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Astoria's season ends at La Grande

Career ends for coach Gasser

The Daily Astorian

La GRANDE — It was a wild ride while it lasted.

Seeking a sixth trip to the state championship game in the last 11 years, the 2017 Fishermen Express made its final stop Tuesday in La Grande, where the Tigers scored two runs in the fifth inning, then tacked on four in the sixth for a 7-2 win over Astoria, in a Class 4A baseball semifinal.

The season comes to a close for the Fishermen (20-6 overall), who were carrying the No. 9 seed into the state playoffs, and scored wins at Estacada and No. 1-ranked Hidden Valley, before Tuesday's loss.

The defeat also closes out the careers for a successful senior class for the Fishermen, as well as the coaching career of Dave Gasser, the all-time leader in victories (750) in Oregon high school baseball.

La Grande (22-3) advances to the state championship game Saturday, when the Tigers will play Henley (23-6) in the 4A state title game at Volcanoes Stadium.

Bottom of the fifth
The Fishermen were within nine outs of making the trip to Keizer, as they held a 2-1 lead entering the bottom of the fifth.

Astoria grabbed a 1-0 lead in the second inning when Kyle Strange drew a walk, took third on an errant pickoff throw, and scored on a single by Jasyn Gohl.

La Grande evened the score in the fourth, before the Fishermen answered in the top of the fifth. Trey Hageman reached on a single, moved to third on a pair of grounders, then scored on a two-out single from Cade O'Brien.

But that was the end of the Astoria scoring, as La Grande pitcher G.T. Blackman allowed just three hits over seven innings, with eight strikeouts.

At the plate, Blackman had three hits and drove in two runs to help his cause.

In the bottom of the fifth, La Grande junior Isaac Chamberlain had a one-out single and advanced to third on two wild pitches, while teammate Jon Gonzalez walked and stole second.

Freshman Logan Paustian followed with a ground ball that scored both runners to put the Tigers in front, 3-2.

In the sixth, La Grande's Andrew Peasley reached on a base hit, went to third on an error, then scored on a single by teammate Garrett Vaughn.

Chamberlain followed with a run-scoring double, and Blackman highlighted his day at the plate with a two-run single for a five-run lead.

Blackman struck out all three batters he faced in the seventh to finish the game.

It will be La Grande's first appearance in the state title game since 2007, when they defeated Astoria in a semifinal, then knocked off Newport in the championship game, 6-5.

SCOREBOARD

PREP SCHEDULE

FRIDAY

Baseball — 2A/1A State Championship: Reedsport vs. Knappa, 1:30 p.m., Volcanoes Stadium

BASEBALL

Knappa 5, Regis 3
Regis 000 001 2-3 4 2
Knappa 200 300 x-5 9 3
Schumacher, Bryce Piete (4) and Brandon Piete; Goodman, Hoover (6), D.Takalo (7) and K.Miller. W: Goodman. L: Schumacher. S: D.Takalo. RBI: Reg, Joyce 2, Bryce Piete; Kna, J.Miller, Hoover, Goozee, Bartlett, Weirup. 2B: Kna, K.Miller. HR: Reg, Joyce, Kna, J.Miller. HBP: Kna, Cruz. LOB: Regis 5, Knappa 4. DP: Regis 2, Knappa.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The Knappa Loggers celebrate yet another win on Tuesday, this time against Regis to advance to the state 2A/1A state championship Friday.

KNAPPA KNOW HOW

Loggers edge the Rams for another shot at the state title

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

KNAPPA — Following his team's win over Knappa in last year's state championship game, Burns coach Kevin Feist said of the Loggers, "They're a great team, they have a lot of youth, and they're going to be back here next year."

Right, on all three counts.

They are great, they're still young, and the Loggers are headed back to the state championship game for the third consecutive season, following a 5-3 win over Regis in a 2A/1A semifinal Tuesday at Teevin Field.

Knappa starter Michal Goodman took a no-hitter into the sixth inning, and the Loggers had to do some fancy relief pitching to hold off a late rally by the Rams.

Coming off back-to-back playoff wins of 15-1 and 22-2, the Loggers haven't had to deal with a lot of anxious moments lately.

But there was at least one coach in the ballpark Tuesday who knew it wasn't going to be easy.

"It's a semifinal, and it's Regis," said Knappa coach Jeff Miller. "Whether it's the first inning or the seventh, we know they're going to come at us, and it's not going to be easy."

"Our pitchers probably felt they were getting squeezed a little, and (the Rams) are going to play hard to the finish. They're a proud and great program. But our kids took a breath and did a good job to finish."

Miller's team will now be making its third straight trip to Volcanoes Stadium and the 2A/1A state championship game, where the Loggers will play Reedsport Friday, 1:30 p.m. The No. 5 seed Braves scored a 7-4 upset over No. 1-ranked Dufur Tuesday.

