



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Imbler High School is finalizing a \$19,000 upgrade of much of its weight room equipment. The majority of the funds came from the Imbler School District and a grant from the Wildhorse Foundation.

## Worth the weight

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

Both middle school and high school students returning to Imbler when the 2019-2020 school year begins Monday will see a much-needed upgrade in one of their classes — one that you could say was worth the wait.

Or, maybe better said, worth the weight.

The weight room in the mezzanine above the Imbler High School gym has about \$19,000 of new equipment that will be in place and ready for class Monday.

It's the culmination of a project spearheaded by IHS instructor Tony Haddock, who teaches weight classes for both middle school and high school students. Much of the old equipment, he said, was aging — a lot of it had been at the school for more than 30 years — and was beyond the point of needing to be replaced.

"We've had stuff break on us in the last five or six years," said Haddock, who also teaches algebra, health and physical education and is the IHS boys basketball coach. "Pulleys were snapped, wires were frayed, dumbbells had fallen apart mid-lift. Squat racks were really tough. You couldn't get down to proper depth because the catch bars stopped you, and if you had fallen forward or backward, you would have hit your head on something. It was pretty dangerous."

Haddock reached out to the Imbler Education Foundation and through it inquired about a grant from the Wildhorse Foundation a couple of years ago. He learned in the process the IEF



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Imbler teacher Tony Haddock works on assembling new equipment in the weight room at Imbler High School Wednesday.

had a grant outstanding at the time so he applied once the old grant had run its course.

"I talked to (Superintendent) Angie (Lakey-Campbell) a lot and (Imbler School District Deputy Clerk) Teresa (Dewey) about getting money from the school. I went through and itemized everything I thought we could use and

what we needed to replace, and ended up requesting half that amount (of items on that list)," Haddock said.

Lakey-Campbell said once the financial side of the request was in order, it was a quick decision by the school board.

"Fortunately the board was quick  
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## Ducks' freshman Thibodeaux should get plenty of playing time

By Anne M. Petersen  
The Associated Press

EUGENE — Most college freshmen struggle with things like laundry. Oregon's Kayvon Thibodeaux is not your typical freshman.

The 6-foot-5, 242-pound defensive end enrolled early so he could get a jumpstart on his college career. He said the biggest adjustment came with the realization that no one was going to coddle him.

"There's no one to get on you," Thibodeaux said. "There's a lot more self-discipline here, which for me wasn't that hard because I'm more of a self-disciplined person, but that was a challenge that I faced."

So, a bit more esoteric than laundry and scheduling classes.

"I've always been told I'm ahead of my years as far as my maturity so I guess you could say it's been different for me than most freshmen, but I feel like it's been pretty easy," he said.

No. 11 Oregon landed the five-star recruit from Westlake Village, California, on the first day of the early signing period, beating out Alabama along with a host of other interested schools. Thibodeaux was ESPN's top overall prospect and easily the highest-ranked signee in Oregon's history.

He is among several promising prospects in coach Mario Cristobal's 2019 recruiting class, considered to be in the top 10 nationally. Eleven of those recruits, including Thibodeaux, enrolled in school early.

"I've said this a few times, and I really mean it, the most impressive part about Kayvon is not the five stars that sit beside his name, it's his five-star attitude and work ethic," Cristobal said.

Known for his agility and athleticism, even at his size, Thibodeaux was impressive in spring drills. He's been battling Gus Cumberlander for the starting nod during fall camp.

The Ducks open the season against No. 16 Auburn

on Aug. 31 at AT&T Stadium in Texas.

Thibodeaux is brimming with confidence, proclaiming that his aim is to get 10 sacks a season. The Pac-12 leader last year was Utah's Bradlee Anae with eight.

Thibodeaux said his mentality is "no excuses."

"Even though you guys, I'm answering questions (but) I'm not gonna go watch the video. I'm not gonna go watch the videos or listen to what's being said or what's going on," he said. "It's just about focusing on what we have to do to get better, what I have to do personally, what we as a team have to work on."

Among the other newcomers who stood out in preseason camp was receiver Mycah Pittman, but he injured his shoulder during a scrimmage and is not expected to be back for six to eight weeks. Pittman was pushing for a starting role before he was hurt.

Cornerback Mykael Wright should also see ample playing time, as should stud end Mase Funa. An intriguing prospect is tight end Patrick Herbert, who is senior quarterback Justin Herbert's little brother.

"I could go on and on about guys like Mase Funa, Mycah Pittman, Mykael Wright, Kayvon. It goes on and on and on, (running back) Sean Dollars," Cristobal said. "All these guys, they're really talented guys, and we expect these guys to be contributors, and we expect them to contribute quickly. They've played at high levels. They've had extraordinary coaching at the high school level."

Thibodeaux said the freshman class is ready to show what it can do.

"I can't really speak for anybody else but I know that Coach Cristobal pushes us. And even for the guys that might not play, he's pushing us like we're gonna play," he said. "So regardless of how it turns out on Aug. 31, everybody's working hard and getting ready for football."

## Grande Ronde Rodeo gaining following entering Year 3



Ronald Bond/Observer file photo

The third running of the Grande Ronde Rodeo will be this Saturday and Sunday.

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

Though it's only entering its third year, the Grande Ronde Rodeo has already gained a positive reputation, and there is a lot of excitement ahead as the rodeo takes to La Grande's Mavericks Arena Saturday and Sunday.

"A bunch of folks have stepped up to be a part of the committee and put the show on," said Bonnie Rasmussen, an advisory board member for the rodeo. "It takes a lot of moving parts to make it happen. The other thing that is really starting to show success is the sponsor level. There are a lot of folks stepping up and becoming part of the show as a sponsor. I really feel like the community is becoming aware of the show, and the attendance will show that this year."

Rasmussen, who co-owns the rodeo's stock provider

— Tri-State Rodeo Company — played a vital role in bringing the rodeo to La Grande when it kicked off in 2017. She said the rodeo is working to "get the community engaged and make rodeo fun again," pointing to that as an original goal.

GRR has events that cater to all ages in seeking to meet that goal, including for younger fans and participants.

"We have everything from stick horse races to bucking ponies and bucking steers," she said, adding that a VIP tent will also be among the first-time amenities at this year's event.

And there's plenty at the Idaho Cowboys Association rodeo for those seeking to take home some cash.

"We'll end up paying out close to \$30,000 this weekend," said Heather Paradis, GRR rodeo secretary and ICA committee director.

She said the rodeo has already earned a place among the top five ICA events of the year.

"It's definitely going in a very positive direction. It's one of our larger rodeos for being one of our newer (ones)," Paradis said.

She noted that as of Tuesday there were about 187 entries in the two days of ICA competition, plus more than 70 entries in local events such as local team roping and barrel racing.

"It's about location. It's about the stock. They definitely have done enough to get a good reputation behind this one," she said of the high number of entries.

The two-day event kicks off at 6 p.m. Saturday with youth competitions followed by the ICA rodeo at 7 p.m. On Sunday, cowboys and cowgirls will compete in the 1 p.m. ICA rodeo.