

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2011

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1B

Sports shorts

PHS grad Engelson voted All-American

GRESHAM — Rylie Engelson capped off her NWAACC volleyball championship-winning season with Mt. Hood Community College by landing a spot on the the 2011 All-American team for two-year colleges.

FACES



Engelson

Engelson, a sophomore and Pendleton native, was voted a first-team player after her Saints finished the year 35-4 in the NWAACC while winning the league championship over Walla Walla. Engelson took home the all-tournament most valuable player award.

The 5-foot-9 setter and outside hitter was third in the NWAACC in hitting percentage and assisted on 305 kills for her team during season and post-season play. Her strong performance this season has brought in some offers to continue playing collegiate volleyball at the Division-I level.

NCAA agrees to \$500 million deal with ESPN

INDIANAPOLIS — The NCAA has agreed to a \$500 million deal with ESPN to broadcast the championships in many of its sports through the 2023-24 school year. The contract announced Thursday gives the company international rights to the men's basketball tournament. It continues the network's U.S. coverage of the women's basketball tourney and the College World Series for baseball and softball.

ESPN's multimedia platforms will air the championships for seven more sports to increase the total to 24 — adding women's gymnastics, men's and women's fencing, Division I women's lacrosse, Division I men's and women's outdoor track, and women's bowling. There will be more than 600 hours of live programming annually.

"...I would tell it to (Tebow's) face — come check me out in five years, Jack, and you'll know who's the best quarterback."

— Steve Smith
Carolina Panthers receiver, on who is a better QB, the Panthers' Cam Newton or the Broncos' Tim Tebow

THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1918 — Jack Dempsey knocks out Carl Morris in 14 seconds in a heavyweight bout in New Orleans.

1990 — Warren Moon passes for a 527 yards — the second-greatest passing day in NFL history — as the Houston Oilers beat Kansas City 27-10.

Contact us at 541-966-0838 or sports@eastoregonian.com

PENDLETON



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Blue Mountain Community College forward Kyle Davis took a two-year hiatus from basketball after graduating high school in 2007. A Division-I recruit, Davis chose work as a missionary over attending college and playing the game he loved.

Man on a Mission

BMCC sophomore gets second chance at basketball

By AJ MAZZOLINI
East Oregonian

The recruitment letters for Kyle Davis started coming about five years ago. From their letterheads shone the crests of schools like Santa Clara, Montana State and the Air Force Academy.

But none of the schools received the answer they sought; namely, a four-year basketball commitment from Davis. He still has all the letters, though, neatly stacked away at his family home in Las Vegas. They sit there as a memento and a reminder, even now as he plays his final season of basketball at Blue Mountain Community College.

Because instead of answering the queries from coaches, Davis answered another calling when he graduated from Bonanza High School in 2007. He

put athletics aside and dedicated himself to the church, embarking on a two-year mission for God.

"I really did want to play basketball, but I knew I had to set my priorities," said Davis, now a 23-year old forward with the Timberwolves.

For as long as Davis can remember, religion played an intricate role in his life. Raised in a household that observed the teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a post-high school mission for Davis had been a topic of discussion for years. His older brother had participated in a mission as well as many other relatives.

An already difficult decision lay in the young man's hands and the choices were further complicated as college recruiters came calling. They were drawn by Davis' size and ambidextrous dribbling ability.

A natural lefty, Davis stands close to 6 feet, 7 inches barefoot. Encouraged by others who had experienced missionary work, Davis left home six months after graduating high school for Atlanta, the destination of his Mormon mission. He missed the game that, along with church, had been a part of his life throughout childhood.

Season stats



Assists:
2.8/game

Points:
11.25/game

Rebounds:
6.8/game

after graduating high school for Atlanta, the destination of his Mormon mission. He missed the game that, along with church, had been a part of his life throughout childhood.

See MISSIONARY/2B

Ducks run up against Badgers' power

Rose Bowl a clash of offensive game styles

By Jesse Sowa
Albany Democrat-Herald

EUGENE — Eddie Pleasant looks at Wisconsin's massive offensive line and isn't concerned at all.

It's college football, and big players are nothing new.

But that's not to say the Ducks senior rover and his teammates don't have immense respect for the Big Ten Conference champions heading into the Rose Bowl on Jan. 2 in Pasadena, Calif.

The sixth-ranked Ducks (11-2) had just started to look at film of the ninth-ranked Badgers (11-2) before they headed home Monday for a few days off after a short stretch of practices to get ready for the bowl game.

But the players had seen enough to know they face a huge challenge in the Badgers, who average 320 pounds on the offensive line to block for an elite running back and also have a solid defense.

