Keeping the ‘P’ in shape

Nicole Angeloni
MUSTANG DAILY

It can be seen from far and wide in San Luis Obispo and has a special meaning for many students at Cal Poly.

Clubs use it, Greeks exploit it and any group that can obtain an e-mail address through the University Union mail center has free reign.

But one must wonder, who returns the ‘P’ to its natural white state after it has been decorated? Running Thunder, Cal Poly’s spirit club, handles all of the appointments for the ‘P’.

“The club goes up there about once a week to clean up anything that’s left over,” said Chris Baker, Running Thunder adviser and interim associate athletic director for Cal Poly. “I know they’ve had to go up there quite a bit recently, but it’s in their bylaws that they’re ultimately responsible for maintaining it.”

Scott Barton, Running Thunder’s ‘P’ Keeper, is in charge of organizing all of the applications that come in from organizations to decorate the ‘P’. He also serves as the go-to guy for any problems with the ‘P’.

“About twice a year the ‘P’ is painted, which is clearly outlined in the contract as one thing that can’t be done when decorating it.”

Epicenter has free reign.

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History junior Stefanie Blanco pledges to drink only water.

“The group’s goal is to raise $7,000. The money raised will supply the necessary tools, equipment and hygiene training for water sanitizing in Zambia.”

“Currently, there is no infrastructure by the government so people are finding their own way to get water in areas like Zambia,” said Elizabeth Limpic, communications coordinator of Lifewater International.

Lifewater International sends trained volunteers all over the world to spend three to five years training residents on hygiene sanitation, drip irrigation and hand pump repair. Limpic said volunteers stay about three to four weeks at a time.

“We are trying to get it to a state of sustainability so they can profit on their own,” Limpic said.

The purpose is to help make people in Zambia self-sufficient, to a point where they do not need any outside assistance from Lifewater International, Limpic said.

Lifewater International sends volunteers who also train in small business development. Some of the students join international cause

The campus fundraiser asks people to give up non-water beverages and donate the money to the H2O project in Zambia

Stephanie Ilkel
MUSTANG DAILY

Mercy On-Campus has launched a weeklong fundraiser to raise money for the H2O Project and Lifewater International. The project will provide training to people in Zambia, Africa, to create and sustain pure and healthy water.

To raise the money, three booths have been set up around campus, where students can pick up donation cups. Students are to put money that they would have spent on non-water beverages in the designated cup during the week.

The booths are at Dexter Lawn, Kennedy Library and the University Union Plaza. The money saved will be collected at the same locations next week, said Bryce Moore of Mercy On-Campus.

The H2O Project, Lifewater International and Mercy On-Campus are partners in the effort to provide a safer water supply to Zambia. All are separate organizations working for the same purpose.

The H2O Project is a non-profit company that provides fund-raising supplies for organizations such as Lifewater International. Mercy On-Campus is the campus-affiliated organization. Zambia is a candidate for this project because of the poor water conditions in the country.

The losing season

Softball hangs tough against fierce competition

IN SPORTS, page 8

‘Battle of the Bands’ on campus

UU Plaza filled with improv and solo artists

IN ARTS & CULTURE, page 6

Tides

High 4.0 at 4:54 a.m.
Low 0.1 at 12:33 a.m.

SUNRISE 6:14 A.M.
SUNSET 7:46 P.M.
Witness describes violent death

Michelle Locke
ASSOCIATED PRESS

HAYWARD — Transgender teenager Eddie "Gwen" Araujo died of a slow and violent death, a physician testified in a chillingly detailed version of how the 17-year-old was killed.

According to Jason Nabors, who said he was present during much of the assault, Araujo was choked, clamped, punched, kicked and stabbed. She was hit on the head with a can and a flying pun. She was tied up, and he said one of the defendants started to pull a rope toward her neck.

Afterward, Nabors helped bury the body.

Nabors, the chief witness against the three men accused of killing Araujo, portrayed a grim scenario of seemingly remorseless attackers.

