

WRESTLE,

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Keifer Smith finished out the night for McNary with a win by pin in 1:34.

"I had never wrestled him before, but I like those matches better. I felt confident, like I was going to win from the start," Smith said.

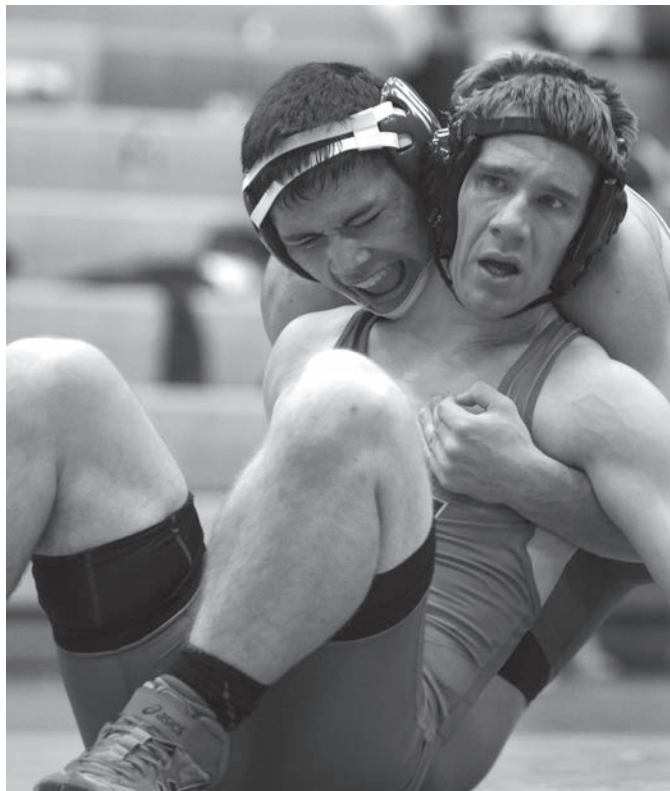
Smith said a win over Silverton High School the prior week set the table for the McNary-McMinnville match.

"When we wrestled Silverton, we weren't expected to win, but we won and that flipped the switch for us. We realized we are good enough to compete with some of the top teams," Smith said.

Burrows said a focus on being a team also helped.

"We did a really good job of communicating and cheering each other on, and we were just there for each other," Burrows said.

At the Oregon National Guard tournament Saturday, Dec. 19, Phelps made it all the way to the final match and



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald
Celt Carlos Vincent grimaces as he attempts to free his wrist from his opponent.

finished second as the result of a major decision; Brayden Ebbs finished third by pinning his final opponent in the third round.

In addition to Phelps, a number of Celtics managed good showings. Kibbey made it all the way to the third round at 120 pounds; Sean Burrows and Gerstner won five matches in consolation rounds to finish

17th; and Kesler, Putnam and Smith also made it to the third round.

With winter break looming, the Celts are now challenged to keep their spirits up and bodies in shape.

"We'll be having some workouts and some morning runs, but honestly we just need to stay in the mindset of being as good as we are," Smith said.

Packing preacher saves day



On the Wild Side

by G.I. Wilson

Two men, cling to the frozen face of a mountain that would give Lindsey Vonn pause. They are not mountain climbers or hikers, but elk hunters, holding a dead elk, teetering on the brink of an abyss. One slip and 300 pounds of prime meat becomes elk burger in the depths of a mile-deep, roadless canyon.

These guys are not handsome hunks you see on the cover of *Bugle* or *Field and Stream*, sporting 10-gallon Stetsons and Danners, packing out trophies on their backs.

We're talking guys that are right out of a senior citizen *Survivor* episode.

Bud Sanders, of Joseph, and G.I. Wilson, of Keizer, have chased elk in the mountains of Oregon and Washington since the 1960s. They have not hunted together over the last five years.

Sanders, 77, has survived: two shoulder replacements, three back vertebrae trimmed to relieve pain, two broken neck vertebrae, and currently nursing a painful sprained ankle held firm by a sturdy boot.

Wilson, 83, has survived three knee replacements, a hip replacement, two shoulder surgeries, three back surgeries, pacemaker, and currently coping with 10 stitches in his arm, and a torn hamstring.

Standard joke for these two is a Mickey Mantle quote, "If I had known I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself."

Sanders has tried to get Wilson to apply for this tag for years, but the season ended on Thanksgiving. He always had family commitments. Over those years, Wilson has become concerned about his physical limitations to hunt

elk.

Wilson applies for the 2015 tag and is successful.

So, here we are, second day of the season, in a situation that was not supposed to happen. Wives and friends have been promised, "We will not shoot an elk unless we can get to it with a winch or ATV."

Sanders' preacher, Dave Bruce, aware of all their maladies, is on standby. He has offered to pack meat if needed.

Getting an elk on the ground doesn't go exactly as planned.

It starts great. Not a cloud in the sky, 17 degrees and a herd of 50 to 60 elk walk out of a canyon 125 yards below us. They pause in the middle of an ATV trail. The trail follows the top of a narrow ridge that drops off into deep canyons on each side.

A young cow is selected. At the roar of the 30.06, she stumbles and turns downhill as the herd stampedes uphill. Next shot puts her down. We stand in disbelief as she rolls, and rolls and rolls. "We're going to lose her," Bud yells. "We'll never get her out of that canyon."

We hold our breath as she comes to a stop, teeters and settles down. One more roll and she would be gone.

Our only hope is to get to the carcass and secure it to a big rock with a rope.

We navigate the 50 yards from the trail with caution. It is steep, rocky, frozen and covered with snow.

She has come to rest with all fours, head and neck folded back under the body. This is the only thing holding her in place.

We gingerly attach a rope to the carcass and anchor it to a large rock 20 feet uphill.

Butchering has to begin at the top of the back and work down. Bud does the work as I sit on the uphill side holding on to the rope and carcass. Any slight push or movement can touch off an avalanche of prized elk meat.

Piece by piece the boning out process is painfully completed.

Two hours later the last piece is bagged. We cut the rope and watch in awe as the carcass rolls and bounces five to 10 feet in the air until out of sight, at least a half mile below.

We finally breathe a sigh of relief.

Bud was an outfitter and hunting guide for several years. He has butchered countless elk. "This is the most difficult one I have ever done," he hisses, through clinched teeth. "Now we have to climb out of here and get help to pack this meat out. I'll call the preacher. He's young, stout and has already packed a spike bull out of one these canyons this year."

Dave Bruce shows up at Bud's the next morning ready to pack. "I'll do this on one condition, you guys stay at the rig and I make four loads," he adds with a big grin.

An hour drive through spectacular mountains, blanketed in snow, and we unload the ATV. From my vantage point at the truck I watch Dave, almost effortless, make the 100 yard round trip in five minutes. Twenty-five minutes, he, Bud and the meat are on the ATV headed up the hill.

We have all heard "A friend in need, a friend in deed." Preacher Dave Bruce was truly a friend in deed as he hauled a couple of old elk hunters out of a tough situation.

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