

# Gasser: Retires with an Oregon high school record of 750 wins

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## One game more

The Fishermen went 20-6 and finished within one game of the state championship for the second year in a row.

And they did it with key seniors who had suffered major injuries in other sports.

Fridtjof Fremstad had a late start to the season after an ankle injury in basketball; while Tyler Lyngstad (knee) and Kyle Strange (broken leg) were still recovering from football injuries.

"Fritz never got completely where he could have been with the ankle," Gasser said. "He still had a great season (batted .384, and was 6-for-6 in save opportunities on the mound). And the season Kyle had (batted .507 with a team-high 29 RBIs), with a rod in his leg, was truly remarkable. And if you look at the La Grande game, or the three one-run losses we had in league, a healthy Tyler Lyngstad is worth at least one league win."

And all Astoria needed was one more league win, "and we would have been rated ahead of La Grande, and we would have been home the whole time," Gasser said.

## King at home

Home field in the playoffs makes a huge difference.

"In my life, we never lost a home playoff game," Gasser said. "We haven't been home that much, but when we were the designated home team in the semis, we always won."

"And the four times we had to travel, we're 1-3. That's how much difference it makes."

"Home-field advantage in the semis, when you're not traveling at all ... it's just too big of an advantage for the OSAA to continue to allow."

The Fishermen still made the best of it, winning playoff games at Estacada and Hidden Valley, before falling at eventual state champion La Grande.

"I've never seen kids have to travel like our Astoria kids," Gasser said. "One thing I can say about 'em — whatever they had to give, they gave it."

## Back on the field

It resulted in a Cowapa League co-championship with Banks, and Astoria's second 20-win season since Gasser returned in 2013.

After retiring following the 2010 season, he came back, just to go out with the Class of 2017 senior class.

"They were the 7- and 8-year-olds who came to my first camp," Gasser recalled. "After a couple years away, I just hoped I had enough in me to give them a run at it."

"As far as I'm concerned, the kids battling to the end and enduring the road like they did, competing their brains out and



Dave Gasser, in his last game at La Grande. Gasser leaves coaching game with the most career wins in the state.

overcoming some adversity ... I couldn't have asked for more."

Likewise, Gasser's coaching system and kids-first attitude was invaluable to Astoria. Since he arrived on the scene in 2006, the Fishermen have played in five state championship games, winning three (one under Brian Babbitt).

## Best of the best

Gasser leaves the game for good with a career high school coaching record of 750 wins, 235 losses. The closest coach still active is Tigard's Tom Campbell, with 693 wins.

"The fact that the Oregon Coaches Association just recognized coach Gasser with the 'Coaching with Character' Award speaks volumes about what he has meant to our baseball program, our baseball community, and our entire high school athletic department," said Astoria Athletic Director Howard Rub.

"The success on the field speaks for itself, but it is the modeling of behavior and the high expectation of behavior that he holds himself, his coaches and his players, that truly separates coach Gasser from the rest," he said.

Before he took the Astoria job, Gasser said, "I walked around town with a little notebook. I knocked on doors and sat down with former Mayor (Willis) Van Dusen, Blair Henningsgaard, Mark Popkin, Hal Snow, Jon Englund and met all sorts of wonderful people."

"I said, 'these are the things I want to accomplish.' The first



Astoria coach Dave Gasser retires with an Oregon high school record 750 coaching victories.

was getting a good summer sponsor, and improve what we do in the summer. The clinics and the summer baseball situation. And thanks to Dane Gouge and Astoria Ford, we did that."

"We were in the (Junior Baseball) state tournament every year and won a few state titles, and brought legion clubs in from Singapore and Australia."

Secondly, "the batting cage is nicer than anything I could have imagined," he said. "The people who made that happen, the whole community should be indebted to those people."

"The third thing was to improve the playing surface, and make Aiken Field's infield more playable."

"A fourth was to take care of the dugouts. They weren't big enough and they were tilted the wrong way. And we

didn't have bullpens.

"And the fifth, pie-in-the-sky one, was we needed to come up with a different backstop and terrace the seating area, so it's actually a stadium."

Every single item was accomplished.

