

ASTORIA FISHERMEN

FOOTBALL • VOLLEYBALL

Astoria looks for return to 'Wreak Havoc'

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

The high hopes for 2017 did not quite pan out for the Astoria football team.

Coming off a league title in 2016, the Fishermen were hoping to at least match their second-round showing in the state playoffs. As it was, Astoria lost a regional play-in game at Estacada to finish with their first losing record since 2014.

Will the 2018 team help Astoria football get back on track? It would be a good year for it, as the Fishermen celebrate the 10th anniversary of their one and only state championship.

They've even brought back the 2008 "Wreak Havoc" slogan for 2018.

"We feel like if we stay healthy, we'll have a chance to be a competitive team," said coach Howard Rub, entering his 19th year at the helm.

A three-game stretch of nonleague games (at Scappoose, home games vs. Stayton and Estacada), followed by the first league game at Seaside, Rub said, "by the end of September, we'll definitely know where we're at in life."

THE COWAPA

Ordinarily one of the toughest leagues in the state, the Cowapa just got a little lighter at the top. Defending league champion and usual state qualifier Scappoose is gone, as the Indians jump to the 5A level.

And in comes Molalla, which was 3-6 as a member of the Tri-Valley Conference.

So, the 2018 league title will be up for grabs between the three teams who always seem to be chasing Scappoose — Astoria, Banks and Seaside.

The Gulls have the inside track, returning key players from a team that finished second behind the Indians last



Astoria quarterback Justin Villa has his eyes on a big senior season for the Fishermen.

Gary Henley/The Daily Astorian

year, and spent the better part of the season ranked in the top three before an upset loss in the state playoffs.

"It will be real interesting with Molalla being there, and not having a great knowledge of what they have going on," Rub said of the Cowapa's newest addition.

"Banks and Seaside return a lot of good players, and I know coach (Kye) Johnson believes that the Cheesemakers are ready to turn a corner. So it will be a very tough league season."

The Fishermen not only open the league season at Seaside, they must travel to Banks for the second year in a row.

THE FISHERMEN

So where does Astoria fit in the new-look Cowapa?

Experience shouldn't be a problem, with seven all-league returners, including four linemen.

The Fishermen offense is always a unit to watch for the rest of the Cowapa League.

After a preseason jamboree at Seaside, Rub said, "the first group showed some good signs of where we're at. Up front we have a lot of returning players. Most of our starters on the line last year were juniors."

And they've got size. "Whenever you have Ben Carpenter (6-foot-6, 375 pounds) being the first guy off

the bus, it gets people's attention," Rub said.

At the skill positions, Astoria must replace quarterbacks Karsten Johnson (graduated) and Tristan Wallace (transferred to Knappa), along with Tyler Ranta and Trey Hageman, who did a little bit of everything.

On the plus side, "Ian Hunt and Josh Olson are back at receiver, and Tryton Matlock has been real steady there," Rub said. "Junior Tristan Boyle has also stepped up."

At running back, he said, "between Niko (Caruana) and Ryan Stutznecker, we saw good things out of both of them at times" in the jamboree.

The quarterback position will be manned by senior Justin Villa, an all-league receiver last year who has traded his No. 32 jersey for No. 5.

"Every once in a while it might be in our best interest to line him up at his more natural receiver position," Rub said. "In normal circumstances, he would have a chance to be an all-state receiver, but where we're at right now, Justin's the guy (at quarterback)."

At times in the preseason, Rub said, "we've seen what Justin can do with his legs when he has to get out of the pocket and run. There's a reason he had two punt returns for touchdowns last year against

ASTORIA FOOTBALL

Coach: Howard Rub, 19th year

2017: 4-5 (2-3 league)

Playoffs: Lost regional play-in at Estacada

All-league losses: Trey Hageman, Zac Patterson, Tyler Ranta, Andrew Schaueremann.

All-league returners: Ben Carpenter, Sr., Josiah Hirsch, Sr., Ian Hunt, Sr., Balan Kolee, Sr., David Merry, Sr., Henry Samuelson, Sr., Justin Villa, Sr.

