

QUICK HITS

WOU basketball signs Drayton

MONMOUTH — Western Oregon men's basketball coach Jim Shaw announced the signing of Christian Drayton on Friday.

Drayton, a 6-foot-8, 240-pound post from Luftin, Texas, played one season at Barstow Community College in California.

He averaged 16.8 points, 14.3 rebounds and 2.1 blocks per game last season. Drayton will join the team for the 2016-17 season.

Tai Chi offered at Dallas Yoga

DALLAS — Dallas Yoga Studio, 115 Court St., Dallas, will host Gentle Tai Chi every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 2 p.m.

Gentle Tai Chi will focus on slow body movements to improve balance, agility, flexibility and meditation — no kicks or squats.

Drop-ins are welcome. There is no cost to attend. Donations are accepted.

For more information: Luke Robinson, 503-999-8583.

Walking Club to meet Saturday

DALLAS — The city of Dallas' walking club will meet Saturday at 10 a.m. at the southeast corner of Court and Jefferson streets. The club will go on the "Dallas historic walk."

There is no cost to attend, and it is open to walkers of all ages.

For more information: David Brautigam, david.brautigam@dallasor.gov.

Sign-up open for mini-marathon

MONMOUTH-INDEPENDENCE — Registration is open for the Monmouth-Independence Mini-Marathon.

The 2.6-mile run will take place July 4 at 11:30 a.m. The course begins at City Hall in Monmouth and ends at the Independence Library.

Cost is \$15 for adults and \$5 for children ages 9 and younger if preregistered. Day of race sign-ups will be available beginning at 8 a.m. Cost will be \$20 for adults and \$10 for children (9 and younger).

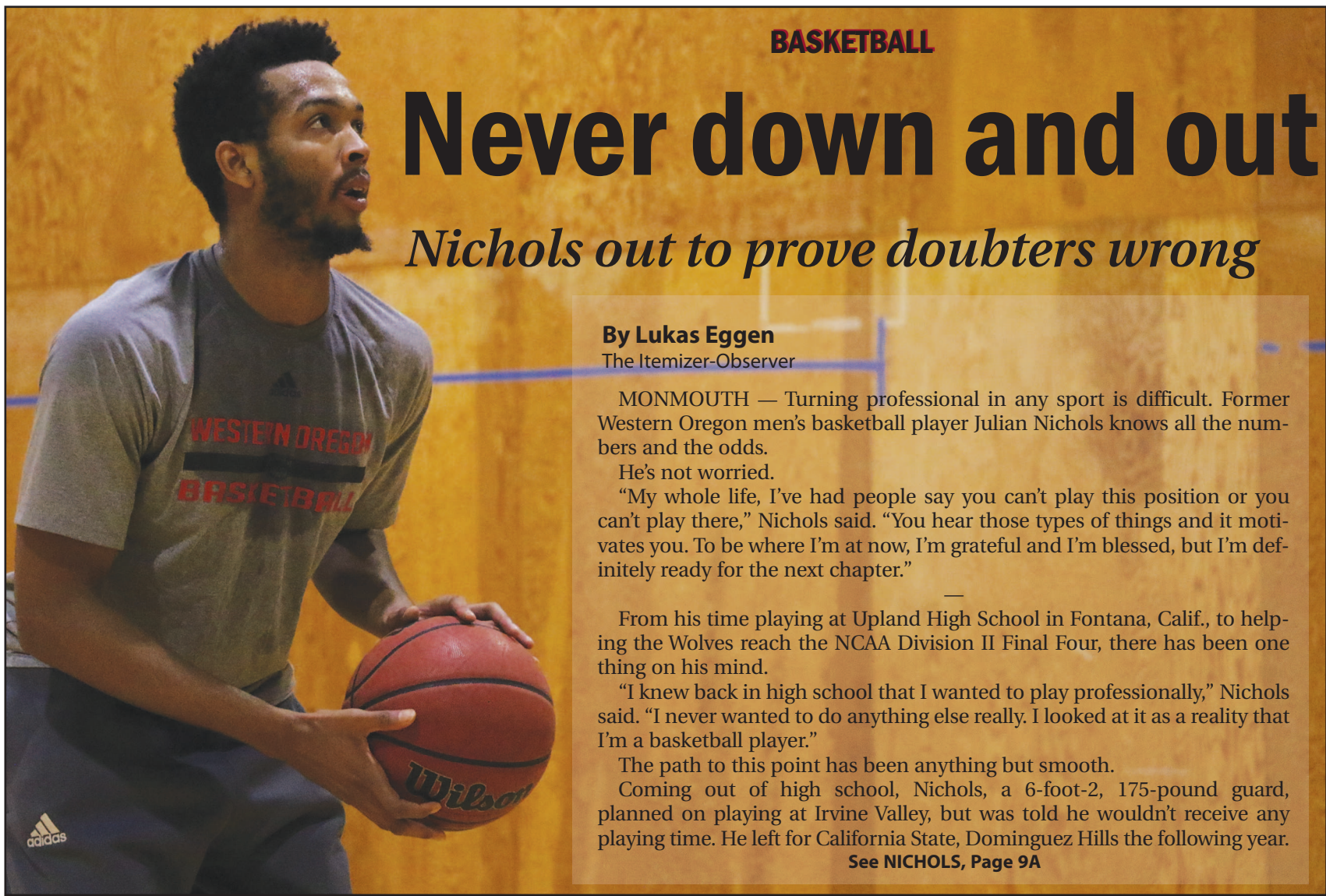
Forms are available online at www.wvroadrunners.org. Online registration must be completed by noon on June 30.

