

STRIKE



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Dallas senior Tucker Weaver delivers a pitch against Corvallis on Friday afternoon. Weaver helped the Dragons earn a 6-5 win. Dallas took two of three games from the Spartans, earning a 5-4 victory on Thursday. The Dragons entered the week in third place in the Mid-Willamette Conference, one game behind Corvallis. Dallas opened a three-game series against Central Tuesday after press time.

DALLAS BOYS TENNIS

Dallas exceeding expectations

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — In the world of Mid-Willamette Conference boys tennis, schools like Corvallis are almost always among the league's best.

This year, one team is looking to crash the party — the Dragons.

"I would say we're a pretty solid group of guys going out and having fun," the Dragons' No. 2 singles player Caedmon Blair said. "We're playing point by point and not stressing out if they get up a couple of games."

Dallas entered the week at 9-3 in league matches, including an 8-0 win over Lebanon on Monday, with losses only to Corvallis and Silverton.



Dudley

The Dragons boast depth in both singles, with exchange student Thomas Gniadecki and Blair leading the way, and in doubles, with Joe Gillette and Josh Dudley, and Randy Mullins and Ryan Bibler.

"The guys have a great work ethic and it shows," coach Caleb Gillette said. "More importantly, I believe they buy into what we do



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer
Dallas' No. 2 singles player Caedmon Blair is among those hoping to earn a trip to state next week.

and the things we teach them, and they work on executing these strategies and techniques in matches."

Dallas not only hopes to send multiple players to state, but finish near the top of the team standings at the MWC District Tennis Championship, which begins May 11 at Timberhill Tennis Club in Corvallis.

Blair will be among those with state aspirations, but he said he's not going to let the moment overwhelm him.

"I'm focusing on having fun and not putting too much stress on myself,"

Swing away

- Dallas' boys tennis team swept Lebanon 8-0 on Monday afternoon.
- The Dragons host Silverton Wednesday (today) at 4 p.m. in the team's final match of the regular season.
- The district tennis championship begins May 11 and runs through May 13 at Timberhill Tennis Club in Corvallis.
- The top four singles players and doubles pairs earn a trip to the 5A state championships, which begin May 19.

Blair said. "If I put pressure, I'm going to lose sight that tennis is a sport that you play to have fun. If I play to have fun, I'll play smooth and relaxed and win games."

Perhaps the team's biggest strength is the sense of team.

Despite playing a highly individualized sport, Caleb Gillette said the Dragons truly embrace being a team.

"They believe in the concept of team," Gillette said. "In tennis it's easy to only be concerned with your individual match, but the guys want everyone to do well and want to win as a team. This means they are willing to accept their role on the team, even if they would rather play a different position."

FALLS CITY TRACK AND FIELD

Boys finish second at meet

Itemizer-Observer staff report
WALDPOR — Falls City's boys track and field squad finished second at the Waldport Small School meet on Friday. The girls placed fourth.

Robert Kempfer won the boys triple jump with a mark of 37 feet, 3 inches. Senior Ryan Macnab took second in the shot put (36-7), third in the javelin (130-5) and fifth in the discus (90-6), while Jeremy Labrado took second in the high jump (5-8).

The boys 4 x 400 relay team of Labrado, Kobe Smith, Kempfer and Austin Burgess also took second, finishing in 49.53 seconds.



Varney

Britany Varney led the girls, taking third in the shot put (28-1), javelin (74-10) and discus (91-3). Rachel Beatty took third in the triple jump (27 3 ½).

The Mountaineers also competed at the Southwest Christian Invitational on April 27.

Macnab took second in the shot put (37-7), third in the discus (107-9) and fifth in the javelin (129-8). Kempfer took fifth in the



Macnab

400-meter run (57.16) and sixth in the triple jump (34-9 ½). Varney was the team's lone female competitor, taking sixth in the discus (86-0) and seventh in the shot put (29-5).

