

Astoria girls gunning for a three-peat at state

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

The historic run by the Astoria girls track program ... isn't over yet. In fact, if it was a race, the Lady Fishermen would only be about halfway through with this run. They've got a loooong ways to go.

Astoria won the 4A state title last year by a record 37.5 points over the second-place finisher.

It may be a little closer this spring, but the team that won it last year (and the year before), is still the heavy favorite to win their third straight. And if you're looking down the road, the Astoria Lady Fishermen could be the first to win four state championships in a row at the 4A level since Oregon went to a six-class system.

Henley won three straight 4A titles from 2007-09, while Summit High School of Bend has won the last 10 team championships at the 5A level.

Either way, Astoria's current dynasty in girls' track will be one of the best ever, when it's all said and done.

Currently, the Lady Fish are in the process of replacing big points lost off last year's team with more young, up and coming talent. So far, so good.

"It's hard to replace kids who set school records, but it's the name of the game," said Astoria coach Garrett Parks. "They move on or graduate, and we have to find that next person, put them in, and keep movin'."

The Lady Fishermen lost big points with the graduation of Halie Korff (now at Western Oregon), while Skadi Freyr and Kaylee Mitchell are now enrolled at different schools.

Astoria has simply reloaded to replace all three. Lose your two best throwers? Bring in sophomore Kes Sandstrom from Scappoose and freshman Kajsa Jackson. Mitchell no longer there? Bring in Sam Hemsley, a sophomore four-sport athlete who can do a little bit of everything.

The Lady Fish still appear to have the top athletes, across the board.

Senior Natalie Cummings (full-ride scholarship to Portland State) and sophomore Gracie Cummings could score a sweep in the sprints at the state meet, with sophomore Andrea Harris (hurdles) and freshmen Elizabeth Barnett adding more points on the track and in the jumps; Jackson, Sandstrom and junior Taylor Cosner will continue Astoria's winning tradition in the throws; Shrida Sharma returns



Gary Henley/The Daily Astorian

With two state team championships already to their credit, Astoria junior Darian Hageman and the Lady Fishermen track team are headed for more success in 2017.

in the pole vault; and of course the best athlete in the state is last year's Athlete of the Meet at state, Darian Hageman.

The junior can do it all, and usually wins. Hageman is the defending state champion in the long jump, high jump and triple jump, winning all three events last year as a sophomore.

Add up all the potential points and places, and Astoria could actually end up surpassing last year's 4A state meet record of 109.5 points.

"We return a handful of our top scorers and the leaders of the group, and went out and found some new kids, as well, who can fill some gaps for us, and continue to make us competitive, not only in league, but in the next level at state," Parks said.

"We're optimistic. We have (Hemsley) doing some jumps, she's done the javelin (at the Seaside Ice-Breaker meet), she's been working on the track, and we're also sharing her with golf," he said. "She's just an incredible kid."

Meanwhile, throws coach Bob Ellsberg keeps churn-

ing out state placers, year after year.

"He always finds somebody out there, and finds their full potential," Parks said. "We have a couple girls — Kajsa Jackson is coming in as a freshman, and Kes (Sandstrom) is a girl we got from Scappoose who's starting to flourish and do well. They're looking really strong."

Fishermen boys

And with a good mix of young talent and top returners for the Astoria boys, the Fishermen could potentially score a sweep in this year's Cowapa League Championships.

"We have a handful of very talented boys coming back," said Parks, who helped the Seaside boys win a state championship in 2001 as a sprinter with the Gulls. "We have a little bit more experience, which is nice. We've got a few younger kids in the mix, and with our returning kids, we have (throwers) Tim (Barnett) and Nain (Garcia Rojas) are looking really strong; Jacob (Olson) in the sprints, Lucas (Caruana) is our

distance kid ... with that kind of a foundation and some of our new kids, I think we'll be more competitive on the boys' side."

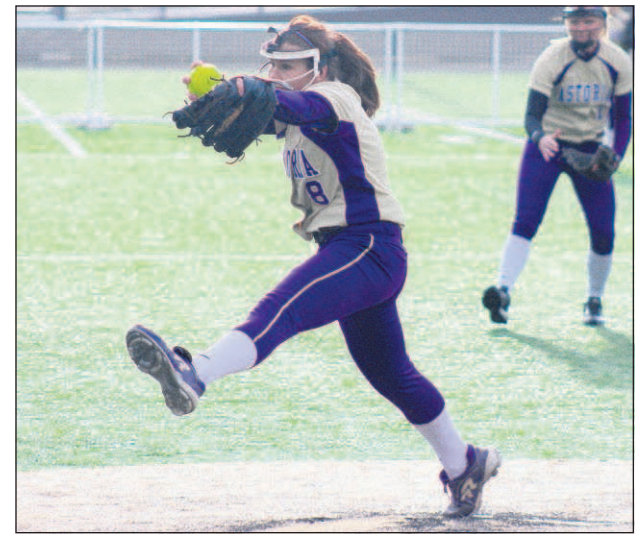
Caruana finished third last year in the state 800 meters, won by Seaside's Jackson Januik.

Barnett could also end up medaling in Eugene.

The keys? Parks knows the routine.

"Step 1, keep everybody healthy. Step 2, we have to get through the league," he said. "Then we'll see where things go from there. The nice thing with all that competition is that it makes us all better."

