

It's on, finally

Floyd Mayweather announces he will fight Manny Pacquiao on May 2 at the MGM in Las Vegas. Page D2



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BROWNS

Cautious approach

Team expected to avoid red flags after 2014 draft

Scott Petrak
The Chronicle-Telegram

INDIANAPOLIS — A little dirt under the fingernails is one thing.

Submerged in a swamp is something completely different. The importance of character in the draft process is an annual point of discussion at the NFL scouting combine. It's a hot-button issue this year for the Browns.

Quarterback Johnny Manziel is in rehab. Cornerback Justin Gilbert has a "very personal" issue, according to coach Mike Pettine.

They were the first two picks of Ray Farmer's tenure as general manager — Gilbert at No. 8, Manziel at No. 22. Both selections came after trading away a draft pick to move up to take them.

They combined for way more headaches than their combined four starts and two touchdowns — one for each. By the end of their rookie seasons, teammates were blasting them publicly and saying major changes were necessary if they wanted to save their careers.

It only seems natural the Browns would err on the side of caution during the draft

April 30-May 2 and avoid guys with a criminal history or any other red flags in the character department.

"There's a danger in that, that if you just say, 'We're only going to add players to our roster who are in the National Honor Society and the school choir,'" Pettine said this week. "You look across the league, it's not just the league, it's society in general. It's rare you're going to have somebody who has impeccable, clean character. It's all risk-reward, you've got to weigh it."

"As a team, that's why we're here doing these interviews. We've had some players who have had some issues and you look to learn from it. But at the same time I don't think you can just knee-jerk react and go the exact other direction and anybody that has any type of red flag you shy away from."

Perhaps not, but the Browns might be well-advised to proceed with care with their first-round picks, Nos. 12 and 19. That would mean removing top-rated quarterback Jameis Winston from the draft board after a checkered tenure at Florida State, including a sexual assault allegation.

See **BROWNS**, D2

BOYS BASKETBALL



STEVE MANHEIM / CHRONICLE

Elyria Catholic's Jacob Kuchta, left, shoots over Rocky River's Sutton Klodnick during the Panthers' loss Friday night. EC was still able to clinch a share of the West Shore Conference title in the league's final season.

CAVALIERS 127, WIZARDS 89



Cleveland's LeBron James dunks during a victory at Washington on Friday night.

2nd half starts with big victory

Jason Lloyd
Akron Beacon Journal (TNS)

WASHINGTON — The second-half push to the postseason began with a two-handed slam. The Cleveland Cavaliers returned from the All-Star break looking every bit as sharp as the team that ended the first half as one of the hottest teams in the league.

LeBron James had 28 points, six assists and five rebounds in only 25 minutes, Kyrie Irving had 25 points and seven assists and the Cavs ambushed the Washington Wizards on Friday 127-89 to move a half-game ahead of them and into fourth place in the East. It narrowly missed as the most lopsided victory of the season, but the Cavs beat the Charlotte Hornets by 39 earlier this season.

The Cavs have won 15 of their past 17 games, and more importantly hold a 2-1 edge on the Wizards in any tiebreaker scenarios. The teams will meet

once more in the season finale at Quicken Loans Arena.

"We're rounding third base going into the final stretch of the regular season," James said. "That should be enough of an edge. Understanding how important every game is for us to get better going into the postseason."

The Cavs have struggled on the road this season, entering

See **CAVS**, D3

A loss, but a win

EC drops WSC finale, yet still shares league crown

Joel Hammond
The Chronicle-Telegram

ROCKY RIVER — Not a whole heck of a lot went right for Elyria Catholic on Friday night — until about 9:20 p.m., when the Panthers were on the bus home.

That about sums up one of the wildest West Shore Conference seasons on record, fitting, since it was the league's last.

Needing a win to ensure at least a share of the final WSC crown, the Panthers started flat against Rocky River and fell behind by as many as 17 early in the fourth quarter. They rallied to cut it to six, but got no closer as the Pirates won 62-49.

Twenty minutes later and seven miles away at Bay, though, North Ridgeville finished off an upset overtime win over the Rockets, meaning the Panthers would share the league championship with the Rockets. It's EC's first league crown of any kind since 2002.

Midview made it a three-way tie, as its

win over Lakewood earlier in the night allowed the Middies also to finish at 9-5 in WSC play.

