

Up, up and away



STEPHANIE RITTER/Golden Plains High School
Golden Plains sophomore Cole Christensen cleared the bar at the Kansas State Track Meet last Friday in Wichita. Christensen finished eighth in the high jump at 5 feet, 10 inches.

Los Angeles wins opener

LOS ANGELES (AP) – Ron Artest and Paul Pierce went back-to-back with their elbows locked, both unwilling to yield even an inch underneath the hoop. The veteran forwards crashed to the court together and got up looking to rumble, earning double technical fouls.

And that was just in the first 27 seconds.

This NBA finals rematch was rough from the opening tumble, but Kobe Bryant and Pau Gasol made sure the Los Angeles Lakers landed the first shot on the Boston Celtics.

Bryant scored 30 points, Gasol had 23 points and 14 rebounds, and defending champion Los Angeles got tough in a 102-89 victory over Boston in Game 1 on Thursday night.

Artest scored 15 points after his tangle with Pierce in the opening minute of the 12th finals meeting between the NBA's most scintillating rivals. It was the opening salvo in a gritty physical effort against the Celtics, who memorably pushed around the Lakers while winning their 2008 finals matchup in six games.

The Lakers are the champs now, and they're not giving it up without a tussle or two.

"I knew it was going to be physical. That's a given," Gasol said. "After consecutive finals, we understand the nature of the game. We understand who our rival is, how they play. You've got to compete, and you've got to match that physicality, that aspect of the game to be successful."

Pierce scored 24 points and Kevin Garnett added 16 after a slow start for the Celtics, who might not want to know Lakers coach Phil Jackson's teams in Los Angeles and Chicago have won 47 straight playoff series after winning Game 1.

"I wish I had put it in the bank, so to speak," said Jackson, the 10-time champion. "We've got to

play this out. ... Our defense stiffened at various points in the game, was very effective. We've got a lot of work ahead of us, but it's nice to know that (the 47-0 streak) is on our side."

Game 2 is Sunday night at Staples Center.

If the first 48 minutes of the rematch are any indication, this series again will be a knockdown, drag-out physical confrontation – and the supposedly finesse-oriented Lakers held their ground early, leaving the Celtics frustrated after giving up 100 points for just the second time in their last 10 games.

"They were the more physical team by far," Celtics coach Doc Rivers said. "They were more aggressive. They attacked us the entire night. I didn't think we handled it very well."

Ray Allen scored 12 points in just 27 minutes, saddled with constant foul trouble while trying to guard Bryant. Pierce also picked up early fouls, while Garnett simply struggled, going 7 for 16 from the field and grabbing just four rebounds – even inexplicably missing an open layup with 5½ minutes to play.

That's mostly because of Gasol, the Spanish 7-footer determined to assert himself after admittedly getting pushed around by Garnett two years ago. Gasol capped a strong game by sprinting downcourt and catching a long pass in stride for a dunk with 6:21 to play.

"Pau played a big game tonight," Jackson said. "I thought they did a good job on him in the post, but his movement and his activity was important."

After Artest and Pierce got wrapped up, the mood didn't improve much in a game featuring 54 fouls. But Bryant's playmaking and the Lakers' inside advantages drove them to a 20-point lead after three quarters before surviving Boston's final run.

The Lakers' aggressiveness was reflected in 10 free throws apiece for Bryant and Gasol, who made 16 of them, along with steady guard penetration from Bryant, Derek Fisher and backups Jordan Farmar and Shannon Brown. Bryant also praised the defensive effort of Artest, whose block on Glen Davis triggered the fast break that led to Gasol's dynamic dunk.

"I think he does a great job for us of setting the tone defensively with his intensity and with his energy," said Bryant, who greeted Artest with a hug after that block. "I was just letting him know it was well appreciated."

Los Angeles outrebounded the Celtics 42-31 and put up a strong shooting percentage until a fourth-quarter slump, again excelling at the their two biggest areas of strength in this postseason. The Celtics' ostensible strengths – toughness, defense and veteran savvy – weren't so much in evidence.

Rajon Rondo had 13 points, just three in the second half – and eight assists for Boston, which went 1 for 10 on 3-pointers.

"You can't ease into the game, especially in the finals," Pierce said. "That's one of the better rebounding teams in the NBA. We've just got to do a better job rebounding the ball, eliminating easy opportunities."

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Complicated play seals win over Scott

The Colby American Legion baseball team won two close games at Scott City on Tuesday night.

A lucky break propelled the Eagles to an 8-7 win in game one and Colby completed the sweep by slipping by Scott 9-8 in the second game.

The biggest play in game one occurred with two runners on – Preston Krzycki and Corey Sager – and Braden Sager, Corey's younger brother, at the plate with the Eagles trailing 7-6 in the top of the seventh. Sager hit a shallow fly ball to right field that Hays' outfielder caught and lobbed back to the pitcher, but the throw got past the pitcher and stopped in between third base and home plate. When the Indians' third baseman ran to get the ball, Krzycki bolted for third base; forcing the third baseman to reverse course and hurry back to third. The pitcher retrieved the ball and tossed a throw too far in front of the third baseman and the ball rolled all the way to the corner left-field fence, allowing Krzycki and Sager to score to make it 8-7 Eagles.

