

## BOYS BASKETBALL

## Gulls could be in the hunt for a championship

By GARY HENLEY  
The Daily Astorian

Will the 2015-16 season be the "Year of the Gull" in Cowapa League basketball? Don't be surprised if it is.

While the Seaside girls are gunning for their third straight Cowapa League title, the Seaside boys are ready to take over the top spot on the boys' side, and are once again Final Four material.

In fact, with four returning all-league players and a youth program that could be unmatched among Cowapa schools — the league may be looking up at Seaside for quite some time.

The Gulls will know where they're at soon enough, with some tough nonleague games.

"Cascade (Dec. 11) will be a big game for us on the road," Seaside coach Bill Westerholm said. "They will be one of the better teams in the state. I think we'll be right up there in the mix with some of the better teams in the state as well."

## THE COWAPA

The Gulls are certainly the favorites on paper.

Defending state champion Scappoose lost six seniors — including FIVE all-league players, while Seaside lost just one non-starter to graduation, and the Gulls return four all-leaguers, including the league's Player of the Year.

"For the most part, a lot of teams have new faces," Westerholm said. "Tillamook, Banks, Valley Catholic and Scappoose all lost a lot of seniors."



Hunter Thompson was one of the leading scorers this summer.

"The only real varsity player (the Indians) have coming back is Brennen McNabb and their quarterback (Robert Lohman). McNabb is a good shooter, but he will be out for six weeks (broke ankle in state championship football game). But they have a lot of good athletes in their school, and Rahim (Tufts) is a good coach — they'll figure out a way to make it work. They just won't have a lot of height, so they

will try to run an up-tempo game, which we will try to do as well."

He added, "The two teams that have most everybody coming back is us and Astoria."

The Fishermen "have some height and a lot of length. They are going to be a tough team to handle this year."

Fans may get an early-season Clatsop Clash preview in Seaside's Holiday Classic tournament, Dec. 17-19.

"I have a feeling we'll see Astoria in the championship game of our tournament," Westerholm said.

## THE GULLS

Current members of the team have already won state titles last spring and this fall.

"We had a lot of success with our kids in the fall season, whether it was cross country or soccer, or both," Westerholm said. "We have 11 returners,

and right now all 11 are playing pretty well."

All five starters return, and "we'll have eight or nine kids who see quite a bit of playing time," said the coach.

"Obviously Jackson (Januik, Jr.) will be our point guard, and Hunter Thompson (Jr.) is a good complement with his athleticism and a motor that just keeps going. He shot the ball well this summer and was one of our leading scorers;

## SEASIDE BOYS

**Coach:** Bill Westerholm,  
**2014-15:** 16-11 (7-3 Cowapa)  
**Playoffs:** Lost state playoff at North Valley, 40-47  
**All-League Losses:** None  
**All-League Returners:** Jackson Januik (MVP), Jr.; Austin Eagon, Sr.; Jaxson Smith, Sr.; Hunter Thompson, Jr.

"Jaxson Smith (Sr.) has become more athletic after one year in our system. We're expecting him to have a good season;

"Saoul Cazarez (Sr.) has made vast improvements from last year;

"Attkin Babb (Jr.) seems to be in better shape, and doing a better job of getting inside instead of just relying on his 3-point shooting;

"Austin Eagon (Sr.) is going to be a pretty good load for a lot of teams to handle, and Zach Marston (Sr.) is a nice compliment to him. He's unorthodox, but he seems to get the job done."

Elsewhere, "Aaron Richardson (Sr.) is getting better, and showing in practice that he can hit an open look;

"Jake Bassett played mostly JV last year, but he had a good summer, and the only thing we need from him is to be more aggressive and get rebounds. He seems to be doing that, and he's a pretty good shooter from 10 to 12 feet."

Michael Lewis (knee surgery in the fall) and Otto Hoekstre (shoulder injury in football) will add depth when healthy.

"We always have big goals," Westerholm said. "We'll be all right."