"Every team was stacked in our conference, and it was difficult and competitive from the first game of the season on," said EC senior James Tirbaso, who along with Jacob Kuchta led the Panthers with 10 points. "Everyone could beat everyone. To win a share of the conference is definitely a point of pride. Of course we wish we could have won tonight, but we'll take it."

See **EC**, E1

Longhorns clinch title

Chris Sweeney
The Chronicle-Telegram

COLUMBIA STATION — The setting was the only thing different for Columbia on Friday night.

Hosting Lutheran West with control of the Patriot Athletic Conference Stripes Division on the line, the Raiders faltered in the second-to-last conference game of the season for the second year in a row, this time losing on their home floor 44-42.

The win gives Lutheran West a share of the division title at 13-2 in the PAC, 16-4 overall. The Longhorns can clinch the division outright with a win against Brooklyn on Tuesday — just as they did last year against Black River after beating Columbia on their home floor.

Columbia falls to 12-3 in the PAC, 13-7 overall and would need to beat Buckeye on Feb. 27 paired with a Lutheran West loss on Tuesday to share the title.

"Heading into this year all I wanted to do was beat Lutheran West so badly," said Columbia senior Kevin Simon, who scored a team-high with 10 points and added five rebounds. "It was just right on my mind every single day. We mentally weren't there tonight, we missed some shots and turned it over, it wasn't good."

See **CLINCH**, E1



DAVID RICHARD / CHRONICLE

Lutheran West's Andrew O'Hara tries to get around Columbia's Justin Tacchite, left, and Brian Hershey during a win Friday night.

INSIDE

CENTURY CITY: Elyria High scores over 100 points in rout of Mayfield. **D4**
'CATS CRUMBLE: Keystone loses to Buckeye, squanders opportunity to clinch PAC Stars Division. **D4**
EAGLES FALL: North Olmsted misses chance at Southwestern Conference title in loss to Berea-Midpark. **D4**
UPSET SPECIAL: North Ridgeville gets 38 points from Isa Abdul-Alim and beats Bay to prevent Rockets from outright West Shore Conference title. **D5**

MIDVIEW 83, LAKEWOOD 73

Middies share crown

Bob Daniels
The Chronicle-Telegram

EATON TWP — On the final night of basketball in the final year of existence for the West Shore Conference, underdog Midview still had a chance to tie for the championship.

But it was a long shot, because some things had to fall into place.

So, improbably perhaps, they fell perfectly Friday night and the Middies today share the title with Elyria Catholic and Bay.

First, Midview (13-9, 9-5 WSC) came from behind to pin an 83-73 loss on Lakewood. Second, EC lost on the road to Rocky River and Bay lost in overtime at North Ridgeville.

After they heard the news in their locker room, the Middies returned to the court and cut down the home-end net in a loud and animated celebration. It is their third WSC championship or share thereof.

They did it with a 27-point performance by Daimion

See **MIDDIES**, D4

HIGH SCHOOL ROUNDUP

EC's McCaffrey is 5th at district meet

CLEVELAND — The Elyria Catholic boys swim team finished in 13th place with 61 points in the Division II district meet at Cleveland State University.

Kevin McCaffrey took fifth place in the 100-yard breaststroke and seventh place in the 200 individual medley.

The girls finished in 14th place with 49 points. Jacqueline Lester took sixth place in the 100-yard backstroke and the 400-yard medley relay place in eighth.

The top individuals and relays per event plus 16 at-large individuals and relays qualify to the state tournament at C.T. Branin Natatorium in Canton.

ELYRIA CATHOLIC BOYS RESULTS
200 MEDLEY RELAY: 9. Elyria Catholic (Charles Splain, Kevin McCaffrey, Peter Velasquez, Brian O'Dell) 1:46.91; **200 INDIVIDUAL MEDLEY:** 7. Kevin McCaffrey (EC) 2:00.97; **100 FREE:** 25. Brian O'Dell (EC) 52.58; **200 FREE RELAY:** 16. Elyria Catholic (Charles Splain, Kevin McCaffrey, Peter Velasquez, Brian O'Dell) 1:37.26; **100 BACK:** 26. Charles Splain (EC) 1:01.15; **100 BREST:** 5. Kevin McCaffrey (EC) 1:30.77.

