

Collins: Dragons have lost five of six games

Continued from Page 13A

"I learned early on to read lips and personal gestures people make so when I use all of those tools, there's not too much that I miss," Collins said. "I don't make it an excuse of why I can't get something done, on or off the court. I don't feel that I should be any different or treated any differently than those without a hearing impairment. It doesn't affect my level of play on the court or in life."

In the midst of a game night with an energized crowd — the extra noise can pose issues.

"The most difficult thing about it on the court is when the crowd is very into the game and it's super loud," Collins said. "It makes it difficult to hear the coach or the point guard call out the plays."

Dallas coach Trent Schwartz installed a series of hand signals for the team's plays — allowing all players to nonverbally communicate with each other.

Collins has emerged as a leader for the Dragons and has shown that hard work can overcome perceived disadvantages.

At 5-foot-8, Collins is one of the shortest players on the court. But you wouldn't be able to tell by the style of his play.

Free fall

- Dallas' boys basketball team lost to Woodburn 69-62 on Jan. 24 and South Albany 61-59 on Friday.

- Jason Richey scored a team-high 21 points against South Albany. Carter Weisensee added 14 points and Aaron White scored 12 points.

- Richey scored 25 points against Woodburn, while Weisensee added 12 points.

- Dallas entered the week with a 6-9 mark overall and a 2-4 record in league play, good for sixth place in the Mid-Willamette Conference. The Dragons played Lebanon Tuesday after press time. Dallas hosts Crescent Valley Friday at 7 p.m. and Corvallis Tuesday at 7 p.m.

"I would say my biggest strengths in basketball is that I play taller than my height," he said. "By basketball measures, I'm a very short and small ball player, but I give my full effort to play as tough as the bigger and taller guys."

It's Collins who often gets the call to shut down the opposing team's best offensive players.

"Jake is a tremendously tough kid who is super quick and a great competitor," Schwartz said. "He has al-

ways had the ability to play good perimeter on ball defense, but has really improved his defense off the ball to become one of our best defenders. ... He also packs a lot of punch for a smaller player and really holds his own playing post defense."

Collins has undergone a transformation on offense.

"He is a tough match up to stay in front of as he has a lightning quick first step offensively and can shoot the ball on the perimeter," Schwartz said.

His long-range shot has always been a strength.

His willingness to take it to the hoop is a new tool — turning him from a specialized offensive weapon to an all-around threat.

"I've developed an aggression to drive to the hoop more and attack the rim better," Collins said. "... Driving to the hoop has certainly been more in my interest as I have grown more fearless of the taller guys blocking me."

Basketball has taught Collins several life lessons that he said has affected him, from the importance of hard work to trusting teammates to rise to the occasion.

Most recently, it's learning from failure — and not being afraid to fail — that



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer file

Jason Riche (14) scored a combined 46 points last week, but the Dragons lost two games.

has allowed him to develop into a more complete player.

"If you can't learn from losing or failing, it will be hard to grow and advance in a difficult life," Collins said.

Learning from failure is something Collins hopes the Dragons will do — and quickly. Dallas has lost five of its last six games. Four of those losses have come by seven points or fewer, including a 61-59 setback to South Albany on Friday.

"What I believe we have learned from the past games

is that we need to push hard to close the door on the tough games," Collins said. "Our record this year isn't an accurate reflection of the strength of our team, in the sense that the point gap of winning to losing has been slim."

