

SPORTS

Bruin girls sweep relays, win sub-district meet

■ **Joe Petshow**
Columbia Gorge News

Columbia High track and field Coach Jim Anderson made two major decisions before and during Friday's 2021 Trico League Sub-District Championship meet.

The second one was easy — he simply kept his mouth shut. The first decision arguably took more fortitude — he had to defer to the collective wisdom of four teenage boys. The result was golden in both cases.

Both decisions involved relay teams, which were key to the Bruins' success at the meet. Especially on the girls side, where three season-best wins, including the 4 x 400-meter race in the meet's final event — and lifetime bests from some unsung heroes — propelled CHS to the championship. In one of the more competitive team finishes in recent years, five of the six Trico teams were within 18 points of first place in the meet at Vancouver's Seton Catholic. The margin among the top three teams was even closer.

Columbia's long relay team of Ella Zimmerman, Hannah Polkinghorn, Chanele Reyes and Makayla Fies clinched the title for the Bruins, finishing in a season-best 4 minutes, 20.02 seconds. The 10 first-place relay points gave Columbia 109 for the meet, four more than Seton Catholic and six ahead of LaCenter. Seton easily won the boys meet with 133.5 points; White Salmon was fourth with 85.

"We knew we had a really good chance to win the girls meet this year," Coach Anderson said.

The 4 x 400 relay members each had busy days for Columbia. Reyes won her specialties, the 100 and 300 hurdles, and ran a leg on the Bruin 4 x 100 relay. Zimmerman was third in the low hurdles and sixth in the 1600. Polkinghorn anchored the Bruin short relay to a

season-best time of 52.44 seconds. She also finished second in the 100 and 200 behind LaCenter freshman Shaela Bradley. (Bradley was the meet's top point scorer with 30 points, having also won the long jump.) Fies won the 400 and PR'd in the 200, where she was fourth, and anchored the Bruin 4 x 200 relay.

As often is the case, it was the performances of some of Columbia's lesser-known athletes that clinched the team title for the Bruins. All told, the Bruin girls produced eight season bests at the meet.

The top four finishers in sub district advanced to Friday's District IV championship (also at Seton). Anderson said there always is some disappointment when an athlete just misses out on advancing. "That's what they all strive for," he said. That said, the Bruin coaching staff underscores the importance of team points — first through eighth. "For example" had Taylor Hanson and Esther Kline not stepped up with their points we wouldn't have won," Anderson said. "They had a pretty good-sized hand in winning the championship."

As did Chloe Clifford and Piper Hicks, who also ran legs on the short relay and 4 X 200. Hicks was seventh in the 100 for two team points. Frosh Jessica Polkinghorn won the shot put and was third in the javelin for 16 points. Frosh Hanson was fifth in the 400 and seventh in the 800 (in lifetime bests) for six more points; classmate Madeline Allen was sixth in the shot put (three points). Kline's distance double — 1600 and 3200 — produced seven points and included a PR in the longer race, her first attempt at that distance.

Anderson said leading up to the meet, knowing the Bruins could score points in the distance races because of a low number of overall entries, he approached

1600-runner Kline with the idea of a double. "I asked Esther, 'You want to run the 3200?' and she was like 'I'll do whatever you want me to do.'"

"Almost everyone had an event which they scored points," Anderson said. "It is something that I do talk about at practice and after meets. There are two sides to track and field. The individual side and then there is a team side of it."

The girls meet came down to the final event, the 4 X 400 relay. "I was keeping an eye on the team scoring as the meet was winding down," Anderson said. With the relay remaining, Columbia and host Seton were tied with 99 points apiece and LaCenter had 95.

"I shared that with our sprint coach (Heidi Schultz), but I didn't let the girls know," Anderson said. "I didn't want to put any added pressure on them. They ran their best 4-by-4 of the year."

Zimmerman opened with a 65-second split and handed off to Polkinghorn, who maintained the Bruins' spot in second place. Polkinghorn passed the baton to Reyes who took the lead after 100 meters of her lap and stretched the advantage to about 10 meters before passing to Fies for the anchor leg.

"Once (Reyes) took over I pretty much knew at that point we had it," Anderson said. Most 1A schools are fortunate to have one runner with 65-second, open 400-meter speed, but Columbia has two. The Reyes-Fies finish brought home the baton in first place and the Bruins had their team championship.

"Our girls work really hard in practice on exchanges and that's what it all comes down to for them," Anderson said. "They just want to make sure that the baton doesn't slow down. They want to dominate those relays."

"I can't recall having relay teams in all three events as strong as they are."



Juan Acosta prepares to shot put in practice above. Below, Piper Hicks and Hannah Polkinghorn practice the 4 X 100 relay.



The Bruin boys team came one leg injury away from likely winning both sub-district relays, as well. It did win the short relay and was third in the 4 x 400. The 4 x 100 victory was in a season-best time of 46.76, by Peter Schlegel, Angel Sanchez, Jace Greenwood, and Ryan Howard. Howard and Sanchez also ran legs on the Bruins' third place 4 x 400 relay. Howard added a runner-up finish in the 200 and was third in the 100 — in a personal best 12.02. Sanchez was second in the 100 and long jump (18-9.25).