On the Wisconsin O-line, senior guard Kevin Zeitler was named to The Associated Press All-America first team and junior center Peter Konz was selected to the second team.

They lead a line that blocks for AP first-team running back Montee Ball, a junior Heisman Trophy finalist who has 1,759 yards and 32 touchdowns in 11 games.

See DUCKS/2B



ROSE BOWL
Oregon (11-2) vs. Wisconsin (11-2)
Jan. 2

NCAA's stipends for athletes put on hold

Proposed \$2,000 share hits road block

The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — The NCAA is putting its \$2,000 stipend on hold.

The governing body said Thursday the number of schools seeking an override had reached 125 — the necessary number to suspend the rule until it can be reconsidered by the Division I Board of Directors at January's NCAA convention.

The board passed legislation in October to give some athletes an additional \$2,000 toward the full cost-of-tuition, money that would go beyond tuition, room and board, books and fees. Some schools have expressed opposition because they believe it violates the NCAA's philosophy on amateur sports. But most are concerned about compliance with Title IX rules requiring schools to treat men's and women's sports equally, or the budget hit athletic departments will face with incoming recruits next fall.

NCAA President Mark Em-

See STIPEND/2B

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Falcons aim high after beating Jags

PAUL NEWBERRY
AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA — Ho hum, another winning season for the Atlanta Falcons.

That's not such a big deal anymore. This team has much higher goals. Putting together its most complete effort of the season, the Falcons clinched a fourth straight winning record with a 41-14 rout of the Jacksonville Jaguars on Thursday night. Matt Ryan had another big game, throwing three touchdown passes in less than three quarters of work, and John Abraham terrorized rookie quarterback Blaine Gabbert with 3½ sacks.

Atlanta (9-5) strengthened its hold on an NFC wild card, shrugging off the immediate accomplishment of another above-.500 finish.

"Our expectations are much higher than winning seasons," coach Mike Smith said. "I'm glad we've been able to accomplish that as an organization and a football team. But believe me, It's not one of those expectations we really want to talk about. If we're where we think we are as an organization and a football team, that's expected each and every year."

It wasn't so long ago that nine wins was a big deal. The Falcons went through the first 42 years of their existence without so much as back-to-back winning seasons. All that changed when Smith and general manager Thomas Dimitroff took over in 2008.

Since then, Atlanta has been to the playoff two times and is closing in on a third appearance.

"I can't speak to the people who came before, but I know since Thomas and I had the opportunity to be here, we've just kind of put our heads down and gone to work," Smith said. "When you do that, good things usually happen. We are not finished, believe me. Our expectations and in-



Atlanta Falcons wide receiver Julio Jones (11) tries to break away from Jacksonville Jaguars defensive back Kevin Rutland (22) during Falcons 41-14 victory Thursday in Atlanta.

AP Photo by John Bazemore

ternal goals are much higher than having a winning football season."

This one was over by halftime. Atlanta led 27-0 when the teams trotted to the locker room, Blaine Gabbert and the shellshocked Jaguars (4-10) saddled with a net passing total of minus-1 yard.

Atlanta stretched out its lead to 41-0 before Jacksonville scored on a blocked punt. Going back to the previous week, when the Falcons overcame a 16-point halftime deficit at Carolina, they ripped off 65 points in a row over five quarters.

Now that's more like it from a team that was projected as a Super Bowl contender but had not quite lived up to expectations.

"I feel like we've hit our stride," said Roddy White, who had 10 catches for 135 yards and became just the eighth receiver in NFL history with 80 receptions and 1,000 yards in five

straight seasons.

Gabbert had one of his worst games in a miserable rookie season, coughing up the ball twice on hits by Abraham. Both fumbles led to Atlanta scores, with defensive tackle Corey Peters scooping up the second one and trotting to the end zone early in the third quarter for a touchdown that ended any thought of the Jaguars getting back in the game.

"It wasn't just me," said Abraham, who came into the game with only five sacks on the season. "The whole team was able to get to the quarterback."

Ryan was 19 of 26 for 224 yards and three touchdowns, with a season-high rating of 137.3. White caught two of the scoring passes, Julio Jones the other.

Gabbert was 12 of 22 for 141 yards, also throwing an interception during a truly awful night full of bad decisions when he wasn't running for his life. He was sacked five times and got most of his yards on a meaningless final drive, which resulted in the only offensive touchdown of the night: a 16-yard pass to Chastin West with 59 seconds remaining.

Football



41
Atlanta
Falcons
(9-5)



14
Jacksonville
Jaguars
(4-10)

OSU beats Howard, off to best start since '84

The Associated Press

CORVALLIS — Ahmad Starks scored 22 points and Angus Brandt added 21, both career highs, to lead Oregon State to a 93-72 win against Howard Thursday night.

