

Scenes from a sunny Miners Jubilee

BELOW: Entries in the Miners Jubilee parade, including the large American flag, line up beside Baker Middle School on Saturday, July 16, 2022. **RIGHT:** Kids enjoy a bouncy experience in Geiser-Pollman Park on Friday.

Photos: Baker County Chamber of Commerce/Contributed; Ian Crawford/Baker City Herald



Bullfighters

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Crenshaw sums up the gig as simply “saving cowboys.”

On Saturday, Crenshaw and his fellow bullfighters, Matt Akers and Danny Newman, worked in coordination to distract heated bulls from downed riders with the goal of preventing injury to the rider, the bull, or themselves.

Unlike the bull riding event — and unlike other forms of bullfighting involving swords and matadors or free-style bullfighting — this crew wasn't competing in any way.

Akers, a 36-year-old who's been bullfighting for 13 years, said that even though the fighters try to draw the bull's attention to themselves, the job isn't about being a “showboat.”

“We stay quiet when we have to be,” Akers said. “You could be running out there and make rounds when you don't have to, and you could have a situation where you bring the bull back to the bull rider because you are just focused on that bull.”

The fighters never engaged with the bulls until necessary — often, the bull would buck or run its way out of the arena on its own. Only when a bull moved toward a rider would the fighters step in.

How to head off a bull

Akers said the trio used what he described as a Northwest style of bullfighting, which involves using a tactic called “head and tailing” — one fighter entices the bull forward while another hovers around its backside, causing the territorial beast to spin in circles, unable to pick one target.

They might sometimes stay quiet, but the fighters are hard to miss.

Each wore a long-sleeve shirts with bright red mark-



All three bullfighters in action, from left to right, Matt Akers, Danny Newman and Jackal Crenshaw, on Saturday, July 16, 2022.

ings to catch the eye of the bull, and two fighters — Crenshaw and Newman, who's 51 — wore traditional loose-fitting denim skirts, called baggies, which allow the bull to make contact with cloth instead of the skin and bones of the fighter.

The fighters all wear protective vests and some form of a hockey girdle, also for protection.

And to complete the outfit, Crenshaw wears clown-like face makeup to accompany his waxed blonde mustache, carrying on the tradition of when bullfighters also served as the entertainment during the down time of rodeos.

Crenshaw, despite being the youngest of the three fighters at 24, said he likes to “keep it old school” with his outfit.

While most everyone involved with the rodeo wore flat-bottomed cowboy boots on Saturday, the three fighters donned footwear with molded rubber cleats for traction.

The cleats help the fighters perform the quick, athletic movements necessary to evade charging bulls. Akers has a background in boxing



Bullfighters Matt Akers, left, and Danny Newman, rest between rounds in the bull riding competition Saturday, July 16, 2022, at Baker County Fairgrounds.

and mixed martial arts, sports that require fast feet and movements in short bursts, as does bullfighting.

Crenshaw said that while he can't outrun a bull in a straight line, he's much more nimble than the bulky creatures. All he has to do is run

on a curve, and even with the bull's horns trailing inches behind his rear end, he'll lose the animal.

Sheer athleticism allows the fighters to protect riders and themselves in many scenarios, but according to Akers, certain situations require a

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— Bullfighter Matt Akers

pre-calculated and coordinated effort.

When competitor Wyatt Covington fell from his bull during one of his rides Saturday, something unusual happened. Instead of hitting the dirt, his hand got stuck under the flat braided rope that riders use to hold the bull, leaving his body dragging on the ground while the bull attempted to shed the rider.

Getting the bull to spin in this case, as the fighters typically try to do, would have left Covington underneath the animal.

Instead, the fighters got the bull to “line out” or continue in a straight line. It wasn't until all three yanked on the rope — that's when the bull's horn probed Crenshaw's ribs — that Covington's hand popped out, leaving him uninjured.

“I haven't seen a guy get stuck that bad in a long time,” Akers said.

The frenzy might have seemed like a random scrum to some in the audience that packed the grandstand and bleachers, but Akers says that's far from the truth.

“There's a method to it, there's a system to what we do,” Akers said. “You are making split second decisions and you're executing those decisions to hopefully slip in there and protect a guy.”

Memorial

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This year's event will feature Agent Orange, a truck that Ralph Tramp, Streifel's longtime friend, has been competing with for more than 40 years. The truck is named for its bright orange paint and to remember Agent Orange, a defoliant the U.S. military used in Vietnam that has sickened many veterans. Tramp is a Vietnam veteran.

Other competitors will include a five-engine and three-engine tractor, as well as a twin jet-powered tractor, Streifel said.

Tractors will be displayed Friday morning at the Baker City NAPA auto parts store and at the Baker City Auto Ranch, both on 10th Street.

For rules or pre-entry information, call Streifel at 541-379-5174.

Remembering Mabry

Anders, who was buried with full military honors at the Haines Cemetery, has been honored with a sign designating Milepost 36 on Highway 7, between Baker City and Sumpter, as Mabry Anders Memorial Highway.

Anders' mother, Genevieve Woydziak of Baker City, said the Powder River in that area was a favorite fishing spot for her son. He and his family spent part of a day there before he was deployed to Afghanistan.

