



Lady Cubs prepare for Arizona battles

Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

The Junior Little League lady Cubs, the first softball team in Wallowa County history to win a state championship, are hard at work down at the Jensen ball fields every evening. The squad is advancing to the regional championships in Tucson, Ariz this week, something this confident squad is looking forward to.

Coach Shane Kirkland is a noted coach who has already won a little league baseball state championship, but this is the first time he's taken a team to a regional championship. He noted the generosity of local citizens in ensuring that the team has the means to get to Arizona.

"We've done a lot of fundraising and a lot of raffles for this," he said. "We're departing Tuesday (July 16), driving to Portland and flying down to Tucson." He added that the team and their families are staying at OMNI National, a resort.

The team's practice regimen isn't much different despite the higher level of play according to Kirkland.

"We're preparing basically the same as any other game," Kirkland said. "We're trying not to make a big deal out of it. We're trying to keep the girls relaxed and having some fun. More important than anything, we're trying to make sure they enjoy this time." The coach also noted the girls have good attitudes during their preparations for the next level of play.

"Their spirits are great," he said. "No one's out in front of themselves, which is easy to do because we've beat up on a lot of teams. They're working just as hard as they would with any other practice."

This is striking, because the team is so young. What is essentially supposed to be a team of 13-15 year-olds has an average age of 12.82 years, although they don't act like it. While they obviously have fun, they're serious about what they're doing. Giggling happens only occasionally. Throws have a lot of zip with very little arc and pop into mitts with more than a little force. The very few mistakes made are met with encouragement from both coaches and teammates.

Coach Kirkland has an easy rapport with the team, and the mutual respect



Steve Tool/Chieftain

Liz Rowley, first baseman of the Wallowa Valley Cubs junior league softball team, throws to home during practice for the team's regional championship game in Tucson, Ariz., on Wednesday, July 17. The team recently won the first-ever state softball championship for a county squad.



Steve Tool/Chieftain

GOT IT! — Wallowa Valley Cubs softball outfielder, Iris Crist, snags one as the team practices for its upcoming regional championship game in Tucson, Ariz., on Wednesday, July 17.

they share is more than a little obvious. Players are attentive when Kirkland points out small mistakes with suggested corrections and no one talks back or

shows annoyance, even in a joking way. The team is famous for its double-play ability, which is probably better than the high school squad.

Sydney Hopkins, 14 and preparing to enter her freshman year of high school, plays outfield. She's very excited about the team's state championship and only a little nervous about playing in Arizona. She hasn't been to the state since she was little.

"It gives them home-court advantage," she said. She added that the team helps her stay grounded through its sense of humor.

Asked her expectations for the upcoming tournament, she replied, "We're going to go kick some booty."

Emmerson Hook is an 11-year-old prospective player for the squad next year. Kirkland invited her to the prac-

tics because of her potential as player at both the pitcher, catcher and first base positions.

"The coach invited me out here, and I came to learn some stuff and get some experience for next year," she said. "It's awesome to practice with the team and learn."

Later, asked about his expectations for the tournament, Kirkland shook his head before he spoke.

"Expectations are to go down and make sure everyone has a good time," he said. "We're just going to go down there and do our best."

The Cubs' first game is at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 17. Fans can follow the game on Gamechanger online. Should the team prevail in Tucson, they will play the next level at Kirkland, Washington.

'EXPECTATIONS ARE TO GO DOWN AND MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAS A GOOD TIME.'

Coach Shane Kirkland

Community pride in action tee time

Rochelle Danielson
For the Chieftain

They say it takes a village to accomplish goals. There are no villages in Wallowa County, but there is plenty of "active community." Wallowa Valley Golf Association is a proud shareholder in that entity. Golf or visit Alpine Meadows Golf Course and witness "community pride" in action.

Golfers who have played the fairways and greens the past few weeks speak highly of the course. "The layout is clean and looks absolutely beautiful," says one happy Wallowa Lake camper. "We've had an enjoyable day of golf. We will be back."

