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Oregon Panthers Brielle Lowery, Hannah Jensen, Celina Ball, Ava Prechel, Lacey Vasas, Kayla Toavs, Hailey Schwinof, Margo McManus, KJ Custer, Brookelynn Jackson and Sophia Fuller are 40-7 since forming in August. Submitted

Volcanoes open milestone season

By **HERB SWETT and TIM HAYS**
For the Keizertimes

The Salem-Keizer Volcanoes started the season with a 6-5 loss to the Hillsboro Hops last Friday.

With 20 years under his belt, Owner Jerry Walker wanted to do something special for the milestone. After speeches from city members, former mayor of Keizer, Dennis Koho, arrived by helicopter, just as he did in 1997, and threw out the ceremonial first pitch.

Opening Day starting pitchers featured Anfernee Benitez for the Hops and Victor Concepcion for the Volcanoes.

The Volcanoes wouldn't wait around long to get on the scoreboard. Shortstop Manuel Geraldo led off the bottom of the first with a double.

Two ground outs and a wild pitch later, Geraldo scored the first run of the game.

The Hops would quickly respond in the second inning.

After back-to-back singles to lead off the inning, Concepcion got a ground ball that looked like it would get him out of the inning. However, the double play was not turned, which brought up second baseman Josh Smith. He would deliver with a three-run home run to right field and give the Hops and early 3-1 lead.

The scoring would come to a screeching halt, as both

pitchers settled in.

Benitez, who went five innings and struck out six, retired 11 of the final 15 batters that he faced. His counterpart, Concepcion, would go on to put down 12 of his final 15 batters, allowing five earned runs over six innings of work.

The Volcanoes would slowly chip away at the deficit. After a solo home run by Gustavo Cabrera in the seventh inning, Kevin Rivera and Geraldo each followed with singles, ultimately scoring on two wild pitches by Hillsboro relief pitcher Trevor Simms.

The Hops added an important insurance run in the eighth inning and headed to the ninth leading 6-4.

A Juan Rodriguez triple to lead off the ninth would be followed by an RBI single by Gustavo Cabrera to cut the lead to one.

There was nothing left for the Volcanoes as reliever Julio Perez shut them down the rest of the inning.

After dropping the season opener, Salem-Keizer went on a winning streak.

Here are the run-downs from the past week:

Saturday: Volcanoes 14, Hillsboro 3

The Volcanoes retaliated in a big way after the Hops' win in the Volcanoes' home opener for Salem-Keizer's most lopsided win since Aug. 9, 2014, over Boise.

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Crushing the competition

Local softball team earns automatic bid to nationals

By **DEREK WILEY**
Of the Keizertimes

With a 40-7 overall record and outscoring their opponents 518 to 124, the Oregon Panthers have already proved they're the best 10-and-under Amateur Softball Association team in the state.

So instead of competing against girls their own age in Beaverton, the Panthers will jump up to the 12-and-under state tournament in Clackamas. Both are July 1-3.

They'll also get an automatic bid to ASA Nationals in Stockton, Calif., where they'll compete against 30 of the best 10-and-under teams from all over the country July 31-Aug. 7.

Before nationals, the Panthers will again test themselves against 12U teams in the Na-

tional American Fastpitch Association Western Regional in Newberg in the middle of July.

Playing in 12U tournaments won't be new to the Panthers, who have already won two of three 12U tournaments they've played in and tallied a 13-4 record against older teams.

But head coach Jamie Vasas, who won a state championship as a baseball player at McNary, said the 12U state tournament will be the Panthers toughest test to date.

"We should do well," he said. "It would be neat winning both. We'll at least compete in that. Skill level they [Panthers] are there [even] but the girls grow so much in that 10 to 12."

The Panthers, which are

made up of girls from Keizer, Salem, McMinnville, Corvallis and Oregon City, formed in August and have played year-round.

