

Dream: Draft stock is growing

Continued from Page 10A

"At the start of my freshman year, I knew if I kept working and getting stronger, I'd possibly have a chance," Williams said. "I knew since I was tall, if I could gain weight, I'd have an opportunity. About my junior year, I started talking to scouts to get feedback on what to get better at during the offseason."

Williams had 56 receptions for 950 yards and eight touchdowns as a senior.

If he is drafted, Williams will become the first WOU player to be selected since former tight end Kevin Boss.

Boss played from 2007-10, including winning Super Bowl XLII on Feb. 3, 2008, with the New York Giants. He was selected in the fifth round of the 2007 draft by the Giants.

As Williams continues to make his case for a chance to play in the NFL, he is optimistic about his chances as he experiences a part of a lifelong dream come true.

"This is still surreal," Williams said. "It doesn't feel real that this is going on. It's been awesome. Hopefully once draft day comes, good things happen."



WOU ATHLETICS/Itemizer-Observer file
Tyrell Williams had 950 receiving yards as a senior.

WESTERN OREGON ROUNDUP

Wolves drop key doubleheader

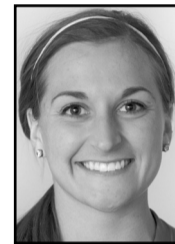
Western Oregon drops to third place in conference

Itemizer-Observer staff report

ELLENSBURG, Wash. — In a clash of preseason conference co-favorites, Western Oregon's softball team dropped a pair of games to Central Washington, 3-2 and 10-5, on Sunday.

Kelsie Gardner led the Wolves (10-14 overall, 5-3 Great Northwest Athletic Conference) going three for four, including a solo home run in the first game.

The losses dropped Western Oregon into third place in the conference behind



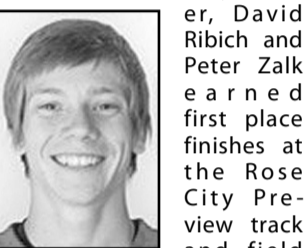
Gardner

Saint Martin's and Central Washington. WOU plays at San Francisco State for a doubleheader Wednesday before taking part in the tournament of champions Friday through Sunday in California.

The Wolves return home to host Western Washington

on April 2.

TRACK AND FIELD EXCELS AT PREVIEW: The freshmen trio of Cody Warner, David Ribich and Peter Zalk earned first place finishes at the Rose City Preview track and field meet on Saturday.



Ribich

Warner won the 100- and 200-meter races in 10.98 and 22.10 seconds, respectively.

Ribich finished first in the 1,500 in 3:55.30, while Zalk won the pole vault with a mark of 13 feet, 3 1/2 inches. On the women's side, Bailey Beeson and Kylie Reinholdt earned second-place finishes for the Wolves. Beeson took second in the 800 in 2:15.84, while Reinholdt placed second in the triple jump with a mark of 36 feet, 2 3/4 inches. WOU will compete at the Mt. Hood Multis Thursday and Friday in Gresham before taking part in the Willamette Invitational in Salem on Saturday.

PREP TRACK AND FIELD ROUNDUP

Dallas excels at home meet

Dragons see five athletes win events on Thursday

Itemizer-Observer staff report

DALLAS — Dallas saw five athletes take first at the Dallas Icebreaker on Thursday.

Sophomore Aaron White won the triple jump with a mark of 39 feet, 3 inches to lead the boys.

On the girls side, junior Naomi Howe placed first in the 300-meter hurdles with a time of 52.56 seconds. Junior Kyleen Benz won

both the shot put and discus with throws of 36-6 and 109-8, respectively. Freshman Amber Beattie took first in the pole vault with a mark of 7-6 and sophomore Karley Sayer won the long jump with a mark of 15-9.

Lebanon, West Salem and Willamette also competed at the nonscoring meet.

Dallas will compete travel to Lebanon on April 1.

