

# All-state senior receiver makes Taft a formidable foe

By Jim Fossum, [sports.lincolncounty.com](http://sports.lincolncounty.com); posted Oct. 8, 2015

Majalise Tolan flashes back to early September last fall and the unsightly trash that cluttered the school parking lot. It was not exactly the way Taft High's principal wanted to greet students and their parents on the first day of school.

"I asked Rylan if he would help pick it up and he did it right away," she said. "At the end of the day, I decided to announce Rylan Fisher as 'Tiger of the Day.' We have had one every day since."

Forever entrenched as an answer to a Tigers trivia question, 17-year-old senior Rylan Fisher is not only a part of tradition at Taft, but promises to leave a lasting imprint in more ways than one upon his graduation this spring.

"Rylan is a great student, athlete and person," Tolan said. "He is kind, respectful and what we want to see in all of our Tigers."

Santiam Christian is likely to get an eyeful of Fisher – but not an armful – at 7 p.m. Thursday at Voris Field, where the returning first-team all-state receiver and the rest of the upstart Tigers will take on the third-ranked Eagles for first place in the Class 3A West Valley League.

"He's not only a great kid, but he catches the ball well, is always where he needs to be and is willing to do whatever it takes to help the team win," Taft football coach James Mick said. "He goes 100 percent whenever he's on the field, so he's pretty invaluable. He just makes us better."

With unique skills, Fisher is counted on to handle the ball from the slot because of his quickness, soft hands and intellect on where to be and how to get there – with or without a caravan of defenders in pursuit.

"It puts me in a very challenging position and it gives me a lot of options to make plays for my team," he said.

"He keeps the offense going in times we really need it. He's there when we need him," Mick said.

Unassuming, Fisher has gained 590 yards in receiving through five games this season, but considers his stats to be team stats. With just under 2,000 (1,918) yards and 20 TDs in 15 varsity games throughout his career, he is the target of great recruiting interest after gaining 1,246 yards and scoring 16 touchdowns



Courtesy photo

First-team all-state receiver Rylan Fisher has earned the respect of his teammates and classmates. "I want to be a student-athlete at a university that will help prepare me for life ahead. After that, I'm not sure where life will take me." - Taft senior star receiver Rylan Fisher

last season while helping lead the Tigers to the state playoffs.

"That led the state in all classifications, so I'm very proud of that team accomplishment," he said. "But the only statistic I am focused on is helping my team win and getting into the state playoffs. League wins are the only stat we are focused on. It's all about the team."

For another few weeks, anyway. After that, it will be off to playing on Saturdays.

"I'm very fortunate to be recruited by some great collegiate football programs," he said, having made visits to several schools, both in Oregon and out of state, and attended a few college camps, including the NW Elite Camp, where more than 25 colleges were represented.

"Coach Mick has really got me in contact with a number of great programs across the country," he said. "With his help and a recruiting service we use, there are about 50 colleges that are recruiting me and following my progress, so that's very humbling."

Fisher keeps in contact with the schools to share his progress and "team stats." He said he hopes to develop a short list after the season and make a decision sometime after signing day in February about where his family can find him.

A Siletz Tribal member, Fisher has three brothers, Kollbei and Keaton, both 19 and Taft High graduates, and Trenton, 13. He also has a younger sister, Lakaya, 9.

Fisher's mother, Becky, works at a local bookstore and has been a fixture for years among the legion of volunteers who assist local youth in North County. Fisher's father, Randy, is director of technology at Chinook Winds Casino Resort.

Rylan, who was born in Lincoln City, excels not only in football, but basketball and baseball. His favorite sport, without hesitation, is football. The math and science enthusiast started in the sport by watching his older brother, Keaton, play when he was younger.

"The first time he helped me put on the pads and snap the helmet on I just knew it was for me," he said.

Fisher doesn't stop there. He credits his older brothers for his success.

"They taught me how to compete and give it everything I have," he said. "And they work just as hard in life as they did in sports."

Meanwhile, his father's professional background has influenced his youngest son enough to spur a keen interest in technology.

"I want to be a student-athlete at a university that will help prepare me for life ahead," Fisher said. "After that, I'm not sure where life will take me."

"Rylan is a unique kid," Taft baseball coach Dustin Hankins said. "He has a heavy family influence. He is a fast and smart player. He's battled injuries most of his career, but he never seems to give up or quit."

"And I really like helping out younger kids," Rylan said, "whether it's being a referee or umpire, a tutor or just hanging out and trying to be a positive influence."

It's a message he hopes to spread.

"I would like to encourage all the young kids to get out there and enjoy sports, all of them," he said. "Don't worry about your athletic ability. Get out there and have fun with your friends. Youth sports are about teamwork, working together and most of all, having fun."

Having grown up together, Fisher has special ties to former Taft quarterback Pete Lahti, the Class 3A Offensive Player of the Year last season and now playing football at Lewis & Clark College in Portland. The Lahti-Fisher tandem was the most feared in small-school Oregon football last fall and statistically among the most threatening in all of the state.

Lahti said Fisher could turn a 10-yard catch into a 70-yard touchdown with his athleticism, sacrifice his body for the good of another couple of yards and a first down for a back, or share his intuition and knowledge with teammates and classmates so that they, too, could excel in sports and life, in general.

"Student-athletes can learn a lot from him," Lahti, the school's Class of 2015 valedictorian, said. "The way he carries himself and takes care of business in the classroom, on the field and in the community is truly something special."

## Art of Excellence 2015 contest invites student submissions on variety of topics

The Oregon Department of Education and the Oregon Arts Commission call all student artists to participate in the Art of Excellence 2015 contest.

Students can enter one artwork that is designed around a theme. Themes include natural landscapes, symbols, history, students in action and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, math) topics. All two-dimensional media, including paintings, drawings, prints, photographs and mixed media artworks, will be allowed.

All contest information can be found at [sites.google.com/a/oregonlearning.org/art-of-excellence/](http://sites.google.com/a/oregonlearning.org/art-of-excellence/). Online submissions are due Nov. 30 and winners will be announced by Jan. 31, 2016.

A statewide panel of experts including OAC and ODE staff members, professional artists and teachers will judge submissions based on originality, technical skill and personal vision.

Winning selections will become the property of ODE and be displayed at the Capitol as well as other locations around Salem. Classrooms of winning students will receive supplies to pursue creativity and expression.

For questions, contact [artofexcellence@oregonlearning.org](mailto:artofexcellence@oregonlearning.org).

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Hee Hee Illahee RV Resort, Salem, Ore. – [heeheeillahee.com](http://heeheeillahee.com) or 877-564-7295

## Oregon state test guide available for parents

From Education Update, Oregon Department of Education, October 2015

Districts across Oregon will release reports with test results that explain their child's progress in math and English based on the Oregon Smarter Balanced assessments taken earlier this year.

Complementary to these reports, parents now have access to the GreatKids Oregon State Test Guide for Parents to inform how they can use these test results to collaborate with teachers and help their children learn.

The online tool is free and available in English and Spanish.

The guide content was informed by best practices in parenting for education success and has been carefully vetted by education experts.

To use and/or share the guide, visit [oregontestguide.org](http://oregontestguide.org).