Falls City will compete at the Toledo Twilight meet Friday at 3 p.m. in the team's final meet before the Special District 1 championships May 13-14 at Portland Christian High School.

Dragons: Dallas earns come-from-behind win

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"I think that I have learned patience from batting and have learned that if I take a deep breath and have patience before I pitch, I do much better," El-Hato said. "With pitching, I get to know the umpire's strike zone, so when I am up to bat, I know what pitches he will be calling and am able to communicate the umpire's zone to my teammates."

Dallas has excelled despite a less experienced roster than in years past.

The Dragons entered the week in second place in the Mid-Willamette Conference.

As the regular season nears its conclusion, El-Hato hopes her final spring

with Dallas is one to remember.

"For now, I am going to finish my senior year having as much fun as possible and making the most of the season," El-Hato said.

Although Dallas' dominating win over Crescent Valley was nice, for coach Brandy Jackson, it was an 8-5 win over Silverton on April 27 that truly stood out.

The Dragons overcame a 4-0 deficit during the win.

"I believe this is the first time all year that we have battled back after being behind, so that was nice to see," Jackson said.

The win marked a key moment for the Dragons, helping give Dallas a two-game lead over Silverton

and Central for third place in the league standings entering the week.

As El-Hato and the Dragons are focused on the present, softball will also be a part of her future.

El-Hato plans to attend Oregon State where she said she'll like play intramural softball or try walking on as a hitter.

But that's not all she has planned.

"I will also continue giving pitching lessons to younger kids to help build up the future generations of softball players," El-Hato said. "I love softball. I enjoy the team concept of the game and the friendships that grow from playing day-to-day with other girls."

PERRYDALE ROUNDUP

Softball defeats St. Paul

Itemizer-Observer staff report
ST. PAUL — Perrydale's softball team defeated St. Paul 14-10 on Monday afternoon.

The Pirates also defeated Delphian 16-6 on April 27 before falling to Regis 9-2 on Friday.



McGill

Against Delphian, senior Anna McGill hit a grand slam in the fourth inning to break a 6-6 tie.

Perrydale plays at Kennedy Wednesday (today) at 3 p.m.

The Pirates host Sheridan on Thursday, Santiam on Monday and Taft on May 11.

All games are scheduled to start at 4:30 p.m.

BASEBALL EARNS FIRST WIN: Perrydale's baseball team earned its first win of the season, defeating Country Christian 9-5 on April 27. Brant Barnes and Keenan Bailey each had a double.

Perrydale fell to Regis 12-1 on Friday and St. Paul 11-5 on Monday.

Perrydale played Kennedy Tuesday after press time.

The Pirates host Western Mennonite on Friday and Santiam on Monday. Both games are scheduled to start at 4:30 p.m.

GIRLS TRACK PLACES FOURTH AT INVITATIONAL: Perrydale's girls track and field team finished fourth at the Southwest Christian Invitational on April 27. The boys placed ninth.

Senior Taylor Price won the girls 100-meter hurdles in 17.27 seconds, took second in



Price



Clark

the 300 hurdles (53.58) and finished fourth in the high jump with a mark of 4 feet, 4 inches. Sarah Clark took second in the javelin (112-3).

Senior Kirk Fairchild finished second in the boys high jump (5-4) and fourth in the triple jump (35-2 ½). Junior Jacob Pope took fourth in the javelin (134-10).

Perrydale will compete at the Regis Twilight Invitational Friday at 3 p.m.

CENTRAL ROUNDUP

Softball defeats Corvallis, South Albany

Itemizer-Observer staff report
INDEPENDENCE — Central's softball team cruised to a pair of Mid-Willamette Conference wins last week.

The Panthers defeated Corvallis 11-6 on April 26 and South Albany 18-2 on Friday. Mariah Hyre hit a home run to lead the Panthers against South Albany.

Central hosts Crescent Valley Wednesday (today).

