



# Jeff Place SPORTS

THE PLACE FOR SPORTS



Volume 27, Number 5 • www.jeffplace.com • jeffplace@outlook.com • April 30, 2017

## Scoreboard

### BOY'S BASEBALL

Wenatchee.....0
West Valley .....12
Wenatchee.....0
West Valley .....11

East Valley.....5
Selah.....7
East Valley.....3
Selah.....8

Othello.....1
Ephrata.....3
Othello.....3
Ephrata.....2

### GIRL'S FASTPITCH

Zillah.....4
Cle Elum .....14
Zillah.....2
Cle Elum .....12

Ellensburg.....1
Othello.....0
Ellensburg.....11
Othello.....1
Cle Elum.....23
Granger.....4

### BOY'S SOCCER

Wenatchee.....0
Eisenhower.....2
Wapato.....0
Toppenish.....4
Mabton.....4
Granger.....0

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# Let the Games Begin

Will Prep Sports As We Know It Ever Be the Same?

The first shot was fired by the Greater Spokane League.

However, the CWAC is making adjustments in preparation and other schools are looking hard at their league alignments and their sports schedules as well.

The new RPI that rated Washington state high schools in basketball generated a lot of controversy this year.

But, most everyone was in agreement that it was a step in the right direction.

Since strength of schedule is a major factor, the GSL in Spokane split up their league into two divisions.

There is also talk of other teams redoing their schedules and as Zillah's Rock Winters says, "Everybody



JEFF PLACE/Jeff Place Sports

Ellensburg will open with 1A powers, Royal and Connell the first two weeks in football.

wants to play us."

One Zillah game that will generate quite a buzz is when the Leopards play Prosser in football during week two this year.

The two schools have played seven

times in the past, with the Mustangs winning six of them. (The last time they met was in the 50's.)

The CWAC split into a North-South for football so the good teams can play tougher op-

ponents and the weaker schools can build their programs with evenly-matched programs.

On paper, Ellensburg has the toughest start opening with Royal and Connell and following with Selah.

Prosser plays Kennewick, Zillah, Othello and then Selah.

Another reason for the league split was to avoid a Tuesday night cross-over game with the GNL. (For complete scheduling look on the CWAC web site.)

Kittitas is also said to be looking at adjusting their basketball schedule, too.

It leaves one to ponder – what will the prep landscape look like in two years? That is the million dollar question. ♦

## THE HOT LIST

### SOCCER

Thu. April 27

Toppenish at Grandview  
6:00 PM

Both schools are tied with East Valley for first in soccer. Although the Red Devils have beaten both clubs, this league finale definitely has playoff implications.

### BASEBALL

Sat. April 29

East Valley at Ellensburg  
10:00 AM

Ellensburg is currently tied with Selah for first with East Valley just one game behind.

The Bulldogs split with Selah earlier this spring while the Red Devils dropped a twin bill to the Viks last weekend. This will be baseball at its best and East Valley must hope for a sweep to remain in second.

### SOFTBALL

Thu. May 11

Ellensburg at Selah  
4:00 PM

The top two teams in the CWAC meet and currently, nobody has beaten either squad.

Ellensburg has swept both Othello and East Valley while Selah beat Othello and has an upcoming date with the Red Devils.



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# QUOTE



**JACK NICHOLSON**

Apr. 22, 1937

“Don’t give anybody your best advice because they’re not going to follow it.”

## POWER RANKINGS

### Boy’s Baseball

- 1 Selah Vikings..... 16 2
- 2 West Valley Rams .. 15 3
- 3 Ellensburg Bulldogs 16 1
- 4 East Valley ..... 15 3
- 5 Ki-Be Bears..... 15 0
- 6 Zillah Leopards ..... 14 2
- 7 Othello Huskies..... 12 6
- 8 Ephrata Tigers ..... 11 7

### Girl’s Softball

- 1 Selah Vikings ..... 12 0
- 2 Ellensburg Bulldogs . 14 0
- 3 Cle Elum Warriors . 12 0
- 4 West Valley Rams .. 9 6
- 5 East Valley ..... 9 5
- 6 Warden Cougars .... 10 4
- 7 Kittitas Coyotes .... 13 1
- 8 (tie) Zillah, Naches, Ki-Be



“There it is -- a big wad of gum! I swear, every time Ted gets up to bat with runners in scoring position, he chokes!”

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

“Golfers cheat.”

Phil Mickelson response to Lexi Thompson, who was given four strokes for misplacing a one foot putt.

# Old and Gray

## Feeling my age after years of sports coverage

I always felt I was invincible.

When I was younger, I never gave a thought about tomorrow. I always felt it would take care of itself.

Well – it didn’t.

As I move to the back side of age 50, I found out this past winter was not only hard on the outside of my home, but on my body as well.

Broadcasting over 50 games, I traveled from Wenatchee to Walla Walla and capped it by trekking up to Spokane. I think I calculated over 5,000 miles in three months and I don’t plan on doing it again. (That is unless you have a gadget like they did on Star Trek.)

After the state basketball tournament was over, I felt about 80-years-old. It may have been from traveling on treacherous roads game after game or freezing in the cold or getting home at 2AM after a Friday night game.

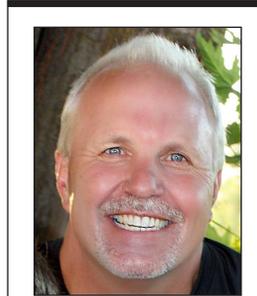
Perhaps it was broadcasting a state championship game at 11:30 PM and then driving home to sleep in my own bed, after spending three nights in a flea bag hotel.

