Pride of the Panthers

Cousins Jaiden Bea and Savea Mansfield are the last in a family line that has shaped Washougal girls basketball.
College-bound cousins next link in First Family of Washougal girls hoops

By MICAH RICE
The Columbian

T he roots of the family tree that has been so fruitful for Washougal High School athletics can be found in the hills outside of town.

That’s where, on the property owned by Jaiden Bea’s parents, you’ll find a concrete basketball court inside a large barn.

It’s a court that has seen plenty of use. Bea, her three older brothers and six cousins have spent countless hours there playing basketball during family gatherings.

“We call it barn basketball,” Bea said. “It’s pretty fun. Guys versus girls. The girls usually win.”

That’s not surprising when you look at the basketball talent in the Bea family tree.

There’s Jaiden and her cousin Savea Mansfield, who are standout seniors on the Washougal girls basketball team and have both signed to play college basketball.

There’s also their cousins Beyonce and Skylar Bea.

As a senior in 2019, Beyonce Bea led Washougal to its first state girls basketball championship and was named Class 2A state player of the year. Her younger sister, Skylar, followed in her footsteps to play at the University of Idaho.

There’s Jaiden and her cousin Savea Mansfield, who are standout seniors on the Washougal girls basketball team and have both signed to play college basketball.

“Beyonce is almost a perfect model,” Savea Mansfield said. “It’s goofy ball. We kind of messed around.”

Bea and Mansfield have played on the same teams since second grade. Things got more focused in middle school, when both began to play club basketball.

They also watched Beyonce begin to garner attention as one of the best players in Southwest Washington. She was named 2A Greater St. Helens League MVP as a sophomore en route to becoming Washougal’s all-time leader in points (1,761), rebounds (1,037) and blocks (234).

As freshmen on varsity, Jaiden Bea and Mansfield remember Beyonce Bea as a stellar player and leader.

“Beyonce is almost a perfectionist in many ways,” Jaiden Bea said. “In everything you want to be game-like or game speed. Let’s do the drill and get better through it. That’s the key thing I learned. Let’s make the most of our time and get better as we’re doing it.”

Community through sports

Sports have always been a part of life for Jaiden Bea and her three older brothers — Brandon, Blaine and Brevan.

For Jaiden Bea, it started with soccer.

“Our parents kick-started that to have us active and be part of things in the community with our friends,” she said. “All of our family would come to the games. It grew from there.”

It wasn’t long before basketball became Jaiden’s favorite sport.

“Looking back at that experience, it’s crazy to think it was three or four years ago.”

That would be a great way to end our high school careers,” Mansfield said. “We’re never going to take anything for granted.”

Washougal seniors Savea Mansfield, left, and Jaiden Bea have signed to play college basketball. Like her cousins Beyonce and Skylar, Bea is headed to the University of Idaho. Mansfield is headed to South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in Rapid City, S.D.
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Union makes case for 11th straight title

But Camas, Skyview set sights on ending the Titans’ long reign

The Union Titans might be a new-look team of personnel and style of play, but expectations of league titles remain the same.

And if the Titans are going to win their 11th consecutive league title, a tough nonleague slate of games is what will best prepare them.

“We want to be the best team we can be by the end of the year and by playoff time,” said Union head coach Blake Conley. “Hopefully by league, we’re ready.”

That includes a trip to Spokane to face Central Valley and Mt. Spokane, plus an invitation to the inaugural Hardwood Invite, hosted by Auburn on Dec. 18-21. It’s four games in four days in an event featuring some of the top teams across Class 4A and 3A.

Conley knows that’ll only help his young Titans, who feature senior point guard Bryson Metz as the team’s lone returning starter. Union’s rotation also features multiple players 6-foot-4 or taller.

“As long as we can be mature and understand why we have a schedule like that,” Conley said, “all of those games are getting us ready for really the six that matter and that’s league in January.”

During the spring’s condensed COVID season, Camas snapped Union’s 57-game regular-season winning streak that includes two undefeated regular seasons in 2018-19 and 2019-20. It also was its first loss to a Clark County team since Skyview topped Union in January 2018.

Camas welcomes back two starters — Carson Frawley and Theo McMillan — from its 10-5 campaign last spring. The Papermakers’ identity includes pushing tempo and firing 3-pointers, said coach Ryan Josephson. Beckett Currie, a freshman guard, is expected to make an immediate impact.

Like Union, Skyview’s lineup features plenty of new faces. Whitworth commit Colton Looney is expected to take on a heavier scoring load after averaging 11 points per game in the spring. He’s also the team’s returning leading rebounder.

Kevin Kiall takes over as head coach Battle Ground after previously serving as an assistant coach. The Tigers return Tait Spencer, a second-team all-leaguer as a freshman.
Deep. Young. Talented. That’s how best to describe the Camas Papermakers. And that might go well past this season, too.

Behind a wealth of underclassmen, including a trio of returning all-league sophomores and three ninth-graders expected to play big minutes off the bench, Camas is the overwhelming front-runner in a small, but mighty 4A Greater St. Helens League.

Fourth-year head coach Scott Thompson said despite graduating three seniors off last spring’s 4A/3A GSHL title team, the talent level doesn’t dip. Four players — junior Anna Mooney and sophomores Reagan Jamison, Addie Harris and Ava Smith — are all returning all-leaguers.

“It is unbelievable how young we are,” Thompson said.

Camas has reached the past four Class 4A state tournaments and is seeking its first state trophy. Thompson said he purposefully scheduled a stiff nonleague slate of Oregon schools to prepare them not only for league play, but a deep postseason run. That includes games against Sheldon, Central Catholic, St. Mary’s, and Clackamas. The team also heads to Arizona for a holiday tournament.

“That’s going to be good for us,” Thompson said of the nonleague slate. “I feel like we need to take our lumps early.”

Skyview, which last won a league title in 2020 when it reached bi-districts, is young. Eight of coach Brett Johnson’s 11-player roster are returning varsity players, including all-leaguer Rowyn Riley.

Union will rely on its experienced backcourt, led by Olivia Euverman, Caitlyn Leake, and Mariah Gahl. The Titans are two years removed from the program’s first-ever state trophy.

Martha Bellcoff takes over as Battle Ground’s coach after serving as an assistant under two prior head coaches.

Though young, talent pool at Camas runs deep
Boys: Young players look to lead

Last Season
6-9, fourth in 4A GSHL

Best State Finish
Champion in 1990

Head Coach
Kevin Kalian, first year

In his first year leading Battle Ground, Kevin Kalian hasn’t been hesitant to bounce ideas off of previous head coach Manny Melo, now athletic director at Prairie, or Gregg Kalian, a longtime Battle Ground assistant and Kevin’s uncle.

Kalian said the transition has been “quite the learning experience,” but with four years as an assistant with the Tigers leading into this year, the team has some continuity at the top.

The Tigers will need it, because they’re quite young. Following the graduation of Kaden Perry, now a freshman at Gonzaga, this year’s team has no seniors, and actually has more sophomores (seven) than upperclassmen (six).

“I got to coach a lot of these guys last year, so I know their strengths and what it takes in their roles. I think they fit in perfectly,” Kalian said. “It’s time for some of these guys returning (from) last year … just look to them like, ‘Hey, we need leadership from you guys now.’ We don’t have that senior leadership.”

Sophomore Tait Spencer (6-2), is a focal point offensively. They also start sophomores Noah Currie (6-2), Trey Spencer (6-0) and Austin Ralphs (6-4).

Girls: New coach, new mindset

Last Season
3-10, 4th in 4A GSHL

Best State Finish
Champions in 1991

Head Coach
Martha Bellcoff (1st year)

Battle Ground is taking baby steps as it works to establish a new foundation under first-year head coach Martha Bellcoff.

Bellcoff served as an assistant for three years before being promoted to head coach. While some facets are similar to years past, Bellcoff sought to change the culture and mindset within the program.

“The biggest thing is getting the girls to believe in themselves and put in the work and effort out of season to make that improvement,” Bellcoff said.

“And, baby steps working toward a winning mentality.”

Time will tell if those changes translate to wins, but there’s no doubting the Tigers’ effort, said Bellcoff, who also noted the team has a no-quit attitude.

Nearly half of the roster is new to the varsity level.

Battle Ground returns sophomore Candice Adams (5-8), a 4A/3A GSHL honorable mention in her freshman campaign last spring, as well as Yvette Rosales, a 5-3 junior point guard.

Boys: Players invest in success

Last Season
10-5, second in 4A GSHL

Best State Finish
Eighth in 1962

Head Coach
Ryan Josephson, fifth year

Now in his fifth season as Camas’ head coach, Ryan Josephson hasn’t been around many teams where he can say work ethic and off-season commitment top the charts.

This team does, however. “They’re so invested,” Josephson said … “They’re special off of that alone.”

Carson Frawley, the team’s leading scorer last season, and point guard Theo McMillan are Camas’ returning starters. Josephson also said guard Beckett Currie is expected to make a big impact as a ninth grader.

In fact, it’s a guard-filled roster that plays fast and is facing a beefy slate of nonleague contests against Oregon schools in preparation for league play and beyond. Back in the spring, Camas went 1-2 against league-rival Union, but its May 25 victory wasn’t an ordinary league win.

It snapped a 57-game regular-season win streak and handed Union its first loss to a Clark County team since January 2018.

Off-season work quickly followed.

“If hard work is going to yield good results, this group is definitely going to have some great things happening,” Josephson said.

Girls: Youth, talent are hallmarks

Last Season
16-1, first in 4A GSHL

Best State Finish
Quarterfinals in 2017

Head Coach
Scott Thompson, 4th year

The future is now in Camas, and the youthful talent stretches past the starting five.

“It’s phenomenal,” coach Scott Thompson said. “You just go down our bench, and I think our No. 10 start would start on 99 percent of teams in the state.”

Most of the Papermakers’ rotation are freshmen and sophomores. Three sophomores — Addie Harris, Reagan Jamison, and Ava Smith — were all-league honorable as ninth graders in the spring.

Junior Anna Mooney, another returning all-leaguer, played big minutes in Camas’ 2019-20 season that ended in the Tacoma Dome.

Despite graduating three starters, Thompson doesn’t see a dip happening.

“We have too many girls that can make shots now to think this is going to be a year of rebuilding,” he said.

“It’s going to be a really fun season.”

