

In-game wagering options still in infancy

GAMBLING • FROM A1

Legally is the key word. In all, the American Gaming Association predicts that bettors will wager about \$23.1 billion, up from \$16 billion last year. That includes office pools, squares contests and casual wagers.

The NFL will pull in \$132 million this season from its gambling partnerships, according to the Washington Post.

Despite years of full-throated opposition to legalized sports gambling, the NFL has embraced sportsbooks, from BetMGM and Caesars to FanDuel and DraftKings. It even has permitted sportsbooks in some NFL stadiums.

‘That decision changed everything’

The 2018 Supreme Court decision overturning the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act (PASPA) changed everything. PASPA was enacted in 1992 and outlawed sports betting for much of the nation, excluding Nevada.

The high court’s ruling paved the way for states to legally accept wagers on sporting events. That meant, from a gambling perspective, that whatever happened in Las Vegas no longer had to stay there.

Since that ruling, 38 states and Washington, D.C., have legalized sports gambling.

“Before, if you wanted to place a bet (outside Vegas), you had to do it offshore or through your local bookie,” said Stephen Address, an advocate for legalized sports betting and editor of industry publication TheLines.com. “That decision changed everything, and it became pretty obvious to the NFL owners that this was a chance to make a lot of revenue.”

The NFL didn’t waste time getting a piece of the action. In 2017, a year before PASPA was overturned, the league approved the relocation of the Oakland Raiders to Las Vegas. The league acted quickly to form partnerships with gambling entities.

In 2018, the first year the league permitted teams to do strike marketing deals with gambling entities, the NFL pocketed \$35 million from sponsors that ranged from casinos to fantasy football sites, according to research firm SponsorUnited.

Five years later, the gambling-generated income has quadrupled for the league, which has official partnerships with three sports betting companies — FanDuel, Caesars and DraftKings — and an alliance with BetMGM as an authorized operator. Fans can find ads for these companies at practically every televised sporting event, not just the NFL. The Steelers have a partnership with BetMGM.

Bettors can place wagers with the touch of an app on their cellphones and, in some instances, at the very games they are attending. Sportsbooks can be found inside the Washington Commanders’ stadium and adjacent to the Arizona Cardinals’ facility. More are expected to be erected in the coming seasons.

Counting legal wagers and those involving office pools, bookies and offshore operations, 68 million adults will place a bet on the Super Bowl, according to the American Gaming Association. The amount wagered will total \$23.1 billion, a \$7 billion increase from 2023.

“Gambling now is more mainstream than it ever has been,” Address said.

Las Vegas remains at the epicenter of the Super Bowl wagers placed legally, albeit barely. About 13% of such bets will come from Nevada, followed by New York at 12.4%. Pennsylvania is fourth at 7.4%, trailing New Jersey in third.

“There was a big fear for a



KRISTINA SERAFINI | TRIBUNE

Vice President of Slot Operations Derek Peluso stands Wednesday amid the seating and screens inside BetRivers Sportsbook at Rivers Casino in Pittsburgh.

Money matters

An estimated \$23.1 billion will be wagered on Sunday’s Super Bowl. See how that compares to past years:
2023: \$16 billion
2022: \$7.61 billion
2021: \$4.3 billion
2020: \$6.8 billion

Courtesy of Statista

lot of people about what effect (the Supreme Court ruling) would have on Las Vegas,” said Adam Pullen, assistant director of trading at Caesars. “It’s been negligible. Look, Vegas is unique. You can bet sports anywhere, but if you want to have a unique experience, you come here.”

The exposure Las Vegas has received this past week is immeasurable. Still, to some of gambling’s most renowned oddsmakers, Super Bowl LVIII is just another day at the office.

“We’ve always had the Super Bowl in Vegas; it just wasn’t always played here,” said Chris Andrews, a Forest Hills native and Robert Morris graduate who works alongside Vaccaro setting the odds at South Point Casino in Las Vegas. “Maybe there is a bit more big money coming to town, but we’ve had that before.”

The NFL isn’t so cavalier about having the Super Bowl played within a Patrick Mahomes deep pass of the Strip. Following up on protocols he sent to teams and players in September, Commissioner Roger Goodell dispatched a memo Feb. 1 outlining the dos and don’ts of players and non-player personnel on site for the Super Bowl.

“With fans across the globe tuning into the game and related events, we must all do our part to protect the integrity of our game and avoid even the appearance of improper conduct,” Goodell wrote.

Players for the 49ers and Chiefs are prohibited from any form of gambling, including casino games. Players from non-Super Bowl participants on hand for the game may “engage in legal gambling” but cannot bet on the NFL or visit a sportsbook until after the game.

The NFL has suspended 10 players for gambling since 2021, including Jacksonville wide receiver Calvin Ridley for the entire 2022 season. Goodell, though, has eased his punishment for players caught betting on non-NFL games at team facilities or at team hotels on road trips. First-time offenders now face a two-game suspension, down from six.

The league also has taken steps to regulate the proliferation of gambling advertisements on its telecasts. A maximum of six commercials per game can be sold to sports betting entities. The NFL also is the largest sports league donor to the National Council on Problem Gambling. According to the Washington Post, the NFL has committed \$6.2 million over three years. Other leagues have committed

about \$50,000 per year.

“You also have to credit the state regulators,” Address said. “When they legalized sports betting, they dedicated a percentage of the tax revenue to state-funded and state-run problem gambling programs. That didn’t exist before.”

Until this year, neither did a Super Bowl in Las Vegas. Consider that just 21 years ago, the city’s convention and visitors authority tried to buy advertising time during the Super Bowl only to be rebuffed by the NFL because of the perception of possible improprieties.

“The relationship was adversarial,” said Pullen, whose employer, Caesars, is an NFL partner. “Times change. What was taboo is now more acceptable.”

Vaccaro, an inaugural member of the Sports Gambling Hall of Fame in 2023, is among the oddsmakers enjoying the ride.

“Used to be the NFL wouldn’t talk to a bookmaker like me,” he said. “It would be the guy with a cigar in his mouth spitting on the floor, that’s who wanted to talk. Those days are gone.”

‘More to come’

What’s next for the gambling industry as it pertains to the Super Bowl? Plenty of additional revenue, experts say.

Nebraska and North Carolina are on the verge of joining the 38 states and Washington, D.C., that already have enacted legislation permitting sports wagering. Among the states still on the outside are two of the biggest and most populous: Texas and California.

“There is no light at the end of the tunnel for California,” Address said. “As for Texas, we will see. They’ve had some conversations, and (Dallas Cowboys owner) Jerry Jones has gotten involved.”

Technological advancements not only have made it easier for bettors to place a wager from their cellphones, but they also have increased the menu of potential sports bets. As popular as prop bets — a wager based on how a certain player will perform — have become, other micro-bets remain an untapped entity.

In-game wagering remains in its infancy. That gives bettors the chance to predict what may happen on the next drive of an NFL game or how many runs an MLB team might score in the next inning.

“It’s much bigger in Europe than in the U.S.,” Address said. “But Europe has had sports betting a lot longer. More and more sportsbooks here are trying to show people they can place a bet in the middle of game and not just before it starts.”

Pullen equates the next phase of sports gambling to a baseball game.

“We might be in the top of the third inning,” he said metaphorically. “It’s young. Yes, we’ve had legal sports betting for five years, and we’ve had legal betting in Las Vegas for 50 to 60 years, but there is so much more to come.”

Joe Rutter is a TribLive staff writer. He can be reached at jrutter@triblive.com.



Kansas City Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift walk together Jan. 28 after the AFC Championship Game between the Chiefs and the Baltimore Ravens. Any number of prop bets might involve the singer’s actions during the Super Bowl.

Gambling site estimates 40% of legal wagers will be prop bets

PROPS • FROM A1

The coin toss is one of the more popular prop bets — a wager that isn’t tied to the outcome of the game — for the Super Bowl. It’s among the hundreds of ways bettors can place a wager on an individual performance or sequence that is unrelated to the final score.

“Each play, once the game has started, there are bets being decided,” Pullen said. “It just shows how Super Bowl betting and betting in general has transformed the country. This used to be a closet Vegas thing. Now it’s everywhere.”

Prop betting’s origins can be traced to January 1986 when the Chicago Bears’ 335-pound defensive lineman William “The Refrigerator” Perry scored a touchdown during a 46-10 rout of the New England Patriots. Traf-ford native and Sports Gambling Hall of Fame charter member Jimmy Vaccaro was one of the few oddsmakers who had established odds on whether the big man would find the end zone.

When word of the bet spread, Vaccaro began receiving calls from sports writers across the country curious about the wager.

“It was pure insanity,” Vaccaro said. “From that point, if there was anything unique, we as bookmakers would find a way to make a wager out of it.”

The popularity of prop bets increased exponentially in 2018 when a Supreme Court decision cleared the way for states to authorize legalized sports betting. That made it legal for a gambler to place a bet on whether the opening kickoff will be returned or a touchback or whether Chiefs star quarterback Patrick Mahomes will have 300 yards passing.

“It’s also a correlation of the popularity of playing fantasy sports,” said Stephen Address, editor of the sports gambling site TheLines.com. “Because of fantasy football, bettors are aware of which player is the best, who has the most yards, who is struggling. Now they could make a bet on any given game based on their fantasy sports opinions.”

Address estimates that 40% of all legal wagering on the Super Bowl will be in the form of a prop bet. Vaccaro puts that percentage higher.

“I think it’s half, which is an unbelievable number,” he said. “Half are betting on the outcome of the game, and half are using their money on props. That way, you’re entertained the entire game. From the flip of the coin until who scores last, you’re always in the action.”

BetMGM sportsbook has about 1,000 prop bet offerings, with several tied to Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce. Not just because Kelce’s track record as a Hall of Fame

Prop bets for Super Bowl LVIII

National anthem props

• How long will it take for Reba McEntire to sing the anthem?
Under 89.5 seconds: -\$130
Over 89.5 seconds: +\$110
• Will Reba McEntire forget any word/words to the anthem?
No: -\$3000
Yes: +\$900

Exotic props

• How many times will Taylor Swift be shown?
Over 4.5 times: -\$170
Under 4.5 times: +\$150
• How many views will the Super Bowl get?
Over 116.5 million viewers: -\$110
Under 116.5 million viewers: +\$110
• How many beers will be sold at the Super Bowl?
Under 120,000 beers: -\$170
Over 120,000 beers: +\$140

• How many hot dogs will be sold at the Super Bowl?
Under 120,000 hot dogs: -\$220
Over 120,000 hot dogs: +\$180
• Which company will have the first commercial?
Coors Light: -\$130
BMW: +\$110

Odds to win the MVP

Player: Odds
Patrick Mahomes: 6/5
Brock Purdy: 5/2
Christian McCaffrey: 9/2
Travis Kelce: 12/1
Deebo Samuel: 20/1
Isiah Pacheco: 30/1
Rashae Rice: 50/1
Brandon Aiyuk: 50/1
George Kittle: 60/1
Nick Bosa: 75/1
Chris Jones: 100/1
Fred Warner: 125/1
L’Jarius Sneed: 150/1
Chase Young: 200/1
Marquez Valdes Scantling: 250/1
Kyle Juszczyk: 300/1
— America’s Line

talent and a big-game player but also for his relationship with pop singer Taylor Swift. Sportsbooks cannot legally accept a prop bet on the singer — such as whether Kelce will propose and each will get a ring after the game — much

The popularity of prop bets increased exponentially in 2018 when a Supreme Court decision cleared the way for states to authorize legalized sports betting.

