

SPORTS

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Knappa wins Clash of Loggers, again

By **GARY HENLEY**
The Daily Astorian

KNAPPA — There's a new favorite in the world of Oregon 2A boys basketball: The Knappa Loggers.

The case for No. 1 is pretty strong right now for the mighty Loggers:

- Unbeaten (13-0) against 2A and 3A competition (Knappa's only two losses are to Class 4A Astoria and Seaside);

- Two convincing wins over the defending 2A state champions from Vernonia, including a 53-33 scorching Thursday night at Knappa;

- And most of all, Knappa is currently 10-0 atop the Northwest League standings, with a 1 1/2-game lead over Columbia Christian in the toughest conference at the 2A level.

Not to mention Knappa's average margin of victory in their 10 league games. Knappa is scoring 68.0 points per contest, to 37.0 for their opponents.

The Loggers of Knappa certainly looked the part of No. 1 Thursday night at home.

"This was really our first big test, based on how things are in the league standings," said Knappa coach Chris Spencer. "We still have four



Krissy Barendse-Goodman/For the Daily Astorian

Knappa's Timber Engblom drives to the hoop between two Vernonia defenders in Thursday's basketball game.

tough games against Life Christian and Columbia Christian, so the main thing is to just keep getting better. There's no panic and no quit in our kids right now.

"We're learning to adapt, and we can play a lot of different ways — we can play big, we can play smaller ... the younger guys are gaining a lot of experience, and we're 10 deep. There

aren't a lot of teams that have 10 guys who can play."

Slow start

After their usual slow start (four turnovers in their first five possessions), Knappa turned up the heat on Vernonia in the second quarter, and made its first big run of the night.

Trailing 16-9, Dale Takalo scored

on a drive to the hoop to spark a 12-0 run, resulting in a 21-16 Knappa lead, and the home Loggers would not trail again.

Vernonia's Brett Elliott hit a pair of 3-pointers midway through the first half, but the senior took a hard fall and hit his head when he was undercut on a rebound with 1:06 left in the first half.

Elliott later returned, but did not score again.

Both teams started slow in the second half, with the first points coming at the 4:52 mark.

Holding a slim 26-23 lead, Knappa's Timber Engblom scored on a running jumper; and the turning point came with 2:43 remaining, when Vernonia's Clay Sullivan was called for a technical foul. Takalo made both free throws for a 30-23 lead.

And it was Colton Weirup who sparked Big Rally No. 2 for Knappa moments later.

The junior guard knocked three straight 3-pointers, helping turn a 30-25 lead into a 47-25 advantage.

"I knew we went through a big stretch there, but I didn't know it was that big," Spencer said. "The big play was Timber's big play at the end of the third quarter. Losing his shoe, hit-

ting the shot and drawing the foul for a three-point play."

Who else but a player named 'Timber' would make the big play in a game between the Loggers and the Loggers?

"Timber Engblom (14 points) was awesome tonight," Spencer said. "Just an amazing game.

"We got off to a tough start, and that's starting to become a concern," he said. "(Vernonia) came out in a 1-3-1 zone, and we knew what to do against it — it just took us a while to adapt, figure things out and find the holes."

Knappa was outsized ("we seem to have that problem with everybody," Spencer said), but "we battled tough inside. It was good to see Colton do what he did, and have the game that he had (a game-high 18 points). Then Eli hit some huge shots."

The future of the NWL certainly belongs to Knappa.

During a key stretch of the second half, "We had two freshmen, a sophomore and two juniors on the floor," said Spencer, who was also giving credit to his assistant coaches, Jed Miethe and Chuck Haglund. "We wouldn't be where we are without those guys."

Falls City tops Jewell boys

The Daily Astorian

FALLS CITY — Sophomore Austin Burgess poured in 25 points to lead Falls City to a 45-30 win over Jewell Thursday night, in a Casco League boys basketball game.

Carson Littlepage had 10 points and Ben Stahly pulled down 11 rebounds for Jewell.

SCOREBOARD

PREP SCHEDULE

TODAY

Boys Basketball — Astoria at Banks, 6 p.m.; Seaside at Tillamook, 6 p.m.; Catlin Gabel at Warrenton, 8 p.m.; Jewell at Valor Christian, 6 p.m.; Ilwaco at North Beach, 7 p.m.

Girls Basketball — Astoria at Banks, 7:45 p.m.; Seaside at Tillamook, 7:45 p.m.; Catlin Gabel at Warrenton, 6 p.m.; Jewell at SW Christian, 3 p.m.; Ilwaco at North Beach, 5:45 p.m.

