

WESTERN OREGON ROUNDUP

Western Oregon clinches conference title

Nichols scores 34 points as Wolves hold off Simon Fraser 93-91 on Saturday night



Senior Lewis Thomas finishes a dunk against Simon Fraser on Saturday. Thomas scored 11 points.

Itemizer-ObsERVER staff report

MONMOUTH — From the moment the season started, Western Oregon's men's basketball team had its eyes set on one goal.

"On our board, we had Great Northwest Athletic Conference championship written," junior guard Julian Nichols said. "It's been there since we started training camp. That was our mindset from the start."

After a 93-91 win over Simon Fraser on Saturday, the Wolves clinched their first-ever regular season title.

Jordan Wiley scored 17 points in the first half, while Nichols added 24 in the second half to finish with a game-high 34 points.

"I want to get my teammates involved first," Nichols said. "They took that away (in the second half), so I could be more aggressive and I found some open shots."

The Wolves had little trouble playing at Simon Fraser's

tempo on offense.

"The key against Simon Fraser is to not let the tempo get the best of you," WOU coach Brady Bergeson said. "I thought we did a really good job in terms of our shot selection, and we made just enough stops on defense."

Western Oregon (22-4 overall, 14-2 GNAC) bounced back after a 73-50 loss to Western Washington on Thursday that saw the Wolves shoot 18 percent from the field in the second half.

Junior forward Andy Avgi missed both games because of a non-life-threatening medical condition. He is expected to return prior to the GNAC Championship Tournament.

WOU closes out its regular season at Alaska Anchorage on Thursday and at Alaska Fairbanks on Saturday. Despite clinching a first-round bye in the GNAC tournament, the Wolves won't be taking their foot off the gas.

"You've got to be smart

with rest, but we're not going to call off any dogs," Bergeson said. "Our mindset will be exactly the same."

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

WINS THRILLER: Senior Dana Goularte and sophomore Jordan Mottershaw carried the Western Oregon women's basketball team to a 71-69 win

over Montana State Billings on Thursday. Goularte scored a game-high 24 points and Mottershaw added a career-high 23

points, including a game-winning running jumper with 12 seconds remaining. The Wolves (7-17 overall, 4-12 Great Northwest Athletic Conference) nearly upset 15th-ranked Seattle Pacific, falling 69-64 on Saturday. WOU trailed 52-38 with 10:31 left in the game, only to see a late rally fall short.

Goularte scored 22 points in the loss. The Wolves host Central Washington Thursday at 7 p.m. and Northwest Nazarene

Saturday at 5:15 p.m. Goularte was named the GNAC's co-Player of the Week for her efforts.

SOFTBALL EARNS SPLIT:

Junior pitcher Alyson Boytz threw a complete game as Western Oregon's softball team defeated Oregon Tech 5-1 before falling to Concordia 9-2 on Friday. Boytz gave up six hits and no earned runs, and senior Amanda Evola recorded three hits and two RBIs during the victory. The Wolves (3-11) open Great Northwest Athletic Conference play with a pair of doubleheaders at Northwest Nazarene on March 6-7.

BASEBALL PREPS FOR LEAGUE:

Western Oregon earned a split against the NIAA's No. 2-ranked team, falling 11-0 on Friday, winning 6-4 before losing 8-4 in a doubleheader on Saturday and earning a 5-0 victory on Sunday. Senior outfielder Matt Taylor recorded seven hits and six RBIs during the series to lead the Wolves (4-12 overall). Western Oregon opens Great Northwest Athletic Conference play at Saint Martin's with doubleheaders on Saturday and Sunday.



Mottershaw

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PREP BOYS BASKETBALL ROUNDUP

Fleming makes return to lineup

Panthers split league games

Itemizer-ObsERVER staff report

INDEPENDENCE — Central may have lost to the Mid-Willamette Conference's top team, but the Panthers received a big boost on Friday.

Senior Kyler Fleming returned from a left-hand injury to score 12 points during the Panthers' 57-54 overtime loss to Silverton. Kaj Bansen led Central with 17 points, while Josh Smith added 16 points.

The Panthers led by three with 30 seconds left in regulation, but an offensive foul by Fleming gave the Silver Foxes one last chance. Silverton tied it at 46 with five seconds left and Fleming missed a potential game-winner from half court.

In overtime, Alec Barba had a chance to send the game into a second extra period, but his shot came up short.

Fleming missed the previous 10 games. Central went 4-6 during that stretch, losing six of their final eight.

The Panthers (6-6 MWC) opened their week with a 49-39 win over Lebanon on Feb. 17 as Kevin Cable scored 18 points.

Central entered Tuesday's game at Corvallis in fifth place in the MWC, one game behind Crescent Valley and one game ahead of Lebanon. The third- through sixth-place teams will participate in the OSAA play-in round against a Midwestern League opponent on Tuesday.

The MWC's third- and fourth-place teams will host play-in round games.

The MWC's fifth- and

Playoff Push

What: OSAA Class 5A boys basketball play-in round.

When: Tuesday, TBA.

What's at stake: The Mid-Willamette Conference's third-, fourth-, fifth- and sixth-place teams will face a Midwestern League opponent. Winners advance to the Class 5A state playoffs. Central and Dallas entered the week in fifth and second place in the MWC.

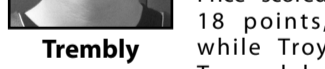
Of note: Watch for play-in updates, locations and times at www.polkio.com, www.twitter.com/polkiosp and the I-O's Facebook page.

sixth-place teams play on the road.

