

SPORTS



An artist rendering shows what the new track, with surrounding facility improvements, might look like.

Contributed graphic

Big plans, little town

By Joe Petshow
Columbia Gorge News

Track and field may be a future link between Maupin and world class athletes; the sport definitely is what linked Michael Bergmann and the small town on Highway 197 near the Deschutes River.

South Wasco High wanted a new running track and Bergmann's background in the sport — including his ability to lead efforts to redo school facilities in Portland — connected him to the community. Two years later, construction on the Maupin Deschutes River Athletic Complex, which includes that track, is underway.

But that might not be the end of the story.

Bergmann talks in broad strokes when envisioning opportunities for the state of Oregon during the next 360 days. His vision is based around track and field and the sport's 2022 World Athletic Championships, but it also incorporates cycling and whitewater rafting and numerous other outdoor recreation activities the state — and specifically this region — has to offer. Maupin is one of a number of communities which Bergmann thinks could benefit from next year's track and field championships to be held at University of Oregon's recently renovated (at an estimated \$270 million) Hayward Field.

At an estimated \$1.6 million, the DRAC is a bit more modest of a project, to say the least, but here's one of Bergmann's ideas: Hundreds of the world's best track and field athletes will be descending on Oregon less than year from now. The competition will bring numerous support staffers and families of those athletes, not to mention thousands of spectators bent on witnessing the first world championship held in the United States.

The athletes will need places to train leading up to the event. Bergmann reasoned

that Maupin, two hours away from Eugene, is void of the distractions of crowded metropolitan areas. A small town with a good training facility might be an appealing, quieter option for athletes, who need to focus on getting race ready.

"Create an opportunity, that's always been kind of the vision with Maupin," Bergmann said. "Build this world-class track and event venue that is absolutely stunning overlooking the (Deschutes) river. A goal would be bringing a small team out there to train and experience Oregon. Not Oregon — Eugene or Portland — but rural Oregon. It's beautiful out here.

"If I was going to paint a scenario? Actually, I'm the right person to be talking about that. Ideally, we have these quality facilities around the state. You have 214 countries coming into the state of Oregon. I don't feel the world should see Oregon through the eyes of Hayward Field only. We could have communities adopt a team, for example.

"Those are big, grandiose ideas. Fundamentally, we want a track for the kids in the community to use."

But then in the next breath: "If we create a multi-use venue with food carts, a potential camping area for Cycle Oregon, we could have events there outside of the track world."

Or inside that world. The past year, with COVID shutting down or at least disrupting most athletic events, Bergmann was instrumental in starting "pop-up," distance-running based track meets in the Portland area. There was no advanced notice to the general public. Bergmann, through his connections — including 30 years working at Nike — and as president of Portland Track, helped schedule those impromptu races between world-class athletes.

The athletes just wanted

to compete, and Bergmann helped them scratch that itch. Athletes would be invited, a time schedule set, a facility secured, and under the cover of darkness — and, sometimes, lights — a handful of races would be held. The races, including ones held at Portland's Jesuit High and Newberg High School — were live-streamed to the world. There was a bit of intrigue surrounding the races — subtle things to pique interest — including the wearing of headlamps, for example.

"We could do that here," Bergmann said about South Wasco High, sans the need for headlamps. "We'll have a track built to international standards. The town's high-speed internet allows for top quality live streaming."

Bergmann said hundreds of athletes, who didn't qualify for the world championships, will still want to compete. Those training for the championships will need to run competitively leading up to the big event.

"How cool would it be to have a world class 10K race — maybe it's not even the people who are competing in the worlds," Bergmann said. "We could, in theory, have the world's best track and field runners competing in Maupin."

The world meet is scheduled July 15-24, 2022, and is promoted regionally as WCH Oregon 22. It was supposed to be held in 2021, but COVID postponed it a year. WCH Oregon 22 is essentially a track and field meet, governed by World Athletics, that invites the best in the world. World Athletics is the international governing body for track and field, cross country, road racing, race-walking, mountain running and ultra-running.

Corbin University in Salem this summer is building a track and field complex which Bergmann also thinks could be used by athletes training to compete in the

world meet.