What Thompson hopes his young team gains as the season progresses is maturity, and growth in big-games, too. That’s why he scheduled what he calls “murderer’s row” in nonleague, which features a trio of Oregon teams ranked in preseason top 10 lists.
**Boys:** New lineup targets playoffs

**Last Season**
9-6, third in 4A GSHL

**Best State Finish**
Sixth in 2018

**Head Coach**
Matt Gruhler, 10th year

**3 POINTERS**
- Team graduated 80 percent of scoring, minutes.
- Colton Looney is team’s top returning rebounder.
- Will play in Cactus Jam in Arizona from Dec. 27-30.

What happens when a lineup responsible for 80 percent of scoring and minutes graduates? Skyview is finding out. The Storm graduated a bulk of their lineup off a team that reached the 4A/3A GSHL title game in the spring, but welcome back five full-time varsity players. One of those is Whitworth University commit and all-leaguer Colton Looney.

It’s a fairly new roster, but expectations remain the same. It includes three seniors on varsity for the first time.

“Those guys play hard and know what we expect,” coach Matt Gruhler said. “So now it’s like, ‘Do we have the talent to compete with the top level of the league?’ That’s the part we’re trying to figure out now.”

Looney is Skyview’s top returning rebounder (6.5 per game), and one of three players who stand 6-foot-6 or taller (Jaxson Filler, Joshua Rushing). Gruhler said Looney will be the focal point of the offense as an inside-outside presence.

“He’s going to have to be consistent,” Gruhler said. “It’s always interesting to see how players handle that, but I think he’s ready for it.”

**Girls:** Experience gained early

**Last Season**
7-9, third in 4A GSHL

**Best State Finish**
Champion in 2012

**Head Coach**
Brett Johnson, fifth year

**3 POINTERS**
- Eight of 11 players have varsity experience.
- Rowyn Riley averaged 11 points a game as freshman.
- Last spring’s team had just one senior.

Player personnel come and go but what doesn’t change in Brett Johnson’s program is defense.

“That’s all we’ve been talking about,” the coach said.

It’s a perfect blend of youth and experience for the Storm, not to mention experienced youth.

Eight of the 11 players Johnson is carrying on varsity played big minutes during the spring’s 7-9 campaign. Four of them were ninth graders, and that youth has grown up fast.

“Everybody knows our sequences now,” Johnson said. “Instead of them being robots, I think they’re going to be a lot more loose on what to do and what not to do.

“They all know where we’re at.”

Skyview graduated just one senior, and will rely on a blend of underclassmen — led by sophomore Rowyn Riley (11 points per game in the spring) as it looks to get back to the top of the 4A GSHL. It last won a league title in 2019-20 when it reached the bi-district tournament.

The Storm’s early season was rocky with two of the first four games cancelled due to COVID on other teams.

**Boys:** Titans taller than last spring

**Last Season**
16-1, first in 4A GSHL

**Best State Finish**
Champion in 2009

**Head Coach**
Blake Conley, ninth year

**3 POINTERS**
- Titans have won 10 straight league titles.
- Bryson Metz is Union’s lone returning starter.
- Four players 6-foot-4 or taller are in starting rotation.

It’s a new look — and new means different — for the Union Titans.

And that can be a good thing.

“We’re going from one of the smallest teams I’ve had to one of the biggest,” Conley said. “It’s been fun for all of us — the players and the coaches — figuring out the best way to use this team.”

Traditionally a guard-heavy roster filled with lights-out shooters under the ninth-year head coach, Union now bolstered a roster with length, strength and four players standing 6-foot-4 or taller in its top-six rotation.

Expect the Titans to play fast, but “it’s going to look a lot different in terms of style of play,” Conley said.

“The kids embrace that and understand why we’re doing what we’re doing,” he said.

Senior point guard Bryson Metz, a Vanguard (Calif.) commit, is the Titans’ lone returning starter.

Junior post Yanni Fasilis, a two-year starter for Washougal, is now at Union and one of several Titans with size.

The Titans will test themselves early, having already faced 4A title contender Mount Si.

**Girls:** Trio of guards power team

**Last Season**
13-4, second in 4A GSHL

**Best State Finish**
Fifth in 2020

**Head Coach**
Gary Mills, fourth year

**3 POINTERS**
- Set team records for points per game last season.
- Euverman, Leake were on fifth-place team in 2020.
- Played in Moda Center against Kelso on Dec. 11.

Union has changed its identity on the fly. The Titans learned the week of tryouts 6-foot-3 returning all-league post Ariel Ammentorp wouldn’t be playing her senior season.

It’s been an adjustment, but the Titans have adjusted quickly.

“You win games either with your personnel or your personality,” said coach Gary Mills. “We’re trying to develop that personality part of it so we can win some games with how hard we play and how tough we are.”

That begins with a trio of senior guards — Olivia Euverman, Caitlyn Leake and Mariah Gahl — that highlight Union’s experience in the backcourt. Euverman and Leake were part of the Titans’ fifth-place team at the Class 4A state tournament in 2019-20. It was the program’s first state trophy three state appearances.

During the spring’s condensed COVID season, Union set school records for point per game and 3-point field goal percentage. The Titans averaged 57 points per game going 13-4 overall.

“I thought we’d slow it down this year,” Mills said, “but we’re going to keep that style going.”
The consensus around the 3A Greater St. Helens League is crystal clear: Kelso is the team to beat for the league title.

With seven of their top eight players returning as seniors, led by GSHL all-leaguer Michael Foust (6-3 wing), Hilanders head coach Joe Kinch understands why.

“If you look at it from a standpoint of returners, we would certainly check that box,” Kinch said. “We certainly have some returning players and experience, but I do think our coaches in the league are darn good and all of our teams, come January, will all feel like they’re prepared to have a great month of January and February.”

While Kelso is regarded as the favorite, the league appears to be balanced from top to bottom.

Evergreen is welcoming back DJ Edmondson after the senior guard played his sophomore and junior seasons at Portland’s Benson High. The Plainsmen also have dynamic playmakers in senior guard Robert Lawrence and sophomore wing Lenny Fiero, both of whom were starters for parts of last season.

Mountain View has a deep stable of guards led by junior Isaiah Vargas, a GSHL all-league second team pick in the spring. Juniors Jacob Martin and Michael Tauscher, as well as sophomore Aiden Nicholson, an all-league tight end in football, give the Thunder plenty of options.

“Probably by early January, we’ll have a pretty good idea of what we could be,” Tuominen said. “Kelso is the definitely league frontrunner for 3A and then after that, I think it’s pretty wide open.”

Clark, a Heritage alumnus, has coached basketball and football at the school for much of the last four years.
Will this be the year when the 3A Greater St. Helens League hierarchy finally shifts? Prairie has been the juggernaut with 22 straight league titles and a regular season league winning streak dating back to 2000. The latter streak was snapped in the spring when Heritage defeated Prairie twice in an eight-day span. Although it was a condensed season and not every team played an equal number of games, Heritage (9-5) finished in front of Prairie (7-5) and Kelso (5-7) in the league standings. Now, with a full winter slate upcoming, teams will soon find out if the spring signaled the start of a new trend.

Prairie graduated six seniors from the spring, including Claire Heitschmidt, while returning two starters, junior Madison Clouse and senior Jordan Peterson. Heritage is also reloading after graduating seniors Katie Peneueta and Maliah Thompson, but the Timberwolves are well-positioned with the experience of juniors Keanna Salavea and Mariah Bibens, as well as senior Alex Rosenbaum. “It’s going to be really tough, everyone is going to be competitive,” Heritage head coach Jacob Kaler said. “We got to bring our best game every single night.”

From an experience standpoint, Kelso appears to be the strongest with 4A/3A GSHL player of the year Natalie Fraley returning for her senior season, in addition to senior Evermore Kaiser, junior Lexi Grumbois, and junior Haley Little. “I think we’re finally at that point where people are going to be a little worried about our returners more than other teams,” Kelso head coach Jen Hamilton said. “Prairie losing Claire (Heitschmidt), Heritage, (Keanna) Salavea is going to be back, but past that it’s like, what else does the league have? I think we have one of the top teams with the most number of returners.”

Under third-year head coach Dan Larson, Mountain View has potential with returning varsity starters Victoria Schneider, Katelyn Henderson and Nina Peterson, but is mostly unproven at the varsity level. All-league selection Coraleigh Speer headlines Evergreen’s core, which also has Hilary Yoon as a four-year varsity player. Evergreen had a promising turnout ahead of the season with enough players to field three teams compared to one during the spring.
**Boys: Guards, bench are strengths**

_Last Season_
5-10, third in 3A GSHL

_Best State Finish_
Champion in 1995

_Head Coach_
Brett Henry, fifth year

**3 POINTERS**
- Team has just one home game in December.
- Three players return from last year’s team.
- Coach says team has most depth in his five years.

Just how deep is Evergreen’s bench this year? Very deep.

“I can confidently say we can play 10 guys, potentially 11,” said fifth-year coach Brett Henry.

Evergreen is two years removed from reaching the Class 3A state tournament at the Tacoma Dome. Much like that 2019-20 team, this season’s squad is a guard-heavy lineup that’s long, rangy and athletic.

And young.

“If we can hit the learning curve quickly,” Henry said, “then I think we have a chance to be pretty good.”

Two sophomores — wing Lenny Fierro and post Caedmon Crader — got big minutes as ninth graders during last spring’s condensed COVID season in which Evergreen reached the semifinals of the 4A/3A GSHL playoffs.

DJ Edmondson, a senior point guard, is back at Evergreen after two years at Portland’s Benson Tech. He saw varsity minutes for Henry as a ninth grader three years ago.

Evergreen’s season-opener against King’s Way was the team’s only home game in December. The next is Jan. 4 vs. Union.

**Girls: Team sees turnout boost**

_Last Season_
1-11, fifth in 3A GSHL

_Best State Finish_
First round in 1989

_Head Coach_
Jim Wilmoth, second year

**3 POINTERS**
- Team doubled turnover numbers from the spring.
- Coraleigh Speer, Hillary Yoon are four-year players.
- Wilmoth spent 7 years as an Evergreen assistant.

Jim Wilmoth’s focus this season isn’t as much on wins and losses as it is on program stability and boosting numbers for Evergreen girls basketball.

Things already are improving in that department, the Plainsmen’s head coach said. Evergreen has doubled the turnover numbers from the spring, and will field three teams this winter compared to just one during the condensed COVID season.

“To get three teams is the first step,” Wilmoth said. “To maintain three teams is the next step.”

