

Bucks: Pendleton returns to title game for first time since 1992

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McNary in Portland. It goes to show that it isn't often a team gets a shot at the state title. "It was tough," said Pendleton head coach TJ Hague-wood. "Baseball's funny that way. The ball could land 3 feet one way or the other, and that could change the game."

In the beginning

The Bucks' season didn't start out with a state title within sight. Despite their conference championship and 5A run, Haugewood said that the journey through the preseason was a rocky one — the team suffered the bulk of their losses just before kicking off league action.

"Every year is a transition," said Haguewood. "You lose seniors as the underclassmen step up. The roles are always changing. We had a lot of question marks and holes to fill. We knew we had to replace a lot of power."

The Bucks dropped five of their eight preseason games as they struggled to find their groove.

"I looked at (assistant coach) Wes (Armstrong) at

the beginning of the year and told him, 'I could pencil in four guys and know where they are. The rest, I'd have to flip a coin,'" Hague-wood said.

Luckily, things started to fall into place as the Bucks entered the IMC. The team had just come off of their last season in the Columbia River Conference, where they took the league title. But with a new league comes a new set of challengers.

"We knew Hood River Valley, The Dalles, and Redmond would be competitive," Haguewood said. "Crook County was another question mark. We expected to be right in the thick of things."

Haguewood was right to be wary of Hood River Valley — the Eagles outlasted Pendleton for a 4-3 victory during their first meeting. It wouldn't be for another few weeks that the Bucks could exact revenge. It came in the form of a 4-1, 6-5 double-header sweep of the Eagles that put Pendleton at the top of the IMC standings.

It would be a true turning point for the Bucks.

"At that point, the boys got a lot of confidence," said Haguewood. "They played with a lot of energy



Staff photo by Kathy Aney, File
Runner Ty Beers, of Pendleton, watches home plate from second base during a game against the Redmond Panthers

and passion."

A winning formula

A key component to any team's success is chemistry, no matter the sport. And once Pendleton found theirs, not many could stop them.

"At the beginning of the year, we were struggling. A lot of it had to do with our chemistry," said senior catcher Justin Duso. "But once we got that, we became a well-rounded team. We had less errors and played solid defense. Our defense

became our strong suit."

If you ask any given Buckaroo ball player, chances are they'll tell you that their fondest memories with the team happened off the field. The Bucks would gather for barbecue lunches in between practices, which proved to be just as vital of a ritual as anything done in the diamond.

"It was a tradition we carried over from last year," said senior centerfielder Gabe Umbarger. "There are so many unforgetta-

ble memories during those lunches. It helped build our chemistry."

Early in the season, coach Haguewood had to take time off from the team to turn his attention to his brother Ty, who was experiencing serious health issues.

"When I came back, the team was wearing 'Ty Strong' T-shirts and wristbands," Haguewood recalled. "That unified us. It's a Buckaroo family."

Making history

Junior pitcher Cooper Roberts kept Crescent Valley scoreless in the 5A quarterfinals game, and from there, Pendleton hit the road to West Albany for the semifinals, where Umbarger came in clutch.

Umbarger hit a three-run homer to overcome their deficit and put the Bucks out front for the rest of the game, securing their spot in the championships.

"It was huge," Umbarger said. "It gave us the mentality that we could really do this. Getting that win showed us that we're a high caliber team. For me, it felt good. It showed me that all my hard work over the season had paid off."

Four days later, and the Bucks found themselves at the Volcanoes Stadium in Keizer. They were about to square up against the 5A's top team, and were the underdog in the fight.

Although the game didn't fall the way they had hoped, it was the deepest run at a state title a Pendleton baseball team had made in nearly three decades. That alone is a monumental accomplishment.

"It was an honor," Duso said. "I loved everything about the experience — from the locker rooms to playing in front of all those people. I remember walking out with the guys before the game, looking down that baseline, and hearing the National Anthem. It was a pretty cool moment."

Despite the loss, it was a moment that will long be remembered in Pendleton High School.

"We didn't just want to play in the championships — we wanted to win," Haugewood said. "That was the ultimate goal. But the boys did a good job of understanding that they did a lot of good things to get there. They're a family. They love each other. That's being successful."

