

Sports+Outdoors

Water polo jamboree splashes into Redmond

The 'Woodstock' of water polo continues for its 18th year

BY NICK ROSENBERGER • Redmond Spokesman

Yelling and splashing filled the Cascade Aquatic Center in Redmond on August 26 as high schoolers from across the state swam, pushed and attempted to hurl a ball into the opposing team's goal during the 18th annual Redmond Water Polo Jamboree.

The jamboree brought 11 teams from Central Oregon, Portland, Eugene, Salem and Ashland to Redmond to compete against each other in fast 8-minute rounds.

"The clock doesn't ever stop unless something drastic happens," said Denise Maich, the head coach of Redmond High School's water polo team. "You get a lot of different experience. You get to play a lot of different teams and it's mainly just a big learning (experience) for all the kids."

Maich and her team, along with many of the other teams in attendance, pitch tents every year at the aquatic center for the three-day event and camp out. They gather to eat food, play games and talk tactics.

"It's really good, fun team bonding for the kids," she said.

The jamboree, which is held during the offseason, is also an opportunity for new players to get some time in the pool and learn the details of a sport that some call "rugby with a chance of drowning."

"The one thing with water polo is there's a lot to learn and there's a lot of moving parts," Maich said. "There's offense, there's defense, there's counter-attacking, there's driving, there's a bunch of small different parts that, for some of these new kids, it's hard to learn."

But, she emphasized that athletes don't need to be the strongest players or the best swim-



Water polo players from Bend High School speak with their coach during a short break at the Redmond Water Polo Jamboree on August 26 in Redmond.

Nick Rosenberger/Spokesman

mers to be good at water polo. She mentioned that she's coached kids who've never swam before, but were good at throwing the ball in the pool because they'd played baseball.

Water polo, she said, is like swimming, soccer and football all mixed together.

"It's a brutal sport," said Gretchen Chadwick, whose daughter, Lilly, plays for Mountain View High School in Bend.

The sport is infamous for a saying: "Everything is legal under the water, if you're not caught." Fingernails and toenails have to be inspected before games begin to reduce the damage caused by kicking, pushing and pulling on swimsuits and legs.

"There's a lot that happens under the

water," said Julie Reber, whose son Jupiter Gillam, also plays for Mountain View. "They play so dirty."

Lilly Chadwick had been a competitive swimmer for years, but eventually got tired of the same old. When a close family friend convinced her and her older sister to try water polo about seven years ago, they never looked back.

Despite the brutality of the pool, it's the people and team bonding that bring so many back.

"Across the board, the kids that play water polo are so fun and jovial and (there's) a lot of camaraderie," Gillam said.

The event started in 2004 as a memorial event for Redmond swimmer

Jay Rowan. It has since earned the nickname the "Woodstock of water polo" by officials, players and coaches — some of whom have been participating in the event since it began. For many teams, it acts as an unofficial kickoff for the season.

Jessica Rowan, the current aquatic director for Redmond Area Parks and Recreation District and Jay's older sister, has overseen it for the last 12 years and loves that Redmond has such an outsized impact in the world of Oregon water polo.

"I feel like it's his legacy," she said. "We like to call it the little pool that could."

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Mountain View High School's goalie prepares to defend a shot at the Redmond Water Polo Jamboree on August 26 in Redmond.

Nick Rosenberger/Spokesman

New coaches take on high school programs

BY BRIAN RATHBONE
CO Media Group

As a new high school sports year is just getting started, several local teams are adjusting to new leadership. In Central Oregon, nine fall sports programs have new head coaches.

Summit volleyball — a perennial state championship contender — is now on its third coach in as many years. This fall, Emily McMahon will lead the Storm volleyball program, which has made five state championship match appearances since 2007, twice (2011 and 2015) winning state titles under former coach Jill Waskom.

"I'm really excited to be at Summit and to regrow the program," McMahon said. "I'm trying to jump in and create a new culture that is back in hard work, discipline and self-reliance."

Last year, McMahon was the JV coach in her first year

coaching at Summit, but she has coached volleyball at numerous levels in the 15 years she has lived in Bend. Recently, she coached the North Pacific Junior Volleyball Club (NPJ) 14U team.

Between NPJ and coaching JV last year, the transition has been a fairly smooth one for McMahon. She said it took all but one day to learn the names of all 37 players in the Summit program.

"I knew it was going to be a big undertaking," McMahon said. "I'm excited the girls wanted to have me, honored they wanted to have me."

Mountain View cross-county also has a new coach, but it is certainly a familiar name in the Central Oregon running scene.

Between 2012 and 2019, McLatchie coached the Storm's cross-country teams to eight team state championships, including six 5A titles and two 6A



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

Summit High School's new volleyball coach, Emily McMahon, talks with players during a jamboree Thursday in Bend.

titles for the girls and four 5A titles for the boys. The Summit girls also won a national title in 2018 under McLatchie's stewardship.

McLatchie spent the past spring coaching the distance runners on the Mountain View track team. Needing a cross-country coach to replace

Andy Young, the school's athletic director Lance Haas did a bit of arm twisting to bring her on as the new head coach, McLatchie joked.

"I always wanted to get back into coaching," McLatchie said. "COVID wasn't fun for me either. It is very energizing to be around young people and ath-

letics."

Seven more Central Oregon high school sports programs are under new leadership this fall:

- Henry Phelan takes over the Bend High cross-country program from Lisa Nye, who had been the Lava Bears coach since 2009. Nye remains the Lava Bears' track and field coach.

- In the school's second year of existence, Caldera retained all but one of its coaches. Mike Mitchell now leads the football program into its first varsity season after the departure of Neil Fendall.

- With Randi Viggiano becoming Ridgeview's new athletic director, the Raven volleyball program — which went to the state title game in 2018, won the 5A championship in 2019 and had a state semifinal appearance in 2021 — will turn to Kurtis Bower. Like many of the volleyball coaches in Central Oregon, Bower coaches club

volleyball for NPJ.

- Redmond High also has a new volleyball coach in Travis Kandle, who after 10 years running the Juniper Volleyball Club takes the reins of the Panther program, which is coming off a playoff appearance last fall under Katie Karcher.

- Madras football replaces Kurt Taylor, who had led the White Buffaloes program since 2016, with Judd Stutzman, who spent three seasons coaching at George Fox University in Newberg before spending last fall coaching 3A Clatskanie.

- Two soccer programs will have new coaches as well. Crook County girls soccer will be led by Mary Buell, who was an assistant coach at McNary (of Keizer) last fall, while Central Christian boys soccer will be led by Paul Edmond, replacing Mark Hughes.

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