

Is it time for patience or time to panic?



SAM BARBEE
FROM THE SIDELINES
Sports reporter

The Seattle Mariners were going to win Tuesday night. They brought this rookie up named Mike Montgomery (where did he come from?) and he threw a heck of a ballgame, tossing six innings of one-run ball. Austin Jackson was 4-for-4 and things appeared to be evening out after Felix Hernandez was shelled the night before.

It would be for naught and turn into a heart-wrenching extra-innings loss to the New York Yankees, when M's closer Fernando Rodney blew a 2-1 lead in the top of the ninth — his third blown save of the year — and eventually losing when some guy I've never heard of hit a three-run dinger in the top of the 11th to beat the Worst Sailors in the World, 5-3. Of the Yankees' five runs that game, four came in the ninth or later.

I'm an optimist. I understand the length and grueling nature of a major league baseball season that's 162 games and six months long. But it's getting difficult. Way too difficult.

If you're a Bad Sailors fan, I urge you to stay away from any sort of Bad Sailors message boards. If you're naturally optimistic, like me, then they will instill a cynicism that you cannot shake. I know, because it's happening to me right now.

Every day after the Seamen play, I go to SeattleTimes.com and scan through what people are talking about. It's usually not good. People are calling for manager Lloyd McClendon's job. People are calling for general manager Jack Zduriencik's job. There is an overwhelming sense there that the M's are in trouble — well, more than in trouble. There's an overwhelming sense that the season is already over.

I don't necessarily think the season is over, but I think the Seamen have to start playing better.

For me, it starts with all-star second baseman Robinson Canó and his underwhelming first couple of months. Many people are retroactively upset about the \$250 million contract he signed last winter. Even then, I knew it was probably too much for a second baseman in his 30s that played in the left-handed-hitting paradise of Yankee Stadium, but Seattle had no choice. It was a similar situation to Nelson Cruz (who's been my favorite player this season). Seattle hasn't been a destination for baseball players since they wore teal hats, and even then it was a stretch. The M's had to do something big, they had to blow all the competition out of the water. They did just that with both of these guys, just one is playing up to his contract figures.

The pitching has been so-so, pretty up-and-down, rather average. It's a little confusing because of how good it was last year, but there was no way in hell it would be that good again this year. Regression is a part of baseball. But it's been a little more severe than even those hoity-toity projections said they were going to be.

Here's something that a lot of people don't or won't agree with: Fernando Rodney isn't the issue. There, I said it. I felt differently Tuesday night, but I've had some time to think about it and I've changed course. I talked about this with my dad and I've seen beat writer Ryan Divish write this: it's tough to stay sharp as a closer when you're pitching two or three times a week. A couple weeks ago — in late May — Rodney had appeared in a handful of games. In a month.

It was something like five appearances in three weeks. That's impossible to handle with any sort of consistency as a closer. He has to pitch more in games. Bullpen sessions mean nothing, realistically. He has to face batters in important situations. That's how he stays mentally sharp. Don't blame Vern, as I call him, blame the Seattle offense that, despite the league-leaguer in on-base plus slugging percentage, is last in the AL in that stat. It's like having, say, Adrian Peterson as your running back and having the worst rushing offense in the NFL. That's hard to do.

Look, I'm not one of those guys who calls for people's jobs. I wouldn't want someone going on the Internet and demand that I lose my job, so I could never do it to anyone except in very specific situations (like Sepp Blatter and FIFA). But it's time for Seattle to start thinking about making some personnel decisions. One has been made, with a rather surprising trade for Mark Trumbo, who either hits the ball 1,000 feet or strikes out. So he's already got the make-up to be a good Seaman.

Man, I am cynical.
— Sam Barbee is the sports reporter for the *Hermiston Herald*. He can be reached at sbarbee@hermistonherald.com

Coffin is leaving, but takes Stanfield support with him

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

Dominique Coffin had until the afternoon to make a decision.

In late April, he had been offered a position as athletic director and head football coach of Cascade (Leavenworth) High School, his alma mater in central Washington. He and his wife, Ashley, had been struggling with the decision. They prayed on it "for a while," and took the entire day to finally make a decision. He called Cascade principal Elia Ala'ilima-Daley, who was also Coffin's mentor in high school, to inform him that he would accept the offer.

"I kinda always knew I wanted to go back eventually," Coffin said. "I wasn't thinking

it was going to be any time soon or didn't want it to be any time soon ... I knew I'd at least apply for it. I was thinking about going home and didn't want to regret it. It was a tough decision for me and my wife to try and figure out if it was time to go back or not."

It was a difficult choice. His plan was to stay in Stanfield as long as he could. He wanted to build something great there and loved the sophomore class. There was talk of Ashley, who works in the Tri-Cities, helping with the Tigers volleyball program, and Coffin, a "big basketball guy" himself, was considering stepping into the vacant boys basketball position. But this was an opportunity he felt like he couldn't pass up.

