

NAU falls to No. 5 Arizona in early blowout

BY CONNER OLSON
Special to the Daily Sun

The Northern Arizona men's basketball team lost to the No. 5 Arizona Wildcats, 84-49, at McKale Memorial Center on Tuesday in Tucson. The Lumberjacks were held to 17 points in the first half but managed to score 32 in the second in a game where expectations were tempered.

NAU won the opening tip, but it went downhill from there. Arizona converted a four-point play on the following possession.

Redshirt sophomore forward Zack Davidson tried to provide a spark early for the Lumberjacks. He made his first free throw to get NAU on the board, then collected his own rebound and scored on a put-back to cut the lead to 4-3. The Lumberjacks forced a turnover on the next possession. Davidson hit a jumper, giving NAU the lead, 5-4, in the early going.

Davidson, who scored a combined 50 points in his first two games since transferring from Montana, did not appear in the second half. He is battling a hyperextended knee he suffered against Justice College on Nov. 7.

Lumberjacks head coach Shane Burcar said pulling him after 17 minutes of first-half action was precautionary. "We're being smart about it," Burcar said. "We'll see what we have and get him checked out, and hopefully he's back next Tuesday."

The Wildcats regained the lead on a fiery alley-oop dunk. After a blocked shot from soph-



Northern Arizona guard Arne Osojnik (44) reaches for the ball handled by an Arizona player during a game Tuesday at McKale Memorial Center in Tucson.

omore guard Kavon Bradford and an NAU turnover, Burcar was assessed a technical foul for arguing a no-call, adding to the early fireworks.

Arizona went on a 10-0 run to lead 14-5. A jumper from freshman guard Brennan Peterson ended the burst. He had four points in 12 minutes of play.

Another five-point run by the Wildcats was put to an end by forward Traivar Jackson, who led the Lumberjacks with 10 points on 5-of-8 shooting. After a stop on defense, junior guard Arne Osajnik made a reverse layup to put the score at 21-11.

"We got off to a decent start," Burcar said. "They just overwhelmed us with their length. They're pretty dang strong, and they started making some shots."

Arizona responded with a 3-pointer and a three-point play on a free throw after a made shot as the score stretched to 27-11.



Northern Arizona guard Diego Campisano (12) attempts a 3-pointer during a game against Arizona Tuesday at McKale Memorial Center in Tucson.



Northern Arizona Lumberjacks head coach Shane Burcar speaks during a postgame press conference after the Northern Arizona men's basketball team lost to the Arizona Wildcats Tuesday at McKale Memorial Center in Tucson.

Later, Arizona pulled away with a 16-0 run that ran up to around the two-minute mark in the first half. The Wildcats led with a resounding 46-17 score at halftime.

NAU scored first out of halftime on a fast break. Jackson went up for a dunk that broke a streak of 10 missed NAU shot attempts.

Arizona responded with a dunk of its own, but Jackson got in the paint again with a layup. The Wildcats marched down and scored a 3 on the next play, but NAU went point for point in the stretch as senior Diego Campisano responded with a 3 of his own. Arizona scored from deep again, followed by a Campisano jumper. A steal-and-slam from Jackson got NAU to the 30-point mark, trailing 62-30.

Senior guard Oakland Fort, an Arizona native, got his first bucket of the second half to make it 74-39 with four minutes

remaining. Back-to-back 3s from the Wildcats got them to the 80-point mark for the third time in as many games.

NAU had a few solid moments in the late stages. Sophomore forward Karl Poom made a 3-pointer and was fouled on a made layup on the next possession. Freshman guard Chris Komin got the last laugh on another 3 with seconds remaining to set the final score at 84-49.

Komin had six points on 2-for-3 shooting from deep in just 13 minutes of play. Burcar sees the St. John Bosco alum as a valuable asset on this year's squad.

"Chris played great," Burcar said. "We ran the last play of the game for him and I thought he played with great confidence. The moment wasn't too big for him."

NAU (1-2) will be back in Flagstaff on Tuesday to host the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University Eagles at Rolle Activity Center.



Sophomore Taylor Lininger and junior Victoria Core high five in the pool following a race during the AIA Division II State Championships at Skyline Aquatic Center in Mesa.

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the 200 medley relay, with Lininger opening in the backstroke in 29.06, followed by Sahl with a 35.90 in the breaststroke, Core finishing the butterfly in 26.36 and Burgoon anchoring in the freestyle for a time of 28.88.

The Eagles' 200 free relay included sophomore Sienna Chitwood (31.71), junior Sydney Crary (30.34), sophomore Karma Saathoff (30.37) and Burgoon (29.00), and placed 24th with a time of 2:01.42.

