

Stacona is hope for Buffalos' future

By Brian Mortensen
Spilyay Tymoo

Even though the Madras High School girls basketball team loses three starters from a team that reached the opening round of the Class 3A State Tournament, great optimism for the future is at hand.

Not just optimism for next year, or even the next two years, but White Buffalo fans earnestly anticipate what could happen the next three seasons.

A lot of that's because of Briana Stacona.

Stacona, a 5-foot-4 point guard, finished her ninth-grade basketball season as the Buffalos' leading scorer, at better than 12 points a game, the team's assist leader, and as much a go-to person as any of the team's starters.

Stacona is still in ninth grade, but she's not a freshman anymore.

"I thought she had a great season," Madras girls basketball coach Bruce Reece said. "She played well beyond her years. She has great court sense. She will get stronger. She will improve her ability to take care of basketball. Overall, she just had a fantastic year."

With the big smile and fresh face of one still only 14 years old, Stacona describes the rush of moving up from playing against her eighth-grade peers in middle school ball to immediately playing on varsity this past season.

"It was fun," she said. "It was an awesome experience to play at the upper level, to go from eighth grade to playing against seniors. It's a whole different level of playing the game. I got a lot of experience from it."

Not that Stacona was completely green when she first put on a Madras varsity uniform last November. Just the summer before, she had helped her 13-and-under age-group team, a team from Seattle in which she was the only player from Oregon, win a national championship in Arizona. She had played with several of the returning Madras varsity players at the University of Oregon team



Briana Stacona

camp.

But beyond that, for Stacona, basketball has already been an indelible, and inseparable, part of her life.

"I've just been playing basketball my whole life, I guess," she said. "And my dad worked with me a lot when I was little. He put me in tournaments, and I just kept playing and playing, and (basketball skills) just built up by playing in tournaments."

But before she even picked up a ball and started playing, she started watching. Her father, Andrew Stacona, took her to tournaments and informal games at the Warm Springs Community Center, and, instead of playing with other kids, she'd sit in the stands and watch the games.

"I just enjoyed watching basketball in general, plus my father was there," she said. "I went to the community center a lot when I was little, like almost every chance I got with my father."

"I never got a chance to play Kiwanis (youth) basketball (in Madras). I guess I was probably at an Indian tournament at the time."

The culmination of all that experience was, of course, her inclusion on this year's White Buffalo team, which finished third in the Tri-Valley League regular season and returned to the Class 3A state tournament for the first time in two years.

She joined a Madras team that failed to reach the state playoffs after winning the 2003 Class 3A championship, and in fact didn't have a true point guard as Elise Hawes, a post the

season prior, moved to the point that season.

Reece said he'd seen Stacona play at the eighth-grade level, and, as things happened, they couldn't have come at a better time for him or Stacona.

"I'd heard a lot of people saying, 'Yeah, Bri, you're really good, I think you'll make it on varsity,' and I just looked at it like, well, maybe I can," she said. "I just started playing with the older girls, and it just made me feel more comfortable playing with them, so by the time coach Reece said, 'You're playing with us,' I got a good feeling like, 'Oh wow.' It was just a cool feeling."

And it must have felt easy after she scored in double figures her first three games and was able to exhibit her quick and deceptive ball-handling skills and passing ability.

In her one season on varsity, with the help of senior captains Jaylyn Suppah and Raylene Thomas, and with the comfort of friends and classmates like Shirelle Adams and Krista Haugen, she got to experience the highs and lows of a campaign that saw the White Buffalos reach the state playoffs but fall short of being among the best teams in the state.

"As a team, I think we understood through the season who has their own little part (of the team's success)," Stacona said. "I guess it just fell into place."

"If you play the game within the game, it works. As a team we all figured out that if one player plays her game and the other player does hers, it all just goes. It all just happened to where I would bring the ball down the court, and we'd all just go from there."

Stacona was responsible for starting the offense, often under pressure, or leading the Buffalos' transition game. And with her quick hands on defense, she was always a distraction for Madras' opponents, particularly when word got around about what she was capable of.

Because teams began keying the White Buffalos' freshman point guard, things would open

up for Suppah or Thomas in the forecourt, or Susan Ahern's outside shooting.

"Before games at practice, we'd talk about who's (the opponent's) best player, what she can do, and I'd watch one of their best players, and coaches would be like, she'll probably be guarding you, and so I'd watch her and watch her weaknesses and what I can do with them," she said.