It may have been on my insistence of doing a weekly football publication in which I often began working on at two AM in the morning.

What ever the reason, I am aware of my own mortality.

I no longer have a ton of energy and I think I’ve lost the bounce in my step. I feel much older than I really am and I now know that I need to change my work habits.

The problem is that I lost money broadcasting both football and basketball and I need a stronger source of ad revenue to make it through another



**Jeff Place**

**Editor’s Column**

year.

Although I’ve covered sports for over 30 years, this is the first full year in which I owned my own broadcasts.

In one year, we went from 100 listeners per game to 6,000 in three days at the state tournament. Listeners came from every town in the Yakima Valley plus points all over the state.

We were also heard in

California, Florida, Montana, Minnesota, Oregon and countries as far as New Zealand and Thailand.

Now strictly an electronic publication, we also reach over 20,000 readers every month along with 13,000 others on the state coaches web site.

In March, our photo web site with Smug Mug, had over 43,000 clicks, so we are close to reaching 100,000.

Everything is rolling along nicely, but I think I need to be about 20 years younger, earn a lot more \$\$\$, and have more time off.

My ideal work week may be four days, with three days off. Perhaps Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday might be the ticket.

That would allow me Monday to golf with Stu and Ty while I could spend the Sundays with my family.

Did I mention that I have another new idea?

Doing a live broadcast one day a week (perhaps Thursdays) in which we would broadcast from a Yakima Valley business and discuss local sports and upcoming events. We might also interview a coach or talk with fans who show up.

Wait a minute... Wasn’t I supposed to be working harder and not smarter? Better pump the brakes . . .



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DOING THE RIGHT THING MATTERS

## Faces in the Crowd



### SCOTT BLAKNEY • Prosser Mustangs • Senior • Track & Field

Coming off a tremendous basketball season in which he led the Mustangs to a 2A state appearance, **Scott Blakney** is continuing his incredible senior year this spring in track and field.

Recently, the 6-foot-9 Blakney extended his school-record in the discus with a toss of 157-10, which eclipsed the mark he set earlier at the Davis Invite when he had 156-11.

In basketball, he was named to the CWAC all-league team and was an honorable mention all-state selection. He is headed to the University of Idaho on a sports scholarship. After averaging 15 ppg as a junior, he averaged close to 20 ppg this year.



### CRISTOBAL CERVANTES • Toppenish Wildcats • Junior • Soccer

The defending CWAC league champions the Toppenish Wildcat soccer team is in a battle for first place this year with two other teams.

A key player is **Cristobal Cervantes**, a junior who tallied 15 goals last spring and has great tactical skills with the ball. His hat trick against Selah helped the Cats turn the season around as well last year and he has been just as impressive once again.

"Cristobal is creative," says his coach, Uriel Gonzalez. "He is also a great finisher around the goal." Also a good student-athlete, Cervantes maintains a 3.5 GPA average and is a team player.



### BRITNEE GUERRERO • Mabton Vikings • Junior • Basketball

Her coach was not only proud of her play all season, but the way her team scrapped and battled in their effort to advance to 2B state.

**Britnee Guerrero**, an honors student, was recognized by her play by being named the Eastern Washington Athletic Conference's (EWAC) Girl's Player of the Year. Also named as a Player of the Week by the WIAA, she averaged 16.4 PPG with a high of 29 during the regular season.

She is currently in the Running Start Program in an effort to get a head start on college graduation and has a GPA of 4.0. This past winter, Mabton lost to Dayton by three at state but they finished third in the state her sophomore year.



### LUKE PEEBLES • Kittitas Coyotes • Senior • Wrestling

One of the dominating performances in wrestling this past winter was put forth by **Luke Peebles** of Kittitas. The 182-lb state champion posted a 35-1 record overall including 30 wins by pin. Most impressive was the one in which he secured the state championship by beating Finlay Holston of Liberty Bell with a technical fall in 4:18.

Peebles is a two-time state medalist and was third last year. This winter, he also won 12 tournament titles (Including the Granger Ironman) and was recently honored by the Kittitas County Board of Commissioners with a "*Luke Peebles Day*," back on April 7.



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The Yakima Valley area is blessed with several great athletes in both basketball and wrestling.

This month's *Athlete profile* reflects all the state action the region was blessed to witness this past winter.

Topping our list is a player that is on pace to become the state's all-time leading scorer, **Brock Ravet** (ruh-vay) of Kittitas.

He opened the season by dropping 40 points on Almira-Coulee-Hartline and finished with 46 in the state championship game against Liberty.

"Brock is a great teammate," states his coach and dad, Tim Ravet. "He understands the game and makes his teammates better."

"He is also very hard to guard because he will hit the open man but is still not afraid to take his shots."

This past winter, the quick sophomore also became the youngest player

in state history to score 1,000 career points.

Currently, he has 1,451 points and was named the 2B

Player of the Year and the EWAC Player of the Year.

If Ravet has an equal, it is probably **Elijah Pepper** who helped guide the Selah

Vikings to their first state championship appearance in over 55 years.

Also a dominating scorer, he can take over a game at any time and his basketball I. Q. is off the charts.

The son of legendary Selah and Central basketball star, Ryan Pepper, he also has over 1,000 career points and is also just a sophomore.

