

GOAL: RESTORE AMTRAK TO EASTERN OREGON

Train fans gather

By Dick Mason
The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — Cook Memorial Library’s community room was prob-ably as crowded late Saturday morning as the Union Pacific Railroad depot in La Grande was on Sept. 27, 1937, when people waited there for the train carrying President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to arrive.

FDR was asleep when his train stopped in La Grande around 12:30 a.m., but First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt appeared and spoke briefly to the crowd.

Few, if any, of the more than 100 people at La Grande’s library Saturday were the same ones who saw FDR’s train arrive in 1937, but many lived here when La Grande had passenger train service. The desire to see passenger rail service return to Northeast Oregon is what drew the crowd to Saturday’s Eastern Oregon Rail meeting.

Those in the audience included an individual who wrote on a display paper asking people why people want passenger train service: “I’m 79 — don’t know how much longer I can drive long distances. I need to travel monthly to Boise and Portland.”

This 79-year-old and many others learned how their dream could become reality during a presentation by the all-volunteer nonprofit Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates, with help from All Aboard Washington. The association would like to revive at least the Portland to Boise portion of the old Amtrak Pioneer route, which was discontinued in 1997 due to budget cuts.

“We need your help if (the return of passenger train service) is going to happen. It will be a longer term effort,” said association President Joe Nuxoll of Eugene.

The need for passenger train service in Northeast Oregon is greater now than it was in 1997, Nuxoll said. A big reason: Greyhound now provides one scheduled bus route traveling east and one going



Dick Mason /The (La Grande) Observer

Jon Nuxoll, president of the Association of Oregon and Transit Advocates, speaks at the start of Saturday’s Eastern Oregon Rail Summit in La Grande.

west a day. Twenty-two years ago, at least two westbound and two eastbound buses made daily stops in La Grande and Baker City.

Nuxoll would like to see as much of the Pioneer route, which ran from Portland to Salt Lake City, restored as possible. However, he said it is more realistic to start small by first attempting to restore the Portland to Boise route.

The Association of Oregon Rail and Transit Advocates president said when people speak up to support Amtrak, they need to address one of its most common criticisms — that it’s subsidized. Nuxoll called that a weak and unfair argument because all modern transportation receives substantial government funding.

Nuxoll said the best way to get members of Congress to look into expanding Amtrak routes is for city councils and county commissions to pass resolutions supporting local and regional passenger rail service. When senators and members of Congress learn of the resolutions, they will know the people they represent want passenger trains to return.

Mark Meyer of Portland, an association board member, said he believes there is strong bipartisan support in Congress for expanding Amtrak.

Many of those attending the meeting said they miss passenger train service, and the atmosphere in the library’s community room was one of hope and excitement.

“You have priceless enthusiasm,” said Louis Musso, a member of All Aboard Washington.

Sports

Baker volleyball travels to Junction City for playoff match

The Bulldogs, who finished second in the Greater Oregon League, will play Saturday, Nov. 2, at Junction City, near Eugene. Time for the match hadn’t been set this morning.

WORLD SERIES GAME 6

Nationals top Astros, 7-2, deciding Game 7 tonight

■ First World Series in which road team won the first 6 games

By Ronald Blum
AP Baseball Writer

HOUSTON — It’s been an unconventional road to Game 7 of the World Series for Stephen Strasburg and the Washington Nationals.

Seizing the October spotlight he missed out on as a youngster, Strasburg pitched another postseason gem into the ninth inning Tuesday night as the Nationals beat the Houston Astros 7-2 to tie this Fall Classic at 3-3.

Juan Soto ran all the way to first base with his bat following a go-ahead homer; the same way Houston slugger Alex Bregman did earlier.

Yep, these wild-card Nationals have matched the heavily favored Astros swing for swing, hit for hit — even home run celebration for home run celebration.

Now, it’s onto a winner-take-all Game 7 on Wednesday night to decide the only Series in which the visiting team won the first six.

“It’s weird, really. You can’t explain it,” Washington manager Dave Martinez said.

Adam Eaton and Soto hit solo homers off Justin Verlander in the fifth to help the Nationals overcome a 2-1 deficit. Anthony Rendon also went deep and drove in five runs.

