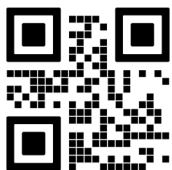


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NBA

Blazers' Lillard to have ab surgery

Portland Trail Blazers guard Damian Lillard will undergo surgery on Thursday to repair his injured abdomen and could miss the remainder of the season, according to reports.

The Athletic's Shams Charania and ESPN's Brian Windhorst have both reported the news.

Yahoo Sports' Chris Haynes reported soon after that Lillard would be out at least 6-8 weeks.

The All-Star guard already has missed 11 games this season for the Blazers (16-24).

The injury has frequently bothered Lillard in the past but usually subsides early in the season, but not this season.

Lillard got off to one of the worst starts of his career to begin the season and then the abdomen injury started to bother him.

He first sat out to rest his abdomen on Nov. 14 at Denver. He has repeatedly made attempts to return to the lineup, even taking a cortisone shot at one point, with mixed results on the court. Amid Lillard's injury and performance struggles, the Blazers lost his back court mate C.J. McCollum to a collapsed lung on Dec. 4.

As if that weren't enough, the Blazers then dealt with a rash of COVID-19 cases that depleted the lineup and even forced coach Chauncey Billups to miss time.

To start the new year, Lillard was shelved once again. The Blazers are 3-2 since the start of 2022 and begin a six-game road trip Thursday at Denver.

— The Oregonian

INSIDE

Baseball — The New York Yankees promote Rachel Balkovec to be the manager of their Low A affiliate in Florida. Story on **A6**.

NFL

Weddle unretires, joins the Rams

LOS ANGELES — Safety Eric Weddle is coming out of retirement to rejoin the Los Angeles Rams for the playoffs.

Weddle turned 37 last week, and he hasn't played in the NFL since the 2019 season, but the Rams signed him to their practice squad Wednesday to address their glaring need at safety.

Leading tackler Jordan Fuller is out for the playoffs with a right ankle injury, and fellow starting safety Taylor Rapp is in the concussion protocol.

Weddle, who played college ball Utah, retired in February 2020 after one season with the Rams in which he made 108 tackles and called the defense's signals. The Los Angeles-area native spent his first 12 NFL seasons with the San Diego Chargers and Baltimore Ravens before his year with the Rams. He has 29 career interceptions.

The NFC West champion Rams (12-5) return to practice Thursday ahead of their visit from the Arizona Cardinals (11-6) on Monday night. Cardinals coach Kliff Kingsbury noted Weddle's surprising comeback.

"All-Pro, Pro Bowl, one of the smartest defensive players that anybody ever speaks about. If anybody can do it, there's no doubt he can," Kingsbury said.

— Associated Press

OUTDOORS

Possible world-record fish landed on Deschutes



Submitted photo

Bend's Alex Dietz and his state record whitefish he landed on the Lower Deschutes near Warm Springs on Dec. 19. The fish might be a new world record.

Bulletin staff report

Bend's Alex Dietz was fly-fishing with an egg pattern on the Deschutes River outside Warm Springs on Dec. 19 when he hooked a 5-pound, 12-ounce, 24-inch-long mountain whitefish with a 14-inch girth, according to an Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife press release on Wednesday.

"My fishing buddy Jason Schreiber saw that I had a big fish on and came over to check out what was going on," Dietz was quoted in the release. "We took pictures of it and kind of laughed about it for awhile. I was getting ready to let the fish go when we realized this thing could be a state record."

Dietz said he is almost exclusively a catch-and-release

angler, but he kept this fish, bringing it to Newport Avenue Market in Bend for an official weigh-in on an Oregon Dept. of Agriculture scale as required under the record rules.

ODFW certified the fish as the new state record mountain whitefish on Jan. 7, beating the previous record: a 4-pound, 14-ounce mountain whitefish caught at Crane Prairie Reservoir in 1994.

