

**CENTRAL BOYS BASKETBALL**

# Panthers face critical stretch

**By Lukas Eggen**  
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — Central's boys basketball team has shown flashes of great play.

Turning those flashes into wins has been difficult.

Central, which lost to Lebanon 61-46 on Jan. 19 and Silverton 43-25 on Friday, entered Tuesday's game against Corvallis with a 1-5 mark in Mid-Willamette Conference play, tied for last place with Woodburn.

"We want to keep their heads high," Central coach Tim Kreta said. "A lot of these kids had a lot of success when they were younger and didn't go through how to handle these types of things."

Against Silverton, the Panthers pulled to within 25-22 in the third quarter, only to be outscored 18-3 the rest of the way.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer  
**Peter Mendazona attempts to drive past a Silverton defender on Friday.**

"We have to focus and play for the whole four quarters," sophomore guard Peter Mendazona said.

If a turnaround is to happen for Central, losers of seven of its last eight games, Mendazona will likely play a major role.

"I see my role as playing tough defense and helping out on offense," Mendazona said. "I'm not that total star player, but I'm helping out all around."

It's Mendazona's willingness to be a student of the game that has impressed coaches.

"He brings a sense of calmness now," Kreta said. "He's asking more questions in practice. He's being a part of it and understanding instead of running through the motions."

While Kreta sees significant improvement, the question becomes whether Central can grow quickly enough to rebound from its slow start.

"The sands are falling through the hourglass a little bit quicker," Kreta said.

**CENTRAL ROUNDUP**

## Girls streak ends

**Itemizer-Observer staff report**  
SILVERTON — A 55-28 loss at Silverton on Friday snapped a seven game win streak for Central's girls basketball squad.

The Panthers, who opened the week with a 53-50 win over Lebanon on Jan. 20, suffered its first loss in league play.

Kylie Nash scored a game-high 23 points to lead the Panthers.

Central hosts Corvallis Wednesday (today) at 7 p.m. and Woodburn Friday at 7 p.m. The Panthers and Spartans entered the week tied for second place.

**WRESTLING GOES 3-2 AT HOME:** Central's wrestling squad went 3-2 at its home duals on Saturday. The Panthers defeated Gladstone,

Sheldon and Wilsonville and lost to Putnam and Tillamook. Marlon Tuipulotu (285 pounds) went 4-0. The Panthers also went 3-1 at the Gary Seaney Memorial Tournament on Friday.

**GLADE LEADS CENTRAL SWIMMING:** Daniel Glade took first in the 50 (24.84 seconds) and 500-yard (5:40.87) freestyle races at the Dallas Invitational on Thursday. The Panthers' boys squad went 3-0 in the meet, which was scored as dual meets with Dallas, Corvallis and Blanchet Catholic. The 200 medley relay team of Glade, August Thornton, Orion Waight and Wyatt Rochefort and 400 freestyle relay team of Glade, Thornton, Isaiah Compton and Waight, also took first. The girls squad went 1-2. AnneMarie Hasbrook took second in the 500 freestyle (7:04.87) to lead the girls.

**PERRYDALE BOYS BASKETBALL**

# Pirates down C.S. Lewis, remain in top spot in Casco League

**Itemizer-Observer staff report**  
PERRYDALE — A 48-41 nonleague loss to St. Paul on Saturday may have snapped a nine-game win streak for Perrydale's boys basketball team, but the Pirates are showing they could be the

team to beat in the Casco League. Perrydale earned a pair of league wins, defeating Jewell 60-32 on Jan. 19 and C.S. Lewis 49-32 on Friday to gain sole possession of first place.

Spencer Bibler scored a game-high 16 points to lead the Pirates against C.S. Lewis, while Haylen Janesofsky added 12 points in a clash between the league's top two teams.

"It's really fun to watch this group when they are moving the ball," Perrydale coach Mike Lowry said. "We are starting to understand the idea of good for great — we want to pass up good shots for great shots. ... I really believe when basketball

is played correctly, it is a beautiful thing to watch." Though they lost to St. Paul in the team's third game of the week, Lowry said the loss could be a blessing in disguise, keeping the team motivated and focused.

