

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Wolves hope clean start brings success

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

MONMOUTH — It took until Dec. 31, 2015, for Western Oregon's women's basketball team to earn its second win last season.

The Wolves reached that mark after two games this season.

Western Oregon defeated San Francisco State 72-63 on Saturday and California State, East Bay 73-63 on Sunday — the first steps in a rebuilding process that players hope proves brighter days are ahead for the Wolves.

WOU hasn't won more than 10 games since the 2010-11 campaign, when the Wolves finished 11-16 overall. Western Oregon went 4-24 last season — but a mix of new faces and players stepping into expanded roles has players confident that it will improve significantly on that mark.

Senior guard Launia Davis has seen the change in attitude firsthand. Davis transferred from Walla Walla Community College prior to last season. She played 13 minutes per game as a junior, and averaged 4.0 points per game, but as the Wolves' losses mounted, so did doubt about her game.

"It's hard to only have four wins in a whole season," Davis said. "For some of us, we came from winning programs whether at high school or a community college. The biggest thing is being able to bounce back and keep your focus knowing that the whole year was setting up what is to come."



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Senior guard Launia Davis averages 8.5 points per game — more than double her average from 2015-16.

Davis vowed to make the most of her senior campaign and worked on everything from her shot to her court vision. Davis is averaging 8.5 points per game and is tied for the team lead in assists.

"Launia is one of the hardest workers we have," coach Holli Howard-Carpenter said. "She put in a ton of time in the gym. She shoots almost daily. She's a more mature player, and she sees the floor better. She's more confident, and I think her teammates have more confidence in her. Last year, I counted on her 3-point shooting. Her defense has

gotten so much better, and she can make huge plays for us with her court vision now. She worked her butt off."

The Wolves also hope several new players will have a positive impact.

Junior Shelby Snook is in her first year with WOU. She transferred from Lane Community College and was well aware of WOU's recent history — but she was sold on Howard-Carpenter's vision for the program.

"I could really see myself here," Snook said. "I'm from Oregon. I'm really close to my family, and I wanted to stay close to them."

The junior's ability to hit



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Western Oregon junior Shelby Snook averaged 17 points per game so far this season.

the long ball or drive inside with relative ease makes her a dangerous offensive threat, and it's showing. Snook is averaging 17 points per game while shooting 61.9 percent from the field.

"She makes us way more dynamic," Howard-Carpenter said. "She's the type of player who can score in bunches if we need her to, but she can also distribute the ball. She understands the flow of the game and does what the team needs."

The team's greatest strength could lie in its depth. Six different players scored in double figures over the first two games.

"That was key for us in the offseason," Howard-Carpenter said. "The returning players really worked on their offensive game, and the people we added, we had to add people who can score."

A year ago, the Wolves' offense struggled, averaging 52.1 points per game.

"Last year we had one main scorer, and if they shut her down, we were like, oh gosh, now one of us has to score," Davis said. "We weren't handling that pressure well."

WOU has scored 72 and 73 points in its first two games with several players

lighting up the scoreboard.

"I think they are hungry and so competitive," Howard-Carpenter said. "This team is very unselfish. They just want to win. They don't care who scores as long as we get a good shot, and I think they have something to prove."

Western Oregon has long been an easy win for conference foes. The Wolves hope to show they won't be overlooked any longer.

"I think we're very positive and motivated to improve every day," Snook said. "We're ready to have a really good season, and a winning season, at that."

WESTERN OREGON ROUNDUP

Men's basketball opens season with wins

Itemizer-Observer staff report
FRESNO, Calif. — Western Oregon's men's basketball began the 2016-17 season with a pair of victories.

The Wolves defeated Point Loma 64-62 on Friday and Fresno Pacific 85-54 on Saturday.

Junior guard Ali Faruq-Bey scored a team-high 19 points against Point Loma, while junior forward Tanner Omlid scored 17 points and grabbed 10 rebounds.



Omlid

closing minutes.

Junior guard Demetrius Trammell hit five 3-pointers against Fresno Pacific, finishing with a game-high 16

points to lead WOU on Saturday. Omlid added 12 points, 10 rebounds, six assists, four blocks and two steals.

Senior guard Yanick Kulich and Faruq-Bey added 12 points each.

Western Oregon will hold its home-opener against San Francisco State Friday at 7 p.m. during the WOU/Double Tree by Hilton D2 Shootout.

WOU also plays UC San

Diego Saturday at 7 p.m.

FOOTBALL WINS FINAL GAME: Western Oregon's football team won its final game of the season, beating Simon Fraser 40-13 on Saturday.

Quarterback Nick Duckworth threw for 343 yards and four touchdowns.

Junior receiver Zack Suarez had six receptions for 117 yards and two touchdowns.

Junior wide receiver Paul Revis had eight catches for 109 yards and a touchdown. Revis totaled 1,057 receiving yards

for the season — the first receiver to have two seasons with more than 1,000 receiving yards under coach Arne Ferguson.

Western Oregon trailed 13-12 with 10:10 left in the third quarter, but scored the game's final 28 points to pull away for the win.

