Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

A player spikes the ball over the net.

SET TO WIN

By GARY HENLEY
The Astorian

The 2019-20 school year has all the makings of a big year for girls' sports at Astoria High School.

A basketball team that's ready to challenge for a 4A state title and a softball team prepared to take over the Cowapa League standings will join the already strong cross-country and track programs.

Volleyball is also ready to make its move, as Jessie Todd begins her third season as the Astoria coach.

And year No. 3 all centers around three athletes who will be major contributors in basketball and softball as well — seniors Julia Norris and Hailey O'Brien, and junior Halle Helmersen.

Norris is a setter/hitter, O'Brien wears the libero uniform, and Helmersen is an outside hitter/middle blocker. All three were all-league last season.

In addition to the big three, the Lady Fishermen have a number of returning players for the volleyball season.

Middle blocker Kajsa Jackson is back for her senior season, while a large junior class includes Kelsey Fausett and Landri Mickle (both outside hitters/middle blockers), along with defensive specialist Skylar Sturtz and setter Taja-Rae Tuimato.

Setter/right-side hitter Mollie Matthews is the lone sophomore on the roster.

"Our goal is always to improve each day and compete every night," Todd said.

League-wise, the challenges are still there, to be sure.

League and defending state champion Valley Catholic is still fully stocked, returning five of seven all-league players.

Tillamook took a big step forward by finishing second in league and was ranked sixth in state last season, while Banks hopes to bounce back from a so-so season (12-12 overall, 4-4 in league), returning four of five all-league starters.

"I am expecting the league will be very even again this year," Todd said. "Every night will be a battle. We are all so evenly matched, it's going to take a lot of grit to pull off wins.

"Valley is coming off of a state title and only lost one senior," she said of the Valiants. "They will be really tough. Banks, Seaside and Tillamook had more seniors leave but are well coached, so I'm expecting them to bounce back from their losses and be very competitive."

ASTORIA VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Jessie Todd, 4th year

2018: 9-12 (2-6 Cowapa)

Playoffs: Lost play-in match at Marist, 0-3

All-league losses: None

All-league returners: Halle Helmersen, Jr., Julia Norris, Sr., Hailey O'Brien, Sr.

SCHEDULE

Aug. 30 at Catlin Gabel Noon

Sept. 5 Estacada 6 p.m.

Sept. 7 Cascade Tournament, TBA

Sept. 12 Rainier 6 p.m.

Sept. 14 at Dallas Tournament, TBA

Sept. 19 at North Marion 6 p.m.

Sept. 24 Seaside 6:30 p.m.

Sept. 26 at Banks 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 1 Tillamook 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 3 at Valley Catholic 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 10 at Seaside 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 12 at Seaside Tournament, TBA

Oct. 15 Banks 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 17 at Tillamook 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 19 at Marshfield Tournament, TBA

Oct. 22 Valley Catholic 6:30 p.m.

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