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Heart of a champion

OC girls play their hearts out but come up one 'W' short of defending their crown

BY JOHN DENNY

The Clackamas Review, Mar 17, 2010 [\(1 Reader comment\)](#)

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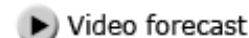
But there was no quit in the Axemen. They scored on their first four shots from the floor in the fourth quarter. And when South 6-1 senior post Mackenzie Kerins hit one-of-two free throws with 1:19 remaining, the lead was down to one point, at 56-55.

Enter Anderson, who hit 5-of-6 free throws inside the final minute of play to seal the victory.

"I wanted to make up for my missed free throws from Friday night," said Anderson. "And I knew I had to stick them for my seniors. I wanted to end the season on a good note for them."

Free throws were big for Oregon City throughout the third-place final. They went to the foul line often, as the Axemen drew fouls while

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attempting to slow the Pioneers down with aggressive, man-to-man half-court play.

The Pioneers were 25-of-36 (.694) from the charity stripe for the game.

Anderson hit 10-of-12 free throws and finished with a team-high 13 points.

Oregon City senior post Alisa Griggs scored 12 points and hauled down eight rebounds and she was named Quest Oregon City player of the game for her efforts.

Belmont (9 points, 4 assists), Ward (9 points, 3 assists), Brewer (9 points) and freshman post Jo Paine (8 points) were also big contributors on offense.

Belmont and Anderson headed the defense, with seven steals between them.

Kerins starred for the Axemen, taking the ball to the basket for 21 points, and claiming 11 rebounds.

But Kerins had to work for her points. Thanks to the scrappy defensive play of Griggs and Paine, Kerins made only 5-of-16 shots from the floor.

Southwest Conference champion South Eugene finished the year with an overall record of 25-5, its only losses in Oregon to Oregon City and to state runner-up Jesuit.

Three Rivers League champion Oregon City advanced in postseason play through state playoff wins over Westview (68-55) and Mt. Hood Conference runner-up Barlow (50-28) and a state quarterfinal rout of Central Valley League champion McNary (77-47), before losing to Metro League champion Southridge (55-47) in Friday's championship semifinals.

Southridge went on to defeat Jesuit 47-38 in Saturday night's championship final, and the Skyhawks finished with a 26-2 record with the victory. The Hawks' only loss to an opponent from Oregon this year was in a preseason game with South Eugene.

Oregon City finished the year as the second highest scoring girls team in the state, outscoring its 29 opponents by an average of close to 30 points, 72.7 to 43.9. Only PIL champion Franklin – which averaged 73.9, while giving up 60.7 – had a higher average.

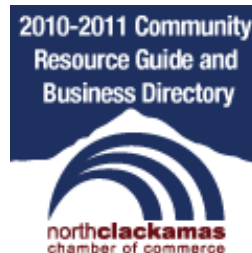
The Pioneers carried on their winning tradition, earning a trophy at state for a 23rd consecutive season, after bagging their 17th straight TRL title. Oregon City teams have won state titles in 11 of the past 18 seasons.

Knighton tried to explain why Oregon City teams have been successful over the years: "I think it's the dedication. We're always in the gym – six days a week. And the girls on the team always give it their all."

It appears highly likely the Pioneers will be one of the state's elite teams again next year. This year's state tournament roster included nine underclassmen, and Oregon City's jayvee and freshmen teams both had highly successful seasons. The jayvees went 23-1 and the freshmen went 22-1, both teams splitting in games with Southridge jayvee and freshmen teams.



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Knighton said of the Pioneers' prospects for next year: "If they put their whole heart into it, I think they can [win a state title]."

"We'll do great next year!" said Belmont. "It's all about hard work and heart, and the players coming back have plenty of heart. They can [win the state title] if they believe they can."

"We have a strong group coming back," said Griggs. "They pushed us every day in practice. I believe they can come back and do it. They've just got to give it everything they've got, and they can come back and do something special next year."

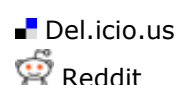
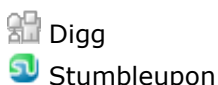
Vying for the Pioneers at this year's state tournament were: seniors Taylor Ward (5-8 guard), Tiffani Brewer (5-9 wing), Alisa Griggs (6-0 post), Brittany Knighton (6-1 wing), Taylor Belmont (5-5 point guard) and Regan Drake (5-9 post); juniors Ashleigh Anderson (5-7 wing), Aly Holterhoff (5-9 post), Jordan Klebaum (5-7 wing), Nicole Peters (5-7 post) and Alisha Seigal (5-11 post); sophomore Marcie Lugar (5-7 wing); and freshmen Jo Paine (6-0 post), Montana Walters (5-4 guard) and Jenae Paine (5-9 wing).

Anderson and Jo Paine both started in Saturday's trophy game, while Holterhoff and Klebaum saw big minutes off the bench.

Drake said of her experience as a reserve post for the Pioneers: "You grow up watching Oregon City and dream of being there someday. And now, to be where those players on those great teams were, it's just incredible."

Belmont said, "Oregon City basketball has helped me grow as an individual. I've learned things that will help shape me for the rest of my life – things like hard work, being part of something bigger than yourself, putting others before yourself, how to bounce back from failure. It's shown me who am and made me the person I've become."

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Re: Heart of a champion

It's always so comfortable to live in the past. The big glory days of Oregon City are gone now. In the last six years Southridge has won the state championship five times. Oregon City has won it once. In that same time frame Southridge has played Oregon City six times and have won 5 of those games

It's time to move on and recognize the current Oregon power house is Southridge High school.

"Ed Gomez"
(email verified)

Thu, Mar 18, 2010 at 12:51 PM



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