

VHS Winter Sports Preview

Boys Basketball – The Vernonia Loggers are the defending State Champions in Oregon 2A! Let's say that again... the Loggers are the defending State Champions!

Last season head coach David Weller and his staff took a loaded squad all the way to the promised land in Pendleton, at times making it look easy on the way to a 28-1 record. After



Tristan Adams

losing their season opener, the Loggers reeled off 28 straight wins while going undefeated in Northwest League play, and then beat Burns, Bandon and top ranked Regis to win the school's first state team title in almost 40 years.

The last time Vernonia won the state title in basketball was 1978 and that team turned around and won it again the following year. Is a repeat in the works again?

"I have every expectation that we'll be back there in Pendleton," says Weller. "That's my goal, but it's going to be tough."

This year things won't be anywhere near as easy as last season. While Weller returns a solid core group of players, he doesn't have the depth he had last season. The starting five would match up well with anyone in the state, but after that the roster has limited varsity experience.

For Weller, Matt Blair is back this season as his assistant coach and Reed Watson takes over as coach of the JV team.

Seniors Brett Elliott, Tristan Adams, and Brett Jones are a formidable group who have been playing together since middle school and have all been to

Pendleton and know what it will take to get there again. Add junior, team captain Clay Sullivan to the mix, who has been the leader of the team since his freshman year, along with senior varsity returners Luke McCallum and Blake Clark, and you have a lot of potential.

Rounding out the bench will be senior Chase Tolonen, junior Andrew Vazquez, sophomore Jake Handegard, and freshman Kale Sullivan, none of whom have seen any significant varsity playing time in the past.

"We're not going to be deep like we were last year," says Weller. "We'll



Brett Elliott

go as far as our first six guys can take us and hopefully we can get the rest of these guys up to varsity speed quickly."

Clay Sullivan, who was named to the All-Tournament Team in Pendleton will lead the offense and should be one of the top two or three players in the league, if not the state, this season. Sullivan is a great all-around player who always finds a way to contribute, whether it's scoring points, grabbing rebounds, making steals or a great pass.

Elliott, who was also named to the All-Tournament Team, is also an all-around player who is big and strong and can go to the hoop or shoot from outside. Weller will need Elliott to step up and be a team leader, stay positive, and consistently give 100% if the team is going to make it back to Pendleton.

Adams, who led the team in scoring in last year's championship final and is a key part of the Logger offense, has a deadly outside shot and will be counted on to keep defenses honest.

McCallum, at 6'5" will give the Loggers some height and a strong inside presence. He has worked hard in the off season to improve his game and should play an important role.

Jones is a scrappy player who gives Weller a little bit of the intangible. He's a player who hustles, dives for loose balls, plays hard defense, and also scores important points.

"Right now we don't have the swagger that should come with being the state champs," said Weller during the Thanksgiving holiday. "I'd like to see more energy, more intensity,

more passion. We need to develop some leaders that will go out and lead by example with a strong work ethic in practice and hopefully it becomes infectious and contagious and the rest of the guys buy in."

The rest of the Northwest League looks to be improved and will provide a good test for the Loggers this season. Weller says Life Christian and Knappa all return solid squads and look to be tough this year, along with league newcomer Columbia Christian, who made it to the state title game at 1A last year.

"We're going to have to win a lot of tight games this season, a lot of single digit games," says Weller.

The Loggers have some strong early season opponents on their schedule, including a trip to Kennedy on December 6 and a match-up at home against Western Mennonite on December 12, who Weller predicts will be one of the top teams in the state this season. The Loggers open their season by hosting Gervais and Riverdale in the Vernonia Tournament on December 2-3. They open Northwest League play at home against City Christian on December 13 and host Knappa on December 15.

Girls Basketball – The Vernonia girls basketball program, defending champions of the Northwest League, will have a slightly different look this season. Former assistant coach Jim Krahn takes over as head coach for the departed Steve Whiteman, who retired during the summer after leading the

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