

No need to ‘wait till next year’

SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX



It's a testament to just how long Seaside fans have been waiting that this is the first state basketball championship for the Gulls' boys. They defeated nemesis Valley Catholic Saturday night 73-61, providing that small can be better when the right elements come together.

For the Gulls, those elements included top starters, a marquee player in Jackson Januik, superior coaching, depth on the bench and a fan base that served as the "sixth man" at the Gulls' nest.

Over the course of this miracle season, we had a chance to celebrate the Gulls' basketball tradition, following an arc of a school that just kept getting better and better in the March toward the hoops.

As far back as we can go in our archives, Seaside took its basketball seriously — even back in 1920 when the game was very different and the Gulls played in what was then called the Columbia League. The long-defunct Seaside Independent Basketball League kept players of all ages on the courts and barnstorming teams put on game demos in the 1930s and '40s, from the "Whiskered Wizards" to the "Redheads Lady Basketeers," surely one of the first regional advances for gender equality on the court.

In the 1960s, longtime coach Larry Elliott took over Seaside's high school program from Tom House, who built the foundation for a winning tradition after coaching at Knappa. Elliott went on to lead nine tournament teams for the Gulls in 25 years.

In the days before the 3-point shot, size was king, and the Gulls built an offense around big players who could find their way inside the paint.

In a January interview, Elliott shared how the Gulls have adapted to changes in the game. Ball-handling, the run-and-gun offense, the smart percentage shots — all contributed to the team's extraordinary success.

This year's team may be the school's best ever.

"I was on the basketball team when I was in high school, but we didn't do nearly as good," City Councilor Tom Horning said Monday.

This year's championship team is "definitely" the best lineup former Gulls' star Brian Taylor has seen.

Taylor, now a school board member and basketball coach, remembers the 1993-94 team with standouts Tim Campbell, Byren Thompson and Ben Morris. "They were one of those teams that went to state every year but couldn't close the deal," Taylor said. "Last year's team had the best record. They even had some big guys, but when they went up against Philomath, they were a little bit bigger, they were a little bit faster than us."

Elliott's successor, Coach Bill Westerholm kept the winning tradition alive. But until this year, victory at the state championship tourney proved elusive.



JEFF TER HARFOR SEASIDE SIGNAL

Gulls fans played a key role in the season's success.



JEFF TER HARFOR SEASIDE SIGNAL

Boys huddle as Coach Bill Westerholm outlines the play.

"Everybody can handle the ball, even the big guys," Taylor said. "We are just scrappy, tough, we are in incredible shape. When half your team is on the cross-country and soccer team in the spring and fall, you know that when they show up on the basketball court, they're going to be in shape and they're going to fly around. Their defensive intensity was always at the highest level and for me as a coach, that's how you coach kids to play basketball. If you can keep the other team from scoring more points than you, you're going to win every time."

Coaching is the key word, as both boys' and girls' successes can be directly attributed to coaches and mentors.

To say that Seaside's fans had a role in the achievement is an understatement: turning out



FILE PHOTO

The Redhead Basketeers were part of the basketball craze in Seaside that stretches back to the 1920s.

for every home game with enthusiasm and game savvy. The support from the Seaside community didn't hurt either — residents followed the progress of the Gulls from early on, as the boys started hot and kept getting hotter. The girls under Mike Hawes played strong, steady ball and compiled a record that carried them to the semifinals.

If they were to suffer defeat at any team's hands, it was fitting they would fall in their finale to Sutherlin, the team to take the crown.

And the city was there for the Gulls every step of the way. City Council student representative Lizzy Barnes kept officials in the loop with her biweekly updates of school scores and activities, with every Gulls' win getting an official nod of approval.

Is it any surprise that the Gulls were greeted

by a motorcade late Saturday night/early Sunday morning as the team returned from their win in Forest Grove?

For once, there was no talk of bedtime.

What's next for these Gulls?

A visit to City Council, for one thing. They'll be invited to City Hall for the April 10 meeting. "They deserve a proclamation," Mayor Jay Barber said at Monday's night's meeting.

