

# Easy tags and a homebuilt muzzleloader



GARY LEWIS

ON THE TRAIL

He called me two days before the controlled hunt application deadline last spring. He had so many elk points. He had so many deer points. He had so many antelope points. And he was getting close to 70 years old. What was a boy to do with those points, he wanted to know. I had some ideas, but he had to make decisions quick.

"But Gary, I don't have a muzzleloader."

No big deal, I told him. I'll find one for you.

In June we drew our antelope tags and as I was wondering what I was going to give my friend Winfield and what gun my daughter was going to hunt with, my phone rang. Another friend said he had two muzzleloader kits and I could have them if I would build them. Quick as that, I had another shop project. My daughter and I started on the two rifles side by side — 50-cal-



Gary Lewis/Contributed Photo

**Mikayla Lewis with the big public lands buck she took last season with a muzzleloader she built for herself.**

ber Traditions Deerhunter kits like those available from La Grande-based muzzle-loaders.com for \$319 each.

Over the summer, my daughter and I completed the rifles. We sighted-in at the beginning of August and by the end of the month we were in the field. My 24-year-old daughter tagged

the biggest trophy of her hunting career when the herd buck put on the brakes in front of us at 41 yards. She dropped the book she was reading and in one quick, smooth motion, cocked the gun and fired. When the smoke cleared we saw the trophy pronghorn stretched out before us, felled by a 275-grain conical from her

home-built muzzleloader.

After a celebratory antelope camp dinner, my daughter headed for the taxidermist and the butcher block with her buck. The rest of us toughed it out in the desert for the next four days. I missed a buck downhill at 100 yards and Winfield had his chances too.

Not only did we burn our

powder last year, I burned my deer tag too and with only one point to count toward the elk drawings, I find myself in the unenviable position of searching the big game regulations for easy-draw muzzleloader hunts. What's a boy to do?

Because muzzleloader hunters are a small minority in Oregon's hunting community, sometimes the opportunities go overlooked. This year, two deer hunts look like they could be drawn with zero or one preference point. The Grande Ronde (152M) hunt runs Nov. 14-27, when whitetails are in the breeding season.

Another option is the Sled Springs Unit muzzleloader hunt (157M) which runs from Nov. 28 to Dec. 11. Be careful when applying for this one as Sled Springs has a lower percentage of public land and the deer are more likely to be found in the valleys. The bag limit for both hunts is one whitetail deer.

For elk, check out the Elkhorn 1 (251M1) and Elkhorn 2 (251M2) offerings in the Sumpter Unit. The first season runs Aug. 1 to Oct. 15 and the second season runs Oct. 15 to Dec. 31. A frontiersman with his coonskin

thinking cap on might also apply for a Baker Muzzleloader (151M) tag for a November whitetail deer season opportunity while hunting elk.

For a nine-day bull elk hunt, consider the Eagle Cap Muzzleloader (260M). This year, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife offers 55 tags. Nine days is a good long hunt and enough time to pattern animals and get close to herds.

Maybe you don't have a muzzleloader. That's easy to fix.

Try to find a 50- to 54-caliber muzzleloader with at least a 28-inch barrel. If it's a traditional sidelock, you can upgrade the sights to adjustable irons, a peep or even to fiber optics.

Plan about 24 hours for the build, working on evenings and weekends. With spring around the corner, the May 15 big game application deadline in view and one or two easy-draw tags in your future, you can start scouting now.

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## Dance:

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been more than 70 in a freshman class and some less than 20.

"We are ready for the next crop of kids," Malinowski said.

OCU's dance program was founded in 1980 by Rowan and her husband John Bedford. In 2019, the Ann Lacy School of American Dance and Entertainment was ranked No. 5 in the top 10 schools for dance.

While dance doesn't resonate with people like football or basketball, Malinowski said the dancers put in the same amount of hard work as the mainstream athletes.

"The amount of hours we dance a day here is as many or more as other athletes put into their sport," she said. "That's why our program is so acclaimed."

Burk's favorite style of dance is contemporary, and her long-term goal is to perform, direct and manage shows.

### Getting an early start

Burk has been dancing since she was 3 years old, though not seriously until she was a little older.

"I was born and raised, for the most part, in Durant, Oklahoma," she said. "My mom is from here and I went to school in Hermiston from kindergarten through fifth grade."

When she returned to Oklahoma, she danced from sixth grade through her junior year in high school at the Access Dance Company. With a rigorous dance schedule, she did most of her schooling online.

Burk told her mom (Tawna Moody) that she wanted a more normal senior year with her friends, so back

to Hermiston they came.

"Before I moved back here, I was in competitive dance," Burk said. "We would travel to competitions and conventions. You would perform and have workshop classes. That's where my love for dance came from — running on E and enjoying it. Those are some of my favorite moments."

The move back to Hermiston has allowed Burk to enjoy the little things.

"I wanted to be involved in my school and go to basketball and football games," she said. "It's kind of nice to be able to support the other sports. It has been a cool experience."

Burk also is a big part of the Hermiston dance team. At the recent district championships, the team placed first in jazz, second in show and fourth in Hip Hop. They will compete at state March 29 at the SunDome in Yakima.

"We've done really well this year and hope to continue that at state," Burk said. "We are a cohesive team, which makes it fun. It has been a really fun experience. It's nice being at a bigger school and having the opportunity to have a dance team, and a good one."

The team practices every weekday morning from 5:30-7 a.m., and it has frequent eight-hour practices on the weekend.

"We have state in three weeks," Stephens said. "We are really excited. We have some adjustments to make. Hip Hop in Washington is very competitive."

Like everyone, Burk had to audition for the team, and each style they perform.

"She made all of them," Stephens said. "She is a hard worker and challenges me as a coach. I give her something, she masters it and wants more. She excels in so many styles, which is hard to find. She's a rock star."



## SPORTS SHOTS

Photos by Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

**Union's Kaylin Nowak (23) hoists the Oregon School Activities Association Class 2A tournament trophy as teammates celebrate. The Union Bobcats defeated the Salem Academy Crusaders 52-38 on March 5, 2022, to win the OSAA Class 2A State Basketball Tournament at the Pendleton Convention Center in Pendleton.**



**Stanfield's Maggie Sharp (21) puts up a shot for the Tigers. The Lakeview Honkers defeated the Stanfield Tigers 48-41 in overtime March 5, 2022, in the fourth/sixth place game of the Oregon School Activities Association Class 2A state tournament at the Pendleton Convention Center in Pendleton.**



**Heppner's Trevor Nichols (2) drags down a rebound for the Mustangs. The Heppner Mustangs fell to the Regis Rams 67-49 on March 4, 2022, in the consolation round of the Oregon School Activities Association Class 2A state tournament at the Pendleton Convention Center in Pendleton.**



**Union's Callie Glenn (22) puts up a shot for the Bobcats. The Union Bobcats defeated the Salem Academy Crusaders 52-38 on March 5, 2022, to win the Oregon School Activities Association Class 2A State Basketball Tournament at the Pendleton Convention Center in Pendleton.**

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