

Slide to the left



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-ObsERVER

Participants practice proper technique for leading off during Western Oregon's youth softball camp on Monday morning.

Rodeo: Entertainment to start at 7 p.m. on Thursday

Continued from Page 10A

White thinks the reason is simple; there's something inherently exciting about seeing a cowboy and a bull at odds.

"The reason rodeo is timeless, it's man against beast — bulls that weigh 1,800 pounds against a cowboy who is 140 pounds," White said.

While the action is ramped up to 11, the mutton busting provides a thrill for the young ones — and a good laugh for the adults.

Hell on Hooves

What: Rough Stock Rodeo
When: Thursday, 7 p.m.
Where: Polk County Fair Arena
Admission: Included in fair admission. \$10 for adults after 4 p.m.

"It's the only form of legalized child abuse," White said with a chuckle. "The reason being every one of those little kids riding nine miles an hour just before they fall, they all do the same thing and open their mouths for some reason.

It's a good time." Attendance for the rodeo is free with a fair admission. Cost will be \$8 before 4 p.m. on Thursday and \$10 after 4. "I say it has been a boon to the fair," White said.

Wolves: GNAC among the toughest leagues in Div. II

Continued from Page 10A

"It helps a ton," he said. "Last year, coming into pre-season, yeah, I had upperclassmen, but I saw everyone pretty much as freshmen because none of them had been through a full year with myself and my staff. This year, the upperclassmen know who I am and can help mentor our younger players."

Outside hitter Alisha Bettinson will be one of those upperclassmen. Bettinson led the Wolves in kills (337) and digs (320) and earned an all-conference honorable mention.

Several newcomers and underclassmen will have the

opportunity to earn significant playing time, Gott said. Every position will be a battle, including at defensive specialist, where Libbie Hoene, who will be a major contender to start.

"I am looking forward to having positional battles," Gott said.

As the Wolves look to settle their starting lineup, they won't have long to hit their stride.

Five out of the eight teams from the GNAC advanced to the Division II volleyball championships in 2016, with Alaska Anchorage advancing to the national title match.

An unforgiving conference

means teams looking to enter into the conversation for a conference title don't have the luxury of starting slowly.

"As far as the west region is concerned, this is the best conference there is," Gott said. "Every night is a grind. You've got to go with everything you've got and you can't take anything for granted."

Clawing their way into contention will be a stiff challenge, but Gott believes these Wolves are ready to go on the hunt.

"We're excited," Gott said. "We're ready to lace up our shoes and get on the court and compete."

Keep your eye on the ball



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-ObsERVER

Rowan practices controlling her shot during a volleyball camp on Monday afternoon at Dallas High School.

Evola transitions from player to coach

By Lukas Eggen
 The Itemizer-ObsERVER

MONMOUTH — During her four-year career (2012-15) at Western Oregon University, softball player Amanda Evola established herself as one of the most prolific players to ever play for the Wolves.

Evola ranks first in WOU history in batting average and RBIs and is second in at-bats, runs scored, hits, doubles and home runs. She was also a first team all-conference selection all four years.

"Softball was my life during my four years," she said. "I put everything I had into it and played as hard as I could."

Though her playing career was over, Evola found a new way of remaining a Wolf through coaching.

Even before she reached college, Evola thought of coaching.

"In high school, I knew I wanted to coach, and when I started to pursue a teaching career, the teacher/coach combo seemed like a perfect fit," she said.

Once she arrived at WOU, it was clear she had two of the most important aspects of becoming a successful coach.

"I did see her incredible knowledge of the game while playing and she was so willing to help her teammates and the team in any way she could," Wolves coach Lonny Sargent said.

Sargent offered her an assistant coach position prior to the 2016 season.

She accepted and went from player to coach.

The biggest challenge came in adjusting to a different role.

Evola had played softball for almost as long as she could remember.

"It was very strange," Evola said. "I wanted to join the

girls and play or workout with them during weight training. I missed the team bonding because there is nothing like it. It was also strange settling into coaching because now I was on the 'inside' and talking game strategy with the other coaches, but I love that aspect."

She was also responsible for coaching players who were nearly the same age as her — many of whom had played alongside her.

"It was odd at first, but the players that were my age had respect for me as a former player and a new coach," Evola said. "They knew my abilities on the field and my experiences as a player were valuable. Having their respect allowed me the opportunity to feel like a true coach. They respected and trusted me to help them do their best."

Evola has also had to trust herself to learn the nuances of coaching.

"It is fun for me to talk game strategy as a coach and to see the whole game rather than just play in the moment like I did as a player," Evola said. "I like to think ahead as a coach. When is it a good time to switch the pitcher? Should we steal? Hit and run? I love seeing how I can use each player and their abilities to get the win."

Evola took everything in stride, Sargent said.

"Amanda is amazing, and she transitioned really well from player to coach," Sargent said.

Unfortunately for the Wolves, Evola won't be staying at WOU.

Evola accepted a teaching position and is unable to coach for the Wolves, Sargent said.

But Sargent said he believes Evola is well on her way to becoming a successful coach at whatever level she chooses.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-ObsERVER file

Amanda Evola played for Western Oregon's softball team until 2015. She served as an assistant coach for two years.

Ride: Cycling is Ramsey's 'vendetta against MS'

Continued from Page 10A

Ramsey qualified for three more Ironman World Championships in 2009, 2011 and 2013 before retiring from triathlons in 2014. But he wasn't ready to sit on the sidelines and began to focus exclusively on cycling.

"Cycling is an escape to some extent, a stress relief," Ramsey said. "It's also sort of

my vendetta against my MS."

Most recently, he competed in the Race Across the West, a 930-mile bike ride from California to Colorado, in June.

He was the first cyclist with MS to attempt to complete the ride solo.

"It was bar none, the hardest single event I've ever done in my life," Ramsey

said. "Riders have less than four days to officially finish. After two days and eight hours of racing, I had covered 603 miles. Between the sleep deprivation and the heat, possibly MS's biggest nemesis, I had enough. My body, surprisingly, had held up well, but I underestimated the mental stress of the event and ultimately little issues kept stressing me more

and more. Like death by 1,000 cuts. But many of these small things are quite fixable."

Ramsey said he will be back on the road in 2018 for the Race Across the West.

All the while, he has furthered his cause to raise money for MS research and awareness — with fundraising totaling more than \$32,000 so far

this year.

His participation in Bike MS is another way to encourage others battling MS that there is hope for the future.

"As a rider who has MS, I am always incredibly honored and overwhelmed by those around me actually doing something to help improve the lives of those of us with MS," Ramsey

said. "I wish I could find the words to describe my thankfulness. Truly, there is still goodness in the world."

That hasn't stopped him so far — and he hopes his story can help people be inspired that they can make a change in their lives.

"I fully intend to still be riding my bike in 50 years," Ramsey said.

IMAGINE Our Communities
 without our **LOCAL NEWSPAPER!**

Thank the businesses who advertise in the
 Itemizer-ObsERVER. Without them...

Interested in advertising?
 Call 503-623-2373

AAAGH!

