

## Wilson:

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the biggest influences in my entire life, my whole childhood revolved around life with Butch. My heart is shattered, broken and will never be the same. My second dad, my coach, mentor, the rock for all of us.”

Amylee Perrine, a former player and later one of Wilson's assistant coaches, has known the Wilson family since she was 7 years old.

“There's a long line of kids in Pilot Rock who got to experience being coached by Butch,” said Perrine, a 2011 Pilot Rock graduate. “He was our coach from the time we were 8 years old until we graduated. He was just always there. He was going to work us hard, but he was going to love you. That was how Butch did his thing.”

### Forever a coach

Wilson took over the Pilot Rock girls basketball program at the start of the 2011-12 season after four years of coaching the JV team. He coached the Rockets for six years, winning district titles and taking his team to state.

“Butch was a lot of fun,” said Perrine, who had Wilson as a JV basketball coach. “He was definitely the type of coach who made you want to work your hardest. He would get excited when he needed to. We were well disciplined and he showed us great respect. We went in and got our work done, but he made sure we had fun.”

Wilson also was the assistant softball coach for the Rockets, so he was a daily fixture for Perrine, who went on to play softball at Corban University.

“I got coached by him in softball and basketball, then came back and coached with him,” Perrine said. “I got to help coach his youngest daughter Jacey. She was also one of the first students I had when I started teaching.”

Taylor said some of her fondest memories were playing for her dad.

“He was harder on me in sports and it took me a while to understand that,” she said. “He will never waste breath to help someone who doesn't want it. If he's hard on you, he cares.”

Taylor, the oldest of the three Wilson girls — also Brooke and Jacey — got a hefty dose of her dad as a coach, but she and her friends would not change a thing.

“We were the guinea pigs,” she said. “He would

try everything on us. By the time Jacey (the youngest) came through, they were amazing. They won two state (softball) titles. He was very humble and very generous. The money he made coaching he put back into the programs. He was very strict with his rules, but very giving.”

Fitzpatrick, who coached the Pilot Rock softball team for nine years, won 2A state titles in 2015 and 2016, and placed second the next two seasons. All with Wilson as one of his assistants.

“Butch was well respected and well liked,” Fitzpatrick said. “The kids put out all they had for him. It's one of those things you don't do for money. He was well respected by parents and players. The kids loved him.”

In addition to coaching at the high school, Wilson was a long-time, and successful, softball coach in the Little League system. He took the 14U to regionals, and twice took the 16U teams to regionals with Mike Baleztena and Jason Gibbs.

“He was such a behind-the-scenes guy,” Baleztena said. “I learned everything from Butch. I might have been the manager, but he was right there with me. Those girls were so smart by the time they graduated, they could have coached their own team. He never took credit for anything. Basketball or softball. That's the way he was. He didn't need the recognition. He will be missed something fierce.”

Perrine, now the Rockets girls basketball coach, said Wilson was just a phone call away when she needed advice.

“There have been some hard spots being a head coach and I would call him,” she said. “Whether it was trying to get them to run a man defense, or the girls are fighting. He was there no matter what.”

When Wilson's responsibilities at work changed in 2017, he had to give up coaching basketball and softball, but that did not change the player's respect for him.

“On the softball field, whenever Butch would just show up, the girls would shape up real fast,” Perrine said. “He always said if you put in a full effort, you will see the rewards.”

For Wilson, that came in 2011, when he was named Pilot Rock's Man of the Year. The family had to use a little trickery to get him to the ceremony.

“He thought I was getting a scholarship,” Taylor said. “He does not like attention on him.”

## Peaks:

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From Santiam Pass the peak has something of the Matterhorn in its dart-like shape, albeit with a summit more akin to a thumb than the tip of a knife as with the Alpine eminence.

But seen from the east, near Sisters, Mount Washington is a dome with a sharp tip in its center.

The differences aren't so distinct from the west or south, but from both directions the mountain could be taken for a different peak altogether.

I had occasion to ponder this matter of mountains, and their many faces, while hiking on Saturday, July 9.

The subject in this case, though, wasn't a single mountain but rather a range — the Elkhorns. My backyard mountains, both figuratively, in that they are the ones I visit most often, and literally, as I can see a section of the range from my own yard.

The site was the eastern side of Gorham Butte, a modest summit — it tops out at 6,176 feet — a couple miles north of the Anthony Lakes Highway.

Gorham Butte, despite its singular name, is actually a spine of high ground with a few separate summits, two on the south end and a third at the north, with a saddle between.

The butte is the highest point between Baker Valley to the east and the Elkhorns — not a foothill, exactly, but sort of an intermediate summit. It's also a hydrologic divide, with the Antone Creek drainage to the south and



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

Van Patten Butte seen from a road on the east slopes of Gorham Butte on July 9, 2022.

