

## Erie preps for April 8 crowds

Solar eclipse enthusiasts expected to fill state's best viewing spot for totality

BY PATRICK VARINE

On Monday, April 8, Erie residents will discover the impact just a few minutes of darkness can have. Depending on how many people travel to Erie for the upcoming total solar eclipse — local tourism officials are estimating anywhere between 50,000-200,000 — the city of just over 94,000 could double in population, regaining its former spot as Pennsylvania's third-largest town, at least for a few days. And that means lots of locals — from residents to grocery store owners to the police — are preparing for the busiest long weekend they've likely ever seen. "Our hotels are at 95% capacity right now," said Visit Erie communications director Christine Temple. "We're the closest city in the total eclipse path to major metro areas like Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, D.C. Pennsylvania as a whole is expected to get between 56,000 and 200,000 visitors, and common sense dictates the majority of them will be coming to Erie."

ECLIPSE · A2

### THE DRIVE TO COMPETE



KRISTINA SERAFINI | TRIBLIVE

Norwin freshman Octavia Walker looks on after being tended to for a nose bleed during a PIAA girls west regional championship match March 2 at Canon-McMillan. This school year was the first for girls competition, and the Norwin squad relished some special moments. **Story and photos, B1.**

## Buttigieg: Boeing to face scrutiny

BLOOMBERG NEWS

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said the Federal Aviation Administration will rigorously assess the Boeing Co. after the blowout of a fuselage section on an Alaska Airlines flight in January. To maintain airline safety, "that means an enormous amount of rigor in dealing with Boeing, in dealing with any regulatory issue," Buttigieg said on Fox News Sunday. "And that's exactly what the FAA is doing." Boeing has faced scrutiny from passengers and regulators after a series of high-profile flight incidents this year, most notably the blowout of a fuselage section on a brand-new 737 Max 9 during an Alaska Airlines flight in January, which has prompted a criminal investigation by the Justice Department.



**Buttigieg:** Aviation and justice officials both looking into company after recent incidents.

BOEING · A9

## AI tool helps diagnose ear infections in kids

UPMC software can analyze images against normal

BY JULIA MARUCA

Using artificial intelligence technology, doctors may soon get a helping hand with diagnosing pediatric ear infections. A new software tool developed by UPMC and Pitt scientists analyzes video captured of a child's ear canal via an auriscope connected to a smartphone camera to help determine if the patient has an ear infection.

The AI technology could help doctors with the challenging task of diagnosing ear infections — a job that's difficult when examining wiggly, fussy young children, said Dr. Judith Martin, professor of pediatrics at Pitt. "It's a challenge that people don't necessarily appreciate how difficult it is," Martin said. "Toddlers are impossible to wrangle, let alone try to come at them with a device when they're not feeling

well. To look into their ear to see the tympanic membrane, the eardrum, is definitely a challenge." The tool is based on a model built by the doctors using 1,151 ear canal videos taken from 635 children who visited outpatient UPMC pediatric offices between 2018 and 2023. The researchers "taught" the software to analyze ear canals like a doctor by looking at features of the tympanic membrane, or eardrum, and identifying characteristics of an ear

infection, or acute otitis media. "We trained the neural network to think like we tend to think as we make that diagnosis," said Dr. Alejandro Hoberman, senior author on the study. Hoberman is a professor of pediatrics, director of the division of general academic pediatrics at Pitt's School of Medicine and president of UPMC Children's Community Pediatrics. The two AI models the team

UPMC · A8



### GOLDEN MOMENTS

"Oppenheimer" cleaned up at the 96th annual Academy Awards. Cillian Murphy (far left) accepts the award for best performance by an actor in a leading role, and Christopher Nolan won the award for best director. Robert Downey Jr. also took home a statue for his supporting performance.

**Story, A10. For complete coverage of the Academy Awards, visit TribLive.com.**

PHOTOS: AP



### INSIDE



#### NATION CAN YOU SAVE?

» A federal program launched in August helps student loan recipients afford their payments. **A8**

#### LOCAL

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» A Vietnam war veteran's talk aims to help people born since that conflict understand the fighting. **A3**



#### SPORTS

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» Behind goaltender Calvin Pickard, Edmonton shuts out the Penguins for their sixth loss in seven games. **B1**

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OILERS 4, PENGUINS 0

# Oilers extend Penguins' misery

*Firing 41 shots on goal not enough to prevent 6th loss in past 7 games*

BY SETH RORABAUGH

While most of the world lost an hour Sunday because of daylight savings time, the Pittsburgh Penguins just kept losing.

Their latest setback was a 4-0 shutout at the hands of the Edmonton Oilers at PPG Paints Arena. While the Penguins did offer a somewhat crisper performance than some of their recent efforts in which they have allowed the equivalent of a touchdown's worth of goals, they still suffered their sixth loss in their past seven games (1-6-0).

The result punched another hole into their hull as their playoff hopes continued to take on water. Regardless, they professed resolve to press on. "Obviously, the games haven't gone the way we want probably the last six or seven," Penguins goaltender Tristan Jarry said. "It's just finding that motivation. Finding something that motivates

you and something that can elevate your game to bring a new level to every game." Despite posting an ample 41 shots against Oilers goaltender Calvin Pickard, the Penguins were shut out for the third time over the past seven games and the fifth time overall this season (to say nothing of being shut out by the Oilers

PENGUINS • B4



CHAZ PALLA | TRIBLIVE

Oilers goaltender Calvin Pickard makes a save on Penguins forward Bryan Rust in the third period during Sunday's game at PPG Paints Arena.

## GIRLS WRESTLING

"We spend so much time together. We've all seen each other bleed, cry, everything." — Norwin's Karsyn Champion

# LEAGUE of their OWN



PHOTOS: KRISTINA SERAFINI | TRIBLIVE

Norwin sophomore Camden Reese (right) battles Southmoreland freshman Juliet Ice during the Norwin girls wrestling team's first home match of its inaugural season Jan. 3.

## Norwin girls wrestlers relish special moments during PIAA's inaugural season

BY KRISTINA SERAFINI

Avalin Barry sat in the black-and-gold bleachers of North Allegheny High School's gymnasium, her Sasquatch-patterned sweatpants tucked into a gray medical boot on her right leg and a brown cowboy boot on the left.

The Norwin freshman and first-year wrestler wasn't able to compete in the first WPIAL girls wrestling championship last month. She suffered a season-ending injury — a broken fibula, torn ligaments and a high ankle sprain — while wrestling with sophomore Josephine "Jojo" Dollman during a practice the week prior. She wore a shirt that read "Compliments of Jojo."

"I didn't know anything like this before. That's why I'm here, to support these girls even though I can't wrestle," she said. "This pretty much means everything to me now."

Barry watched her team make history that day. Dollman was the first Norwin girls wrestler to earn a gold medal in the inaugural event.

sports.triblive.com  
Visit our website for more behind-the-scenes photos from Norwin's season.



NORWIN • B2

Teammates cheer on Norwin sophomore Lillian Chaney before a match earlier this season.

## Khan not afraid to shop around

*Plenty of free agent options if Steelers GM again looks externally*

BY CHRIS ADAMSKI

Never in the 30 offseasons that preceded it since the NFL introduced unrestricted free agency had the Pittsburgh Steelers added more than the 11 free agents they signed away from other teams last spring.

That 2023 was the first full offseason under general manager Omar Khan is probably not a coincidence.

Consider that the Steelers signed a *total* of just 10 external free agents *combined* over the 2019, 2020 and 2021 offseasons. And among the 11 signed last season, six spent the season (when healthy) atop the depth chart at his respective position. That made the second consecutive year the Steelers got six starters via free agency. For context, there were several instances over the past few decades when the Steelers' foray into free agency was little more than picking up some spare parts and backups.

Make no mistake, like Tom Donahoe and Kevin Colbert before him, Khan envisions building a sustainable winner via the draft. It's in the Steelers' DNA to develop and re-sign their own. And even after binging on unrestricted free agents last season, the organization can pride itself more on finding at least three rookie starters in the draft, with at least a couple more projecting as possible starters down the line.

Still, free agency remains an important part of roster-building.

"We're looking at everything, and I have an obligation to this organization, to the players, to the front office, to every member of Steelers nation, to look at every option and every way of trying to improve this team," Khan said at the NFL Combine last week. "And we're going to do so."

The free agency aspect of that improvement process formally begins at noon Monday, when teams are permitted to start negotiating with the agents of players whose contracts officially expire at

STEELERS • B3



AP

Pitt's Blake Hinson shoots over N.C. State's Casey Morsell on Saturday.

## Pitt's Capel keeps focus on his team

*Coach likes look of Panthers regardless of ratings with ACC Tournament ahead*

BY JERRY DiPAOLA

Jeff Capel appears weary of the debate.

Pitt's coach is a busy man, and he has more pressing issues on his mind than metrics, quads and what outsiders think of his team. Most important at the moment is the fact that after 10 previous ACC Tournament appearances, the No. 4-seeded Panthers have earned their first double bye and will play Thursday in the quarterfinals in

Washington D.C.

You can bet the Shady Side Academy girls' next PIAA tournament game — his daughter Cameron is on the team — piques Capel's interest more than anything Joe Lunardi might think about Pitt's NCAA chances.