The Panthers close the regular season at Lebanon on Friday, at Silverton on Tuesday and at Corvallis on May 11. All games are scheduled to start at 4:30 p.m.

BOYS TRACK TAKES SECOND: Central's boys track and field team finished second at the Dick Baker Invitational on Saturday. The girls placed sixth.

Sophomore Bethanie Altamirano won the girls 400-meter run in 1 minute, 2.57

seconds and took third in the 200 (27.46) to lead the girls. Baillie Hartford took second in the 3,000 (11:31.43) as did the 4 x 100 relay team of Elizabeth Chavez, Alex Alvarez, Altamirano and Reba Hoffman (51.23) and the 4 x 400 relay team of Alvarez, Altamirano, Hoffman and Beatriz Trujillo (4:19.89).

Sam Cole took second in the boys shot put with a throw of 47 feet, 5 ¼ inches, while Kyle Miller took second in the dis-

cus (133-1) and Peter Mason placed second in the long jump (21-4 ½). The boys 4 x100 relay team of Casey Brown, Isaiah Abraham, Jaxon Hutchinson and Nick Burgett also took second (44.47).

The Panthers travel to Woodburn Wednesday (today) at 3:45 p.m. and will host the Mid-Willamette Conference District Championships May 11-12.

GIRLS TENNIS DEFEATS

LEBANON: Central's girls tennis squad defeated Lebanon 5-3 on April 27.

Aya Kan earned the Panthers' lone singles point. The doubles pairs of Renee Bruning and Danielle Chance, Julia Hamar and Andrea Garibay, and Olivia Teague and Diana Huerte also earned wins.

Central lost to Dallas 6-2 on Thursday. Patience Teague and Tamoka Naru won singles matches for the Panthers. Cen-

tral also fell to Silverton 7-1 on Friday and Corvallis 7-1 on Monday. The Panthers host Woodburn Wednesday (today) at 4 p.m. in the team's final match of the regular season.

FARNWORTH HEADS TO DISTRICT: Central golfer Zoe Farnworth was the Panthers' lone qualifier for the girls district golf tournament, which began Tuesday after press time and ends Wednesday (today) in Banks.

Game: WOU has chance to earn conference title

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Few would argue he made the right choice. Podratz had a successful high school career and played baseball at the University of Hawaii until 2015, when he took the season off.

The itch to remain close to the game remained.

During his year away from playing baseball, Podratz coached high school freshmen baseball.

"It was fun to see younger

guys look up to me and care about what I was providing to them," he said. "Seeing them start to fall in love with the game is something I love to see."

Coaching helped him stay sharp — and spark a possible career path once his playing career is over — but the urge to get back on the diamond was great. All he needed was the right opportunity.

When a mutual acquaint-

ance introduced Podratz to WOU coach Kellen Walker he knew he found a new home.

"Talking with coach Walker we just started to click," Podratz said. "We're on the same page mentally. We had an understanding of where I was and what I had to offer. I had a good feeling about it from the get-go."

The partnership has certainly paid off.

Podratz leads the Wolves in batting average (.372) and hits (54). He ranks second on the team in home runs (four) and RBIs (30). He also has a perfect fielding percentage playing at first base, helping WOU enter its final regular season series with a chance to earn a regular season conference title.

After losing three of four to Montana State Billings, Western Oregon just wants

to get things back on track and clinch its spot in the conference tournament.

"As cliched as it sounds, we just need to play our game," Podratz said. "Our offense has kind of been struggling lately and not taking care of the baseball. We just need everything to fall back into place."

Walking away from his video game career may have been tough, but Podratz doesn't regret choosing

baseball over gaming all those years ago.

In fact, that choice helped give his baseball career an extra boost.

"I love every bit of this game," Podratz said. "I think it's hilarious that you can go out there and hit it three out of 10 times. That's not supposed to be fun, but somehow we make it fun and enjoy it. There's nothing you can replace this with."