

A return to head coach

After a brief break, Kendra Anderson is back as the Lions head volleyball coach

By Zach Silva
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Cottage Grove High School has welcomed back a familiar face to the volleyball program.

Kendra Anderson is now the new head coach of the Lions but this is not the first time. Anderson coached at Cottage Grove for 10 years which saw five with her as head coach of the varsity team. She then took a three year break from coaching but has since coached JV volleyball at Marist Catholic High School in Eugene and most recently she coached at Creswell Middle School where she is a social studies teacher.

Now entering her 21st year of coaching, she is ready and excited to be back at the varsity level.

"I'm excited about the new players and the up and coming players coming in," said Anderson. "My goal is always to make it to that final eight and I think this team could do that."

This summer the team has been active in the weight room and has been participating in open gyms that bring back Lion alumni as well. The goal of these sessions is to help get the current team ready while also having a fun time with the alumni.

Another important facet that Anderson sees is youth in volleyball. Anderson sees the value of making the middle schoolers an important part of the process. This is why when she was previously head coach, her and the Creswell coach would have a tournament in spring that featured middle school girls from Cottage Grove, Creswell and surrounding areas and get them playing and competing. This brief exposure helped show those students what volleyball is like at the next level.

"I think it is really important to build the programs at [the middle school level]. It is important for them to see the current players at the high school interact with them," she said. "The coaches at the middle school and high school level do a really good job at fostering that love of volleyball which helps build that program all the way through."

And while there is value in fostering the program with participation from alumni and the middle school students, she is also ready to take on the challenge at hand with this year's varsity team. Last year the team finished second in the Sky-Em while the State champion Sisters finished first in league. The Lions were eliminated in the first round of the playoffs.

Swim team promotes culture, Olympians

By Caitlyn May
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It's not about winning for Tyson Pilling. Not completely.

The 27-year-old coach of the Cottage Grove High School swim teams says it's more about cultivating a culture of compassion and respect than strutting around the pool with medals. But, winning is nice too.

"Last year we had a district champion and at least eight state qualifiers," he said.

Pilling has been the coach for both the boys and girls high school teams as well as the leader of the district's swim club—a feeder

for the competition teams—for approximately four years. It was the swim club, Pilling said, that brought back the girls' water polo team after a four-year absence. Interest during the summer session of swim club ultimately funneled girls into the competition team during the winter term.

"If you have a good club program," Pilling said, "then you will have a good program in the high school. It's essential to have a good club program."

The swim club begins in August, just after Pilling mans swim camps. This year local swimmers were treated to a visit from two Olympians and according to Pilling, they reinforced the lessons he tries to instill in his teams.

"We had Elizabeth Basile come and she didn't talk about the years she won," Pilling said. "She talked about the year she fractured her finger in practice, went to the ER where they buddy wrapped her fingers and when she got back for competition, she was disqualified because of that wrap," he said. "And she said it was important for her to keep a positive attitude and have a good culture for the rest of the team."

A "good culture" is exactly what the Cottage Grove swimming Lions are expected to help create and maintain.

"We don't walk around with our chests out when we win," Pilling said. "We don't care how much our suits costs. We set goals and we focus on them and we try to achieve them."

And while it's not quite swim season yet, Pilling keeps busy with swim camp and his duties as professional lifeguard and "toiler scrubber" at the Warren H. Daugherty Aquatic Center; a facility set to undergo a transformation over the next year.

In November, voters approved a bond measure aimed at improving school infrastructure and while the majority of the funds—\$23 million—are scheduled for the new Harrison Elementary School, the pool is expected to pocket a few million for renovations.

It will mean a new home for Pilling and adjusting to whatever decisions the school district and its yet-to-be-formed committee make but for now, he's not looking too far into the future in regards to construction or the new season.

"It's really too early to say what the next season will bring," he said. "There's always lots and lots of room for improvement and we'll do the best with what we have. We'll see when we start putting in the work and our good culture and we'll go from there."



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