"In a game, I try to take advantage of it, and sometimes they'd worry about me the whole game, to where I could just relax and they wouldn't notice one of our players getting hot. They'd be like, 'She's on fire; we've got to balance it out,' and then we'd get back into our game, and it'd work out for us. We'd break them down with little things."

The Buffs' season vacillated from hot to cold through the season, as they started by winning three of their first four, falling under .500 in December, then winning five straight Tri-Valley League games, and then losing three in a row before the start of the playoff campaign.

"That little time we were winning, we were so excited, and we thought we could take the lead in the league, and it kind of got to our heads, whether we thought we were too good or it just wasn't our game, and we kind of went down for a couple of games," she said.

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Mini marathon on May 1

The Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center has scheduled the annual Mini Marathon for Sunday, May 1. The four events scheduled are the 14.5-mile, 10K, three mile, and the one-mile. The top three winners of each division will receive medals for each event.

Pre-registration will be accepted until April 29 at a rate of \$12, which includes t-shirt.

Day of the race registration rate will be \$20. If you prefer to pay a rate without a t-shirt the rate is \$8. Day of race registration will open at 8 a.m. at the Kah-Nee-Ta Village front gate. The 14.5-mile run will load runners and leave the Kah-Nee-Ta Village front gate at 8:30 a.m. sharp. The 14.5-mile run begins at 9 a.m. from Simnasho. All other race events begin at 10 a.m.

Feeder Sale

Mar. 30th

Butchers start at 10am • Farmers start at 9am

SALE CALENDAR

March 30th - Feeder Sale

April 9th - Murphy Farm Equipment Auction - Prineville

April 16th - Hay Consignment Auction - COLA

April 23rd - Equipment Consignment Auction - COLA

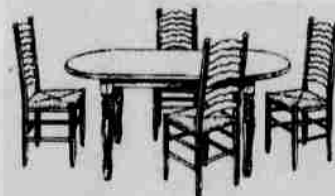
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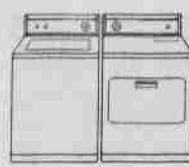
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Smith wins at boxing tourney

Johnny Smith of the Warm Springs Boxing Club won his match in the 145-pound division in Friday action of the Oregon State JO Boxing Tournament and Match Bouts at West Side Elementary School in Madras last weekend. Smith won a three-round decision over Daniel Medina of the Central Oregon Boxing Club.

Smith's bout was one of 10 on Friday during the two-day competition and the only one involving boxers from the Warm Springs club.

The following is a list of

the other bouts during Friday action.

65 pounds - Kahtahn Thompson, Knott Street (Portland) defeated Spencer Gruenberg, Deschutes County Rocks

85 pounds - Harvey Platero, Knott Street, dec. William Chapman, Grand Avenue.

100 pounds - Jonny Villanueva, Central Oregon, dec. Jonathan Lira, Grand Avenue.

114 pounds - Rafael Bautista, Knott Street, defeated by retirement Daniel Tooke, All-American.

132 pounds - Alberto Martinez, Knott Street, dec.

Marco Olivera, Central Oregon.

165 pounds - Sam Haynes, Grand Avenue, defeated by retirement Brian Haberman, Long Beach.

201 pounds - Pedro Rodriguez, Deschutes County Rocks, dec. Nelson Zepeta, Grand Avenue.

201+ pounds - Joseph Lafferty, Jr., All-American, dec. Jose Mendoza, Central Oregon.

176 pounds - Eric Orozco, Grand Avenue, dec. David Robles, Deschutes County Rocks.

Mt. Hood Meadows hosts free ski day

A free ski day for young people is scheduled for Saturday, April 9. The ski trip to Mt. Hood Meadows is for fifth graders.

Fifty students are invited to attend. If there are not 50 fifth-graders who are interested, then sixth-graders will be invited.

The ski trip is being sponsored by Mt. Hood Meadows, as a cooperative effort with the Confederated Tribes.

In the summer, also as part of the cooperative effort with the tribes, Mt. Hood Meadows is sponsoring huckleberry picking outings for tribal members. For the ski trip the bus will

leave from the reservation at 8:30 a.m., probably from the Community Center, and will be back in Warm Springs at about 4:30 p.m.

Ski equipment and lunch will

be provided to students who attend. There also is a need for adult chaperons. For information call Marie Calica at 553-1840, whose office is in the Vernon Jackson home.

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