

CONTACT US
Gary Henley | Sports Reporter
 ghenley@dailyastorian.com

SPORTS

FOLLOW US
 facebook.com/
 DailyAstorianSports

Astoria volleyball opens with win

The Daily Astorian

The Astoria volleyball team opened the 2017 season the same way it opened 2016, with a victory over Catlin Gabel.

Astoria's Kes Sandstrom pounded out 19 kills and Chelsea Christensen led a strong defensive effort with 43 digs, helping the Lady Fishermen win in four games, 25-16, 25-23, 22-25, 25-13, Wednesday night at the Brick House.

Madi Landwehr added 14 kills, and Julia Norris contributed 11 kills and 34 assists for Astoria, which was 2-2 in a preseason jamboree last week.

In Wednesday's first regular match, "we definitely had some first game jitters," Astoria coach Jessie Todd said. "We were down at first in Game 1, then fought back and finally got into a groove."

Christensen also had seven ace serves, Landwehr added 26 assists, and Darian Hageman finished with seven blocks to spark the Astoria defense.

"We played great defensively," Todd said. "We battled when we fell behind, and our setters (Norris and Landwehr) made great choices all night."

She added, "we talked about keeping our unforced errors down, and we did a fairly good job of that, with the exception of sets one and three, when we kind of got stuck in a rotation. But I was happy with how we came back, and it feels good to start with a win."

Astoria returns to action tonight against another Lewis & Clark League opponent, as the Fishermen travel to Rainier to face the 3A Columbians.



TOP: Julia Norris prepares to spike the ball.

LEFT: Kira Worwood dives for a ball for the Astoria Fishermen.

Photos by
 Colin Murphey
 The Daily Astorian

Loggers sweep the Tigers

The Daily Astorian

CLATSKANIE — It was the 2A Northwest League against the 3A Lewis & Clark League Wednesday night in Clatskanie, where the Tigers hosted a nonleague match with Knappa.

And the 2A Loggers bounced back from Tuesday's loss at Warrenton with a three-game sweep over Clatskanie, 25-16, 25-17, 25-22.

Knappa's Paris Vanderburg was hot at the service line, connecting on 17-of-18 serves with eight aces. She also had 12 assists, while Kaitlyn Truax was 14-for-15 serving with five aces, five digs and four kills.

Kourtney Tischer was 11-of-11 serving, and Jaden Mieth had 17 digs for the second night in a row.



SIS PREVIEW MORE ON PAGE 10A

Gulls' volleyball ready for a return to state

By **GARY HENLEY**
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Eric Huntsman, 1st year
2016: 2-8 Cowapa
State playoffs: Lost first-round match at Sisters
All-League losses: Maddi Utti
All-League returners: Alyssia Gonzalez, Sr.; Anna Huddleston, Jr.; Jetta Ideue, Sr.

The Cowapa

Last year's Sweet 16 included five of the six Cowapa League schools, and three of the eight teams in the state tournament were from the Cowapa, with Banks and Valley Catholic reaching the Final Four (both lost, and Valley Catholic defeated Banks in a consolation match).

The league could be up for grabs this year, with both the Braves and Valiants graduating big senior classes. Valley Catholic lost four all-league players, while Banks lost three first-team all-leaguers.

Astoria and Seaside will both put competitive teams on the floor.

The Lady Gulls

The Gulls only graduated

three seniors, but one big loss was outside hitter Maddi Utti.

Her primary sport was basketball (Utti will play at Fresno State this winter), but Utti was arguably the most talented volleyball player in the Cowapa last season.

Still, Seaside has athletes ready to step in and fill the void.

Leading the way are a trio of returning all-league players — senior middle blocker/hitter Alyssia Gonzales; senior outside hitter Jetta Ideue; and junior setter Anna Huddleston.

Seaside's preseason turnout was enough to fill three teams, with Danielle Reese coaching the junior varsity, and Mitch Ward leading the JV II squad.

The eight players on the varsity roster include two other seniors — Nikki Mercado and Sequoia Shand; along with juniors Maddie Jensen, Emy Kiser, Tori Tomlin and Huddleston.

After one week of play, the Gulls were 3-0 and ranked No. 2 in the OSAA rankings. It's early, but Seaside appears headed for another state playoff-qualifying season.

Young Gulls ready to fly for new coach

By **GARY HENLEY**
The Daily Astorian

For the first time in nearly 40 years, the Seaside cross country program will enter a season with a new head coach.

Neil Branson coached cross country for 39 years, including 37 as an assistant and head coach at Seaside, before retiring at the end of last season.

And he didn't just fade down the backstretch — Branson went out with very competitive teams the last two years, including a state championship for the Seaside boys in 2015, and a runner-up finish in '16.

But Branson's gone, along with many of those runners.

Frank Januik is the new guy in charge, with a lot of young, new "charges" under him.

Of Seaside's 10 runners on the boys' side, four are freshmen, with one sophomore, four juniors and one senior.

The numbers are just plain thin on the girls' side, with only three runners as of this week.

It will take time, said

Januik, who was serving as Branson's assistant right up until his final year.

"We lost a lot of kids," he said. "Two-thirds of our team last year were seniors. Our boys were great, and Josie Smith was a great runner for the girls. And of course, Neil was there for a long time and did a really good job. So it's different."

Branson is still in charge of the big 3-Course Challenge Meet, Sept. 23 at Camp Rilea.

The coaching duties at Seaside will fall to Januik and his assistant, Matt Spear, a successful marathon runner.

"He's a current runner," Januik said. "Last year at the 20-mile mark of the Portland Marathon, he was in third place overall. He can run, and he's been a big help to the kids."

The lone senior for the Gulls is Rafi Sibony, the last holdover from the 2015 state championship team.

"Matt and Rafi have run a lot together," Januik said, "and Rafi is probably in the best shape he's ever been. He's ready to get after it this year."

After that, the team gets

young, in a hurry.

The juniors are Alex Barnett, Mathew Carpenter, Sam Henderson and David Schwinof. Cameron Lippert is the lone sophomore, with incoming freshmen Sean Barnett, Jude Gomez, Beau Johnson and Francisco Rojas.

The going will be tough for the freshmen boys, "until they get bigger and stronger," Januik said. "There's a big difference between their freshman and senior years. That's what everyone will see in Rafi this year."

On the girls' side, Seaside has junior Ana Rojas, sophomore Hayley Rollins and freshman Angelina Alcalá.

In a bit of a change, there's only one athlete (Sibony) running cross country and also playing soccer this fall.

"That was huge for us," said Januik, whose son Jackson was a two-sport athlete in the fall. "Both years for the last two years, five of our seven runners were soccer players. And they were soccer players who were junior and seniors — that makes for strong runners, and that's what we don't have this year."

CELEBRATING OVER 80 YEARS SERVING SEASIDE

GO SEAGULLS!

Good Luck **ALL ATHLETES AND COACHES**

From All Our Chamber Member Partners, We Wish You the Best this Season

SEASIDE Chamber of Commerce

BIG RIVER CONSTRUCTION INC. ASTORIA, OR.

PACIFIC POWER A DIVISION OF PACIFICORP

CLATSOP DISTRIBUTING 1875 E.E. 12TH PLACE