

Spring (football) is in the air



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Western Oregon's football team held its annual spring game on Saturday afternoon. The day's festivities began with a free kids' clinic and finished with a family barbecue. The Wolves finished 7-4 overall and 5-1 in Great Northwest Athletic Conference play during the 2015 season.

WESTERN OREGON ROUNDUP

Baseball clinches spot in conference tournament

Itemizer-Observer staff report
MONMOUTH — Western Oregon's baseball team punched its ticket to the Great Northwest Athletic Conference Championships.

The Wolves closed out the regular season taking three of four from Central Washington, earning 16-8 and 10-7 wins on Friday and splitting a doubleheader on Saturday, winning 6-2 before falling 6-5.

Senior Trevor Podratz recorded at least one hit in each of the four games — extending his hit streak to 22-straight games. Podratz opened the series on Friday by recording a single, double and home run.

WOU earned the No. 3 seed and will travel to Nampa, Idaho, for the conference tournament.

Western Oregon will open the tournament

against Montana State, Billings Thursday at noon before facing Northwest Nazarene Thursday at 3:30 p.m.



Podratz

in the round-robin tournament. The conference championship game begins Friday at 1 p.m.

TRACK AND FIELD TO HOST GNAC CHAMPIONSHIPS: Western Oregon will host the GNAC Championships Friday and Saturday at McArthur Field. WOU's track and field team sent athletes to the Oregon Twilight Meet in Eugene on Friday and the Linfield Open in McMinnville and the Oxy Invite in Los Angeles

on Saturday.

WOU's women's 4 x 400-meter relay team of Bailey Beeson, Suzie Van De Grift, Megan Rose and Olivia Woods took first in McMinnville, finishing in 3 minutes, 54.44 seconds, and Rachel Huffman won the discus with a throw of 131 feet, 9 inches to lead the women.

Kaleb Dobson won the boys 110 hurdles (15.27 seconds). The 4 x 100 relay team of Wesley Gray, Devonte Woods, Aaron Whitaker and Cody Warner took first (41.53), and Kody Kantola won the long jump (21-3 1/2).

Aaron Whitaker won his section of the men's 400-meter run in Eugene, finishing in 48.52 seconds.

Tickets for this weekend's championships will cost \$8 (per session) for adults, \$5 for seniors, students and children.

Events begin at 2 p.m. on Friday and 9:30 a.m. on Saturday.

Falls City: Hendrickson learns to let others help

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"Last year, I tripped on a hurdle for the first time," Hendrickson said. "I came pretty close to falling."

She was able to avoid taking a spill and finished the race, but her confidence was gone.

"After that (race), mentally, I couldn't do it," Hendrickson said.

A number of medical issues began to take its toll on her physically. What she hoped would be a promising freshman year turned into a nightmare.

"My strength that I could possibly have had last year wasn't cutting it," she said.

She entered this spring

with a clean bill of health, but one thing still lacked — confidence.

"I thought my hurdles were toast because I couldn't even get over them last year," Hendrickson said.

As she prepared for the Mountaineers' season-opening meet, she was warming up for the 100 hurdles when she nearly tripped again.

"I thought, 'not again,'" she said. "My friends and coaches kept telling me they believed in me. I just thought I'm going to go through with this, and I did. I ended up taking first in my heat that race."

Since then, she's become

one of the district's top hurdlers — discovering that a big part of her success was letting others — including freshman Phoenix Brown — support her.

"You have to have buddies to push you," Hendrickson said. "If you don't have anyone to push and support you, you won't be as successful."

As Hendrickson regained her form on the track, she also gave long jump a try — even if it took a little convincing.

"I was terrified to do it because I've seen two long jump accidents in my life," she said.

Turns out, she was a natu-



Labrado

ral, setting the school record (15 feet, 3 3/4 inches) in just her second jumping. Hendrickson began the season hoping to regain some of her pre-high school magic. This weekend, she has a chance to do that.

"I'm super excited that I'm even close to making state," she said. "If I make it to state, I know I'm going to be real jittery, but I think I'll do OK. It would be really exciting, especially since I'm

only a sophomore."

Hendrickson isn't the only state hopeful the Mountaineers have.

Senior thrower Ryan Macnab is seeded second in the shot put and fourth in the discus.

Sophomore Jeremy Labrado is ranked third in the high jump and Robert Kempfer is seeded fourth in the triple jump.

For the girls, freshman Rachel Beatty is seeded first in the triple jump.

Senior thrower Brittany Varney is ranked third in the shot put and discus.

With a mix of experienced and young athletes hoping to make their pres-



Varney

ence felt, Mountaineers coach Ronnie Simmons said he's excited to see who can rise to the occasion and learn what it will take for them to join the state's elite.

"They have a lot of natural athleticism," Simmons said. "I think they need to develop a stronger work ethic. Sometimes, having failure might be the best motivator and they can see what it takes to get to the next level."

PERRYDALE TRACK AND FIELD

Clark pursuing school records in quest for state

By Lukas Eggen

The Itemizer-Observer

PERRYDALE — Senior Sarah Clark isn't afraid to dream big.

Clark took 10th at state in the javelin as a junior. The thrower/hurdler wanted to leave her mark on Perrydale's record books as a senior.