Kelce will score the first and last touchdown of the game. A takeoff on the song “You Belong With Me” is the “You Belong with Rashee” wager. It is based on whether Chiefs receiver Rashee Rice will score a touchdown in the first half.

A loophole on Swift-related prop bets, however, can be found outside the U.S. Ontario is one territory where bettors can find such action.

“There is more lenience, more novelty and fun props,” said John Ewing, BetMGM PR manager. “For instance, will the MVP mention Taylor Swift at all? Since Travis Kelce is the most bet player to win the MVP, bettors are thinking that if he wins the MVP, he’ll give his girlfriend a shoutout.”

The number of wagers on the Super Bowl can be staggering, something Vaccaro never predicted when he left Western Pennsylvania for Las Vegas in the 1970s.

Vaccaro, now 78, was in his infancy as a bookmaker when the Steelers played the Dallas Cowboys in Super Bowl XIII in January 1979.

The point spread was the wager back then. One promotion offered bettors the

chance to give 3.5 points with the Steelers and take 4.5 points and the Cowboys. The Steelers’ 35-31 victory ensured almost everybody who bet on the game was a winner.

That game became known as “Black Sunday” in Las Vegas gambling

circles.

“We got our (butt) kicked,” Vaccaro said.

Vaccaro had the task of delivering the message to his boss.

“I said, ‘Do you want the good news or the bad news?’” Vaccaro recalled. “The bad news is we lost \$185,000, which was a pretty significant number in those days.”

Vaccaro’s boss incredulously asked about the good news.

“We only lost \$185,000,” he said, recalling the exchange. “A lot of other places got hit harder than we did.”

This year, that type of six-figure wager has been placed on the outcome of the coin toss, as Pullen can attest.

“It boggles my mind,” he said, “that someone would bet that much money on that.”

Joe Rutter is a TribLive staff writer. He can be reached at jrutter@triblive.com.



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Casinos ready for Super Bowl influx, wagers on Chiefs win

BY JOYCE HANZ
AND QUINCEY REESE

Dave Bilsky is a Steelers fan, but come Sunday evening, you can bet he'll be pulling for the Kansas City Chiefs. He'll have plenty of company locally.

Bilsky, 51, of Belle Vernon is among myriad local gamblers putting money on the Chiefs in Super Bowl LVIII.

"One thing that we've learned is that the Pittsburgh region, Western Pa. region, doesn't like San Francisco," said Anthony Zrelak, FanDuel sportsbook manager at Live Casino Pittsburgh in Hempfield. "They already have Super Bowl (wins) — one behind the Steelers — so nobody wants to see them tie."

The Chiefs face the San Francisco 49ers beginning about 6:30 p.m. Sunday.

Bilsky's logic for betting on the Chiefs is simple. "Better quarterback. Better defense. Better team."

About 90% to 95% of the bets coming in at the casino at Westmoreland Mall last week will be for a Chiefs victory, Zrelak estimates. He credits, in part, pop star Taylor Swift, who began dating Chiefs tight



KRISTINA SERAFINI | TRIBLIVE

Dave Bilsky of Belle Vernon places a bet Tuesday using a FanDuel Sportsbook kiosk at Live Casino Pittsburgh in Hempfield.

end Travis Kelce in the fall.

Throughout the season, bets on the Chiefs were often inspired by Swift, Zrelak said. One bet, that Kelce would score a touchdown, was titled "Seeing Red," inspired by Swift's 2012 album "Red."

"We've seen new faces and customers that have come up and they've asked how to bet on the game," Zrelak said. "They want to bet on the Chiefs so they can support Taylor Swift."

All bets in the state are approved by regulators from the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board, Zrelak said.

Bets expected to increase by \$7 billion

Super Bowl weekend is the biggest day for the casino in terms of sports betting, Zrelak said, drawing two to three times the wagers than during a regular-season NFL weekend.

This falls in line with

national trends. The American Gaming Association expects nearly 68 million Americans to bet on the Super Bowl — a 35% increase from 2023. In all, bettors are predicted to wager — legally and illegally — about \$23 billion, up \$7 billion from last year. That includes side bets, office pools and square contests.

The March Madness college basketball tournament and UFC matches are also high betting days, Zrelak said.

"The Super Bowl is everybody coming in and betting solely for one day, so the volume is just typically substantial. March Madness is a good second," he said. "If you don't bet on the Super Bowl, you can't come in and bet the next day. You're either going to hit it, or you're going to miss it."

Bilsky agrees. Although he is an avid sports bettor, wagering on the Super Bowl comes with added excitement.

"It's a culmination of a long football season," he said.

Rivers Casino vice president of slot operations Derek Peluso oversees the BetRivers sportsbook and is gearing up for a soldout Super Bowl watch party dubbed the Big Game Watch & Wager With

Us event.

"We offer over 900 bets for the Super Bowl alone," Peluso said.

For Harvey Hicks Jr., 25, of Monroeville betting on Super Bowl Sunday is a tradition.

"I hope the 49ers win. I'm tired of Patrick Mahomes winning," he said while relaxing at Rivers Casino last week.

Hicks said he gambles like it's his part-time job.

"When the Rams played the Bengals, I guessed the correct score and won thousands," he said. "I'll be here Sunday, and if you're good at it, why not make it a job."

Avery Williams, 45, of McKees Rocks said he never misses a chance to bet on the Super Bowl because "all the marbles are on the table."

On Wednesday, Williams was placing numerous basketball-related bets at one of the sports kiosks.

Calling gambling his new-found occupation after retirement, Williams encourages folks to gamble responsibly.

"You can't always bet with your heart," he said. "You've got to think about it. And the purpose of gambling is to have fun."

The Super Bowl ups the ante

for many fans, Williams said.

"It's the last game, the biggest game, of the year. The stakes are highest," he said. "It makes it lot more interesting, and you've got the best of both teams. I'm going with Kansas City because I believe they have the better team."

Williams plans to watch the game from inside the sportsbook lounge.

"It's gonna be big. It's fun. There's so much money involved and so many bets you can do. You could win a lot or lose a lot. It's a thrill each year," Williams said.

Williams said Swift's star power is adding an interesting element to the game.

"She's the good luck charm. If she don't show up, then Kansas City loses," Williams said.

Peluso will be in attendance Sunday and said emotions will be running high.

"It's a roller coaster — like being at a stadium or at a game. People are cheering. People get upset," Peluso said. "Half the room might be happy, and the other half may be upset."

Joyce Hanz and Quincey Reese are TribLive staff writers.

Commissioners also cut funding for other agencies

WCCC · FROM A1

be other adjustments to our budget and we'll have to take other steps."

WCCC's budget operates on a fiscal year, so the funding cut isn't expected to have a major impact until this summer. The college's trustees are expected to consider a new budget and tuition rates for the 2024-25 school year in June.

According to data posted by the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges, WCCC's tuition rates rank as

the sixth-lowest among the 15 community colleges in the state.

WCCC's budget for the 2023-24 school year is about \$34 million with an enrollment of nearly 4,300 students.

In addition to funding from the county, the school's revenues included more than \$12.5 million from the state and \$13.8 million through tuition payments and fees from students.

WCCC spokesman Janet Corrinne-Harvey said the school has \$28 million

in reserves for unexpected emergencies and long-range planning. She said WCCC is required to have a fund balance of at least \$14 million to cover four months of operations in order to retain its accreditation.

"The funding cut (from the county) will have a tremendous impact. It could have a severe negative impact on the coming budget. These dollars coming from our sponsor have a direct impact on how it subsidizes tuition for in-county residents," Kerr said.

Commissioners defended the funding cut as a necessary step to balance a county budget that required imposition of a 32.5% tax increase this year. It was the first tax increase in county property taxes since 2019.

In addition to the slashed funding for the community college, the commissioners' budget included the elimination of annual funding allocations to Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corp. and Redevelopment Authority. The WCIDC received \$333,612

in 2023 and the Redevelopment Authority received \$25,000.

Both agencies received no funding from the county's general operating budget in 2024.

Other allocations, including payments to the Westmoreland County Airport Authority and Westmoreland County Transit Authority, local libraries and the conservation district, were unchanged from previous levels.

"When the board looked at the numbers, we saw that WCCC had a fund balance of \$30 million. Because they had

that in reserve, they would be able to make do for a year. This is a temporary thing, and I feel that we can go back to where it was at in the prior years," said Commissioner Sean Kertes.

Commissioner Ted Kopas said WCCC's surplus was key to allowing the county to cut funding this year.

"Based on their finances, they can cover it," Kopas said.

Rich Cholodofsky is a TribLive staff writer. He can be reached at rcholodofsky@triblive.com.

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Spring Training 24

Pirates should improve (a little)

Thin starting rotation, lack of long-term deals in offseason troubling

BY KEVIN GORMAN

When the Pittsburgh Pirates completed a season that marked a 14-win jump, Ben Cherington acknowledged the importance of their improvement but stressed the need to keep getting better.

The Pirates general manager knows a 76-win season and fourth-place finish in the National League Central isn't satisfactory.

"It starts with me and doing my job really well this offseason to find ways to make the roster better, continue to put us in a position to be stronger going into spring training," Cherington said in October. "Our focus will be the same: continued improvement, take another step. I believe if I do my job well and we all do our job well — including the players — this offseason, we can do that. Progress made. Not satisfied."

What Cherington has delivered is viewed as a dud. The Pirates were desperate for starting pitching, and he traded for left-hander Marco Gonzales — who is coming off surgery for a nerve issue — and signed lefty Martin Perez. They had a gaping hole at first base and signed slugger Rowdy Tellez in hopes he would have a bounce-back year. They needed depth in the outfield and traded for Edward Olivares and Billy McKinney. The Pirates made a no-brainer by bringing back fan favorite Andrew McCutchen as designated hitter, then fired a fastball by signing seven-time All-Star

PIRATES • B5



CHRISTOPHER HORNER | TRIBLIVE
Right-hander Mitch Keller will be expected to lead the Pirates staff again.

