

WARRENTON WARRIORS FOOTBALL • VOLLEYBALL • CROSS COUNTRY



The Daily Astorian

Claire Bussert, No. 4, is back and taking aim at a big season for Warrenton volleyball.

New league offers title hopes for Warrenton

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

A three-match win streak midway through the league season had the Warrenton volleyball team sitting with a 5-2 league record, in great shape for a big stretch run last year.

But that's where the winning stopped, literally.

The Warriors were swept in consecutive matches by Oregon Episcopal, Portland Christian and Rainier, then another three-game loss to OES in the league playoffs.

"We just stopped getting better," said Warrenton coach Staci Miethe. "We had a really big jump from the first part of the season to midseason, then the second half of the season we just plateaued."

"We competed well," she said. "We were the only team in the league to score over 20 points in a game against Rainier (and they did it three times). We did some good stuff."

The good news — the Warriors can say goodbye to the private school competition.

Clatskanie, Rainier and Warrenton will join Taft and Willamina to form the new Coastal Range League.

Given the strength of the private schools in so many sports, that will be a definite plus for the Warriors.

THE COASTAL RANGE LEAGUE

The Warriors already know how good Rainier is. Willamina (11-10 overall) is the only other school that returns with a winning record from 2017.

Clatskanie was 3-15 overall, and Taft finished 1-17.

So the good news — there's less competition. The bad news — there's less competition. That won't help the RPI rating in the OSAA rankings.

On the other hand, it shouldn't be hard to make the state playoffs from the new league.

Warrenton finished sixth in the old Lewis & Clark League last season. Four of the teams that finished ahead of the Warriors (Portland Christian, Catlin Gabel, OES and Portland Adventist) are no longer there.

Even first-place Rainier lost its best player (league MVP Breana Edwards), along with fellow first-teamer Mikayla Lorentson.

Miethe said, "When they announced the new league, I looked at our roster and who we had coming back and thought, 'we have a real chance of vying for a league championship next year.'"

"We were competitive with Taft and Willamina, and Rainier is definitely in a rebuilding phase. They lost their coach (Daniel Mirelez will replace Mike Edwards),

WARRENTON VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Staci Miethe, 2nd year
2017: 8-12 (5-6 league)
Playoffs: Lost league playoff at OES
All-league loss: Morgan Blodgett
All-league returner: Claire Bussert, Sr.

they lost Bree, and without her, they're a completely different team.

"Clatskanie is better. Shelby (Blodgett) is strong, and they have a significantly good eighth-grade class coming up."

"So I'm thinking, 'league championship,' then all of a sudden two of our players move, and another is lost to surgery."

Still, "I think we'll be able to compete with every team in our league."

THE WARRIORS

Warrenton originally had six varsity returners, but two players (sisters Elly and Morgan Blodgett) moved to Seaside, and senior Sagi Diego underwent offseason knee surgery, and is lost for the fall season.

"We'll have to be adaptable," coach Miethe said. "That's our key word this year. We're basically starting from scratch."

The Warriors, however, won't be without talent.

All-league setter Claire Bussert returns for her senior year, and Fernanda Alvarez will play in her senior season.

"Claire is going to be setting again, but I'm going back to a 5-1 (alignment) and I'm going to utilize her as much as possible. Fernanda has really buckled down and accepted her role. She'll be my main middle. Then we have Ruby Dyer and Noelle O'Bryan, a defensive, back row player."

Also in the mix will be junior Melia Kapua, "probably a Libero, and we're working with her on back row attacks," Miethe said.

Junior Natalie Oseguera (5 feet 10 inches tall) joins the varsity, along with 6-foot sophomore Annie Heyen, and Mia McFadden, a 5-9 sophomore.

"We're tall, just not very experienced and not super-quick," Miethe said. "It's a wide open lineup. Avyree (Miethe, a freshman) competed real well this summer, and we will utilize her as an outside hitter. I could be moving girls back and forth all season."

Assisting coach Miethe will be Jess Slivkoff, Brent Sullivan, and Kurt Wendschuh, a 6-4 former beach volleyball player.

WARRIORS HOPE FOR SUCCESS AT 2A LEVEL

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

It's a new era for Warrenton football. New uniforms, new helmets, new team slogans, new league ... about the only thing that's still the same is the coach.

For the first time in five years, the Warriors have the same coach from the previous season returning for another, as Ian O'Brien is back for 2018.

After going 0-9 in 2016 and 1-8 last year (and two straight 0-3 league seasons), the Warriors were looking for a serious makeover.

One way to improve: Drop down a level, with the OSAA's permission.

And that's the road Warrenton has taken, as the former Class 3A Warriors will compete in the 2A Northwest League for at least two years.

"It's not the position that we want to be in, having to drop down a level, but at the end of the day, I think it's what's best for our program and our community to play in the Northwest League," O'Brien said.

"We've been in the Lewis & Clark League with Rainier and Clatskanie, but to be honest, I think our parents get more psyched up when we play Vernonia, Neah-Kah-Nie or Knappa," he said. "Because for the parents who went to Warrenton, those are the teams they played when they were in high school."

THE NWL

The Warriors have actually been playing Northwest League schools for the past 12 years. The only difference — now they will be league games instead of nonleague.

But just because the Warriors are now the big fish in a small pond, Warrenton can't start thinking "league championship."

The NWL has belonged to Knappa for much of the last 10 years. The Loggers have only had one losing season in league play since 2005, with three 4-0 league seasons over the last four years.

