

CENTRAL ROUNDUP

Girls basketball downs Dragons

Itemizer-Observer staff report

INDEPENDENCE — Central's girls basketball team strengthened its hold on the No. 3 spot in the Mid-Willamette Conference. The Panthers (12-6 overall, 7-2 MWC) defeated South Albany 55-43 on Feb. 3 before beating Dallas 50-43 on Friday.

Kylie Nash scored a game-high 16 points against the Dragons. Krista Omlid added nine points, while Emma Girod and Elizabeth Chavez scored eight points each.

"I thought we executed our game plan very well," Central coach Julie McDonald said. "We played tough defense on their posts and rebounded the ball well. Offensively, we executed our

plays and 75 percent of our baskets were made off assists, which shows great ball movement, patience and getting everyone involved."

The Panthers entered the week one game behind Corvallis and two games behind Silverton, the top two teams in the league. Central played Crescent Valley Tuesday after press time. Central hosts Lebanon Friday at 7 p.m. and Silverton Tuesday at 7 p.m.



Nash

WRESTLING TAKES FIFTH AT INVITATIONAL: Central's wrestling team placed fifth at the Robert Paul Invitational on Saturday. Collin Swinehart (152 pounds) and Sam Crow (195) placed first to lead the Panthers. Opeti Tuipulotu (220) and Marlon Tuipulotu (285) finished second. The Panthers defeated Woodburn 53-18 in a league dual on Feb. 3. Central faces Crescent Valley Wednesday (today) in the team's final dual meet before the MWC Conference district tournament Feb. 19-20.

DALLAS BOYS BASKETBALL

Dragons hope White gives team a boost

By Lukas Eggen

The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — A freak injury has cost Dallas junior Aaron White dearly during the 2015-16 school year.

Now, he's hoping to make up for lost time.

It was during a seemingly routine play that White broke his right wrist during football season in a game against Central on Sept. 25, 2015.

The injury ended his football season early and kept him from playing basketball until Jan. 22 against Crescent Valley.

But the hardest part wasn't the recovery or rehab — it was having to sit on the sidelines as the season progressed — and not being able to help his teammates out.

"I think it was even harder watching us win than playing while we lose," White said. "I wanted to be out there with the guys."

White has begun to work his way back into Dallas' rotation, but the injury has left its mark. White wears a brace on his right wrist and has forced some big changes to his game.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Dallas' Everett Minahan (3) attempts to save the basketball over Central's Andrew Barry (34) on Friday.

"With (the brace on), I can't bend my wrist at all," White said. "I have to use more of my left hand when I shoot. In the long run, this may be bad for my form, but I've been working on it and I feel like I've been getting better every day."

White's return gives the team another offensive weapon and depth at the guard positions.

"Aaron's return is especially good for us on the defensive end," Dallas coach

Trent Schwartz said. "He is extremely quick and can keep most anyone in front of him with his perimeter defense. He's not afraid to stick his nose in there and draw charges. He has surprised us as a coaching staff with how well he has shot the ball and handled the ball playing with his brace."

Schwartz hopes having White back in the lineup can spark Dallas.

The Dragons entered the week tied for last in the

Mid-Willamette Conference after a 47-29 loss to Woodburn on Feb. 2 and a 47-37 overtime loss to Central on Friday. Dallas, Central, South Albany and Crescent Valley all entered the week with a 3-6 mark in league play and tied for fifth place. The top six teams advance to the postseason.

"We missed a golden opportunity to break away from the bottom of the pack in the conference had we gotten a couple wins vs. teams we'd beaten the first time around," Schwartz said.

The Dragons host South Albany Wednesday (today) at 7 p.m. before playing at Corvallis on Friday and hosting Crescent Valley Feb. 17 at 7 p.m.

Dallas has lost six of its last seven games to fall into the bottom half of the league, but White said the Dragons have all the ingredients necessary to right the ship. It's just a matter of not losing focus within drives and taking advantage of the opportunities presented to them.