INSIDE

» Spring training roster, schedule B5

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SUPER BOWL

6:30 tonight, CBS



the MAN behind MAHOMES

New Kensington native Girardi preps for another Super Bowl as Chiefs QBs coach

BY CHRIS ADAMSKI

An increasing number of people are beginning to wonder if Patrick Mahomes just might end up as the greatest quarterback of all time.

And at present, Mahomes' defined position coach hails from New Kensington.

David Girardi has been part of the Kansas City Chiefs' offensive staff since Mahomes took over as starting quarterback in 2018, and this season

INSIDE

» South Fayette's Watson eyes another Super Bowl ring B4
» Madden: Watt's no-show at NFL awards event a bad look B5

Girardi moved into the role of quarterbacks coach for the Chiefs.

Girardi, 35, is coaching in a Super Bowl for the fourth time and could earn his third championship ring if the Chiefs beat the San Francisco 49ers in the Super Bowl on Sunday

night in Las Vegas.

"For us as a family, obviously, we are very proud of our son for what he's accomplished and the role that he's playing, really, with any team he's been a part of," said father Frank Girardi, a New Kensington native and Valley High School alumnus.

"Whether it was a smaller college or the Division I schools he's been

"David has got two (Super Bowl) rings, and it's not like he's just sitting there charting plays. This guy has got a brilliant offensive mind."

GENO DeMARCO
COACHED DAVID GIRARDI AT GENEVA

Some under-the-radar bets to consider



TIM BENZ

Our annual Super Bowl betting edition of "Football Footnotes" has been hit or miss the past two years.

When the Rams beat the Bengals two years ago, I went 4-3 and made money. When the Eagles

lost to the Chiefs last year, I went 2-4 and lost money.

So, essentially, if you gamble with me, you are quite literally ... gambling. I could go in any number of directions with my results on Super Bowl Sunday.

Good luck, and gamble responsibly.

By "responsibly," I mean following

someone else's advice besides mine.

Note: All lines provided by BetRivers.com

• I'm surprised the Kansas City Chiefs opened as 2.5-point underdogs. I thought that number was put out after conference championship weekend to suck in some heavy early K.C. money, and I

More, AI

» NFL reaps rewards of gambling, plus a look at some prop bets

expected it to correct as the next two weeks went along.

It has. But only by half a point. The line right now at BetRivers.com is San Francisco at minus-2. So I bought a point in favor of the Chiefs to get the margin up to a field goal and took K.C. at plus-3 (minus-139).

DEEBO SAMUEL



JETS 2, PENGUINS 1

Penguins edged by Winnipeg

Team fails to duplicate Tuesday's effort vs. Jets

BY SETH RORABAUGH

Despite an unofficial 29 saves on 31 shots by goaltender Tristan Jarry, the Pittsburgh Penguins lost to the host Winnipeg Jets, 2-1, on Saturday at Canada Life Centre.

The result was considerably different than the last meeting between these two teams Tuesday, when the Penguins won 3-0 at PPG Paints Arena.

"It was a gutsy win against a team that is one of the better teams in the league right now," Penguins coach Mike Sullivan said Thursday in

Cranberry. "They have a lot of talent, they've got a strong team game, they have a ton of balance through their lineup and they have really strong goaltending. It's no secret why their record is where it's at. It was a gutsy effort on our part. There's a lot of things that we can build on."

There was little discernible the Penguins could construct off this result, their second consecutive setback after a 3-2 road loss to the Minnesota Wild on Friday. To amplify their woes, fourth-line forward Jansen Harkins — whom the Penguins claimed from the Jets via waivers in October — did not finish Saturday's contest. His final shift of the game came at 14 minutes, 26 seconds of the second period. There was no

immediate word on his status.

The Jets struck first 10:20 into regulation when forward Mark Scheifele scored his 15th goal of the season off a turnover by Penguins forward Jake Guentzel.

Pulling up on the right half-wall of the offensive zone, Guentzel forced an ill-conceived pass to the left point intended for Penguins defenseman Ryan Graves. Jets forward Nikolaj Ehlers was stationed in front of Graves and accepted Guentzel's charity, then initiated a two-on-one rush with Scheifele against Penguins defenseman Erik Karlsson. After gaining the Penguins' zone on the right wing, Ehlers dished a cross-ice



Winnipeg's Mark Scheifele scores past Penguins goaltender Tristan Jarry during the first period Saturday.

PENGUINS • B2



The Penguins' Chad Ruhwedel defends against Winnipeg's Nikolaj Ehlers in front of goaltender Tristan Jarry during the second period.

Penguins drop 2nd straight

PENGUINS • FROM B1

pass to the left circle, where Scheifele sizzled a one-timer by Jarry's blocker on the near side. Ehlers had the only assist.

Jets forward Nino Niederreiter scored his 13th goal at 15:39 of the first period.

From the left point of the offensive zone, Jets defenseman Logan Stanley slid a pass to the opposite point for defensive partner Nate Schmidt, who clapped a one-timer that went wide to the near side of the cage.

The puck clunked off the end boards and deflected to the right of the crease, where Niederreiter beat Penguins defenseman Chad Ruhwedel and chopped a backhand over Jarry's left skate. Schmidt and Stanley recorded assists.

The Penguins got on the scoreboard at 14:08 of the second period via forward Bryan Rust's 13th goal.

Settling a loose puck at the left point of the offensive zone, Graves fed the puck to Karlsson on the opposite point. Surveying his options for a moment, Karlsson snapped a forehand shot toward the net.

Burrowing his way past Jets forward Morgan Barron in the left circle, Rust managed to get the backhand side of his stick blade on the puck and deflected the puck by goaltender Connor Hellebuyck's glove on the near side. Karlsson and Graves claimed assists.

Jarry's record dipped to 14-15-4.

Notes: Penguins rookie defenseman John Ludvig appeared in his first game

JETS 2, PENGUINS 1				
Penguins	0	1	0	- 1
Winnipeg	2	0	0	- 2
First Period—1, Winnipeg, Scheifele 15 (Ehlers), 10:20, 2, Winnipeg, Niederreiter 13 (Stanley, Schmidt), 15:39. Penalties—None.				
Second Period—3, Penguins, Rust 13 (Graves, Karlsson), 14:08. Penalties—Stanley, WPG (Interference), 2:30; Stanley, WPG (Roughing), 7:27.				
Third Period—None. Penalties—Schmidt, WPG (Interference), 12:45; Malkin, PIT (High Sticking), 14:59.				
Shots on Goal—Penguins 8-16-12—36. Winnipeg 13-7-11—31.				
Power-play opportunities—Penguins 0 of 3; Winnipeg 0 of 1.				
Goals—Penguins, Jarry 14-15-4 (31 shots-29 saves). Winnipeg, Hellebuyck 24-10-3 (36-35). A—15,225 (15,321). T—2:14.				
Referees—Chris Lee, Chris Schlenker. Linesmen—Caleb Apperson, Justin Johnson.				

since he suffered an undisclosed injury Dec. 31. Primarily deployed on the third pairing with Ruhwedel, Ludvig logged 11:39 of ice time on 17 shifts and had one shot on two attempts. ... Penguins forward Noel Acciari (concussion) and defenseman P.O Joseph (healthy) were scratched. Acciari was injured on a hit by Jets defenseman Brenden Dillon during Tuesday's game. On Saturday, Dillon served the second game of his three-game suspension for the infraction. ... Sidney Crosby had a nine-game scoring streak snapped. ... Jets forward Kyle Connor, who played at the junior level with the Youngstown Phantoms of the United States Hockey League, appeared in his 500th career game.

Seth Rorabaugh is a TribLive staff writer. He can be reached at rorabaugh@triblive.com.

ROBERT MORRIS 71, MILWAUKEE 60

Colonials rebound from loss

After OT heartbreaker, Robert Morris men earn Horizon victory

BY JUSTIN GUERRIERO

Robert Morris was left with a bad taste in its mouth after Thursday's overtime loss at home to Green Bay, the Horizon League's top team.

Making matters worse, guard TJ Wainwright went down with an injury, which kept him out of Saturday afternoon's matchup at UPMC Events Center vs. Milwaukee.

Facing an opponent that also was fresh off an overtime loss Thursday (to Youngstown State), the Colonials (10-15, 6-8 Horizon League) were able to channel the right energy, coming out on top, 71-60.

Markeese Hastings led Robert Morris with 21 points, and Stephaun Walker chipped in 16. Both finished just shy of double-doubles with nine rebounds apiece.

Two other Colonials, Justice Williams (13) and Jackson Last (11), also scored in

ROBERT MORRIS 71, MILWAUKEE 60	
MILWAUKEE (12-13) — Fields 2-4 3-4 7, Jamison 1-9 1-2 4, Pratt 3-11 0-0 7, Pullian 0-1 0-0 0, Freeman 7-20 6-7 23, Davis 1-2 0-0 2, Ham 3-4 0-0 8, Stuart 3-8 2-2 9, Wilson 0-0 0-0 0, Murchison 0-0 0-0 0. Totals: 20-59 12-15 60.	
ROBERT MORRIS (10-15) — Hastings 9-12 1-1 21, Walker 6-12 2-2 16, Corbin 3-11 0-0 7, Ford 1-3 1-3 3, Williams 3-9 6-6 13, Last 2-4 5-6 11, Folgueiras 0-4 0-0 0. Totals: 24-55 15-18 71.	
HalfTime—Robert Morris 36-27. 3-Point Goals—Milwaukee 8-30 (Freeman 3-12, Ham 2-3, Jamison 1-3, Stuart 1-4, Pratt 1-6, Davis 0-1, Pullian 0-1), Robert Morris 8-26 (Hastings 2-4, Last 2-4, Walker 2-5, Williams 1-4, Corbin 1-6, Folgueiras 0-3). Rebounds—Milwaukee 28 (Fields, Freeman 7), Robert Morris 41 (Hastings, Walker 9). Assists—Milwaukee 10 (Fields, Pullian, Freeman 2), Robert Morris 16 (Corbin 7). Total Fouls—Milwaukee 15, Robert Morris 16. A—1,084 (3,056).	

double digits.

After emerging from an early six-point hole, Robert Morris used a 10-2 run over the final five minutes of the opening half to take a nine-point lead into the locker room.

The Colonials stayed comfortably ahead for the majority of the second half, but, with about five minutes remaining, the Panthers had clawed their way back from a double-digit deficit to trail just 53-50.