The mountain whitefish might actually be a world record as the current record is a 5-pound, 8-ounce whitefish taken in 1995 from Albert's River near Calgary, Alberta, according to the International Game Fish Association. Dietz is submitting the information to the IGFA to be certified.

Dietz grew up in Bend and

has been fishing since he was in high school. He usually targets trout and steelhead. His record fish is being taxidermized for display at his home.

Dietz said Dec. 19 was the first time he'd been fishing since he and his wife Andrea welcomed their first child, a baby girl, on Nov. 15, 2021.

"December 19 was the first time I got the green light from my wife to go fishing, so big thanks to her, too," Dietz said.

Mountain whitefish are a native migratory fish in Oregon and are distributed throughout most of the western United States and Canada, according to the ODFW. These fish are typically found in cool mountain streams, but also live in lakes.

See **Outdoors** / A7

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL

Calm and collected

Composure is an early-season theme for Mountain View High

BY BRIAN RATHBONE • The Bulletin

When South Salem's Maddie Dustin knocked down a 3-pointer to erase a nine-point fourth quarter deficit and tie the game 42-42 with 30 seconds left, there was a sense of comfort among the Mountain View girls basketball team.

Games coming down to the final possessions have been a familiar theme for the Cougars 10 games into the season. In their five games decided by 10 points or less, they have won four.

INSIDE

• High school scores and results in Scoreboard, **A6**

"They don't get too rattled. We have been in a lot of close games this year," said first-year Mountain View coach Jon Corbett. "At the end of close games they seem to calm down and finish things off."

And Tuesday night, Mountain View (7-3, 1-0 Mountain Valley Conference) continued the seasonlong trend against South Salem, a program that won the conference in two of the last three seasons, with a 46-42 win over the Saxons (6-4, 0-1). The Cougars scored the final four points to secure the victory in their MVC opener.

See **Mountain View** / A7



Brian Rathbone/The Bulletin

Mountain View's Avery Andrews dribbles to the basket during the Cougars' 46-42 win over South Salem on Tuesday night at Mountain View High School in Bend.

NBA | PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS

Simons seizing opportunity with Lillard out

BY ANNE M. PETERSON

Associated Press

PORTLAND — While Portland's Damian Lillard remains sidelined with an abdominal injury, Anfernee Simons is seizing the opportunity to show he has the abilities to be an everyday starter in the NBA.

Simons' emergence has given the Trail Blazers a spark in an otherwise bleak season. Just 16-24 and sitting in 10th place in the Western Conference, Portland is missing both Lillard and his backcourt partner C.J. McCollum because of injuries. On Wednesday it was reported that Lillard will undergo abdominal surgery Thursday and will be re-evaluated in 6-8 weeks.

"That's my main goal really, just to show that I can be that

guy," Simons said. "So that's what I'm trying to do."

Simons had 23 points and a career-high 11 assists in Monday night's 114-108 victory over the talent-laden Brooklyn Nets, who were missing James Harden but played Kyrie Irving for the second time this season.

The win capped a home-stretch during which the Blazers went 3-2. Simons kicked off the homestand with a career-high 43 points in a 136-131 victory over Atlanta Jan. 3.

Known by his nickname Ant, the 22-year-old Simons has averaged 27.8 points and 7.6 assists over those five games, scoring 20 or more points in four of them.

"I think he's on his way," Portland first-year coach

Chauncey Billups said when asked if Simons has proven himself to be an NBA starter. "This stretch here without Dame is going to be big for Ant. I know what I feel about him, but it's not about me, it's about proving himself to everybody else. He's going to have to maintain that consistency."

He started each of those games in the absence of Lillard, who has struggled this season with lower abdominal tendinopathy. Lillard, a six-time All-Star and the Blazers' stalwart leader, has been bothered by the injury since the Tokyo Olympics and had already missed 11 games prior to the announcement that he would have surgery.

See **Simons** / A7



Craig Mitchell/Idyer/AP

Portland Trail Blazers' Anfernee Simons (1) drives to the basket in front of Sacramento Kings' De'Aaron Fox Sunday in Portland.