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Warrenton tops Amity in battle of the Warriors

First state tournament in nine years

By **GARY HENLEY**
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Goal No. 1 was to make the state playoffs. Goal No. 2 was a state tournament appearance, the school's first since 2010.

Now that the Warrenton girls basketball team has accomplished the first two, it's on to Goal No. 3: To win a state championship. After all, there's no reason it can't be the Warriors.

Following a 60-52 win Saturday night over the Amity Warriors, the Warrenton Warriors have wins over the No. 2, 8 and 9 teams in the state. Now they're in the final eight themselves — and looking like Final Four material.

(Bonus points — it's also the first 20-win season since 2009-10 for Warrenton, now 20-7).

"We've worked hard every single practice for this moment," said Warrenton senior Fernanda Alvarez, who scored a game-high 28 points in Saturday's win. "I was excited to play this game. I was really focused on getting this (win). I didn't want the season to be over."

Warrenton will open the state tournament Thursday at Marshfield High School, tipoff 8:15 p.m. against Salem Academy, one of the ranked teams the Warriors knocked off (even without Alvarez) during the regular season. The winner of Thursday's game will meet Blanchet Catholic or Vale in the Final Four.

"We haven't had a state playoff win since I've been here, in any sport," said Warrenton coach Robert Hoepfl, in his fourth year. "It's so great for the kids. We had great minutes from everybody, and we get to keep playing."

"We get another shot at SA (Salem Academy), then who knows what could happen," said Hoepfl (pronounced "hopeful"). "Three wins, and that's the goal. All those teams area really good, and we'll have to play really well to beat them. At least we get a chance."

A win would be Warrenton's first in a state tournament game since beating Valley Catholic in 2009 at Willamette University.

Meanwhile, Amity's only lead Saturday was 3-2. A short jumper by Claire Bussert gave Warrenton a 4-3 lead, and the home team never trailed again.

Warrenton (and specifically Alvarez) dominated the first half, gathering in offensive rebounds and forcing turnovers at will. Or, has Hoepfl calls it, "frantic trapping. That's just how we play."

Baskets by Alvarez and Avyree Miethe to close the second quarter gave Warrenton a commanding 26-15 lead.

While Alvarez and her teammates were scoring inside, both teams were struggling from the 3-point line, finishing a combined 2-for-21 in the first half.

Warrenton was an eventual 1-for-16 from the arc, before Kenzie Ramsey found her range and made three long-range 3-point bombs for Warrenton's biggest lead at 41-27.

Still, Amity won the 3-point shooting contest, making seven triples in the second half, four by senior Keeley Graham that helped Amity close to within 56-52 with 20 seconds left.

"They're super well-coached," Hoepfl said. "Reg (McShane) does an incredible



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian
Fernanda Alvarez reaches high for a rebound for the Warriors.



Kenzie Ramsey battles for a loose ball for Warrenton.

job with their kids. This is the third time we've played them in the last two years, and they beat us the other two. You have to give their kids credit. They hit a bunch of shots down the stretch."

But Amity was called for an intentional foul in the final seconds, and Alvarez made four straight free throws to close the game.

Ramsey added 14 points (11 in the second half) for Warrenton.

It was a balanced scoring effort from Alvarez, who had six points in the first quarter, seven in the second, six in the third and nine in the fourth.

"I thought Fernanda played her best game ever," Hoepfl said. "She was dom-

inant, really incredible on both ends, stayed out of foul trouble and made huge shots down the stretch.

"Claire and Kenzie have kind of carried us all year, and they were both great tonight. Kenzie made some huge threes when we needed them."

He added, "It's about this group of seniors. We have five kids who, when they came into the program, we were 2-22. It's been a steady climb ever since, with their eyes on this. To be able to reach the goal that we set at the beginning of the year, it's incredible."

Said Alvarez, "We just want to get better from here. We gotta keep going so we can win."

Sweet 16 for Seaside, after win over Molalla

The Daily Astorian

Seaside's 2-6 league record may not look like it belongs in the Sweet 16, but that's where the Gulls are headed, following a Class 4A girls basketball play-in game Friday night at Molalla.

The Gulls clinched their spot in the final 16 with a 41-31 win over Molalla, improving Seaside's overall record to 14-13 and sending the Gulls on to the first round of the state playoffs.

Lilli Taylor scored 19 points for Seaside, which is one win away from returning to the state tournament for the first time in three years, when they took third in 2016-17.

The Gulls will open the state playoffs Saturday at Baker. The Bulldogs finished second in the final OSAA rankings — but they haven't faced a team from the tough Cowapa League, which has four teams among the final 16.

