



Silvertown football head coach Josh Craig, 26, shows a play to his team during a practice. ANNA REED / STATESMAN JOURNAL

# New leadership brings youth, motor to program

Silvertown's head coach, Josh Craig, is barely older than his players

GARY HOROWITZ STATESMAN JOURNAL

SILVERTON – During a typical Silvertown High School football practice, first-year head coach Josh Craig runs as much as his players.

After junior quarterback Levi Nielsen completed a long pass in practice Sept. 26, Craig sprinted downfield shouting, “Good job! Good job! Here we go!”

Maybe it’s because of his age. After all, at 26 he is one of the youngest head coaches in the state.

“I can still run around with the guys, which is good,” said Craig, who has always been a high-energy, positive fella. It’s in his DNA. “I still have a lot of energy and I think the guys respond to that.”

Silvertown is No. 1 in the Class 5A OSAA rankings heading into Friday’s Mid-Willamette Conference showdown at No. 3 Crescent Valley.

Clearly, the Foxes (4-0, 2-0 league) have responded to Craig’s coaching style.

“We love it,” Nielsen said. “When things don’t go our way you’ve gotta have positive energy or you’re never gonna be able to get things right.”

Craig is not taking credit for Silvertown’s success.

Former coach John Mannion, who resigned in April to become head coach at the new Mountainside High School in Beaverton, left the program in excellent shape. He had a 57-20 mark in seven seasons at Silvertown, which included three state semifinal appearances and a state runner-up finish in 2014.

“I inherited this great team,” said Craig, adding, “I’m not the one playing



Head coach Josh Craig leads a practice on Tuesday, Sept. 26. ANNA REED / STATESMAN JOURNAL

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Five Salem-Keizer schools could join three Bend schools in a new league. FILE PHOTO

## Salem schools face lengthy travel in new recommendation

BILL POEHLER STATESMAN JOURNAL

Five Salem-Keizer high schools will play in a sports league with three Bend schools starting next fall, under a final recommendation released Thursday by the OSAA’s Classification and Districting Committee.

The final recommendation, reached after a year of meetings, puts McKay, McNary, South Salem, Sprague and West Salem in an eight-team league with three Bend schools — Bend, Mountain View and Summit, which are moving up from 5A.

“It’s going to be a hard sell to our community,” South Salem athletic director Brian Armstrong testified at Monday’s committee meeting.

That means Salem-Keizer schools would have three-hour bus rides to play league games at least two to three times per season.

“Though it has become evident that no current league is interested in adding the three Bend schools, the group believes that choosing the shortest of the three travel options makes the most sense when applying the criteria,” the committee said in the final release.

The recommendation next goes to

**“It’s going to be a hard sell to our community.”**

BRIAN ARMSTRONG SOUTH SALEM ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

the OSAA’s Executive Board at its 9 a.m. Oct. 16 meeting at the Wilsonville Holiday Inn. There will be one more opportunity for public testimony at that meeting before the Executive Board votes.

The OSAA’s Delegate Assembly then meets for a final vote at 1 p.m. that same day at the same location.

The new classification will go into effect for the 2018-2022 time block. The final recommendation included several other changes from current leagues:

» West Albany would drop down to 5A from 6A to rejoin the Mid-Willamette Conference.

» Cascade would move from 4A to the 5A Mid-Willamette Conference. Cascade had 14 people testify against moving up to 5A at Monday’s final meeting of the committee. It would be the smallest school in the classification.

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