

CROSS COUNTRY

Seaside boys set to repeat as state champs

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

"Perfect and gettin' better," is a favorite phrase of Seaside cross country coach Neil Branson.

It's also the perfect fit for the Seaside boys' cross country team.

The Gulls were certainly perfect in 2015 — enough to win the Class 4A state championship in Eugene. And they were also "gettin' better," since six of their seven runners who competed at state were non-seniors.

As it turns out, their top six finishers in the meet at Lane Community College were the non-seniors. All of which spells one thing, as the Gulls ended the 2016 season: R-E-P-E-A-T.

Led by individual state champion Bradley Rzewnicki, Branson's crew is the best in Oregon as they enter a new year, in search of another state title.

The Seaside boys finished with 49 points to top the 14 boys' programs who competed with full teams in the state meet. The next closest was Phoenix, with 65.

Rzewnicki — who had actually finished second in the Cowapa League meet just 10 days earlier — ran the 5,000-meter course at LCC in 16 minutes, 13 seconds, finishing well ahead of Tony Hooks, a senior at Sisters.

And Rzewnicki did not have to wait around long for his teammates, as Hunter Thompson crossed the finished line in 16:34 for fifth place; Jackson Januik took ninth in 16:40;



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Seaside's Bradley Rzewnicki is the returning individual state champion in Class 4A, for the defending state team champion Gulls.

and Rafi Sibony placed 12th in 16:59.

Colton Carter was 31st and Juneau Meyer 33rd, with senior Jack Whittle placing 89th.

The theme for Class 4A boys' cross country in Oregon this year? "Chasing Seaside."

That's what everybody will be doing this year, as Rzewnicki, Thompson, Januik, Sibony, Carter and Meyer all return. Rzewnicki, Thompson, Januik and Meyer are seniors, while Sibony and Carter are juniors.

This year's senior class could turn out to be one of the most decorated in Seaside school history.

In addition to their state championship in cross country, Carter, Januik, Meyer and Thompson played for Seaside's league champion soccer team,

while Januik and Thompson played key roles in leading the Gulls all the way to the state title game in basketball last March.

In the spring, Januik was the 800-meter state champion in track.

"That was great last year," Branson said. "It was fun the way it came together, and all the cooperation."

"The important thing is that

we have kids out here who were part of that team last year, 37 kids who ran at district ... and we're going to take care of everybody and have fun. I do not get lost or wrapped up in the state meet.

"If we take care of kids, treat 'em right, train them proper ... everybody is going to improve, and then what comes from that, comes from that."

The Cowapa

Before the Seaside boys can win another state title, they have to get out of their own league first — the toughest at the 4A level.

The rankings going into the state meet had Seaside first, Tillamook second and Valley Catholic third.

Because only two teams advance from district meets, only the Gulls and Cheesemakers took teams to state.

"We had the top three teams in the state, and Valley Catholic drew the short straw," Branson said. Statewide, "Who knows what other school has popped up? In our own league, all we can do is take care of our own business and have fun with it."

"Tillamook will be competitive," he said. "And Valley Catholic has huge numbers. The Scappoose girls always have numbers, and they're a well-organized team."

"October 27 (league championships) is when you lay it on the line."

The Gulls

In addition to the above,

"we've added one (senior Will Garvin) who was here his freshman year, and wants to give it another go," Branson said.

"And you can't be a 300-meter hurdler without having a few strings of toughness in you."

"The biggest thing with these guys coming back — certainly they're talented — but they're just plain tough. They know how to compete," he said.

"And not necessarily for the first half-mile. I don't know much about soccer, but they know how to attack and defend. It's the same way they play basketball. You can't coach that. They just innately know how to compete in everything they do, even in the classroom. I just sit back for the ride."

And "we've got some others coming in," including freshman Beau Johnson. "We have nine kids working for seven spots. Having that internal competition is good."

The Seaside girls finished fourth out of six in the team standings in the Cowapa League meet last year, but there's plenty to look forward to for the Lady Gulls in 2016.

Their top two runners in the league meet were freshman Katie Zagata and junior Josie Smith, who finished fourth and fifth, respectively, out of 42 runners. (Smith would finish 16th at state, out of 108 runner).

The Seaside girls are hoping to add a little depth this season, to climb the Cowapa ladder and make a run at traditional league powers Tillamook and Scappoose.

GIRLS SOCCER

Coach Garhofer hopes to see that 'fire in the belly'

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

The 2016 season marks the first year of the "Josh Garhofer Era," as the former Gull soccer player takes over as head coach of the Seaside varsity girls soccer program.

