

Portland's final push

By Zach Silva
zsilva@cgsentinel.com

As high school basketball season draws to a close and the local teams have bowed out, and as the NCAA basketball season has a staggering amount of FBI involvement, it's time to check in with the team up north: those Portland Trail Blazers. Whether you are an avid Pat Connaughton fan or just someone who vaguely pays attention to what's going on in Rip City, now is the time to lock-in on the NBA.

Having worked in Cottage Grove for the last nine months, I'm still unsure as to what the NBA following is like here. At high school games and basketball camps, it is clear there is certainly at least some level of interest. It is hard to be in those settings and not see at least one person repping the Warriors or Celtics at all times. There is at least some love of the NBA. But regardless of how you feel, there is no better time to be a fan than in this present moment.

With just over a month to play in the regular season, the Western Conference is in an outright frenzy. To recap: as of this writing just 2.5 games separate the three seed and the ninth seed. The margin for error over the final month is razor-thin.

Amidst the chaos across the standings, it has been the Blazers momentarily making a charge as they climb to the top of the second-tier teams. Sitting in third place in the standings, the Blazers are playing like a legitimate team that can win a first-round series and then lose in six games to the Rockets or Warriors in the second round. While from an outside perspective that seem like a sad best-case scenario for a franchise, it seems important to note that the Blazers were swept by the Warriors last season in the first round and lost to them in five games two seasons ago. A six-game series would be a momentary milestone.

Winners of eight of their last nine (which could easily become 10 of their last 11 if Portland can get past the Lakers and Knicks on Monday and Tuesday night) Portland has picked a good time to be playing their best basketball. As always, leading the way has been the immaculate Damian Lillard. Averaging 31.4 points and 6.7 assists in February, Lillard has risen to new levels of dominance.

While it all starts with Dame, it has been a team effort as the Blazers have created depth extending beyond their backcourt. Of course there is Dame and CJ but now there is Moe Harkless who has worked back as a contributing member of the rotation. Most promising of all, there is the seven-foot 20-year old Zach Collins who played 28 minutes against the Thunder last week and finished with 12 points and five rebounds.

While the view through these rose-city colored glasses looks good now, the road to the end of the season does not get easier. With two games against Houston, a game against Boston and four of their last five games on the road, there are many ways for this season to finish and most of them do not include finishing third.

But that is not what is important now. Now it is time to enjoy this lovably-imperfect team in the last month of the season.

Cottage Grove champion keeps going



Cottage Grove's Andrea Macauley leads a step class last week.

PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

Weight lifter and instructor Andrea Macauley refuses to be slowed down

By Zach Silva
zsilva@cgsentinel.com

When Andrea Macauley isn't winning world championships, you will most likely find her teaching workout classes in Cottage Grove. And the 54-year-old five-time world association of benchers and deadlifters (WABDL) champion has no intention of stopping anytime soon.

"My goal is to try and encourage and inspire all that comes across my way. And that I come across theirs. Whether it's sitting in the doctor's office or pushing my cart at Safeway," said Macauley fresh off of teaching a step class last Wednesday night.

For over 32 years, Macauley has been leading classes across Lane County. While the people and places she taught and classes she's led have changed, what has remained is the excitement to be there.

"We can come in really dog tired, had an emotional day, everything go wrong and you come here and you do your workout and you leave tired but feel good," she said.

As the sounds of the "Dirty Dancing" soundtrack welcomes a full class of people with varying levels of fitness, it's easy to see that people are excited to be here. While the class starts at 6 p.m., the space begins to fill up 10 minutes before as eager participants want to claim their "spot" and also begin to chat with those around them. Each new face that walks through the door is met with a warm welcome from not only Macauley but the

other people who see this as a good way to spend their evening. While the promise of an hour-long workout is what brought them to the gym, it is the people in the room that keep them coming back.

"They greet each other and know each other by name and learn each other by their name... and I want the love to spread through the town," said Macauley.

In the class, like many workout classes, the individuals are instructed to believe in themselves and to keep fighting. But these are not just empty phrases from their instructor but rather guiding tenants of her life.



PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

"Nothing is unattainable as far as I'm concerned. I've had lots of setbacks along my way. Injuries, and physical issues and the thing is you just keep chipping away. Even if it's just a little bit. If you fall down, you get back up. It's five steps back, six steps forward. That's what you have to do," she said.

Lifting is a punishing sport both physically and mentally. From the mental side, no matter how good the lifter, they end their lifts after they have failed to lift the next weight. There is no going out on a high note but rather a constant reminder of the level that you could not get to.

But with grit and determination, Macauley demonstrated these skills last November on her way to a WABDL championship in the bench press. Setting an Oregon state record for her age group with a weight of 187.2, she became a champion. Something that was anything but guaranteed.

After health complications earlier in the year, Macauley was called by people from WABDL just a few weeks before the competition asking if she was going to compete. After being hesitant, she agreed and then dropped 37 pound in five and a half weeks to make her weight class.

"That's crazy and I wouldn't tell anybody to do that. Nobody," she said in November. "I wouldn't say go lose that much weight that short. I think I was really driven by... everybody's support that said, 'you can do this.'"

Just as those around her believed in her, Macauley looks to provide that for those in her class each night. A sense of no matter who is walking through the door, if

MACAULEY continued on B3

Biking group looks to make impact in community



PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

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While the group may not have an official name and a mission statement is still in the works, the group that is currently known as the Cottage Grove Bike Committee does have a guiding principle.

"It sounds corny, but just get out there and ride. That's what we want," said Justin Watt one of the leaders of the group.

Last Thursday night the group met at the Healing Matrix to discuss how they will move forward as a positive force in the community. While just a handful first got together last year, the group has begun to expand in the last two months.

"We met early last spring and we started just kicking the can around like who we were, our interests and what we would want to do with a bike committee," said Watt. "And we tried to do like, what everybody wanted at the same time and I think the speed bump we were really running into was there was five of us trying to do a lot of stuff."

With 14 members at the meeting, and some who couldn't make it, Watt believes that the

size of the group now allows individuals to focus on what they are most passionate about so that they can accomplish more of their goals as a group.

"That's what I love about the subcommittees, if people don't want to show up to talk about governance and mission statements, they just want to ride bikes, I mean there is a group for that. Any level of participation is what we want," said Watt.

The different subcommittees included topics ranging from bike tourism to support of the Row River Trail.

"The nice thing about the group is that it's a lot of people who didn't know each other and came together for a common interest," said Jim Harrison who has been working with the group from the start. "And seemed to have tonight identify things that people want to work on so we left with direction and hopefully some quick wins. So it's promising to get a group that we hope will get even bigger in participation."

After the recent death of a 13-year-old who was struck by a car on his bike on Hwy. 99, there was a heightened interest in bike safety for the group.

BIKING continued on B3

Athletes of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are the South Valley Athletics 4th/5th grade basketball champions. On the boys side the Hoop Dreams (pictured left) took the title while on the girls side Lawn Clippings (right) came away as the champions.



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