

Howell from 1B

to the state playoffs and a berth in the semifinals.

Howell was also the first Viking ever named to the East-West Shrine all-star game. He will be inducted into the Siuslaw Sports Hall of Fame on Friday.

"Dennis was probably the hardest hitter I ever coached and certainly one of the toughest," Erv Garrison, the Vikings' head coach from 1961-64, said in a 2016 phone interview from his home in Milwaukie, Ore. "If you were in a scrimmage with Dennis, you'd be wise to have your head on a swivel."

Howell's grit and tenacity could be traced to his troubled childhood. Raised in Sacramento and then Eugene, Howell endured years of abuse and neglect.

His mother took him from Sacramento to escape an abusive stepfather, but then abandoned him in Eugene when he was 15, Christy Howell said.

"She just deserted him, with no food, no note, nothing," she said. "A truant officer showed up at the home after Dennis hadn't been in school for two weeks."

Howell was made a ward of the court and sent to a juvenile home for several weeks before another stepfa-

ther, Neal Howell, picked him up and moved him to Florence in the spring of 1961.

Ill-tempered, emotionally unstable and not one to back down from a fight, the younger Howell didn't make many friends when he first moved to Florence. But he did become buddies with John Spikes, and it was Spikes who encouraged Howell to try out for football.

Howell attended a team meeting in May of 1961, but sat in a corner and looked disinterested, Garrison recalled.

"He was off to himself," Garrison said. "Our line coach, Dick Smith, noticed it and thought this kid was going to quit before we ever put a uniform on him."

Garrison called Howell into his office after the meeting and told him the coaching staff had big plans for him.

"You could tell he was a good athlete just by looking at him," Garrison said. "I said, 'Dennis, you don't even know how good you can be.' His eyes perked up and he smiled. All this kid needed was for someone to believe in him."

Until the day Howell graduated from Siuslaw, in May of 1964, and beyond, Garrison was his surrogate father. They shared a love

for logging, fishing and being in the outdoors.

Howell had such little knowledge of football when he moved to Florence, Garrison said, that the youngster didn't know the difference between offense and defense.

"He just said to put him out there where he can hit people," Garrison said, chuckling. "I told him I thought we could make that happen."

Despite his dearth of experience, Howell quickly became a starter during his sophomore season in the fall of 1961, Garrison's first as head coach. The Vikings won only one game, but seven sophomores were in the starting lineup on both sides of the ball.

The foundation was being laid for a winning program.

The following season, the Vikings went 6-2-1, and Howell was their best player. He almost needed a wheelbarrel to lug home all the awards and trophies he gathered at the team banquet: most valuable defensive player, most valuable offensive player and most inspirational player.

Howell was even better as a senior. He was the leading tackler from his middle linebacker position on defense, and showcased his speed when he returned an interception 77 yards for a touch-

down against Mapleton.

On offense, he served as a bruising fullback as the Vikings won their first-ever league championship and advanced to the state semifinals before losing 7-6 to North Catholic.

Howell surely would have been a bigger part of the offense but Siuslaw's backfield, led by first-team all-state halfback Tooley Emery and speedy Bob Vanderford, was loaded. Howell excelled when given the chance, as evidenced by a 63-yard touchdown run against Philomath and a 60-yard pass reception for a touchdown against Mapleton.

And he saved his best for the playoffs. In a stunning 41-14 win on the road over previously unbeaten and No. 3-ranked Brookings, Howell seemed to be in on nearly every tackle.

Afterward, the Brookings coach asked Garrison: "Who was that animal you used at linebacker, that number 46? He didn't even read our plays. He just tore us apart."

Howell was equally ornery in a 13-0 state quarterfinals win over Junction City the following week and was nearly as dominant in the semifinals when Siuslaw shut out North Catholic for more than three quarters.

The Oregon Journal newspaper took notice, naming Howell a first-team

all-state selection at linebacker. About a week later, he got the nod as a Shrine game participant for the West squad in Pendleton.

Nearly a decade later, Christy Howell visited the two young men in the hospital in Thorne Bay the day after the accident. Cliff Peeline, who at 27 was the same age as Dennis, began weeping as he saw her approaching.

