



Photos by Jeff Ter Har/For EO Media Group

Coaches provide side court guidance.

## Gulls: Good team chemistry is key

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About midway through the regular season, the players have put up some notable numbers, both as individuals and as a team. They are 20-7 overall and scheduled for a game tonight in Seaside against Valley Catholic. Coach Wally Hamer and assistant coach Mike Hawes lead the team, which is comprised of five seniors, three juniors and three sophomores.

Teamwork is a prized concept for the Lady Gulls basketball program.

"You don't win league championships without having good team chemistry," Hamer said.

During the first week of practice, the girls basketball program held an in-town retreat. After splitting off from the junior varsity players for the night, the varsity girls went over their goals for the season, according to senior Whitney Westerholm. This year, she said, they "bonded over the question" of what were their biggest fears for the season.

"You kind of get to know your team on a different level beside basketball," she said. "We talk about how we're going to accomplish those goals and how we're going to overcome those fears as a group. I think that's another reason why we're so close as a team. Because we know each others' fears, and we know what they need to do to overcome them. And we all have the same goal in the end."

Some of the deep connections between players can be attributed to long-standing friendships forged through many years living in the same small town, attending the same schools and participating in many of the same activities besides basketball. Yet players like senior Jesse Trott, who moved to Seaside from out of state as a freshman, show there is more to it than simply adding up years.

"I had no friends for the first 3 1/2 months," she said. "When I walked on the basketball court, I kind of just immediately had friends."

During those months, she said, she felt like an outsider "everywhere else, but not on the basketball court."

"I never got treated like a new kid," she added.

The team's slogan, created two years ago and brought into reuse this year, is T<sup>2</sup>, which stands for "tough and together," Hamer said.

"It has been really a cool thing for our girls to think about, always being tough. No matter what the situation is, we've got to handle it in a tough manner," he said. "And we're going to be together and have each others' backs, no matter what."

### Good people off the court

As student-athletes, the girls approach the game with an understanding that other responsibilities are equally important.

The varsity team practices after school each day and on Sundays. To participate in games, the girls abide by certain criteria. They cannot be failing



The Lady Gulls loosen up before a game.

more than one of their five classes. They cannot practice if they've taken an unexcused absence that day. If they don't practice the day before a game, they can't play in at least the first half. If they're failing a class, they can't miss that class to go to an event.

Senior Annuka Brown, who plays post, said the coaches encourage them to be "really good people off the court," which means "having respect and manners" and "treating everyone nicely."

The girls know basketball doesn't last forever, and when the game ends, it is what they have learned that will last.

"It's not just about how good we are and how many points we scored and stuff like that," Westerholm said. "It's more about how it relates to the bigger picture."

Hamer believes the beauty of athletics is "you can learn life skills" that can't be learned in a regular classroom setting.

"It's competitive and you fail, you succeed, you have to work together with people," he said. "Where else do you learn that until you get out of high school and college? You don't learn that in a lot of spots, unless you're on a team."

In addition to their families and coaches, the players see one another as a prominent source of accountability.

"We can be hard on each

other and we can push each other, but we know our limits and we know when to stop," senior Brittany West said. "I think that improves everyone on our team, younger and older."

This accountability, the pressure of not wanting to fail a teammate, drives the players to perform at a high level. However, when the chips are down — in a game, in a class or in life — the girls know who they can rely on for nonjudgmental support, advice and encouragement. Discussing what she will miss the most when she graduates this year, West said she has "made some of the best friends I could ever ask for, and some lifelong friends."

Senior Paige Ideue agreed she would miss "the natural click of the team, because that's really hard to find."

The players also feel connected to their coaches, who give advice without criticism and provide support even in the face of mistakes, which relieves the girls from the fear of failure.

"You could talk to them about anything and they'd be there and understand," West said. "I think having that relationship with a coach or coaches is something rare."

### 'A natural progression'

The girls hope to be playing basketball into March, at

the state tournament as the Cowapa League champions, which "will be tough" goals to accomplish this year, Hamer said. But what the girls will do beyond that is still being set in motion.

Ideue anticipates playing softball, her primary sport, at Centralia College in Washington on a scholarship and possibly playing intramural basketball for fun. Junior Maddi Utti is being scouted as a college basketball prospect.

For West, Brown, Trott and Westerholm, however, they see their days on the court as numbered.

"I've played sports for so long and I've been a part of the sports community for so long," Westerholm said. "I love the sports community, but I think at this point in my senior year, I've kind of made my peace with the fact that this is my last year doing it. It was fun while it lasted, but it's almost like a natural progression to move on and move on to bigger things."