"Ultimately, I wanted Astoria baseball to be taking on the best teams in the state and holding their own." Check.

## The coaching staff

"It was only because of the phenomenal coaching staff," that Gasser finally accepted the Astoria coaching job. "I mean that. Ryker (Thornton), Brian (Babbitt), Glen (Fromwiller), Ralph (Steinback) ... they've been with me every year and Glen all but one."

"It was those guys and a community that was generous, supportive and an administra-

tion at the school that encouraged it in every way."

Fromwiller will assume the head coaching duties next season.

"He's been a JV coach for 11 years, he knows the kids, he's worked in the youth program, and he was a head coach prior to coming here," Gasser said. "He's well-qualified. He's a great guy, good teacher, just what you want. He's not a senior citizen who forgets where his keys are."

Of this year's senior group, Gasser said, "there are a lot of guys who I would consider to be really good role models who graduated in the Class of 2017. This is the highest GPA of any team I've ever had. We had two valedictorians, both starters and all-leaguers."

"As sophomores, juniors and seniors, we won about 60 games and played in three straight quarterfinals, and two semifinals. I don't care if it's 4A, 5A or 6A ... how many do that?"

## Farmers and Scandinavians

After spending years coaching in the Portland area, Gasser's teams at Astoria were unique. It's safe to say his teams at Madison and Lakeridge did not have many Olafs or Fridtjofs on the roster.

Astoria "definitely had a Scandinavian flair that I hadn't had previously," he said. And with a number of players who also belonged to the Future Farmers of America, "it was great to get to know the importance of weighing a pig. It

really is a legitimate reason to miss a summer baseball game for the kids, who are putting in a lot of blood, sweat and tears."

"They're well-rounded kids, they're fishing, they're hunting ... they're going to the fair and doing a lot of things, and at the same time they're playing some pretty good baseball."

Many of Gasser's players have gone on to college ball, with a couple of Astoria players advancing to the pros (never mind that for one it's the NFL, and not MLB).

"When I was thinking about taking the Astoria job, I was driving out of the Astoria parking lot heading towards Dairy Queen, and there was this kid in the old outdoor batting cage, taking BP (batting practice) with a buddy."

"I watched three swings, and I literally did a U-turn and pulled into the parking lot, walked down and said, 'Who are you?' And this little 14-year-old kid said, 'Hi, I'm Jordan Poyer.'"

Poyer and Conor Harber were both MLB draft picks, with Harber now playing in the Milwaukee Brewers' farm system, while Poyer took the football route.

They're not always all-leaguers.

"Some of my absolute best memories in Astoria is that you can still see kids who were proud members of state championship or semifinal teams, who didn't play all the time, but were great bench kids."

"Those qualities of selflessness and supporting others and busting it even when you don't play, are better predictors of long-term success than having an insane amount of athletic ability," Gasser said. "They're just proud to be part of a good team. I had those kind of kids every year I've coached year."

## Positive influence

Gasser "has had such a tremendously positive effect on everyone involved in our high school athletic department," Rub said. "We have been very fortunate to have him serve as our head baseball coach for 10 of the past 12 seasons, as the defensive coordinator for the football program for three seasons, and in general, as a consultant to our Athletic Department for the past 15 years."

Finally, you can expect to see Gasser at future ball-games, as he and wife Vicki have made Astoria their home. He leaves the Fishermen baseball program in great shape for the future.

"The young kids coming up are in a good place, and I don't know how our facilities can be any better," he said. "The program is in good hands with Fromwiller ... it will just keep rollin'."

# Tax: Bill now goes to Gov. Brown

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The revenue-raising bill required a three-fifths majority vote, and all 17 Democrats in the Senate, plus three Republicans, including state Senate Minority Leader Ted Ferrioli, R-John Day, voted for it, exceeding the required votes by two.

The bill was carried by both Republican Sen. Jackie Winters of Salem and Democratic Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward of Beaverton.

The proposal is not without controversy: Sen. Jeff Kruse, R-Roseburg, called the bill an "important package" that did "need to pass," but he took issue with the structure of the taxes, including the 1.5 percent tax on insurance premiums.