"We just have to finish plays," White said. "We do a lot of good things. We'll get a good look on offense, but miss the shot. We'll run through a play well and have one bad pass or we'll play good defense and be a little out of place for an instant and they'll get an easy bucket."



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Central guard Harkie Bal attempts to go to the hoop while Dallas' Everett Minahan tries to stop him.

Panthers: Central faces crucial games

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"Alec has done a great job shooting," Kreta said. "We want the ball in his hands down the stretch. We need him to be a little stronger with the ball and make decisions within the offense, but we want him to pull the trigger. We want him to shoot before we want him passing."

Central now has a chance to move up in the standings. The Panthers host Crescent Valley Wednesday (today) at 7 p.m. A win and the Panthers pass the Raiders in the MWC. A loss could be a nail in the coffin for the team's postseason hopes.

"Everyone is beating up on each other," Kreta said.

"That left the door open for us (to move up in the standings). We put ourselves in this tough spot and we have to get ourselves out of it. But they left the door open for us. We need to pound and work and, if it works out that we can taste a little bit of that success, we'll love it and take advantage of that."

Last week's wins will mean little if the Panthers can't build on them, but for the moment, it could help turn their season around.

"We're by no means where we want to be," Kreta said. "But this win (against Dallas) is a light. It gives the kids hope. They're grabbing onto that."

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The Pirates find themselves in a position they haven't been in during Lowry's tenure: front-runner. But it's a spot his players are thriving in.

"I've never been in this position," Lowry said. "My first year, we were near the top, but we had to fight from behind. This year, we're the front-runner. I talked to other coaches about what you do in this position. We talk about the mental stuff, being able

League title

• Perrydale's boys basketball team has clinched at least a share of the Casco League title.

• If the Pirates defeat Crosshill Christian on Friday, Perrydale will win the league championship outright.

to get up for each game and be ready mentally for playing three games in three days during the playoffs."



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Perrydale's Keenan Bailey looks to drive past Falls City's Zach Labrado on Friday night.

WESTERN OREGON ROUNDUP

Wolves defeat Seattle Pacific in overtime

Itemizer-Observer staff report

SEATTLE — Western Oregon's men's basketball team overcame a 14-point halftime deficit to defeat Seattle Pacific 84-82 in overtime on Saturday.

Andy Avgi, who scored a game-high 29 points, led the WOU rally in the second half. Avgi hit a 3-pointer with 43 seconds left in regulation to send the game to overtime.

Western Oregon also defeated Saint Martin's 74-62 on Thursday. WOU was ranked No. 1 in the NABC Division II national poll for the first time in school history on Tuesday.

The Wolves (20-2 overall,

13-1 Great Northwest Athletic Conference) host Western Washington Thursday at 7 p.m. and Simon Fraser Saturday at 7 p.m.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL DROPS SEVENTH-STRAIGHT: Western Oregon's women's basketball team dropped a heartbreaker to Alaska Fairbanks 62-61 on Thursday before falling to Alaska Anchorage 77-42 on Saturday. The Wolves and AFU entered the fourth quarter tied, but Alaska Fairbanks built a four-point cushion in the final seconds, which WOU could not overcome, despite a buzzer-beater 3-pointer from Sydney Azorr.

Western Oregon saw its losing streak extend to seven games. WOU (3-19 overall, 2-12 GNAC) played Concordia Tuesday after press time and faces Montana State Billings Thursday at 6 p.m.

BASEBALL SPLITS OPENING SERIES: Western Oregon's baseball team split a four-game series with Azusa Pacific on

Thursday, Friday and Saturday. WOU won the first two games 3-1 and 8-4 before losing the final two games 2-1 and 7-6.