The other girls agreed playing college sports competitively is not for everyone.

"There are so many other things in the world and so many other avenues," Trott said.

She feels like she has missed out pursuing some of her other interests because of practice and games. While she is content having made that sacrifice, she said, "I'm ready to not have to say, 'I have to be at practice right now,' and go do other things with my life."

## Loggers sixth at Gervais

The Daily Astorian

GERVAIS — The Knappa wrestling team took part in the 17-team Cougar Classic Saturday in Gervais, where the Loggers finished sixth in the team standings, against a field of mostly larger schools.

Scio was the team champion with 166.5 points, followed by Woodbury, Dayton, Myrtle Point, Riverside and Knappa.

"I was pleased with our team," Knappa coach Dan Owings said. "They performed well. There were 12 schools larger than us and we came in sixth."

"We were short in four weight classes, so I think we did a great job as a team."

After a bye in the first round at 113 pounds, Knappa freshman Luke Goozee pinned Pleasant Hill's Logan Parrish in 26 seconds, then scored a 30-second fall over Lili Giron of Woodbury in the semifinals to reach the championship.

In the title bout, Goozee pinned Anorve Flores of Gervais in 5:18.

"Luke worked extremely hard and pinned all of his opponents, with his last opponent being ranked in state at the 3A level," Owings said.

At 160 pounds, Knappa's Reuben Cruz lost just one match and that was to the eventual champion (Cody Stahl of Dayton). Cruz finished with a pin (3:28) over Jared Ojua of Amity for third.

After a first round bye at 182, Andrew Goozee scored pins over Jacob Barker of Yamhill-Carlton (38 seconds) and Gage Hardy of Pleasant Hill (2:30), to reach the championship vs. Avery McDaniel of Scio, last year's second place finisher at the 3A level.

"It was a thrilling match, with it going into the last

round of overtime (Sudden Victory)," Owings said, "where (Goozee) managed to escape and score a win (6-2)."

Team results: Scio 166.5, Woodbury 142, Dayton 139.5, Myrtle Point 139, Riverside 126, Knappa 109, Pleasant Hill 95, Yamhill-Carlton 95, Taft 76, Neah-Kah-Nie 71, Monroe 68, Clatskanie 65, Gervais 58, Amity 47, Vernonia 41, Sheridan 36, Colton 0.

Knappa wrestles at Waldport today, where all eight teams in the district will wrestle to determine seeding for Districts, Feb. 12-13.

### Swimming Fish compete at Tillamook

TILLAMOOK — The Astoria girls finished fourth and the Fishermen boys placed fifth in the Tillamook Cheese Relays, which took place Friday at the Tillamook YMCA.

Tillamook won the girls' team title, followed by Newport, Taft, Astoria, Rainier and Valley Catholic; while Newport captured the boys' team championship.

The Astoria girls opened the meet with a win in the very first event, the 200-yard medley relay, where the foursome of Megan Sparks, Kendal Gustafson, Ashley Schacher and Olivia Paul won in 2 minutes, 9.89 seconds.

The same four won the 400-yard freestyle relay (4:28.47) and placed second in the 400-yard medley relay.

Astoria's Jan Kreibich and Ryan Russell were second in the boys' 200-yard freestyle relay.

Team results: Girls — Tillamook 104, Newport 90, Taft 72, Astoria 60, Rainier 42, Valley Catholic 12.

Boys — Newport 108, Rainier 86, Valley Catholic 60, Taft 52, Astoria 44, Tillamook 32.

## SCOREBOARD

### PREP SCHEDULE

#### TODAY

**Boys Basketball** — Astoria at Scappoose, 6 p.m.; Valley Catholic at Seaside, 6 p.m.; Portland Adventist at Warrenton, 7:45 p.m.; Knappa at Gaston, 8 p.m.; South Bend at Ilwaco, 7 p.m.

**Girls Basketball** — Astoria at Scappoose, 7:45 p.m.; Valley Catholic at Seaside, 7:45 p.m.;

Portland Adventist at Warrenton, 6 p.m.; Knappa at Gaston, 6 p.m.  
**Wrestling** — Knappa at Waldport, 5 p.m.

#### THURSDAY

**Girls Basketball** — Ilwaco at South Bend, 7 p.m.

**Swimming** — Scappoose at Astoria, 4 p.m.; Tillamook at Seaside, 4 p.m.

**Wrestling** — Astoria, Seaside at Banks, 5:30 p.m.

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