

PREP SPORTS

Other states begin altering, canceling winter seasons

Oregon was one of seven states that did not have high school competition during the fall of 2020. The majority of states played a modified fall season while others made no changes at all amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now, several states across the country are reversing course and either postponing or canceling winter sports after competing in the fall.

West Virginia and Arizona — two states that offered modified fall sports — recently announced changes to their winter sports schedules.

In West Virginia, athletic competitions are postponed until March 3 (a similar timeframe to Oregon's target of March 1 to return to competition).

While in Arizona, the Arizona Interscholastic Association canceled its winter seasons due to a surge in COVID-19 cases after initially delaying the start to late January.

Central Oregon schools are returning to some forms of in-person classes within the next month — a positive first step to having high school sports return for the first time since last March.

But there are a number of hurdles that have to be cleared for them to return — primarily for sports that are currently prohibited by the Oregon Health Authority.

While the Oregon School Activities Association is hopeful for sports to return March 1, shortening seasons or cancellations remain on the table.

"I think you get to the point where you can only condense something so much," Peter Weber, the executive director of the OSAA told The Bulletin last week. "I don't know that we are there; if we aren't, then we are really close."

— Bulletin staff report

NFL

Belichick will not receive medal

New England Patriots coach Bill Belichick said on Monday night that he will not receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, saying "remaining true to the people, team and country I love outweigh the benefits of any individual award."

In a one-paragraph statement, the six-time Super Bowl winning coach did not say explicitly that he had turned down the offer from President Donald Trump, instead explaining "the decision has been made not to move forward with the award" in the wake of last week's deadly siege on the U.S. Capitol.

"Recently, I was offered the opportunity to receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which I was flattered by out of respect for what the honor represents and admiration for prior recipients," the coach said in a statement, which was forwarded to The Associated Press by the team.

"Subsequently, the tragic events of last week occurred and the decision has been made not to move forward with the award. Above all, I am an American citizen with great reverence for our nation's values, freedom and democracy. I know I also represent my family and the New England Patriots team."

Although he describes himself as apolitical, Belichick wrote Trump a letter during the 2016 presidential campaign that the candidate read aloud at a rally in the days before the election. Belichick has said the two are friends.

—Associated Press

SPORTS



Alabama wide receiver DeVonta Smith runs past Ohio State safety Josh Proctor for a touchdown in the first half of the College Football Playoff national championship on Monday in Miami Gardens, Florida. Smith, who won the Heisman Trophy last week, scored three touchdowns in the first half before leaving the game with a hand injury. Chris O'Meara/AP

CFP NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP | Alabama 52, Ohio State 24

LANDSLIDE

No. 1 Alabama wins national title; coach Saban's 7th

BY RALPH D. RUSSO
AP College Football Writer

MIAMI GARDENS, Fla. — DeVonta Smith was uncoverable, Najee Harris unstoppable and Mac Jones impeccable. With a performance that was both surgical and explosive, No. 1 Alabama won the College Football Playoff national championship game 52-24 against No. 3 Ohio State on Monday night.

The final game of a college football season in a pandemic, a season that was uncertain to be played in the summer

and filled with disruptions in the fall, ended in the most predictable fashion: Alabama (13-0) as national champion for the sixth time in the last 12 years under coach Nick Saban.

For Saban, it was career title No. 7 overall, breaking a tie with Alabama great Paul "Bear" Bryant for the most by a major college coach.

Ohio State (7-1) just couldn't keep up. Justin Fields, playing what might be his last game before heading to the NFL, passed for 194 yards and a touchdown.

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Alabama wide receiver Slade Bolden, right, celebrates with quarterback Mac Jones after scoring a touchdown in the second half on Monday in Miami Gardens, Florida. Chris O'Meara/AP

PAC-12 MEN'S BASKETBALL

Five takeaways from No. 22 Oregon's weekend against Colorado and Utah

BY CHRIS HANSEN

The (Eugene) Register-Guard

Oregon's eight-game win streak ended in Colorado Thursday afternoon, but thanks to a tremendous second-half effort against Utah Saturday night, no losing streak followed for the Ducks.

No. 22 Oregon split its road series this past weekend in the most predictable manner.

The Ducks lost to the Buffaloes, 79-72, to remain winless in Boulder after 10 tries.

Against the Utes, Oregon won 79-73 in dramatic, come-back fashion for their sixth straight victory against Utah and for the 18th time in the last 20 games between the two teams.

At 9-2 overall and 4-1 in Pac-12 play, the Ducks are tied for second place in the conference standings with Stanford and one game behind UCLA.

Up next is a series against Arizona State (6 p.m. Thursday) and Arizona (7 p.m. Saturday) at Matthew Knight Arena.

But first, here are five takeaways from the weekend:

1. Chris Duarte is in the zone

The senior guard scored 27 points against Colorado and 25 against Utah, making a combined 19-of-30 from the field and 6-of-11 from the 3-point line, to bring his season average to a team-high 18.4 points.

Those performances were just a continuation of what has been a solid five-game stretch for Duarte, in which he has averaged 23



Oregon's Chris Duarte, right, shoots over Colorado's D'Shawn Schwartz during Thursday's game in Boulder, Colorado.

points, 4.4 rebounds and 3.4 steals and is shooting 58% from the field (41-for-71) and 50% on 3-point attempts (19-for-38).

He was named the Pac-12 player of the week Jan. 4 after leading the Ducks to wins against Stanford and California when his late-game heroics sealed victories.

2. LJ Figueroa's injury and impact

The Ducks survived without Figueroa for the final seven minutes against Utah after the senior guard injured his left ankle — the severity of which remains unknown. But he'll definitely be missed if he can't play against Arizona State on Thursday and Arizona on Saturday.

The transfer from St. John's is

fourth on the team in scoring at 10.1 points per game and is tied with Eric Williams Jr. for the rebounding lead at 6.5 per game. But Figueroa also is Oregon's spark on defense and brings maturity and intensity to the floor that the Ducks have come to rely on.

Figueroa has been in the starting lineup since center N'Faly Dante injured his knee against San Francisco and was lost for the season. But even before then he was averaging 28 minutes a game.

After the game against the Utes, coach Dana Altman said Figueroa ankle would be looked at Sunday in Eugene. No update has been given since.

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NFL | COMMENTARY

Seahawks face an offseason full of change

BY BOB CONDOTTA

The Seattle Times

The Seahawks figured they'd return to their practice facility in Renton, Washington, on Sunday and rejoice in a victory the day before while beginning preparations for the divisional round.

Instead, they spent the day clearing out their lockers and trying to make sense of the disappointment of Saturday's 30-20 wild-card playoff loss to the Rams that ended a once-promising season with a most inglorious thud.

"I definitely feel like we had the group to go farther than what we did," said middle linebacker Bobby Wagner via Zoom. "It feels weird that we're done. I didn't expect that. I didn't think that at all."

There was plenty of blame to go around.

The offense scored just one touchdown before a garbage-time score and was held to a season-low 278 yards while continuing a theme of late-season struggles. The only three times the Seahawks were held under 300 yards this season were the last three games of the year, against the 49ers and twice against the Rams.

And the defense — which memorably held the Rams without a touchdown in a division-clinching game Dec. 27 keyed by a goal-line stand — allowed Los Angeles to rush for 164 yards, its third-highest total of the season. That helped take the pressure off quarterback Jared Goff, who had to enter on the second series when John Wolford was injured and play 12 days after thumb surgery.

Rams offensive tackle Andrew Whitworth said later that playoff football is about "imposing your will" on the other team, indicating he felt the Rams had done just that.

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