

SPORTS

ON TRACK

Maupin's Deschutes River Athletic Complex slowly, steadily becoming a reality

By Joe Petshow
Columbia Gorge News

Take a good idea, add teenage ingenuity, involve people who know how to get things done, have patience through a pandemic, and the result might be what's happening this summer in Maupin.

That's where the Deschutes River Athletic Complex, a modern track and field / multi-purpose event venue, is taking shape with renewed vigor. Meantime, work also is starting on construction and renovation of the South Wasco County School District facilities, made possible by the November 2020 passage of a \$4 million bond levy and subsequent \$4 million matching grant.

Jim Hull, SWC athletic director, longtime coach and teacher, said, "It is starting sometime in the next week or so, along with our \$8 million bond, new gym, major upgrades. It's going to be crazy."

Osprey nests and butterfly gardens have been relocated. Sod from the football field was removed a few weeks ago — free to take by community members who perhaps needed some lawn patchwork done. Fundraising continues for the \$1.6 million DRAC project but "we have enough money to break ground and get the foundation of the track in by October," facilitator Michael Bergmann said.

Bergmann, who started a series of businesses based in the Portland area a few years ago after 30 years at Nike, agreed last week to being the spokesman on the project for this article — recognizing this is the peak of tourist season in Maupin. He falls into the "knows how to get things done" category.

"Someone described me once as the guy who is good at putting himself into situations and figuring out how to get things done," said the president of his aptly named company, IncubatorU, as well as Portland Track. The latter is the connection which landed Bergmann his role with DRAC.

In August 2019, another go-getter, Maupin outdoorsman Don Jacklin, contacted Bergmann, asking if he could come to town to talk about a track and field facility the community wanted to build. Jacklin had heard that Bergmann helped accomplish track and field facility upgrades in Portland — specifically one at Roosevelt High, which inspired other positive, revitalizing change in the north Portland (St. John's) neighborhood.

Jacklin, who founded All Star Rafting guide service in Maupin in the 1990s and is active in the Maupin Area Chamber of Commerce, invited Bergmann to a meeting at South Wasco High School. Bergmann was expecting a one-on-one meeting, but when he walked, "there were eight or nine there and I was like, 'Oh, they kind of want to get this thing done.'" When the group went outside to view the site, Bergmann said he was astounded with the Deschutes River below and rolling hills as a backdrop. "My first thought was that this is more than just a track," he said.

Just a track was all Holly Miles wanted. The senior-to-be at South Wasco High grew up running on the pear-shaped cinder, gravel, hole-punctuated track that

awkwardly surrounds the Redside's football field. Her parents, Susie and Rob Miles, owners of Imperial River Company, challenged her to be a part of a positive change, instead of simply complaining about the constant cinder in her running shoes.

And she did, or they did, to be more precise. The Miles have been among a group of key local catalysts in the progression of the project. "Why can't we just get a real track" T-shirts sprouted up and local fundraising began in earnest. In the winter of 2019, track project supporters started working with the district bond committee to develop a master plan for all district facilities.

Then COVID-19 reared its ugly head. Community-based, largely volunteer projects are often a series of start-and-stop affairs, interspersed with setbacks and milestones. Obviously, with a worldwide pandemic turning things upside down, DRAC lost some traction, but the dream remained alive. Small gains were made: The local garden club got a new home secured for its butterfly garden; an osprey nest was removed from a nearby power pole.

Shortly after the August meeting two years ago, Bergmann started doing his own connecting. He dialed Ron White, a former longtime employee of Hoffman Construction (the contractor of the recent Hayward Field redo), who started Probit Builders in Portland. The project management company specializes in helping get construction projects off the ground.

"Ron and I kind of chipped away at it," Bergmann said. "We mapped out the framework. We helped build the plan and the vision, and we had a fundraising event. Then COVID hit and everything shut down."

The project's pulse kept going, but it was obvious that some people's ambitious completion deadlines would not be met. "We had a year that was really tough — no events, no gathering. We pulled back a bit," Bergmann said.

Last summer, White, a retired Navy Civil Engineer Corps officer, and others used their contacts to enlist the Oregon National Guard to complete some necessary excavation work, primarily on the northeast corner of the site. About 40 National Guard members camped on the football field and spent 11 days moving dirt and adding almost 5,000 cubic yards of fill and quarry rock donated from Warnock Family Ranch.

