

GU golfers fourth in Hermiston

Team holds a successful fundraiser

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

HERMISTON — The Grant Union boys golf team finished in fourth place with a 396 at last Friday's Big River Invitational in Hermiston.

Nixyaawii came out on top with a 378.

A total of 75 boys and girls competed on the long par 70 course. Other teams competing included Echo, Heppner, Wallowa, Enterprise and Imbler.

Boys medalist was Logan Grieb of Heppner with 82. Grant Union's Nathan Gehley

was a few strokes away with 89 for fifth.

Rounding out the scoring for Grant Union were Duane Stokes, 96; Connor White, 97 (a personal best) and Jay Goldblatt, 114.

On the girls side, Heppner shot a 464 and Enterprise, 511. Medalist was Amanda Rea of Heppner with 92.

Grant Union's Tiana Allen tied for seventh place.

"It was a great day on the Columbia River for a golf match," said head coach Ron Lundbom. "No wind and mild temperatures made it a good day to score. We improved our team

score, but, again, a couple of bad holes made the scores higher for all of the Grant Union players."

Lundbom said the team will work on their short game in preparation for Friday's competition.

Grant Union competes at the 2A Invitational in Union at the Buffalo Peaks Golf Course at 10 a.m.

Last Saturday, seven teams competed in the Grant Union golf team's annual fundraiser scramble.

Mitch Saul and Colt Carpenter won the gross event.

Kathleen Lee, Chuck Coffman, Matt Aasness, and Dave Nelson were first; and Andy Radinovich, Kevin Krause, Rob Raschio, Kevin Percy were sec-

ond in the net event.

Devon Stokes was KP winner at 9'2". Nathan Gehley and Kathleen Lee were accuracy shot winners. Mitch Saul won the 50/50 contest.

"The winners were all gracious enough to donate all the prize money back to the team," Lundbom said. "The silent auction was a success also with all the items auctioned off."

He said hats, shirts and coats are still available to purchase. Those interested may reach the coach at 541-620-0427.

"I want to thank and the sponsors, donors and golfers for making this a huge success," Lundbom said.

TRAIL

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Yet there are some downsides to this trail that must be mentioned.

The first is the near infestation of ticks. Before you head out, liberally apply bug repellent. And be sure to wear pants, a long-sleeved shirt and a hat, bring extra bug spray for future

doses and check yourself and your hiking partners closely at the end of the trip.

The second downside is that the angling — one of the main draws of the river during the majority of the year — ranges from poor to impossible during the spring runoff. A kayak would be more useful equipment than a fishing rod while the water is at its most turbid.

A third downside is that

crossing the river is not possible. A jaunt up Cougar Creek Trail, for instance, requires fording the river. That is not possible until at least mid-May.

Yet there are some positives too.

You can wander off trail for some favorite Eastern Oregon spring outdoor hobbies, as both antler and mushroom hunting can be very good.

About 5.2 miles in, just as the trail crosses Corral Creek, there is a riverside flat underneath towering ponderosas. Turning around here would make for a good hike of 10.4 miles — a good training day for those dou-

ble-digit alpine hikes that await this summer.

Those with greater ambition, or who had a more active winter, can continue for miles more. There are dispersed campsites all along the river, with very little chance you'll have human company anywhere nearby.

If you plan ahead, you can leave a shuttle vehicle at the other end of the trail at the North Fork John Day Campground, about 23 miles as the river and the trail winds. But even if it is a simple out-and-back, the North Fork John Day Trail has plenty to offer close to home.

TRACK

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"I plan to make it to state in pole vault and show up better than last year," said Copenhagen, who's been in track since seventh grade and is competing in pole vault and javelin. "I plan to get some new (personal records) this year."

Wilson's events include high jump, long jump, triple jump and the 4x400 relay.

"I'm looking forward to a great season, and I plan on making it back to state. It's been great working with John Houk (the jump coach). I've been working with him since fourth grade."

Brock, involved in track since seventh grade, competes in the long jump, triple jump, hurdles and 4x400.

"I'm really excited to see how our team does," she said. "Overall, we're pretty strong on the girls side."

The Grant Union girls team came in second behind 4A Ontario at the April 9 Oster Burns Lions Invitational in Burns, out of 12 teams.

Smith is aided by five assistant coaches who help train athletes in the various events, including Ken Boethin, hurdles; John Houk, long jump and triple jump; Kelsey Wright, jav-

elin and high jump; Angie Lusco, discus and shot put; and Buzz Gilmore, pole vault. Smith trains athletes for sprints, distance and relay.

"I'm so thankful for my coaches," Smith said. "The quality of performances that I'm getting from these athletes wouldn't be possible without these coaches that specialize."

The current challenge, Smith said, is avoiding injuries as they head down the stretch, competing while training for districts.

The Meet of Champions in Salem, set for Saturday, is the next big meet.

Nine athletes have qualified for the event, including four upperclassmen and five underclassmen.

"It's 1A-4A meet, and they have to qualify," Smith said. "The standards to qualify are equal to or above the state qualifying for 2A."

"Those who go to the Meet of Champions usually end up being close to the number that go to state," she added. "This is the only time they get the quality of competition and get to see athletes from the west side of the state."

Grant Union hosted the GU Small Schools Meet on Tuesday of this week.

Smith, training runners on the track, quipped, "We're already taking for granted that we have the new track."

Construction of the new eight-lane track was completed in the summer of 2014.

"It's nice to compete at home and train at home," she said. "I'm excited to compete on Prairie City's new track. That gives us a total of four meets within the county — three here and one in Prairie City."

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