

SPORTS

Wallowa County teen has an eye on national titles

By **KATY NESBITT**
For the Wallowa County Chieftain



Contributed Photo

Hanley Miller, an incoming sophomore at Joseph High School, is the 2022 Oregon State High School Rodeo tie-down champ. This July he ran with the pros as an exhibitionist at the Chief Joseph Days Rodeo.

ENTERPRISE — In a county well known for its pro rodeo the last full weekend of July, it's no surprise to find a pro rodeo cowboy in the making. Hanley Miller is already a state champion and was asked to perform at the 2022 Chief Joseph Days Rodeo.

As a high school freshman this spring, Miller won the tie-down competition at the state rodeo finals. With that title, the Pro Rodeo Cowboy Association paid for his PRCA card; at 15, he was too young to compete but was allowed to test his skill against the pros as an exhibitionist.

Just before Chief Joseph Days, Miller placed 29th in the tie-down aggregate at the National High School Rodeo finals in Gillette, Wyoming. With three more years in high

school and two until he is old enough to hold a PRCA card, he has ambitious goals.

"I want to win a national title in tie-down and qualify for the NFR (National Finals Rodeo)," he said.

Miller, an incoming sophomore at Joseph High School,

fought hard for that state championship in tie-down. He said he had a tough go in the second round of state finals after being very consistent all year.

"I had to forget about it and move on," he said.

The excitement of the

crowd carried him through, and his mother, Dena Miller, said, "he took care of business" and got the win.

This past year he teamed up with partner Bayli Ladner, of Klamath Falls. The pair placed fourth at the Oregon State Finals Rodeo in Prineville. This coming year, Miller said he is adding steer wrestling to his events, with an eye on earning points toward the all-around competition.

The high school rodeo season is three competitions in the fall and four in the spring.

Miller said he had a rope in his hand as a toddler and was horseback by the age of 3. It wasn't long before he was a regular at local junior and ranch rodeos and a hand at Chief Joseph Days, either untying calves at timed event slack competitions or cooling down the pickup men's horses.

At the age of 7, he competed in his first rodeo outside of Wallowa County — the Cayuse Junior Rodeo in Pendleton. He started competing in junior high rodeo competitions as a sixth grader and qualified for nationals, held in Huron, South Dakota.

Miller's seventh grade year was during the COVID-19 shutdowns, so he and his family opened up their arena to kids in Wallowa County to come rope and ride. Up to 50 would attend an afternoon of roping, barrels and pole bending.

"There were no fall sports so we had rodeo practice open to the community all fall on Tuesdays and Thursdays," Dena Miller said.

The following year as an eighth grader, the young cowboy qualified again for the junior high rodeo national in Des Moines, Iowa. With three more years of high school, the

sky's the limit.

"To see your kid want something and work for it is really emotional," Dena Miller said.

Hanley Miller's skills aren't confined to the rodeo arena. Along with the rest of his family, he moves cattle for the Fence Creek Ranch, and he started training horses by the age of 11.

"People will call up and say, 'I want a roping horse,' and I work with them," Miller said.

Keen on perfecting his rodeo skills, while encouraging others to do so as well, Miller and his family are hosting a breakaway and tie-down roping clinic with PRCA champion Nathan Steinberg.

"We are excited to share our passion and bring someone with his qualifications to come to the county," Dena Miller said.

Shortage of high school football officials hitting Northeastern Oregon

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

MORE INFORMATION

People interested in serving as football officials for the Northeast Oregon Football Officials Association should call Pete Caldwell at 541-910-7020.

LA GRANDE — A shortage of football referees is looming as the start of high school football season in Northeastern Oregon approaches.

The Northeast Oregon Football Officials Association, which provides officials for high school and middle school varsity and junior games in Union, Wallowa, Baker and Grant counties, has just 19 people available to officiate this season, seven short of the minimum needed, according to Pete Caldwell, commissioner of the association.

"It is the lowest number we have had," said Caldwell, who has been with the Northeast Oregon Football Officials Association for about 25 years.

Caldwell attributes the decline to the fact that many members have been retiring.

"I don't know why more younger people are not getting involved in officiating. It is a mystery," said Caldwell, noting that the average age of

his association's members is now 61.5 years.

He said that unless the association can recruit more people to officiate, it will face the prospect of requesting schools on some occasions to change their schedules. For example, schools may be asked to move some contests to Thursday or Saturday — instead of Fridays, when there are a high number of games scheduled —

to reduce the logjam, making it possible for officials to be provided for all of them.

Caldwell, who noted that rescheduling had to be done several times in 2021 when there was also a shortage of officials, said it is not easy.