Araujo started to bleed profusely; she was ordered off a couch to keep it clean, Nabors said. Later, she was carried into the garage because blood was getting on the carpet, he said. He said before helping to bury the body, Nabors said he changed into an old shirt so he wouldn't get his clothes dirty. On the way back from the burial, the men were hungry so they stopped at McDonald's for breakfast.

Michael Magidson, 23, Jose Merel, 24, and Jason Catarse, 24, were charged with killing Araujo. Nabors, 21, who led police to the body, initially was charged with murder but pleaded guilty to manslaughter and has been promised an 11-year sentence for testifying.

Defense attorneys say Nabors is lying, and they were expected to engage in rigorous cross-examination.

Nabors and the three defendants became friends with Araujo, whom they knew as "Lida," in the summer of 2002. Nabors said Merel and Magidson had sexual encounters with her and they began to suspect she was biologically male after comparing notes.

On Oct. 3, 2002, the men confronted Araujo at Merel's house in Newark, a San Francisco suburb. Araujo was shocked and resisted suggestions that she should wear makeup. On the night of March 9 while she was on campus, Araujo became friends with Merel and they began to suspect she was biologically male after comparing notes.

As the attack began, Araujo begged for mercy, saying "No, please don't. I have a family," Nabors said. Nabors described Merel as wielding the can and skullet and said Magidson choked, punched and kneed the teenager. He said Catarse kicked Araujo after she was down.

After Araujo had been tied up and taken to the garage, Nabors said he saw Magidson pulling a loose end of rope toward Araujo's neck. He said he left the garage to go into the house, where he saw Merel scrubbing blood from the carpet. Nabors said he returned to the garage to find Magidson and Catarse carrying Araujo's body out to a pickup truck.

The four drove about 150 miles east to a remote area near Lake Tahoe, where they dug a grave, putting Araujo's body in and throwing rocks on top, Nabors said.

At some point on the drive, Nabors said Magidson talked about having twisted the rope. According to Nabors, Magidson said he hadn't been sure Araujo was dead until Catarse hit her over the head with a shovel.

Little was said at the grave site, said Nabors. But he does recall Merel saying something: "That he was so angry that he could still kick her a couple of times."
State Briefs

SAN DIEGO — Errors in judgment by a San Diego-based squad commander and flight crew caused a jet to plunge off the flight deck of USS Constellation last year, according to a Navy report obtained by The San Diego Union-Tribune.

The two pilots aboard the V-33 Viking safely ejected during the April 2003 mishap, but the $27 million aircraft sank in the Persian Gulf after refueling several fighters and bombers over Iraq.

An investigation found Cmdr. Sean Kelly, the squadron’s commanding officer, failed to recommend that the aircraft, which had developed hydraulic problems, be towed away landing. While taxiing to a parking spot, the twin-engine jet suddenly veered and plummeted from the deck.

EL CAJON — A jury has awarded $4.5 million to a driver who repeatedly was stopped by California Highway Patrol — after lodging a complaint against one of them.

Juries in the six-week trial said they hoped the punitive damages awarded to Steve Grassilli, 44, on Monday would send a message to the CHP.

The lawsuit named specific CHP officers, but the agency typically pays monetary awards when its officers are sued, said Greg Garrison, one of Grassilli’s lawyers.

The CHP said it intends to appeal the decision. Deputy Attorney General David Taglienti, who represented the CHP officers, declined to comment on the case. The officers, Richard Barr and Michael Toth, also declined to comment.

FRESNO — A June 21 trial date was set Tuesday for a man accused of killing nine of his children, but an attorney said it’s not clear a trial can begin at that time.

Marcus Wesson, 57, also pleaded innocent Tuesday to nine counts of murder and 13 counts of sexual assault, all of which had to be refiled after authorities consolidated 33 previous counts of sexual assault.

