

OPINION

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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Friday night lights in Seaside

The Gulls' side of the football field is a sea of red; Astoria's purple colors are more sparsely seen at the south end.

The high school band jams a sizzling medley of pregame tunes — bass drums pounding, snares tat-tatting and brass shouting.

Nearby lines form for snacks and for the single port-a-potty on the path to Broadway School.

But on this Friday night in September, the press box is the place to be.



R.J. MARX

The three-story structure is almost hidden, tucked between the bleachers, disguised by a storage area on the main floor.

Once you find the secret entrance and convince yourself it's OK to stride the stairs, you arrive at a sportswriter's hallowed ground.

A group of regulars scarcely looks up as a steady procession of visitors comes and goes — and through the course of the game, there are many, from former superintendent Doug Dougherty to assistant principal Jason Boyd. Outside, as the wind picks up and the skies open, others come for shelter or a run up to the third floor for a birds-eye view of the game.

Chairs are at a premium. Upstairs are Tim Wunderlich — “Wundy” — and his Radio Clatsop broadcast partner John “Chappy” Chapman.

Each huddles over a large-print scorecard listing the players' vital statistics. On the plywood counter is enough candy and cakes to make a Trick-or-Treater consider it a good night: Franz fruit pies, Hostess chocolate cupcakes, Peppermint Patties and more.

“They just don't make Hostess cupcakes like they used to,” Chappy says. “There's not enough frosting.”

“No Ding-Dongs?” Wundy gripes, scanning the hillocks of sweets.

Seaside High School math teacher Jim Poetsch — also the high school golf coach — operates the scoreboard and history teacher Mike Hawes the public address system.

At the end of the line is The Daily Astorian's Gary Henley, so silent that I don't see him at first, wearing an Oregon Ducks cap and diligently writing notes for Monday's paper.

The Clatsop Clash

The Clatsop Clash is bigger than any trophy or award.

The battle of the Astoria Fishermen and the Seaside Seagulls represents a century of gridiron competition, pitting the two largest cities in a county where there is no pro or college ball. For the denizens of Clatsop, the greatest thrill is to watch young athletes brave the elements while cheerleaders implore the crowd to even greater heights of fervor, undeterred by lashing torrents of rain that would deter most mere mortals.

On the field this Friday night, it is all Gulls from the opening kickoff.

A series of Seaside stars — No. 3, Brayden Johnson, at wide receiver and defensive back; No. 25, Gio Ramirez, running back and linebacker; No. 2, Alexander Teubner, running back and safety; No. 6, Payton Westerholm, quarterback and defensive back; No. 8, Duncan Thompson, running back and linebacker — smother the Astoria offense and take the offensive stage with run after run, racking up 10, 15 and 20 yards and more.

Athletes play both offense and defense, a challenge that would quickly exhaust anyone older than 18.



The Seaside High School band provides a soundtrack for the Gulls' winning ways.

Photos by R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian



Tim Wunderlich and John Chapman broadcast from the Broadway Field press booth.



The Signal's Jeff Ter Har braves the elements to bring you the game shots.

Just when one weapon is utilized, another piece of the Gulls artillery enters, with backs batting away passes, tacklers stopping runners cold and ballhandlers dragging opponents for hard-earned extra yardage.

Gulls' kicker Kaleb Bartel is so accurate he hits seven points-after kicks, and at one point prepares to kick a 40-yard field goal, although the attempt is whistled dead after a penalty sends them back.

And penalties may be the weak spot of the Gulls this night, as a few sparkling runs are negated by holding calls behind the line of scrimmage; a face mask nullifies another play.

If the Gulls hadn't drawn so many whistles, who knows, the score might have been even more lopsided.

Seaside players ignore the elements until the rain starts to hurt and the ball spills out of players' hands like a squirming pig.

In the stands, plastic tarpaulins and rain slickers blanket the crowd.

Signal photographer Jeff Ter Har roams the sidelines with an umbrella the size of a pup tent, pitching a tripod in the mud; the Astorian's Colin Murphy

confronts pelting rain and fogged lenses streaked by windswept pellets.