ELYRIA CATHOLIC GIRLS RESULTS
200 MEDLEY RELAY: 14. Elyria Catholic (Jacqueline Lester, Julia Tollet, Ally Decker, Ashley Watson) 2:00.28; **200 FREE:** 13. Julia Tollet (EC) 2:02.68; **100 FREE:** 17. Jacqueline Lester (EC) 56.58; **500 FREE:** 13. Julia Tollet (EC) 5:28.34; **200 FREE RELAY:** 18. Elyria Catholic (Taylor Cruz, Logan Haywood, Ashley Watson, Ally Decker) 1:52.02; **100 BACK:** 6. Jacqueline Lester (EC) 1:01.58; **400 FREE RELAY:** 8. Elyria Catholic (Jacqueline Lester, Julia Tollet, Ally Decker, Ashley Watson) 3:55.21.

Boys basketball

Olmsted Falls 53, Avon Lake 43

AVON LAKE — Victor Hitterman scored a game-high 12 points to lead to Olmsted Falls to a win over Avon Lake in Southwestern Conference action. Matt Molina led Avon Lake (4-17, 0-12) with 11 points.

OLMSTED FALLS (53): Hanna 4-0-10, Hurrell 3-2-9, Candow 1-0-2, Hitterman 3-3-12, Sosic 3-4-10, Fritz 0-10-10. **Totals 15-19-53.**
AVON LAKE (43): AJ Outcalt 2-0-6, James O'Connor 1-0-2, Luke Harris 4-0-9, Logan Good 2-1-5, Jordan Ball 1-0-2, Matt Molina 4-2-11, Matt Pappas 3-0-8. **Totals 17-3-43.**

Olmsted Falls 12 12 15 14 — 53
Avon Lake 8 9 9 17 — 43
Three-point goals: (AL) Outcalt 2, Harris, Molina, Pappas, (OF) Hannah 2, Hurrell, Hitterman 2.
Junior varsity: Olmsted Falls, 48-44.

Brecksville 66, Westlake 40

WESTLAKE — Andris Balodis led the Demons with 22 points, including six 3-pointers, in a loss to the Bees in SWC play.

BRECKSVILLE (66): Auble 5-1-13, Bazil 2-0-4, Bruno 1-0-3, Cipolla 3-0-8, Dimitrijevs 4-0-9, Harwood 7-0-15, Jakovljevic 1-0-2, Maddox 3-0-7, Shirilla 1-0-2, Stevens 1-0-3. **Totals 23-1-66.**
WESTLAKE (40): Andris Balodis 8-0-22, Cameron Brown 1-0-2, Mark Schuler 4-0-9, Rico Tate 3-0-7. **Totals 16-0-40.**

Brecksville 13 17 19 17 — 66
Westlake 3 10 17 10 — 40
Three-point goals: (B) Auble 2, Cipolla 2, Bruno, Dimitrijevs, Harwood, Maddox, Stevens, (W) Balodis 6, Schuler, Tate.

BASEBALL



Oakland catcher Luke Carlin, a former Indians player, participates in a drill Friday during training camp.

Pace of game addressed

Ronald Blum
 The Associated Press

NEWYORK — Major League Baseball is slowly addressing the lagging pace of games.

MLB and the players' association announced an agreement Friday to enforce the rule requiring a hitter to keep at least one foot in the batter's box in many cases. MLB also will post stadium clocks timing pitching changes and between-inning breaks starting in spring training, and it no longer will require managers to always come onto the field when they request video reviews by umpires.

But the sides limited penalties to warnings and fines, and not automatic balls and strikes. The fines don't start until May 1 and are capped at \$500 per offense.

Many of the more radical ideas experimented with during the Arizona Fall League were not adopted, such as a 20-second clock between pitches, a limitation of pitcher's mound conferences involving catchers and managers, and no-pitch intentional walks.

Still, even the modest changes are too much for players, used to their routines and reluctant to alter them.

"If you rush a hamburger, it's not going to be completely done. There are going to be too many mistakes. You're

going to rush the game. It would just be terrible. I don't think there needs to be a time limit," Miami Marlins pitcher Mat Latos said.

Said Chicago White Sox outfielder Adam Eaton: "I'm not a big fan. There's a lot of thinking involved. When a pitcher steps on the rubber, there's a lot going on. There's thinking in the dugout, the coaches, everyone. Why speed that up?"

Baseball has been contemplating the issue for nearly a decade. In February 2005, the batter's box rule was announced as an experiment in the minor leagues.

