

Canceled: Spring sports season was to be a special one

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It was hoped that the spring season would represent a second chance to end the sports year on a positive note.

But Wednesday's announcement dashed those hopes.

"This is definitely not the way I pictured ending my high school sports career," said Warrenton senior baseball player Jake Morrow, who will at least get to continue to play at Linn-Benton Community College.

Most athletes learned of the decision through phone calls or text messages.

"It's devastating to all the seniors who have to hang up their cleats as they find out through Facebook or a text," Morrow said. "It's sad to think that I'll never get to finish off our season at our home field. This is something you will look back 40 years from now and still get emotional from it."

Teammate Devin Jackson felt the same way.

"This is a very sad way to end it," he said. "Especially thinking this is really a one-in-a-lifetime experience and having to be the class to deal with it. It is not how I was hoping to end my high school career, let's just say that."

For the Astoria girls, it was another blow to an otherwise successful year in several sports. The volleyball team finished the season as the fifth-ranked team in the state; basketball was ranked fourth and had a record of 22-3; and softball had high hopes of a league championship.

Senior Julia Norris played all three sports, and was all set for her fourth and final year of softball, as Astoria's No. 1 pitcher.

"For me it was sad to hear my sports season was coming to an end," she said. "I never would've thought this would happen our senior year."

In softball, "I believe we would've gotten league champs and had a good run at the state tournament."

Warrenton's Kenzie Ramsey, another senior three-sport athlete (football, basketball, softball), was pretty straightforward about her feelings.

"It's a super-crappy way to end it," she said. "I'm really bummed out. This season was growing on me, and I have a center field to protect."

Indeed, the Warrenton baseball team also had big plans.

"This spring was going to be something special," Morrow said. "We've all been waiting for it since our freshman year, and coming off solid football and basketball seasons we were all excited to get back out on the field. We knew what we needed to work on to be one game better than last year, and we were all determined to finish our senior season the right way."

Senior Madelynn Weaver was the starting



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

LEFT TO RIGHT: Warrenton High School senior Mark Warren was the state champion for shot put last year. Senior Kenzie Ramsey was a three-sport athlete at Warrenton High School. Senior Julia Norris was Astoria's No. 1 pitcher.

pitcher for the Knappa softball team, which had high hopes, as well.

"This was a very weird year for sure," she said. "Lots of sudden changes to my daily schedule and now life."

"I felt that this year had a good look to it. We had something going for us, and we were getting more people interested in this season. As a pitching staff, we went from having one to two pitchers my freshman year, to having five this year. Our program is building, and in the next few years the girls are going to soar."

Return to title game

Meanwhile, Knappa baseball was seeking a return to the state title game after losing in the semifinals last season. The Loggers played in four straight championship games from 2015 to 2018, winning three.

In his first two years of high school baseball, Logger senior Eli Takalo finished both his freshman and sophomore seasons as the winning pitcher in the championship game.

"After coming up short last year, me and the boys were looking forward to getting another crack at it," Takalo said. "I am grateful that my baseball career won't end here though," as he has already signed on to play next season at Mount Hood Community College.

Individually, Warrenton track senior Mark Warren — state champion in the shot put last year — was hoping for an even bigger 2020 season.

"It was a sad way to end it, having no choice but to give up everything I've worked so hard for, for many years. I've been training since football season ended. My throws

are looking great," said Warren, who got in two weeks of practice before the OSAA shut down the season.

Judging by his preseason marks, Warren was hoping to set new school records in both the shot put and discus. Now, he'd settle for just one more track meet.

"If I only had one meet ... something I took for granted and will never see again in my high school career."

There are some teams that have a silver lining, or some good news to point to — teams that have very few or no seniors at all.

Seaside boys golf was going to be strong this season, and the Gulls (second at state last year) will be strong next year, seeking their first state title since winning back-to-back championships in 2014 and 2015.

Seaside girls golf had just two seniors, and co-coach Mike Verhulst said, "We really had some big goals this year. Our entire varsity squad was back from last year. After competing at the state championship last year, we had some big goals to head back to state."

Verhulst and co-coach Ed Arden are both "really bummed by the season issues with COVID, and taking that opportunity away from the girls, and especially the seniors," he said. "We were really excited to see the size of the program grow, and the number of freshmen that came out this year. We will be in great shape for next year."

While there are teams like Astoria baseball (10 seniors on their preseason roster) that will have to rebuild in 2021, there are others like the Seaside softball program, with no seniors at all.

Still, Gulls' softball coach Jessica Garri-

gues holds a soft spot for other teams that do have seniors.

"I cannot imagine how seniors are feeling right now, with the remainder of their school year and seasons being put on hold," she said.

Last week, in previewing her team before the season was canceled, Garrigues said, "With our season on hold, I have encouraged the girls to stay connected with each other, stay active, and read 'Mind Gym,' a book I gave them about the mental side of the game," she said.

"Now that we are all settling into our routines at home and learning that we may not get to play at all this season, we'll be connecting again soon on a team level to stay united and remember what we can control during this time."

"I look forward to seeing my girls again soon, and getting out on the ball field whenever we can."

With the spring season over, many athletes can turn their attention to summer sports, competing for club teams, playing junior baseball or softball.

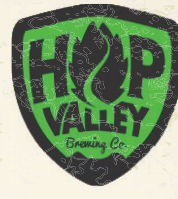
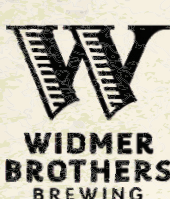
Then again, those teams will need fields. And school facilities are still off-limits.

"We're all hoping that the OSAA or the state doesn't place a moratorium on summer activities," Wolfe said. "The OSAA is supposed to meet again later this month, and that will be one of the subjects. And the OSAA has within its power to place moratoriums on summer ball as well."

"From the optimistic point of view, I'm hoping that we'll be allowed to do things in June and July, and most coaches are of the same thinking. We just want to play ball."

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