

PAC-12  
BASEBALLBeavs' Ober named  
player of the week

The Oregon State Beavers' successful start to the 2021 season now includes a little individual recognition from the Pac-12 Conference.

Junior infielder Ryan Ober on Tuesday was named the Pac-12 Conference Player of the Week, earning the honor for the first time in his career thanks to prodigious performance in the Sanderson Ford Baseball Classic.

Ober was dominant in the Beavers' season-opening tournament, batting .429 with two home runs, two doubles, six runs scored and nine RBIs. The Beavers (3-1) erupted for 41 runs in the four-day event.

Only the first three games counted toward player of the week consideration, but they were an impressive three games for Ober. He hit a two-run home run in the eighth inning of the Beavers' first game against Kansas State, crushed a grand slam in the second game against New Mexico and finished 2 for 3 with three RBIs and three runs scored in the third outing.

The Beavers play again on Thursday, when they open a four-game series at Grand Canyon in Phoenix.

—The Oregonian

## NWSL

Thorns ink Horan,  
Dunn to contracts

The Portland Thorns have signed star midfielders Lindsey Horan and Crystal Dunn to three-year contracts, the team announced Wednesday.

Although Horan and Dunn will remain on contract with the U.S. women's national team, they relinquished their NWSL allocations from U.S. Soccer as part of their new deals with the Thorns.

Thorns coach Mark Parsons called Horan and Dunn "key pillars to our future" in a statement.

"Their role on and off the field is crucial to our identity and the collective goals of the club," Parsons said in the statement. "I am inspired by their dedication to the team and our vision to take this important step forward as a club."

Horan is entering her sixth season with the Thorns, and the 2018 NWSL MVP ranks third in club history in goals with 23 and fifth in games started with 74.

Dunn, who came to the Thorns via a trade with OL Reign in October, won league MVP and Golden Boot honors in 2015 when she scored a league-high 15 goals.

Dunn has tallied 32 goals and 20 assists across her first six NWSL seasons.

"Having the ability to sign two of the top players in the game to contracts with Thorns FC is an important move for our club that highlights our commitment as well as the growth of the NWSL in the global soccer landscape," Thorns FC general manager and president of soccer Gavin Wilkinson said in a statement.

Horan and Dunn will join the Thorns in pre-season camp after the conclusion of the SheBelieves Cup in Orlando, Florida, where they are competing with the USWNT, which routed Argentina 6-0 Wednesday night. See A6 for a recap.

—The Oregonian

## MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Bump in  
the road

Oregon coach Dana Altman looks to get Ducks back on track in bid to qualify for the NCAA Tournament

BY JAMES CREPEA  
The Oregonian

EUGENE —

It's that time of year again, when Dana Altman works his magic and Oregon gets hot entering the postseason.

The postseason train has rarely run late on the Ducks under Altman, who has led UO to a conference-leading 66-28 mark during the second half of Pac-12 play over his 11 seasons. Over the last seven years, Oregon is 35-8 after Valentine's Day in Pac-12 games.

"A lot of credit goes to Dana and the staff," said Utah coach Larry Krystkowiak, who has coached against Altman for the past 10 years and is just 2-19

against Oregon in that span. "It's not atypical to have transfers on this roster and top junior college players, not to mention plenty of five-star kids. When you talk about that combination, there's some guys back, (Will) Richardson and (Chris) Duarte from a year ago, but there's a lot of new faces. I think what needs

to happen to be successful is that new faces find a rhythm and get accustomed and fit into the system and figure out where their niche is.

"Dana has always done a good job, a lot of his teams peak at the right time and start gelling. Definitely kudos to what they've done. Their system is not over-complicated. It's pretty predictable what it is they do and I think as the year goes on they get really good at it. That's all part of that success that Oregon's had since I've been here 10 years."

The numbers don't lie, not over such a large sample featuring so many different rosters and players and varying levels of competitiveness in the Pac-12.

"Dana does as good a job as anybody in our



Ashley Landis/AP

Oregon head coach Dana Altman looks on during the Ducks' game against Southern Cal on Monday in Los Angeles. Altman is known for having his team playing its best late in the season heading into March Madness, but UO's loss to the Trojans may have thrown a wrench into that scenario.

league in terms of getting his team better as the year goes on," said Colorado coach Tad Boyle, who has also coached against Altman for the past 10 years and is 10-8 against UO and 5-5 over the last 10 meetings, the only Pac-12 team with a winning record against Oregon over Altman's tenure.

