



DAVIS CARBAUGH  
CARBAUGH'S CORNER

## Winter sports season gets underway

**L**A GRANDE — It's that time of year, folks. Local athletes have put away the football pads for the winter and are hitting the hardwood, wrestling mats and swimming pools for winter sports action.

Several standouts in the area will be favorites to bring home state championships this year, while a number of competitive teams will aim to finish the season on top.

One major impact heading into the season is a shortened offseason for some, with teams like Powder Valley having a quick window to switch from football to basketball. Just six days after the Badgers came one touchdown shy of a 1A state title in football, a large number of those same athletes hit the hardwood for the team's opening game against Jordan Valley.

Football senior standouts like Reece Dixon, Kaden Krieger, Clay Martin and Case Olson will all be names to watch in basketball this season. Kaiden Dalke is another player who will look to help the Badgers achieve similar success in the winter sports season.

In wrestling, several local standouts and competitive teams should see productive results this year. La Grande returns a large group of wrestlers from last year's second-place 4A state team, who will be looking to bring a state title back home for the Tigers. Imbler's Garrett Burns and La Grande's Braden Carson each have their eyes on a third career individual state championships, which would make history at both schools.

A common trend among basketball teams in the area this year is either a large group of upperclassmen or a group of entirely young athletes. At Union, Odin Miller and the Bobcats boys team are looking to replace seven graduating seniors from last year's team that made it to the quarterfinals of the 2A state tournament. With a largely new squad this year, Union will be building on the same winning tradition the Bobcats established in the spring season.

The Elgin and Imbler boys teams will also be counting on younger players to step up, and first-year Cove girls head coach Kindra Wright is doing the same with an inexperienced group. Another Wright, Brian Wright of the La Grande girls team, is working to replace several key standouts from last year's team that went 10-0 in the regular season.

With the complications of last year's pandemic-altered spring season, many teams in the area are facing the similar challenge of building the programs back up. That is not the case at every school, however, as the Union girls team will lean on five seniors to lead the charge for a competitive Bobcats team this season.

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# Paying tribute



Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

Powder Valley's Kaden Krieger, left, and Clay Martin celebrate a touchdown while displaying Calvin Hiatt's initials on their helmets during the OSAA Class 1A state championship game on Saturday, Nov. 27, 2021. Hiatt, a local referee and coach, died in an accident Nov. 3.

## Local referee and coach honored at high school basketball tournament

By DAVIS CARBAUGH  
The Observer

**NORTH POWDER** — A beloved high school sports referee is having his memory honored through a local prep basketball tournament.

Calvin Hiatt, who was killed in a car accident on Nov. 3, will be remembered at the inaugural Calvin Hiatt Basketball Tournament in North Powder from Dec. 9-11. Twelve schools and 24 teams are competing in the three-day tournament, which is being held to raise money for Hiatt's

wife and five children. "Calvin was very instrumental in athletics and dedicated quite a lot of time to athletics," Powder Valley Athletic Director Brad Dunten said. "He's going to be missed."

Hiatt spent decades as a local referee in multiple sports and a coach for youth and college athletics. He served as an assistant women's basketball coach at Treasure Valley Community College and was a long-time youth sports coach. He was a graduate of Vale High School in 1997 and served a mission with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1998.

"We were really good friends," Dunten said of the tournament's namesake.

The coach and referee was well-known and respected around Eastern Oregon, which is reflected in the wide array of schools that traveled in for the weekend tournament. Union County



Powder Valley Athletics/  
Contributed Photo

Former referee and coach Calvin Hiatt was honored at the inaugural Calvin Hiatt Basketball Tournament in North Powder in early Nov. Hiatt died in a car accident in early November.

schools competing at the Calvin Hiatt Tournament are Powder Valley, Imbler and Union.

According to Dunten, Hiatt helped put on a 32-team basketball tournament last summer in Baker City and North Powder. He was also big on recruiting officials, which is an asset that Eastern Oregon is often short on.