Coach Jeff Krzycki said his team had been on the receiving end of their opponents' lucky breaks throughout the spring season and he was glad the Eagles finally had luck on their side.

"This was huge for us," he said. "We haven't had any luck all spring."

While Krzycki said his team did get lucky, he added aggressive base running helped create that luck.

Relief pitcher Jordan Rasmussen struck out the side in the bottom of the seventh and Colby picked up the victory thanks to the incomprehensible play.

The Eagles got off to a strong start and led 4-0 after two innings. The Beavers scored two in the third, cutting the boy's lead in half. Rasmussen relieved starting pitcher Brock James in the top of the

fifth with Scott trailing 4-3 and two runners on base. Goodland scored two more runs in the inning to go up 5-4. The Beavers tacked on two more in the sixth, extending their lead to 7-4.

Scott's pitcher walked three batters to load the bases in the top of the seventh. Then Preston Krzycki hit a grounder to the Beavers' shortstop that led to a force out at second, but allowed one run to score, cutting Scott's lead to 7-5. A single by Corey Sager narrowed the gap to one. The crazy play that started with a routine pop fly to right happened next, and Colby picked up the 8-7 win.

Braden Sager started the second game for Colby. He pitched all seven innings and ended with 12 strikeouts.

Scott jumped out to a 5-0 lead in the first two innings. The Eagles picked up two runs in the fourth, cutting the Beavers' lead to 5-2. Colby overtook Scott's lead with a five-run inning in the fourth. Braden Sager, Jake Thompson, Jordan Rasmussen and Krzycki singled in the inning. Thompson's single tied the game at 5 and Krzycki's single drove in two runs and gave the Eagles a 7-5 lead.

The boys scored two in the top of the sixth, stretching their lead to 9-5. Scott cut Colby's lead in half by scoring two runs of their own in the bottom the sixth. They picked up another run in the bottom of the seventh, but the Eagles escaped with a 9-8 victory.

The doubleheader against Burlington scheduled to start at 6 p.m. Sunday at the recreational fields has been canceled, due to Burlington not having enough players to field a team.

The Eagles will play a tournament game against Columbus, Neb., at 7:30 p.m. Friday in Columbus. The tournament will run through Sunday.

Jayhawk official being investigated

TOPEKA – (AP) University of Kansas athletics director Lew Perkins' recent payment for several years' use of exercise equipment may not resolve the ethics issues surrounding his acceptance of the gift.

Gov. Mark Parkinson and three members of the Kansas Board of Regents, which oversees state universities, continued to defer Thursday to University of Kansas Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little. She's ordered an investigation, and the officials said they have confidence in her judgment.

Questions about Perkins' acceptance of the equipment arose days after the university disclosed a ticket scalping scam had cost it up to \$3 million. The university's investigation didn't implicate Perkins but five department employees, including top Perkins lieutenants, have been accused.

A former employee accused Perkins of accepting thousands of dollars worth of exercise equipment in 2005 in exchange for access to premium men's basketball tickets. Both Perkins and an official from the company that supplied the equipment have denied the allegation.

But Kansas ethics laws also prohibit state employees from accepting most gifts or loans. Perkins made a payment in April to the company's co-owner for rent – \$5,000, according to newspaper reports – but it came at least a year after the equipment was removed from his home.

The equipment came from Medical Outfitters, a now-defunct Kansas City-area business. Co-owner Mark Glass did not return a telephone message left at his home Thursday but told The Kansas City Star that he held onto a check from Perkins for several weeks before depositing it in a holding account last week.

The state Governmental Ethics Commission can fine officials who violate the gift law up to \$5,000. Carol Williams, the commission's executive director, declined to discuss Perkins' case Thursday or confirm her staff is investigating it.

Williams told The Associated Press that she can't say even generally whether an after-the-fact payment for goods or services would prevent a violation of the gift law. Typically, she said, the parties would have an agreement spelling out what would be paid and when.

"Can you just go back and say, 'Now, I'm going to pay?'" she said. "It depends on the individual circumstances."

An athletics department spokesman has said Perkins doesn't believe he violated any rules and reported his situation to the Ethics Commission himself.

Gray-Little is in London meeting with alumni and other university supporters and plans to return next week, spokesman Lynn Bretz said. But the chancellor has directed senior staff to finish their investigation of the gift by June

16, and the regents have told her to report to them during their June 23-24 meeting.

"Her statement was, 'Let's get the facts and then make the judgment,'" Bretz said.

Lykins and other regents appear willing to wait for Gray-Little's report to the board.

"It really is premature to make any judgment on who should stay or who should go," said regent Gary Sherrer, of Overland Park, a former lieutenant governor. "It's frankly getting a little annoying that the tail is starting to wag the dog. We're starting to lose sight of a university that's doing some really good things."

And board Chairwoman Jill Docking, a Wichita financial adviser, said: "I think the chancellor is particularly suited to look at the facts and make a sound judgment."

In a statement Thursday, Parkinson called the recent questions about university athletics "troubling."

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