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A10

Running with the Wolves

Heppner's Wolters to continue football career at WOU

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — During the COVID-19 pandemic, and the high school gym off-limits to everyone, Blake Wolters and Jayden Wilson created their own workouts.

The Heppner seniors weren't going to let anything stand in their way of being prepared if and when football season got underway.

Wolter's hard work paid off, as the 5-foot-8, 185-pound running back will continue his playing days as a preferred walk-on at Western Oregon University.

"I had a couple of other offers, and I had a couple things on my mind," Wolters said. "I kept in touch with Western. It was the right school."

Wolters will stick to the offensive side of the ball for the Wolves. He knows he doesn't have the size to play on the defensive line at the college level.

"Will be playing running back for Western," he said. "That's the position I really love. That's what I have wanted to do and what I have worked for. I was always quicker, that's what I used to my advantage when I played on the defensive line. I prefer running behind the offensive line."

While the Wolves will get a lot of mileage out of Wolters on the field, he also brings an aspect to his game that you cannot coach — work ethic.

"I definitely think my work ethic is the biggest thing I will bring," he



Heppner running back Blake Wolters (26) holds up the OSAA trophy following his team's 12-7 win over the Kennedy Trojans in the 2019 OSAA Class 2A state title game at Kennison Field in Hermiston. Wolters is heading to play football for Western Oregon University in Monmouth.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan, File

said. "No one will work harder to earn a spot. I get my hands dirty and work 110% every day, every play. That is woven into my DNA."

Heppner coach Greg Grant can attest to that.

"I don't think he is going to impress you the first day he walks out there, but day after day you will see how hard he works and the effort he puts out," Grant said. "He will not

let anyone else put out a better effort. They will be pleased."

Western also offers Wolters independence, but is close enough to home that his parents can come watch him play, and Wilson is just 20 minutes down the road at Linfield University.

"It's definitely nice being close to home," he said. "Being in a place like this (Heppner) when you love

county life. At Western, we are 20 minutes from Linfield. Jayden and I talked about keeping in touch. He is definitely my best friend and I can't wait to see the greatness he puts out."

At WOU, Wolters plans to major in sports science, kinesiology and sports nutrition.

"It has been my whole life," Wolters said. "That's the path I

have taken. My dream is to be a strength or conditioning coach at a D-I college or an NFL team."

A mighty Mustang

As a junior, Wolters was a first-team Blue Mountain Conference selection at running back and as a defensive lineman. He was a second-team 2A all-state pick at both positions as the Mustangs won the 2019 state title.

Wolters ran for 999 yards and 16 touchdowns, and had 70 tackles and four quarterback sacks.

He was primed to have a stellar senior year until a hamstring injury derailed his season. He missed all five games.

"It was the worst thing I have experienced as an athlete," Wolters said. "Not being able to compete, especially with the people you love in your last year. It hurt like no other. I am ready to get back to work."

Through rest and physical therapy, Wolters is good to go. He recently was asked to play in the East-West Shrine All-Star Game on Aug. 7 in Baker City. He will play on the East team with Heppner teammates Wilson and Jackson Lehman (Eastern Oregon University).

"Apparently, the East coaches emailed Grant and asked if I wanted to play," Wolters said. "They had some kids back out. I'm pretty excited. It will be nice to get one last game with Jayden and Jackson."

The players also have resumed their workouts, which makes the average person tired just watching.

"Since everything is opened back up, we can use the school weight room," Wolters said. "We are getting ready for the Shrine Game and the upcoming season."

Page finishes sixth at Timbersports Series

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Kate Page has improved her placing every year she has competed in the STIHL Timbersports Series, and this year she finished sixth among the 12 women during the July 23-25 event.

"I shouldn't complain," Page said. "I was eighth in 2018 and seventh in 2019. I was in the middle of the pack without points in one event. Next year, I have to be in the top five."

Martha King of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, won the event for the second consecutive time.

Page, 30, who works as a firefighter in the Heppner Ranger District on the Umatilla National Forest for the U.S. Forest Service, qualified for the U.S. Championships at the West Coast qualifier June 6 in Centralia, Washington.

With nationals nearly two months away, Page thought she would have training time to hone her skills. The recent fires in Oregon threw a monkey wrench in her plans.

"We had the Lovlett Fire and I didn't get in the training I wanted to," she said. "We were working 12-hour days."

At nationals, the competitors started with the stock saw, then moved to the standing chop, the single buck and the underhand.



Kate Page/Contributed Photo

STIHL Timbersports Series competitor Kate Page finished sixth at the U.S. Championships on July 23-25, 2021. Page is a native of John Day now living in Heppner, and moved up from placing seventh in 2019.

It was the stock saw event that Page was disqualified in because the second piece of wood (cookie) that she cut was too thin.

"Right out of the gate, I disqualified in the stock saw," she said. "It was so close. The edge of your thumbnail was how close. They make a line all the way around the

log with a Crayon. Usually when I disqualify, it's because I cut a Crayon line. I'm looking at my log and I thought it was good. I turned my saw off and set it down, which means you are done. My second cookie was super thin. It was too thin."

