



West Virginia's Spencer Barrett fields a ground ball during a game against Arizona in the Big 12 baseball tournament on Friday, May 23, 2025, in Arlington, Texas.

WVU BASEBALL — BIG 12 TOURNAMENT

Little things add up big in 12-1 loss to Arizona

By KEVIN KINDER
BlueGoldNews.com

ARLINGTON, Texas — When a baseball game is lost by a double-digit margin, there are usually some overriding factors at work. That was the case in West Virginia's 12-1 loss to Arizona in the Big 12 tournament on Friday. The Mountaineers yielded 17 hits, but there were several other "little things" — items which might go unnoticed — that ended up setting up several Wildcat runs. First up was West Virginia's

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home run on a 3-1 count to the third hitter in the first inning, then advanced another runner to second before Kartsonas got a strikeout to end it. The same scenario, minus the homer, repeated in the second and fourth innings, and although the Wildcats didn't score in either of those frames, those situations raised Kartsonas' pitch count dramatically and forced the already struggling starter, who couldn't locate his breaking balls as well as he usually does, to come in with fastballs. SEE WVU BASEBALL, 7C

MOUNTAIN EAST MEN'S BASKETBALL

Howlett leaving West Lib for Indy

Coach piled up 217 wins in 8 seasons leading Hilltoppers

By TAYLOR KENNEDY
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Ben Howlett has never shied away from an opportunity or competition. Howlett spent the last eight seasons on the sidelines representing his alma mater at West Liberty, guiding the men's basketball Hilltoppers to 217 victories. Howlett is taking on a new opportunity as he was hired as the new coach at Indiana University-Indianapolis, a Division I program competing in the Horizon League. Howlett was West Liberty's quickest coach to 200 wins, capturing at least a share of Mountain East Conference regular-season titles in seven of those eight seasons. He led the Hilltoppers to the 2023 NCAA Division II tournament national title game. West Liberty finished the 2024-25 season 30-5 and reached the Elite Eight, making it the third time in Howlett's tenure the Hilltoppers reached the Elite Eight. "What will stand out the most is the players and coaches that I got to spend time with," Howlett said. "Obviously, the wins and championships are great, and I won't forget those. But, those relationships that I developed at West Liberty are ones I won't forget. "They gave a 30-year-old a chance to be a head coach, and for that I'll forever be grateful." The search for the next Hilltoppers leader has begun. "Ben Howlett has been a pillar of excellence and loyalty for West Liberty University," Hilltoppers athletic director Brad Forshey said in a statement. "His unwavering commitment to our student-athletes, the program and the Hilltopper community has elevated West Liberty basketball to national prominence.

SEE HOWLETT, 7C

PREP TRACK AND FIELD — STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

GREAT BRITTON



Sissonville's MaKinley Britton (708) competes in the 100 meters trials during the WVSSAC track and field state championships Friday, May 23, 2025, at University of Charleston Stadium at Laidley Field in Charleston.

MaKinley Britton's drive produces a record season

By TAYLOR KENNEDY
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Sissonville's MaKinley Britton seeks to embrace obstacles in front of her, rather than find excuses. She attributes that to the fire inside her ignited when she's competing either in basketball or on the track. Britton's fiery nature has allowed her to break school records in two events, including twice doing so in the 200-meter run. She broke a 24-year Sissonville 200-meter record on April 17 in a meet with a time of 26.01. Twenty days later, Britton broke her

time again, posting a 25.86. Britton's impressive season landed her in the track and field state meet in Charleston. She qualified for the 100- and 200-meter championship races on Saturday at Laidley Field. "I like to compete and be competitive," Britton said. "Personally, I don't like to lose. You have to have the will to want to win. You have to have that trek." Britton believes there isn't a rhyme or reason behind her competitiveness. "It comes from wanting to be better for myself," Britton said. "I've always wanted to break the school record. I fi-

nally got it, and that drive helped me get to it. Then, that competitiveness allowed me to do it." Sissonville coach Chad McClanahan has seen up close how much Britton has grown, especially also serving as her coach on the Indians' girls basketball team. "She puts in a lot of time," Britton said. "She's the first one that practices and usually the last to leave. She's getting extra training, which is helping her. The light switch has turned on for her. It was always there. She's caught a few people by surprise this year." SEE BRITTON, 7C



Kendall Ryan (left), of Ventura, Calif., is congratulated by former pro cyclist and national champion George Hincapie after Ryan won the Women's Elite Criterium race Friday, May 23, 2025. She is a member of Team L39ION, based in Los Angeles.

USA CYCLING

Ryan, Bourgoyne capture criterium championships

By RICK ELMORE
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Kendall Ryan was one of 16 racers in the women's elite pro criterium on Friday who crossed the finish line with a time of 1:13.12. However, the 32-year-old from Ventura, California, crossed the line first to claim her sixth championship overall and fourth pro national championship in criterium at the US Pro Road National Championships in Charleston. Ryan pulled away from the group of finishers coming out of the last turn from Hale Street onto Kanawha Boulevard, she

said, and the sprinter beat the field to the finish line to capture the championship for L39ION of Los Angeles. "The last two laps, it got really, really fast," said Ryan, who also competed on a rainy course in the same event last year in Charleston. "That's usually my favorite part of the race, but I had people diving under me, taking big risks, and the whole time I was just hoping that they weren't going to crash and slide out and hit me. Fount was really just taking some crazy moves in the corners." SEE CYCLING, 7C