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Lady Warriors rally for 'Clatsop Clash' win

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — A quick sign that the fall sports season is really underway — the Knappa and Warrenton volleyball teams going head-to-head in their annual preseason Clatsop Clash.

The two friendly rivals met for their usual nonleague match Tuesday night at Warrenton High School, and the annual meeting continues to be a bit more enjoyable for the Warriors.

Claire Bussert's serving saved the Warriors more than once, and Warrenton was able to defeat the Loggers for the seventh straight year, 23-25, 25-14, 25-21, 25-21.

Still — in their first official match of the season — the Loggers had

plenty of positives.

Knappa built a 13-5 lead in Game 1, behind some sharp serving from Aiko Miller, along with kills from Kourtney Tischer and Paris Vanderburg.

Warrenton rallied and tied the game at 23-23, following an off-speed kill by Leah Durham and an ace serve from Morgan Blodgett.

But the next two points belonged to the Loggers, on a missed serve by the Warriors and a Warrenton serve-receive error at game point to give Knappa a quick one-game lead.

The Warriors were never threatened in Game 2, as they jumped out to a 7-1 advantage.

Highlighted by kills from Bussert and Elly Blodgett and a service ace by Michelle Arney, the lead reached 21-11.

Elly Blodgett blocked an attack by Mack Strain, and Sagi Diego set Morgan Blodgett for a kill at game point, as Warrenton evened the match at one game apiece.

Game 3 was knotted at 14-14, before a small serving run by Bussert helped the Warriors to a 20-14 advantage.

The Loggers answered with a stuff kill from Ressa Inman and an ace by Kaitlyn Truax, pulling Knappa to within 22-21.

But — despite four missed serves in the game — the Warriors scored the next three points, with an ace serve by Melia Kupua at game point for the win.

Knappa had four service errors in Game 4, but the Loggers still led deep into the game at 21-19, following an ace serve by Miller.

Unfortunately for the Loggers, Miller's ace would serve as Knappa's final point of the night.

Arney set Morgan Blodgett for a Warrenton kill that tied the game at 21-21, Durham served up an ace, and the same Blodgett had back-to-back kills for game and match.

Miller, Truax and Vanderburg were a combined 36-for-38 serving for the Loggers, while Truax led with seven kills, Miller had six ace serves, and Vanderburg finished with 10 assists, six digs, five kills and four aces.

Sophia Carlson added four digs for Knappa, which returns to action tonight at Clatskanie. Warrenton (2-4 overall) begins league play at Portland Adventist Sept. 5.

"We had a very diverse offensive output, which I was happy with," said

Warrenton coach Staci Mieth. "Elly and Morgan were very solid at the net, and Claire is making the transition from setting all the way around to being a front row player nicely."

"Her confidence is building and that will be key for future success," she said. "Melia played outstanding in the libero position. I am not a huge fan of the position, unless a player can show me they embrace it, and she showed me that tonight."

The Warriors "still have some work to do on our communication and unforced errors, but that is to be expected with such a young team," she said. "Overall I was happy with the good things I saw and not surprised with the rest."

Junior varsity: Warrenton defeated Knappa, 25-18, 17-25, 25-14.

Alabama-Florida State kicks off this season's games to watch

By NOAH TRISTER
Associated Press

College football's four-team playoff has altered some of the drama of the regular season.

On one hand, some of the biggest games aren't necessarily must-wins, since one loss may not end a team's playoff hopes. Clemson lost in November last year and still went on to win the national title. Ohio State made the playoff despite failing to win its conference.

The tradeoff, of course, is that more teams are in the hunt later in the season — and that can mean more compelling games in more leagues. If a game has conference title implications in a top league, it can also have playoff implications.