Still, the average time of nine-inning games as increased to a record 3 hours, 2 minutes last year, up from 2:33 in 1981.

Detroit Tigers ace Justin Verlander says the change will be tougher on batters than pitchers.

"I hope it screws up their whole rhythm and everything," he said, jokingly.

MLB cannot make unilateral changes to playing rules without the consent of the players' union unless it gives one year prior notice, so an agreement was necessary for any 2015 alterations. The World Umpires Association also approved.

"The players believe that enforcing the rules that currently exist regarding

between-inning breaks and plate appearances is the best way to address the issue of pace of play," union head Tony Clark said in a statement. "We're confident that today's announcements will have a positive impact on the pace of the game without jeopardizing the integrity of the competition."

The pitch clock will be used in the minor leagues at Double-A and Triple-A, where union approval isn't needed.

MLB said it is likely to announce only fines involving repeat flagrant violators. In the AFL, strikes and balls were called as penalties, and the average game time was reduced by 10 minutes.

The rule requiring hitter's keep a foot in the box contains many exceptions, including swinging at a pitch, getting forced out by a pitch, calling time, faking a bunt and wild pitches and passed balls.

Clocks will be installed on or near outfield scoreboards and on facades behind home plate, near most press boxes. Inning breaks will be counted down from 2:25 for locally televised games and 2:45 for nationally televised games. Pitchers must throw their last warmup pitches before 30 seconds remaining, with exceptions if the pitcher or catcher is on base when the previous half-inning ends.

CLINCH

From D1

Coming out of the locker room tied at 16, Lutheran West went on a 12-3 run that ultimately gave it a lead it would not relinquish. Clay Carper hit back-to-back jumpers — the second inches away from being a three-point shot. Adam Felten nailed a three and two possessions later Andrew O'Hara scored his first field goal since scoring the first 10 points for Lutheran West — all in the opening quarter.

O'Hara was spectacular, with a game-high 19 points and leading the Longhorns in rebounds with eight.

"I was just taking open shots in the first quarter, then the second quarter hit and they weren't falling so I kind of shied away a little bit," O'Hara said. "We just took the best shot possible."

Columbia, however, didn't go down without a fight, switching up to a press that frustrated the Longhorns into five of their 12 turnovers in the

fourth quarter — the most they had for any one quarter.

Still, whenever Columbia got close Lutheran West had an answer. The Raiders cut the lead down to six twice only to see Lutheran West push it right back to eight on the next possession. Columbia's Justin Tacchite converted a three-point play to bring Columbia within five, only to see the Longhorns push it back to seven.

"We knew they were holding the ball a lot to make us chase them around, so at that point we had to try and get something going," Columbia coach Larry Babics said. "We did a decent job, we're really not a pressing team. But we put ourselves in a bad spot in that third quarter."

The back-and-fourth battle continued for two more series until Columbia forced a turnover and Brian Hershey drained a three that cut Lutheran West's lead to 41-38 with 3:12 left. But Felten answered with a layup and the Longhorns defense clamped down to seal the victory, nursing a five-point lead with five

seconds to play when Taylor Beck connected on a meaningless 3-pointer as the buzzer sounded.

"When you're playing Columbia, the concern always is that they're going to come back and hit threes and get that momentum going," Lutheran West coach Alan Januzzi said. "We focused on chasing them off the line and really it came down to defense. When you get to this time of the year, that's really what it comes down to."

Contact Chris Sweeney at 329-7135 or ctsports@chronicle.com.

Lutheran West 44, Columbia 42

LUTHERAN WEST (44): Andrew O'Hara 8-1-19, Nick Knudsen 1-0-2, Clay Carper 3-0-6, Adam Felten 2-2-7, Sean Voliers 3-0-6, Dominic Januzzi 1-2-4, Scottie Berghaus 0-0-0, Josh Ranc 0-0-0. **Totals 18-5-44.**
COLUMBIA (42): David Delahunty 2-5-10, Kevin Simon 3-4-10, Brandon Heidecker 2-1-5, Brian Hershey 3-1-9, Justin Tacchite 1-1-3, Jordan DeLisle 0-0-0, Taylor Beck 1-2-5, John Fehet 0-0-0. **Totals 12-14-42.**

Lutheran West 12 4 14 14 — 44
Columbia 14 2 7 19 — 42
Three-point goals: Lutheran West 3-13 (O'Hara 2, Felten), Columbia 4-20 (Hershey 2, Delahunty, Beck). **Field goals:** Lutheran West 18-41 (44 percent), Columbia 12-42 (29 percent). **Free throws:** Lutheran West 5-11 (46 percent), Columbia 14-24 (58 percent). **Rebounds:** Lutheran West 23 (O'Hara 8), Columbia 29 (Delahunty 8, Heidecker 8). **Total fouls:** Lutheran West 19, Columbia 16. **Technical fouls:** Simon. **Fouled out:** Heidecker. **Turnovers:** Lutheran West 12, Columbia 8. **Junior varsity:** Lutheran West, 56-34.

