

Elgin Stampede goes airborne

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The Mark Nichols Memorial Bull Riding and corresponding barrel racing at Thursday night's Elgin Stampede brought a little bit of everything to the table.

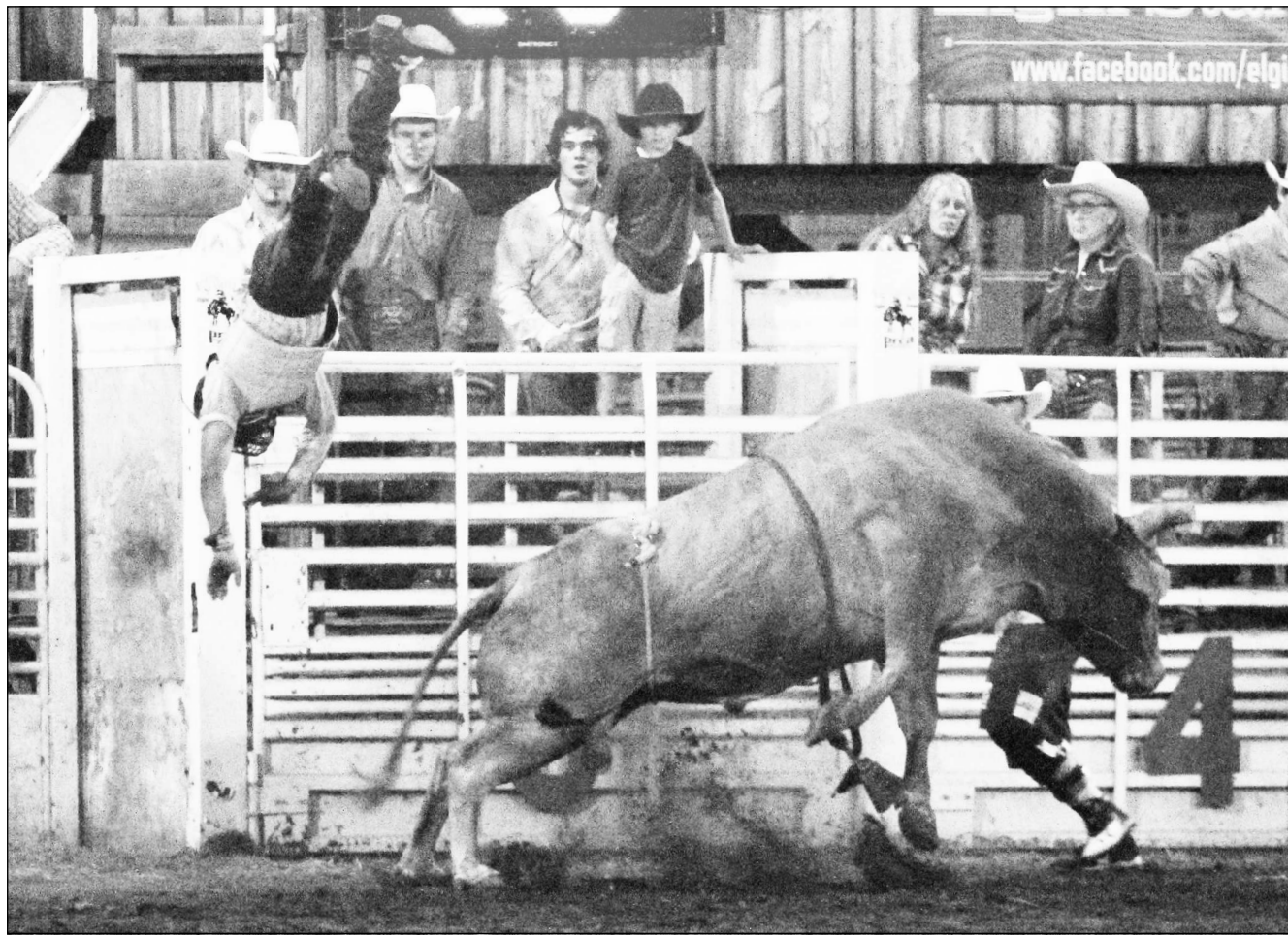
Spectacular rides. Stunning crashes. And a rarity in barrel racing.

