

# Rancher overcomes injury to win award

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
Capital Press

SENECA — Despite an accident nine years ago that left him paralyzed from the sternum down, Alec Oliver is busier than ever at his family's fifth-generation cattle ranch in Eastern Oregon.

Oliver, 33, rides tall in a modified saddle that allows him to continue roping cows on pasture and forestland east of Seneca. When he's not managing his own herd, Oliver usually is connecting with other ranchers across the West as membership director for Country Natural Beef.

A rising star in the livestock industry, Oliver was named the 2021 Agriculturist of the Year by Oregon Aglink, a nonprofit group dedicated to agricultural education and promotion.

"It's shocking and very humbling," he said. "I still feel I have a long ways to go, a lot to prove and a lot to achieve."

Getting to this point almost didn't happen for Oliver, who was 23 when he rolled his pickup one night after having too much to drink at a fundraiser in Seneca, population 262.

Prior to the accident, Oliver actually had gotten a ride home but decided later he would return to town. He remembers the truck fishtailed, and he swerved to avoid hitting their fence. That's when the vehicle flipped, pinning his leg between the steering wheel and gear shifter.



J.C. Oliver Inc./Contributed Photo

**Alec Oliver working cattle on the ranch near Seneca. Oliver was named 2021 Agriculturist of the Year by Oregon Aglink, a nonprofit group dedicated to agricultural education and promotion.**

Instead of being ejected, Oliver had his hip pulled out of the socket and broke the T7 vertebrae in his spine. The truck landed back on its wheels, and his parents, alerted by the noise, ran outside to find him hanging out of the driver's window.

"If (the pickup) had gone another quarter-turn on its side, I'd have been underneath it," Oliver said.

Oliver was flown from the hospital in John Day to an intensive care unit in Bend, where he had surgery. After two weeks, he was flown again to Craig Hospital in Englewood, Colorado, to begin rehabilitation as a paraplegic.

Even then, Oliver said he never gave up hope he would eventually get back to ranching.

"I never thought about quit-

ting," he said. "It was just a matter of how do I do it."

The biggest moment of inspiration for Oliver came when he was visited by his neighbors and fellow ranchers Mike and Linda Bentz. To be a rancher, they told him all he needed was his brain — he could always hire help for physical tasks.

In 2013, the year after the

accident, Oliver went to Indiana where he had a lift installed in the back of his pickup that could maneuver him on and off a horse. He also had a custom saddle made by Randy Bird in Texas, with a high back and strap to keep him from falling.

Today, Oliver runs the ranching business, J.C. Oliver Inc., after his father J.C. Oliver III died in 2017. Another silver lining of the accident, Oliver said, is it put him in touch with Country Natural Beef, a co-op with more than 100 rancher-members from Hawaii to Texas.

Networking with other ranchers has helped to refine practices on their own ranch, Oliver said, such as grazing plans and regenerative agricultural practices to increase the land's overall resiliency and drought tolerance.

"I think grazing has been a huge thing, just managing the grass and soil to create healthier landscapes and allow for more production," Oliver said.

The goal, Oliver said, is to keep the 132-year-old ranch along Bear Creek healthy and productive for another century.

"We've been here since 1889," he said. "My hope is by 2189, there's new generations taking even better care of the land than I am."

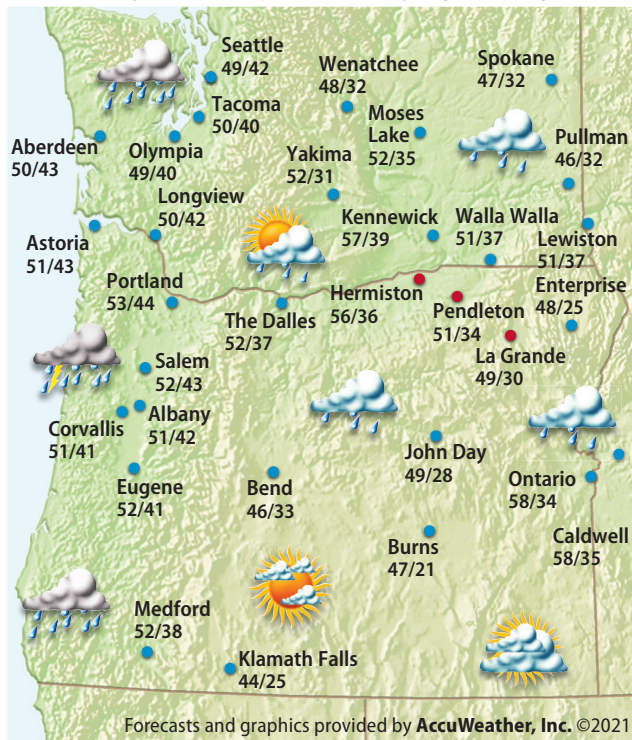
Oliver will be recognized by Oregon Aglink on Nov. 19 during the organization's annual Denim and Diamonds event at the Salem Convention Center.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area

TODAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
A shower; windy this afternoon	Partly sunny and cool	Rather cloudy	Cloudy and cooler with showers	Some sun with a shower in places
PENDLETON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
51° 34°	51° 35°	56° 47°	54° 38°	51° 41°
HERMISTON TEMPERATURE FORECAST				
56° 36°	56° 34°	56° 48°	55° 39°	54° 44°

## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



### ALMANAC

**PENDLETON** through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	55°	39°
Normals	55°	35°
Records	75° (1934)	13° (2003)

**PRECIPITATION**

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.10"
Month to date	0.15"
Normal month to date	0.21"
Year to date	6.18"
Last year to date	10.36"
Normal year to date	10.53"

**HERMISTON** through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	53°	41°
Normals	56°	34°
Records	79° (1934)	13° (2003)