PIRATES COMPETE IN McMINNVILLE: Perrydale's track and field squad opened its 2015 season at the Jim Barks/Grizzly Bear Open in McMinnville on Thursday. Senior Alysia Vergin placed third in the 100-meter hurdles to lead the girls, finishing in 18.60 seconds.

Junior Sarah Clark took fifth in the javelin with a throw of 93 feet, 10 inches, while senior Taylor Rossi placed seventh in the triple jump with a mark of 26-8.

Junior Logan Shamblyn finished seventh in the boys 800 in 2:27.70. Senior Martin Lopez took 10th in the 300 hurdles in 54.91 and 13th in the 110 hurdles in 19.68. The Pirates were one of 12 schools at the meet. Perrydale will compete in the Tri-River preview April 2 at East Linn Christian at 4 p.m.

YEAGER LEAS FALLS CITY:

Falls City senior Tristan Yeager led Falls City's track and field team at the Pleasant Hill Icebreaker on March 17. Yeager placed third in the discus with a mark of 119 feet, 10 inches. Senior Arlin Schwanke placed fourth in the shot put with a throw of 39-8. On the girls side, freshman Madelyn Hendrickson earned a pair of eighth-place finishes in the 100- and 200-meter runs. She finished with times of 14.79 and 31.04 seconds, respectively. Hendrickson also took 10th in the 100 hurdles with a time of 25.97.

The nonscoring meet saw 10 teams participate. Falls City will compete at Salem Academy on April 2.

CLASS 5A PREP BASEBALL

Letting his actions speak

Pitcher earning bigger role in team's rotations

By Lukas Eggen

The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — Ruben Martinez isn't a screamer.

The senior pitcher/infielder isn't one to fire up the Central baseball team with shouts or chants.

"Ruben is a quiet but hard worker," Panthers coach Zach Miller said. "I have had the pleasure to see him work his tail off in the summer with his fielding as well as winter workouts with his hitting. He goes about his business, and I have never heard him gripe or be upset if he isn't in the lineup that day."

He may be a man of few words, but Martinez's play is more than speaking for him early this season.

Martinez has pitched in two of Central's first three games, a 19-1 victory over Stayton on March 16 and a 3-1 win over Cascade on March 18.

"I really wanted to focus on pitching," Martinez said. "I kind of struggled last year in finding the strike zone consistently."

In both outings, Martinez has looked sharp.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer
Central senior Ruben Martinez is earning a bigger role in the Panthers' pitching rotations.

"He has come in this year in our first two games and shown that he can get ahead and put hitters away by locating both the fastball and offspeed pitches," Miller said.

Baseball has been the

need to keep working hard." After a 4-3 loss to Philomath on Thursday, the Panthers begin Mid-Willamette Conference play on Tuesday at Woodburn.

Martinez's emergence on the mound is part of a defensive performance that Miller has not seen from his team in recent memory. Central's pitchers combined to throw just 79 pitches against Cascade.

"Our pitchers are challenging hitters, and when they do put it in play we are making plays to get outs," Miller said. "In past years, our defense has held us from where we want to be at the end of the year, so seeing clean baseball this early is always nice."

At the plate, Jackson Holstad, Kyler Fleming, Luke McBeth and more have seen success, recording extra-base hits. While the Panthers won two of their first three, Miller said the real challenge is just getting started.

"It will be a test with three games a week against the same team, but a challenge we accept and look forward to next week against Woodburn," Miller said.

PREP SOFTBALL ROUNDUP

Central's bats dominate early

Panthers off to a 4-0 start

Itemizer-Observer staff report

INDEPENDENCE — Central softball coach Kendra George looked for the Panthers to get a quick start to the 2015 season.

The Panthers (4-0 overall) did just that, earning a quartet of victories and outscoring opponents by a combined 40-5.

"It was really fun to see the girls out there competing against other teams," George said. "We got the bats going, which was really encouraging because sometimes it's hard to get them going in the beginning of the season."

Central defeated Franklin 3-1 on March 17, McKay 14-0 on March 18, Philomath 15-2 on Thursday and Madison 8-2 on Friday. Jori Kerr hit two home runs during the four games.