"That expanded the footprint (of the project); provided a level surface for the track," Bergmann said of the excavation and subsequent engineering work. "And, luckily, we got it done before the wildfires hit." Once that happened, the National Guard was busy tending to fire-related concerns.

Last winter, the DRAC selection committee chose Kirby Nagelhout Construction Company as the contractor for the facility. The choice coincided with the school district tabbing the Bend company to do its renovation and construction project, as well. Kirby Nagelhout Construction also was the contractor for Gorge renovation and/or construction projects at Hood



Holly Miles, an incoming senior at South Wasco High School, has been working for the replacement of the non-regulation cinder track at the high school. Construction of a new, state-of-the-art track — and more — is now underway.

"My first thought was that this is more than just a track."

Michael Bergmann
Portland Track



Michael Bergman of Portland Track took an interest in the possibilities for a new track in Maupin. Above, he explains how the new track will be positioned. He is standing on a gravel extension to allow a regulation track, made with fill put in place as part of a Oregon National Guard exercise. Below, Bergmann and Miles teamed up to get support and funding to replace the red cinder track behind them. Mark B. Gibson photos

River's May Street Elementary and its two middle schools, and the Sherman County Courthouse.

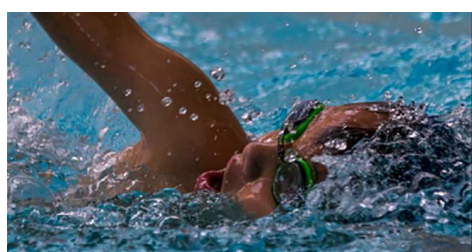
Plans call for the footprint of the running track to be completed this fall. Rob Miles, in his June monthly DRAC update to the local school board, said Phase 1 funding will allow for pavement to be laid and the hydroseeding of the infield. The field will be prepared for Beynon Sports, one of the subcontractors at Hayward Field track, to pour the track surface.

The funding has come from many sources, many laid out in various places on the project's website, www.maupindr.org. Susie Miles worked behind the scenes on grant writing, in addition to being front and center on some of the project's online promotions.

Some of the larger contributions include: A \$250,000 Maybelle Clark Macdonald Fund grant that has a matching \$250,000 component; a Nike stock donation at a current value of \$266,000; and a Travel Oregon grant of \$200,000.

Bergmann said there is some \$600,000 left to raise, to build a new grandstand and install lighting. "We want to inspire someone to open their wallet and help us get to the finish line," Bergmann said. "We're poised to go and have about \$1 million committed; \$1.6 (million) will get us all the way, including the stage, grandstand."

"I'd love to have Holly and her friends get to have a track meet her senior year (spring 2022).



No Enrollment Fee Special
for the entire month of July, for all memberships, including tennis and pickleball. Join today!



Gorge Athletic Clubs
THE DALLES | HOOD RIVER
GorgeAthleticClubs.com
A Healthy Lifestyle Company!
www.GorgeAthleticClubs.com

The Dalles 541.298.8508 | Hood River 541.386.3230



SDS
Lumber Company
is **HIRING!**

We're looking for people to join our successful team! People who enjoy working with a team to produce like-minded results. SDS Lumber Company is a goal oriented organization that strives to be efficient in safety, quality, and production. We want people that can come into our already efficient teams to learn, grow, and become an asset to the Company. If that sounds interesting to you or if you would like to learn more contact Nick Reeves, HR Supervisor at (503) 720-7465 or email nickr@sdsllumber.com.

Current Openings:
-Utility Worker
-Dryer Grader
-Class A CDL Truck Driver
-Maintenance Millwright
-Saw Filer

Benefits include:
• 401(K) Matching
• Benefits include: Health (medical, dental, Vision, Prescription); Life insurance
• Access to Sponsored Medical Clinic (no cost for employee and family).
• Vacation pay & 8-paid holidays
• Employees discounts on our wood products, work apparel and more.
• On the job training
• Plus other benefits!

If interested please give Nick the HR Supervisor a call at (503) 720-7465 or email at nickr@sdsllumber.com

WE ARE AN EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER!