

## HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING

BY NEIL WEINTRAUB

Special to the Daily Sun

Next weekend, on Feb. 7, nearly 4,000 runners from around the world will participate in what is arguably one of the most scenic racing venues in the country: the sold-out RunSedona Half Marathon, 10K and 5K races. With nearly 2,000 runners registered for the half marathon, volunteers from the Northern Arizona Trail Runners Association LLC (NATRA) will once again provide support for runners — including 119 Flagstaffians — at our infamous, award-winning aid station located at the Doe Mountain Trailhead.

Beginning with the inaugural Sedona Marathon in 2006, NATRA has made themed aid stations a tradition. As gorgeous as the race is, we figured giving runners a laugh would provide an extra boost of much-needed energy over the course of its 12 challenging hills. Between our costumes

and rocking soundtracks, we've kept the aid station lively with new themes every year.

Since I last wrote about our love of volunteering at the RunSedona Half Marathon exactly 10 years ago — when we dressed in black and white for our "Runners Against Humanity" aid station — I thought that for our 20th anniversary of volunteering I'd share the themes from the past decade.

In 2017, we dressed in 1950s outfits celebrating the movie "Grease" and its soundtrack. The following year, at our "Greatest Show on Earth" aid station, runners passed by our tallest volunteer on stilts or were "whipped" by our lion tamer while crawling through fake flames in a "burning" hoop.

In 2019, we celebrated the music of the Beach Boys, suiting up in swimwear during one of the chilliest races in memory. In 2020, we became "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy," welcoming runners with a "Don't Panic!" sign — before



NATRA JAZZERCIZE AID STATION, COURTESY

NATRA and its Jazzercise-themed aid station take part in last year's RunSedona Half Marathon.

being forced to take the following year off when the pandemic turned the race fully virtual.

We boldly returned in 2022 with "The Best Aid Station in the Wordle," followed by our sensational "Addams Family" theme as the streaming series "Wednesday" became a smash hit on Netflix. In 2024, "Barbie: Run from the Patriarchy" and our pink outfits drew plenty of laughs, while last year's "Let's Get Physical" had runners dancing with NATRA's spandex-clad volunteers Jazzercising to '80s pop.

This year, our aid station is once again located near the

highest point on the half-marathon course at Doe Mountain. By the time runners arrive, they'll feel like they've been on a roller coaster thanks to the constant ups and downs of the race's breathtaking hills.

While all RunSedona race distances are sold out, there are still plenty of volunteer opportunities available, including course setup, athlete check-in and race-day general support. Learn more at RunSedona.com/volunteer.

Finally, as NATRA keeps our annual theme a secret until race day, we'll be hosting a contest on social media. The

first person to correctly guess this year's theme on NATRA's Facebook or Instagram page will win NATRA's newest racing cap!

**NEIL WEINTRAUB** CO-FOUNDED NORTHERN ARIZONA TRAIL RUNNERS ASSOCIATION (NATRA) IN 2001 AND IS CELEBRATING NATRA'S 25 YEARS OF "PUTTING A LITTLE SOUL IN YOUR STRIDE" WHEN THE ORGANIZERS OF THE INAUGURAL SEDONA MARATHON APPROACHED HIM ABOUT IDEAS FOR PARTNERING IN LATE 2005. NEIL PROPOSED PRINTING THE FIRST NORTHERN ARIZONA RACING CALENDAR FOR PARTICIPANTS. SINCE THEN THE RACING CALENDAR HAS GROWN EXPONENTIALLY AND IS HOSTED AT NATRA.ORG/NAZ-RACES TO HELP RUNNERS AND RACE DIRECTORS PLAN OUT THEIR YEAR. RACHEL SMITH IS A MOM OF TWO AMAZING DAUGHTERS, A PROFESSIONAL RUNNER AND THE COORDINATING EDITOR OF THIS COLUMN. SHE WISHES YOU ALL THE BEST IN 2026 AND ASKS YOU TO SHARE YOUR RUNNING-RELATED STORY TO THE COLUMN BY EMAILING HER AT RACH-SCHNEID18@GMAIL.COM.

## LOCAL ROUNDUP

## FHS girls basketball beats Mohave to extend win streak

BY SUN SPORTS STAFF

Before beginning their final stretch of games in the regular season, the No. 5 Flagstaff Eagles earned a 59-27 victory in their final true road game against the No. 13 Mingus Union Marauders on Thursday night.

The Eagles (11-2, 7-1 4A Grand Canyon) extended their winning streak to four games with the victory against the Marauders (8-5, 5-4 4A Grand Canyon), who have lost four of their past five games. Flagstaff

will play its next four games at home before finishing the regular season at Coconino High School.

Flagstaff will begin the stretch, which includes five games in 10 days, on Monday against the No. 16 Bradshaw Mountain Bears (8-5, 3-4 4A Grand Canyon). The Eagles beat the Bears by 40 points in the first meeting between the teams this season in Prescott Valley on Jan. 9.

