

PHOENIX RACEWAY



ALEXANDRA RAY, ARIZONA DAILY SUN

Roush Fenway Keselowski Racing driver Ryan Preece (60) spins out during the Straight Talk Wireless 500 on Sunday at Phoenix Raceway. He finished the race in 13th.

NASCAR, IndyCar drivers want more dueling races

Each series sees big ratings in collaborative Phoenix weekend

BY BRENDEN MARTIN
Sun Sports Editor

NASCAR driver Chris Buescher's family had season tickets to Texas Motor Speedway when he was a kid. That meant any time there was a race at his home track, they would go, no matter what kind of race it was.

Whether it was NASCAR, IndyCar or any other type of motorsport, Buescher was there. That exposed him to different types of racing beyond stock cars. The open-wheel IndyCar series was a regular fixture at the track during his childhood.



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Rahal Letterman Lanigan Racing driver Louis Foster (45) is seen during a practice and qualifying session at Phoenix Raceway on March 6.

For the first time, NASCAR and IndyCar shared the same oval track last weekend at Phoenix Raceway. Each series came together

and selected the 1-mile short oval as the starting point for a potential long-term collaborative effort. Buescher said that kind of crossover is what

makes race fans like he was as a kid.

"Having another race series here at a racetrack

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HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING

Saving Buffalo Park: the beginning

BY NAT WHITE
Special to the Daily Sun

But for a few energized citizens, Buffalo Park would not be what it is today. Walkers, joggers, runners, elite athletes, and families and friends experience open meadows and beautiful views of the peaks, Observatory Mesa forests, Anderson Mesa and Mormon Mountain. Nary a man-made structure is visible from the park, yet it is still within the city limits. Many may not know, but a few decades ago this community jewel came close to not being what is so enjoyed by so many today.

Forty years ago this March, 60.8% of Flagstaff voters decided that no road would ever enter Buffalo Park. The backdrop to this story started quietly when, in October 1983, Flagstaff City Council gave the OK to city staff to begin planning a road: the Gemini Parkway.

This major arterial road was projected to penetrate the open space exactly where the buffalo statue still stands. Thus began the anxious and contentious, two-year effort to "Save Buffalo Park."

Buffalo Park was named for a short-lived Western-theme park — currently commemorated on a plaque at the



COURTESY

There were several proposed Gemini Parkway routes through the park. All passed directly through the buffalo statue and entrance structure.

base of the buffalo statue. Upon its closure in 1969, usage by runners and walkers gradually increased through the 1970s. Cross country teams at the two high schools were established in 1978, adding another Buffalo Park user group.

Nevertheless, the park was not the citywide popular open space it is today.

Folks living immediately east and west of the park found access through breaks in the chain-link fence. Old Cedar Road, now a FUTS link, passed in front of the buffalo statue. Flagstaff crosstown travelers occasionally stopped to enter through the old log stockade gates. A strong sense of value and pride of ownership developed amongst those few early users.

In 1984, three letters

were published in this newspaper extolling the same independently written prophetic thought: "As Flagstaff continues to grow, this special beautiful area will become even more valuable to the citizens of Flagstaff."

Dan Sauers, a former NAU elite runner and president of the Flagstaff Road and Track Club, submitted the first letter, followed by Joseph Hayes and NAU professors Doug Degher and Mike Kanan. They were so correct so many years ago!

Road or no road became a city council election issue. Council candidates Steve Darden and Anita Wood voiced strong opposition to the road. Steve Darden, a well-known Native American, won the March 1984 election; the remaining suc-

cessful candidates were pro-road.

For many months, the issue lingered low key in the public eye, although several small, informal environmental groups, walkers and runners were vigilant. Then, on Aug. 21, 1985, the Daily Sun's bold headlines announced, 'Council Approves Gemini Alignment' — a major road right through the buffalo statue!

For the next seven months the issue dominated newspaper coverage. The intrigue, tension, debates, tricks and cleverness of a clearly divided community was anything but low key.

The question: Gemini Parkway or save Buffalo Park? Stay tuned for the rest of the story next week.

NAT WHITE WAS A MEMBER OF THE FIVE-PERSON COMMITTEE THAT HELPED SAVE BUFFALO PARK. NAT HAS RUN THOUSANDS OF MILES ON THE TRAILS IN AND AROUND FLAGSTAFF DURING THE LAST 57 YEARS. IF YOU HAVE MEMORIES TO SHARE OF THE "SAVE BUFFALO PARK" EFFORT, PLEASE EMAIL NEIL WEINTRAUB AT NATRALLC2017@GMAIL.COM. RACHEL SMITH IS A MOM OF TWO AMAZING DAUGHTERS, A PROFESSIONAL RUNNER AND THE COORDINATING EDITOR OF THIS COLUMN. SHE WOULD LOVE FOR YOU TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE COLUMN AND SHARE YOUR RUNNING-RELATED STORY BY EMAILING HER AT RACHSCHNEIDT8@GMAIL.COM.

