

# How to improve on perfection? Loggers will try

By GARY HENLEY  
The Daily Astorian

Twenty-seven and 0? It was a great season, it was fun and it was a blast for Logger baseball fans to watch their team win another state championship.

But 27-0 is in the past, and Knappa baseball is on to the next season.

"I've never heard the kids talk about it, I don't talk about it ... that was last year's team," Knappa coach Jeff Miller said.

Their fans may sport sweat-shirts and T-shirts with "27-0" on the back, but "We don't ever discuss wins here," Miller said of the players. "We try to take care of other things, and the wins come along with it."

Of last year's amazing streak, he said, "We know that it won't help us this year."

## THE NWL

Make no mistake, the Loggers will still be a factor in the league race, but the chase for the championship could be a little tighter for the first time in years. It may even come down to a three-game series between Vernonia and Knappa, the final week of the regular season.

"I'd pick Vernonia as the favorite going in," Miller said. "They obviously have athletes, like they did (winning league championships) in basketball and football. They return experience, athletic ability and pitching. They should be at the top, and challenged closely by Gaston, which has a deep pitching staff. (Jarad) Davis is a good pitcher, and (Bailey) Morrison at Vernonia is good."

"I hope that we get to where we're in that mix," he said. "We have kids who are used to winning and like to compete, so I think we can be in the mix of



Knappa's Dale Takalo pitches during a baseball game against Reedsport.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

those teams at the top.

"Hopefully we'll still be close enough to where that last series is interesting."

Miller's favorite would have been Portland Lutheran, before the school dropped its varsity baseball program.

"They had the best pitcher in the league," he said of the Bluejays.

Statewide, Miller said, "Reedsport and Burns are the top 2A teams this year."

Knappa has already beaten

Reedsport twice, 3-2 and 10-0 in a two-game series to start the season. "Irrigon will also be a tough out. They have a tremendous left-handed pitcher, (Austin) Rice. He's good, and they're talented and athletic."

## THE LOGGERS

Five all-league returners (and only one senior among those six) will go a long ways in helping Knappa be "a part of the mix."

"It's a work in progress," Miller said. "We return some good baseball players, but there's a lot of questions out there, and positions to fill."

To start with, on the mound, where Knappa must replace Chase Rusinovich and Tyson Burnard.

"Dale (Takalo, a sophomore) is basically all we return on the mound. It's a new role for him, stepping up to be the ace. Behind that, it's one of those years where it's hard to

**KNAPPA BASEBALL**

**Coach:** Jeff Miller, 15th year  
**2015:** 27-0 (21-0 NWL)  
**State Playoffs:** Defeated Lost River, 19-2; Dufur, 6-4; Regis, 7-3; and Monroe, 3-0, in the state championship.  
**All-League Losses:** Andrew Miller (MVP), Austin Dragoo (transferred), Justin Dragoo, Chase Rusinovich, Nate Truax.  
**All-League Returners:** Reuben Cruz, So.; Noah Kinney, Sr.; Jason Miller, Jr.; Dale Takalo, So.; Colton Weirup, So.

identify your pitchers, so everybody's a pitcher.

"We're working a lot of guys, and they're all capable. They will be better a month from now than they are now."

Some things, however, never change. The Loggers still have a defensive lineup that will be unmatched at the 2A level.

All-state junior Jason Miller will move to infield this year, where, coach Miller said, "We have some very solid infielders, with Noah Kinney our only senior. He's been a starter for a long time, he's as solid as it gets at second base; Jason Miller and Mason Hoover (So.) are both solid infielders (and interchangeable at second and short-stop). Between the three, that's a solid an infield as you will find."

Takalo will play first when not pitching, and the same with junior Michal Goodman, who already has a head-to-head win over an all-state pitcher in the preseason.

The outfield is "anchored by two good returning players, (sophomores) Reuben Cruz and Colton Weirup. Defensively, we're very solid."

Knappa must replace another all-leaguer behind the plate (Nate Truax), and may just do it with another all-league caliber catcher.

"Andrew Goozee (Jr.) has the strongest throwing arm I've ever coached. He has the tough-

ness you want in a catcher, and he's a leader. He has a lot of qualities.

"So with Reuben, Dale, Jason and Noah — there's four very good baseball players, then throw Mason in for a fifth," coach Miller said. "We have seven, eight, nine really good baseball players."

Also challenging for spots will be Logan Bartlett, Ryker Coffey, Reece Hunt, Shawn Lackey and Quentin Pinkstaff. "Good numbers and a quality freshman class," Miller said. "We just hope to be in the district playoffs, where you have a chance to play your best for a game or two and hopefully qualify for the state tournament."

With a 62-1 record in league play over the last three years ... yes (in the safest bet of the century), the Loggers will probably be in the league playoffs.

**Prediction:** Miller's choice is Vernonia, but it's almost impossible to ignore what Knappa has done over the last three years.

Knappa outscored the rest of the league 310 to 35 last year (and 325-40 in 2014); and the Loggers won the league title last season with a 21-0 mark, over second-place Faith Bible (13-8).

Vernonia may put up a fight, but it's hard to imagine any team even challenging Knappa for the NWL title.