**Heritage Timewolves**

**Boys: New coach models success**

_Last Season_
4-12, fifth in 3A GSHL

_Best State Finish_
Never qualified

_Head Coach_
Ashton Clark, first year

**3 POINTERS**
- Juniors lead way with eight on varsity roster.
- Clark has held various coaching duties for 4 years.
- Heritage’s last league title was in 2009.

_to become a league champion and playoff team, Heritage must first believe it can get there. As such, head coach Ashton Clark hasn’t been shy about pointing to a banner in the upper corner of the Timewolves’ gym, signifying the last time Heritage won a league and district title (2009). To Clark, a 2009 Heritage graduate himself, the banner is a reminder of what the T’Wolves are building toward.

“I point up to it and talk about it and say, ‘We have the ability to win the league, we have the ability to get to the playoffs,’” Clark said. “We talk about changing that culture of our program, and making sure people know we’re a force.”

Senior Quincy Gill, a 6-2 forward, is Heritage’s hard-worker, rebounder and can also stretch the floor. Junior forward Vernon Onick (6-2) is a lengthy, rangy two-way player. Juniors Jayden Cardiel (5-11) and Quincy Caston (5-11) make up the starting Heritage backcourt.

The T’Wolves style is to push the tempo offensively, take 3’s when they’re available and be aggressive on the defensive end. The team plans to use as many as 10 players on a given night.

**Girls: Spring set new standard**

_Last Season_
10-6, first in 3A GSHL

_Best State Finish_
Never qualified

_Head Coach_
Jacob Kaler, fourth year

**3 POINTERS**
- Last season saw Heritage beat Prairie for first time.
- Keanna Salavea was second-team all-league.
- Mariah Bibens, Salavea entering third varsity season.

Heritage is hoping to ride the wave of a successful spring season into the winter as the team transitions to new leaders.

Seniors Katie Peneueta and Maliyah Thompson graduated from a Heritage team that went 10-6 during the condensed season.

This year’s group features a core of juniors Keanna Salavea (5-11), Mariah Bibens (5-5), as well as seniors Alex Rosenbaum (5-6) and Madalynn Thun (5-6).

All have experience, but now it’s their turn to lead the program.

“That core nucleus, I’m really excited for them, just kind of trying to keep the momentum going from the spring,” Heritage head coach Jacob Kaler said. “I think the sky’s the limit for this year.”

Salavea, a GSHL all-league player as a sophomore, is a versatile scorer, anchors Heritage’s defense as rim protector and will be called on to initiate the offense in certain situations.

“We can ask her to do a lot of things from bringing the ball up to playing in the post,” Kaler said. “Very versatile, and more than anything this year, we’re asking for that elevated leadership.”
Boys: Seven seniors lead the way

**KELSO HILANDERS**

**Last Season**
7-7, second in 3A GSHL

**Best State Finish**
Fifth in 2019

**Head Coach**
Joe Kinch, 22nd year

**3 POINTERS**
- Foust averaged 19.8 points per game as a junior.
- Seven of top eight returners are seniors.
- Will play at GESA Winter Shootout in Wenatchee.

Kinetic Johnson and Tyler Hays fly around the perimeter making plays for the Hilanders, Carter Lloyd is a shooter and improved defender and Colby Cooper is an all-around athlete who was named the 3A GSHL's defensive player of the year in football. Sean McFarland and Chase Dillehay provide depth off the bench.

“They just complement each other really well,” said Kinch. “They’ve all said it’s really important to play this senior year, because I think, same with last year’s group I went through, they’re probably not taking things as much for granted.”

Girls: Fraley, team thinking big

**KELSO HILANDERS**

**Last Season**
5-7, third in 3A GSHL

**Best State Finish**
Eighth in 2002

**Head Coach**
Jen Hamilton, fifth year

**3 POINTERS**
- Will miss Erin Tack and Kaydence Mackin (injuries).
- Three freshman could make instant impact.
- Team had goal of being state academic champion.

Natalie Fraley is back for one last high school season, as are three other starters on a veteran Kelso girls team.

With a core centered around Fraley, the 4A/3A Greater St. Helens League player of the year, senior Evermore Kaiser (5-foot-10), junior Lexi Grumbois (5-5) and junior Haley Little (5-5), Kelso expects to get every team’s best shot while vying for the 3A GSHL.

The Hilanders’ position is somewhat new to them, but it’s one they fully embrace.

“We’re going to have a target on our back for sure,” Kelso coach Jen Hamilton said, “and that’s something we haven’t had in a while.”

A feisty defense predicated on pressing frequently should lead to opportunities on the offensive end, where the Hilanders plan to push the tempo with Fraley at the center of it all. The Utah State signee has grown to 6-0, while adding some extra strength from hitting the weight room in the offseason, Hamilton said.

“She’s just done everything right to put herself in position to have a huge, full year,” Hamilton said. “I’m not going to hold her back whatsoever … I only get her for one more year, and she’s definitely a once-in-a-career type of kid.”

Boys: Core grew quickly in spring

**MOUNTAIN VIEW THUNDER**

**Last Season**
5-10, fourth in 3A GSHL

**Best State Finish**
Third in 1986

**Head Coach**
JC Alexander, fifth year

**3 POINTERS**
- Alexander coached Parkrose (Or.) to third in state.
- Played at Moda Center Dec. 18 vs. Hudson's Bay.
- Seeking first state berth since 2012.

For Mountain View’s younger nucleus of players, the condensed spring season served as a preview of what was to come just six months later.

When the Thunder returned weeks ago to get back to work, it became apparent to head coach JC Alexander just how important that spring was. He calls the current group one of the most coachable and highest IQ teams he’s had in his five years at Mountain View.

“We’re moving faster on the timetable than I anticipated,” Alexander said.

Mountain View’s class of juniors are a key part of the team. They include guards Isaiah Vargas, an all-league player from the spring, Jacob Martin and Michael Tauscher.

The team is also looking forward to the return of senior guard Mahkahri Bolds from injury.

Of the current roster, only Bolds and Vargas were full-time varsity players on the 2019-20 team, the last full season prior to the pandemic.

“It’s a good group. We’re excited,” Alexander said. “Whenever you take over a program, it always takes three to four years to kind of get it where you need and where you want it as a coach.”

Girls: Guards to push tempo

**MOUNTAIN VIEW THUNDER**

**Last Season**
4-11, fourth in 3A GSHL

**Best State Finish**
Second in 1995

**Head Coach**
Dan Larson, third year

**3 POINTERS**
- Three starters return from last spring.
- Senior Victoria Schneider is top returning scorer.
- Final season in school's 40-year-old gym.

This season marks a first for Mountain View coach Dan Larson.

“I’ve never gone into a season where I had more question marks,” the third-year Thunder coach said, “but also more excitement for what’s going to unfold.”

That’s because the Thunder have a mixed bag when it comes to experience levels — From two- and three-year starters and first-time varsity players to those back in the program after not playing during the spring’s condensed COVID season.

It’s a youthful and guard-heavy squad Larson expects to push tempo and cause havoc, led by returning top scorer Victoria Schneider and junior point guard Katelyn Henderson.

Nina Peterson, a sophomore guard, is now a two-year starter and one of four returning varsity players off the Thunder’s 4-11 spring campaign.

The ceiling is high on potential, Larson noted.

“There’s room to grow and tons of potential down the line,” he said of his team. “Our potential to get better is as high as any team I’ve coached.”
Boys: New coach, same tradition

Last Season
6-5, first in 3A GSHL

Best State Finish

Head Coach
Jimmy Tuominen, first year

Roster and coaching changes signal the beginning of a new era at Prairie, but the Falcons hope the program's tradition will endure.

Jimmy Tuominen spent 14 years as an assistant under longtime head coach Kyle Brooks, making him a natural choice to succeed Brooks following his retirement in June.

With Tuominen, the Falcons have a foundation in place on the sidelines. They also return senior Hayden Rose, a 6-foot-5 forward who earned GSHL all-league honors after averaging a double-double during the spring season, and added transfer Talus Sather, a 6-2 senior guard who will shore up the Falcons' backcourt.

Beyond that, the team is turning to a host of varsity newcomers. The first month of the season will be an important measuring stick for that group.

“We’re just excited to see what these young guys are going to do at 7 o’clock when the lights are on and they’re playing against other varsity opponents,” Tuominen said. “We’re just looking to see which guys can rise up and compete at the level it (takes) to be a varsity basketball player.”

Prairie has been a constant force in the state for decades, finishing at the top of the Greater St. Helens League and making deep playoff runs. Taking away the condensed spring 2021 season, the Falcons have won 22 consecutive league titles. They also had a streak of more than 200 straight league wins dating back to 2000.

The year in, year out results are tough to follow, but that’s the challenge for nearly every Prairie team.

The Falcons graduated six seniors following the condensed spring season and are turning to a young group led by returning starters Madison Clouse, a 5-7 junior point guard, and Jordan Peterson, a 5-9 senior who can play guard or forward.

Tempo will be the focus on both sides of the court, pushing the ball on offense and playing a hard, ball-denial defense, head coach Mike Smith said.

Smith is in his second stint at Prairie. In 2012, he succeeded legendary head coach Al Aldridge, who won 710 games and six state championships in his 32 seasons, but left after one season. Smith then returned in 2020 and coached the Falcons in the spring season.

Girls: Young team takes its turn

Last Season
7-6, second in 3A GSHL

State Titles
1993, 94, 98, 99, 2003, 12, 19

Head Coach
Mike Smith, third year

Six seniors graduated from last spring.

Madison Clouse and Jordan Peterson return as starters.

Will play in Cactus Jam in Arizona at end of December.
When asked who is the favorite in the 2A Greater St. Helens League, most coaches cut to the chase.

It’s the Lumberjacks.

R.A. Long went undefeated with the 2A GSHL last spring and was favored to win the district tournament. But COVID swept through the team at the worst time, forcing the Lumberjacks to bow out of the playoffs.

But R.A. Long and reigning league MVP Cavin Holden didn’t sulk. Instead, they turned their focus to this year; when the Lumberjacks are among the top contenders to win the state title.

“We thought we were going to win the district championship, but it didn’t work out,” Holden said. “But we had to get in the gym, come back and prove ourselves all over again.”

But two league rivals aren’t ready to crown R.A. Long just yet. Mark Morris and Ridgefield are lurking right behind.

Ridgefield already has an crucial early season win over the Monarchs.

“We were right there in the mix last year,” said Ridgefield coach Jason Buffum. “We’re trying to build on that and give ourselves a chance to make a postseason.”

Mark Morris caught fire toward the end of last season, winning nine straight games to claim the district title.

