

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

# SETTING A NEW STANDARD

Santiam team impresses doubters with its first state playoff run since 1994



Santiam's Dustin Keys (55) holds up the OSAA 2A second-place trophy after the championship game against Monroe on Saturday at Hillsboro Stadium. Monroe won the title 36-22. PHOTOS BY MOLLY J. SMITH / STATESMAN JOURNAL

**BILL POEHLER**  
SALEM STATESMAN JOURNAL  
USA TODAY NETWORK

**HILLSBORO** – For a couple decades, people looked past boys sports teams from Santiam High School.

There were a bunch of 4-5 football seasons, some two-win boys basketball teams and the most notable happening was when the 2012 baseball team forfeited the rest of its season three games into the season.

A group of athletes is changing the conversation about the sports teams from the Mill City school.

Santiam's football team significantly exceeded expectations this season by going from the No. 5 seed in the OSAA Class 2A state playoffs to the state championship game for the first time since 1994.

The Wolverines lost to Monroe 36-22 Saturday afternoon at Hillsboro Stadium, but when the season is looked at through the prism of Santiam football teams and boys basketball teams playing in state championship games in the same calendar year, it marks a remarkable turnaround.

"I definitely think it's a good impact on our school," said sophomore quarterback Colin Thurston, who was 8 of 11 passing for 142 yards and two touchdowns.

"Basically with all this, we're just getting our school on the map again. It's been a while since it's been this successful, and it's definitely been a pleasure."

Over the years, Santiam has had sporadic success in boys sports, and has been known more for its prowess in girls sports.

The football team won state championships in 1971 and 1972 and was last in the state championship game in 1994 prior to Saturday. The boys basketball team won the 1974 state championship and was in the title game in 1976.

Santiam's current football success



**Top:** Santiam's Trevor Tinney (16) carries the ball in the first quarter of the OSAA 2A State Championship match. **Bottom:** Santiam's Trevor Whitmire, right, celebrates as Brody Davidson (33) runs in for a touchdown during the game.

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**COLIN THURSTON**  
SANTIAM SOPHOMORE QUARTERBACK

has coincided with Dustin McGee's tenure as head coach.

The team went 4-5 in his first year at the school in 2015 and in 2016 went 7-4, made the state playoffs for the eighth time in school history and made it to the quarterfinal round.

To go 11-2 and make it to the state championship game in 2017 is remarkable after a lot of 4-5 seasons.

"Santiam athletics are on their way back up, boys and girls," junior lineman Dustin Keys said. "Coach McGee, I got to give him all the credit in the world. He's brought big things and great things to the community."

When McGee arrived at the Mill City school from Arkansas from the first time in 2015, outsiders warned him about what he was in for.

They told him that Santiam hadn't had much success and the athletes don't give much effort.

He was determined to change that by changing the culture.

And his team that made the state championship game had just five seniors and was loaded with juniors and sophomores.

"There is no reason that Santiam High School can't be good for years to

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# State parks pass is a sweet deal



**OUTDOORS**  
**HENRY MILLER**

If you or your friends visit Oregon Parks and Recreation Department sites that have day-use parking fees more than five times during a year, this is a sweet deal.

During December, the department is knocking \$5 off the regular \$30 price tag on an annual state parks pass.

Just 25 state park recreation sites require the fee out of the 197 administered by the department, from lighthouses and viewpoints to scenic corridors and waysides.

But the pay-to-play park sites are among the most popular, and many are

handy to Salem, such as Detroit Lake State Recreation Area, Silver Falls State Park, Champeog State Heritage Area and Willamette Mission State Park.

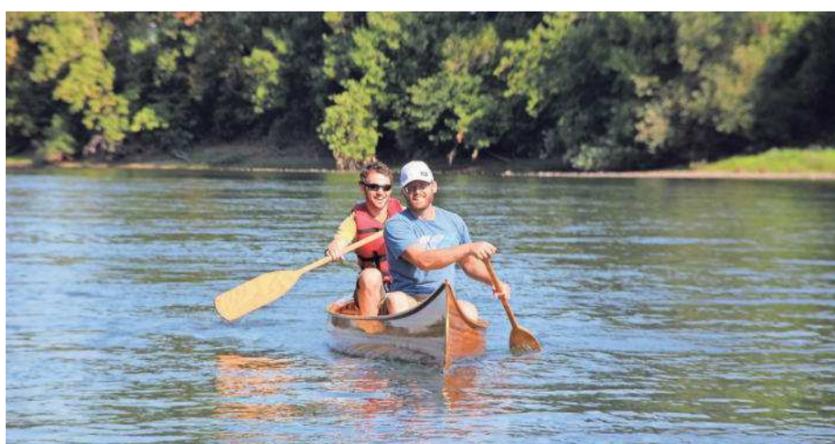
And the pass is transferable if your family has more than one vehicle.

Although if you're like me, you forget to transfer it between the truck and the SUV. Or back again for that matter.

The passes are available at most state parks, or by using your credit card and purchasing by phone (800) 551-6949 or online at the State Parks Store secure website at <https://store.oregonstateparks.org/>

Annual passes, along with gift certificates for state parks, also are available at department headquarters, 725 Summer Street NE, Suite C in Salem.

Now I'll let you in on a little secret,



The Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is offering a discount on the annual state parks pass. Willamette Mission State Park is one of the parks that charges day use fees. ZACH URNESS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

RE: Those gift certificates.

The department also offers a two-year day-use permit.

The cost is \$50, and you get that price no matter when you buy it. So you get the

equivalent of the \$5 one-year discount for each of the two years.

The kicker is that if the recipient is a

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