

2016 ALL-REGION VOLLEYBALL TEAM

MIDDLE BLOCKER

Krista Omlid

Central

Omlid, a junior, was among the MWC's most dangerous middle blocker/outside hitters. Omlid was second for the Panthers in kills with 179 and in aces with 23. "Krista is a very naturally talented player," Central coach Claudine Mendazona said. "She has a lot to offer our program and the potential to play at a high level beyond high school. Offensively and defensively, she was a major contributor for us. She is tough to stop. Offensively, she is very quick to the ball." Omlid earned second team all-MWC honors for her performance. And her killer instinct made her the Panthers' top offensive threat. "She was our go-to," Mendazona said. "She could put the ball away. I expect that she will do big things for us next season."

SETTER

Emma Classen

Dallas

Classen, a sophomore, was the key to

making Dallas' offense go. "Emma is one of the most athletic kids I have ever coached," Dallas coach Shana Lavier said. "She was able to get to most every second ball because of her pure athleticism. With a 26-inch vertical, she was able to put a big block up as a setter. Her left hand made her an offensive threat of her own." Classen earned second team all-MWC honors for her performance and was a big part in Dallas' success during the 2016 season.

OUTSIDE HITTER

Alex Dowdell

Central

The senior came into her own in 2016. Dowdell led the Panthers in kills (203) and in aces (26) and was second in digs (172). Dowdell earned an all-league honorable mention for her performance during the season. She was invaluable to the team's success, Mendazona said. "She was the voice of the Panthers on the court," Mendazona said. "She put in the work to become the player she is. She has an excellent work ethic and a strong commitment to

her team."

LIBERO

Jackie Juarez

Perrydale

The junior libero was a key player during Perrydale's run to the state playoffs in 2016. Juarez, who earned first team all-Casco League honors, was one of the Pirates' unquestioned leaders. She helped an inexperienced squad find success in league play. "We were very dependent on her for her great defense," coach Denise Dickey said. "Every match she played left a lasting impression. She, in my opinion, is one of the best defensive players in the state. She was the core of our very young team."

RIGHT SIDE

Megan Ronco

Central

The senior right side hitter's true value was defined by versatility. "Megan was one of those kids that has played every position for us,"

Lavier said. "Last year she was a middle blocker. This year, she was a right side for us. She had a great attitude about it and was a leader on the team." Despite moving positions, she found ways to excel and thrive in her new roles. Along the way, she earned an all-league honorable mention.

LIBERO

Elizabeth Chavez

Central

The sophomore defensive specialist/libero became one of the Panthers' most important contributors during the 2016 season. Chavez had 202 digs, a 2.20 passing average, and 18 aces. "Elizabeth is another talented player I have been fortunate to coach," Mendazona said. "... Defensively, she did a great job of reading plays and anticipating where she needed to be. She was our libero who chased down and laid out for every out-of-system ball off the court. Every point was important to her, as it should be to all. She has an aggressive, jump-float serve that she earned many aces from." Chavez,

who earned an all-league honorable mention, and as only a sophomore, has the potential to become one of the team's, if not the league's, best players. "I'm very excited to see her grow," Mendazona said.

COACH

Claudine Mendazona

Central

Mendazona helped Central navigate a difficult Mid-Willamette Conference to earn a spot in the state playoffs. "She gives you praise when you do something good," Dowdell said. "She would invite other coaches into our practices to help her see things that she wasn't seeing. She wasn't always the most cheery coach. We knew when we did something bad, she would punish us, like she would make us run for our errors. It helped everyone realize we need to stop making so many errors."

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The 2016 Itemizer-Observer all-region volleyball team was selected by Sports Editor Lukas Eggen, along with heavy input from area coaches.

Dowdell: Volleyball career won't end in high school

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"Coach would always get after us seniors to step up and be a leader," Dowdell said. "I thought, why not me?"

By the end of the season, she was no longer the quiet player content with following. Dowdell was the team's full-blown leader, which makes her the 2016 *Itemizer-Observer's* Volleyball Player of the Year.

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When Dowdell's family moved to Independence prior to her eighth-grade year, it meant a big lifestyle change.

Before the move, she

helped out on her uncle's cattle ranch with various chores and work with horses. Dowdell never had time to play sports, but moving into the city changed all that.

