

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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Hermiston's Jayden Ray, left, Jizelle Gonzalez and Sydney Seavert pose for a portrait at Kennison Field in Hermiston on Wednesday, March 10, 2021.

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Learning curve

Hermiston girls soccer team has put lessons learned to good use during undefeated start to season

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Twenty-five goals scored in five games.

The Hermiston girls soccer team did not score that many goals the past two years combined in the Mid-Columbia Conference, but the Bulldogs did learn valuable lessons from their new conference members in Washington.

"I feel like playing against the MCC in all sports has helped us," said senior team co-captain Jayden Ray. "They

have some legit teams. We have grown as a team and players the past two years. It has shown us our faults and where we can be better."

The Bulldogs will try to run their record to 6-0 on Saturday, March 13, when Hood River Valley visits Kennison Field.

The Bulldogs (5-0) have been putting their lessons learned to good use this season, albeit with a make-shift schedule with games against their former Oregon foes, and two upcoming games against MCC partners Chiawana and Walla Walla.

"I'm excited to play them," Ray said of the Oregon teams. "I like playing the teams I did when I was a freshman — a little reminiscing — but also being able to put our team to the test."

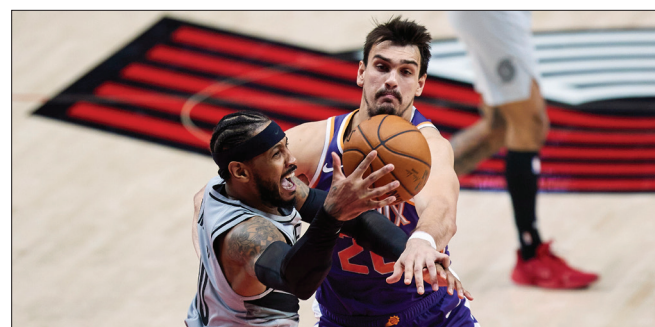
A poll of this year's opponents would have the Bulldogs heading back to the MCC.

The Bulldogs beat former Columbia River Conference rival Pendleton 7-0 in their season opener, then trounced Umatilla 7-0. They followed with a 5-0 win over The Dalles, then rallied for a 2-1 win over Hood River. Hermiston beat The Dalles again, this time 4-1, on Thursday, March 11.

"It's a game changer," Hermiston coach Freddy Guizar said. "You go from pushing and being hard on them, and now you can sit back and enjoy it. I have a big smile from ear to ear that the culture and family bond we wanted is here. I have learned as much from the girls as they have from me. I am improving as much as they are."

It was Hermiston's first win over Hood River in recent memory. The teams tied three times (2013, 2015, 2017) in the past eight years.

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Craig Mitchell/Associated Press

Portland Trail Blazers forward Carmelo Anthony, left, and Phoenix Suns forward Dario Saric vie for a rebound during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Portland on Thursday, March 11, 2021.

Devin Booker scores 35 points, Suns beat Trail Blazers 127-121

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Devin Booker returned from the knee injury that kept him out of the All-Star Game to score 35 points and the Phoenix Suns beat the Portland Trail Blazers 127-121 on Thursday night, March 11, for their fifth straight victory.

Chris Paul added 19 points for Phoenix, and Mikal Bridges scored 16 of his 18 points in the first half. Second in the NBA behind the Utah Jazz, the Suns have won 17 of their last 20 games.

It was Booker's 100th career game with 30 or more points. Paul, who didn't think Booker would play on March 11, called it "smooth."

Phoenix outscored the Blazers 37-27 in the final period.

"I think we had some good energy going into the fourth quarter," Booker said. "We were really animated in the huddle right before the fourth quarter. I was saying 'This is winning time, time to lock in.' That's what we did."

Damian Lillard had 30 points for Portland, and Enes Kanter added 16 points and 11 rebounds. They had won three in a row.

The Suns trailed by 11 points in the third quarter, but pulled to 96-95 early in the fourth on Abdel Nader's 3-pointer. Cameron Payne followed up with a 3 of his own to put Phoenix in front.

Paul's 3 stretched the Suns' lead to 104-99 with 7:44 left. Booker added another with five minutes to go that made it 114-104 and Portland couldn't catch up.

Booker did not play in the All-Star Game on Sunday night, March 7, because of a sprained left knee, which he injured in the Suns' 120-98 victory at home over Golden State.

"He comes out focused on the task at hand," Payne said. "It's amazing to watch — even as a teammate — to see him get going."