**Panthers 37, Thunderbirds 12**

**Bears 44, Panthers 29**

Aided by its best defensive effort of the season, No. 27 Coconino (6-10, 3-7 4A Grand Canyon) defeated No. 41 Mohave (0-15, 0-9 4A Grand Canyon) in Bullhead City on Thursday night.

The win followed a loss at home against No. 16 Bradshaw Mountain on Wednesday and wrapped up a stretch of three games in as many days.

Coconino has just three

games remaining in the regular season, beginning with a trip to the Valley to face the No. 43 Peoria Panthers (0-13, 0-6 4A West Valley) on Tuesday before taking on Bradshaw Mountain again in Prescott Valley on Thursday.

**Cowboys 37, Spartans 30**

After trailing by nine following the first quarter, No. 38 Northland Prep (0-14, 0-5 2A North) nearly earned their first victory of the regular season at home on Thursday night.

No. 31 Camp Verde (6-9, 2-2 2A Central) led 19-10 after the first quarter before both sides struggled to score and finished the first half at 21-10. The Spartans cut into the deficit with a 12-4 advantage in the third quarter, but the Cowboys held off the comeback in the fourth quarter.

Northland Prep begins its final stretch of the regular season on the road against the No. 2 St. Johns Redskins (13-2, 5-0 2A North) on Saturday.

**Yetis 59, Wildcats 25**

Wrapping up its home schedule with a victory on Wednesday night, No. 24 BASIS Flagstaff (7-7, 0-4 1A North) beat No. 30 Mayer (6-11, 1-6 1A Central) ahead of Saturday's road doubleheader to finish the regular season.

Set for two games at Rock Point High School, the Yetis will face the No. 35 Rough Rock Sundevils (2-0, 0-5 1A North) at 10 a.m. followed by the No. 15 Rock Point Cougars (7-10, 3-2 1A North) at 2:30 p.m.

## Boys basketball

## Panthers 65, Thunderbirds

38

With a win over No. 42 Mohave (2-14, 1-8 4A Grand Canyon) on its home court Thursday night, No. 9 Coconino (14-2, 10-0 4A Grand Canyon) effectively locked up a Grand Canyon Region title.

The Panthers lead the region by two games over the Mingus Union Marauders, who they swept this season, with just two more games to play. Though the Marauders could win out in their final three region games, even two losses by the Panthers would leave them in a tie with the head-to-head tiebreaker in hand.

Coconino will host the No. 38 Bradshaw Mountain Bears (3-10, 2-5 4A Grand Canyon) on Thursday night at 7 p.m. before hosting Flagstaff on Monday at 7 p.m.

## Spartans 61, Cowboys 55

Ahead of a crucial showdown in the 2A North Region standings on Saturday, No. 10 Northland Prep (10-3, 5-0 2A North) won their second game of the week on Thursday night at home against No. 22 Camp Verde (5-10, 1-3 2A Central).

The Spartans will travel to face the No. 14 St. Johns Redskins (11-3, 5-0 2A North) on Saturday night at 6 p.m. The two schools are the last two with an undefeated record in region play this season with just one region game remaining after their meeting. Earlier this season, Northland Prep fell to St. Johns 51-49 on its home

court in a non-region contest.

## Yetis 69, Wildcats 43

Led by a 30-point game for senior Daniel Quiroz, No. 17 BASIS Flagstaff (9-5, 2-3 1A North) earned a non-region victory against No. 36 Mayer (2-14, 0-7 1A Central) on Wednesday night.

Junior Teo Tan added 18 points in the victory to go along with seven rebounds. Quiroz completed a double-double in the game with 10 rebounds, second-most on the team behind 17 boards for junior Everett Evans, who just missed his own double-double with nine points. Junior Nolan Takeuchi added eight assists to go along with six points.

Like the girls team, BASIS Flagstaff will head to Rock Point High School for a doubleheader on Saturday. After taking on the No. 37 Rough Rock Sundevils (4-11, 1-6 1A North) at 11:30 a.m., the Yetis will face the No. 10 Rock Point Cougars at 4 p.m.

## Girls soccer

## Eagles 2, Thunderbirds 0

Coming off a draw in Prescott on Tuesday, No. 19 Flagstaff (3-6-1, 1-2-1 4A Grand Canyon) earned its first region victory of the season on its home field against No. 18 Mohave (5-4-1, 1-3 4A Grand Canyon) on Thursday afternoon.

The Eagles remain in contention for a postseason berth with just two games left in the regular season. Flagstaff will host No. 11 Mingus Union (7-1-1, 2-1 4A Grand Canyon) on Tuesday at 3 p.m. before wrap-

ping up the season in Prescott Valley against Bradshaw Mountain on Thursday night.

## Badgers 1, Panthers 0

Hitting a bump in the road as they looked to close in on a Grand Canyon Region title, No. 2 Coconino (9-1, 4-1 4A Grand Canyon) fell to No. 17 Prescott (4-5-1, 2-1 4A Grand Canyon) on the road Thursday night.

