

Saturday, November 19, 2016

Mayolo, La Center hold off Mount Baker in 1A quarterfinals

By Rene Ferran, For The Columbian

WOODLAND — La Center spent the second half playing keepaway from Mount Baker.

It helped having Jeffrey Mayolo to carry the load.

Mayolo rushed for 184 yards on a career-high 36 carries Saturday night, with his final run the clinching 11-yard touchdown with 1:56 remaining to lift the No. 6 Wildcats to a 25-13 victory over No. 2 Mount Baker in the Class 1A state quarterfinals at Beaver Stadium.

“In all my years of sports, this is one of the best feelings I’ve ever had,” Mayolo said. “We were going to try to spread the ball around, but in the end, we figured out something they couldn’t stop and kept pounding them.”

The Wildcats (11-1) will take on No. 3 Connell (11-1), a 56-21 winner over Meridian earlier in the day, in next weekend’s semifinals. Date and time are to be determined, although McKenzie Stadium or Doc Harris Stadium were likely locations.

“I’ve always wanted to practice over Thanksgiving,” said Mayolo after leading La Center to just its second semifinal appearance in school history. “I’d walk all over the field, there’d be frost on the grass, and I’d think that it’d be so great to practice in that. I’ll finally get that opportunity.”

The Wildcats had twice lost to Mount Baker in the quarterfinals, both in 2012 and 2013. In the 2013 game, the Mountaineers hung 63 points on La Center, and Mayolo and his fellow seniors had long memories.

“I remember that feeling. We were all just crying,” Mayolo said. “To finally get that revenge on Mount Baker, show them who’s boss, feels real good.”

The Wildcats led 19-13 at halftime, then held the ball for more than 18 1/2 minutes of the second half thanks to two long drives. But the Mountaineers (11-1) held on fourth down twice, including once at their 1-yard line, to keep the margin a one-possession game.

By holding the ball so long, though, La Center forced Mount Baker out of its powerful running game, and driving into a strong wind in the fourth quarter, the Mountaineers passing game struggled.

Jeremy Scott, the Trico MVP, had a pair of interceptions in the fourth quarter. On the first, he returned the ball 44 yards to the Mount Baker 11, setting up Mayolo's clinching score one play later.

"I'd been burnt on a couple of balls earlier in the game, so I wanted to make sure to keep the play in front of me and not let them get deep," said Scott, who also ran for a score and threw for another in the first half.

"On that first interception, I knew I had underneath help, so I just sat back and knew it was mine. I wanted to score and end the game right there."

Mount Baker came in averaging almost 46 points per game, and it racked up 455 yards of total offense in a first-round win over Hoquiam. The Wildcats held the visitors to just 196 yards, with Clint Smith leading the way with six tackles, a sack and a forced fumble.

"Our defense was great today," Scott said. "The only things we gave up were a couple of big plays, but we had confidence we could stop them and win the game with our defense."

The Wildcats struck on their opening possession, taking over at the Mount Baker 48 after Jackson Leslie blocked a punt. Three plays later, Scott hit Thomas Dreyer on a shovel pass that the junior turned into a 53-yard touchdown.

La Center made it 12-0 on the first play of the second quarter on Mayolo's first touchdown, a 6-yard run. The Mountaineers answered quickly, with Kaleb Bass finding Thomas Barbo on passes of 34 and 29 yards, the latter making the score 12-6.

The Wildcats then chewed up almost eight minutes to go 83 yards in 14 plays, with Scott capping the drive with a 4-yard run with 2:10 left for a 19-6 lead.

Right before halftime, Bass hit Jed Schleimer on a 25-yard TD pass to close the gap to 19-13.

La Center finished with 336 yards of total offense and held the ball for almost 34 1/2 of the game's 48 minutes.

"We knew we weren't going to shut them completely down," said LC coach John Lambert, who last led the Wildcats to the semifinals in 2003. "But we wanted to control the ball, keep their offense off the field, and our defense played a real inspired game tonight."

