

STATESMAN JOURNAL SPORTS AWARDS

## Finalists named for top athlete, coach

**BILL POEHLER**  
STATESMAN JOURNAL

There are great athletes, but these are the best of the best.

These are the finalists in the categories of the male athlete of the year, female athlete of the year and coach of the year for the June 6 Statesman Journal Sports Awards at the Salem Convention Center.

Each of these athletes and coaches will be honored at the gala, and the awards presentation will crescendo with the announcement of the athlete of the year and coach of the year that night.

**Girls athlete of the year**

The finalists for girls athlete of the year are McNary senior Sydney Hunter, South Salem senior Evina Westbrook and Silverton junior Maggie Roth.

Hunter was first-team all-Greater

Valley Conference in volleyball and basketball and was honorable mention 6A all-state in both sports.

Roth was second-team 5A all-state in soccer after scoring one goal and having four assists. She was honorable mention all-state in basketball after averaging 7.5 points and 5.8 rebounds. And she is a starter for the Foxes' softball team.

Westbrook needs no introduction, but her credentials are impressive nonetheless. She averaged 25.1 points, 7.9 rebounds, 5.8 assists and 5.2 steals per game and earned numerous player of the year awards, including the American Family Insurance ALL-USA national player of the year.

**Boys athlete of the year**

The finalists for boys athlete of the year are Kennedy senior Bishop Mitchell, Dallas senior Tanner Earhart and Sprague junior Teagan Quitoriano.

Quitoniano was a 6A first-team all-state selection in football at defensive end and was first-team all-Greater Valley Conference at defensive end and tight end. In basketball he was a first-team all-state selection after averaging 28 points and 13 rebounds per game.

Earhart was the 5A state offensive player of the year in football in the fall after rushing for 2,068 yards and 24 touchdowns. In wrestling, he was the 5A state champion at 160 pounds. And he's a standout baseball player for the Dragons.

Mitchell was the 2A state offensive player of the year in football after rushing for 2,217 yards and 28 touchdowns. He was honorable mention all-state in basketball in the winter. And he's been dominant in track and field and has one of the state's best marks in the long jump this season.



Hunter Westbrook Roth



Mitchell Earhart Quitoriano



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Silverton junior Maggie Buckholz is one of the premier softball players in the state and has verbally committed to play at Oregon.

PHOTOS BY MOLLY J. SMITH / STATESMAN JOURNAL

# SOFTBALL STANDOUT

## Oregon-bound junior shortstop breaking Silverton records

**GARY HOROWITZ**  
STATESMAN JOURNAL

SILVERTON - When Maggie Buckholz began playing in the Amateur Softball Association at the age of 9, she didn't have instant success.

Buckholz attended a tryout for the Lady Celtics in Keizer and although she made the team, she wasn't an impact player.

"I wasn't that good back then," Buckholz said.

Times have changed for Silverton High School's junior shortstop.

Buckholz worked diligently at the game, switched from a right-handed hitter to the left side of the plate at the encouragement of her dad A.J., a former minor league infielder in the Pittsburgh Pirates' organization, and her game took off.

"We just worked on a (hitting) tee for hours," A.J. Buckholz said. "She was just such a hard worker and still is, of course. She was determined to make it work for her."

Those hitting lessons have certainly paid off.

A contact hitter with power to all fields for the fifth-ranked Foxes (9-6, 8-3 Mid-Willamette Conference through Friday), Buckholz made a verbal commitment in the summer of 2015 to continue her softball career at the University of Oregon.

"It's my passion. It's definitely something I love," Buckholz said.

A MaxPreps All-American as a freshman and sophomore, and a second team 5A all-state selection last season, Buckholz's numbers are off the charts in 2017. Heading into Saturday's double-header against Crescent Valley, she was hitting a team-high .620 with seven homers, 36 RBI, 18 runs scored, six doubles and three triples. She can run, too, with 20 stolen bases.

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**What:** Statesman Journal Sports Awards

**When:** June 6

**Where:** Salem Convention Center

**Tickets:** statesmanjournal.com/sportsawards

In Wednesday's 10-0 victory over Corvallis, Buckholz swatted her seventh homer, a single-season school record.

"It was just amazing to be able to witness that," said senior pitcher and close friend Alex Molloy. "She's a great player. It's been great to play with her and have that special bond that we have."

Silverton coach Ralph Cortez moved Buckholz from the No. 3 spot in the batting order to leadoff this season to prevent teams from pitching around her.

Buckholz is an outfielder in ASA summer leagues, a position she will likely play in college. But Buckholz has the versatility to play several positions. She has a .967 fielding percentage this season at shortstop and catcher.

"She does everything well," Cortez said. "She's our backup catcher, too. I can play her anywhere and she'll do a great job. She has the tools to play the game."

And the desire. In the summer of 2015, Buckholz committed to Oregon after fluctuating between the Ducks and California. After attending the 2014 Women's College World Series in Oklahoma City, as part of the College World Series All-American Camp, Buckholz knew she wanted to play for Oregon.

"I saw them in their uniforms. I saw them under the lights and I was just like, 'that's where I wanna go,'" Buckholz said.

She'll be joining one of the nation's premier softball programs. Under coach Mike White, the Ducks have made seven



Silverton shortstop Maggie Buckholz has set a single-season school record for home runs.

consecutive NCAA tournament appearances, won four Pac-12 titles in a row, and been to the WCWS three times.

Buckholz hopes to return to Oklahoma City as a participant.

"Definitely. That would be the goal," she said with a smile.

Having the security of a college scholarship offer has taken some pressure off. "Now I can focus on what I need to do when I get there instead of focusing on what I need to do to impress them," said Buckholz, who carries a 3.8 grade point average.

Buckholz also plays volleyball as a 5-foot-7 outside hitter for the Foxes, and there was a time when she had two favorite sports. That is no longer the case.

While Buckholz enjoys the team aspect of volleyball and softball, it became clear in high school that she had more up-

side in softball.

"I like being on a team and it's not just one person, it's everybody," Buckholz said of her passion for softball. "I love having support on and off the field. I've played on so many teams and I have so many like sisters now that I can go back to."

Winnings adds to the enjoyment. The Foxes, who advanced to the 5A state semifinals Buchholz's freshman year and quarterfinals last season, have the chemistry and talent to make another state playoff run.

"I think we're doing really good on our defense this year, so I think if we just keep up that and our pitching, and our offense will come along too," Buckholz said.

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