

Submit Sports story ideas, team photos, scores and tips for all ages to sports@austindailyherald.com and 507-434-2234

SPORTS & CLASSIFIEDS

SCHEDULE

Wednesday
College volleyball: Minnesota West at Riverland, 6:30 p.m.
College men's soccer: Riverland at Dakota County Tech, 5 p.m.

Thursday
Volleyball: Owatonna at Austin, 7 p.m.; LeRoy-Ostrander at Lyle-Pacelli at Lyle, 7:15 p.m.; Southland at Glenville-Emmons, 7:15 p.m.; Blooming Prairie at TCU, 7 p.m.; Grand Meadow at Kingsland, 7:15 p.m.
Boys soccer: Mankato East at Austin, 7 p.m.
Girls swimming and diving: Albert Lea at Austin, 6 p.m.
Cross country: Pacelli at Stewartville, 4 p.m.; GMLOS, Hayfield at Stewartville, 4 p.m.; Blooming Prairie at Stewartville, 4 p.m.

Friday
Football: Northfield at Austin, 7 p.m.; Mabel-Canton at Lyle-Pacelli, 7 p.m.; Southland at LeRoy-Ostrander, 7 p.m.; Blooming Prairie at Hayfield, 7 p.m.; Grand Meadow at Lanesboro, 7 p.m.
Girls tennis: Austin at Mankato East, 4:45 p.m.

Saturday
Volleyball: Austin at RCTC Invite, 8 a.m.
Sunday
College men's soccer: Riverland at St. Mary's JV, 4 p.m.

BRIEFS



With knee surgery for Irv Smith, Vikings TE depth 'not good'

EAGAN — The Minnesota Vikings were dealt their first injury setback of the season, with knee surgery scheduled for on-the-rise tight end Irv Smith Jr. that will likely sideline him for at least a few games.

Coach Mike Zimmer said Monday that Smith will have the procedure done this week by team physician Dr. Christopher Larson. The timetable for Smith's return won't be known until after the surgery on his meniscus, depending on how significant of a repair is required.

"Dr. Larson is one of the best in the country, so we expect a good turnout," Zimmer said.

The injury to Smith's meniscus occurred sometime Friday during Minnesota's exhibition game at Kansas City, but "it's hard to know exactly what happened," Zimmer said.

In a system that often uses multiple tight end formations with no established wide receivers behind stars Justin Jefferson and Adam Thielen, Smith was poised for a breakout season following the departure of 11-year veteran Kyle Rudolph.

Tyler Conklin has suddenly become the leading man at the position. Fifteen of his 19 receptions last season came in the final four games, including his first career touchdown.

"Sometimes you get thrown out there and you're not prepared, but I think in my situation I got to learn from a good vet in Kyle Rudolph. I got to be eased into and basically play a starting role in the last four to six games last year and got to go and have a strong offseason and feel really prepared for Week 1," Conklin said. "I don't think it could have worked out any better."

As for the depth beyond Conklin?

"Yeah, well, it's not very good," Zimmer said, indicating the offense will use more three-wide receiver formations while Smith recovers.

— Associated Press

AP source: Jets trade TE Chris Herndon to Vikings

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Jets have traded tight end Chris Herndon to the Minnesota Vikings, a person with direct knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press.

Herndon was a fourth-round pick of the Jets in 2018 out of Miami. He had a promising rookie season, but never quite became the consistent playmaker New York was hoping for.

NFL Network first reported the trade Tuesday as teams whittled their rosters to the maximum 53-player limit. The person confirmed the deal to the AP on condition of anonymity because neither team had announced the trade.

Terms of the deal were not immediately known, but it is believed the Jets will receive draft compensation from the Vikings.

The 25-year-old Herndon has 71 career catches for 796 yards and seven touchdowns in three seasons. He was in a competition this summer with Tyler Kroft, Ryan Griffin, Trevon Wesco and Kenny Yeboah. It appeared Kroft, a free-agent signing in March, had moved ahead of him on the depth chart.

Herndon should step right into a starting role in Minnesota.

— Associated Press



The LeRoy-Ostrander volleyball team celebrates an ace served by Anna Welsh in LeRoy Monday. Photos by Rocky Hulne/sports@austindailyherald.com

Cardinals show grit in 4-game win over Rockets

By Rocky Hulne
 sports@austindailyherald.com

LEROY — The LeRoy-Ostrander volleyball team had a lot of ups and a few downs, but it showed plenty of grit as it outlasted Randolph by scores of 26-24, 25-20, 25-27, 25-15 in LeRoy Monday.

