

After championship season, Gulls to defend crown

By Gary Henley
Seaside Signal

Defending state champions.

That's a pretty nice title to enter a season with, as the Seaside boys basketball team will.

The Gulls certainly earned it last year, winning 23 of 24 games, including their final six, which included a 71-63 victory over Valley Catholic in the state championship game.

Now comes the tough part — keeping the title while every team you play is trying to take it away.

“We had a target on our back all last year, from what we had done the previous year,” said Seaside coach Bill Westerholm, entering his 20th year. “We know (the target) is going to be there. Teams are going to come after us, because we're one of the teams that has shown to be successful the last five or six years and can compete, year in and year out. It's a good position to be in.”

And keep in mind: Seaside is still the best in the Cowapa League, and for the last three years, the best in the Cowapa League has ended up in the state championship game. So don't be surprised to see the Gulls right back in Forest Grove playing for another state title in March.

The Cowapa

The toughest part for Seaside may be winning a league title. It's all downhill once they get to the state tournament.

“Once again, it will be a tough league,” Westerholm said. “Valley Catholic has a lot back — they're going to be tall and physical; Banks has some of their big guns back, Dalton Renne and Blake Gobel, and they'll be

in the running for one of the top spots in state.

“Tillamook finished strong last year and they get most of their team back. Scappoose has some good athletes and lost only two seniors. Astoria has good height. We should be right in the mix in league, and right in the mix of the state playoff run.”

The Gulls

Seaside spent most of the boys soccer season ranked No. 1 in the state, and most of the football season ranked in the top five. Most members of the basketball team played one of the two sports.

The Gulls came up short of state championships in both, which could serve as an inspiration for basketball.

“They had a bit of disappointment from not going as far as they had hoped,” Westerholm said of the fall sports athletes. “They all wanted to go a little farther, but that may benefit us this winter.”

First off, the Gulls will miss last year's seniors — Jackson Januik, Attikin Babb, Hunter Thompson and Otto Hoekstre.

But, the Gulls still have a Januik (Chase), and a Thompson (Duncan), with returners who experienced last year's state title.

“Colton Carter is a natural leader,” Westerholm said. “He's a senior who hasn't played much varsity, but he leads us in practice. Then we have Payton (Westerholm) and Chase — they know the routine and played significant roles on last year's team.

“Payton is going to be the point guard, and Chase is still in the off-wing role. Then we have Duncan Thompson, who will move into a starting spot at low-post. He can step out and play the wing, too.

“Colton will be a low-post



Seaside players and coaches smile for a photo after winning the 4A State Championship game in Forest Grove.



Seaside fans cheer after a point as Seaside faces off against Valley Catholic in the 2017 4A State Championship game.

who provides some toughness and rebounding inside.”

The Gulls are not very big, but they were the smallest team in the state tournament last year, so no worries.

Coach Westerholm said, “Payton is 6-1, Chase 5-10, Duncan 6-1, Ryan Hague is

almost 6-2 — he will be starting at wing; Brayden Johnson is 6-foot, a sophomore with good basketball skills; Beau Johnson (So.) can shoot it from the outside; Dylan Meyer (Jr.) has more of a big

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Duncan Thompson goes up for a shot as Seaside faces off against Cascade in round one of the 4A State Championship.