Immediately thereafter, a three-point play from Hastings plus two free throws by Jackson Last inflated the Colonials' lead back to eight.

The closest Milwaukee would come from there would be seven.

"Focus, being humble, understanding that people go on runs, just being able to hold our composure when things got tight and sticking together," Hastings said about pulling off the win. "I feel like we did a very good job sticking together today even when things went bad. We were able to pull it off because of the togetherness that we had today."

Robert Morris faced a tall task in defending Panthers guard BJ Freeman, who was averaging 18.5 points per game.

He led all scorers with 23 on 7-of-20 shooting but scored 15 of his points in the first half and none over the final 4 minutes, 48 seconds before halftime.

The Colonials managed to limit him to six points in the second half.

"BJ Freeman's a first-team

all-league-level player," said Colonials coach Andy Toole. " ... As he tried to drive it, I just thought we took away some of that space and stayed in front of him."

Milwaukee did some damage early from beyond the arc, hitting four 3-pointers within the first 4:15 of the game. But the Colonials allowed only five 3-pointers the rest of the way.

"We just needed to tighten some things up on the defensive side, and then from there, I thought we were extra urgent on some of their shooters," Toole said.

On the day, Robert Morris went 24 of 55 (43.6%) from the field, hitting 8 of 26 (30.8%) shots from 3-point range.

The Colonials enjoyed a solid performance on the glass, out-rebounding Milwaukee, 42-31.

Toole said Wainwright is day-to-day after landing awkwardly Thursday against Green Bay.

Justin Guerriero is a TribLive staff writer. He can be reached at jguerriero@triblive.com.

Drame leads win for Duquesne

WIRE REPORTS

Fousseyne Drame scored 16 points to help lead Duquesne over St. Bonaventure, 75-69, on Saturday. Drame also had 14 rebounds for the Dukes (14-9, 4-6 Atlantic 10).

Jimmy Clark III scored 15 points, including 4 for 8 from 3-point range, and added eight assists. Dae Dae Grant finished with 12 points but had a cold-shooting afternoon (3 for 10, 0 for 6 from 3-point range).

• Dylan Disu scored 19 of his 27 points in the first half to

lead Texas over West Virginia, 94-58. Jesse Edwards scored 17 points, reserve Noah Farrakhan 11 and RaeQuan Battle 10 for West Virginia (8-15, 3-7).

• Jeremiah Williams scored 18, and Rutgers used a stifling defense to lead the entire game and hand No. 11 Wisconsin its fourth straight loss 78-56.

• A.J. Hoggard had 23 points to lead Michigan State over No. 10 Illinois, 88-80.

• Anton Watson scored 17 points, including a go-ahead three-point play with 3:49 remaining, and Gonzaga defeated No. 17 Kentucky, 89-85, handing the Wildcats their first three-game losing streak at Rupp Arena.

IN BRIEF

• Hunter Dickinson scored 15 points to lead a balanced attack as No. 4 Kansas extended its home winning streak to 18 games with a 64-61 win over No. 13 Baylor.

Golf

Nick Taylor had a one-shot lead at 13-under-par with 12 holes left in the third round of the waterlogged Phoenix Open when play was suspended because of darkness.

The Canadian continued to ride his fast start after matching the TPC Scottsdale record with an 11-under 60 to finish his first round Friday.

Sahith Theegala used five birdies on the back nine of the

second round early Saturday to shoot a 64 and take a one-shot lead into the third.

• Dustin Johnson won LIV Golf Las Vegas in windy and chilly conditions for his third victory on the Saudi-funded tour, pulling ahead with a birdie on No. 17 and closing with a par to edge Peter Uihlein and Talor Gooch by a stroke.

Hockey

Washington's Alex Ovechkin scored his 57th career empty-net goal with 28 seconds remaining in the third period of the Capitals' 3-0 win over Boston. He passed Wayne Gretzky for most empty-net goals in NHL history.

FOOTBALL

NFL PLAYOFFS SUPER BOWL

Today Kansas City vs. San Francisco, 6:30 p.m. (CBS)

INJURY REPORT

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS vs. KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — SAN FRANCISCO: LIMITED: DT Arik Armstead (knee), LB Oren Burks (shoulder), TE George Kittle (toe), CB Ambry Thomas (ankle). FULL: LT Kalia Davis (ankle), KANSAS CITY: DNP: G Joe Thuney (pectoral). LIMITED: RB Jerick McKinnon (groin), WR Rashee Rice (ankle), RB Clyde Edwards-Helaine (NIR-illness). FULL: WR Richie James (foot), DT Chris Jones (quadriple), WR Skyy Moore (knee), RB Isaiah Pacheco (toe/ankle), CB L'Jarius Sneed (calf), T Prince Tega Wanogho (quadriple).

HOCKEY

NHL EASTERN CONFERENCE Atlantic Division

	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Boston	32	11	9	73	178	135
Florida	33	15	4	70	167	131
Tampa Bay	28	20	5	61	182	175
Toronto	26	16	8	60	176	162
Detroit	27	18	6	60	180	164
Montreal	21	22	8	50	143	180
Buffalo	22	25	4	48	148	160
Ottawa	21	25	2	44	163	173

Metropolitan Division

	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
N.Y. Rangers	33	16	3	69	170	147
Carolina	30	16	5	65	171	149
Philadelphia	28	19	5	62	156	152
N.Y. Islanders	22	18	12	56	154	175
New Jersey	25	21	4	54	169	177
Penguins	23	19	7	53	144	131
Washington	23	20	7	53	122	155
Columbus	16	25	10	42	150	188

WESTERN CONFERENCE Central Division

	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Dallas	32	14	6	70	192	159
Colorado	32	17	4	68	196	169
Winnipeg	31	14	5	67	151	117
St. Louis	27	21	2	56	144	154
Nashville	26	23	2	54	153	160
Minnesota	23	23	5	51	154	169
Arizona	23	23	3	49	145	150
Chicago	14	35	3	31	109	183

Pacific Division

	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	34	12	6	74	192	137
Vegas	31	15	6	68	169	141
Edmonton	30	16	1	61	166	130
Los Angeles	23	15	10	56	152	132
Calgary	25	22	5	55	163	161
Seattle	21	20	5	52	142	150
Anaheim	18	31	2	38	132	175
San Jose	14	32	5	33	107	199

NOTE: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference advance to playoffs.

RESULTS/SCHEDULE

Friday's games

Minnesota 3, Penguins 2

N.Y. Rangers 4, Chicago 3 (OT)

Edmonton 5, Anaheim 3

Saturday's games

Winnipeg 2, Penguins 1

St. Louis 3, Buffalo 1

Dallas 3, Montreal 2

Calgary 5, N.Y. Islanders 2

Detroit 4, Vancouver 3 (OT)

Washington 3, Boston 0

Florida 4, Colorado 0

Carolina 1, New Jersey 0 (OT)

Tampa Bay 4, Columbus 2

Ottawa 5, Toronto 3

Philadelphia 3, Seattle 2

Arizona at Nashville (n)

Edmonton at Los Angeles (n)

Today's games

St. Louis at Montreal, 1 p.m.

Vancouver at Washington, 1:30 p.m.

Monday's games

Arizona at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.

Calgary at N.Y. Rangers, 7 p.m.

Seattle at New Jersey, 7 p.m.

Minnesota at Vegas, 10 p.m.

Basketball

COLLEGE MEN

Noon Seton Hall at Villanova, CBSN

Noon FAU at Wichita St.

ESPN2

1 p.m. Penn St. at Northwestern, BTN

3 p.m. Minnesota at Iowa, BTN

2 p.m. North Texas at SMU, ESPN2

2 p.m. Tulane at Memphis, ESPN2

2 p.m. Rhode Island at UMass, USA

1 p.m. Penn St. at Northwestern, BTN/96.5 FM, 730 AM, Penn State Radio Network

COLLEGE WOMEN

Noon Pitt vs. N.C. State, 99.1 FM, 1320 AM

3 p.m. Penn St. at Wisconsin, 98.7 FM, 730 AM, Penn State Radio Network

NBA

Today's game

Super Bowl LVIII

Favorite Points (O/U) Underdog

49ers 2 (47.5) Chiefs

NFL

Today's game

Super Bowl LVIII

Favorite Points (O/U) Underdog

49ers 2 (47.5) Chiefs

NBA

Today's games

Favorite Points (O/U) Underdog

49ers 2 (47.5) Chiefs

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Today's games

Favorite Points Underdog

VILLANOVA 4.5 Seton Hall

FLA ATLANTIC 7.5 WICHITA ST

UW WESTERN 8 Penn St

UAB 2.5 TULSA

Charlotte 4 TEMPLE

SMU 5 North Texas

MEMPHIS 8.5 Tulane

MASSACHUSETTS 11.5 Rhode Island

UL-LAFAYETTE 7 Bowling Green

IOWA 6.5 Northwestern

Northern Iowa 3.5 ILLINOIS-CHI

NHL

Today's games

Favorite Odds (O/U) Underdog

Blues -\$125/+\$105 (6.5) HABS

Canucks -\$155/+\$135 (6.0) CAPS

Home team in CAPITAL letters; (O/U) = over/under; NL = no lines

BASKETBALL

NBA

NEW YORK KNICKS — Signed F Taj Gibson to a 10-day contract.

TORONTO RAPTORS — Signed Fs Justise Winslow and Mouhamadou Gueye to 10-day contracts.

WNBA

PHOENIX MERCURY — Signed F Morgan Bertsch to a training camp contract.

FOOTBALL

NFL

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Activated RB Jerick McKinnon from injured reserve.

Placed OL Joe Thuney on injured reserve.

Promoted OL Mike Pennel to the active roster from the practice squad.

LOS ANGELES CHARGERS — Named Navarro Bowman linebacker coach.

SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS — Promoted DLs T.Y. McGill and Alex Barrett to the active roster from the practice squad.

