



FOUR-legged caddies

Goats pack clubs on new Silvies challenge course

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

Descriptions of McVeigh's Gauntlet, the fourth golf course at The Retreat & Links at Silvies Valley Ranch south of Seneca, ranged from "beautiful" and "amazing" to "intimidating," but the golfers trying out the course on opening day most frequently described the seven-hole challenge course as "fun."

Two goat caddies, Mike LeChevon and Bruce LeGoat, stole the show July 10, taking their maiden voyage on the course with new friends.

The happy-go-lucky Boer goats are trained to be caddies for visitors from all over the globe.

Two more caddies are also prepared for the task, and the owners said they eventually would like to have six to 10 goats ready to pack clubs and beverages on the course.

Sandy Campbell, who owns the ranch with her husband, Dr. Scott Campbell, assisted with the goats during the opening event.

"The golfers walked them, and they did well," she said, adding the only problem was running out of the goats' favorite treat: peanuts.

Surrounded by hills of sagebrush and juniper trees, a unique feature of the challenge course is the need to drive the ball from ridgetop to ridgetop.

Some golfers may wonder if they should have packed hiking boots, as the trails from hole to hole involve walking up and down paths that are inaccessible to golf carts.

The goat caddies may seem like an odd idea, but Campbell said, with the higher altitude, at almost 5,000 feet, the help of four-legged friends comes in handy for golfers.

Golf course architect Dan Hixson said McVeigh is designed to give golfers a difficult, but not impossible, game.



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Architect of The Links at Silvies Valley Ranch Dan Hixson takes a swing at McVeigh's Gauntlet July 10. In back, from left, are Akbar Chisti, Sandy Campbell, Sheryl Miller and Colby Marshall.

"The intent is to get someone on the tee to see something they haven't seen before," he said.

If golfers hit a bad shot, he said, it's going to end up in the sage brush, but it's still playable.

Hixson designed the other three courses at Silvies — Craddock, Hankins and Chief Egan — and he is the vice president/golf and resort general manager.

He's also known for building the Bandon Crossings Golf Course on the coast and the Wine Valley Golf Course in Walla Walla, Washington.

The opening day was the first time Hixson had tried the course since grass was added, and he managed to make it through the course without losing his ball.

A bonus hole at the halfway point of the course gave players a brief reprieve under the shade of the famous "Beer Tree," which had a cooler waiting for the participants.

An approximately 8-by-60-foot bumpy stretch of green on the hole gave players a unique experience.

Three teams of three enjoyed that first round.

"I think this course is a lot of fun," said Akbar Chisti of Beaverton. "It's basically a fantasy golf course with lots of chances to rejoice and grimace."

Chisti, who owns Seamus Golf with his wife, Megan, designed the golf caddie packs the goats were testing.

"It's about as cool a project as we could have done," Akbar said.

He said he was looking forward to returning to Silvies soon and bringing his family.

PNGA member Jay Brandt and his wife, Cynthia, of Bend enjoyed the morning at McVeigh.

"It's beautiful and a delight," Cynthia said of the course and scenery, but added with all the nonplayable, out-of-bounds areas, "it's not for the faint of heart."

Choosing the right club is important.

"I used my 7 wood a lot," she said.

Michael Williams, who is director of travel and lifestyle with golfWRX.com and host of the podcast "The 19th Hole," was also out enjoying the game.

"You get a look at these holes as something you're not going to see anywhere else, and that's the fun of it," he said. "The goats are what these guys are about, making the land better and using the resources better — that's Silvies Valley."

Silvies Valley Ranch includes the resort with a spa opening soon, but it is also a working ranch, raising over 1,000 goats a year as well as a herd of cattle.

Colby Marshall, vice president of livestock and guest services, said the team is excited to open their fourth course.

"Our focus is to make destination travel fun and unique," he said. "That is what the McVeigh Gauntlet golf course was designed to be."