When it was all said and done Thursday, Travis Miller was the long-go champion in the bull riding, Cody Casper won the short-go and Bobbie Correa came away with the top spot in the barrel racing.

Miller posted the highest score of the roughly 20 competitors who took part in the opening two rounds of the bull riding, surging to the lead late in Round 1 with a score of 84. Miller's bull spun left for about half of the eight-second ride then stopped and turned right, but the Brogan native had no problem with the mid-ride change.

Miller was one of five riders in the long-go to turn in a qualified ride. Justin Houston and Abraham Medina — on his third attempt after his first bull laid down in the chute twice — both had scores of 74. Thor Hoefler added a 70 and Casper turned in a 47 after choosing to decline a re-ride option.

In the finals, Casper set the early precedent with a score of 86 on board a bull that kicked, leaped and turned right. He was the only one of the seven riders to complete a qualified ride in a finals that was not too kind to the bull riders. Both Miller and Houston were bucked right out of the chute in the finals. Jacob Ramirez, who reached the finals based on time, was thrown back into the chute at the conclusion of his ride. Cane Smith, who also made the finals on time, got a spur caught after he was tossed and for a moment looked to be in serious trouble before breaking free of his animal.



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Abraham Medina goes airborne after getting bucked off his bull during the short-go of the Mark Nichols Memorial Bull Riding Thursday night at the Elgin Stampede.

But the most spectacular crash came from Medina. His bull spun around to the left, then midway through the attempt launched him upside-down about eight feet in the air and sent him to a hard landing. Medina, though, walked away from the crash.

In barrel racing Thursday, Correa led a fast third and final round for the top spot. The Echo resident was one of five racers — and three in the final round alone — to complete the clover pattern in less than 17 seconds. She used three tight turns to cross the finish line in 16.62 seconds and take the top spot from Julie Williams, who had a time of 16.68 seconds in the second round. The rest of the top five were Cassi Johnson (16.82 seconds), Colleen Kingsbury (16.90) and Kelsey Monahan (16.98).

The oddity in the barrels, though, came during



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Cody Casper was the champion of the short-go with a score of 86. He was also the only competitor to have two successful rides with a combined score of 133.

the second round. Melody Payne, a Stampede board member, turned in a time of 17.19 seconds which, at the time, put her in second place. The next racer, Whit-

ney Stahl, burned through the barrels and reached the finish line in an identical time of 17.19.

They weren't the last ones, either: Two races later, Tara

Bertrand also clocked in at 17.19, and Lisa McLean rounded out the bizarre five-minute stretch by matching the three racers at 17.19.

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La Grande Juniors, Little Leaguers begin state play

Observer staff

The La Grande Junior All-Star baseball team begins play at the Oregon Junior state tournament Saturday after recently running through its district tournament with a perfect record.

La Grande went 3-0 in the District 3 Tournament, manhandling Hermiston 17-1 and then twice defeating Baker, 18-3 and 12-0, to qualify for state.

In the finale of the district tournament, Noah McIlmoil had three RBIs and both Devin Bell and Nick Bornstedt had two RBIs each. Jace Schow tossed five shutout innings for the win, allowing three hits.

La Grande opens play in the state tournament against the Parrish/West Salem All-Stars, the winners of District 7. All the state tournament games are at Beaverton High School.

The championship game, if La Grande reaches it, is Wednesday.

The La Grande 10U All-Stars also reached the 8-10

state tournament, though they needed a few more games to get there.

The 10U All-Stars went 7-1 to win their District 3 Tournament, but had to win six elimination games in a row. After beating Baker 10-2, La Grande lost to the Hermiston Nationals, 14-7. They rolled off four straight wins to reach the finals — 14-4 over Harney County, 17-1 over Wallowa Valley, 12-2 over Columbia and 6-2 over Pendleton — then had to beat the Hermiston Nationals twice, which they accomplished, winning 9-8 and then 11-10.

The 10U All-Stars, though, got off to a rough start at the state tournament, which began Thursday in Salem, losing to Klamath Falls 15-4.

