

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL | OPENING DAY 2018

Baseball is back



Seattle Mariners starting pitcher Felix Hernandez throws the first pitch to the Cleveland Indians in the first inning of a baseball game Thursday in Seattle. AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

Opening Day is the greatest day

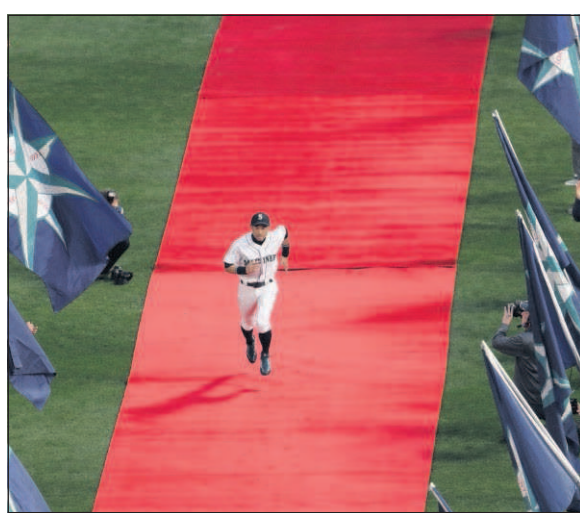
Thursday began as a normal day for me. I awoke to the alarm clock on my phone chiming, and soon slowly started my normal morning routine. And then, while scrolling through my Twitter timeline and getting out of the morning grogginess, I remembered the good news that Major League Baseball was back. I then sped up my routine in order to plop down on the couch, turn on MLB.tv and begin to indulge myself in as many of the 13 games being played as I could.

Opening Day in the world of Major League Baseball, to me, is the best day in professional sports and tops the opening days, nights and weekends of the other major professional sports in America. The NFL, NBA and NHL each spread out the season openers for each team over the span of several days, which takes away from some of the excitement I think for a fan of the entire sport. Whereas, for the most part, MLB has all 30 teams open up on the same day, spreading the start times out from early afternoon on the east coast to late evening on the west coast, making for a tremendous day of baseball viewing.



ERIC SINGER
Comment

See COLUMN/2B



Seattle Mariners outfielder Ichiro Suzuki runs down the red carpet after he was introduced for the team's baseball game against the Cleveland Indians Thursday in Seattle. AP Photo/Ted S. Warren



Seattle Mariners' Nelson Cruz is congratulated after his two-run home run against the Cleveland Indians during the first inning of a baseball game Thursday in Seattle. AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

VIEW A FULL-PAGE GRAPHIC PREVIEWING THE 2018 MLB SEASON PAGE 3B

Hernandez starts strong as M's top Indians, 2-1

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Felix Hernandez pitched shutout ball into the sixth inning, Nelson Cruz hit a two-run home run in the first inning and the Seattle Mariners opened the season with a 2-1 win over the Cleveland Indians on Thursday night.

Hernandez became just the seventh pitcher to start at least 10 straight opening days, and he got off to a strong start against one of the best teams in the American League. Hernandez allowed two hits in 5 1/3 innings, only being pulled due to a limited pitch count after being hit by a line drive during spring training and missing some time.

Hernandez (1-0) was given an early jolt from Cruz, who picked up where 2017 left off. After hitting 39 home runs last year, Cruz hit the first pitch he saw from Corey Kluber (0-1) over the center field fence for an early 2-0 lead. The 88 mph cutter stayed in the middle of the plate, and Cruz didn't miss.

That was all Seattle would get against Kluber, who pitched eight innings and allowed six hits. Following Hernandez, the Mariners used five relievers. Edwin Diaz hit two batters in the ninth and let

See MARINERS/2B

Prep roundup

Hermiston takes big loss in first day of tournament

Hepper softball comes away with narrow victory, Mac-Hi tennis sweeps competition

East Oregonian

KEIZER — In the first day of the Volcano Stadium Tourney at Salem-Keizer Volcanoes Stadium, the Hermiston Bulldogs were handed a 15-3 loss to a tough 6A opponent.

The McNary Celtics out of the Greater Valley Conference took control of the game early, building up a 5-0 lead after the first three innings. Jacob Jackson's two-RBI double in the third highlighted McNary's early efforts.

Hermiston's scoring would come later. After reaching base only fourth times in the first fourth innings, the Bulldogs (2-2) finally got on the board in the fifth.

Joey Gutierrez was Hermiston's leadoff hitter, and reached first on a single to third base. Brylee Dufloth followed with a line drive and was safe thanks to an error, which also gave Gutierrez time to get to third. Next with Jordan Ramirez at the plate, Dufloth stole second and Gutierrez made it home for the first run of the inning. Ramirez grounded out to shortstop when Dufloth recorded the second run to cut the deficit to 5-2.

But the Celtics (2-3) ran away with the game in the seventh, scoring 10 runs. Seth Prewitt was able to get the Bulldogs out of the inning, catching a pop fly and inducing a fly out to first base but the damage was already done.

Hermiston scored a lone run in the bottom of the seventh off a sacrifice fly from Trevor Wagner but it was too little too late.

Lukas Tolan ended up taking the loss on Day 1 of the three day affair after giving up two hits and five runs in 3 1/3 innings of work. Tolan struck out four.

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(H) L. Tolan, J. Ramirez (4), S. Prewitt (7).
2B: J. Jackson, C. Wentworth (M).

SOFTBALL

HEPPNER — After dropping the season opener to Mac-Hi on March 13, the Heppner Mustangs have worked their way to five straight wins capped off by a 2-1 victory against Knappa on Thursday.

In Heppner, the two teams battled it out for eight innings after each scored a lone run in the first.

"It's the kind of competition we need to face," head coach Rick Johnston said.

In the low scoring affair, the only extra base hit came from Maggie Flynn. The double was one of seven hits from the Mustangs (4-1), which included the winning run on a two-out fast ball from Knappa's Madelynn Weaver.

The Loggers (1-4) recorded five hits on the day off Heppner's Dakota Durfey. In eight innings of work, Durfey struck out eight and walked three.

The Mustangs will continue play Saturday against Vernonia.

See ROUNDUP/2B

Sports shorts

Steve Nash, Jason Kidd, Grant Hill to enter Basketball Hall of Fame

Jason Kidd, Steve Nash and Grant Hill have been notified of their inductions into the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame as part of the Class of 2018, sources told ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski.

The full 2018 Hall of Fame class will be revealed Saturday (ESPN2, 9 a.m.) from the site of the men's Final Four in San Antonio.

—ESPN

Bennett named AP coach of year

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — Virginia coach Tony Bennett isn't going to waver from his foundation, whether it's the philosophy that built the Cavaliers into a contender or the big-picture perspective that helps him handle the sting of a historically improbable loss.

Bennett was named The Associated Press men's college basketball coach of the year Thursday after his Cavaliers set a program single-season record for wins, dominated the Atlantic Coast Conference and reached No. 1 in the AP Top 25 for the first time since the Ralph Sampson era. Yet that wildly successful season ended abruptly in the most unexpected way: with the Cavaliers falling to UMBC to become the first No. 1 seed to lose to a 16-seed in NCAA Tournament history.



THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1943 — Ken Sailors scores 16 points to lead Wyoming to a 56-43 victory over Georgetown in the NCAA basketball championship.

1981 — Sophomore guard Isiah Thomas scores 23 points to lead Indiana to a 63-50 victory over North Carolina to win the NCAA basketball title.

1995 — Maine beats Michigan 4-3 in triple overtime, the longest hockey game in NCAA tournament history, to advance to the NCAA title game.

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