

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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IndyCar opens with stacked rookie class chasing Dixon

By JENNA FRYER
AP Auto Racing Writer



Michael Conroy/Associated Press, File
NASCAR driver Jimmy Johnson, left, and IndyCar driver Scott Dixon, right, talk during practice for the Indianapolis 500 IndyCar auto race at Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Indianapolis on May 16, 2019.

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Jimmie Johnson, Scott McLaughlin and Romain Grosjean, oh my! That's quite the rookie class for IndyCar, which opens the season Sunday, April 18, at Barber Motorsports Park stacked with storylines throughout the grid.

Johnson brings seven NASCAR championships to Chip Ganassi Racing for a career reset at 45 years old. Although he always wanted to be an IndyCar driver, his opportunities came in stock cars until Johnson was able to call his own shots.

The transition will be incredibly difficult. The opening practice on Saturday, April 17, on the road course will be the first for Johnson, who will be doing nearly everything for the first time this weekend.

"If there's a rocky day, am I

going to be surprised? Probably not," team owner Ganassi said on Wednesday, April 14. "He's a damn

hard worker. He sets the bar at a new level for the amount of work a driver puts in. He's always in the simula-

tor, on the computer, on the phone,

making calls, asking questions,

working out, talking to sponsors,

talking to the team.

"I mean, the guy doesn't slow down. I had no idea what I was up against when racing against him in NASCAR, and now I've got a little feel for it."

Grosjean comes to IndyCar from Formula One, where he'd grown frustrated at team disparity that prevented him from winning in nine seasons. His F1 career came to an abrupt halt after a fiery November 2020 crash in Bahrain; and instead of taking a ride with another team not capable of winning, the Frenchman signed with Dale Coyne Racing.

Like Johnson, Grosjean does not plan to race the four ovals on IndyCar's 17-race schedule.

McLaughlin is the three-time defending Australian V8 SuperCars

champion who moved to the United States to drive the full season for Team Penske and will resurrect the iconic "Yellow Submarine" paint scheme in the Indianapolis 500 driven by Penske winners Helio Castroneves, Rick Mears, and Johnny Rutherford.

"I didn't think I'd be racing Jimmie Johnson and Romain Grosjean. It's crazy. Very exciting," McLaughlin said. "It just shows what IndyCar is all about right now. I hope the fans relish it."

McLaughlin should easily take top rookie honors because he's running the full schedule, but he's got his sights set on winning races and even competing for the championship. But the competition is fierce starting at the top with six-time champion Scott Dixon and within Team Penske.

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COLLEGE FOOTBALL

OSU intends to lean on deep TE group in 2021

By NICK DASCHEL
The Oregonian

CORVALLIS — Let's talk tight ends. Specifically Oregon State tight ends.

Sure, it's not football's sexiest position. The occasional pass reception. A lot of blocking. But for the Beavers, it's a position of significant strength and could be that difference maker in 2021 if OSU is to emerge with its first bowl berth in eight years.

The importance of tight ends to an offense varies wildly in college football. At the bottom is Mike Leach's get-them-out-of-my-program offense, to a heavily dependent offense like Oregon State. The Beavers' pro-style attack heavily relies on a tight end for nearly every play, often two, and on rare occasion, three.

Oregon State can do what it wants at the tight end position, as it is well-stocked with veterans and newcomers. The Beavers may face a team this upcoming season with a singular better tight end, but they shouldn't have trouble matching anyone's duo with junior Teagan Quitoriano and sophomore Luke Musgrave.

It's hard to miss either during Oregon State's spring practice. Both cut prominent figures at 6 feet, 6 inches. Quitoriano carries a little more weight at 256 pounds, vs. Musgrave's 248.

There are a couple of promising second-year freshmen in Tommy Spencer and Jake Overman that bolster a tight end room. In seven games last season, Oregon State's tight ends combined for 27 receptions for 346 yards.

More importantly, they helped provide the blocking for an OSU running game that averaged 5.4

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Off to the races

Hermiston Raceway gears up for season opener on May 1

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — When Hermiston Raceway opens on May 1, there will be a little something for all racing fans.