“R.A. Long junior guard Cavin Holden is the reigning 2A Greater St. Helens League player of the year.

Mark Morris has two big posts, but with four really good guards,” Buffum said.

Woodland junior Beau Swett is one of nine returners from last season for a Beavers team on the rise.

R.A. Long is seeking its first trip to the state tournament since 2008.

“A couple years ago it was pretty down,” Holden said. “But we had to build it back up to let people know who we are.”

Woodland is also on the ascent. Nearly everyone is back from the team that was much better than its 1-7 record in league play last season.

Columbia River, with fast and talented guard Alden Fay, is looking to send longtime coach David Long out on a high note. Long has been at Columbia River for 34 years, the last 29 as head coach. He will retire with close to 500 wins, the most of any boys coach in Clark County history.

Washougal fields a young but fast lineup that, while seeing last year’s leading scorer transfer, will never lack for effort.

Hockinson, Fort Vancouver and Hudson’s Bay all expect to improve as the season as young players adjust to new roles and responsibilities.
Two teams with state tournament ambitions.
A darkhorse contender rich on experience and talent.
The top of the 2A Greater St. Helens League is rich in compelling storylines.
Defending league champion Hudson's Bay hasn't lost a step despite graduating league MVP Jaydia Martin, who now starts for Eastern Washington.
The Eagles turned heads with an early-season win over Camas, considered one of the state's better Class 4A teams. Aniyah Hampton and Mahaila Harrison give Hudson's Bay one of the area's best guard-forward tandems.
Hockinson has eight players who played on varsity in the 2019-20 season. That makes the Hawks among the few teams whose majority has first-hand experience with a full varsity campaign in addition to the COVID-shortened season last spring.
“The senior-led teams will separate themselves from the rest,” Hockinson coach Damon Roche said. “They know what to expect. They know what to do. And they're super hungry.”
Washougal coach Britney Ervin is happy to have company among the league's best teams. In 2020, the Panthers rolled through the 2A GSHL season unbeaten only to fall to W.F. West and Tumwater in the district tournament and miss the state playoffs.
“When we aren’t challenged during the season, we aren't that sharp,” Ervin said. “That’s what we need to be tuned up for districts. Tumwater, W.F. West and Black Hills always come in with that advantage of rising to the occasion and having to be challenged constantly. It’s the best thing that could happen to us.”
Ridgefield, Mark Morris and R.A. Long are among those also eying one of the league's four berths to the district tournament.
Behind senior guard Kelli Krsul, Ridgefield looks to continue its upward trajectory that saw it go 4-4 in league play last spring after going 1-11 in 2020.
“Kelli has taken this team and said watch out for Ridgefield,” Spudders coach Billy McKinney said. “We've come to fight.”
Columbia River, Fort Vancouver and Woodland all field young teams whose focus is more on growth and improvement than chasing playoff berths.
**BOYS: Youth pressed into action**

**Last Season**
5-9, sixth in 2A GSHL

**Best State Finish**
Second in 2009

**Head Coach**
David Long, 29th year

The injury bug hit Columbia River early this season, with three starters missing games. But that’s not all bad for the Rapids, especially for a talented group of underclassmen.

Freshmen Aaron Hoey, Ari Richardson and John Reeder have all come up from junior varsity and gained valuable experience.

The team coach David Long envisioned for this season won’t come together until after winter break.

That includes quick and talented senior guard Alden Fay, who broke the pinky finger on his non-shooting hand in the season-opener Dec. 3. Six-foot-5 forward Nico Valdez is also working his way back to health after surgery to remove his appendix. Starting guard Steven Briggs is also nearing 100-percent health.

Long, the longest-tenured head coach in Clark County at 29 years, will retire after this season with close to 500 wins.

He won’t be leaving the cupboard bare.

“Our freshman class is really loaded,” coach David Long said. “The future of this program is in great shape. Some of them will just have to play sooner than they thought.”

**GIRLS: Emphasis is on learning**

**Last Season**
5-9, seventh in 2A GSHL

**Best State Finish**
Second in 1976

**Head Coach**
Jesse Norris, second year

However many games Columbia River wins this season, it won’t be coach Jesse Norris’ main barometer of success.

“The emphasis is really on the learning,” Norris said. “We’re not playing to the scoreboard. We’re trying to get better every possession, whether it’s a 30-point game or a one-point game.”

With just two seniors and three returners from last season, the Rapids expect to improve throughout the course of the winter.

While Norris expects there to be coachable moments, he likes the base from which River has to build.

“They’re good kids and they really get after it,” Norris said. “It’s an easy coaching job in that sense. We’re all in this together and we’re going to take ownership of the hard jobs.”

Junior guard Logan Dukes, a soccer standout, brings all-around athleticism to the court. Her sister, freshman Peyton Dukes, and sophomore Emma Iniguez have taken on prominent roles despite being underclassmen.

Taegen Benke brings a hard-working attitude and is among the team’s top rebounders.

**BOYS: Newcomers fill big roles**

**Last Season**
2-9, eighth in 2A GSHL

**Best State Finish**
Seventh in 2009

**Head Coach**
Scott Weaver, second year

Though Hockinson struggled in the abbreviated season last spring, it looked as if that team’s large junior class would bring plenty of experience into this season.

But that was before starting guard Daniel Hjort transferred and football standout Andre Northrup opted not to play. Mac Koldt, perhaps the most talented player on last season’s team, suffered a torn ACL last May and won’t play.

That leaves Hockinson with a small track record but big chances for players to step into big roles.

“It’s almost like starting over,” second-year coach Scott Weaver said. “We have very little starting varsity experience.”

Instead of stepping back, Weaver is eager to see who steps up. Among those could be junior guard Logan Wall, who added strength in the weight room since last season.

Seven-foot senior Samuel Kelly, who played previously at King’s Way Christian, scored 33 points in an early-season game against Hudson’s Bay.

Six-foot-3 senior Kenyon Johnson will be joined in the frontcourt by newcomers Jacob Jensen and Wyatt James.

**GIRLS: Experience pays dividends**

**Last Season**
7-5, fourth in 2A GSHL

**Best State Finish**
Quarterfinals in 2009

**Head Coach**
Damon Roche, eighth year

For a team with both athleticism and experience, look no further than Hockinson.

The Hawks have seven seniors whose varsity experience stretches beyond the COVID-shortened 2020 campaign. Kylie Ritter and Gracie Brammer both earned all-league recognition in 2020.

But to coach Damon Roche, this year’s senior class is more than a few individual standout.

“There’s a lot of synergy with this group,” Roche said. “I see a mature, athletic and competitive group. I see the effort. I see the diving on the floor.”

Brammer is within striking distance of becoming just the second 1,000-point scorer in program history.

Roche, a coach who prides himself on his team’s defense, noted Addie Chappelle as a player who brings intensity.

Nearly half the team started practice late because they were on the Hockinson soccer team that reached the 2A state championship game.

But Roche is not at all worried about that.

“I would absolutely love to coattail on that championship mindset,” Roche said. “Winning breeds winning.”
Boys: Energy, growth are focus

Whether Fort Vancouver is winning or losing, you can’t tell the difference by looking at the bench.

“The bench is hyped when we make a three, a layup or anything,” said junior guard Kaelb Cvitkovich. “The most important thing to coaches and our bench is taking a charge. When we do that, we’re going to get hyped.”

Fort is building a new cohesion. Over the past three seasons much of the offense went through star guard Kahlil Singleton, who set the school’s single-game scoring record of 55 points in 2019.

Singleton moved to a private school in Connecticut, leaving Fort with a starting lineup that has one senior.

Cvitkovich and David Smith-Miles give the Trappers speed in the backcourt. Dean Cadena and Kenan Weinmaster, despite neither being taller than 6-foot-4, have a presence in the paint.

The main focus this season, Cvitkovich said, is on improvement and celebrating each other’s successes.

“We’re going to grow with basketball IQ,” Cvitkovich said. “We have a lot of young guys. We’re going to grow our chemistry together and play strong.”

Girls: Indie schedule embraced

An outside-the-box thinking has the Trappers poised to find success this season.

The girls basketball team’s partial independent schedule, an arrangement made this off-season, is a welcoming change for a program that last won a league game in the 2012-13 season.

Fort won’t play 2A GSHL foes Washougal or Hockinson, and faces rival Hudson’s Bay only once.

Coaches and players are embracing it. Already, the Trappers topped Evergreen, 32-31, and coach Arlisa Hinton’s goal is to pick up more wins before January arrives. That includes a three-day home tournament later this month.

More importantly, confidence is what Hinton hopes for most facing teams of similar skill set.

“I’ve seen growth in every quarter and in every game,” Hinton said.

Avery Rowe, a three-year varsity player, is Fort’s lone senior. Two players, Molly Malone and Athiena Ghormley, were part of the cross country program’s fourth-place state trophy in the fall.

Winter sports scenes

Porter Craig, left, and his Camas teammates are happy to be back indoors this wrestling season. Last spring saw events held outside after COVID disrupted the season.

Santa Claus high-fives the scorekeeping staff during a girls basketball game between Washougal and Hudson’s Bay at Washougal High School.
**Hudson’s Bay Eagles**

**Boys:** Playoff berth inspires team

- **Last Season:** 4-8, sixth in 2A GSHL
- **Best State Finish:** Champion in 1964
- **Head Coach:** Will Jones, second year

If Hudson’s Bay is going to build off its spring when it reached the post-season, it’s going to have what coach Will Jones calls a good mix of newcomers and returnees.

“Now it’s about learning how to mix that together,” Jones said.

Five returning varsity players are back for the second-year coach following the team’s 4-8 season.

Now in its third year in Class 2A, Bay looks to make back-to-back post-season appearances after getting the final playoff spot during the spring’s condensed COVID season.

Leading the way is Joey Gordon, the team’s returning leading scorer who averaged 15 points per game in the spring.

What Gordon brings to the guard-heavy lineup is reliability and consistency.

“He can score from anywhere,” Jones said.

A bulk of the rotation are guards but there’s no shortage of interior experience, led by returning starter Izek Finn at 6-foot-4. Another post, 6-foot-9 senior Isaac Hossom, is a varsity newcomer.

**Girls:** Postseason goals are high

- **Last Season:** 9-3, first in 2A GSHL
- **Best State Finish:** Quarterfinals in 2007
- **Head Coach:** Michael Rainville, sixth year

There’s been no shortage top-flight Hudson’s Bay girls basketball teams in recent memory, but perhaps none have better embodied the word than this year’s group, coach Michael Rainville said.