WOU finishes the 2016 season with a 4-6 record overall and a 3-5 mark in Great Northwest Athletic Conference play.

VOLLEYBALL DEFEATS MONTANA STATE BILLINGS:

Western Oregon's volleyball team defeated Montana State, Billings 13-25, 25-20, 29-27, 25-15 on Thursday in the team's final home match of the season.

Junior Alisha Bettinson led the Wolves with 19 kills. Sophomores Amanda Short and Mariella Vandenkooy added 13 kills each.

Western Oregon (10-15 overall, 7-11 GNAC) closes out its season at Central Washington on Thursday and at Northwest Nazarene on Saturday.

Dallas: Lebanon beat Dallas 28-10 on Oct. 28

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"I'm not sure who it was, but one of the coaches brought us together and told us to stay calm," Earhart said. "We were getting frazzled, but we came together, decided to take it one play at a time and stayed calm. After that, something on offense just started clicking. I don't know if it was us deciding it was our moment, or them getting tired, probably both."

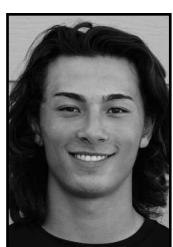
A kickoff return from Evan Courtney gave Dallas the ball on Summit's 30, a drive capped off by an Earhart touchdown.

With about seven minutes left in the game, the Dragons attempted — and recovered — an onside kick.

"We went up there to win," coach Tracy Jackson said. "Honestly, I couldn't see waiting for a better moment."

Dallas began its march down the field again.

"I had watched 'Rocky Balboa,'" Jackson said. "And boxers, they hit you, and they hit you in the arm, and the chest so by the time you get to the ninth round, your arms are so tired you can barely lift them up. Then your head becomes a target and you can go in for the knockout. I felt if we just kept hitting



Earhart

them and driving them down, it would work. They looked real good early, but in the fourth quarter they started to crack. Tanner was getting bigger gains, and I thought if they are going to blitz everybody, we are going to block everyone and run right off the edges."

And while Earhart had been commanding most of the attention, it was quarterback senior quarterback Caedmon Blair who ran it in for the touchdown.

Then came the two-point conversion.

"I knew they would be chasing Tanner left," Jackson said.

The Dragons ran a similar play to the touchdown run.

"I thought, 'coach is giving me the ball, oh crap,'" Blair said. "What was running through my mind was, catch the snap, is one. Don't fumble, and make the two points. You're going to get this conversion, no ifs, ands or buts about it."

An interception from Aaron White gave the Dragons a chance to run out the

clock, but were stuffed on fourth down deep in Summit territory. The Storm crossed midfield, but as their final pass fell incomplete, Dallas celebrated a huge moment.

"It was crazy," Earhart said. "I've never experienced something like that. It's something I'll never, ever forget."

The Dragons' reward for winning is a rematch with No. 4 Lebanon Saturday at 2:15 p.m. at Hillsboro Stadium.

Lebanon defeated Dallas 28-10 on Oct. 28.

"We looked at 17 plays where one little thing, something even as small as stepping with the wrong foot first, that made a difference between us getting a 5-yard gain, or leaving a crease open that they blow past, and tackling our guy for a 1-yard gain."

The winner advances to the state title game on Nov. 26.

"It'll be exciting to play them again," Blair said. "For the senior class, Lebanon has probably been our main rival since, like, eighth grade I think. We don't really like them too much, but it feels right that we have to play them to go to the championship. It just feels right."

Central: Mendazona throws for five scores

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Redmond found success on the ground, but Central got enough stops when it mattered.

"We have a lot of courage and heart on this team," Mendazona said. "Our defense played really clutch. They made some big plays along with our offense. I'm proud of our guys."

The win brings Central's players into uncharted territory — the state semifinals.

"It feels great," Tuipulotu said. "We've always made it to the quarterfinals but never passed it."

The Panthers face a different challenge against Wilsonville.

Quarterback Connor Neville leads an offense that averages 39 points per game and whereas Redmond boasted a great ground game, Wilsonville brings one of the state's best passing attacks.

"They have a Division 1 quarterback who committed to Washington State," Hedrick said. "They throw the ball really well and have scored huge amounts of points."

On defense, Wilsonville will bring an aggressive, opportunistic attitude, Hedrick said.

"Defensively, they play a little scattered," Hedrick



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Central players get ready for the start of the Panthers' game against Redmond on Friday night.

said. "They take some risks and that can be difficult for an offense to deal with. We're going to have to slow down their passing attack. We have to win the turnover battle — that's going to be huge — and we have to move the ball like we have been the last couple of weeks."

The shift in focus presents a change in thinking on defense.

"It's going to be a real challenge for us," Hedrick said. "You go from not focusing as much on the passing game on defense and putting an extra de-

fender on the defensive line to having to stop the pass. It's a real dilemma for us and it's going to be difficult."

The winner advances to the state championship game on Nov. 26 against the winner of No. 8 Dallas vs. No. 4 Lebanon.

"A couple years ago we played Wilsonville and they beat us," Mendazona said. "We want revenge. We know their quarterback is good. We know all that. We feel like we can get them, and we're going to go out there and give it our all."