SEE COFFIN/A7

New faces and changing places in blue and gold

Stanfield fills coaching ranks; two positions still open

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

There is some movement in the athletic department of Stanfield Secondary School.

The first is at the top, Dominique Coffin. Last June, he was hired as the athletic director and head football coach and led the Tigers to a 4-6 (3-5) record, but he

is departing for his alma mater Cascade High School in Leavenworth, Washington.

He said there was an opportunity that comes around "once every 20 years," and he had to take it.

"It's way sooner than I would have liked to leave," Coffin said in an email. "I've loved it at Stanfield, the community, fans, parents, and school have been amazing. It's a bitter sweet situation because my wife and I get to go home, but yet were leav-

SEE STAFF/A7



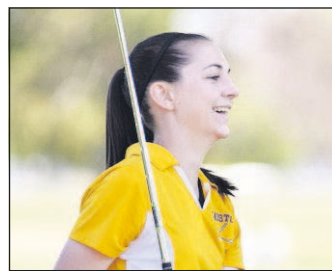
Brea Kestler



Tavin Headings



Jazmin Gutierrez



Madison Welch



Dylan Caldwell



Abi Drotzmann



Amie Zitterkob (left), Andrea Lemus-Cisneros (center) and Berenice Chavez

Caldwell inks with Linfield

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

Ever since Dylan Caldwell can remember, he has dreamed of playing college football. As a member of Hermiston's Grid Kids youth program, he watched Oregon State on television and hoped one day that would be him on a collegiate field.

Now, after three Hermiston first-team all league selections and a state championship, Caldwell's dream is becoming a reality. He will play offensive line next fall for the Linfield Wildcats.

"I'm just excited to make a shot and make a name for myself there," he said.

Competing as a member of the NCAA's Division III, Linfield went 11-2 in 2014 and lost to eventual national champion Wisconsin-Whitewater 20-14 in the semi-finals. Caldwell will likely make the move from tackle inside to guard or center.

He chose Linfield over College of the Pacific in nearby Forest Grove and Tabor College in Kansas, where teammate Luis Santoyo committed to in February. Caldwell liked Linfield's distance from Hermiston, however, and he quickly felt at home. Caldwell wants to teach and coach as an adult, he said. By attending Linfield, he sees an opportunity to continue with a good program and, although he may not play for a year or two, he will learn the game in an intimate environment that will help him later on as a coach, he said.

After transitioning to tackle his sophomore year at Hermiston after playing tight end and defensive end, Caldwell earned first-team all-league honors, which both surprised and began to convince him that he could play in college.

During his junior year, he began talking to recently retired head coach Mark Hodges about the college level in which he should play. Hodges suggested Division III or NAIA, which focused Caldwell's search.

As a junior and senior, Caldwell was again named to the Columbia River Conference's first team. As left tackle, Caldwell started every varsity game in three

SEE CALDWELL/A7

Continuing the dream



Noa Ena



Keegan Crafton



Daisy Risueno



Madisen Ledbetter



Luis Santoyo



Tim Swarat

Students advance to higher education in sport

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

Many students today will walk across a stage, be handed a diploma and turn a tassel on a hat, referring to a centuries-old tradition of recognizing the completion of an academic course load.

For some area students, though, high school graduation means more than just the continuation of their lives, it's also the continuation of their athletic careers. Fifteen athletes from Hermiston and Umatilla — 12 from Hermiston and three from Umatilla — have already signed agree-

ments with various schools to play various sports.

Hermiston

Dylan Caldwell — Football, Linfield College
Keegan Crafton — Basketball, Wenatchee Valley College

Abi Drotzmann — Softball, Linfield College

Noa Ena — Volleyball, Centralia College

Jazmin Gutierrez — Basketball, Pierce College

Tavin Headings — Basketball, George Fox University

Brea Kestler — Volleyball, Southwest Oregon

Community College

Madisen Ledbetter — Softball, Clark College

Daisy Risueno — Soccer, Clark College

Luis Santoyo — Football, Tabor College

Tim Swarat — Cross Country/Track, Northwest Nazarene University

Madison Welch — Golf, Concordia University

Umatilla

Berenice Chavez — Track, Eastern Oregon University

Andrea Lemus-Cisneros — Track, Eastern Oregon University

Amie Zitterkob — Track, Eastern Oregon University

GO SEE IT

Saturday, June 6

Golf
Big River CG closed for Meadowood Springs Fundraiser Tournament

Sunday, June 7

Golf
Big River CG closed for Meadowood Springs Fundraiser Tournament

Baseball
Stanfield @ Richland (AAU)(DH), 3 p.m.

Monday, June 8

Baseball
Hermiston Little League games starting at 5 p.m.
Stanfield vs. Hermiston (AAU), 4 p.m.

Tuesday, June 9

Baseball
Hermiston Little League games starting at 5 p.m.

Wednesday, June 10

Baseball
Hermiston Little League game at 5 p.m.

If you have any other sports events, contact Sam Barbee at sbarbee@hermistonherald.com