"Eli is a special player and he's a unique individual," states his head coach, Tim Garza. "He plays the game with his hair on fire and I'm lucky to have the opportunity to coach him."

The 6-foot-3 guard was named to the 2A All-State basketball team

and was the CWAC MVP.

The third player in our basketball trifecta is Zillah's **Trey Delp**.

Although fellow senior, Nate Whitaker also deserves a lot of attention, Delp was the key in the Leopards' state title.

An avid outdoorsman, the 6-foot-3 standout averaged over 20 ppg, finished with 1,472 career points and was the 1A State Player of the Year.

He was also the SCAC Player of the Year as well.

Other boy's basketball players include Scott Blakney (Prosser), Hunter Jacob (Wapato), Wesley Abrams (White Swan), Luke Wagenaar and Cade Bosma of Sunnyside Christian.

All earned all-state honorable mention.

Among the girls, **Emilee Maldonado** of Sunnyside and **Janealle Suterliect** (Wapato) earned all-state honorable mention honors as did Kristen Broersma and Sailor Liefke of Sunnyside Christian.

But pound-for-pound, you can't beat Granger's **Alexis Castro**.

She graduates as the Spartans' all-time leading scorer (1,861 points), and enough honors to fill her own trophy case.

She was a first-team all-state selection, the SCAC West Player of the Year and the leading scorer this year among the girls in the Yakima Valley.

"Some of the things she could do with the ball were just amazing," said her coach, Andy Afholter.

Castro also helped Granger to four state trophies.



Brock Ravet



Eli Pepper



Emily Maldonado

## STATE CHAMPIONS

### GIRL'S WRESTLING

**VIKTORYA TORRES**  
 Granger • 110 lbs • Fresh.

**CAMERON GUERIN**  
 Davis • 115 lbs • Jr.

### BOY'S WRESTLING

**SERGY SALAS**  
 Wapato • 113 lbs • Jr.

**ALEX VACA**  
 Wapato • 120 lbs • Jr.

**CHUCO CISNEROS**  
 Granger • 126 lbs • Sr.

**DIEGO NUNEZ**  
 Toppenish • 132 lbs • Sr.

**JOSIAH RODRIGUEZ**  
 Sunnyside • 132 lbs • Jr.

**CARLOS LOPEZ**  
 Selah • 138 lbs • Sr.

**FRANKY ALMAGUER**  
 Granger • 145 lbs • So.

**ANDRES AGUILERA**  
 Toppenish • 152 lbs • So.

**AARON PIMENTAL**  
 Selah • 160 lbs • Sr.

**REESE JONES**  
 Othello • 170 lbs • Sr.

**LUKE PEEBLES**  
 Kittitas • 182 lbs • Sr.

**T. J. MARTINEZ**  
 Othello • 195 lbs • Sr.

**JUAN ZAMORA**  
 Granger • 195 lbs • Sr.

**NOEL OROZCO**  
 Granger • 220 lbs • Sr.

### 2nd Place at State

**GIRLS:** 110 Olyvia Smith, Jr. Zillah; 130 Nikki Velazquez, Sr., Othello; 170 Aylin Bautista, Sr., Sunnyside

**BOYS:** 106 Kyler Romero, Fr., Topp.; 113 Haiden Drury, Fr., Topp.; 120 Elias Romero, Sr., Sunnyside; Jaron Hunter, Sr., Ki-Be; 132 John Sowers, So., Davis; Juan Isadoria, Jr., Granger; 145 Garrett Cheney, Sr., Ellensburg; 170 Hunter Wallace, Sr., Kittitas; 182 Chase Pidgeon, Sr., Zillah

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## TEAM OF THE WEEK

# Among the Best

Six Teams Earn Honor, More Are Deserving

Looking back at this past winter, it would be impossible to name one team as the team of the month.

Headlining the basketball teams could be the Kittitas Coyotes.

Their 26-0 state championship record was the best in school history and they had never played for a state title in boy's hoops before.

It was not easy for the young Coyotes, who celebrated by getting back in the gym and winning two AAU championships this past month.

The Top-Hi wrestling team is right up there with Kittitas and they captured a back-to-back state championship this past winter.

Coached by Johnny Cerna, the Wildcats earned eight medals including two champions and two others who finished



**Kittitas Basketball**

second.

The Zillah Leopards won the 1A state title under first-year coach, Mario Mengarelli.

They only tasted defeat (against Wapato) and rolled to the title game.

They beat 2A Selah and probably could have competed at any level.

Sunnyside Christian overcame injuries and benefitted from total team play in earning a 1B state championship.

They also had a bit of luck as their half court last-second shot against

Yakama Tribal nearly blew the roof off the Zillah gym.

Selah surprised everyone (but themselves) in advancing to the 2A boy's basketball championship.

Their title was the first since the 1962-63 season in which they beat West Valley for the title.

It was their first state trophy since 1979-80.

Granger, also a wrestling power, captured the 1A state championship under Richard Sanchez's guidance.

The Spartans

featured four state champions along with eight other medal winners.

There were several other schools who earned honorable mention status.

They include fourth-place finishes by the Sunnyside and Wapato girls along with the Yakama Tribal boys.

Fifth-place awards went to Granger and Sunnyside Christian girls.

In wrestling Kittitas was fourth, the Othello girls third & Sunnyside girls sixth.

