

VHS Spring Sports Preview

The weather has been especially uncooperative this spring for the VHS Sports Teams. Rain-outs and indoor practices have been the norm as our teams try to prepare for their upcoming seasons. The following is an early season look at what to expect from this year's spring sports squads.

Baseball-- Last year head Coach Aaron Miller fielded a very young squad; this year's squad is still young, but has some players who are returning with varsity experience they gained last year. With twenty-three players on his squad, fifteen of them sophomores and freshman, Miller has been able to field a JV team for the first time in a few years. "That's a good sign for our program," says Miller.

Miller is isn't sure what his squad is capable of this year. Miller has four seniors, two of them with no previous varsity experience, and two juniors. He also has a few players who have transferred into the district since last year and three players that have come over from the Jewel School through a co-op program to play for VHS. The lack of opportunities to see his kids play out on the field because of weather cancellations hasn't helped either. But as the Loggers begin league play at home against Clatskanie on April 13th, Miller is optimistic. "Clatskanie and Rainier will be the teams to beat in our league," says Miller, "and we'll be battling for the third spot. That's a realistic goal for us."

Returning All-League senior pitcher Alex Lende is one of the top pitchers in the league, and gives Miller a solid, experienced arm to send out to the mound. The other senior, Tim Brown, offers experience and will fill the role of utility player. "Alex Lende is definitely our team leader-- he leads us on the mound and is solid hitting and in the field," said Miller. "Having Tim Brown in there with his glove and his bat and his utility ability-- he's someone I can put in there anywhere and he'll fill in and do a solid job."

T.J. White, who made All League Honorable Mention as a freshman last year will handle most of the

catching duties and will also step in as a pitcher. "T.J. is a real solid ballplayer and has a lot of potential to do real well at the high school level and beyond," says Miller. "He's solid behind the plate, he has a great arm, and hits the ball extremely well." Sophomore Jackson Miller returns at shortstop and anchors the infield.

Other pitching options include Lucas Foster from Jewell, Miller, Brown and sophomore Ryan Lawrence, a transfer student from Dallas.

Jackson Miller and sophomore Josh Butcher spent some time at a base-



Alex Lende will lead the VHS Logger baseball team this season.

ball hitting camp this past summer and Coach Miller has seen some real improvements. "They both have been hitting the ball real well this spring," says Miller.

Miller also mentioned sophomore transfer student, Zack Schattschneider from Ohio as a solid ballplayer who should contribute at the varsity level.

Softball-- Randy Shockey returns to coaching softball this year as Head Coach of the team this year. The Lady Loggers were 3-1 in non-league games to start and were ready to start the regular season. They won the Seaside Tournament, beating Ilwaco and Taft, and beat Gaston 5-0. "That Gaston game showed us what we could be," said Shockey. "We played almost a perfect game-- we had no errors, made some great defensive plays and got runners on base and moved them around."

Shockey will be fielding a veteran team with a group of seniors who have played together for a number of years. "They're a really good group of kids," he says. "They're very talented and athletic."

The infield is made up of returning First Team All Leaguers, Bonnie Birkmaier at third base, Souvanny Miller at second base and Karly DeWitt at utility infielder, along with Second Teamer, Amy Rethwill at first base. Shockey also has Senior Bre Moldonado who gives him depth in the infield and returning All League Honorable Mention players Chelsea Patton in the outfield and Catcher Ariel Rock. Senior Melissa Sandstrom and Megan Rock will also play in the outfield and Adrienne East will be the main pitcher.

"Defense is going to be very important for us this year," says Shockey. "Bonnie Birkmaier is a phenomenal fielder. Karly DeWitt has great range and Bre Moldonado has a great glove and a very strong arm. Souvanny Miller is very solid and the same with Amy Rethwill. Melissa Sandstrom is good defensively in left field and Chelsea Patton in center is so quick and covers so much ground out there. She has a great glove. We need to not make mistakes that give teams a chance against us."

Offensively, Shockey expects Birkmaier to lead the team along with East and DeWitt. "We've had different people step up at times and hit the ball, we've just had trouble putting it all together where everybody is hitting at the same time," says Shockey. "And we haven't really seen outstanding pitching yet, so it will be interesting to see how we do when we get into league play."

Again, Clatskanie and Rainier appear to be the teams to beat in league play. "If we play the way we did against Gaston, I think we can beat anyone in the league," said Shockey.