That makes it hard to single out just six games to watch over the next three months, but here are a few matchups to circle during the regular season:

Alabama vs. Florida State (Sept. 2)

The top-ranked Crimson Tide and third-ranked Seminoles face off in Atlanta in just the fourth season-opening game involving teams in the top five. No, the loser won't be out of the playoff race, but its margin for error



Florida State defensive coordinator Charles Kelly, left, talks to defensive back Tyler Hunter against Clemson.

will be a bit lower. And games like this between two national title contenders are what fans crave for non-conference play. Alabama also started last season with a neutral-site game against a big-name program. The Tide beat Southern California 52-6.

Clemson at Louisville (Sept. 16)

Deshaun Watson and Lamar Jackson put on quite a show in this matchup last season, combining for

601 yards passing and 253 rushing. A couple of late touchdown passes by Watson lifted Clemson to a 42-36 win. Now the Tigers must replace Watson, while Jackson, last year's Heisman Trophy winner, returns to lead the Cardinals.

Penn State at Ohio State (Oct. 28)

The Nittany Lions upset the Buckeyes 24-21 last year thanks to a blocked field goal return in the fourth

quarter. That was enough to keep Ohio State out of the Big Ten title game, but although Penn State won the conference, it was the Buckeyes who went to the playoff. Both teams will have plenty of motivation for this one.

Oklahoma at Oklahoma State (Nov. 4)

In each of the past two seasons, Oklahoma won this matchup in the regular-season finale with the Big 12 title on the line. The Sooners and

Cowboys will play earlier this year, and the Big 12 is bringing back its conference title game — but that won't take too much of the luster off Bedlam. Quarterback Baker Mayfield is back for Oklahoma, but coach Bob Stoops isn't, and that might give Oklahoma State an opening this time.

Washington at Stanford (Nov. 10)

Washington's 44-6 win over the Cardinal last September made it clear that Chris Petersen's Huskies were for real. They ended up winning the Pac-12 title and advancing to play Alabama in the national semifinals. Stanford has to replace record-setting running back Christian McCaffrey, but will have home-field advantage against Washington on a Friday night in November. If the Huskies can get past Colorado on Sept. 23, they could enter the Stanford game unbeaten.

Ohio State at Michigan (Nov. 25)

The Buckeyes prevailed in a double-overtime thriller last year for their 12th victory in the past 13 meetings against their biggest rivals. Jim Harbaugh has only one returning starter on defense, but the Wolverines get Ohio State at home this year.

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Big senior class to lead Astoria spikers

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

Head coach Jessie Todd received a rude welcome to Cowapa League volleyball in 2016.

Astoria's first-year coach and her team went winless in league play, and other than a first-place finish in a tournament at Vernonia, there weren't a lot of highlights for the Lady Fishermen.

Given that Astoria had just two seniors on the roster last year, things should go a little better for Todd in her second season.

"I feel good about the team that we've put together," Todd said. "I'm really happy with the progress we made (the first) week and where we're at. There's a lot less having to teach the girls new things. They know the drills and the system. We're definitely ahead of the game."

The Cowapa

Last year's final eight at the state tournament included three teams from the Cowapa League. Banks and Valley Catholic both lost in the semifinals, while Tillamook eventually won the consolation final. The Valiants lost three first-team all-league players, but two others return. The Braves and the Cheese-makers all lost key seniors.

Still, "It's going to be a tough year again," Todd said. "Everyone in our league is good, so we'll have to show up every night and play hard, and hopefully things will swing our way."

The Lady Fish

Despite the winless league record, Astoria still had three all-leaguers, two of whom return.

Middle blocker Darian Hageman and setter/right side hitter Madi Landwehr are back for their senior seasons, along with outside hitter Chelsea Christensen and defensive specialist Kira Worwood.

After that, the Fishermen had a lot of youth on last year's team.



The Daily Astorian/File Photo
Darian Hageman, No. 7, jumps into her fourth and final year of volleyball at Astoria.

