

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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BACK IN THE GAME

Porter returns to sidelines with Pilot Rock volleyball

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — Jen Porter had no intention of coaching volleyball when she and her husband Cody returned to Oregon five years ago to take over his family's ranch.

She filled in at the end of the season for Danielle Baleztena at Pilot Rock High School last year, and that lit the volleyball fire once again.

"I just wanted the girls to have a positive experience," Porter said of her interim duties.

And now?

"I thought it would be nice if someone who had experience came in," said Porter, who recently was hired to lead the Rockets. "We had a talk about how it's going to be different. More structured and disciplined. I was really encouraged after meeting with them. They all seem very excited and on board. I need them to buy in, that's important."

Porter definitely has the experience to take the Rockets in the right direction.

A 1992 graduate of McLoughlin High School, Porter played volleyball, basketball and track for the Pioneers. She then went on to play volleyball at Blue Mountain Community College where she played outside hitter, middle blocker and defensive specialist.

After college, Porter took a few years off from volleyball. She worked as a dental hygienist before she went back to the court.

She still has her hands in people's mouth as a dental hygienist at Columbia Dental in Hermiston. She also works for an agency that tests college students for their board exams.

Living in Montana, Porter played city league volleyball and basketball in Bozeman for several years, and went into coaching, starting with a club team in 2005. She also coached the Belgrade middle school team in 2006, and at Belgrade High School from 2008-11.

In 2010, she became the Big Sky Volleyball Club Athletic Director/lead coach for the USAV 18 Elite team.

"If I wasn't coaching, I was playing city league," Porter said. "I think it teaches you so many life lessons. I don't have any connection other than I love the sport. A lot of my success and having confidence comes from my athletics. It's a great team sport. You don't have a ball hog."

The athletic director/coach position at the Big Sky Volleyball Club was a



Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

Pilot Rock High's new head volleyball coach Jennifer Porter poses for a portrait Tuesday, June 14, 2022, at the school gym.

full time, year round position with skills clinics, camps and private lessons. The Club had more than 300 athletes and 18-20 coaches.

"I was fortunate enough to work with some great experienced coaches and to mentor young coaches," Porter said.

Between her high school and club players, she had 22 athletes signed to play in college at a variety of schools, including University of Hawaii, Montana State University, University of Montana and Boise State.

That list includes her daughter Jorden, who played four years of college volleyball.

"That is an adjustment at Pilot Rock," Porter said. "All the players I coached were going on to play college volleyball. I did that in high school. As a coach, it has been players who only play volleyball, or a few that played a few other sports. I think if you give them a good experience you are doing good."

The Rockets finished the season 1-18 last year. They lost five players to graduation, but have a good core of players returning, including Aiva Ellis, Malory Walborn, Payden Bennett and Teagen Thornton.

"I have pretty high expectations for the kids," Porter said. "I think they will try to meet those. I told them we are starting with a clean slate and tryouts. I have quite a few kids coming back, and eight freshmen coming in. There are 19 trying out."

Summer league has gotten off to a good start. Porter had seven players the first week, and expects to have 11 next week.

"They are really excited, which makes me feel good about things," she said. "It's about being a positive influence in their life and teaching some life lessons along the way. Volleyball practice may be the most positive experience in their day. You want to give that to them."

SPECIAL DISTRICT 7

Heppner, W-M players earn baseball honors

TigerScots' Peal named a first-team all-state pitcher

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — Special District 7 baseball coaches selected three Heppner players, and two from Weston-McEwen, to the all-league first team.

Seniors Toby Nation and Kason Cimmiyotti, and sophomore Cameron Proudfoot, earned honors for the Mustangs, while Blane Peal and Quinn Graham got first first-team nods for the TigerScots.

Dufur, which won the league title with a 15-1 record, had five players selected to the first team.

Nation, the Mustangs' third baseman, had a .560 batting average with a team-high 47 hits. He had 10 doubles, one triple, two home runs and a team-high 31 RBIs.

A catcher, Proudfoot had 156 putouts and just four errors in 25 games. At the plate, he hit .451 with 26 hits, including 10 doubles. He also had 21 RBIs and scored 31 runs.