“It’s just a great team,” Rainville said. “The kids are dedicated ... they work hard, they look forward to practice every day. They’re just awesome. We just got to keep it up.”

The Eagles no longer have the services of 2A Greater St. Helens League player of the year Jaydia Martin, now a freshman at Eastern Washington.

They’re not lacking in experience, however.

Aniyah Hampton, a senior guard, Paytin Ballard, a senior forward, and junior forward Mahaila Harrison have all played varsity since they were freshmen. Hampton and Ballard have been part of two Eagles team that advanced to state, and Harrison one.

Together, they form a three-headed monster of scoring, hard-nosed defense and hustle.

“They’re the key to our team,” Rainville said. “They do most of the scoring, most of the defense. If you have three good players and they play well, you’re going to win.”

**Mark Morris Monarchs**

**Boys: Shorter team still mighty**

- **Last Season:** 14-3, second in 2A GSHL
- **Best State Finish:** Champs in 1978, 1985, 1987
- **Head Coach:** Bill Bakamus, 30th year

Even in his 30th year of coaching Mark Morris, Bill Bakamus can still find a new challenge.

This season, it’s fielding one of his shortest teams in a program traditionally known for dominant post players.

But not having a player taller than 6-foot-3 doesn’t mean this is a down year for the Monarchs. Mark Morris brings back three guards who played significant roles on the team that won the district championship last spring.

Deacon Dietz, Kobe Parlin and Rome Hendrickson power a team that averaged a league-best 72.2 points per game in nine 2A GSHL contests last season.

Dietz earned first-team all-league honors despite being just a sophomore. Sophomore Braydon Olson will also play a key role in the backcourt after playing on varsity as a freshman.

Despite graduating five seniors and the lack of height in the frontcourt, Mark Morris remains a favorite to secure a district playoff berth.

“It’s a team that knows how to finish strong. The Monarchs won nine straight to end last season en route to the district title.

**Girls: Goal is winning season**

- **Last Season:** 5-9, sixth in 2A GSHL
- **Best State Finish:** Champion in 2013, 2015
- **Head Coach:** Sean Atkins, seventh year

Mark Morris coach Sean Atkins believes his team has the talent and experience to have its first winning season in four years.

Nearly every player is back from a team that went 4-4 over its last eight games after starting 1-5.

That includes four of five starters and eight players that averaged at least 10 minutes per game last season.

“We have high expectations for our team this season,” Atkins said. “Our goal would be to have a record of better than .500 and make the district playoffs.”

Junior guard Brooklyn Schlecht returns after earning honorable-mention all-league honors last season. Junior Madi Noel also returns in the backcourt.

Six-foot Erica Snyder, a senior, can play on the wing or in the post. She’s joined in the frontcourt by juniors Emma Fisher and Isabella Merzoian.

The Monarchs are eyeing improvement on offense after averaging 40.7 points a game last season, third lowest in the 2A GSHL. The team scored at least 48 points in three of its first six games.
**Boys: State title is realistic goal**

The reigning league MVP on the perimeter. A pair of 6-foot-8 players in the post. A defense-first mentality that allowed a league-low 44.8 points per game last season. There aren't many weaknesses for an R.A. Long team that could contend for a Class 2A state championship this season.

And if talent wasn't enough, the Lumberjacks are extra motivated. After going undefeated in league play last spring, R.A. Long's season ended prematurely when COVID swept through the team right before the district tournament. Junior guard Cavin Holden, the reigning 2A GSHL MVP, didn't mince words when asked last season's end was motivation.

“It's big, huge,” Holden said “After last season, we're all in. We're all confident we can win the state championship.”

Along with Holden are the post powers of Aaron Ofstun and Jaxon Cook.

“Two towers, that’s very nice,” Holden said. "When opponents see them in the paint, they’re not going to go in there.”

**Girls: Lomax paces Lumberjills**

Miranda Lomax is the motor that propels R.A. Long.

The Lumberjills' 5-foot-6 senior point guard can attack defenses off the dribble, heat up from 3-point range and has the vision to set up teammates.

R.A. Long will lean on Lomax, a 2A Greater St. Helens League first-team selection in the spring, for a league slate shaping up to be tough with the likes of Washougal, Hudson’s Bay and Hockinson near the top.

Lomax and 5-foot-9 forward Jayla Clark are the two seniors to start for R.A. Long under first-year head coach Kyle Randall. The Lumberjills also have two sophomores in Bryelle Box, a forward, as well as guard Grace House. Jadyn Terry, a junior forward is a versatile scorer and senior Giulia Silvestri provides added shooting off the bench.

Randall, who was hired to replace Jan Karnofski, has coached with Roots Academy in Longview, Cascade Middle School while also leading local camps and training players.

In the condensed spring season, R.A. Long had a strong start by winning eight of its first nine games, but ended on a five-game losing skid.

**Ridgefield Spudders**

**Boys: Focus turns back to defense**

Though by many measures last season was a success, Ridgefield coach Jason Buffum felt something was missing from his team.

That was the Spudders' defense-first mentality.

“The last couple of years, we let that go a little bit,” Buffum said. “That was on the coaches too. We didn’t have the same grit about it. We’re trying to get back to making teams earn every basket.”

Ridgefield also has options on offense. Six-foot senior guard Henry Hughes can score from anywhere on the floor. Six-foot-3 Ty Snider and 6-foot-4 Nathan Semlick and 6-foot-3 Sidhartha Bryant give the Spudders length and athleticism in the frontcourt.

“We’ve got some size and some basketball skill,” Buffum said. “We’ve just got to put it together and be good team players.”

Last season, Ridgefield strung together five consecutive wins during league play and reached the semifinals of the district tournament. Seven players return from that team.

“We’re trying to build on that and give ourselves a chance to make a postseaon,” Buffum said.

**Girls: Progress excites team**

At Ridgefield, the volleyball, girls soccer and football teams are well known for their success both in the 2A Greater St. Helens League and statewide.

Billy McKinney wants the girls basketball team soon to be talked about in the same vein.

“I told the kids, you have to make a name for yourself,” McKinney said.

Last season, Ridgefield graduated just three seniors from last season. Kelli Krsul is entering her fourth varsity season and teams with Annikka Hill to give the Spudders a talented backcourt.

The arrival of 6-foot-7 junior Avery Wilson, who played for Skyview last season, gives Ridgefield a boost of height and defense. It’s a lineup that has McKinney optimistic that the momentum and good vibes of last spring will continue this season.

“That's something for us to go forward with. The kids have bought in.”

Ridgefield graduated just three seniors from last season. Kelli Krsul is entering her fourth varsity season and teams with Annikka Hill to give the Spudders a talented backcourt.

The arrival of 6-foot-7 junior Avery Wilson, who played for Skyview last season, gives Ridgefield a boost of height and defense. It’s a lineup that has McKinney optimistic that the momentum and good vibes of last spring will continue this season.

“It feels good to say, yes we won,” McKinney said.
**Boys: Young squad looks to grow**

Young, quick and athletic, the Panthers are embracing both the challenges they will face and the chance to improve. Having graduated six seniors and seen its leading scorer Yanni Fassilis transfer to Union, Washougal has many roles to fill.

While guard Carson Morris takes on the mantle of senior leader, expect a pair of sophomores to play major parts. Holden Bea and Sam Evers don’t shy away from responsibility, as shown by the key roles they played on the football team this fall.

“I think we should improve as the season progresses as the guys get more and more comfortable with all of the things that come with varsity basketball,” Washougal coach AJ Labree said.

At 6-foot-2, Bea is among Washougal’s tallest players. That means the Panthers will focus their offense on the perimeter and try to create transition baskets with their defense.

“Overall we aren’t very big but hopefully will make up for that with speed and aggression,” Labree said. “This is a group of great kids who are willing to play together as a team. It should be fun to see them gel as they gain experience.”

**Girls: Veteran team set to win**

This season’s Washougal team might have the perfect mix of talent and experience.

With four of five starters back, the Panthers are looking to return to the state tournament after falling short in the 2019-20 season.

“I think our leaders are in a place where they can lead us in those kinds of situations,” Washougal coach Britney Ervin said. “In years past, I don’t think we were there yet. It takes four years of growth and maturity to get to that point.”

First-team all-leaguer and University of Idaho signee Mansfield and Samantha Mederos bring a diverse skill set to the front court.

A player who has consistently improved since playing on varsity as a freshman is junior guard Chloe Johnson.

“I think Chloe is a big key to our success,” Ervin said. “The game is slowing down for Chloe is a big way. I think she’s going to have a breakout season this year.”

Washougal’s string of four straight league titles was snapped last spring by Hudson’s Bay. That, and the excitement to play after year of COVID disruptions, have the Panthers enthusiasm high.

**Boys: Lessons of past put to use**

Woodland’s struggles in the spring of 2021 were not in vain. While the Beavers went 2-7, lessons were learned and good habits formed.

Now, the nine returners from last season have the experience that coach Jesse Buck hopes will put Woodland over the top in close games.

“Last season, a lot of the sophomores and younger guys came away feeling so confident, knowing they were close and could do it,” Buck said. “They’ve been working really hard since.”

Woodland starts Dane Huddleston and Beau Swett in the backcourt, both juniors who can shoot over a defense from long range.

Though the Beavers don’t have anyone taller than 6-foot-3, senior Cole Logan anchors a frontcourt that prides itself on tenacity.

“Cole Logan for sure has been a different guy this year,” Buck said. “He’s been flying around getting defensive stops and rebounds.”

Maturity has been a hallmark of this Woodland team, which has just one underclassman.

“They don’t get cheated in practice,” Buck said. “They push each other and go after each other in a healthy way. I couldn’t be more proud of that.”

**Girls: Effort is source of pride**

With just two seniors, the goals this season for a young Woodland team were always going to center around improvement.

The challenges got tougher when one of those seniors, DeZohnae Dodds, suffered a broken arm in the season opener against La Center.

But that hasn’t deterred the Beavers from putting their best effort forward.

“The girls work hard,” said coach Glen Flanagan, who is entering his 25th season. “We tell them, the only things we can control are attitude and effort.”

In a league with Hudson’s Bay and Washougal, who both have state tournament aspirations, Flanagan knows some nights the challenge will be daunting.

“They’re beating 4A teams,” Flanagan said. “It’s about us increasing our individual ability and closing that gap every night so we can play at that high level. We’re just focusing on making ourselves better because this league is going to be tough.”

Senior Abbie Huston, junior Sydney George and freshman Addi Stading start in the backcourt. Junior Emily Hughes is a target for many plays that try to get the ball into the post.