Page finished fourth in the standing chop, fourth in the single buck and seventh in the underhand.

"I set a personal record for myself in the underhand," she said.

Other than that, Page was not totally pleased with her performance.

"The whole weekend was crap," she said. "I was all over the board, but I took sixth. It was a little wild this year. I didn't break any equipment, which is good."

Page also took the time to add up some numbers.

"If I would have taken sixth place (in the stock saw), I still would have been in sixth — 3 points behind fifth," she said. "Unless I had a really good time, I would have been stuck at sixth place."

Some competitors were surprised that Page showed up at the competition with all the fires raging in the Northwest.

"They talk about me being a firefighter and stuff, and saying, 'Shouldn't you be out fighting fires,'" she said. "They are waiting for me when I get back. There's a 400,000-acre fire (Bootleg Fire) going on right now."

Cowboys have success and heartbreak at NHSFR

Stewart and Mahoney each won a performance in their event

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

LINCOLN, Neb. — Team roper Jett Stewart of Heppner, along with partner Brayden Schmidt of Benton City, Washington, finished 28th at the 73rd National High School Finals Rodeo July 18-24 at the Lancaster Event Center in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Stewart and Schmidt had a time of 6.53 seconds on their first run to win their performance and finish sixth in the go-round, but their second trip out of the chutes did not go as well.

"I caught him, but my partner lost his rope," said Stewart, who is the header. "It was kind of disappointing, but it happens."

Stewart and Schmidt will take some time off before going to the Wrangler National Team Roping Championships in September in Billings, Montana.

Blane Mahoney of Heppner finished 40th overall in steer wrestling with a time of 21.74 seconds on two runs.

His first run of 17.39 seconds came with a 10-second penalty for breaking the barrier out of the chute.

He was 4.35 seconds on his second run, winning his performance and placing sixth in the go-round, but his combined time wasn't enough to reach the finals.

"The second run was pretty good," Mahoney said. "I didn't do the math, but without the penalty I might have been close to making the finals."

In pole bending, Lauryn Riney of Milton-Freewater finished 21st in the average with a time of 42.182 seconds. She also was 65th in barrel racing with a time of 36.875 seconds.

In her first run through the poles, Riney had a time of 21.719 seconds to finish 53rd. On her second run, she was 15th in a time of 20.463.

In barrel racing, Riney's first run came with a time of 18.595 seconds, good enough to finish 89th. She was 68th on her second run (18.28).

Also in pole bending, Alyson Terry of Hermiston was 65th with a time of 46.033. Terry had a time of 20.268 seconds on her second run to finish ninth, but her first run was not as impressive (111th, 25.765).

SPORTS SHORT

Oregon State reports three NCAA Level III violations

By NICK DASCHIEL
The Oregonian

CORVALLIS — Oregon State committed three NCAA Level III violations during the 2020-21 school year, a significant drop from recent years.

Level III infractions are considered minor, are usually self-reported and minimally penalized.

Oregon State's Level III infractions came in baseball, women's track and field, and wrestling.

In 2019-20, Oregon State had

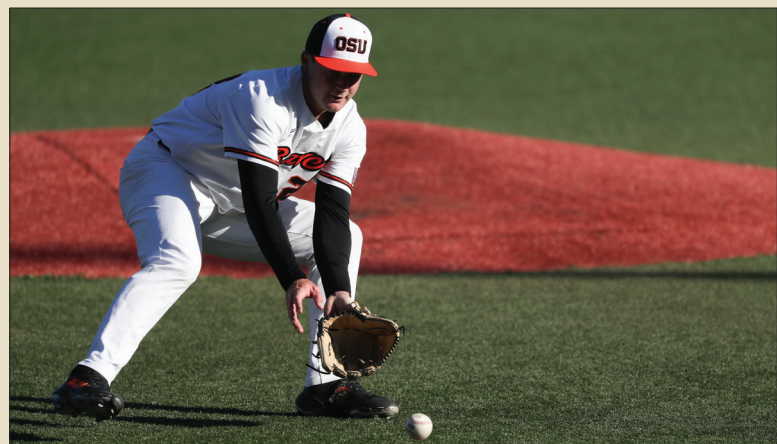
nine Level III infractions, 14 the previous year and an average of about 15 per year dating back to 2014-15.

The baseball violation actually occurred in May of 2020, when an assistant coach gave an impermissible endorsement of a recruiting service. Action came during the summer of 2020, with the baseball coaching staff instructed to undergo mandatory education for recruiting and scouting service regulations.

Oregon State did not reveal the

sport for the other two violations in a public records request by The Oregonian/OregonLive, though one was committed by women's track and field, and the other was wrestling.

One infraction involved participation by an ineligible athlete, resulting in a \$5,000 fine by the NCAA, and rules education. The other involved a recruiting call to a prospective athlete whose name wasn't entered in the NCAA transfer portal. The penalty was additional education.



Amanda Loman/The Associated Press, File

Oregon State pitcher Kevin Abel fields a ball during an NCAA baseball game against California April 16, 2021, in Corvallis.