### TOP PERFORMERS

#### KITTITAS Boy's Basketball

Captured the 2B state championship with a perfect 26-0 record. It was not only the first basketball championship in school history, but they only lose two seniors to graduation, however all five starters return.

#### ZILLAH Boy's Basketball

Under first-year coach, Mario Mengarelli, the Leopards won the 1A state championship. They only lost once, to Wapato and simply dominated at state.

#### SUNNYSIDE CHRISTIAN Boy's Basketball

The Knights may need to build a new wing onto their gym. The state's best 1B team won another title. Good news for SSC fans, eight of the top nine players return.

#### SELAH Boy's Basketball

Under second-year coach, Tim Garza, they advanced to the 2A state title game. Although they lose their key big man, another Pepper will be added.

#### TOPPENISH Wrestling

The Wildcats repeated as 2A state champions again this year. Three years ago, they placed fourth.

#### GRANGER Wrestling

The Spartans rose to the pinnacle of the wrestling world with a state title. The school now has a monster gym to break in.

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# A Deserving Successor

Mario Mengarelli Had Big Shoes to Fill But Managed the Job Quite Well

**M**ario Mengarelli comes from a sports-minded and athletic family.

They have made impacts on several programs across the Yakima Valley and this year, the man known as "Super Mario" during his prep days at Granger, guided Zillah to a state championship.

**Was there pressure taking over for Doug Burge?**

"There was some pressure taking over for Doug and taking on such a great program that he has built. There was also some pressure inheriting such a great group of players with a lot of talent."

"Once the season started, I didn't really feel any extra pressure though. We just focussed on the task at hand."

**How important has your family been in supporting you?**

"Family and friends are everything to me. I'm very lucky to have the support system I have!"

**Do you have a friendly rivalry with the Granger - Zillah thing?**

"I have it with many of my friends from Granger. But, being in Zillah, you learn that every school



GEORGE GARCIA PHOTOS/Jeff Place Sports

Mario Mengarelli led Zillah to a state championship during his first season as head coach.

thinks they are your rival."

**You had a great high school career, what are among your greatest memories?**

"Being Valedictorian and beating my brother as Salutatorian."

**Looking at this year's team, what can you tell me about your main players?**

"Three Captains: Beau Widner, Trey Delp and Nate Whitaker. They are just winners! I wouldn't go out and say we were the

hardest working team, but they know how to win and expect to win."

**Who was the unsung hero in this year's team?**

"I think the whole team was an unsung hero. I didn't have to deal with any behavior or attitude issues all year. It shows how special this group was!"

**What do you think was the biggest thing that helped your team win the title?**

"I think the whole team finally bought into what is best for the team. Our only goal that mattered was to win!"

**Do you feel the loss to Wapato helped you?**

"I hate losing more than anything! However, I believe losses are really good to learn from and helps give you extra motivation to improve."

**How important was your coaching staff?**

"My assistants have a huge impact on the success of the Zillah program."

"As a head coach, I believe it is extremely important to surround yourself with great assistants."

"Robert Slack was a great player and truly understands the game. Erick

Delp our "C" squad coach, has only one loss in the last two years. While Tyler Widner and Ryne Phillips are the true brains of the operation. I look to those two on every decision I make."

**Do you talk with and former coaches for advice, too?**

"I speak to many coaches and steal/borrow many ideas. Coach Burge was great to have as a resource all year. There were multiple times that I called to get his input"

"I also work in the same building as Brandie Valadez (Zillah girl's coach), so it is always nice to bounce ideas off of her. Andy Afholter is another one of my references."

**Looking down the road, what can we expect from next year's team?**

"We obviously lose a lot, but Zillah is a great program and we have a lot of kids ready to step in."

"I expect guys like Brock Ellis and Antonio Salinas to have great years. Sebastian Godina and Cesar Diaz will also be ones to watch. We will be guard-heavy, but it seems like valley teams always are!"

**Final thoughts?**

"I feel fortunate to be part of the Zillah program and feel very blessed/lucky to have a state championship under my belt."

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# The Leopards Leave No Doubt

Mario Mengarelli Had Big Shoes to Fill But Managed the Job Quite Well

It was a year of change, yet one of domination for the Zillah Leopards basketball program.

As Doug Burge replaced Kevin McKay (Now in Sunnyside) as the Zillah Superintendent of Schools, he walked away from his coaching duties but felt it would be in competent hands.

He knew the program was loaded and was confident they would do well.

I don't think anybody realized how dominant they would be.

With a nod to Wapato, who took 52 points by Hunter Jacob to beat them, they started nearly every game in high gear, put the throttle down and never let up.

By the time they were cutting down the nets, Zillah had an impressive 26-1 record and simply demolished everyone in the post season.

In the Regional game, they beat LaCenter 78-55, then crushed Cascade Christian 81-54 in their



GEORGE GARCIA PHOTOS/Jeff Place Sports



Nate Whitaker  
1,055 Points



Trey Delp  
1,472 points

opening game at state.

Lynden Christian fell in the semi finals 72-57 and Freeman, the top-ranked RPI team lost 69-53 in a game that was not as close as the score.

They outscored the competition by nearly 20 ppg in that run and what was even more impressive?

They beat three of the state's top 1A trophy teams at state. King's, who was third was the only one they face in the post season.

Perhaps they made up for it by beating the 2A runner-up this year, Selah 90-70 back in late January.

Their best player was Trey Delp, who finished his career with 1,472 points while being named the 1A Player of the Year and SCAC West Player of the Year.