"I just wanted to play a sport," Dowdell said. "I had some friends who played volleyball, so I went out. I thought I would play for a year or two, but that I wasn't going to be very good at it."

Turns out she was a natural. She made Talmadge Middle School's "A" team her eighth-grade year.

"Our coach Andrew Francis would tell me how much potential I have," Dowdell

said. "I thought, let's see how far I can go."

Her biggest challenge? "There are a lot of rules I had no clue even took place," Dowdell said. "You think your job will be easy, but you see quickly that it takes a lot of talent to be able to pass and set."

She made junior varsity her freshman year of high school, then varsity her sophomore season.

"My junior year, I thought this is really fun," Dowdell said. "I want to do this for the rest of my life."

She had all the physical tools to succeed. But something was holding her back. "She used to be very quiet

on the court," Mendazona said. "She was somewhat intimidated by her teammates."

Since Mendazona's request of her senior to lead, Dowdell shed her quiet nature.

"You earn the trust of other players," she said. "When you're talking on the court, or you're there to make the play, you can help inspire other players and they trust you more. That benefits the team."

On the court, she was a versatile player, able to fill in at any position needed.

"I think I was better at reading the opposing teams," Dowdell said. "I

knew what they were doing and was better at moving to the spot they were going to hit or put the ball before it gets there."

Dowdell led the Panthers this season with 203 kills and aces (26) and was second in digs with 172.

She was also the one to lead the team in warm-up stretches or give encouragement during a tough stretch in a match.

"Alex grew tremendously, mentally and physically, in her game," Mendazona said. "... I was pleased with her growth on the court and seeing her take a leadership role and working hard to be a

better player."

Dowdell hopes that volleyball can carry her even further.

The senior plays on a club team with the hopes of getting her name out to a number of colleges.

"Coaches would tell me I could play at either a Division II or Division I school," Dowdell said. "If they think so, hopefully college coaches will."

Time will tell where volleyball takes Dowdell, but the journey has been fun thus far.

"It's amazing to see how far you can come with dedication and hard work," Dowdell said.

Dallas: Ford leads swim team against Silvertown

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SWIMMING DROPPED BY SILVERTON : Senior Jolie-Rae Ford finished first in the girls 200-yard freestyle with a time of 2 minutes, 6.16 seconds during Dallas' swim meet against Silvertown on Dec. 6. She also won the 100 freestyle (58.21 seconds).

Ryan Kennedy took first in the boys 200 freestyle (2:07.94). Kennedy also placed first in the 500 freestyle (5:40.83). Gabe Applegate won the boys 100 butterfly (1:20.16).

Dallas' boys and girls swim teams lost to Silvertown on Dec. 6. The boys fell 117-44, while the girls lost 132-29.

Dallas competed at Crescent Valley Tuesday after press time. The Dragons host the Paul Mannen Invite Thursday at 2:30 p.m. in a special event.

"Dallas has had an invitational in previous years," coach

David Morelli said. "I continued the tradition last year. When I read about Paul after his death and that, as the Athletic Director of Dallas High School, he encouraged invitational tournaments in Dallas, I asked permission from the school and the aquatic center to name our annual invitational after him."

Mannen, who died on April 12, served as Dallas' AD from 1996-99. He was inducted into the Oregon Athletic Directors Association's Hall of Fame in 2009.

The invitational will be a way to honor all that Mannen contributed.

"I know that in his retirement he continued to be present in the community," Morelli said. "... Like Paul, I believe that an invitational brings teams from around the area into Dallas."

A shadow box with Paul's

swim gear and a plaque that will list the champions of the invitational each year.

WRESTLING FINISHES FIFTH AT ROSE CITY CHAMPIONSHIP: Dallas' wrestling team finished fifth at the Rose City Championship on Saturday.

Joseph Foster (126 pounds) finished second to lead the Dragons. Treve Earhart (third, 182), Clay Coxen (fourth, 182), Cody Janssen (fifth, 170) and Ryan Bibler (sixth, 113) also placed.

The Dragons will compete at the Liberty Invitational in Hillsboro Saturday at 9 a.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL LOSES TWO: Dallas' girls basketball team lost to The Dalles 58-50 on Dec. 6 before falling to Churchill 39-37 on Friday. Stats were not available. The Dragons (0-3 overall) played South Eugene Tuesday after press time. Dallas plays at Hillsboro on Friday.