HOCKEY

SPORTS BROADCASTS

sin. 98.7 FM, 730 AM, Penn State Radio Network

NBA

2 p.m. Boston at Miami, ABC

Football

NFL

6:30 p.m. Super Bowl LVIII: San Francisco vs. Kansas City, Las Vegas, CBS

Golf

PGA TOUR

1 p.m. The WM Phoenix Open final round. GOLF

3 p.m. The WM Phoenix Open final round. NBC

Hockey

IIHF WOMEN

2 p.m. Rivalry Series: U.S. vs. Canada, St. Paul, Minn. NHLN



WPIAL BASKETBALL RANKINGS

Boys

CLASS 6A			
Team	W-L	Last	
1. Mt. Lebanon	18-3	1	
2. Central Catholic	13-8	4	
3. Upper St. Clair	15-5	3	
4. Baldwin	16-5	2	
5. North Allegheny	10-11	5	
Out: none			

CLASS 5A			
Team	W-L	Last	
1. Moon	18-3	1	
2. Franklin Regional	19-2	2	
3. Shaler	20-2	3	
4. Thomas Jefferson	18-3	4	
5. Peters Township	16-5	5	
Out: none			

CLASS 4A			
Team	W-L	Last	
1. Lincoln Park	18-3	1	
2. Hampton	18-3	2	
3. Uniontown	18-3	3	
4. Montour	18-3	4	
5. North Catholic	13-7	5	
Out: none			

CLASS 3A			
Team	W-L	Last	
1. Deer Lakes	17-4	1	
2. Mohawk	17-5	2	
3. Shady Side Academy	14-6	NR	
4. Neshannock	17-3	4	
5. Yough	17-4	5	
Out: Seton LaSalle (16-5, 3)			

CLASS 2A			
Team	W-L	Last	
1. Aliquippa	17-4	1	
2. Greensburg C.C.	20-2	2	
3. Northgate	16-4	3	
4. Fort Cherry	16-5	4	
5. Bishop Canevin	12-9	5	
Out: none			

CLASS A			
Team	W-L	Last	
1. Imani Christian	11-9	1	
2. Neighborhood Academy	16-5	2	
3. Rochester	15-5	4	
4. Monessen	17-3	5	
5. Union	12-10	3	
Out: none			

Girls

CLASS 6A			
Team	W-L	Last	
1. Norwin	18-3	2	
2. Peters Township	20-1	1	
3. North Allegheny	19-2	3	
4. Mt. Lebanon	11-10	NR	
5. Chartiers Valley	14-6	5	
Out: Upper St. Clair (12-10, 4)			

CLASS 5A			
Team	W-L	Last	
1. Oakland Catholic	21-0	1	
2. McKeesport	18-3	2	
3. Armstrong	17-4	4	
4. Trinity	17-5	5	
5. Lincoln Park	19-2	3	
Out: none			

CLASS 4A			
Team	W-L	Last	
1. Blackhawk	20-2	1	
2. North Catholic	14-6	2	
3. Elizabeth Forward	19-2	3	
4. Highlands	16-6	4	
5. Laurel Highlands	18-2	5	
Out: none			

CLASS 3A			
Team	W-L	Last	
1. Avonworth	19-1	1	
2. Shady Side Academy	18-2	3	
3. South Park	15-6	5	
4. Waynesburg	18-2	2	
5. Beaver Falls	14-6	NR	
Out: Neshannock (15-6, 4)			

CLASS 2A			
Team	W-L	Last	
1. Greensburg C.C.	16-5	1	
2. Aliquippa	19-2	2	
3. Serra Catholic	18-4	3	
4. Fort Cherry	17-4	4	
5. Chartiers-Houston	16-5	5	
Out: none			

CLASS A			
Team	W-L	Last	
1. Union	16-5	1	
2. St. Joseph	19-2	2	
3. Aquinas Academy	15-5	3	
4. Monessen	16-4	4	
5. Riverview	14-6	5	
Out: none			

Rexrode wins her 3rd WPIAL gymnastics title

Baldwin junior Abby Rexrode won her third straight all-around title at the WPIAL gymnastics championships Saturday at Moon, taking first place in three of the four events.

Rexrode, who won the vault, bars and floor and placed eighth in the beam, is the third gymnast to win three straight WPIAL titles. She will have a chance at an unprecedented fourth title next year.

Mt. Pleasant's Olivia Kovach was the runner-up, winning the beam and placing second in the bars.

Hopewell's Marina Pinchiotti won the all-around in the Intermediate II division, finishing second in the beam, seventh in the bars and ninth in the floor.

Hempfield's Ava Hickman won the bars in the Intermediate II division.

— TribLive

WPIAL teams stand out

Wrestling squads exceed rankings at PIAA tourney

BY PAUL SCHOFIELD

HERSHEY — When WPIAL Class 3A wrestling teams Connellsville, Trinity and Franklin Regional qualified for the PIAA championships, they weren't ranked high in the state.

Connellsville was ninth, Trinity 10th and Franklin Regional 13th.

So much for those rankings. All three made it to the final eight, and Connellsville made the final six.

"We wanted to finish top four, so that was disappointing," Connellsville coach Bill Swink said. "But all three WPIAL teams performed well. We just needed to reverse some of the matches against Pennridge."

Pennridge held off Connellsville in the consolation semifinals 39-33.

It was a match that featured 10 pins, five by each team. The difference was Pennridge, from District 1, was able to get a technical fall and a major decision, and Connellsville's sixth win was a decision.

Falcons who won by fall were Tommy Gretz (107), Kia Vielma (133), Julian Ruggieri (139), Evan Petrovich (145) and Chris Cook (215).

"We needed to find a seventh win and didn't get it," Swink said. "I thought the effort was there, but maybe we were emotionally drained after beating Trinity."

The Falcons and the Hillers met in a rematch of the WPIAL finals, and the Falcons won 30-26.

Connellsville was able to get bonus points and not allow bonus points against Trinity.

"The Trinity match was big for the wrestlers," Swink said. "We had a little wiggle room this time."

Connellsville led 30-14 with two matches left and forfeited the matches.

Connellsville got pins from Gretz,



PAUL SCHOFIELD | TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Franklin Regional's Mike Ruane tries to turn over Central Dauphin's Francis Perri during their 114-pound match Saturday.

Lonzy Vielma (160) and Tyler Gallis (285). It was Vielma's 100th career victory.

"We were in a situation that we were all right hoping to keep the match for later," Trinity coach Ron Tarquinio said. "We save some points at one spot and give up bonus points at another. We were behind the eight ball against them."

Tarquinio told the team after the match he was proud that they were able to battle through injuries through the season. Trinity was ranked No. 1 for much of the season.

Franklin Regional saw its season end during the round of eight when it lost to Central Dauphin, 29-26.

The Panthers led early, but the District 3 perennial power won five

consecutive matches (139 through 172) to rally from a 23-6 deficit.

"In a three-point dual meet, we needed one win," Franklin Regional coach Matt Lebe said. "These guys were unbelievable. Losing always hurts. They really believed they should be here. I'm happy overall of our team effort."

All three coaches told their teams that they expect to return here next year. Connellsville started only one senior, Franklin Regional started four and Trinity seven.

"We have to continue to get better, and they will," Swink said. "Some of the average kids will become better wrestlers."

Paul Schofield is a TribLive staff writer. He can be reached at pschofield@triblive.com.

BASKETBALL NOTEBOOK

Gardner breaks county record

BY BILL BECKNER JR.

Gardner points are usually reserved for WPIAL football tiebreakers.

On Friday night, Gardner points went into basketball record books.

Monessen senior guard Lorenzo Gardner made history as he scored 64 points to set the Westmoreland County single-game scoring mark, breaking the previous record of 61 by Eric Roslonski of Southmoreland against Brownsville in 1991.

Gardner had 30 points in the first half and 34 in the second. He made 23 two-point field goals and three 3-pointers, along with nine free throws, in Monessen's 90-59 victory at California.

The performance tied former Highlands star Micah Mason's mark for the third-most points in a game in WPIAL history.

Mason netted 64 in a 101-83 win over Valley in 2011.

Monessen clinched the outright Section 2-A title on Gardner's big night.

"My teammates got me involved early in the game, and I could not have done this without my teammates," Gardner told the Mon Valley Independent. "I wanted to finish the season off strong and get this team ready for the playoffs. Our coaches push us every day to get better and to win as a team."

Mohawk's Larry Hardesty has the WPIAL record for points in a game with 71 in 1959.

Nine other players have scored more than 60 points in a game in WPIAL history, including Vinny Graham of Belle Vernon, who had 60 in 1995.

Lyndon Henderson had the previous Monessen school record with 55 in 2018.

"Lorenzo took advantage of every shot he had tonight," Monessen coach Dan Bosnic told the MVI. "He was aggressive but stayed away from any bad shots. He was great in the paint and going downhill. But I also think his teammates were great tonight, too.

Their unselfishness and willingness to sacrifice themselves was special. I think it was a team accomplishment."

Gardner is the sixth player from the county to score 50 or more in a game.

Monessen's Lyndon Henderson scored 55 in a game in 2017 against Geibel.

Jim Neurohr of Greensburg Salem had 53 against Latrobe in 1972.

Points of interest

Earlier this season, Clairton's Iyanna Wade set a WPIAL scoring record with 65 points in a game.

Local fans probably don't know that Mt. Pleasant boys first-year coach Annie Malkowiak was fourth in the record books before Wade came along.

Maude Searcy of Wilkinsburg had the previous record with 62 in 1990, Kam Gissendanner of Clairton had 60 in 2003 and Kris Sebastian of Monaca had 60 in 1989.

Malkowiak, who played at Ellwood City, scored 59 in a game in 1989.

Gina Naccarato of Monessen has the girls' Westmoreland single-game record with 57 points in 1994.

Naccarato has the WPIAL record for career points with 3,364 points. She is Monessen's athletic director.

Playoffs set

The local field of WPIAL playoffs is set.

The playoff pairings will be released Monday afternoon, around 2 p.m., on the WPIAL website. The playoffs begin later this week.

Girls qualifiers are: Norwin (18-3) in 6A; Penn-Trafford (13-8) and Latrobe (11-11) in 5A; Greensburg Salem (15-7) and Belle Vernon (10-12) in 4A; Burrell (16-4) and Mt. Pleasant (14-7) in 3A; Greensburg Central Catholic (16-5) in 2A; and Monessen (16-5) and Jeannette (8-9) in A.

Local boys qualifiers are: Franklin Regional (19-2), Penn-Trafford (11-11) and Kiski Area (14-7) in 5A; Belle Vernon (12-7) and Southmoreland (16-6) in 4A; Yough (17-4), Derry (13-6),

Mt. Pleasant (8-11) and Burrell (13-5) in 3A; Greensburg Central Catholic (20-2) and Jeannette (14-6) in 2A; and Monessen (17-4) in A.

Lighting it up

Friday was a high-scoring night across the board for Westmoreland boys teams.

Three teams scored at least 90 points, including Gardner-powered Monessen.

Franklin Regional beat McKeesport in a track meet Section 3-5A finale, 92-85. Lamont Perkins had 40 for the Tigers.

Derry topped Ligonier Valley, 96-60, as senior guard Nate Papuga pumped in a career-high 42. Jeannette beat Riverview, 75-54, and Belle Vernon fell to Elizabeth Forward in overtime, 71-64.

