



PHOTOS BY ANNA REED / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Silverton's Paige Alexander walks to accept her award for female soccer player of the year.

THE BEST OF THE BEST

High school athletes honored at Statesman Journal awards



Kennedy's Bishop Mitchell walks to the stage to accept his award for Boys Track and Field Athlete of the Year during the Statesman Journal Sports Awards.

PETE MARTINI
STATESMAN JOURNAL

West Salem High School was the big winner June 6, capturing 10 awards at the Statesman Journal Sports Awards, including the Capitol Cup for the second year in a row.

The top high school athletes in the Salem area gathered at the Salem Convention Center to celebrate all of the sacrifice, hard work and accomplishments during the 2016-17 school year, with soccer legend Mia Hamm sharing stories about her career and offering inspiration as the guest speaker.

One of Hamm's messages to the attentive audience was about the opportunities that female athletes have today, compared to the past.

"A number of young girls are getting the opportunity to play," Hamm told the crowd. "And the other thing I see is a tremendous amount of camaraderie and kinship with their male counterpart athletes, and I think that's an important part."

Many of the athletes in the audience are either currently going through the college recruiting process, or just completed the process.

"It seems like it's much more intense now than when I was going through the process, and it seems like it's getting younger and younger," Hamm said. "For me, one of the criteria in terms of where I wanted to go to school is that I really had to love it without soccer. Does it fit your needs academically? And hopefully they have a good sounding board that they can bounce things off — whether it's a school counselor, a parent, a coach, a



Silverton's Maggie Buckholz takes the stage to accept her award for Softball Player of the Year during the Statesman Journal Sports Awards with soccer star Mia Hamm at the Salem Convention Center on June 6.

club coach — that can really help them navigate these waters."

Awards were given to the top athlete in each of the 19 OSAA sports, as well as five community awards and five overall awards.

The Titans took home nine of the 19 awards for specific sports, as well as the Capitol Cup, which was awarded to the best sports school for the 2016-17 year.

Four of West Salem's athletes were repeat winners — Ahmed Muhumed (boys cross country), Paige Whipple (volleyball), Micah Masei (boys swimming) and Andrew Eyre (boys golf).

"Today actually was my last day of high school and there were two different feelings," said Muhumed, a senior who will compete at Boise State at the college level. "The first is, 'I am done.' And the second was, 'wow, I am done.' Looking ahead, I'm just going to work hard and

get better. I'm just really blessed to be part of a team and a program that has actually helped me a lot in my daily life and athletic life."

Other repeat winners included Sprague's Logan Blair, who this year shared the boys tennis award with his younger brother and doubles team partner, Judd, as well as Silverton softball player Maggie Buckholz, South Salem girls golfer Ellie Slama and South Salem girls basketball player Evina Westbrook.

Westbrook, who is going to play college basketball at Tennessee, also repeated as overall female athlete of the year. After winning state championships as a sophomore and junior, Westbrook helped the Saxons place third this year at the OSAA Class 6A girls basketball tournament.

Dallas athlete Tanner Earhart, who won the football player of the year

award, also was honored as the top overall male athlete of the year. Earhart, who will play college football and baseball at Linfield, was the Class 5A state offensive player of the year in football, a wrestling state champion at 160 pounds, and helped the Dragons reach the state quarterfinals in baseball.

Ron Hittner, who guided the Blanchet girls basketball team to the OSAA Class 3A state championship, won the coach of the year award.

South Salem's Kaitlyn Paluska was awarded as the Scholar Athlete, which comes with a \$5,000 scholarship.

The five community awards were won by South Salem's Tyler Coates (Comeback Award), Sprague's Caleb Elliott (Heart and Desire Award), McKay's Noah Tavera (Courage Award), Regis (Cheer Squad) and Sprague (Dance and Drill Team).

2017 STATESMAN JOURNAL SPORTS AWARD WINNERS

FALL SEASON	Girls cross country	Salem	Maggie Buckholz, Silverton	Andrew Eyre, West Salem	Boys athlete of the year	Comeback Award
Football	Ginger Murnieks, Sprague	Wrestling	Baseball		Tanner Earhart, Dallas	Tyler Coates, South Salem
Tanner Earhart, Dallas	Boys cross country	Ian Carlos, North Salem	JaVon Logan, Regis	Girls tennis	Coach of the year	Heart and Desire Award
Volleyball	Ahmed Muhumed, West Salem	Girls swimming	Keira McCarrell, West Salem	Anya Gerasimova, West Salem	Ron Hittner, Blanchet girls basketball	Caleb Elliott, Sprague
Paige Whipple, West Salem	WINTER SEASON	Hannah Bodkin, West Salem	Boys track and field	Boys tennis	Scholar Athlete	Courage Award
Girls soccer	Girls basketball	Boys swimming	Bishop Mitchell, Kennedy	Logan Blair/Judd Blair, Sprague	Kaitlyn Paluska, South Salem	Noah Tavera, McKay
Paige Alexander, Silverton	Evina Westbrook, South Salem	Micah Masei, West Salem	Boys track and field	OVERALL AWARDS	Capitol Cup Award	Cheer Squad
Boys soccer	Boys basketball I	SPRING SEASON	Ellie Slama, South Salem	Girls athlete of year	West Salem	Regis
Stuart Aeschliman, West Salem	Kyle Greeley, West Salem	Softball	Girls golf	Evina Westbrook, South Salem	COMMUNITY AWARDS	Dance and Drill Team
			Boys golf			Sprague