The program was started 30 years ago by Keizer resident Jerry Orlando and the girls practice on the field in his front yard.

Korrine Jackson, who won a softball state championship at McNary, is also on the coaching staff. Both Vasas and Jackson's daughters, Lacey and Brookelynn, play for the Panthers.

"It's nothing that we've coached," Vasas said. "The girls are just really good. We've got really good pitching, fielding. Everyone on the team can hit. It's just an overall good team."

The team includes Lacey, Brookelynn, Sophia Fuller, Hailey Schwinof, Kayla Toavs, KJ Custer, Celina Ball, Brielle Lowery, Hannah Jensen and Ava Prechel.

Jeff Ball and Troy Custer

help coach.

Thanks to an indoor facility in Salem, the Panthers can practice and play year-round.

"They put a lot of time and effort into being able to do what they can do," Vasas said. "It's pretty impressive. They've done it themselves. They are very talented. They put the effort in. There's not a team that comes around too often that can do what they've done."

The Panthers' dominance continued last weekend as they won the Play for the Cure tournament at Wallace Marine Park in Salem.

The Panthers won the championship game 12-2.

"None of the games are close when we play 10," Vasas said. "That's why we're playing 12."

Second baseman Margo McManus hit a home run during the tournament.

"I was there all day and you don't even see that from 14-year-olds," Vasas said.

Keizer swim teams ready for fun summer

By **DEREK WILEY**
Of the Keizertimes

Holiday Swim Club, one of three teams in Keizer, is proof that summer swim league is for everyone.

In the same pool as Kylie McCarty, an incoming sophomore at McNary, who gets up at 6 a.m. each day to swim for three hours for Mid-Valley Aquatics in Salem, and then comes to Holiday to teach lessons before practice, is a 4-year-old just learning how to put his face in the water and kick.

"I like to swim, I like the people and you get a tan," said McCarty, who's been swimming for Holiday in the summer for at least eight years. "There's a lot of younger kids and that's more fun. The school season, that's a lot of fun but you don't know everyone as well and I feel like I know a lot of people here really well."

Annie Willcoxon coached Holiday for the past six summers but has moved to team coordinator and passed the torch to former West Salem swimmer Cody Luth.



Northwood Park Swim Club began practice Monday, June 20 and will compete in its first meet Thursday, June 30 at 4 p.m. at Holiday, which will host the all-city meet on July 30. KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

"I think the goal for all summer leagues is more to have fun and keep the neighborhood pools going and maybe a little less competitive and get swimmers who aren't necessarily high school swimmers or club swimmers, get-

ting them in the water," Willcoxon said. "It's all about fun."

Luth, who assisted Willcoxon last summer, isn't the only new head coach in Keizer. Former McNary swimmer Alan McCloud is in his first year leading the Northwood

Park team. He's also been a volunteer coach at McNary the past four years.

"The goal of the swim team is to teach kids how to swim better and make them feel safer in the water," McCloud said. "Coming away

with an all-city win is a plus but the main goal of the swim team is to provide kids with the opportunity to swim and learn how to swim well so if they do want to pursue it in high school or college, they can do that. It's a basic start."

The swim league has six teams, three in Keizer—Holiday, Northwood Park and Northview Terrace, and three in Salem—Jan Ree, Madrona and Cambridge.

Practice began Monday and each team will have five duels, June 30, July 7, July 14, July 21 and July 27 before wrapping up the season on Saturday, July 30 with the all-city swim meet at Holiday.

Around 350 young swimmers competed in the all-city meet last summer.

Northwood has won the meet the last two years.

The first week of duels has Northwood going to Holiday, Northview hosting Cambridge and Madrona at Jan Ree.

All weekday meets begin at 4 p.m.

"It's a fun environment for kids and a chance to be part of a team," said Jeremy Darst, who is in his second summer coaching at Northview Terrace.

"It's not super serious or competitive. We work towards getting better and improving their strokes."