

WNBA

Former player part of Dream sale

ATLANTA — Former Atlanta Dream guard Renee Montgomery made history on Friday as part of a three-member investor group that was approved to purchase the team.

The ownership change follows pressure on former Sen. Kelly Loeffler, a Republican who angered WNBA players with her opposition to the league's racial justice initiatives, to sell her share of the Dream.

Real estate investor Larry Gottesdiener was approved as majority owner of the team. The investor group also includes Montgomery and Suzanne Abair, president of Northland Investment Corp. in Massachusetts, the firm Gottesdiener founded.

Montgomery becomes the first former player to become both an owner and executive of a WNBA franchise. She said she would play an active role with Abair in the leadership of the team.

Montgomery said she first began considering her role in an ownership group after Los Angeles Lakers star LeBron James tweeted about the possibility of being part of such a group.

"That tweet prompted my mind," Montgomery said, adding she "started to figure out if that could become a real possibility."

James applauded Montgomery's ownership role by posting on Twitter: "So proud of this Queen. This is everything we are about!"

Montgomery recently announced her retirement from the league after 11 seasons and two WNBA championships.

— Associated Press

NFL

Niners GM expects Garoppolo as QB

The San Francisco 49ers are reportedly interested in Houston Texans' quarterback Deshaun Watson. They may have even had a chance to sign Tom Brady before he signed with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 2020.

The 49ers' reported interest in a quarterback would seem to indicate their dissatisfaction with Jimmy Garoppolo after the team posted a 6-10 record in 2020, raising the possibility of replacing him in 2021. However, San Francisco general manager John Lynch expressed confidence that Garoppolo will be the team's starting quarterback in 2021.

Lynch was asked if Garoppolo is healthy, is there any doubt in his mind that he will be the team's starting quarterback in Week 1.

"No, not at all," Lynch said Wednesday on the Eye Test For Two podcast. "I really believe that."

The 49ers have been very good when Garoppolo starts. They are 22-8 when he has started in regular season games and they reached Super Bowl 54 following their 13-3 season in 2019.

The problem for the 49ers and Garoppolo is keeping him on the field. Garoppolo has missed 23 games due to injury since the start of the 2018 season and he missed 10 games due to high ankle sprains in 2020.

"When he's healthy, he's played at a high level," Lynch said Wednesday on the Eye Test For Two podcast.

— The Oregonian

FOOTBALL

Redmond's new pro team looking for local talent

BY BRIAN RATHBONE
The Bulletin

Football players chasing professional dreams will be making their way to the First Interstate Bank Center in Redmond in hopes of landing on the Oregon High Desert Storm's training camp roster.

Central Oregon's new professional indoor football team will hold a combine-style tryout Saturday to help round out the 40-person roster when the team begins training camp in mid-April in preparation for its inaugural season in the Ameri-

can West Football Conference.

The High Desert Storm have already signed 11 players to their roster, most of whom have played college football, and some who have professional experience. The team's first signee, wide receiver L.J. Castile, played college football at the University of Houston, and played in four preseason games for the Cleveland Browns after competing in various arena football leagues.

When the team kicks off its season against the Idaho (Nampa) Horsemen on May 8,

"It is always about getting local talent because that gets butts in the seats. But this is also about us competing for a championship."

— Keith Evans, High Desert Storm coach

21 players will suit up. But even the players who have already been signed must earn their spot on the active roster.

"I am bringing about 40 people into training camp, some are signed, but none are guaranteed a spot on the team," said High Desert Storm coach Keith Evans. "These kids who are signed are trying to get to the next level. This is not semi-pro, not even close."

Athletes will be clocked with a 40-yard dash time and will perform an assortment of agility drills, similar to an NFL combine. There will also be a conditioning test and a variety of one-on-one drills for coaches to assess the prospects.

Evans is hoping someone flashes some speed and passes the eye test.

There are at least 40 participants expected at Saturday's tryout, which will include athletes from Central Oregon, the Portland area and out of state. While there are advantages to bringing in athletes from Central Oregon, finding the best players to field a winning team is the priority.

"It is always about getting local talent because that gets butts in the seats," Evans said.

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WOMEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Revenge game

Oregon State's maturing, retooled team eager to show December performance against Oregon was a one-off

BY NICK DASCHSEL
The Oregonian

Seventy-seven days separate the games, but it doesn't seem possible it was just over two months ago when Oregon routed Oregon State 79-59.

The Ducks could have named the score on Dec. 13 in Gill Coliseum. It was that one-sided. Oregon was up 21 points at halftime, and led by as many as 29 points in the second half.

For Oregon State to make up that much ground and catch the Ducks, it seems the page would have to turn to next season. Yet here we are, in late February, and most following the programs have to say Sunday's 3 p.m. game in Eugene is a toss-up.