Friday, November 4, 2016

Blocked PAT costs Columbia River vs. W.F. West

By Rene Ferran, For The Columbian

Dalton Garrett hardly had time to celebrate his pick-six on the Columbia River sideline before he watched W.F. West block the extra-point kick.

No big deal, he thought.

“Based on what our defense was doing all game, stopping them, I thought that our offense was going to be able to drive it down,” Garrett said.

Except the big play the Chieftains kept waiting for from their offense never came, and their season ended with a 7-6 loss to the Bearcats in a Class 2A regional playoff game Friday night at Kiggins Bowl.

For the first time since 2011, Columbia River’s season ends short of the state playoffs.

The Chieftains finished 5-5, while W.F. West awaits the result of tonight’s Black Hills-Hockinson playoff game to find out where it plays next week.

“This was a good football program when I got here,” said first-year River coach Christian Swain, “but anytime you bring in a new culture, a new scheme, there’s going to be bumps in the road.

“But for us to take an 8-1 football team into deep water like that says something about our team. I feel like we represented really well tonight.”

The Chieftains managed just 53 yards of total offense and had more punts (seven) than first downs (six), but their defense kept them alive by forcing three second-half turnovers and holding the Bearcats twice on fourth down.

“I was definitely a little shocked that we weren’t able to capitalize on offense,” Garrett said. “We threw everything we could at them, and they were able to take care of it.”

Garrett had inside position on the Bearcats receiver as the wobbly pass dropped in. He fended off the receiver and streaked untouched down the right sideline for a 36-yard touchdown with 7:19 to play.

It looked like this defensive standoff was destined for overtime, but 6-foot-6, 290-pound senior Hunter Arredondo swatted away the ensuing PAT attempt to keep the Bearcats in the lead.

“It just had to be done,” Arredondo said. “Our defense runs our team.”

The Chieftains forced a quick three-and-out and got the ball back with 5 minutes left, but three straight runs netted just four yards, forcing yet another punt with 3:03 to play.

W.F. West converted on third-and-3, then got another first down a minute later to run out the clock.

“It crossed my mind to go for two,” Swain said. “I knew that could be it right there, but I also knew that we were playing well enough on defense to get more opportunities to score. If we could just pin them down, we’d have a chance.”

The Bearcats offense struggled most of the night, but one big play set up their only score early in the second quarter. Tyson Guerrero turned a simple slant pass into a 58-yard gain, getting chased down by Koben Jamison at the River 17.

Four plays later, Austin Emery scored on a 10-yard run on fourth down.

W.F. West appeared poised to score on the opening drive of the second half, but Jamison forced a fumble near the goal line that Nahiku Lidstone recovered in the end zone.

Jamison later picked off a pass near midfield with 1:01 left in the third. But after River gained one first down, the Bearcats stiffened again to force another punt.

“They were really fast defensively, and whenever we went east-west, they made us pay for it,” Swain said. “We couldn’t protect our quarterback (Jack Armstrong), and he was running for his life all game, so when we tried to open things up, we went the wrong way.”

Friday, November 6, 2015

Spudders stopped short as W.F. West wins in 3OT

By Rene Ferran, For The Columbian

RIDGEFIELD — A couple of inches can be the stuff that dreams are made of.

Or nightmares.

A couple of inches were all that turned Ridgefield's dream of a first state playoff appearance in a decade into a nightmare that will be hard to awaken from.

A couple of inches are all that separated W.F. West and Ridgefield in an epic 2A district playoff matchup Friday night at Spudders Stadium.

Those couple of inches are all Jalen Williams needed to finish his two-point conversion try in the end zone and propel the Spudders onto state.

But when the bodies unplied and the linesman pointed at a spot a couple of inches shy of the goal line, the Bearcats escaped with a 31-30, triple-overtime victory that ended Ridgefield's season.

"This was my 12th season of football, and that was about the worst way I can think of to go out," said senior quarterback Cade Morrill.

"Ever watch Friday Night Lights? We all love it as a team. One year on the show, they lose the state championship when they're tackled on the half-yard line as time runs out. It's crazy that almost the same thing happened to us."