The loss came via a penalty kick with less than 18 minutes remaining in the match following a foul in the box by Coconino after a corner kick by Prescott. The Panthers had previously scored at least two goals in all nine of its regular season matches before the loss. Prescott's goal was just the ninth allowed by Coconino in 10 matches this season.

Coconino will conclude its region schedule against the Mohave on Tuesday at 3 p.m., followed by a meeting against the Thunderbird Titans on Friday to conclude the regular season.

## Boys soccer

## Eagles 3, Thunderbirds 0

Putting in two goals in the first half, No. 22 Flagstaff (5-5, 2-2 4A Grand Canyon) defeated No. 41 Mohave (2-8, 1-4 Grand Canyon) on Wednesday night in Bullhead City.

The Eagles have two games remaining in the regular season, which concludes next week.

After traveling to Cottonwood to face the No. 46 MINGUS Union Marauders (0-9-1, 0-4 4A Grand Canyon) on Monday, Flagstaff will host Bradshaw Mountain on Wednesday at 3 p.m.

## LUMBERJACKS

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Thursday, Eastern Washington went 22 for 28 as a whole at the line. NAU committed a season-high 25 personal fouls.

"We got to do a better job with their main person," Burcar said. "You can't come in here and score 30 points."

Foul trouble kept Bradford and a few others from playing much until the end of the game, where his defense was needed.

On the other end, NAU once again held on to a win thanks to clutch free throws. The Lumberjacks went 26 for 28 from the charity stripe. Four different players went 4 for 4.

"I think the assistant coaches are doing a great job with our individual improvement," Burcar said. "What we're doing now is we're shortening practices."

NAU committed four fouls in the first 3:26 of the second half. The game could have unraveled there. Instead, a

9-0 Lumberjacks run in a time where the Eagles missed eight of nine shots gave the host a 61-46 lead with 13:15 to play.

Poorn got to his 16-point mark to give NAU its largest lead of 20 points with under 10 minutes to go. Eastern Washington slowly reeled NAU back in by forcing two turnovers within a minute during an over four-minute stretch of the Lumberjacks going without a made basket.

It was offense that kept the Eagles from getting within a possession.

"We were flawless offensively under four minutes," Burcar said. "We were great under four minutes."

Some bad fouls on NAU allowed Eastern Washington back in it. Redshirt senior Diego Campisano fouled Arizona native Elijah Thomas on a 3-point shot with 2:09 left. A 6-0 Eagles run cut the lead to four with 90 seconds left.

Like at the end of the first half, Komin knocked down a huge 3-pointer to bring the

lead back up to 86-79 with exactly a minute to go. He ended with 15 points and shot 3 for 4 from 3-point range.

"I think Chris did a good job with his hesitation dribble," Burcar said. "He elevated and the ball was pure. When it left his hand, it looked like it was pure."

The Lumberjacks made six straight free throws in the final 47 seconds to secure the win and score the highest point total the Eagles have allowed in conference play.

Eastern Washington (5-16, 3-5 Big Sky) has alternated between wins and losses for its last seven games. The Eagles will look to get back on track on Saturday against Northern Colorado (12-10, 2-7 Big Sky) in Greeley.

NAU (8-14, 2-7 Big Sky) will close out its longest homestand of the season against Idaho (12-9, 4-4 Big Sky) on Saturday at 6 p.m. The Vandals will come in after losing two straight, including a 91-83 defeat to Northern Colorado on Thursday.

## EAGLES

FROM PAGE B1

transitioned into a speedy fast break for Mingus Union.

The Eagles took to the court for the third quarter ready, willing and able to match the rapid-fire hoops the Marauders flexed in the tail end of the first half. But Mingus Union opted to slow the pace instead, bleeding the entire shot clock on its opening possession.

It utilized the slowing of the pace to lull the Eagles into playing complacent defense. This allowed Marauders senior guard Memphis Korolowicz to camp around the arc, slipping between gaps in the defense to find open looks and fire off successful 3-pointers on four straight possessions.

"We knew [Korolowicz] could shoot the ball," Reyes said. "We lost him."

The Eagles fluctuated throughout the second half, never able to find a rhythm and crawl out of the hole that their second-quarter slump

put them in. By the time they began to match the Marauders from beyond the arc in the fourth quarter, it was too little, too late.

Despite the crushing blow, Reyes maintained his confidence in the capabilities of the Eagles down the stretch, as they now prepare to close out the season with five straight road games. It is a bump in the road for them, one they relish as an opportunity to roll their sleeves up and get back after it.

"We keep moving forward," Reyes said. "If we don't, then everything we've done up to this point wouldn't matter, and that's not this group."

Flagstaff (9-5, 5-3 4A Grand Canyon) had its three-game winning streak snapped and now turns its attention toward a road contest against Bradshaw Mountain on Monday. Flagstaff previously knocked off the Bears earlier this month in a nine-point victory.

The Eagles and Marauders will meet again for Flagstaff's final regular-season game on Feb. 10.