

Playoffs again on the line for Raiders, Coyotes

J. Scott Russell
Times Record News

Last year, the Rider Raiders and the Wichita Falls High Coyotes met in the last game of the regular season with the final District 5-4A playoff spot on the line.

Rider won 3-1 and advanced to face Fossil Ridge in bi-district.

When the two old rivals meet today — a week later than originally scheduled because of the Swine Flu scare — playoff spots will again be on the line.

First pitch is scheduled for 2 p.m. at Hoskins Field.

Yes, it's playoff spots, as in two, as Class 4A districts are now sending four teams to the playoffs and both WFISD schools have qualified already.

The Coyotes come into the game 20-6 for the season and are currently third in District 5-4A with an 8-5 record. Rider is 16-12 overall and is a game behind the Coyotes in district with a 7-6 mark.

If WFHS wins, it will finish third and play the District 6-4A runner-up — either Aledo or Birdville. Rider would finish fourth and play the 6-4A champion.

The two teams would be tied with a Raiders win, but Rider would get the third-place spot because of its 4-1 win over the Coyotes earlier this season.

Both teams should be well rested and near full strength as they haven't played in more than two weeks (April 24).

As a result, WFHS coach Rob Johnson and Rider coach Scot

Green will have some decisions to make — especially on the mound.

For the Coyotes, it's Brier Kruse's turn in the rotation. He's 4-4 with a 3.08 ERA. But Josh Wright is also available with his 7-2 record and 2.98 ERA. The Coyotes may use both of them with the bi-district playoffs coming up next weekend.

The Coyotes are hitting .337 as a team with catcher Marshall Morris leading the way at .441, followed by center fielder Ben Henderson at .410, shortstop Craig Alvarez at .397, first baseman Connor Bishop at .350 and designated hitter Bryan Keith at .338.

Kruse is the team-leader in home runs with three and RBIs with 26, while Henderson's seven stolen bases are tops.

The Raiders have pitchers Matt Wolfe and Ben Smith to choose from on the mound. It is Smith's turn in the rotation and the sophomore left-hander is 6-1 with a 1.12 ERA. Wolfe, a senior right-hander, is 8-3 with a 0.74 ERA.

The Raiders are hitting .258 as a team with catcher Landon Little's .325 mark leading the way. Shortstop Cameron Allen is hitting .304, designated hitter Nathan Seay is next at .296, followed by Smith at .292, center fielder Gage Green at .291 and third baseman Reid Barnett is hitting .274.

Little and Seay lead the Raiders in RBIs with 16 and 14, respectively.

The bi-district playoff series must be completed by May 16.

NOTE: The eight playoff teams

from Districts 5-4A and 6-4A have already been determined after Brewer's 10-5 win over Boswell Thursday night, but the seedings were dependent on games Friday night and today's game.

Denton Ryan had a one-game lead over Denton Guyer prior to their 7 p.m. game Friday night at Guyer. If Ryan wins, it is the district champ, will be the top seed and play Brewer in bi-district. If Guyer wins, the two teams will flip a coin to determine top seed. The runner-up will play Boswell.

Aledo and Birdville had identical records heading into their 7:30 p.m. game Friday in Birdville. The winner will be the 6-4A champ and will play the WFHS-Rider loser, while the loser will play the WFHS-Rider winner.



Mawson

Mawson signs with New Mexico school

Chelsey Mawson of Wichita Falls High School has signed to play soccer at the University of the Southwest in Hobbs, N.M.

Mawson was a first-team All-District midfielder for the District 5-4A champion Lady Coyotes her

senior year. Mawson was third on the team with nine goals scored.

The University of the Southwest is a non-denominational Christian college. The team's nickname is the Mustangs.

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as a freshman, 6-4 as a sophomore and grew to 6-8 as a senior.

"We have a picture of that 1996 team, and it looks like he was four feet taller than everybody else," Jonathan Hines, the current Iola basketball coach, said.

