



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

**Steer wrestler Dirk Tavenner, of Rigby, Idaho, brings down his steer in 3.9 seconds to win the round on Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022, at the Farm-City Pro Rodeo in Hermiston.**

## Rodeo:

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"I have never been on her before," Tutor said, "but I knew she would be good. It's a good day to be in Oregon. This is a great rodeo."

Tutor hopes his score holds up for a paycheck. He's sitting 19th in the world standings and needs every dollar he can get to earn his third trip to the NFR.

"I would love to go back," he said.

### Steer wrestling

Dirk Tavenner is holding on by a thread in the top 15, but after his run of 3.9 seconds Thursday night, he leads the average on two at 7.6 seconds, just a step ahead of Will Lumms (7.7).

"I just needed to hit the barrier and make a good run," he said. "I'm in the top 15, and good money here would go a long way. I love this rodeo."

### Tie-down roping

Reese Riemer likes the

FCPR so much that when he sits down in January to plan his calendar he makes sure it's on there.

Riemer had the hot run of the night at 9.3 seconds, and sits fifth in the second go round.

"There are so many guys who are roping so good right now that you can't back off," Riemer said. "The \$20,000 added money means a lot when this is what we do for a living."

### Barrel racing

Jennifer Kalafatic had her own cheering section at the FCPR, and the Idaho cowgirl used their cheers to help her record a time of 17.26 seconds for the top run of the night, and is sitting this overall.

"I have lots of family here in Hermiston," she said. "I love coming here. I came last year and we placed ninth."

Kalafatic got a solid performance from her young horse Rockin' the Guns, who is just 7 years old.

"I'm extremely proud of him," Kalafatic said, "especially on a big stage like this. He loves this arena."

## August:

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one. That'd be fun to go stay there and hike and pick berries.

After the floor was laid in my office, I spent two days getting my office back in order. ... translates to two good fishing days wasted doing that. My four-wheeler has been in the shop. I think the bears poured sugar water in the gas tank to keep me from being up in the mountains chasing them. Pretty ungrateful, huh, seeing how many hundreds of pounds of bait I feed them every year.

But despite the bears (there are haters everywhere, you can't let them bother you) with the heat pounding us like it is, Katy wants to go up high where it's a little cooler and do some trail riding. Hmm, not a bad option anytime a good-looking girl wants to go four-wheeling with you.

And lest I give you a big list of outdoor things to do and you get sidetracked, don't forget, it is backpacking season. I haven't got to go yet. I just got me

and Kolby some new Alps Mountaineering day packs and HybridLight flashlights I want us to test out. Oh, then Kolby and I also have some Danner and La Crosse boots that we're dying to go backpacking in. Backpacking is a big daddy/daughter event every summer.

What's more fun than to hit a wilderness with a backpack on your shoulders? You can momentarily forget about the skyrocketing inflation, installing new flooring in your house, \$5/gallon gas and whatever else is bothering you. Set up a camp and take off on day hikes and view awesome country. Build a fire at dusk and cook dinner over it and then watch the stars. And finally crawl off to your tent dead tired.

Gee, I've got to get in gear. This is quite a list of activities that I have to get accomplished before summer is over. Luckily we have global warming so summer should last until December this year so I'll be able to fit it all in.

*Tom Claycomb is an outdoor writer from Meridian, Idaho.*

# Driving to glory in demolition derby

Local man reflects on taking 2nd place at Haines Demolition Derby

BY IAN CRAWFORD  
*Baker City Herald*

HAINES — Imagine you're a pinata, sewn out of leather, dangling at a sugar-loaded kid's birthday party. And, wouldn't you know it, the little champ just unwrapped a Louisville Slugger.

Karmen O'Dell, a local auto tech and chain-and-bang demolition derby driver, knows that feeling, and like the pinata, from the inside it's pretty sweet.

O'Dell competed in the 2022 Haines Demolition Derby on Aug. 6. Hundreds turned out for the fundraiser for Shriners Hospitals for Children, and by showtime the cars were still lined up for half a mile.

O'Dell, though, was focused on only one. His 1978 Chrysler Cordoba. Or what's left of it. "Everyone wants this car. It's a big car, it's heavy and it can take a beating," O'Dell said prior to the derby, popping open the doors and hood for preparation. "That's what you want in a demolition derby."

There wasn't a speck of gleaming chrome left on the original machine, the bones if not the very tattered soul of the Cordoba, given life and fuel. The dash is gone. So is the dome light and the speedometer.

But when O'Dell pressed down on the gas pedal the



Ian Crawford/Baker City Herald

**Karmen O'Dell behind the wheel of his '78 Chrysler Cordoba, a car later transformed to survive the Haines Demolition Derby on Aug. 6, 2022.**

V-8 made nearby windows rattle.

