

Gulls look to 'earn their wings'

By Gary Henley
Seaside Signal

Having endured the last two years with very young lineups on the field, the Seaside Gulls are ready to "earn their wings," so to speak, in 2017.

Even so, the Gulls will still be one of the youngest teams in the Cowapa League, as they played the 2016 season with six freshmen and three sophomores on their varsity roster.

Many of those players started or were more than part-time contributors for a team that struggled to a 6-20 finish, 2-13 in league play.

But the Gulls have already shown that they've made strides, early in the



DANNY MILLER/EO MEDIA GROUP

Scott Plampin attempts tagging out an Estacada runner at second base as Seaside faced off against Estacada at Broadway Field in Seaside.

2017 season. They advanced to the championship game of their own tournament, losing to Hockinson (Wash.) in the final.

"I see us improving this

year," said coach Joel Dierickx, entering his 20th year at Seaside. "We're improving and getting better every day, and we'll see how that plays out."

Seaside Baseball

COACH: Joel Dierickx, 20th year

2016: 6-20 (2-13 league)

KEY LOSSES: Jacob Bassett, Michael Lewis

KEY RETURNERS: Dawson Blanchard, Jr.; Otto Hoekstre, Sr.; Gage McFadden, So.; Scotty Plampin, Sr.; Dylan Wallis, Sr.; Brent Walsh, Sr.; Payton Westerholm, So.

when there's three Cowapa teams in the final eight of the state playoffs, as there was last season.

As it is in most sports, the Cowapa will be the toughest league in the state at the 4A level, with Astoria, Banks, Scappoose and Valley Catholic all legitimate state title contenders.

"It's as tough as ever," Dierickx said. "Astoria, Banks, Valley Catholic, Scappoose ... are all right up there."

The Gulls

The good news: the Gulls had just two seniors last year, and return most of their starting lineup intact.

A more experienced Seaside team will have four seniors on the field, with three juniors among the regulars.

Returning seniors include catcher/outfielder Otto Hoekstre, pitcher/infielder Scotty Plampin, outfielder/pitcher Dylan Wallis, and infielder/pitcher Brent Walsh, who is "solid on the mound and behind the plate and as a middle infielder," Dierickx said.

Dawson Blanchard, a 6-foot junior outfielder/utility player, will be one of the Gulls' big hitters at the plate this season. Just recently, he had three hits in the first of two Sunday games in the Seaside tournament, with a two-run home run in the second game.

Ashton Boyd enters his junior year, and "we're trying to find a spot for him," Dierickx said. "He's grown a lot, he's putting the ball in play and doing a great job."

The Cowapa

Success in basketball just hasn't carried over into baseball for the Gulls, who are a combined 5-40 in league games over the last three years.

Of course, it's not easy




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