

Creech becomes weightlifting champion

La Grande softball player sets record despite pandemic

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

LA GRANDE — When her junior softball season was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic, Harley Creech found an outlet in weightlifting.

“I was stuck at home for a while, obviously, so I was looking for something to do because I didn’t have softball practice and wasn’t able to go out and do the things I normally do,” she said.

Before the summer was even halfway over, she had become a record-breaking state champion.

Creech, who will be a senior at La Grande High School this fall, won her division in the Eastside Invitational in Springfield July 25. In the process, Creech set a state record not only in the youth girls division — she posted marks that were records in the division above her, the women’s junior division.

Creech, 17, recorded a lift of 192 pounds in the clean and jerk, a personal record by 2 pounds, and added a mark of 146 pounds in the snatch, which was 3 pounds off her personal best in the lift.

“I was pretty nervous, but I think the adrenaline definitely helped me,” she said. “On a normal training day you don’t hit



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

Incoming La Grande High School senior Harley Creech trains Saturday, Aug. 1 at Eagle Cap Crossfit, La Grand. Creech won the Eastside Invitational July 25 in Springfield and in the process set records in two divisions. She is set to compete at the junior nationals in December in Atlanta, Georgia.

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— Harley Creech, on winning her division in a recent weightlifting competition

those kinds of numbers.”

She also surged to sixth in the nation as a youth and as a junior.

Both of Creech’s parents lift, and she said she

had lifted with them sporadically, but when school and sports were brought to a halt, she started a lifting program with her father.

“That was something

to keep me busy during the day,” she said of the 12-week program.

When they started the program, she could lift 125 pounds in the snatch

and 170 in the clean and jerk.

“We saw a lot of improvement over those 12 weeks, so we wanted to see what else I could do

with an actual coach who could help me,” she said.

The search led them to an Olympic weightlifting coach on the other side of the state.

“We found a coach to see how it went,” she said. “I’ve been lifting with my parents a little bit — not Olympic lifting but more powerlifting for a while — but this is new.”

Her coach, Mason Kobernik, is based in the Portland area, so Creech would receive a training regimen from him and send videos to be analyzed.

Everything headed into the state competition in Springfield was foreign for the teenager — and her family.

“I had no idea what to expect because I had never been to one and my parents have never been to one,” she said.

It was also the first time she met her coach in person, though she thinks that could have fueled her drive.

“That added to the stress, I guess, but the nerves definitely were an advantage because of the adrenaline,” she said.

As it turned out, the first-timer put up a near perfect performance on her record-setting day.

“I made all three of my snatches and two out of three in my clean and jerks,” she said.

Creech will compete in the junior nationals, which will take place in Atlanta, Georgia, in December.

Rival Blazers, Lakers open playoff action Tuesday

The Associated Press

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. — The Los Angeles Lakers’ path to a 17th championship looks awfully perilous from the outset, and not just because the Western Conference’s top seeds have struggled in the bubble.

Damian Lillard by himself is enough to make any team worry about its post-season prospects, yet the bubble MVP is just one challenge looming before the Lakers.

The Lakers’ dubious reward for perseverance in an extraordinarily challenging and particularly tragic season is no prize at all: They must begin their quest against the streaking Trail Blazers and Lillard, who has lit up the Lakers and just about everybody else for years.

“Definitely not your typical eighth seed,” first-year Lakers coach Frank Vogel said. “They played at an elite level during this stretch in the bubble, at least offensively.”

What’s more, the Lakers have only a nominal home-court advantage when the first-round series begins Tuesday. They’ll play in the near-silent bubble instead of a sold-out Staples Center cheering this beloved franchise’s first playoff appearance since 2013.

After going 3-5 in the

bubble with unusually poor play by their normally sturdy defense, not much looks certain for the Lakers — except the leadership of LeBron James, who has already done just about everything possible in the NBA postseason.

Even if their fans must watch from afar, the Lakers still ended their streak of six straight non-playoff seasons — an unprecedented embarrassment for the NBA’s glamour franchise.

Everything changed when Anthony Davis agreed to join LA from New Orleans last summer, and the Lakers spent the year quickly building a cohesive team that could handle the rigors of a post-season run.

Lillard presented an

entirely different set of challenges, particularly in the confines of a seven-game series.

“He’s balling right now,” Davis said. “He’s hot. He’s doing whatever he can do to make his team win. He’s carrying the load, playing a ton of minutes. He’s the head of the snake for their team, and you’ve got to do your best to contain him, take away some of his tendencies, but they also have other guys to make plays as well. They’re a tough opponent, but everybody knows that level he’s on and his mindset.”

Portland had to win the first play-in postseason NBA game since 1956 to reach this spot, beating Memphis 126-122 on Saturday.

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