ASTORIA VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Jessie Todd, 2nd year
2016: 4-13 (0-10 Cowapa)

Playoffs: None
All-League losses: Jacqueline Jarrett, MB
All-League returners: Darian Hageman, Sr.; Madi Landwehr, Sr.

Youth with potential.

A large sophomore class featured outside hitter Kes Sandstrom, who transferred from Scappoose; and hitters Heaven Barrett and Emmi DeLong.

Sophomore setter Julia Norris and libero Hailey O'Brien both saw extensive action as freshmen.

Rounding out the varsity 12 will be junior Camille Cottrell and transfers Corrin Howard (Seaside) and Chloe Magranahan (Warrenton), both seniors.

"I'm looking forward to seeing how my hitters do against some of those tall blockers in our league," Todd said. "We've talked a lot about encouraging each other and coming together and creating a cohesive team unit. Half our roster is seniors, so we've got some good leadership."

Astoria cross country team running with numbers

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

The rebuilding has begun for the Astoria cross country program.

After finishing in last place in the team standings (both boys and girls) in the 2016 league championship meet, the first order of business was to build up the numbers.

That part, at least, has been accomplished, with 25 runners total, 16 on the boys' side.

"I'm excited for this season, and I'm really happy with everyone we have out," said Astoria coach Andrew Fick. "We're a young team on the boys' side, but we have some strong runners coming in, as well as several of our guys returning which will help us continue to build our program and be competitive."

The Cowapa

"The Cowapa League will continue to be strong on both the boys' and the girls' sides, but we're up for the challenge," Fick said. "Our numbers are up and everyone has been working hard early on."

The Tillamook girls and the Seaside boys are the defending league champions, with Scappoose and Valley Catholic always in the mix on both sides.

Coach Fick's rundown

On the girls' side, "we're fortunate to have veteran runners coming back, and their leadership makes a huge difference," he said. "McKenzie is a really strong runner and a positive force on our team. She really knows how to get the most out of the workouts and raise the bar for everyone else."

"Kathy and Libbie also do a great job and help make sure that everyone is really working together. They help strike that balance between keeping it fun while doing what it takes to get better and run competitively."

"McKenna and Taylor also bring

THE RUNNERS

Girls

McKenzie Burnett, Sr., Abby Groncki, Fr., McKenna Long, So., Sophie Long, Fr., Libbie Nash, Sr., Taylor Palmrose, Jr., Kathy Perez, Sr., Allyson Pritchard, Fr., Emma Roe, Fr.

Boys

William Berezay, Jr., Steven Blankenship, Fr., Nikolai Boisvert, Fr., Tristan Bostick, Fr., Dorian Bryant, Fr., Tyler Farrell, Fr., Parker Ivanoff, Jr., Calvin Kaul, Jr., Ammon Larsen, So., Jacob Matlock, Fr., Noah Kastengren, Fr., Logan Ploghoft, Fr., Evan Randall, Fr., Elias Simmons, Jr., Dalton Somers, So., Cameron Van Raden, Fr.

a lot of valuable experience and have really grown in the past year as distance runners, so I'm really excited to see what they'll do this season.

"We also have some great new runners joining us. Sophie Long has been running really well with McKenzie and has been putting in some great early workouts. Abby and Emma are also going to be major contributors and are looking quick in our early training. As a team, they're dedicated and focused and overall just a great group of girls, and I'm looking forward to some really solid races this year."

For the boys, the Fishermen lost Lucas Caruana, but "Calvin Kaul is always a hard worker and sets a positive tone for the team," Fick said. "Parker, Elias and Will also bring valuable experience, having run in the big races and put in the training miles."

"Our incoming freshman, Nikolai Boisvert, had the top finish in our team time trial and we had several of our other freshmen boys right in the pack as well. Cameron, Evan, Ammon and Dalton are all in the mix for our early season varsity lineup."

"We've got our work cut out for us being in such a strong league, but these guys work hard as a team, so you never know ... that's why we run the races."