Investigators think the victims, who ranged from a 2-year-old girl to a 7-year-old boy, were all Wesson’s children. Police said Wesson engaged in incest and polygamy, fathering children with his daughters and nieces. Testimony from officers who interviewed Wesson’s daughters and nieces after the killings said he exerted extreme control over his family, preaching to them daily and telling them salvation would come only through him.

LOS ANGELES — A man has pleaded guilty to selling illegal copies of the HBO series “Sex and the City” on the Internet, officials said.

In a plea agreement with prosecutors, William Jefferson Philpott, 33, of Los Angeles pleaded guilty to a felony count of criminal copyright infringement, authorities said.

Philpott entered his plea Monday in U.S. District Court and is scheduled to be sentenced July 2.

He is one of five people convicted in federal court in the past month of copyright infringement charges related to video piracy.

— Associated Press

National Briefs

WASHINGTON — The Constitution gives presidents and vice presidents power to gather advice and make decisions without being forced to reveal every detail of how those decisions are made, the Bush administration’s Supreme Court lawyer argued Tuesday.

“This is a case about the separation of powers,” Solicitor General Theodore Olson told the justices at the start of lively arguments about privacy in White House policy-making.

PHILADELPHIA — Sen. Arlen Specter, one of the Republican Party’s leading moderates, tried to beat back a surprisingly stiff challenge in Pennsylvania’s GOP primary Tuesday from a conservative congressman who branded him a RINO — Republican In Name Only.

The race between Specter, 74, who was seeking his fifth term, and Rep. Pat Tooney, 42, was expected to go down to the wire, with the candidates making last-minute appeals to the state’s 3.1 million Republicans.

FLORENCE, S.C. — An Army helicopter with three soldiers aboard vanished during a training flight in bad weather, and a search was under way Tuesday in a swampy, wooded region, authorities said.

The UH-60 Blackhawk was on a flight from Fort Bragg, N.C., to Florence when it was reported missing about 9:50 p.m. Monday.

It wasn’t known if the helicopter crashed or made an emergency landing, but there had been no distress signals, Lt. Col. Billy Buckner, a spokesman for the 18th Airborne Corps at Fort Bragg, said Tuesday morning.

WASHINGTON — With an eye to the fall election, House Republican leaders on Tuesday outlined a spring and summer economic agenda centered on cutting taxes, slicing government red tape and reducing government waste.

Democratic leaders accused the Bush administration of failing the economy by ignoring the loss of manufacturing jobs and not enforcing trade laws.

House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, R-Texas, joined by Commerce Secretary Don Evans and others, said the package of bills to be introduced over the next several months “marks the broadest and most forward-looking economic agenda Congress has undertaken in a generation.”

Rep. Todd Tiahrt, R-Kan., who helped craft the economic program, said it was "about changing the environment that we put in place over the past eight years."

The Republicans did not go into specifics, although DeLay mentioned legislation to encourage private sector research and development. G.O.P. Whip Roy Blunt, R-Mo., said the House would take up a free trade agreement with Australia.

Already planned for the next several weeks are several attempts to make permanent the tax cuts Congress has passed in recent years, including one eliminating the so-called marriage penalty and another maintaining the current 10 percent for the lowest income tax bracket.

— Associated Press

World Briefs

BAGHDAD, Iraq — U.S. troops fought militia members overnight near Najaf, killing six gunmen and destroying an anti-aircraft gun.

An American soldier was killed Tuesday in Baghdad, raising the U.S. death toll for April to 115.

The battle outside Najaf was one of the heaviest with the militia at U.S. troops try to increase the pressure on guerrillas loyal to radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. U.S. troops moved into a base in Najaf that Spanish troops are abandoning, but promised to stay away from the sensitive Shi'ite shrines at the heart of the southern city.

As the United Nations prepares to discuss the form of a caretaker government due to take power June 30, U.S.-appointed Iraqi leaders complained that the administration won’t have real sovereignty as promised by American administrators for months.