Elyria Catholic's James Tirbaso collides with Rocky River's Jimmy Kinsley during the Panthers' loss Friday night.



STEVE MANHEIM / CHRONICLE

EC

From D1

EC (14-7, 9-5 WSC) needed help even to be in a position where help helped them: When Lakewood was forced to forfeit last Friday's win over the Panthers, EC moved into a tie with Bay, meaning if Bay lost, an EC win could have given it the outright championship.

But early on against the Pirates on Friday, it was clear a win was going to be a difficult proposition. The Panthers had seven turnovers in the first four minutes of the game — and 22 total — and trailed 18-8 after one thanks to three 3-pointers by River's Patrick Connors. Tirbaso scored six early in the second before going to the bench with his second foul, and EC managed to cut it to five at half, 29-24.

But after Tirbaso cut the lead to three with a bucket to open the second half, the Pirates rolled off 13 straight — including eight straight at one point

by Evan Nugent — to blow it open. After River scored the first four of the fourth — with two of EC's eight missed free throws mixed in — the Pirates had their biggest lead, 48-31, with 6:30 left.

Yet the Panthers made a run, scoring 10 in a row: Jacob Kuchta made two free throws and back-to-back threes, and Ceeven Shelton added a bucket to make it 48-41. Nugent made a pair of free throws, and after a charge on Shelton that the EC bench loathed, Connors increased it back to 11, 52-41. Shelton, though, converted a three-point play and Colden Schemmel cut it to six.

EC got no closer. River scored nine of the next 10 to ice it.

"The conference was very tough — a three-way tie or a four-way tie is a very fitting for this conference," EC coach Phil Kuchta said. "There was a lot of good teams. We beat Bay twice, Midview beat us twice — it's a credit to every team in the league."

Indeed: River, which finished

4-10 in the league (and is 9-11 overall), lost five conference games by three points or fewer.

"The depth of the league, top to bottom, is incredible," River coach Mike Murray said. "We've played close games, and lost close ones, but lately we've been playing better and playing confidence. I think we showed that tonight."

Contact Joel Hammond at 329-7135 or ctsports@chronicle.com.

Rocky River 62, Elyria Catholic 49

ELYRIA CATHOLIC (49): DJ Graham 2-0-4, Kevin Kelley 1-0-3, Ceeven Shelton 4-4-12, Darin Guice 2-0-4, Colden Schemmel 1-0-2, Cole Virgin 1-0-2, Jacob Kuchta 3-2-10, James Tirbaso 5-0-10, Brian Duffield 1-0-2. **Totals 20-6-49.**

ROCKY RIVER (62): Sutton Klodnick 1-0-2, Eric Jones 1-0-2, Patrick Connors 6-5-20, Jack Corrigan 2-1-6, Gary Matthews 1-0-3, Evan Nugent 5-2-12, Jimmy Kinsley 5-4-14, Nathan Seffernick 1-1-3. **Totals 22-13-62.**

Elyria Catholic 8 16 7 18 — 49
Rocky River 18 11 15 18 — 62
Three-point goals: Elyria Catholic 3-13 (Kelley, Kuchta 2), Rocky River 5-10 (Connors 3, Corrigan, Matthews). **Field goals:** Elyria Catholic 20-48 (42 percent), Rocky River 22-46 (48 percent). **Free throws:** Elyria Catholic 6-14 (43 percent), Rocky River 13-18 (72 percent). **Rebounds:** Elyria Catholic 28 (Virgin 7), Rocky River 29 (Jones 7). **Total fouls:** Elyria Catholic 23, Rocky River 13. **Turnovers:** Elyria Catholic 22, Rocky River 17. **Fouled out:** None. **Junior varsity:** Elyria Catholic, 44-39.

HOLY WEEK

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