

Clearing the way for sports

■ Travis Bloomer, an assistant varsity football coach at Baker High School, used his snowblowing equipment to clear football and soccer fields at Baker High School and Baker Middle School

By Corey Kirk
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Travis Bloomer is the rare football coach whose work preparing his players includes driving an ATV connected to a snow blower.

But then Bloomer, an assistant on varsity head coach Jason Ramos' staff at Baker High School, didn't expect to coach in a season that started in the depths of winter.

When he's not in the fast-paced world of real estate, Bloomer, who's a BHS graduate and former standout football player, spends a lot of his free time as a coach.

And when heavy snow fell in Baker City around the time the Bulldogs started practice for their pandemic-abbreviated season, Bloomer was happy to volunteer his time and his ATV, which is equipped with tracks instead of wheels.

"I had the equipment, so it wasn't a big deal for me, it was just I felt that it was my job to do it," Bloomer said.

He has removed snow from the football and soccer fields at BHS, as well as the football field at Baker Middle School.

Ramos, in his second year as varsity head coach, wasn't surprised that Bloomer offered to make sure players weren't slogging through ankle-deep snow and slush.

"That's what Travis does, he just steps up and fills any need that's there, even without being asked," Ramos said.

Bloomer said he was motivated largely by the bond he has developed coaching many

of the Bulldogs over the years, including his son, Gauge, a junior running back and linebacker.

Travis Bloomer said he wants to ensure the players have the best experience possible after their usual season was canceled due to the pandemic in the fall of 2020.

The Bulldogs, who haven't played in a game since November 2019, return to action Friday, March 5, at Vale.

"It's for the kids, it's for their souls right now. I believe that firmly," Bloomer said.

Gauge Bloomer said his dad has been involved in his athletic pursuits since Gauge was a fourth-grader, and he's grateful to have his dad as a coach. He said he wasn't especially surprised when his dad volunteered to clear snow from fields.

"I love it, I don't think I'd be where I am without him," Gauge said.

Travis said it takes about four hours to clear snow from one field. The biggest challenge, he said, is laying out a grid to follow with the blower.

"Every time you throw snow, snow packs, and then it's harder to throw a second time," Bloomer said. "Well, there's at least three throws to get it off the field when you start in the middle. So it's how you grid that.

"The biggest thing is the thinking part, how do I go about doing this efficiently so I can actually get it off the field, because if you throw it too many times, it won't throw," Bloomer said. "That was a hard learned lesson on that field."



Jennifer Trader/Contributed Photo

Travis Bloomer, an assistant varsity football coach at Baker High School, uses an ATV and snowblower to clear snow from the practice football field at Baker Middle School.

"It's for the kids, it's for their souls right now. I believe that firmly."

— Travis Bloomer, assistant varsity football coach at Baker High School

Then there are the potential obstacles hidden by the snow and capable of lodging in the snowblower's rotating auger.

"Probably one of the tougher things is when you catch a football glove or a face mask or a dog stick in the auger, it can slow you down, but it's worth it," Bloomer said.

He emphasizes that he didn't work alone. Bloomer said football players wielded shovels to help move snow.

"That's my family, those boys just picked up shovels and came," Bloomer said.

"The coaches have their backs and they have ours."

Ramos said he's grateful to have a coaching staff that sacrifices so much time, including outside of practices, to help students.

While Bloomer worked on the field at Baker Bulldog Memorial Stadium, lineman coach Rick Ritter set up portable lighting at the practice field.

"Why we all do this is certainly not for a paycheck, but it's for all the important things that come along with it," Ramos said. "It's the relationship with the kids,



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Travis Bloomer, right, during a recent football practice at Baker High School.

"That's what Travis does, he just steps up and fills any need that's there, even without being asked."

— Jason Ramos, head varsity football coach at Baker High School

ing forward to the Bulldogs returning to the field for an actual game.

"We are just grateful that whoever is in charge is allowing us to play," Bloomer said. "That's our overall message, you are going to get hit in life with obstacles that may not seem that there's anything that you can do but within the legal parameters and realms you can still figure out ways to get them done."

Although the weather has been relatively tranquil the past week, if another snowstorm bears down on Baker City this month, you'll probably have a chance to see Bloomer driving his snowblower at the stadium, a smile on his face.

and doing what's best for the kids in the program, and making it a positive experi-

ence for everybody."

Now that the fields are snow-free, Bloomer is look-

Wave energy testing planned

PORTLAND (AP) — Federal energy regulators have given Oregon State University initial approval for a groundbreaking wave energy testing facility off the coast.

The PacWave South project is designed to facilitate and accelerate the development of wave energy technology, which harnesses the motion of the ocean to generate electricity, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported.

Oregon is considered to have a high potential for wave energy generation.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission issued a license to the project on Monday, but another review period must pass before OSU gets final approval.

"It's huge. It's the first license of its type to be

issued in the United States," said OSU's Burke Hales, chief scientist on the project.

Oregon State's project would offer a pre-permitted area offshore of Newport, where wave energy developers could anchor and plug in their devices to the grid. The array would spread over about 8 square miles of ocean and include four testing "berths" with undersea cables to carry energy produced back to shore near Driftwood Beach State Recreation Site.

"We hope to be moving this summer with groundbreaking for building our shoreside facility," Burke said, adding that the underground and under-ocean boring work needed to run the transmission lines offshore would start this year as well.

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