Family over bracketology.

Too bad for Capel, the speculation doesn't figure to go away. He tries to avoid it, but it's March, and it's a rule that everyone must have an opinion.

"All we've talked about is, we have to keep winning. We've had a 1-0 mentality," Capel said.

Still, he said Pitt staff members keep reminding him of the facts.

"I never look at them, but from

what (a Pitt staff member) told me, we're higher in the Net," he said Saturday night after Pitt won its 11th game of the past 14, 81-73 against N.C. State.

After Pitt's final game of the 2022-23 regular season — a 78-76 road loss to Miami — Pitt was 58th in the NCAA Net rankings, went 1-1 in the ACC Tournament and earned an NCAA berth. Presently, the Panthers are 44th.

Asked to explain, Capel said, "I have no idea."

This year and last, Pitt had a 7-8 record against Quad 1 and Quad 2 teams, considered the more difficult

PITT • B4



AP

The Steelers have scheduled a meeting with former Bills center Mitch Morse.



GIRLS WRESTLING



PHOTOS: KRISTINA SERAFINI | TRIBLIVE

**ABOVE:** Norwin's Jojo Dollman (second from left) leads a prayer with teammates Karsyn Champion (from left), Addison Elyes, Avalin Barry, Kei Leonard and others ahead of a match at Upper St. Clair.

**LEFT:** Norwin junior Abby Hewitt (right) is congratulated by teammates Camden Reese (middle) and Karsyn Champion after winning third place at 190 pounds during the WPIAL championships Feb. 17 at North Allegheny.

**FAR LEFT:** From left, Norwin's Octavia Walker, Karsyn Champion, Giana Ruble (leaning forward), Lillian Chaney and Camden Reese look on during weigh-ins before a match against Plum earlier this year.



# Norwin girls revel in making history

NORWIN · FROM B1

She will be in the books as the first girl to win WPIAL gold in her 142-pound weight class in this, the first girls wrestling season sanctioned by the PIAA.

Flanked by athletes from Peters Township and Butler, Dollman cried as she bent down to atop the winner's podium to receive her medal from her dad and coach, Mike Dollman.

"I was so in my head before that last match, and he came up to me and was like, 'No matter what, I'm proud of you,'" she said. "So for me to get that pin in the first period and for him to hang that medal around my neck, it was just so amazing, and I don't think anything will ever top that feeling."

Dollman wasn't the only Norwin wrestler celebrating.

Freshman Octavia Walker had a difficult start in her 170-pound championship bout against Audrey Calgaro. But she bounced back from a 5-0 deficit to pin the Canon-McMillan sophomore before leaping into the arms of her dad and coach, Rob Walker.

The Knights earned four other medals at WPIALs: junior Abby Hewitt's third place (190 pounds), freshman Karsyn Champion's fourth place (148), sophomore Addison Elyes' fifth place (112) and junior Keiarra "Kei" Leonard's eighth place (235).

Of those six, all but Leonard qualified for the PIAA girls west regionals March 2, where Dollman and Champion's first-place finishes, along with Walker's second place and Hewitt's third, earned them a trip to Hershey for the state championship. Dollman was the only Norwin girls wrestler to place at the state event, finishing fifth.

The season was a huge success for this team of 10. Most of the girls never had wrestled before. A few never had been involved in organized sports.

Nick Semon, one of Norwin's coaches, said the team has progressed tremendously over the last few months.

"I think their confidence, their overall mental toughness, their discipline, their commitment to excellence has all improved over the season, along with their technique," he said. "Girls wrestling is a great add-on to the community. I see a lot of support from the parents. I see a lot of support from girls in general and how inspiring it is to the younger generation, especially our middle school girls coming up to the high school."

Brooke Zumas is the chair of SanctionPA, a nonprofit organi-



**LEFT:** Norwin freshman Octavia Walker is seen through a window of an auxiliary gym during weigh-ins before a match this season. **RIGHT:** Norwin's Karsyn Champion (top) wrestles Northwestern Lehigh's Katie Brensinger during the PIAA championship quarterfinals March 8.

zation that spearheaded efforts to get girls wrestling sanctioned in Pennsylvania. Among its benefits, she said, wrestling helps boost self-confidence, grit, perseverance and the ability to overcome obstacles. It also helps improve body image, she said, by showing that people of all shapes and sizes are needed and valued.

"No matter what you weigh, we have a place for you in this sport," Zumas said.

In March 2020, SanctionPA kicked off its campaign to meet the PIAA's 100-school threshold to consider a sanction. They met that goal in February 2023, and the PIAA unanimously voted on the sanction last May, making this its first winter season. Pennsylvania was the 38th state to sanction the sport. Now, 183 schools across the commonwealth have sponsored teams.

Zumas said the interest has been amazing. The number of girls participating in the sport nearly has doubled each year since 2020. There were 305 girls wrestling in the state during the 2020-21 school year. That number swelled to 1,934 this year.

News of the sanction sparked sophomore Camden Reese's interest in joining Norwin's team.

"I was really scared, but once you start wrestling, you just focus so

much on that and you just forget everything else around you," she said.

Others were recruited to the team by classmates.

"I was in the same gym class as Jojo, and she kind of walked up to me and was like, 'Do you want to see a video of me throwing a girl?' And I was like, 'OK.' And then I just started going to practices," sophomore Lillian Chaney said. "It was super fun, so I stuck with it."

Sophomore Giana Ruble was persuaded to join to fill a spot needed for the 118-pound weight class.

"I would've never wrestled boys," she said.

Leonard said her lacrosse teammates, Reese and Hewitt, nagged her to join.

"I gave in ... and I fell in love," she said.

Though intimidating on the mat, the Norwin girls are anything but that behind the scenes. There's lots of support and camaraderie among the group. Lots of hugs and "I love you's." And a ton of hair-braiding.

The girls described the team as a family, despite many of them only knowing each other for a short time.

"They're my best friends," Walker said. "I didn't even know half of these girls before the season, and now our bond with each other is



so tight and it's so special. I don't think there's anything else I would ask for."

Before a Valentine's Day match at Upper St. Clair last month, one of the girls brought in pink, red and white-striped goodie bags to pass around for some holiday cheer. Sparkly pink iced sugar cookies were a supplement to the usual post-weigh-in scarf fest, and heart-shaped headbands adorned the heads of teammates as they gathered for their pre-match prayer.

"This team means everything to me. I've been on other sports teams, and it just hasn't clicked with the girls, but these ones will be cheering for me if I'm getting my head shoved in the mat, or if I'm the one shoving someone else's head in the mat," Chaney said.

Champion agreed.

"We spend so much time together. We've all seen each other bleed, cry, everything. Everyone's downfalls, we've all seen. It's a really great connection to have with someone, knowing that they have your side. It means a lot," she said.

Hewitt, another first-year wrestler, said she was impressed by how well the season has gone.

"It's the first year for a girls team, and all of the girls are getting really good this year. A lot of our first-year girls are doing really good. Everyone's trying really hard this year," she said.

Of the 10 girls on the team, three have wrestling experience. Walker and Elyes wrestled last year with the boys.

"I feel like I have so much more experience now. I'm definitely

getting stronger throughout the year," Elyes said.

Last year she said she had to compete in outside tournaments to gain more experience because she didn't have too many matches.

"(The boys) are a lot stronger, definitely, but I feel like more technique comes in with the girls," she said.

Dollman is the team's veteran, having been in the sport for eight years. She exclusively wrestled on the boys team during her first year. In the years that followed, she wrestled boys all season until it came time for states, where she would face female athletes.

She repeated that until last year, when she had girls competitions in-season for the first time. Wrestling on the boys team had been a challenge for her. She said she faced a lot of bullying.

"So for me to have girls that I can relate to that consistently put in effort and consistently show up, it means that I have my own family now, and it's not just me and one other girl or me and a couple girls that are the team managers," she said. "These girls know what I go through on a day-to-day basis."

Dollman said the sanctioned sport proves girls deserve to be in the wrestling space just as much as the boys, though she's known that all along.

"Just because we're now having our own season doesn't mean we haven't been here before," Dollman said. "We've been here for a long time."

Kristina Serafini is a TribLive photographer. She can be reached at kserafini@triblive.com.

**"I've been on other sports teams, and it just hasn't clicked with the girls, but these ones will be cheering for me if I'm getting my head shoved in the mat, or if I'm the one shoving someone else's head in the mat."**

LILLIAN CHANEY  
NORWIN WRESTLER





# Flenory makes HOF family affair

1998 grad Brice joins uncle B.B. in Alle-Kiski hall

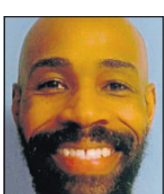
BY MARK NITOWSKI

Longtime local basketball fans might remember Brice Flenory for his deadly fade-away jumper.

A 1998 Valley graduate, Flenory apparently hasn't lost his touch over the years.

"My fade-away shot still is unstoppable, even at the age of 45," said

Flenory, who is a dean of students for the Pittsburgh Public Schools. "I don't play that much anymore, but when I get in the gym, that shot is unstoppable. With a fade-away, you either have it or you don't. I picked it up by watching



Flenory

Michael Jordan."

