

Lady Gulls make it three straight to Elite 8



Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Seaside's Maddi Utti, No. 25, wrestles away a rebound against North Marion's Emily Scanlan, left, and Kiley Florez, right, during their basketball game at Seaside High School on Friday.



Seaside's Paige Ideue, No. 12, goes up for a shot in the second quarter of the basketball game against North Marion at Seaside High School on Friday.



Seaside's Jetta Ideue, No. 5, wrestles the ball away from North Marion's Hannah Kinniburgh, No. 40, during the game Friday.

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — The Seaside Lady Gulls made it 3-for-3 Friday night.

Three straight 20-win seasons, 3-0 in the Sweet 16 ... and now three straight trips to the state tournament.

A 49-42 win over North Marion in a Class 4A state playoff game at the Gulls' Nest will send Seaside to its third straight appearance in the Elite Eight, where the Gulls will play Mazama at 6:30 p.m., Thursday at Forest Grove High School.

More three's? How 'bout three 3-pointers from senior Paige Ideue in the first half? The Gulls held leads of 12-5 and 22-14 in the first half, and Ideue's third trey late in the second quarter gave Seaside a 30-22 lead at halftime.

Still, the Gulls had trouble putting away a team they had beaten six straight times, by scores of 60-38, 53-41, 44-25, 49-25, 52-35 and 63-46 in the last meeting, Jan. 15.

"They're a good team," Seaside coach Wally Hamer said of the Huskies. "We knew it was going to be a battle. I expected it to be close. All the people I've talked to thought that North Marion has improved a lot."

Ideue — one of five seniors playing their last home game — said, "it was a little closer than we expected. The first time we played them, we were down, then Whitney (Westerholm) came back and hit three 3-pointers."

In Friday's game, Seaside scored just five points in the third quarter, but still held a 35-28 lead going to the fourth.

The Huskies drained nine 3-pointers of their own, including six in the second half and four in the final period.

Hannah Kinniburgh's triple at the 4:08 mark had North Marion trailing 38-34, and a trey from Ally Umbehower had the Huskies within 43-39 with 1:25 left.

Seaside — which made just five field goals the entire

second half — put the game away at the free throw line, where Maddi Utti and Westerholm combined to make seven in a row in the final 1:38.

Jesse Trott added a big 3-pointer early in the fourth, and Jetta Ideue hit a short jumper moments later to help maintain a six-point lead.

"Our goal is to always win the third quarter, and I felt like we were kind of sleep-walking tonight on offense," Hamer said. "We're not perfect. There's a lot of things we could have done better, but we hung in there and battled, and ended up winning the game."

Utti scored 10 of her game-high 20 points in the second quarter.

The victory marks the third straight 20-win season for Seaside, 20-5 overall.

And now the Gulls will hope the third time is the charm at the state tournament, where Seaside will hope to finally capture that elusive state title.

Only three schools are making their third straight appearance in the Elite Eight — Sutherlin, Seaside and Mazama. Sutherlin has won back-to-back state titles, and Mazama won the championship in 2013.

It could be Seaside's turn.

The Gulls were 16-of-32 from the field, and forced 23 turnovers in Friday's win. Those are the kind of numbers that win championships, and the Gulls know that if they play like that, they will be a tough team to beat in the tournament.

"We're on a real tough side of the bracket — Banks, Sutherlin, Mazama and us," Hamer said. "But all eight teams will be tough."

"Our first goal is win a league championship, and that didn't work out very well for us," he said. "So we rearranged some goals. The season has been full of challenges, and I feel like our girls have really stepped up to those challenges."

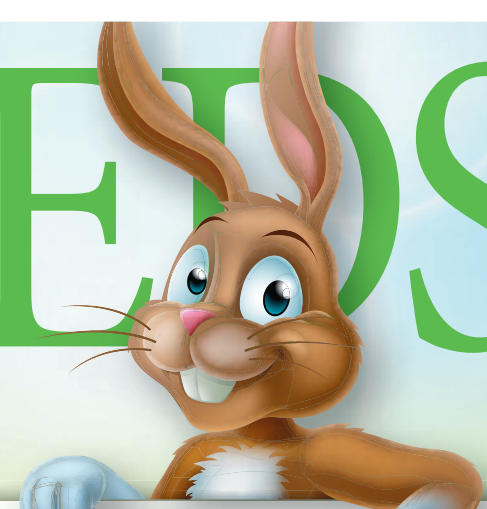
Ideue said, "Going to state for the third time is one of the greatest feelings."

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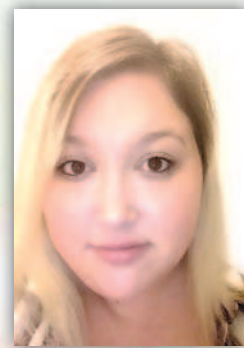
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