Few players on the court showed more toughness than L-O senior libero Gracie O'Byrne, who dove her way to 20 digs for the Cardinals (2-0 overall, 2-0 SEC). O'Byrne suffered plenty of hits from the hard gym floor, and also took a little damage from some friendly fire.

"I got kicked in the face. It hurt a little and I got beat up a little bit back there, but you just kind of suck it up and go out and play," O'Byrne said. "It's a lot more fun to play when you have a ton of people to cheer you on."

The Rockets stormed back from being down 22-17 to tie the first game at 24 before Sidney Lewison served an ace and Jordan Runde put down a game-winning kill. Randolph also came back from being down 20-16 to tie the second game at 20, before L-O senior Kylie Welsh served three aces during a five-point serving.

"I'm not sure what worked for me on that run," Welsh said. "But we feel really good. Our team has been together for



Jordan Runde pushes the ball back against Randolph.

awhile and that helps us know what each other might do. We help each other."

L-O led the third game 20-17, but the Rockets were able to rally back and win that one. Despite letting a two-point loss slip away, the Cardinals still had plenty of fight left in them when they pulled away to a 10-point win in the final game after leading just 11-10.

"We worked on trying to get that mental toughness back and how to fight through it," L-O head coach Lindsay Milks said. "I don't have the answer for them every time, but they figured out how to get the job done. This group has really come together well and several of them are three year starters. The chemistry is the best I've seen in my time coaching here. The girls are

in tune with each other and the biggest thing is that they trust each other."

LeRoy-Ostrander stats: Jordan Runde, 10 kills; Sidney Lewison, 8 kills, 5 blocks, 4 aces; Sam Volkart, 2 kills, 3 blocks, 1 ace, 16 digs; Benita Nolt, 2 kills, 3 blocks; Kiley Welsh, 7 ace serves, 7 digs; Gracie O'Byrne, 20 digs, 1 ace serve; Anna Welsh, 39 set assists

Packers drop first match to Cougars

By Rocky Hulne
 sports@austindailyherald.com

The Austin volleyball team came out on the upswing against Mankato East, but weren't able to keep it up in a sweep at the hands of the Cougars 3-0 (25-19, 25-12, 25-7) in a season opening match in Packer Gym Friday.

Kate Holtz served an ace to bring Austin within 17-16 in the first game and Austin tied things up at 17-17 before the Cougars scored six straight points to run away with it. Austin led 3-1 early in the second game and it was tied 2-2 early in the third game.

"I can tell it's a different vibe," said Austin head coach Jeremy Struck. "This is a different Austin team than what I coached against. The environment is different and we're hoping for some good things this season."

Senior hitter Joy Deng showed a burst around the net for the Packers (0-1 overall, 0-1 Big Nine). She was active throughout the night with four kills. Deng is hoping to make a much bigger impact this season after not playing a lot as a junior.

"I was too much in my head before and the people that support me were just telling me that I got it. I think right now, I've really got the hang of it," Deng said. "We just need to know how to not get in our heads. Once we get going as a team, we'll be good."

The Packers had to play most of the night without junior hitter Peyton Manahan, who had to leave the match with an injury. Struck is hoping she will be back in the lineup soon.

"The wind kind of went out



Austin's Thowl Othow goes up for a spike against Mankato East Friday night in Packer Gym. Eric Johnson/photodesk@austindailyherald.com

of our sails when one of our top players went down and that was a bit to recover," Struck said. "I thought the girls played well for parts. It's just that consistency where we have to be fundamentally correct. We just

have to stay calm and collected, and move on."

Austin stats: Thowl Othow, 4 kills 1 block; Joy Deng, 4 kills; Chloe Jenkins, 8 assists, 2 kills, 1 block; Nevaeh Borg, 8 digs, 1 ace

IN BRIEF



Austin plays Como Park to a tie in season opener

Austin Daily Herald
 sports@austindailyherald.com

The Austin boys soccer team opened its season with a 1-1 tie in Como Park Saturday.

The Packers (0-0-1 overall) scored their goal in the 24th minute of the game.

VOLLEYBALL Mabel-Canton 3, Grand Meadow 0

The Grand Meadow volleyball team lost its season opener to Mabel-Canton by scores of 25-17, 25-23, 25-17 in GM Friday.

Kendyl Queensland had 15 digs for GM (0-1 overall, 0-1 SEC).