Track and Field-- The girls will be leading the way on this year's VHS Track and Field Team. Head Coach Byron Brown and Assistant Coach Teresa Williams have a strong group of talented and athletic young ladies on their team. "They are the strength of our team this year," said coach Brown.

The early season meets have yielded some great individual performances from the sprinters and in the long jump and high jump. Even more impressive, early in the year the girls 4x100 meter relay team had posted the second best time in the state in Division

3A. That relay team is made up of senior Katy Stevens, junior Nora Hieronimus, sophomore Kim Allen and freshman Sami Lindauer-- all four of those girls are also ranked in the top ten in the state individually in the 100 meters. Allen, Hieronimus and Stevens were ranked in the top ten in the 200 meters, and Stevens was highly ranked in the 400 meters.

Sami Lindauer has won the high jump at the last two meets; Kim Allen has twice won the long jump, and Sami Morgan won the 1500 meters at the last meet.

"What everyone needs to remember is the teams we compete against have real tracks to practice on," says Brown. "The fact that these girls are doing so well shows that they are great athletes. They have taken a lot of responsibility themselves and they know what they are capable of achieving. They are a rare group that have set their goals and they are willing to go out there and work to achieve them. I think it says a lot about what kind of people they are and what they can accomplish in their future. I'm really proud of them already."

With only ten boys on the team, freshman Nathan Fleck has been highly competitive in the 1500 meters and senior Levi Timmerman and junior Alex Barber have the potential to do well in field events.

"If the whole team continues to improve, I think we could be a real threat at districts this year, and that would be the first time that has ever really happened," says Brown.

Golf-- The weather has certainly made things difficult for Coach James Brookins and the VHS Golf team. "The weather has been uncooperative and we've had to play in some horrible conditions," said Brookins about the early part of the season.

Last year's team leader, junior Paul Whiteman, has struggled early this season finding his form. Other top players this season look to be seniors Wayne Fogel and Calvin Barnes and underclassmen Jake Alf and Ryan Roberts. An unexpected and exciting surprise has been foreign exchange student Su Min Kim, a young lady from South Korean who is competing well with the boys on the team.

"We look to be a middle of the pack team in our league this year," said Brookins, "and we'll see improvement as the year goes along."



Calling All Band Geeks

By Rob Izzett-- VHS Band Teacher

I think it is safe to say that football season in Vernonia is nearly a religious experience. No matter how well the team is playing in a given year, one can predict that the stands will be full for every home game. And that is what I love about teaching in a small town. The town rallies around its kids. And what fall event brings more excitement than the Homecoming football game? While it is always preferable for the home team to win its Homecoming game, the truly important thing is that former students return from all over the state to experience that Friday night event once again.

It is because of Homecoming that I am writing this article. Since arriving in Vernonia, I have always wanted to include former band members in the Homecoming festivities. The last three years have seen the band perform on the field, with two of those being in their new marching uniforms. But next fall, I want to do something really special for

this town and its alumni. So, I am inviting any former Vernonia High School band alumni, or parents of band kids, or any adults who still play their band instrument, or wish to play it again, to give me a call. In other words-- "Calling all Band Geeks!"

Without giving away too much-- because this will be a surprise for the people attending the football game-- you will need to get a copy of the song we are playing at half time, as well as the, um, choreography, from me before school ends this year. It may require one or two brief rehearsals, but nothing too excruciating. I really do want this to be something, the likes of which Vernonia has never seen at a halftime show in this berg. So contact me, Mr. Izzett, at rizzet@vernonia.k12.or.us, or call the school at (503) 429-2046. Please don't let the fact that you have not played your instrument in many years scare you away. I can show you that it is not that difficult to get your playing chops back into good enough shape to handle this one performance. I am looking forward to hearing from you.

VHS Band to Host Joint Concert

The VHS Band will hold a joint concert with the visiting Molalla High School Band on April 19th at 1:00 P.M. in the school gymnasium. The public is invited to attend.

According to VHS Band Instructor Rob Izzett, this is the second year for this event. "Last year, our band went to Molalla; this year, we get to be the host," said Izzett. "Each band will play a few numbers on their own, then the bands will have a chance to perform together."

This is just one more activity that Izzett has organized for his band students that has helped revive the VHS Band Program.

"I'm hoping we get a really good crowd out to support this," said Izzett.