PIRATES' SEASON ENDS: Perrydale's boys basketball team came up short in its bid to advance to the state playoffs. Central Linn defeated the

Pirates 54-49 in the second round of the Tri-River Conference play-offs on Feb. 18. Chad Price scored 18 points, while Troy

Trembly added 12 points and Haylen Janesofsky finished with 11. "It was our best game against Central Linn," Perrydale coach Mike Lowry said. "This season, Central Linn had our number and just caused us a number of fits." The Pirates finished 10-14 overall, but Lowry said he saw potential. "The end of the year showed me that next season has the potential to be just as great, if not better," he said.



Trembly

CLASS 5A PREP BOYS BASKETBALL

Dragons extend win streak

Dallas closes regular season against Silverton

By Lukas Eggen

The Itemizer-ObsERVER

CORVALLIS — In the moments after a 53-27 loss to Silverton on Feb. 4, the Dallas boys basketball team's season appeared to be on the brink of collapse.

The Dragons had lost their third game in a row after suffering home setbacks to Lebanon and Crescent Valley, and fell to 3-4 at the midway point of Mid-Willamette Conference play.

The Silverton loss also marked the third time in four games that Dallas had allowed more than 50 points.

"After the Silverton game, (assistant coach) Matt Jackson just sat down with us," senior guard Isaak Tichenor recalled. "He said sometimes the shots don't go in and you have to take care of what you can control, and that's defense and rebounding."

The players took that message to heart.

"It made us realize that we want to get that No. 2 spot in league and we need to kick it into high gear," junior guard Everett Minahan said.

Dallas has answered the call.

The Dragons defeated Corvallis 61-44 on Feb. 17 and Crescent Valley 49-41 on Friday. Dallas enters the final week of the regular season riding a five-game win streak and in a tie for second place in the MWC with the Spartans, a team the Dragons have swept and hold league tiebreaker advantage over.

It's been the defense that has reignited the Dragons.



Dallas guard Everett Minahan looks to get past Crescent Valley's Philip Whitney on Friday night. Minahan scored a game-high 16 points against the Raiders.

Dallas held Corvallis to 14 points below its season average of 58 points per game and held the Raiders to 13 points below their average of 54 points, while limiting Crescent Valley to 23 percent shooting.

"There's been a renewed focus on defense," Dallas coach Trent Schwartz said. "We're limiting teams to one shot and grabbing rebounds. It's keeping us in games when we're not shooting well. Now, over the last few games, we are starting to shoot well and we're gaining confidence."

For the season, Dallas is third among all Class 5A teams in scoring defense, allowing 40.5 points per game.

More importantly to the players, the Dragons knocked Crescent Valley out of a three-way tie for second entering Tuesday's matchup against Lebanon.

Earning the MWC's second seed means an automatic berth into the 16-team state playoff bracket. Failure to capture the second spot means taking part in the play-in round on Tuesday.

"This is what the whole second half of the league season has been about," Tichenor said. "We're coming together as a team and we're realizing our goals are attainable."

Dallas' regular season fi-

nale could be its toughest hurdle. The Dragons host league-leading Silverton Friday at 7 p.m. in what will likely be a defensive struggle.

The Silver Foxes boast Class 5A's second-best scoring defense. But this is a different Dallas team than the one that faced Silverton earlier this year. This time, Schwartz said they'll be ready for the challenge.

"To get the second seed, we've had to play with urgency; the playoffs really started for us already and it's been that way for a while," Schwartz said. "We're hitting our stride at the right time and it's all coming together."

History: Mountaineers face Portland Lutheran

Continued from Page 10A

"(Reaching state) has meant everything," Reynolds said. "I've been really emotional about the whole thing. Basketball has been something I've loved since I was a little girl. I can take out my anger and aggression. Not knowing if I'm going to play again after high school is scary. I'm glad we're making it last as long as we can this year. We started out as strangers, but we're walking out with friendships. I love this team and we are awesome together."

Falls City's players may have been ecstatic after the

win, but it was the following day that the ramifications of their accomplishment set in.

"It's indescribable," Allison Kidd said. "I don't even have the words. I'm just so proud of the girls. It's been crazy with everyone at school congratulating us. It's just crazy."

The Mountaineers will face Portland Lutheran Wednesday (today) at 7 p.m. in the first round of the state playoffs. The winner advances to the second round on Saturday.

The Blue Jays finished 15-10 overall and were 10-2 in



Kidd

hat on the defensive end of the floor," Micke Kidd said. "They have a couple of really good scorers that we'll look to defend better than the first time we played."

Regardless of whether the Mountaineers advance, this season is a watershed moment for the program,

Kidd said.

"It feels like we're moving in the right direction," he said. "Every year you want to improve and be a little more successful. We have a lot of girls coming up in the middle school program. We've had some consistency with coaches. We're moving forward. I've told them this for years that somewhere in the stands is a little girl who wants to be like you. We have to hold ourselves to a higher standard and this is part of that."

The Mountaineers enter the state playoffs as the Casco League's lowest seed.

Falls City By The Numbers

1972

The year the Falls City Mountaineers began offering girls basketball at the high school level.

7

Total number of players the Mountaineers have on their roster, including two freshmen.

8

The number of wins Falls City had after Jan. 1. The Mountaineers started the season 2-10 overall.

But if there's one thing players have learned, it's to never count them out.

"When we beat Willamette Valley Christian the first time, I thought we

can do this," Allison Kidd said. "We've been underdogs for a while, but I hope people see that you can accomplish things, no matter what the circumstance."