Fellow senior, Nate Whitaker proved his meddle by also scoring 1,000 career points (1,055) and earning several accolades as well.

Beau Widner filled out the trio while youngsters like sophomore Anthony Salinas and Brock Ellis had their moments and will be carrying the torch forward.

Even though they get hit hard by graduation, first-year head coach Mario Mengarelli and his valuable staff will not find the cupboard too bare.

The JV and C squad were pretty impressive as was this team which finishes as one of the best in Yakima Valley history.

Don't be afraid to change . . .

You May Lose Something Good . . .



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# Nobody Does it Better

Granger's Andy Affholter Has Forged a Legacy in Girl's Basketball

The mark of a legendary coach is not only the imprints they make on their program, but how they positively affect others around them.

Andy Affholter of Granger should be remembered as one of the greatest coaches in Yakima Valley history for many reasons. His legacy is still felt in Mabton and coaches from Prosser to Zillah come to him for advice.

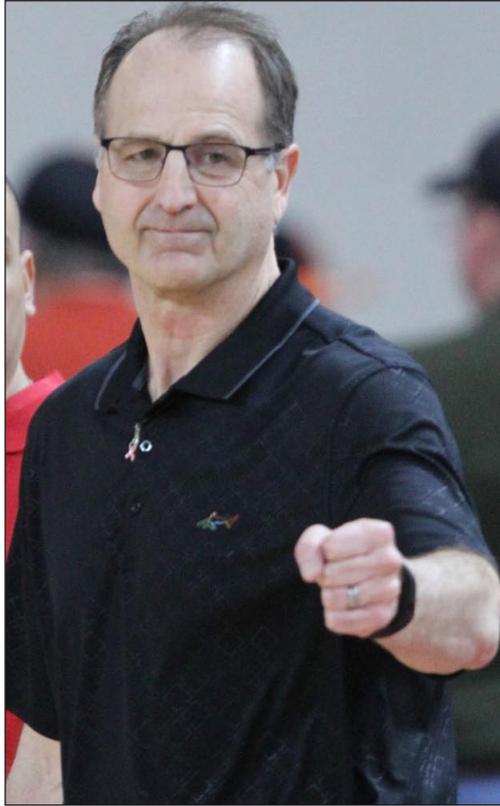
This next winter, Affholter will help break in the Spartans' luxurious new gym and if you haven't watched his teams play yet, circle the calendar now. (He may not be coaching too much longer.)

Simply put, Andy Affholter is the standard on how you should build a program.

**After coaching boys basketball, what made you switch to girls?**

"I did it because I have a day job. I teach P. E. and didn't want to give it up. and go back into the classroom for a different coaching job. My dad actually said there was no difference and he was right as always."

**Looking at this year's team, what made them special?**



GEORGE GARCIA PHOTOS/Jeff Place Sports

Andy Affholter has brought Granger nine basketball trophies in ten years. Included are two seconds and two thirds.

"No two teams are the same. Even if nine or ten are back, the one that is gone, makes a difference."

"This team had a great ability to score and we could actually put four kids out on the floor who could really shoot the three ball well and stretch teams out."

**Who had the biggest impact for you this year?**

"They all did and that is why basketball is an ultimate team sport."

"Obviously, some had a bigger impact than others. Alexis Castro was not only a great scorer, but a good ball handler. She finished with 1,861 points, the all-time leading scorer in school history, male or female."

"Jay Vasquez, Naya Roettger and Keely Teel were great defenders and scorers when open."

"Sophie Blodgett was a great shooter and rebounder while Katilynn Roettger, Lily and Emma Stewart played their roles perfectly. They also gave us some much-needed depth at the big position."

"Laynie Brien did the same when we needed her. Kiki Rodriguez and Xochi Chavez were also great team mates and supported everyone."

"You can't win without those kids and everybody did their part."

**Alexis Castro just completed a phenomenal four-year career. What are your thoughts as she moves on?**

"1,861 points. I am going to just miss watching her at times. Some of the things she could do with a ball were just amazing."

**Who will be key play-**

**ers for you next year as you adjust to Castro's graduation?**

"We actually have seven of our top eight players back so we will be better than people think. This summer will tell who kind of steps up. They will all get the chance."

**What are your feelings about the new tournament format?**

"Not perfect, but there is still work to be done. I think it is a step in the right direction. (Unfortunately) I will be long gone before it is finalized and perfected."

**How about the RPI (Ratings Performance Index)?**

"I would like to use Oregon's RPI and not Colorado's. It is more in-depth and has a human element to it. I feel the biggest thing is that district games need to count in the final RPI." (That change was made after this interview.)

**What are your fondest coaching memories?**

"I am not sure really. I have too many to think about or just point to one. I spent eight years in Mabton and just finished my 11th year in Granger. Both have been a great deal of fun and I have enjoyed the journey."

**Several of your former players are coaching or involved in some way.** (See the next page)



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(ANDY AFFHOLTER -- from previous page)



**Jayleen Vasquez**

"Yes, I really like following my former players' kids. I loved seeing them coach their kids in AAU and things like that through the years. It's also kind of funny because I hear them saying the same things I told them when they played for me."

**You come from a coaching family and your dad, Andy Sr. is very well respected. What has been his impact?**

"My brother Randy and I are extremely lucky to have a dad who was a coach. He knows exactly how tough it is and has been in our shoes."