NBA: Raptors move within victory

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Arena before the team's move to new Chase Center in San Francisco next season. Stephen Curry added 27 points but shot just 9 for 22 and 2 of 9 from 3-point range on the heels of his postseason career-best 47-point outing in a 123-109 Game 3 defeat.

Serge Ibaka scored 20 points on 9-of-12 shooting in 22 minutes off the bench for the composed and confident Raptors, who for a second straight game found an answer to every Warriors threat at raucous Oracle — where home fans were stunned and silenced when the final buzzer sounded.

A huge section of Toronto fans then broke into singing "O Canada!"

"It's awesome," Raptors coach Nick Nurse said. "Our fans travel really well in the regular season. We get this a lot on the road. It's really amazing. It's Canada's team, and Canadians from all over the country are traveling down and making

NBA FINALS



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Toronto leads series 3-1

plans when we play in Florida or California or Detroit especially."

The two-time defending champions' quest for a three-peat is suddenly in serious jeopardy.

Toronto will take its first try at the title in Game 5 on Monday night back at Scotiabank Arena. Golden State, still hopeful of injured star Kevin Durant's return, must stave off elimination to guarantee one more game at Oracle. It would be next Thursday.

"It's not over. It's not a good feeling right now, obviously," Curry said. "We've been on both sides of it and

for us it's an opportunity to flip this whole series on its head."

Leonard's 2017 postseason with San Antonio got cut short against the Warriors in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals after he re-injured his troublesome left ankle when Zaza Pachulia's foot slid under his.

Leonard's two jumpers in the final 42 seconds of the third put the Raptors up 79-64 heading into the final 12 minutes. Fred VanVleet then dealt another dagger on the first possession of the fourth with a 30-footer.

A bloodied VanVleet then went to the locker room with 9:35 left after being hit in the face by Shaun Livingston's left elbow when the Warriors guard went up for a shot and VanVleet was just behind him. Replays showed a tooth in the middle of the key even after play resumed.

These poised Raptors kept level heads again after falling behind by 11 points in the first half. Pascal Siakam scored 19 for Toronto.

Hodgen: Team will play 2 games today

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Travis Zander said. "We had great weather — just a little downpour. It helped settle the dust on the field. Mike, coach Wes, our volunteer Doug Rowe, and our umpire assigner Rick Jagers have all done a great job. We couldn't do any of this without them."

Legends third baseman Wyatt Earp drew a walk and took third on back-to-back wild pitches in the top of the first. What followed sent the game into a screeching halt.

With Parker Robinson batting for La Grande and Pendleton's Cooper Roberts on the mound, Robinson hit a hard line drive that clipped Roberts in the back of the head. He was sent to the hospital and received three staples in his scalp.

Armstrong said Roberts will be back on the mound "eventually," but it is unclear when.

Earp would score on the hit to give the Legends

their first lead.

Tanner Sweek stepped onto the hill in place of Roberts, and would tally nine strikeouts over 4 1/3 innings to keep the game within reach.

In the top of the third, Robinson smacked a double to deep centerfield to score a run, and advanced to third on the throw. Robinson crossed home on the next at-bat to give the Legends some breathing room.

"It's part of baseball," Robinson said. "You gotta come in clutch for your team. At the time, it just happened to be me."

Simons homered over the left field fence to bring Hodgen Distributing within one run of the lead in the bottom of the third, and Jordan DeGeer's single drove in a run to knot the score.

The home run was Simons' first of his career.

"That was important for all of us," Simons said. "It felt really good, as a sophomore, to get my first

home run on this field."

But La Grande was quick to take over once again — Logan Paustian's RBI-double in the top of the fourth gave the Legends an advantage they wouldn't relinquish.

Weinke's solo homer came in the bottom of the seventh, when he sent the second pitch over right field and out of the park. It would bring Pendleton within one run of La Grande, but it wouldn't be enough.

"We hit and pitched really well today," Simons said. "I'm excited to see what we can do this season."

Weinke led Hodgen Distributing with a 2-for-4 batting performance that scored a run and an RBI. Robinson went 3-for-4 with a run and two RBIs for La Grande.

"I like this team," Armstrong said. "We've got some younger kids playing with our varsity kids. They'll do good things together."

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