SAO PAULO, Brazil — In a decision that could have far-reaching repercussions for the American farmer, the World Trade Organization has ruled that U.S. cotton subsidies are unfair to farmers in developing nations.

Riding with a complaint from Brazil, the WTO said the subsidies boost U.S. production and exports while lowering world cotton prices.

The ruling is the first time a country has been chal­ lenged over its domestic agricultural subsidies, and the first case that looks at the effect of export subsidies on crops. Monday’s decision came in a long-awaited report by three WTO experts. A trade official in Washington, who declined to be named, said the United States plans to appeal.

PRETORIA, South Africa — President Thabo Mbeki was sworn in for a second term Tuesday as South Africa celebrated its first decade of multiracial rule with a military air display and a massive open-air concert.

Raising his right hand, Mbeki pledged faithfulness to the republic and obedience to the constitution before a crowd of tens of thousands, including presidents and mon­ archs from around the world.

On this day in 1994, South Africans of all races voted together for the first time, bringing to a close almost half a century of separate white minority rule. Nelson Mandela, who emerged from 27 years in jail to lead the negotiations that ended apartheid, was elected the coun­ try’s first black president.

Ten years later, Mandela joined in the celebrations marking a miraculous transformation that many once feared would end in a bloodbath. Wild cheers and singing broke out as the 85-year-old Mandela arrived with his wife, Graca Machel, and slowly made his way to his seat.

Despite a growing economy and new opportunities for millions sidelined under apartheid, the country still faces major challenges, including widespread poverty, high unemployment and crime, and a devastating AIDS epidemic.

— Associated Press

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All prices include 7% sales tax.
Women need birth control access to direct futures

Commentary

The Administration for Children and Families reported that in 2001, 897,640 children were victims of child maltreatment. About 1,400 of those children died as a result. The number of substantiated incidents of child abuse rose by 30 percent between 1997 and 2001. However, these statistics probably only represent a fraction of the children who are victimized every year, most between 1997 and 2001. However, these statistics probably only represent a fraction of the children who are victimized every year, most by their parents. The implications of this phenomenon are staggering. Abuse and neglect are linked to behavioral problems, poor school performance, poverty, and, later in life, criminal activity.

Two-thirds of teenage runaways are fleeing abusive homes, and 97 percent of pregnant teenagers report being abused as children. Parents who love their children often know no other way to treat them but the way they were treated.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, and there is no better time to talk about birth control.

According to the Census Bureau, adults under 25 are most likely to be in poverty, least likely to have access to health care (including the most effective birth-control methods) and most likely to have an unplanned pregnancy. In fact, according to a study by Stanely Henshaw, the majority of pregnancies in women under the age of 25 are unwanted. Not surprisingly, the highest percentage of terminated pregnancies is for women aged 15 to 19.

Youth who love their children often know no other way to treat them but the way they were treated.

Who are the women who undergo the surgery? Are they happy with the result because their voice sounds less husky or younger, however, this is not always the case. There is never an assurance that the end result will be what the person wanted. Sometimes a voice may sound squeaky or may not have the same vocal range as it once did.

Julie Andrews, who is best known for her vocal performances in the classic film "Mary Poppins" and the hit musical "Sound of Music," suffered the loss of her astounding singing abilities after surgery. Andrews did not have surgery for cosmetic reasons but because she was having trouble with her voice.

Letters to the Editor

Pep band played at athletics celebration

For anyone not invited to the referendum party athletics three for mee, I will tell you in on the details of the extragavage waste of our precious money, and the things we are opting to anyone who wanted to come hear the results of the referendum. The live band, however, was only one thing band, the very group that is now going to exist next year because of the fee passed. As for you not being invited, maybe we're just tired of hearing you whine.

I too, was "hammed" by an athlete in the University Union. One had the nerve to remind me to vote.

