

## SPORTS



Corey Conant

At the district meet last week, team champion Warrenton qualified nine wrestlers for the unofficial state tournament. The Warriors have since added a 10th wrestler to the list.

## District champ Warriors hope for state title

By GARY HENLEY  
The Astorian

The Warrenton Warriors are the new kings of District 2 wrestling. And with the youth on this year's roster, Warrenton's district title last week could be the first of many.

Warrenton district championships were common in the 1970s, when the Warriors won five straight from 1973 to 1977 (under three different coaches). Dennis Warren took the Warriors to additional district titles in 1988 and 1990.

That marked the end of Warrenton's district championships, until the 2021 Warriors won last Saturday's District 2 title at Clatskanie, topping a field of eight teams.

The Warriors finished with 230.5 points, ahead of second-place Rainier (214), with Yamhill-Carlton (177) a distant third. Defending champion Dayton finished back in the pack with 115 points.

"We knew that we had a shot because we were as deep as any team in our league, but our league is very deep," said Warrenton coach Corey Conant. "Rainier, Willamina, Yamhill-Carl-

ton, Dayton and Taft all have competitive programs, and Amity and Clatskanie have some very high-talent individuals on their teams."

Meanwhile, Warrenton's highest finish at state is second place, accomplished in 1976, '77 and '89. If all goes right, the Warriors will break through with a state championship later this week, when 3A schools meet for the season-ending tournament Saturday in Redmond.

As the champion from the state's toughest district — why not Warrenton? Last year's District 2 champion, Dayton, finished second at state in 2020.

Warrenton had just five wrestlers in the 2020 state tournament, and the Warriors doubled that and will be well-armed with 10 athletes this year. (Only La Pine, with 12, will have more wrestlers).

The group is led by senior Sam Irwin, the huge favorite at 195 pounds. The defending state champion would be Warrenton's first two-time state champion in over 50 years of school records.

Irwin had to wrestle a little over a minute to win his district title. The bracket at 195 only had four wrestlers, with Irwin scoring victories

by fall in the semifinals over Yamhill-Carlton's Hunter McAvoy in 23 seconds, then pinned Yamhill's Hunter Stephenson in 56 seconds for the title.

Warrenton's other two-time champion was senior Nic Prior at 145. He pinned wrestlers from Clatskanie and Willamina in his first two matches, then defeated Dayton's Jimmy Larsen 8-5 in the finale.

At 170, sophomore James Mickelson pinned No. 1 seed Parker Cavan, of Willamina, (5:18) and won by fall over Rainier's Donovan Smith (1:51) to reach the finals, where he would have faced junior teammate Alex Tapia. The Warriors opted "to save that match for the state tournament," Conant said, as Tapia was given the victory by forfeit.

Tapia pinned Eli Jones, of Taft, in 23 seconds, then topped No. 2 seed Andrew Allen, of Willamina, 4-2, to reach the final.

Elsewhere, junior Jorge Lopez took third at 138, finishing 3-1 and beating higher-seeded wrestlers along the way.

Freshman David Niehuser was third at 152, where he pinned Yamhill's Eli Potter and Kyle Troutman, of

Dayton, before a loss in the semifinals.

Warrior junior Josh Niehuser (3-1) was third at 182, where senior Duane Falls (2-2) took fourth, and also earned an at-large spot at state. Niehuser defeated Falls 10-4 in the third-place match.

And at 220, junior Josh Smith was third, "and continues to show huge improvement and toughness in his second year," said Conant, who was voted district Coach of the Year, "which is a huge honor and testament to our staff and the work we have put in together. Trent Klebe, Steve Stratton, Lennie Wolfe and I all share the award."

Early this week, the tournament added the 10th and final Warrior, Austin Atwood, to the 126-pound bracket.

The Warriors "needed contributions from up and down the lineup, and we needed to earn bonus points from falls, which is exactly what the kids went out and did," he said. "It was satisfying to see their hard work pay off. Not every wrestler met their goal, but we set very high goals for ourselves and can live with the results of our best work."

