

stuff shots

Pitching woes slow Pioneers

by MARK FLOYD
Sports Editor

There are two things which have kept the Sandy High boys baseball team and girls softball team out of the first division this year.

Pitching and consistency.

In either sport, pitching can make all the difference in the world between a first place club and the also rans. Two, maybe three strong pitchers can guarantee a baseball team of a winning record.

There's an old adage that good pitching will beat good hitting. That is especially true in high school. If a coach has a couple of good hurlers to rotate, the team will do just fine.

That's not to say that the Pioneers have a bunch of pasty-armed pitchers. On the contrary, Sandy has three or four hurlers who have come up with excellent showings this season. The only problem is that they haven't done it with any degree of consistency.

Rainouts have also hurt, forcing games to be scheduled three and four days in a row, a situation that wreaks havoc with the rotation. Going a week or 10 days without pitching doesn't do much for a hurler's sharpness, either.

The Pioneers have shown that they can hit the baseball, run the bases and field, although lapses in all three aspects have cost them a couple of games this year. That's where the inconsistency comes in and a lot of that can be attributed to the team's youth.

Sandy's softball team, on the other hand, seems to have found a stopper in Patty Gray. When Gray finds the strike zone, as she did in a recent shutout, she is truly a weapon. Sandy's defense is good and the batting has improved noticeably this season.

The good thing about softball is that it doesn't strain the arm as much as in baseball. A pitcher can hurl back-to-back games without blinking an eye in softball, so one pitcher can usually carry a team. The one exception may be tournament play.

But again, inconsistency has hurt Sandy's softball players. They've lost a few games they should have won, including a 4-2 defeat at the hands of the Canby Cougars, a game the Pioneers could easily have won.

Both SUHS teams appear to have turned the corner after lackluster, and that's putting it kindly, seasons last year.

The Sandy boys are using a number of sophomores and juniors in the lineup and seem to have a much-improved attitude this season. They have better speed and the hitting is spread throughout the lineup. The errors will take care of themselves with time.

The Sandy girls are a junior-dominated lineup and one that continues to get better. The hitting is 100-percent improved over last season and should get even better by the time the Pioneers are all seniors. Gray looks solid from the mound and it's just a matter of time before Sandy becomes a power in the Timber Valley League. A second pitcher, however, would speed up the process.

One final note of optimism is that both teams are without freshmen players. The coaches chose to play the frosh on their respective underclassmen teams and there are times this season they may have regretted that decision.

But the winning attitude and year of experience will only benefit the youngsters when next year rolls around.

Now, if only some of them can pitch.



Sandy's Russell Fork (center) struggles to the finish line at the end of the 400-meter run. Fork finished third in the race. The Canby boys scored a 75-70 win over Sandy but the Pioneer girls won easily. See page 1 for meet details.

Photo by Mark Floyd

Big game hunt applications due next Monday

The application deadline for antelope, bighorn sheep and cougar hunts is approaching rapidly.

Hunters must have their applications postmarked no later than April 27 to be considered for the hunts. Printed regulations, season information and application instructions and cards are available at license agencies throughout the state.

This year, 34 permits have been authorized for bighorn sheep in five areas of the state. Bighorn sheep offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to Oregon hunters — those who successfully draw sheep tags are ineligible to ever apply again.

Some 1,535 rifle permits to hunt antelope in 23 areas are available and an additional 400 permits for the Gerber

Reservoir bowhunting season have been authorized.

Cougar hunters will have a chance at 161 tags in nine areas of the state.

The drawing will be held Thursday, May 21.

The first minus morning tides of the year began earlier this month, but they were combined with weather and surf conditions which made razor clam digging all but impossible.

Diggers should be taking to the beaches in increasing numbers, however, as weather and ocean condition improve.

The diggers may find a bumper crop, and they may not. Shellfish biologist Terry Link said that there is simply no way to predict with assurance whether diggers

will find better or poorer digging than average following a winter period.

No matter how many clams were available the previous fall, their survival through winter is extremely variable, depending on winter storms and other factors.

Diggers remove an average of 937,000 razor clams from Oregon beaches each year. Harvest extremes range from a record high of 1.7 million in 1958 to a low of 300,000 in 1974.

It seems amazing that razor clams continue to exist in the face of the onslaught that occurs each season, but survive they do.

A look at the clam's history explains many of the mysteries of its existence against great odds. Razor

clams are found in stable, sandy, surf-swept beaches along the open coast and in some coastal bays. They have been found on the ocean bottom at depths of 24 feet. Only the portion of the population that lives in the zone exposed by receding tides is available to diggers.

Although clams can move vertically through the sand, they do not move horizontally. Clams are not always found near the surface since they spend much of their time deep in the sand protected from the pounding surf.

A razor clam matures in

its second year of life. Males and females usually spawn in the spring and summer when water temperatures reach about 55 degrees. A female will produce six to 10 million microscopic eggs, which, after 16 or so weeks, develop into juvenile clams. As their shells develop, they settle to the bottom where they dig into the sand.

It is at this time that in-shore currents, water temperature and climatic conditions have a strong bearing on the number of larvae reaching the beach and their subsequent survival.

Some 95 percent die of natural causes. Growth for the survivors in rapid during spring and summer when plankton, their major food source, is plentiful.

Although the population fluctuates, records show that the abundance and age composition of razors is about what it was 30 years ago. Upper areas of the beach often have fewer and younger clams because of the increased number of diggers today.

Most new diggers lack experience needed to dig in water, so they concentrate on the upper beach.

calendar

TRACK
April 23 - Sandy at Oregon City 3:45 p.m.
April 30 - Sandy at Sweet Home 3:45 p.m.

GIRLS TENNIS
April 23 - Sandy at Sweet Home 4 p.m.
April 27 - West Linn at Sandy 4 p.m.
April 30 - Sandy at Oregon City 4 p.m.

BOYS TENNIS
April 23 - Sweet Home at Sandy 4 p.m.
April 27 - Sandy at West Linn 4 p.m.

April 30 - Oregon City at Sandy 4 p.m.

BOYS GOLF
April 23 - Sandy at Centennial 4 p.m.
April 24 - Silverton at Sandy 4 p.m.

April 28 - Canby at Sandy 4 p.m.

GIRLS SOFTBALL
April 24 - Sandy at Oregon City 4 p.m.
April 27 - Silverton at Sandy 4 p.m.
April 29 - Estacada at Sandy 4 p.m.

BASEBALL
April 24 - Sandy at West Linn 4 p.m.
April 28 - Sweet Home at Sandy 4 p.m.

FROSH BASEBALL
April 24 - West Linn at Sandy 4 p.m.
April 28 - Sandy at Ogden 4 p.m.

Additional games may be scheduled to make up contests postponed because of rain. Call Sandy High School, 668-8011, to obtain further information.

Classified deadline is noon Monday

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The sports calendar gives you a place to announce your team games and practices. Send your announcements to the sports editor.

Prep of the Week:



STEVE METELAK

Sandy High junior Steve Metelak placed first in 800 meters, 1,500 meters and triple jump in Sandy's dual track meet Thursday with Canby. He also runs cross-country for the Pioneers in the fall. Congratulations, Steve!

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