

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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Hermiston boys soccer opens season with 3-1 loss

By **BRETT KANE**
East Oregonian

The frigid winter winds did not blow in Hermiston's favor on Tuesday night.

The Bulldog boys suffered a 3-1 loss to the visiting Walla Walla Blue Devils to open the season at Kennison Field.

The game served as their debut in the Mid-Columbia Conference, a league where boys soccer is played in spring instead of fall. It was their first game in 18 months.

"You could tell it's been a while since we've been together as a program," said coach Rich Harshberger. "We're still getting our legs under us."

Walla Walla's net was left untouched for the entire first half. Junior midfielder Cristian Sanchez-Cuellar, senior midfielder Agustin Arceo, and junior forward Julio Tapia all knocked down goals for the Blue Devils.

Hermiston was held scoreless and went into the half down 3-0. "We knew (Walla Walla) would come out and give us

their best game possible, and we respected that," said Bulldogs senior goalie Juan Navarrete. "I tried to help my team the best that I could. Walla Walla was tough."

Navarrete toughed the game out with an injury after rolling his ankle in a physical education class earlier in the week.

"Sometimes, life doesn't go your way," he said. "But I wanted to come out and start over with a clean slate. I think the wind was in our favor in the second half. We played a better game."

You could call it the wind,

or you could call it bad luck for the Blue Devils, but Hermiston got their lone goal two minutes into the second half. Junior midfielder Coleman Solano launched the ball toward Walla Walla's goal and Blue Devils sophomore midfielder Juan Segovia-Cruz deflected it into his team's own net.

Solano and senior midfielder Emilio Leal both got penalty kicks for a chance to reduce their deficit, but missed the net. Neither team posted another goal as the clock wound down and sig-

naled Walla Walla's win.

"This game showed us our team's deficiencies," Harshberger said.

"We need to tighten up our touch and get our passes where they need to go. Walla Walla presses as a team really well. They didn't give us a lot of time on the ball. We'll see more of that when we play these upper-league teams this season."

The Bulldogs will shoot for a comeback on Friday at 7 p.m. with a home match against Richland.

Gonzaga falls in WCC title game

By **JOHN MARSHALL**
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Saint Mary's heard for weeks about the NCAA Tournament bubble. First four in, first four out, fortunate to be in the discussion to be included in the field of 68.

Tired of all the chatter, the Gaels put an emphatic end to it, popping the bubble by taking down a team no one outside their program thought they could beat.

Saint Mary's ended the nation's longest winning streak and Gonzaga's six-year reign as West Coast Conference Tournament champions, grinding out a 60-47 victory in the title game on Tuesday night.

"We were told to pull off a miracle by people who don't know us," said Saint Mary's guard Jordan Hunter, who had 12 points and 15 rebounds. "We didn't need a miracle. We knew we could beat them."

Saint Mary's (22-11) all but shut down the nation's highest-scoring team by slowing the game and forcing Gonzaga to grind out possessions instead of playing fast and free.

The Gaels held Gonzaga's leading scorer Rui Hachimura in check and limited the Zags (30-3) to 2-of-17 shooting from 3-point range to end the nation's longest winning streak at 21 games.

Gonzaga's 18-game WCC tournament winning streak, dating to the 2012 title game, also came to an end, and so too could its bid for a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament.

Instead of waiting for Selection Sunday, Saint Mary's left no doubt, getting back to the NCAA Tournament after a one-year absence with its first WCC title in nine years.

Jordan Ford had 17 points and Tanner Krebs scored 13 for the Gaels.

"The way we did it, from where we were at the beginning of the year until now, I get a lot of satisfaction out of that," Saint Mary's coach



AP Photo/John Locher

St. Mary's Jordan Hunter, right, and Malik Fitts, second from right, celebrate after their team defeated Gonzaga 60-47 in an NCAA college basketball game for the West Coast Conference men's tournament title on Tuesday in Las Vegas.



AP Photo/John Locher

St. Mary's Jordan Ford (3) and Gonzaga's Zach Norvell Jr. collide during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game for the West Coast Conference men's tournament title on Tuesday in Las Vegas.

Randy Bennett said.

Gonzaga steamrolled its way to the regular-season title and through the WCC semifinals by getting out in transition, and knocking down open shots.

The Zags did neither against Saint Mary's,

held to a season-low in points and 37 percent shooting. Gonzaga had six assists after finishing with 26 in the WCC semifinals against Pepperdine.

Brandon Clarke led Gonzaga with 16 points and Hachimura was held to nine, nearly 12 under

his average.

"It was our worst offensive game of the year and give them credit for that," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said.

Gonzaga dominated the WCC during the regular season, finishing 16-0 while winning by a conference-record 27 points per game.

Two of those wins came against Saint Mary's: 66-55 in Moraga and 94-46 in Spokane.

The Bulldogs cruised into their 20th straight title game under Few — and 22nd overall — by crushing Pepperdine 100-74 in Monday's semifinals.