Yes, the athletic fee money will go to fund athletic scholarships, but what everyone keeps neglecting to look at is that the money currently paying these scholarships is now being redirected to support other groups. Have you ever watched or received a free T-shirt at an athletic event? Running Thunder, the group responsible for these things, will now have a budget. Also, the stunt and dance teams will not only have their first budget, they will now be able to have insurance.

Do you realize how many events the marching and pep bands play at? Every time someone invites them, they say yes, regardless of how important the event may be. Did we ever get paid for these gigs? Of course not. Our budget for next year was forecasted to be significantly less than what we can require. We can no longer promise any band, the very group that is now going to exist next year because of the fee passed. As for you not being invited, maybe we're just tired of hearing you whine.

Ladies and gentlemen, why is the fee being passed? As for me, it is because of the extragavage waste of our precious money, and the things we are opting to anyone who wanted to come hear the results of the referendum. The live band, however, was only one thing band, the very group that is now going to exist next year because of the fee passed. As for you not being invited, maybe we're just tired of hearing you whine.

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Prohibitive costs of college

Commentary

The cost of obtaining a college education is mounting out of reach for many Americans. Representative John Boehner, R-Ohio, has proposed, under a federal program that locks interest rates for 30 years. This plan makes sense if you do not think past the end of the year. Interest rates are low now, but when they return to typical or even higher levels, students will save thousands of dollars if they consolidate loans at the government — far more than they would if yearly loan ceilings are raised but the interest rate is not fixed over the long run.

The real reason that the Republicans are pushing this change is to commonize this administration to supporting big business. The initiative to end the student-loan consolidation program came from Sally Mae, the largest student loan underwriter, because it wants to protect its profits. Low interest rates on student loans protected by the government are for-profit revenue for lenders.

America has been unique because it is an open society, in which a bigger opportunity to move up the class hierarchy. A college education is one of the vital ingredients. Social class in universities across the country is becoming less diverse, while diversity in almost all other measures is increasing.

To protect the American value of social improvement, universities absolutely must adopt need-blind admission policies. The wealthiest universities should go one step further and follow Harvard's lead by providing complete financial packages to students from lower-class families. The federal government has an obligation to protect students' rights and the right to an affordable education. And students must stay informed and search for the real reason behind any proposed change to the Higher Education Act.

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By mail:
Letters to Editor
The Mustang Daily
222 Figueroa St.
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407

By fax:
905-756-6784

By email:
mustangdaily@hotmail.com

A closer look at the White House tell-alls

Commentary

As the debate rages about Iraq, the newly emerging genre of the White House tell-all gives Americans a view of the Bush White House that is both enlightening and infuriating. On one hand, they offer Joe Citizen an opportunity to view the policymaking of the present administration. On the other hand, those policies are made tempts some to toss things at the television.

The president appears insulated from most of his staff by his inner circle who more or less make decisions for him by filtering them. O'Neill was fired two years into the Bush presidency. The notion "you're either for us or against us" has been interpreted in the administration to mean that if an American opposed the war in Iraq, that person was obviously unpatriotic. This logic could probably be extended to folks like Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Clarke, and Robert McFarlane. If this is the case, we have a duty as Americans and international citizens, to judge our policies with an eye to an affordable educational, especially if the world opinion. Plus it can alienate one's own citizenry.

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I have sat back quietly reading letter after letter pushing the university's referendum. Let me just say now how little these students really know about Cal Poly athletics. It's unfortunate for me to realize the number of Poly students who don't care about anything else at Poly except for themselves.

For the person who is angry because top athletes in the state and nation are offered scholarships while their peers to encourage them on. "I'm part of the extravagant one single cigar until Mustang results of the vote. And there was no cigar party. In fact, I never saw one cigar until Mustang.

The university's only downside is in athletics. I voted to get rid of you but you were given a second chance, so use it. You clearly think highly of yourselves, so convince us that you are right.