## BOYS BASKETBALL

## Knappa pounds Heppner, 70-32

The Astorian

The Knappa boys basketball team sent the strongest statement Monday night to the rest of the 2A finalists — the Loggers are on a roll.

It wasn't even close, as Knappa jumped out to a 15-0 lead over Heppner, on its way to a 70-32 win, in a game played at Rockwood Commons in Portland. It was the most lopsided win of the first round.

The Loggers advanced to the final eight, where they were scheduled to play Wednesday at Salem Academy.

After losing the season opener to 4A power Seaside, Knappa has won 11 of its last 12, including the last seven straight.

Tanner Jackson and Shane McMahan scored 18 points apiece for the Loggers, but "the story was

our defense," said Knappa coach Paul Isom. "We were about to jump on them early, starting the game on a 15-0 run fueled by our defense and creating turnovers."

"Tanner particularly was just a monster tonight," he said. "He was flying around making plays all over the court. And everyone fed off that. Every guy who played came in with a ton of energy and we were able to pressure basically the whole game and make everything difficult for Heppner."

Still, Isom said, "Credit to Heppner. They came out in the third and made a run like we knew they would."

They are a well-coached team with a bunch of great athletes. But it seemed like every time they went on a four- or six-point run we would come down and hit a big shot or create a turnover and get an easy bucket. Just a great team win."

## Seaside qualifies five wrestlers for state

The Astorian

The Seaside wrestling team qualified five wrestlers for the 4A state tournament later this week.

Tillamook cruised to the District 1/4A title with 353 points last week, followed by Estacada (223), Banks (214), Woodburn (161.5), North Marion (135), Seaside (103.5), Molalla (45) and Astoria (21).

Leading the way for the Gulls will be junior Lawson Talamantez, the district champion at 220 pounds.

Talamantez wrestled just twice in the district tournament, pinning Woodburn's Axel Avendano in 3:27 in a semifinal, then pinning Tillamook's Jackson Contreras in 50 seconds in the title match.

Junior Everett Rollins placed third out of five wrestlers at 160 pounds, and the Gulls had three wrestlers take fourth, with sophomore Xander Knox (113), freshman Robert Howes (126) and senior J.J. Stanley (285) all qualifying for state.

## Former Astoria runner competes in US Olympic Track & Field Trials

The Astorian

Astoria had a connection in this year's U.S. Olympic Track & Field Trials, which continues this week at Hayward Field in Eugene.

Kaylee Mitchell, who recently completed her red-shirt sophomore year at Oregon State University, ran in Sunday's first heat of the women's 3,000-meter steeplechase.

Wearing her Oregon State uniform, Mitchell finished 32nd in 10 minutes, 26.69 seconds. Heat 1 was won by Emma Coburn, of New Balance, in 9:21.32.

Mitchell was off her personal best pace of 9:48.30, which she set May 14 at the Katherine B. Loker Stadium in Los Angeles.

"I'm incredibly proud of this journey that Kaylee has been on," said Louie Quintana, Mitchell's coach at Oregon State. "It's certainly not



Oregon State University

Former Astoria runner Kaylee Mitchell running a steeplechase event earlier this season for Oregon State University.

the result she was looking for, but just gaining the experience of competing at the Olympic trials is huge. She is a sophomore and she will be back and better at these big meets. There are big things ahead for the Beavers."

Mitchell's personal best was accomplished at the Pac-12 Championships, and set a new Oregon State school

record.

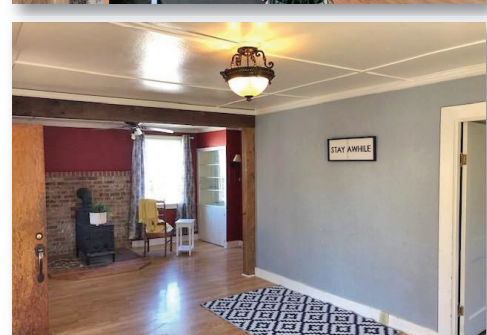
Mitchell attended Astoria High School in 2015 and 2016, before transferring to Sprague High School after her sophomore year.

Last spring, she finished seventh in the Pac-12 cross-country championships, leading the Beavers to a school-record fourth place team finish.



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