

NFL

Seahawks sign DE Aldon Smith

SEATTLE — Aldon Smith is back in the NFC West, this time with the team he spent the early part of the decade tormenting — the Seattle Seahawks.

The Seahawks on Thursday announced they had signed Smith, a former All-Pro with the 49ers. Terms of the deal were not disclosed but the NFL Network reported it will be for one year.

The signing came after Smith, 31, had an official visit with the Seahawks on Wednesday.

Smith spent the 2020 season with the Dallas Cowboys, his first season since being reinstated from a four-year suspension for various substance abuse-related issues. Among them: an arrest for DUI and hit-and-run in 2015 that prompted his release from the San Francisco 49ers and brought to a screeching halt a career that began with Smith considered one of the best pass rushers in the NFL.

A 2011 first-round pick out of Missouri, Smith was an All-Pro with the 49ers in 2012 when he had a career-high 19.5 sacks in helping lead San Francisco to the Super Bowl. He had 14 as a rookie in 2011 and then 8.5 more in 11 games in 2013, posting 42 sacks overall in 43 games from 2011-13.

With the Cowboys last season, Smith had five sacks in 16 games. Three of those sacks came against the Seahawks in Seattle in Week 3.

Smith now adds to a Seattle edge-rushing group that includes recently re-signed Carlos Dunlap and Benson Mayowa, and second-year players Darrell Taylor and Alton Robinson.

— *The Seattle Times*

MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL**USC avoids major NCAA penalties**

LOS ANGELES — The NCAA hit Southern California's men's basketball program with two years' probation on Thursday because a former assistant coach violated NCAA ethics rules when he accepted a bribe to steer players to a business management company.

The Division I Committee on Infractions announced the penalties, which include a \$5,000 fine and a 1% loss of the private school's basketball budget. The probation, which does not include a postseason ban, runs until April 14, 2023.

Tony Bland, the former associate head coach under coach Andy Enfield, wasn't mentioned by name in the NCAA report. He was arrested by FBI agents in September 2017. USC fired Bland four months later. He pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit bribery in January 2019 and cooperated with the NCAA's investigation.

As part of his plea deal with federal prosecutors, Bland acknowledged accepting a \$4,100 bribe during a July 2017 meeting with financial advisers and business managers in exchange for directing players to retain their services when they entered the pro ranks. He received two years' probation.

USC is the fourth school involved in the federal investigation of conspiracy and bribery in college basketball to be punished by the NCAA.

— *Associated Press*

PREP GIRLS GOLF

A change in approach

Ridgeview's Dietz finds groove as Summit's Garcia wins opening tourney

BY BRIAN RATHBONE
The Bulletin

REDMOND —

As a sophomore member of the Ridgeview girls golf team that finished fourth at the 5A state tournament in 2019, Logan Dietz has a new perspective on golf during her senior year.

And the new outlook has turned her into a better golfer.

As a young high school golfer, the primary goal was scoring as low as possible. But once the COVID-19 pandemic hit — which resulted in a canceled 2020 season and a 2021 season that is limited to regional play without a state tournament — simply enjoying the game and soaking in the memories of her final high school season became the main focuses.

"Sophomore year I was all about getting my score as low as possible," said Dietz. "It wasn't really to have fun and enjoy it, it was more doing what I had to get done. This year it is more having fun and the results are what I want them to be."

The change in the approach has not gone unnoticed by Ridgeview coach Guy Millington, who has seen Dietz blossom from a talented freshman into one of the leaders of the team.

"When we had our spring season canceled she



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Ridgeview's Logan Dietz attempts a putt at the 11th green while playing at The Greens at Redmond on Wednesday.

was a true leader," Millington added. "She is the one texting to make sure to get to the golf course, what do we need to practice. She has been nothing but positive this past year with golf."

The Ridgeview coach knew that they were getting a golfer with skill, as Dietz's father Steve is the men's club champion at Juniper Golf Course. The father and daughter have been playing in tournaments together throughout the past year.

Over the past year, Millington has noticed a golfer

who is much more at ease, even after a bad shot. For some golfers, one bad shot or a bad hole can lead to another one ... and another one ... and another.