Bergmann said Maupin, with the Deschutes River recreation opportunities and attractive cycling routes, is an appealing option for future events — in addition to track and field. Bergmann has plans to incorporate a cycling race based in Maupin this fall, with fundraising ties to DRAC. He said Cycle Oregon, the annual fundraising bike ride through central and eastern Oregon, has been pitched on the idea of using DRAC as a stopover for its next ride.

"Runners don't have any money," he quipped. "Now cyclists, they spend \$20,000 on bikes."

Bergmann earlier this month invited a dozen of his cycling friends to ride the Oregon Scenic Byway skirting the Deschutes River.

"A lot of people don't even know that Maupin is gorgeous," he said. "I took 12 of my buddies out and they were absolutely blown away. There are no cars; the roads are great. They couldn't believe it. Two or three of them have been back already to ride it again."

By this fall, Bergmann said the footprint of the new track will be in place and the cycling race will be a way to showcase it — and the subsequent phases of DRAC — to visitors.

"People will get to see it and get to donate" to the track project, he said. "Let's activate this beautiful area; let's figure out how to get people out there in October and November. Then let's bring them back next year for some track meets."

THE DALLES BASKETBALL

Hodges takes over Riverhawk girls program

Staff report
Columbia Gorge News

Former all-state and college player Darcey Hodges was hired late last month as the head girls basketball coach at The Dalles High School.

Hodges, a 1999 TDHS graduate, replaces Keith Howe.

The Riverhawk girls have been attending open gyms the past few weeks, allowing Hodges to better get to know her players. For the most part, the introductions have been re-introductions, as Hodges has been a coach in town since moving back in 2007 to raise her family.

"We've had open gym three days a week and had a few scrimmages," she said.

Hodges first moved to The Dalles from Evanston, Wyo., in the late 1990s as a high school sophomore. She was a first-team, all-state player her senior season, when The Dalles finished third at the Oregon Class 3A (then second-to-largest classification) state tournament.

Hodges describes her coaching self as someone who will, "encourage my players, while instructing them in things that need to be corrected. I love defense and will challenge and push my players to be better athletes, students and people."

She has coached at various levels, including middle school boys and girls basketball at The Dalles Middle School and St. Mary's, freshman girls basketball at TDHS, and junior varsity girls basketball at Yamhill-Carlton. She also has coached JV soccer in Newberg and The Dalles.

Among her goals: "I hope to build the program back to having three full teams. They only had one team this past season. I hope to make more of a connection with the youth in The Dalles and find ways to get the elementary and middle school kids more active, involved, and connected to the program."

Hodges played soccer, basketball, and golf in high school. Her senior year she participated in soccer, basketball and both golf and track — and played softball during the summer. She played one year of basketball

and one year of soccer at George Fox University, played a year of basketball at Utah Valley State College (now Utah Valley University), and two years of basketball at Western Oregon University.

She earned her associate degree from Utah Valley State, a bachelor's degree from Western Oregon, and a master's degree from Eastern Oregon University.

She and husband, Jeff, have a son, Trey, who will be a freshman at TDHS, daughter Kestley, who will be in seventh grade at St. Mary's, and daughter Tenley, who will be in fourth grade at St. Mary's.

Hodges teaches middle school social studies, sixth grade math, physical education and health, and electives at St. Mary's. She taught health and PE in Newberg and coached girls JV soccer and Yamhill-Carlton JV basketball. She has been a substitute teacher for North Wasco for 10 years while coaching JV girls soccer, girls middle school basketball, and eventually frosh girls basketball. She also taught two years of health and PE at The Dalles Middle School. The has taught three years at St. Mary's and coached boys basketball there.

The Dalles was 2-8 this past COVID-shortened season, which placed the Riverhawks fifth in the six-team Intermountain Conference regular-season standings. Program numbers were at an all-time low, primarily because of the timing of the season, which didn't get started until late spring.

The Dalles had winning records in two of Coach Brian Stevens' three seasons from 2017 to 2020. The program was consistently above .500 during Coach Dan Telles' long tenure during the early 2000s, including five straight from 2011 to 2016. The 2015 Riverhawk team was the last one to win an OSAA postseason game — 56-40 over Liberty High in a state play-in contest.



Darcey Hodges