

The championship that got away

The basketball Gulls have yet to win a state championship. But they’ve sure come close. As they look ahead to the tournament ahead, players past, present and future are watching a team with a long legacy of success.

Mark Wickman’s name comes up almost immediately in every conversation of Seaside’s basketball stars.

“I had a great player, Mark Wickman,” Coach Larry Elliott, who led the team from 1971-96, said. “He went on to Linfield, was a little All-American academically as well as basketball.”

The Gulls have never won a state championship, but Wickman’s scoring dominance — abetted by the play of his teammates — in the 1973-74 season brought them close.

Seaside alum and 1973-74 basketball team member Scott Maltman recalled “some good athletes those years: Mark Wickman, Lee Wilson, my younger brother Michael, Frank Sheppard was our center. Mike Hartman was the other guard my senior year.”

Others in a team photo include Mitch Mooney, Tom Bates, Josh Gizdavich, Fritz Beckford and Jim Norling.

“If we wanted to be in the gym, we were in the gym,” Maltman said in January.

Wickman is not easy to catch up with today — he’s frequently on the road as a financial planner — but we did manage to catch him for a phone conversation on one of his drives in southern Oregon.

Wickman transferred to Seaside High School from a small religious school in the Olympic Peninsula for the 1972-73 school year.

“The two prior years, the Gulls hadn’t won many games,” Wickman said.

The team finished 6-4 in the very tough Cowapa League in 1972-73, beating two league powerhouses, Scappoose and Tillamook, during the regular season. Wickman was picked for first team all-league. Dave Allen, Dave Butler and Tom Maltman gained second team honors, setting the next season’s stage.

“I knew that going into the ’73-74 season we could be a very good team,” Wickman said. “We were big, we had guards, shooters, we started 6-6, 6-5, 6-4 and we had 6-5, 6-4 coming off the bench as well.”

The Gulls reeled off a 9-1 record by early January, the only loss coming to Portland’s Class AAA Jackson.

Seaside was ranked No. 1 in the Class AA Associated Press poll. “They know they can’t sit back and rest on their record,” Elliott said at the time.

“Oh my goodness, it was crazy,” Wickman said. “Just crazy. We won our tournament and another tournament. The gym was packed throughout the year. The No. 1 ranking was something people really got behind.”

You think “Go Gulls” fever is big this year? With two tournament wins, “busloads of

SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX



fans” followed the Gulls to every game, Wickman said.

“We had a very good following on the road,” he said. “This was the event, every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday night in town to go to, and people went.”

The season had its share of big games. Wickman set a school scoring record against Clatskanie, pouring in 38 points, 24 in the second half. He also hauled down 24 rebounds and had eight steals.

Cascade was dominant, as were the highly ranked Rainier Columbians.

“I had a game where I was 15-15 from the field and they still beat us,” Wickman said. “They just had our number. They had an all-state guy that was about my size, and another guy, second team all-state.”

Looking back at the record, Wickman’s memory holds true. In a February 1974 game, the Columbians shot 80 percent in the first half and 90 percent in the second half to trip up Seaside.

The level of play remained high all year, as did the excitement. A January contest brought what the Signal’s sportswriter called “cardiac basketball.”

Scott Maltman was the hero of a showdown with Neah-Kah-Nie, making a layup in the final second of the game to win 48-46.

In another buzzer-beater, senior forward Beckford gave the Gulls an 50-48 overtime win against Scappoose with a reverse layup with 14

seconds on the clock. That win put the Gulls into the State AA Tournament in Eugene.

Their first matchup was against No. 2 Cascade. The game pitted two all-state centers — Jeff Koenig played the position for Cascade — and though it was the first game of the tournament, it was considered the jewel in the crown.

Wickman still regrets the trophy that might have been.

Seaside played 3 1/2 quarters of some of its best ball of the year, the Signal reported, “man-handling the Cougars and almost breaking the game open at several points.”

With a little more than two minutes remaining, Seaside led 57-53 and had a one-and-one bonus situation at the foul line.

The Gulls missed the opportunity and in the next 120 seconds Cascade reeled off points as the Gulls lost the ball repeatedly on the full court press.

Cascade capitalized on an 11-point burst for a 74-61 victory.

Wickman scored 33 points in that game, 14 rebounds and “completely handled” Koenig for the first three quarters, but he and the team ran out of gas as Cascade’s Koenig and all-state guard Dennis Federico led the Cougars’ comeback.

“I’d had a real good game,” Wickman recalled. “They came back, they had a couple of guys who kept plugging away, we made a few bad decisions and they took advantage.”

Wickman was “absolutely crushed.”

“I felt we were the better team,” he said. “It sounds selfish, but knowing what I know now, I would have said, ‘Give me the ball.’”

After the loss, the Gulls regained their composure, rolling off three victories in a row, winning the consolation trophy and finishing

fifth in the state. In one of those tournament games, Wickman set a record tying the individual field goal mark in a tournament, 15. He was named to the all-tournament team and was the Class AA rebounding leader.

Cascade went on to beat the Gulls’ nemesis, Rainier, for the title, 56-50.

“I know we provided the best matchup against them than anyone at the tournament,” Elliott told the Signal at the time.

The next year, the Gulls earned a repeat trip to the tournament, winning their first two games before being stymied.

Wickman followed his Gulls career with even greater glory, playing ball at Linfield College — the alma mater of Coach Elliott.

At Linfield, Wickman was a three-time All-American and four-time All-Northwest Conference and all-district basketball player. He was a nearly straight-A student.