"He was a shot-blocking fool. It was uncanny," said Randy McDougald, the head football coach and athletic director at Iola when Andersen was in high school.

"We wanted him to play football. He played a couple years for us as a wide receiver and defensive end," Mc Dougald said. "He decided to just play basketball, and it was the right decision. But none of us back then envisioned this tall and thin kid make it to the pros."

"He was 6-7 and averaged a triple-double his junior year, but not one college coach called me about him," said Stewart, now the head basketball coach at Conroe Oak Ridge, "In his first game as a senior, he had something like 34 points, 22 rebounds and 14 blocked shots. I Xeroxed the final stat sheet and started getting calls from everybody up to Bobby Knight."

Although he was a star on the court, Andersen was a dud in the classroom.

"Chris' grades were not anything to write home about," was the way McDougald put it.

"Tony Barone recognized his talent and wanted him to come to Texas A&M, but he was not good enough academically," my friend Robert Cessna, the sports editor of the *Bryan Eagle* told me. "Then he went to Blinn (junior college) for a year and couldn't stay in academically."

He played in China and for a couple of minor league teams before finally signing with Denver in 2001.

But in his first five seasons in the NBA, Andersen — who was with the Hornets at the time — was best known for two uneventful All-Star slam dunk contests and then receiving a two-year suspension for testing positive for "drugs of abuse."

The drugs on that list are amphetamine and its analogs, which include methamphetamine; cocaine; LSD; opiates, including heroin, codeine and morphine; and PCP.

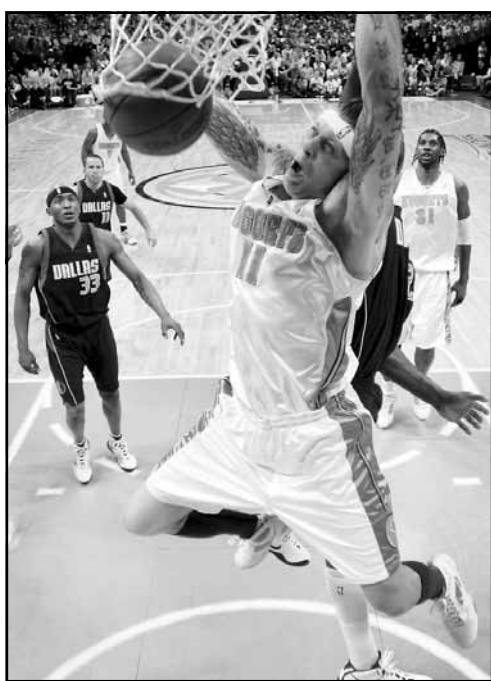
During his two-year suspension, Andersen also underwent a month rehab for a drinking problem.

"They were in Houston to play, and I went to watch him, but he wasn't there. I called him on his cell phone and he said he was in his hotel room sick and not to come see him," Stewart said.

"The next day he came and ate lunch with my wife and me and told us the whole story. From that day until now, he never blamed anybody but himself for what happened."

The Birdman is now back in Denver, where his NBA career started, and is making the most of his second chance.

In the first two games of the playoff



The Associated Press

Denver Nuggets forward Chris Andersen, front, dunks the ball and gets hit by Dallas Mavericks center Erick Dampier, just behind Andersen, while Mavericks forward James Singleton (33), looks on in the second quarter of Game 2 of an NBA Western Conference semifinal in Denver on Tuesday.

series against the Mavericks, Andersen come off the bench and averaged 9.5 points and 7.5 rebounds, but what really got our attention is the way he came on and pretty much bottled up Dirk Nowitzki for most of the final 3 1/2 quarters of Game 1.

It's strange that Iola's most famous person turned out to be a professional basketball player.

This little town is known more for its football teams, which was the "team of the decade" in the '90s, winning 83 percent of their games.

But most of the 333 people in Iola are now watching NBA basketball.

