

1980: Women make their mark in the sports world

1980 will go down in history as the year women took over on the local sports scene. The "weaker sex" became the strong.

The sports programs for girls at Sandy High School not only gained strength, they leapfrogged past the boys into statewide prominence. As usual, there were some key individuals who made headlines during the year and helped their respective teams to success.

For the second straight year, the Sandy girls volleyball team made the final four at state, winning the consolation trophy. Senior Cherie Elliott was named to the all-tournament team. A week earlier, the Pioneer girls cross country team romped to sixth at state, by far the best in the school's history.

Just when summer was about to make its presence known in the Northwest, the Sandy girls track team was making its presence known at the state meet. Michele Cleland and Christie Elliott combined for 19 points to give the Pioneers ninth among the state's teams.

Individuals stood out for Sandy in the winter sports. Gayle Roth took fourth in the state in the 50-yard freestyle swimming competition and Tim Freeman finished second in the 157-pound class at the state wrestling tournament. The wrestlers were among the top boys programs at the high school.

Here is a month by month account of 1980 and the individuals who stood out.

JANUARY

The year got off to a slow start, thanks to Christmas vacation and a crippling snowstorm which halted athletic activities for nearly a week.

The layoff gave local teams a chance to recover from their various maladies. The SUHS wrestling team had injuries and the boys and girls basketball teams used the time off to prepare for league.

The Sandy boys moved (briefly) into second place in the Timber Valley League with wins over Silverton and Sweet Home. But the big upset in January came from the Pioneer girls, who shocked Oregon City 49-43. Sandy had been 0-10 at the time and Oregon City was undefeated and ranked fourth in the state.

Christie Elliott also made an impressive track debut, winning the 500-meter race at the Oregon Indoor Track meet at Memorial Coliseum.

FEBRUARY

February marked the return of the wrestling team to power after injuries had slowed the team early in the season. Sandy won tournaments at Reynolds and Sprague to gear up for district. But the Pioneers ran into tough competition and managed just a fourth place finish. Mike Martin, 157, and Chris Jones, 136, won individual titles for Sandy.

Gayle Roth helped the Sandy girls to second in the district swimming meet, then went on to place fourth in the state in the 50-freestyle and sixth in the 100-freestyle.

Meanwhile, the Sandy boys were eliminated from the TVL basketball playoff picture by Canby. The Cougars took a 67-53 win over Sandy and went on to the league playoffs. The Pioneers, preseason darkhorse picks, were through for the season.

The girls team ended the season by beating Silverton, its fourth win of the season, a school record.

MARCH

Sue Wilson, center for the Sandy girls basketball team, was named to the State-Metro All-Star game.

Sandy took 12th in the state wrestling tournament. Tim Freeman was second in the 157-pound division, just ahead of Mike Martin, who took fourth at that same weight.

The Sandy ski team won the Mt. Hood Championships to gear up for what was supposed to be its third straight state title. But the Pioneers ran into problems in southern Oregon and came home in fourth place. Falls and injuries ruined any hope of a third title.

For the first time, a softball team was started at Sandy High. Gary Curtis was named head coach and he had a few rough moments in the early going with an inexperienced team.

Chris Roth met the national standard in the 200-meter butterfly, but fell just short of his attempt to meet the Olympic qualifying time. The former Sandy High swimmer had a best of 1:50.6.

A bumper smelt crop came into the Sandy river in March and things slowed to a standstill while everyone rushed to get their nets out. Smelt were thick enough to walk across and everyone who tried came away with more than enough to fill a freezer.

APRIL

Michele Cleland, the best female athlete in Sandy High history, ended a lot of speculation when she signed a letter of intent to Oregon State University to compete in track and field.

Strawberry Fields won the Sandy Recreation Division city basketball title with a 69-64 win over The Loggers.

Cleland and Christie Elliott continued their strong performances, winning several individual titles at invitational meets throughout the state.

The team from 1971-72 won the first Sandy High Alumni basketball tournament. Several teams competed in the event, destined to become an annual occurrence.

MAY

Greg O'Meara was named head football coach at Sandy High, replacing Lynn Harris who resigned. O'Meara had been junior varsity coach.

The budget of the Mt. Hood National Forest was trimmed, decreasing the amount of services available, but the action had little overall effect on recreationalists.

The SUHS boys tennis team took last at district while the girls took fourth. Janet Bonner fell one match shy of a state tournament berth.

Connie Case took a pair of national titles for the Mt. Hood Community College track team. She won the 3,000 and 5,000 meter races, then inked a letter of intent to Oregon State.

Cleland was named to the 1980 Prep All-American Girls Sports Team.