"Here's the problem I have: we're doing bridge funding here," Kruse said. "We can assume in some point in time next year that Congress is going to make significant changes in Medicaid, and all this that we're doing may disappear. We don't know that. But at the end of the day what we'll still have is two new taxes."

## Federal changes

The vote in Oregon comes as the U.S. Senate drafts what are believed to be sweeping changes to the Affordable Care Act, which dramatically expanded eligibility for Medicaid in Oregon and other states that signed on to the expansion.

The taxes are dedicated specifically to health care, but Kruse contended taxes are "fungible" and could be increased in the future.



Ted Ferrioli



Elizabeth Steiner Hayward



Jeff Kruse

Steiner Hayward noted that the assessment will sunset, at which point the Legislature needs to renegotiate it.

A family physician and member of a legislative work group that hammered out the proposal, Steiner Hayward said the tax on rural hospitals, at 4 percent of net revenue, was lower than the total 6 percent assessed on certain urban hospitals because legislators sought to "protect" rural hospitals, which were previously not subject to the assessment and, she said, have thinner margins.

Democrats have advocated for the legislation as a means of covering the costs of expanding Medicaid in Oregon under the Affordable Care Act.

"This bill will keep over 350,000 Oregonians from losing their health insurance," said Sen. Laurie Monnes Anderson, D-Gresham.

## 'Key vote'

Ferrioli, the Senate Republican leader, said the provider assessment

"may be the key vote of this legislative session, in terms of how we balance our budget and how we proceed in an orderly fashion out of this building."

"Often we face a choice of trying to do the greatest good for the most people, even though it can come with a downside," Ferrioli said. "Certainly, this bill has built into it a tax that I don't particularly like, and that's the one on insurance premiums. But it does have stuff that I know many Oregonians, particularly those who are needy, must have in order to maintain their access to health care, so on balance, I believe this is good public policy."

Ferrioli added that by voting for the legislation, he intended to counter the narrative that Republicans opposed new revenue measures and that they are "insensitive to people in need."

The legislation now goes to Gov. Kate Brown for her approval.

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# Closing: 'These are hard-working people who've just run out of money'

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wide average of about \$69 a day for each patient.

"It's woefully inadequate," he said. That's why so many providers are no longer willing to accept Medicaid and patients are having more trouble finding the care they need.

"We're talking about middle class, worked all their lives and have gone through their savings," Dale said. "These are hard-working people who've just run out of money."

He'd like to see the Legislature and the state Department of Social and Health Services raise reimbursements to around \$90 a day. At least, that'd be a place to start, he said.

Dale's organization represents most — 525 — of the state's skilled nursing and assisted-living homes. However, not many of them are in Pacific County. The closure of Long Beach Retirement brings the number of homes in the county that are represented by the trade association to three.

## Options scarce

For many of Rowe's residents, the Golden Sands retirement community near Ocean Park isn't an option. Willapa Harbor Care Center in Raymond also serves the county but it hasn't been the right fit for any of the seniors he's working with, so far. Both facilities are for assisted living, with less focus on nursing care.

Rowe and staff made arrange-

ments for some to live at Alder House in South Bend or at a group home in Tokeland. Others are planning to move in with family or apply for an aide to help them after they move back into their homes.

Despite limited options, the AARP on June 14 named Washington the most successful state in the country when it comes to supporting seniors, adults with disabilities and caregivers.

Washington state was also recognized for making improvements in the percent of Medicaid and state dollars that go to older people and adults with physical disabilities, subsidized housing and improving the quality of care in nursing homes.

## Short-staffed

Even so, Rowe had trouble recruiting trained staff and keeping them. He faced competition from large hospitals and care centers in urban areas that offer better pay for similar work.

Medical professionals are in short supply across the health care industry, particularly in rural areas, he said.

Like Long Beach Retirement, assisted-living homes across the state struggle to with the high demand for trained staff, particularly certified nursing assistants, Dale said.

Despite the challenges of working in a rural area, Rowe said, his business would not have survived long without its hard-working staff. He credits them with meeting the No. 1 goal of in providing long-term care.

"This truly was like home," he said.