It's strange that Iola's most famous person turned out to be a professional basketball player.

"He's growing into a legend here," Hines said.

"We've got a basketball in our trophy case signed by him," Hines said proudly. "He signed it 'Bulldog for life.'"

Although Andersen was never much in the classroom, he did have a talent that is now displayed all over that tattoo covered body.

"Chris' dad is an artist in Greenwich Village, New York," Stewart told me. "And Chris is an unbelievable artist. A lot of those tattoos you see, he drew himself."

And the haircut?
I'm betting no barber in Iola did that.

Nuggets hope to have learned Game 3 lessons

Jaime Aron
The Associated Press

DALLAS — In their romp through the playoffs thus far, the Denver Nuggets have made only one mistake: blowing Game 3 of their first-round series.

Up 2-0 on the Hornets, and playing in New Orleans, the Nuggets jumped way ahead in the opening minutes — then wound up losing. They bounced back in a big way the next game and haven't lost since.

On Saturday, Denver gets another Game 3 on the road, again while up 2-0. This time it's against the Dallas Mavericks.

Have the Nuggets learned their lesson? Do they now understand the difference between a playoff road game and a regular-season road game?

Denver coach George Karl is eager to find out.

"Game 3 always has a sort of home-court intensity that big-time pros know how to take advantage of, and I think Dallas is made up of big-time pros," Karl said. "They're going to have a home-court en-

ergy that's going to be more than New Orleans has. It's going to be hotter. It's going to be a hot building where we're going to have to keep 48 minutes of composure and focus and make sure we stay on track and on point to how to win the game."

The Nuggets haven't had many problem with the Mavericks so far, using their size and strength to bully their way to the basket seemingly at will. Both games have featured stretches when everything came easy for Denver and nothing was easy for Dallas.

Yet the Mavericks haven't been total bystanders. In both games, they led early and got close with about a quarter left. The difference has been Denver pulling away and Dallas unable to stop it.

Mavs coach Rick Carlisle and staff have had three days to come up with some new strategies and some backups in case those don't work. There's also been time for Josh Howard to rest his ailing ankles. And there's the twin comforts of being home (where Dallas is 17-1 since mid-February) and being out of Denver's high altitude.

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from Game 2 for a verbal altercation with Bryant following Bryant's elbow to Artest's upper chest.

"I don't think that was a flagrant, maybe a flagrant one," Bryant said of Artest's ejection. "That rule is so all over the place, it's hard to judge. I'm an '80s baby, so that's just two shots and let's go."

Artest had 25 points and Yao Ming added 19 points and 14 rebounds for the Rockets but he was bothered by a lower left leg injury in the final minutes and was limping as he left the court.

The Lakers snapped the Rockets' nine-game home winning streak.

Lakers 108, Rockets 94

L.A. LAKERS (108)
Ariza 4-7 2-4 13, Odom 7-11 0-0 16, Gasol 4-11 5-7 13, Farmer 3-7 6-8 12, Bryant 11-28 7-8 33, Walton 2-6 1-2 6, Bynum 2-2 0-0 4, Brown 2-2 4-4 8, Vujacic 1-6 0-0 3, Powell 0-2 0-0 0. Totals 36-82 25-33 108.

HOUSTON (94)
Battier 2-5 0-0 6, Scola 5-11 0-2 10, Yao 6-14 7-9 19, Brooks 3-8 0-0 7, Artest 10-23 3-4 25, Lowry 3-6 2-3 8, Hayes 0-0 0-0 0, Landry 4-7 2-2 10, Wafer 2-10 4-5 9. Totals 35-84 18-25 94.