Flenory used his silky shooting skills and defensive prowess to carve out an outstanding career at the high school and professional levels. For his basketball exploits, he will be among those inducted into the Alle-Kiski Valley Sports Hall of Fame on May 4 at the Pittsburgh Shriners Center in Harmar.

"I think getting in (to the A-K Hall) reflects the hard work that I put in while playing," he said. "It also makes me think about my old teammates, guys like Erin Russell, who was our point guard (at Valley), Josh Schreckengost, Rudy Wade, Jim

## If you're going

**What:** 53rd A-K Valley Sports Hall of Fame induction  
**When:** 7 p.m., May 4  
**Where:** Pittsburgh Shriners Center, Harmar  
**Tickets:** \$40  
**Contact:** Larry Lutz, 724-882-3695; Fred Soilis, 412-736-1809; Bill Heasley, 724-882-3079

Richardson and Llewellyn Johnson."

Flenory is the nephew of former Valley great B.B. Flenory, who starred for the Vikings in the mid-1970s and then was a standout at Duquesne. B.B. was inducted into the A-K Hall in 1997.

"I heard about the glory days in New Kensington and Pittsburgh, but I was too young to see him play," Brice said. "I tried to carry on the (Flenory) name and tradition, but I didn't feel any pressure. I was doing it for me, not anyone else. I was more into watching (former Valley star) Tom Pipkins when I was a kid."

Flenory grew up in the Parnassus section of New Kensington before his family moved to Arnold. He described Monte Banks, a teammate of Pipkins on Valley's 1993 WPIAL championship team, as one of his early mentors.

"Monte lived two doors down from us," Flenory said. "We had a hoop in front of our house, and he would come over with his brother, Ralph, and we would play three-on-three

with Antawun Harris and some other guys."

At Valley, the 6-foot-2 Flenory scored more than 1,200 points, finishing fifth on the school's all-time points list.

"What a lot of people don't realize is that I scored those points in basically two and a half seasons on varsity," said Flenory, who also was a three-year letterwinner in track and field. "A senior started in front of me at the beginning of my sophomore year."

Flenory was a first-team Valley News Dispatch all-star selection as a junior and senior.

"We had some good teams," he said. "We split the section with North Catholic in '96 and had a nice run in the state playoffs in '97. We had a 7-7 (section) record my senior year but didn't make the playoffs."

As a senior, Flenory was the A-K Valley's leading scorer, averaging 23 points. In the Comcast Tipoff Tournament, the Vikings defeated rival Burrell behind Flenory's 24 points, including 14 in the pivotal fourth quarter and overtime. Later in the season, he scored 27 points in Valley's upset of Knoch.

After high school, Flenory stepped away from competitive basketball. In his mid-20s, he was playing pick-up games at Pitt's Trees Hall when he decided to try out for the Pittsburgh Xplosion, a minor-league team in the American Basketball Association.

"It was real high level. Guys were flying in from all over the country for the tryouts," he said. "It was an

eye opener for me because I hadn't played in college and didn't have that experience. But I think that made me hungry and ready."

Flenory made the Xplosion roster for the 2006 season. He recalls sharing the court with former NBA players and Pittsburgh natives Armen Gilliam and Myron Brown.

"The coach made me a defensive stopper, and I played well," he said. "We made good money, and our games were played at Mellon Arena. It was a great experience traveling to play teams across the eastern seaboard."

After the Xplosion folded, Flenory played for the Pittsburgh Phantoms, another ABA franchise.

"With the Phantoms, I was the elder statesman on the team," said Flenory, who was inducted into the Valley High School Sports Hall of Fame in 2006.

A Point Park graduate, Flenory said he serves as an assistant junior varsity boys basketball coach and the baseball coach at Perry High School.

Flenory relies on his experience in athletics to help build positive relationships with students.

"Sports teaches you to be disciplined and builds integrity and focus," said Flenory, who lives in Pittsburgh's Observatory Hill neighborhood with his wife and their family. "It's a lot of the things that young people will need to become successful businessmen and women."

Mark Nitowski is a TribLive contributing writer.

## NOTEBOOK

# Mid Mon Valley hall calls to group of local luminaries

BY BILL BECKNER JR.

Longtime Belle Vernon softball coach Tom Rodriguez, former Monessen football standout Joe Como and late Belle Vernon administrator Steve Russell are part of the 29th Mid Mon Valley All Sports Hall of Fame class.

The class will be inducted June 21 at St. Spyridon's Hellenic Center in Monessen.

Rodriguez has been the Leopards' leading man since 2002 and has a career record of 303-143 with five WPIAL championships, including one last season.

Como, a 1975 Monessen alum, was an all-state fullback and linebacker who went on to play at IUP and Salem. Russell, known as a Belle Vernon historian, was a teacher, principal and superintendent in the district. He was a key member of the hall of fame committee and an originator of the BVA hall of fame.

## Jeannette-GCC

In a rare treat for local basketball fans, the Jeannette (18-9) and Greensburg Central Catholic (23-4) boys will play each other in the PIAA Class 2A second round.

The game will tip at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Norwin.

Both teams won state openers Saturday. Jeannette handled District 10 champion Iroquois, 58-32, in Erie. GCC hosted District 5 runner-up Windber and won 57-42.

GCC swept the Jayhawks in section play this season. The teams have not met in the state tournament since 2012 when current Centurions coach Christian Hyland was a sophomore point guard.

## Crosby offered

Samir Crosby, a sophomore football standout at Greensburg Central Catholic, received his second NCAA Division I scholarship offer, from Miami of Ohio, the alma mater of former Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger.

Crosby, who also has an offer from



CHRISTOPHER HORNER | TRIBLIVE

Belle Vernon softball coach Tom Rodriguez has a career record of 303-143 with five WPIAL championships.

UNLV, has played running back, receiver, quarterback and defensive back for the Centurions.

Last season, he led the team in all-purpose yards (1,874), tackles (107), receptions (35) and receiving yards (690).

Crosby (5-foot-10, 175 pounds) also ran for 634 yards, passed for 311 and accounted for 22 touchdowns.

## State champs

With five local teams winning their first-round games over the weekend, a PIAA basketball championship is a possibility for the area.

A local team hasn't won a state title in 16 years.

Four boys teams from Westmoreland County have won state titles in basketball: Irwin (1947, '48, '53, '54),

Valley (1978), Monessen (1988, '89) and Jeannette (2008).

Local girls PIAA hoop champions are: Franklin Regional (1979), Greensburg Central Catholic (1997) and Monessen (2004).

## Spring in their step

The WPIAL spring sports season gets underway Monday with the start of boys tennis matches, likely indoors.

The other sports — baseball, softball, track & field, boys lacrosse and boys volleyball — are scheduled to start Friday.

Tryouts and practice began last Monday.

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



PAUL SCHOFIELD | TRIBLIVE

Senior Isaiah Mallich and his Jeannette teammates will play GCC in the PIAA playoffs Wednesday.

# Steelers have options available

STEELERS • FROM B1

4 p.m. Wednesday. It is at that moment that new deals for unrestricted free agents can be signed.

Luckily for the Steelers, none of their unrestricted free agents-to-be are considered major losses. For example, none are in CBS Sports' compilation of the top 100 UFAs.

But that doesn't mean there isn't plenty of talent available on the open market. Nor that the Steelers don't have plenty of holes to fill. A quick look at what the Steelers might be looking for:

## Quarterback

Everyone from coach Mike Tomlin to Khan to president Art Rooney II has expressed the need for "competition" to push Kenny Pickett.

That could come from Mason Rudolph, who outperformed Pickett last season when he started the past final four games (including playoffs). But Rudolph is wont to at least test the market. If the Steelers go outside the organization via the free-agent route, don't expect the likes of Kirk Cousins, who expected to command big money. If the ballyhooed Russell Wilson option doesn't pan out, the ceiling then becomes the likes of Ryan Tannehill or Gardner Minshew.

## Center

Arguably the most glaring hole in the starting lineup, the Steelers already have scheduled a meeting with recently released former Buffalo Bills center Mitch Morse. There is no shortage of other veteran options: Andre James (formerly of the Raiders), Connor Williams (Dolphins), Lloyd Cushenberry (Broncos), Aaron Brewer (Titans), Tyler Biadasz (Cowboys), Coleman Shelton (Rams) and Evan Brown (Seahawks).

## Cornerback

Expect nickel/slot to be addressed again on the cheap. But could the Steelers splurge for an outside corner to play opposite Joey Porter Jr.?

The cost for a high-level CB is much more than, for example, a center. Among seemingly limitless options include former Bengals DB Chidobe Awuzie, Sean Murphy-Bunting (ex of the Titans) and Adoree' Jackson (Giants). Former Steeler Steven Nelson joins versatile Kendall Fuller (ex of the Commanders), former NFL Defensive Player of the Year Stephon Gilmore (Cowboys) and Ronald Darby (Ravens) as options age 29 or older.

## Wide receiver

Like corner, the market is flooded with receivers of various skillsets. The Steelers and former Clairton and Pitt star Tyler Boyd always have been linked. The Steelers never have swung big at WR in free agency, probably eliminating the likes of Michael Pittman Jr. (Colts) or Marquis "Hollywood" Brown (Cardinals). The Commanders' Curtis Samuel is an intriguing option.