There was no questioning coach Dan Andersen's decision to go for two after Williams burst untouched into the end zone from 10 yards out on the Spudders' first play of the third overtime.

After almost three hours of slugging it out with the Bearcats (6-4), it was time for someone to go home a winner.

"I thought we could push it across on that last play," Andersen said. "We had a check called based on how they lined up, and they lined up how we thought they would so we could get in."

Two hours earlier, it certainly did not seem as if these teams would need three overtimes to decide things. The Spudders (8-2) built a 17-0 lead early in the third quarter after Morrill rumbled and stumbled through the West defense for a 38-yard touchdown run.

That was when the Bearcats decided to open up their attack, and things got interesting.

A pass interference call, followed by two big pass completions, set up Elijah Johnson's 1-yard touchdown run with 7 minutes left in the third — the first points the Spudders had allowed in 12 quarters.

Ridgefield looked like it would answer West's score, but a bad pitch on third down stalled a Spudders drive at midfield. Five plays after Ridgefield punted, the

Bearcats closed to within 17-14 on a 44-yard screen pass from Johnson to Austin Emery.

“They started throwing the ball more, and once they did that, everything changed. They made some big plays and got the momentum,” said Morrill, who finished with a season-high 100 yards rushing, threw for a touchdown and made a team-high seven tackles at safety.

W.F. West tied the game on a 26-yard field goal by Cory Davis with 6:45 left. Ridgefield then drove to the Bearcats 34 before getting stopped on downs, and the Spudders survived to overtime when an apparent game-winning touchdown pass was nullified by a holding penalty.

The teams exchanged touchdowns in the first overtime, with Johnson scoring on a 5-yard run and Tommy Herz turning a pass to the left flat into a 20-yard score.

Ridgefield was poised to score in the second overtime, but Nathan Anglin picked off a third-down pass in the end zone. The Spudders answered by holding the Bearcats to no yards on their possession.

W.F. West got the ball first in the third overtime, and Johnson ran the ball three times, powering in from the 1 for the score.

“I knew this game would be a battle,” Anderson said. “And it ended up being every bit of one.”

Friday, Jan. 2, 2015

House Bill 2611: Cultural Competency Continuing Education

By Rene Ferran, Office of Equity and Inclusion

The Legislature spoke last session about its intent to see cultural competency training added to the continuing education of health care professionals.

The [State Board of Psychologist Examiners](#) is ready to put those rules into place, thanks to the efforts of [Dr. Sandra Jenkins](#).

Dr. Jenkins, the Director of Human Diversity at Pacific University's School of Professional Psychology and a Board member since April 2013, proposed a rule to add a minimum of four credits of cultural competency training.

At its November meeting, the Board unanimously approved a proposal to have a rule-making meeting for the purposes of putting this requirement in place.

If the psychology board follows through, it would be the first professional health care board in the state to put the standard in place.

"That would make me proud of psychologists and psychiatry if we are (the first)," Jenkins said. "I think it's fitting and appropriate if we're the professional group that's first."

Jenkins has spent her career researching the psychology of women (especially of ethnic minorities) and low-income clients, which was one reason she pushed her fellow Board members to approve the cultural competency proposal.

"Research shows there is a problem for people of color and minority groups not benefiting from psychotherapy as much as white middle-class people," she said. "They are not going to therapy, or not staying as long. It's the same for poor people. We are failing minorities, people of color, poor people.

"We're well aware that this is a problem. I didn't experience much resistance at all. Psychologists tend to be empathetic. We're trained to be aware of the feelings of other people. I don't think this will be a problem (to implement) at all."

Once the psychology board holds its rule-making meeting, and if it passes the final rules, it will need assistance implementing the rules, and that's where OEI fits into the equation.

After HB 2611 passed during the 2013 legislative session, OEI went to work implementing the law, informed by a 15-member [Rules Advisory Committee](#) (RAC) that included representatives of health licensing boards and agencies, health professional associations, coordinated care organizations, and culturally specific community-based organizations.

The RAC met throughout the summer of 2014, holding several public meetings and completing the public comment process in November.