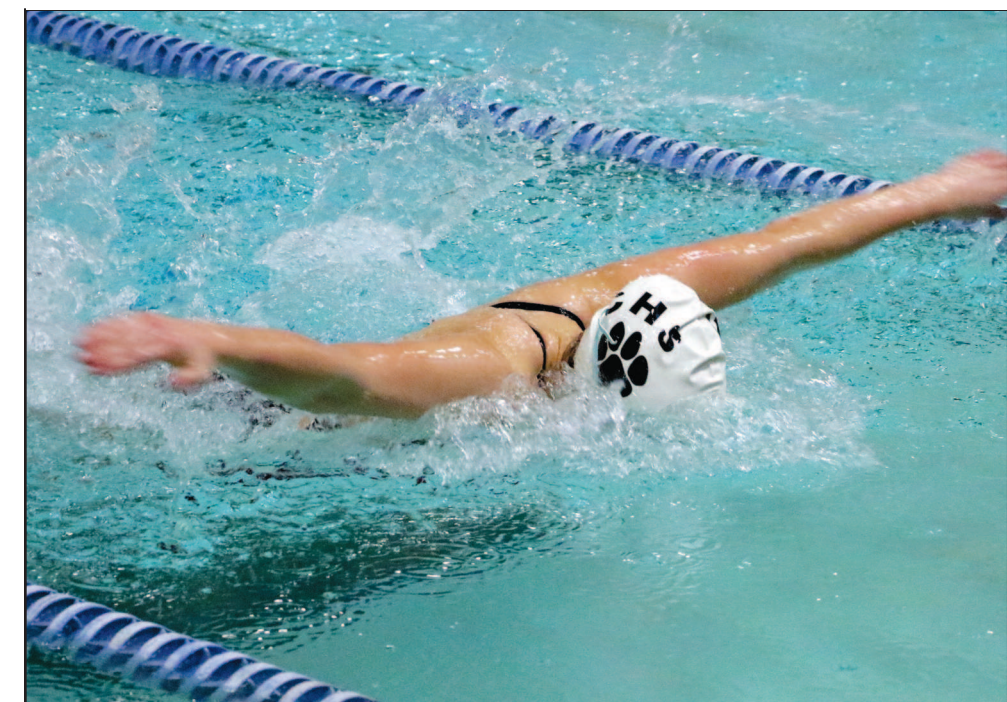
Dallas, which played Lebanon Tuesday after press time, entered that game with a 6-9 mark overall and a 2-4 record in Mid-Willamette Conference play — good for sixth place.

Nearing the midway point

of league play, the Dragons have time to right the ship — but in a highly competitive league, failing to close out tightly contested games will be a fatal flaw.

"With this league, every game is going to be close at the end," Collins said. "It's all about finishing, and that's what the team is focused on accomplishing from here on out. We play good basketball with lots of heart and trust. Finishing games will be crucial to helping us win."

Going for a swim



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Central swimmer Grace Holstad competes in the girls 100-yard butterfly during a meet at Dallas on Jan. 24. Holstad finished second with a time of 1 minute, 8.26 seconds.

CENTRAL ROUNDUP

Panthers down Corvallis

Itemizer-Observer staff report

WOODBURN — Central's boys basketball team won a thriller, defeating Corvallis 52-49 on Jan. 25, before falling to Woodburn 57-47 on Friday.

The Panthers rallied in the fourth quarter against the Spartans.

"Isaiah Abraham came in and brought some much-needed energy on the defensive side of the ball," coach Tim Kreta said. "Brenden Lesmiester, who got his first start of the year, pulled down a few early boards to help keep things going. Alec Barba was able to keep (Corvallis') defense honest by hitting some crucial 3-pointers, and Peter Mason was able to get to the lane for a few closer shots."

Barba scored a game-high 22 points. Mason added eight points. Abraham and Andrew Barry each scored seven points. Against Woodburn, Central kept the game close, entering the fourth quarter down by two, but the Bulldogs pulled away in the final frame.

"The fourth quarter got away from us," Kreta said. "Our kids were really disappointed with their energy on Friday and are ready for a great week of competition."

Barry and Mason each scored 13 points to lead the Panthers.

Central played Silverton Tuesday after press time. The Panthers play at South Albany Friday at 7 p.m. and at Crescent Valley Tuesday at 7 p.m. Central entered the week with an 8-7 mark overall and a 4-2 record in Mid-Willamette Conference play.

GIRLS BASKETBALL DEFEATS WOODBURN: Central's girls basketball team defeated Woodburn 56-24 on Friday. Meagan Mendazona scored a game-high 14 points to lead the Panthers over the Bulldogs. Annika Riddell added 11 points.

The Panthers opened the week with a 48-36 loss to Corvallis on Jan. 24.

Mendazona scored a team-high 18 points to lead Central against the Spartans.

The Panthers play at Silverton Wednesday (today) at 7 p.m. Central hosts South Albany Friday at 7 p.m. and Crescent Valley on Feb. 8 at 7 p.m. Central entered the week with a 6-8 record overall and a 3-4 mark in league play. The Panthers are one of three teams with a 3-4 league record.

Crow: Loss fuels senior to work harder

Continued from Page 13A

"Between football and wrestling, I didn't have a break at all," Crow said. "I went straight from the semifinals at Hillsboro Stadium,

had the weekend to take a break, then was out the next Monday for wrestling."

He's come back strong since then, coach Van Holstad said. And he's out to

show himself — and his teammates — that dedication and determination can lead to success.

"I think that if some of the younger guys can see a good,

strong leader, they will be like that one day," Crow said.

row knows he can't get ahead of himself. But he's grateful and excited for a chance to finish what he

started at districts.

This time, he's ready to do everything he can to make sure he doesn't have the same feeling as last season.

