

WOMEN'S COLLEGE HOOPS

Star joins Beavs ahead of schedule

Talia von Oelhoffen, a 5-star guard who recruit who signed with Oregon State in November, is graduating early from Chiawana (Wash.) High School and plans to join the Beavers this season.

The 5-foot-11 von Oelhoffen can begin practicing and playing with OSU as soon as she passes university health protocols. Von Oelhoffen has enrolled in winter quarter classes at OSU and is listed in the school's student directory.

Von Oelhoffen scored 2,392 points during a three-year high school career playing at Tri Cities Prep and Chiawana High in Washington.

One national recruiting service rated von Oelhoffen as the No. 14 prospect for the Class of 2021.

Because of the uncertainty of a high school basketball season in Washington this year, von Oelhoffen turned to Oregon State because of an option of early enrollment.

"As the prospect of a high school basketball season dimmed for her, the opportunity to grow and develop alongside her teammates at the next level became increasingly appealing," OSU coach Scott Rueck said in a statement. "Talia is excited to join us, and we are ready to welcome her to the Oregon State women's basketball family."

— The Oregonian

NFL

Seahawks talk to Lynn about OC

Seattle Seahawks' coach Pete Carroll said he wants to run the football more often in 2021. He may be seeking an offensive coordinator who possesses experience in developing successful rushing attacks.

The Seahawks are searching for a new offensive coordinator after Brian Schottenheimer was fired Tuesday. Carroll has talked to former Los Angeles Chargers head coach Anthony Lynn about the position, according to a report.

Lynn was fired as head coach of the Chargers following the 2020 season. The Chargers finished the season with a four-game winning streak and posted a record of 7-9.

However, the Chargers were 5-11 in 2019 and the team's ability to consistently win close games during the past two seasons was a big reason Lynn was fired, despite the Chargers going a combined 21-11 during Lynn's first two seasons.

One possible reason for Carroll's interest in Lynn is his preference for running the football.

The Chargers were ninth in rushing attempts during the 2020 season. The Chargers' decision to run the football was partly an effort to lessen the pressure on rookie quarterback Justin Herbert.

However, the Buffalo Bills were the top rushing team in the NFL during each of Lynn's two seasons as running backs coach in 2015 and 2016. Lynn became the offensive coordinator for the Bills early in the 2016 season, after Greg Roman was fired.

— The Oregonian

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Vikings opt out

Portland State backs out of Big Sky Conference spring season, could play modified 2-game schedule in April

BY JOE FREEMAN • The Oregonian

The Portland State Vikings have, at the 11th hour, decided to back out of the Big Sky Conference spring football schedule because of safety concerns related to the coronavirus pandemic.

In a move announced Friday morning, Portland State said it would not take part in a delayed six-game conference season and will instead consider playing a modified two-game schedule in April. Montana and Montana State joined the Vikings in the decision, which, among other things, ensures the trio will not be eligible for the Big Sky championship and FCS playoffs.

The development comes days after Portland State players reported to Stott Center on campus for preseason COVID-19 testing and roughly six weeks before a season-opening matchup against Eastern Washington.



Portland State wide receiver Emmanuel Daigbe (80) looks to get past Simon Fraser University's Matt Duda (2) in September 2019.

"We have been out of competition and practice for nearly a year and to get our team ready by a scheduled Feb. 27 game doesn't make sense. Playing potential games in April and preparing for the 2021 season makes more sense for the safety of our team."

— Bruce Barnum, Portland State football coach

"With the uncertainty of the football season, we have determined this is the best course of action for our program this spring," Portland State athletic director Valerie Cleary said in a release.

Earlier this week, as players were going through a two-day wave of

coronavirus testing in preparation for the season, Cleary said the Vikings were on track to play Feb. 27 against Eastern Washington at Hillsboro Stadium. But she also couched her optimism with the reality that pandemic plans "can change at any time," noting that the university would put the

health and safety of its student-athletes ahead of everything else.

At the same time, coach Bruce Barnum admitted he was "anxious" about the looming season and the health and safety of his players on multiple levels. For starters, coronavirus cases and deaths are soaring nationwide, including in Oregon, so keeping a team that mostly lives off-campus virus-free will be tricky. What's more, Barnum and Portland State administrators are also concerned about the physical well-being of their players from a football standpoint.

See **Vikings** / B2

NFL PLAYOFFS



Wally Skalij/Los Angeles Times file

Los Angeles Rams' Jalen Ramsey, center, and Greg Gaines, right, upend Seattle Seahawks' Alex Collins in Los Angeles on Nov. 15.

Top cornerbacks standing out on Super Bowl hopefuls

BY GREG BEACHAM

Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif.

