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Small town sports run deep and diverse

JUSTIN MUCH
STAYTON MAIL

When a handful of high-school athletes — Anna McGill, Hannah Hallock, Keiley Griffin, Taylor Price and Shylar Halverson — competed in the 4 x 100 girls relay for Perrydale at the OSAA Class 1A state track championships this spring, it seemed like any other relay team on the surface.

But it wasn't. It was a team consisting of one track athlete and four softball players.

But, hey, at a rural school like Perrydale — a Polk County site where the lone retail establishment within miles of the school's surroundings is a soft-drink kiosk — athletes some-

times pitch into multiple sports, even within the same season. Multisport athletes are common in small schools, as is the tight-knit school spirit that pervades many smaller communities.

Sports teams are vital to small towns in general, and that vitality may be doubly important to a place such as Perrydale, where fall's Friday-night lights gathering corrals its fandom from a broad swath of acreage around the Polk County countryside and beyond.

As the Mid-Valley Sports Awards near, many of the 89 athletes receiving recognition that evening hail from smaller hamlets around the region.

High-school sports teams of rural complexion are vital fix-

tures of community pride, whether they are centered around homespun, road-map blinks such as St. Paul, Scio or Perrydale, or more king-size schools that are in relatively small towns, such as Silverton, Stayton, or Central of Independence and Monmouth.

Schools such as Cascade High School, serving the Aumsville, Turner and Marion areas, exemplify the mold even though the institution doesn't take one namesake municipality, but rather weaves a largely agricultural region into one focal point of pride.

"Cascade is like a community," said Heidi Hermansen, the school's athletic director and as-

See **SMALL TOWN**, Page 4A



Silverton's Sam Roth drives past a Corvallis guard in a game at Silverton High School in February.

STATESMAN JOURNAL

'Planning on a great year'



MOLLY J. SMITH/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Scott Lunski, center, owner of Detroit Lake Marina, stands with employees Lucas Lunski, right, and Braeden Cook on the docks of the marina on Thursday. Lunski has owned the marina since 2004, and has become frustrated by low water levels at the reservoir.

Reservoir is in good shape, but shortages on horizon

ZACH URNESS
STATESMAN JOURNAL

There is both good and bad news for outdoor recreation this summer at Detroit Lake.

The positive news is that the reservoir is in far better health than a year ago, when a severe statewide drought dropped the lake to its lowest summertime level in history, stunting tourism and hurting business throughout the Santiam Canyon.

As of this week, Detroit Lake is 47 feet higher than this time last year, meaning normal boating and fishing conditions for Memorial Day Week-

end. "It's a very positive atmosphere up here right now," said Callie Lunski, one of the owners of Detroit Lake Marina. "We've got boats in the water and that are ready to rent. We're planning on a great year."

Yet the news isn't all positive.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said hot and dry conditions this spring means reservoir levels are lower than normal. Detroit Lake never reached its maximum height of 1,563 feet above sea level, and is already dropping, down to 1,554 feet as of May 26.

The reservoir will be as low as 1,540 feet by mid-August, the Corps projects, meaning many of the docks and marinas will find themselves on dry land.

Early snowmelt and lack of spring rain — about 70 percent of normal in the Willamette Basin — created the shortage, Corps spokeswoman Amy Echols said.

"This year had more snow and a little more rain than last year, but again, we saw a pretty dry spring," she said. "We could still see big rains, but it's definitely going to be a lower level than normal."

Flood control, followed by keeping enough water in the North Santiam River for endangered species and wildlife, are the top two priorities for the Corps at Detroit Lake.

That's not good news for businesses such as Kane's and Detroit Lake marinas. The two businesses already took a major hit last season — both had to move their docks to a new location just to stay in business. An early end to business this year wouldn't help.

"We're going to work with what we have," Lunski said. "Obviously it is frustrating, but it's out of my hands."

Zach Urness has been an outdoors writer, photographer and videographer in Oregon for eight years. He is the author of the book "Hiking Southern Oregon" and can be reached at zurness@StatesmanJournal.com or (503) 399-6801. Find him on Zach Urness or @Zach-sORoutdoors on Twitter.

Should Detroit Lake be managed differently?

ZACH URNESS
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Scott Lunski believes the time has come for changes in the way Detroit Lake is managed.

The owner of Detroit Lake Marina said the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has struggled to keep the reservoir east of Salem high enough for summer recreation.

He pointed out that guidelines for filling the reservoir haven't been significantly updated since the 1950s, and that water releases for fish conservation have pushed the reservoir to lower summer levels.

"I don't think the Corps are doing their job very well," said Lunski, who has owned the marina since 2004 with his family. "Their job is to keep the lake full and meet all the demands. Instead, they're making excuses in the name of fish conservation and using technology from the era of black and white TV to run the reservoir."

Corps officials said they are fulfilling their mandate, which prioritizes flood control and fish health above recreation. They point to the myriad uses for reservoir water — hydropower, irrigation and city drinking water — and said they actively plan and adjust management of Detroit Lake.

"We understand the economic value for recreation at Detroit, and we can make some concessions to keep water in the lake, but recreation isn't the top priority in driving the decision-making process," said Amy Echols, spokeswoman for the Corps in Portland. "All the demands on water — plus fulfilling our mission on flood control — create a challenging balancing act."

The rule curve

The primary issue centers on what's known as the "rule curve."

Developed when during the period the reservoir was con-

See **LAKE**, Page 2A

Strawberry season here for your pick

HEATHER RAYHORN
STATESMAN JOURNAL

You-pick strawberries are an Oregon tradition that mark the beginning of warmer weather and a summer bounty of fresh, local produce. Several local farms already have opened their strawberry fields to you pickers including Olson Peaches in southeast Salem, Greens Bridge Gardens in Jefferson and Willamette Valley Pie Company in northeast



Several local farms have opened their strawberry fields to pickers.

See **STRAWBERRY**, Page 2A

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- Calendar2A
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