

# EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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## State finals a clean slate for Pendleton, Central

**Bucks will take on top-ranked Panthers in 5A title game**

By **ANNIE FOWLER**  
*East Oregonian*

At this point of the season, rankings, records and stats don't mean a thing.

There are just two teams left in the bracket, with a state title on the line.

The Pendleton Bucks find themselves as one of the final two teams in the 5A state baseball bracket. They will take on Central High School at 5 p.m. Saturday at Salem-Keizer Volcanoes Stadium for the championship trophy.

"They are ready," Pendleton coach TJ Haguewood said. "For some, there is no better opportunity than now to get to play for a championship. They are prepared and they are excited."

It's the first time since 1992 that the Bucks have advanced to the title game. That year, they lost the 4A championship game to McNary 7-4 at Civic Stadium in Portland.

The Bucks, who have never won a state baseball title, also placed second in 1985 (3-2 loss to Beaverton), 1975 (6-0 loss to Klamath Union), and 1963 (5-0 loss to Madison).

Central has one state baseball title to its credit —

beating Myrtle Creek 6-0 in the A-2 championship game in 1958.

Coach Tom Roberts said the Panthers have not had this type of success since the 1980s.

"It's been a while since Central baseball has reached this level," Roberts said. "I have a big senior class and they have won some big games over the years, but they haven't been able to put it all together. We have that fighting mentality. We are

30 miles from the stadium, so we are hoping for a good crowd."

The Bucks (18-8), who won the regular-season Intermountain Conference title with a 12-3 record, opened the state playoffs with a 4-3 victory over Wilsonville.

Pendleton shut out Crescent Valley 6-0 in the quarterfinals, then topped West Albany 4-3 on Tuesday in the semifinals.

"We have a lot of respect

for Central," Haguewood said. "We have beaten three really good ball clubs already. Central has been No. 1 all year, and they have good pitching and defense. We know it will be a battle. We know we have to execute. We have as good a chance as anyone else."

Pendleton will start junior Cooper Roberts, and while he has had a successful season, the Bucks have

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## Taking aim at the title

Cooper Roberts will make his championship game debut on the mound for the Pendleton Bucks on Saturday

By **BRETT KANE**  
*East Oregonian*

This is Cooper Roberts' first season on the varsity baseball team, and he's about to take on the biggest responsibility a Pendleton pitcher has had in 27 years.

The Bucks will hit Volcanoes Stadium in Keizer on Saturday to challenge Central High School in this year's 5A championship game. It will mark Pendleton's first title game appearance since 1992.

Roberts, a junior, will start the game on the mound. "Of course I'm nervous," said Roberts, 18, "but I just have to trust myself and do my thing."

Roberts pitched an inning here and there for the varsity team last season, but made the cut for the first time this year. His team is going into their final game with an 18-8 overall record.

The Bucks earned the top spot in the Intermountain Conference standings for their debut year in the league.

Roberts is part of a pitching power trio, sharing the mound with seniors Ryan Stahl and Chris Large. But Stahl and Large both threw against West Albany on Tuesday, leaving it up to Roberts to start the Bucks' deepest state run in almost three decades.

"He's such a good competitor," coach TJ Haguewood said. "He doesn't let emotions get to him. If something bad happens, he flushes it and reengages. He knows the most important pitch is his next pitch."

The 6-foot, 2-inch Roberts holds the best ERA amongst the three Bucks pitchers with a 1.00. He was also named to the IMC baseball all-league second team.

"One of the things that sets him apart on the mound is that he enjoys the competition between himself and the hitter," Haguewood said. "He pounds the zone, keeps guys off-balance, and lets his defense work."

And that chemistry Roberts shares with his defense often makes the difference in a game.

Last Friday, he threw a complete game shutout at Crescent Valley as the Bucks brought home a 6-0 quarterfinals victory. He threw 88 pitches and tallied

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Staff photo by Kathy Aney

**Pendleton pitcher Cooper Roberts will take the mound during the state title game on Saturday against Central.**

## Raptors take NBA Finals opener, beat Warriors 118-109

By **BRIAN MAHONEY**  
*AP Basketball Writer*

TORONTO — Pascal Siakam scored a playoff career-high 32 points and the Toronto Raptors won the first NBA Finals game played outside the U.S., beating the Golden State Warriors 118-109 on Thursday night.

The Raptors hardly looked like newcomers to the NBA's biggest stage, controlling the action most of the way against a Golden State team beginning its fifth straight NBA Finals appearance.

Kawhi Leonard added 23 points and Marc Gasol had 20 for the Raptors.

Stephen Curry scored 34 points and Klay Thompson had 21 for the Warriors, who had won all four Game 1s in the last four years. All those had come at home, but this time Golden State doesn't have home-court — or home country — advantage.

Game 2 is Sunday night in Toronto, which is hosting an NBA Finals game for the first time after the Raptors entered the league as an expansion team in 1995.

The Raptors were perhaps a little jittery at the start, with Kyle Lowry firing a pass well out of bounds on their first possession. But they quickly settled in afterward, building a building a

10-point lead by halftime.

Siakam then went 6 for 6 in the third quarter to keep Golden State from gaining much ground, and the Raptors kept their lead around double digits for much of the final quarter, countering every attempt the Warriors made to catch up.

All four of the Warriors' previous finals were against LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers, and they struggled to figure out a new opponent. Toronto shot 50.6 percent from the field and the Warriors never found an answer for Siakam, the finalist for Most Improved Player who has a nice start for an NBA Finals MVP resume.

The party 24 years in the making started early, with fans arriving at Jurassic Park outside the arena in the morning. There were lines at the arena entrances hours before the game.

DeMarcus Cousins made it back from a torn left quadriceps to come off the bench in his first NBA Finals game, but the Warriors remained without Kevin Durant, the MVP of the last two NBA Finals.

The Warriors had won every game since he got hurt in the second round but sure missed him against the Raptors, who are on a roll after falling behind 2-0 to Milwaukee in the Eastern Conference finals.



AP Photo/Nathan Denette

**Toronto Raptors forward Pascal Siakam (43) blocks a shot by Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green (23) during the second half of Game 1 of basketball's NBA Finals on Thursday in Toronto.**