This type of comment is not only expressed by tourists, but local golfers alike. Credit goes to the efforts of a caring Greens crew who includes JD Hagan, Tristan Beck, Mac Huff and Jon Hagan plus several dedicated volunteers.

Credit also goes to AMGC's current Board of Directors, who includes president, Jerry Hook, vice-president, Kathy Reynolds and board members Judy Ables, Ron Layton, Adam Ward, Mike Harshfield and Brian Rahn. The group meets once a month, year round, to guide Alpine Meadows in a sustainable direction. Each board member serves a 3 year stint. The board hires and works with clubhouse

GOLFING EVENTS ROUNDUP

MEN'S DAY THURSDAY, July 11, skins results: Dick Anderson, 3 gross skins. Dale Johnson, 3 gross. Harlan Menton, 1 gross/2 net. Terry Lamb, 1 gross. Jerry Hook, 1 net.

Blind Draw results: Low Gross, Terry Lamb and Chuck Haines. Low Net, Dale Johnson and Harlan Menton.

GLOW BALL TOURNAMENT canceled.

THE annual SHRINE GOLF Scramble is Friday, July 26. Get an entry in right away encourages Sam Wade. Golfers always have a good time while contributing to a great local cause.

co-management, Cheryl Kooch and Marsha Hauptmann and greens superintendent, JD Hagan. If you're interested in taking an active role in community there's two (2) board positions open for election this year. See Cheryl or Marsha in Pro Shop and fill out a candidate declaration form. Voting will take place August 10 through 19.

The AMGC logo was given a facelift this month. Thanks to a tenacious Nancy Huff, who with help from husband Mac Huff, purchased 60 heavy stone blocks, put three coats of white paint on each one, hauled the material to the site and with volunteers Judy Ables and Carol Marr, pulled out the crumbling cement and replaced with the new.

Short bouts of exercise enhance brain function, research shows

Erik Robinson
OHSU

Most people know that regular exercise is good for your health. New research shows it may make you smarter, too.

Neuroscientists at OHSU in Portland, Oregon, working with mice, have discovered that a short burst of exercise directly boosts the function of a gene that increases connections between neurons in the hippocampus, the region of the brain associated with learning and memory.

The research is published online in the journal eLife.

"Exercise is cheap, and you don't necessarily need a fancy gym membership or have to run 10 miles a day," said co-senior author Gary Westbrook, M.D., senior scientist at the OHSU Vollum Institute and Dixon Professor of Neurology in the OHSU School of Medicine.

Previous research in animals and in people shows that regular exercise pro-

motes general brain health. However, it's hard to untangle the overall benefits of exercise to the heart, liver and muscles from the specific effect on the brain. For example, a healthy heart oxygenates the whole body, including the brain.

"Previous studies of exercise almost all focus on sustained exercise," Westbrook said. "As neuroscientists, it's not that we don't care about the benefits on the heart and muscles but we wanted to know the brain-specific benefit of exercise."

So the scientists designed a study in mice that specifically measured the brain's response to single bouts of exercise in otherwise sedentary mice that were placed for short periods on running wheels. The mice ran a few kilometers in two hours.

The study found that short-term bursts of exercise – the human equivalent of a weekly game of pickup basketball, or 4,000 steps – promoted an increase in syn-

apses in the hippocampus. Scientists made the key discovery by analyzing genes that were increased in single neurons activated during exercise.

One particular gene stood out: MtsslL. This gene had been largely ignored in prior studies in the brain.

"That was the most exciting thing," said co-lead author Christina Chatzi, Ph.D.

The MtsslL gene encodes a protein that causes bending of the cell membrane. Researchers discovered that when this gene is activated by short bursts of exercise, it promotes small growths on neurons known as dendritic spines – the site at which synapses form.

In effect, the study showed that an acute burst of exercise is enough to prime the brain for learning.

In the next stage of research, scientists plan to pair acute bouts of exercise with learning tasks to better understand the impact on learning and memory.



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