The cost for a round at McVeigh is \$77, and for a goat golf caddy, the price is also \$77.



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The first golfing group to try out McVeigh's Gauntlet July 10 at The Links at Silvies Valley Ranch are, left, golf course architect Dan Hixson, who designed all four golf courses at the ranch, Michael Williams of golfWRX.com and Akbar Chisti of Seamus Golf. The men lead the goat caddies along to the next hole. In back is ranch owner Sandy Campbell.

Two local youths qualify for National Junior Olympic meet

Four athletes compete at regional event

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

Two Grant County youth athletes, Mason Morris and Anna Jacobs, qualified for the July 23-29 National Junior Olympic Track & Field Championships.

The event, sponsored by USA Track and Field, will be held at North Carolina A&T University in Greensboro.

Morris, 14, who will be a freshman at Grant Union Junior-Senior High School this fall, placed first in the triple jump (40-3.5) and second in the long jump (18-4) at the July 5-8 Junior Olympic Region 13 Meet in Bend.

"Going in to nationals, he is seeded third in triple jump and 15th in long jump," said his coach Sonna Smith.

Morris has opted out of taking the trip to Greensboro, but he said it was "pretty cool" to rank well nationally. This is Morris' first year in the sport.

He had some training from Grant Union jump coach John Houk last spring as an



Contributed photo

Long jumper Anna Jacobs, 8, of Prairie City qualified for the National Junior Olympics, competing at a regional event in Bend.



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Mason Morris practices at the long jumper pit on Thursday at Grant Union Junior-Senior High School in John Day.

eighth-grader on the junior high team.

When Houk became ill, Morris continued learning from coach Smith and teammates.

He and his family, including his mom Sophia Morris,

moved to the area in April, and since there was no opportunity for baseball, his usual spring sport, he decided to try track and field. Mason said he caught on easily, and he's enjoyed it.

"It's more of an independ-

ent sport, and I made new friends," he said. "It'll be fun to get back to it."

Morris also competed well in the 200-meter dash, javelin, triple jump and the 4x100 with Justin Hodge, Daniel Henry and Dylan

Clark at Grant Union.

Jacobs, 8, will be in Lorie Croghan's third-grade class at Prairie City School this fall.

She qualified at regionals with a third-place finish in the long jump (9-4.5). Jacobs expected to know where she stands in the national rankings post press time.

She is planning to attend the event with her mom, Jenny Jacobs, who is also her coach.

When she started practicing long jump last year, Anna could jump 8 feet.

This year, she's hit marks of 10 and 11 feet in practice.

"My mom did long jump when she was in high school, so she's teaching me," Anna said. "It's just kind of fun because you meet new people."

Anna also enjoys the 400- and 100-meter dashes.

She's looking forward to nationals and has plans to visit a roller coaster park with her mom during the trip.

Jacobs' mom is starting an Eastern Oregon track and field club next spring for Prairie City and John Day youth, ages 8-18.

She imagines most participants would be elementary and junior high students with community members and parents who specialize in events helping coach the youth.

If there is enough interest, she would schedule four or five competitions at Track Town youth league meets and US-ATF meets to help expose kids to track and field.

Jenny said the competitions are fun and exciting.

"Big city meets have a totally different atmosphere," she said. "The more you can expose your kids to a high-level competition situation, the more apt they are to rise to the occasion. It will help them flourish in their sports career."

The goal would be to eventually host a Track Town event locally.

Anna likes the idea of the local club.

"Practicing by myself is boring, so having other kids compete with me would be fun," she said.

For more information about the track club, email Jacobs at jencjacobs@gmail.com.

Also competing at the regional meet were Trinity Hutchison, who will be a Grant Union senior this fall, who placed 10th in triple jump with a mark of 33-3.5, and Jordan Hall, who will be a Grant Union sophomore, who placed ninth in the triple jump at 37-6.5 and 13th in 110 hurdles at 18.56.