"We still have big things to accomplish and this minor bump will not affect us," Lowry said. "We will move on and excel down the stretch. This could end up being the best thing to happen to us."

**FALLS CITY ROUNDUP**

## Girls basketball defeats Willamette Valley Christian

**Itemizer-Observer staff report**  
SALEM — Falls City's girls basketball team moved into third place in the Casco League after defeating Willamette Valley Christian 39-29 on Jan. 19 and Livingstone Adventist 43-27 on

Thursday evening. The Mountaineers entered the week on a five-game win streak. Allison Kidd scored a game-high 18 points to lead Falls City against Willamette Valley Christian. Brittany

Varney added seven points. Tiaunah Davis led the Mountaineers against Livingstone Adventist with a game-high 12 points, while Kidd scored 10 points.

Falls City (10-5 overall, 6-3 Casco League) played County Christian Tuesday after press time. The Mountaineers host Eddyville Charter Friday at 5:30 p.m. before playing at St. John Bosco (at Oregon School for the Deaf) on Monday.

Falls City hosts Perrydale on Feb. 3 at 5:30 p.m. **BOYS BASKETBALL DROPS TWO:** Falls City's boys basketball team lost a pair of Casco League contests last week. The Mountaineers fell to Willamette Valley Christian 49-30 on Jan.

19 before falling to Livingstone Adventist 64-45 on Thursday. Falls City (2-11 overall, 1-8 Casco League) hosts Eddyville Charter Thursday at 7 p.m. before playing at St. John Bosco on Monday. The Mountaineers host Perrydale on Feb. 3.

## Coxen: Success for team comes first

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The lifelong wrestler said his fitness level is the best it's ever been, allowing him to focus on technique and fine-tuning for districts. "He's had some great tournaments throughout the year," Dallas coach Tony Olliff said. "If he can put together an effective ground game and increase his diversity on his feet, he'll be a force at state." Coxen's biggest advantage going forward may be his speed. "He and Jeff (Dunagan) are both tiny for their weight class," Olliff said. "We are hoping that being small for their weight class will give them the advantage of speed and quickness at state."

**Reser's**  
• Dallas' wrestling squad placed 10th at Reser's Tournament of Champions on Friday and Saturday.  
• Tanner Earhart (152 pounds) and Treve Earhart (160) placed third to lead tech Dragons. Ryan Bibler (106) took sixth.  
While he has his personal goals, Coxen is far more focused on simply doing his part to helping the Dragons succeed as a team. "It's more of a team goal than an individual," Coxen said. "I want to win a state title as a team. It would mean everything. That's the big deal for me."

**DALLAS ROUNDUP**

## Ford, Kennedy lead Dragons at Invitational

**Itemizer-Observer staff report**  
DALLAS — Dallas' swim team hosted the Dallas Invitational on Thursday. Team scores were kept in dual meet formats. The Dragons lost to Corvallis, Central and Blanchet Catholic. Jolie-Rae Ford placed first in the 50 (26.10 seconds) and 100 freestyle (57.69). Elizabeth Dressel took first in the 100 butterfly (1:06.83) to lead the girls. Ryan Kennedy finished first in the 100 (58.15) and 200 freestyle (2:08.60) to lead the boys.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer  
**Swimmers prepare for the start of a race at the Dallas Invitational on Thursday afternoon.**

**DALLAS BOYS FALL TO 2-3 IN LEAGUE PLAY:** Dallas' boys basketball squad dropped a pair of Mid-

Willamette Conference matchups, falling to Corvallis 65-43 on Jan. 19 and Crescent Valley 68-49 on Friday. Everett Minahan scored 19 points, while Harrison Broadus added 10 points to lead the Dragons against Corvallis. Dallas played Lebanon Tuesday after press time. The Dragons host Silverton on Friday at 7 p.m. and Woodburn Tuesday at 7 p.m. **GIRLS BASKETBALL WINS TWO OF THREE:** Dallas' girls basketball team won its final two games of the week as the Dragons earned sole possession of fourth place in the MWC. Dallas opened with a 42-33 loss to Corvallis on Jan. 20 before defeating Crescent Valley 49-40 on Friday and Redmond 58-36 on Saturday in a non-league makeup game. The Dragons (8-7 overall, 3-2 MWC) play at Lebanon Wednesday (today), at Silverton on Friday and at Woodburn on Feb. 3.