Anderson said the short relay's focus all season has been the upcoming district meet. "That is the event that I've personally given the most time," he said. "Because I want those guys to win the district championship."

They tuned up for district with a come-from-behind victory at sub-district. Greenwood, the No. 3 leg, overcame a six-meter deficit running the curve and handed off the baton to Howard in the lead. "Ryan, who is one of the fastest guys in the league, I knew that when he got it, it

was over."

Anderson said in pre-meet practice he tinkered with the idea of changing the order of the runners. He was quickly vetoed. "They said, 'We like it the way it is. If it's not broke coach, let's not fix it.'"

Senior thrower Juan Acosta was a double winner, taking the shot put at 39-10.5 and discus in 110-9. His 20 team points were among the 37 total for the Bruin throwers, whose collective effort also included Josiah Nelson, Eli Nielson, Calvin Andrews and Beren Anderson. Nelson's 31-4.5 fourth-place shot put mark was a personal best. Senior Dylan Muehlbauer had Columbia's other PR — a 54.84-second 400. He also joined Howard, Andrews, and Sanchez on the long

relay.

Anderson said he was especially pleased with Acosta's double win in the throws because the senior is a great example of a field and track leader. "That kid is a workhorse. First one to practice, last one to leave. He's one of our captains," Anderson said. "He helps the younger kids with their technique. Takes them to the weight room and helps them with their workouts - pushes them. He's a great kid."

Anderson said this year's team is a special group. "Every now and then you get a group of kids that comes together who just mesh," he said. "It's been fun to watch and be a part of."

HRV, TD boys battle on the links; Eagles win five-team invitational

■ **By Mike Weber**
For Columbia Gorge News

For a second straight week, The Dalles and Hood River boys golf teams battled over 18 holes, with the Eagles coming out on top but with the Riverhawks closing the gap on their Gorge rival.

The most recent competition was April 19 in a five-team tourney at The Dalles Country Club. Hood River won with a 381, followed by The Dalles at 392; La Grande was third at 407, followed by Seaside (418) and Pendleton (476).

"I'm really proud of our team for getting second place, particularly since they're such young players who were competing in just their second high school tournament," said The Dalles Coach Dan Telles. "They come out to practice every day so that they can try to get better, and they performed as well as I could expect them to. They're improving every week. This is quite a bit different than coming out to a course and playing with your mom and dad. There's a lot more pressure on them to do well when they're playing in a tournament."

Course conditions affected the play. "We did not play to our potential as a team, but there are a few things that contributed, I think," HRV Coach Erin Mason said. "The course conditions are a little rough right now, due to lack of water during prime season and some construction around the course to do improvements. They are doing some great upgrades that will make the course better in the

future.

"Coach Telles, understanding this condition, made this a preferred lie tournament for all the players."

Despite the win, Mason, ever the perfectionist, was looking for areas his linksters could improve. "Overall, we played OK; it was a win in the end but there are many things we can improve on," he said. "The main thing is course management and shot selection when in trouble on the course. We averaged over bogey golf in this contest and that's not acceptable as I know our potential is much lower. I take the course conditions into account, as well."

Curtis Kunde of Seaside won the match with a 77, followed by HRV's duo of Ren Tappert (81) and Dylan Santee (86). The Dalles took the next two spots; Joseph Coddling shot 87 and Spencer Taylor 90. The 87 was a personal best for Coddling, who birdied the par-5 second hole. Taylor's 90 also was a personal record.

Mason said he is pleased with his team's progression. "Overall, I am happy with our progress. There are always a few hiccups along the way,

and we will power through it. I was happy to get Charlie Wilson and Jake Beukelman out there, as well, today on the JV side. I think it's great to get them some match-style competition."

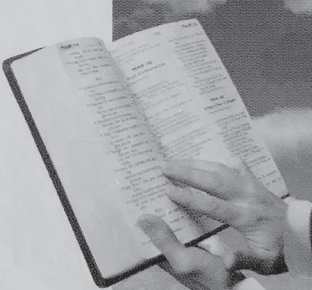
Coddling, who has been playing golf since age 10, said he wants more this season than to simply beat his personal best. "I've only had two tournaments so far, so it's not too hard to beat my personal best score. I'm trying to get much lower scores though and I'm hoping to shoot in the 70s range by the end of the season. That's the goal I've set for myself and I'm hoping to reach that point. "It's a joy to be out on the golf course because there's lots of great people out there who are really fun to be around."

The Dalles scoring four-some also included sophomores Kenneth Miller, who shot 105, and Chase Sam, who shot 110. The Dalles and Hood River were scheduled to play April 26 at Indian Creek in Hood River (result was after the printed edition deadline). Their next event is May 3 at 10 a.m. at The Golf Course at Birch Creek in Pendleton.

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