

# Gulls look to 'earn their wings'

By GARY HENLEY  
The Daily Astorian



Photos by Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Gage McFadden plays in the middle infield and pitches for Seaside. The Cowapa League will be the toughest league in the state at the 4A level.

Having endured the last two years with very young lineups on the field, the Seaside Gulls are ready to "earn their wings," so to speak, in 2017.

Even so, the Gulls will still be one of the youngest teams in the Cowapa League, as they played the 2016 season with six freshmen and three sophomores on their varsity roster.

Many of those players started or were more than part-time contributors for a team that struggled to a 6-20 finish, 2-13 in league play.

But the Gulls have already shown that they've made strides, early in the 2017 season. They advanced to the championship game of their own tournament, losing to Hockinson, Wash., in the final.

"I see us improving this year," said coach Joel Dierickx, entering his 20th year at Seaside. "We're improving and getting better every day, and we'll see how that plays out."

## THE COWAPA

Success in basketball just hasn't carried over into baseball for the Gulls, who are a combined 5-40 in league games over the last three years.

Of course, it's not easy when there're three Cowapa teams in the final eight of the state playoffs, as there was last season.

As it is in most sports, the Cowapa will be the toughest league in the state at the 4A level, with Astoria, Banks, Scappoose and Valley Catholic all legitimate state title contenders.

"It's as tough as ever," Dierickx said. "Astoria, Banks, Valley Catholic, Scappoose ... are all right up there."

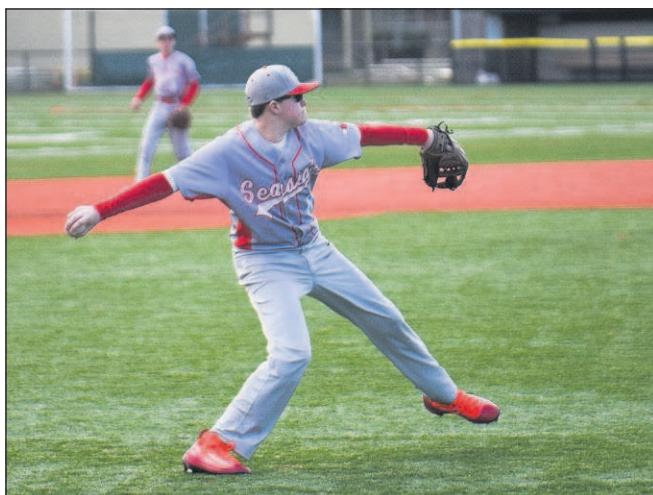
## THE GULLS

The good news: the Gulls had just two seniors last year, and return most of their starting lineup intact.

A more experienced Seaside team will have four seniors on the field, with three juniors among the regulars.

Returning seniors include catcher/outfielder Otto Hoekstre, pitcher/infielder Scotty Plampin, outfielder/pitcher Dylan Wallis, and infielder/pitcher Brent Walsh, who is "solid on the mound and behind the plate and as a middle infielder," Dierickx said.

Dawson Blanchard, a 6-foot junior outfielder/util-



Freshman Brayden Johnson fields a ground ball and throws to first base.

## SEASIDE BASEBALL

**Coach:** Joel Dierickx, 20th year  
**2016:** 6-20 (2-13 league)

**Key Losses:** Jacob Bassett, Michael Lewis

**Key Returners:** Dawson Blanchard, Jr.; Otto Hoekstre, Sr.; Gage McFadden, So.; Scotty Plampin, Sr.; Dylan Wallis, Sr.; Brent Walsh, Sr.; Payton Westerholm, So.

ity player, will be one of the Gulls' big hitters at the plate this season. Just recently, he had three hits in the first of two Sunday games in the Seaside

tournament, with a two-run home run in the second game.

Ashton Boyd enters his junior year, and "we're trying to find a spot for him," Dier-



Pitcher/infielder Scott Plampin attempts to tag out an Estacada runner at second base.

ickx said. "He's grown a lot, he's putting the ball in play and doing a great job."

Junior Astor Landwehr will see most of his action in the outfield.

The rest are sophomores, with one freshmen.

Gage McFadden and Payton Westerholm are both middle infielders/pitchers; Isaias Jantes is at third base, with Dylan Meyer at first; and Duncan Thompson is a pitcher/infielder.

Other sophomores include

Jacob Derby, Travis Fenton and Paxson VanNortwick, a pitcher/first baseman.

Freshmen Brayden Johnson and Ledger Pugh are both on the Seaside varsity roster.

Dierickx is assisted by Ross Knutsen and Dan McFadden.



EO Media Group/File Photo

Jackson Kunde is Seaside's most experienced golfer.

# Gulls enter rebuilding year

By GARY HENLEY  
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The state 4A champions of 2014 and 2015 are in full-on rebuilding mode in 2017.

Seaside boys golf coach Jim Poetsch can proclaim one thing: He has one of the youngest teams in the region. That fact was evident in the first two tournaments of the new season for the Gulls.

Just two years after winning their second straight state championship, Seaside has youth up and down the roster, with no seniors and just one junior.

Seaside's second outing of the current season was a 43-stroke loss to Cowapa League rival, on Seaside's

home course at Gearhart.

"We got a chance to see where we need to be if we want to compete at season's end this year," Poetsch said after the match. "Valley Catholic returns five players from a team that led the state tournament after the first day last year, and they should have a shot at the title this year."

"We have a bunch of young guys that don't have a lot of experience, but they are getting a little better every day," he said. "Jackson (Kunde) showed some flashes of good golf today, as he birdied two of the last three holes on the front side."

Seaside opened the season by finishing seventh out of 10 teams at The Dalles Invita-

tional — a tough tournament for a young team to make its debut.

Sophomore Connor Merrell led the Gulls with a 93, followed by another sophomore, Samson Sibony, with a 96. Kunde — Seaside's most-experienced player as the lone junior — shot 100 followed by two more sophomores, Mason Shamion and Mason Crawford.

The Dalles Invite "was a good test for our young guys," Poetsch said. "Besides the home team, only five players were able to break 90. Connor was only a few strokes off joining that elite group. He has worked hard during the off-season, and I expect him to get a little better each week

as the season progresses.

"This course points out any flaws in your game, and it showed us we have some work to do," he said. "But for as young as we are, we only scored a few higher than last year. I'm hoping this group sees their potential to be a good team and works to reach that goal this year."

Scappoose is the defending district regional champion, as the Indians took the team title last season over Crook County, Valley Catholic and Seaside. All four teams were within 16 strokes of each other.

Kunde was Seaside's second-highest scorer in the regional meet, behind the graduated Aaron Richardson.



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