— When Brandon Staley looks at the defenses on the remaining eight teams in the NFL playoffs, the Los Angeles Rams' defensive coordinator sees several top-notch groups with several qualities in common.

Yet one element stands apart — quite literally at times.

Nearly every team still vying for the Super Bowl has an elite cornerback often capable of shutting down an opponent's top receiver all by himself.

The NFC playoff bracket has three of the conference's four Pro Bowl cornerbacks: Green Bay's Jaire Alexander, Los Angeles' Jalen Ramsey and New Orleans' Marshon Lattimore. There's also Los Angeles' Darious Williams, who quietly had one of the most impressive coverage seasons in the league, and Tampa Bay's underrated duo of Carlton Davis and

Jamel Dean.

On the AFC side are Pro Bowlers Tre'Davious White of Buffalo — a second-team All-Pro — and Marlon Humphrey of Baltimore, along with the Ravens' Marcus Peters and Cleveland's Denzel Ward.

"Those guys are all outstanding players," Staley said. "But, you know, we feel like we have the best guy."

Most of the defensive coordinators left in the postseason feel the same way about their own top cornerback — and with good reason in most cases.

Ramsey's matchup with fellow All-Pro Davante Adams is among the most interesting aspects of the Rams' trip to Green Bay on Saturday, but every postseason game this weekend offers a chance to watch an elite cornerback doing his best to tear up an offense's game plan.

See **Cornerbacks** / B2

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Athletic trainers adapt to chaos of sports in a pandemic

BY JOHN MARSHALL

AP Basketball Writer

Collegiate athletic trainers are used to being the calm amid chaos.

Screaming fans, blaring music from loudspeakers, coaches and players caught up in the heat of competition — all of it gets tuned out when a trainer is tending to an injured athlete.

The coronavirus pandemic has added another constantly shifting layer to what they do.

The last 10 months have turned into a complicated juggling act of tending to athletes' day-to-day needs while dealing with the intricacies that come with trying to play sports and keeping everyone safe — themselves included — in a pandemic.

"Athletic trainers by design are the master builders of healthcare in collegiate athletics," Northern Arizona director of sports medicine Cherisse Kuttyreff said. "We tend to juggle so many different balls anyway. It was a little chaotic to start, but it's our natural tendency when emergencies come up or crises arise, athletic trainers are the ones who sit, try and troubleshoot and come up with solutions. That's our wheelhouse to be under fire."

The early days of the pandemic put athletic trainers in a delicate spot of trying to balance treating athletes while protecting themselves and their families against a deadly virus.

As scientists learned more about the complexities of the virus, trainers became more comfortable navigating the uncertain tides of the pandemic.

Culling information from a variety of sources, including each other, they've implemented safety protocols to prevent infections and steered through a new world of testing and contact tracing — all while keeping up with the latest COVID-19 news and recommendations.

And they had to do it while keeping up with the rigors of attending to hundreds of athletes across multiple sports. Days of 12 hours or more are not uncommon.

"They didn't sign up for this, that's for sure," Northern Arizona coach Shane Burcar said. "A lot of times it can be overwhelming. It's not something you train for, a pandemic, especially with all the changing bylaws and protocols. It's something where I respect the heck out of our trainer."

The pandemic forced trainers to alter the way they do nearly everything.

Training rooms were reconfigured with tables spread out for social distancing and limits were put on how many people are allowed in at a time. Masks became mandatory. Cleaning equipment and constant hand washing became a priority. Many schools have gone to appointment-based rehab schedules.

Athletic trainers also have been responsible for determining team safety protocols for practices, games and travel. They test athletes and have to be vigilant with contact tracing to prevent outbreaks. Some even make deliveries to those in quarantine.

"It's been a challenge for all

of us just because of some of the new things that have been put on our plate," Idaho State head athletic trainer Dustin Enslinger said. "Some of it's been very challenging as we make sure we're doing what's right from a virus standpoint, but also making sure we're taking care of our student-athletes the way we should be."

Communication has been key.

Pre-pandemic, athletic trainers took calls and tapped out texts throughout the day, coordinating staff coverage, keeping tabs on injured athletes and setting up doctor appointments.

The pandemic has increased phone usage exponentially as questions and concerns stream in from all corners of campus.

"Their phones are blowing up every day," Burcar said.

Athletic trainers also have to keep up to date with the latest COVID-19 information and protocols, then condense and disseminate to coaches and athletes.

They have to know guidelines from the CDC, NCAA, multiple conferences and schools, along with those released by their state and county.

Guidelines are constantly changing and protocols vary widely, so the learning curve is at a constant arc.

"The new information and evidence is coming out with such frequency that being able to get that information, decipher it and determine what we need to change is critical," Kuttyreff said.

See **Trainers** / B2