

Local & State

OTHERS ALLEGED COACH ENCOURAGED ATHLETES TO COMPETE IN IDAHO TOURNAMENTS

Wallowa basketball coach resigns after complaints from football team

By Ellen Morris Bishop
For the Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Wallowa High School Principal David Howe resigned his position as the school's girls basketball coach Monday night, March 15, in the face of an official complaint filed by the school's football team with the Wallowa superintendent of schools March 2.

The outcome of the complaint is pending and still in review.

Head football coach Matt Brockamp, Wallowa Superintendent of Schools Tammy Jones and Wallowa School Board Chairman Woody Wolfe all declined to comment or provide the Chieftain with the text of the March 2 complaint or a second complaint filed with the school board on March 8.

"My duties as principal and my duties as the girls basketball coach seem to be in conflict with each other and therefore I will be resigning my position as girls basketball coach, effective immediately," Howe said in a prepared statement to the Wallowa School Board on Monday.

Howe's resignation was precipitated by the complaint as well as allegations of encouraging and supporting Wallowa High School athletes to participate in high school tournaments in Idaho earlier this year.

Under Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) rules, participation in out-of-state sports events requires student athletes to self-quarantine for two weeks after the out-of-state games. Brockamp had protested Howe's action, out of concern that students who participated in the Idaho basketball games would



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

David Howe, Wallowa High School's principal and girls basketball coach, reads his letter of resignation to the Wallowa School Board on Monday, March 15.

not be able to play the first and possibly other games in Wallowa's short, five-game football season.

"As a head coach, I made my concerns known to WHS about unsanctioned, out-of-state basketball tournaments jeopardizing our opportunity to play an OSAA-sanctioned football season," Brockamp stated at an emotion-charged school board meeting March 8. At that meeting he called for "a fundamental change in Wallowa High School."

The concerns about Idaho basketball games are coupled with controversy over Wallowa High School's failure to schedule a replacement game for the canceled Elgin contest, which had been scheduled for March 6.

"I was instructed to tell my football team, which has worked hard preparing for a month outside in the snow, that WHS would not schedule them another home game with another team," Brockamp said at the March 8 meeting.

Howe's resignation in-

cluded an apology.

"I am deeply sorry for any hurt I have caused my students, coaches and community members, staff members or board members," Howe said in his prepared remarks. "That was not my intent. It was never my intent to undermine other sports programs or coaches. If that occurred, I apologize for that."

Six parents and Wallowa School District staff at the meeting spoke during the public comment period. Most expressed support for the school, and for Jones, who came under fire at the March 8 meeting, as a competent and caring administrator.

Wallowa first-grade teacher Kelsey Layton praised Jones for "inspiring, encouraging and working alongside of us to build relationships with (teachers) and families during this unprecedented year."

"Students are the No. 1 concern," said Melissa Lowe, who teaches Title 1 classes. "We need to remember in our community that education safety and well-being of our

students, your children, and education should be first and foremost, not sports."

But parent Joe Miles criticized the school board for a lack of community and educational leadership.

"I support you guys, but at the same time I do have a higher expectation of anybody in a leadership position," he said. "There's a lot of frustrated people in this community."

Those thoughts echoed some of the comments made to the school board at the March 8 meeting. They included concerns about lack of respect for students, student athletes and Wallowa's rural culture.

At the well-attended March 8 meeting, the entire WHS senior class presented a letter regarding parts of the school's mask policy. Specifically, the seniors were speaking against them being the ones called on to enforce the school's mask mandates rather than administrators. They also spoke on concerns that this year's senior trip might be canceled due to the seniors' lack of enforcement of mask-wearing by all students in the high school.

But the trip still is on, Jones said.

It is tentatively planned as a three-day jaunt either to the Oregon Coast or Triple Play Family Fun Park in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

The final decision on destination and COVID protocols will be made as the date gets nearer, she said.

"I think COVID definitely has placed a lot of stress on families and the community," Jones said. "The more we can have kids have more normalcy, the better off the kids are."