"Of all the things Randy and I have done professionally, coaching is by far the toughest. I talk to dad probably 3 to 4 times a week during the season. I have learned more from him on how to manage players than anyone and I am sure Randy feels the same way."

**How does that make you feel?**

"Probably the thing that I am most proud of is my relationship with players after they've graduated and those in teaching and coaching is an extra bonus."

**Do you follow players like Diego Garza of Mabton or the Maldonado's in Sunnyside who both have ties to former players you coached?**

"I am excited for the new facility. The best thing is that I get to practice every day after school. At my age, that is a big deal. :)"

**What are your thoughts on Granger's new gym?**

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# The Wildcat Take-Down

Toppenish captures the first back-to-back state title in school history

As the old song says, “Nobody does it better,” — Toppenish wrestling that is.

The first team championship came in 1991 and another followed in 1993. Their third came in 1998 and it took 18 years before they did it again.

They didn’t wait so long this time. They repeated.

You could point to several reasons why but perhaps one of the biggest (along with tradition) is the impact the Cerna family has had on the sport in this busy reservation town.

The winning tradition began with John Cerna and when he stepped back to enter into administration, several good coaches also left their fingerprints on the program.

Joe Elizondo, Albert Zuniga and Dell Gere have all had success leading the wrestlers along with super assistant, Ron Kintner.

But it has been the quiet leadership of Cerna’s son, Johnny, that has raised them to school-record heights.

A 1999 Toppenish graduate, he was a multi-sport athlete who returned back to his Alma mater and took over the program when the late Gere retired due to health concerns.

Being the son of not only a coaching legend, but now



GEORGE GARCIA PHOTOS/Jeff Place Sports

Sophomore Kyler Romero battles Wapato sophomore Jesus Rodriguez in the state championship of the 106-lb state title. It is a preview of what we may see the next two years.

the school’s superintendent, may appear to have it’s share of pressures, but the younger Cerna doesn’t see it that way.

success and is very proud of the giant foot steps he is walking in.

“When you are attempting to be at the pinnacle of anything in life, you often emulate those who have already achieved those goals,” Cerna explained.

“My father has had his hand in six different state championships here at Toppenish,” he continued. “Five with our wrestling team and one with the 1989 football team, where he was an assistant coach to Bob Winters.”

“When you get to this point, its easy to get caught up in the petty things from day to day, but with my

father’s advice, my coaching staff has been able to stay focussed on doing what is right for kids in helping them achieve their goals.”

Cerna’s staff certainly is another major reason the Wildcats have captured the 2A state title two years in a row.

Pepe Segovia was one of the first coaches the younger Cerna hired when he took over the program. “I look at him as being the motor to our vehicle,” Cerna stated. “He runs our youth program, *BadBoy Wrestling* and they have produced several state champions and state placers for us.”

Segovia also runs several youth tournaments, fundraisers and community service projects. During the summer, he runs one of Washington State’s elite camps in Toppenish and invites top clinicians who have all-American or Olympic status.

David Escamilla is a former state champion who also wrestled with both Cerna and Segovia on the 1998 state title team. “He is a very soft-spoken coach who is the absolute technician,” states Cerna. “He spends tons of hours in the wrestling room and will work with anyone willing to put in the time.”

“He has elevated mediocre athletes to elite-level wrestlers.”

The opposite of Escamilla is (see the next page)



Johnny Cerna

“My dad has been an administrator since I’ve been in high school, so it’s pretty normal for me to see him in a position of authority,” he explained.

“I feel that our working relationship is just as strong as our personal relationship. There are just as many perks as there are challenges.”

It is easy to see the younger Cerna has utilized and studied his father’s

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(From previous page)

Manuel Arambul, who has been with Toppenish for ten years and before that, led the Wapato program.

“He adds old-school grit to our team,” states Cerna. “He is a no-nonsense type of coach and the kids know it.”

Arambul, whose family has deep roots with the Wildcats’ nearby rival, is 100% Toppenish when wrestling begins and brings coaching experience and philosophy from sports like football and baseball as well.

He also had tremendous success as a head coach, leading Wapato to it’s highest placing ever, second.

Another accomplished coach is Ruben Saldivar. The former head coach at Granger, he led that school to it’s first-ever state wrestling championship (2013).

“He understands what motivates kids and he knows how to help kids elevate their game throughout the season,” said Cerna. “His invaluable expertise has been a great asset to our team.”

Leading the middle school program is Austin Kintner, the son of Ron, who coached with the elder Cerna on the 1991, 93 and 1998 teams.

“Austin brings a combination of everything to our team,” stated the Wildcat head coach. “He is a great technician and relates very well with the kids but he will set them in line when they need it.”

“Our coaching staff is a well-oiled machine as a whole,” states Cerna.

As with any successful program, you need to have the kids and Toppenish had their share.

“The key to winning was consistency,” explained Cerna. “We were the only team in the entire state which went perfect on the season in both tournaments and duals.”

“The kids understood that we didn’t have to do

24-4.

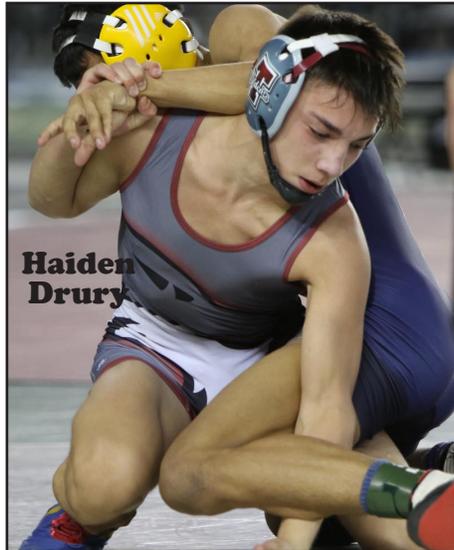
Two freshmen, Kyler Romero (106) and Haiden Drury (113) narrowly missed state titles as well, both losing to Wapato wrestlers.

