

WOLVES AT THE NBA ALL-STAR BREAK

West's top seed is firmly in Wolves' sights

The team has sat atop the conference standings for most of the season.

By CHRIS HINE
chris.hine@startribune.com

PORTLAND, ORE. — Early in his career, Timberwolves forward Kyle Anderson was a part of a few Spurs teams that contended for the No. 1 seed in the Western Conference.

There was a phrase Anderson said coach Gregg Popovich always preached: The team had to have the “appropriate fear” of its opponent on a nightly basis.

“It pertains to what’s going on tonight,” Anderson said the morning of the Wolves’ victory Thursday at Portland. “Just having the proper respect for this team. They’re still a team full of really good players despite their record. They can come out and play hard and beat us. So we just got to have that in the back of our minds.”

Thursday’s game had the added component of being the final game before the All-Star break, and perhaps players might have heard the plane engines revving in the background to take them to their desired getaway. But before that,



MATT KROHN • Associated Press

Kyle Anderson (1) contended for the top seed in the West with the Spurs, and he has applied what he learned with the Wolves.

the Wolves took care of business in blowing out the Trail Blazers 128-91.

At the break, the Wolves are 39-16 and in first place in the Western Conference by 1½ games over Oklahoma City with only 27 games remaining in the regular season. They have the most road victories in the league (20) and entered the break on a four-game winning streak as they tried to put behind a choppy final few weeks that saw them take preventable losses to sub-.500 teams in Charlotte, San Antonio and Chicago.

During the final eight weeks

of the season, the Wolves will be trying to secure the second No. 1 seed in franchise history, joining the 2003-04 team. Their primary rivals for that spot seem to be Oklahoma City, the Los Angeles Clippers (two games behind) and defending NBA champion Denver (three behind).

Of course, a championship is the ultimate goal, but their success — and lack of it in the playoffs — begs that question of how vital the Wolves view earning the No. 1 seed in helping them achieve the goal of winning a title.

See **WOLVES** on C5 ▶

LOPPET CUP

A WARM HOMECOMING



Photos by SHARI L. GROSS • shari.gross@startribune.com

Afton, Minn., native Jessie Diggins crossed the finish line in fourth place Saturday, but falling just short of the podium couldn't ruin the day she had dreamed of her entire career.

‘Wall of noise’ greets Diggins in Wirth Park

Almost 20,000 vocal fans saw local hero Jessie Diggins take fourth place in World Cup’s return to the U.S.

By RACHEL BLOUNT
rblount@startribune.com

Her body told her she should probably slow things down a bit, to conserve some energy during a long day of racing. Jessie Diggins’ heart had a different opinion.

At long last, the Afton native was finally on the course for a World Cup cross-country race in her home state. Thousands of people covered the hillsides at Theodore Wirth Park. They raised such a ruckus she wasn’t sure she would hear the starting gun.

“I was just letting it all in, because this is so cool,” Diggins said. “Nothing is ever going to feel like this again.”

That made it an easy call. Diggins gave in to her heart, racing with abandon through all four grueling rounds of the freestyle sprint. While she was a little spent in the finals.

See **DIGGINS** on C6 ▶



Diggins family brings cheer

Deb Diggins held and wore photos of her daughter Jessie at the Loppet Cup at Theodore Wirth Park on Saturday. About 30 family members were in attendance for Jessie Diggins’ first World Cup race on American soil.

Saturday’s races

Men sprint: Johannes Hoesflot
Klaebo, Norway, 2:54.24

Women’s sprint: Jonna Sundling,
Sweden, 3:06.30

Sunday’s races

• Men’s 10k individual start, 10:30 a.m.
• Women’s 10k ind. start, 12:45 p.m.

TV: NBC (Tape-delayed coverage at 3 p.m.)

World Cup skiing event doubles as family reunion

CHIP SCOGGINS



Cal Robinet grew up doing daredevil acts with his cousin. They went ziplining for hours and waged “tubing wars” behind a boat. They’d jump out of windows, launch themselves off cliffs and climb trees.

It wasn’t until Saturday, though, that Robinet got to watch his cousin perform her specialty in person for the first time.

Jessie Diggins’ extended family came out in full force to witness her long-awaited homecoming as a cross-country skiing superstar.

“I see her on video all over the world, and I just don’t have the opportunity to travel to Italy and Russia and South Korea,” the 35-year-old Robinet said. “I wouldn’t miss this for the world.”

Among the crowd of nearly 20,000 cheering on Diggins at Theodore Wirth Park were 30 or so family members who turned the World Cup event into a reunion. They came from Boston, Canada, Arizona and St. Cloud.

“Then, of course,” Diggins’ mom, Deb, said, “there is the ski family of pretty much the entire St. Croix Valley.”

Diggins placed fourth in the women’s freestyle sprint, but the event is Minnesota’s

See **SCOGGINS** on C6 ▶