

'Spring' sports active now

By **Charlie Kanzig**
Correspondent

In the topsy-turvy world of COVID-19, athletes at all levels, including Sisters High School, have been faced with canceled, postponed, and shortened seasons. Activity resumed in mid-September for a few of the traditional spring sports under strict guidelines for a five week "mini-season."

According to SHS Athletic Director Gary Thorson, track and field, tennis, boys lacrosse and girls softball are taking advantage of the opportunity to train and, in some cases, compete.

The decision to implement mini-seasons prior to the start of official OSAA-sanctioned sports came at the individual school district level, according to Thorson. Districts in the region are working together to give student athletes the opportunity to get back into their sports after the entire regular spring season was canceled due to COVID-19 in mid-March.

Thorson said, "Our district has recognized the need for our students to get safely engaged again, and has set a plan which is a healthy compromise on the engagement spectrum."

Track and field actually has three "mini-meets" scheduled with local teams, including one at home

September 30 against Ridgeview, while softball has played one game with ten more planned through October 10.

According to head track coach Jeff Larson, the first meet will feature all field events other than triple jump, along with running events in the 4x100-meter relay, 1500 meters, 100 meters, high hurdles and 200 meters.

"We thought it best to start small and condense the length of the meet a bit," he said.

Asked how the mini-season plan was working out, softball coach Neil Fendall said, "For the kids and coaches it's going fantastic. Having real human interaction and experiencing the group dynamic every afternoon is the highlight of my days and for the kids as well."

He continued, "It's good to see them appreciate the face-to-face contact and the value of that. This pandemic appears to be teaching us all how important human interaction really is. I am hearing them say, 'I just want to go back to school and see my friends.'"

Regarding meeting health protocols, Fendall explained, "We have our masks ready for when athletes are close together and we have to disinfect equipment after each practice. At our game

at Crook County fans were spread out, including along the outside fence. Fans entering the complex signed in at a check-in table and people seemed to be social distancing appropriately."

Fendall, in his first year as the coach, reported having 12 girls playing this fall, which Fendall believes will provide a solid base when the real spring season comes.

"I'm super pleased with the group we have and they are willing to work hard, stay positive and try their best," he said.

Traditional fall sports will start a mini-season in October, followed by winter sports in November.

OSAA-sanctioned sports with condensed seven-week seasons will begin December 28, with traditional winter



PHOTO PROVIDED

COVID-19 has turned a lot of things upside down – including school sports. Athletes are now participating in a limited run of sports usually played in the spring.

sports (basketball, swimming, wrestling), followed by traditional fall sports, including cheerleading from

February 22 to late April or early May, and concluding with spring sports April 19-mid to late June.

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