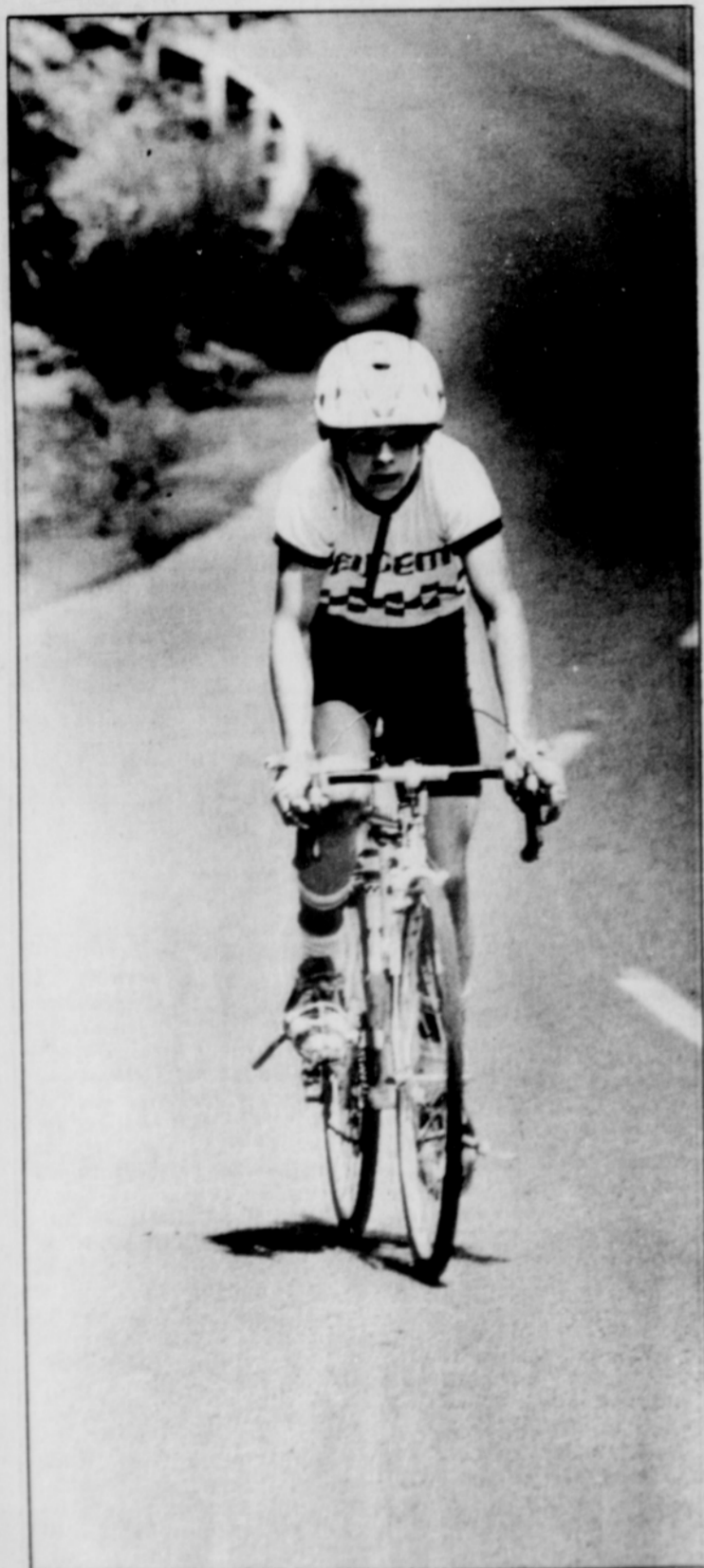
The Sandy girls took first place in the TVL district track meet; the boys were seventh. Individual titles were won by Cleland, Cherie and Christie Elliott and Gayle Roth. Paul Daugherty won the triple jump for the boys.

JUNE

Sandy took ninth place in the girls competition at the state track meet. Cleland was second in the shot put and discus; Christie Elliott was fifth in the 200 meters and sixth in the 100.

The Oregon School Activities Association voted to reduce the number of high school athletic contests in every sport except football.

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The year 1980 was, indeed, a year dominated by female athletes. And young ones at that. Freshman Jacqui Pullen (top left) amazed crowds with her balance and flexibility at Sandy High gymnastics meets. Her specialty was the balance beam. Kecia Harris (above) helped the Pioneer girls swimming team to a second place finish at district. There were some good performances by male athletes as well. Chris Jones (below) took the district wrestling title at 136 pounds as a sophomore last February and has already defeated the defending state champion this fall. Just prior to his freshman year, Mike Sheppard (far left) took second place in a regional bicycling championship — just three weeks after he began to ride competitively. He qualified for nationals. When coach John White (right) wasn't leading his Sandy cross country team to a district title, he could be found in a variety of places, even atop a four-legged friend in a game of donkey basketball.



photos by Mark Floyd