Anthony Creek to the west and south. The latter stream, which drains from its namesake alpine lake, follows a glacier-carved canyon that runs nearly due east until it reaches the base of Gorham Butte, which forces the stream to flow northwest for a few miles before it resumes its easterly course.

I picked Gorham Butte for the hike mainly because the route, along a road I didn't recall ever traveling, was on the east side of the ridge, and I reasoned, or so I told my wife, Lisa, and our son, Max, that there would be more cooling shade.

Which it was.

What I didn't anticipate was the fresh perspective the road lent to the familiar peaks of the Elkhorns.

But first we had to climb about 350 vertical feet, on sometimes steep grades, along Forest Road 7320-050. Once the road reaches the aforementioned saddle, though, it's either flat or slightly downhill.

Just north of the saddle the trees thinned slightly and the views opened to

the west and south. We stopped, and I needed a few seconds to figure out what I was looking at.

The view of Twin Mountain, in particular, was so different from what I'm used to that I didn't recognize it right off.

The granitic peaks around Anthony Lakes, sculpted into horns and pinnacles by Ice Age glaciers, are a reliable landmark, but even those familiar peaks weren't in quite the right order, so to speak. Once I had picked out Gunsight Mountain the rest fell into position, as it were.

Yet each summit seemed just strange enough from our vantage point that I felt as though I were seeing each anew. Van Patten Butte was broader than I was used to.

Most notably for me, though, was Angell Peak, the spire that looms above Angell Pass on the Elkhorn Crest Trail about two miles south of Anthony Lake. The scree slopes on the peak's east side were almost completely snow-covered, and as I processed the

scene I realized that I was looking directly at the spot where the Crest Trail was hacked through the granitic outcrops and boulders on the climb to the pass.

I knew, even more than several miles away, that the trail was largely, if not completely, covered by snow that has persisted longer than usual due to the chilly spring.

It was a curious sensation.

But also a pleasant one, rather like encountering a favorite old friend in an unfamiliar city.

Besides the surprising vista of the Elkhorns, the road is also a fine place to get an overview of the Anthony Burn. In July and August 1960, a lightning-sparked fire burned about 20,000 acres between Gorham Butte and the Ladd Canyon Road. It was one of the larger blazes in North-eastern Oregon during the 20th century, and in the fire's wake much of the land was colonized by lodgepole pines that, more than a half a century later, form all but impenetrable thickets over much of the area.

We could hear the roar of Anthony Creek, still swollen with snowmelt, several hundred feet below.

It was a beautiful July day — a few harmless cumulus, pleasantly warm but refreshingly cool in the shade.

I was reminded that although I prefer trails, hiking on roads — even roads that, like 7320-050, are open to vehicles — can be rewarding as well.

Jayson Jacoby is the editor of the Baker City Herald and enjoys Eastern Oregon's outdoors.

## SPORTS BRIEFING

### Racing action returns July 23 to Hermiston

HERMISTON — Coca Cola Saturday Night Thunder heats up at Hermiston Raceway next weekend. The planned appearance and racing on Saturday, July 16, with Mr Dizzy Motorsports is cancelled because of injury.

The gates open at 4 p.m. July 23, with the racing action starting at 6 p.m. at 81236 N. Highway 395. The evening features WESCO Winged Sprint Cars, the Washington Midget Racing Association, INEX Legends, hornets and bombers.

General admission for adults is \$20; seniors/veterans are \$17, youths, \$15 and a family pass is \$50 (for two adults and three youths). In addition, Speedy's Grill offers a variety of food and beverages.

Advance tickets are available via [www.hermiston-raceway.com](http://www.hermiston-raceway.com). For questions,

contact 509-845-5510 or [info@hermistonraceway.com](mailto:info@hermistonraceway.com).

### Tee off for Eastern Oregon Mission

UMATILLA — The Eastern Oregon Mission golf tournament is July 30. The four-person scramble event raises money to help support Agape House and Martha's House.

The tournament, which is open to men and women of all skill levels, will begin with a shotgun start Saturday, July 30, 8 a.m. Golfers are asked to check in at 7 a.m. at Big River Golf Course, 709 Willamette St., Umatilla. The entry fee is \$60 per person, which includes green fees, breakfast pastries and lunch. A luncheon, raffle drawing and awards ceremony will be held at the conclusion of the tournament.

Also, sponsorships are available. For more information, call Mark Gomolski at 541-567-8774.

— EO Media Group

## People with HIV are our neighbors.

More than half of Oregonians with HIV live outside Portland, often in suburbs or small towns like this one.

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