



Doug Sams helps swimmers.

(G-T Photo)

Heppner latches on to ex-LaGrande sprinter

Last week Doug Sams was waiting by the telephone in LaGrande for a call from the Forest Service... hoping for a summer job.

He didn't have time to pick up the phone. Sams is the new Heppner swim coach and if his past history in the drink are any omen, then this community grabbed a good one.

Sams walked, sometimes ran, back and forth on the cement pool side Tuesday morning, looking over Sunday morning prospects. The Heppner club opens their summer season with a dual against Pendleton here Sunday morning at 8 a.m.

"Ten laps, one stroke with five seconds rest after every two laps," Sam barks out with a gravel voice he said came with Monday's practice.

And the swimmers splash in and take off, with Sams walking the pool side, aiding them mentally with physical tips on how to stay on top of the water and get from one end to the other quicker.

Sams has a history in swimming that started when he was 10 in LaGrande. He even helped coach when he was 13.

At age 16, he swam in two Oregon Junior Olympics meets, taking fifth in the 50 meter freestyle and third in his team's relay squad.

That relay team held district records in LaGrande till last year. Who broke it? Sam's little brother and his LaGrande relay teammates.

Sams swam on five LaGrande district teams. He can say that he knows each team in the league and, he says, he knows what they have.

Sams isn't only a barking go-get-em swim coach. He looks at the aquatics with an amount of psychology and logic, too. "I got a lot out of swimming," the freestyle sprinter said. "It helped in other athletics and even, I guess, in my schoolwork."

"Swimming helps discipline you, makes you do your schoolwork and physically helps in other sports."

Sams played football, basketball, and baseball at LaGrande. Two years ago, he went to Oregon State University and started to play football there.

Not a big man, but muscular, Sams wrenched his knee, messing up cartilage and ligaments and virtually destroyed his playing career.

He is manager of the OSU squad this year as a junior and will make all the Beaver games. As a senior next year, he hopes to be a junior varsity coach.

Sams would have swam at OSU but budget woes thwarted the Beaver brigade in the water.

Kathy Kennison was to be the Heppner coach but the recently married young woman decided to spend more time with her husband. Sams jumped at the chance and is working in well.

And working is the only way to describe it. Sams has built

himself into a vigorous days schedule but only seems happy to accommodate another hour into the day.

His practice day starts at 7 a.m. and if he gets his way it won't end till 10 p.m.

At 7 a.m., Sams works with the older swimmers. At 8:30, the 11-12-year-olds and few younger swimmers hit the water. They go till 10 a.m. and then Sams gets a break.

At 12, he works with 8-and-under till 12:30 p.m. and from 12:30-1 p.m., the beginners down to 3 and 4-years-old share his expertise.

From 1-2 p.m. is a stroke clinic for any of the swimmers that want to develop better techniques. A little slack time evolves before Sams starts his 5-6 p.m. practice for starts and turns and a little fun with water polo.

Sams would also like to add a 9-10 p.m. practice for kids that work during the day.

What kind of team does Sams feel Heppner has this year? A darned good one.

"From what I've heard and seen, these kids have really improved over last year," Sams says proudly. "I expect them to repeat as district B champs."

Sams says one of the main ingredients working with him is the attitude of his swimmers.

"They really want to work hard and they have a lot of pride," he said. "We have to work out strokes, fundamentally. But, they're willing to work."

Last year about 25 kids were out. This year he has close to 50 signed up and Sams said 40 were at practice Monday.

Looking down a long list of names, Sams picked out some hopefuls for Sunday but he couldn't get through the list without saying "they all have potential... I'm still learning their names."

He named the Hollands, a strong looking group headed by Diane, 16 and followed by Dale, 14 and Doug, 12. He also picked out Rick Klaus, 12; Sandra Ward, a good breaststroker; Kelly Bergstrom, age 9; Sandy Kelscuf, 11 and Lottie Laughlin.

"I don't see any reason why we can't win all our duals," Sams said. A Heppner invitational is in the working and Sams said the club should win that too.

"We want to get trophies for first, second and third and I want to see these kids take as many as we can... they have good potential."

A wet headed swimmer slides up to pool side after ten laps and yells, "Hey, what do we do now coach?"

"Another ten laps," Sams barks back, "with two seconds rest after every two laps. We have to get ready."

Doug Sams is bullish on Heppner swimmers and Heppner swimmers are bullish on him.

The Giants and the Indians are knotted in a first place tie in Heppner Little League action this week.

Both squads share first with identical, 9-3 records. Second place Dodgers are way back at 5-9 and the Braves, bringing up the rear, are fourth and last with a 2-10 record.

Kinzua rips Navy, 11 - 1

Scoring four runs in the sixth sparked the Kinzua softball team to a 11-1 victory over Navy. The win marks a 6-3 record in the Hermiston league. The Heppner team scored all their runs in ten run, five-inning contest.

Kinzua jumped to an early lead with runs by shortstop Keith Burnett and third baseman, Laverne Van Marter in the first inning.

Navy closed the gap by scoring a run in the top of the second. Kinzua came right back in the bottom with second baseman Kevin Dick getting a base with a walk and right fielder Mike Smith hitting a double.

This brought up pitcher Gary Kemp who got on base with an error and brought Dick home. Tim Bellamy hit a single and sent Smith across the plate before the inning was over.

Smith came up with another run in the bottom of the fourth to enable Kinzua to take a 5-2 lead.

Kinzua never allowed Navy to tag another run. Kinzua went on to score two runs in the fifth on hits from Jamie Sands and Marvin Lane. In the sixth, Burnett scored the first of four runs on a single and was followed by Mike Rowell, Marvin Lane and Gerald Seals.

Kinzua whips Herald, 15 - 5

Kinzua scored six runs in the second to outblast the Hermiston Herald, 15-5, in a five inning game, last Wednesday night at Hermiston Junior High field.

Centerfielder Bill Baker started the game with a double for Kinzua. He was followed by a double from Mike Rowell who scooped with Baker from hits by Jamie Sands, Marvin Lane and Gerald Seal.

Hermiston Herald failed to score in the first but came up with two runs in the second. Kinzua blasted the ball for six big runs in the second. The first man out, Tim Bellamy walked to first. Bill Baker, Lavern Van Marter, Mike Rowell, Jamie Sands followed with singles. GERAL Seal slugged a triple to enable three more runs to score. Mike Smith was unable to score as he was left on base.

Good pitching by Kinzua's Gary Kemp held Hermiston Herald scoreless in the third and fourth. In the third Kinzua's Van Marter smashed the ball in the left field for a home run.

Each team scored three runs in the fifth. Kinzua had Rowell, Van Marter and Sands crossing the plate.

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