



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT Seaside's Brayden Johnson (3) leaps for a ball in the end zone, in a foggy state championship game in November (Colin Murphey). Gretchen Hoekstre had a record-setting, state title-winning season for the Seaside track team (Gary Henley). Seaside guard Payton Westerholm, left, chases down a ball in a state tournament win over North Marion (Jeff Ter Har). Seaside's boys golf team, following their second place finish at the state meet (Seaside High School photo).



Big year for Seaside sports

By GARY HENLEY
Seaside Signal

If someone were to write a book on Seaside sports for the just-completed school year, a working title might be something like: "Second place is better than no place: The story of the 2018-19 Seaside Seagulls."

It was indeed a year to remember for Seaside High School athletics.

One sport played in its first state championship game since 1994. Another sport made its fourth trip in four years to the state title game.

In the spring, a group of athletes teamed up to take on a big school powerhouse in a battle for a state title on the links, while one athlete won two state titles in one record-setting season.

Just make sure you remember the names. Because athletes who were walking the halls of Seaside High over the last nine months will someday have their pictures hanging in the school's Hall of Fame.

It began in the fall, as Jeff Roberts entered his final year as the Seaside football coach, determined to make 2018 his best year.

He had help, with senior quarterback Payton Westerholm, an offensive line that had three of its five starters earn first team all-state honors, and a running back who put up numbers that may never be matched.

The Gulls opened the season with a redemption win over the team that ended their 2017 season.

Originally scheduled to play the Henley Hornets in Eugene, the game was moved to Seaside, where the Gulls squashed the Hornets 55-13.

That was the first of six straight wins that included victories over Marist (33-22), Gladstone (70-46), Astoria (55-7) and Valley Catholic (64-8).

Seaside's road to the league title took a wrong turn in Week 7, when the Banks Braves came to Broadway Field and shocked Seaside with a dramatic 10-7 win over the Gulls.

Seaside fans had plenty of opportunities to see their team, which played seven of its first 10 games on their home turf.

Ranked as a No. 3 seed entering the state playoffs, Seaside defeated Cascade (50-7) and Estacada (44-42) in the first two rounds, then knocked off Gladstone (the only team to defeat Banks) in the semifinals, 23-19.

Then it was on to the state title contest, Seaside's first trip to a championship football game since Stubby Lyons took the Gulls to the '94 game at Autzen Stadium.

On a dark and foggy night Nov. 24, Seaside's championship dreams ended in a Hillsboro haze, as Banks rallied from a first half deficit to beat the Gulls in an all-Cowapa League final, 31-20.

"Our kids rallied, never gave up, never quit, and still had an opportunity," Roberts said after the game, his final as the Seaside coach. "But it stings. It stings a lot.

"We've turned this program around," he added. "The expectation is for them

to be good people. To do the right thing, to be men of character, men of class, men of commitment, and that leads to the product on the field. And that's what I told them. I'm super proud of them. It's the best season we've had in 25 years."

Running back Alex Teubner was the driving force for the Gulls, rushing for 2,420 yards and scoring 44 touchdowns in 12 games.

Roberts will turn the keys over to assistant coach Aaron Tanabe next season.

"I'll have fond memories forever," he said. "The program's in good hands. Aaron is going to do a fantastic job. We'll be back."

It was the first state title for Banks in 98 years.

Also in the fall, Seaside boys soccer was ranked 10th before a season-ending loss in the state quarterfinals.

Gulls rule the court

For the 2018-19 winter season, all eyes in Oregon 4A boys basketball were on the Gulls, in their drive for a three-peat.

Heavily favored to win their third straight title, the Gulls certainly looked like favorites in the regular season.

After a 3-2 start, Seaside won 17 in a row, including victories over big school powers South Eugene, Bend and Thurston in the Summit Holiday Tournament.

The only league loss was to Banks, a 54-53 setback. To break the tie for first in the league standings, the Braves and Gulls met two days later in Tillamook, where the Gulls defeated Banks 51-42 (but still finished ranked second behind the Braves).

At the state tournament in Forest Grove, the winning continued with victories over North Marion and Stayton. Seaside's drive for a third straight championship was looking like a sure thing.

In the state championship game against Banks, the Gulls led 35-24 with 5:34 left in the third quarter.

But in a replay of the football state championship, the Braves rallied behind Blake Gobel. Banks tied the game at the end of the third quarter, gradually built a nine-point lead in the fourth, then held off the Gulls in the final minutes. The final score: Those darn Braves 62, Seaside 56.

And just like that, the Gulls' March Madness turned to March Sadness.

"They're feeling low," Seaside coach Bill Westerholm said after the game. "These kids have come a long ways. Most of our seniors have either played in or been on the bench for three straight championships. So it hurts 'em to lose."

He added, "You can't finish first every year. We got beat by a good Banks team. It's been a great ride with these seniors. We have a good young group coming in, so we're going to be just fine."

The winter season also included a state playoff appearance for the Seaside girls basketball team, and in wrestling, Andrew Gastelum and Luke Nelson posted Seaside's first wins in the state tournament since 2006.

Nelson eventually finished fifth at 220 pounds.

Hoekstre highlights spring season

With many of the same athletes who spent the fall and winter seasons racking up wins, Seaside baseball had hopes of battling Banks for another race to another championship in another sport.

The Braves made it, but the Gulls didn't. Banks won the 4A state title in baseball with a 3-1 win over Henley, the same team that defeated Seaside in a first round game, 12-0.

Instead, Seaside's success shifted to golf and track.

The Seaside girls golf team made a late-season run and qualified their entire team for the state match in Redmond, where the Lady Gulls finished ninth in the team standings.

Meanwhile, the Seaside boys golf team put themselves in serious contention for their first state title since winning back-to-back championships in 2014 and '15.

The only team standing in the way of coach Jim Poetsch's team was (no, not Banks) Marist, which was coming off a state championship at the 5A level in 2017.

The OSAA moved Marist to Class 4A for the 2018-19 school year, and the Spartans — competing on their home course in the state tournament — just had too much firepower for the Gulls, who finished second to Marist for the third time in the season.

That gave Seaside its third runner-up showing in its third different sport (football, basketball, golf) in the same school year.

Still, at least one Seaside athlete was standing on the very top of the awards stand.

Already signed and sealed to compete in track at Brigham Young University, senior Gretchen Hoekstre had a memorable final season with the Gulls.

She spent much of the season ranked as the nation's top female shot putter, and Oregon's best in the discus.

And Hoekstre came through in the state meet at Mt. Hood Community College.

She set a state meet record in the discus (156 feet, 11 inches), then won the shot put with her very first throw of 43-8 $\frac{3}{4}$.