

Binghams good fit for Siuslaw running culture

By STAN PUSIESKI
Special to Siuslaw News

If it seems that Morgan Bingham has been doing some fancy footwork on the cross country course this season, let it be known she started her athletic career as a dancer.

Now she's part of a Siuslaw Vikings girls team that may be waltzing to a 4A state title today at Lane Community College in Eugene.

Think barn dancing, if you're not into a waltz.

"Coach (Chris) Johnson says the hay is in the barn, and we are ready," Bingham said of the top-ranked Viking girls. "There's nothing we can do at this point.

"We have a plan, and coach Johnson says if we stick to it, we should be fine."

Morgan and her brother, Murray, weren't part of the plan as Johnson entered his 20th season as head coach of the highly successful Vikings cross country team — but they have been game-changers from the get-go.

The siblings transferred to Siuslaw during the summer, then immediately got with the program.

Murray, a freshman, has been the boys' top performer all season, while Morgan has been a consistent high-scoring

No. 2 to fellow junior Celie Mans on the girls' team.

Tuesday, Morgan was named KCST's Athlete of the Week for her third-place showing at the recent Far West League championships at Tugman State Park.

The Viking girls easily won the team title and firmly established themselves as the team to beat at the state meet.

"Her athletic ability was apparent from day one," Johnson said. "That was probably just half of it. Her attitude, she just fit in from the first second she walked around on campus.

"Chemistry really matters in a sport like this. She's been a great asset to the team."

Morgan, who took up the sport as a freshman in Utah and ran track last spring at Hidden Valley in Grants Pass, is just as effusive about her coach.

"This is the best running program I've been involved in," Morgan said. "I think coach Johnson is a big part of that. He knows what he's doing. He helps us a lot, and he has a good workout plan."

It's Johnson's plan that impresses her most.

"I've had a history of being injured, and he's made sure that hasn't happened," Morgan said. "I really like coach Johnson's workout

plans for me. He knows and he helps us to learn our abilities, and he doesn't push it.

"He knows when we're ready, and he lets us know when we're ready."

The Vikings are ready to toe the line Saturday with the same seven girls who won the district title and the same seven boys who emerged as a state-qualifying second place.

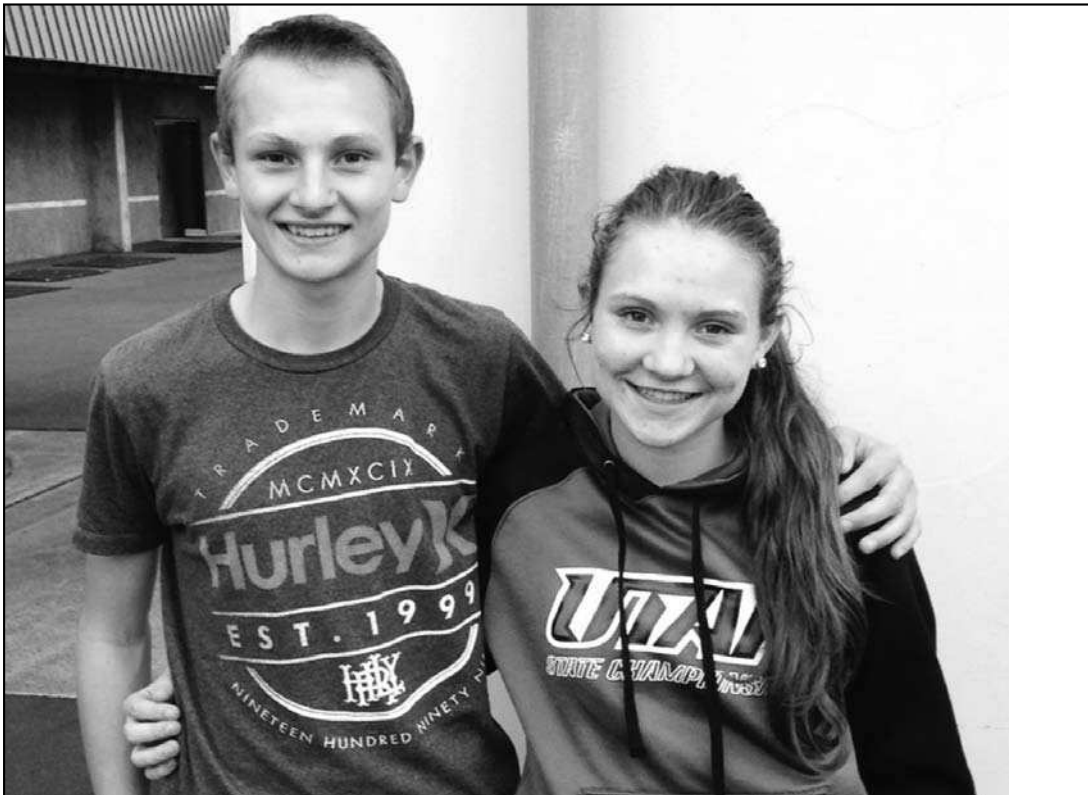
Had the boys not qualified for state, Murray still would have gone as one of the top five individual finishers at Tugman, running his first sub-17-minute 5,000-meter race (16:43) to place fourth.

Morgan ran a personal-best 19:30 as the Siuslaw girls totaled 33 points to win by a wide margin over state-qualifying South Umpqua, which had 50.

Joining Mans and Morgan on the girls team are seniors Sierra Potter and Mikaela Siegel, junior Destinie Tatum and freshmen Kaeli and Trinity Ramos.