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Bands battle for pride, big opening gig

Residence hall-sponsored event attracts solo acts, improvisational artists for hot event under the Sunday sun

Christina Joslin

Last Sunday, the University Union Plaza wasn’t only filled with insufferable heat, but also the soulful vibes of many different groups and solo artists competing in the “Battle of the Bands.”

The battle was funded by the Cal Poly dorms and coordinated by Michael Pando, a resident adviser for Yosemite Hall.

“I’ve seen these kinds of competitions before and I just thought it would be an interesting and fun event to put on,” Pando said. “Not to mention that there is so much talent running throughout the dorms that it would be a waste if they didn’t get the chance to be heard.”

To compete in the “Battle of the Bands,” at least 20 percent of each group had to be comprised of dorm residents.

Competitors included the bands Hourne Drft, Longview and Habanero. Scott Squared, A Hardwork Sound, Antagonist, Smooth Keub and Hrvan Kmi also performed.

The battle brought about quite several memorable performances. Scott Squared, a band comprised of two pianists, played together on the same keyboard and improvised all their music on the spot. Longview, a mix between rock and surf music, performed with high energy and included an impressive drum solo.

“We like to call our music ‘what-ever sounds good,’” Longview lead singer-guitarist Dan Curcio said. “We’re influenced by groups ranging from Van Morrison to Sublime. We try to go back to the roots of music.”

Each group and single artist was judged on a scale of 30 points in categories such as musicianship, originality and appeal. The panel of judges included resident advisers from various dorms, dorm residents and members of ASI.

“I think it’s neat that the dorms are putting on this event,” said Angela Schacatano, a judge and intern with ASI events. “It’s cool to see the different bands and all their different styles of music.”

Habanero, winner of the band section of the competition, received $100 and was offered the chance to play at the upcoming “BMX and Band Blowout” on May 22. The group boasted a very hard reggae sound, similar to the Expendables.

Smooth Keub, who played acoustic guitar and sang, received $50 as the winner of the solo-artist competition. His voice was very soothing, with a slight jazz emphasis.

…There is so much talent running through the dorms that it would be a waste if they didn’t get the chance to be heard.

-Michael Pando

Battle of the Bands coordinator

Local band Longview (above) put up a good fight, but in the end it was Habanero who came out victorious in the Battle of the Bands.
Lakers
continued from page 8
him as the Houston coach. The two had an angry exchange during Game 4, with Van Gundy saying afterward: "We won’t be smoking the peace pipe any time soon.”

They have a history — when Jackson was coaching the Bulls and Van Gundy the Knicks.

"Who cares about us? We're just coaching our teams," Van Gundy said.

"Jim has never misinterpreted the content of his communication," Van Gundy said.

I have tremendous respect for their individual players, him as a coach and their organization.”

Regarding animosity between the Lakers and Rocker, Van Gundy said:

"This is tame. This is good will among men.”

Softball
continued from page 8
in our conference.”

Hively pitched six innings Saturday, picking up another close victory, 3-2, by allowing one earned run, six hits, and striking out seven.

Hively pitched again in the first game of Sunday's doubleheader for a 7-1 win, and the Mustangs continued to trample UCSB, winning the second game 6-0.

The series sweep gives the team momentum heading into the upcoming Big West Games and increases their chances for nationals, Viola said.

Four other starting freshmen are turning Hively up — Janae Gran, Jackie Gehke-Jones, Lisa Modgin and Kristi Alvers — who have all proven themselves both on the field and at the plate. It’s your team, and when in position, the entire left side of the diamond is dominated by three of the freshman starters.

Gevs who was out with an elbow injury for a couple games, is back and has been hitting hot lately,Viola said. Although her season statistics are satisfied, and always striving to be better play-

Gevs admitted she is pleased with her efforts this season.

"Our record may not show it, but we’ve got to finish the season strong," she said. "We've done well this year being young. It's just going to get better.”

especially considering the Mavs are just 16-27 on the road, including losses in the first two games of this series.

