

## PREP BASEBALL

# Dragons fall to Raiders in quarterfinals



BEN MITCHELL/for the Itemizer-Observer

Dallas' baseball team defeated Hood River Valley 5-2 on May 24.

**By Lukas Eggen**  
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Dallas' baseball team just couldn't solve Crescent Valley.

The Dragons lost to the Raiders 13-6 in the state quarterfinals on Friday, ending Dallas' run in the state playoffs.

The Dragons fell to Crescent Valley for the fourth time, though this time the game was more tightly contested than previous matchups.

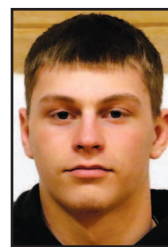
The game was tied 5-5 through four innings before the Raiders scored four runs in the bottom of the fifth and sixth innings to pull away.

"We fell behind early, but kept the course and fought back to a 5-5 tie," coach Scot McDonald said. "I'm proud of the kids."

Clay Coxen had two hits and two RBIs to lead Dallas. Carter Weisensee, Tanner and Treve Earhart, Morgan Taylor and James VanEverd-



Earhart



Coxen

Donald said.

Cody Kessler went 2-for-4 against Hood River, and Zach Wallace had a hit and drove in two runs.

"The biggest strides was playing clean baseball," McDonald said. "We just needed more experience as the season went along."

Dallas finished the season with a 17-12 record overall. The Dragons had a 12-9

inghe also recorded hits.

No. 11 Dallas upset No. 6 Hood River Valley 5-2 on May 24 to advance to the quarterfinals.

"The kids came in with confidence and a plan to compete," McDonald said.



Wallace

can play at a high level," McDonald said. "They know what focus it takes to play good teams and win."

Turning that experience into greater success will be the focus, McDonald said.

Though the team will lose some key players to graduation, the Dragons will have a strong core to retool in the coming years.

"We're expecting to play at a high level and not settle for trying," McDonald said. "Everyone can try, but we want to perform and compete at a high level, win or lose. I was proud of all the kids and what they brought to the team."

## Dallas: Dragons faces Silverton in state semifinals



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Lauren Wallace gets ready to swing.

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"You know, their coach was in my way," Jackson said. "But I knew it was going to be a bam-bam play and a judgement call. From where I was standing it could have went either way."

The umpire called the runner out and the inning was over.

"Getting that double play was huge," Jackson said.

The Dragons closed out the game in the seventh to advance.

"It was very intense,"

Locke said. "It was fun to play. I'm kind of speechless about it, honestly."

Dallas defeated Parkrose 7-0 in the first round of the state playoffs on May 24.

The winner of Dallas vs. Silverton advances to the state championship game against the winner of No. 3 Pendleton vs. No. 2 Marist Catholic Saturday at the Oregon State University Softball Complex.

Dallas defeated Silverton 10-5 on May 5 in the teams' most recent contest.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Dallas' softball team defeated Parkrose 7-0 on May 24 and Lebanon 3-2 on Friday to advance to the state semifinals Tuesday after press time against Silverton. The winner moves on to the state title game on Saturday.

## Ribich: Hopes his success inspires others to excel

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Ribich has a chip on his shoulder. His hometown, Enterprise, is a city with a population of 1,940, according to the 2010 Census. He didn't come from a high school that was rich with athletic traditions.

Western Oregon was one of the only universities to show interest in Ribich coming out of high school. No Division I schools made a scholarship offer to him.

All that just added fuel to Ribich's fire. He was out to prove that where you come

from doesn't have to define your success.

"I think (since high school) I've always wanted to do something with running that could serve as inspiration for kids coming out of high schools, small schools especially," Ribich said.

That gives him extra motivation to go a little harder on training runs during the summer months or to do a little more during the winter.

It's why he serves as a counselor at a running camp at the Steens Mountains during his only two weeks off from training in July.

His victory Saturday was validation of the message he's been trying to tell people — that it doesn't matter how big or small of a town you come from.

"I'm not running this to win an individual title for myself," Ribich said. "I'm trying to make a statement

that you don't have to go to a large university. You can go to a small school and have that same feeling and success. I need to stay focused and stay humbled. I'll train and try to defend, but also remember I'm doing this for a lot of people and a lot more than just a trophy."

## NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

## Williams to build after breakout year with Chargers

**By Lukas Eggen**  
The Itemizer-Observer

LOS ANGELES — The first former Western Oregon receiver Tyrell Williams did after the 2016-17 NFL season was head to Hawaii.

The trip was well-earned.

After injuries to some of the Los Angeles Chargers' top receivers in 2016, Williams made the most of his chance, emerging as the team's top threat, but it took its toll physically.

"You have to take care of

your body," Williams said. "After the season, you're pretty worn down. That was something I wasn't ready for. Your body is going to be beat up."

The season may be taxing, but it has been well worth it.

It wasn't so long ago that Williams was working at a far less glamorous job.

"I was washing dishes in college," he said. "I liked it. I got free lunch."

His current job requires a bit more dedication, even during the "offseason."

"I go back after the season and talk with coaches on what to improve on going into OTAs and workouts on my own," Williams said. "I focus on things that will take my game to the next level next year and not make the same mistakes as I did last season."

An increased focus on the timing and speed will make Williams a more complete receiver.

"I worked on getting out of breaks quicker and attacking the ball in the air so

that any ball thrown up there is mine," Williams said.

The drive to improve can be traced back to his days at Western Oregon.

Coming into college, Williams was physically gifted, but lacked the work ethic. "I used to be really lazy up until WOU," Williams said. "I never worked out too much and didn't do anything extra."

Strength coach Cory Metzger changed all that.

"She didn't allow anyone to be lazy," he said.

That work ethic proved to be key in finding a home in the NFL. Now it'll help determine how big of a weapon he is during this coming season.

Some of Williams' targets last year were because as injuries piled up, he remained one of the constant weapons at quarterback Philip Rivers' disposal.

With players like Keenan Allen returning from injuries and new additions, like rookie receiver Mike Williams, competition for targets will be high.

But Williams views that as a positive, not a drawback.

"Our offense should be really strong," Williams said. "Everyone has been doing well, and it's nice to see all the guys out there and seeing how many weapons we do have."

Williams will be ready to make the most of whatever chances he has.

"Getting opportunities to catch the ball is all you can ask for," he said. "You have to be ready to make the most of those opportunities."