

'DEFENDING LEAGUE CHAMPS' LABEL FITS JUST FINE



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Players line up on the court and practice setting to one another.

By **GARY HENLEY**
The Astorian

For the first time in exactly 40 years, the Warrenton volleyball team heads into a season carrying the title, "defending league champions."

Warrenton's first place finish in the Coastal Range League last season was the first league title for the school since 1978.

The Warriors were swept in a first-round state playoff match at Santiam Christian, bringing their season to a quick end.

But a league title's a league title. And the Lady Warriors have plenty of size, experience and athleticism to repeat the feat.

At least Warrenton coach Staci Miethe is thinking along those lines.

"My goal for the team is to have them ready to compete for the league title," said Miethe, in her third year. "We have the ability to be league champions again and return to the state playoffs. I will be focusing on team chemistry and defense."

And replacing some key personnel lost to graduation. That goes without saying, as the

Warriors lost league Player of the Year Claire Bussert, along with Fernanda Alvarez, the league's top middle blocker.

On the plus side, Warrenton returns senior libero Melia Kapua and sophomore outside hitter Avyree Miethe. Both were all-league selections in 2018. (Avyree Miethe could miss a few matches at the start of the season, due to a ruptured appendix late this summer.)

"We are returning five players from last year who all played a huge part in our success," coach Miethe said. "We have senior Natalie Oseguera, a hitter who combined with sophomore Leah Schiewe to be our most effective defensive net tandem."

"We are also returning Melia Kapua, who was an all-league selection last year and anchors our defense," said the coach. "Lastly, our offense will be anchored by (junior outside hitter) Mia McFadden and Avyree Miethe."

And there will be a few new names in the Warrenton lineup.

"We are planning on filling the voids left by Claire Bussert and Fernanda Alvarez with the talents of Annie Heyen, junior in the mid-

dle position, and Grace Fritz, sophomore setter. Additionally, there is a good group of sophomores and incoming freshmen who will be looked at to potentially contribute to the varsity program."

There was a pretty clear dividing line in Coastal Range League volleyball last year, the first for the new five-team league.

Warrenton was the only team with an overall winning record (14-6), while the Warriors, Rainier and Willamina all finished 6-2 in league.

The remaining teams, Clatskanie and Taft, were both 1-7 in league, and a combined 3-29 overall.

"The league looks to be comparable to last season," Miethe said. "I believe we have the ability to challenge for the league championship again, but it won't be a given."

"Rainier is returning a majority of their players from last year," she said. "Willamina graduated several key players (four of their six all-league players), but their program is always solid, so they both will be challenges."

The Warriors picked up 13 votes in a pre-season coaches poll.



WARRENTON VOLLEYBALL

Coach: Staci Miethe, 3rd year

2018: 14-6 (6-2 Coastal Range League)

Playoffs: Defeated Taft, Willamina and Rainier in league playoffs, lost state playoff at Santiam Christian, 0-3

All-league losses: Claire Bussert (MVP), Fernanda Alvarez

All-league returners: Melia Kapua, Sr., Avyree Miethe, So.

SCHEDULE

Aug. 29 Knappa 6 p.m.

Aug. 31 Warrenton Tournament, TBA

Sept. 3 Yamhill-Carlton 6 p.m.

Sept. 5 Portland Christian 6 p.m.

Sept. 10 Rainier 3:30 p.m.

Sept. 10 Seaside 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 12 at Amity 6:30 p.m.

Sept. 14 at Toledo Noon

Sept. 14 Creswell, at Toledo 2 p.m.

Sept. 19 at Taft 6 p.m.

Sept. 24 at Clatskanie 6 p.m.

Sept. 26 Willamina 6 p.m.

Oct. 1 at Rainier 6 p.m.

Oct. 3 at Banks 6:30 p.m.

Oct. 8 Taft 6 p.m.

Oct. 10 Clatskanie 6 p.m.

Oct. 15 at Willamina 6 p.m.

Oct. 17 Rainier 6 p.m.