Some might even look at the events in Pauley Pavilion last weekend and claim, advantage Beavers. On Feb. 19, then-No. 8 UCLA manhandled Oregon 83-56. Two days later, Oregon State led for more than 28 minutes and handed the Bruins a 71-64 loss.

"It's going to be a battle. It's not going to be a 20-point game like last time," Oregon coach Kelly Graves said.

What happened?



Bryan Byerly/Utah Athletics file

Oregon State's Talia von Oelhoffen (22) looks for space around Utah's Niyah Becker on Sunday, Jan. 31, 2021, in Salt Lake City. Von Oelhoffen has been a difference maker for the Beavers since arriving on campus mid-season.

"It's going to be a battle. It's not going to be a 20-point game like last time."

— Kelly Graves, Oregon women's basketball coach

Oregon State grew up. And added a big piece since the first Oregon game that completely changed the Beavers' backcourt.

Both teams had inexperienced rosters heading into that Dec. 13 game, but the Ducks had a team full of 5-star freshmen and key transfers eager to show what they could do. Oregon outscored OSU 36-9 from 3-point range, and had 25 assists on 31 overall baskets.

It got worse before it got better for Oregon State. The Beavers lost to Washington State in Pullman on Dec. 19, then the following day put the program on pause for nearly four weeks because of a COVID-19

outbreak.

When OSU returned to action, it immediately lost to Arizona and Washington State, running the Beavers' losing streak to a rare five games.

But along the way, the roster began to mature. Transfer forward Ellie Mack found her place. Freshman Sasha Goforth began to blossom on defense. Jelena Mitrovic, a 6-foot-9 center, became a key substitute. Senior guard Aleah Goodman emerged as one of the Pac-12's top talents.

After sinking to 3-5 at one point, the Beavers have won five of six games heading into Sunday's showdown in Eugene.

"It will be kind of a cool comparison because we were so fresh and new the first time," Goodman said. "We're finally getting into a little bit of a rhythm."

See **Revenge** / B3

MLB

Brewers' Yelich eager for fresh start

BY STEVE MEGARGEE
Associated Press

Milwaukee Brewers outfielder Christian Yelich has never believed the results of one season have any carryover effect into the next year.

He didn't think that when he was coming off an MVP season in 2018 or a second straight batting title in 2019. Nor does he feel that way that now as he tries bouncing back from the most disappointing season of his career.

"Good or bad, the previous year really doesn't mean anything," the 29-year-old Yelich said Friday from the Brewers' spring training site in Phoenix. "You can't do anything about it. Whether you were the MVP the previous year or you sucked, everybody starts at zero in spring training and the new year. We live in a business where it's, 'What have you done for me lately?' What I've done lately is play terribly, so

I'm looking forward to a fresh start and starting a new year."

During a pandemic-shortened 2020 season in which many stars struggled, Yelich arguably was the most notable example. He hit .205 after winning NL batting titles in 2018 and 2019.

He still produced a .356 on-base percentage thanks to 76 walks and had 12 homers and 22 RBIs in 58 games. But his .786 OPS was his lowest since 2015 and significantly off his NL-leading totals in of 1.000 in 2018 followed by 1.100.

"I thought I was pretty much all-around terrible," Yelich said. "It just wasn't good. But it is what it is. This is baseball. That stuff happens. You can't change it now and you can't do anything about it."

The Brewers hope for Yelich to bounce back after signing him to a \$215 million, nine-year contract prior to last season. Their hopes for a fourth

straight playoff berth depend largely on him returning to form.

But they aren't showing any signs of concern regarding their franchise player. Brewers manager Craig Counsell said at the start of spring training camp that Yelich "wants to be better, and he's going to be better."

"I just don't worry much about Christian," hitting coach Andy Haines said.

A look inside the numbers offers cause for optimism.

Yelich ranked sixth in the majors in hard-hit percentage, behind only Fernando Tatis Jr. Miguel Sano, Ronald Acuña Jr., Corey Seager and Eloy Jiménez. The problem was that he struck out over 30% of the time. Before last season, Yelich had struck out in only 19.6% of his career plate appearances.

He said Friday he has a few ideas over what went wrong and feels he now has a handle



Jae C. Hong/AP

Milwaukee Brewers' Christian Yelich gets ready for batting practice during the team's spring training workout in Phoenix, Arizona, on Tuesday. Yelich is looking for a bounce-back season after slumping in 2020.

on the situation, though he declined to go into specifics. Yelich also says he spent time this offseason working with Haines in Nashville, Tennessee.

While Yelich hasn't used the unusual circumstances of 2020's pandemic-delayed sea-

son as an excuse, he acknowledged that "whatever routine you had last year pretty much got thrown out the window." Even before the pandemic started, Yelich already was having a different type of year.

See **Yelich** / B3