

Low numbers, high expectations for Warrenton's 11-player baseball team

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

Entering his 25th year as the Warrenton baseball coach, Lennie Wolfe gets right to the point when describing his 2016 team: "There's not a lot of depth ... well, no depth at all, when you get right down to it."

Indeed, the Warriors are heading into a baseball season with just 11 players on the roster. And that's the complete program.

With six seniors, things could get really tricky next year, but for now, "the nice thing at this stage is that both freshmen are versatile, so they will get some playing time," Wolfe said.

L&C LEAGUE

Even with the lack of numbers, the Warriors are going to be a major player in how the Lewis & Clark League shakes out.

Warrenton has a lack of depth, but other teams in the league were hit heavy in the graduation department.

"There's a fair amount of transition for everyone," Wolfe said. "Clatskanie lost seven starters. Their two returning starters are (Alex) McCallister, and (Cole) Warren will be a really tough pitcher.

"Rainier has a pretty good core back, but they lost some important seniors (including Carson Nicklous and Jeff Tripp). They have at least two back, (Mason) Schimmel and (Tim) Seybert, who are both pretty good pitchers. They have some good arms and they will be tough. Rainier would be my preseason favorite."

THE WARRIORS

The top half of the Warrior lineup could be the best (certainly the most-experienced) in the league.

Leading off will be senior catcher Gavon McFadden: "A four-year starter, second year behind the plate. He had a breakout year last year offensively, and filled a gaping hole behind the plate. He put a lot of time in the weight room, and he's one of the fastest kids around. He will be a pretty exciting guy in the lead-off spot."

Batting second is senior third baseman/catcher Justice Watson: "A four-year starter,



Warrenton's Dalton Knight pitches during a baseball game against County Christian.

Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON BASEBALL

Coach: Lennie Wolfe, 25th year
2015: 11-14 (6-6 L&C)
Playoffs: Lost league playoff to Cattin Gabel, 1-2
All-League Losses: Brock Johnson, Hunter Michaelson
All-League Returners: Joe Little, Sr.; Gavon McFadden, Sr.; Justice Watson, Sr.

first-team all-league. He's consistent and gives us quality at-bats. He's got quick hands, and we're hoping that's the case defensively. It hurts to take an all-league center fielder and say 'I need you at third base,' but we need him to be our third baseman. He's a consummate team player and will play whatever we ask."

McFadden and Watson "gives me two guys at the top of the order who can flat-out hoof it," Wolfe said. "As a team we will be much faster, so it will allow us to return to some old practices. They will be exciting on the bases, and statistically, they've always been on the bases."

Batting third, senior pitcher/shortstop Joe Little: "His batting came around last spring, he has improved contact at the plate. And we should have peo-

ple in scoring position when he comes up. His off-season commitment to pitching will be noticeable."

The No. 4 and 5 spots will go to senior right fielder Anthony Cochran, and senior first baseman Hunter Wilson.

"Anthony started clicking offensively last summer, and led the team in hitting (RBIs and average). He's a two-time all-league lineman in football, so he can put a big hurt on the ball."

Wilson is a three-year starter at first, "developed as a defensive player in the spring, and only struck out once in the summer. He's made improvements offensively."

The sixth senior is second baseman David Foster: "He's not flashy, but gets the job done. He's an early enlistee in the Army, and we're proud of



Warrenton's Gavon McFadden looks to throw a runner out during a baseball game against County Christian.

the commitments he's making, both to our country and our team," Wolfe said. "Those are rare kids."

The lone junior is outfielder Derek Ham, and the sophomores include Preston Miller and Matt Burgher.

Freshmen utility players Kale'o Kapua and Dalton Knight will both see playing time ("Dalton's biggest contribution this spring may be on the hill").

Young Warriors will compete in L&C

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

With an all-league returning pitcher and a solid infield of young stars, the Warrenton softball team is hoping for more success in 2016 ... at least in the league season.

An injury to one player — suffered in another sport, with another school — will have an impact on Warrenton's preseason results.

The player happens to be their all-league pitcher, sophomore Niqui Blodgett (a student at Jewell High School) who tore her ACL during basketball season. Since there's no softball at Jewell, Blodgett plays softball at Warrenton.

Blodgett has already had surgery, and "she has limited mobility right now," said Warrenton coach Staci Mieth. "But the doctor thinks she will be able to throw by the first league game (April 15). That's a better prognosis than we expected, but she's still not going to be 100 percent when she comes back."

L&C LEAGUE

The theme, as it seems to be every year in Lewis & Clark League softball, is "Chasing Rainier." The Columbians lost the state title game to Dayton last year, and they're back for another strong season.

"Rainier is always above everybody else," Mieth said. "Last year, we were right there (tied for third with Portland Adventist).

"We lost to Clatskanie every time, but I think we can be more competitive with them this year. If I were doing a coaches poll, they would probably be No. 2, and then PAA and us split last year (with the Cougars defeating Warrenton in the league playoffs). We'll be pretty competitive with them.

"Our goal is to be at least third in league, and that would put us in a home field advantage for the (league) playoffs, and we'll go from there."

Portland Christian finished 0-12 last season.