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**Last Season**

7-5, tied for third in 2A GSHL

**Best State Finish**

Fourth in 1992

**Head Coach**

AJ Labree, fifth year

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**Last Season**

10-3, second in 2A GSHL

**Best State Finish**

Champion in 2019

**Head Coach**

Britney Ervin, fifth year

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**Last Season**

2-7, tied for 8th in 2A GSHL

**Best State Finish**

Second in 1984

**Head Coach**

Jesse Buck, third year

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**Last Season**

1-7, eighth in 2A GSHL

**Best State Finish**

Fourth in 2001

**Head Coach**

Glen Flanagan, 25th year

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3 POINTERS

- Carson Morris will wear No. 12 to honor friend Zain Justis, who died of cancer.
- Holden Bea threw six TDs to Sam Evers in football.
- 2 winning seasons in row.

3 POINTERS

- 53-3 record in league the past five seasons.
- Reached state four straight years prior to 2020.
- Jaiden Bea first-team all-league two straight years.

3 POINTERS

- Nine players are back from last season.
- No player is taller than 6-foot-3.
- Reached the district title game in 2019.
What’s been a mainstay in recent seasons in the 1A Trico League is who’s among the league’s elite.

That’s been King’s Way Christian and La Center. Since 2016-17, neither team has placed outside the top two.

All indications are to expect the same this winter behind two teams with experience and talent. La Center coach Jeremy Ecklund said facing the Knights brings out the best in his team. La Center last won the league title in 2018, and has the most depth in Ecklund’s seven seasons. “We’ve had some epic battles the past few years,” Ecklund said. “It’s been a lot of fun.”

King’s Way Christian, winners of the past two 1A Trico League titles, has reached the past six state tournaments. That includes a runner-up finish in 2019.

While coach Daven Harmeling hasn’t talked about “a finite goal of winning ‘x’ or winning ‘y’,” the coach added, “but I do feel like we’re making a commitment to each other on a daily basis to grow together.”

The Knights return reigning league MVP Giovanny Evanson, also the team’s leading scorer. Seton Catholic has a record turnout of ninth graders; 22 of its 31 players across three teams are ninth graders. Some are expected to contribute early to a lineup that features reigning second-team all-league Jack Jenniges and a trio of seniors.

Fourth-year Castle Rock coach Hayden Tilton believes this might be the year the Rockets break into the district tournament behind the experience of Lane Partridge, Adam Partridge and Trevor Rogen.

In White Salmon, Columbia coach Evan Wiley believes his Bruins can be a surprise in the league. Their roster features all seniors and juniors.
Brittney Stryker knows the importance of having an experienced, veteran girls basketball team. Especially as a relatively new head coach. Last spring was Stryker’s first season at the helm coaching her alma mater, and now this winter, she’s got a squad filled with talented multi-year starters poised to make a playoff push.

That starts with aiming for a league title. And that veteran experience, Stryker said, can’t pay enough dividends.

“Being a relatively new head coach,” she said, “it’s great to have that strength in just seniority because it’s not like we’re starting fresh.”

It’s anything but starting fresh for La Center, which lost just two players off its 2020-21 roster and has a trio of all-leaguers returners — Kylee Stephens, Gianna D’Emilio and Annabelle Atwood, a King’s Way Christian transfer.

La Center has placed first or second in the Trico since 2014; it last won a league title in 2019.

King’s Way Christian has a lot of new faces, but a trio of players are back off last spring’s Trico title-winning team. One of them is senior Laurel Quinn, who averaged 17.8 points and seven rebounds a game.

Seton Catholic welcomes back eight returnees and has just two seniors off last spring’s 1-9 campaign. While the Cougars lack size, priority will be placed on fundamentals, execution and defense.

Brooke Wirkkala, a returning all-league player, is expected to pave the way for Castle Rock. Its coach, Kim Karnofski, became the program’s winningest coach in the spring.

White Salmon has a strong junior class, headlined by Maggie Bryan and Ella Reed, a pair of all-leaguers.
BOYS: Rockets aim to end drought

Kim Karnofski knows how to win basketball games. The Rockets' head coach, in her fourth consecutive season after previously serving as head coach from 1990 through 2004, became the school's career wins leader in the spring. She entered this season with 196 career victories at Castle Rock.

This winter, she expects her Rockets to be competitive and be in a position to reach the playoffs.

That's something Castle Rock hasn't accomplished since her first season back in 2018-19.

That year, the Rockets won 10 games and reached the postseason for the second time since the program captured the Class 1A title in 2013.

Returning all-league guard Brooke Wirkkala, also the league's MVP in volleyball, headlines the roster as one of five seniors.

Lori Ogden, Kate Loftus, Zoey Snow and Susan Mosqueda are the other seniors who give the Rockets plenty of experience to lean on.

Last season saw two of the team's 10 games cancelled due to COVID-19.

Girls: Team targets playoff push

The team’s postseason targets are plenty.

Veteran guards lead way

As usual, what the Bruins lack in size is made up in experience.

Columbia-White Salmon doesn’t have a player on its roster taller than 5-foot-9.

In fact, eight players stand 5-6 or shorter, but experienced guard play is one of the Bruins’ strengths.

Ella Reed and Maggie Bryan — both juniors — are the team’s returning all-league honorees from a 4-4 season during the spring and a fourth-place finish in the 1A Trico League.

They’re part of a five-player junior class that also includes Sydney Aman, Sophia Acosta and Teagan Blankenship.

The Bruins showed a knack for scoring last spring. Their 51.1 points per game was second-best in the Trico League.

Columbia-White Salmon dropped their first two games of the season — 54-42 to Goldendale and 55-24 to Corbett.

Goldendale, a 2B school, played as part of the Trico League back in the spring because of COVID-19.

The Bruins face Riverside (Ore.), Hood River Valley (Ore.) and 2B Stevenson in nonleague play before opening Trico action Jan. 4.

Best State Finish

Champion in 2013

Head Coach

Kim Karnofski, 18th year

Last Season

2-6, fifth in Trico League

3 POINTERS

- Karnofski is the program’s winningest coach.
- Last made playoffs in 2019, Karnofski’s first year back.
- Brooke Wirkkala is one of five seniors.

Columbia Bruins

Boys: Bruins look to surprise

For how tough the 1A Trico League can be, Columbia-White Salmon coach Evan Wiley knows his Bruins are better off for it.

“If we can compete in the Trico League,” he said, “we can compete with any 1A in Washington.”

Just how his team will stack up is still up in the air, he said. But what isn’t lacking is senior leadership and experience behind Carson Lanz, Ben Allen, Jace Greenwood and Dylan Connely.

Wiley also returns to the bench after not coaching the Bruins in the spring.

“We have the athleticism and the talent to have some success, and the goal is to be playing in the second week of February (in the postseason),” Wiley said. “But we have to be disciplined enough to do the little things, and to play the right way. If we can play as a unit and keep things within our offensive and defensive sets, we could surprise some people.”

The Bruins are thankful to have a full season on the schedule. In the spring, four of the teams last six games were canceled due to COVID.

Girls: Veteran guards lead way

Last Season

4-4, fourth in Trico League

Best State Finish

Fifth in 1976

Head Coach

Howard Kreps, third year

3 POINTERS

- Maggie Bryan, Ella Reed lead strong junior class.
- 51.1 points per game was second-most in Trico League.
- Program last reached state in 2007.
## Boys: Wildcats rely on depth

**Last Season**
3-3, second in Trico League

**Best State Finish**
Champion in 1996, 1997

**Head Coach**
Jeremy Ecklund, 7th year

Few teams statewide endured what La Center did in the spring: a six-game schedule. COVID-19 cancellations were to blame, and such a short season can feel like the Wildcats are starting from scratch, coach Jeremy Ecklund said.

“This year is kind of a start-over for us,” the seventh-year coach said.

What isn’t changing, though, is La Center’s high-tempo, high-scoring style of play and expectations of routinely in competition for a 1A Trico League crown.

And a plus this season: never before has Ecklund had such a deep roster. In fact, its entire roster are full-time varsity players.

“I can go to my bench and not have a drop off,” Ecklund said. “I feel like the next guy is in and we don’t slow down at all.”

Point guard Jordan Nixon, an all-league returnee, is one of three seniors.

La Center also has two forwards at 6-foot-5, including freshman Boston Walker, who scored 16 points in his high school debut. Six-foot-3 sophomore guard Julius Frazier also sees significant playing time.

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## Girls: Familiarity fills the roster

**Last Season**
4-3, second in Trico League

**Best State Finish**
Fourth in 2004

**Head Coach**
Brittney Stryker, 2nd year

With so many familiar faces in the starting lineup and an all-league guard new to the program, there aren’t many question marks for coach Brittney Stryker in her second season leading the Wildcats.

La Center only lost two players from its seven-game season last spring. Still, there’s plenty of takeaways for this winter after coaching changes and such a short season because of COVID concerns.

“I think that set the tone for starting out this year,” Stryker said.

Stryker, a 2006 La Center graduate, previously served as an assistant at her alma mater. An experienced lineup is headed by a trio of guards — returning all-leaguers Kylee Stephens, Gianna D’Emilio and Annabelle Atwood, a transfer from King’s Way Christian.

Stryker described Atwood, a senior, as a true point guard, meaning it opens up more scoring opportunities for Stephens and D’Emilio. All are multi-year starters.

“They’re such a strong group,” Stryker said of her team, “and I’m looking forward to seeing what they do this year.”

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## Boys: Evanson leads young core

**Last Season**
11-0, first in Trico League

**Best State Finish**
Second in 2019

**Head Coach**
Daven Harmeling, ninth year

King’s Way Christian knows what it has in junior point guard Giovanni Evanson, the reigning Trico League boys basketball player of the year.

The question now becomes, where will the Knights turn for the production vacated by graduated seniors Bryce Dodge, Ty Maize, Evan Hernandez and Jackson Moses?

Coming off an 11-0 spring season, it’s a tough task for King’s Way and head coach Daven Harmeling, but early returns are encouraging.

In the team’s first two wins against Evergreen and Wahiakum, respectively, the Knights had a balanced scoring effort from the likes of Evanson, junior Jamison Duke, sophomore Ryan Tyler and junior Alex Fulton. Also a pleasant surprise: the Knights hit a combined 16 shots from 3-point range.

“We probably made more tonight than I’ve seen in any practice,” Harmeling said Dec. 1 after the Knights defeated Evergreen 71-58.

