

Flying High, Team Portland win basketball tournament

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals staff writer

Alec Barba of team Flying High had a great weekend in Grand Ronde when his high school division team won the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's 2015 Native Youth 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament and he won the three-point shootout on Saturday, Aug. 15.

Tribal members Wakeeza Ream and Anthony Hernandez teamed with Aaron Hernandez and Tre Ratcliff to lead Team Portland to the middle school division championship.

This year's tournament was held on Friday and Saturday, Aug. 14-15, in conjunction with the Tribe's annual Contest Powwow.

The tournament drew nine teams of four players each and Grand Ronde Tribal member Leonard Logan scored the first basket just seven seconds into the first game on Friday night.

Even though Friday night's opening games were just for seeding purposes for Saturday's tournament games, you wouldn't have been able to tell by the fierceness of the competition.

Not long after scoring the first basket on a drive down the left side of the lane, Logan was knocked into the gravel when he tried to repeat the move. It was outdoor parking lot basketball at its finest.

The tournament showcased 36 players from four high school teams and five middle school teams. Each of the teams had a coach. Participating teams and their players were from Grand Ronde, Siletz, Monmouth, Dallas, Salem and Portland.

Third-seeded Flying High won the high school division's first-place honors on Saturday and Logan's top-seeded The Real GR finished



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

The Real Grand Ronde's Leonard Logan looks to drive past Grand Ronde Elite's AJ Farmer during the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Native Youth 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament held at Uyxat Powwow Grounds on Saturday, Aug. 15.

in second. Flying High featured Barba, Andrew Barry, Kevin Cable and Max Braziel.

"We just wanted to go out there and have fun," said Logan. "The player on their team that really caught my eye was Andrew Barry. He's gotten a lot better since the last time we played them. If our shots were falling in the first part of the game we could have beat those guys."

Logan's high school tournament team won the event in 2014 and lost this year by one basket. The Real GR team consisted of Logan, who will be a senior point guard

at Chemawa Indian High School in Salem, Anthony Simmons, Nick Larsen and Elijah Flowers.

Simmons, who will be a sophomore at Willamina High School, played on the high school division championship team last year with Logan.

Flowers, who will be a senior at Willamina, was asked by Logan and Simmons to play with them on this year's team.

"I felt like we had some big shoes to fill from last year," said Logan. "I mean, of course you want to win the tourney, but sometimes it just doesn't go your way."

Tribal member AJ Farmer, who will be a junior shooting guard/point guard at Willamina High School, played for the GR Elite high school team with fellow Tribal member True Gibbons. He said he is already looking forward to the tournament next year.

Gibbons will be a sophomore point guard at Willamina.

"The tournament was well put together and I really enjoyed playing in the games," said Farmer. "That's really why I play the game is because I love the sport."

In the middle school division, No.1-seeded Team Portland took the tournament title and fourth seed Curry Flurry's finished second.

In addition to the tournament games, 23 players in all age groups participated in the three-point shootout contest. Barba won the shootout by making seven three-point shots in one minute.

Every player who participated in this year's tournament received a T-shirt when they filled out a health

nutrition survey. The T-shirts were paid by a "weave" grant also known as a Wellness for Every Native American Indian to Achieve and View Health Equity grant.

Recreation Assistant Kendra Steele said the winners in each division also received championship T-shirts as well. Steele said the theme for this year's event was "healthy mind, body and spirit."

According to Planning and Grants Development Manager Kim Rogers, the "weave" grant funding came through the Northwest Area Indian Health Board via the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Rogers said Tribes who applied for the funding needed to accomplish a community health assessment to make it to the next level and receive funding for healthy activities.

Grand Ronde Health & Wellness Center Registered Nurse Tashina Blair said Grand Ronde was one a several Tribes that received the funding.

Blair said the Health & Wellness Center had an interest in the tournament to get an idea of what young people consider to be healthy habits.

"If we help our kids be healthier it translates into a healthier community," said Blair. "When the kids start doing it, the parents follow, the grandparents follow and it brings the whole community in."

Youth Education Program Manager Tim Barry said the basketball tournament games were evenly matched and he said it was a great time.

"We had really, really good competition this year," Barry said. ■



The Real Grand Ronde's Anthony Simmons dribbles past Grand Ronde Elite's True Gibbons during the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Native Youth 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament held at Uyxat Powwow Grounds on Saturday, Aug. 15.