LOCAL ROUNDUP

FHS, CHS lose at Bob Everett Classic

BY SUN SPORTS STAFF

Facing off against a pair of 6A Conference schools on Wednesday as part of the Bob Everett Classic in the Valley, the Flagstaff Eagles baseball team fell to the Desert Vista Thunder and the Desert Ridge Jaguars.

Against the Thunder, the Eagles fell behind by three runs before stepping up to the plate themselves. Flagstaff cut into a 4-0 deficit with one run in the bottom of the third inning, but Desert Vista added five more runs in the top of the fourth.

Senior Will Carpenter finished the game with two hits and one RBI while senior DJ Faust, senior Cullen Callander and junior Jace Adams accounted for the Eagles' other hits.

In the second game of the day against the Jaguars, the Eagles fell behind 8-0 in the first inning and trailed 10-0 before breaking through for their lone run of the game in the fifth inning. Callander and Carpenter accounted for Flagstaff's two hits, with the former coming home to score.

The Eagles face the Aqua Fria Owls on the road in Avondale on Wednesday before beginning Grand Canyon Region play against the Mohave Thunderbirds on March 28.

Pumas 11, Panthers 6

Junior Stone's fourth home run of the season and two-hit games by junior Jackson Clouse and senior Jake Hanley were not enough for Coconino to take down Perry on Wednesday afternoon in the Bob Everett Classic hosted by Gilbert High School.

The Panthers and Pumas were tied at 6 as the game entered the bottom of the fifth inning with a single run for Coconino in the top half. However, Perry put up five runs in the frame and held Coconino scoreless to earn the victory. Hanley finished the game with three RBIs in addition to his two hits and freshman Caleb Smith

scored a pair of runs as a pinch runner.

Coconino will return to regular season play on Monday in Tempe against the Marcos de Niza Padres at 3:45 p.m. before beginning its stretch of 12 consecutive Grand Canyon Region games on Tuesday at home against the Lee Williams Volunteers.

Softball

Panthers 14, Scorpions 1

Panthers 5, Tigers 0

Facing off against 5A Conference Desert Edge and 6A Conference Millennium, Coconino opened the West Valley Invitational Softball Tournament with a pair of victories on Thursday.

Sophomore Emma Kennelly led the Panthers with three hits, three RBIs and two runs scored in the 13-run victory against the Scorpions. Sophomore Hailey Householder, senior Katelynn Yazzie and sophomore Joy Shafor all added two hits against Desert Edge, with Householder and Shafor also finishing with three RBIs. Yazzie, Shafor, senior Norah Kennelly and junior Savannah Waters all scored two runs as well.

In the circle, senior Jade Sandoval finished with seven strikeouts in four innings while allowing one run with one hit and four walks.

Against Millennium, senior Norah Kennelly held the Tigers scoreless in five innings of work with two hits, two walks and two strikeouts. Coconino recorded just two hits in the win, coming from senior Cassidey Castillo and Yazzie, while drawing five walks as a team, with two for Norah Kennelly and junior Summer Rhodes. The Panthers took a three-run lead in the second inning before adding on runs in the third and fourth as well.

Coconino was scheduled to face the Raymond S. Kellis Cougars on Friday afternoon as the tournament continued.

NAU ROUNDUP

Golf to host Red Rocks Invitational in Sedona

BY NAU SPORTS INFORMATION



NAU women's golf is set to host the 19th annual Red Rocks Invitational Friday through Sunday at Oak Creek Country Club.

The Lumberjacks are coming off a seventh-place finish at the Lady Luck Invitational in Las Vegas earlier this month against a stacked field, which included seven top-50 nationally ranked teams and numerous top-100 players.

Lizzie Neale shot +3 over 54 holes to finish ninth, marking the 17th top-10 finish of her career and earning her second Big Sky Conference Player of the Week honor of the spring season. The award marks the sixth time the senior has earned the recognition. She also

received the honor following her performance at the Alice and John Wallace Women's Golf Classic in Palm Desert, California in February, where she posted a three-round total of 216 (76-71-69, +3).

At last year's Red Rocks Invitational, NAU's Ellena Slater captured the individual title for the second time in her career, shooting a 3-under-par 69. The tournament was shortened to 18 holes due to a snowstorm that swept across Oak Creek. Visibility became so poor that play was suspended after the first day and resumed on the

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