

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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SHARING HIS LOVE OF SOCCER

Varela takes over Pendleton girls program

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — When Murillo Varela was a young boy growing up in Brazil, he and his friends would take a woman's nylon stocking, fill it full of rags, shape it and use it as a soccer ball.

"It was a pretty decent way to play," Varela said. "We were a family of eight kids — four boys and four girls. The economical situation in Brazil was extreme hardship and those things cost money. At that time there was no money to buy a proper soccer ball."

Varela, 65, has plenty of experience to draw from as he takes over the Pendleton girls soccer program.

"I am very excited," he said. "A new coach, a new league. I am really happy we have a new league with Ontario and La Grande. When I coached at Madras, Mac-Hi, Ontario and La Grande were our biggest enemies. I am sure they are different now."



Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

Pendleton High School's new head girls soccer coach Murillo Varela poses for a photo Thursday, July 14, 2022, on the Buckaroos' home field in Pendleton. He coached last year as an assistant for the boys team.

Varela replaces Kiana Rickman, who stepped down in the spring because her husband, Nate, was accepted into a physical therapy school.

Varela started coaching in the Pendleton School District last year as an assistant with the boys teams. When he heard the girls team coach-

ing job had opened up, he applied.

He began his coaching career in Madras in 1994, and stayed until 1999 when he got a job with the airlines and he didn't have time to coach any more.

He later coached a couple of years with the Madras girls program, but that was the end of

his coaching career until he moved to Pendleton.

"Work things changed drastically," Varela said. "I accepted early retirement. Now I can do the things I like the most and that is coaching soccer."

Helping Varela this season will be Ty Burchard, who is heading into his eighth year with the Bucks, and first-time assistant Susana Argueta.

"It will be big shoes to fill because they were so good," Varela said of last year's team that went to the 5A state playoffs. "Luckily, only three girls graduated. Right now, we have 34 girls, including the incoming freshmen. We will have a varsity team, a JV and maybe a JV 2 team. I have had a summer program on Tuesday and Thursday, but I've only had 12 girls. Some of them have jobs and family obligations."

Living and breathing soccer

Varela was born and raised in Brazil and played soccer during physical education class at school.

When he was 14, he got an opportunity to go to boarding school in another state.

"Boarding schools, depending on what kind, can be hard to get in with placement," he said. "There aren't that many vacancies. I was lucky when I applied. As soon as I

got to the school, they had options of activities and one of them was soccer. The soccer programs were very competitive. That's when I got really involved playing."

The level of play was beyond the typical high school soccer.

"We played at a high level even though we were young," he said. "There were thousands of schools competing at a high level. It was like a factory for the players going to professional teams."

Varela never went pro, but when he was 21, he went to Israel to further his education. He played soccer there for another four years.

"After I got to Israel, I started playing on a regional team," he said. "My travel and time outside of Brazil was a lot. I kind of lost track of time."

When he was through with school and soccer in Israel, Varela came to the United States, where he has been ever since.

"I go to Brazil very frequently," he said. "I have perks from the airline I worked for. My mother (Maria) is 93 years old and I go visit her. I also have two sisters who live close to her. I went in January and March this year."

His travel will be less during the soccer season, but for Varela it's worth it for the sport he loves.

EOL hands out honors

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

IRRIGON — Irrigon junior Boyd Davis and Riverside sophomore Riley Lantis earned second-team Eastern Oregon League baseball honors.

Davis was selected as a pitcher, while Lantis, a first baseman, was chosen as an infielder.

The Knights finished the season 5-7 in the EOL and 7-13 overall, while the Pirates were 4-8 in league play and 6-13 overall.

Jaden Tiller of Burns, and Kade Kurata of Vale were named co-players of the year, while Vale's Garrett Brown was named coach of the year.

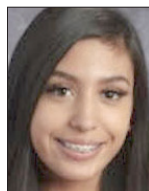
In softball, Irrigon's Priscilla Chapa, and Umatil-

la's Madison Rico, Kyleigh Wheeler and Libby Hartley were named to the second team.

Named to the honorable mention team were Umatilla's Piper Dilley and Thalia Trujillo, along with Irrigon's Shelby Harshman, Leyla Gutierrez and Natalia Gridley, and Riverside's Justin Tido, Makaila Lantis and Clarissa Sanchez.

The Vikings finished 7-5 in EOL play and 8-19 overall. The Pirates were 2-10 in league play and 2-17 overall, and the Knights went 0-12 in league play and 0-21 overall.

Burns swept the all-league honors, with Melissa Medley named player of the year, Ayla Davies the pitcher of the year and Robert Medley coach of the year.



Chapa



Davis

SPORTS BRIEFING

Swim, bike, run for triple the fun

HERMISTON — Area children can dive in, pedal and dash into the weekend during the Hermiston Kids Triathlon.

The non-competitive swimming, bicycling and running event is open to youths ages 4-12. The younger children may use life jackets and training wheels.

The event is Saturday, July 23, 9 a.m. at the Hermiston Family Aquatic Center, 879 W. Elm Ave. Participant check-in begins at 8:30 a.m.

Coordinated by Hermiston Parks and Recreation, the registration fee is \$10. For more information, visit www.hermistonrecreation.com or call 541-667-5018.

Pendleton High holding youth volleyball camp

PENDLETON — The Pendleton High School volleyball team hosts a youth volleyball camp Aug. 2-4 at the high school.

Players in grades one through four attend 9-11 a.m., while players in grades five through eight go 1-5 p.m. each day.

The cost is \$40 for players in grades one through four

and \$60 for those in grades five through eight. The cost also includes a T-shirt.

To register, contact coach Chelsie Speer at cspeer@pendletonsd.org.

BMCC hosts summer volleyball tournament

PENDLETON — The Blue Mountain Community College volleyball team will host the Summer Slam Volleyball Tournament on Friday and Saturday, July 22-23.

Varsity teams entered are Weston-McEwen, Pilot Rock, Union, College Place, River View, La Grande and Burns.

The junior varsity bracket includes Pilot Rock, Ione/Arlington, Irrigon, La Grande, Burns, Weston-McEwen and Union.

The JV tournament will be played July 22, while the varsity tournament will be July 23. Action begins at 9 a.m. each day.

Admission is \$5, \$3 for seniors older than 65, and children under 10 are free. There also will be full concessions with a \$5 meal deal.

The tournament is a fundraiser for the BMCC program.

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