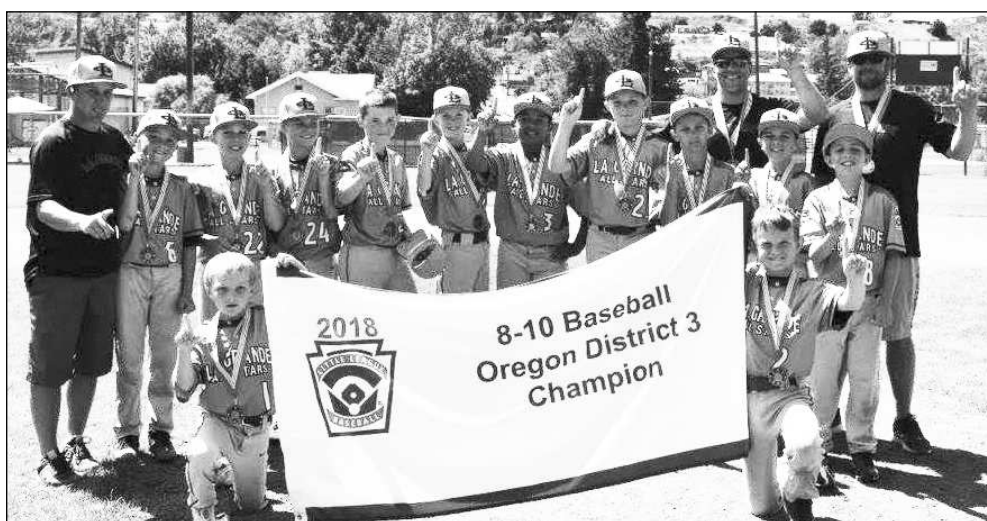
Landon Hood and Sovann Chab both had two hits for La Grande, which meets Del Norte at 5:30 p.m. today in an elimination game.

If La Grande is able to play back to the championship, that game takes place Wednesday.



Lance Rinler photo

The La Grande Juniors baseball team begins state play Saturday in Beaverton.



Courtesy photo

La Grande's 10U baseball team started the 8-10 state tournament Thursday night.

Williams to meet Kerber in final

By Howard Fendrich
The Associated Press

Yes, this will be Serena Williams' 10th Wimbledon final. Yes, it's her 30th title match at any major. And, well, sure, she's widely regarded as not just the best of her era, but any era.

Let others shrug at this latest accomplishment, as if all it signified were merely another chance at another in a long line of trophies. Williams is not shy about saying she, for one, is impressed by this. Rightly so. For it was only about 10 months ago she was having a baby and then dealing with a serious health scare that followed.

Even after all of that, even after more than a year away from the game, even in only the fourth tournament of her comeback, Williams showed she's still capable of dominance. Especially at the All England Club, where a relatively routine 6-2, 6-4 victory over 13th-seeded Julia Goerges of Germany on Thursday put Williams one win away from an eighth championship.

She's also closing in on her 24th Grand Slam title, which would equal Margaret Court's all-time record.

"A lot of people were saying, 'Oh, she should be in the final,'" the 36-year-old Williams said. "For me it's such a pleasure and a joy because, you know, less than a year ago, I was going through so much stuff."

After hitting five aces with a serve that reached 119 mph, delivering 16 winners to only seven unforced errors, and covering the court so well with speed and effort, Williams will face another German, 11th-seeded Angelique Kerber, on Saturday.

"Whatever happens, honestly," Williams said, "it's an incredible effort from me."

The left-handed Kerber, a former No. 1 and two-time major champion, beat 12th-seeded Jelena Ostapenko 6-3, 6-3 earlier Thursday.

"Seeing her back, it's great," said Kerber, who has lost six of eight previous matches against Williams. "I know that she is always pushing you to the limits."

Williams vs. Kerber will be a rematch of the 2016 final. Williams won that for a second consecutive Wimbledon title.

BRIEFLY

EOU men's hoops add D-I transfer

The Eastern Oregon men's basketball team added Kobi Gardea, a National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I transfer from Idaho State University, the school announced this week.

"He's a very heady point guard that has a high IQ for the pick-n-roll and will surprise opponents with the 3-ball," EOU head coach Carlito Labarda Jr. said in a press release.

Gardea was a walk-on at ISU last season but still retains full eligibility. Gardea averaged 13.1 points, 8.0 assists, 4.3 rebounds and 2.1 steals during his senior year at Pocatello High School.