Sophomore Jesus Rodriguez beat Romero (37-3 overall) 6-2 and junior Sergy Salas beat Drury 4-3 (who was 36-3).

The combined 73 wins and second place trophies should make them even hungrier over the next three years. That is a scary proposition for Wildcat opponents.

Senior Jonathan Cuevas, recently did well at a national tournament, but may be remembered forever with the battle he had with eventual state champion, Cy Hicks of Tumwater in the quarter-finals.

Unbeaten at that



Haiden Drury

something that was out of character or something that was spectacular.

Looking at the individuals, there were eight who brought home medals from state.

Leading the way was senior Diego Nunez, a second generation wrestler who compiled the best individual mark, a perfect 38-0 record.

Nunez captured the 132-lb state title in impressive fashion, 7-0 over Randy McDonald of East Valley-Spokane. Last year, he placed second.

The other Toppenish individual champion was Andres Aguilera, the 152-lb winner. The sophomore was

point, the CWAC’s Upper Weight Wrestler of the Year (285), had a bloody brawl loss but bounced back to pin Jackson Potts of Foss for third place. Overall, Cuevas finished 38-1 and

his 36 pins this year was a single-season record.

Carson Northwind (37-8 at 160 lbs), like Drury and Nunez is a second-generation Wildcat wrestler and the sophomore was fourth at state.

220-lb senior Isaac Anaya finished with a 32-5 win/loss record and fifth-place medal while 182-lb junior, Salvador Osorio was 36-9 with a sixth-place state finish.

Sophomore Keyano Zamarripa (170 lbs) was 25-12 as a state participant and fellow sophomore Alexei Rubio was 32-11 at 138.

145-lb Mario Luna (junior) also was an important factor as was 195-lb senior Alexis Garcia. Both were all-CWAC honorable mention.

Gonzalo Aleman (106), Jason Zuniga (120), Isaac Johns (126), Carlos Urcino (132), Miguel Castellanos (145), Isaias Ramirez (160) and Eduardo Rojas (170) also were key members of the team as well.

In addition, Toppenish had two female wrestlers that also enjoyed outstanding seasons.

Senior Dominique Garcia (100) was eighth at state this year and sophomore Jacqueline Luna, “An extremely hard worker,” placed third (190).

“I’d like to congratulate all these kids on their accomplishments, dedication and hard work,” Cerna said happily.

He also would like to thank the parents, coaches and the community of Toppenish for all of their support this year. ♦



Jacqueline Luna

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# Reaching Their Potential

## Prosser Surprised Everyone in an Incredible Run to State

For the past three years, Prosser fans have been waiting for the boy's basketball team to reach their potential.

Featuring two athletes who could start for anyone at any level, they kept falling short in their attempt at making the state playoffs.

As this winter hit the final stretch, everyone was shaking their heads. Why does this team keep faltering?

Every time it appeared as if they were turning things around, they slipped backwards.

The team began the year 5-1, lost two of three then won five of six.

The lone loss was a thrilling 56-55 loss to Toppenish who seemed to have their number.

As they headed into their last five games, they collapsed. They lost four in a row, including a 21 point loss to rival Grandview.

They salvaged the year



GEORGE GARCIA PHOTOS/Jeff Place Sports

**THE FORCE** 6-foot-9 Scott Blakney led the charge as Prosser made it to the state basketball tournament.

with a 64-60 win over Othello and stumbled into districts.

Their reward was a loser-out affair at Ephrata on February 10.

With barely a pulse, they shocked the Tigers 70-48. "They never missed," said Ephrata coach, Brandon

Evenson.

They followed with a loss to Selah then met Toppenish in a game that will be remembered forever.

Held at Wapato High School, the winner would host the GNL #2 team while the loser would travel to either Clarkston or Pullman.

As the Greyhounds were upsetting the defending state champions, Prosser was in a pickle.

Listed on the bottom half of the bracket, they thought they were the home team, so they brought their white uniforms.

However, Toppenish was the higher seed so both clubs had their whites.

In stepped the Wolves who loaned the Mustangs their dark blue uniforms.

The game was a seesaw battle in which Logan Hatfield hit the thrilling shot as time expired.

The win seemed to propel the Mustangs who beat

Clarkston and advanced to the state tournament.

Prosser played three games at state and although they never brought home a trophy, their magical run energized the community.

One of the keys was the play of 6-foot-9 senior Scott Blakney, who is headed to Idaho on a scholarship.

"He definitely was a key in our success this year," stated Ryan Allen, the Mustang coach. "His drive to get better was immense. He took it a step further by getting in the weight room and preparing for the next level."

6-foot-5 senior, Nate Brown was also a factor and many opponents regarded him as one of the toughest players in the conference. With the ability to hit the long three, slash, rebound, run the floor or make an assist, his skill level was immense.

Other players who played valuable roles in Prosser's magical run included Angel Rivera, Noah Flores, Tanner Bolt, Kolby Swift, Austin Wagner, Teegan Cox and Anthony Godinez.

