

Sports

Different season, same ending: Girls' Golf Team crowned State champion for second straight year

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Champion is a word interspersed throughout the Girls' Golf team's legacy over the past few years. Champion as in team State champion for the second year in a row. Champion as in 2009 individual champion Sharon Shin, senior. Champion as in this year's individual State champion, Morgan Thompson, senior.

"I am so happy for our girls. The girls have practiced very hard in preparation for that moment, so I was very excited for them," head coach Bob Turnquist said. "You have no idea if you will ever win a state championship, you just try to be in a position to be prepared to win."

Shin and Thompson's careers as Lions can't be described as anything less than historic. Each of the four years the pair has been on the team, they have finished in the top five at State. As a sophomore, Shin won an individual championship at State. This year, it was



Photo courtesy of Morgan Thompson
Morgan Thompson, senior, admires her shot at Districts. The Lions won Districts and finished first at State while Thompson was crowned individual State champion.

Thompson's turn to be champion.

"It was really exciting and emotional," Thompson said. "This year winning the individual title was really special and walking the last few holes with my coach for the last time was very bittersweet."

"I can't even describe how

proud I am of the two of them and all of things they have accomplished over the last four years," Turnquist said.

"I am excited for their future as college players and I know they will accomplish great things. It has been truly a pleasure to get to know them so well."

In the past three years, the

State match has ended with a West Linn individual or team in first place, culminating this year when the Lions had both an individual and team State champion. It was the first time since 1994 the individual and team champion hailed from the same school. Turnquist says multiple factors contributed to the successes

"We have a ton of talented kids in the West Linn area that have decided to make golf their focus," he said. "It is not rare to have one talented player on a team, but to have 8-10 kids every year is unbelievable. The girls have learned to make the sport very fun and social in their own way. Golf can be very isolating, and these girls have learned to work through that."

Shin and Thompson were the only two returners from last year's team. Joining them were three freshman: Kristin Elich, Sarah Archuleta and Tiffany Lee. Archuleta finished seventh in the tournament. Overall, the Lions set a State record with a two day score of 627. The

team beat second place Jesuit by 25 strokes.

"To go back-to-back at State was awesome. I hope West Linn Girls' Golf continues to be a strong force in Girls Golf," Thompson said.

At Districts, the Lions took first, as was the case for most of the season. Over the two days of Districts, the Lions shot an astounding 599, beating the second place team by 80 strokes.

With three returning golfers, the Lions could potentially be a force again next year. Meanwhile, it is on to college for Shin and Thompson. Shin will be headed to California State University Northridge and Thompson will be attending University of California Berkeley.

"The four years on the team are four years I will never forget. I've made some of the best memories and best friends as well," Thompson said. "It's been an amazing run and I'm looking forward to having another great four years with collegiate golf."

Six distance runners battle adversity, develop bonds to bring stability throughout their four years on Varsity

SEAN PEBLER

It's not often that a group of young athletes can command an entire division of its track team throughout four consecutive seasons. However, Taylor West, Cullen Wannarka, Timothy Donnelly, Graham Frank, Jefferson Chandler and Zachary Boyd-Helm, seniors, have directed the Boys' Distance Crew to triumph and success during their respective high school careers.

"It was fun to watch these runners grow up," John Linman, head coach, said. "They come to us as 14 year-old freshmen and leave four years later ready to pursue college."

For four straight seasons, these six runners have dominated their particular sport, pushing each other to new personal bests and challenging each other for Varsity spots.

"We're all pretty competitive, so we'll usually work pretty hard to beat each other in workouts and races," Wannarka said.

The group has been able to constructively foster growth due to its friendships on and off the track. Many of these

runners share close bonds, and spend much of their free time with each other.

"As good friends, we

exercises."