Stock Cordoba engines ranged up to 190 horsepower in peak conditions.

"Some people get really serious, some are in it for money," O'Dell said. "There's two different classes. This is a chain and bang car, it all has to be factory standard. If you take a car and just drive it off the road, and then hook some chains and pull it into the derby, this is like that."

At his Precision Import Auto Repair shop in Baker City, O'Dell prepared the machine for the rigors of vehicular mayhem.

"The other class is what they call the unlimited class, and they get really serious with that," he said, allowing more extreme modifications than simple reinforcement — short of outright weaponry and hazards of course.

Gloves, safety harness, helmet, Hans neck brace aside, the beams he's welded to the car protect it and him from the damage of a serious roll, reinforced with a gauge of steel tubing you might more expect to connect to a fire hydrant. Even then, it's against the rules to bash in the driver's door in derbies entirely.

Paying in part, O'Dell also lined up support from Baker Brothers Mobile Tire, Ladd's Auto, Robert and Ben Cutshall and Baker Beverage and Mixer Shoppe.

"Also I want to thank Terry Yates, Rocky Soder and why not, Jesse Christensen here," said O'Dell, pointing out his mechanic.

"Terry had done a lot of demolition derbies in Lakeview, where he grew up," O'Dell said. "He brought it to my attention, (offering to drive) and I said yes," and

simple as that, O'Dell was getting strapped in, helmed up and knuckled down in demolition driving.

Awards included best and worst looking, hardest hit delivered and most miles traveled, but grand prizes were all about endurance, last one standing taking the pot.

O'Dell was there to have a blast, prizes or not, but after nearly 30 minutes of bashing, two 15-minute heats with a pit stop between them, Karmen smashed his way to the finals and ultimately took home second place, \$1,000 and a shining trophy for proof.

The trophy is on display in O'Dell's office at Precision Import but whatever you do, don't wipe off the dust and grime.

"It's still covered in dirt from the derby," said O'Dell, and for him it's all part of the glory.

## Snake:

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head, while the second two were less than an inch apart, about three inches below the head. Even after three hits and three minutes in the water, it still was trying to snap at me. I cut its head off and put the dangerous part in the creek where no other creature would step on it.

We were rattled. Jennifer, who had my camera when the shooting started, captured the action in stills, the first two of which she took with the lens cap on. When we encountered the rattler, Jennifer was only a few feet behind me. When I looked again she was way up on the hill.

"I was scrambling up the cliff," she said, "shooting with the camera back over my shoulder. I wanted to get a good angle for the pictures."

That's my girl. I try to avoid snakes and, for the most part, they try to avoid me. A week before the rattlesnake incident, we had a brush with a puff adder on a red dirt two-track in South Africa. That snake, when provoked, bit my photographer's GoPro and venom slid down the lens. But the puff adder was so far



Gary Lewis/Contributed Photo

**Before a morning's dry fly action, Jennifer Lewis catches up on her adventure reading — "Into the Wild" by Jon Krakauer.**

from any village it was no threat. We took its picture and shooed it back into the brush.

Usually, when I encounter a rattlesnake it's with a fishing rod in my hand. I hear a rattle and I jump. One time I jumped over a snake in the tall grass along the river. I leapt so high in my waders, I think I might have caught the eye of an NBA scout if one had been there instead of my loutish companions, who got more comedic value out of the incident. I tried to point out to them how much hang

time I had at the top of the leap, but they were too busy laughing.

Skirmishes with snakes tend to be brief, adrenalized and punctuated by profanity. Often the snake goes the other way and there is no need to shoot. But if the snake is aggressive, it may take one shot to slow it down and another to finish it.

Often the snake is on a trail and the first rattle goes unheard. Or they don't rattle at all.

Once we packed into a roadless area on a hunt in Baker County. Bringing up

the rear was my friend Ken, who didn't have a bear tag that year. He brought along a Ruger Single-Six.

"In case we see a snake," he said.

When we started up the trail, I noticed it was not on his hip, and asked him about it.

"It's in the backpack. I'll load it if we see one," he said.

"If you need it," I said, "you'll want to have it loaded, on your hip."

He laughed. A day later we were in camp, making dinner. Ken was sitting on a campstool tending to his backpack stove and a can of soup. We spotted the rattler when it was between his feet.

The usual things happened. Leaping. Profanity. Flailing. Which contributed to spilled soup and a small grass fire when the stove tipped over.

By the time the fire was stomped out, the snake had made a quick exit between boulders. Ken unzipped his backpack, unwrapped his revolver and loaded the gun with shaky fingers.

*Gary Lewis is the author of Fishing Central Oregon and Oregon Lake Maps and Fishing Guide and other titles. To contact Gary, visit [www.garylewisoutdoors.com](http://www.garylewisoutdoors.com).*

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