

Three sports show great potential at Wilson High School this year

By Jack Rubinger
The Southwest Portland Post

A trio of Wilson High School sports — boys cross country, boys soccer, and girls volleyball — are leading the charge as we begin the fall 2016 season.

While each has its challenges and goals, these three have tremendous potential, according to athletic director Mike Easton. Here's the breakdown:

Wilson girls volleyball coach Peter Fukuchi grew up and played volleyball in Hawaii. He talked about *ohana* — a Hawaiian word which loosely translated means building culture, building family, creating camaraderie, caring, culture and sisterhood.

"This is a brand new team," he said. "We're young and solid and I'm excited about continuing the spirit of *ohana* with this group. Last year, we really gelled and went on to become league champions.

With just four team members returning from last year's squad — Rachel Hunt, Jane Woodward, Saioa Lostra and India Jones — Coach Fukuchi has his work cut out for him.

"Our offense has power, but our defense is something we'll need to really work on this season," he said.

Boys varsity soccer team has something to prove this season

Varsity boys soccer Coach Frank Mathews (also a Wilson social studies teacher) is very excited about the upcoming soccer season because 19 players are returning from last year's team.

Mathews said he has a great group of seniors who are determined to work their hardest in the pre-season to ensure that they have a successful season and

run in the playoffs.

According to Mathews, the team's mantra this season is that they need to prove it. They are not one of the schools one automatically thinks of at the top of the 6A state standings, but this season they feel they belong in the conversation.

Mathews said they are confident in their abilities, but they need to go out there and play hard and win all those close games against good competition that were lost last season.

Like last season, their schedule is very competitive, said Mathews. There are no easy games and each match is going to be hard fought.

In the pre-season and in the Portland Interscholastic League, they will have to be mentally and physically ready to play each game because the quality of play is so high against each team, said Mathews.

According to Mathews, some players of note to look out for this season include senior Alec Dunkeld, who was the leading scorer last season. Junior Tyson Horn is center midfielder with a knack for the goal; field captain and defender Sam Nathenson is a strong leader.

Speed, performance and talent drive the boys cross country team

They are the returning PIL champions and have the returning PIL individual champion.

According to Coach Thor Esbensen, the boys cross country team hopes to be in the top five at state. Esbensen said he hopes with some good fortune and hard work that they can be a contending team.

The boys return with Alex Slenning, junior, 8th at last year's state meet and



Wilson High School's boys cross country team trains constantly in all kinds of terrain. (Photo courtesy of Wilson High School)

the number three returner. He had a great track season and broke the school record in the 3000.

Senior Caleb Seely also returns. Seely was PIL runner-up in cross country and broke the school record in the 1500 and 800 in track this past season. According to Esbensen, junior Kian Mitchell had a break-out track season and is a top returner.

Elius Graff will be competing in cross country full time this year after splitting time with soccer last year, said Esbensen. Aidan Manley, senior, also had a break out season in track and will be entering his second season of cross country.

"Alex and Caleb have developed incredibly fast and are tremendously talented athletes. They should be at the top of most races they run this fall," said Esbensen. "We have entered our team in many top meets. We are going to try

and gain experience by going to the state's biggest meets," said Esbensen.

According to Esbensen, one of the biggest team strengths is the community and parent support and involvement. Parent groups are quick to set up camping trips, spaghetti dinners, team sleepovers and weekend trips to out-of-state meets.

Without their support many great team-building activities would not happen, he said. The team and community epitomizes the saying, "It takes a village."

"We have had a strong summer and our team motto's of the building storm and confidence, strength, desire will drive us this season," said Esbensen.

"With our top two athletes and three of our top seven returning from a breakout season last year and a flood of hard-working younger runners coming along, we anticipate great things."

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