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A slice of soccer heaven with caveats

Thorns Academy players must show commitment



Silverton's Paige Alexander, from left, with West Salem's Abbey Knoll, Karly Feis-White and Lexi Tejada at a Thorns Academy soccer practice on Oct. 24 at Providence Park in Portland. PHOTOS BY MOLLY J. SMITH/STATESMAN JOURNAL

GARY HOROWITZ
SALEM STATESMAN JOURNAL
USA TODAY NETWORK

PORTLAND – Paige Alexander looked around the pristine soccer field at Providence Park and smiled.

The stands were empty during the recent practice, but it was easy to imagine the roar of 22,000 fans who fill Providence Park at home games for the Portland Thorns of Major League Soccer.

For high-school age players accustomed to playing on remote fields with a few metal bleachers, it's like being in soccer heaven.

"We're blessed to have this beautiful environment and these amazing fields to play on," said Alexander, a sophomore at Silverton High School and a member of the Portland Thorns FC Academy U17 team. "I'm just so happy and grateful and thankful that I get the opportunity to play on such an amazing, quality field. It's great."

But this slice of soccer heaven comes with a price. Thorns Academy players can't play on their high school soccer teams, and they are discouraged from participating in any other high school sports.

It's that sacrifice vs. reward decision that both the players and their parents struggle to make.

Thorns Academy or high school soccer?

In past years girls were permitted to play on their high school teams and with the Thorns Academy because the soccer seasons did not overlap. That is no longer the case.

The U.S. Soccer Development Academy, which includes regionally-based teams throughout the country - 197 girls and 231 boys academy teams - has a 10-month season beginning in September.

Elite high school players like Alexander, Thorns Academy U17 teammates Karly Feis-White, Abbey Knoll and Lexi Tejada who are sophomores at West Salem, and Blanchet senior Emily Collier, a member of



Blanchet's Emily Collier runs with the ball during a Thorns Academy soccer practice. Collier is on the Thorns U19 team.



West Salem's Abbey Knoll works on her kick during practice. Knoll plays goalkeeper for the Thorns Academy U17 team.

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"I really loved playing with the (Silverton) girls and it was really difficult for me.

But I feel like this is the right choice and it's gonna get me farther for where I wanna go."

PAIGE ALEXANDER, SILVERTON HIGH SCHOOL SOPHOMORE AND A MEMBER OF THE PORTLAND THORN FC ACADEMY U17 TEAM, ON JOINING THORN ACADEMY AND NOT PLAYING ON HER HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER TEAM

Gas tax measure appears to pass vote

Silverton voters also choose to keep local pool afloat

JONATHAN BACH AND NATALIE PATE
SALEM STATESMAN JOURNAL
USA TODAY NETWORK

Silverton residents passed a 2-cent-per-gallon gas tax, meaning they can expect to pay a little more to fuel up.

Under the measure passed Nov. 7, gas stations will pay the tax to the city every month. Gas stations can send increased costs to customers by ratcheting up prices.

Silverton Mayor Kyle Palmer praised the gas tax as a way for out-of-towners to help pay for the city's roads.

The city says the gas tax should bring in about \$173,000 a year. Taxes will go toward roads in the city, though a stipulation lets the money to go toward state or federal projects as "matching funds."

Meanwhile, a measure passed for a five-year operating levy to keep a Silverton swimming pool in operation. The tax will be \$275,000 a year for five years, or an estimated \$1,375,000 altogether.

If voters had rejected the measure, the pool was poised to shut down after June of next year because of a lack of funding.

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Mt. Angel's new police chief brings experience

CHRISTENA BROOKS
SPECIAL TO SALEM STATESMAN JOURNAL
USA TODAY NETWORK

Next month, Mt. Angel is scheduled to swear in a new full-time police chief.

Mark Daniel, 52, a Sherwood Police Department captain, was Mt. Angel's top pick among seven candidates for a job that's been part-time for the last seven years. He'll take over for Chief Mike Healy, who retired last month.

"Mark stood out to us because of his fit and personality," said City Manager Amber Mathiesen. "From his degrees to his completion of an FBI academy, to his experience as a public information officer ... all these things create a package that's a good fit."

Daniel has been a police officer for 35 years with four different agencies. He knew he wanted to go into law enforcement from the time he was a boy growing up in Junction City and then Portland.

At 15, he joined the Clackamas County Sheriff's Department as a cadet explorer scout. After high school, he earned an associate's degree from Clackamas Community College and, by 21, was hired as a reserve officer. A year later, he became a full-time officer for Salem Police Department.

"There wasn't a time in my life when I can remember not wanting to do this," Daniel said. "I still do this

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School bus co. tests tracking app

CHRISTENA BROOKS
SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE

SILVERTON – Parents may be able to track their students' bus locations, if the local school busing company can work out the bugs in a smartphone app it has been testing this fall.

Bus Tracker is an app that parents can download and use to see where their kids' buses are at all times.

In testing this fall, Durham School Services has found there are "latency issues," said Dandy Stevens, assistant superintendent for the Silver Falls School Dis-

trict. In essence, there's sometimes a lag between the time a bus location is uploaded to the "cloud" and when parents receive the information on their phones.

"I want to be purposeful in providing this tool so we don't add a layer of frustration and stress to either parents or the transportation company," Stevens said. "I am hoping to pilot this with a route prior to Thanksgiving week so we can have a week or so to use it, see how it is working, make adjustments over the break when students are not riding, and then proceed from there."

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