Anders was born in Yuma, Arizona, on July 22, 1991. After graduating from high school he entered the U.S. Army in January 2010.

He served in South Korea from June 2010 to June 2011. In March 2012 he deployed to Afghanistan where he was a driver for two route-clearing packages. He was killed in action at Kalagush.

Anders' convoy hit a roadside bomb, and while he was looking for other bombs he was fatally shot.

In a biography on the Facebook page for the Spc. Mabry James Anders Memorial Foundation, he is described as a “fun-loving young man” who “lived life to the fullest.”

“Mab loved the outdoors, riding dirt bikes, off-roading in his jeep, horseback riding and flying helicopters,” the biography goes on. “His humor, strong sense of friendship, encouragement and compassion touched many lives. Mabry was dedicated to his family, friends and his brothers-in-arms. He loved serving his Country and those he served with. A friend quoted Mabry as saying, ‘If you want to learn something in this life, learn how to live!’”

Weather

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But statistically speaking, temperatures typical of summer pretty much coincided with the solstice on June 21.

For the first 20 days of June, the average high temperature was 68.3.

For the rest of the month it was 83.2.

Prior to the solstice, the temperature reached 80 degrees only once in June.

After, the high was 80 or above on seven of 10 days (and 79 on another).

The atmospheric spigot that dripped frequently on the area from early April through early June has been turned off, as well.

Since the solstice, just 0.02 of an inch of rain has been measured at the airport — scarcely enough to dampen the ground.

The National Weather Service is forecasting similar weather through at least the coming weekend, with high temperatures ranging from the upper 80s to low 90s and no rain.

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Quakes

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Just a few earthquakes with magnitudes larger than 3.0, which only cause minor shaking, have occurred in Baker Valley in the past 150 years, according to a DOGAMI publication.

But that doesn't mean the seismic and geologic nature of the valley shouldn't be investigated on a deeper level, McClaughy said.

Baker Valley's geological history

The valley is what geologists call a graben — a German word meaning trench or ditch — a slab of the Earth's crust situated below two other adjacent landmasses.

In Baker Valley's case, those higher chunks of crust are the Elkhorn Mountains to the west, and the much lower hills rising east of the valley.

Those hills, made up of volcanic basalt 10 to 12 million years old, are a relatively young part of the Columbia River Flood Basalts, a massive outpouring of lava, much of it erupting from vents in the Wallowa Mountains, that flowed west along the current route of the Columbia River.

These basalts, which are a few thousand feet thick in places, were later cut through by the Columbia River, and the dark brown rocks make up the towering slopes of the river's gorge.

Some basalt flows extended to the Pacific Ocean, where they form some prominent headlands.

McClaughy uses the analogy of three building blocks to describe the relationship between the valley and the adjacent mountains or hills.

The valley is the middle block, and it's dropping, at the imperceptible rate of most geologic movements, relative to the mountains.

It's this slippage — friction between adjacent chunks of crust that



Kathy Orr/Baker City Herald, File

Faults along the base of the Elkhorn Mountains have caused Baker Valley to drop, and the mountains to rise, over millions of years. When the Earth's crust slips along those faults, earthquakes result. Geologists hope to study the faults within the next several years to learn more about the history of quakes in the valley.

occasionally is released — that causes earthquakes along what geologists call faults.

According to a 2017 USGS report partially authored by McClaughy, the fault on the western edge of the valley, at the foot of the Elkhorns, is the most recently active, in geologic time anyway.

The report says this fault has created roughly 3,000 feet of vertical displacement over the past 7 million years — the reason for the Elkhorn's prominence, with the highest peak, Rock Creek Butte, rising more than 5,000 feet above the valley floor.

Additionally, there's evidence of fault activity there within the last 2.5 million years, meaning the fault can be considered “potentially active,” McClaughy said.

Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) evidence shows some other, smaller faults near the Elkhorns to be 120,000 years or younger, based on

the fact that they cut through similarly aged glacial deposits.

Detailed geologic studies planned

With other statewide geologic studies completed, McClaughy said Baker County is near the top of the state's priority list for a survey using current technology.

“The target goal within the next five years is to begin the project,” McClaughy said. “Then it would take us about three to four years to complete an adequate geologic assessment of the larger Baker Valley.”

USGS geologists would use high-resolution mapping and geophysics to get a better understanding of rock formations in the valley, as well as what's underneath them. McClaughy and his colleagues from the federal agency will be able to see further into earth's crust and potentially recognize different types of fault systems — or potentially new faults they

didn't know existed.

“There are certainly ones buried at depth below the valley, beneath the river fill, that we don't know their location, orientation or what they look like,” McClaughy said.

They'll also get a better understanding of when the faults were last active, if they are still active, how big the potential earthquakes could be and what type of risk that might pose to the valley.

“You want to know two things: what is the largest earthquake that could develop, and how often do they occur,” McClaughy said. “I don't have the answer to that at this point.”

That is vital data, because the magnitude of a quake largely determines the severity of damage.

In Baker City, older, unreinforced masonry stone buildings, of which there are many in the historic downtown district, are particularly vulnerable to shaking.