LOCAL BRIEFING

Annual cleanup at Mount Hope Cemetery scheduled for April 12-26

Baker City's maintenance contractor, Grass Masters, will be doing the spring cleanup at Mount Hope Cemetery, including removing deteriorated decorations and flowers, from April 12-26.

The city is asking people to remove those items before April 12. They can be replaced starting April 27. Items that are left and that the contractor has to move will be stored, except perishable items, until Nov. 1, 2021.

A copy of the cemetery rules is available at www.bakercity.com, and more information is available by calling 541-524-2047.

Free online training for landlords, housing providers scheduled April 6

The Fair Housing Council of Oregon (FHCO) and the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District are co-hosting a free online training for landlords and housing providers.

The training will cover current fair housing laws, COVID-19 and best practices in rental housing and the Oregon eviction moratorium.

The training will be April 6 from 10 a.m. to noon via Zoom. Registration is required. For more information or to receive information about registration, contact Lisa Dawson at lisadawson@neoedd.org or Glenda Moyer at gmoyer@fhco.org.

State Sen. Lynn Findley, Rep. Mark Owens plan virtual town hall March 24

Baker County's two state legislators, Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, and Rep. Mark Owens, R-Crane, will participate in a virtual town hall with another representative, Daniel Bonham, R-The Dalles, on Wednesday, March 24 from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

More information, including ways to participate in the online town hall, is available at Findley's Facebook page, www.facebook.com/senlynnfindley.

Free six-week 'Business Foundations' workshop series starting March 31

The Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD) is offering a free six-week workshop series designed to help entrepreneurs and small business owners. The "Business Foundations" series will take place on Wednesday evenings starting March 31 and continuing through May 5, from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. each evening. Classes are done by videoconference, and preference for registration is given to people with low to moderate incomes.

Lisa Dawson, executive director of NEOEDD, has been teaching the Business Foundations workshops for more than a decade. Topics covered include business concepts, analyzing financial essentials, sales forecasting, market research, marketing and presenting a business plan.

For information about registering for the workshop series, call Dawson at 541-426-3593 or email lisadawson@neoedd.org.

OREGON SENATE APPROVES RESOLUTION ASKING VOTERS TO AMEND STATE CONSTITUTION

Voters could make affordable health care a human right

By Andrew Selsky
Associated Press

SALEM — The Oregon Senate on Thursday approved a resolution that would ask voters to decide whether the state is obligated to ensure that every resident has access to affordable health care as a fundamental human right.

The resolution, whose aim is to amend the state Constitution, was approved along party lines, with Democratic senators in favor and Republicans opposed. It next goes to the House in the Democrat-controlled Legislature.

A similar effort in 2018 was approved by the House but it died in

committee in the Senate. If it had been put on the ballot and approved by voters, it would have been the first constitutional amendment in any state to create a fundamental right to healthcare.

"Every Oregonian deserves access to cost-effective and clinically appropriate health care," said Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner. "Oregon's Constitution should reflect that truth."

If the House passes the bill, voters would be asked to consider amending the state's 162-year-old Constitution.

Republicans said any promise to ensure all Oregonians are entitled to

health care lacks financial backing.

"The bill doesn't fund any system to deliver on that promise," Senate Republican Leader Fred Girod said. "If Democrats are serious about giving Oregonians free health care, they should come up with an actual plan."

The resolution says the state's obligation must be balanced against funding public schools and other essential public services.

Senate Republicans claimed in a statement that the League of Women Voters of Oregon has opposed this measure "because of its obscurity."

But in a Feb. 15 letter, the League

of Women Voters of Oregon said it supports the resolution, and called it "simply an aspirational bill."

This year, as the coronavirus pandemic persists, "will be pivotal for national and state health care reforms," League President Rebecca Gladstone and healthcare specialist Bill Walsh wrote. "It's time to continue to do our part in this effort by involving voters in the process."