## Inside linebacker

Is longtime rival and former Raven Patrick Queen on the radar? He wouldn't come cheap. Frankie Luvu emerged as one of the NFL's best pass-rushing ILBs with the Panthers. Lavonte David (Buccaneers) has borderline Hall of Fame credentials but is 34. Willie Gay Jr. (Chiefs) and Azeez Al-Shaair (Titans) might not have the coverage chops the Steelers need.

## Special teams

It is more likely than not that special teams captain Miles Killebrew re-signs, but there is a need at punter. The Steelers could give longtime veteran Thomas Morstead (Jets) a look. Cameron Johnston (Texans), Tommy Townsend (Chiefs) and Rigoberto Sanchez (Colts) are multi-year NFL punters on the market. Braden Mann was in Steelers' camp last year but ended up punting for the Eagles.

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

## HIGH SCHOOLS

### BASKETBALL

#### BOYS

#### CLASS 6A

#### Second round

#### Tuesday's schedule

Lower Merion (26-1) vs. Archbishop Wood (17-8) at Bensalem, 7:30 p.m.; Springfield Delco (14-14) vs. Springfield (21-6) at Norristown, 7:30 p.m.; Parkland (22-5) vs. Chambersburg (20-6) at Central Dauphin East, 7:30 p.m.; WC Henderson (25-5) vs. Roman Catholic (26-2) at Cardinal O'Hara, 7 p.m.; Cumberland Valley (23-3) vs. Coatesville (18-8) at Garden Spot, 7 p.m.; Reading (19-9) vs. McDowell (21-5) at Altoona, 6 p.m.; Red Lion (19-8) vs. Central York (22-3) at Dallastown, 7 p.m.; Upper St. Clair (21-5) vs. State College (13-12) at Pitt-Johnstown, 8:30 p.m.

#### CLASS 5A

#### Second round

#### Tuesday's schedule

Unionville (24-2) vs. Dallas (21-7) at Liberty, 7:30 p.m.; Archbishop Ryan (18-9) vs. Radnor (21-4) at Bensalem, 7 p.m.; Abington Heights (25-0) vs. Whitehall (17-9) at East Stroudsburg South, 7 p.m.; Exeter Township (19-8) vs. Imhotep Charter (25-3) at Coatesville, 6 p.m.; Mechanicsburg (21-5) vs. Shaler (24-3) at Altoona, 6 p.m.; Franklin Regional (24-3) vs. Selinsgrove (18-7) at Altoona, 7:30 p.m.; Fox Chapel (16-11) vs. Bethel Park (14-13) at Peters Township, 7:30 p.m.; Whitwell Suburban (21-6) vs. Moon (24-3) at Hollidaysburg, 6 p.m.

#### CLASS 4A

#### Second round

#### Tuesday's schedule

Neumann Goretti (23-3) vs. Berks Catholic (22-3) at Coatesville, 7:30 p.m.; Overbrook (13-13) vs. Scranton Prep (17-9) at Easton, 6 p.m.; Allentown Central Catholic (21-6) vs. Archbishop Carroll (18-8) at Norristown, 7:30 p.m.; Carver E&S (20-6) vs. Danville (21-7) at Catasauqua, 6 p.m.; Eastern York (19-7) vs. Valley View (20-6) at Easton, 7:30 p.m.; Johnstown (22-4) vs. Hampton (22-4) at Hempfield, 7:30 p.m.; Lincoln Park (24-3) vs. Uniontown (23-4) at Canon-McMillan, 7 p.m.; Avonworth (18-9) vs. North Catholic (17-9) at Gateway, 7:30 p.m.

#### CLASS 3A

#### Second round

#### Wednesday's schedule

Devon Prep (11-13) vs. Riverside (23-3) at Liberty, 7:30 p.m.; Trinity-District 3 (19-5) vs. Executive Education (22-4) at Hamburg, 7:30 p.m.; Loyalsock Township (27-1) vs. Notre Dame Green Pond (25-3) at Hazleton, 7:30 p.m.; Math, Science & Civics (18-10) vs. Columbia (20-4) at Norristown, 6 p.m.; Ellwood City (18-9) vs. Mohawk (18-8) at New Castle, 7 p.m.; Bishop Guilfoyle (24-4) vs. Girard (24-2) at Clarion, 5:30 p.m.; Deer Lakes (22-4) vs. Forest Hills (21-4) at Armstrong, 5:30 p.m.; Franklin (21-5) vs. Chestnut Ridge (23-4) at Gateway, 6 p.m.

#### CLASS 2A

#### Second round

#### Wednesday's schedule

Claysburg Kimmel (16-10) vs. Holy Cross (21-3) at Milton, 7 p.m.; Sanofka Freedom (13-13) vs. Dock Mennonite (21-4) at Bensalem, 6 p.m.; Mahanoy Area (28-0) vs. Constitution (23-6) at Liberty, 6 p.m.; Lancaster Mennonite (18-7) vs. Conemaugh Township (22-5)

at McConnellsburg, 7 p.m.; Aliquippa (22-5) vs. Eisenhower (21-5) at PennWest Edinboro; West Shamokin (21-6) vs. Redbank Valley (23-3) at Armstrong, 7 p.m.; Jeannette (17-8) vs. Greensburg Central Catholic (24-3) at Norwin, 7 p.m.; Fort Cherry (21-6) vs. Serra Catholic (18-9) at Peters Township, 7:30 p.m.

#### CLASS A

#### Second round

#### Tuesday's schedule

Livville Hill (21-1) vs. Bethlehem Christian (21-7) at Governor Mifflin, 7:30 p.m.; Freeland MMI (15-10) vs. High Point Baptist (17-7) at Minersville, 7:30 p.m.; Lancaster Country Day (17-9) vs. Phil-Mont Christian (19-5) at Upper Merion, 6 p.m.; Lancaster County Christian (17-9) vs. Berlin Brothersvalley (25-2) at Cumberland Valley, 7 p.m.; Imani Christian (15-10) vs. Clarion (18-9) at Armstrong, 6 p.m.; Cameron County (23-5) vs. Farrell (20-5) at Clarion University, 6 p.m.; Bishop Carroll (19-6) vs. Neighborhood Academy (16-16) at Armstrong, 7:30 p.m.; Union (16-11) vs. Elk County Catholic (25-2) at Clarion University, 7:30 p.m.

#### GIRLS

#### First round

#### CLASS 6A

#### Second round

#### Tuesday's schedule

Perkiomen Valley (26-1) vs. Haverford (23-4) at Upper Merion, 7:30 p.m.; Cardinal O'Hara (22-4) vs. Hazleton Area (24-4) at Liberty, 6 p.m.; Parkland (27-2) vs. Dallastown (23-3) at Governor Mifflin, 6 p.m.; Conestoga (24-3) vs. Archbishop Carroll (19-8) at Norristown, 6 p.m.; Central Dauphin (24-2) vs. Garnet Valley (22-5) at

Pottstown, 7:30 p.m.; North Penn (23-4) vs. North Allegheny (23-3) at Bald Eagle Area, 7 p.m.; Peters Township (24-2) vs. Spring-Ford (22-5) at Bald Eagle Area, 5:30 p.m.; Norwin (22-3) vs. Charters Valley (17-8) at Peters Township, 6 p.m.

#### CLASS 5A

#### Second round

#### Wednesday's schedule

Bishop Shanahan (15-11) vs. Abington Heights (19-7) at Freedom, 6 p.m.; West Chester East (18-8) vs. Bethlehem Catholic (21-5) at Pottstown, 7:30 p.m.; Scranton (24-2) vs. West Chester Ruston (19-9) at Freedom, 7:30 p.m.; Dallas (21-7) vs. Archbishop Wood (22-5) at Catasauqua, 7:30 p.m.; Indiana (20-7) vs. McKeesport (22-4) at Gateway, 7:30 p.m.; Armstrong (22-5) vs. Hollidaysburg (23-3) at Pitt-Johnstown; Cathedral Prep (20-3) vs. Northern York (25-2) at Norwin, 5:30 p.m.; Oakland Catholic (25-2) vs. South Fayette (19-8) at Peters Township, 6 p.m.

#### CLASS 4A

#### Second round

#### Wednesday's schedule

Universal Audenried (23-5) vs. Valley View (14-12) at Easton, 6 p.m.; Delone Catholic (22-1) vs. Allentown Central Catholic (18-9) at Warwick, 7 p.m.; Scranton Prep (20-5) vs. Villa Joseph Marie (16-9) at Easton, 7:30 p.m.; Nazareth Academy (15-11) vs. Central Columbia (26-2) at Catasauqua, 6 p.m.; Wyomissing (26-0) vs. Neumann-Goretti (19-6) at Pottstown, 6 p.m.; Warren (21-5) vs. North Catholic (18-7) at PennWest Edinboro, 5:30 p.m.; St. Marys (22-5) vs. Blackhawk (23-3) at Keystone, 7 p.m.; Laurel Highlands (21-4) vs. Fairview (21-5) at North Allegheny, 6:30 p.m.

