

SPORTS



Courtesy of Dawson Bunch

Dawson Bunch, a 2021 graduate of Kodiak High School, plays for the Great Falls Americans, a Tier III Junior A hockey team in Montana.

Bunch making strides in Tier III hockey

By DEREK CLARKSTON
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Dawson Bunch missed playing high school hockey in Kodiak by one year.

"That didn't work out in my favor, but good for them that they are starting up their program," said Bunch on Monday afternoon from Montana. "It is super cool to see them getting things going."

Bunch, a 2021 graduate of Kodiak High School, is also doing super cool things as a second-year skater on the Great Falls Americans, a Tier III Junior A hockey team based in Great Falls, Montana.

Bunch, a 5-foot-9, 160-pound forward, recently had his best game for the North American 3 Hockey League club when he punched in a pair of goals and dished out an assist in a 6-4 victory over the Badlands Sabres that snapped a five-game losing skid.

"I finally got my first multi-goal game," Bunch said. "It's been a long time coming."

After barely sniffing the ice in his first season with Great Falls as a fourth-liner,

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Courtesy of Dawson Bunch

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PLAYBOOK

Friday, Dec. 9

Hockey: Kodiak vs. Juneau at the Baranof Park ice rink, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 10

Hockey: Kodiak vs. Juneau at the Baranof Park ice rink. Junior varsity, 10:30 a.m.; varsity, 7:30 p.m.

Wrestling: Kodiak at the Northern Lights Conference Championships in Soldotna.

LOCAL RESULTS

City League Basketball

Dec. 6

Ohana 80,

AG Destroyers 69
Ohana (80) — Randy Delacruz 23, Jon Sanchez 19, Paul Kewan 13, Chris Nocon 10, Josue Martinez 8, Eli Deardruff 5, Nick Calderon 2

AG Destroyers (69) — Juwan Abad 23, Jemuel Mangalus 19, Kris Cunanan 9, Daryl Villanueva 8, Rodney Recustudio 8, JP Cunanan 2.

Dec. 7

Pholokoy'z 55, Scoops 49

Pholokoy'z (55) — Aedan Abrincia 15, Isaac Calderon 13, Marck Abellera 8, Gavin Baul 5, Denz Barroga 4, Eli Calderon 4, Josh Tabon 4, Nick Calderon 2.

Scoops (49) — Jet Vinberg 19, Rica Gongora 12, Elmar Barroga 11, Kerri Zelenak 5, Natasha Kutchick 2.

Will's Remodeling 67, Silverbay Seafoods 60

Will's Remodeling (67) — Charles Gueverra 22, Ernesto Gueverra 18, Mac Pronuevo 14, Marco Pastor 12, Reynold Gueverra 1.

Silverbay Seafoods (60) — Ernest Borromeo 12, Benny Fanganilo 10, Arnold Obillo 9, Jhon Fred 8, Mark Domingo 8, Alvy Lounmala 7, Juho Shin 6.

Comeback win vs. Rams was exciting, but Seahawks still have issues

BY MATT CALKINS
Tribune News Service

Now that the euphoria has calmed, and now that the focus on Sunday's triumph has shifted to this Sunday's test — Seahawks fans have to face reality.

Yes, Geno Smith dazzled in that 27-23 victory over the Rams — as did receivers DK Metcalf and Tyler Lockett — but the problems of the previous few weeks persisted.

Even against a depleted Los Angeles team that was missing starting quarterback Matthew Stafford, All-Pro receiver Cooper Kupp and all-century defensive tackle Aaron Donald, Seattle needed a last-minute touchdown drive to squeak by. And though that might be excusable in isolation — this is the "Any Given Sunday" NFL, after all — the truth is the Seahawks haven't looked good in a month.

That isn't hyperbole. The last time a 12 could walk away from a game thinking their squad resembled a dominant football team was on the road vs. the Cardinals on Nov. 6, when Seattle (7-5) won 31-21. That punctuated the four-game winning streak that thrust the Seahawks to the top of the NFC West, and a surprising (shocking?) playoff berth seemed likely.

Then came a loss to the Buccaneers in Munich, where Tampa Bay (then 4-5) — the worst running team in the NFL this season and one of the worst ever — racked up 161 yards on the ground in a five-point win. Two weeks later, the Raiders (then 3-7) posted 283 rushing yards in a 40-34 victory at Lumen Field. And then came the Rams — now 3-9 — who managed 171 rushing yards on 33 carries before their defense surrendered a touchdown in the final minute.

So no, there hasn't been an impressive showing in quite some time. And perhaps that's fine with a good chunk of fans who expected nothing out of this season's Seahawks and don't see losses as bummers so much as they see wins as bonuses. But I imagine most

12s have been lured in emotionally by their team's early success and are desperately hoping they can squeeze into the playoffs, where the Seahawks would hold the seventh and final spot in the NFC if the season ended today.

Should they be optimistic? Well, they do have the fortune of a relatively favorable schedule for the rest of the season. Key word being "relatively."

