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Spring season suspended for prep sports

By MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

The entire sports world, including the OSAA, came to a standstill last week.

On Friday, March 13, the OSAA announced they were suspending interscholastic practices and contests for sports and activities for all member schools until at least March 31.

This decision came after the OSAA canceled all remaining winter state championships the week prior.

"As this unprecedented public health emergency continues to evolve, we believe that the responsibility to our member schools and communities regarding the health and safety of participants remains our highest priority," said Peter Weber, OSAA Executive Director.

Baseball, softball, boys track and field, girls track and field, boys golf, girls golf, boys tennis and girls tennis are all sanctioned sports through the OSAA. Club sports, like lacrosse, will also be put on hold.

During a 48-hour period, the OSAA went from playing their state championships with fans in the stands

to canceling the final week of the season for all winter sports teams still competing and suspending all spring sports activities.

Needless to say, it was a stressful time for athletic directors all around the state.

"I've never experienced anything like it," McNary athletic director Scott Gragg said. "We would come up with a plan, and then something would change."

"But it's our role as leaders to make sure that we are a calming, peaceful presence during this time."

During the suspension, all organized activities will be prohibited from the McNary campus. The district will be monitoring field usage and Gragg said he wouldn't be

surprised if community use was limited or denied.

If the suspension is lifted on April 1, Gragg says that he will follow the recommendation from the OSAA on how to proceed.

"If or when the season continues, we will probably be getting more guidance as to what that looks like. Whether or not those games that were canceled will be rescheduled, that will be up to the OSAA. We will follow all of their guidance," Gragg said. "There will probably be some acclimation period where practices can continue and then contests will start."

However, there is a very real possibility that high

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— Peter Weber,
OSAA Executive Director



File
McNary outfielder Alexa Cepeda is one of the top senior softball players in the state. But there is a chance that she, and many other McNary seniors, won't be able to finish their final season of high school sports.

Coburn leaving behind a lasting legacy at Whiteaker

By MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

It's hard to find someone more passionate about his career than Scott Coburn.

The 63-year old has been a teacher and coach in the state of Oregon for 42 years — and for the last 27 years, he has poured himself into the kids of Whiteaker Middle School.

With his different roles as a P.E. teacher, volleyball and track coach and district middle school athletic director, Coburn is often the first one at the school during the week and the last to leave.

But at the end of the school year, Coburn plans to hang up the whistle.

If he hadn't been mentally prepared for the day to come, Coburn acknowledged that the decision to retire would have been a lot harder to make.

"I love what I do. I love the teaching and I love the coaching. If I didn't mentally prepare myself, I think it would be very, very difficult to leave," Coburn said.

Coburn began his stu-

dent-teaching at McMinnville in 1978 and was an assistant coach for the 1979 state champion boys basketball team. He also got the opportunity to coach Charlie Sitton, who was a star at Oregon State and eventually was drafted by the Dallas Mavericks in 1984.

Coburn then got his first full-time teaching job at Siletz High School in 1980. He was the boys basketball coach for four seasons and even took on the volleyball program for one year in 1982.

"It was a great starting experience. I learned a lot and we got better. It was a lot of fun," Coburn said.

He then was transferred over to Waldport where he taught at the middle school and coached prep basketball from 1983-89. But after spending a decade on the coast, Coburn and his wife, Laurie, decided that they wanted to move back to the valley — both grew up in Dayton.

Coburn then began teaching at Kennedy High School

in Mount Angel in 1989. Before the start of the school year, he thought he would just be coaching boys basketball. But school officials also asked him if he would take on the role of head volleyball coach as well.

Coburn is a self-described "basketball guy" but he reluctantly agreed to accept the volleyball gig as long as he was able to go learn from Terry McLaughlin — McLaughlin was a legendary coach at Chemeketa Community College.

"Terry really helped me through that first year. The girls even went to practice at Chemeketa a couple of times. He was a great mentor to me and that's how I learned the footwork and the fundamentals and everything so that's why I just kept on doing it," Coburn said.

Both of Kennedy's volleyball and boys basketball teams experienced tremendous success under Coburn. The volleyball program won back-to-back league championships and made a state

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Submitted
Whiteaker volleyball coach Scott Coburn gives instructions to his team during a timeout. Coburn will be retiring after spending the last 27 years at Whiteaker.



File
The McNary football team celebrates their second straight Mountain Valley Conference title after being South Salem on Nov. 1, 2019. After playing a shortened league schedule the last two seasons, McNary will face every team in the conference starting in 2020.

MVC switching to six-game conference schedule in 2020

By MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

The days of a four-game Mountain Valley Conference football schedule are now over.

Starting in 2020, the MVC will move to a six-game league schedule, meaning every team will play each other once during the regular season.

Each team in the conference will play three non-league contests to begin the season.

"We benefit from playing a full league schedule because those teams look like us. We are all a similar group. Our chances to win the league again are just as good based on the guys that we have returning to make another run," McNary athletic director Scott Gragg said. "I do like that we now have a chance to play all of our schools."

Before the Mountain Valley Conference was formed in 2018, the Salem-Keizer schools (McNary, Sprague, South Salem, McKay, North Salem, West Salem) played in

a league with McMinnville, Forest Grove and West Albany.

Prior to the start of the 2018 football season, there were many changes across the state, with the intent of trying to boost participation and lessen mismatches within conference play.

The OSAA introduced special districts for each league and allowed teams to play down a level in football only. McKay decided to exercise this option and play 5A football. North Salem, on the other hand, elected to drop down to 5A in all sports, meaning that the MVC football league featured the remainder of the Salem-Keizer schools, as well as the Mountain schools — Bend, Summit and Mountain View.

However, with the new format, some unintended consequences came to fruition.

"In an attempt to eliminate some mismatches, we ended up creating mismatches in other ways, and the teams that were typically

mismatches were no longer in our conference," Gragg said.

Although they dropped down a level, McKay and North Salem still didn't fare well playing 5A football — North Salem has gone 2-7 in each of the last two seasons, while McKay has only gotten three wins over that time frame.

For the last two years, the Metro League and the Portland Interscholastic League were the only two 6A conferences that played a full league schedule, which made scheduling more non-league games difficult for teams like McNary and Sprague.

Statewide scheduling takes place every two years and requires each team to designate themselves as either tough, average-plus, average, average-minus and weak. This helps programs schedule teams that they are more evenly matched with and assumes that teams can either play up a level or down a level.

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