OHA then finalized the rules in December, effective Jan. 1, 2015. It's now creating a Cultural Competency Continuing Education Curriculum Approval Committee, which will be tasked with determining what training and learning opportunities will satisfy the requirements of the law.

Anyone interested in joining the committee can contact [Emily Wang](#), with the goal for the committee to hold its first meeting by early February 2015.

“All health care professional boards can set this standard,” said Wang, an OEI Health Equity Policy Analyst who spearheaded the rule-making process. “If they choose to do it, we will support them in any way we can.”

And if a board chooses not to implement HB2611’s standards into its licensing procedure? “They still have to report to OHA on how many of their professionals participate in [cultural competency continuing education](#),” Wang explained.

Given the Legislature’s mandate, though, and Oregon’s growing diversity, it seems clear other boards will want to follow the State Board of Psychologist Examiners’ leadership.

Wednesday, Oct. 1, 2014

[Giving Patients a Voice](#)

By Rene Ferran, Office of Equity and Inclusion

Every time Carmen Villa steps into a room at Salem Hospital, she remembers why she chose to become a health care interpreter.

“I think about myself years ago. I remember how I felt,” said Villa, a native of Mexico who moved to the U.S. in 1990. “It was frustrating. I could understand some (English), but not fully.

“I imagine my client is feeling the same way I did. They’re relieved to have a voice.”

Villa is one of eight full-time employees at Salem Hospital interpreting for Spanish- and Russian-speaking patients who need someone to act as their voice when working with medical personnel.

She also is one of only 30 Spanish-speaking certified interpreters on the state’s [Health Care Interpreter Registry](#).

Along with 40 qualified Spanish interpreters on the Registry, that makes 70 individuals eligible to serve the 115,466 Medicaid recipients enrolled with Coordinated Care Organizations (CCOs) statewide who are limited English proficient (LEP) and list Spanish as their preferred language.

That ratio -- 1,650 patients per certified/qualified interpreter -- is something the OHA’s Office of Equity and Inclusion is working to decrease as the need for interpreters only increases statewide.

“Our goal is to promote health literacy, and providing interpreters who have a command on medical terminology is important,” said April Johnson, Health Equity Workforce Manager with OEI and head of the Health Care Interpreter (HCI) program.

Villa said she noticed a difference in how both clients and doctors looked at her professionally after she earned her certification in 2012.

“What would be the difference with an electrician who has certification and one who doesn’t?” she said. “It’s the same (for health care interpreters). Our profession is starting to be recognized in value. I’m really fighting to demonstrate that being certified is an advantage for everyone.

“There are many people out there who’ve been working as interpreters many years. I ask, why not get certified, get that recognition, and provide that peace of mind for the patient and the provider?”

Villa first got into the field in the mid-2000s, when there wasn’t much training available. She initially took courses designed for legal interpreters -- when she could afford them -- then slowly began learning the medical terminology necessary for the job.

“I just saw the need,” she said. “I saw many people like me, who couldn’t communicate their needs, their emotions, to the doctor. My appointment book was always full.”

It wasn’t until 2009 that OHA hired Dr. David Cardona to develop the Health Care Interpreter Program, which has a stated purpose of “improving access to quality health care interpretation for Limited English-speaking persons in Oregon.”

“It was nothing, just a concept,” he said. “We’d just had the rules approved, and I was hired to develop the program.”

By March 2011, Cardona and his team had the program up and running, allowing DHS to contract with vendors to qualify and certify interpreters.

[Qualified interpreters](#) must demonstrate a proficiency in both English and the second language, have undergone 60 hours of formal health care interpreter training (broken down into 52 hours of medical terminology, physiology and anatomy, and 8 hours of HCI ethics), and 40 hours of documented work experience.

[Certified interpreters](#) must meet all the requirements for qualification, but have 80 hours of work experience as well as pass both oral and written HCI certification testing from one of two organizations. Currently, certification testing

is available in seven languages -- Spanish, Russian, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Vietnamese and Arabic.