## Knappa softball still strong, still young

By GARY HENLEY  
The Daily Astorian

Knappa baseball wasn't the only undefeated team during the 2015 Northwest League spring sports season.

The Knappa softball team was 12-0 in league play, highlighting a breakthrough season for Lady Logger softball.

An overall record of 24-4, unbeaten in league play, with a sweep of the league MVP and Coach of the Year awards ... and it all ended in the state quarterfinals, with a 1-0 loss at eventual state champion Pilot Rock (which won the state championship game, 2-1, over Weston-McEwen).

The Lady Loggers have lost their all-star pitcher, Kacie Cameron, but Knappa still returns four all-league players (one junior and three sophomores) — plenty to make another run at a title.

## THE NWL

"Vernonia just has too many hitters," said Knappa coach James Nichols. "The only good thing for me is that they're all seniors. They've got the two Smith girls (Sara and Paige), and Cassidy (Whitton).

"Gaston has (sophomore) Charity Hall, and we were 3-0 against her last year." Knappa also swept all three games from Vernonia.

Still, "It will be us and Gaston for that second spot," Nichols said. "I think we've got better hitters. We'll give up some runs — we're not going to strike out 17 or 18 hitters a game, so we'll be relying on our defense."

## THE LOGGERS

"Senior Night" is going to



Jaden Miethe will be one of Knappa softball's big hitters this spring.

The Daily Astorian

**KNAPPA SOFTBALL**

**Coach:** James Nichols, 4th year  
**2015:** 24-4 (12-0 NWL)  
**State Playoffs:** Defeated Prospect, 4-1; lost at Pilot Rock, 0-1  
**All-League Losses:** Kacie Cameron (MVP), Stacey Aho, Alyson Olheiser, McKailyn Rogers (transferred to Astoria).  
**All-League Returners:** Jaden Miethe, So.; Alisha Murphy, Jr.; Kaitlyn Truax, So.; Paris Vanderburg, So.

be short and sweet this spring at Knappa High School. Track has a few seniors, baseball has one, and Logger softball has no seniors at all.

Knappa was young last season, but good. Now they're a year older and a year better.

Just one week into spring practice, Nichols had his starting defensive lineup in place.

The infield includes freshman Hannah Hellburg at first base; junior Alisha Murphy at second and freshman Laicee Hendrickson at third, with sophomore Jaden Miethe at the key shortstop position.

The outfield has juniors Emilee Olson in left and Hailey Murray in center, and sophomore Mackenzie Strain in right.

The all-important pitcher-catcher battery will have

sophomore Paris Vanderburg in the circle, with sophomore Kaitlyn Truax behind the plate.

Rounding out Knappa's roster are junior Desiree Andrade; sophomores Ryain Killion, Mikayla Rethati, Emaly Roberts and Emma Taggart; and freshmen Katie Patterson, Lily Roberts and Jordan Walter.

Assistant coaches include Jeff Kaul, Paul Olheiser, Lisa Graham, along with Kacie Cameron as the pitching coach and Nestucca graduate Emily Menefee.

**Prediction:** With no seniors on the roster, the Lady Loggers are certainly the team of the future in the Northwest League. Why not get a head start on a dynasty? Knappa will challenge Vernonia for the league title.



The Loggers return senior Chris Montano, who competed at last year's OSAA Track and Field State Championships.

Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

## Logger track season under way

By GARY HENLEY  
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The Knappa track team tuned up for the 2016 with their first meet last Saturday, as the Loggers took part in the Tillamook Invitational.

Competing against mostly bigger schools, the results were predictable for the Loggers, who finished eighth out of nine teams on the boys' side, and ninth on the girls'.

Still, there's plenty to be encouraged about for Knappa Track, '16.

Knappa returns three-fourths of its state-qualifying 400-meter relay team, with juniors Chelsea Sapp, Meranda Godwin and Devin Vandergriff.

**THE LOGGERS**

<p><b>Girls</b>                  Tabitha Adams, Sr.                  Meranda Godwin, Jr.                  Ressa Inman, So.                  Emerald Mason, Fr.                  Mikayla Morton, So.                  Chelsea Sapp, Jr.                  Devin Vandergriff, Jr.                  Alyssa White, So.</p> <p><b>Boys</b>                  Noah Bagnall, Jr.                  Levi Christie, So.</p>	<p>Braedon Eltagonde, So.                  Josh Fulton, Fr.                  Spencer Fulton, So.                  Keenan Gebhart, So.                  Noah Gothro, Jr.                  Cody Hobbs, Jr.                  Nathan Hoikka, Fr.                  Josh Jones, Fr.                  Patrick Maize, Sr.                  Chris Montano, Sr.                  Elijah Patterson, Sr.                  Trentne Smith, Sr.</p>
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Vandergriff will be the top returner in the district 200 meters, and she's in the top two in the 100 and 400 meters.

The Knappa boys lost their state points from Devin Lewis Allen (100-, 200- and 400-meter finalist at state, district champ in all three), but the Loggers return senior Chris

Montano (long jump and triple jump), who won the long jump competition in the Tillamook Invitational, beating out Class 4A jumpers from Molalla, Banks, Taft, Astoria and Tillamook, with a leap of 19 feet, one inch. He placed second in the triple jump (39-2 1/2).

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