Booker was fouled late in the fourth quarter against the Blazers and came up limping after falling to the floor, but he remained in the game. Suns coach Monty Williams said that Booker "seemed OK,"

following the game. "That's part of the game," Booker said afterward. "That's what comes with it."

Portland led by as many as 13 points in the opening half, but the teams went to the break tied at 60.

Williams said he was impressed with his team's steadiness throughout the game.

"I thought we grew tonight in our emotional stamina, especially on the road against a good team," Williams said.

It was the second of three games between the teams this season. The Suns won the first, 132-100 in Phoenix last month.

"We played them better this time than last time, which was encouraging," Blazers coach Terry Stotts said. "We'll see what happens next time."

The teams played in Portland on March 10 of last year, the last game for both teams before the league was suspended by coronavirus concerns. The Blazers won 127-117.

Tip ins

Suns: Stotts praised Paul in his pregame chat with reporters, saying he has shown this year and last year in Oklahoma City what a great player he is. ... The Suns had seven players in double figures.

Trail Blazers: The Blazers wore their gray and black Nike "earned" jerseys for the first time. The "earned" jerseys went to teams who made the 2020 playoffs. ... Kanter leads the Blazers with 21 double-doubles this season.

Booker's 30+

The NBA said Booker, at 24 years and 132 days, is the eighth youngest player in history to reach 100 games with 30 or more points. The only younger players were LeBron James — who was a day shy of his 22nd birthday when he reached the milestone — along with Kevin Durant, Bob McAdoo, Carmelo Anthony, Oscar Robertson, Shaquille O'Neal and Michael Jordan.

Up next

Suns: Host Indiana on Saturday night, March 13.

Trail Blazers: At Minnesota on March 13 and Sunday night, March 14.

NCAA rules panel recommends change to shorten overtime games

The NCAA Football Rules Committee is recommending a slight change to overtime rules

By ERIC OLSON
AP College Football Writer

INDIANAPOLIS — The NCAA Football Rules Committee on Friday, March 12, recommended a slight change to overtime rules that would require a team to try a two-point conversion after a touchdown when a game reaches the second overtime instead of the third.

The committee also addressed the problem of teams faking injuries to slow an opponent's momentum and blocking below the waist, among other areas.

Changes must be approved by the NCAA Playing Rules Oversight Panel, which is scheduled to discuss football rules recommendations April 22.

The overtime recommendation was based on player safety and intended to reduce the number of plays it takes for a winner to be determined. National coordinator of officials Steve Shaw said overtime games add an average of 16.4 plays to a contest.

The new rule would have teams run alternating two-point plays in the third overtime instead of starting another drive at the opponent's 25-yard line. Alternating two-point plays currently start in the fifth overtime.

Teams could still choose whether to kick the point after touchdown or run a two-point conversion play in the first overtime.

The committee has discussed the issue of faking injuries in recent years and now is proposing that a school or conference be allowed to ask Shaw for a postgame video review about

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SPORTS SHORT

Russian folk song rejected as substitute Olympic anthem

By GRAHAM DUNBAR
Associated Press

GENEVA — Russia's wish to use a patriotic Soviet-era folk song as a replacement anthem for the Tokyo Olympics was rejected by the Court of Arbitration for Sport on Friday, March 12, in further fallout from a years-long doping scandal.

The court said its panel of three judges was asked to clarify what music it would allow within the two-year ban on Russia's team name, flag and national anthem from Olympics and world championships imposed in December 2020.

Russian officials proposed the

"Katyusha" song, which is strongly identified with the fight against Nazi Germany in World War II.

"The CAS panel considers that 'any anthem linked to Russia' extends to any song associated with, or with links to, Russia, which would include Katyusha," the court said in a statement to The Associated Press.

It is unclear which piece of music Russian Olympic officials could propose in consultation with the International Olympic Committee.

Russia will compete in Tokyo and next year's Winter Olympics in Beijing as "ROC," an acronym for the Russian Olympic Committee.

The CAS judges' ruling in Decem-

ber 2020 settled Russia's long-running dispute with the World Anti-Doping Agency over a state-backed doping program and cover-ups.

The IOC asked the Russian Olympic body last month to submit an alternative piece of music for use at medal ceremonies.

Similar restrictions apply to world championship events in Olympic sports, and most governing bodies have played their own anthems for Russian athletes and teams.

A piece of music by 19th-century Russian composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky was approved by the International Skating Union for its world championships.



Eugene Hoshiko/Associated Press

A man and a woman stand with the backdrop of the Olympic rings floating in the water in the Odaiba section in Tokyo on Wednesday, March 3, 2021.