Murray is joined on the boys team by sophomores Isaac Griffes and Kyle King, juniors Jack Pickell, Andrew Rannow and Sean Burns and senior Tyler Williams.

Griffes was seventh and Pickell 10th overall as the boys totaled 59 points — just two short of first-place Brookings-Harbor.



STAN PUSIESKI/FOR SIUSLAW NEWS

Siblings Murray and Morgan Bingham will both be competing at the 4A state cross country meet for Siuslaw today in Eugene.

North Bend was six points behind Siuslaw and Marshfield as the top four teams finished within 11 points of each other.

"I feel confident in this team, especially on the girls side," said Johnson, who received Far West League's Coach of the Year honors this season. "We have experience, we have front-runners, and we have some seniors who are

hungry to finish off the right way."

And no one exudes that confidence more than Morgan, who, like her brother, has bought into the Vikings cross-country program and culture.

"Trust me, running is more than just a sport," she said. "It's a way of life. My family supports the running program, full on.

"The team has been awesome. The coaches have been great. What motivates me is to keep doing better, and to see my teammates and coaches by me and through it."

Retired sportswriter Stan Pusieski writes exclusively for the Siuslaw News and his website, ExplodingWhaleSports.com.

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Rojas from 1B

been absolutely awesome," Dodson said. "His attitude and his positiveness is beyond me. I'm very proud of him."

Sean believes much of that has to do with conditioning and staying healthy.

"Thank goodness I've been injury-free," Sean said. "We've all upped ourselves, like in the weight room and our well-being. Injuries aren't coming as easily. I can definitely say my senior year is the best shape I've ever been in."

Sean and Victoria remain close, despite a drop or two.

"Growing up, we were like every brother and sister," Sean said. "We went through

that phase where we bickered a lot.

"Definitely now we've developed a bond. I've got her back, and she's got mine. She needs help, she asks me. I need help, I ask her."

Both siblings are considering a career in health care, Sean as either a paramedic or a nurse, Victoria as veterinarian.

"I've been the first-responder in two car accidents, one in Arizona and one here," Sean said. "In both accidents, a car was totaled and someone had to be carried out of their car.

"I noticed I have good on-the-spot reflexes, like instinct. I enjoy helping people, so I thought being a paramedic would be good."

Jr. Viks blank Siletz 28-0, play today



Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane County's fifth and sixth grade tackle football team beat Siletz last week.

Happy to be home after two big wins on the road, the Boys and Girls Club of Western Lane County fifth and sixth grade tackle football team hosted the Siletz Jr. Warriors Saturday, Oct. 24.

Looking to avenge last season's two losses, the Jr. Viks defense would prove too much for Siletz, holding them scoreless for the entire game and posting two key turnovers: a fumble

recovery and an interception.

The offense was also in high-gear as four different Viks found the end zone, including a devastating 97-yard touchdown run.

Come cheer on the Jr. Viks in their final home game today, Oct. 31, when they host Lincoln City at Hans Petersen Field in Florence.

Kickoff is scheduled for 11 a.m.

Viks from 1B

York, a middle blocker, went on to score 12 kills on the night and was one of several underclassmen to step up Tuesday night against the hard-hitting Lions.

Sophomore outside hitter Emma Collins was a force at the net, managing three blocks, eight assists and seven kills to lead the team in hitting percentage at .385.

Meanwhile, Rose hammered Cottage Grove for 17 kills and four blocks.

"We wanted to do well for the seniors and did our best," said York. "I think it was our best game of the season for sure."

In game two, the Lions powerful serving began to have an effect, with 10 points delivered on service aces en route to a 25-20 win that tied the match at 1-1.

In the third game, Siuslaw regrouped and got out to a quick 12-6 lead that prompted the

Lions to call a timeout.

Over the next few minutes, Cottage Grove was able to draw within one point, 16-17. A tip from York made it 18-16 for the Viks, who steadily pulled away and maintained a three-point or better lead for the remainder of the set.

An ace from junior Claire Waggoner, who would go on to finish the night with two aces and 16 points from the service line, put Siuslaw up 20-17.

Waggoner's second ace came a short time later, bringing the Vikings to set-point, 24-20. On the next rally, Jakobsen smacked a kill shot across the court for the win, 25-20.

Siuslaw took the lead once again in game four, getting ahead by as many as five points, only to have the Lions roar back to tie the set at 19-19 before moving ahead on a kill.

"We really tried to stay focused and keep fighting," said Dotson.

The teams traded points up to

a 24-24 tie, with Cottage Grove scoring on two consecutive kills to win it, 26-24, and tie the match at two games each, forcing a fifth set.

Both teams battled for an advantage, staying within one point of each other through an 8-8 tie.

Lions freshman Lauren Witte went on to deliver the next seven

points, including three aces, toward a 15-8 match win that ended the season for Siuslaw.

Bartlett, who had 25 assists for the Vikings in the final match of her Siuslaw career, said she felt that it was a good season.

"We kept getting better all season and became really close," said Bartlett. "We bonded and accomplished a lot."

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Correction

JESSE CHAPMAN/FOR SIUSLAW NEWS

On page B1 of the Wednesday, Oct. 28, Sports and Recreation section, the photo caption accompanying the story "Viks Advance to Play-In" was misidentified due to a formatting error. The caption should read: "Siuslaw leaves the field after a narrow, come-from-behind victory over Brookings-Harbor Friday night."

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