“When you become certified, it shows that you not only know the terminology, but that you know how you can do your job in the best way to allow that communication between patient and provider,” Villa said. “You learn the cultural aspect of it, of both cultures that you work with, and about how to read the patient, to see when they’re not understanding something, or they’re too afraid or overwhelmed to ask for clarification.”

The benefits run both ways, Villa stressed.

“The providers I work with, they know I’m certified, and they know what I’m talking about,” she said. “They know I know what the rules are and what our role is.”

Cardona has since passed the torch of running the HCI Program to Johnson, whose top task is finding funding to provide grants for training programs, especially in locales outside the Willamette Valley.

Of the 70 qualified or certified Spanish-speaking interpreters on the Registry, only eight are outside the Portland-Salem-Eugene corridor.

For example, Eastern Oregon CCO, which covers 12 counties, has two qualified HCIs for its 6,151 Spanish-speaking LEP enrollees. Jackson Care Connect, in the state’s sixth-largest county, has one qualified HCI serving 2,359 enrollees.

“We want to target specific areas where they are not serving, look at the CCOs in that area, and see how we can get HCIs into the training program,” Johnson said.

As you can imagine, Villa and her colleagues at Salem Hospital are kept hopping from room to room on most days. She estimates she sees between five and 15 patients a day.

“You don’t know what you’re going to say, if you’re going to have to deliver devastating news to a patient and their family,” she said. “You have to be there, hold back your tears, and be professional but not aloof. You let them know, I’m just your voice. You can say what you want, how you want, and I’ll adhere to the message.”

Villa then smiled.

“It’s just gratifying when you’re finished to hear, *Gracias senorita*. Thank you.”

Saturday, May 24, 2008

4A track: Defending champ DQ'd in girls 3,200

By Rene Ferran, Herald staff writer

Nicole Cochran stood by herself in the middle of the Edgar Brown Stadium infield, cheering as loud as she could.

One by one, the runners the Bellarmine Prep senior had just vanquished in Friday's 4A girls 3,200-meter race climbed the Star Track XXVI awards podium and received their medals.

Cochran, though, wasn't part of the official ceremony.

She had been disqualified from the race, ruled to have run on the inside line of the track along the far curve during the seventh lap -- the precise moment when she made her move to escape a pack of runners and take the lead.

"There's not really much I can do," said the Harvard-bound Cochran, who was hoping to repeat her 2007 title. "We tried to appeal it. It's very unfortunate, but sometimes it's what you get dealt."

As she finished speaking, Shadle Park sophomore Andrea Nelson walked over. Nelson had been awarded the victory after Cochran's disqualification, but she took the first-place medal and slipped it around Cochran's neck.

"It's your medal," Nelson said to her. "You're the state champion."

Then, one by one, the rest of the top eight runners gathered around Cochran in a circle and held their own informal ceremony, exchanging their medals -- Nelson receiving the second-place medal, Redmond's Sarah Lord the third-place medal, and so on down the line.

"That's not how you win state," Nelson said. "She totally deserves it. She crushed everybody."

It was a controversial end to Day 1 of the two-day state track and field championships, a day that otherwise saw plenty of tight finishes.

Shadle Park leads the girls standings with 20 points, with defending champion Gig Harbor second with 17. Bellarmine, though, still got eight runners and two

relays through to today's finals and are in good shape to win their first title since 2005.

Mead leads what figures to be a wide-open boys race after Day 1 with 15.5 points.

Girls

Ferris senior Kelly McNamee didn't have the finish she quite hoped for in the high jump.

While she successfully defended her state title, she only cleared 5-8, doing so on her third try to beat out Mountain View's Christine Rice on fewer misses.

McNamee had hopes of becoming only the fourth girl in state history to go over 6 feet. She said having to run a hurdles prelim in the middle of the competition might have played a factor, but she didn't want to make excuses.

"Honestly, I don't know what happened," she said. "I know what I can do, and it just wasn't there today."

McNamee then went and finished sixth in the long jump, which was won by Curtis junior Andrea Geubelle with a best of 19-1 3/4.

Geubelle was consistent throughout the competition, posting four jumps over 19 feet and the five best of the afternoon, but she still was hoping for better results.