Joey Crunkilton hit a two-run home run in the first game to lead the Wolves. Western Oregon also defeated California State University, Dominguez Hills 7-6 on Sunday thanks to an RBI sacrifice fly in the top of the ninth inning from Nathan Etheridge. WOU plays at Cal State University, East Bay for a four-game series on Friday, Saturday (double-header) and Sunday.

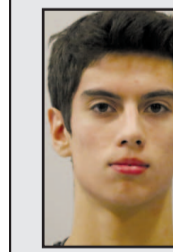
SOFTBALL GOES 1-3: Western Oregon's softball team opened the season with an 8-6 win over Metropolitan State 8-6 on Friday before dropping a pair of games to the University of California San

Diego (6-0 on Friday and 3-2 on Saturday) and a 6-2 contest to Metropolitan State on Saturday. Destiny Kuehl led the Wolves with three hits during the team's lone victory. WOU will compete at the Dixie State tournament on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

CORNISH SETS SCHOOL MARK AT MEET: David Cornish set a new school record for Western Oregon's track and field team in the men's 3,000-meter run at the Portland Indoor Invitational on Thursday. Ribich took third with a time of 8 minutes, 27.63 seconds. David Ribich took first in the men's mile (4:12.41), while Cody Warner took first in the 200 (21.80 seconds). Emmi Collier led the women by taking first in the shot put with a throw of 44 feet, 9 inches. WOU will compete at the Husky Invitational in Seattle on Thursday and the University of Washington Indoor Open on Sunday.

Itemizer-Observer

Athlete of the Week



Alec Barba
Central High

Barba, a junior wing, was held in check on the offensive end for the Panthers' boys basketball team's game against Dallas on Friday. In the overtime period, Barba made his presence felt. The junior went a perfect six for six from the free-throw line, helping Central defeat Dallas 47-37 on the road and move into a four-way tie for the fifth spot in the Mid-Willamette Conference standings.



Emmi Collier
Western Oregon

Collier, a senior, led Western Oregon's women's track and field team at the Portland Indoor Invitational on Thursday. Collier won the women's shot put with a throw of 44 feet, 9 inches, the third best mark in school history. The throw also gave Collier an NCAA-provisional qualifying mark in her third event of the season. Collier hopes to continue her strong season this week in Seattle.

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.

DALLAS ROUNDUP

Wrestling wins Mid-Valley Classic

Itemizer-Observer staff report

SOUTH ALBANY — Dallas' wrestling team won the Mid-Valley Classic on Saturday in the team's final tournament before the Mid-Willamette Conference district championships on Feb. 19 and 20.

Joseph Foster (113 pounds), Noah Sickles (126), Ean Woodruff (138), Tanner Earhart (152), Jeff Dunagan (170), Clay Coxen (182) and Marcos Molina (220) placed first to lead the Dragons.

"We are no longer trying to add to our repertoire, we are just trying to hone the



Sickles

skills we've shown the wrestlers at this point," Dallas coach Tony Olliff said. "If we can stay healthy and keep the wrestlers focused at this point, that's good."

The Mid-Valley Classic not only gave Dallas momentum, but played a big role in preparing the Dragons for a run at another district title.

"One of the big reasons

we went to South Albany is because that's where our district tournament is going to be," Olliff said. "I think the gym will be pretty familiar to us if we spend the Saturday before in it. The other goal is to get everyone some varsity exposure so that some of our younger district entrées aren't going through any type of shock at the district tournament."

Dallas also defeated Silverton 61-13 in the team's final dual meet on Feb. 3.

GIRLS BASKETBALL SPLITS LEAGUE GAMES: Dallas' girls basketball team defeated Woodburn 50-37 on

Feb. 3 before falling to Central 50-43 on Friday. The loss meant the Dragons (10-9 overall, 5-4 MWC) fell two games behind the Panthers for third place. Dallas holds a two-game lead over Crescent Valley for fourth. The Dragons played



Nelson

South Albany Tuesday after press time before hosting Corvallis Friday at 7 p.m. Dallas plays at Crescent Valley on Tuesday.