CENTRAL ROUNDUP

Panthers drop home-opener

Itemizer-Observer staff report

INDEPENDENCE — Central's boys basketball team lost its home-opener 60-53 to Philomath on Friday. The Panthers also fell to Liberty 58-56 on Dec. 6.

Alec Barba scored 18 points to lead Central against Philomath, while Peter Mendazona added 14, but the Panthers were outscored 27-8 in the first quarter and could never recover from there.

"We had a tough start on Friday," coach Tim Kreta said. "We had a hard time matching their ener-

gy for the first eight minutes. The kids battled the rest of the game, but couldn't quite make up that difference."

Barba scored 30 points against Liberty, and Andrew Barry added 13 points.

"It was a hard-fought game," Kreta said. "We got down early and needed to battle back defensively. We cut the lead to one in the fourth quarter, unfortunately we could not hit a few crucial free throws down the stretch."

Central went 14-for-25 from the free-throw line.

The Panthers (1-2 overall) play at Stayton on Friday before hosting Cascade Monday at 7 p.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL FALLS TO GRANTS PASS: Central's girls basketball team lost to Grants Pass 38-35 on Dec. 6.

Meagan Mendazona scored a game-high 11 points to lead the Panthers, while Lexi Barba and Katelyn Trevino each scored eight points.

Central's (2-1 overall) game against Summit was canceled. The Panthers play at Stayton on Friday before hosting Cascade Monday at 5:30 p.m. and Churchill on Dec. 21 at 7 p.m.

PERRYDALE ROUNDUP

Girls basketball earns victory

Itemizer-Observer staff report

PERRYDALE — Perrydale's girls basketball team defeated Livingstone Adventist 36-9 on Dec. 6.

But coach Terry Newton knows there's plenty to work on.

"We're playing five to six freshmen and sophomores at least 80 percent of the game, and there are things that need to get better," Newton said.

The Pirates remained undefeated on the season, but a home game against Crosshill Christian Wednesday (today) at 5:30 p.m. and at Falls City Friday at 5:30 p.m. will provide better tests of where the team is at.

"Crosshill with Willamette Valley Chris-

tian are the favorites in the league, I would say," Newton said. "I want to see us come out and play them really tightly. Falls City, it's the Polk County challenge, and we'll have to get after it."

The Pirates remain very much a team that is working out the kinks. But Newton is pleased with progress being shown day in and day out.

"I want to see steady improvement," Newton said. "You can see it in practices. They are starting to put together things and understand concepts better. Sometimes I'm seeing yellow and they're seeing green, but it's all part of the process."

BOYS BASKETBALL WINS

TWO: Perrydale's boys basketball team defeated Livingstone Adventist 56-57 on Dec. 6 and C.S. Lewis 67-35 on Monday.

Five players scored in double figures for the Pirates against C.S. Lewis, including Jacob Pope who was also dominant on the boards, nearly recording a double-double.

"We've been looking for him to do that all season," coach Brian Domes said. "Monday was probably our best balanced-scoring game of the season."

Perrydale plays Crosshill Christian Wednesday (today) at 7 p.m. before playing at Falls City Friday at 7 p.m.

"We're excited to play Crosshill. They've been to the state tournament the last three years and we want to see where we are against them."



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Dallas' boys and girls swim teams fell to Silvertown on Dec. 6.

FALLS CITY ROUNDUP

Girls basketball defeats Mapleton

Itemizer-Observer staff report

FALLS CITY — Falls City's girls basketball team defeated Mapleton 38-24 on Saturday.

The Mountaineers led

29-8 at the half.

Sarah Mack scored 11 points to lead the Mountaineers. Amara Houghtaling added 10 points, Gracie

Tadlock scored nine, and

Emma Burgess scored eight points.

Falls City lost to Crosshill Christian 43-11 on Dec. 6.

The boys basketball team lost to Crosshill

Christian 40-28 on Dec. 6 and fell to Mapleton 52-46 on Saturday.

Austin Burgess led the team in scoring each game, including 17 points

against Mapleton and 14 points against Crosshill Christian. Jeremy Labrado added 13 points against Mapleton.

The boys and girls teams

play at Jewell on Wednesday (today) before hosting Perrydale on Friday.

The girls game begins at 5:30 p.m. with the boys game following at 7 p.m.