L.A. Lakers 30 20 24 34—108
Houston 28 20 14 32—94
3-Point Goals—L.A. Lakers 11-20 (Bryant 4-6, Ariza 3-4, Odom 2-2, Walton 1-2, Vujacic 1-3, Farmer 0-3), Houston 6-19 (Battier 2-5, Artest 2-8, Brooks 1-2, Wafer 1-4). Fouled Out—None. Rebounds—L.A. Lakers 50 (Odom 13), Houston 60 (Yao 14). Assists—L.A. Lakers 17 (Farmer 7), Houston 16 (Battier 7). Total Fouls—L.A. Lakers 22, Houston 22. Technicals—Walton. Flagrant Fouls—Artest. A—18,495 (18,043).

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ing 1-2 in four start in April with a 7.89 ERA. He didn't allow a runner past second base and only allowed one walk while striking out five. Harrison

"His body language out on the mound has been incredible the last few starts," Murphy said. "He kind of looked a little unsure of himself early in the season and I think he's figured things out. That kind of shows."

Jose Contreras (0-5), who helped the White Sox win the 2005 World Series allowed five runs, three earned on six hits. He also hit one batter, threw two wild pitches and walked two. After the game, White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen said he talked to Contreras and told him they will replace him in the rotation.

After allowing a single to Jermaine Dye in the second inning, Harrison retired the next 11 batters. The left-hander picked up his second victory against the White Sox this week after throwing five scoreless innings in Sunday's win at Texas.

"It feels great," Harrison said. "I just came out early and tried to follow the last start, not change anything unless they made me make an adjustment and they didn't. So I just kept pounding the fastball. I was in and out and using my changeup like I was the last time. I was able to get ahead of them early in the counts and early in the game and just followed that up with pounding the zone late in the game and they were making

Rangers 6, White Sox 0

Texas	ab	r	h	bi	Chicago	ab	r	h	bi
Kinsler 2b	3	1	2	2	Getz 2b	4	0	1	0
Vizquel ss-3b	5	0	2	2	Fields 3b	4	0	1	0
MYong 3b	3	0	0	0	Quentin lf	4	0	0	0
Andrus ss	2	0	1	0	Thome dh	4	0	0	0
AnJons dh	3	0	1	0	Dyer rf	3	0	1	0
Byrd cf	5	0	1	0	Konerk 1b	3	0	0	0
N.Cruz rf	5	0	0	0	Przyne c	3	0	0	0
DvMro lf	4	3	2	0	J.Nix ss	2	0	0	0
C.Davis 1b	4	1	1	0	Lillirdg cf	3	0	1	0
Tegrdn c	3	1	2	1	Totals	37	6	15	3
Totals	37	6	15	3	Totals	30	0	4	0
Texas	120	201	000	—6	Texas	000	000	000	—0
Chicago	000	000	000	—0	E—Kinsler (3), Fields (5), DP—Texas 2, Chicago 1. LOB—Texas 9, Chicago 4. 2B—Vizquel (3), Byrd (12), Dav.Murphy (3), Teagarden (1), SB—Kinsler (8), Vizquel (1), CS—Fields (2), S—Kinsler.				

CS—Fields (2), S—Kinsler.

Texas Harrison W, 3-2 9 4 0 0 1 5

Chicago Contreras L, 0-5 2/3 6 5 3 2 3

Carrasco 3 4 1 1 0 5

Richard 1 1/3 0 0 0 0 3

Broadway 1 1 0 0 0 1 0

HBP—by Contreras (Teagarden). WP—Contreras 2, Carrasco.

Umpires—Home, Mike Winters; First, Lance Barksdale; Second, Brian Knight; Third, Randy Marsh.

T—2:28. A—21,326 (40,615).

great plays behind me."

After Contreras struck out Nelson Cruz in the second inning, Murphy reached on Josh Fields' throwing error: Contreras then gave up back-to-back singles to Chris Davis and Taylor Teagarden to load the bases. Murphy scored on Kinsler's fielder's choice and Davis scored on Contreras' wild pitch. Despite the damage, Contreras wasn't charged with an earned run because of the throwing error.