With just one meet under their belt heading into Saturday's Daily Astorian Invitational, he said, "it's looking pretty good. We're progressing along really well. There's been significantly more rain this year, so it's been challenging from that standpoint. But we had a lot of kids doing what they needed to do in the off-season to come in ready to go. It's sports in the Pacific Northwest."



Gary Henley/The Daily Astorian

Freshman Julia Norris has her sights set on a strong season for the Astoria softball team.

Astoria softball team ready to challenge again

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

ASTORIA SOFTBALL

The Astoria softball team came up agonizingly short of the state playoffs last season.

Trailing 4-3 in a loser-out, winner-to-state playoff game against Hidden Valley, the Fishermen had the bases loaded with two outs in the bottom of the seventh inning.

Unfortunately for the Lady Fish, they couldn't push across the tying run, and their season ended that day at CMH Field.

It also ended the prep careers for a talented senior class, which included Mykka Abrahams, Libby DiBarotomeo, Taylor Mickle and Kelsey Wullger.

The good news for Astoria softball fans — the Lady Fish are back with an equally talented lineup to take another shot at those elusive state playoffs.

"I'm hoping to be over .500 this year, get a playoff game, and see where we can go from there," said Kent Israel Jr., in his second year as head coach.

THE COWAPA

Like many other sports, the Cowapa is home to the defending state softball champions.

Banks defeated McLoughlin in last year's 4A final. And the only reason it wasn't an all-Cowapa League championship was that Banks and Scappoose were in the same half of the bracket (the Braves defeated the Indians in the semifinals).

Banks and Scappoose will be strong again, while the Lady Fish could be the favorites for that No. 3 spot to state.

"Obviously Banks, the returning state champs, is going to be good," Israel said. "And so will Scappoose."

"We know what Banks has coming back, and Scappoose has so many girls out for softball, they're going to be good again," he said. "The rest of us will be fighting. Seaside has Jetta (Ideue) coming back, and she's a good pitcher, and I think they have some younger kids coming in who can play."

THE LADY FISH

Another small, but talented



The Daily Astorian/File Photo

Astoria's McKailyn Rogers will pitch or play center field.

Coach: Kent Israel Jr., 2nd year

2016: 16-11 (9-6 league)

Playoffs: Lost Regional Play-in to Hidden Valley, 4-3.

All-League Losses: Mykka Abrahams, Libby DiBarotomeo, Taylor Mickle, Kelsey Wullger

All-League Returners: Rylee DeMander, Sr.; Caitlyn Hougham, Sr.

senior class for Astoria, as Abi Danen, Rylee DeMander and Caitlyn Hougham gear up for their final seasons.

During the course of the preseason, Israel was still figuring out the rest of the lineup.

The conclusion: "We're going to start some freshmen," he said.

For Astoria, the future belongs to the Frosh. The list includes pitcher Julia Norris, who has already seen action in the circle; Brooklynn Hankwitz, Astoria's starter at first base; Kayla Helligso and Hailley O'Brien.

In addition, freshman Emma Graham was out with a concussion "so she hasn't seen the field yet, but she will be there when she gets cleared," he said.

There's two juniors on the roster — outfielder Hailley Ranta and pitcher McKailyn Rogers; and two sophomores, Jenna Barendse and Lexx Lyngstad.

Whatever the final lineup looks like, Israel said, "we only have two players in the same position as last year," with Hougham at catcher, and Rogers at pitcher or center field. "Other than that, we're putting seven different players in seven different spots."

Danen will move to third base, with DeMander going from second base to shortstop.

For most of the nonleague season, it was Norris and Rogers sharing the pitching duties.

"Right now, we'll rotate Julia and McKailyn in center," he said, "which is what I did last year with Libby and McKailyn. Julia can also play anywhere on the field. That whole (freshmen) group has been together a long time, and they've played a bunch of tournament ball."

More golfers equal more hopes for Astoria golf

By GARY HENLEY
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Last year's top golfer has graduated, but the numbers are up — way up — for Astoria girls golf.

And numbers are everything in golf, where it takes four to qualify for team scoring in tournaments and invites.

"The good part is having eight golfers," said Astoria coach Chris Hunt, who had just five golfers total on last year's roster. "They all get to play at the invitationals, and it will be nice having the depth in the scoring."

The Cowapa League and district will still present the

usual challenges.

Crook County was the Special District Regional champion, followed by Scappoose, Valley Catholic and Oregon Episcopal.

Astoria was fifth in team scoring in last year's tournament, after a third-place finish in the Cowapa League meet.

League-wise, "I would expect the top two to be Valley Catholic and Scappoose," Hunt said. "Scappoose had the top individual (Morgan Hall), and she returns. Then you just have to wait and see with everybody else once you get to Regionals."

Last year's regional Medalist, Jane Schlenorf of OES,



Gary Henley/The Daily Astorian

Sam Hemsley will be a two-sport athlete this spring for Astoria, on the golf course and the track.

has graduated. Astoria's top golfer last

season, Chloe Hunt, has moved on to college volleyball and basketball, leaving four returners: senior Kristin Travers, junior Sadie Wooldridge, and sophomores Sam Hemsley and Jenny Travers.

The Lady Fish have four first-year golfers: seniors Sarah Dieffenbach and Anna Gimre; and juniors Sarah Lertera and Jasmine Mabry.

"The Travers girls go out and play quite a bit, and Sam and Sadie are both experienced returners," coach Hunt said. "With the new girls, we're just going to ease them into it and see what kind of progress they make. They're eager to learn."

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