Ryanne Huffman also hit a home run as the Panthers

racked up 13 extra-base hits.

"This is a great way to build confidence and work together toward that common goal in league," George said. "We had some big wins, but we'll face some tough competition in league and we'll be preparing for that during spring break."

Central opens Mid-Willamette Conference play at South Albany on Tuesday.

PIRATES EARN SPLIT: Perrydale's softball team earned an 11-4 win over Crow on Thursday. The Pirates, who lost to Gaston 4-2 on March 17, improved to 2-1 this season. No details were provided. Perrydale (2-1 overall) faces a pair of road games at Scio on April 1 and at Crow on April 3.

DALLAS DROPS TWO: The Dallas High softball squad lost its first two games at the Medford Spring Break Classic on Monday. The Dragons fell to Marist 9-2 and Hood River Valley 10-6. The Dragons played La Salle and Liberty Tuesday after press time. Dallas hosts Woodburn Tuesday at 4 p.m. in the team's Mid-Willamette Conference opener.



Huffman

PREP BASEBALL ROUNDUP

Pirates' offense rolling early on

Perrydale off to 3-0 start to year

Itemizer-Observer staff report

PERRYDALE — Through three games this season, the only thing stopping Perrydale's baseball squad is the weather.

The Pirates defeated Gaston 10-4 on March 17 before cruising to a 16-0 win against Crow on Thursday.

Perrydale (3-0 overall) found itself holding a 3-2 lead over the Greyhounds before scoring six runs in the fourth inning to pull away. Chad Price and Haylen Janesofsky had two hits and two RBIs each, while Keenan Bailey earned the win.

Against Crow, Hunter

Johnson hit a home run, while Brant Barnes, Troy Trembly and Johnson hit doubles during the blowout win. The Pirates held Crow to one hit.

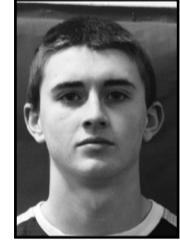
Perrydale's games against Portland Lutheran on Monday were postponed due to weather. No makeup date has been announced as of press time. The Pirates play at St. Paul on Tuesday.

DALLAS SPLITS OPENING GAMES: The Dallas High baseball team defeated Putnam, 8-3 on Saturday before falling to Tigard 5-0 on Monday at the Tigard Tournament.

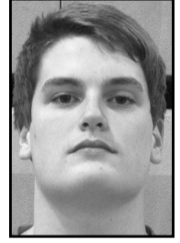
Logan Hatley earned the win against Putnam. No details were provided. The Dragons faced Hillsboro Tuesday after press time. Dallas plays at Mountain View of Bend and Ridgeview of Redmond Friday. Dallas opens league play at Lebanon on Tuesday.



Trembly



Janesofsky



Hatley

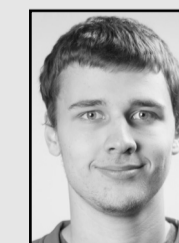
Itemizer-Observer

Athlete of the Week



Jori Kerr
Central High

Kerr, a sophomore, helped Central open its 2015 softball season with a bang. Kerr hit a home run against McKay on March 18 during a 14-0 win. She followed that performance with a home run during a 15-2 win over Philomath on Thursday. Against Philomath, Kerr went 2-for-3 with five RBIs. Kerr's home runs helped the Panthers to a 4-0 start as the team prepares to open Mid-Willamette Conference play.



Cody Warner
Western Oregon

Warner, a freshman sprinter, made the most of his chance to shine for the Western Oregon track and field team. Despite running into a headwind, Warner finished first in the 100- and 200-meter races at the Rose City Preview on Saturday. Warner won the 100 in 10.98 seconds, while he placed first in the 200 in 22.10 seconds. Warner defeated a 23-runner field in the 100 and a 34-runner field in the 200.

To submit nominations for the Itemizer-Observer Athlete of the Week, contact Sports Editor Lukas Eggen at 503-623-2373 or leggen@polkio.com by 9 a.m. on Monday.