



Contributed photos

Alicie Moore returns the ball, her teammates Hailie Wright, left, and Mariah Moulton in back, at the national AAU tournament in Florida.

Gold Diggers AAU volleyball team takes on nationals

Volleyball bond brings many U.S. teams together

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

It was the journey of a lifetime for the Gold Diggers AAU volleyball team, which competed at the June 25-28 AAU Junior Girls National Volleyball Championships in Orlando, Florida.

"It was a brand new experience for the girls," said Kristi Moore, who coached the 18U Gold Digger team.

Held at the ESPN Wide World of Sports complex, the tournament had over 80 courts in just one portion of the convention center.

"It was kind of crazy," said team member McKeely Miller. "I wasn't expecting so many teams."

Two girls on the team of seven had never flown before, and none had previously visited Florida.

The Gold Diggers won the June 8-9 regional tournament, the RIVAL AZ Championships, in Lake Havasu, Arizona, to qualify for the national championships.

At the Florida competition, the team was pushed to new heights.

"They had to make a lot of adjustments with size of the court and speed of the game as well as the size of the competition," Moore said. "They adjusted well, though, and got to witness ways that in-



From left: Kaylee Wright, Alicie Moore, Baylee Combs, Mariah Moulton, Katlyn Wells, McKeely Miller and Hailie Wright.

ternational volleyball speeds the game up."

The biggest change was having 6 feet of service space, when they are used to having more space for the jump serve.

Some differences in the game gave them greater flexibility, while other rules were more strict.

"The girls adjusted well and grew more confident as the tournament progressed," Moore said.

She said because they were playing in the 18U division, most of their opponents had already

graduated from high school.

The other teams had also been practicing and competing together since last fall, while the Gold Diggers teammates have been involved in other sports, including basketball, track, softball and golf.

"It was a good insight into a higher level of volleyball play," Moore said.

Miller said one of the greatest difficulties was facing taller teams.

"We have tall teams over here, but we don't play them often," she



The Gold Diggers compete at the National AAU tournament in Orlando, Florida.

said. "Trying to get through the block was a challenge."

She said although the teams they faced were tough, it was a benefit because it forced them to be more strategic.

"It definitely made me a better player," she said. "It was a really good experience to go and play as hard as we could. It was a fun trip."

The girls had three days of pool play, and the girls improved every day, Moore said.

"By day four, our team worked together, communicated and

showed their athleticism," she said.

They won their first match on the final day.

While the competition was their main focus, the trip also gave the seven Grant County girls and their coach an opportunity to sightsee, including visits to Gatorland and Cocoa Beach.

Now that the trip is over, the team will be fundraising for the rest of the summer.

"The girls have already been talking about returning next year, but we will see," Moore said.

Some changes affect Grant Union's 2018-19 sports

Blue Mountain Eagle

The 2A Grant Union Prospector varsity volleyball, basketball and track teams will be in a new league, the Blue Mountain Conference, starting in the 2018-19 school year. The teams were previously in the Wapiti League.

Grant Union will compete with Enterprise, Union, Heppner, Pilot Rock, Stanfield and Weston-McEwen in the new league.

Elgin and Imbler schools are now in the 1A class.

The Prospector football team will be in a special district with Heppner, Stanfield, Riverside and Weston-McEwen.

Grant Union's softball team will move from the 3A class to 2A next year.

All participating OSAA dance teams will perform in a one-day competition at state, instead of two rounds held in two days.

Three coaching positions opened after the 2017-18 school year for Prospector volleyball, girls basketball and baseball.

Ali Abrego, a Humbolt Ele-



Eagle file photo

Grant Union outside hitter Sydney Brockway (11) delivers in a homecoming volleyball game against Imbler last year. Grant Union's volleyball, basketball and track teams will compete in a new league, the Blue Mountain Conference, next year.

mentary special education teacher, was hired as the new volleyball coach.

The new head girls basketball coach has been selected and is

awaiting board approval in August.

The baseball coaching position will be posted soon and closed when filled.



Eagle file photo

Grant Union head coach Jason Miller leads his Prospector football team in a game against Weston-McEwen last year. The teams will be in a special district next year for football with Heppner, Stanfield and Riverside.

Kuhn wins PPGA championship at Silvies

Blue Mountain Eagle

Darren Kuhn of Pocatello, Idaho, won the Pacific Northwest Master-40 Amateur Championship at The Retreat & Links at Silvies Valley Ranch.

The 22 seed beat 1-seed Jeff Byrnes of Buckley, Washington, in the match-play championship June 29. The 43rd championship, conducted by the Pacific Northwest Golf Association, consisted of amateur male golfers over 40.

The competition began June 26, and the top 32 scores advanced to the single-elimination championship flight. The competitors golfed the two reversible courses during the tournament.