The top of the Trico League is likely to be crowded once more with La Center, Seton Catholic and King’s Way in the mix. For the time being, Harmeling said the Knights are more intent on their own growth.

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## Girls: New-look team is talented

**Last Season**
10-1, first in Trico League

**Best State Finish**
Regionals in 2019

**Head Coach**
Nicole Bagley, second year

King’s Way Christian is introducing plenty of new faces to the program, with just three holdovers from the last season, but the Knights still have the talent to compete for Trico League title.

One of the three is senior guard Laurel Quinn, who averaged 17.8 points and seven rebounds per game to earn Trico League first team honors in the spring.

Senior forward Riley Philbrook also returns as starter.

Meanwhile, the Knights are expecting contributions from junior guard Ella Zimmerman and freshman Bridget Quinn, who’s taken over as the team’s starting point guard, playing alongside older sister Laurel in the backcourt.

The group is much different than the spring team that won the Trico League title. Still, the Knights have aspirations of winning league, advancing to districts and beyond.

“I know it might be hard because it’s a new group, but I’m really looking forward to seeing how far we can go,” Laurel Quinn said.

King’s Way head coach Nicole Bagley was hired in 2020 after spending two years in the program as an assistant.
**Boys:** Program growing in size

**Last Season**  
3-7, fifth in Trico League

**Best State Finish**  
Regionals in 2019

**Head Coach**  
Aaron Jenniges, second year

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**3 POINTERS**

- 22 of program’s 31 players are freshmen.
- Junior Jack Jenniges earned all-league honors.
- Jenniges spent 4 years as Cougars’ JV coach.

There’s a hot trend at Seton Catholic, and its boys basketball program also is reaping the rewards.

Second-year coach Aaron Jenniges had a record number of players tryout for basketball, and “feel blessed to have so many interested and excited about our program.”

It comes after a fall in which the playoff-qualifying football team also had its highest turnout ever of freshmen.

Of the 31 players across three teams, 22 are ninth graders. Jenniges expects several varsity freshmen to play big minutes and contribute early.

Four freshman started the season on varsity — Tyler Tran, Brady Angelo, Rico George and Lance Lee.

They’ll also complement three of the top-four scorers from last season’s 3-7 campaign, led by returning all-leaguer Jack Jenniges, a 6-5 forward.

The Cougars got off to a hot start with a 58-point season-opening win.

“We’ve been really impressed with our team chemistry, unselfishness, and commitment to detail so far in practices,” Jenniges said.

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**Girls:** Better after tough season

**Last Season**  
1-9, sixth in Trico League

**Best State Finish**  
Never qualified

**Head Coach**  
Joe Potter, second year

---

**3 POINTERS**

- Seton returns eight players but just two seniors.
- Just three players are 5-foot-10 or taller.
- 60 points in opener were more than any last season.

Last season wasn’t a lot of fun, but Seton Catholic never sulked.

The Cougars went 1-9 in a shortened campaign. But eight returners are using last spring as a building block.

“We talk a lot about when teams are 10-0, it’s easy to come to practice,” Seton coach Joe Potter said. They never quit. They came and battled every game.”

This team, which is still young with two seniors, is also looking to last season as motivation.

“They remember 1-9,” Potter said. “That wasn’t a whole lot of fun. We motivated ourself. We have that 1-9 chip on our shoulder.”

Returners Maddie Willis and Hannah Jo Hammerstrom are joined by sophomore newcomer Lauryn Bowyer in the backcourt.

Six-foot sophomore Cami Price is the Cougars’ tallest player. Therefore, Seton will put a priority on fundamentals, execution and defense.

“We’re getting better,” Potter said. “They worked hard over last season” 

Seton has already seen improvement with wins in three of its first four games this season.

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**Winter sports scenes**

Fort Vancouver starters are introduced before a game against Mountain View.

Woodland High School students anticipate a 3-point shot against Columbia River.
**Kalama Chinooks**

**Boys:** Esary, team seeking titles

Wes Armstrong is a patient coach. It took until the week of Dec. 6 for him to get his varsity roster on the practice floor. That’s because the majority of the varsity roster played on Kalama’s state championship football team.

Once the Chinooks get their “basketball legs”, Armstrong expects his team to compete for league and district titles behind physicality and experience.

“We have tremendous depth at all positions,” said Armstrong, the fourth-year coach.

That starts with Jackson Esary, the league’s reigning co-MVP who averaged a double-double of 24 points and 10 rebounds in the spring.

Two other players — Dylan Mills and Jack Doerty — averaged better than 6 points per game.

The Chinooks captured the 2B district crown in the spring, and Armstrong believes Kalama should compete for a league crown alongside Toutle Lake, the spring’s league champions, Adna and Napavine.

Kalama finished last season with wins in 10 of its last 11 games.

**Girls:** 8th graders help to rebuild

The Chinooks are in full rebuild mode.

With just seven high school players program-wide, Kalama is turning to eighth graders to help fill out its roster.

The Chinooks also had eighth graders play during the spring’s condensed COVID season.

Coach Amber Doerty said a few eighth graders joined the high school program fresh off its middle school season that ended Dec. 6.

“They’ll rise to the occasion,” Doerty said.

Doerty is in her second consecutive season as coach, but previously coached the Chinooks from 1998-2003.

The program isn’t far removed from multiple league titles and consecutive state appearances from 2014-17.

The team’s lone senior, 5-foot-6 Sydney Johnson, is a do-it-all-type player who can shine at guard and forward.

“We’re going to have a good season, have fun and rebuild,” Doerty said.

“Hopefully we can get a JV team going and keep the fire alive.”

After going winless in the spring, Kalama already has a win under its belt by beating Fort Vancouver.

**Stevenson Bulldogs**

**Boys:** Bulldogs find way in 2B

The Stevenson Bulldogs are finding out how competitive 2B basketball is.

The Bulldogs are in their second season in the Class 2B Central League — an ultra-competitive league that routinely has teams bring home hardware from the 2B state tournament in Yakima.

In the WIAA’s last state tournament, Toutle Lake and Willapa Valley brought home two of the top-six trophies awarded.

“The league lost some very good seniors a year ago,” third-year coach Robert Waymire said, “but many of the 2B elite seem to reload annually with players that are just as good. There will be no easy games.”

A trio of sophomores — Jordan Waymire, Kacen Bach, and Chris Blackledge — were three of the team’s top four scorers off the team’s 0-12 campaign in the spring.

The Bulldogs are still young, but coach Waymire said he expects continued growth after a spring of valuable experience.

The Bulldogs ended their losing streak with a win over Lyle in the second game of this season.

**Girls:** Team embraces ‘reset’

It’s a “complete program reset” for the Stevenson Bulldogs in their second season in Class 2B.

That’s what Jereth Robinson is embracing in his first season leading the girls basketball program at his high school alma mater.

Robinson was a four-year player for the Bulldogs who led the program to state in 2007. Finding the right mental mindset for achieving success is a starting point for Stevenson, which went 2-11 in the spring.

“Building a positive culture that entices our players to become the best versions of themselves on and off the court,” Robinson said.

Robinson’s roster has three seniors — Ramy Nielsen, Ashleigh Essacson and Isabella Spencer — along with five ninth graders.

Nielsen is a four-year player and Spencer played eighth at the Class 2B/1B state cross country championships. Robinson calls sophomore point guard Sofia Spencer a “distribution queen.”

Stevenson already has a convincing win this season, a 50-14 victory over Lyle on Dec. 14. Spencer scored 13 points.
Ugbinada chases goal of bowling in college

By TIM MARTINEZ
The Columbian

One match in early December, Fort Vancouver bowler Rose Ugbinada had a perfect game going into the 10th frame.

But her 10th ball left her with a split. It was the closest the senior had come to a 300 game in five years of competitive bowling.

“Nothing like that before,” Ugbinada said of her game on Dec. 6 at Hazel Dell Lanes. “I've had like 260s where one ball in the middle wasn't a strike. But I've never had a string all the way through the ninth before. It was exciting. I'm almost there. I will get there. It will come when it's ready.”

True to form, Ugbinada regrouped, picked up the split then rolled her 10th strike for a 278. It's an impressive score for any bowler, but even more so for one who only picked up the game five years ago.

Ugbinada's introduction to the game came from watching her sister bowl for her middle school.

“One time, my parents and I went together and bowled, and the league coach at Crosley (Lanes) was there,” Ugbinada said. “He said, ‘You have good form. You should consider signing up for a league.' So I did, just because. And I didn't like it at first. But my mom said 'you should go again.' And that's when I bowled my highest game at that time, and then I thought 'OK, maybe I'll keep doing it.' ”

She joined the bowling team at Fort Vancouver her freshman year and earned a spot to the state tournament. Her sophomore year, she placed third overall at the 3A state tournament.

And that got her thinking about just how far bowling could take her.

“I knew by my sophomore year that I maybe I could take this to college,” she said. “So I started looking at college programs.”

Last summer, her high school coach Julie Pagel helped Ugbinada make a highlight video that she could send to colleges. Now, Ugbinada hopes to attend Alabama A&M next year and bowl for the Bulldogs.

More quiet by nature, Ugbinada bursts into a firecracker when bowling with the Trappers, belting out cheers with her teammates after rolling a strike.

“My mom says it's the Hawaiian in me,” she said. “But when I yell, it comes out as this really deep voice. I don't know why. That's just the way it is. And it's not I don't like to talk. It's just sometimes I don't know what to say when I'm sitting there. But when I get out on the lanes, I know what to say when I get a strike. We have these cheers, and I get into it.”

With her senior season fully underway, Ugbinada is rolling again, posting an average of 203 this season.

The start of the pandemic was especially hard on her. While other high school athletes could kick a ball or shoot baskets on lockdown, there were no bowling facilities open during the spring and early summer of 2020.

“At first I thought ‘OK, it will come back in two weeks,' ” she recalled. “It didn't. After a month and a half, that's when I started going insane. I was like 'I need to bowl.' So I pretended to bowl in my yard, which I know is a little sad.”

Later that summer, her family drove three hours to the only available bowling center just for the chance to bowl.

“And then I guttered my first ball,” she said. “And I was 'OK nerves. You can do this. It's just like riding a bike.'”

