

WARRIOR FOOTBALL

'BACK TO SQUARE ONE'

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

The merry-go-round of Warrenton football coaches has come full circle, with the guy who started the whole thing back for his second ride.

After a two-year absence, Ian O'Brien returns to coach the Warriors, making it Warrenton's third coaching change, and fourth different coach in four years.

O'Brien coached the 2014 season, then left to become athletic director at Lakeridge High School. Travis Freeman replaced O'Brien and coached one year (2015); Freeman left and Jason Edwards coached the 2016 season, and now O'Brien has returned.

It also proves what they say about coaching changes — it makes it hard to build a winning program.

From 2014-16, the Warriors are just 1-7 in league. They hit rock bottom last year, finishing 0-9 overall, 0-3 in league, forfeiting their season finale at Rainier because of a lack of players.

For the record, it was Warrenton's first winless season since 1960 (0-8).

Now the rebuilding starts.

"I feel like we're back to square one," O'Brien said the first week of practice. "A lot of fundamentals, lots of teaching of things that we did that very first year we were together (2012). But they're picking it up quickly, flying around and having fun. That's all you can ask."

THE LEAGUE

It's still the same goal in the four-team Lewis & Clark League: Two wins will get you to state.

And it's a not a far-fetched idea to see the Warriors go from a winless season in '16 to the state playoffs in '17.

Clatskanie and Rainier both lost loads of senior talent, and there's no telling what Portland Christian will have.

In addition to losing the league's Offensive and Defensive Players of the Year, the Columbians lost five all-leaguers on offense, six on defense. Clatskanie lost eight all-league starters.

O'Brien is hoping to return the Warriors to what they were



Gary Henley/The Daily Astorian

Gio Martinez is a three-year starter at quarterback for the Warrenton Warriors, who are looking to make big strides in 2017.

WARRENTON FOOTBALL

Coach: Ian O'Brien, 1st year (4th overall)

2016: 0-9 (0-3 L&C)

All-League losses: Ray Alcobendas, WR/DB; Devon Bowser, OL/DL
All-League returners: Gabe Breitmeyer, So., Punter; Logan Fischer, Sr., LB; Giovanni Martinez, Jr., DB

in his last year, 2014, when Warrenton opened the season with six straight wins over non-league competition, then lost two close games at Rainier and Clatskanie in league play to finish 0-2 in league (Portland Christian had not yet joined the league).

"Rainier is the power, as always," he said. "Clatskanie always does a good job, and (Portland Christian) gave it to us last year. Rainier is the favorite, as they should be. They've earned the right to be those guys at the top."

THE WARRIORS

"We've got a really big sophomore and freshmen group, and a smaller junior class with six or seven seniors," O'Brien said.

And it's the competition at each position — as well as the

competition between young and older players on the roster — that could help the Warriors back sooner than expected.

"Our strength now is coming out each day and giving it all the effort that we have," O'Brien said. "We have some big kids. And we'll be relying on some of the older kids who have been playing the last four years. We have a big freshmen and sophomore class with great numbers."

The line is anchored by seniors Beau Reynolds and Caden Hans, along with senior Collin Burchell and sophomore Mark Warren. The skill position players include juniors Kaleo Kapua and Gio Martinez, and sophomores Gabe Breitmeyer, Devon Jackson and Jacob Morrow. Freshman Duane Falls could be a big contributor.

Junior receiver/defensive back Dalton Knight suffered a broken wrist in Friday's jamboree at Astoria.

"Gio and Jacob Morrow are in competition (at quarterback), and they're doing a good job pushing one another," O'Brien said. "It's a healthy competition. We need our best 11 guys on the field, and regardless of who's playing quarterback, the other one will be on the field at another position."

"The seniors are doing a great job leading, but we're going to have a ton of sophomores who will see live action Friday nights," he said. "It should be a great opportunity. You have to grow up quick."

Quotable: "I think confidence is going to be essential right now," O'Brien said. "Our kids don't have a whole lot. They didn't have a lot to feel confident about last year. But our style of play, the way we approach practice and are getting excited about little things and big plays, that culture will come back and they'll start to get the taste of it."



Submitted Photo

The 2017 Warrenton volleyball team, hoping for a big season under first-year coach Staci Miethe.

Miethe takes over Warrior volleyball

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Staci Miethe, 1st year

2016: 10-10 (5-6 league)

Playoffs: Defeated Catlin Gabel, lost to Portland Christian in league playoffs.

All-League losses: Asia Lambert, Landree Miethe
All-League returners: None

Three coaches in three years? Generally not a good thing for a high school sports program, but at least Warrenton volleyball is sticking with familiar names.

After Jenny (Forney) Smith stepped down following the 2015 season, former coach Jim Hackwith took over and ran the Warriors in 2016. Hackwith has re-retired, and now Warrenton volleyball has brought in one of its former players to run the program, as Staci Miethe takes over as varsity coach for 2017.

Miethe has plenty of volleyball experience (first-team all-league as a player at WHS). She coached middle school volleyball and was an assistant under former coach Dianne Dick, before serving as an official at high school matches in recent years.

She has also followed Warrenton volleyball closely for the last four years, with daughter Landree on the team.

"I don't think it's going to be too difficult for (the current players) to adjust to my system, because I'm sticking to the basics," Miethe said. "I'm going with what I know, and emphasizing fundamentals."