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Sammy Jo Hester/The Associated Press, File

Kalani Sitake is introduced as the new football head coach for Brigham Young University during a news conference on Monday, Dec. 21, 2015, at the BYU Broadcasting Building in Provo, Utah. Sitake has interviewed with Oregon for the open head coach position.

# Oregon interviews Sitake, Wilcox for opening

Ducks ask permission to interview UCLA's Chip Kelly, per source

By JOHN CANZANO and JAMES CREPEA  
The Oregonian

**EUGENE** — Oregon has interviewed BYU's Kalani Sitake and Cal's Justin Wilcox, has requested permission to interview UCLA's Chip Kelly and is speaking to at least two other candidates for its football head coaching position, according to a source with knowledge of UO's coaching search.

Sitake, 46, is 48-28 over six seasons at BYU. The Cougars are 10-2 this season entering the Independence Bowl and went 11-2 last season with No. 2 overall pick Zach Wilson at quarterback.

During a television appearance earlier this week, BYU athletic director Tom Holmoe said the school is in negotiations with Sitake, who signed a contract extension through the 2025 season this past August, though terms are not disclosed from a private school.

Wilcox, 45, just went 5-7 in his fifth season at Cal, which was picked to finish third in the Pac-12 North in the preseason media poll. The Golden Bears have gone 26-28 in Wilcox's five years, including 8-5 in 2019, but have fallen off since, albeit amid the most strict COVID-19 regulations any FBS program has had to navigate.

A UO alum who is from Junction City, Wilcox earned \$3.3 million this season and is under contract through 2023. His buyout is only \$1.75 million.

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# Pendleton Round-Up wins Large Outdoor Rodeo title — again

East Oregonian

**LAS VEGAS** — The Pendleton Round-Up won the Large Outdoor Rodeo of the Year award for the eighth time on Wednesday, Dec. 1, at the annual Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association Awards Banquet.

The prestigious award is voted on by members of the PRCA, which is made up of cowboy contestants and fellow rodeo committees.

"There is no higher honor than to be recognized by cowboy contestants, contract personnel and fellow rodeo committees," Pendleton Round-Up Publicity Director Pat Reay said in a press release. "It is because of the dedication of many volunteers, staff, sponsors, fans, the community and loyal supporters that the Round-Up has been able to be recognized by our peers in the rodeo industry."

Pendleton, which also won in 2003, 2010, and 2015-19, was one of five finalists, along with Cody, Wyoming; Deadwood, South Dakota; Dodge City, Kansas; and Cheyenne, Wyoming.

Pendleton's streak of winning the award five years in a row came to a halt in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic caused the cancellation of the Round-Up for the first time since World War II.

The 2020 award went to Deadwood's Days of '76. "To be crowned again in 2021 after not being able to host an event in 2020 is bittersweet and something we cherish and hold in the highest regard," Pendleton Round-Up Past President Randy Bracher said in the press release. "We are very proud to bring this award home to our community; to the people who have helped build and shape the traditions and authenticity that make this an event like no other in the world." The Pendleton Round-Up



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

Cowboys sit in the infield Sept. 15, 2021, during the bareback competition on the opening day of the Pendleton Round-Up. The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association earlier this month, named the Round-Up the Large Outdoor Rodeo of the Year for the eighth time.

also was a finalist for the Heston Sowing Good Deeds award, which went to the Burke Stampede Rodeo in South Dakota.

Three of Pendleton's contractors also earned year-end awards. Justin Rumford, who is a delight year after year at the Pendleton Round-Up, was named the Clown/Barrelman of the Year for the 10th time, while Matt Twitchell was voted the PRCA Pick-Up Man of the Year for the second time. Molly Twitchell was named one of the two PRCA Timers of the Year.

The Pendleton Round-Up can accommodate 17,000 fans per day. The 2022 event is scheduled for Sept. 14-17.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

Saddle bronc rider Ben T. Andersen, of Alberta, Canada, takes a ride on Strawberry Rocket who veers toward a group of cowboys sitting on the arena grass on Sept. 17, 2021, at the Pendleton Round-Up.