In typical Altman fashion, he credited having good players with being the primary reason for

Oregon turning getting hot in mid- and late-February and March into an annual tradition.

"The team aspect really takes over this time," Altman said. "You're either with the team, the team goals are the most important things, and if they're not, then you're in trouble because some teams are just trying to finish the year."

See **Ducks** / A7

## GOLF COMMENTARY



Phelan M. Ebenhack/AP file

Tiger Woods, left, gives his son Charlie a fist bump after Charlie made a putt on the 12th green during a practice round of the Father Son Challenge in Orlando, Florida, in December.

Woods escaped with his life;  
we escaped from our grief

BY BILL PLASCHKE

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Twisted metal on a February morning. Wreckage of a vehicle wedged amid the brush. Somber official statement about a fallen superstar.

When the news of Tiger Woods' single-car crash scrolled across my phone Tuesday, my heart leaped to my throat as memories flooded my brain.

Oh no. Not again. Not another Kobe Bryant.

One day before the first anniversary of Bryant's memorial service, the Bryant tragedy actually was repeating itself? Another aging local athletic hero who finally had found peace was going to leave us too soon? How much grief could one sports landscape take?

It turns out, our worst fears were not realized. For once in these past horrendous 13 months, a bullet was dodged. Woods escaped with his life. We escaped from our grief.

See **Woods** / A6

## MOTOR SPORTS | NASCAR COMMENTARY

## Flag ban opens sport to diverse new crowd

BY JENNA FRYER

AP Auto Racing Writer

A sign at the entrance to Daytona International Speedway warned spectators the Confederate flag was not welcome on property. Its presence, NASCAR wrote, "runs contrary to our commitment to providing a welcoming and inclusive environment."

Pass through the tunnel and onto the sprawling grounds and not a single Confederate flag was flying over the campsites. If any had been smuggled in, they weren't displayed to be easily spotted over two weeks of racing at Daytona as the stock car series kicked off its season.

NASCAR half-heartedly tried in 2015 to ban the Stars and Bars from its events, but that first effort lacked a meaningful enforcement plan. Five years later, pushed by the only Black driver during a summer of national unrest, NASCAR took its firmest position in its 73-year existence.

NASCAR is inextricably tied to its Southern roots and culture, and with it comes a checkered racial history. NASCAR founder Bill France Sr. endorsed Alabama governor and segregationist George Wallace for president, and the Hall of Fame biography

for Wendell Scott, NASCAR's first Black driver, is white-washed of his unrelenting battle for equality in the sport.

NASCAR was serious this time, even if meant alienating a portion of its fan base.

Steve Phelps, who in 2018 became NASCAR's fifth president and its most progressive, only saw upside in social consciousness — for every fan who complained about lost heritage, someone new would discover a sport far more inclusive than initially perceived.

Phelps' theory proved true in June, on the very day NASCAR banned the Confederate flag.

NFL running back Alvin Kamara heard about the flag ban, heard about Bubba Wallace standing up for racial equality and tuned in that same night to watch a rare midweek race. Kamara saw Wallace, NASCAR's only Black fulltime driver, race with a Black Lives Matter paint scheme and wear a shirt that read, I Can't Breathe.

Four days later, Kamara was at his very first race.

He's now a super fan and just 36 hours after attending his first Daytona 500, Kamara agreed to sponsor a young Hispanic driver in last Sat-

urday's Xfinity Series race. Kamara, who is Black, was at Daytona, this time as someone with a car on the track.

Michael Jordan made his debut at Daytona as co-owner of one of three new NASCAR teams. Driven by Wallace, 23XI Racing is the only team with a Black owner and Black driver.

Pitbull also entered ownership with Trackhouse Racing. The Cuban-American entertainer wants Trackhouse, along with Mexican driver Daniel Suarez, to establish itself as a NASCAR team with a message of global unity.

Pitbull was all over Daytona ahead of the Daytona 500, posing for fans and celebrating with Suarez. Jordan played golf at Oceanside Country Club and schmoozed with sponsors in a suite during the race.

It is no coincidence these NASCAR newcomers followed the banning of the Confederate flag.

"I don't think this was a place where a lot of us felt comfortable being because of what we thought," Kamara said. "You see that flag, you see the scope of what's going on. ... One bad apple spoils the bunch."

See **Motor sports** / A7