The Millers

Fittingly, it was a couple Millers on the playing field that keyed the Knappa win.

Playing his last home game, senior Jason Miller led off the bottom of the first with a solo home run, his career first.

"It was a nice time to have it," said dad.

"It's about time," Jason said. "It was a fast-ball, right down the middle. I was kind of expecting it right there, and I got it."

On the very next pitch, Knappa's Kaleb Miller belted a double over the left fielder's head, and eventually scored on a sacrifice fly from Mason Hoover for a 2-0 lead.

"It was nice to get off to that start," coach Miller said. "All three playoff games here, we've gotten off to good starts. And that's always nice, so your pitcher can relax a little."

"We said coming in, if we score five we'll give ourselves a chance," he said. "We wanted more than five, but we had a few opportunities we didn't convert on in later innings."

The pitching

Meanwhile, Goodman was mowing down batters left and right over the first five innings.

He needed the help of a 6-4-3 double play to get out of the first inning, but retired 13 of 15 batters from the first to the sixth inning, nine by strikeout.

Hoover and Dale Takalo came on in relief,



Jason Miller lays down a perfectly executed bunt for Knappa during Tuesday's win over Regis. The Loggers will face Reedsport in the championship game on Friday.

UP NEXT: 2A/1A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP IN SALEM

• Knappa Loggers (18-3)
vs. Reedsport Braves (24-3)
• Friday, 1:30 p.m.

'They're a great team, they have a lot of youth, and they're going to be back here next year.'

Kevin Feist

Burns coach, talking about the Knappa baseball team after their loss to Burns last year in the state championship game

but Goodman still picked up the win.

"Mason got us out of the middle of an inning (the sixth), and Dale did a good job of getting us out of the seventh," coach Miller said. "So both those guys threw well. But, wow, I can't say enough about Michal."

"They didn't have a good swing against him. He was really dealin', and did a great job. He reached his pitch limit, trusted his teammates, and they brought him home."

"We figured it would be a three- or four-pitcher day to get us through, and we did a good job against a high-powered team."

The batters

The Loggers picked up three crucial runs in the bottom of the fourth, as five of Knappa's first six batters had base hits.

Two of the hits — by Andrew Goozee and Logan Bartlett — were misplayed by Regis outfielders, allowing extra bases and extra runs for the Loggers.

The final hit was by Colton Weirup, a squeeze bunt down the first base line that scored pinch-runner Shaun Lackey, and Weirup beat the throw to first.

The five-run lead seemed plenty, with Goodman tossing a no-hit shutout.

But a Knappa error and a walk allowed the Rams to score a run in the top of the sixth, and with Hoover on the mound in the seventh, junior Nate Joyce blasted a two-run homer to

bring Regis to within two runs.

Takalo replaced Hoover on the mound, and after giving up a single and a walk — and with the Rams' go-ahead run at the plate — Regis junior Brandon Piete lofted a fly ball to right fielder Eli Takalo, and Little Bro saved Big Bro by making the catch for the final out.

"It was a team effort, from the first home by Jay to the final catch in the outfield by Eli, and everybody in between," coach Miller said.

"And we had two huge plays by Kaleb," throwing out runners at second base in the fourth and sixth innings. "A good catcher changes a game, and that was a good example right there. Two plays, gunning guys down. Not many catchers are going to make those plays."

"We feel we have as good a guy as there is, period," in Kaleb Miller, who was an all-league catcher last year at the 3A level. "I don't care how many A's you put behind the number, any team, anywhere would be proud of those plays he made today."

Rams' coach

The loss by the Rams brought an end to a great coaching career, as Regis coach Don Heuberger had previously announced his retirement, effective at the end of the season.

Heuberger finishes with 718 career wins over a 39-year career (35 at Regis), second behind Astoria's Dave Gasser's 750 career victories.

"It's close to 40 years of service, and all his wins are almost all at one school," Jeff Miller said. "He is Regis baseball, and coaches everywhere look up to him."

"When I came into coaching, I looked down the road at Lennie (Wolfe) and the standard he set, and I look to the valley and the standard that Don Heuberger set. Those are the guys you emulate to get better. I have nothing but respect for him and the program he's built, and wish him a great retirement."

Knappa's next opponent will face the Loggers for the second year in a row, as Knappa opened the 2016 season with a doubleheader sweep over Reedsport at CMH Field (3-2 in eight innings, and 11-0).

"If you see them, you wonder what they put in the water down there," Miller said of the Braves. "They have a bunch of big, strong athletes. They have two, top-of-the-line pitchers who throw very well. They're going to be all we can handle, and then some. We'll have to find a way to execute and make plays."