Valley Catholic. He's dangerous in the open field.

"Our speed is going to be better than average. And we'll rely on our experience up front to keep the chains moving and make some things happen."

Defensively, "the first group looked solid, but we need to get some of our backups varsity-ready."

Josiah Hirsch returns at center, with left guard Michael Williams, right guard Henry Samuelson, left tackle Grant Roe and right tackle Dylan Ploghoff.

In addition, "Skylar Smith, Marcus Rasmussen and Cannon Kraft will be relied upon to provide depth up front," Rub said. "And we expect big things from David Merry at defensive end."

Other names to get familiar with: "Marcus Soderstrom has had a real good preseason," Rub said. "We hope to get some solid play from Marcus. And Taylor Hutchinson is vying for time at split end and corner."

"Michael Moore, Bo Williams, T.J. Colvin and Dylan Junes are four of our top sophomores."

Replacing all-league place-kicker Andrew Schaueremann could be Taylor Palmberg, over from the soccer program.

Astoria volleyball primed for success

By GARY HENLEY
The Daily Astorian

The most improved team for the 2017 Cowapa League volleyball season ... Astoria, hands down.

After going 0-10 in 2016, the Lady Fish turned things around big-time in 2017. In her second year as coach, Jessie Todd led Astoria to a 6-4 league record and a No. 7 ranking in the final OSAA poll.

That put Astoria back in the playoffs, where the Fishermen swept past North Valley in a play-in match to land a spot in the Sweet 16.

Alas, Baker ended the dream with a four-game win over Astoria in late October.

The Fishermen return with high expectations in 2018. Astoria has already shown up as the ninth-ranked team in a preseason coaches poll.

"I'm really excited with the group I have," Todd said. "We have 10 really solid kids who mesh really well together. I'm excited to see what they can do. They're motivated and competitive."

A large turnout will once again give Astoria three teams.

"We have a great group of athletes," Todd said. "And we had a good season last

ASTORIA VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Jessie Todd, 3rd year

2017: 13-9 (6-4 league)

Playoffs: Defeated North Valley in play-in, lost state playoff at Baker.

All-league losses: Chelsea Christensen, Corrin Howard, Madi Landwehr.

All-league returner: Julia Norris, Jr.

year. We've spent time talking about how we're going to continue that success. We want to get back to state again."

THE COWAPA

Valley Catholic swept everything last year, finishing 10-0 in league with both the league's Coach (Becky Kemper) and Player (Lizzy Osborn) of the Year.

Osborn is gone, but four all-league players return. Second-place Tillamook lost four all-leaguers to graduation, while fourth-place Scappoose is gone completely. The Indians will now compete in the 5A Northwest Conference, leaving the Cowapa with just five teams and an eight-match league season.



Colin Murphy/The Daily Astorian

Astoria's Julia Norris, No. 10, is one of the top returning volleyball players in the Cowapa League.

"The league is always tough," Todd said. "Losing Scappoose is going to put an interesting twist on it. It's just eight league matches, and that will be different, having a bye week."

As for the league race, she said, "Valley Catholic and Tillamook will be good, Banks will bring it and even Seaside will be better ... you can't take anybody for granted."

THE LADY FISH

Astoria finished with four all-league starters last season, including first-team players Madi Landwehr and Julia Norris. Of those four, Norris is the only returner.

On the plus side, the players coming into the program already have some experience.

"A lot of these freshmen played club, so that puts us ahead of the learning curve

coming in," Todd said.

Astoria will be competitive with their long list of returners, including seniors Heaven Barrett, Camille Campbell, Emilli DeLong and Kes Sandstrom.

The talent doesn't stop there, as Kajsa Jackson, Hailey O'Brien and Norris return for their junior seasons.

Three sophomores on the varsity roster are Kelsey Fausett, Halle Helmersen and

Taja-Rae Tuimato.

"We definitely have some height, and some good experienced players," Todd said. "Taja and Julia will both be setting, and Kajsa will add some height in the middle.

Kelsey and Emilli will do some hitting, and possibly Halle on the outside. Hailey O'Brien will add some good leadership defensively, as will Camille."

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