

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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1B

Men's College Basketball

Road doesn't get easier for Ducks

Oregon prepares for roadtrip to face Arizona, Arizona St

By STEVE MIMS
The Register-Guard

Oregon will face its first two ranked opponents this season when it leaves the state for just the second time.

No. 11 Arizona State and 17th-ranked Arizona each dropped in the polls following losses last week, but remain the only Pac-12 men's basketball teams in the Top 25 when Oregon visits Thursday and Saturday, respectively.

The Ducks (11-5) dropped to 1-2 in conference play for the first time in four years after losing 76-64 Friday night at Oregon State.

"They are down. That's part of a long season," Oregon coach Dana Altman said. "With what we have coming up, they should be really concerned. We go to Arizona, which is the toughest road trip, and then we have USC and UCLA coming to town. The next four games is our toughest stretch, so we better get ready."

ASU (13-2) and Arizona (12-4) are each 8-0 at home this season as they wait for the Ducks, whose only true road game was a 68-61 win at Fresno State on Dec. 18. Oregon has played one team currently in the AP poll, but No. 9 Oklahoma was not ranked when it beat the Ducks 90-80 at the Phil Knight Invitational on Nov. 26.

The Ducks have dropped to No. 117 in RPI rankings with their best remaining opportunities to rise up likely coming this week against the Sun Devils and Wildcats.

ASU was the last unbeaten team in the country at 12-0 before back-to-back losses. The Sun Devils, who opened conference play with

See DUCKS/3B

IRRIGON

Knights hang on against Pirates



Irregon's Ana Zacarias and Riverside's Faith Rosen fight for a loose ball in the Knights' 33-29 win against the Pirates on Wednesday in Irregon.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Knights sweep Pirates in two thrilling Eastern Oregon League battles

By ALEXIS MANSANAREZ
East Oregonian

IRRIGON — Leading up to league play, the Irregon Knights had a near perfect record. They opened the season with a seven-game win streak and lost only one game in 2017 — a matchup with the Class 4A La Grande Tigers.

With the new year came a

new record and their then-11-1 rap sheet didn't mean much entering play in the Eastern Oregon League (EOL).

Irregon had dropped its league opener, a 37-24 loss

to Vale, where the Knights' defense was sound but the offense struggled to keep up.

However, Wednesday night back at their home court, the Knights found their rhythm both offensively and defensively to top Riverside 33-29.

"That was a big win for us because Riverside has been playing pretty good," head coach Mike Royer said, "and we knew they were going to be tough."

The Pirates (11-4 overall, 0-2 EOL) were coming off a league opening loss of their own, and the short 11 mile trip from Boardman gave them a chance to bounce back.

At first, Riverside came out with vengeance and scored 16 of its 29 point in the opening quarter. A couple of 3-pointers from junior Brendy Avalos and senior Skylar Wightman — who finished with a team-high seven points — and good looks in field goal range for junior Faith Rosen put the Pirates up 16-15 after eight minutes of play.

The Knights (12-2, 1-1), however, made their adjustments and it was off to the

See KNIGHTS/3B

Houston guard Chris Paul (3) goes up for a shot between Portland's Ed Davis (17) and Shabazz Napier (6) during Wednesday's game in Houston.

AP Photo/Michael Wyke



Pro Basketball

Paul's season-high 37 leads Rockets over Blazers

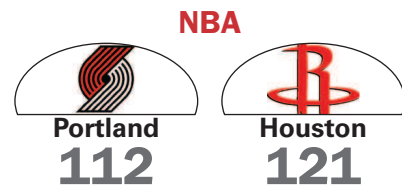
By KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press

HOUSTON — With James Harden injured, the Houston Rockets are figuring out different ways to make up for the offense the league's leading scorer normally provides.

On Wednesday night, that meant Chris Paul took 29 shots and finished with a season-high 37 points to help the Rockets to a 121-112 win over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Paul tied his career high for field-goal attempts in a regulation game. He took 33 shots and scored 42 points in a double-overtime game with New Orleans in 2008.

His 37 points were the most by a Rocket besides Harden since Jeremy Lin had 38 against San Antonio on



Dec. 10, 2012.

Paul, who made 13 field goals, was asked if he realized he'd come close to taking the most shots in his career.

"I don't know," he said. "It kind of felt like it. Like goodness. I missed a lot, too. That's what I'm mad about."

Portland coach Terry Stotts said Paul was tough to stop.

"He was exceptional," Stotts said. "He really controlled the game, like he can do. His shot-making was as good as I've seen."

Eric Gordon added 30 points as the Rockets withstood a late run to win their second straight.

The Blazers used a big run to cut a 14-point deficit to three with about three minutes left. Houston responded with a 6-2 run, capped by a 3-pointer from Paul, to make it 111-104 about a minute later.

Damian Lillard made a layup on the other end, but Paul cut through three defenders to make an off-balance layup to push the lead to 113-106.

The Blazers couldn't get the ball in after a timeout, Houston got the ball back and Clint Capela added two free throws to secure the victory.

The Rockets won their second straight and improved to 3-2 in five

See BLAZERS/3B

Sports shorts

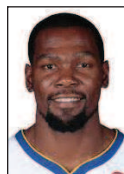
Durant the second youngest to 20,000 career points in NBA history

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Kevin Durant became the 44th player in NBA history to score 20,000 career points Wednesday night.

Durant reached the milestone on a pull-up jumper from the left wing at the 1:41 mark of second quarter. The Warriors announced his accomplishment on the main scoreboard and Durant received a standing ovation, shaking his head in acknowledgment while still very much in game mode.

The NBA Finals MVP returned from a three-game absence with a strained right calf and scored 25 points in the first half against the Clippers KD's biggest half of the season. He came in needing exactly 25 points for 20,000.

Durant is at 29 the second-youngest player behind LeBron James and the first to reach the 20,000 mark as a member of the Warriors.



Durant

"It's an honor. Obviously [Bear Bryant] is one of the greats. This is a team award. I'm just happy to represent the players and coaches that had such a phenomenal year."

— Scott Frost

The former UCF head coach was named Bear Bryant Coach of the Year on Wednesday, recognizing his UCF Knights team that went 13-0 and defeated Auburn in the Peach Bowl, just two years removed from an 0-12 season. Frost is now the coach at Nebraska.

Hermiston girls soccer coach resigns after six seasons

HERMISTON — After six years at the helm of the Hermiston girls soccer team, head coach Danielle MacBride has resigned.

"It was a tough decision," she said, "but I'm getting to the point in furthering my education that I just can't dedicate the time it requires."

She currently works at Hermiston High with HermistonOnline! as a mentor, and is in the process of finishing her Associate of Arts Transfer degree at BMCC — which should be completed in the spring.

MacBride also said she may be required to move within the next year, as she will transfer into a social work program that focuses on family services.

She joined the program after one of its most successful seasons — a 11-3-0 record in 2011 — and leaves with a 24-35-10 overall record.



THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1987 — Denver's John Elway leads the Broncos to a 23-20 overtime victory over the Cleveland Browns to win the AFC Championship. Elway caps a 15-play, 98-yard march with a 5-yard TD pass to Mark Jackson to tie the game with 37 seconds remaining. Rich Karlis kicks a 33-yard field goal in overtime to give Denver the win.

2014 — Alex Rodriguez is dealt the most severe punishment in the history of baseball's drug agreement when arbitrator Fredric Horowitz rules the New York Yankees third baseman is suspended for the entire 2014 season.

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