"I'm glad I got first, so I'm not going to say I was disappointed," she said. "But I felt I could have popped a 20-footer. That was my goal."

Thomas Jefferson senior Sofia Malamura won the shot put with a throw of 41-2 1/2 -- a personal-best by more than 7 inches and a school record, but more important, almost 3 1/2 feet farther than freshman teammate Kayla Adams, who'd beaten Malamura at last week's West Central District meet but placed seventh Friday.

"In practice, we don't acknowledge it, but in competition we're head-to-head like this," Malamura said, knocking her fists together. "I just didn't want her to beat me today."

Monroe senior Kelsey Brennan won a tightly-bunched javelin competition, going 135-9 on her first throw in the finals to pass Marysville-Pilchuck's Jenna Walsh.

"We all knew it would be close. There was a handful of us who could easily have taken it," said Brennan, who finished second a year ago. "I usually throw better here than anywhere else. I think it's the atmosphere here."

Boys

In a long jump competition that saw three of the top four qualifiers fail to make the finals, Kentlake junior Zach Smith came up big in the finals to win the title.

He took the lead with his first jump, going 22-8 to pass Oak Harbor's Donovan Hunt. Then on his final jump, Smith popped a 23-3 that stood up as the winner.

"I knew I'd gotten myself into first, but there were a couple others behind me who looked like they were ready to jump big, so I knew I had to go farther," Smith said. "It was either go big or go home."

Inglemoor senior Ian Quinn definitely went big to win the pole vault title, going 15 inches higher than he'd ever vaulted when he cleared 15-3 on his first attempt to finally get the best of his three-way duel with Stanwood's Nathan Simunds and Mead's Keith Webber.

"That made it fun," Quinn said. "We're very aware of what's going on. Last week, I won on misses. There was a lot of going back and forth today."

Bethel senior Oliver Henry led the discus competition from his first attempt, going 169-3 and watching it stand up for the title.

"I felt relieved," he said. "I got fifth last year, and I was just trying to prove to my dad that I could do it."

Gig Harbor senior Miles Unterreiner, headed to Stanford in the fall, will take the 3,200 title with him after dominating the second half of the race to win in 9:13.51 -- more than 5 seconds ahead of Tahoma's Jon Lafler.

"I was planning on coat-tailing the first mile, then throw it in gear at the mile mark and see who went with me," he said. "I just kept ratcheting it up lap by lap."

Sunday, June 20, 1999

New dad marvels at his little miracle

By Rene Ferran, Herald staff writer

So, here it is, 4:30 in the morning, looking down upon my little mystery wrapped in her receiving blanket, staring back at me as the sun begins to peek into our window.

Everyone tried to prepare me for this.

For the sleepless nights that turn into a parade between the kitchen and the changing table.

For the smells that I thought I'd left behind when I stopped driving past the pulp plant near Albany, Ore.

For the howls that somehow permeate the fitful sleep I do manage, travel down my spine and into my soul, haunting me until I can make them stop.

For the squirming legs and flailing arms that make changing her outfits an exercise in futility.

But there was something no one could prepare me for, no words could have described.

It's that feeling I get while holding my Isabella in my arms, a tidal wave of awe, pride, excitement and love, all wrapped up in the awesome sense of responsibility that ties these feelings together in a pretty pink bow.

I realize that my life, whatever meaning it had before, suddenly has a greater purpose -- to care for this little wriggling person and somehow guide her and help her become the best person she can.

A year ago, I couldn't have told you I was ready for this challenge.

Me, a dad? Heck, half the time I can't take care of myself. Just ask my wife. She'll agree, probably a bit too quickly.

When I was in college, working a summer job as a teller at a U.S. Bank branch, my sister ordered me not to go to the office before checking in with her.

Why? Because, she said, I couldn't dress myself. She had to approve whatever mishmash of patterns I came up with before I could set foot out of the house each day.

I'll even admit now, I didn't want to be in the delivery room. Too much blood and gore for me. Besides, I wasn't doing any of the work, right?