"They've owned the



Gary Henley/The Daily Astorian

Warrenton's Jake Morrow will be one of the top quarterbacks in the 2A Northwest League.

WARRENTON FOOTBALL

Coach: Ian O'Brien, 2nd year (fifth overall)
2017: 0-9 (0-3 league)
All-league losses: Logan Fischer, Caden Hans, Preston Miller.
All-league returners: None

league," O'Brien said of the Loggers. "They've been the Northwest League champion three of the last four years. They're always good. Neah-Kah-Nie will be really tough, Vernonia has a great running back, and Portland Christian always has great athletes. Nestucca kids are always farm tough, down there working the dairy farms."

"We played all those teams last year, and only beat one of them (Nestucca)," O'Brien said. "Let's see how hard we've really worked compared to these other schools, some of whom had their way with us."

THE WARRIORS

The Warriors have just three seniors on the roster. But don't call the team "inexperienced."

"The kids who are juniors, they have quite a bit of experience, because they've had to play," O'Brien said. "With only three seniors, I need juniors to be seniors for two years."

Warrenton will have to replace three all-league players lost to graduation, including Logan Fischer, a first-team running back and linebacker.

Junior Jake Morrow will be

the prime candidate to fill those shoes, on both sides of the ball.

"When I look at our offense, you have to look at who's going to be behind center," O'Brien said. "That will be Jake Morrow. Jake's a heck of an athlete, a first team all-state catcher, so he's familiar with having to be a leader."

Whoever is on the field, look for more yards and more points in 2018. Warrenton was only shut out once last year (41-0, at Knappa), after scoring a grand total of just 44 points in 2016.

"Last year, we were crawling," O'Brien said. "We kind of got away from what coach (John) Mattila did, traditionally, which was the Power-I and the pro set."

"Last year was the first year for a lot of these guys, so they were also having to learn a new language. That's what happens when you have three coaches in three years."

Other key players will include senior Gio Martinez, who moved to wideout and will play some defensive back and linebacker, O'Brien said. "He's a senior who's played a lot of football. He will get some reps at quarterback, too."

Devin Jackson "is a utility guy who will play some receiver and linebacker. Kale'o Kapua will be one of our three seniors, and Kale'o is a heck of an athlete. He will play O-line, D-line and some linebacker."

"I'm excited about our line," said the coach. "It's young, but they work hard."

"Sam Irwin (sophomore) is the strongest kid in our school, just a workhorse. Duane Falls is a scrapper, huge heart and loves to compete. Mark Warren (junior) is in his third year on the line. He's a big kid with a big frame, 6-2, about 230."

"And Triston Scott is a sophomore. I've got two sophomores and two juniors starting on the line. We've got good size with those five."

The running back position "will be a little by committee," O'Brien said. "Devin Jackson, Ethan Green and Ahstin Culp could all see some carries. Another guy is Austin Little. He gives us a different dimension and can do some things. And Gabe Breitmeyer will be out there, at receiver and linebacker."

The first week of practice, the Warriors had 35 players on the field.

"The bulk of our numbers are in the junior, sophomore and freshmen groups," O'Brien said. "It's exciting. If we have a couple decent years, I think there will be more buzz with the kids. Kids like to be a part of things that are having success, right?"

With the numbers and talent at the grade school level, Warrenton could soon be dominating whatever sport in whatever league they playing in.

"Our third-fourth grade and fifth-sixth grade coaches are doing a great job," O'Brien said. "Our numbers are healthy."

"There's really no excuses this year. Let's go out, give it our best effort, and hopefully when the clock strikes zero, some of those games will be in favor of the Warriors."

Prediction: The Warriors should certainly be good enough for a top-three finish in their new league, which means a return to the state playoffs.

More runners for Warrenton

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

An increase in numbers will hopefully result in higher finishes for the Warrenton cross country teams in 2018.

The Warrenton girls placed fourth out of six teams in last year's district race, while the Warrenton boys did not score points.

Warrenton is back with experience on both sides.

For the boys, seniors Forrest Bigelow and A.J. Schenbeck are running, while senior girls include Cailin Bennett, Katelyn Carelock, Adrianna DeJesus, Madison Kadera, Sahanna Rodriguez and Pamela Talancon-Botello, "all of whom I will be relying heavily on for leadership," said Warrenton coach Hayley Espelund Rogers. "We have a large group of young students, too."

Rogers is expecting more runners to show up before the season starts.

The current roster includes "Nicole Hopkins, Bella

Carr, Gabriel Boisvert, Forrest Cooley, Caden Weimann, Serena Moha, Lucas Thompson and Julian Whitsett for newbies," Rogers said, "though some of them ran track for me so I'm familiar with their ability."

Other than the seniors, returning runners include Analysa Johnson, Kaisa Liljenwall, Anna Schenbeck, Darren Garnett and Kale Moss.

"I am expecting a very competitive girls team, with many girls close in their time ability for a 5K, even more so than last year with the additions," Rogers said. "All of our girls are already running as well as, if not better than they were at the beginning of last season."

The boys "were short on numbers last year, but we have had a pretty big increase in numbers and these boys are already showing a competitive spirit which will help them push each other," she said.

Warrenton is holding its annual cross country camp in

Bend (Aug. 27-30) and will host its opening meet at Fort Stevens (the "Wreck Run") Sept. 25.

Warrenton distance runner Kaisa Liljenwall has a sprinter's speed, as she showed on the track last spring.

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