

CLASS 5A PREP BASEBALL

# Hatley, Dragons ready for stretch run

Dallas to face Mid-Willamette Conference's top teams in consecutive weeks

By Lukas Eggen  
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — After a three-game sweep of Woodburn, Dallas' baseball team appears ready to face a critical stretch of its season.

The Dragons opened the series with a 19-0 win on

April 7 before winning 9-4 and 7-0 on Thursday. Pitcher Tucker Weaver gave up two hits while recording 13 strikeouts in the first game.

"Tucker (Weaver) was dominating," Dallas coach Scot McDonald said. "As a team we hit the ball well and controlled the game from the get go."

Hatley struck out 12 batters in the first game of the doubleheader on Thursday. Freshman pitcher Jared Stewart earned the victory in the final game of the series.

Hatley, one of the Dragons' top starters, had nine straight strikeouts to open

## Rough Road

- Dallas entered the week in third place in the Mid-Willamette Conference.

- The Dragons' 5-1 league record trailed Central and Corvallis, both of which entered the week unbeaten in MWC play.

- Dallas faces the first-, second-, fourth- and fifth-place teams in the conference over the next four weeks.

his start against the Bulldogs before giving up two walks in the fourth inning.

"I wasn't upset that I walked the first batter, I was upset that I let him steal on the very next pitch," Hatley said.

But, much like he has all season, Hatley took a moment to gather himself before returning to close out the inning.

"I just needed to step off the mound, listen to what coach (McDonald) had to say," Hatley said. "I just needed to take a step back and get back to what I was



Dallas pitcher Logan Hatley strikes out 12 batters against Woodburn on Thursday.

doing." The Dragons' pitching staff will likely need to be at

its best going forward. Dallas entered the week at 5-1 in Mid-Willamette Con-

ference play, one game behind Central and Corvallis and two games ahead of

Crescent Valley and Silverton.

The Dragons opened a three-game series against the Raiders Tuesday after press time.

Dallas will also face the Silver Foxes, Spartans and Panthers in a stretch that will go a long way in deciding the league's champion between the MWC's top five squads.

"Our coaches went to a game between Crescent Valley and Corvallis. We asked about what they saw but they wanted to leave it until after the series," Hatley said. "We never talk about things like who are we facing after this team or anything like that."

"They may not be looking ahead, but the Dragons know the next four series are critical and that they are ready to try and clinch a regular season conference championship.

"I know they all are going to be good teams," Hatley said. "We will see better pitching than we've seen for a while. We just need to go out there, throw strikes and do what we can to get the win."

## Pair: Dallas duo still refining

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"Coach (Gillette) told us to be more aggressive, and I thought we played more aggressive today," Gumpinger said. "I think we did OK."

Gumpinger has played doubles in each of his three seasons, but is on his third partner. Gillette has played both singles and doubles during his high school career.

"At the start of the season, we tried different pairs," Gumpinger said. "We just didn't complement each other and didn't communicate as well."

That all changed once Gillette was paired with Gumpinger. The pair's chemistry was apparent almost immediately.

"If I'm playing singles and I get into a funk, it's hard for me to pick myself up," Gumpinger said. "I don't have that mental strength. Having (Gillette) out there keeping my spirits up and telling me what I'm doing wrong really helps me."

For Gillette, playing with Gumpinger has introduced him to a whole new style of tennis, one that is bringing



Dallas' Cameron Gumpinger (left) prepares for the start of a game on Thursday afternoon.

out the best in him.

"It's faster paced and I think it's more fun," Gillette said. "I think there's more consistency. I like the pace better because I'm not consistent enough to play high singles."

Gumpinger and Gillette have the most important keys to being a successful

doubles pair down. Now, they are looking to refine their game.

"We had a few errors (against Corvallis)," Gumpinger said. "We had some issues with our footwork where they hit some hard shots that we could have gotten to."

Gumpinger and Gillette

are helping to lead a young Dallas squad that is looking to improve rapidly.

The Dragons, which lost to Corvallis 7-1, have been affected by inexperience, but are showing signs of their potential.

"We're progressing at a steady pace, and I think that's what you hope for when you have a young team that hasn't played the sport long," Caleb Gillette said. "... These guys are extremely hard workers, very coachable with great attitudes. At the end of the day, that will lead to improvement when you possess those fundamentals. It just takes time."

Dallas, which played at Crescent Valley Tuesday after press time, hosts Lebanon Thursday at 4 p.m.

The Dragons hope to see improvement throughout its lineup, while Gumpinger and Gillette are hoping to refine their games to make a deep run at the district championships.

"We want to take as many games as possible and start to make other teams worry about us," Gumpinger said.

## Course: Senior having a blast

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"We definitely started off pretty unskilled," Brinton said. "We've worked hard and have gotten a lot better as time goes on."

The Panthers finished last in their first two tournaments, but took sixth on Monday.

Central has seen its total team score lower in each tournament so far this season.

Brinton, who shot a team-low 95 on Monday, knows this is a long process for everyone involved.

