

**Trio** from 1B

the end.”  
Loomis’s football career in particular is one that showed incredible grit. Said Johnson, “Skyler Loomis is the single-toughest kid I have ever coached. From a devastating knee injury last year in our first practice in full pads, to becoming the ultimate wrecking ball in our backfield this year, he has displayed how tough he is time and time again this year.”

With the uncertainty of even being able to play football this season, Loomis’s comeback after losing his junior year was a true testament to what hard work and resilience can bring, as well as a true tale of victory.

“He will go on to be an incredibly successful man because no adversity will ever stop him from accomplishing what he needs to do,” said Johnson.

The program has been quite meaningful for Blankenship as well, who was named First Team Quarterback and Honorable Mention Defensive Back. Blankenship explained, “Siuslaw football is more than just football — it is 91 years of a brotherhood that started back in 1929. From a football standpoint, Siuslaw football is a hard-nosed team that will run it down your throat play after play.”

Blankenship, whose prowess on the field as a quarterback was literally unmatched this season, described one of the aspects of the Vikings football program that makes it unique to others.

“Siuslaw football teams are closer than most other teams because we have guys that have grown up



NED HICKSON/SIUSLAW NEWS

**Siuslaw head coach and Viking football alumni Sam Johnson (center) walks with the team onto the field at the start of the April 9 game against Sutherlin. The Viks ended the season at 3-3, including a final-game romp over the Bulldogs.**

together since kindergarten,” said Blankenship. “Being isolated in a small town on the coast, we don’t have many kids transferring in, and we can’t just transfer to a different school when things get tough. We learn to stick together and make it work.” Blankenship’s commitment to the team was unquestionable in his eyes. “I have many reasons why I chose to keep playing football after my sophomore year,” said Blankenship. “For starters, my love for the game of football is too big to just walk away from after two bad seasons.”

With his faith unshaken, he would not be stopped. But it was another reason that made the promise of the next two years even sweeter.

“Ever since I was young, my class (Class of 2021) and the Class of 2022 have always played really well together, and we knew we had the potential to be a good team,” explained Blankenship. “Late spring of my sophomore year, we found out Sam (Johnson)

had been hired as our new coach, and that brought hope. I’ve known him since I was a little kid, and I knew what a great guy he was; very positive, energetic and encouraging.”

Blankenship also remembered Sam’s older brother, John, who coached his eighth-grade team.

“It was a great experience,” said Blankenship. “The Johnsons have a long history of football knowledge and success. Most importantly, Sam played Siuslaw football and we knew he could get it back to what it was — and should be.”

The tradition of Vikings football reaches far into the past, and the coaches who kept it going were the heart of the program. Len Lutero spent 29 years at the helm of the Vikings’ football ship, coaching players that including his predecessor, Tim Dodson, who coached for 20 years after Lutero retired — and mentoring Sam Johnson along the way.

It is no surprise that Johnson coming on to

coach brought hope and inspiration to the student athletes he would have under his wing. It certainly served to carry Blankenship through his final two years on the team.

“I am so thankful to be a part of Siuslaw football, and for coach Johnson turning the program around,” said Blankenship. “Although the past four years have had a lot of adversity with two tough seasons and COVID, I would not trade these last four years for anything. Not only have they helped me grown as a man, my team and I grew really close as brothers.”

Johnson recognized how special his time with Blankenship was as well.

“For me, the highest praise I could ever give someone is that they remind me of my dad and brother John in how they represent themselves in every facet of life,” explained Johnson. “Elijah Blankenship does just that. Elijah will go down in my book as the most impactful player in the history of

Siuslaw football.”

Siuslaw’s final senior completing his fourth season with the Vikings is Newlan, who earned the honor of Second Team Defensive Line.

According to Newlan, “Siuslaw football means more than most things in life because it’s a family — it’s a brotherhood — and it gave me a sense of purpose.”

Newlan’s commitment to the team also came from a place of faith and trust in the program.

“I chose to stick it out because I had faith that something would change,” said Newlan, “and that change happened junior year when our coach saw our potential and pushed us to be our best.”

Newlan is another player who identifies with growing from a boy to a young man as a result of his time playing Vikings football.

“Being in this program, I learned how to face adversity, I learned how to be a better person, and I learned how to be a leader,” said Newlan. “The most

important thing that came out of this program is the family members we gained. All of those guys that chose to stick with the program mean a lot to me; I’ll always remember them and I will always remember our coaches that were there with us along the way.”

The coaches will certainly remember Newlan as well. According to Johnson, “Christian Newlan is a kid who gave me everything he had from day one. He was all in and would do whatever it took to make sure our line was prepared to go to battle every Friday night.”

Another quality Newlan brought to the team was camaraderie and spirit. As Johnson said, “He loved those around him and celebrated the successes of others on and off the field. He displayed every practice and game how much he cares for those around him. To me that is the greatest quality of a young man: how well he can celebrate the success of those around him, because it teaches him how to love those around him.”

Loomis, Blankenship and Newlan have given their all to the program over the years, and Johnson made sure to recognize all that these three seniors have done for the Vikings these past four years and for the future.

“The three seniors I have that have stuck around from before I was the coach will go down as the most influential players to have ever played for this program since 1929,” said Johnson. “They went from a losing mentality to revitalizing Siuslaw football. We haven’t been rewarded this year on the field how we hoped, but that doesn’t diminish what those three have done for the culture of this program and school.”