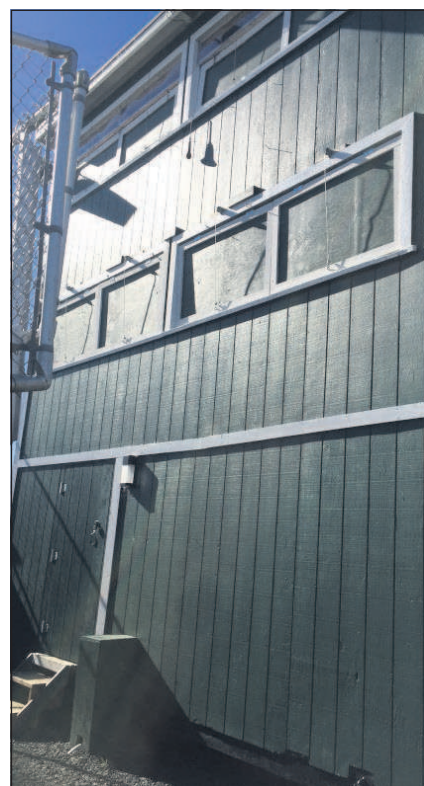
Before the game is done, the “mercy rule” is invoked, a recent addition to the Oregon State Athletic Association handbook, in which games of 45 points or more difference are either called or allowed to play without timeouts between plays.

The clock stops only after injury, heat or “unusual circumstances, such as a dog on field, etc.” For the Fisherman, the fourth quarter would have been the time to unleash the hounds. As someone once said, it's easy to win, but it's hard to lose.

Despite a few kerfuffles — 13 penalties for the Gulls, costing them 125 yards — the score piles up on Seaside's behalf. Thompson scores with a 35-yard run and Westerholm surpasses even that with a 38-yard sprint.

The clock ticks down, and upstairs, when 0:00 hits, snacks are scooped up, chairs folded (or not) and the press box clears out, stories to be filed — just like at CenturyLink Field.

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.



The Broadway Field press box, when not in use for a game.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thanks for support of Astoria Column

In the midst of political chaos and a busy election season, I wanted to take a moment and express my sincere gratitude to this community and the patrons of the Astoria Column.

As we wrap up another summer of high traffic volume and peak tourism, I felt the need to say thank you to the local patrons who live alongside the chaos that our beautiful destination town tends to experience in the summer months. Our local patrons who visit us year round, and assist in coordinating events at the column and bringing tourists here, are our unsung heroes.

I would like to especially thank the city of Astoria Parks and Recreation Department for their support. We hope that the Column remains the beautiful and well-kept historical landmark that it is today, and continues to represent all that Astoria is; history, beauty and a

safe place to harbor. The Column represents our community as a whole, and we should all be proud. So again, thank you, and we hope to see you here soon.

FRED PYNES
Astoria Column park host

Vote Brown for governor

I'm voting for Kate Brown for governor because she understands that we all do better when we invest in clean energy jobs. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report presented to the United Nations makes clear that we must face changes to our climate now, and find the opportunity within it to change how we create and use our energy sources. New technologies and innovation mean new, good jobs for Oregonians.

Meanwhile, her opponent does not support the proposed Clean Energy Jobs Bill, and he has received more than \$850,000 from corpo-

rations and special interest lobbyists working to undermine environmental protections. He doesn't get it. We need Kate Brown and her leadership to help Oregonians thrive in these challenging times.

I support Kate Brown because she supports Clean Energy Jobs. Join me in voting for Kate Brown for governor.

BEBE MICHEL
Gearhart

Vote 'no' on recreation district bond

Vote “no” on the Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District bond measure 4-196. Property taxes were recently raised 15 percent for the \$100 million-plus school bond measure. This bond measure would nearly double (75 percent increase) your property tax levy for the recreation district. Renters would also

feel the effect.

Properties in the Sunset Empire district are already heavily burdened with a tax levy that Gearhart and Cannon Beach are unencumbered by. The bond would make our district tax levy the fourth-highest in the entire state of Oregon. It would take \$58 million in tax dollars out of our community over the next 20 years.

The project has not been vetted by the city of Seaside, or the Seaside School District, with regard to additional land required for parking requirements.

We cannot afford another drain on our tax dollars for a \$20 million gym. The recreation district is the 15th largest park and recreation district in the state of Oregon, but is funded as the seventh-largest. The district is already grossly overfunded for a community of our size.

PATRICK DUHACHEK
Warrenton