Flag football

Rattlers 31, Panthers 3

Facing off against No. 7-seeded Crismon on Wednesday in Queen Creek, 10th-seeded Coconino had its second season in school history come to an end following a second consecutive postseason appearance.

The Rattlers earned their sixth consecutive victory in the first round of the 4A Conference state tournament dating back to Oct. 14, with just 10 points allowed during the stretch. Crismon advanced to face the No. 2-seeded Eastmark Firebirds in the second round of the tournament, scheduled for Saturday.

Cycling

Competing at the Arizona Cycling Association's State Championships hosted at Fort Huachuca five hours



Junior Victoria Core poses with one of her two gold medals won at the AIA Division II State Championships at Skyline Aquatic Center in Mesa.

south of Flagstaff near Sierra Vista, Flagstaff High School earned the Division I overall team title by holding off Northland Prep Academy.

Nora Kruse finished first in the girls varsity race for the Eagles, ahead of Northland Prep's McKenna Marino in second. The Spartans also had Margaret Browne place fifth overall, Adalie Gesten in seventh and Malia Curtis in 11th. BASIS Flagstaff's Linnae Kuehl placed 12th overall for the Yetis.

In the boys varsity race, Flagstaff's Isaac Cole and Tarek Nelson-Castagno finished first and second overall, leading a group of seven Eagles to finish the race. Carson Tucker (17th), Cruz Blue (18th), Bo Jay (19th), Ethan Field (20th) and Austen Moezzi (22nd) also competed in the event. Northland Prep's Colson Skersick placed 26th overall and Coconino's Nathan Finney finished 31st.



Members of the Flagstaff High School swim team pose for a photo during the AIA Division II State Championships at Skyline Aquatic Center in Mesa.

HIGH COUNTRY RUNNING

Sometimes there is more to running than just racing

BY RACHEL SMITH
Special to the Daily Sun

This past weekend I got to race in the BAA Boston Half Marathon for the second time in the last three years. Two years ago I was almost seven months postpartum after having our first daughter in April; last year I was a few months pregnant with our second daughter (and didn't race); and this year I was seven months, to the day, postpartum again.

Having been a professional runner for just over a decade, deciding to start a family in the midst of my career was not what I'd call a small decision, but felt like a surprisingly easy one. I love to train and race — like really love it. But I loved the idea of being a mom even more. After making the Olympic team in 2021, the majority of my 2022-2025 has been defined

by pregnancies and the humbling climb back to elite-level fitness.

Pregnancy and postpartum recovery transform a woman in every way. The body adapts, stretches and softens to nurture new life, and priorities shift as days revolve around tiny hands, sleepless nights and endless love (and exhaustion!). Racing, once a measure of physical strength and speed, suddenly feels distant — something from "before." Yet that distance also creates a new kind of hunger. The return isn't just about running again; it's about reclaiming the connection between movement and self.

Stepping onto a starting line again is a moment charged with emotion. The feelings aren't focused as much on performance and outcomes, but on gratitude and joy. Not many people see or

understand what it takes to be on that start line, and it often feels like a major victory in itself. The race feels like a personal declaration that the "old" me still lives in the "new" me and that no matter what my race result is, I love this new me, the mom and runner me, the best.

This past weekend's finish line was especially emotional for me — and while I was happy with my result, it had nothing to do with the time or place I came in. Right after crossing, I immediately saw my dad, holding my baby girl, and ran over to them. Them being there like that, while so simple in some ways, felt like a miracle.

The BAA Half is partnered with the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute — the very place my dad has received over 30 chemotherapy treatments over the course of the last two and a half

years. In March 2023, after shockingly being diagnosed with a late-stage terminal cancer, it was projected he had approximately three to 10 months left to live. Now, 32 months and lots of treatments later, there he was — happily holding his newest granddaughter. His cancer is an ongoing battle, but every day he has shown my family the true meaning of strength and perseverance, and the power of love, positivity, living each day with joy and gratitude, and showing up as your best self each day.

Crossing that finish line and running to my dad and 7-month-old daughter, and seeing more of my family shortly after, felt like the biggest celebration of life and love and embracing hard things — what it's really all about.

Rachel Smith is a mom of two amazing girls and three



Rachel Smith poses for a photo with her father and youngest daughter after racing the BAA Half Marathon.

happy furkids. She runs professionally for Nike and feels so lucky to call Flagstaff "home." She is also the coordinating editor of this

column and implores you to send articles to her at rachsneid18@gmail.com so you don't get stuck reading her ramblings!