

# Richey: Dallas beats Redmond

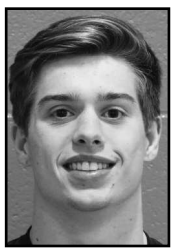
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"I would say it's his defense and his ability to keep in front of guys," Schwartz said. "He's become a much better defender on ball."

Improving defense is a theme among all of Dallas' players.

"I think last year we relied on offense a little too much," Richey said. "You can't do that to win games. You have to get stops."

The Dragons backcourt may become one of the best in the Mid-Willamette Conference. White has returned from an illness, and Jacob Collins is set to return from a hamstring injury before league play starts on



White

ing a little bit more," Schwartz said.

Dallas, which played Hermiton Tuesday after press time, travels Pendleton Wednesday (today) at noon.

"We want to see more ball movement on offense and don't be as one-dimensional on offense," Richey said. "We just need to relax and have fun."

Jan. 5, 2017.

"When those three get back on the court together, I think we'll be clicking a little bit more," Schwartz said.

# Holstad: Hopes to get to state

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Although only a freshman, Holstad enters the 2016-17 season with a wealth of competitive swimming experience and has become a key part to the team both during meets and practices.

"She has that skill base there," coach Jennifer Tress said. "She has that competitive drive and is fun to be around in practice. She makes a lot of people laugh. She brings a lot to the team both in skill and atmosphere and attitude."

Holstad isn't shy about her goals, either. She knows she has to cut down on her time in the butterfly in

order to be among the state's best — but she believes she can, and make a run at qualifying for state.

"It would mean the world," Grace said. "I've always wanted to go to state. It's been my dream ever since I started swimming."

To get there will take a lot of work, but Holstad is confident in her abilities.

She knows the swim season is a long one, but she is out to have fun — just be ready to get out of her way.

"They always say have fun, but it's more fun for me if I win," Holstad said. "It sounds kind of self-centered, but I love winning. It's the best."

# CENTRAL GIRLS BASKETBALL Mendazona takes control

By Lukas Eggen  
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — For a brief moment at the start of the season, Central freshman Meagan Mendazona wasn't sure how aggressive to be.

A newcomer to the Panthers' girls basketball team, Mendazona was hesitant to seize opportunities she saw on offense.

Some discussions with her coaches quickly changed her tune.

The coaches' message was simple: Don't be afraid to be aggressive.

Mendazona heard the message loud and clear.

"Meagan worked a lot on her game in the offseason, and you can tell it has paid off for her," coach Julie McDonald said. "She works very hard at her game, is very coachable and is always looking for ways to improve her game."

She scored a game-high 22 points during a 50-48 loss to Summit on Thursday, and a team-high 11 points in a 45-44 loss to Churchill on Dec. 21.

Against Summit, Mendazona showed little signs of hesitation to take the open shot or drive to the basket when given the opportunity.

"I just felt like I had to kind of pick it up and do what I could to help the team," Mendazona said.

Her range and versatility on offense already make her a key part of the Panthers' offense — and coaches expect her to only get better from here.

"Meagan is a gamer," McDonald said. "Even though



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Central freshman Meagan Mendazona drives past a Summit defender on Thursday.

she is a freshman, she isn't looking around for someone else to get the job done. She wants the ball at the end of the game. I'm looking for big things out of her this year and the following three years."

Though Central lost two close games, McDonald said they were good lessons to learn for the long haul.

"Our preseason is just that — getting us ready for league," McDonald said.

"We have two games in the loss column, but they were only by one and two points. You'd rather have a game like this than play a team you beat by 30 and don't

learn anything."

Central fell behind 20-9 in the second quarter against Summit, but rallied to within one entering halftime.

"I feel like if we slow down a little bit and run our press break like we do in practice, we would have been fine," Mendazona said.

They Panthers learned an important lesson in the final moments of the game against Summit.

The Panthers trailed by two with about a minute left in the game. McDonald was signaling for her players to foul, but a miscommunication allowed Summit to run precious time off the clock.

"We had a little miscom-

munication," McDonald said. "It was about 15 seconds too long to get the foul. It's something we'll work on."

Central had a chance to tie at the end of the game, but could not get a clean shot off.

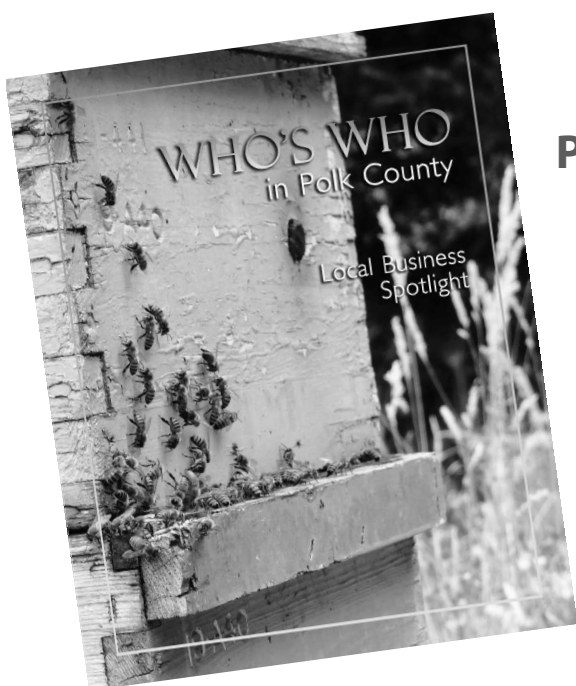
Though the Panthers suffered two tight losses, players didn't hang their heads. Instead, they believe that in the end, the experience will make them stronger.

"Both these close games have been good for all of us," Mendazona said. "It helps us figure everything out."

The Panthers are off until Monday when Central plays at West Albany at 7 p.m.

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