Roberto Nelson added 20 points and eight rebounds for Oregon State (8-2), off to its best start since the 1984-85 team opened 8-1. It was the first time in seven years that three players had 20 or more points in a game for the Beavers.

"It was great, just to get a rhythm out there. Get stuff going," said Starks, who also had four assists and three steals. "Everybody was in a flow tonight and that's what we want."

Oregon State coach Craig Robinson said, "If we can have that kind of production with the kind of defense we're playing, that makes a coach sleep easier at night."

Brandon Ford and Prince Okoroh had 13 points apiece for Howard (3-8). Starks, a sophomore, scored eight points in a 19-4 run that put Oregon State ahead 37-18 with 5:09 left in the half. Brandt, a junior from Australia, matched Starks' 14 first-half points as the Beavers led 49-30.

Oregon State led by as many as 36 points in the second half and the Bison got no closer than 17.

The Beavers, who are 6-1 at home this season, have two more nonconference games before Pac-12 play begins.

"I think we're right where we should be and probably a little ahead of schedule," said Jared Cunningham, who had 10 points, six assists and three steals for the Beavers. "We put in the work and the effort in the offseason and it's showing right now."

Oregon State shot 31 of 60 from the floor while Howard was 24 of 61. Howard had a 38-37 rebounding edge.

The Beavers have scored 90 or more points four times already, their best performance since the 1991-92 season. One reason credited is their move to primarily man-to-man defense from the 1-3-1 zone Robinson's teams played in his first three seasons with the Beavers.

DUCKS: Wisconsin's size no more than Oregon has seen this season

Continued From 1B

"I think we match up pretty well. We've played a lot of teams that run that style of offense," Oregon defensive end Dion Jordan said, noting LSU, Stanford and USC. "They do a lot of power (runs), pulling guards and centers. I feel like we've seen enough to be ready."

Given the teams Oregon has faced already this season, Pleasant isn't concerned as much about the size as he is the talent.

"We've all got to be out there playing against a big line, big running backs the whole year," Pleasant said.

Wisconsin receivers Jared Abbrederis and Nick Toon have caught the eye of Oregon junior free safety John Boyett.

The two have combined for 106 receptions, 1,636 yards and 16 touchdowns.

Toon was a second team all-Big Ten selection. Abbrederis is also the Badgers' punt returner, averaging more than 16 yards per return.

"I've been more impressed with their pass game than their run game, probably as much because everybody talks about their run game," Boyett said.

That pass game also includes senior quarterback Russell Wilson, a uni-

mous first team Big Ten pick with 2,879 yards passing with 31 touchdowns against three interceptions.

Wilson has also rushed for 320 yards and five scores.

"The number-one thing is we've got to make sure we get after their quarterback," Jordan said. "The more we get after their quarterback the better chance our quarterback has a chance to win a game for us."

On defense, the Badgers are eighth in the country in total defense, giving up 293 yards per game.

Playing big parts in that are linebackers Chris Borland and Mike Taylor.

They are Wisconsin's top two tacklers, each averaging about 10 tackles per game.

Borland, a sophomore, has 18 tackles for loss and four forced fumbles. Both players have two interceptions and Taylor, a junior, has two fumble recoveries.

"They are very fundamentally sound," Oregon coach Chip Kelly. "They're very, very good tacklers. Not a lot of big plays against them."

Like Pleasant talking about the Wisconsin offense, Oregon running back Kenjon Barner says the Badgers are big and physical but not more so than the Ducks have seen this season.



AP file photo

Oregon's LaMichael James (21) runs against UCLA in the first half of the Pac-12 Championship game in Eugene on Dec. 2.

STIPEND: Critics say average athlete needs more, target \$3,000 sum

Continued From 1B

Emmert says he believes the concerns can be addressed.

The board has three options when it meets: Rescind the stipend and operate under previous NCAA rules, modify the rule or create a new proposal that would go back to the schools for another 60-day comment period, or allow members to vote on the override. It would take 5/8ths majority of the

roughly 350 Division I members to pass.

Some conferences already have agreed to start giving out the additional money to student-athletes. NCAA vice president David Berst acknowledged Wednesday that many of the 1,000 or so student-athletes who have signed national letters-of-intent did so with the expectation of receiving the additional money.

Those athletes will get

the stipend, the NCAA announced in a statement on its web site.

But unless the override measure fails or the board passes a modified version, athletes who sign with schools in February or April would be prohibited from receiving additional money.