Itemizer-Observer  
**Athlete of the Week**



**Andy Avgi**  
Western Oregon

Avgi, a senior, showed why he is one of the Great Northwest Athletic Conference's best players, leading Western Oregon's men's basketball team to wins over Alaska Anchorage and Alaska Fairbanks.



**Jolie-Rae Ford**  
Dallas High

Ford, a junior, recorded two first-place finishes at the Dallas Invitational on Thursday afternoon. Ford won the 50-yard freestyle with a time of 26.10 seconds and the 100 freestyle with a time of 57.69 seconds. Ford also was part of the 200 freestyle relay squad that placed second with a time of 2:01.46, showing why she is one of the Dragons' best chances to earn a spot to the state meet for the girls.

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.

## Natural: McFarland ready for first tourney

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That all changed in 2015, thanks to his doctors. "It was mostly through the Shriner's Foundation," McFarland said. "I go there for my checkups, my surgeries and my appointments. One of my doctors said I needed to play an adaptive sport, and I heard through them about basketball (with the Wheel Blazers)." The Junior Wheel Blazers is a youth wheelchair basketball team put on through the National Wheelchair Basketball Association. Last October, he became an official member of the Wheel Blazers. It didn't take long for McFarland to discover he was a natural. "I love the sport," McFarland said. "It's one of my passions. I'm good at it. As soon as I started, I could make baskets. The first shot I ever took, I made." He got to play a scrimmage during the halftime of a Blazers game and will compete in his first tournament this weekend in Fairview.

**Bridge City Classic**

• Grant McFarland will compete with the Junior Wheel Blazers at the Bridge City Classic Saturday and Sunday at Reynolds Middle School, 1200 NE 201st Ave, Fairview.  
• Admission is free.  
• The Junior Wheel Blazers are scheduled to play at 9 a.m. and noon on Saturday and 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on Sunday.  
• Schedule is available online at www.polkio.com.  
• For more information: Trisha Suhr, 503-241-0850.

"I get a rush of adrenaline," McFarland said. "I always get excited to go on the court, but there's always a bit of nervousness in the back of my mind. ... I try my best to keep that nervousness away and fill myself with positivity and confidence." More importantly than his success on the court was the confidence it gave him off it. Prior to joining the Wheel Blazers, McFarland largely kept to himself — always battling the feeling that because of his condition or use of his wheelchair meant he never could quite fit in. "I'd probably be staying

with art and would be way more of an introvert," McFarland said. "I wasn't very talkative or sociable." Discovering basketball has showed him a world he never thought he would be a part of. "I've made more friends playing," McFarland said. "At Dallas, I've made so many more friends, too. I have athletic friends. I feel more comfortable and friendly with them and they saw I could play basketball as an equal with them." That confidence helped him become a better student. "My grades have gotten better because I have more confidence in myself," McFarland said. "I was really self-conscious. Basketball has really shown me how to be confident and how to be a leader." Most importantly, he no longer sees himself as an outsider. "He never used to feel equal to others because of his disability, and basketball has given him a sense of equality to able-bodied people, something he never thought he would get to experience," Charen, Grant's mother, said. As McFarland hopes his first official tournament with the Wheel Blazers is a successful one, he knows basketball has already impacted his life in some big ways. Now, he hopes to show everyone what he can accomplish. "It's amazing," McFarland said. "It's almost like nobody knew about Steph Curry until he picked up the ball and started shooting. I'm one of those naturals who can pick it up and suddenly, I can play and do well."