

The best and worst of the 4th of July

By Zach Silva
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Well, it's July, and as you, fine reader, have noticed there aren't many (local) sports going on. But fear not! This is now the sports and recreation section so let's discuss the good and bad (but mainly good) of the 4th of July.

With this especially festive holiday coming on the worst day of the week for a holiday to fall, let's take a minute to appreciate the good and bad that occurs on the only holiday that we refer to as the date opposed to the actual holiday. (If someone says, 'oh yeah, what are you doing on the Fourth' you wouldn't bat an eye. But what if, for a different holiday, they said, 'oh yeah what are you doing on the 25th?' Or what about the 31st? Plans on the 14th? I just don't get it and googling Fourth of July history weirdly enough does not bring up the history of the words but rather, you know, some other history.) Anyway, let's dive in.

Fake Parades

There was a time when my Fourth of July always began with a road race. It was fun and exciting until you then realize that a Fourth of July 10K/5K/etc. is really just a fake Fourth of July parade. And not even a good one! Nothing even happens and no candy is given out. Save running for another day; this is a day of celebration. Go join a real parade or better yet, watch a parade from the comfort of a sidewalk.

"Independence Day"

The world loves to laud Christmas movies. The entire month of December leading up to the 25th is set aside for these movies as they burn them into our collective cultural consciousness. The Fourth of July certainly does not get the same treatment. But what we do get is Will Smith and Jeff Goldblum saving the day, the country and the world. And that might just be a little bit better.

The NBA

A normal reaction to this would be to point out that there are no NBA games on the Fourth. But what that is missing is the beauty of free agency and players deciding on the Fourth where they are going. LaMarcus Aldridge to the Spurs in 2015, Kevin Durant to the Warriors in 2016 and Gordon Hayward to the Celtics in 2017 all happened on the 4th. Your move LeBron.

Fruits! Vegetables! Lemonade!

The star of the food portion of the day belongs to the barbeque. Hot dogs, burgers, ribs, the whole deal. But the rest of the plate – and often they don't even make it to the plate – is equally as good as the main dish on this day. For starters, blueberries (the greatest food in the whole wide world) and strawberries are ready to go as is some corn on the cob. Throw some lemonade in a cup and you have a perfect meal on a nice Fourth afternoon.

Fireworks

Fireworks are...fine. They are certainly a necessity for the Fourth but I'm not clamoring to make sure we incorporate fireworks into all festivities. But I think for everyone you just have to find the proximity that best suits you. Whether lighting them off or better yet, sitting on a blanket and

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Preparing festivities for the Fourth



A group of kids waves to a North Douglas fire truck as it goes by in last year's Fourth of July parade in Yoncalla.

PHOTOS BY BECKY GERRARD

A year of preperation culminates with Yoncalla's Fourth of July celebration

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In Yoncalla, there are holidays and then, there is the Fourth of July. The annual all-day celebration brings the small town of just over 1,000 people a little bit closer together for an event that is dependent on community support.

"It's 100 percent from the community, for the community and by the community," said North Douglas Betterment's (NDB) development officer Jennifer Bragg.

Bragg, a Yoncalla native who started at NDB in January, has had the Fourth on her mind since taking the job. And with this event, there is a lot to think about.

To kick off this patriotic party is the parade. The parade, run by the Chamber of Commerce, features around 70 different entries ranging from the usual suspects of rodeo queens and local businesses but also features State Senator Floyd Prozanski.

"He's our horse pooper scooper," said parade coordinator Vicky Shook who has

helped with the parade for the last four years. She added, "I enjoy the fact that (the parade) is celebrating our country, number one, and then we always have a theme and this year we're honoring our EMTs you know the unsung heroes. Everyday heroes is kind of our theme this year."

After the parade, there is a full slate of activities: the rodeo at noon; the ice cream social in the afternoon; following that are the "pioneer games" such as three-legged race and potato sack races making their return to the celebration and they will be led by mayor Jerry Cross; live music and dancing in the evening; and then the firework show to put the cherry on top of a full day.

Throughout the year residents in Yoncalla are reminded of the event by donation jars that sit at businesses across the city. The money collected goes into the pot of part of the \$15,000 (\$12,000 for the fireworks and \$3,000 for an added safety feature for the pyro crew) that funds the climactic firework show put on by NDB.

"It's a lot, it's huge. I think it's the best firework show around. It's amazing, the pyro crew does a great job and they put on a great show every year. And they do this beautiful grand finale. There's no

down time either because once it starts it's just go, go, go, go," said Bragg.

There are five donors who contributed a "major gift" of over \$1,000 to the event while the rest of the funds have come from various donations including a handful from individuals who no longer live in the city but send money to support the celebration.

While the funding is crucial to being able to light up the sky, what makes the rest of the event go are the people. There

are around 100 volunteers throughout the day at the different events and different businesses and organizations take charge to make sure that it is a successful day.

"It is something that everyone in our town is so proud of. It's like our moment of the year is the Fourth of July and everyone comes out and people have their families come from all over and we're all so prideful on the Fourth," said Bragg.



Fireworks go off in Yoncalla last Fourth of July.

Adult soccer league in full swing



PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

A soccer player races up field on Wednesday night.

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While the eyes of the soccer world are focused on World Cup in Russia, Jeff Schloss' interest is elsewhere.

"You know, I love soccer but I don't watch it. I love to play it. I'm more of a participant than a spectator," he said.

The main soccer on Schloss' mind is SCORES, South Valley Athletics' four-team adult soccer league. There is a team of high school students (mixed with some newly minted graduates), a team from a local business, a team of some family and friends and a house team that brings individuals together who were looking for a team. They all come together to create SCORES that runs from June to August and plays game at Cottage Grove High School.

Schloss first got involved with SVA when he coached his son's third grade team in 2013 and joined the SCORES league as a player in 2016 before coming into this position last year. In his first year as head of SVA's soccer program, he oversees the league that is in its seventh season of action and has continued to follow a simple guiding principle since its inception.

"Let's have some fun and score some points and just have fun," said Schloss.

Part of the fun of the nine-on-nine league is the aspect of making sure that people stay healthy.

"That's why we have the rules the way that we do. You know, no sliding no contact to keep it safe and fun for old people like me who come out here to play still against these youngins," said Shelly Heintz who started the league when she

oversaw soccer for SVA and is now on the house team. "They'll give us a run but it's a lot of fun."

The league bounces between four and six teams per year and last year even ended on five and a half teams.

"So the last game was somebody vs. whoever wanted to play. Which is great. That's a great – you don't have so much of a 'my team' adversary thing going on," said Heintz.

Ultimately for Heintz it's about "running around and having fun." And sometimes that fun includes the high school players racing by on the way to score a goal.

"It was like 'oh my God,' these kids were like five and I coached them. And now I'm playing against them. Come back here, I taught you that," said Heintz.

For more pictures from the action turn to B2

Athletes of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are the members of the Cottage Grove Little League AA softball team that went undefeated and won the division title last month.



South Valley Little League's Cottage Grove softball champions.
PHOTO C/O SOUTH VALLEY LITTLE LEAGUE