

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Thomas rises above the competition

6-foot-4 Hermiston senior center leaves a lasting impression on the basketball court

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

While Hermiston was a welcomed addition to the Mid-Columbia Conference this season, the girls basketball coaches were a little unsure of the challenges that would come with the Bulldogs and their 6-foot-4 senior center Jordan Thomas.

"She was very difficult for us," said Kamiakin coach Lane Schumacher, whose team won the MCC title. "Not only does she have the height to make things difficult for us with her defense, but she also has a good touch on the offensive end. We tried to pressure the guards so they couldn't get her the ball."

Thomas was a cut above the competition this season, earning her the East Oregonian Player of the Year honor.

"It's a well-deserved honor for her," Schumacher said. "She is going to keep developing. Her best basketball is still ahead of her."

Thomas is joined on the first team by teammate Jazlyn Romero, Pendleton freshman Muriel Hoisington, Sydney Wilson and Jacee Currin from Heppner's 2A state championship team, and Ana Zacarias of Irrigon.

Heppner's Robert Wilson is the Coach of the Year.

Thomas averaged 15.5 points, 13.2 rebounds, 3.8 blocked shots and 1.2 steals a game for the Bulldogs, who advanced to the 3A regional tournament.

She also was named to the MCC's first team, and to the defensive team.

"It makes my job easy in terms of scoring options," Hermiston coach Juan Rodriguez



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hermiston's Jordan Thomas is the East Oregonian Player of the Year. Thomas averaged 15.5 points and 13.2 rebounds this season for the Bulldogs.

said. "I think a lot of coaches would like to have a player like that, who can get a basket at any time. She's definitely a dominant player, especially in this league. For the coaches to single her out and put her on the first team says a lot."

For Thomas, the switch to the MCC helped her game, and helped in preparation for taking her game to the college level.

"I found it more challenging," Thomas said. "I took that in a positive way. It was fun to play against those girls, they are so skilled. There was new competition, and I learned a lot. It was good to see new things."

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ALL-EAST OREGONIAN BASKETBALL TEAMS

Player of the year: Jordan Thomas, senior, 6-4, Hermiston.

Coach of the Year: Robert Wilson, Heppner.

First Team

Jordan Thomas, senior, 6-4, Hermiston

Jazlyn Romero, junior, 5-9, Hermiston

Sydney Wilson, sophomore, 5-8, Heppner

Jacee Currin, senior, 5-7, Heppner

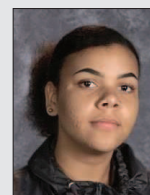
Ana Zacarias, senior, 5-4, Irrigon

Muriel Hoisington, freshman, 5-8, Pendleton.

Second Team

Natalie Neveau, sophomore, Pendleton; JaLay Burns, freshman, Irrigon; Taylor Durfey, freshman, Umatilla;

Katie Vescio, senior, Weston-McEwen; Faith McCarty, freshman, Echo; Marie Chretien, senior, Ione.



Thomas



Romero



Wilson



Currin



Zacarias



Hoisington

Lillard scores 33 points as Blazers beat Mavericks 126-118

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Damian Lillard had 33 points and 12 assists to lead the Portland Trail Blazers past the Dallas Mavericks 126-118 on Wednesday night.

Seth Curry scored 20 off the bench for the Blazers, who have won five of six as they try to secure home-court advantage in the first round of the playoffs. Portland (44-27) led by as many as 25, and Lillard hit six of the team's 16 3-pointers.

Luka Doncic had 24 points for the Mavericks, who have lost nine of 10 and sit in second-to-last place in the West, ahead of the Phoenix Suns.

The Trail Blazers are fourth in the Western Conference standings, a half-

game back of Houston and in front of a cluster that includes the Spurs, Thunder, Jazz and Clippers.

Portland rested Lillard in the fourth quarter. Enes Kanter had 14 points and 10 rebounds off the bench for his first double-double since joining the Blazers just before the All-Star break.

Portland was coming off a 106-98 victory at home over Indiana on Monday. That was the team's first game without starting guard CJ McCollum, who strained his left knee last weekend. McCollum will be reevaluated next week, and no timetable has been set for his return.

The Blazers started Jake Layman for the second straight game in McCollum's place against the Mavericks. Layman also started

against the Pacers, but coach Terry Stotts said the rotation going forward would be fluid.

Lillard had 10 points and four assists as Portland took a 26-17 lead to close the first quarter. It was the lowest first-quarter point total for the Mavs this season.

The Blazers led by as many as 13 in the first half, but Doncic hit a floater and a pair of free throws to put the Mavericks up 39-38.

The threat didn't last long and Portland pulled in front 58-52 on Jusuf Nurkic's dunk. Maurice Harkless closed out the half with another dunk to give the Blazers a 65-52 lead at the break.

Portland stretched the lead to 79-66 after Lillard's 3-pointer. Another 3 put the Blazers up 87-69, and Dallas

never threatened again.

The Mavericks (28-43) have lost eight straight on the road.

Tip-ins

Mavericks: Stotts said he expects Doncic to win the NBA Rookie of the Year award. Mavs coach Rick Carlisle, told of the prediction, joked: "Boy, he's really putting himself out there."

Trail Blazers: It was Lillard's third double-double in his last five games. ... The Blazers split the season series with the Mavericks 2-2.

Up next

Mavericks: At the Sacramento Kings on Thursday night.

Trail Blazers: Host the Detroit Pistons on Saturday night.



AP Photo/Craig Mitchelldyer

Portland guard Damian Lillard, center, passes the ball away from Mavericks forward Dwight Powell, left, and guard Jalen Brunson during an NBA game in Portland on Wednesday.

SPORTS SHORTS



AP Photo/Toru Takahashi

Ichiro cheered as Mariners top A's 9-7 in opener

TOKYO (AP) — Ichiro drew all the cheers.

Most everyone else on the Seattle Mariners did all the hitting.

A crowd that came to salute Ichiro Suzuki in his homeland saw Domingo Santana deliver the biggest hit at the Tokyo Dome, a grand slam that sent Seattle over the Oakland Athletics 9-7 Wednesday in the Major League Baseball opener.

Batting ninth and knowing he'd

get two plate appearances, Ichiro popped up and worked a walk. The 45-year-old star took his spot in right field to begin the bottom of the fourth inning, then was pulled to another huge ovation.

He was met with hugs from the Mariners on the diamond.

"The fans in Japan probably aren't used to the reception I got from my teammates, but it's not that unusual in the majors," Ichiro said.

Mariners manager Scott Servais said Ichiro will play in Thursday's final game of the series, but there is no guarantee he'll start.

"We certainly want to give him an opportunity to go out and play, but we also want to get some other guys in the game," Servais said.

"I understand everybody wants to see him go all nine innings. We're trying to do the best thing for the team and Ichiro understands."