But there I was that May morning when my daughter took her first breath, and I wouldn't trade that day for the promise of a million more tacked on at the end of my life. The moment when Isabella's head poked out simply took my breath away.

Like I said, I couldn't have told you I was ready for this challenge a year ago.

Just 5 1/2 weeks later, I can't imagine life without it.

So bring on the soiled diapers, the stained clothes, the bloodshot eyes. I can take it. I want to take it.

Fatherhood suits me, you might say. Who'd have thought it?

Certainly not me.

Sunday, Feb. 22, 2004

Twice as nice: Sherfey, Warden repeat as state mat champions

By Rene Ferran, Herald staff writer

TACOMA -- Tyler Sherfey doesn't let his guard down very often.

Not on the wrestling mat. Not in celebrating a second state title at Mat Classic XVI.

After the Kamiakin senior finished off Foss' Robert Davis 10-3 to win the Class 4A 145-pound title Saturday night at the Tacoma Dome, there were no back flips, a la Moses Lake's Anthony Vela, also a two-time winner at 4A 112.

No tears, a la Prosser senior Manuel Plata, who shared a few with his coach and father, Armando, after finally winning a title at 3A 125 after placing seventh, seventh and third in his prior state appearances.

"People always talk about what it feels like to be a state champion," said Plata, whose 5-2 victory over Sedro-Woolley's Michael Lomsdalen was in doubt until the final seconds. "Now I know."

No shimmying, a la Warden senior Eddie Lyles, who boogied a few seconds with teammate Carlos Hernandez after recording a last-second pin of Republic's Tommy Swank in the 1A-B 171 final.

And certainly no dogpiling, a la the Othello coaching staff after Vashon's Robert Bennedsen had defeated Mount Baker's Josh Little in the 2A 160 final, clinching the Huskies their first state team title in 30 seasons.

No, none of that for Sherfey. He shook hands with the Foss coaches, exchanged a few hugs with his coaches, then he stepped off the mat and donned his warmups with a hint of a smile.

Just another day at the office for the Boise State-bound wrestler, who finished his season 37-0 and career 141-12?

No, not quite.

"This feels great," Sherfey said. "To go out on top, you can't beat it -- to do it in front of everyone here, to let everyone in Washington know you're on top again. And to do it twice just proves how dominant you are."

Just as dominant were the Warden wrestlers, who romped through the 1A-B competition with 13 placers and four state champions -- Lyles, Hernandez at 215 and two-time titlists Frankie Torres at 112 and Ismael Campos at 130 -- to win their third straight team title by 65 points.

"It's nice to achieve what we set out to do and expected to do," said Cougars coach Rick Bowers.

In all, 10 Mid-Columbians brought home state titles, including a pair of Othello unbeatens -- Tony Cantu at 119 and Alex Torres at 152 -- and Sunnyside senior Ray Romero at 3A 145.

Four others -- Warden's Jeff Cox at 119 and Ross Jones at 145; Sunnyside's Gabe Lara at 215; and Kennewick's Robert Hazenberg at 171 -- finished runners-up. Of the 84 wrestlers to take part from the region, 53 brought home hardware.

At the gymnastics meet next door, Southridge senior Jessica Fuller ended her high school career with a fourth-place finish in the floor exercise, the top showing of the three Tri-Citians in the final.

Friday, March 30, 2001

Soaring past class distinctions

By Rene Ferran, Herald staff writer

LACROSSE -- The sand in the long jump pit at LaCrosse-Washtucna's practice facility has the color and consistency of crystallized brown sugar.

It doesn't make for the softest of landings, but it's perfect for the perfect diversion from the daily grind of track practice.

"We build sand castles in the middle of the pit," said junior Danielle Ayers-Stamper. "Then, we try to jump over them."

As she walks back down the runway, her good friend and teammate, Andrea Stueckle, amends that statement.

"Well, Nell jumps over them," Stueckle corrected. "We just jump into them."

The middle of the pit is about 16 feet from the board, and at most meets, Ayers-Stamper is still soaring through the air at that point.

The two-time Class B state champion in the event, she jumped 18 feet, 4 1/2 inches to win the title last year, and only three girls statewide, regardless of classification, went further.