"As I was watching it all roll out, I was thinking, 'Seaside, we're a pretty small town,'" Councilor Tita Montero said. "To have the top placer and the third-placer come from Seaside is a pretty big deal. Congratulations to all the players and coaches."

"I echo those comments," Barber said. "I just think it's a privilege to the community where we have that kind of teen sport energy."

LETTERS

Another one that got away

I read with great interest the Seen from Seaside column titled "The championship that got away" by R.J. Marx in the March 3 Seaside Signal.

My brother Gary Williams was on that 1973-74 team. He is pictured in the team photo: #10 kneeling in the front row, second from left. I am writing to mention that there was another "championship that got away" just the very next year with the 1974-75 boys basketball team. That team did not have the services of Mark Wickman who was truly a Seaside basketball star, but did make it all the way to the state semifinals where they lost to Marist in a real nail-biter, 43-42.

My brother Gary was on that team (also coached by Larry Elliott) and I attended the semifinal game at Mac Court in Eugene with my parents Chet and Joyce Williams. They came ever so close to being in the State championship game.

On a related note, both Mark and Gary were instrumental in helping the Gulls with the Boys Track State Championship in the

1973-74 year and coached by Gene Gilbertson.

Gary passed away in 2004 and I still treasure my memories of him and his teammates in both basketball and track during his career at Seaside High School.

Steve Williams
Seaside

The kindness of strangers

Thank you Astoria, Seaside and Cannon Beach. I am not a resident of the area, but absolutely adore it, and it means more to me than you know. I'll explain.

I have been coming to the area for some time, five years ago, to be exact, since I first discovered it. I adore it, and come as often as I can, it's truly special. In fact I've been here for the last few days. A little over a year ago my mother and father died, 13 days apart, and it ripped me to pieces.

They loved the ocean, my mother especially. The last ocean they laid their eyes on was at Seaside at sunset. I can't imagine a better end. Since then, the area has been a refuge, something good, and a feeling of some sort of familiarity of my parents to hurt,



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Michael Quatrociocchi and his dog in Cannon Beach.

rejoice and connection. When I'm there it's like they're not gone, like I'm not gone.

Not long after they died, my dog (her dog as well) fell ill with cancer. She's getting treatment, but will pass away. She is the last living link to her I have, to something special just between us. She's always gone with me, and she will continue to until she can't — she shares the love of the area with me. She means so much. We are the best of friends, she's all I have. I will continue time to give her the best life possible.

Something happened Sunday.

Along Cannon Beach, adjacent to Haystack Rock, my dog and I stopped to watch the sun go down. Those sunsets are the most beautiful; Sunday was the most beautiful.

Now I know the people of the area are wonderful. I've interacted with them for years, and they've been kind to my parents and pooch, and myself. As I was leaving, a woman approached me and said she was a photographer. She said she had a picture for me, and normally doesn't approach subjects, but felt I needed a picture she had taken of us.

When I saw it, I didn't know what to say, but cry. First it made me happy, sad she was going to die, sad for my parents gone, but joyous in its connection, it's love, hope, and something we all share that can't ever die. All because a resident I didn't know — a stranger's kindness, a common thread of all residents — who knew enough to know what it meant, and that I needed it.

I know the area is special, and has given me, us, so much, and brought it all together yesterday. I'd like the communities to know that.

Michael Quatrociocchi
La Grande

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Tuesday, March 21
Sunset Empire Parks and Rec District, 4 p.m., 1225 Ave. A, Seaside.

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., 1810 S. Franklin, Seaside.

Tuesday, March 28
Seaside Airport Advisory Committee, 6 p.m. City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Wednesday, April 5
Seaside Improvement Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

Thursday, April 6
Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 7 p.m., City Hall, City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Tuesday, April 18
Sunset Empire Parks and Rec District, 4 p.m., 1225 Ave. A, Seaside.

Seaside School District, 6 p.m., 1810 S. Franklin, Seaside.

Thursday, April 20
Gearhart Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

Wednesday, May 3
Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

Tuesday, May 16
Sunset Empire Parks and Rec District, 4 p.m., 1225 Ave. A, Seaside.