"Well, we were able to sneak our way into the state tournament, and Marla (Olstedt, assistant coach) and I couldn't be more proud to accompany this group," said Seaside coach Mike Hawes, whose team won a first-round playoff game at Molalla in the 2016-17 season, 38-31.

If they win Saturday, the Gulls would face either Junction City or Stayton in a first-round game of the state tournament, March 7 at 8:15 p.m. at Forest Grove High School (the Seaside boys will likely play at 8:15 p.m. the same night, at Pacific University).

Molalla scored the first three points of the game, but Seaside's Emy Kiser scored the next seven off a steal, an offensive rebound and a 3-pointer. And the Gulls never looked back.

Back-to-back scores from Morgan Blodgett and Lilli Taylor gave Seaside a 15-7 lead. Ruby Douglas hit a 3-pointer to counter a trey by the Indians, and Blodgett knocked down a triple as time expired in the second quarter to give the Gulls a commanding 23-12 halftime lead.

Seaside had to weather a brief third-quarter rally by the Indians, who closed to within 26-22, but the Gulls went to their go-to play — Taylor at the free throw line.

The freshman finished 11-for-12 at the line, including 7-for-8 in the fourth quarter alone. With limited defensive pressure from the Indians, the Gulls closed it out with easy scores by Taylor and Douglas in the final 1:20 to pull away.

Taylor had five rebounds and five assists in addition to her 19 points. Douglas added nine points, Blodgett had eight points and nine boards. Kiser finished with seven points, as only four Seaside players scored.

"The second half (the Indians) made a run and switched to man, and eventually we just turned it over to our freshman," Hawes said. "We ask an awful lot from this youngster, but sometimes she just has to be the best player on the floor, and tonight she certainly was."

SCOREBOARD

GIRLS BASKETBALL	
Seaside 41, Molalla 31	
SEA (41): Lilli Taylor 19, Blodgett 8, Kiser 7, Douglas 7.	
MOL (31): Madeline Lisac 10, Myers 7, Nogle 3, Nelzen 2, Nacoste 2, Wood 2, Curry 2, Burge 2, Greer 1.	
Seaside 11 12 5 13—41	
Molalla 5 7 10 9—31	
WARRENTON 60, AMITY 52	
AMT (52): Keeley Graham 19, Lopez 14, Plummer 13, Hatch 4, Stables 2.	
WAR (60): Fernanda Alvarez 28, Ramsey 14, Bussert 6, Miethe 6, Dejesus 2, M. Henry 2, Phillip 2, Kapua.	
Amity 7 8 16 21—52	
Warrenton 10 16 15 19—60	
BOYS BASKETBALL	
Knappa 70, Coquille 46	
COQ (46): Ean Smith 15, Davis 14, Haagen 8, Kistner 3, McKinley 3, Sperling 2, Baxter 1.	
KNA (70): Eli Takalo 24, Engblom 18, Ramvick 13, Wallace 5, Vanderburg 3, Coffey 2, Phillip 2, Westerholm 2, Goodman, Hoover, Lackey.	
Coquille 9 13 7 17—46	
Knappa 25 4 22 19—70	

Knappa boys knock off Coquille in state playoff game

The Daily Astorian

Coquille was faced with what has become a near-impossible task Friday night — playing a first-round boys basketball state playoff game at Knappa.

The Loggers have become unbeatable in first-round games at home, as they showed again with a 70-46 win over the Red Devils.

Knappa has won six straight first-round state playoff games on its home floor — all by lopsided

scores — Union (70-45), Yoncalla (86-47), Monroe (95-34), Heppner (84-67) and Reedsport (81-35).

And now it's on to the Loggers' home away from home, Pendleton, where Knappa will play Thursday against Oakland (3:15 p.m.), with the winner to face either Kennedy or Columbia Christian in the Final Four.

Outside of a good second quarter, the Red Devils were never in the ball game after the first eight minutes. Knappa outscored Coquille

47-16 in the first and third quarters.

Leading 25-9 after one quarter, the Loggers "jumped on them early, but Coquille battled back and cut the lead to seven at the half," said Knappa coach Paul Isom. "Our pressure and pace seemed to get to them some in the third and we were able to pull away."

"Credit to Coquille," he said. "Those kids battled and if not for some timely shooting by Joe Ramvick, we would have been in a fight. Joe And Ty (Vanderburg) played

really well. They made plays all over the court defensively and Joe ended up going 3-for-3 from the 3-point line) which was huge. Tristin (Wallace) also was aggressive and had some big steals in the third quarter.

"Timber (Engblom) and Eli (Takalo) led the way," he added, with Takalo scoring 24 and Engblom adding 18. "Seemed like every time Coquille wanted to make a run, one of those guys would make a play."