

Begay: great time in Australia

(Continued from page 6)

They went to the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary in Gold Coast, where they saw crocodiles, snakes, turtles, kangaroos, dingos, Tasmanian devils, koala bears, all manner of fauna found only in Australia.

"The crocodile was sleeping," Begay said. "The feet on the thing were big. It was two car lengths long. I didn't want to wake him, but I got pictures of him."

He and the wrestlers also saw a performance by a group of Australian aboriginal dancers and singers.

"That was pretty neat. It was a whole other thing for me," he said. "I sing our Native music, and to listen to their music, the voices, the beat and their instruments, it was neat."

Begay and the wrestlers went to an amusement park. Because they were there only 90 minutes or so, they didn't get on many rides because of long lines.

On the trip, Begay met Native Americans from other states, including Navajos from Arizona and Utah and Hopis from New Mexico.

And he found out that as much as Australians have an accent to us, Americans have an accent to Australian ears. "They said they liked our accent. I said, 'We don't have an accent.' But we do - I figure we both have accents."

While the team was in Hawaii, Begay said the locals thought he was one of them.

"I found that kind of funny," he said. "It was kind of neat being noticed as a local. Even though I wasn't."

In Hawaii, the team had its picture taken and was treated to a luau with roast pig and chicken.

Before the trip to Australia, Begay had never been on an airplane before.

"I was getting kind of tight in my stomach," he said. "What worried me most was just getting over there first before having any fun."

Begay was happy to come home on the 20th, after the 14-hour flight from Sydney to Los Angeles and subsequent flights to Las Vegas and Portland.

"I got back on Wednesday, and I got the whole weekend off after I came back," he said. "I took my Grandma to a powwow in Post Falls, Idaho."

"I got a little homesick the last couple days in Australia. I called my Dad, and he said, 'Soak up all you can.'"

He said one thing the trip showed him is that he doesn't like the faster pace and congestion of a city.

"I was glad to breathe in the fresh air when I got home," he said. "I was glad to be home safe, and it was the same way I left it."

The trip would not have been possible had he not been able to raise nearly \$4,000, including airfare and lodging and spending money. Begay and his family cooked and prepared a number of feeds for the community, including spaghetti, Indian tacos and Indian burgers.

"We raffled off a Pendleton blanket," he said. "I got a lot of help from my community. The Confederated Tribes even sponsored me a little."

He found out that he had been nominated to participate in the Down Under Games while walking down the hall at Madras High.

"I was called into the office, and they gave me the letter," he said. "I gave the letter to my dad."

He said he was excited at the prospect of traveling to Australia, but concerned about the pricetag.

"My Dad said, 'Do you want to go,'" Begay said. "I said I'd like to go, but that's a lot of money. He said, 'Keep it in the back of your head.'"

Like Charlene Moody, who went to Australia about a week

earlier than Begay, he attended a Down Under Games meeting in The Dalles to find out more about the program.

"All of a sudden, we started raising money," Begay said. "Me and Charlene did things together, like we had a movie night at the Simnasho Longhouse, and everything we made, we split 50-50, and sometimes we did our own things. It worked out pretty good."

Since he's been back, Begay has been fixing fences and checking water troughs for Warm Springs Natural Resources. His focus is on the high school football season, which for him begins Monday with the start of daily doubles at Madras High School.

"I wouldn't say I'm in really good shape. I haven't been working out *hard* hard, but I've been running, keeping my wind up," he said. "I'm pretty pumped up for football."

Begay is a lineman on both sides of the ball, and in his senior season, the White Buffaloes will try to improve on their fourth-place finish in the Tri-Valley League, the best Class 3A league in the state last year, with defending champion Wilsonville and runner-up Sherwood.

Though he has wrestled since he was in middle school, Begay said he might try basketball his senior year.

"I grew up playing basketball," he said. "I play around here at the house, but I haven't played any hard pickup games."

Most of all, Begay said he wanted to express his gratitude to the Warm Springs community for allowing him the chance to begin his world travels.

"I'd like to thank the Creator for getting me over there and getting me back safe," he said.

"I'd like to thank my parents, elders, my grandparents for being behind me the whole way, and everybody in Warm Springs, and to the tribes for pitching in money for me."

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Horse race: honoring longtime friend

(Continued from page 6)

He remembers riding with David at the Pendleton Roundup and dressing up as girls for the women's races.

"We would put a handkerchief on our heads and be girls, said Heath. "Francis would even put on lipstick, wear a dress and put balloons inside his top." One of the lighter moments Heath remembers was a time when one of David's balloons came flying out at they were nearing the finish line.

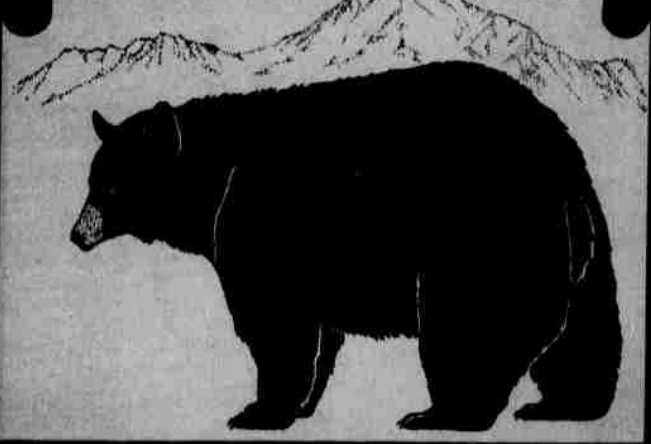
The chief reminisced about how they would fight in boarding school. When they got caught fighting, they would have to stand in the hall. While being left out in the hall, they would begin elbowing each other and get in trouble again.

"You do a lot of things that make you stronger," Heath said. "As times goes on, you remember things that happened in your life. Francis might have taught me something without knowing it."

"I can still remember the race like it was yesterday. Francis told Franklin Suppah that he was going to ride Franklin's horse that day. He said he wouldn't be riding for his dad, Thomas David. There were a lot of riders there that day, Jim Wesley, Vernon Spino, George Picard, Sid Miller, and Rudy Clements," Heath said.

The Chief commented that he and his family had shared some very hard times in life's journey. "Because of the battles Francis and I had at boarding school, Francis made me stronger for life. It is with that appreciation that I want to honor him this year," said Heath.

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