Emmert has insisted over the past several months that the additional money is not pay-for-play as some have insinuated

and compares it to stipends that non-athletes receive beyond the cost of tuition, room and board, books and fees. Until 1972, college athletes were permitted to receive a small monthly payment as laundry money.

Some critics contend \$2,000 is not nearly enough and cite studies showing the average athlete pays roughly \$3,000 to \$4,000 out of his or her own pocket in college costs.

MISSIONARY: Former Timberwolves player helped player get recruited by school

Continued From 1B

He liked to play with his fellow missionaries if opportunities presented themselves. They rarely did, though, as he and the other missionaries stayed busy under strictly scheduled days.

"I just had to tear myself away from basketball and realize I had more important things to do," said Davis, who spent much of his time in Georgia doing community service.

The missionaries volunteered to help impoverished Georgians get back on their feet by doing light construction on homes and helping families move if needed. Thoughts of basketball felt farther away than home most days.

Now, more than four years since the last recruitment letter was opened, Davis finds himself in an eerily similar situation. His two years of community college ball are almost up. His sophomore and final season at Blue Mountain is under way.

The forward leads the T-Wolves — now 3-2 in the early season — in assists and shooting percentage while also ranking second in rebounds and third in points. The Las Vegas native is in the best playing shape of his life and a transfer recruitment could be in the cards soon.

"My skills are a lot more fine-tuned now; I've really come back around," said Davis, who was initially sloth-footed and rusty on the court after his time away.

But does he really want it?

"I've asked myself that a lot of times recently. Do I want to pursue basketball?" Davis said. A lengthy silence followed the end of his question, almost as if he hoped an answer would materialize in the emptiness.

Indecision lingers in Davis as he contemplates trying to move closer to home to be with his family following the season. But that could involve dropping basketball again, a difficult task he's already fought through.

For a player who once drew considerable Division-I interest, the opportunities are out there. He could try and reconnect with the schools that once targeted him. If not those, there must be others.

If no program wants to take a shot on him, Davis said trying to walk on with his home-team UNLV Rebels is the backup plan. That would allow him to pick up his education at the school and continue working toward a degree in the medical field.

Wherever he finds himself in a year, he has options. But that wouldn't be true without a chance basketball encounter with a civil engineer named Kenny Ward.

Davis returned home from his mission two years ago and enrolled at UNLV. The positive experience he had in Atlanta had reassured him of his decision to leave basketball, but the game wasn't gone entirely. Davis played pick-up games at a local LDS church on Tuesdays and Thursdays every week. Despite these weekly activities, basketball was largely gone from his life.

On a Tuesday in the spring of 2010, an out-of-basketball-shape Davis squared off against Ward. Ward had played shooting guard for two years at Blue Mountain a decade previous before getting his degree from BYU, and remains in close contact with Timberwolves' coach Larry Barte. When Ward, now 29, saw the big man drive to the basket and switch dribbling hands with ease, he took an interest.

"He was very smooth when we played and I just said, 'Wow, did you play college ball?' " Ward recounted over the phone from Las Vegas. "Usually, you can tell who has."

"He was pretty fresh off his mission and I asked him, 'Do you think you'd like to play ball?' I know you could play (at Blue Mountain). I know if you went up there it wouldn't be a waste of time."

Whether because of fate

or just another stroke of luck, Barte was making a recruiting trip to Sin City that May and Ward invited Davis to join the tryout. Despite the rust, Barte liked Davis immediately.

"He's left-handed and he messes people up when he fakes right and goes left," Barte said.

Having an older player like Davis on the team was another plus for Barte. Davis' life experience and poise rose to the surface during conversations with the coach. The ball player's speech is peppered with humble "yes sirs" and constant assuring eye contact.

"He's a great leader for our kids," Barte said. "Those three or four years maturity make so much difference. There's such a big difference between being 18 and 22."

Davis' maturity allows him to stick to his convictions. As part of his religion, he can't suit up in his Timberwolves jersey on Sundays. Blue Mountain's schedule is void of Sunday games outside of tournament play, but if the T-Wolves advance to the championship game of this weekend's Wenatchee Valley Crossover tournament, that game will take place on Sunday.

"And I won't be playing," Davis said shortly. "It can be tough not to play. I'll still be there to support my team — but from the bench."

Because whether he's assisting the less fortunate or assisting his teammates on baskets, the Sabbath is a day of rest for Davis.

Athlete of the week

Darius Polhamus
Senior,
Pendleton

Darius led the Buckaroos to two wins in Pendleton's three games last week. He scored 17, 22 and 20 points in those three contests.

Did you know?
The Bucks are 4-1 so far this season the best mark in the Columbia River Conference.

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