#### CLASS 3A

#### Second round

#### Tuesday's schedule

York Catholic (19-7) vs. Holy Redeemer (22-5) at Minersville, 6 p.m.; Loyalsock Township (25-3) vs. Lake-Lehman (18-10) at Berwick, 7:30 p.m.; Hughesville (23-4) vs. West Catholic (12-13) at Martz Hall, 6 p.m.; New Hope-Solebury (13-10) vs. Lancaster Catholic (22-2) at Pottstown, 6 p.m.; Forest Hills (25-3) vs. Avonworth (23-2) at Gateway, 6 p.m.; Neshannock (19-8) vs. Mercyhurst Prep (22-3) at Sharon, 6 p.m.; Shady Side Academy (25-2) vs. Northwestern (22-4) at Sharon, 7:30 p.m.; Westmont-Hilltop (20-4) vs. Seton LaSalle (16-10) at Hempfield, 6 p.m.

#### CLASS 2A

#### Second round

#### Tuesday's schedule

Muncy (18-8) vs. Sacred Heart Academy (15-8) at Martz Hall, 7:30 p.m.; Holy Cross (11-15) vs. Minersville (22-4) at Berwick, 6 p.m.; Northern Lehigh (17-10) vs. Marian Catholic (21-6) at Catasauqua, 7:30 p.m.; Montrose (14-10) vs. Marion Center (21-5) at Milton, 7 p.m.; Greensburg Central Catholic (21-6) vs. West Middlesex (20-5) at North Allegheny, 7 p.m.; South Side (16-11) vs. Everett (19-7) at Greensburg Salem, 7 p.m.; Clairton (20-6) vs. Bishop McCort (25-2) at Norwin, 7:30 p.m.; Portage (24-3) vs. Kennedy Catholic (21-4) at Norwin, 6 p.m.

#### CLASS A

#### Second round

#### Wednesday's schedule

Linville Hill (22-1) vs. Lourdes Regional (17-9) at Hamburg, 6 p.m.; Meadowbrook Christian (22-2) vs. Greenwood (16-11) at Shamokin, 7 p.m.; Mountain View (21-4) vs. Veritas

Academy (19-7) at Hazleton, 6 p.m.; Mt. Calvary Christian (18-6) vs. St. John Neumann (23-4) at Central Dauphin East, 6 p.m.; Union (20-5) vs. Northern Bedford (17-9) at Hempfield, 5:30 p.m.; DuBois Central Catholic (15-11) vs. Bishop Guilfoyle (25-3) at Clarion, 7 p.m.; Berlin-Brothersvalley (22-5) vs. St. Joseph (22-4) at Hempfield, 7 p.m.; Williamsburg (25-3) vs. Elk County Catholic (26-2) at West Branch, 7 p.m.

#### HOCKEY

#### PIHL

#### Penguins Cup playoffs

#### Semifinals

#### At RMU Island Sports Center

#### CLASS 3A

#### Today's schedule

Pine-Richland vs. Peters Township, 7:15 p.m.; Seneca Valley vs. North Allegheny, 9:15 p.m.

#### CLASS 2A

#### Tuesday's schedule

Penn-Trafford vs. Norwin, 7 p.m.; Franklin Regional vs. Thomas Jefferson, 9 p.m.

#### CLASS A

#### Wednesday's schedule

Charters Valley vs. Indiana; Shaler vs. Greensburg Salem, 8:45 p.m.

#### Varsity D2

#### Thursday's schedule

Bishop Canevine vs. Neshannock, 6:45 p.m.; Burrell vs. Deer Lakes, 8:45 p.m.

All schedules are subject to change. To report scores or schedule changes, email ptrsports@triblive.com.

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# Oilers keep Pens on slide

PENGUINS • FROM B1

for the first time since that franchise joined the NHL in 1979).

“Obviously, we’re getting a lot of shots. We’re not putting them in the back of the net,” said Penguins forward Reilly Smith, who tallied a team-best six shots. “Part of that is just probably confidence. We just have to work our way out of this as a team. That’s the only way you’re going to do it.”

Not passing the puck directly to the NHL’s defending Art Ross Trophy winner and allowing him to score 68 seconds into regulation is another way to accomplish that task.

Settling a bouncing puck in the neutral zone, Penguins defenseman Kris Letang retreated to the left half of his own zone, spun to his right and snapped an odious pass attempt to the center point to the tape of Oilers forward Connor McDavid’s stick. With an acre of ice and a calendar of time to operate with, McDavid lasered a wrister from the top hashmarks by Jarry’s blocker for his 24th goal. There were no assists.

Oilers defenseman Matthias Ekholm’s fifth goal of the season — and first since Dec. 6 — supplied the visitors with a 2-0 lead at 8:53 of the first period.

Defenseman Darnell Nurse’s seventh goal at 10:42 of the third period put the Oilers up by three.

Nurse scored again at 15:58 of the final frame.

Jarry’s record fell to 18-21-4 after he stopped 38 of 42 shots.

“Collectively as a team, I don’t think we’ve played very well,” Jarry said of his team’s recent doldrums. “We’ve been giving up a lot of chances. And, obviously, the puck hasn’t gone in for us. It puts a cloud over a lot of guys.”

It has certainly been a tempestuous stretch for the Penguins as their time to piece together any success that will allow them to play meaningful hockey this spring is running out.

“You don’t have any other choice but to just muster it up,” Penguins forward



CHAZ PALLA | TRIBUNE

Penguins goaltender Tristan Jarry mad 38 saves on 42 shots Sunday.

Bryan Rust said. “Nobody is happy with what’s going on, how things have been going. It doesn’t matter how hard you may think it is. You’ve just got to find a way to make that confidence for yourself.”

## Notes:

- The Penguins suffered their sixth consecutive loss to the Oilers (0-6-0), tying a mark for their longest active losing streak to any one opponent. They also have lost six consecutive games to the New Jersey Devils (0-5-1).

- This was a combined shutout as Oilers goaltender Stuart Skinner replaced Pickard for the final 1:16 of the second period after Pickard was run over by Rust a few moments earlier. Pickard, who logged 58:44 of ice time, returned to the cage to open the third period. The Penguins did not record a shot against Skinner.

As such, this marked only the second combined shutout against the Penguins in franchise history. The first saw Toronto Maple Leafs goaltenders Ron Low (59:36) and Jacques Plante (24 seconds) team up in a 4-0 road win Dec. 29, 1972, at Civic Arena.

- Ludvig received 17 minutes in penalties after fighting Oilers forward Warren Foegele at 10:35 of the second period as a response to Foegele high sticking Penguins defenseman Erik Karlsson. In addition to a fighting major, Ludvig received a 10-minute

## OILERS 4, PENGUINS 0

Edmonton	2	0	2	—	4
Penguins	0	0	0	—	0

**First Period**—1. Edmonton, McDavid 24, 1:08. 2. Edmonton, Ekholm 5 (Bouchard, McDavid), 8:53. **Penalties**—Nurse, EDM (Interference), 2:37; Nugent-Hopkins, EDM (Hooking), 13:27; Carter, PIT (Roughing), 14:14.

**Second Period**—None. **Penalties**—Ekholm, EDM (Tripping), 5:44; Penguins bench, served by Bemstrom (Too Many Men on the Ice), 6:40; Edmonton bench, served by Hyman (High Sticking), 10:35; Ludvig, PIT (Instigator), 10:35; Foegele, EDM (Fighting), 10:35; Ludvig, PIT (Fighting), 10:35; Ludvig, PIT (Misconduct), 10:35; Rust, PIT (Interference), 17:05.

**Third Period**—3. Edmonton, Nurse 7 (Nugent-Hopkins, McDavid), 10:42. 4. Edmonton, Nurse 8 (Ekholm), 15:58. **Penalties**—Crosby, PIT (Hooking), 13:54; Desharnais, EDM (Roughing), 18:59.

**Shots on Goal**—Edmonton 13-17—42. Penguins 13-12-16—41.

**Power-play opportunities**—Edmonton 0 of 4; Penguins 0 of 5.

**Goalies**—Edmonton, Skinner 29-13-3 (0 shots-0 saves). Edmonton, Pickard 9-4-0 (41-41). Penguins, Jarry 18-21-4 (42-38).

A—17,753 (18,387). T—2:26.

**Referees**—Trevor Hanson, Frederick L’Ecuyer. **Linesmen**—Jonny Murray, Andrew Smith.

misconduct and a minor for instigating over the dust-up. Foegele received a fighting major as well as a double minor for high sticking.

- Letang previously had the Penguins’ single-game mark for penalty minutes this season with the 12 he incurred during a 7-0 road loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Dec. 16.

- Rust was activated from injured reserve and returned to the lineup after missing seven games because of an undisclosed injury.

- The Penguins’ power play was 0 for 4 and logged five shots.

- Penguins forwards Drew O’Connor (concussion) and Jesse Puljujarvi (healthy) were scratched.

- Former Penguins forward Jaromir Jagr attended Sunday’s game, three weeks after having his No. 68 retired by the franchise. Jagr will be participating in former teammate Mario Lemieux’s fantasy camp this week.

- Jagr paid a visit to the visiting dressing room following the game.

- Oilers forward Ryan McLeod appeared in his 200th career game.

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Christopher Bell does a burnout after his win Sunday at Phoenix Raceway.

# Bell gets emotional win

JGR driver writes celebratory ending after 2 years of sorrow

ASSOCIATED PRESS

AVONDALE, Ariz. — Christopher Bell and the rest of Joe Gibbs Racing have been through more than their share of heartbreak in the desert.