Alvarez gets 1,000

The milestone came and went with little fanfare, but Greensburg Central Catholic senior Franco Alvarez scored his 1,000th career point Friday in a 73-40 win over Springdale.

Did you know?

The Pennsylvania high-school record for most points in a game is held by Pete Cimino of Bristol, who had 114 in a 1960 game against Palisades. Cimino made 44 of 79 shots and 26 of 29 free throws.

He later played Major League Baseball for the Minnesota Twins and California Angels. As a minor-leaguer, he had a 20-strikeout game.

Other notable scoring performances from the Commonwealth include 90 points by Wilt Chamberlain, who played at Overbrook High in 1955.

Danny Fortson had 60 points in 1992 while playing for Altoona, and the late Kobe Bryant (Lower Merion) had 50 in 1996.

Bill Beckner is a TribLive staff writer. He can be reached at bbeckner@triblive.com.

ROUNDUP

Yough prevails over Mt. Pleasant

TRIBLIVE

game between the Vikings and Cougars and died Feb. 2.

Washington 59, Monessen 56 — De'ondre Daugherty scored 20 points to lead Washington (15-7) to a non-section win against Monessen (16-4). Ruben Gordon added 11 points for the Little Prexies. Lorenzo Gardner scored 24, and Rodney Johnson added 19 for Monessen.

Girls basketball

Penn-Trafford 61, Gateway 25 — Olivia Pepple and Elle Visco scored 11 points apiece to lead Penn-Trafford

(14-8) to a nonsection victory. Aubrie Lovelace scored 12 for Gateway (2-19).

Riverview 28, Jeannette 13 — Lily Bauer and Isabel Chaparro scored nine points each as Riverview (15-6, 6-2) beat Jeannette (8-9, 3-5) in Section 3-A. The Raiders held Jeannette to two points in the first half. Adriana Allison picked up nine points in the loss.

Washington 38, Monessen 36 (OT) — In nonsection play, Olivia Woods had 14 points as Washington (14-8) beat Monessen (16-5) in overtime. Sidney Campbell scored nine points for Monessen.

ATHLETES OF THE WEEK

Kiersten O'Connor

School: Mt. Pleasant

Sport: Swimming

Class: Junior

Claim to fame: O'Connor won the 100-yard backstroke and 200-yard freestyle, while also swimming leadoff legs of the first-place 200-yard medley relay and 400-yard freestyle relays in a 99-84 victory over Kiski Area. O'Connor has the No. 1 time in 2A in the 100 backstroke (56.03) and also has top-three times in the 50 free and 100 free.

How is your season going in relation to your expectations?

This season is going great so far. It has already exceeded my expectations, so I can't wait to see what the rest of the season brings.

What are your best times? I had two personal bests at WCCAs this year in the 100 back (56.03) and the 100 free (52.41).

What are your goals for this postseason?

To drop time in my events and to help my team to the best of my abilities.

What do you enjoy most about swimming?

The immense support system that you have in your team and coaches. Some of my best friends are my teammates, and I'm so lucky that I'm able to grow in the sport I love with my friends right beside me.

Do you have a pre-swim routine?

Every day before swim, I make sure to stretch and eat a snack to fuel me for practice.

What's it like training with an athlete like Lily King?

It's really great. She's one of the nicest people I've ever met, and no one will hype you up like Lily King. I'm lucky to have such a great teammate that supports me in and out of the pool.

Do athletics run in your family?

Yes. My entire family is very athletic. My grandma sparked an athletic interest in my whole family. My mom swam in college, and both of my brothers were super involved in multiple sports in high school.

Troy McClelland

School: Franklin Regional

Class: Senior

Sport: Wrestling

Claim to fame:

Since the postseason began for the Panthers, McClelland has been on a roll. He went 7-0, including 4-0 in Hershey, and helped the Panthers to a top-eight finish at the PIAA Class 3A team tournament. He improved to 27-10 competing at 189- and 215-pound weight classes.

Talk about the experience of wrestling in a big tournament and making it to the final day.

It was a real great experience being with my team. It's my last year, so it was really nice to actually have a good team to come here with.

How about the experience of winning here? You were a key reason for the team's success by getting some very big wins and competing at different weights.

It was super exciting. My coaches gave me the confidence, and I try to wrestle my best and tell me I'm better than who is in front of me and I believe them.

Do you hope to wrestle in college?

Yes I do. I haven't made a decision yet. I want a school that appreciates what I can give them. I want to be a key part of the lineup. As for my education, I want to own a business, and I want a place that can give a business degree.

What is your most memorable moment in high school?

It was the third-place match against Bethel Park, and I pinned Landon Hartman. He was a pretty good 215-pounder, and I pulled off an upset pin.

What makes Franklin Regional so special?

The camaraderie. Everyone is behind one another, and the coaches are even further behind us. We're just a tight-knit group, and everyone battles for each other.

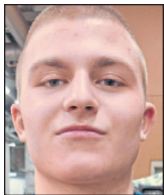
Do you have any rituals before a match?

I start getting ready during the 145-pound match. I stand up and make sure my body feels right. I bounce around, and by 160 pounds, I have my headgear on and I'm telling myself I can do this.

What type of music do you listen to?

I like all types of music.

— Bill Beckner Jr. and Paul Schofield



Chiefs vs. 49ers
6:30 p.m. today
Allegiant Stadium,
Las Vegas
TV: CBS
Line: 49ers by 2
Records: Chiefs 14-6,
49ers 14-5
Series record:
Chiefs lead 8-7
Last meeting: Chiefs beat
49ers, 44-23, on Oct. 23,
2022
49ers offensive rankings:
Overall (2), rushing (3),
passing (4), scoring (3)
49ers defensive rankings:
Overall (8), rushing (3),
passing (14), scoring (3)
Chiefs offensive rankings:
Overall (9), rushing (19),
passing (6), scoring (15)
Chiefs defensive rankings:
Overall (2), rushing (18),
passing (4), scoring (2)
Key injuries: Chiefs
All-Pro LG Joe Thuney is
out after sustaining a pec-
toral injury in the divisional
round in Buffalo. RB Jerick
McKinnon is also unlikel-
y to play despite being
designated to return from
injured reserve, where he
has been since a procedure
for a core muscle injury on
Jan. 2.



McCAFFREY

Notes: San Francisco is making its eighth Super Bowl appearance — tied for second most ever — and is seeking its record-tying sixth championship. ... The 49ers lost their two previous trips in the 2019 and 2012 seasons and haven't won it all since 1994. ... San Francisco's 38 playoff wins are the most in NFL history. ... The 49ers are the eighth team to reach the Super Bowl after overcoming a second-half deficit in the divisional round and the conference championship game. Four of the previous seven won it all. ... Niners coach Kyle Shanahan is 8-3 in the playoffs, tied for the second-best winning percentage for any coach with at least 10 games. ... QB Brock Purdy's four playoff wins are one shy of Ben Roethlisberger's record for the most in a player's first two seasons. ... Niners RB Christian McCaffrey has at least 50 yards from scrimmage and a TD in all six of his career playoff games. That's one shy of the longest streak ever held by John Riggins, Marcus Allen, Terrell Davis and Leonard Fournette. ... McCaffrey's 25 TDs in the regular season and playoffs are the most for any 49ers player in a single season. ... The Chiefs are making their sixth Super Bowl appearance. They lost the first Super Bowl to Green Bay, beat Minnesota in Super Bowl 4, then waited 50 years before beating the 49ers four years ago. ... The Chiefs are one of seven franchises to have reached consecutive Super Bowls more than once. ... Chiefs coach Andy Reid would tie Hall of Fame coaches Joe Gibbs and Bill Walsh for the third-most Super Bowl wins with his third. He is coaching in his fifth overall. ... Patrick Mahomes can pass Hall of Famers Terry Bradshaw, John Elway and Peyton Manning for the third-most playoff wins by a QB in NFL history with his 15th. ... TE Travis Kelce has an NFL-record 159 postseason catches, and his 1,810 yards receiving and 19 touchdowns trail only Jerry Rice in history. ... Kelce has 257 yards receiving in the Super Bowl. He needs 67 to move into the top five and 108 to climb to No. 2 in history. ... Chiefs WR Rashee Rice needs 20 yards receiving to pass Torry Holt (242) for second among rookies in the play-offs. He needs 146 to break Ja'Marr Chase's record.

— AP



KELCE

ON THE DEFENSIVE

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LAS VEGAS — The Chiefs go as far as Patrick Mahomes takes them. The 49ers have Christian McCaffrey, Deebo Samuel, George Kittle and a star-studded group surrounding Brock Purdy.

This Super Bowl will come down to the other side of the ball.

Defense wins the Vince Lombardi Trophy on Sunday.

Kansas City is seeking to become the NFL's first repeat champion in 19 years. San Francisco is aiming for a record-tying sixth Super Bowl title.

Mahomes, Travis Kelce and coach Andy Reid get most of the attention on the Chiefs (14-6), but defensive coordinator Steve Spagnuolo's unit deserves plenty of credit for carrying the team during various points of the season when the offense was inconsistent and out of sync.

All-Pro Chris Jones and Trent McDuffie along with George Karlaftis, L'Jarius Sneed and others stepped up, giving the Chiefs their best defense of Mahomes' era.

They will need to do it for one more game against a versatile, dynamic offense.

The 49ers (14-5) also have a formidable defense led by Nick Bosa, All-Pro Fred Warner, Javon Hargrave and Charvarius Ward. They've struggled in the postseason, especially making third-down stops.

They have to be better against Mahomes and the Chiefs to have a shot to win.

When the 49ers have the ball

The 49ers had the league's third-ranked rushing attack behind McCaffrey and fourth-ranked passing offense behind Purdy. The Chiefs gave up the second-fewest points (17.3), were fourth against the pass and 18th against the run.

McCaffrey, tight end Kittle, left tackle Trent Williams and fullback Kyle Juszczyk were All-Pros. Brandon Aiyuk was a second-team All-Pro. Samuel is a versatile, do-everything player.

The 49ers have plenty of weapons, and coach

Despite splashy names on offense, expect 'D' to decide Super Bowl

Kyle Shanahan is known for finding innovative ways to use them and keep defenses off balance. He's facing a master tactician in Spagnuolo.

It will be a chess match.

Spagnuolo has a penchant for blitzing. Purdy excelled against it.

The 49ers have to block Jones, who can be a game-wrecker. McDuffie is a shutdown slot cornerback, and Sneed allowed only one receiver all season to have more than 50 yards receiving in a game, so Purdy has a tough task.

He led the NFL with a 113.0 passer rating on 4,280 yards, 31 TDs, 11 picks and a 69.4% completion rate. McCaffrey led the NFL with 1,459 yards rushing and had 14 rushing TDs for San Francisco. He also had 564 yards receiving for seven scores.

