

HSSZ: SPRING SPORTS PREVIEWS

■ **Cottage Grove:** The Lions head to North Bend on Friday and Saturday for the Sky-Em League Championships. On the boys side Cottage Grove looks to contend for the league title, led by **Brennen Murphy**, fastest in the league in the 200m (22.41) and second in the 400m (49.96). The boys also have **Jaden Owens** and **Carter Bengtson**, who are both top-four in the league in the 1500m and 3000m. For the girls, sophomore **Allison Palluck** should contend for the podium in the 800m, 1500m and 3000m.

■ **Creswell:** Creswell heads to Siuslaw on Thursday and Friday for the Special District 4 Championships. **Jack Nguyen** leads the boys with the fastest 110m hurdles time in the league (15.74) and second-fastest 300m hurdles (42.16) time. On the girls side, **Samairah Quinones** is the favorite in the javelin, while **Kaitlyn**

TRACK & FIELD

Machado looks for a podium finish in the shot put and discus.

■ **Pleasant Hill:** The Billies also head to Siuslaw for the SD4 meet, with a chance to compete for the podium on the girls side. Freshman **Soleis Jones** leads the league in the 200m (27.04) and is top-five in the 100m and 400m. Junior **Dakota Hyland** is the favorite in the 400m, and both Jones and Hyland are a part of the league's fastest 4x100m time. **Jackson Weller** leads the boys with the league's best long jump mark (20' 2).

■ **Springfield:** Springfield hosts the Midwestern League Championships on Thursday and Saturday. Senior **Kian Lamb** could be one of the top point-getters at the meet, leading the boys league in the 200m (22.92), 400m (51.31) and 300m hurdles (42.03).

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Kylie Rankins will likely lead the girls thanks to being top-three in the league in the shot put (35' 4), discus (123' 3) and javelin (108' 2.5).

■ **Thurston:** As Thurston heads to Springfield on Thursday and Saturday, the girls team should be the favorites to win the league championships. Senior **Breanna Raven** leads the way with the fastest 100m (12.55), 200m (26.06) times, as well as the best triple jump in the league (18' 7). For the boys keep an eye on **Ammon Gallup** in the long jump, **Taylor Carpenter** in the high jump, and **Tyler Raven** in both hurdle events.

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team depending on where they place. For Knutson, that means getting the most out of his best athletes, Murphy being one of those.

Murphy was already locked into three events for this week's Sky-Em League Championships: the 200m, 400m and long jump, where Murphy is third in Class 4A this year. Their goal last Friday was to find a fourth event for Murphy, so they tested out high jump, which Murphy, a senior, hadn't competed in since middle school. He ended up jumping six-feet, tied for seventh in Class 4A this year.

"Jumping six feet today, that's going to put him in the mix next week at league as well, so it's exciting to get him into a fourth event," Knutson said.

Both Murphy and Knutson are hoping that Murphy's success is a sign of what's to come on the team level as well. The Lions boys are coming off a Sky-Em League title and finishing



in fifth at state last season, one point behind Mazama for a top-four finish. This year, the boys are trying to do something that no CGHS boys team has done in decades.

"It's been a long time since the boys finished top-four, I think it's some time in the 1970s. We were one point out last year, and we've been in that situation before. I think in 2018 we set the record for most points scored by the sixth-place team. Most years it was third or fourth," Knutson said.

"So we've been right there, and we've come up short a few times."

Although Knutson said he tries not to discuss the state meet with his

team too much before the district meet, Murphy said it's been a motivating factor for several returners.

"I definitely believe we can get a trophy at state. Last year we were a point off from getting a trophy, so that hurt. I think a lot of us have a chip on our shoulder. And I think we're ready to get a trophy," he said.

Before competing at state though, the Lions must defend their league title this weekend in one of the deepest leagues in Class 4A. Only the top-two finishers in each event automatically qualify for state, so there's very little margin for error. Knutson believes his team has the talent and depth to repeat and compete with the best.

"It's an exciting next couple of weeks. I mean, this is what it's all about, and kids are feeling good," Knutson said. "Ultimately, we want to win the district title. It's a fun thing for the kids to be able to stand up and take that trophy home together, that's a big deal."

Heat, spring runoff slow chinook action

"Spring runoff" is a condition that merited your consideration a few years ago. But the recent heat wave accelerated the melting of our ample statewide snowpack, causing rivers and streams that drain the west Cascades to spike to levels where the quality angling becomes marginal at best.



Frank Armendariz
The Angler's Log

run size and it is still early with plenty of time to see those numbers rebound.

Conversely, lakes across our region are nearly full and in prime condition and trout stocking always ramps up in the spring. The ODFW through April has been busy stocking thousands and thousands of rainbow trout into stillwater resources all over Lane County.

This runoff also has slowed the spring chinook run into the southern tributaries of the Willamette River. At the end of April, just before melting snow began to influence river and stream levels, migrating salmon counted at the Willamette Falls had reached over 500 on a couple of consecutive days – generally a sign that the run is "on." But rising water levels have slowed the falls' count to only about 100 per day. Water temperatures, integral to salmon migration, dropped into the low 50s and is no doubt a contributing factor.

In addition to hatchery trout, most of Lane County lakes offer a multi-species opportunity and hold wonderful numbers of warm-water fish. Some have both large and smallmouth bass, crappie, perch and even bluegill, swimming in lakes where you can troll or bank fish for trout in the morning. Then shift to the flats, flooded timber areas and shallow bays in the afternoon, where bass and other sunfish stage in the spring and early summer.

Less than good news, fluctuating river conditions will last into June. In the near term it will hamper mostly trout anglers on the McKenzie River and other streams that see early spring stocking. And so far only about 3,000 spring salmon have made it past the Willamette Falls. But you can expect the salmon migration to surge in the first weeks of June toward the peak of the run in early July. With numbers expected to exceed 60,000 salmon, this year's run is predicted to be the best Willamette spring migration in a couple of decades.

A snapshot of several local lakes shows conditions are representative of most of the state of Oregon. On Blue River Reservoir at Saddle Dam Landing, the lake level is 50 feet above the end of the ramp. At Cottage Grove Reservoir, the Lake Side boat ramp is 40 feet above the end of the ramp, and at Baker Bay on Dorena, the lake level is 60 feet above the end of the ramp. Hills Creek is also nearly full, the lake level at Packard Creek ramp is 54 above the end of the ramp.

In anticipation of additional runoff, Fall Creek Reservoir has had fluctuations ranging from five to 10 feet and has not yet been dependably accessible from day to day, but should stabilize in time for the Memorial Day weekend and the beginning of the summer season. Lastly, the Dune Lakes in far western Lane County are experiencing conditions that have not been this good in five years.

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BASEBALL & SOFTBALL

Thurston at Springfield doubleheader

■ Thurston baseball (21-3, ranked #1) heads to rival Springfield (5-15, ranked #30) as the Colts look to finish their Midwestern League season undefeated. Thurston's already clinched its fifth-straight league title, but hasn't had an undefeated league run in that span. On the flip side, Thurston softball (12-10, ranked #13) attempts to clinch a post-season berth with a series win at Springfield (1-17, ranked #31).

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