Grand Meadow stats: Emma Grafe 8 assists, 3 kills, 1 ace; Isabelle Fretty, 6 assists, 3 digs, 1 ace; Anna Oehlke, 2 kills, 8 digs; Lauren Queensland, 1 block, 3 kills, 5 digs; Kendyl Queensland, 15 digs, 3 kills; River Landers, 1 dig, 9 kills, 3 blocks, 1 ace; Sydney Cotten, 16 digs



Grieving QB Morgan values connection, support from Gophers football program

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Last month, Tanner Morgan lost his closest confidant and biggest fan.

Minnesota's fourth-year quarterback has found plenty of both among his coaches and teammates, as if he had any doubt about the depth of their connection.

Morgan's father, Ted, died in July of brain cancer.

"This is what my dad would want me to be doing right now. He'd want me to be in training camp ready to go and excited to play football again," Morgan said recently. "Everyone can talk about a family or culture or whatever it may be, because every team has a different one. Ours is obviously very unique, but when you experience it through personal loss, personal trials, I think it really just hits deeper on how close it really is."

The grit, leadership and maturity that Morgan displayed in high school in Kentucky were what drew Gophers coach P.J. Fleck to recruit him first at Western Michigan and then persuade him to follow him to Minnesota once he took



that job in 2017.

The way Morgan handled the ups and downs of his dad's illness over the 14 months until his death merely cemented the admiration that exists for him within this tight-knit program.

Ted Morgan, as Fleck declared, was a dad to "pretty much everybody" on the team. Said wide receiver Chris Autman-Bell: "We talked to him all the time. He gave advice and shared love and nothing but passion. He was a great guy."

About a year ago, when Ted Morgan's recovery from surgery and fight against the disease was going relatively well, he was delighted to receive a package from Minnesota with hand-written notecards of encouragement from more than 100 Gophers coaches and players.

"I've never seen a member of a family pass away and watch a team grieve as much as they have for Tanner's dad. I think that

shows the impact Tanner has," Fleck said.

Morgan learned plenty of football from his father, but lessons of life and faith have made the biggest impact. Their devout and humble Christian beliefs were evident in the moving tribute Morgan posted on social media when his dad died — and remain clear now. Morgan cited his gratitude to God, his family, his teammates and the university at the beginning of preseason camp when he spoke to reporters about overcoming the grief.

"It's what brings me joy through this and what gets me through," he said.

Morgan is 18-8 as a starter, ranking in the top 10 in most passing categories on the program's all-time list. He has ample opportunity to move up the rankings with a season more like the 11-2 record the Gophers posted in 2019 and less like the 3-4 mark they had during a pandemic-altered schedule.

Morgan, who was an All-Big Ten second-team selection in 2019, said last week he's had more fun in summer practices this month than at any other point in his career.

He's not a scrambling

quarterback, but in a system that uses plenty of run-pass option plays he has to be nimble, so he focused on improving his speed during offseason conditioning. Pointing to the sleep tracker he wears on his wrist, Morgan also has become more cognizant of total-body health, seeking any additional edge he can for what could be his final year in college.

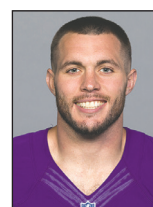
If the Gophers are ever going to have a legitimate chance to beat a team like Ohio State, it ought to be this year, with Morgan at the helm behind an extra-experienced offensive line and Mo Ibrahim — a preseason Associated Press All-America second-team pick — at running back next to him. The Gophers host the fourth-ranked Buckeyes on Thursday night to open the season.

"He is a wonderful person, an elite leader, and he's gotten better in the off-season," Fleck said. "He's got that competitive spirit, that competitive greatness that you want to be able to see in every area of his life and that needs to rub off on our entire team, which it has. I'm just proud of the progress that he's made on and off the field."

Vikes sign 10th-year safety Smith to \$64M extension

Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — The Minnesota Vikings signed five-time Pro Bowl safety Harrison Smith to a four-year contract extension on Sunday, securing the team's longest-tenured player for what could be the remainder of his decorated career.



Smith

Smith has a league-leading 28 interceptions among all safeties since he entered the NFL in 2012. Only Hall of Famer Paul Krause (150) has started more games at safety in Vikings history than Smith (129).

According to a person with knowledge of the deal, speaking on condition of anonymity because the terms were not being announced, the new contract is worth \$64 million with a little more

than \$26 million guaranteed. That will put Smith safely among the top five highest-paid safeties in the NFL, with Seattle's Jamal Adams at the top of the annual average values.

Prior to the signing, Smith was in the final year of his deal with a salary cap hit slightly above \$10 million. At age 32, the new contract ought to ensure he'll stay with the Vikings as long as he's on the field. No one from the team was available to the media on Sunday. Smith was scheduled to address reporters on Monday.