One of the circumstances that each member of the crew shares in common is that

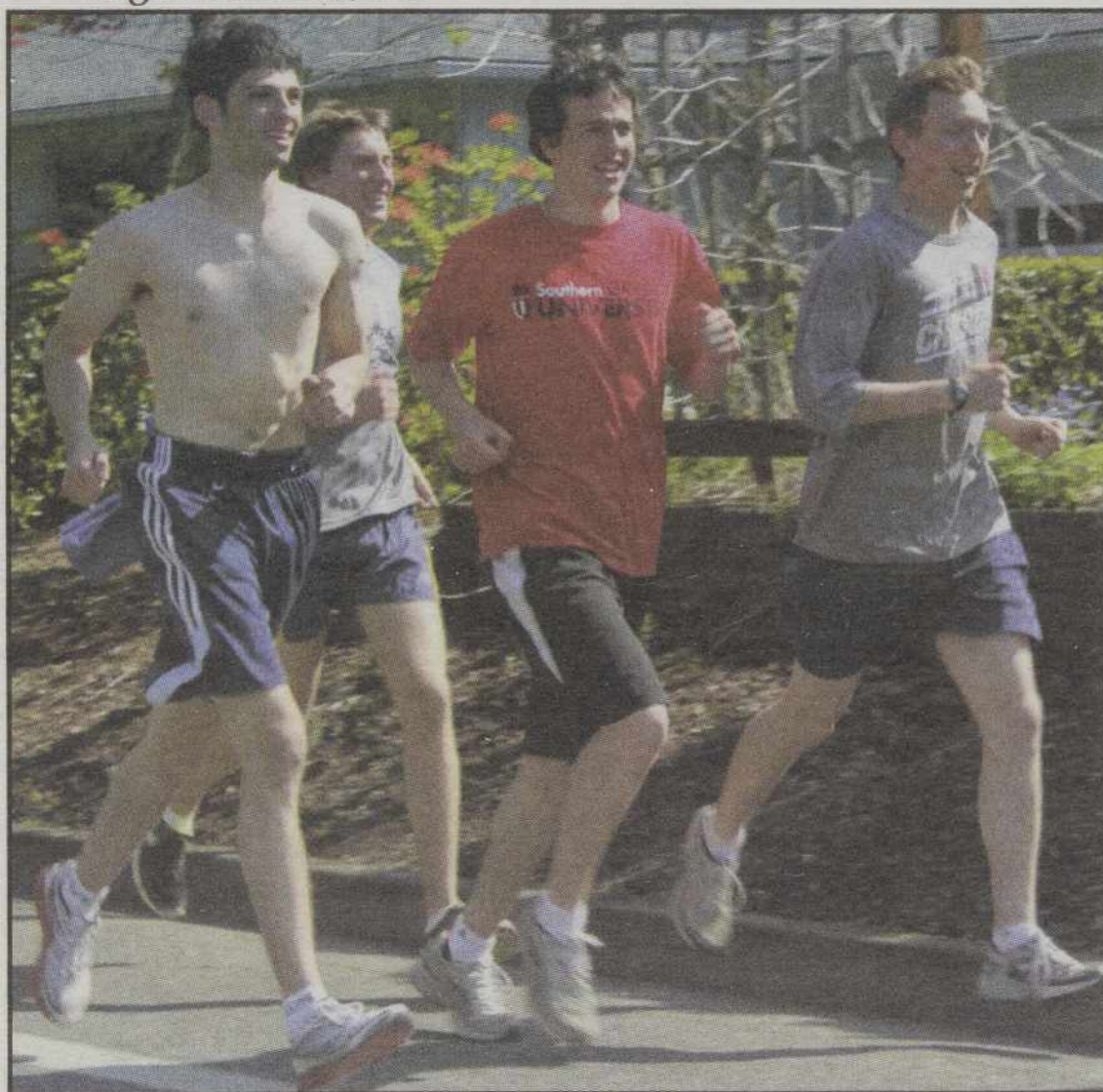


Photo by Laurel Massaro
Timothy Donnelly, Graham Frank, Zachary Boyd-Helm and Jefferson Chandler, seniors, jog along West A Street during a practice in preparation for the District Meet. The four runners, along with Taylor West and Cullen Wannarka, seniors, have competed with each other on the Varsity Distance Crew for four years.

always want each other to do well," Chandler said. "Healthy competition between ourselves is one way, as well as sharing tips about form, rest, nutrition and

they have all faced extreme adversity in their selective careers.

"When I got walking pneumonia last year during track, my season fell apart,"

Wannarka said. "It was really disappointing for me."

Wannarka hasn't been the only one to have his season marred by injury or illness. West is currently battling a torn anterior cruciate ligament suffered when he was moving furniture.

"Tearing my ACL about a month ago and wrecking my senior track season has been challenging. It has honestly just been a great reflection time to know what I want to pursue in life," West said.

Through the highs and lows the runners have stuck together, remaining the guiding force for younger athletes aspiring to be on Varsity. All of them are pursuing distance running as part of their life after high school, with some going on to compete for prestigious running universities. Boyd-Helm and West will each be attending Southern Oregon University in the fall.

"(Zach) is our best track runner, having run the second fastest 800 meter in school history. He will have a great college career," Linman said. "(Taylor) is our best cross country runner, having won the district cross country meet this year."

Others will be competing in distance running out-of-state. Frank will run for Colorado College, while Chandler will travel to the east coast to compete for Southern Virginia University. Recently, Wannarka committed to Iowa State University on a running scholarship.

"(Graham) is our hardest worker, and will just get better as time goes on," Linman said. "(Jefferson) has had a great senior year in both cross country and track."

Donnelly is the only member of the group who will not be competing at the next level, but he still expects to run and sustain his fitness outside of school. He will be studying engineering at Purdue University.

"Tim is the best team athlete we have," Linman said. "When I ask him what distance he wants to race, his response is always 'whatever the team needs'. He has been the easiest runner to coach of all our seniors."

After the team placed third overall in the State Meet last season, the runners have only to improve this season to leave a lasting legacy in the West Linn distance program.