Four of Seattle's next five games are at home, but their opponents have a combined record of 31-29 — including the 9-3 Chiefs, 8-4, 49ers and 7-5 Jets. That said, San Francisco just lost starting quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo for at least the regular season due to a foot injury, and while he's no All-Pro it does change the dynamics of that matchup and the divisional race at large.

Also, we don't know how healthy the Seahawks running backs are — and these are running backs on a team averaging fewer than 65 rushing yards over their past three games.

Rookie Kenneth Walker III, whose shine has waned over the past month — has an ankle strain. No. 2 running back DeeJay Dallas has an ankle injury as well. Doesn't mean they'll be out Sunday vs. the Panthers, but it will probably put even more pressure on Smith and his receiving corps to produce.

More significantly, though, there doesn't seem to be an imminent solution to their run-defense woes. Safety Quandre Diggs, perhaps the most candid of the Seahawks, somberly said "I thought we fixed it" when asked about the defensive struggles after the Raiders loss two Sundays ago. They hadn't. And they still haven't. Smith's heroics Sunday distracted from that reality, but it hasn't altered it.

Speaking of Geno, he was convincing Sunday in saying that individual achievements mean nothing to him and that team success is everything. His mindset is focused solely on getting to the playoffs. Seahawks coach Pete

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SPORTS

Padres get free agent shortstop Xander Bogaerts

Tribune News Service

The third try was the charm.

The Padres, who already had two shortstops, got their shortstop.

Shortly after the Winter Meetings ended, the team and free agent Xander Bogaerts reached an agreement on an 11-year, \$280 million deal Wednesday night.

That came after the Padres' unsuccessful attempts to land shortstop Trea Turner on Monday and right fielder Aaron Judge on Tuesday.

Bogaerts will almost certainly play shortstop for the Padres in 2023 with Ha-Seong Kim moving over to second base and Fernando Tatis Jr. playing in the outfield when his suspension for a failed PED test is over April 20. This also presumably moves Jake Cronenworth to first base after he primarily played second base the past two seasons.

The 30-year-old Bogaerts, a four-time All-Star, brings a .292/.356/.458 career hitting line to the Padres. He spent the first 10 years of his career (2013-22) with the Red Sox.

Since 2015, his .299 batting average ranks 11th in the major leagues while his .364 on-base percentage ranks 34th in that span. Those numbers lead all qualifying shortstops in that span.

Marshawn Lynch goes 'Yeast Mode' on new holiday baking show

By TAYLOR BLATCHFORD
Tribune News Service

The clock was running down. The pressure was on Marshawn Lynch. His task: Decorate a baked meringue wreath with blueberry coulis, mascarpone cream and sugared berries.

The former Seattle Seahawks running back is one of six contestants on a new celebrity special of "The Great American Baking Show," a spinoff of the beloved British competition show. Lynch — introduced by host Ellie Kemper as "hoping to turn Beast Mode into Yeast Mode" — competed with D'Arcy Carden, Liza Koshy, Nat Faxon, Chloe Fineman and Joel Kim Booster.

Hosted by Kemper and Zach Cherry, the contestants tackled three holiday baking challenges for judges Paul Hollywood and Prue Leith.

Lynch is better known for his love of Skittles than for his own baking, and his inexperience quickly became apparent in the famed baking show tent. The first challenge required contestants to bake eight identical cream puffs shaped like holiday characters — Lynch chose Christmas elves, filled with strawberry cream and topped with fondant hats.

"If you could just go ahead and throw me a couple little pointers, I wouldn't hate them or snitch on you or none of that," he told the judges, decked out in a Beast Mode hoodie and beanie.

What do you need help with? Hollywood asked. "All of this," he said.

The plate of elfish cream puffs was in disarray when the judges came to taste them, but Lynch explained that there had been a fight between North Pole and



Tribune News Service photo

Marshawn Lynch measures milk while competing in "The Great American Baking Show" holiday special.

South Pole elves. The judges accepted the explanation and told Lynch his fluffy, golden choux pastry buns were "really delicious."

The second challenge — the meringue wreath — went south quickly. Lynch struggled to separate eggs and whisk them with sugar ("What is soft peaks? I don't know what this is"). Later, he added an entire jar of vanilla

bean paste to his meringue (the recipe had called for one teaspoon). The result: a meringue (which Lynch pronounced "mer-ain-gay") that Hollywood said "burned his mouth."

"What's whisked?" Lynch sheepishly asked the judges after they said his meringue was underwhisked, but his cream was overwhisked. "Y'all are using different lan-

guage."

But the third challenge brought his redemption: a lemon drizzle cake in honor of his grandfather, PaPaw Lynch. Decorated with fondant dice, the cake represented his holiday memory of playing dice games with family.

"My grandfather has been making this cake for my whole life," Lynch told the judges. "After the games when I first started playing organized football, Little League, he used to bring these cakes as 'hey, you did a good job.'" "The simple sandwichlike cake wowed the judges, who called it "perfectly made."

Leith likened his simple icing to a glaze of sugar and water; Lynch beamed and said, "You used a lot of words I don't know, but they sound good, baby."