The top bowlers by average

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bowler</th>
<th>Average</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rose Ugbinada</td>
<td>203</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kylee Jo Wisinski, Col. River</td>
<td>176</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ava Rudman, RA Long</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie Lender-Aderle, RA Long</td>
<td>173</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lily Bash, Prairie</td>
<td>173</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emily Strehele, Kelso</td>
<td>172</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makaila Perkins, Mark Morris</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla Blix, Fort Vancouver</td>
<td>170</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kailee Wilcox, Evergreen</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fort Vancouver's Rose Ugbinada bowls at Hazel Dell Lanes during a match this season. Ugbinada nearly achieved bowling perfection when rolled all strikes through nine frames on Dec. 6. She finished that round with a 278.
Camas aims to stay on state podium

With 40 gymnasts, Papermakers have talent and depth

By TIM MARTINEZ
The Columbian

The Camas gymnastics team’s streak of three consecutive 4A state titles in still intact. But because last year’s COVID season didn’t include a state meet, it has been nearly two years since the Papermakers last hoisted that state championship trophy.

And Camas graduate several talented gymnasts since then, including four-time All-Region gymnast of the year Shea McGee.

But don’t think this year’s group of Papermakers don’t have their sights set on the top podium at state.

“That is definitely something that we’re working at,” senior Olivia Bane said. “It’s definitely something we can do. We just need to work hard like we always do. But it’s definitely something we can accomplish again.”

The 2021-22 Papermakers are deep with talented gymnasts. Bane, a state finalist in the vault as sophomore in 2020, and Peyton Cody, who placed fifth in the vault at state in 2020, return as team leaders.

A big new addition since 2020 is sophomore Halle Kempf, who coach Carol Willson describes as a contender for the state all-around title.

Kempf said last spring’s abbreviated season served a low-key introduction into high school gymnastics for her.

“It was still fun to be with the team every day, still, and get some experience in,” Kempf said. “It was just difficult to push myself because we didn’t have that motivation of getting to state. But it was still really fun being with a new team and getting all the support of the girls.”

The Papermakers will have a lot of support this winter as they sport a roster of 40 gymnasts.

One challenge of having a larger roster for Willson is finding practice time for all of them. Camas breaks its practice time into groups.

To make that work, the team has established five team captains — Bane, Cody, Cyenna McCusker, Hannah Affleck and Ali Hubbard — and each is responsible for leading each group.

“We work with our groups to see if anyone needs any help on any event, getting their skills up and meeting their requirements for their events,” Bane said. “It’s really good to have these small groups because you always have someone you can go to for help. And it’s really encouraging because all of the little groups are super supportive of each other.”

And having 40 gymnasts gives the Papermakers another edge.

“We have a bunch of girls with a bunch of different skill levels, which is good because we have a lot of depth on the team,” Bane said. “If we have someone who, say, isn’t as strong on bars, then we have someone else to help pull up the scores.”

Kempf added: “It’s super easy to have like an off day in competition. So we definitely need all the girls that we have to keep the team strong.”

After last season’s meet without any fans in attendance, the Papermakers are eager to get back out in front of crowd to see what they can do.

“We’re just excited to have a real meet this year with a bunch of fans being able to support us out there,” Bane said.

Gymnasts to watch
Olivia Bane, sr., Camas
Sarah Bilyeu, sr., Skyview
Peyton Cody, sr., Camas
Elainie Hendricks, jr., Union
Halle Kempf, so., Camas
Gretchen Lane, so., Prairie
Joslyn Mayberry, sr., Ridgefield
BOYS SWIMMING

Dangleis relishes fun of high school competition

Hockinson swimmer aims for return to state meet

By TIM MARTINEZ
The Columbian

When moving to Clark County from Las Vegas seven years ago, the weather wasn’t the only adjustment for Parker Dangleis.

“The school system is what really surprised me,” Dangleis said. “In Vegas, we switched around schools a lot. But in Hockinson, there is one elementary, one middle school, one high school, so I’ve grown up with the same kids in school the whole way through. I’ve been able to build some good friendships.”

This winter, the junior is reconnecting with friends on Hockinson High’s swim team, which practices at Lacamas Swim and Sport with swimmers from Seton Catholic and Washougal.

It’s a mixed bag of experienced swimmers and first-timers, a combination that Dangleis likes. “It’s fun,” Dangleis said. “As compared to my club experience, it seems like the swimmers here progress a lot faster. They go from being nothing to being pretty good swimmers. It’s fun to see that, and be a part of that.

“For some, this is their first year with the team. And for some, there here to learn to swim competitively. It’s fun to see that progression. To see them go from not even being able to swim the length of the pool to being competitive in events and beating people.”

Dangleis has been a competitive swimmer since he was nine and a new arrival from Las Vegas. “We were living with my grandparents until our house was finished being built, and we were taking swim lessons at Marshall Community Center,” he said. “At the end of our lessons, we would see this swim team come in. So that’s when I decided to start swimming competitively.”

Dangleis has been swimming with the Columbia River Swim Team ever since, growing into a strong distance swimmer. While club swimming has the mile — 1,650 yards — the longest high school event is less than three times as long — the 500-yard freestyle.

“The 500 free was the event Dangleis qualified for state as a freshman in 2020. But it might not be his specialty this winter. “It’s starting to change recently,” he said. “It’s starting to be the 200 freestyle. I used to be a miler. That was my main event in club. But I have been transitioning more to the 200 free.”

During last spring’s abbreviated COVID season, Dangleis posted the region’s top 200 free time among 2A swimmers, and the fourth-best time among swimmers of any classification.

“It was a short season, so it was hard to get back into the groove of things,” he said. “I had club swimming as well, and I had been doing that for a while. But it was nice to get back in the water and hang out with the high school guys. It was still fun, just not a full season.”

While some club swimmers will choose to focus just on the club, Dangleis likes what both the club and high school experiences provide. And he’s looking forward to competing for a spot in the high school state meet again.

“I’m just here to improve my times,” he said. “I don’t really care where I place. I just want to be able to improve myself and see my teammates go with me to state. That would be cool. Other than that, it’s just having a good time.”

Hockinson junior Parker Dangleis qualified for state as a freshman in the 500 freestyle, but might focus on shorter races this season.

Swimmers to watch
Parker Dangleis, jr., Hockinson
Sam Empey, so., Union
Yonten Ghadong, so., Mountain View
Jack Houlanah, jr., Prairie
Nathan Kim, jr., Camas
Liam Noftsker, jr., Columbia River
Kairos Phed, jr., Prairie
Tyler Torve, sr., Camas
Justin Xue, sr., Mountain View
Hamblin chases third state championship

Mountain View senior to wrestle for Oregon State

By MICAH RICE
The Columbian

At a recent Mountain View wrestling practice, coach Joel Denman was explaining the best process for getting ready before a match.

Then he called on CJ Hamblin to share his pre-match routine.

And why not? Few teams have a two-time state champion to call on for advice.

Hamblin is at his neighborhood school to chase what he hopes will be the crowning achievement of his senior season — a Class 3A state championship.

As a freshman, Hamblin brought Seton Catholic its first ever individual state title when he won the Class 1A crown at 145 pounds. The next year, he won the 1A state title at 152 pounds.

Much has changed for Hamblin since his sophomore season.

For one, his goal of becoming a four-time state champion had to be amended after the pandemic pretty much wiped out last year’s wrestling season in Washington.

Hamblin also underwent a second knee surgery earlier this year to repair the same torn meniscus he suffered in the summer of 2019.

Perhaps most importantly, he secured a chance to compete at the next level. Hamblin, who had originally committed to Northern Colorado, landed an offer from Oregon State.

Then there’s a new group of teammates, who Hamblin is not at all unfamiliar with.

“Most of these kids who go here, I grew up with,” Hamblin said. “I’m happy to be back here. They have respect for me and I have respect for them.”

Denman said having a wrestler of Hamblin’s caliber can have a big impact on a team, whether at a tournament or practice.

“When he wrestles, everybody is watching,” Denman said. “They see the way he competes, how he focuses and how he trains.”

Hamblin, who has lost just two matches in his high school career, isn’t fazed by moving from Class 1A to 3A. He has plenty of experience facing wrestlers from larger schools at regional or national tournaments.

“Though God’s will, I feel that I’m the best in any classification in the country,” Hamblin said. “All my coaches, they’ve always put that in me. Since I was 4 years old, I’ve always believed I was the best.”

While Hamblin has some serious goals — win national titles and eventually make the Olympics — he tells his teammates to enjoy wrestling.

“I know it’s kind of cliche, but I just tell them to go out and have fun,” Hamblin said. “Of course we’re trying to win. But don’t go out there scared to wrestle matches. Go out there and believe you’re going to win. Believe in your training and technique. The rest will take care of itself.”

It’s that same zest for the sport that sold Hamblin on Oregon State.

“At other places, there are a lot of wrestlers who are stiff,” Hamblin said. “At Oregon State, they have a lot of high fliers and high scorers who like to have fun while they’re wrestling.”

Hamblin was disappointed when the 2020-21 high school season didn’t happen. He was chasing a feat accomplished by just 22 others in Washington — becoming a four-time state champion.

“When the shutdown happened I was at a loss for words,” Hamblin said. “But I was talking to my pastor. It’s God’s plan.”

As for what things he can control, Hamblin is going to give his best effort.

“I just want to be the best me I can be,” he said.

Wrestlers to watch

BOYS
Tucker Alexander, sr., Ridgefield
Porter Craig, sr., Camas
Henry Jones, sr., Washougal
Tennyson Kurtz, so., Columbia River
Devin Padilla, sr., Camas
JJ Schoenlein, fr., Skyview
Averie Sikes, jr., Union
Malachi Wallway, jr., Prairie
Cody Wheeler, sr., Hockinson

GIRLS
Uwa Abe, jr., Ridgefield
Niah Cassidy, so., Union
Tyla Engstrom, sr., Ridgefield
Lacey Klopman, sr., Washougal
Regan Schlaefli, jr., Prairie
Jaylyn Sayler, sr., Skyview

MICAH RICE/The Columbian

Mountain View senior CJ Hamblin, right, spars with a partner at wrestling practice. Hamblin is seeking a third state title.
Chasing State Titles Again

After a year without state tournaments, athletes are more excited than ever to hunt hardware.

Union's Kyle Brosius celebrates an 11-7 decision win over Decatur's Bradley Tyack in the 170-pound championship at Mat Classic in February 2020.

Files/The Columbian

Union players celebrate their third-place trophy at the Class 4A boys basketball tournament in Tacoma in March 2020.

Files/The Columbian

The Camas gymnastics team celebrates winning the Class 4A state championship.

Courtesy of Carol Willson

Evergreen bowlers share their joy en route to winning the Class 3A state championship.

Files/The Columbian

The Columbian, Sunday, December 19, 2021
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