

Teams set for the 2017 NWSL playoffs

The Portland Thorns are hosting a home playoff game for the second year in a row in the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL). The team's semifinal match against the Orlando Pride will be held at Providence Park on Saturday, October 7 at 12:30pm. In the other semifinal game, the North Carolina Courage take on the Chicago Red Stars at Sahlen's Stadium at WakeMed Soccer Park in North Carolina on Saturday, October 8 at 12:30pm.

Both playoff games, as well as the championship match on Saturday, October 14 at Orlando City Stadium, are televised live on Lifetime.

In an interesting twist of regular-season scheduling, the four teams that had secured playoff berths prior to the final weekend of league games played each other, with results of the two matches impacting final placements in the playoff bracket.

First-place North Carolina (16-7-1, 49 points) — which features Abby Erceg, Lynn Williams, Yuri Kawamura (currently on the disabled list), and others — fell 2-3 to the Orlando Pride (11-6-7, 40 points) — which includes Marta, Chioma Ubogagu, Alex Morgan, and others — in front of 7,020 fans. Stalwart defender Erceg has anchored the Courage backline this season, holding opposing teams to only 22 goals, the second-fewest allowed in the league.

At Providence Park in front of a sellout crowd of 21,144 fans, second-place Thorns FC (14-5-5, 47 points) — featuring Nadia Nadim, Christine Sinclair, Tobin Heath, and others — defeated the Chicago Red Stars (11-7-6, 39 points) — which includes Yuki Nagasato, Sofia Huerta, Danielle Colaprico, and others — by a score of 3-1.

Orlando's win coupled with Chicago's loss allowed the Pride to jump into third place, pushing the Red Stars down to fourth place.

The Thorns ended the regular season just two points behind North Carolina, who took home the NWSL Shield, which is awarded to the club with the best regular-season record.

Seattle Reign FC, whose roster



NWSL PLAYOFFS. Nadia Nadim of the Portland Thorns dribbles the ball during the team's final regular-season National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) match against the Chicago Red Stars at Providence Park on September 30, 2017. The Thorns, who finished league play in second place, are hosting a home playoff game for the second year in a row. The semifinal match against the Orlando Pride will be held at Providence Park on Saturday, October 7 at 12:30pm. (AR Photo/Jan Landis)

includes Nahomi "Naho" Kawasumi, Rumi Utsugi, Megan Rapinoe, and others, ended its season in fifth place with 34 points and an overall record of 9-8-7, missing the playoffs. Naho topped the NWSL assist chart this season with nine.

Sky Blue FC, a club with players such as Sam Kerr, Tasha Kai, Christie Pearce, and others, will also be watching the playoffs from home despite multiple-goal performances by Kerr and her squad in the latter part of the season.

The Australian playmaker scored her 17th goal of the year over the weekend, which broke the all-time NWSL record for most goals in a single season. Kerr already owns the all-time NWSL record for most career goals, with her most-recent tally placing her at 43 goals overall.

Sky Blue finished just a point behind the Reign in sixth place with a 10-11-3 record and 33 points.

The Thorns squad broke several club and league records this year, including two involving home attendance. In 12 matches held at Providence Park, 211,830 fans — an average of 17,653 per game — wildly

cheered on their team. The 2017 numbers resulted in new NWSL records for both total and average attendance in one season.

Portland this year also had the best home record — 10 wins, 1 loss, and 1 tie — in the league, which set a new single-season record for home wins at Providence Park and stands as the best home record in the NWSL this year. In addition, the team allowed the least number of goals against — 20 — and goalkeeper Adrianna Franch posted a league-leading 11th shutout during the regular season.

Portland, North Carolina, Orlando, and Chicago are now the four clubs vying for the 2017 NWSL championship. Past winners have included the Thorns in the inaugural 2013 season, FC Kansas City in 2014 and 2015, and the Western New York Flash (now the North Carolina Courage) in 2016.

Providence Park is located at the corner of S.W. 18th Avenue and Morrison Street in Portland. To learn more, or to buy tickets for the October 7 semifinal match, call (503) 553-5555 or visit <www.portlandthornsfc.com>.

Long-endangered snow leopard upgraded to "vulnerable" status

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considered "endangered."