**Honors** from 1B

*Honorable Mention Offense:*

Skyler Loomis — RB  
Avery Hart — OL

*Honorable Mention Defense:*

Elijah Blankenship — DB

**SHS Cross Country**

All-League:

*First Team:*

Rylee Colton

Brea Blankenship

Gracie Freudenthal

Chad Hughes

Sam Ulrich

Kyle Hughes

Jaxson Jensen

Braden Linton

*Second Team:*

Jane Lacouture

Corduroy Holbrook

Dylan Jensen

Jacob Blankenship

**All-State**

*First Team:*

Rylee Colton

*Second Team:*

Brea Blankenship

Chad Hughes

Sam Ulrich

*Third Team:*

Jaxson Jensen

Gracie Freudenthal

*Honorable Mention:*

Brayden Linton

Jane Lacouture

**MHS football:**

While the league didn’t hand out individual recognition, the performance of senior JJ Neece is notable. The senior receiver,

runningback and quarterback rushed for 452 yards on 40 carries against Falls City last week. The yardage total ranks No. 13 on the state’s all-time single-game list for eight-man football. It also boosted his career rushing total to 6,502, which is No. 2 all-time to Dufur’s John Hammel (6,959,

1965-68). With a full season, he likely would have become Oregon’s all-time eight-man rusher. In passing, threw for 2,304 yards and 31 touchdowns in his high school career. His combined yardage of 9,082 for rushing, passing and receiving is No. 6 on the career list.

**Fishing** from 1B

through the month of March. The Alsea River remains open to steelhead fishing through April and then closes on April 30. Trout fishing in streams opens on May 22. The later returning wild broodstock fish are providing the majority of the catch now and typically peak in February and March.

**SALMON RIVER:** *Winter steelhead*

Winter steelhead fishing closes on the Salmon River on March 31. Trout fishing in streams will open on May 22. The peak for winter steelhead on the Salmon River is typically January to March. Last updated 3/31/21.

**NOTE:** Reminder, the Salmon River hatchery remains closed to walk in anglers. Anglers can use access points upstream and downstream of the hatchery to access those traditional fishing locations.

**SILETZ RIVER:** *Winter steelhead*

Steelhead fishing on the Siletz River improved last week with the bump in river levels but has slowed down now with the low and clear conditions. The Siletz River remains open

year-round for steelhead fishing and provides opportunity through April for winter steelhead and then summer steelhead typically start to show up in decent numbers in May. Fish are now distributed throughout the river from the boat sections up through the gorge. Mid-February to mid-March is typically the peak for Siletz winter steelheading. The 4-mile bridge (aka Steel Bridge) in the Siletz gorge is open to motorized vehicles on the weekends only. Anglers can walk/bike in the road during the weekdays. There is a parking area located at the 1-mile gate where anglers can walk/bike upstream from there.

**WILSON RIVER:** *Steelhead*

Steelhead fishing on the Wilson is low and clear which makes fishing challenging. Fishing has been slow recently, but there are still a few being caught and pressure has been light. There are still a few hatchery and wild steelhead (catch-and-release only for wilds) throughout the system. The Little North Fork and the South Fork of the Wilson closed to steelhead fishing April 1. Remember to handle and release wild

fish with care! There are some great resources available in the regulation book (page 15) and on the ODFW website.

**YAQUINA RIVER:** Winter steelhead

Winter steelhead will start to show up in the Yaquina/Big Elk in December and typically peak from January to March. Fishing closes on the Yaquina/Big Elk on March 31 and will re-open on May 22 for trout fishing.

**COOS RIVER BASIN:** Bottomfish

Boat and bank anglers (on the jetty) are still catching rockfish and lingcod inside lower Coos Bay. Smaller jigs with a twister tail or 1-ounce jigging spoons have been working to catch rockfish. Lingcod are being caught on bigger jigs or by suspending a frozen herring around the rocks. The daily bag limit for marine fish is 6, which includes a one fish sub-bag limit for China, copper and quillback rockfish. Anglers can still harvest 2 lingcod per day. Trout fishing in streams and rivers opens on May 22.

**UMPQUA RIVER, SOUTH:** Winter steelhead

After a slow season, most anglers are eyeing

other opportunities. But there are still fresh steelhead returning to the South and little angling pressure. Don’t forget to turn in snout from hatchery winter steelhead for a chance to win a gift card

**PACIFIC OCEAN AND BEACHES:** Bottomfish, surfperch

Boat anglers have been doing very well catching nice size lingcod and rockfish when the ocean swells are down. Bottom fishing is open to all depths through May 31. The daily bag limit for marine fish is 6 fish, which includes a one fish sub-bag limit for China, copper, and quillback rockfish. Anglers can still harvest 2 lingcod per day. Anglers must release all cabezon through June.

Anglers may also choose to fish the offshore longleader fishery outside of the 40-fathom regulatory line, which is open year-round. The longleader fishery has a daily bag limit of 10 fish made of yellowtail, widow, canary, blue, deacon, redstripe, greenstripe, silvergray, chillipepper, and bocaccio rockfish. No other groundfish are allowed and offshore longleader fishing trips cannot be combined with traditional bottomfish, flatfish

or halibut trips. Find information about a longleader setup here.

Ocean Chinook salmon fishing opened on March 15.

Surfperch anglers have been doing well catching good size red-tail surfperch along beaches near the mouths of rivers and bays.

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