



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Seaside's Maddi Utti, No. 25, makes a shot after a steal early in the first quarter during Seaside's game against Klamath Union.

Seagulls fly higher than Pelicans, 54-43

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — It's the downside of greatness.

While certain teams spend the latter part of February competing in league play-offs, district tournaments and Regional Play-in games, the great teams have to sit around for two weeks and patiently wait their turn.

So — after 15 days without a game — the Seaside Lady Gulls finally returned to the court Saturday night, and scored a not-as-close-as-it-looked 54-43 win over Klamath Union at the Gulls' Nest.

Despite playing for the first time since Feb. 20, the Gulls picked up where they left off following the league season, as they dismantled the Pelicans in the first half of Saturday's Class 4A girls basketball Sweet 16 game.

Seaside jumped out to its usual 17-point lead, and Maddi Utti had 19 of her game-high 26 points by halftime.

More impressively, the No. 7-ranked Gulls swarmed the Pelicans with a relentless defense, forcing 33 Klamath turnovers, 22 in the first half.

And now the Gulls are hot on the trail of a state championship — again — and this time, Seaside may have an inside track.

Seaside will open the quarterfinal round of the state tournament against Valley Catholic, a team Seaside has already beaten once this season.

The two Cowapa League teams will battle again Thursday, with a 6:30 p.m. tip-off at Liberty High School in Hillsboro. The winner will play Friday against Banks or Henley. The Gulls swept the Braves in the regular season, and beat Henley in last year's state tournament.

But, first things first. The Gulls had to overcome a poor third quarter before they were able to hold off Klamath Union in Saturday's playoff.

Utti scored the first 10 points of the game, and the Pelicans had eight turnovers on their first eight possessions.

Whitney Westerholm hit a 3-pointer, and the Gulls used an 8-0 run midway through the first half to build a 24-9 advantage. Utti and Sydney Villegas scored back-to-back hoops late in the second quarter for a 36-17 halftime lead.

The Pelicans were finally able to score some points (11 straight), the Gulls went cold, and Klamath Union was actually within 40-33 in the opening seconds of the fourth quarter.



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Seaside's Maddi Utti, No. 25, tries to make a shot under defensive pressure by Klamath Union's Jordan Newman, No. 23, during their basketball game at Seaside High School Saturday.



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Seaside's Allison Bussert, No. 32, fights for a rebound against several Klamath Union players.

But the Gulls settled down, as Brittany West banked in a jump shot just inside the 3-point line, Haylee Dundas had five of her 10 points in the final quarter, and the one-turnover-per-minute Pelicans committed several forced turnovers in the final four minutes.

Having not played a game in two weeks, the Gulls weren't as sharp as they normally are. "It affected us like it did last year," said Seaside coach Wally Hamer. "And this was a well-coached, good team. We kind of let them back into it, but it's a win, and now we get to move on."

"It is what it is," he said. "We didn't play, we've been doing that in our games recently. We get a big lead, and we have a tendency to not play as hard."

Dundas added 10 points and eight rebounds for the

Gulls, who were 8-for-19 from the free throw line.

"We need to make our free throws," Hamer said. "It's huge. That's what kept (the Pelicans) in the game — our free throws."

Utti had eight steals and seven assists in addition to her 26 points.

"I think (the layoff) did hurt a little bit," Utti said. "We weren't in perfect game shape. We were tired (in the second half). In the third quarter, we couldn't get our offense moving, and we couldn't score very much."

Meanwhile, the nonleague games the Gulls played earlier in the season will have them well-prepared to make deep runs in the state tournament.

"The experience of playing the top four teams in the state this year is big," Hamer said. "We've played Cascade, Sutherlin, Valley Catholic, Henley ... we've played all those teams."

BOYS BASKETBALL

North Valley 47, Seaside 40
GRANTS PASS — The Seaside boys basketball team was not intimidated by North Valley's No. 3 ranking or their 23-2 overall record.

But a win's a win for the Knights, who won their 14th game in a row Friday night, a 47-40 win over the Gulls.

North Valley's win in the Sweet 16 game of the Class 4A state playoffs sends the Knights (24-2) on to the state tournament, while Seaside's season comes to a close at 16-11 overall.

The Gulls were able to hold the Knights to their season low in points, and Seaside even held a third-quarter lead, 31-29.

But back-to-back hoops by Cody Thompson late in the third period sparked an 11-0 run for the Knights, who never trailed again.

Seaside had to overcome an early 12-6 deficit, and did it



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Seaside's Whitney Westerholm, No. 24, hugs Tristyn McFadden, 12, of Seaside, after Seaside's 53-43 win over Klamath Union. Seaside will travel to Hillsboro to play for the state championship.

MORE SPORTS

Back-to-back losses end Knappa boys basketball team's season. **Page 7A**



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Seaside's Whitney Westerholm, No. 24, breaks away and puts up a shot in the first quarter.

with a trio of 3-pointers from Trent Meyer. A layup by Zach Marston gave the Gulls a 21-20 lead at halftime.

Scores by Jaxson Smith, Austin Eagon and Marston had Seaside holding a two-point lead late in the third quarter, before the Knights answered with their big run.

Thompson led North Valley with 21 points, followed by Chris Morsa with 12.

Marston had 12 points, with nine points from Meyer, the Gulls only senior.

North Valley was 14-for-

20 from the free throw line, to Seaside's 0-for-3. After that, the statistics were fairly even, with the Gulls outrebounding the Knights 24-21, while both teams had seven steals. North Valley was 15-of-38 from the field to Seaside's 18-of-41.

"This was still a good experience" for the Seaside players, said coach Bill Westerholm. "We have all but one coming back, and next year we'll be a year older and a year stronger. This group will do whatever it takes to get better."