

PREP BOYS SOCCER

Walker makes difficult transition

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — From the time he began playing soccer in second grade, Dallas junior Danny Walker has always been about the attack.

His mindset has usually been on one thing: Create goal-scoring opportunities.

Not anymore. Dallas boys soccer coach John Jones was looking for someone to play defense. Walker's height, 6-foot-3, and experience made him an attractive choice to move to defense.

"I watched teammates struggle to get around him during practice," Jones said.

All that remained was getting Walker on board.

"Not really. At first no (it wasn't easy for me to accept)," he said. "But I saw what was best for the team and how to better the team."

And so, the lifelong goal scorer took on a new role — not that it's been easy. As a forward, Walker relied on his speed and ball handling to create opportunities.

"It's a big change," he said. "When I'm up top, usually there's (a pass up the field) and it's a sprint to the goal. On defense you have to mark up. You have to play much more physically."

There are still those moments that Walker gets the itch to go on the attack.

"Sometimes I want to run up with them and get a play going," Walker said. "But I have to hang



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Danny Walker switched positions from striker to defender for the 2016 season.

back. It's a different mindset and knowing where to play."

Walker provides a unique perspective for the defense — that of a forward.

Playing defense has also allowed him to become a better teammate and leader.

"As a forward, I'd watch the defense get beat and get frustrated with them," Walker said. "Now I'm in that position. I know what

they're thinking and I know how forwards play, so I can help the team on defense by sharing."

Despite the drastic change in position, Walker has emerged as a leader.

"He's stepped in and played really well there," Jones said.

Walker's leadership is among the reasons Dallas is hopeful about the program's future — despite the difficulties the team has faced in

previous years.

The Dragons defeated St. Helens 3-2 on Sept. 6 — rallying from a 2-1 halftime deficit.

Cameron Overstreet scored two goals to lead Dallas to the victory.

"They were controlling the ball really well," Jones said. "They felt they were playing better than St. Helens was."

But a 5-0 loss to Benson on Thursday in a match that featured

Soccer

• Dallas' boys soccer team defeated St. Helens 3-2 on Sept. 6 before falling to Benson 5-0 on Thursday.

physical play throughout showed that while Dallas is making progress, the Dragons are very much a work in progress.

"Not only does the team affect our play, but the refs affect our play with how much they'll let us play before they blow their whistle," Walker said. "We try not to let any emotions get involved, but if it's the same guy who gets you every time, you get a little annoyed with them."

Handling different styles of play — and avoiding a letdown after a strong performance — are growing pains the Dragons are slowly learning, but are signs that brighter days are ahead for a program that has struggled mightily in recent years.

"It's something we're working on," Jones said. "It's part of building that winning culture, being consistent and working hard in practice. Being consistent in attendance at practice and with performance on the field. I saw a dip, I felt, in the Benson game. The practices between now and Thursday are extremely important. How do we respond to the highs and lows?"

Dallas plays at Southridge on Thursday at 7:30 p.m. and at Parkrose on Tuesday at 4:30 p.m.

CENTRAL ROUNDUP

Hartford places 19th at XC festival



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Central junior Bailie Hartford placed 19th at the Ash Creek Cross-Country Festival at Western Oregon University on Saturday afternoon.

Itemizer-Observer staff report

MONMOUTH — Central junior Bailie Hartford led the Panthers' girls cross-country team to an 11th-place finish at the Ash Creek Cross-Country Festival on Saturday. Hartford finished 19th in the 5,000-meter run with a time of 20 minutes, 6.2 seconds. Beatriz Trujillo (88th, 22:36.1), Diana Nye (101st, 23:09.0), Bethanie Altamirano (132nd, 24:03.7) and Naomi Vega (144th, 24:28.1) rounded out the team's scorers.

The boys team finished 14th. Zachary Meyer took 68th in 18:06.3. Mat Raines (87th, 18:24.5), Jaydon Aydelotte (90th, 18:26.9), Josh Dickson (100th, 18:30.9) and Jonathon Brown (111th, 18:45.2) also scored for the Panthers.



Meyer

Central will compete at the Silver Falls Oktoberfest Invitational Wednesday (today) at 4 p.m. The Panthers will take part in the Mid-Willamette Conference District Preview meet at Willamette Mission State Park in Brooks on Sept. 21.