Contreras struggled again in the fourth inning when he allowed a leadoff double by Murphy, who advanced by Contreras, who advanced to third on a wild pitch, and one out later; he hit Teagarden. Kinsler followed with a sacrifice bunt and Vizquel chased Contreras with an RBI double.

Contreras, the winner of

17 straight decisions during the 2005 and 2006 seasons, was booed by the home crowd throughout and then heard cheers when manager Ozzie Guillen took him out. Contreras allowed five runs — three earned — and six hits. He also hit one batter, threw two wild pitches and walked two.

Last season, Contreras season ended when he ruptured his left Achilles tendon on Aug. 9, but said the injury is not a reason for his struggles.

"I feel healthy. Issues are: left the ball up and location," Contreras said through a translator. "It would be different if my leg wasn't feeling good. If it wasn't feeling healthy. It's difficult. I am going to keep working hard. It's the only thing I can do."

White Sox catcher A.J. Pierzynski doesn't have an idea on how to get Contreras back to form.

"We've tried different things," he said. "We've tried a million things. We've tried to attack guys this way, attack guys that way and nothing seems to work right now. You feel so bad because Jose is such a great guy and you really want him to succeed and do very well and you just don't know what to do anymore."

Texas third baseman Michael Young left in the bottom of the fifth inning with lower back stiffness and went 0-for-3, snapping an 11-game hitting streak. He said he is day-to-day.

Teagarden added an RBI double in the sixth.

Howard powers Magic to 117-96 victory

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Into the stands. Off the backboard or in another player's face, Dwight Howard sent Boston Celtics' shots everywhere.

Howard had 17 points, 14 rebounds and five blocks to lift the Orlando Magic to a 117-96 victory over the Celtics on Friday night and a 2-1 series lead in their Eastern

Conference semifinal.

Rashard Lewis had 28 points, and Hedo Turkoglu scored 24 for Orlando, which played without starting point guard Rafer Alston. He was suspended by the NBA for slapping Eddie House in the back of the head in Game 2.

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son jitters their defense didn't show it, going toe to toe with the more experienced Saginaw team and forcing a stalemate through seven innings.

After going three up and three down to start the game, Hislop gave up a double to leadoff hitter Mariah Alvarez. But she managed to get out of the first inning with a groundout to third, strikeout, and fly ball to center field.

"I think we were a little intimidated at first until we went out and got those three big outs," Franklin said. "After that we figured out that we can play with this team and everyone settled in for a tough ballgame."

Hislop would go on a bit of run, striking out the next four batters until Alvarez notched her second hit of the night with a single in the bottom of the third inning. Hislop racked up eight Ks on the night with just one walk.

"I think the break helped Sammy out a lot because it gave her time to get plenty of rest," the coach said. "She was hitting her spots really well and when the other team tried to get in her head she completely shut them out and threw even better. She did a phenomenal job, as young as she is, going up against a senior pitcher like that." Rider got into a bit of jam in the top of

the sixth when Alvarez once again singled, and Bell drew a walk to put runners on first and second with one out. But just as before the Lady Raider defense held strong with a fielder's choice to first and a great play on a fly ball by center fielder Nazia Frank.

Crain struck out all three Rider batters in the final regulation inning. The Lady Rough Riders then had a runner in scoring position in the bottom of the seventh with one out, but another grounder to third and Hislop's final strikeout of the night sent the game into the extra innings.

In the bottom of the eighth, right fielder Kori Pounds sent a dribbler back to the pitcher's mound and Hislop and Rider first baseman Bailey McCreary were unable to get the putout, recording Rider's only error of the night.

Alvarez once again stepped up at the plate with a sacrifice bunt to advance the runner to second, and Bell ended the game on a full-count double that helped Pounds cross home plate.

"We have to play perfect defense and put the ball in play," Franklin said when asked what her team needed to accomplish to get the win today and force a deciding Game 3. "Our defense played well, Sammy pitched well, so if we can hit the ball we'll be fine."