Kittle had 65 catches for 1,020 yards and six TDs.

Aiyuk led the way with 75 receptions for 1,342 yards and seven scores. Samuel had 1,117 yards from scrimmage.

A wild card for San Francisco's offense is Purdy's surprising mobility. His scrambling was a major factor as he led comeback wins against the Lions and Packers in the playoffs.

The Chiefs shut down two-time MVP Lamar Jackson, the best running QB in the NFL, so they'll be ready for Purdy.

When the Chiefs have the ball

The Chiefs had the league's sixth-ranked passing offense behind Mahomes and 19th-ranked rushing attack. The 49ers were 14th against the pass and third against the run, but they have allowed 13 of 25 third-down conversions in the playoffs.



AP PHOTOS

49ERS DE NICK BOSA AND CHIEFS DT CHRIS JONES

Watson seeks 3rd Super Bowl ring

South Fayette grad, Chiefs WR has reached pinnacle of his sport 3 times in 4-year span

BY CHRIS ADAMSKI

He might be earning a third Super Bowl ring Sunday. But Justin Watson holds a former football championship near and dear to his heart, too.

"One of my favorite things when I go home is you pull into South Fayette, and right off the exit there's a sign that says 'State Champions,'" Watson said during the Super Bowl LVIII media night event this past week in Las Vegas. "And I was a part of that first state championship team in 2013, and so I still swell with pride thinking about my time at South Fayette."

Watson, a 2014 alumnus of South Fayette, is a wide receiver for the Kansas City Chiefs preparing for Sunday's Super Bowl against the San Francisco 49ers. During last season's big game, Watson had two catches for 18 yards while playing 60% of the offensive snaps in a win against the Philadelphia Eagles.

Two years before that, Watson was on a team that played *against* the Chiefs in a Super Bowl, but he was inactive for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers during their victory.

So while the likes of Chiefs stalwarts Patrick Mahomes, Travis Kelce and Andy Reid can claim a third Super Bowl ring, too, this Sunday, only Watson could say he has won three over a four-year span.

Watson twice was on teams at Penn that shared Ivy League titles. But, judging by what he told NFL broadcaster Ross Tucker in Las Vegas this week, it was the 2013 PIAA Class 2A championship won by South Fayette — the first in the school's history — that Watson looks back on with most joy.

"Coach Joe Rossi taught me my foundations with football," Watson said, "and that's bringing a great attitude every single day. And I still live and practice by that every single time I put a helmet on."

Watson might not be the only graduate of a WPIAL school to play in Sunday's Super Bowl if New Kensington's Skyy Moore (Shady Side Academy) returns for the Chiefs. A second-year wide receiver, Moore made eight starts before suffering a knee injury in December. He was activated off injured reserve Wednesday, a signal he might be in uniform for the Super Bowl



AP

Chiefs wide receiver Justin Watson set career highs with 27 catches, 460 yards and three touchdowns this season.

364 days after he had a 4-yard touchdown reception during last year's triumph over the Eagles.

Kevin Givens, a 49ers defensive lineman, played for Altoona High School a decade ago when that school was part of the WPIAL. Givens, a Penn State alum, is in his fifth NFL season, all with San Francisco.

One of Givens' teammates on the 49ers defense, safety Ji'Ayir Brown, is also a former Penn State player. The rookie third-round pick has started six games this season, including the NFC championship game when he played every defensive snap.

"I think every moment of every season I've went through has prepared me for this exact moment," Brown said at Super Bowl media day this past week.

A third former Nittany Lion who will play Sunday is Kansas City veteran left tackle Donovan Smith. Smith, who played for Penn State from 2011-14, was on that 2020 Bucs team that claimed the title.

San Francisco right tackle Colton McKivitz is a West Virginia alum in his fourth NFL season. He has been a full-time starter for the first time this season.

Chris Adamski is a TribLive staff writer. He can be reached at cadamski@triblive.com.

K.C.'s Girardi part of coaching family

GIRARDI · FROM B1

with or the Kansas City Chiefs, he's worked hard at it. Believe me, he's a grinder. He gets there at 5 o'clock in the morning, always one of the first ones there when they open. This definitely was something that he wanted to make his career."

David Girardi grew up in New Kensington and was a three-year starter at quarterback for Geneva College, where he has been inducted into the school's athletic hall of fame.

Though Girardi went to high school in Florida — his father and brother were on the coaching staff at St. Petersburg at the time — his Western Pennsylvania roots were solidified when he returned to play at Geneva under longtime coach Geno DeMarco. It was also DeMarco who gave Girardi his first coaching job — quarterbacks coach at his alma mater — in 2013.

"If you can imagine a person who has high intelligence, an incredible work ethic, a relentlessness to succeed and the ability to prepare for that success," DeMarco said, "those are the four things that I think David demonstrated here that he continues to demonstrate in the years that I have known him since he stepped on this campus."

DeMarco was interviewed last February within weeks of the announcement of his induction into the National Christian College Athletic Association Hall of Fame and in having the opportunity to watch one of his star pupils earn a second Super Bowl ring.

A year — and a promotion for Girardi — later, Girardi is part of the big game for a fourth time. And in his role,

he often has the ear of future Pro Football Hall of Famers such as Mahomes, Chiefs coach Andy Reid and star tight end Travis Kelce.

"David has got two (Super Bowl) rings, and it's not like he's just sitting there charting plays," DeMarco said. "This guy has got a brilliant offensive mind."

Girardi was born into a coaching family that included his father, uncle and two older brothers. Older brother Dom was the head coach at Highlands from 2017-21. In addition to a lengthy career coaching at the college and high school levels (including at Burrell and Highlands), father Frank develops and sells headsets and other communication equipment targeted for use by football coaches.

"I think that was instilled in (David), 'Hey, we are a coaching family,'" Frank said during an interview last year. "I am sure it's something that he's always had a desire to do."

Still, even for a football coaching lifer such as Frank Girardi, having a son compete for Super Bowls at the highest level seemingly every year never gets old.

"You see your kid on TV sometimes when you're watching the game and you're like, 'Hey, there's my boy,'" said Frank, who, like his wife, Barbara, is a 1972 Valley High grad. "You know how that is as parents."

"It's really nice to watch him interact with Patrick, Travis, Coach Reid. He's held at a high standard by those guys, and they trust the input that he has."

"It's really nice to watch him interact with Patrick, Travis, Coach Reid. He's held at a high standard by those guys, and they trust the input that he has."

FRANK GIRARDI
ON HIS SON DAVID

Chris Adamski is a TribLive staff writer. He can be reached at cadamski@triblive.com.

No-show bad look for Watt



MARK MADDEN
Hot Take

For the Pittsburgh Steelers, this past Thursday's NFL Honors show was an evening of triumph and perceived tragedy. The triumph was Cameron Heyward being given the Walter Payton Man of the Year award in recognition of off-the-field community service. Heyward is a thoroughly good man who has given back from his earliest opportunity. Bravo and well done.

The perceived tragedy was T.J. Watt not getting NFL Defensive Player of the Year. That honor went to Cleveland's Myles Garrett, who had far inferior stats. Watt got robbed. But compared to the grand larceny of Wayne Gretzky getting NHL MVP in 1988-89 despite having 31 less points (all goals) than Mario Lemieux, Garrett's smash-and-grab job is petty theft.

That debacle taught Lemieux to judge himself by championships and stats. The former is difficult for Watt. He's never even won a playoff game, let alone a Super Bowl.

But Watt led the NFL in sacks this season and in two of the previous three. That's tangible. That's got to be reward enough.

Watt is understandably mad.

But skipping the NFL Honors show — apparently because he had learned he wasn't going to win — is more than a bit immature. Watt went to Las Vegas specifically to attend.

"Nothing I'm not used to."

That's what Watt posted on X even before Garrett was announced as the winner.

Watt got Defensive Player of the Year in 2021. So being snubbed isn't something Watt is totally used to.

Watt should have attended in support of Heyward.

Watt should have congratulated Garrett. Watt no-showing could be construed as disrespecting Garrett. Garrett didn't declare himself the winner. He didn't get a vote. It's not Garrett's fault.

But Watt's a baby. His actions confirm, and not for the first time.

Had Watt won the award and Garrett ditched the ceremony in petulance, Steelers fans would be unleashing ridicule.

The NFL Honors show created more than one tempest in a teapot.

Some were chapped that Cleveland quarterback Joe Flacco got Comeback Player of the Year over Buffalo safety Damar Hamlin.

Hamlin, a Pitt and Central Catholic product, suffered cardiac arrest during a game Jan. 2, 2023. He came back and played this past season, registering two tackles in five games.

Flacco, 38, jumped off his couch to join the Browns after injury wrecked their quarterback room. He started five regular-season games, winning four, and got Cleveland into the playoffs. Flacco threw multiple touchdowns in each of his five regular-season starts.

Hamlin is alive, thank heaven. But he barely got on the field in 2023. Buffalo might have cut Hamlin if not for his circumstance.

Flacco came back and prospered. He didn't just survive. He deserves his award.

Mark Madden hosts a radio show 3-6 p.m. weekdays on WXDX-FM (105.9).

Bet on Purdy to do some running

BENZ • FROM B1

I'm inclined to leave the point total alone on this one. My gut says the game is going over 47.5 points. But I'm also thinking if the Chiefs win, it's going to have to be fairly low scoring. This is too much of a coin flip. I think there are better bets to be made elsewhere.

- If the Chiefs win, Patrick Mahomes probably will be the MVP. It would be his third such award. And you can still get it at plus-140. That strikes me as excellent value. Get in on it now.
- I also placed a long-shot bet on running back Isaiah Pacheco at plus-3000. So \$20 would pay off at \$620.
- I'm heavily invested in Pacheco's individual props. I've got him scoring a touchdown (minus-115) and going over 86.5 rushing-plus-receiving yards. The Niners allowed 136 and 182 yards rushing in their two playoff games. Pacheco has 84.6 yards rushing (alone) on average in the Chiefs' three playoff games. He scored a touchdown in all three, as well.
- On the San Francisco side, I love quarterback Brock Purdy going over 12.5 rushing yards. Some are saying that's a sucker bet because in the last two playoff games, he went for 48 (Detroit) and 14 (Green Bay) yards rushing, but in six of the last seven regular season games, he stayed under that total.
- Well, then, I guess I'm a sucker because I'm in on it. I also took Deebo Samuel at over 15.5 yards rushing (minus-115) and over 78.5 yards rushing and receiving (minus 109).
- As KNBR's John Lund told me on Thursday's "Breakfast With Benz" podcast, "I think you're right. (Purdy) is going to run in this game. ... They don't run Deebo a lot during the season. But during the playoffs, because there is no tomorrow, they do. And that's why Brock Purdy ran

against the Lions. They were desperate. You say this guy is not going to beat us with his legs. But he'll do that, and he's sneaky athletic."

