

Baseball team's dreams of attaining State title comes to grinding halt

JON HELMKAMP

co-Editor-in-Chief

This year was supposed to be the year. With the immensely talented group of seniors on the Varsity Baseball Team that has fallen short of the State title each of the last three years, many thought that this year would end with a State Championship trophy. Abruptly, the dream ended against Tigard on May 20.

West Linn ended the year strong, going 14-1 since April 7 and finished the season by outscoring their opponents 52-11 in their last four games. They took that momentum with them going into the first round of the State playoffs, and kept it going after their victory.

In the first round game against the South Medford Panthers, the Lions won 7-4 behind the arm of Kyle Kraus, senior, and his complete game bid, giving up only three hits and striking out 12 Panther hitters. All four runs were charged to him, but only three

of the four went down as earned runs. Their offense was carried primarily on the bat of Joseph Offer, senior, who went 3-4 with 3 runs batted in.



Kyle Kraus, senior, winds up to deliver a pitch against South Medford on May 16. Kraus gave up only five hits and three earned runs while striking out 12 batters.

Photo by Jon Helmkamp

After their win against South Medford, West Linn aimed to square off on the road with the Tigard Tigers, a team that seemed to pose no threat. West Linn was 15-3 in the Three Rivers League during the regular season. Tigard was 8-7 in the Pacific League. Many thought that this game was only going to be a speed bump in West Linn's road to glory.

"We thought we had a good shot. We knew we were going to face good pitching and were going to have to be productive with runners in scoring position, but we felt good," Mike Lord, Varsity Baseball Coach, said.

However, this game proved not to be the walk in the park that was expected. With one swing of the bat which was gripped by Tigard's number nine hitter, the Lions were eliminated from the playoffs. The game was tied 1-1 going into the final inning, a game highlighted by outstanding defense and solid pitching from both teams.

"They threw their number one guy at us. We only struck out four times, but we didn't hit the ball hard. Both teams played great defense, there was only one error in the game," Lord said. The only error in the game came on behalf of Tigard.

Reed Nicholson, senior, pitched a complete game, allowing one run through the first six innings, keeping

his team in the game. In the seventh inning, with a runner on first after being walked on four pitches, the batter took Nicholson's fastball and hit a high fly ball over the right field fence.

"Reed threw him a good fastball, and he hit a good pitch. He was pretty bummed. I told him not to let one pitch get in the way of how he did. He pitched a heck of a game," Lord said.

"I was disappointed, you hate to lose like that. But you have to tip your hat to them, they played a good game and executed when they had to," Lord said.

A group of seniors on the team have been together during high school and some of them were Little League teammates. Justin Monahan, Kraus, Nicholson, Offer, Spencer Flores and Max Cathcart, seniors, and Ryan Barnes, junior, were a part of the 12 year-old All Star team in 2002 that went to the Little League World Series in Williamsport, VA. They went all the way to a third place finish in the United States division.

After the game that ended their high school careers, Lord's focus wasn't on the game. "We didn't talk about the game, we talked about our themes for the year: facing adversity, dealing with things when things get tough, and hard work ethic. The older guys were truly disappointed with the loss, but they have nothing to be ashamed of," Lord said.

That one swing of the bat that brought the Lions' season to a close was the end of much more than just a season. That swing marked the end of an era where this group of seniors became more than teammates, but became friends. This group played together, grew together, and created a strong family-like bond. They were a team that played together as one. After this season, there is a good chance that they will never get to take the field together again.

"These seniors have had as good a four year run as any class in the state of Oregon. They went 10-4 in playoffs the last four years. That's something to be very proud of," Lord said.

Historic Yankee Stadium to be torn down

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The shrine of Major League Baseball, home to more hall of famers than any other ballpark, will be no more than a cloud of dust and debris this fall, when after 85 years, it is torn to the ground. Yankee Stadium opened the 1923 season for the New York Yankees with a young slugger named George Herman "Babe" Ruth hitting a monster home run deep into the bleacher seats leading a 4-1 against the Boston Red Sox.

Yankee Stadium has become the most historic site in Major League Baseball. In its opening season it hosted the World Series, which the Yankees won over the New York Giants in six games. This was the first of 26 World Series titles that the Yankees won and the first of 37 World Series at Yankee Stadium.

After the 1973 season, the stadium was almost torn to the ground during renovation. The

original roof and the copper facade that lined the rim of the stadium were lost, with only a small part of the copper reclaimed and installed along the top of the scoreboard. In the new Yankee Stadium that will be in commission next season, a replica of the old copper facade will be featured at the top of the stadium.