The season opens with the Speed Tour Modified Series, then returns on May 15 with Saturday Night Thunder, which will include West Coast vintage sports cars, late models, legends and bombers.

"Every single night has something entertaining," raceway promoter/owner Greg Walden said. "There's not a weak show."

Tickets went on sale earlier this week, and are available online only.

The raceway is following all state and county health guidelines, and will be limited to 25%

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East Oregonian, File
Pit crew members look on as drivers make some practice rounds in 2019 ahead of Hermiston Raceway's Labor Day Spectacular event.

HERMISTON RACEWAY SCHEDULE

May 1: Speed Tour Modified Series

May 15: Saturday Night Thunder

May 29: Saturday Night Duel

June 12: Racing Dynamik's Prolate Challenge

June 19: NW Super Late Model Series

June 26: NW Figure 8 Series

July 3: Thunder on the Hill

July 17: Night of Destruction: starring Mr. Dizzy

July 31: Saturday Night Thunder

Sept. 4: Labor Day Spectacular

Sept. 5: Labor Day Spectacular NWSLMS — Atomic 125

Sept. 12: Championship Night

Oct. 23: Racing Dynamik's Prolate Challenge

MCC FOOTBALL

4 Hermiston players earn all-conference honors

Sam Cadenas honored on both sides of the ball

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Hermiston Bulldogs, whose season was limited to just four games, had four players named to the Mid-Columbia Conference football team.

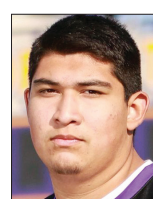
Junior Sam Cadenas was named to the second team as an offensive lineman, and to the



Cadenas



Elliott



Fernandez



Mikami

honorable mention team as a defensive lineman.

Quarterback Chase Elliott, a junior, was a second-team selection.

Senior offensive lineman Josh

Fernandez and junior linebacker Koi Mikami were named to the honorable mention team.

The Bulldogs finished 1-3 on the year with a win over Hanford. Kamiakin running back Tuna

Altahir and Richland receiver Ben Fewel shared Offensive Player of the Year honors, while Kennewick linebacker and Kamiakin linebacker Luis Salgado shared Defensive Player of the Year accolades.

Lineman of the Year honors went to Kamiakin's Aaron Tano and Kennewick's Ayden Knapik.

Special Teams Player of the Year was Walla Walla kicker/punter Seamus Hall, and Chiawana's Scott Bond was named Coach of the Year.

SPORTS SHORT

MLB salary down 4.8% in 2 years; top 100 earn half

By RONALD BLUM
AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK — The average major league salary dropped 4.8% to just under \$4.17 million on opening day from the start of the previous full season in 2019.

The average has fallen 6.4% since the start of the 2017 season, when it peaked at \$4.45 million, according to a study of major league contracts by The Associated Press. The salary downturn is yet another sign baseball could be headed toward labor strife and a possible work stoppage in 2022.

Baseball's middle class has

borne the brunt of the drop. The median salary — the point at which an equal number of players are above and below — is \$1.15 million, down 18% from \$1.4 million two years ago and a drop of 30% from the \$1.65 million record high at the start of 2015.

Of 902 players on opening-day rosters, 417 (62%) had salaries under \$1 million, including 316 (35%) under \$600,000.

The 50 highest-paid players are getting 33.4% of all salaries, up from 28.6% in 2017, and the 100 highest-paid are receiving 52.4%, an increase from 42.5% in 2017.

Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher

Trevor Bauer is the highest-paid player in 2021 at \$38 million after agreeing to a \$102 million, three-year contract he can terminate after one season. Los Angeles Angels outfielder Mike Trout is second at \$37.1 million, followed by Yankees pitcher Gerrit Cole (\$36 million) and St. Louis third baseman Nolan Arenado (\$35 million), who was acquired in an off-season trade with Colorado.

The World Series champion Dodgers topped the major leagues at \$241 million, the highest big league total since the Dodgers set the record at \$270 million at the start of the 2015 season.



Ross D. Franklin/Associated Press, File

Los Angeles Dodgers starting pitcher Trevor Bauer throws against the Colorado Rockies during the first inning of a spring training baseball game in Phoenix on March 1, 2021.