

Former Gulls go to bat for Gizdavich

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Budnick, DeGandi, Knutsen, Mizell, Pfund, Wickersham ... the names from the past were all familiar ones Saturday in Seaside, for an afternoon of alumni baseball.

Nearly 30 former Seaside players gathered for the first annual Jon Gizdavich Memorial Doubleheader, to raise money for a Seaside High School scholarship, and also to honor a former friend and teammate who lost his life following a car accident in Corvallis in January 2013.

If the first one is any indication, this alumni day is going to be a fun one.

"This has been a year in the making," said longtime Seaside baseball coach Joel Dierickx. "I know Astoria has an alumni game; at Warrenton, Lennie (Wolfe) was talking about what a great event they had last summer."

"So I just thought, we'll do something like that, but let's make it worth something," he said. "And the very first person that came to my mind was Jon. He was a special person, and obviously his life was cut short."

Gizdavich was a Class of 2007 graduate of Seaside High School, and was nearing his graduation from Oregon State University at the time of his death.

"To me, Jon was always the epitome of someone who consistently cared about other people and was a pleasure to be around," Dierickx said. "He had to overcome some things, but was about ready to graduate from college. And then the tragedy happened."

To start a scholarship in his name, Dierickx said, "was a no-brainer. The goal was to bring everybody together and give a little something. I talked to Bri



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Players who participated in Seaside's first annual Jon Gizdavich Memorial Doubleheader gather for a post-game team photo.



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Terry Gizdavich, wearing her son's hat, and Jon Gizdavich's girlfriend, Bri Hostetler, right, were on hand for Saturday's alumni games.

Hostetler, who was Jon's girlfriend, and she and Terry (Gizdavich), his mother, jumped on board. It just steam-rolled from the idea."

Seaside graduate Ross Knutsen also helped with some of the organizing.

Wearing her son's team jacket and hat, Terry Gizda-

vich threw out the first pitch Saturday.

"It's very emotional," she said. "It's an amazing thing. Jonny would be so pleased. He loved baseball."

Hostetler was also on hand, and called the day "awesome. We had a great response."



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Jeremy Carow, SHS Class of 2009, makes a diving catch in Game 1 of Saturday's alumni doubleheader.

There were two players from the Class of 2000 (Blake Bakken and Mike Mizell), with others from 2001 to 2014. For most of the "old" Gulls, it was their first chance of playing on the new Broadway Field.

"I really didn't know

what we'd get from the pitching side to the hitting side, but it's been fun," Dierickx said. "They're very competitive. It's been a good time. We've fallen on some challenges the last few years, but when you look at all these guys,

there's a lot of playoffs and

victories from the guys who are here."

For the record, the young graduates (2007-14) beat the older graduates (2000-06) 6-0 in the first game, before the old guys held on for a 4-3 win in Game 2. The recent grads trailed by one run with the bases loaded and one out in the bottom of the seventh, before the older graduates turned a double play to end the game.

"It was a great event," said Dierickx, who served as the umpire in Game 1, and was a catcher in Game 2. "Word of mouth got around. We tried to do it the best way we thought — Facebook — and from that point it just spread. It's been fun, and I know it's going to get bigger and better."

Each player paid a \$30 entry fee, with all proceeds from concessions and the sales of an alumni day T-shirt going to the scholarship fund.

Said Dierickx, "In starting a scholarship, I think we're going to have a very good fund right away."

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