

SIBLINGS

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“Watching her and getting to experience swimming at that level, knowing she’s my sister, is impressive. Getting to see her finish out this year as well as being part of the team will be exciting.”

The only sibling pair that won’t be split after this season is the Kruses, with Kennedy and Reagan getting another year together in 2019-2020.

What competitiveness does exist between the sisters is tempered by the fact that they swim in vastly different events.

“She’s long distance (swimming the 500),” Reagan said. “I’m short distance (swimming the 50).”

Even when the two swim in relay races together, Reagan doesn’t worry about the time she may post in comparison to her older sister.

“I don’t really care,” Reagan said.

What little competition there is, Kennedy said, is “fun competition. It’s really fun (swimming together). Reagan’s (set several personal records) this year. It’s been great.”

“I think it’s really fun,” Reagan agreed, saying that being on the team with her older sister is “just like swimming with another teammate.”

The older of the two added she believes swimming has brought them closer together “because of the (early) mornings, and we do hang out with the same group of friends. (We’re) laughing together. We both joke about things a lot more.”

Early mornings, in fact, are a reality for the swim team. Practices are at 5:30 a.m. each morning, and of the sibling groups, the

Kruses are among the earlier risers, getting up around 4:30 (the Remilys, by comparison, push it until the final moments, getting up around 5:15. Both the Rickers and Jensens have a mix of early and late risers).

“We like to eat and stretch — and then get there early,” Kennedy said of their preferred unrushed morning routine.

In the pool, though, noted Reagan, her older sister is anything but slow.

“Kennedy moves really fast when she swims,” she said. “Me, I don’t move fast.”

The younger sister added that because of their swimming styles, they should be in the opposite races — Kennedy in the shorter races and Reagan in the longer.

“It actually should be the other way around,” Reagan said.

Kennedy pointed out, however, that the mental aspect of a longer endurance race fits her better.

“During sprint sets, it’s hard for me to go all out and put my whole brain into it. I’m better at enduring through (a longer race),” Kennedy said.

The mentality going into a race is also vastly different in the Ricker family, especially between sisters Romaine and Laramie.

“I try to run through the races in my head, what I’m going to do,” Romaine said. “If I panic, I run to my siblings or my teammates, and I’ll cheer them on and start getting more positive vibes.”

Laramie is the polar opposite, which translates well into her races as a sprinter since she does the 100 and 200 freestyle (she’s also done the 50 in the past).

“As a sprinter you have to not be afraid of just going. Just get up on the block and go,” she said.



The four sets of siblings is the most La Grande Head Coach Darren Dutto can recall having on a single team a during his 14 years leading the programs.

Caden has also become a sprinter, moving away from the 100 breaststroke as one of his events two years ago.

“I was basically following in the footsteps of (older brother) Dean to a certain degree in the 100 breast,” he said. “My whole family is pretty decent at breaststroke, but after my sophomore year I couldn’t swim breaststroke as fast so I went to 50 (freestyle) and became a sprinter. Now I’m more of a 100 free and 200 free (swimmer), and that’s what I’m good at.”

Several of the other sibling sets pointed to the Rickers as the hardest workers on the team. Caden said it comes down to the family’s work ethic.

“If I’m going to be there, I have to go the whole time, otherwise it’s not worth it,” he said.

Romaine noted that, during practice, she and her siblings stay focused for the

most part.

“We don’t really talk a lot (during practice),” she said. “Sometimes I’ll give them a high five and (encourage) them to go faster. Personally, what gets me going is cheering other people on.”

But they’re by no mean fun mongers.

“There was one time we were (practicing starts), I had to come up because I was choking I was laughing so hard,” Laramie, the comedian of the group, said. “I just remember Caden started laughing too (and I was) laughing my head off”

The Ricker sisters also team up on relays.

“I really enjoy having Laramie on my relay,” Romaine said. “It’s something special we can share looking back in a couple years, how we won districts — hopefully.”

But with so many families on one team, how does it impact the entire team

dynamic?

“I think it’s great because it brings some stability to the team,” Coach Dutto said. “You have a bunch of kids who know each other between the sibling sets, and then kids who have known each other for a long time. It’s nice as a coach because (the team is) already a fairly cohesive unit.”

In fact, Dutto called this group one of the most close-knit in his 14 years coaching at LHS, ranking it with the 2008-09 team, which he called “probably the closest team I’ve had.”

“They tend to support each other really well,” he said. “The great thing is a lot of them are experienced. They take the new kids under their wing and help them out. It’s a good experience all around.”

Or, as Grayson put it, “All the families being on the team make it more (of a) family.”

Union boys, girls sweep

Observer staff

Abriel O’Reilly led four players in double figures with 12 points and four 3-pointers as the Union Bobcats girls basketball team rolled to a 61-23 blowout win over the Weston-McEwen TigerScots at home in Blue Mountain Conference play Wednesday.

Union surged ahead 17-4 after the first quarter and rolled from there, taking a 22-point lead at the half and going up by 25 points after three at 42-17.

Audrey Wells had 11 points and both Kaylin Nowak and Brianna Kohr had 10 for Union, which knocked down eight 3-pointers on the night.

The Bobcats (12-9 overall, 6-5 BMC) wrap up the regular season tonight at Pilot Rock.

Boys UNION BOYS EKE OUT WIN

The Union Bobcats boys basketball team rallied from a slim halftime deficit to win a 74-70 shootout at home over the Weston-McEwen TigerScots Wednesday in Blue Mountain Conference play.

Union, which trailed 37-36 at the half, inched ahead by three after three quarters at 54-51, then held on down the stretch for the win, which kept them in the running for second place in the BMC.

Tate Lantis had a double-double with 21 points and 12 rebounds for the Bobcats. Keegan Glenn led the way in scoring with 24 points and Cole McLean chipped in with 11 points and four steals.

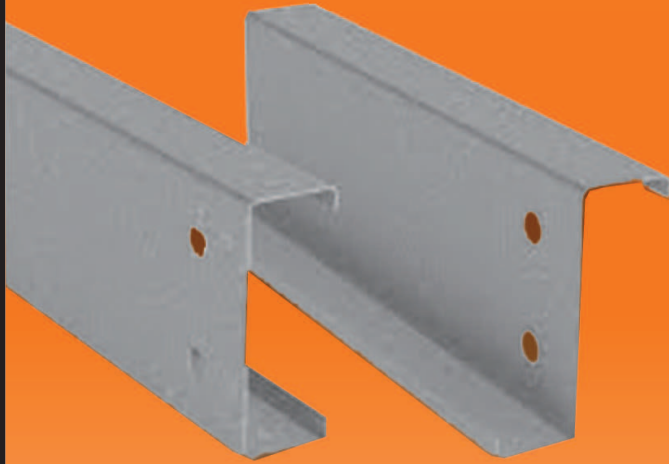
Union (14-7 overall, 7-4 BMC) finishes the regular season tonight at Pilot Rock.



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