The unexpected death of the team’s vice chairman and owner Joe Gibbs’ son happened in Phoenix two years ago. Last fall, a broken brake rotor spoiled Bell’s NASCAR Cup Series championship hopes in the Valley of the Sun.

Winning at Phoenix Raceway never will erase the anguish, but it’s certainly another step in the healing process.

Bell surged into the lead when Martin Truex Jr. was forced to pit and pulled away for an emotional NASCAR Cup Series win Sunday at Phoenix Raceway.

“This one feels really good,” Bell said. “You don’t get cars like that very often, as you know. Just super, super proud to be on this 20 car.”

JGR has been through a whirlwind of emotions in Phoenix.

In 2022, hours after Ty Gibbs won an Xfinity season championship for his grandfather’s team, vice chairman Coy Gibbs was found dead in his hotel room. Ty’s father was 49.

Bell and JGR returned to Phoenix Raceway in November as part of the championship four vying for the Cup Series title. Instead of mending emotions, the team left dejected after Bell’s car broke early in the race.

## SUNDAY’S RESULTS

NASCAR CUP SERIES  
Shriners Children’s 500  
(Start position in parentheses; C=Chevrolet, F=Ford, T=Toyota)

1. (13) Christopher Bell, (T), 312 laps, 50 points.
2. (14) Chris Buescher, (F), 312, 36.
3. (2) Ty Gibbs, (T), 312, 43.
4. (18) Brad Keselowski, (F), 312, 35.
5. (16) Ryan Blaney, (F), 312, 41.
6. (12) Ross Chastain, (C), 312, 31.
7. (11) Martin Truex Jr., (T), 312, 37.
8. (9) Michael McDowell, (F), 312, 32.
9. (8) Chase Briscoe, (F), 312, 30.
10. (6) Tyler Reddick, (T), 312, 46.
11. (4) Denny Hamlin, (T), 312, 42.
12. (7) Noah Gragson, (F), 312, 28.
13. (15) Daniel Suarez, (C), 312, 24.
14. (17) Kyle Larson, (C), 312, 23.
15. (10) Carson Hocevar, (C), 312, 22.
16. (22) Bubba Wallace, (C), 312, 21.
17. (29) Todd Gilliland, (F), 312, 20.
18. (5) William Byron, (C), 312, 31.
19. (3) Chase Elliott, (C), 312, 28.
20. (25) Alex Bowman, (C), 312, 17.
21. (20) Ricky Stenhouse Jr., (C), 312, 16.
22. (31) Kyle Busch, (C), 311, 15.

23. (27) Ryan Preece, (F), 311, 14.
24. (33) Justin Haley, (F), 311, 13.
25. (19) John H. Nemechek, (T), 311, 12.
26. (36) Josh Berry, (F), 310, 11.
27. (24) Harrison Burton, (F), 310, 10.
28. (21) Daniel Hemric, (C), 310, 9.
29. (28) Zane Smith, (C), 309, 8.
30. (32) Kaz Grala, (F), 309, 7.
31. (4) Erik Jones, (T), 305, 13.
32. (30) Austin Dillon, (C), 304, 5.
33. (35) Corey LaJoie, (C), accident, 204, 4.
34. (23) Joey Logano, (F), accident, 203, 3.
35. (26) Derek Kraus, (C), accident, 203, 2.
36. (34) Austin Cindric, (F), accident, 6, 1.

**Race statistics**  
**Average Speed of Race Winner:** 103.564 mph.  
**Time of Race:** 3 hours, 0 minutes, 45 seconds.  
**Margin of Victory:** 5.465 seconds.  
**Caution Flags:** 6 for 40 laps.  
**Lead Changes:** 10 among 6 drivers.  
**Lap Leaders:** D.Hamlin 0; T.Gibbs 1-57; T.Reddick 58-64; D.Hamlin 65-119; T.Gilliland 120-133; T.Reddick 134-180; C.Bell 181-189; D.Hamlin 190-202; T.Reddick 203-216; M.Trux 217-271; C.Bell 272-312.  
**Leaders Summary (Driver, Times Led, Laps Led):** T.Reddick, 3 times for 68 laps; D.Hamlin, 3 times for 68 laps; T.Gibbs, 1 time for 57 laps; M.Trux, 1 time for 55 laps; C.Bell, 2 times for 50 laps; T.Gilliland, 1 time for 14 laps.  
**Wins:** K.Larson, 1; W.Byron, 1; D.Suarez, 1.

Given another shot, Bell held his emotions in check, and the crew gave him the fastest car on a perfect afternoon in the desert that ended with a massive celebration on Victory Lane.

“It is a little bit cathartic,” Bell’s crew chief Adam Stevens said.

Bell’s win in the No. 20 Toyota also ended Chevrolet’s perfect start to the season after winning the first three races. He is the eighth different winner in eight races at Phoenix Raceway’s mile tri-oval.

Chris Buescher finished second after being wrecked 27 laps into last week’s race in Las Vegas, and Ty Gibbs was third for his career-best finish. Brad Keselowski and Ryan Blaney rounded out the top five.

“We had a rough go last week,” Buescher said. “This was good to get everybody

back to prove that we’re in this together, and we’re going to win one of these things as a team.”

The Phoenix race marked the debut of NASCAR’s new aerodynamics package for short tracks in hopes of producing more passing on tracks of a mile or less and road courses. Goodyear also produced tires with thicker treads designed to retain heat and increase lap-time falloff.

Starting 13th, Bell took advantage of the changes, overcoming a slow pit stop to charge back to the front. Bell moved into the lead with 40 laps to go when leader Truex had to pit for fuel and tires.

Bell led the final 49 laps for his seventh career Cup Series victory, the first since Homestead in October.

“I drove a rocket ship today,” Bell said. “It just took off.”



Scottie Scheffler tees off at the 15th hole during the final round of the Arnold Palmer Invitational.

# Scheffler dominates with putter

No. 1’s play at Arnold Palmer Invitational ‘borderline unfair’

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ORLANDO, Fla. — Scottie Scheffler figured the simple solution to his putting struggles was to quit trying so hard. That’s what he did at the Arnold Palmer Invitational, and it wasn’t a fair fight.

The best in the world from tee to green, Scheffler didn’t miss a putt inside 15 feet all weekend. On a tough Sunday at Bay Hill, he played bogey-free in the final group and closed with a 6-under-par 66, by two shots the best score of the final round.

The result was a five-shot victory, the largest at Bay Hill since Tiger Woods in 2012.

“It would be borderline unfair if he starts putting really good,” U.S. Open champion Wyndham Clark said after finishing second. “I never want to wish ill on anybody, but if starts putting positive each week, it’s going to be really hard to beat.”

The positive was in reference to the “strokes gained” statistic, regarded as the most accurate measure. Scheffler usually is on the

negative side, no tournament more glaring than the Memorial last year. He lost 8.5 shots to the field in putting and missed a playoff by one shot.

“His ball-striking is, honestly, on another level compared to everyone else right now,” Rory McIlroy said. “We knew if he started to hole putts, then this sort of stuff would happen.”

Scheffler was simply unstoppable.

He holed a 12-foot birdie putt on the opening hole, built a three-shot lead at the turn and then poured it on as a Clark, Shane Lowry and Will Zalatoris simply were trying to survive Bay Hill.

Scheffler hit wedge to 8 feet for birdie on No. 10. He hit another wedge to 6 feet on No. 11. He made key par saves and then poured in a 35-foot birdie on the 15th, letting out a yell with a light fist pump.

“Part of the problem is just trying too hard,” Scheffler said. “It’s frustrating to not have the best of myself, just because I know that I can putt really well. It’s not like I’ve been a bad putter my whole career. I’ve just gone through a stretch where it’s been tough.”

“I think this week I did a really good job of not letting the misses get to me.”

Scheffler finished at 15-under 273 and won \$4 million from the \$20 million purse of this signature event. It was his seventh career win, all against some of the strongest fields.

And it came a week before Scheffler defends his title at The Players Championship, which had been his last official PGA Tour win.

All that held him back over the last year was the putter. Scheffler switched to a mallet model this week, but far more important was keeping quiet between the ears, thinking more about the stroke than the outcome. Both were superb.

“I just stayed in my own little space and tried to keep pushing,” Scheffler said.

Scheffler had spoken earlier in the week about learning to quiet the mind. The trick was not to block out the noise — in this case, endless questions about his putting — and focus on something positive. He also made sure not to let putting take away from the fact he was playing golf like no one else from tee-to-green.

“He showed today why he’s world No. 1,” said Lowry, who started the day tied for the lead and never had a chance. Lowry finished with three birdies and seven pars over the last 10 holes for a 72 to finish third.

PITT • FROM B1

opponents. It also was 14-2 in Quad 3 and Quad 4 games at the end of both regular seasons.

The difference? None that Blake Hinson can see.

When asked that question — considering Pitt is 21-10 going into the ACC Tournament just like it was a year ago — Hinson drew a chuckle from assembled reporters when he said, logically, “I guess there is no difference. Same record.”

Actually, not quite. Pitt finished this season stronger (4-1 in the past five games) than it did a year ago (2-3).

