

Merchants win a national title

By GARY HENLEY
The Astorian

Youth softball on the lower Columbia has a national title this summer, as one local team scored a championship over the weekend in Newberg in the North American Fast-pitch Association nationals tournament.

The North Coast Merchants' 14U team, the top-seeded team after pool play, won eight games in four days to win the association's nationals title at the Darnell Wright Sports Complex.

"Our girls played their best softball in the two years we have coached this group," said North Coast coach Ian O'Brien. "On Saturday in our third game of the day, we lost a tight one to the team we ended up beating in the championship."

Meanwhile, the Astoria Future Fish 10U team placed second in their nationals title game against Beaverton, but still went 3-2 over four days to reach the championship game.

North Coast capped the competition with a 12-5 victory over the Glide Wildcats Sunday night.

The Merchants and the 'Cats met four times in three days, with North Coast winning three and losing one.

Following a Saturday night loss to the Wildcats in a championship semifinal, the Merchants had to come back through the losers bracket, and beat Glide twice on Sunday to win the state title.

The team of players from the North Coast region began their big week with a 5-2 win over the Wildcats Thursday afternoon.

Glide had six hits to the Merchants' four, but three runs by North Coast in the first inning held up for the win. Lily Simpson had two of the four hits for the Merchants, while pitcher Maddie Wilkin earned the victory, striking out six with three walks.



North Coast Merchants

The North Coast Merchants' championship team. Bottom row, from left: Savannah Bigelow, Maddie Wilkin, Jazmyn Short, Lena Wakefield, Taylor Pass, Gabbie Martinez. Top row, from left: Ian O'Brien, Lily Simpson, London O'Brien, Kendall Jackson, Mike Pass, Jamie Annat, Mark Simpson, Taeja Tuimato, Emma Smith, Jasmine Horton, Frank Tuimato.

North Coast followed with an easy 10-0 win over the Lake Oswego Renegades, as Wilkin tossed a no-hitter with only one walk to end pool play.

The Merchants had nine hits in four at-bats with Jamie Annat going 2-for-2 with three RBIs while Wilkin had a double and London O'Brien and Taeja Tuimato both had triples.

North Coast had just one game Friday, a 10-0 win over the St. Helens Black Ops.

Wilkin threw a three-hitter over four innings, with seven strikeouts and no walks. Simpson drove in five runs with a double and a home run, and O'Brien added a triple.

The blowout victories continued Saturday as the Merchants opened with an 8-1 win over the Gresham Affliction. Wilkin allowed just one hit with 10 strikeouts and five walks, and North Coast scored a 13-2 victory against Dayton MVP, as the Merchants pounded out 13 hits over five innings. Eight players had hits, which included a triple by Gabbie Martinez and a double for O'Brien. Wilkin gave up seven hits, but drove in four runs to help her cause.

The only loss of the tour-

namment for North Coast came Saturday night, when the Wildcats scored a 4-1 win in an error-plagued (seven combined) game.

Two Glide pitchers gave up just two hits and struck out nine while Wilkin allowed four hits with four strikeouts.

North Coast bounced back with another blowout victory Sunday morning, 14-0 over Dayton MVP, as Wilkin, Taylor Pass and Jasmine Horton combined on a one-hit shut-out with four strikeouts and no walks in a game that lasted just three innings. Tuimato was 3-for-3 and scored three runs.

Dayton pitchers gave up eight hits and walked seven.

In their third game of the week against the Wildcats, the Merchants gained some revenge for Saturday's loss with a 4-3 win.

After falling behind 2-1, the Merchants took the lead with two runs in the third, and tacked on one more in the fifth, when North Coast loaded the bases without a hit, and scored on a bases loaded walk.

Following a short break, the same two teams played for the fourth time in four days, this time for the championship.

Leading 3-1 after four innings, the Wildcats woke up in the bottom of the fifth, scoring twice to tie the game.

But North Coast answered big, exploding for six runs in the top of the sixth.

Lena Wakefield scored the first run on a wild pitch, and Tuimato followed with a line drive single to center, scoring Pass.

Two more runs crossed the plate on a fielder's choice grounder by Simpson, and O'Brien slammed the door shut with a two-run, inside-the-park home run for a 9-3 lead.

The Merchants tacked on two runs in the seventh on more run-scoring hits by Tuimato and O'Brien.

O'Brien finished 4-for-5 at the plate and drove in three runs, and Tuimato had five RBIs, going 3-for-5 with three runs scored, including an inside-the-park homer in the third inning.

Pass had a triple and also scored three runs.

Wilkin carried the Merchants in the circle all season, and was the winning pitcher in the title game. She allowed 10 hits, with 11 strikeouts and two walks, throwing 113 pitches.