Forms can also be dropped off at Anytime Fitness in Independence, Brooks and Terry's Espresso stands and Monmouth Fitness Club, or mailed to Mini Marathon, 833 N. High St., Monmouth, 97361.

Oak Knoll to host golf tourney

INDEPENDENCE — Oak Knoll Golf Course, 6335 Highway 22, Independence, will hold the Jim Vanderfeen Memorial Tournament Saturday at 11 a.m. Cost is \$240 per team for the four-man scramble. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to Shriner's Hospital.

For more information: 503-378-0344.



BASKETBALL

Never down and out

Nichols out to prove doubters wrong

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — Turning professional in any sport is difficult. Former Western Oregon men's basketball player Julian Nichols knows all the numbers and the odds.

He's not worried.

"My whole life, I've had people say you can't play this position or you can't play there," Nichols said. "You hear those types of things and it motivates you. To be where I'm at now, I'm grateful and I'm blessed, but I'm definitely ready for the next chapter."

From his time playing at Upland High School in Fontana, Calif., to helping the Wolves reach the NCAA Division II Final Four, there has been one thing on his mind.

"I knew back in high school that I wanted to play professionally," Nichols said. "I never wanted to do anything else really. I looked at it as a reality that I'm a basketball player."

The path to this point has been anything but smooth.

Coming out of high school, Nichols, a 6-foot-2, 175-pound guard, planned on playing at Irvine Valley, but was told he wouldn't receive any playing time. He left for California State, Dominguez Hills the following year.

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LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Former Western Oregon University men's basketball player Julian Nichols hopes to play professional basketball.

43rd MONMOUTH-INDEPENDENCE FOURTH OF JULY TENNIS TOURNAMENT

Tennis tourney set for July 2-3

Part of proceeds go toward Central's boys and girls tennis teams

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH-INDEPENDENCE — Patty Youngren has been a part of an annual tradition for more than three decades — the Monmouth-Independence Fourth of July tennis tournament.

"I moved here in 1985. I played against Mary Christensen in my first competition," Youngren said. "She and Phil Schroeder, who ran the tournament at the time, crushed my partner and I.

Mary has become a lifelong friend."

Now entering its 43rd year, Youngren, who will help run the tournament with Paul Hirt and Ron Warkentin, are hoping others experience what Youngren discovered about tennis — that playing the sport can lead to relationships that span decades.

This year's tournament will take place July 2 and 3 at Central High School and Western Oregon University.

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Tennis Time

What: Monmouth-Independence Fourth of July Tennis Tournament.

When: July 2 and 3.

Where: Matches will take place at Western Oregon University and Central High School.

Cost: \$15 singles, \$25 doubles.

How to register: Registration is available through noon on June 29 at www.oregontennis.com.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer file

The Monmouth-Independence Fourth of July tennis tournament attracted a large turnout in 2015. Organizers hope for a big turnout in 2016.

NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

Williams eyes bigger role on the Chargers



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE SAN DIEGO CHARGERS/for the Itemizer-Observer
Tyrell Williams caught his first NFL touchdown pass last season.

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

SAN DIEGO — Western Oregon alumni Tyrell Williams made sure his first NFL catch was a memorable one — hauling in an 80-yard touchdown for the San Diego Chargers against the Denver Broncos in the Chargers' final regular season game.

"It's a weird feeling," Williams said at the time. "It was like an out-of-body experience. It was awesome."

That football now sits on display at his home. For some players, it would be a sign of finally making it.

For Williams, it's a sign of better things to come.

"I'm coming in with more confidence," he said. "I'm more comfort-

able out there and more relaxed while playing."

A familiarity with the offense allowed Williams to work on the finer details of the game and allowed him to transform from just a deep threat to an every-down receiver.

"My route running, being precise and crisp and being able to get separation from the defender, not just on deep balls, but on short, intermediate routes, has improved," Williams said.

The second-year pro also added upper body strength.

"I wanted to make sure I didn't have any problem with getting off the press," Williams said. "I definitely feel the difference."

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130 Main St., Rickreall • 503-623-2365 • www.rickfarm.com