In the outfield, Cimmiyotti did not have any errors in 17 games. He hit .479 with 23 hits, including two home runs. He also had 17 RBIs and scored 27 runs.

The Mustangs finished third in the SD7 standings with a 12-4 record. They finished 16-9 overall. They won their first-

round 2A/1A state playoff game with a 13-3 win over Bonanza, then dropped a 13-1 game to Knappa in the second round.

Peal was the heart and soul of the TigerScots. On the mound he was nearly untouchable. In 49 2/3 innings, he allowed just nine hits and one earned

run. He struck out 118 and walked nine while finishing with an ERA of .141.

Peal, who is headed to George Fox University, also earned first-team outfield honors. He hit .549 with a team-high 39 hits, including nine doubles, two triples and four home runs. He had 28 RBIs and scored 41 runs.

Peal also set the state record for strikeouts in a row with 14 on April 12 in an 8-0 win over Stanfield/Echo.

An infielder, Graham hit .338 with 24 hits, including four doubles, one triple and 13 RBIs. He also scored 31 runs.

The TigerScots finished 14-2 in league play and 18-4 overall. They lost in the second round of the 2A/1A state playoff to Neah-Kah-Nie 4-3.

In addition to all-league honors, Peal was named a first-team all-state

pitcher, while Graham earned third-team honors as an infielder.

Nation and Cimmiyotti earned second-team all-state honors at their respective positions.

Dufur's Isaac Anthony was named the 2A/1A All-State Player of the Year, while C.S. Little was named Coach of the Year.



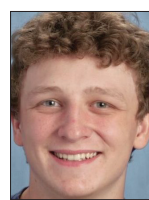
Cimmiyotti



Graham



Nation



Peal



Proudfoot

Return of the catbird



BRAD TRUMBO

UPLAND PURSUITS

The cool humidity of summer rain stuck to my skin as the front rumbled in. Lightning flashed in the distance casting a disco ball lighting effect on the riparian floor beneath the dense stand of white alder and chokecherry. The alder catkins released the few remaining tufts of cotton seeds as the branches rattled in the breeze, and among the clatter of leaves, the faint cry of the gray catbird drifted through the timber.

The catbird was one of a few species to successfully raise a clutch for the first time in the alder run during the spring of 2021 and I was



Brad Trumbo/Contributed Photo

It took a week to capture this modest photo of the gray catbird as it darted among the alders and shrubbery.

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SPECIAL DISTRICT 7 BASEBALL

First team

Pitchers: Isaac Anthony, sr., Dufur; Blane Peal, sr., Weston-McEwen.

Catcher: Cameron Proudfoot, so., Heppner.

First base: Brock LaFaver, sr., Dufur.

Infield: Toby Nation, sr., Heppner; Carson Smith, sr., Dufur; Kobe Fell, sr., Grant Union. Quinn Graham, sr., Weston-McEwen.

Outfield: Kason Cimmiyotti, sr., Heppner; Isaac Anthony, sr., Dufur; Blane Peal, sr., Weston-McEwen.

Utility: Gabe Petroff, sr., Dufur.

DH: Joey Holloway, so., Dufur.

Second team

Talon Dark, so., Sherman County; Peyton McClouth, sr., Weston-McEwen; Taylor McGill, sr., Weston-McEwen; Karver Wilkins, fr., Heppner; Ben Hubbard, jr., Weston-McEwen; Kaleb Pence, sr., Dufur; Braden Carnine, sr., Sherman County; Parker Neault, sr., Grant Union; Willy Cain, sr., Weston-McEwen; Kole Martin, jr., Sherman County; Mason Morris, sr., Grant Union; Ryland Beil, fr., Grant Union; Eric Culley, so., Grant Union; Talon VanCleave, so., Grant Union; Chase Corwin, so., Pilot Rock; Javon Curiel, sr., Stanfield/Echo; Isaac Marble, jr., Lyle; Levie Phillips, sr., Weston-McEwen; Brody Geer, jr., Sherman County; Tucker Ashbeck, jr., Heppner.



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