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

SATURDAY

Boys Basketball — Delphian at Knappa, 4 p.m.

Wrestling — Ilwaco Beach Brawl, 10 a.m.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Knappa 53, Vernonia 33

VER (33): Clay Sullivan 8, Brett Elliott 8, Clark 7, Adams 4, McCallum 4, K. Sullivan 2.

KNA (53): Colton Weirup 18, Engblom 14, D.Takalo 13, E.Takalo 6, Rubus 2, Goodman.

Vernonia 13 7 5 8—33
Knappa 9 17 16 11—53

Field goals: Vernonia 10-38; Knappa 19-42. **3-Point goals:** Vernonia 3-16 (Elliott 2, Adams); Knappa 8-19 (Weirup 5, E.Takalo 2, D.Takalo). **Free throws:** Vernonia 10-13; Knappa 7-13. **Fouls:** Vernonia 20, Knappa 17. **Technical:** Vernonia, C.Sullivan. **Turnovers:** Vernonia 20, Knappa 16.
JV: Knappa 53, Vernonia 32

Falls City 45, Jewell 30

JWL (30): Carson Littlepage 10, R. Kane 4, N.Kane 4, Godwin 3, Meehan 3, Lilley 2, Hinson 2, Stahly 2.

FC (45): Austin Burgess 25, Labrado 8, Young 4, Curry 3, Simmons 3, Oberg 1, Varney 1.

Jewell 6 8 10 6—30
Falls City 13 10 12 10—45

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Vernonia 36, Knappa 29

VER (36): Viviana Bustamante 21, Everett 4, Barklow 4, M.Ely 4, Wolf 2, Harral 1.

KNA (29): Kaitlyn Landwehr 10, Weaver 7, Miller 4, Vanderburg 3, Vandergriff 3, Inman 2, Strain.

Vernonia 13 7 8 8—36
Knappa 7 4 7 11—29

Field goals: Vernonia 15-43; Knappa 10-56. **3-Point goals:** Vernonia 3-13 (Bustamante 3); Knappa 1-14 (Vandergriff). **Free throws:** Vernonia 3-9; Knappa 8-17. **Fouls:** Vernonia 17, Knappa 11. **Turnovers:** Vernonia 29, Knappa 14.
JV: Knappa 37, Vernonia 14

Jewell 39, Falls City 38

JWL (39): Gabi Morales 11, Littlepage 10, Kaczynski 6, Guillen 4, Hollenbach 4, Wammack 2, Norman 2, Olvera.

FC (38): Amara Houghtaling 21, Tadlock 10, Burgess 5, Lamers 2.

Jewell 2 4 16 9 10—39
Falls City 8 7 2 12 9—38

SEASIDE SQUAD FOLLOWS 'TRADITION'

Seniors take charge for the undefeated Gulls

By **GARY HENLEY**
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE —The Seaside Gulls are becoming the Golden State Warriors of the Cowapa League.

With one exception. The Warriors lose every now and then. The Gulls do not. The Gulls stand at 13-0 and 3-0 within the league. They are ranked No. 1 in three polls.

Granted, Seaside has played far fewer games than the Warriors — but the Gulls win any number of ways, and they can launch 3-pointers better than just about anybody — Class 5A and 6A included — in the state.

Seaside — the runner-up in last year's state championship (another feeling the Golden State Warriors can relate to) — is one of only two unbeaten teams in Oregon high school basketball. Dayton is 18-0 at the Class 3A level.

And assuming that Tillamook does not score a miracle win tonight, Seaside will be 4-0 in league play.

Currently playing the part of Steph Curry is Jackson Januik — at least it was his turn Tuesday, as the senior guard connected on a couple of long-range, NBA-size 3-pointers on his way to a 19-point night in the latest win against Valley Catholic.

A Seaside High School graduate himself, head coach Bill Westerholm knows the tradition and process of becoming a Gull.

"I remember as a kid, looking up to the kids at the high school. I had the opportunity to have some success when I was here, and it's nice to be able to get these (current) kids involved. What we do at Cedar Ridge (an annual off-season camp), we get all the kids together, and the younger kids get to know the older kids.

"These guys we have now were the ones who were looking up to the Andrew Potter's and that group, and right now, all the youth who were sitting behind our bench tonight, they're watching their idols now."

Trophies

And when they start young, a successful program seems to follow. That means wins. Lots and lots of wins.

Summers are normally filled with team photos of young Seaside players holding up trophies.