Local baseball season comes to a close

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Warrenton's Talon McGrorty, who will be an eighth grader this year, had a double against Astoria Ford in Monday's final game of the season at Ernie Aiken Field.

Astoria Ford won the battle, while Warrenton closed the night with two victories, as the last Junior Baseball games of the year in Clatsop County were played Monday night at Ernie Aiken Field. Warrenton was scheduled to play two games against Ilwaco in Long Beach, Washington, on Wednesday.

After the spring sports season was canceled, the Junior State season lasted just a month this year, with teams from Astoria, Ilwaco, Knappa, Neah-Kah-Nie, Tillamook and Warrenton playing each other in games at Aiken Field in Astoria and Tinker Field in Long Beach.

In Monday's triple header finale, Astoria Ford defeated Ilwaco 7-4, and Warrenton followed with wins over Knappa (15-3) and Astoria (6-5).

The Warriors had doubles by Josh Earls, T.J. Hicks and Talon McGrorty in the victory over Knappa (Drew Miller was 2-for-2 and had a double for the Loggers), while Warrenton rallied from a 5-1 deficit after four innings to defeat Astoria Ford.

Astoria's first two batters in the bottom of the seventh reached base, but Warrenton pitcher Duane Falls came on in relief and struck out two batters to end the game. Gunnar Olson pitched well for the Fishermen.

Warrenton coach Lennie Wolfe and other area coaches were just happy to have any games at all.

"We were able to play, mainly through the efforts of two people," Wolfe said. "Dane Gouge of Astoria Ford covered all the costs, including the umpires. He basically saved North Coast baseball for the year.

"And (Astoria Ford

coach) Tyler Lyngstad took on ownership of the facilities," he said, "taking on caretaker and administrative duties. Here's a 22-year-old kid who was able to coach a team and put things together so we could have a 14-game schedule. I hope Astoria realizes just how fortunate they are to have Tyler.

"And (Ilwaco coach)

Bret Hopkins also put in a lot of time and effort so that we could play games in Long Beach. With everything going on, the six teams and the North Coast community bonded together so we could have a season."

Astoria Ford 7, Ilwaco 4

In the first game of the day, the Astoria Ford Fishermen defeated the Ilwaco Fishermen 7-4.

Ilwaco led 1-0 after a half inning, before Astoria Ford rallied with at least one run in every inning but the second.

Ilwaco scored twice in the top of the fifth to cut Astoria's lead to 5-4, but Astoria tacked on two runs in the bottom of the sixth to pull away.

Nate Hopkins and Cannon Johnson had two hits apiece for Ilwaco. Evan Agee, Hopkins and Johnson each had a double.

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CLATSOP CASA NEEDS VOLUNTEERS NOW – MORE THAN EVER

In this time of social distancing, we must all work to remain socially close to children. Child abuse and neglect is likely on the rise in the face of this pandemic, as families are put under more financial and emotional stress, but reporting may be down. Children are no longer in the public eye. One group of people who speak up for children is the Clatsop CASA Program volunteers. They work with children in the child welfare system who have experienced abuse or neglect. They meet with children in person at least monthly, advocate for children's best interests and provide information to judges that helps them make the most well-informed decisions for each child.

These in-person visits provide an opportunity for CASA volunteers to ensure the child is safe and well-cared for. But right now, meeting in person with the children they advocate for is difficult or impossible. This means it is harder for them to gauge what is going on in children's lives, and their needs. Staff and volunteers at Clatsop CASA are finding creative ways to continue to meet with children. CASA volunteers are using social distancing and masking up to go on walks, video chats by Zoom and Skype, and calling the child's home frequently. This kind of creativity is what will make a real difference

in children's lives right now. It is the kind of creativity that people in all sectors of society are demonstrating.

Clatsop CASA is also working with community partners to strengthen families, enhance service system delivery, and build childhood resiliency.

If you are willing to get involved in a life-changing and sometimes life-saving cause—the safety, health and well-being of a child—join us in speaking up for a child at this time of community crisis. When the world re-opens, the need will be greater than ever.

Those who want to change a child's life as a CASA volunteer can use this time to learn more about the children we serve and to take advantage of our upcoming virtual CASA 101 Orientation. This orientation will be offered at both 12 pm and 6 pm on Wednesday, August 26th. This training orientation requires no commitment and is open to the public. To get the link, visit our website at www.clatsopcasa.org or email us at casa@clatsopcasa.org.

It is up to all of us to make sure the children in Clatsop County are safe, that OUR children are safe.

- Nakesha Womble, Executive Director