"I know that anything is possible," Crow said. "(What happened last season) keeps me working hard to get that first-place finish."

WESTERN OREGON ROUNDUP

Track and field squad sets five school marks at meet

Itemizer-Observer staff report

SEATTLE — Western Oregon's track and field team set five school records at the University of Washington Invitational on Saturday.

Junior David Ribich broke his own school mark in the men's 1,600-meter run, finishing fifth overall with a time of 4 minutes, 2.30 seconds. The time was also a new Great Northwest Athletic Conference record.

The women's 4-by-400 relay team of Megan Rose,



Ribich

3:56.73.

The men's distance medley relay team of Ribich, Dustin Nading, AJ Holmberg and Josh Dempsey set new school and conference

Grayson Burke, Suzanne Van De Grift and Olivia Woods set a school mark, finishing in

records with a time of 9:45.45.

Kennedy Rufener set a new WOU record in the women's 5,000 in 17:24.07.

The final school record was set by the women's distance medley relay team of Van De Grift, Rose, Woods and Nicole Maurmann with a time of 12:05.24.

Van De Grift set a personal record in the 800. Her time of 2:14.10 is the third-best in school history.

AJ Holmberg finished the

men's 400 in 49.28 seconds, setting a new personal best by 0.15 seconds, ranking as the fourth fastest time in program history.

WOU's track and field team will return to Seattle Feb. 10-11 for the Husky Classic.

MEN'S BASKETBALL TOPS CRUSADERS, WILDCATS: Western Oregon's men's basketball team defeated Northwest Nazarene 69-67 on Thursday and Central Washington 85-68 on Saturday. Junior Ali



Faruq-Bey

edge past the Crusaders.

WOU led by as many as 12 points in the first half, but trailed by as many as eight in the second after a 17-2 run by Northwest Nazarene.

Faruq-Bey scored 23 points, grabbed five rebounds and had two steals.

Tanner Omlid added 13 points, nine rebounds, six assists, six steals and three blocked shots.

Faruq-Bey also led the Wolves against Central Washington, scoring 21 points. J.J. Chirnside recorded 13 points and eight rebounds.

Western Oregon hosts Saint Martin's Thursday at 7 p.m. and Seattle Pacific Saturday at 5 p.m. Saturday's game will be aired on Root Sports.

DALLAS ROUNDUP

Girls basketball defeats Woodburn, South Albany

Itemizer-Observer staff report

ALBANY — Dallas' girls basketball team rolled to a pair of league wins. The Dragons defeated Woodburn 77-11 on Jan. 24 and South Albany 69-43 on Friday.

Emma Classen, Jordan Dippel and Madi Feldman each scored 10 points against Woodburn. Olivia Nelson, Jessica Furman and Katie Senger each added eight points. Dallas led 36-2 at the half.

Dippel led the Dragons against South Albany with 17 points. Nelson added 15 points and eight rebounds. Becca Anco recorded 13 points and five assists.

Dallas hosts Lebanon Wednesday (today) at 7 p.m. before playing at Crescent Valley Friday at 7 p.m. The Dragons (9-6 overall, 4-2 Mid-Willamette Conference) enter the week in third place in the league standings behind Corvallis

and Silverton.

WRESTLING WINS INVITATIONAL: Dallas' wrestling team defeated Central 51-23 in a league dual on Jan. 25. The Dragons also won the Robert Paul Invitational on Saturday.

Dawson Barcroft (113 pounds), Jacob Jones (126), Joseph Foster (132), Cody Janssen (160), Clay Coxen (182) and Treve Earhart (195) earned first-place finishes on Saturday. Ryan Bibler (113) and Bryce Miller (138) placed second.

Dallas will compete at Woodburn Wednesday (today) at 7 p.m. before hosting South Albany Thursday at 7 p.m. The Dragons will take part in the Tod Surmon Tournament Saturday at West Albany High School in the team's final tournament before the MWC District Championships Feb. 10-11.

FORD, KENNEDY LEAD SWIM TEAM: Dallas senior Jolie-Rae Ford won the girls 100-yard butterfly during a dual meet against Central on Jan. 24. Ford won with a time of 1

minute, 6.5 seconds. She also won the 50 freestyle in 26.85 seconds.

Ryan Kennedy won the boys 200 freestyle in 2:11.99 and the 500 freestyle in 5:48.02.

Gabriel Applegate won the boys 200 individual medley in 2:55.01.

The Dragons lost both the boys and girls meet to the Panthers. Dallas traveled to South Albany Tuesday after press time for the team's final meet before the MWC District Championships Feb. 10-11 in Corvallis.