"We’ve got to win two games. We want to do it as soon as possible," Webber said. "This is the position we wanted to be in, but we’ve got to finish it off.”

There was more disconcerting news for the Mavericks, whose pre-game entertainment skit at Cluiie 3 is under review by the NBA, a league spokesman said Tuesday.

The girls softball team is clearly winning in some aspects of play. The number of wins and losses can’t measure success completely; team achievements made as a whole and in its players are part of the equation as well.

With a handful of young, talent-

Kings
continued from page 8
third quarter when the Kings came from behind to lead for good.

"He was aggressive and he got his shots," Kings forward Chris Webber said.

"We wanted him to keep shooting.”

Dallas suffered two seven-game series last season, against Portland and the Kings, to advance to the Western Conference finals. Now the Mavs have to win twice just to get to a seventh game, which would be Tuesday in Sacramento.

It’s a good situation for the Kings —
Liza Sullivan | MUSTANG DAILY

The softball team isn’t looking too impressive this season, with a 17-24 overall record and a 5-7 mark in Big West play. “Aside from our record not being so good we are a much improved team in all areas,” assistant coach Ali Vuica said.

With increased speed, power and depth, the team has been able to hang tough against top teams like UCLA, Cal and Long Beach State this season. The girls haven’t lost any games by a landslide, so the talent is definitely there.

“Physically we really haven’t gone our way,” left fielder Lisa Modglin said of their losses. “We haven’t gotten any breaks at all.”

West play.

Liza Sullivan

UCLA, Cal and Long Beach State hang tough against top teams like}

The softball team isn’t looking too}

The girls haven’t lost any games

Aside from our record not being

Phil Jackson said. “They know

I was a betting man, I would go to

Last week freshman Emily Hively was named Big West Conference Pitcher of the Week for her performance in a weekend series against Long Beach State.

Hively pitched the entire 17­-inning first game, striking out six, walking five and allowing seven hits in a 1-0 win and her second shutdown of the season.

“Physically, any pitcher could do it,” Hively said. “It’s more of a mental thing — staying in the game that long.”

Not told of the Pitcher of the Week honor right away, Hively said she was excited and surprised when she finally got the news.

“I didn’t even hear about it until one of my baseball guy friends called to congratulate me,” she said.

Hively kicked off another series Saturday at rival UC Santa Barbara, and although the team lost the Long Beach series, Hively said, “I think last weekend built our confidence for this weekend because we played so well against probably the best team.

see Softball, page 7

NBA Playoffs

Joh Nadel | ASSOCIATED PRESS

EL SEGUNDO — With Kobe Bryant in Colorado and Shaquille O’Neal and Nene Medvedenko reduced to the role of spectator, the Los Angeles Lakers went through their last full practice for Wednesday night’s playoff game against Houston.

That might not be ideal, but a 3­-1 lead over the Rockets makes such problems easier to accept.

“We had a really good, spirited practice today,” Game 4 star Karl Malone said Tuesday. “We’ve got to do our job to close these guys out. We don’t want to give a lot of people talk­ ing about it.”

If the Lakers win, they face the Spurs beginning Monday night in San Antonio. Should the Rock­ets win Game 6, it will be played Saturday in Houston.

“We know a desperate team will come in here on Wednesday,” Lakers coach Phil Jackson said. “They know they’ve lost a couple close games — the series could easily be 3-1, they could be up.”

As these playoffs began, only seven teams of the 130 that faced 3-1 deficits have won three straight to advance.

“Work done before,” Huston’s Maurice Taylor said. “Obviously this is a bad situation to be in. I mean, if I was a betting man, I would go to Vegas and put my money on the Lakers, too.”

O’Neal didn’t practice Tuesday because of a sore right knee.

“1 was here — he knows what we’re going to do,” Malone said. “He has a look about him that’s he’s ready to go. We’re not worried about him.”

O’Neal told reporters he did practice.

