

# EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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## COLUMBIA RIVER CIRCUIT FINALS

# RODEO ON THE MOVE



East Oregonian/E.J. Harris, File

Steven Peebles of Redmond rides Mucho Dinero for 89.5 points in bareback riding on Sept. 15, 2017 at the Pendleton Round-Up. Peebles is one of the favorites in the event this weekend at the Columbia River Circuit Finals in Yakima.

## Peebles back for more as rodeo moves to Yakima

By ANNIE FOWLER  
East Oregonian

Steven Peebles has a vast collection of belt buckles from various rodeos all over the United States and Canada. He has a handful from the Columbia River Circuit Finals, and if one is good, more is better.

"I have won it quite a few years," the Redmond bareback rider said. "I can't complain, that's for sure. I always look forward to the circuit finals. Battle the three horses and see how much I can earn. Just go out and have some fun."

The CRC Finals begin Friday and run through Sunday at the Yakima Valley SunDome. Action begins the first two nights at 7 p.m., while Sunday's round begins at 1 p.m.

While the event has been held for years in Central Oregon, CRC pres-

ident Rowdy Barry said the move to Yakima was a necessity.

"It seems more centrally located for fans," he said. "We loved the venue in Central Oregon, but economically, it wasn't working out there. That's what brought us to Yakima. Ticket sales just aren't what they used to be."

The event also moved from November to January to avoid going up against other events.

"You have the NFR, the PBR, the Canadian finals, the Indian finals, hunting and football playoffs," Barry said. "No matter where you are, it's a tough sell. It's tough on the cowboys this time of year keeping their horses up."

One benefit of the CRC Finals being in January, is the money earned goes toward their 2019 earnings, as does the winnings from the RAM National Circuit Finals.

"The money goes toward world

standings, and for a circuit guy, it gives him a better chance to make it to the NFR," Barry said.

The winner and the average winner of each event will advance to the RAM Circuit Finals from March 21-24 in Kissimmee, Florida, along with competitors from the 12 other circuits.

The CRC steer ropers held their event Nov. 10 in Athena, with Tom Sorey of Pendleton winning the average with a time of 42.9 seconds on three head. He, and his oldest son Pake, advanced to the RAM Nationals Circuit Finals in Torrington, Wyoming, in April (dates have not been announced). Tom Sorey will be relegated to cheerleader for his son after having shoulder surgery in December.

Peebles, 29, is excited to get back to work this weekend, and hopes to advance to Florida. He leads the CRC

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### COLUMBIA RIVER CIRCUIT FINALS COMPETITORS

#### Bareback riding

Payton Wright, Pendleton

#### Tie-down roping

Preston Pederson, Hermiston  
Seth Hopper, Stanfield

#### Steer wrestling

Clayton Morrison, Pendleton  
Travis Taruscio, Stanfield

Dalton Massey, Hermiston

Blake Knowles, Heppner

#### Saddle bronc riding

Ryan Verling, Stanfield

#### Team roping

Andy Carlson, Hermiston (heeler)

Jake Stanley, Hermiston (header)

Calgary Smith, Adams (heeler)

Phoenix Everano, Pendleton (heeler)

#### Barrel racing

Jordan Minor, Hermiston

#### Bull riding

Cain Smith, Pendleton

## BMCC volleyball coach Jessica Humphreys resigns

By BRETT KANE  
East Oregonian



Jessica  
Humphreys

After four years at the helm of Blue Mountain volleyball, Jessica Humphreys will resign from her position as Timberwolves head coach.

Humphreys is leaving the position to spend more time with her family, but will continue her career as a faculty member in BMCC's nursing program, the com-

munity college said in a statement.

Humphreys first joined the Timberwolves in 2015, co-leading the team alongside her father Dave Baty. Blue Mountain won the Northwest Athletic Conference championship that same year.

When Baty retired in 2016, Humphreys took over the reins as sole head coach. This year, she led the Timberwolves to a 25-11 season and the No. 3 spot in the East Region standings.

"I am very grateful for the opportunity to have coached BMCC volleyball and helped this program grow to become a thriving championship program, setting NWAC records and putting our volleyball program on the map," Humphreys said in a statement. "I will miss the opportunity to be a mentor for the student-athletes navigating the challenges of leaving home, and promoting academic, mental, and spiritual growth."

Humphreys' final day as head coach is Jan. 31. BMCC will begin the search for a replacement next week.

"BMCC would like to thank Jessica for her many years of dedication to Timberwolf volleyball," said Dawn DiFuria McClendon, Director of Athletics, Outreach, and Student Life in a statement. "She is leaving the program in a positive position for future success, and we'll miss seeing her on the sidelines."

### SPORTS SHORTS



## Olympian Michael Phelps honored for mental health advocacy

BOSTON (AP) — **Michael Phelps** is picking up more hardware — this time for what he's been doing outside the pool.

The Boston-based Ruderman Family Foundation, a leading voice in calling for more opportunities for the disabled, said Tuesday the Olympic champion is the recipient of its fifth annual Morton E. Ruderman Award in Inclusion.

The foundation told The Associated Press it picked the world's most decorated swimmer of all time to recognize his advocacy for people with disabilities and "his own journey with mental health."

Phelps has gone public about his struggles with depression and thoughts of suicide.

Last year, the 23-time Olympic gold medalist announced a partnership with Talkspace, which provides online therapy for those who are going through tough times. Phelps said helping people overcome the dark chapters in their lives is "way bigger than ever winning gold medals."

In a statement, the 33-year-old Olympian thanked the Ruderman Family Foundation for "their continued efforts to help eliminate the shame and stigma that surrounds mental illness."