Verlander dropped to 0-6 with a 5.68 ERA in seven Series starts, a blemish on his otherwise sterling career.

“Maybe they enjoy our park and maybe we enjoy their park,” said Rendon, who attended high school 4½ miles from Minute Maid Park.

“We’re not going to ask questions.”

Max Scherzer, revitalized by an injection of painkiller, is primed to return from an irritated nerve in his neck to start Game 7 for Washington in a Series that’s been all road, sweet, road.

Scratched from his scheduled Game 5 start only hours before the first pitch, Scherzer was warming up in the seventh inning Tuesday before Rendon’s homer; then sat down as Martinez became the first manager tossed from a Series game since Atlanta’s Bobby Cox in 1996.

“The cortisone shot worked. That relieved the pressure on the nerve, and then keep applying heat,” Scherzer said.

“Our chiropractor; he does amazing work. He was able to go in there and make adjustments. We did two treatments of it and really freed up the neck.”

Zack Greinke will start for the Astros, who led the majors with 107 wins and are seek-

ing their second title in three seasons.

“I wish it was in a National League park,” Greinke joked, cracking a smile about his affinity for hitting.

Fired up after a disputed call at first base went against them in the seventh, the Nationals padded their lead moments later when Rendon hit a two-run homer off Will Harris. Martinez, still enraged at umpires, was ejected during the seventh-inning stretch, screaming as a pair of his coaches held him back while the crowd sang along to “Deep in the Heart of Texas.”

Rendon added a two-run double off Chris Devenski in the ninth to just about seal it after Strasburg gutted through without his best fastball to throw five-hit ball for 8 1/3 innings. Washington pitching coach Paul Menhart told Strasburg after the first that he was tipping pitches.

Strasburg allowed only three more hits.

“Started shaking my glove, so they didn’t know what I was throwing,” Strasburg said. “It’s something that has burned me in the past, and it burned me there in the first.”

Visiting teams have won three straight Game 7s in the Series since the Cardinals defeated Texas at home in 2011.

Spurs hold off Blazers’ rally

■ Damian Lillard scores 18 straight points as Portland erases 15-point deficit, but his 3-pointer at the buzzer goes in and out

By Raul Dominguez
Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Portland point guard Damian Lillard refused to give up when all seemed lost, and nearly willed the Trail Blazers to an improbable win over the San Antonio Spurs.

DeMar DeRozan scored 27 points and San Antonio overcame a sluggish start and Lillard’s hot finish to beat Portland 113-110 Monday night to remain undefeated.

San Antonio is 3-0 for the eighth time in its 43-year history, but this outcome was in doubt until Lillard’s 3-pointer from the right corner bounced in and out as time expired.

“We were on him,” Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. “He made shots. He drove it too easily, that’s for sure. We didn’t stay in front of him very well down the stretch, but he’s a great player. He put

it on himself to just take it and attack the rim and he did and we didn’t stay in front of him very well.”

Lillard had 28 points, including 18 straight in the final four minutes, as Portland erased a 15-point deficit. The 6-foot-3 guard was limited to 10 points on 3-for-16 shooting through three quarters before going 6 for 12 in the fourth.

“I’m not going to shy away because of that or try to go away and say, ‘Alright, it’s just not my night,’” Lillard said. “I’m going to empty it and I’m going to go out swinging.”

He almost took down San Antonio by himself.

The Spurs seemed poised for a comfortable win after narrow victories against New York and Washington, but nearly let the game get away by closing out the contest as sloppily as they opened.

Lillard took the Blazers on an 18-2 run, capped by a pair of 3s to close within 107-104 with 1:57 remaining. A dunk by Lillard cut the margin to a point, 109-108, with 1:10 left. Lillard and Anthony Tolliver missed consecutive 3-point attempts with Portland trailing 113-100. DeRozan missed a pair of free throws, setting up Lillard’s final shot.

“You can never count a guy like Damian out,” DeRozan said. “He could get it going and missed shots are not going to deter him from trying to get it going. You’ve got to be aware and he got it going. Thank God we got bailed out.”

CJ McCollum added 27 points for the Blazers (2-2). Derrick White added 21 points, LaMarcus Aldridge had 15 and Bryn Forbes 14.



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