In addition to Westerholm, some of those responsible for



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Seaside's Hunter Thompson dribbles down the court during a game against Valley Catholic on Tuesday in Seaside.

the building of Seaside basketball include Frank Januik, Byren Thompson and Gene Quilhaugh.

"Frank Januik and Byren Thompson coach them from kindergarten through the seventh grade; and Gene Quilhaugh — who has a lot of knowledge about basketball — had both groups through their seventh- and eighth-grade years," Westerholm said.

"They've won a lot of summer games. These kids have won a lot of games at the youth level, and now they've won a lot of games at the sophomore and senior levels.

"We're still trying to keep that tradition," he said. "We know what the ingredients are — the coaches we've had at the youth level. We're trying to continue that history in our youth programs right now."

Playing together

It's an advantage that private schools don't have. Whereas private schools can "recruit," their players often don't know or play together until they reach the high school level.

Seaside players, for the most part, have been teammates from the moment they pick up a basketball.

Jackson Januik, the reigning 4A state Player of the Year, says, "That's the great thing about playing for Seaside. I've played with this group my entire life, and we know each perfectly. Playing against a bigger team like Valley Catholic, when I drive, I know Hunter's going to be cutting, because he's been doing it for years. And Payton, Attikin, Chase we work together extremely well."

He adds, "We played a lot of the

6A schools in the summer tournaments, like Westview and Southridge. Those were good games for us. Those games pushed us to be better, and have more success in high school."

And now that they're No. 1?

"We know we have a target on our back, and we've talked about that target at the beginning of the year," coach Westerholm said. "We know that every team that plays us is going to bring their best game. They want to beat the No. 1 team, the team that played in the state championship last year. And we want that challenge."

No. 1

Assuming there's no upsets on the horizon, the Gulls will likely take that No. 1 ranking into the state playoffs, and on to Hillsboro.

But even if they don't hold down the No. 1 seed, "What's important is how we're playing at the end of the year," Westerholm said. "(The No. 1 ranking) is a nice little feather in the cap, and these kids deserve it. But it's not the most important thing right now. The important thing is that we continue to work as a team, and get better with each practice.

"With our senior leadership — Jackson Januik, Hunter Thompson, Attikin Babb and Otto Hoekstre — you couldn't ask for four better senior leaders."

Upcoming games include matchups Tuesday against Banks at home and Feb. 3 against Scappoose. They'll finish their season with away games at Astoria, Valley Catholic and Banks. Their final home game is Feb. 14 against Tillamook.

Lady Jays win overtime thriller

The Daily Astorian

FALLS CITY — An offensive rebound basket by Alyscia Littlepage with eight seconds left in overtime gave the Jewell girls basketball team a 39-38 Casco League win at Falls City Thursday night.

Gabi Morales had 11 points and 13 rebounds to lead the Lady Jays, who led for much of the second half, despite being outscored 15-6 in the first half.

Jewell's 16-2 run in the third quarter had the Jays in front 22-17 heading into the fourth period.

"It was a fun game," said Jewell coach Mark Fick. "The kids played hard. Gabi Morales hit quite a few shots in the fourth quarter and overtime.

"We held a lead for a good part of the fourth quarter, but (the Mountaineers) came back and tied it, and it was back and forth in the overtime."

Littlepage and Hayley Norman each had five steals for Jewell, while sophomore Amara Houghtaling scored 21 points to lead Falls City.

Jewell now has two straight league wins. The Jays posted their first league win of the season the night before, 58-18 over Livingstone Adventist.

Morales had 18 points and five steals; Littlepage added 10 points, four steals and four assists; and Norman finished with four steals and three blocks.

Vernonia girls edge Knappa

The Daily Astorian

KNAPPA — The Vernonia Loggers struggled with turnovers, while the Knappa Loggers had problems shooting the ball Thursday night at Knappa, in a crucial Northwest League girls basketball game.

But someone had to win. It turned out to be Vernonia, which overcame 17 first half turnovers in a 36-29 win over Knappa.

Knappa was within 8-6 midway through the first quarter, but their downfall was Vernonia's Viviana Bustamante.

The senior guard scored the first 11 points for her team, and finished with a game-high 21 (16 in the first half).

Knappa's pressure defense came up with 12 steals and forced 29 turnovers, but the home Loggers continued to struggle from the field in the second half, in which Knappa was 6-for-34 from the field (10-for-56 for the game).

Kaitlyn Landwehr led Knappa with 10 points (nine in the first half), while freshman Madelyn Weaver finished with seven points and five rebounds. Aiko Miller added four points and four steals.