Yankee Stadium, which has been deemed "the house that Ruth built," has been host to more than just baseball games. It's hosted everything from college and pro football, soccer, political assemblies and religious conventions. It's played host to concerts, the circus, 33 boxing championships, the 1923 Army-Navy game, and was also the site of the Nov. 12, 1928 Notre Dame-Army game where Knute Rockne made his famous "win one for the Gipper" pep talk. The Fighting Irish went out and beat the Cadets, 12-6 after a deadlocked 0-0 score at the half.

Oh yeah, it's also been a pit stop for several popes. On Oct. 4, 1965, with the Yankees out of the World Series for only the third time in 17 years, the Stadium hosted an event of worldwide significance. During his first visit to North America, Pope Paul VI celebrated mass before a crowd in excess of 80,000. Fourteen years later, Pope John Paul II also made Yankee Stadium a stop on his tour of the United States.

After this season, Yankee Stadium will be demolished and baseball's most celebrated team will move into a new home across the street. The

new stadium will keep the same field dimensions — 318' to left field, 408' to center, and 314' to right. It will also preserve Monument Park, a park dedicated to past Yankee greats.

"This new home preserves our tradition and restores some of the lost treasures from the 1923 stadium: the great cathedral windows, the frieze on the roof, the old auxiliary scoreboards in the outfield, along with a host of other things. It maintains the playing field as it is today, relocates Monument Park and keeps all the great features fans have come to love of the present stadium," Randy Levine, Yankees President, said.

"This new stadium will provide new comforts and features and will be state of the art in every way. It will have comfortable seating, great service and new entertainment venues," Levine said. "It will be the most spectacular, fan-friendly stadium ever built. As the boss insists, it will cater to the needs of our fans."

Despite the new Yankee Stadium being an amazing venue and a great tribute to the Yankee tradition, it is still not the Yankee Stadium. It will not be "the house that Ruth built," the place where legends of the game played, the site where 26 World Series were clinched, nor will it be the field where Lou Gherig gave his teary-eyed goodbye. Major League Baseball will be losing a significant part of baseball's history, and the United States will forever lose one of the most treasured icons of this country.

Boys' Tennis wins league, girls make league history

KELSEY SCHRADER

Staff Reporter

After suffering a loss in its opening league match of the season, it looked unlikely that the Boys' Tennis Team would finish this year atop of the Three Rivers League standings. However, powered by a ten match win streak, the Lions finished the season 12-1, (9-1), with their lone loss against Lakeridge coming at the beginning of league play.

Top doubles team comprised of juniors Miles Rifkin and Christopher Erbin won the TRL title for the third consecutive year. At Districts they defeated Lake Oswego's top team 6-3, 6-2. The team only dropped seven games in four matches prior to reaching the championship match. They opened their State campaign by ousting McKay 6-1, 6-0 before taking down a difficult team from Sprague in the quarterfinals, 6-4, 7-6(3).

"The match against Sprague was really important for the guys," Ward Lewis, coach, said. "Sprague was very good, probably a team that should have been seeded, but our guys responded well and played a fantastic match."

In the semifinals, Erbin and Rifkin routed Jesuit's top doubles team 6-3, 6-1 to reach the State Championship for the second consecutive year. The finals was a rematch of the 2007 Championship match, when North Medford topped West Linn fairly easily 6-3, 6-2. The 2008 final started in similar fashion, as the team from

Medford jumped out to a 6-4, 3-0 lead. Rifkin and Erbin responded however, winning six of the next seven games to take the match into a decisive third set. In the decider, West Linn came within one point of winning the title before Medford stormed back to claim their second consecutive Championship 6-4, 4-6, 7-5. Rifkin and Erbin earned fifth place in State for West Linn as a team.

"I have seen a lot of terrific matches in all my years of coaching," Lewis said.

The girls also made a strong State run, as everyone who competed won a match. The doubles team of Alix Smith, senior, and Kellie Kawasaki, junior, competed well all tournament before falling to the eventual State Champs from Lake Oswego. The team's most noteworthy performance came against a tough team from Sprague, who then defeated 6-3, 6-1. The girls also gave Lake Oswego its toughest match of the tournament, prior to the finals, losing 6-3, 6-3.

In singles, Danika Tanning, junior, drew a tough draw at State for the second consecutive year. She fell in a tough first match to the eventual third place finisher, then went onto win her first match in consolation, losing just one game. She then lost a close match to a Beaverton opponent in a rematch of their opening meeting of the year.

In addition, the team earned a share of TRL title by beating Lake Oswego who, in the 28 year history of the TRL, had never lost a dual match.

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