

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

RB from Texas commits to OSU

The Oregon State Beavers have a long tradition of finding hidden gems and molding them into elite college football players.

No one embodied that more than Jesuit High School graduate-turned-Oregon State walk-on-turned-2005 Biletnikoff winner Mike Hass.

But it's possible the more endearing, program-altering recruiting discovery were brothers James and Jacquizz Rodgers, the latter of which ran for 8,246 yards and a Texas high school record 135 touchdowns from 2004-2007 before graduating in spring 2008.

So, it stands to reason Beaver Nation may have a soft spot for talented, uber-productive, under-the-radar Texas running backs.

On Monday, Jonathan Smith added one into the fold, as 247Sports three-star prospect Damien Martinez committed to Oregon State over Georgia Tech and Kansas.

He is rated the nation's No. 79 running back and the No. 150 prospect in Texas.

But that doesn't tell the 5-foot-10, 220-pound ball-carrier's whole story.

Last season at Lewisville High School (Texas), Martinez ran the ball 232 times for 2,010 yards (8.7 yards per carry) and 30 touchdowns.

Martinez projects as a solid, physical 1-2 punch alongside shifty class of 2021 ball-carrier Damiir Collins, the headliner of last year's haul.

Martinez is the second class of 2022 commitment for Oregon State in less than a week, as he joins Rivals four-star inside linebacker Melvin Jordan (Florida).

—The Oregonian

NFL DRAFT

Ex-Duck Sewell projected at No. 5

Penei Sewell is considered not only the best offensive lineman in the 2021 NFL draft, he's also among the best athletes in the draft.

ESPN draft analyst Mel Kiper, Jr. hasn't wavered much regarding the former Oregon Ducks' star offensive lineman in his mock drafts. Kiper has the tackle being selected at No. 5 by the Cincinnati Bengals in his latest mock draft released Tuesday.

"This was the toughest call for me. It came down to Sewell and wide receiver Ja'Marr Chase, who knows (Bengals' quarterback) Joe Burrow well from their time together at LSU," Kiper said. "Ultimately, the Bengals' offensive line was such a disaster that I don't think they can pass on Sewell, who should start immediately at one of the tackle spots."

Other mock drafts have the Bengals selecting Chase with the No. 5 pick. Burrow and Chase were teammates during the Tigers' historic run to the national championship during the 2019 season.

Kiper cites the need to protect Burrow as the higher priority after he suffered a season-ending knee injury while being sacked during his rookie season. Burrow was sacked 32 times in 10 games in 2020.

The three-day NFL draft begins April 29.

—The Oregonian

RUNNING

'THOUGHT THAT WAS IT'

Olympic-hopeful runner recalls Boulder store shooting



David Zalubowski/AP

Runner Maggie Montoya is shown as she trains with fellow runners at a park on the east side of Boulder, Colorado, on Friday. The Olympic hopeful was working in the pharmacy at the King Soopers supermarket in Colorado on March 22 when 10 people were killed in the mass shooting.

BY PAT GRAHAM

Associated Press

BOULDER, Colo. — Inside a small room where she and four others were hiding from a gunman just steps away from their locked door, Olympic hopeful Maggie Montoya made a quiet and emotional phone call to her parents.

Just to tell them one last time that she loved them. "Because I honestly thought," Montoya softly said, "that was it."

The 25-year-old distance runner was working in the pharmacy at the King Soopers supermarket in Boulder, Colorado, on March 22 when 10 people were killed, including a police officer, in a mass shooting.

For a harrowing hour or so, she and those with her waited in the room — growing more and more

"There was so much gunfire. I just thought, 'I don't know how many shooters there are.'"

"We were just waiting for the moment that they were going to hop the counter in the pharmacy and be able to get into the room with us."

— Runner Maggie Montoya

fearful that a constantly ringing pharmacy phone outside their door would betray their location — until they were escorted to safety by the SWAT team after the shooter was arrested.

The next day, Montoya was picked up by her dad and taken home to Rogers, Arkansas — to be with family and remember those who lost their lives.

To escape even for a moment on long runs with her boyfriend as she trains for the 10,000 meters at the U.S. Olympic Trials in June in Eugene.

To emotionally mend from that time she spent behind a metal door where she could hear everything, including the chilling voice of the gunman.

And to forget this image: Bloody footprints close to that door that she was later told likely belonged to the wounded gunman.

"Being home definitely helped me separate and work through everything that had just happened," she said.

That Monday afternoon, Montoya was just a few hours into her shift following an exciting weekend during which she finished seventh at the USA Track & Field 15-kilometer championships in Florida.

See **Running** / A7

NBA COMMENTARY

No cheering in the press box? Kobe turning Mamba changed that

BY BILL PLASCHKE

Los Angeles Times

The broken Kobe Bryant bricked his first five shots, yet for the next two hours the Lakers legend kept shooting, shooting, shooting.

