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For the St. Paul Rodeo

CHAMPS TO LEAD THE PARADE

St. Paul High School volleyball, girls basketball teams chosen as grand marshals for rodeo parade

St. Paul, Ore. (May 13, 2019) – The Oregon High School 1A State Champion volleyball team and basketball team, both from St. Paul High School, have been selected as grand marshals for the 2019 St. Paul Rodeo parade.

Both teams won their respective sports at state this year and both will be honored during the parade on July 4 through downtown St. Paul.

The girls on the teams were special this year, said their coaches, Coach Lesli Hiller (volleyball) and Coach Dave Matlock (basketball), and it wasn't just because they were state champs.

“The way the kids conducted themselves, they were tough as nails,” said Matlock. “They didn't back down to anybody. We'd get behind in some games, and come right back.”

Both teams were undefeated, each with overall records of thirty wins and no losses.

“We went into the (volleyball) season deciding we were always going to try to improve upon what we already were,” said Coach Hiller. “Going into state playoffs, our focus was to remain confident and calm, regardless of the score, and to always play one point at a time.”

Five girls played on both teams: Emma Connor, Erin Counts, Karlee Southerland, Megan Tuck and Isabella Wyss, and the seniors provided leadership. Matlock remembers Megan Tuck taking a leadership role without being asked. It was in the 2017-2018 school year and the team was playing Central Linn and down fifteen to six after the first quarter. Central Linn had made three three-point shots in a row, Matlock said. “I remember, Megan said, ‘hey, it's ok, there are four quarters to this game, we're all right.’ Without being prodded, she took it upon herself to be a leader.”

The basketball team never looked too far ahead, Matlock said. “Our mantra was one day at a time, one play at a time. They were able to work hard on the next thing and not get hung up on what was coming or looking back. It paid dividends, because we were tough to beat over 32 minutes.”

The St. Paul Rodeo is a fundraiser for the St. Paul High School Booster Club, and each high school team is required to volunteer time in the stadium concession stands and parking cars for the rodeo. The kids enjoy it, Matlock said. “You should see them parking cars. They're

everywhere, doing everything.” The athletes who are on more than one team volunteer multiple times, once for every sport.

Hiller’s team had one goal in mind, she said. “We came into the season, focused on that goal and how to get there. The team is a very mature, calm team. They never let drama come onto the team.”

Hiller, who has coached at St. Paul for the past nine years, spoke highly of her players. “They were very confident and able to motivate others. Sometimes high school kids are embarrassed and afraid to motivate others and put themselves out there. But this team had strong motivators and confident players. They didn’t worry about what other people thought.”

Matlock began as an assistant coach at St. Paul High School five years ago and moved into the role of head coach four years ago. He has a deep respect for the kids, the families and the sense of community in St. Paul. “I actually told the girls, you don’t know how good you have it here. This is a special place. This group of girls was probably the finest group I’ve coached, and it’s not just because they were state champs. When you add up the tenacity, mindset, character, talent, and work ethic, this team was heads and tails above everybody else.”

He says those characteristics are passed to the kids from their families. “You can enhance them, but they’re an innate thing that goes back to the traits they were taught in the homes of parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. All these people have been teaching these kids for that moment.”

The rodeo is part of that. “That’s the beauty of the rodeo. It’s always looking to stay current, but it’s not losing its roots in the past. The kids and their families understand that and work really hard to help at the rodeo.”

“The rodeo very much embodies all of this, and that’s why it’s so special.”

Matlock loves his team and the community, and has coined a phrase for the team. “St. Paul is the oasis in the desert of life. I really firmly believe that.

“St. Paul is a very special place and the rodeo is a part of that.”

The St. Paul Rodeo parade kicks off at 10 am on July 4, followed by a rodeo matinee at 1:30 pm that day. Rodeo performances also take place at 7:30 pm each night of July 2-6.

For more information, visit www.StPaulRodeo.com or call 800.237.5920.

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The St. Paul High School volleyball team is the 2018-2019 1A state champion. The players, alongside the basketball team, will be grand marshals for the rodeo parade on July 4 in St. Paul.

The St. Paul High School girls basketball team, 1A state champs, will serve as grand marshals, with the state champion volleyball team, for the St. Paul Rodeo parade on July 4. The team was 30-0.