Drafted in the first round in 2012 out of Notre Dame, Smith quickly entrenched himself as the anchor of the secondary and had two of his four career interception returns for touchdowns as a rookie. He made his first Pro Bowl in 2015 and was an All-Pro pick in 2017. Smith also holds the franchise record for defensive backs with 13 1/2 career sacks.

Even as COVID cases rise, US Open, other events welcome fans

NEW YORK — Full-throated shouts and hearty applause returned to the U.S. Open tennis tournament Monday, bursts of sound that offered some form of reaction to nearly each and every action. Also back: lengthy lines to get through the gates and to buy something to eat or drink.

A year after spectators were banned entirely from Flushing Meadows because of the coronavirus pandemic, lending a dystopian feel to a normally lively event, 100% capacity is once again being permitted — proof of vaccination needed; no masks required — at this and other sports events.

College football resumed Saturday, with tens of thousands on-hand for such as matchups as Illinois vs. Nebraska or Hawaii vs. UCLA. The NFL is letting its teams sell every ticket for the regular season; its first Sunday is Sept. 12.

Makes it tough to tell there's been a recent surge in COVID-19 cases thanks to the highly contagious delta variant. Ready or not, our fun and games are moving forward, with full stadiums and, in some cases, few protocols.

"Playing without fans here last year was brutal," 2017 U.S. Open champion Sloane Stephens told the crowd at Arthur Ashe Stadium after beating Madison Keys in three sets in a rematch of their all-American final four years ago.

Perez on a home run tear for rebuilding Royals

Associated Press

The major league leader in home runs is a pitcher, and he needs no introduction.

The guy in second place is a catcher — and that's pretty remarkable in its own right.

Kansas City's Salvador Perez has been on an extended tear since the All-Star break, and he now has 38 home runs on the season, just three behind major league leader Shohei Ohtani. Perez is on track to set an American League record for most homers by someone who played at least 75% of his games behind the plate. Carlton Fisk set the previous mark of 37 in 1985, so as long as Perez catches enough games, he'll surpass Fisk.

Perez has 17 homers in 40 games since the All-Star break. His 12 home runs in August have tied the team record for any calendar month. After missing the whole 2019 season following Tommy John surgery, Perez has 49 homers in 166 games since the start of 2020.

The 31-year-old Perez is a link between the current Royals and their championship team of 2015. In fact, he was the World Series MVP that year. Kansas City is in fourth place now, and while veterans like Perez and Whit Merrifield have value, they are both over 30, and the team's rebuild appears to have a ways to go.

The Royals do have the No. 3 prospect in baseball according to MLB Pipeline in Triple-A shortstop

Bobby Witt. Right-hander Brady Singer is 3-9 with a 4.87 ERA for Kansas City, but the 25-year-old is averaging about a strikeout an inning and the Royals have reason to be patient with him.

Speaking of young shortstops

Tampa Bay's Wander Franco has reached base in 29 straight games. The Rays have won seven straight games and lead the AL East by six — even though the second-place Yankees recently won 13 in a row.

Trivia time

The record for the longest on-base streak by a player age 20 or younger was set by a member of the Cincinnati Reds who went on to make the Hall of Fame. Who was it?

Line of the week

Not the best line by any means, but Philadelphia's Zack Wheeler had a fascinating night on the mound against Tampa Bay on Wednesday, allowing seven runs and 10 hits in eight-plus innings and striking out 10 — all while throwing just 102 pitches. According to the Stathead Baseball tool, the last time a pitcher threw so few pitches while allowing at least 10 hits and going at least eight innings was in 2017, when Pittsburgh's Iván Nova did it in 100 pitches. But Nova had only one strikeout.

Comeback of the week

The Pirates scored eight runs in the bottom of the

seventh, erasing a 7-3 deficit and beating St. Louis 11-7 on Thursday night. Gregory Polanco, who had been getting booed regularly at Pittsburgh's home park, hit a two-run double during the big inning. The Pirates released Polanco on Saturday. Before Pittsburgh's big rally, the Cardinals' win probability peaked at 95.4% in the seventh, according to Baseball Savant.

Highlight

Minnesota's Miguel Sanó hit a 495-foot home run out of Fenway Park on Wednesday night, the longest homer of the year so far, according to Statcast. Sanó's homer wasn't pulled down the left-field line. It left the park at the center-field edge of the Green Monster and cleared the seats and a fence beyond the 37-foot wall.

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