"We lost some league



The Daily Astorian

Warrenton's Nikki Blodgett, No. 11, pitches in a game against Willamina last spring.

games that we shouldn't have lost last year," Mieth said. "Fortunately for us, we only have a five-team league, and four make it to the playoffs, so we always have a chance."

THE WARRIORS

"We're very, very young. It's the youngest team we've ever had," Mieth said.

Junior all-leaguer Landree Mieth is the only returning player with any extensive varsity experience, while senior Heidi Erland has seen limited action. Brittany Rasmussen is the only other senior, but has not played since her freshman year.

Still, the Warriors are plenty athletic.

The three sophomores on the roster are Rachel Dyer, Kiley Holdiman and Tyla Little, while the Warriors have two freshmen who can step in to play the middle infield, Danielle Bue (from Knappa) and Claire Bussert. Freshman Jo Armstrong, from Jewell, has also contributed in the pre-season.

Before Blodgett returns, Landree Mieth and Bussert will share the pitching duties.

Bue and Bussert "will both be solid in the infield as far as the fundamentals," coach Mieth said, adding that freshman Lilly Thomas "will serve as the catcher when Landree is not behind the plate."

The Warriors (1-6 after seven games) should be more than competitive once Blodgett returns and league play starts.

WARRENTON SOFTBALL

Coach: Staci Mieth, 15th year
2015: 11-13 (5-7 L&C)
Playoffs: Lost league playoff to Portland Adventist, 0-4
All-League Loss: Bri Marsch
All-League Returners: Niqui Blodgett, So.; Landree Mieth, Jr.

Warriors ready to run, jump, throw

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

A normal preseason for Warrenton track & field: Replace key losses, return young athletes with potential, get better as the weather warms up, and score big at districts.

The Warriors did all of the above in 2015, and they're back to do the same this year.

Warrenton lost some key athletes to graduation, but the Warriors also return some high-class, talented underclassmen who will be scoring points at state.

THE OUTLOOK

With 143 points, the Warrenton boys placed second behind Catlin Gabel (188), and well ahead of third-place Clatskanie (98) in last year's district meet. The Warriors could be challenging for the top spot in 2016.

On the track, junior Raymond Alcobendas was sixth in the 400-meter final and junior Luke Liljenwall was a district

THE WARRIORS	
Girls	Boys
Fernanda Alvarez, Fr.	Raymond Alcobendas, Jr.
Cailin Bennett, Fr.	Forrest Bigelow, Fr.
Libby Biel, Sr.	Hayden Bingham, Jr.
Morgan Blodgett, Fr.	Devon Bowser, Jr.
Alma Bolanos, So.	Colin Burchell, So.
Adriana DeJesus, Fr.	Charles Burrows, Sr.
Sagi Diego, Fr.	Kordell Dungan, Fr.
Macen Fritz, So.	Jeff Lafferty, So.
Cheyenne Harrison, Jr.	Levi Lewis, Sr.
Christina Hopkins, Fr.	Luke Liljenwall, Jr.
Alexis Maddox, Fr.	Alan Martinez, Jr.
Taylor Owens, Jr.	Giovanni Martinez, Fr.
Leticia Sanchez, Fr.	Andrea Ortalli, Sr.
Sarah Stein, Sr.	Eli Petersen, Sr.
Pamela Talancon, Fr.	Nate Pringle, Sr.
Vanessa Talancon, So.	Jesse Salcedo, Sr.
Sophia Thomas, Sr.	Tyson Secord, Sr.
Grace Travis, So.	Austin Stein, So.
Trinity Womack, So.	Rodrigo Verrisimo, Sr.
	Tyler Whitaker, Jr.

finalist in the 800 and 1,500 meters.

Sophomore Austin Stein placed fourth in the 110-meter hurdles, and has the district's second-fastest time among returners.

Junior Tyler Whitaker placed second in the 300-meter hurdles,

and takes over the district favorite role, with the graduation of Oregon Episcopal's James Graybeal. Whitaker was also third in the district long jump and triple jump last season.

As always, the Warrenton boys scored big points in the throws, and the same will



Macen Fritz competed in the OSAA 2015 Track and Field State Championships.

be true this season, despite key graduations.

Bryton Kyme was the district champion in the shot put (seventh at state) and took second in the discus; Juan Salcedo was third in the shot and fourth in the discus. Both are gone, as is Chris Oceana (district champ and triple jump in state).

Senior Eli Petersen is the top returner in the throws department, after placing second in



Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Luke Liljenwall competed in last year's Daily Astorian Track Meet at Astoria High School.

the shot and third in the discus in 2015.

The Warrenton girls were fourth in the team standings at districts.

Sarah Stein returns for her senior season, after placing sixth in both the 1,500 and 3,000-meter district races.

Macen Fritz had a great freshman season (district champ in the 300 hurdles, second in the 100 hurdles), and will be one of

the contenders in both events at state.

The four members of Warrenton's 1,600-meter relay squad (Libby Biel, Sophia Thomas, Stein and Fritz) all return.

Sophomore Ciara Kish (fourth in the district shot put and javelin) will lead the throws group; and Biel (district champion in triple jump, second in long jump) is another state title contender.

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