I also sprinkled a few bucks on tight end George Kittle going over 49.5 yards receiving at plus-100. He's gone over that mark in five of his last seven games. The Niners say he is going to play despite a toe injury, and I think the injury concerns are keeping the odds on his receiving totals friendly.

I've also got Purdy throwing at least one interception at minus-122.

- Here's a bonus one to consider once the game starts. In Chiefs games this year, the second-half under has hit 17 of 19 times. The fourth-quarter under has hit 18 of 19 times. Particularly if the Chiefs are up after two or three quarters, you might wanna bang those numbers live in-game.
- Right now, the point total for the second half is at 24.5 points, with the under at minus-130. The fourth quarter is at minus-109 at 13.5 points.
- So, to recap, I have nine bets:
- Kansas City +3 (minus-139)
- Mahomes to win MVP at plus-140 and/or Pacheco at plus-3000
- Pacheco over 86.5 rushing-plus-receiving yards (minus-109)
- Pacheco to score a TD (minus-115)
- Kittle over 49.5 receiving yards (plus-100)
- Purdy over 12.5 rushing yards (minus-112)
- Purdy throwing at least one pick (minus-122)
- Samuel over 15.5 rushing yards (minus-115)
- Samuel over 78.5 yards receiving plus rushing (minus-109)

Tim Benz is a TribLive staff writer. He can be reached at tbenz@triblive.com or via Twitter @TimBenzPGH.

SPRING TRAINING PREVIEW

40-man roster

PITCHERS

No.	Name	B/T	Ht.	Wt.
67	Braxton Ashcraft	L/R	6-5	195
51	David Bednar	L/R	6-0	225
43	Ryan Borucki	L/L	6-4	210
34	JT Brubaker	R/R	6-3	180
53	Mike Burrows	R/R	6-1	190
54	Aroldis Chapman	L/L	6-4	235
59	Roansy Contreras	R/R	6-1	205
26	Bailey Falter	R/L	6-4	175
27	Marco Gonzales	L/L	6-1	205
61	Jose Hernandez	L/L	6-3	205
35	Colin Holderman	R/R	6-4	230
23	Mitch Keller	R/R	6-3	220
50	Carmen Mlodzinski	R/R	6-2	220
36	Dauri Moreta	R/R	6-2	185
62	Kyle Nicolas	R/R	6-4	223
48	Luis L. Ortiz	R/R	6-2	235
24	Johan Oviedo	R/R	6-5	245
64	Quinn Priester	R/R	6-3	210
54	Martin Perez	L/L	6-0	200
52	Colin Selby	R/R	6-2	220
	Jackson Wolf	L/L	6-7	205

CATCHERS

32	Henry Davis	R/R	6-0	210
55	Jason Delay	R/R	5-11	190
5	Endy Rodriguez	S/R	6-0	200
14	Ali Sanchez	R/R	6-1	200



HENRY DAVIS

INFIELTERS

3	Ji Hwan Bae	L/R	5-11	185
71	Tsung-Che Cheng	L/R	5-7	173
15	Oneil Cruz	L/R	6-7	215
39	Nick Gonzales	R/R	5-9	190
13	Ke'Bryan Hayes	R/R	5-11	195
31	Liover Peguero	R/R	6-0	220
44	Rowdy Tellez	L/L	6-4	270
19	Jared Triolo	R/R	6-3	210
75	Alika Williams	R/R	6-1	180

OUTFIELDERS

2	Connor Joe	R/R	6-0	205
38	Edward Olivares	R/R	6-2	190
54	Joshua Palacios	L/R	6-1	200
10	Bryan Reynolds	S/R	6-2	205
65	Jack Suwinski	L/L	6-2	215

DESIGNATED HITTER

22	Andrew McCutchen	R/R	5-10	190
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Non-roster invitees

PITCHERS

Name	B/T	Ht.	Wt.
Bubba Chandler	S/R	6-2	200
Thomas Harrington	R/R	6-2	185
Ben Heller	R/R	6-3	210
Jared Jones	L/R	6-1	190
Michael Plassmeyer	L/L	6-2	197
Ryder Ryan	R/R	6-2	205
Paul Skenes	R/R	6-6	235
Anthony Solometo	L/L	6-5	220
Hunter Stratton	R/R	6-4	225
Sean Sullivan	R/R	6-1	180

CATCHERS

Carter Bins	R/R	5-11	215
Abrahan Gutierrez	R/R	6-0	214

INFIELTERS

Sergio Alcantara	S/R	6-4	151
Andres Alvarez	R/R	5-8	175
Jack Brannigan	R/R	6-0	190
Termarr Johnson	L/R	5-8	175
Jake Lamb	L/R	6-3	215
Joe Perez	R/R	6-1	198

OUTFIELDERS

Gilberto Celestino	R/L	6-0	170
Matt Gorski	R/R	6-2	198
Billy McKinney	L/L	5-11	205

PHOTOS: CHRISTOPHER HORNER | TRIBLIVE



CHRISTOPHER HORNER | TRIBLIVE

Outfielder Bryan Reynolds hit 24 homers and drove in 84 runs last season.

Bucs look inward for more offense

PIRATES • FROM B1

lefty reliever Aroldis Chapman to serve as setup man to two-time All-Star closer David Bednar.

The Pirates didn't sign any free agents to multi-year deals nor did they extend any of their returning players. Bednar and All-Star ace Mitch Keller got generous bumps to avoid arbitration but will continue to be viewed as trade candidates without long-term deals.

A frustrated fan base wanted more, like seeing the Pirates sign big-name free agents Cody Bellinger or Rhys Hoskins or trading for an ace such as Dylan Cease. Those were always unrealistic expectations. Instead, Cherington plugged holes by spending about \$31 million on the new additions, the same amount as last offseason. The Athletic graded the Pirates a D for their offseason.

The idea that the Pirates were suddenly going to start spending wildly was always a fantasy. They had a \$73 million Opening Day payroll last year, the fourth lowest in baseball. The front office has been resolute in adherence to its plan of how to build a sustainable contender, which is why the spending has been focused on the MLB Draft and international signings.

Even so, the Pirates should be better.

They won 29 of 57 games over the final two months despite relying on only two traditional starting pitchers, Keller and Johan Oviedo, who is out for the 2024 season after Tommy John surgery. Now they have three starters, with the hope that Perez and Gonzales are upgrades over Rich Hill and Vince Velasquez. They also are counting on a combination of Roansy Contreras, Bailey Falter, Luis Ortiz or Quinn Priester to fill the other two spots in the starting rotation until JT Brubaker and Mike Burrows are ready to return after the All-Star break or top prospects Paul Skenes and Jared Jones make their major-league debuts.

The bullpen has been bolstered by the addition of Chapman, who still

Spring training schedule

Date	Opponent	Time
Feb. 24	@ Minnesota	1:05 p.m.
Feb. 25	vs. Baltimore	1:05 p.m.
Feb. 26	@ Toronto	1:07 p.m.
Feb. 27	vs. Atlanta	1:05 p.m.
Feb. 28	vs. Detroit	1:05 p.m.
Feb. 29	@ Baltimore	1:05 p.m.
March 1	vs. Tampa Bay	1:05 p.m.
March 2	@ Detroit	1:05 p.m.
March 3	vs. Baltimore	1:05 p.m.
March 4	@ Tampa Bay	1:05 p.m.
March 5	vs. Toronto	1:05 p.m.
March 6	@ Baltimore	6:05 p.m.
March 8	vs. Minnesota (SS) @ Atlanta (SS)	1:05 p.m. 1:05 p.m.
March 9	@ Detroit	1:05 p.m.
March 10	vs. Philadelphia	1:05 p.m.
March 11	@ Boston	1:05 p.m.
March 12	vs. Atlanta	1:05 p.m.
March 13	@ Toronto	1:07 p.m.
March 14	vs. Baltimore	3:05 p.m.
March 15	@ N.Y. Yankees	6:35 p.m.
March 16	vs. Detroit (SS) @ Atlanta (SS)	4:05 p.m. 6:05 p.m.
March 17	vs. Tampa Bay	1:05 p.m.
March 18	@ Philadelphia	1:05 p.m.
March 20	@ N.Y. Yankees	6:35 p.m.
March 21	vs. Toronto	6:05 p.m.
March 22	@ Baltimore	6:05 p.m.
March 23	vs. Boston	1:05 p.m.
March 24	vs. N.Y. Yankees	1:05 p.m.
March 25	vs. Toronto	1:05 p.m.

possesses one of the best fastballs and strikeout rates in baseball even if his walk rate is a concern. It allows for the possibility of lefty Ryan Borucki and righties Carmen Mlodzinski and Colin Selby to serve as openers instead of high-leverage relievers to demand less of Contreras, Falter, Ortiz

and Priester. The Pirates have lefty Jose Hernandez and righty Dauri Moreta as firemen and sinkerballer Colin Holderman as a setup bridge.

Given his popularity and team-best .378 on-base percentage, McCutchen is a bargain at \$5 million who is one home run shy of his career 300th. Where Tellez is a defensive downgrade from Carlos Santana at first, he does present power potential. Tellez hit 35 home runs in 2022, so his \$3.2 million deal — worth another \$800,000 in incentives — is a low-cost risk if he can repeat that production.

The Pirates had a minus-98 run differential last season, the NL's fourth worst. While the rest of the starting rotation remains a mystery, the bullpen should be formidable. The greater concern is at catcher. After losing Endy Rodriguez to season-ending elbow surgery, backup Jason Delay is their only experienced catcher. Henry Davis, the 2021 No. 1 overall pick, will get a shot at the starting job but remains raw. The Pirates signed a Sanchez (Ali) but not the one fans wanted (Gary).

How will the Pirates improve their offense? Only two NL teams scored fewer than their 692 runs. Even the 59-win Colorado Rockies scored more runs (721). That answer is internal. They are counting on career years from Ke'Bryan Hayes, Bryan Reynolds and Jack Suwinski, all of whom are entering their primes.

And the Pirates are banking heavily on Oneil Cruz to provide the missing production. If Cruz can return to his rookie form, he projects to hit 31 homers and 101 RBIs over a full season. That's asking a lot of a 6-foot-7 shortstop coming back from a fractured left ankle that caused him to miss all but nine games last year. But Cruz is considered a unicorn, so anything is possible.

If that sounds more like fingers crossed than a fool-proof plan, so be it.

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