"What caught me unaware with this particular one was how good the celebrities actually were," Hollywood told Tasting Table in an interview. "You can tell that because they'd practiced — all right, Marshawn Lynch didn't — and the celebrities that practiced are always going to bring their best."

One takeaway from the show: an unexpected connection with notoriously critical judge Hollywood.

"I was watching some of his rushes, actually, when he was in the tent, and I went and had a chat with a few of them about it afterwards," Hollywood told Tasting Table. "It was lovely catching up with him, speaking to him one to one, quietly having a cup of tea. It was fantastic."

"I won for sure," Lynch said at the end of the episode. "I for sure for sure enjoyed myself, for real for real."

"The Great American Baking Show" streams for free on The Roku Channel; find it at therokuchannel.com.

SEAHAWKS

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Carroll was asked about that prospect Monday.

"We have a shot at it. We have some of the elements that you need that we are fortunate to have — leadership, we've got quarterback play, we've got a style about us, we've got a kicking game," Carroll said.

"We've got a lot of things that are really positive about this team, but it doesn't matter. It's a bunch of gibberish unless we win some games."

You'd think the 4-8 Panthers team that just released Baker

Mayfield coming to Seattle on Sunday would be a welcome sight. Perhaps it is. But you'd have thought the same about the 3-7 Raiders two weeks ago, and we all know what happened then.

The Seahawks have been one of the NFL's premier feel-good stories because they've put together a season few expected. This past month, though? They've played exactly how most expected they would.

BUNCH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Bunch has made a gigantic jump in his sophomore season. He skates on the top two lines and has nine points — five goals and four assists — in 23 games. He had only one goal in 28 games during the 2021-22 season.

"This year, it feels like the hard work is finally starting to pay off," Bunch said. "I'm starting to contribute more goals for the team and be a top guy. It feels pretty good."

Bunch didn't feel like that in

his inaugural season of big-boy hockey. He came in raw and skated with teammates who dedicated their lives to hockey.

A wrestler in his early years in Kodiak, Bunch found hockey as an eighth grader when he joined the Kodiak Hockey League.

"I decided I didn't like wrestling anymore," he said. "My parents told me I had to play a sport in the winter. My dad brought up hockey, and I had a couple of friends who played. I gave it a shot and loved it."

From the Kodiak Hockey League to the junior league circuit, a path very few has

taken before Bunch. In 2016, Aaron Hocum spent the first part of his senior year at Kodiak High in Minnesota playing for Blaine Energy.

Bunch knew nothing about junior league hockey until he joined the Alaska Heat — a Mainland team with a roster filled with players from all over the state.

After concluding his senior season with the Alaska Heat, Bunch's coach recommended he contact the coach for Great Falls. He did.

Before Bunch knew it, he was in Montana for a three-day tryout. He only needed one practice to impress the

coach.

"The first day I was there, he invited me over to dinner and gave me a contract," Bunch said.

As it turned out, that ended up being the highlight of his rookie season. He said he played every other game during the 55-game schedule.

"It was tough. I had always been used to being the best and being super confident," Bunch said. "I went through highs and lows of confidence."

He never thought about quitting, though.

"I couldn't end on a bad season. I couldn't end my hockey career because I didn't get what

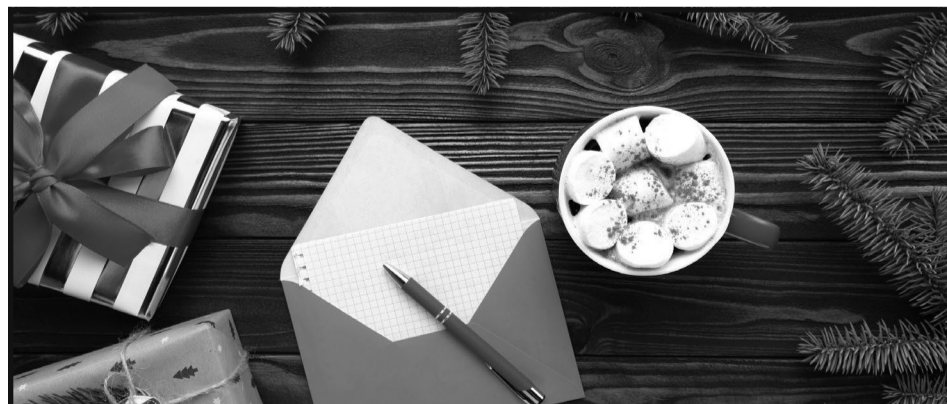
I wanted," he said. "I wanted to score goals. I wanted to be the best. I'm by far not the best, but I am getting there."

Great Falls is fifth in the eight-team Frontier Division with 20 points (10-13-0-0).

The season that started in September will conclude in March.

Bunch isn't sure where hockey will take him. College? Semi-pro in Europe? Who knows. He is simply embracing the moment.

"I want to play hockey for as long as I can," he said. "You don't get to play very long. I'm enjoying playing and not having a 9 to 5 job."



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