That was a problem that Dietz once had, her coach said, but now she is able to move on from a bad shot.

"She has totally taken a 180 to her approach of the game," said Millington. "She is enjoying it rather than worrying about it. She is relaxed when she is out there."

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NBA



Don Ryan/AP file

Portland's LaMarcus Aldridge, left, maneuvers against Toronto's Amir Johnson during a game in Portland in 2014. Aldridge announced his sudden retirement on Thursday.

Former Blazers standout LaMarcus Aldridge retires

BY JOE FREEMAN
The Oregonian

LaMarcus Aldridge left the NBA on Thursday the same way he left the Portland Trail Blazers six years ago.

With a surreal and stunning tweet.

The man who patrolled power forward for the Blazers for nine years announced he was retiring after a distinguished career that included seven All-Star berths, five All-NBA selections and 19,951 points. Aldridge, who has played throughout his career with Wolff-Parkinson-White Syndrome, a heart disorder, said it was an irregular heart-

beat that led to his abrupt retirement.

"My last game, I played while dealing with an irregular heartbeat," Aldridge said in a statement on Twitter. "Later on that night, my rhythm got even worse which really worried me even more."

"Though I'm better now, what I felt with my heart that night was still one of the scariest things I've experienced. With that being said, I've made the difficult decision to retire from the NBA. For 15 years, I've put basketball first, and now, it is time to put my health and family first."

See **Aldridge** / B4

MLS | SEASON PREVIEW

Season starts with hopes of normalcy

BY ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

Major League Soccer embarks on the 2021 season with a new labor agreement in hand, the return of two big stars, a new team in Austin, Texas, and lessons learned from 2020.

There still won't be full crowds in most places but there are reasons to be optimistic for the league's 26th season as more Americans get vaccinated against the coronavirus.

The league was two games into the season last March when the COVID-19 pandemic shut down sports in the United States. Play resumed in the summer with the MLS is Back tournament in a bubble in Florida before an abbreviated season held in local markets. The Columbus Crew emerged as the MLS Cup champions.

MLS estimated losses at nearly \$1 billion last season, mostly the result of playing in empty stadiums and charter flights for teams.

While that will likely improve, the league is expecting another financial hit. As a result, MLS invoked the force majeure clause in the collective bargaining agreement last year.

After a rather contentious back-and-forth — the players had already agreed to concessions in 2020 — a new agree-

ment was struck in February that will run through the 2027 season.

The season kicks off Friday night with a pair of games: San Jose at Houston and Minnesota at Seattle. The league's newest team, Austin FC, will play its inaugural game Saturday against LAFC in Los Angeles.

"MLS has always been about momentum," Commissioner Don Garber said. "More teams, more stadiums, more fans, more players and players that are representing all the exciting activity that takes place on the field. We had the momentum going into last year, and then clearly that got put on pause a bit with the pandemic. Now that momentum has kicked back in."

Stars return

It appears two of the league's top stars, LAFC's Carlos Vela and Atlanta's Josef Martinez, will be back.

Vela, who had an MLS-record 34 goals in 2019, missed the MLS is Back tournament because of his wife's pregnancy and the birth of their child. Then he was hampered by injuries and appeared in only eight regular-season games.

Martinez was knocked out of last year's season opener with an ACL injury that required multiple surgeries.

He's not quite at full strength heading into United's opener, but close.

"Day-by-day, I am stronger. Obviously not 100%, because I think I'll get there once I start playing more games. But I feel OK," Martinez said.

New team

Austin FC joins this year after overcoming challenges presented by the pandemic, like pulling together a roster and staff in the Zoom era, selling 15,000 season tickets and building a \$260 million stadium. They were assisted by a bit of star power: Oscar winner Matthew McConaughey is the team's minister of culture.

"This is a city on the rise that marries perfectly with a league on the rise. There's so much energy, there's so much pent up demand in that city. You think about the fact we're the first professional sports league to be in that city," Garber said.

Charlotte joins the league next year and St. Louis will join in 2023.

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