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

## GIRLS BASKETBALL

## Seaside seeking third-straight league title

By GARY HENLEY  
The Daily Astorian

The 2014-15 season was a hard one to figure for the Seaside girls basketball program.

The Lady Gulls were the Cowapa League favorites coming in, and indeed won their second straight league title with a 9-1 record.

Yet in a two-day stretch at the 4A state tournament in Hillsboro, the Gulls lost to league rival Valley Catholic, 61-30, and lost to Banks in the consolation bracket, as the Braves rallied from a big first-half deficit.

It just wasn't Seaside's time, said coach Wally Hamer.

"I think we played our best game last year in the first game with Valley Catholic," a 64-56 Seaside victory Jan. 27, Hamer said. "That was a phenomenal game. We had a pretty good run, but in the second half of the league season and then obviously the state tournament, we didn't play well. We all wanted to play better, and it didn't happen."

In two years as the Seaside coach, Hamer is 19-1 in league play, with two league championships.

"One of the goals I had to begin with was just to develop the program," he said. "Of course we always want our varsity team to do well, but I like looking at the whole program."

## THE COWAPA

Despite the tournament losses to Banks and Valley Catholic, its team with Maddi Utti on it has got to be a league favorite. Which is just where the Gulls find themselves as they enter 2015-16,

**SEASIDE GIRLS**  
**Coach:** Wally Hamer, 3rd year  
**2014-15:** 20-7 (9-1 Cowapa)  
**Playoffs:** Lost to Valley Catholic (30-61) and Banks (37-44) at state tournament.  
**All-League Losses:** Haylee Dundas  
**All-League Returners:** Maddi Utti, Sr. (MVP); Sydney Villegas, Jr.; Whitney Westerholm, Sr.

playing for their third-straight league title.

Utti was the Cowapa's Player of the Year last season, in addition to being voted as the league's Defender of the Year.

Hamer — the Cowapa Coach of the Year — knows his team will face the same challenge as last season.

The Valiants return some talent, but lost Kaylynn Bush to graduation. Banks returns all-leaguers Megan Bunn and Ariel Slika, while Astoria — in Mike Jacobson's second year at the helm — should join the mix this year.

"With Banks and Valley Catholic, it won't be easy," Hamer said. "One of our goals is to win a Cowapa League championship. That's something we strive for."

"We don't take anything for granted. Our league will be good. We'll take one game at a time, work hard and try to improve every game and every practice."

## THE LADY GULLS

With five returning seniors, the Gulls are way ahead of the game in experience and leadership.

"It's nice when we don't have to spend hours to work on something, when you have kids who

have been with you and know what to expect," Hamer said.

The seniors are led by four-year starter Whitney Westerholm, an all-league guard last season. She is joined by Annuka Brown, Paige Ideue, Jesse Trott and Britany West.

"The last couple years Paige has been a spark plug, and we'll expect her to start right off with that," Hamer said, while Westerholm is a sharp shooter from the 3-point line, and will help run the offense.

But the go-to girl for points the past two seasons has been Utti, the league's best player. She was voted as the Cowapa MVP as both a freshman and a sophomore.

Utti sprained her ankle at a basketball tournament during volleyball season, but is at full strength and has added to her game, Hamer said.

"The biggest thing we want her to do is be a confident shooter," he said. "She's worked hard at that part, and she could have a big season."

Other juniors on the roster are all-leaguer Sydney Villegas and Lucy Bodner, who played JV last year, but had a great summer, Hamer said.

A talented sophomore class includes Bryre Babbitt, Jetta Ideue and Anesha Smart.

"We'll definitely miss Shelby (Miller), Haylee (Dundas) and Allison (Bussert)," Hamer said of last year's seniors. "Haylee will be tough to replace. She was such a good shooter. We just need people to step up and make shots. I think we have kids who can step in and do that. With two or three kids, we can make up those 10 points."



Whitney Westerholm, a four-year starter, was an all-league guard last season.

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