As the Warrenton softball coach, "they know that any time I coach, I come with passion and intensity. I think I'm convincing them that I'm not just filling in. I'm here to be their coach, and I'm not just a softball coach who's helping out."

THE LEAGUE

Like basketball, the Lewis & Clark is a crowded league when it comes to indoor sports.

Rainier, Portland Christian, Oregon Episcopal, Portland Adventist — last year's top four teams in L&C volleyball all had winning league records.

Unfortunately, the league did not have a single representative in the final eight at the state tournament — even the Columbians, who went into the state playoffs with an 11-0 league record and ranked seventh. Rainier suffered an upset loss to Coquille in the Sweet 16, while OES and Portland Christian lost in three-game sweeps.

The Warriors were 5-7 against league competition last season, but a combined 0-6 against the top four teams.

Not much changes from year to year in the L&C.

"Rainier is still going to be the one to beat," Miethe said. "Breanna Edwards is a senior and probably the best player in the league."

"Our goal is to finish in the top half of league and make the playoffs, because once you get to the playoffs, anything can happen."

THE LADY WARRIORS

While one Miethe comes in to coach, another one has graduated and moved on.

Landree Miethe was Warrenton's lone first-team all-league player last season, but the three-sport star has graduated, along with libero Asia Lambert, an honorable mention all-league player.

"We lost the bulk of our offense, so this year's theory is to spread it around," coach Miethe said. "We're not going to give it all to one person, so we'll have to be crafty in our offensive mindset. Our big goal is to be scrappy defensively and hopefully not allow anyone to score a lot of easy points."

The Warriors were always strong defensively under Smith and Hackwith, and should continue to be this year.

"Defensively we look pretty good, and the Blodgett girls (junior Morgan and sophomore Ellie) are both coming along nicely offensively."

"Claire Bussert (Jr.) was a setter in the past, but she will be a setter/hitter, and able to hit when she's in the front row. Between Claire, Morgan and Ellie, we should make up the bulk of the offense we lost."

Elsewhere, "Sagi Diego (Jr.) is looking strong in the front row, and Michelle Arney (Sr.) is consistent and solid."

Rounding out the roster are seniors Leah Durham, Kiley Holdiman and Vanessa Talancon, juniors Fernanda Alvarez and Ruby Dyer, and sophomore Melia Kapua. Alvarez could miss the first few weeks of the season for medical reasons.

Running tough, in a tough district

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

District 1/3A cross country can be a challenge, especially for a public school.

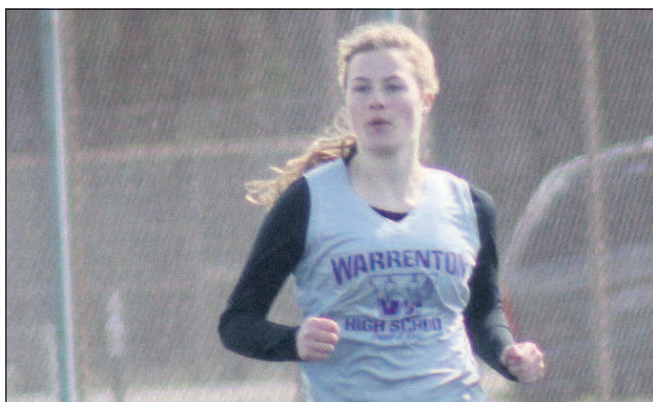
They're outnumbered to begin with, while the private schools have historically dominated at the district and state levels.

And the 2016 season was no exception. Nor will it be in 2017, as the usuals gather at the starting line for another year.

On the girls' side, the top three schools in last year's district meet (Catlin Gabel, Oregon Episcopal and Southwest Christian) are the likely favorites again, in no particular order.

The top three runners in the district (defending champion Stephanie Finley from OES, and Catlin's Maya Rayle and Lillian Fenner) all return.

Meanwhile, the Warren-



The Daily Astorian/File Photo

Kaisa Liljenwall is one of the top returning runners for the Warrenton girls cross country team.

ton girls finished eighth out of eight teams in the district meet, but to counter that, the Warriors enter 2017 with good numbers.

That's the good news for coach Hayley Espelund Rogers. On the other hand, the Warriors have several first-year runners and will be young, again.

Only three returners ran in last year's varsity district meet (sophomore Kaisa Liljenwall, senior Alma Bolanos and junior Madison Kadera), with Liljenwall finishing 34th out of 64.

The Warrenton boys lost their top runner (Luke Liljenwall), and have just five athletes on the preseason roster

THE RUNNERS

GIRLS

Cailin Bennett
Alma Bolanos
Katelyn Carelock
Adriana DeJesus
Madison Kadera
Kaisa Liljenwall
Sahanna Rodriguez
Anna Schenbeck
Rebecca Sprengeler
Pamela Talancon-Botella
Trinity Womack

BOYS

Forrest Bigelow
Darren Garnett
Kale Moss
Andrew Schenbeck
Lucas Thompson

— juniors Forrest Bigelow and Andrew Schenbeck, sophomore Darren Garnett and first-year runners Kale Moss and Lucas Thompson.

Southwest Christian, OES, Riverdale and Catlin Gabel were the top four teams in last year's district meet, with the Warriors placing seventh.

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