

SPORTS

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ASTORIA WINTER SPORTS PREVIEWS



The Daily Astorian

Astoria coach Kevin Goin has a big rebuilding job on his hands.



The Daily Astorian

Astoria's Sam Hemsley is looking to have a big junior season.

Astoria's young guns battle in tough league

By GARY HENLEY
 The Daily Astorian

If Astoria boys basketball coach Kevin Goin had wanted to play the "injury card," in describing his team's 2016-17 season, it would have been understandable.

Injuries don't always define your season, but they certainly played a big role for the Fishermen a year ago.

How else to explain a team that placed fourth at the state the year before, comes back mostly intact, then finishes 1-9 in league play?

The Fishermen had high hopes, but the season took an unexpected turn when seniors Kyle Strange and Fridtjof Fremstad were lost for most of the season with injuries.

Olaf Englund remained and did what he could (earning first team all-league honors), but the task was tough in a league that had two of its teams playing in the state championship game in March.

The league is still tough, and the challenge will be just as big for Goin this year. The injury bug has already struck, with Tristan Wallace going down with a knee injury during the football season.

"We started OK last year, but once we lost Fritz and Kyle, it made it rough," Goin said. "It's one of those things that happens. In my 22nd year of coaching, I've never had so many injuries in back-to-back years. Last year we had the two, then Tristan this year."

Last season, "we still beat three teams who were in the state playoffs, and we were 10-3 going into league. I really thought without the injuries, we would have been right there with everybody else."

THE COWAPA

When it comes to 4A basketball, the Cowapa League is the best, hands down. Over the last three years, four Cowapa teams have played in the state championship game (Scappoose, Valley Catholic, Seaside twice).

In their swan song as a member of the

ASTORIA BOYS BASKETBALL

Coach: Kevin Goin, 4th year
2016-17: 10-13 (1-9 league)
All-league losses: Olaf Englund, Ryan Palek

Cowapa this year, "Scappoose brings every single kid back," Goin said. "They looked really good this summer. Tillamook brings their guards back. Seaside has their young guys back, and Banks will be huge.

"It will be a tough year," he said. "It's not the best year to be reloading in the Cowapa."

THE FISHERMEN

Wallace is likely out for the year, Goin said, although there is a chance for a late return.

It's next year the Fishermen are really looking forward to.

"We've got good numbers at the younger levels," Goin said. "It's just the senior class where we only have two kids," with Karsten Johnson and Michael Kee, a 6-foot-4 post who has not played since his freshman year.

Elsewhere, "the freshman numbers are good, and juniors and sophomores," Goin said. "We're going to be real young this year, so we're probably a year away. The unfortunate part is that our league never seems to lose anybody. Everybody's good."

At least Astoria has size — Ian Hunt (6-5, Jr.), Conner Long (6-3, Jr.), Josh Olson (6-4, Jr.), and Peter Johnson, a 6-3 junior transfer from Port Angeles, Wash.

Two sophomores in the varsity lineup include Isaac Brockman and Ryan Stenblom.

"Most likely, there will be five or six JV kids who swing," Goin said. "We've got a huge (20 players) incoming freshmen class. The Johnson kid we added is real athletic, but hasn't played a ton of basketball. He's got a lot of skill, and will be a good player.

"Among the top eight or nine guys, there's only one or two seniors, so we'll bring back a pretty good nucleus."

Astoria girls on the verge of greatness

By GARY HENLEY
 The Daily Astorian

The upcoming season could be a good one for the Astoria girls basketball program. And the following year is *really* shaping up to be something special.

Big things are on the way for the Lady Fishermen, entering Mike Jacobson's fourth year as the Astoria coach.

"We're going to be young, but good," Jacobson said. "We've had eight to 10 kids in the weight room a couple days a week, even during fall sports. They're buying in, and they see what's going on. We played three freshmen quite a bit last year, and Sam (Hemsley) as a sophomore."

THE COWAPA

"Banks will be really good," Jacobson said, as the Braves advanced to the state championship game last year. "They've got five or six seniors, and (junior) Aspen Slifka is back. It will be them and probably Valley Catholic. But I think we should be right in there with Valley."

THE LADY FISH

After years of sending their middle school teams to state tournaments, things should finally start paying off at the high school level.

"Hopefully it translates over for them now, if the coach doesn't screw it up," Jacobson said. "We have three starters back, with Sam, Brooklynn (Hankwitz) and Hailey (O'Brien), so we'll be pretty strong. We should be better than what we were last year."

In addition, "we're going to be young," he said. Hankwitz (a 5-foot-11 post) and O'Brien are sophomores, along with 6-foot-2 Kaja Jackson and Julia Norris.

Gracie Cummings and Hemsley are juniors, with seniors McKenzie Burnett, Taylor Feldman, Libbie Nash and McKailyn Rogers.

With Hankwitz and Jackson, Astoria will be one of the biggest teams in the

ASTORIA GIRLS BASKETBALL

Coach: Mike Jacobson, 4th year
2016-17: 9-16 (4-6 league)
League playoffs: Defeated Scappoose, lost to Valley Catholic.
All-league losses: Rylee DeMander, Alexis Wallace
All-league returner: Sam Hemsley, Jr.