**PRECIPITATION**

24 hours ending 3 p.m.	Trace
Month to date	0.10"
Normal month to date	0.17"
Year to date	4.02"
Last year to date	2.86"
Normal year to date	6.64"

**WINDS** (in mph)

	Today	Sun.
Boardman	SSW 8-16	SSW 4-8
Pendleton	WSW 10-20	SSW 7-14

**SUN AND MOON**

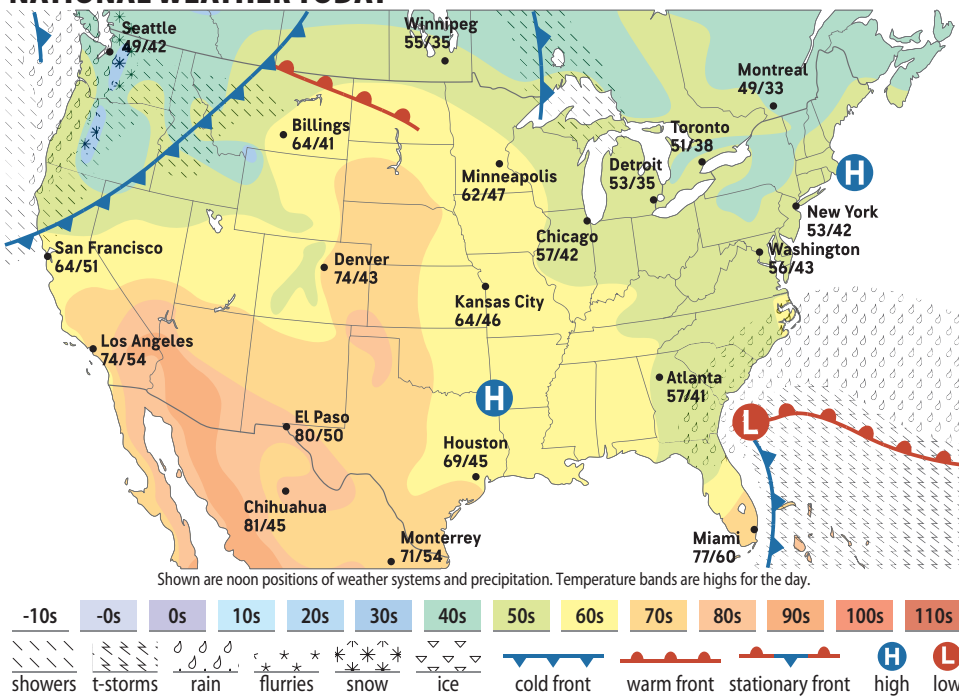
Sunrise today	7:42 a.m.
Sunset tonight	5:35 p.m.
Moonrise today	10:06 a.m.
Moonset today	6:56 p.m.

First Full Last New  
Nov 11 Nov 19 Nov 27 Dec 3

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)  
High 93° in San Bernardino, Calif. Low 11° in Alamosa, Colo.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Buffalo Peak selected as facility of the year by Oregon Golf Association

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
The Observer

UNION — A hidden gem is no longer hidden, as Buffalo Peak Golf Course is starting to turn heads around the state and in the golf community.

The Union golf course recently won the Oregon Golf Association award for facility of the year, an acknowledgment the association gives to the best facility in the state. Buffalo Peak received the honor for its contributions to the game of golf, the community and the Oregon Golf Association. After being built 20 years ago and facing hurdles along the way, the course has become a spectacle in the heart of Union County.

"As a team we're very proud of it, I have to say," Dana Londin, the course's general manager, said. "We're in a town of 1,300 people and 30,000 in the county, so to receive this award is a great honor."

Built in 2000, the golf course itself encountered many challenges in paying off construction costs and building up a reputation capable of drawing in skilled golfers and amateurs alike.

"We've got a great team here," Londin said. "They've bought into my plan and we're just running with it."

The course includes 18 holes that were originally designed by golf course architect Williams Phillips. The premier playing range utilizes the local beauty of Northeastern Oregon, which Londin noted is a big draw to visitors.

In 2019, the Union County Board of Commissioners created a restructured fiscal plan that was aimed at increasing the course's spending budget. The decision marked a shift toward



Davis Carbaugh/The Observer, File

**Oregon's elite youth golfers compete at the Buffalo Peak Golf Course in Union during the 91st Bob Norquist Oregon Junior Amateur tournament June 28-July 2, 2021. The Union golf course recently won the Oregon Golf Association award for facility of the year, an acknowledgment the association gives to the best facility in the state.**

more focus on marketing, following a loss of money nearly every year of operation since it opened.

Londin joined the course as general manager shortly after, in February 2020, and has helped the county achieve its vision for the course.

"I would give all the kudos for the award to our crew and to Dana," Union County Commissioner Donna Beverage said. "They all really work hard and have put in so much time over this last year and a half."

Londin stated the course's financial report for the last year outdid the team's expectations.

"We're really trying to be physically and financially responsible," he said. "I think last year we did really well. The financial goals that I set, we literally blew away."

Part of that success came from hosting the Oregon

State Junior Amateur Championship this summer. More than 100 of the state's top junior golfers came to Union to compete, adding a sizable economic boost to local businesses and the course itself. The event was considered a massive success by those involved, while also showing the positive impact the golf course can have on the county.

"We're hoping that this will continue to help other entities in Union County, like the restaurants, Mount Emily Recreation Area and the Union County Museum," Beverage said. "We wanted to be able to help the whole region."

Upon hosting this year's championship and winning golf facility of the year, the Oregon Golf Association selected Buffalo Peak to host the first major event of the season for the next five years. The competition will take place in May.

**CORRECTIONS:** The *East Oregonian* works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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