Asked to explain why Senate Republicans claimed the League has opposed the resolution, caucus spokesman Dru Draper pointed out that the League had opposed it in 2018.

A League president — Glad-

stone's predecessor — had sent a letter in opposition in 2018, saying the state couldn't afford "the added cost of health care coverage for all its residents at this time."

But Gladstone said things are different this time.

"We are pleased to see provisions added to this 2021 bill that will balance health care with the public's interest in funding schools and other essential public services," Gladstone said in an email late Thursday. "This seems to be a direct response to the League's work on the 2018 bill, when we advocated for provisions that would protect funding of these essential services."

ADVENTURE

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He's referring to an especially steep section of the route that he and Katie, who's 14, traversed on Wednesday, March 17 on the west side of the Elkhorns.

Their goal was a saddle on the ridge between Lake and Crevice creeks. Both are tributaries of Deer Creek, which flows beneath Highway 7 between Union Creek Campground and McEwen. Lake Creek is the stream that drains from Twin Lakes.

David, who lives in Sumpter Valley, had hiked to the saddle while hunting, but he had never visited during the winter, and certainly not aboard a snowmobile.

This winter, he said, he and Katie made an attempt in January and another in February before finally succeeding Wednesday. David attributes this to the snow becoming more firm during the recent mild, dry weather.

Katie slightly contradicts her dad's description of the failures that preceded the conquest.

"We actually did a couple of runs just to pack down the trail," she said.

When they arrived about noon on Wednesday, Katie said she was enthralled by the view.

"It was amazing," she said. "You could see forever. It was definitely a big moment getting to the top."

David's purpose went beyond the scenery, however.

He also wanted to see how deep the snow was at the saddle, elevation 7,360 feet, particularly after the epic snowstorms in mid-February that pummeled the Elkhorns with many feet of snow.

For that purpose he brought along a 14-foot pole.

Which sounds like an awfully awkward appendage to strap onto a snowmobile.

But this pole, which holds up part of a four-person dome tent, is collapsible, consisting of seven two-foot segments.

Katie plunged the pole into the snow. Except for piercing the crust, the pole slid pretty easily, she said.

After retrieving the pole, father and

daughter confirmed that it had gone all the through, as evidenced by a bit of damp soil stuck to its tip.

The measurement showed 83 inches of snow — one inch shy of seven feet.

David said he was surprised. He was expecting four or five feet.

Although scattered clouds slightly interfered with the view — it had been mostly sunny for much of the snowmobile ride, Katie said — it was otherwise a pleasant day, with calm winds and a temperature of 38 degrees even at that lofty elevation.

Katie said she didn't even need gloves for the ride.

She said she's intrigued by the role that mountain snowpack plays in Eastern Oregon, as the main source of water to fill streams and reservoirs.

"It's interesting to learn about the snowpack in different areas and how it affects the water supply," Katie said.

Although David doesn't plan to ever return to the saddle to compare this year's snowpack with future winters, he said he might look for a more accessible spot, at a similar elevation.

New At The Library

Patrons can reserve materials in advance online or by calling 541-523-6419. Drive-in hours at 2400 Resort St. are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from noon to 4 p.m.

FICTION

- "A Matter of Life and Death," Phillip Margolin
- "The Nightmare Feast," Andrew Klavan
- "Merchants of Virtue," Paul C. R. Monk
- "Boyfriend Material," Alexis Hall
- "The Western Wind," Samantha Harvey

NONFICTION

- "Keep Sharp," Sanjay Gupta
- "Between Two Kingdoms," Suleika Jaouad
- "Pandemics," Christian McMillen
- "The Last Days of John Lennon," James Patterson
- "Brave Enough," Jessie Diggins

DVDS

- "Big Little Lies, Season 2" (TV Series)
- "Larry the Cable Guy: Remain Seated" (Documentary)
- "Navy SEALs vs. Zombies" (Action)
- "The Dog Who Saved Easter" (Holiday)
- "Vienna Blood" (Drama)