

GULLS SEEK A CHAMPIONSHIP 3-PEAT

By Gary Henley
Seaside Signal

Seaside athletes have been making a lot of history over the last four years, in many sports.

The Gulls are on the verge of making some huge history this winter. If Seaside can win its third straight boys basketball state championship (and the Gulls are heavy favorites), they will be the first 4A team to do so (West Linn won four straight 6A titles, from 2013-16).

Seaside has been to the state championship game in each of the last three years, won the last two, and their four all-league players are all back.

With their lineup of all-state players, led by their state Coach of the Year, the Gulls will be everyone's favorite this season.

The coaches agree, since Seaside was the only team in the state to be a unanimous No. 1-ranked team in the preseason coaches poll.

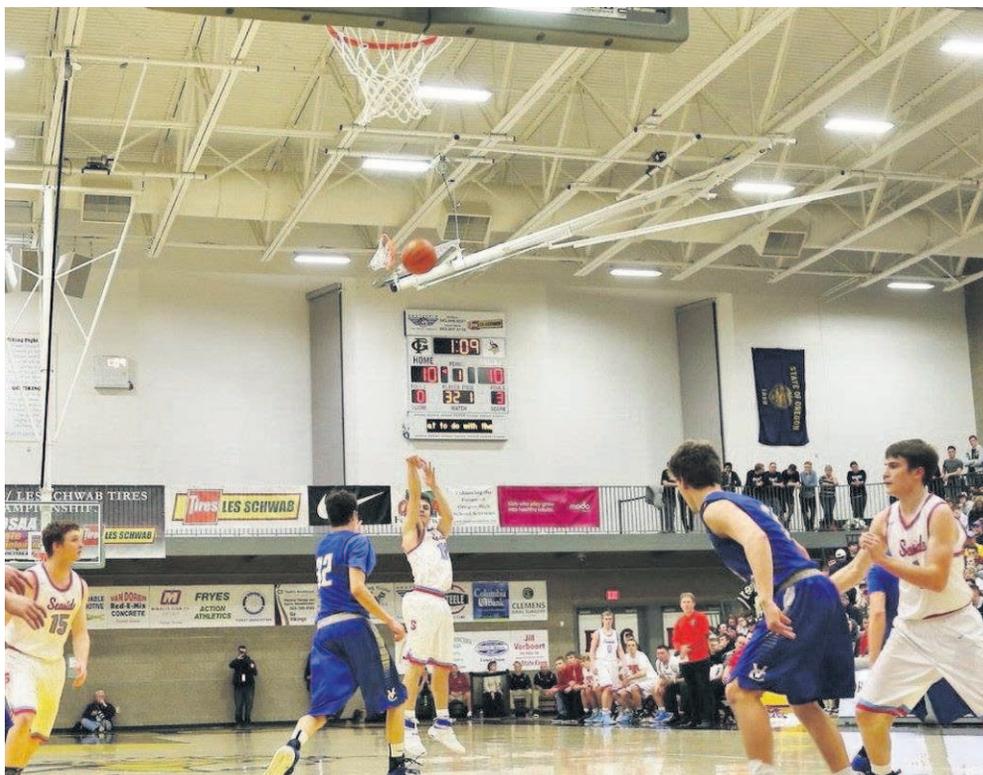
The target on their backs "will be there," said Seaside coach Bill Westerholm. "Everybody knows we're unanimous in the coaches poll, and rightfully so. We have everybody coming back."

Or, as Chase Januik put it after last year's state championship game: "We're going to be better than ever next year. We'll be looking for a three-peat."

The Cowapa

While it's no secret that the Gulls are the best team at the 4A level, the Cowapa is clearly the best league.

A Cowapa League team has been in each of the last four state championship games (2015 champion Scappoose is no longer a part of the league). Last year's state title game was



JEFF TER HAR

Brayden Johnson is one of the returning Seaside team leaders.

expected to be Seaside and Banks, and when the Braves didn't make it, Valley Catholic took their place in the championship game, won by the Gulls, 48-44.

In fact, the toughest part of any season for Seaside is the league season, in which three different teams (Banks, Scappoose and Tillamook) managed to beat the Gulls last year.

While the Gulls are back and stronger than ever, Scappoose has moved to Class 5A, Banks lost three all-league players (including league MVP Dalton Renne), and the Valiants lost two all-leaguers.

"Banks is going to be very good," Westerholm said. "(Jacob) Slifka is the same type of player that Renne was. He will be a junior, and will have a great opportunity.

"Valley Catholic beat Scappoose by 45 (Wednesday)," he

SEASIDE BOYS

COACH: Bill Westerholm, 21st year

2017-18: 22-5 (7-3 Cowapa)

PLAYOFFS: State champions. Defeated Valley Catholic in 4A state championship.

ALL-LEAGUE LOSSES: None

ALL-LEAGUE RETURNERS: Ryan Hague, Jr., Chase Januik, Sr., Duncan Thompson, Sr., Payton Westerholm, Sr.

said. "Coach (Joel) Sobotka will try to speed things up and put points on the board, and press more. And he's got some players who can do that."

Astoria is "going to be senior-dominated this year," he said. "If Ryan Stenblom gets his knee back in shape completely, he will give them some strength at point guard.

"Josh (Olson) and Ian (Hunt) have improved tremendously on the offensive end and they've got some height, so they're going to give teams problems. You can never look by anybody in our league."

The Gulls

The familiar names are all back: seniors Chase Januik, Dylan Meyer, Duncan Thompson and Payton Westerholm, and juniors Ryan Hague, Beau Johnson and Brayden Johnson. All have state championship rings, and most have two.

"For the most part, we have our pieces back," coach Westerholm said. "We just have to find two or three kids to fit some roles. That will be anyone from Brayden to Dylan Meyer. Stephen Sny-



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Duncan Thompson goes up for a shot as Seaside faces off against Cascade in round one of the state championship in Seaside.

PREDICTION:
The Gulls get their three-peat. State champions.

der had a good summer, and Gavin Rich shoots the ball really well.

"Ledger Pugh and Samson Sibony will have opportunities to play varsity. We have five returning starters, so its going to be hard to find playing time," he said. "Guys who would start at a lot of schools are going to be playing JV and swinging to varsity."

The current problem will be getting in basketball shape, after half of the team was playing football up until last week, following Seaside's run to the state championship game.

"It will take us a while to get our legs underneath us," said Westerholm, who will face one of his toughest pre-season schedules in years.

"Stayton is a top five team, and we have Marshfield, Marist and Dayton, which will be in the running for a 3A state championship," he said. "We'll play Ridgeview in a tournament, and if we win that game we'll play Pendleton or Bend, and if we win those, we would probably play Thurston (the defending 5A state champion). Hopefully we'll be .500 by the time we get to league."