FOOTBALL FALLS TO MOUNTAIN VIEW: Central's football team lost to Mountain View 24-14 on Friday. Mountain View built a 14-0 lead before a touchdown pass from Peter Mendazona to

Peter Mason early in the second quarter cut it to 14-7. Mountain View scored just before half to take a 21-7 lead into the break.

Mendazona hit AJ Morales for a 6-yard touchdown pass in the third quarter to pull the Panthers within 21-14, but the Cougars responded with a nine-minute drive that resulted in a field goal.

"The Cougars' grind-it-out style limited us to 40 offensive snaps," coach Shane Hedrick said. "We gave up a few big plays in the first quarter to a hard-nosed Mountain View team."

Mason ended the game with three catches for 57 yards and a touchdown. Running back Alvin Berroa gained 55 yards.

Morales also had 15 tackles on defense. Marlon Tuipulotu had eight tackles.

Central closes out nonleague play at Glencoe Friday at 7 p.m. The game will be held at Hare Field.

GIRLS SOCCER LOSES TO McNARY: Central's girls soccer team fell to McNary 5-1 on Sept. 6. The Panthers trailed 4-0 at the half, before scoring early in the second half to avoid the shutout. Central fell to 0-1-1 overall. The Panthers played North Marion Tuesday after press time. Central hosts Cascade Thursday at 4 p.m.

BOYS SOCCER MATCH CANCELED: Central's boys soccer team's match against McNary on Sept. 6 was canceled due to a lack of officials. The Panthers played North Marion Tuesday after press time. Central plays at Cascade Thursday at 4 p.m.

Itemizer-Observer

Athlete of the Week



Tanner Earhart
Dallas

Earhart, a senior running back for Dallas' football team, dominated against North Eugene. Earhart carried the ball 27 times for 429 yards and seven touchdowns. Five of those scores came in the second half as the Dragons overcame a 25-19 halftime deficit to win 63-35. Earhart's performance helped Dallas improve to 2-0 as the Dragons get ready to open league play against Silverton on Friday night.



David Ribich
Western Oregon

Ribich, a junior cross-country runner, continued his hot start to his season. A week after taking first at the John Frank Oregon State Invitational, Ribich added the Ash Creek Invitational title to his list of accomplishments. Ribich finished the 6.3-kilometer race in 18 minutes, 53.8 seconds, helping the men's team to a second-place finish in the team standings. Ribich will compete at the Sundodger Invitational on Saturday.

To submit nominations for the Itemizer-Observer Athlete of the Week, contact Sports Editor Lukas Eggen at 503-623-2373 or leggen@polkio.com by 9 a.m. on Monday.

See something interesting happening in Polk County? Call us at 503-623-2373. We check out your news tips!

Pain: Cross aims for 16:00

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If he approaches 16 minutes, Cross will be in the mix for a berth to the state meet.

Cross took 18th overall at the Ash Creek Cross-Country Festival on Saturday, finishing in 17:07.6, about a second over his PR, despite having a runner stop and have to leave the race right in front of him.

"Trevor is a beast," Dallas coach Monique Lankheet said. "He is competitive, has an amazing work ethic and is very coachable."

During his freshman season, Cross wasn't ready for the level of training that awaited him in high school, including the distance runs and speed workouts.

This time around, he embraced it.

"It was a lot more laid back in middle school," Cross said. "We train a lot harder (in high school). We know that practices will pay off. The harder we work in practice, the faster we will race. We just have to be there for each other, encourage each other and push each other. We keep each other accountable."

He also learned just how cross-country could truly be a team sport.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Dallas sophomore Trevor Cross passes runners during the boys varsity race at the Ash Creek Cross-Country Festival in Monmouth on Saturday afternoon.

The boys team finished fourth at the MWC District Championships in 2015, four points away from earning a spot to the state meet.

"None of us were in a position to go to state by ourselves, but as a team, we were really close. We all ran together and trusted each other," he said.

This year, the boys varsity team will look markedly different with five of last year's varsity runners graduated.

Dallas cross-country

• Dallas' boys cross-country team finished 25th at the Ash Creek Cross-Country Festival on Saturday. The girls placed 29th.
• Trevor Cross (18th), Ryan Bibler (109th) and Gavin Grass led the boys.
• Alyssa Garner (118th), Jamie English (134th) and Peyton Fast (150th) led the girls.

But the goal remains simple. Work hard, train hard, and leave everything they have on the course. "I love the competition,"

Cross said. "Teaching yourself to endure the pain while racing and seeing if you can do that better than the other racers is a lot of fun."