"He thought I was going to blame him," Christy Howell said. "I told him, no, it was nobody's fault and that Dennis loved him."

Peeline suffered a sprained back but wasn't seriously injured. The other man that Howell had saved, 19-year-old Tom Chartier, wasn't as fortunate. He suffered a severe leg injury and was permanently disabled.

Christy Howell remained in Alaska until 1979, when she moved back to Florence and took a job as a park ranger at Honeyman State Park. Years later, as Christy was checking in guests at Honeyman, she saw the name Chartier on the check-in form. She looked up and saw Chartier's father. Tom Chartier was among other

family members in the park that night, and Christy visited them when she got off work.

"It was an emotional reunion," she said. "Tom kept thanking me for Dennis saving his life."

Garrison, who left Florence in 1965 and coached at three high schools in the Portland area for the next 25 years, never lost touch with Christy Howell and her family.

Her oldest boy, Denny, who was just 3 when Dennis Howell died, stayed with Garrison at his home in Milwaukie for a month when he was in the seventh grade.

They kept in touch until Garrison died in February of 2017 at the age of 83.

Christy Howell's daughter lives in Yachats while her younger son Greg, whom she was five months pregnant with when the accident occurred, lives in Maryland.

—Don Hunt is a 1971 Siuslaw High School graduate and freelance writer who lives near Kalispell, Mont.

His book, "The History of Siuslaw High School Football, a Tradition of Excellence," will be released on Aug. 20.

Fishing from 1B

SILETZ RIVER: Steelhead, spring Chinook, cutthroat trout

Summer steelhead are in the river. Fishing is good in the lower gorge. Casting spinners, drifting bait or using a bobber and jig can be effective.

Spring Chinook are available in the Siletz. Be aware of the regulations for the Siletz, 1 wild Chinook per day and two for the season through July 31.

Trout fishing in streams and river opened May 22.

• **Note:** The 3.5 mile bridge (aka Steel Bridge) in the Siletz gorge is now open to motorized vehicles, but is only open to public vehicles on the weekend.

Anglers can walk/bike in the road during the weekdays. If anglers do walk in they can park at the one mile gate and start from there.

SIUSLAW RIVER: Cutthroat trout

Trout fishing in streams and river opened May 22. Fishing is restricted to artificial flies and lures through Aug. 31.

WILSON RIVER: Steelhead, spring Chinook, trout

Summer steelhead are present in decent numbers. Low clear water can make fishing for summer steelhead challenging, but there can be some good action at first and last light, or on those drizzly overcast days. Concentrate on deep pools and deeper riffles. Drift fishing, spinners, and flies are good choices. Light line, small presentations, and fishing the riffles and deep pools at first and last light can increase success.

There are still a few spring Chinook available in the Wilson River, although numbers will be very low, especially considering the low runs we are seeing on other basins.

Cutthroat trout can be found throughout the river, with sea-runs beginning to enter tidal areas. Fishing should be fair to good, with spinners or flies good bets for

success.

YAQUINA RIVER: Cutthroat trout

These lakes and ponds are now listed individually in the alphabetical listing. Spring trout stocking begins around March 1.

COOS COUNTY LAKES/PONDS: Trout

These lakes and ponds are now listed individually in the alphabetical listing. Spring trout stocking begins around March 1 (see stocking sched-

ule).

COOS RIVER BASIN: Dungeness crab, bay clams, rockfish, trout

Streams and rivers are open to trout fishing. Trout anglers are having success using small spinners or flies. Anglers can use only artificial flies and lures in streams above tidewater. The daily limit for trout in streams is 2 fish per day and they must be 8-inches or longer.

Recreational fishing for bot-

tomfish is open in the ocean along with bays and estuaries. Beginning July 1, the daily bag limit for marine fish will be reduced from 5 to 4 plus 2 lingcod. The retention of cabezon starts on July 1 with a 1-fish sub-bag limit. Anglers have reported catching rockfish, greenling and striped surfperch inside Coos Bay near the north jetty and other submerged rock structures.

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