SCOREBOARD

PREP SPORTS SCHEDULE

TODAY

Girls basketball — Warrenton at Nestucca, 6 p.m.
Boys basketball — Warrenton at Nestucca, 7:45 p.m.

FRIDAY

Girls basketball — Gladstone at Seaside, 7:30 p.m.
Boys basketball — Seaside at Gladstone, 7 p.m.

Cowapa for the next few years, and "we can do some different things that we're not used to," Jacobson said. "We can go big if we have to, or we can go pretty fast, too."

Hemsley will be looked to for the scoring.

"She's been shooting the ball real well and taking on leadership," he said. "I think she can step in and have a good season. And hopefully Brooklynn can score. She's spent a year in the weight room."

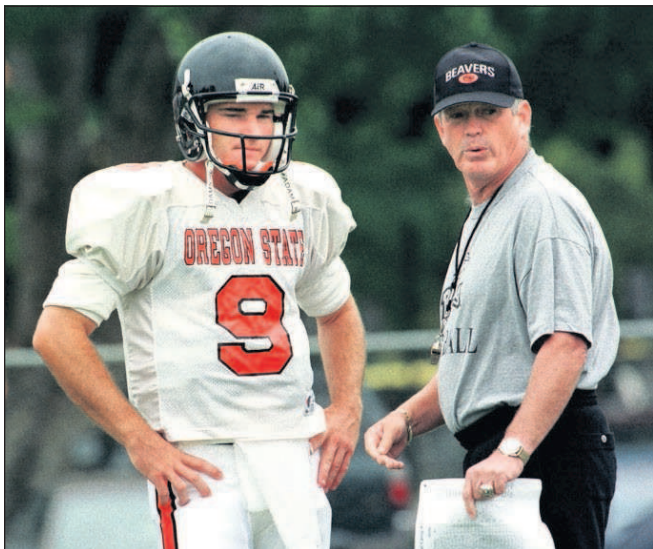
"Sam will most likely be our leading scorer every game, but I'm hoping that we can get a pretty good average from Brooklynn — eight to 10 points a game, and hopefully between 12 and 15 from Julia and Hailey combined. As long as we can score, I think we'll be all right."

Sophomore Libby Whitsett could also be in the mix, along with freshmen Kelsey Fausett and Halle Helmersen providing future depth. The Lady Fishermen have 15 freshmen in the program this season.

Prediction: State playoffs this year, state tournament next for the Astoria girls.

MORE INSIDE: PREVIEWS FOR ASTORIA HIGH SCHOOL'S WRESTLING, SWIM TEAMS ON PAGE 9A.

Oregon State hires former Beavers QB Smith as coach



AP Photo/Don Ryan

Oregon State head football coach Dennis Erickson talks strategy with quarterback Jonathan Smith during an August 1999 practice in Corvallis.

By RALPH D. RUSSO
 Associated Press

Jonathan Smith is returning to where he started.

Washington's co-offensive coordinator Jonathan Smith has been hired by Oregon State to be the Beavers' head coach, the school formally announced Wednesday night.

Oregon State has been in the market for a new coach since Gary Andersen surprisingly stepped down in early October after a 1-5 start, with the victory coming over lower-division Portland State.

Smith is a former Beavers quarterback who has been working as quarterbacks coach for coach Chris Petersen since 2012, starting at Boise State and following him to Washington in 2014.

He also had stops as an assistant at Montana and Idaho. He was a graduate assistant at Oregon State from 2002-03.

"Oregon State University is a special place and I have many memories of being a part of Beaver Nation," Smith said in a statement. "I played for some of the best coaches I have ever been around and learned many of the qualities I have utilized in my coaching career."

Smith was a walk-on in Corvallis, playing for the Beavers from 1998-2001. He was on Oregon State's 2000 team that went 11-1 and defeated Notre Dame in the Fiesta Bowl under coach Dennis Erickson.

A fan favorite during his playing days, Smith ranks third on Oregon State's career list with 55 touchdown passes and 9,680 yards. He holds the record for the longest touchdown pass in school history, with a 97-yard TD pass to Chad Johnson in 2000.

"We interviewed several qualified candidates and Coach Smith emerged as our top choice," athletic director Scott Barnes said. "He brings to Oregon State football an

impressive plan to build our program. He has a unique perspective on what it means to be a part of Beaver Nation and to be successful for our student-athletes on and off the field."

After Anderson stepped down, the Beavers promoted cornerbacks coach Corry Hall as interim head coach. Hall appeared to inspire the team, which challenged Stanford in a close 15-14 loss. And a group of players started an online petition supporting Hall, as well as a Twitter hashtag #HALLin.

But Hall's connection to the players didn't translate to wins. The Beavers wrapped up the season with a 69-10 loss to rival Oregon in the Civil War rivalry game to finish 1-11 overall and 0-9 in conference.

"I feel very positive about the future of that football team in there," Hall said following the Civil War loss outside the Beavers' locker room, "because I know they've learned a lot and I know they'll be in good hands."