Using improved methods for assessing the cats' population, experts estimated there are at least about 4,000 in the wild, though there could be as many as 10,000.

Scientists have managed to survey only a small fraction of the animal's high-mountain range, an area covering some 695,000 square miles crossing into 12 countries in Asia.

Doing the research "is difficult," said Peter Zahler, coordinator of the snow leopard program at the Wildlife Conservation Society, who was involved in the multi-agency team's assessment. "It involves an enormous amount of work in some of the most remote and inhospitable regions of the world."

New technologies, including camera traps and satellite collaring, are "giving us better information about where snow leopards are and how far they range," he said.

Some positive developments included an increase in the number of protected areas, as well as stepped-up efforts by local communities to

protect the animals from poachers.

Communities were also working to prevent cases of local herdsmen retaliating for lost livestock by building predator-proof livestock corrals, team member Rodney Jackson of the Snow Leopard Conservancy group said in a statement.

Still, the animals are hunted for their thick fur and bones. They also face declining numbers of wild prey, as domestic livestock have degraded grasslands.

Japanese video gaming adapts new tech for familiar titles

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division, said Japanese culture is at the root of visual storytelling that began with manga comic books, went on to animation and films, and now allows for an interactive element in games.

Many people used to play games, Morita added, but they have stopped as they got older. But with new technology like the virtual-reality headset that Sony has developed and an array of software products coming out, the time may be finally ripe for the Japanese game industry to reap

Whether they might be impacted by global warming remains uncertain. But scientists agree the Himalayas are one of the world's most susceptible regions to climate change.

"Saying snow leopards are now 'vulnerable' rather than 'endangered' doesn't mean they're safe," Zahler said. "It doesn't take much to make large predators disappear from landscapes. We've seen it happen over and over again around the world."

the rewards, he said.

"We want people to once again remember and rediscover the fun of games," said Morita. "We want people to re-experience that joy, that emotion."

Square Enix Holdings Co. president Yosuke Matsuda said his company is putting out the 15th game of the longtime hit "Final Fantasy" series. Long lines formed at its giant booth at the Tokyo Game Show for a chance to try it out.

"Japanese games are loved by the world," he said.

NBA coaches helping create instructional videos

By Tim Reynolds
AP Basketball Writer

MIAMI — National Basketball Association (NBA) coaches are about to start offering instruction to anyone who can get online.

The National Basketball Coaches Association (NBCA) announced it is embarking on a partnership with a company called eCoach to produce instructional videos about the various skills of the game. The content will be offered for the first time this fall.

"This technology and content is unprecedented and will totally change the way we communicate our game to the rest of the world," said Dallas coach Rick Carlisle, the NBCA's president. "In my 12 years as president of the NBCA, this is without question the most exciting endeavor we have been a part of."

Organizers tout the project as an "online basketball university," and there will be a special emphasis on reaching markets in China, India, Brazil, Africa, the Philippines, Australia, and Europe.

Most of the videos will be between two and four minutes, touching on various topics and done differently for varying skill levels. Beginning next year, the videos will be subtitled into many languages.

Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said he thinks it will be a tremendous boost to growing the game, both internationally and in the U.S.

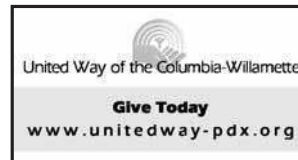
"Kids from the Philippines to China to Europe to South America can access drills to learn fundamentals," Spoelstra said. "I think all of us have been really searching for a way to house all of the fundamentals and basics that are getting lost, particularly in the youth American game with AAU. [We want] to find a way to tap back into that, and then use the coaches at our level to help teach the game and grow the game globally."

Angelina Jolie on her Cambodian epic and the power of family

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says. "This could be Myanmar." But it also concludes Jolie's most massive undertaking — a movie made for an entire country.

"I didn't plan on becoming a director," Jolie says. "But through directing I've had to learn a lot. And I've tried different styles and I've learned different things. When I did *Unbroken*, I was going to the classics that I loved and trying to understand that. This one, I think I finally found something that was just mine, that wasn't something that I was in any way trying to emulate. I was thinking: I know children and I love the way children look at things."



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