The two meets where she faced all comers, she won -- beating 2A long jump champion Mary Ann Graves of White Salmon at the inaugural Cougar Invitational at Washington State University and winning by 19 inches at the Strandberg Invitational in Spokane.

Ayers-Stamper also won her second state title in the 100-meter hurdles, although she didn't come close to her own record of 15.24 seconds set in prelims as a freshman.

"I feel privileged to have her," said L-W coach Paul Dunster. "A coach, particularly at a small school, is rarely blessed with an athlete of her talent."

It took Dunster awhile to harness her talent. She leapt 18-4 and broke the state B hurdles record as a freshman despite having the attention span of ... well, a freshman.

"I called her a fliberty jibbert because she didn't focus on any one thing for more than a few minutes," Dunster said. "She's just a real high-energy girl. At state that year, I caught her wandering around the hotel at 3 a.m. because she couldn't sleep.

"But last year, she was more focused, a more mature athlete. It made her a lot more consistent in her marks, but it also means I don't get to give her as bad a time."

Ayers-Stamper said she gets her energy from her mother's side of the family, but her athleticism is more spread around -- her maternal grandfather, Roy Urban, was a champion hurdler in the '30s, while her father, Jeff Ayers, played minor league ball in the Cincinnati Reds organization in the early 1980s.

His teammate with the Eugene Emeralds was Tim Stamper. The families became friends, and later, after their marriages ended, Stamper and Danielle's mother, Debbie, began seeing each other.

When Danielle was 6, she, her mother and her two younger siblings moved from Kirkland to LaCrosse to be with Stamper, a 1977 LaCrosse grad who returned to the school to become a maintenance worker and jack-of-all-trades coach.

"It was culture shock for me, but Danielle adapted very well," said Debbie, now married to Tim for 10 years. "She thought the wide-open spaces were great. She just loved to run in the dirt."

That turned out to be perfect practice for when she took up track as a seventh-grader. Robert Camp Memorial Track, the school's practice facility, is no more than a four-lane cinder facility scratched out of a field on the outskirts of town, but from the start, it was clear Ayers-Stamper had a talent for the sport.

As an eighth-grader, she competed at the Junior Nationals in Seattle, taking third in the long jump and sixth in the high hurdles for her age group.

"I just liked it, and I knew I could get better at it," Ayers-Stamper said.

As usual, that's just Ayers-Stamper being modest. "She just hates being in the spotlight," Stueckle said. "She's always talking about how, 'Oh, I'm not that good,' and how she just wants to get better."

To that end, Ayers-Stamper is a bit of a perfectionist. As a photographer puts her through her paces on this afternoon, she asks Stueckle, "Where am I on the board?" and she checks to make sure she's getting proper height over the hurdles.

Her stepdad wasn't surprised. "If you move anything in her room even an inch, she knows," he said. "Sometimes, we'll move things around just to drive her crazy."

She's so meticulous, she double- and triple-checked at state last year to make sure the wind gauge would be operated during the long jump competition. Her diligence didn't pay off -- no one watched the wind, meaning her winning jump didn't earn her the state record.

"My goal this year is to get that record again," said Ayers-Stamper, who turned 17 on Thursday. "I want to jump in the high 18s, and in the hurdles to be in the low 14s."

Right now, what's making the biggest mess in her bedroom might be the letters she's receiving from colleges for both track and basketball -- a 5-foot-11 wing, she's a two-time All-Whitman County League pick who's led the Tigercats to second- and seventh-place finishes the last two years.

She had the chance to play for the Spokane Stars elite AAU program last summer but turned it down to attend track camp at WSU.

"I'm concentrating more on track because I think track is what's going to get me through college," said Ayers-Stamper, who's expanding her repertoire this year to include the heptathlon events in preparation for her post-high school career. She threw the javelin 110 feet in her first competition Wednesday in Clarkston.

But those closest to her are dubious she has the endurance -- or the patience -- for the heptathlon's finale.

"I think the 800 would be her best event," Tim said. "But she probably thinks it's too long."