Saint Mary's controlled the pace in round three against Gonzaga, bogging down the Zags' offense and forcing them into difficult shots. Gonzaga struggled to get anything to fall, open or not, scoring a season-low 24 points by halftime and missing six of its seven 3-point attempts.

"Gonzaga likes to get out and run, they feed off energy," Ford said. "It was kind of like a home game for them and we had to slow the tempo."

The Zags also had a hard time containing Krebs. The junior, who averages 8.9 points per game, had 13 by halftime to push the Gaels to a 27-24 lead. Saint Mary's did it with second-leading scorer Malik Fitts limited to less than a minute because of foul trouble.

Saint Mary's continued to bog down Gonzaga and Fitts scored eight quick points to open the second half. The Gaels extended the lead to 48-41 with 7½ minutes left and answered every time Gonzaga tried to make a run.

"They were mucking it up a little bit, getting into lanes and we just didn't make shots," said Gonzaga guard Josh Perkins, who had 10 points, four assists and five turnovers.

Big picture

Saint Mary's played arguably its best game of the season at the best possible time. Now it's on to the NCAA Tournament.

Gonzaga was never able to speed the Gaels up and rev up their high-scoring offense, showing a weakness that could be exploited.

McCollum scores 35 to lead Trail Blazers over Clippers

By **JOE REEDY**
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — CJ McCollum scored 35 points, Jusuf Nurkic and Damian Lillard added 20 apiece and the Portland Trail Blazers snapped the Los Angeles Clippers' five-game winning streak with a 125-104 victory on Tuesday night.

McCollum, who was 12 of 21 from the field and made six 3-pointers, took control of the game during the fourth quarter as the Trail Blazers broke things open with a 21-5 run. Portland led 95-94 with 8:50 remaining before going on a 15-3 spurt that included 13 straight points by McCollum, including three 3-pointers.

The Clippers — who were on the end of back-to-back games — led for most of the first 30 minutes before the Trail Blazers went on an 11-3 run to go up 75-68 with 4:55 remaining in the third quarter. McCollum and Lillard completed the run with 3s. Los Angeles slowly crept back and was within one in the fourth before Portland took control.

Montrezl Harrell had 22 points and Lou Williams added 18 for the Clippers, who had won eight of their previous 10.

There were four lead changes until the Clippers scored eight straight points to take a 19-12 lead with 4:08 remaining in the first quarter. They would be up by as many as eight (43-35) midway through the second quarter until the Blazers went on a late run to close the quarter and get within 52-50 at halftime.

Tip-ins

Trail Blazers: Nurkic also had 12 rebounds for his 31st double-double of the season. ... Guard Rodney Hood did not play due to right hip soreness.

Clippers: Ivica Zubac had 10 points and 16 rebounds for his sixth double-double of the season and second with the Clippers.

Up next

Trail Blazers: Travel to the New Orleans Pelicans on Friday. Portland has won both meetings this season.

Clippers: Host the Chicago Bulls on Friday. Los Angeles has won six straight over Chicago.

SPORTS SHORTS

Adam Jones eager for fresh start with D-Backs

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (AP) — Adam Jones had been climbing Camelback Mountain and hitting at Grand Canyon University for the past two weeks, waiting for a major league team to give him a job. On Tuesday, he officially joined the Arizona Diamondbacks, the only team that Jones says showed any real interest in the 33-year-old outfielder.

A free agent after playing the last 11 seasons with the Orioles, Jones

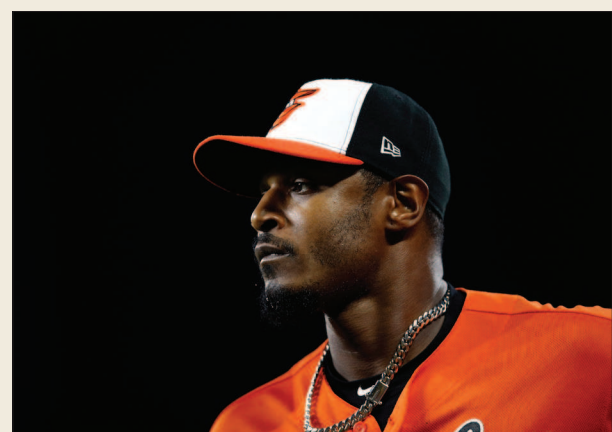
signed a one-year, \$3 million contract with the D-backs.

"I was in San Diego and a lot of the baseball players I trained with, they all came to spring training," Jones said. "I'm sitting there looking around at the stars. It made sense to come here and be with my friends who are unsigned. I've been out here working out with the guys who are still looking for jobs."

Jones batted .281 with 24 home

runs and 93 RBIs in 145 games with the Orioles last season and his defensive statistics showed a decline. Was his value hurt because he didn't grade well with the analytics folks?

"I don't know," Jones said. "All I know is that between the lines, I know I can play. That's all to me personally that matters is that I know I can play between the lines. I know I can hit a fastball, I know I can hit a breaking ball."



AP Photo/Patrick Semansky, File