Garhofer replaces Matt Johnson, who led the Lady Gulls for two years, following the retirement of Dave Rouse after the 2013 season. Johnson remains on the coaching staff, as does Rouse.

And Garhofer will have his hands full, as Seaside must replace three all-leaguers, and nine total seniors lost to graduation. The Gulls lost five of their last seven games in 2015 ... and as always, the Cowapa League promises to be one of the best in the state at the 4A level.

"Our goal is the same every year: Get to the finals," Garhofer said. "But first and foremost I want the group to really come together and be a team. Winning is important, but the most important aspect is to have a love and appreciation for the game."

"I want to see them have that 'fire in their bellies.' An old coach of mine would repeat that. I believe they have it."

The Cowapa

The "Conference of Champions" performs well in just about every sport — none more so than girls soccer.

Scappoose is the defending state champion at the 4A level, as the Indians beat Valley Catholic in the semifinals and finished



The Daily Astorian/File Photo

Lizzy Barnes, right, going against Astoria's Jenna Rudolph in last year's Clatsop Clash, hopes to lead Seaside to a winning season in her senior year.

SEASIDE GIRLS SOCCER

Coach: Josh Garhofer, 1st year

2015: 4-8-2 (4-6 Cowapa)

All-League Losses: Sophie Trevino; Whitney Westerholm; Alie Zagata

All-League Returners: Bryre Babbitt, Jr.; Lizzy Barnes, Sr.

the season a perfect 18-0.

Scappoose was brutal on the North Coast teams last year, outscoring Astoria and Seaside by a combined 35-0 in four games.

Scappoose will still be forced to reload, following the graduation of 10 seniors. Valley Catholic lost nine seniors, making 2016 a good year to rebuild and possibly challenge the upper half of the league.

The Cowapa had three teams in the 2014 quarterfinals, with Valley Catholic winning the state title; and Scappoose won

it all in 2013, as the Cowapa (whichever team it may be) will be attempting to win its fourth straight state championship.

The Valiants actually won the state title at the 3A/2A/1A level in 2013, making it four state titles won by Cowapa League teams in the last three years. Let's see another league do that.

The Lady Gulls

Last year's varsity team had a lot of seniors, four freshmen ... and not much in between.

Now, however, the Gulls

have seven seniors on the current roster, as they gained some first-year varsity seniors.

Seaside will look to Lizzy Barnes and Morgan Brown as the two senior leaders this season. Barnes is a returning all-league midfielder.

"Both (Barnes and Brown) have a strong sense of the game and I look forward to seeing what they will do this season," Garhofer said. "Getting Sydney Villegas back from a hiatus on soccer last year will also boost our team."

Elsewhere, having solid juniors such as Bryre Babbitt and Corrie Falleur "is always helpful," he said. "Being able to slot into any spot as well as giving our back line a strong presence is very important."

"Kirstin Lent (Sr.) and Geri-Ann Klaffke (Jr.) will be our goalkeepers," he said. "Being unafraid of the ball is a rare thing to find in some keepers, and I am very excited to see their growth."

Adding youthful depth to the roster, Garhofer said, "sophomores Chloe Bartel, Katie Zagata, Audrey Kunde and Maddie Brown will also be very important to our success."

"Having one year of varsity soccer under their belt, I expect them to be more confident with the ball."

New additions to the team include Patricia Granillo, Paola Campuzano, Dania Nolzaco and Jessica Angulo-Joli.

"All four came into practice fighting for a spot," said the coach. "They have earned it."

Seaside volleyball looks for a real new year in 2016

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Angie Huntsman, 4th year

2015: 1-9 Cowapa

All-League Returner: Maddi Utti, Sr.

It's a tough battle to put a winning team on the court in Cowapa League volleyball. No program knows that more than Seaside.

Look no further than the Gulls' league records over the last five years: 1-9, 1-9, 0-10, 1-9, 1-9 — a combined 4-46 league mark since their 7-3 record in 2010.

There are signs of encouragement — Seaside finally managed to score a league win over Astoria last season, and the Gulls only had one senior (Brittany West) on last year's roster. Everybody else returns for head coach Angie Huntsman.

The Lady Gulls

Seaside's only all-league player in 2015 was junior blocker Maddi Utti, who missed part of the season after suffering an injury while playing basketball.



The Daily Astorian/File Photo

Maddi Utti enters her senior year at Seaside High School, and will be looking to spike the competition in volleyball.

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