It was as if he knew he was aiming at forever.

Once the scoring started, the packed Staples Center crowd began chanting, then cheering, then roaring, constantly roaring, creating the most deafening din in the building's history.

It was as if they knew this love would have to last forever.

There is a strict rule against cheering in the press box, yet when all the shooting and scoring multiplied into something mystical, a certain columnist jumped to his feet and screamed.

It was as if I knew I would be seeing this forever.

The magic of Kobe Bryant's 60-point final game against the Utah Jazz five years ago was so plain, so pervasive, so ... astounding, it was as if everyone involved knew the unknowable.

That this would be the last memory. That this would be the indelible portrait. That this would be a forever farewell.

Bryant and Los Angeles would come together briefly for a two-jersey retirement ceremony a year later, but never again. He will not hear the cheers at his Staples Center statue unveiling. He will not give a speech at his Basketball Hall of Fame induction ceremony. He will never



Mark J. Terrill/AP file

Los Angeles Lakers forward Kobe Bryant waves to the crowd during a ceremony before Bryant's last NBA game against Utah, five years ago in Los Angeles. He scored 60 points in the game.

have a chance to connect with the crowd on slow walks to his courtside seat for upcoming decades of Lakers playoff games.

His death in January 2020 ensured that the final game of his career would, for most, be the last real vision anyone had of the most glowing athlete in Los Angeles history.

In that, it was absolutely perfect. For that, it was heavenly scripted.

Even though it didn't involve a championship, it was inarguably one of greatest Lakers moments ever, because it was about something far bigger. It was about the final framing and hanging of a legacy. It was about that priceless chance for one last hug, for one more goodbye.

"I can't believe this actually happened," Bryant said afterward. "I'm still in shock about it."

Five years later, that shock remains.

He threw up 50 shots — 50 shots! — the most in the NBA since they started keeping track of such things more than three decades earlier.

Of his 22 baskets, 18 were made with a defender in his face, and 16 were made without a direct pass, meaning he basically took on the entire Jazz team by himself.

His 60 points were the most in the NBA that season, all scored by a 37-year-old man who could barely move.

Remember that seemingly outrageous two-year, \$48.5-million contract he was given at the frail end of his career?

Those final hours paid that bill.

"I gave my soul to this game," he said. "There's nothing else I can give."

See **Kobe** / A6

COMMENTARY

Olympic boycott chatter shouldn't go any further

BY TIM DAHLBERG

AP Sports Columnist

It may have been a slip of the tongue, or perhaps a bit of miscommunication in a new administration.

That's little consolation to hundreds of potential Olympians around the country. Just to hear chatter in the nation's capital about a possible boycott of the Winter Olympics in China had to be enough to alarm athletes already deep in preparation for the games.

Thankfully, there doesn't seem to be any groundswell of support for the idea of boycotting the games, which are scheduled to take place just 10 months from now. The U.S. State Department suggested earlier this month that an Olympic boycott was among the possibilities because of human rights issues in China, but a senior official said later that keeping the U.S. team home has not been discussed.

Here's hoping it doesn't enter the conversation again.

"For an Olympic athlete, a boycott is an absolute tragedy," track great Edwin Moses said. "We only get that one shot every four years."

Moses hasn't run in an Olympics since 1988, though he's got a unique insight into boycotts. When he was dominating the 400-meter hurdles for the better part of two decades he seemed to run into one every time he set his sights on the Olympics.

The boycott in 1988 in Seoul was so small he struggled to remember the nations involved. The one in Moscow eight years

earlier was so big that it almost surely cost him a gold medal.

Moses still managed to win gold medals in Montreal in 1976 and Los Angeles in 1984. But even the greatest hurdler ever couldn't win when he wasn't allowed to run.

"We couldn't even watch the Moscow Olympics because they weren't televised," Moses said in a phone interview with The Associated Press. "I took a midsummer break, went to California, and laid on the beach."

It was probably best that Moses didn't watch. His stomach might have turned had he seen the 400-meter hurdles gold won in 48.70, more than a second slower than the winning time he ran in 1976.

Two weeks before the 1980 games he broke his own world record in a meet in Milan, winning so easily that the other hurdlers are barely in the picture after he cleared the last hurdle.

Moses was lucky in some respects because he was so good for so long that his career spanned four different Olympics. He missed just one, the 1980 games in Moscow, after President Jimmy Carter ordered the U.S. team to boycott because the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan.

A lot of his potential teammates for Moscow weren't as fortunate. Many lost their only chance for Olympic glory when the games became caught up in cold war politics. Two out of every three never got a chance to compete in an Olympics again.

See **Boycott** / A6