Yet the Panthers appeared to have a firmer grip on a tournament invitation last year than they have now. Pitt might need to reach the ACC Tournament title game Saturday night to avoid disappointment.

ESPN’s Lunardi put Pitt on his “next four out” line. Fox Sports’ Mike DeCourcy ranks the Panthers a bit higher on his “first four out” line.

Working against Pitt this season are two home losses to Quad 3 teams Missouri and Syracuse. Pitt might regret the Missouri game most of all. The Tigers finished 0-18 in the SEC.

To Capel, however, all the talk represents what other people think. His thoughts don’t stray far from his locker room.

“I don’t worry about it,” he said. “I really and truly don’t because I can’t control it. I try not to give it much thought.”



Pitt coach Jeff Capel: “I, personally, felt like I didn’t have anything to prove. I know I’m a good coach, and I’m not saying that in an arrogant way. I believe in me and us and things that we’re trying to do.”

Whether the NCAA Tournament committee believes Pitt is worthy of invitation matters to Capel, but his first thoughts are with his players, himself and his staff and how they approach the game.

“They’re gym rats. They’re eager to learn,” he said of the players. “They want to be good, individually and collectively. We see the work that they put in. They see the work that we put in as a staff in trying to make sure we’re prepared.”

“I, personally, felt like I didn’t have anything to prove. I know I’m a good coach, and I’m not saying that in an arrogant way. I believe in me and us and things that we’re trying to do.”

“Having back-to-back 20 wins is great. It’s awesome. I’m proud of it for our guys and for them to learn how

to fight.

“Our job as coaches is to teach, and for us to be able to help these guys learn how to fight, how to work, how to persevere, how to push through, how to believe. Those are things that, if they take them, those will help them in life for the rest of their life.”

Sadly, there is no metric for that.

**Note:** Will Jeffress, a junior with two years of eligibility remaining, was part of the senior night ceremonies Saturday. “He has not informed me or us as a staff that he isn’t planning to come back (next season). Obviously, with the nature of college athletics now, you never know what your roster is going to be when the season’s over with. We’re grateful for him.”

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## Cruz homers twice, but Phillies rally

Oneil Cruz and Bryan Reynolds hit back-to-back home runs to get the Pittsburgh Pirates off to a strong start, and Cruz added another tape-measure blast that gave them a five-run lead.

Cruz went 2 for 4 with four RBIs, driving in the tying run by sprinting to beat the double-play throw on a fielder's choice.

But the Philadelphia Phillies rallied with a Kody Clemens grand slam off starter Quinn Priester to tie the score, then scored two runs on a bases-loaded error by second baseman Termarr Johnson in the ninth for a 9-7 win Sunday afternoon in a Grapefruit League game at LECOM Park in Bradenton, Fla.

Cruz led off the bottom of the first inning by crushing Max Castillo's fastball 412 feet to right field at an exit velocity of 116.6 mph for his second home run of spring training. Reynolds followed with a 384-footer to right-center for his third homer and a 2-0 lead.

After designated hitter Carter Bins — a replacement for Joshua Palacios, who was a late scratch because of an illness — singled to score Jared Triolo in the second inning, Cruz turned on a full-count changeup over the heart of the plate for a two-run blast with a 114.4 mph exit velocity that carried 434 feet and gave the Pirates a 5-0 lead.

"My main focus has been just look for good pitches to swing and just let go of the bad pitches," Cruz said through an interpreter, Pirates coach Stephen Morales, on the SportsNet Pittsburgh telecast.

Priester encountered trouble in the fourth, giving up a single to Darick Hall, hitting Edmundo Sosa with a pitch and another single to Jake Cave to load the bases. Then Clemens hit a 2-0 fastball to right field for a tying grand slam.

Priester allowed five runs on five hits without a walk while striking out three.

—Kevin Gorman

# Lamb focused on finding role

*Sidetracked from stardom, 1st baseman healthy, motivated*

BY KEVIN GORMAN

Jake Lamb has something on his resume that no other Pittsburgh Pirates player can claim — a 30-home run, 100-RBI season — but the 33-year-old corner infielder also is aware it happened seven years ago.

A lot has happened in the interim for Lamb, who has learned to adapt his mentality to make the most of the remainder of his career. An All-Star third baseman for the Arizona Diamondbacks in 2017, Lamb has dealt with devastating injuries and bounced around baseball the past four years.

"I've been to the playoffs. I've won big playoff games. I've been an All-Star," Lamb said. "On the opposite end of that, I've also been DFA'd. I've also been the last guy on the bench. I've also been back in Triple-A for the first time in seven years. So, at first, I used to look down on that. Now I use it as a tool. It's a unique spot that I'm in, as far as I've kind of experienced it all, minus the World Series. I'm still here, still going, still feel great."

And Lamb is still trying to show he can make an impact in the major leagues, this time as a role player for the Pirates. He's batting .381 with two doubles, a home run and five RBIs for a .619 slugging percentage in nine Grapefruit League games this spring. Starting at first base, Lamb went 2 for 3 in Saturday's 8-5 loss to the Detroit Tigers, driving Matt Manning's 1-2 curveball 337 feet for an opposite-field home run in the first inning to give the Pirates a 2-0 lead.

It's the type of production to which Lamb was accustomed in his prime, when he followed a 2016 season with 31 doubles, 29 homers and 91 RBIs by hitting 30 doubles, 30 homers and 105 RBIs the next year, the best of his career.

"There's no secret there. I need to drive the ball in the gaps. I need to hit doubles and home runs. I need to drive in runs," Lamb said. "When I'm at my best, that's what I'm doing. If I'm getting on first base every at-bat, I'm not doing a whole lot for the team. I'm a good baserunner, but I don't got speed like that. When I'm helping the team out, I'm in the middle of the order and I'm driving in runs. That's plain and simple about what I'm bringing to a team."

The flip side for Lamb is his high strikeout totals — 154 in 2016, 152 in '17 — and a series of serious injuries that sidetracked him from stardom.

A disappointing 2018 season ended when an MRI found a frayed rotator cuff in his left shoulder that required surgery. He dealt with a quadriceps strain the following spring. He signed a \$5.5 million contract for the pandemic-shortened 2020 season, but



CHRISTOPHER HORNER | TRIBLIVE

Jake Lamb was an All-Star before injuries began to derail his career.



after batting .116/.240/.210 with no home runs in 50 plate appearances over 18 games he was designated for assignment that September and started the nomadic phase of his career.

Lamb finished the 2020 season for the Oakland A's, split the next year between the Chicago White Sox and Toronto Blue Jays after being DFA'd by both. He signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers in 2022 and batted .290 with 15 homers in 61 games at Triple-A Oklahoma City but played only 29 games with the Dodgers before being traded to the Seattle Mariners for cash considerations at the deadline in August.

Last spring, Lamb made the Los Angeles Angels' Opening Day roster, slashing .216/.259/.353 with two homers and five RBIs in 18 games before being designated in late June. He finished the season with the New York Yankees' Triple-A affiliate in Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, where he posted a respectable .269/.396/.427 line in 51 games.

Lamb knows he has long odds of making the Pirates' Opening Day roster. He's behind Rowdy Tellez on the depth chart at first base, with Connor Joe and Jared Triolo also capable of

playing the position, and Gold Glove winner Ke'Bryan Hayes is locked in at third base.

But toiling in the minors had a profound impact on Lamb. It served as a reminder of how much love he still has for the game, in whatever role that can allow him to continue playing. The 6-foot-3, 215-pound left-handed hitter is still fit and fresh-faced, so he's focused on changing the narrative about his health and proving he has something left.

"That's always the key. I understand people love to tell that story, that I've been injury-prone," Lamb said. "Physically, I've felt great the last two years. The health isn't really — knock on wood — a thing. It's more just trusting my ability and going out and being a baseball player."

"You get caught up in, 'I want to put up certain numbers. I want to do this or that.' I just want to be a baseball player, and coming to a team like this where you don't have a position. If you're on the team, you might give Rowdy a couple days at first, you might give Ke' a couple days at third, you might sneak into the outfield, you might get a DH day. It's just being a good baseball player, being versatile. That's what I'm trying to do."

Kevin Gorman is a TribLive staff writer. He can be reached at kgorman@triblive.com.

## IN BRIEF

## Mayfield staying with Buccaneers

WIRE REPORTS

Baker Mayfield is staying with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers after agreeing to a three-year contract worth up to \$115 million, a person familiar with the deal told the Associated Press on Sunday.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the agreement, which includes \$50 million guaranteed, has not been finalized.

The Tampa Bay Times reported Mayfield, 28, will receive \$30 million in 2024 and \$30 million in 2025, with \$20 million guaranteed in the second year of the deal. The quarterback's salary would increase to \$40 million in 2026, the newspaper said.

● The New England Patriots and new coach Jerod Mayo agreed to trade quarterback Mac Jones to the Jacksonville Jaguars for a sixth-round pick in next month's draft, according to a source.

● Philadelphia Eagles six-time Pro Bowl defensive tackle Fletcher Cox announced his retirement.

● The Chicago Bears agreed to a two-year contract with veteran safety Kevin Byard.

## Wrestling

Penn State won the Big Ten title, the eighth for coach Cal Sanderson, on the strength of five individual champions.