Wickman’s bid at a major college tournament came in his sophomore year at Linfield, when they faced a team from South Carolina. “That was one and done as well,” Wickman said. “Their starting lineup was 6-11, 6-10, 6-6, 6-6 and 6-2. We gave up about 4 inches at every position, another one where we’re leading with two minutes to go and I fouled out.”

Wickman’s career total of 2,357 points has never been equaled at Linfield. Nor his career rebound total of 1,109.

Wickman came oh-so-close to a career in the National Basketball Association, drafted by the Trail Blazers the season after they won the title. “They won the title in ’77, my year was ’78,” Wickman said. “I went to rookie camp, played a little bit in the summer league and then got cut. I played four years in Europe. I coached and taught for a little while, then went into financial services.”

Today he and his family split their time between McMinnville and Bend.

Wickman looks back on his time in Seaside and Coach Elliott. “Tongue in cheek part is, he never ages,” Wickman said. “He looks the same as he did 40 years ago. He was a Linfield guy as well. Certainly that played a role in my decision. I did a lot of camps there, looking back 40-plus years, I look back and see his growth as a coach. That was really, really something that was encouraging to me.”

Perhaps with a little bit of irony, the Gulls are back up against the team that took it all in 1974, the Cascade Cougars, on Saturday night at the Gulls’ Nest.

Wickman has encouraging words for this year’s Gulls as they take to the court once again with hoop dreams.

“I just know they were there last year in that championship game and they have to realize how great an advantage having been there last year in that championship game was and how they can use that to their advantage this year,” Wickman said. “It’s a confidence issue. Absolutely a confidence issue. Believing in themselves, they can win.”

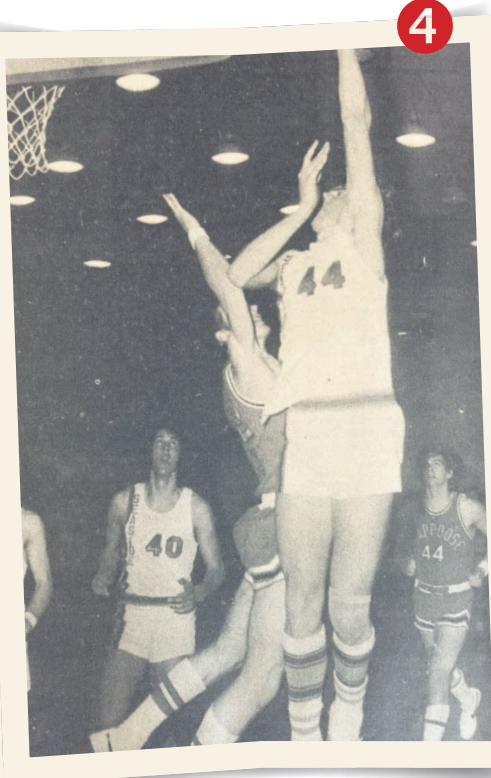


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Mark Wickman
1973-74 basketball team member



Mark Wickman, 6'6" Cowapa leading scorer and rebounder, scorer and rebounder for the Gulls.



1 1973-74 team photo.

2 Mike Maltman played a big scoring role for the 1973-74 Gulls.

3 1973-74 stand-outs Mark Wickman, Scott Maltman, Mike Maltman and Fritz Beckford.

4 Mark Wickman dominated on the court in 1973-74.

FILE PHOTOS

My hospital visit didn’t make for much of a vacation

In my last column there were two typos which made it sound silly and that always bugs me. You probably figured them out. The married couple were two halves of the same whole; not “where,” and the leg amputation was one that did not heal, not “walk.” Sorry. I hand print my copy and often it’s not legible to the transcriber. I need to try harder.

Valentine’s Day I went to the hospital with Montezuma’s Revenge — a lovely time. Montezuma and I haven’t spoken for ages. The visit ran into my son’s birthday on the 15th. A “friend” asked if I were vacationing. Not so you could notice!

SCENE & HEARD
CLAIRE LOVELL



Stormy weather was fun to watch out the window when I was cozy inside, except when the lights went out at midnight and we were on generator for two or three minutes. Disconcerting.

I discovered a lot of unpleasant things about myself, except that it comes with the territory. Nurses and assistants were so plentiful, there

were many names to learn. One aide (my word) who got the unpleasant jobs, had a Spanish name which she said meant “a rock before it became a star.” I thought that was beautiful. Everyone, from E.R. to discharge, was so nice, except for putting me in room 213. Maybe that caused me to stay three days. Ha.

Has anyone else seen the three deer that used to come to my back yard or know what happened to the mama with the broken leg? Was there ever an accident on the highway, which took one of the fawns, too? They’ve been a part of my outside scene for so long, I’d like to

know how everything turned out.

Most outstanding news in the paper recently was the article that told us that Packy had died the day before. I haven’t been to the zoo for ages although there was a time when every important detail of Packy’s progress was fascinating to us all. His birth started a whole new circumstance in the zoo industry. I wonder if TB is a common ailment among elephants.

I’ve never been a fan of legalizing marijuana sales and I do believe the time will come when we will regret having so many (or any) outlets. It makes sense to allow it in

pharmacies for the conditions it alleviates but anything mind altering, it seems to me, would be dangerous on the highways. I think it’s cool that our shop is next to the police station.

I had a phone “outage” on Monday after my illness and got upset because I couldn’t make any calls. I’d forgotten to check what had happened before — another phone off the hook. Tsk.

Laugh lines

Pick: “Did you hear about the kidnapping at City Park?”
Pat: “No, what happened?”
Pick: “His mother woke him up!”