

A Slapshot of Hops

EUGENE BREWERY IS THE BEER OF CHOICE FOR NEW NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE TEAM SEATTLE KRAKEN

By Henry Houston

When the puck drops for the 2021-22 National Hockey League season, Eugene-based Hop Valley will have its craft beer in Seattle's Climate Pledge Arena concession stands.

On March 10, the Seattle Kraken announced Hop Valley as the exclusive craft beer for the arena. The hockey team, whose inaugural professional season begins October, says the brewery fits with their climate-friendly mission and expanding the Kraken's exposure throughout the Pacific Northwest.

For Hop Valley, the partnership is another notch on the belt of the beer's sports venue's list and a way to grow its brand in Seattle. The partnership comes months after the brewery's parent company, Molson Coors, announced a plan to distribute throughout North America.

"Through this partnership we'll be able to engage with the Seattle community more, in the arena, through events, concerts," says Hop Valley Director of Marketing Megan McKenna. "We want to share our beer, celebrate with our beer, get involved, but we also want to support the Seattle community through it."

Hop Valley's Kraken beer will include the brewery's trademarked Cryo Hops, a process that includes cryogenics and low temperatures to preserve flavors. And the hops are sourced from the Washington company Yakima Chief Hops, McKenna says. "Using the hops from the state will be a nice layer to the storytelling of this

canned package."

The Kraken's venue is called the Climate Pledge Arena after a net zero carbon campaign led by Amazon and advocacy group Global Optimism. To live up to the name, Anderson says the team is committed to sourcing 75 percent of its food and beverage from within 300 miles of the arena.

Although Seattle is around 280 miles from Eugene, Hop Valley will make the beer at its Whiteaker brewery, McKenna says, and the company isn't planning to establish a new facility in Washington. One way the brewery will meet the demand of hockey fans, who are notorious for beer drinking, is through its Hop Box, she says. That's a portable, repurposed shipping container, branded with Hop Valley's colors and logo. "They really present

a unique opportunity for us where we don't need a brick and mortar space. We have a portable pub," she says. "We plan to activate one in Seattle, potentially in the Kraken fan zone."

In 2018, the NHL Board of Governors approved the addition of the Seattle Kraken to the league, making it the only U.S. Pacific Northwest professional hockey team. Before the Kraken, the most northern U.S. West Coast professional team was the San Jose Sharks; the Vancouver Canucks are just across the border.

"The Seattle Kraken represent much more than just Seattle," Kraken's Corporate Communications Manager De'Aira Anderson says via email. The Kraken's media tentacles spread to Alaska, Washington, Idaho and Oregon, she adds. "It is our goal to create a



love affair with fans all throughout the Pacific Northwest, and one of the ways we will do this is by offering our patrons their favorite regional food and beverage options at Climate Pledge Arena."

Hop Valley is creating a special 19.2 ounce tall boy, only available in Washington state due to restrictions set by the NHL, McKenna says. The brewery is keeping quiet on the details of the beer for now, but she says the can will feature the tentacles of the legendary sea monster and is planned for release in September, before the NHL season begins. Climate Pledge Arena will also have the brewery's Bubble Stash IPA at concession stands.

Months before the Kraken announced Hop Valley would be sold at the arena for the 2021-22 season, Molson Coors said in a Dec. 2, 2020, press release that it would begin distributing the beer nationally, expecting the brewery to compete against other craft breweries, such as Lagunitas, Sierra Nevada and Elysian. Molson Coors acquired Hop Valley in 2016, and the Kraken beer exclusivity deal includes Coors Light.

The team didn't comment on how long the agreement with Hop Valley is or how much Hop Valley or Molson Coors are paying for the partnership.

The deal with the Kraken isn't the first craft beer deal that Hop Valley has made with a sports team. It's also the official craft beer of the Oregon Ducks football team, McKenna says, and is sold at NFL's Las Vegas Raiders games, as well as MLB's Seattle Mariners, Los Angeles Angels, San Francisco Giants and Colorado Rockies.

"We're all sports fans," McKenna says about Hop Valley's staff. "I think sports and craft [beers] are a natural partnership, so hockey is the newest sport that we're falling in love with out here." ■

slant

• **We're sorry to see the Ashland Tidings (formerly the Daily Tidings) disappear and merge with a renamed Medford Mail-Tribune.** The papers' ownership, Rosebud Media, announced there will be one newspaper — *The Mail Tribune* with two editions, one for the Medford area and the other for Ashland and nearby communities. It will only print four days a week. Retired *Eugene Weekly* Editor Ted Taylor was an editor at the *Tidings* when it was a fine paper in Ashland before he eventually came to Eugene and *EW* for his illustrious 17-year run. He reminds us that the *Tidings* is one of the oldest daily newspapers in Oregon.

• **We are delighted to announce (and brag) that Black Girl from Eugene podcaster and columnist Ayisha Elliott won second place for her *Eugene Weekly* column in the Association of Alternative Newsmedia national contest.** Former *EW* intern Donald Morrison took second for his longform news article about the sexual exploitation of a University of Oregon student, "Begin Modeling." The AAN contest is highly competitive, and alternative newsweeklies have launched the careers of Ta-Nehisi Coates, David

Carr, Susan Orlean and Matt Groening, to name only a few.

• **One more terrific topic comes from the City Club of Eugene: "Prescription: Nature. Can Time in the Great Outdoors Save Your Life?"** The Zoom taping will be 1 pm July 27. Speakers are Jared Hanley, NatureQuant; Dr. Christopher Minso, University of Oregon Human Physiology; and Katie Lynch, UO Environmental Leadership Program. This program airs on the City Club Facebook and YouTube pages starting at noon on Friday, July 30.

• **Are rabbits coming out of somebody's hat? Suddenly they are everywhere.** We had a report from a hiker on Mount Pisgah that he saw a dozen. We also watched a pack of little boys chase one fast rabbit around the edges of a soccer match at Civic Park. Perhaps they're just breeding like rabbits. You might be seeing a native Oregon brush rabbit, a black-tailed jackrabbit or a larger introduced Eastern cottontail. There have been recent reports of rabbit



hemorrhagic disease in Oregon, which can kill them quickly. It does not affect humans but can sicken your pet rabbits. Let us know your sightings — and don't let your own kids chase the bunnies and scare them. Leave wildlife alone, including cute little Peter Rabbit.

• **Were you at the Lane County Fair, heard the gunshots and fled in fear for your life?** Did you see the social media and news reports and stress out about loved ones at the fair? Luckily, it was not an active shooter; instead, a weapon went off as security took down the teen holding the gun. But it's a terrifying reminder — yet again — of the need for gun control.

• **Just when we thought we were overcoming COVID-19, it sucked us back in.**

The stark reminders that we're still in the midst of a pandemic are all around us, from the empty stands at the Olympics in Tokyo to the staggering high COVID-19 cases reported by Oregon Health Authority. So please wear your mask — and get vaccinated already.