"My goal for this season was to break the school records in all three throwing events and just PR as best I could in the hurdles," Clark said.

That pursuit has helped Clark become one of the top throwers in Special District 1, primed for a return trip to Eugene.

It didn't take long for Clark to begin her assault on the record books.

"At the very first meet (this year) in McMinnville, I beat the school record in the javelin with a throw of 114 feet, 11 inches," Clark said. "It was a huge accomplishment for me and realizing that I had one down and two more to break was exciting."

It took until the last meet

SD1 Track and Field Championships

What: Special District 1 track and field championships.

When: Friday, 11 a.m.; Saturday, 11 a.m.

Where: Portland Christian.

Who: Athletes from Falls City, Perrydale, C.S. Lewis, Columbia Christian, Columbia County Christian, Crosshill Christian, Damascus Christian, Jewell, North Clackamas Christian, Open Door Christian, Oregon School for the Deaf, Portland Lutheran, Portland Waldorf, Southwest Christian, St. Stephen's Academy and Willamette Valley Christian.

What's at stake: Winners and second-place finishers from each event at the district meet automatically qualify for the Class 1A state track and field championships, May 19-20 at Hayward Field in Eugene.

Any athlete meeting a predetermined qualifying standard may also qualify for state, regardless of number.

of the regular season, but Clark crossed another off her list — shot put, breaking her previous personal best by more than three feet at the Regis Twilight Invitational on Friday.

"I threw 33-4 1/4," Clark said. "It was very exciting and thrilling that I could throw it that far and bumped me up to second place in districts. Two down and one more to go. I realize that if I work really hard before districts on discus that I could possibly beat the school record. If not, I

am still very blessed to break two records and it is a big accomplishment for me."

But Clark's attention has also turned to districts, where she enters ranked second in both the javelin and shot put.

"I need to not have any distractions and realize I could go to state in two events and just work as hard as I can," Clark said. "This is a really big deal for me and I need to not let this chance slip away. I will never get this opportunity again."

Pirates optimistic about chances at district meet

By Lukas Eggen

The Itemizer-Observer

PERRYDALE — If there's one thing Perrydale track and field coach Brian Evans is feeling it's hope.

The Pirates will compete at the Special District 1 track and field championships Friday and Saturday at Portland Christian High School, and Evans hopes to see multiple athletes book their ticket to the state championships in Eugene.

Among Perrydale's state contenders, one of its top athletes will face a unique challenge.



Price

Senior Taylor Price is ranked first in the girls 100-meter hurdles and third in the 300 hurdles,

but she's also balancing a challenging schedule.

"She's also doing OHSET the same time as districts,"



Clark

prelims in the hurdles. We fully expect her to make it to state in the hurdles and it would be awesome if she did."

Senior Sarah Clark is ranked second in the javelin and shot put, and freshman Tiffany Clark is ranked fourth in the triple jump.

The biggest question mark on the girls side could be the 4 x 100 relay team of Anna McGill, Hannah Hallock, Shylar Halverson and Kiele Griffin. The quartet also plays softball, which has made practicing handoffs difficult, Evans said. The relay team enters ranked third in the district.

"If they can get down to 55 seconds, that would be really close to getting them to state in our league," Evans said. "It will be a real-



Fairchild

ly interesting race if they can get their handoffs just right." Senior Kirk Fairchild may represent the boys team's best chance at qualifying for state. Fairchild is ranked third in the triple jump and high jump.

"He's been stuck at 37 feet (in the triple jump)," Evans said. "He's working hard at that, and we expect him to pull out a big PR. It just hasn't happened yet."

Junior Jacob Pope is ranked in the top 10 in the javelin, discus and shot put.

"We've ran the hurdles, jumped the jumps and thrown the throws so much, it's about fine tuning now," Evans said. "I want them to enjoy the moment and to not put pressure on themselves. I want the runners to run with courage and for everyone to dig deep and let their training that they've done show and put it all together."

Curtis: Junior looks for a top 15 finish at state

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Those mistakes, whether hitting into a bunker, out of bounds or into the water or missing a makeable putt are what defines a player, Curtis said.

"We have those humbling moments of going into all the hazards and learning to play smarter," Curtis said. "There's always things you learn from every round. That's what I told our new girls. You're going to make a ton of mistakes. There's a lot of information I learned from making mistakes."

Curtis finished tied for 26th at state in 2015. She said she hopes to

place in the top 15 this year.

"(I'll work on) my short game," Curtis said. "Chipping is where I lost a lot of strokes during the last tournament."

More importantly, she wants to take in the experience.

"I just want to beat myself, have fun with it and stay calm," Curtis said. "The tournament is just dead quiet and it feels intimidating at first. I want to find the peace in that and relax."

What will help is a surprising amount of encouragement from the players she'll be competing against.

"Everyone is so nice," Curtis said. "It's more of a feeling of I want us all to do well, but I want myself to do a little bit better. It's not that I want them to shank it into a hazard. I want to do my best to beat them."

As Curtis attempts to best her performance last year, she'll also be doing what she can to take in a special moment.

"I love being out there," Curtis said. "It's probably my favorite feeling. When they say in school to go to your happy place, that's definitely mine — spending a morning out on the course."



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer file

Dallas junior Kailee Curtis qualified for state for the second time.