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# For the Record

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**DIED:** Curt Kramme, (cray-me) Lynden football coach by cancer.

A graduate of Blaine High School, Kramme took over the program in 1981 and took them to greater heights, compiling a 248-61 record in 26 seasons.

He also coached the Lions to ten state final appearances including seven state championships. He was named coach of the year several times and built the program into one of the state elite.

Kramme forged a strong friendship with Tom Moore of Prosser and used the former Mustang mentor's "Setback Comeback" moniker as a catch-phrase when he was diagnosed with the disease last year.

He was a starting running back on Blaine's 1979 state championship team which beat Granger for the state title. His high school coach was Jack Irion, who is now the Yakima Superintendent of Schools.

Kramme's passing means that two of the



state's top football programs will have new head coaches this fall.

**Sid Otton**, who retired at Tumwater was replaced by Olympia head coach, **Bill Beattie**, a former T-Bird graduate.

**HIRED:** Bruce Siebol by Sunnyside as their new boy's basketball coach.

The former Granger boy's coach has spent 16 years in the sport as a varsity head coach including a four-year stint at Highland

and ten years at Riverside Christian.

Siebol and his wife make their home in Sunnyside and he looks forward to the challenge at coaching at the 4A level.

He is also the vice-president of the Washington Interscholastic Basketball Coaches Association (WIBCA) where Joe Harris of Chelan is President.

He is also a representative for the Washington State Coach's Association for YVIAA District 5.

Siebol has seen the Spartan sports programs come a long ways from when he took over the baseball program back in the 1980's. The school failed their levy back then and he volunteered to run the program so it wouldn't be cut.

He also raised funds for

items such as a pitching machine which the school used for years.

**COMPLETED:** By the Granger School District, their new, impressive 2,000 + seat gymnasium.

It includes four separate locker rooms for both boys and girls basketball. A separate entrance for the officials along with a large multi-purpose room.

There will also be an office for the athletic director and there are separate media areas at the top of both the home and visitor bleachers.

The project still needs \$30,000 of public funds to complete the project. That will be used to buy ice machines and other amenities that were not covered

by the bond.

David Pearson, the athletic director is spearheading that effort.



Bruce Siebol



Curt Kramme



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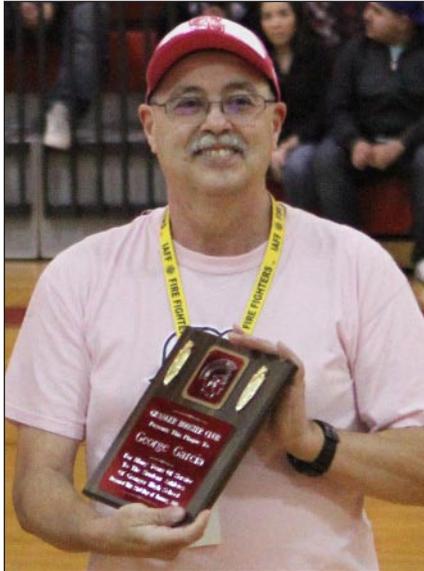
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# In Case You Missed It

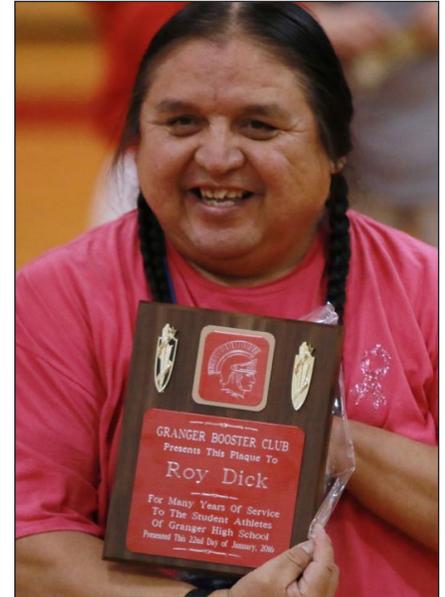
## A Look at the Past Winter in Pictures & Our Archives



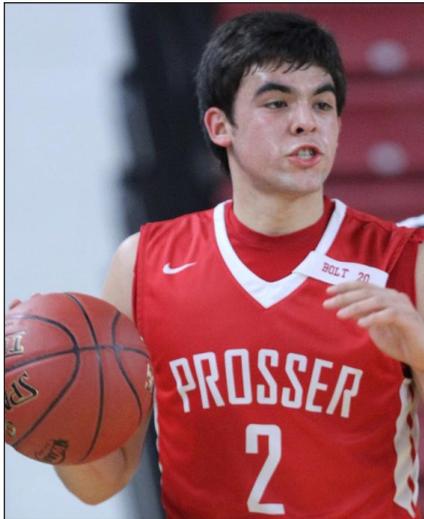
George Garcia receives a plaque from the booster club for all he has done to help promote the Granger program.



Wapato has some of the most loyal and avid fans in the Yakima Valley. (George Garcia photo)



Granger graduate, (and KYNR announcer) Roy Dick, was honored a year ago by the Spartan Booster Club.



Angel Rivera was a solid point guard for the Mustangs this winter.



Zillah was cheered on by the avid Leopard fans at the state championship game. (George Garcia photo)



Grandpa Pete (Dodd) watches the Spartans while daughter Dana (Carpenter) takes care of him. Dodd was a main cog for youth sports when he was younger.



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