"It is a huge headache," he said.

Doug Hislop, of La Grande, an official with the association for the past 52 years, said rescheduling games is not ideal. He said he fears that the complications created by the process may lead some schools to cancel some contests.

Caldwell is hoping people will step forward to serve as officials to reduce the short-

age. Previous officiating experience is not needed.

"We can teach anyone to be an official," he said.

Caldwell said those starting out may first be assigned to middle school and junior varsity games before officiating varsity contests. This will allow them to develop their skills in a less pressure packed environment, he said.

Caldwell said many people who serve as officials are driven to do so because they want to help youth.

"They want to give back to the community and kids," he said.

Hislop said this a motivating factor for him, noting that he will never forget how ref-

erees made it possible for him to participate in athletics as a youth growing up in Idaho.

"I had the opportunity to play football and wrestle because we had officials," he said.

Others are drawn to officiating because of their love of a specific sport — football, for example.

"It gives people a chance to be part of the game," Caldwell said.

Officials are paid on a per game basis, making \$73.50 for officiating class 4A games. Officials are paid a little less for officiating varsity games involving schools in the 3A, 2A and 1A classifications for smaller schools.

3pm - 4:30pm Guided hike up the East Moraine led by Dr. Ellen Morris Bishop, Kathleen Ackley and Larry Nall

5pm - 7pm Dinner and live music on the back lawn of the Wallowa Lake Lodge

Wallowa Lake's East Moraine was permanently protected in January 2020 when over 1,800 acres were transferred into Wallowa County ownership. Our celebration is long overdue due to the pandemic, but we are excited to finally share this FREE celebration with you!

PLEASE RSVP TO ATTEND:
<https://www.wallowaresources.org/east-moraine-celebration-rsvp>

Hosted by the Wallowa Lake Moraines Partnership

This publication made possible through a grant from the USDA Forest Service. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

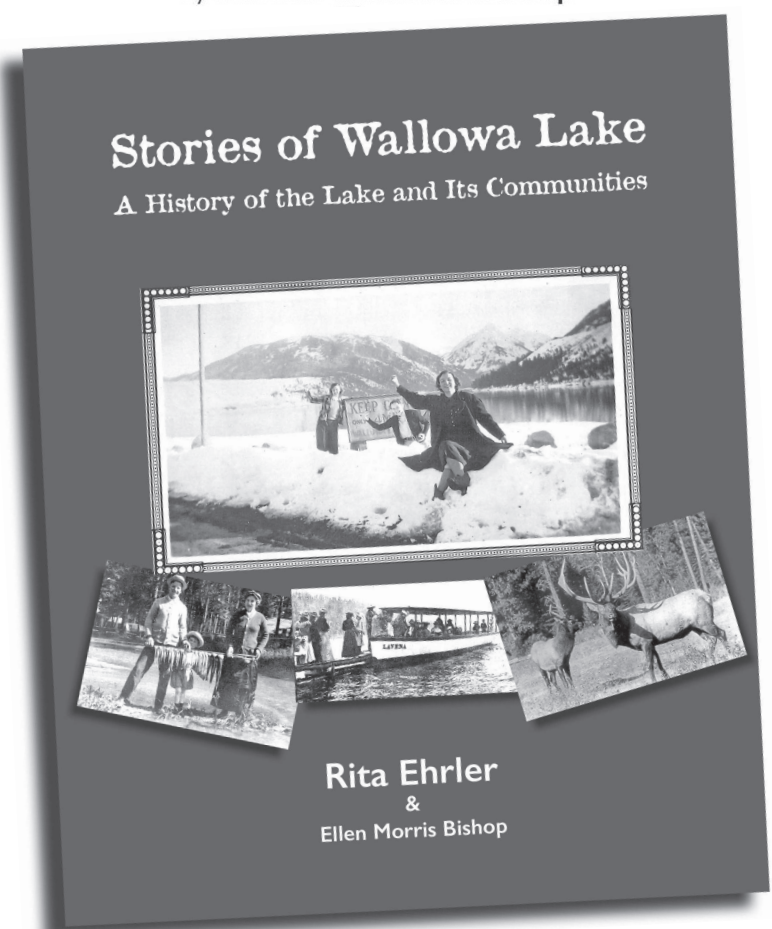
Image by Leon Werdinger Photography

NEW

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Stories of Wallowa Lake A History of the Lake and Its Communities

By Rita Ehrlrer & Ellen Morris Bishop



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- Wallowa Lake Amusement Park and its merry-go-round
- Early rodeos at the Lake (1930's) where Harley Tucker got his start.
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- The Edelweiss Inn's history
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