

BUCKS RALLY TO FINISH OFF PIONEERS



Pendleton’s Aspen Garton makes a backhanded grab of a ground ball in the Bucks’ 4-3 win against Mac-Hi on Thursday in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

By BRETT KANE
East Oregonian

On Thursday, the Bucks survived a Pioneers rally to finish their softball preseason with a narrow 4-3 home win.

Pendleton took an early 2-0 lead in the third inning, but their Mac-Hi visitors mounted a three-run fifth inning to grab a brief advantage. The Bucks managed two more runs to finish the game and reclaim the lead for good.

“Mac-Hi is a playoff team,” said Pendleton coach Tim Cary. “It was good for us to get that kind of competition this early on.”

The first two innings breezed by without a run as Bucks pitcher Kylie Parsons struck out four Pioneers to get their defense going. Parsons would strike out six and walk just three by the end of the game.

“You need to have great pitching



Mac-Hi’s Rikki Mark stretches to catch the ball as Pendleton’s Kirah McGlothan slides past while stealing second base in the Bucks’ 4-3 win against the Pioneers on Thursday in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

to have a great team,” Cary said, “and Kylie came out and pitched an outstanding game.”

Bucks sophomore Maria Lillienthal led off the bottom of the third with a double on the first pitch, and senior Elli Nirschl’s sacrifice bunt sent her to third. Senior Kirah McGlothan drove her home with a double two at-bats later.

“The coaches were telling me to relax, and my team was there to support me,” Lillienthal said of the base hit that got her team’s offense started. “They just told me to take deep breaths, and trust my hands.”

McGlothan made it home on an error at first base to give Pendleton their 2-0 advantage.

But the Pioneers fought back with a game-changing fifth inning. Courtney Cain, Britney Wells, and Kayla Casillas all singled to load the bases with just

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Baylor-Oregon: Final 4 matchup of contrasting styles

By FRED GOODALL
Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Kim Mulkey rejects the notion that being the No. 1 overall seed makes Baylor the team to beat in the women’s Final Four.

The Lady Bears (35-1), who are riding a 27-game winning streak and have trounced four opponents in the NCAA Tournament by an average of 38 points, face Final Four newcomer Oregon (33-4) in Friday’s national semifinals.

The winner advances to Sunday’s championship against either UConn or Notre Dame.

Mulkey, who’s won titles as a player and an assistant coach at Louisiana Tech in addition to guiding Baylor to a pair of NCAA crowns, said it would be a mistake to assume the Lady Bears are clearcut favorites.

“We don’t approach it like: ‘Oh, wow, we’re the No. 1 seed, we’re supposed to win.’ According to a lot of people, we’re not supposed to win,” Mulkey said.

“We’re going to fight. We’re going to claw. We’re going to compete. We’re going to give it our best shot,” she added. “I’m sure the other three teams are going to do the same thing.”

Oregon promises as much.

Led by All-American point guard Sabrina Ionescu, the Ducks are in the Final Four for the first time after upsetting another No. 1 seed, Mississippi State, in the Elite Eight.

“We’re honored and humbled to be here, but I think we all know we don’t want to go home tomorrow,” Ionescu said after practice Thursday at Amalie Arena. “We didn’t just come here to enjoy the experience. We came



AP Photo/Chris O'Meara

Oregon players work on a drill Thursday during a practice session for the women’s Final Four NCAA college basketball semifinal game against Baylor in Tampa, Fla.

UP NEXT: FINAL FOUR

- Oregon Ducks at Baylor Lady Bears
- Today, 4 p.m. TV: ESPN2

here to win some more basketball games.”

Baylor is back in the Final Four for the time since 2012, when it finished a 40-0 season and captured its second national title.

The Lady Bears are led by an imposing frontcourt featuring 6-foot-4 Lauren Cox and 6-7 Kalani Brown and use their size to dominate on both ends of the floor.

Oregon, meanwhile, plays a contrasting perimeter-oriented style that coach Kelly Graves acknowledged has prompted some people to call the Ducks the Golden State

Warriors of women’s college basketball.

“Steph Curry gave Sabrina quite a shout out yesterday, I thought that was really cool,” Graves said. “You know what, yeah, she’s a lot like Steph, how he’s a conductor, is always a threat to make a huge play, make those 3-pointers.”

Baylor’s Caitlin Bickle said “they’re calling it new school versus old school.”

“We work from the inside out, and I think they work from outside in,” Bickle added. “So we’re just kind of opposite.”

Mulkey said teams generally do whatever they feel is necessary to be successful.

“You play to your personnel,” the Baylor coach said.

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AP AWARDS

Gustafson player of year, Mulkey coach of year

By DOUG FEINBERG
AP Basketball Writer

TAMPA, Fla. — Megan Gustafson rewrote the women’s basketball record book at Iowa.

The 6-foot-3 center led the nation in scoring for the second straight season, averaging 27.9 points, and became the fourth player to reach 1,000 points in a year. On Thursday, she won The Associated Press women’s college basketball player of the year award.

“She’s an amazing young woman who left an incredible legacy at this school,” Iowa coach Lisa Bluder said.

Led by Gustafson, the Hawkeyes reached the Elite Eight for the first time since 1993. That season, coach Kim Mulkey and Baylor ended their season.

Mulkey was also honored Thursday, taking the AP coach of the year award for the second time. She has led top-ranked

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