

As weather warms, athletes fire up for spring sports

EMMALIE COX & MAX HAYS

Staff Reporters

Spring sports, including baseball, softball, tennis, lacrosse, golf and track, begin before the winter season is even over. Practices are underway and teams are looking to contend in the Three Rivers League and beyond.

BASEBALL

In the immortal words of Sammy Sosa, "Baseball has been very, very good to me." It's been good for West Linn over the last few years as well. The team finished last season with an impressive record of 20-9, won the Three Rivers League Championship and won two State home playoff games before being eliminated by Westview in an extra-inning thriller during the State semi-finals.

The team has many goals for the 2008 season as well, including establishing winning attitudes, academic success in the classroom, a chance to compete for the State Championship, and repeating as TRL Champions.

"Our expectation this year is that we will settle for nothing less, and we will be working very hard for the opportunity to play in Salem for the state championships," Mike Lord, coach, said.

Returning players include Kyle Kraus, senior, and three time All-State player, who has signed a letter of intent to play baseball at University of Portland; Justin Monahan, senior, and returning First Team All League player, and Ryan Barnes, junior, and returning All State baseball player. Barnes has a verbal agreement to play baseball at Oregon State University.

If last year is any indication, their rivals to beat this spring are Lake Oswego, Clackamas and Oregon City.

SOFTBALL

Jamie LeVeque, softball coach, looks forward to new faces, but is worried about the lack of the number of girls signed up.

"We could be as good offensively as last year, but probably not defensively," LeVeque said. Goals for the season are to be competitive and make the playoffs. LeVeque also hopes to beat Rex Putnam two out of three, a feat that will not be easy to repeat.

Returning players include McKenna Pyeatt, Ashley Bruser and Sachie Hopkinson, juniors, and Rhianna Russell and Carley Dolder, sophomores. Advice for incoming players would be to play softball during the summer to prepare for the competition at high school level.

TENNIS

Boys'

Hopes for the season include winning the TRL Championship and a state doubles title. "We should be more experienced. We had a lot of sophomores last year who now are juniors," Ward Lewis, coach, said. However, Lewis is worried about the rain and a shortened season.

Lewis hopes this year to go an undefeated 14-0. Returning players include Collin Bundy, Nicholas Russel and Toby Reutter-Harrah, seniors, Christopher Erbin, Brett Wright, Ryan Nesbit, Sam Tingey, Miles Rifkin and Brett Wright, juniors.

Tryouts are after President's Day, and the first match is March 10 against Beaverton. Advice for incoming players is to start playing out in the cold.

"There is very little time to form the team, so have your game in order and your play at a high level when you come out," Lewis said.

Girls'

Aaron Downs, Girls' Tennis Coach, looks forward to the team coming back strong. This year, they want to qualify as many players for State as possible.

"We'll do well. We lost some key players but I know others will step up," Downs said.

Returning players include Alexandra Smith, senior, Danika Tonning and Kellie Kawasaki, juniors. Rivals to beat are Lake Oswego and Lakeridge. Practices start at the end of February, and look for posts about informational meetings, which are yet to be scheduled.

LACROSSE

Boys'

Three returning captains plus returning starters may well put the Boys' Lacrosse Team in contention for the Three Rivers League title. They hope to make it to the final four in the State tournament.

Last year, the team finished third in the Three Rivers League. They advanced to the State playoffs with a win over Wilson, but lost at Churchill in the second round.

"We don't have many seniors, but I think this group is very hungry to make sacrifices for each other to get West Linn back in the final four," Mark Flood, coach, said.

Returning starters include Connor Deeks, Shannon Sirvaitis, Spencer Smith and Nick Peppler, seniors, and Ryan Squires, Jeff Janoff, Paul Garcia and Drew Forseth, juniors. Primary rivals this year include Lakeridge and Lake Oswego.

Girls'

Allister Bunch, head coach, is looking forward to a season with a positive atmosphere where every player will be able to improve personally and have fun, while at the

same time winning one game at a time with hopes of making the playoffs.

Last year the team made it to the semi-finals in State, where they lost to eventual State champions, St. Mary's. Players returning on a team dominated by seniors include Solveig Lee, Sara Johnson, Shannon Edwards, Erika Busch, Samantha Dewart and Malia Chong along with Kristen Brown, Karina Dewart, Jenna Hoogstraet and Jenna Steele, juniors, and Brittney Spurgeon, sophomore.

GOLF

Boys' and Girls' Golf teams hope to kick off the year with a strong start. Lake Oswego, Lakeridge and Clackamas are returning a number of great

players so competition is going to be fierce for the boys according to Shawn Hoffman, assistant coach.

"Realistically the boys have a chance for second and third place in league. The girls' team should be very strong as we have both returning players and incoming freshman with experience," Hoffman said.

Rivals to beat this season are Lake Oswego, Lakeridge and Clackamas. Tryouts begin Feb. 18 and will last about two weeks. Additional information can be found on the high school website.

TRACK & FIELD

Joe Cerny, head track coach, hopes that this year's team will be more exciting than

ever. With a young team and a strong distance and throwing crew, both the boys and the girls have a good chance of returning as one of the top teams in the district.

For the boys, top returners include distance runners Ben Morrow, Michael Bernert and Taylor Kolasinski, seniors, sprinter and jumper, Nico Matthews, junior, and throwers Josh Oltman and Alexander Schlitt, juniors.

For the girls, top returners include distance runners Natalie Pittenger, senior, and Taylor Nowlin, junior, sprinter Taylor Brooke, junior, and throwers Samantha Dewart and Ali Super, seniors.

With practices starting Feb. 19, the team hopes to see a strong turnout for the season.

Helmkamp's Hits

Sports related injuries lead to life of recovery,

JON HELMKAMP

Staff Reporter

I can't help but wonder why more and more teenagers have been sustaining injuries that require serious surgery, such as a torn meniscus, torn anterior cruciate ligament or a torn achilles tendon. There have been several cases of these injuries this year, and it worries me that kids are putting this much stress on their body at such an early age.

If we're putting this tremendous amount of pressure on our bodies now, then what's going to happen later, when we're middle aged? We're already starting to seriously damage our bodies and set ourselves up for a life of bad knees, bad backs and bad shoulders. Based on common trends, our generation is going to be in worse health than our parents were when we enter retirement. This is the first time in generations that this has happened.

Most of these injuries come from playing sports. Why are all these injuries happening when safety rules and

equipment are supposedly advancing? School sports have increased and upgraded their safety equipment, and rules continue to be put into action to help prevent injuries. Yet despite all of these improvements, serious injuries still take place.

I'm not saying that teenagers shouldn't play sports. Sports are a great part of

been taking place.

Much of this has to do with the competitive environment of team sports. There is so much pressure to outrun, outplay and outlast your opponents that sometimes athletes don't think about the risk of what they're doing. They're willing to put themselves out there, to go all out to try and make that amazing catch or to score that game-winning goal. Sometimes, being too competitive puts them into a position where they are putting their bodies at risk.

Competitive spirit is a crucial element of sports. Risking it all for your teammates and the passion of the game is what adds that drama, that excitement and passion that makes sports worth playing. No one can expect athletes to diminish that drive and passion for excellence, but something has to be done to decrease the risk of serious injury when they lay themselves out there. Student athletes need to be protected but they also need to be smart about how to avoid injuries.



growing up. You learn lessons about how to be a part of a team, about dedication, about hard work and about learning to give your best effort; all valid and good reasons to play sports. Sports give you an outlet. They are also a great source of exercise and are great for your overall wellbeing. Nonetheless, something has to be done to change the number of serious injuries that have

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