They believe better days are rapidly approaching. Brinton is one of the team's leaders, offering a hand to the squad's less experienced players.

"When you start out, you're going to be frustrated," Brinton said. "Possibly, you won't want to play it anymore. But you're not going to be the best when you start. Everybody on our team is getting better. And we play on some nice courses for free, which is a

good thing. I think everyone on this team loves the game of golf."

While the Panthers hope the experience they gain on the course leads to better play, Brinton isn't shy about setting high goals for his teammates.

"I think one of our goals is to finish in the top three as a team in at least a couple of tournaments," Brinton said. "We want to finish higher than we have been."

For Brinton, this season is a possible stepping stone to playing golf beyond high school, with plans to play in tournaments once he graduates.

Even if those plans don't work out, getting the chance to spend time playing golf with his friends makes this season more than worthwhile.

"Being able to go out with your buddies and play golf for free, you don't have to worry about much," Brinton said. "It's a good experience."

### PREP SOFTBALL ROUNDUP

## Panthers remain unbeaten all year

Itemizer-Observer staff report

INDEPENDENCE — The Central softball continued its perfect start, improving to 9-0 overall. The Panthers defeated Lebanon 5-1 on April 7 before blanking Corvallis 10-0 on Friday. Central, which held the Spartans to two hits on Friday, scored five unearned runs in the fifth inning to build its lead to 10. The Panthers' game against Crescent Valley on Monday has been rescheduled for Saturday at noon. The Panthers faced Woodburn Tuesday after press time. Central hosts South Albany Wednesday (today) at 4:30 p.m. before playing at Dallas on Friday.

**DALLAS SPLITS:** The Dallas Dragons split a pair of Mid-Willamette Conference games as Dallas fights for position in the league standings. The Dragons opened by defeating Corvallis 10-0 in five innings on April 7. Yasmine El-Hato hit a home run and a double and pitcher Erin Taylor held the Spartans to two hits. Dallas (3-5 overall, 2-2 MWC) could not retain momentum, however,



El-Hato

play at Woodburn Wednesday (today) before hosting Central Friday at 4:30 p.m. and South Albany on Tuesday.

**PIRATES OPEN LEAGUE PLAY:** Perrydale's softball team earned a split of its first two Tri-River Conference games of the season. The Pirates lost to Kennedy 12-2 on April 7 before defeating Western Mennonite 7-3 on

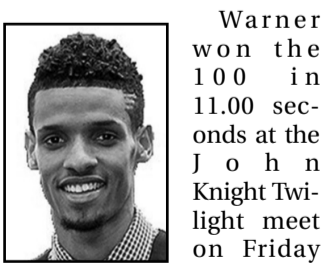


Nelson

Thursday. Emily Nelson and Kieley Griffin hit doubles for Perrydale. The Pirates play at Western Mennonite Wednesday (today) before playing at Regis on Monday at 4:30 p.m.

Itemizer-Observer staff report

MONMOUTH — Freshman Cody Warner swept the men's 100- and 200-meter runs for the fourth time this season to lead the Wolves' track and field team.



Sultessa

Warner won the 100 in 11.00 seconds at the John Knight Twilight meet on Friday and finished the 200 in 22.09. Warner was also part of the 4 x 100 relay team, which placed third. Junior Badane Sultessa placed first in the 800 in 1:51.88, while freshman Caleb Dobson won the 110 hurdles in 14.95.

"This was a fun meet all around for our team," WOU coach Mike Johnson said. "There are a lot of positive things that we can take from today and build toward the Great Northwest Athletic Conference championships

### WESTERN OREGON ROUNDUP

## Freshman wins two events

Cody Warner sweeps the 100- and 200-meter runs Friday



Western Oregon freshman Cody Warner (right) races toward the finish of the 4 x 100-meter relay on Friday.

in a few weeks." Senior Rebecca Laible and junior Emmi Collier led the women's squad. Laible placed second in the triple jump with a mark of 36 feet, 11¾ inches. Collier finished second in the shot put with

a throw of 44-6¼. Western Oregon will send athletes to the Oregon relays in Eugene Thursday through Saturday, the Mount Sac relays in Walnut, Calif., on Thursday and Friday, and the Lewis & Clark open in

Portland on Saturday.

**SOFTBALL EARNS KEY SPLIT:** Western Oregon's softball team picked up a trio of key Great Northwest Athletic Conference victories to remain in the conference tournament picture. The Wolves split a doubleheader against



Gardner

Western Washington on Saturday, falling 9-5 before winning 8-5. Sophomore Destiny Kuehl went five-for-five at the plate, including a home run. WOU (18-23 overall, 10-6 GNAC) swept Simon Fraser on Saturday 21-4 and 6-5. Sophomore Kelsie Gardner went seven for nine with five RBIs. WOU enters the week in fourth place in the conference standings. Central Washington (9-7 GNAC) is in fifth. The top four seeds advance to the softball championship. The Wolves host Saint Martin's and Central Washington for a pair of doubleheaders. First pitch is scheduled for 2 p.m. Thursday and noon Saturday.