Then, after a pause, he added: “I mentally practiced. It was good. We know what we have to do. We can’t get cute and come in and shoot threes and try to kill them.”

Of his performance in the series, O’Neal said: “I think I really haven’t had the opportunity to do much. My knee hasn’t been a problem.”

He said much of the same thing last year about his left knee before admitting after the Lakers were elim­inated by the Spurs in the second round that it hampered him.

When pressed, he said his right knee is “about the same” as his left knee was last year.

O’Neal is averaging 17.3 points on 11.7 rebounds in the series and has a miserable time at the free­throw line, going 13-for-42.

“Right now, it’s in the garbage,” Jackson said of O’Neal’s foul shooting. “I told him we won’t survive for very long if he doesn’t improve.”

Bryant is averaging 22.8 points, 4.6 rebounds and 5.4 assists a game. Despite scoring 35 points in 46 minutes Monday night, he shot 10-for-41 from the field and 2-for-14 from the free­throw line.

Jackson went on to say that Bryant faces the same circum­stances twice during the regular sea­son.

The first time, he arrived during the first quarter against Denver and made a game­winning jumper as time expired. The second time, he showed up an hour before tipoff and scored 36 points in a victory over Sac­ramento.

Saturday night’s game starts 30 minutes rather than the previous two, so it could get dicey.

“Our hearts are with him, our prayers are with him,” Derek Fisher said. “There are more important things in life than tomorrow night’s basketball game.”

Jackson wouldn’t say whether De­von George would start again at small forward instead of Rick Fox, who has been playing defense instead of shooting.

“Rick is obviously hurt,” Jackson said.

Jackson also refused to mention Jeff Van Gundy by name, referring to see Lakers, page 7

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Mavs’ struggles aid Kings in first round

Stephen Hawkins | ASSOCIATED PRESS

DALLAS — Dirk Nowitzki was weary after a restless night, unable to sleep while replaying his offensive struggles in his head.

“I didn’t have any sleep, it was a rough night,” Nowitzki said. “I would have made a couple of shots here or there, it probably would have been enough. The all-around game was not that bad, but offensively, I never really got going. Games like that, the only sad part was the timing of it.”

The Mavericks are on the brink of elimination in the first round of the Western Conference playoffs, and it showed.

“His kind of good to have a couple of days here to get it out of our sys­tem,” Nelson said.

Sacramento, going home for Game 5 on Thursday, took a 3-1 series lead with a 94-92 win Monday night on the court where Dallas had the NBA’s best home record.

“Our every plan is to end it Thursday,” Kings guard Doug Christie said. “We have to attack, attack.”

If the Mavericks and Nowitzki don’t solve their shooting woes, things could go according to Sacramento’s plan, especially with Peja Stojakovic rediscovering his offensive touch.

Nowitzki led the Mavericks in Game 4 with 21 points, but he was just 5-for-22 from the field. Two of the baskets were dunks and he missed a couple of layups. He did make 11 of 14 free throws, but two misses came with 33 seconds left.

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To make things worse, Dallas made just 20 of 33 free throws. The Mavs’ best free­throw shooting team had missed a total of 14 of the four first games of the series.

“It’s very disappointing to shoot the ball as poorly in every aspect,” said Steve Nash, who missed a game­ending 18­footer with Stojakovic defending him. “It’s not characteristic of our team. For once, no one’s got anything to say about our defense. Unfortunately our offense couldn’t hold in the behalf of the Kings.

Stojakovic didn’t look like one of the league’s best offensive players the first three games, when he scored 48 points on 17-of-41 shooting. Then he missed 10 of his 11 shots in the first half Monday.

But urged by coach Rick Adelman and his teammates to keep shooting, Stojakovic did. And he started hitting again at the right time, scoring 16 of his 20 points after halftime. Ten points came over the last five minutes of the game.

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The softball team’s record has been hurt by several close losses, including many to some of the top teams in the country.