Freshman Braeden Davis (125), sophomore Levi Haines (157), freshman Mitchell Mesenbrink (165), senior Aaron Brooks (197) and senior Greg Kerkvliet (285) won individual titles.

## College basketball

Qudus Wahab had 19 points and 15 rebounds, and Ace Baldwin Jr. added 17 points as Penn State (15-16, 9-11 Big Ten) routed Maryland, 85-69.

## Hockey

Philadelphia Flyers coach John Tortorella was suspended for two games and fined \$50,000 by the NHL for unprofessional conduct directed at the officials.

● Colorado Avalanche forward Logan O'Connor will undergo hip surgery this week and miss the rest of the season.

## Golf

Brice Garnett holed a 15-foot birdie putt on the fourth playoff hole to win the Puerto Rico Open in his first tournament of the year, sending him to The Players Championship next week and giving him PGA Tour status for the next three years.

## HOCKEY

### NHL EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division						
	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Florida	44	17	4	92	217	153
Boston	38	15	9	82	222	179
Toronto	37	19	8	82	231	201
Tampa Bay	34	25	6	74	224	219
Detroit	33	25	6	72	221	211
Buffalo	30	30	5	65	189	195
Montreal	24	30	10	58	180	229
Ottawa	25	33	4	54	200	220
Metropolitan Division						
	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
N.Y. Rangers	41	18	4	86	210	172
Carolina	39	19	6	84	216	177
Philadelphia	33	24	8	74	192	194
N.Y. Islanders	28	20	14	70	191	205
Washington	30	23	9	69	170	194
New Jersey	31	29	4	66	211	224
Penguins	28	27	8	64	180	184
Columbus	22	32	10	54	192	232

### WESTERN CONFERENCE

Central Division						
	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Dallas	40	17	9	89	242	199
Winnipeg	40	18	5	85	193	153
Colorado	40	20	5	85	241	197
Nashville	37	25	4	78	211	201
Minnesota	31	27	7	69	204	215
St. Louis	32	29	3	67	179	199
Arizona	26	34	5	57	192	218
Chicago	17	43	5	39	138	233
Pacific Division						
	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	42	17	7	91	234	178
San Jose	39	21	8	83	222	180
Los Angeles	32	20	11	75	194	171
Vegas	33	23	7	75	207	191
Calgary	31	28	5	67	200	206
Seattle	28	24	11	67	174	179
Anaheim	23	37	3	49	166	223
San Jose	16	40	7	39	139	250

**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

Saturday's games	
Nashville 2, Columbus 1	
Buffalo 3, Edmonton 2 (SO)	
Carolina 4, New Jersey 2	
Sunday's games	
Florida 5, Calgary 1	
Washington 4, Chicago 1	
San Jose 2, Ottawa 1	
Tampa Bay 7, Philadelphia 0	
Toronto 3, Montreal 2	
N.Y. Rangers 4, St. Louis 0	
Vancouver 5, Winnipeg 0	
Vegas 5, Detroit 3	
Dallas 4, Los Angeles 1	
Monday's games	
Edmonton 4, Penguins 0	
Minnesota 4, Nashville 3 (OT)	
Carolina 7, Calgary 2	
Chicago 7, Arizona 4	
N.Y. Islanders at Anaheim (n)	

Tuesday's games	
New Jersey at N.Y. Rangers, 7 p.m.	
St. Louis at Boston, 7 p.m.	
Washington at Winnipeg, 7:30 p.m.	
N.Y. Islanders at Los Angeles, 10:30 p.m.	
Wednesday's games	
Ottawa 7, Tampa Bay 6	
Columbus at Montreal, 7 p.m.	
Detroit at Buffalo, 7 p.m.	
N.Y. Rangers at Carolina, 7 p.m.	
San Jose at Philadelphia, 7 p.m.	
Arizona at Minnesota, 8 p.m.	
Florida at Dallas, 8 p.m.	
Anaheim at Chicago, 8:30 p.m.	
Calgary at Calgary, 9 p.m.	
Vegas at Seattle, 10 p.m.	

## GOLF

### SUNDAY'S SCORES

PGA TOUR — Arnold Palmer Invitational	
Final	
Scottie Scheffler	70-67-70-66—273 -15
Wyndham Clark	71-66-71-70—278 -10
Shane Lowry	66-71-70-72—279 -9
Russell Henley	68-69-72-72—281 -7
Will Zalatoris	69-69-71-72—281 -7
Sahithi Theegala	68-72-75-68—283 -5

## Baseball

### SPRING TRAINING

**1 p.m.** Pirates vs. Boston. SportsNet Pittsburgh  
**4 p.m.** L.A. Dodgers vs. Cleveland. MLB.N

## Basketball

**COLLEGE MEN**  
**6 p.m.** Coastal Athletic Tournament: TBD, semifinal. CBSSN  
**7 p.m.** Southern Tournament: TBD, cham-

pionship. ESPN

**7 p.m.** Sun Belt Tournament: TBD, championship. ESPN2  
**7 p.m.** Horizon League Tournament: Cleveland St. vs. Oakland semifinal. ESPNU  
**8:30 p.m.** Coastal Athletic Tournament: TBD, semifinal. CBSSN  
**9 p.m.** West Coast Tournament: TBD vs. Saint Mary's (Cal), semifinal. ESPN

Brendon Todd	74-67-72-70—283 -5
Byeong Hun Ahn	71-69-76-68—284 -4
Emiliano Grillo	69-70-74-71—284 -4
Rik Homa	71-69-71-73—284 -4
Andrew Putnam	71-71-72-70—284 -4
Brian Harman	69-68-77-71—285 -3
Lee Hodges	68-73-72-72—285 -3
Tom Hoge	72-71-69-73—285 -3
Hideki Matsuyama	67-70-72-76—285 -3
Nick Taylor	69-71-74-71—285 -3
Justin Thomas	69-71-72-73—285 -3
Corey Conners	70-71-73-78—286 -2
Cameron Davis	72-70-74-70—286 -2
Sungjae Im	71-70-71-74—286 -2
Eric Cole	70-73-70-74—287 -1
Harris English	69-73-68-77—287 -1
Rory McIlroy	73-74-69-72—288 E
Seamus Power	72-74-69-72—287 E
Ludvig Aberg	73-74-69-72—288 E
Grayson Murray	72-73-71-72—288 E
Patrick Rodgers	72-74-72-70—288 E
Xander Schauffele	72-70-76-70—288 E
Erik Van Rooyen	72-73-72-71—288 E
Sam Burns	68-72-71-78—289 +1
Lucas Glover	73-70-74-72—289 +1
Mackenzie Hughes	75-71-71-72—289 +1
Si Woo Kim	75-70-71-73—289 +1
Webb Simpson	73-71-70-75—289 +1
Jordan Spieth	69-74-77-69—289 +1
Keegan Bradley	71-75-70-74—290 +2
Jason Day	70-74-75-79—290 +2
Austin Eckroat	72-69-74-75—290 +2
Rickie Fowler	75-72-71-72—290 +2
Viktor Hovland	71-69-75-75—290 +2
Justin Lownd	67-76-69-78—290 +2
Cameron Young	73-70-71-76—290 +2

**PGA TOUR — Puerto Rico Open**  
**Final**  
**x-won on fourth playoff hole**  
x-Brice Garnett 66-66-68-69—269 -19  
Erik Barnes 66-66-69-68—269 -19  
Victor Perez 69-68-68-65—270 -18  
Hayden Springer 68-65-69-68—270 -18  
Jimmy Stanger 68-65-67-60—270 -17  
Adrien De Chassart 73-65-67-66—271 -17  
Joe Highsmith 65-65-71-70—271 -17  
Ben Kohles 69-66-63-73—271 -17  
Norman Xiong 65-69-70-68—272 -16  
Austin Cook 68-71-66-68—273 -15  
Evan Hameling 70-69-67-67—273 -15  
Martin Laird 67-68-70-68—273 -15  
Matt Schmidt 67-65-68-73—273 -15  
Giancarlo Van Paris 70-70-69-64—273 -15

LIV Golf — Hong Kong Final	
x-won first playoff hole	
x-Abraham Ancer	63-62-72—197 -13
Paul Casey	66-67-64—197 -13
Cameron Smith	67-64-66—197 -13
Joaquin Niemann	67-64-63—198 -12
Carlos Ortiz	68-64-64—198 -12
Kevin Na	67-68-66—199 -11
Bryson DeChambeau	65-68-66—199 -11
Nicholas Perich	66-68-66—200 -10
Charles Howell III	64-69-67—200 -10
Graeme McDowell	64-64-67—200 -10
Dean Burmester	63-69-68—200 -10
Ian Poulter	66-66-68—200 -10

## SPORTS BROADCASTS

**9:30 p.m.** Horizon League Tournament: Milwaukee vs. N. Kentucky, semifinal. ESPN2  
**11:30 p.m.** West Coast Tournament: TBD vs. Gonzaga, semifinal. ESPN2  
**COLLEGE WOMEN**  
**1:30 p.m.** Summit League Tournament: TBD, semifinal. CBSSN  
**2 p.m.** Sun Belt Tournament: TBD, championship. ESPN2

**1:30 p.m.** Summit League Tournament: TBD, semifinal. CBSSN

**2 p.m.** Sun Belt Tournament: TBD, championship. ESPNU