

Close call

Powwow basketball tournament rebounds with 8 teams

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals staff writer

This year's annual Grand Ronde Contest Powwow 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament turned out to be a family affair for the Bruckners.

The high school-age division winner was a team made up of Tribal members Brodey Bruckner, Reece Ebensteiner, Anthony Simmons and Leonard Logan called The Goof Balls. The team was coached by Brady Bruckner and one of the tournament referees was Brandon Bruckner. Brother Brent Bruckner was in the audience cheering on his brothers along with their parents, Jimmer and Melody.

This year's tournament featured four high school teams and four middle school teams in action.

The Bruckner brothers were participating in the powwow tournament fresh off a third-place finish in the 6-foot and Under division at this year's annual Hoopla 3-on-3 Tournament held in Salem in early August.

Hoopla XVIII, held in front of the State Capitol each year, is the largest 3-on-3 street basketball tournament in Oregon and the Bruckners competed against 43 other teams in finishing third overall in their division.

The powwow tournament began with round-robin play on Friday night to help determine the seeding for the tournament bracket.

The Goof Balls won their first game against the Red Team 20-3. The win put them into the Saturday morning bracket against The Treys featuring Tribal member True Gibbons. The Goof Balls won 20-8 before facing Tribal member Brylynn Luey and The North in the championship game.

The Goof Balls won the championship game 20-10.

Coach Bruckner said his team really picked up its defense in the championship game and on offense they looked for mismatches.

"It was a team defense," said Brady. "What I noticed was we really stepped up our defense in that last game and we made them work harder. I just told them to pick and roll and to look for back door passes."

Ebensteiner said it was hot on Friday for the first game, but that they played smart on Saturday morning and didn't let the heat get to them.

"We're all pretty experienced ball players so we subbed out when we needed it," said Ebensteiner.

In the middle school bracket, the Grand Swoosh team, led by Tribal member Dominik Briant, won the tournament championship.

Grand Swoosh, coached by Tribal member Nick LaBonte, won its first game against The Hoopers 20-13 and then faced off against Tribal member Josh Henry and The Js in the second game. Grand Swoosh defeated The Js 12-2.

Grand Swoosh had a rematch in the championship game when they once again faced The Hoopers on Saturday morning. Briant and Grand Swoosh won the championship game 16-12.

Tribal member Isaiah Holmes won the tournament's three-point shooting contest when he made 10 three-pointers in one minute. Simmons and Logan tied for second place in the three-point contest when they each made nine three-pointers in the time limit.

"It just worked out great," said tournament director and Recreation Coordinator Harris Reibach.



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Brodey Bruckner plays in the championship high school game of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Native Youth 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament held near Uyxat Powwow Grounds on Saturday, Aug. 20. Bruckner's team, The Goof Balls, beat The North for the high school championship title.

"A lot of people showed up. A lot of good people from the community came out and supported us. It was an awesome turnout. It all came together."

Early in the week it looked like the tournament might not happen, but Reibach went to work and got the teams necessary for a tournament. He said he was supported in his efforts by his supervisor Tyson Mercier.

Mercier is the Tribe's Facilities Maintenance supervisor and he said working on things like recreation activities and basketball tournaments is new to his department, but that Reibach has made the transition easy with his calm demeanor and willingness to work hard at his responsibilities.

"Finding Harris and bringing him in was

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lucky," said Mercier. "Everybody in this community loves his outlook on life. He's a great self-starter. He communicates with me daily and he takes pride in his work."

Mercier said people tell him the gym and the weight room have never looked better and that once the support came through that they needed to make the tournament happen, Reibach took it from there.

Reibach, always humble, said he needed to thank Tribal Council, General Manager Dave Fullerton, Mercier, LaBonte, the Bruckners, Kate Rankin, Matt Zimbrick, Alton Butler, Marion Mercier, Candi Buswell, Anthony Henry, Marcus Gibbons and Tim Barry for "supporting the event and for making it possible." ■



Grand Swoosh's Dominik Briant dribbles around a Hoopers defender during the middle school championship game of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Native Youth 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament held near Uyxat Powwow Grounds on Saturday, Aug. 20. Grand Swoosh won the game.