



WILDFIRE WINS!

9-10-11 Little League softball team brings home state title

By Angel Carpenter
Blue Mountain Eagle

The 9-10-11 Grant County Wildfire team blazed a championship trail of success at the July 19-23 Oregon Little League Softball Tournament, taking the title in an impressive comeback.

The Grant County girls were undefeated as they entered the semifinals on Sunday, where they experienced their first and only loss to Del Norte, 4-6.

Wildfire followed up with a 22-1 win over Willow Creek later that day. In earlier games, Wildfire beat Bend North on Thursday 6-1, and Willow Creek on Saturday 19-11.

On Monday, Wildfire had to win two games against Del Norte for the title.

The team maintained their composure and dominated 12-3 in game one, followed by a closer 6-4 win for the championship.

Grant County third baseman Lauren Wenger had the crowd cheering when she hit a 2-run infield homer in the bottom of the fourth inning in game one.

The Wildfire kept their cool in the top of the sixth inning of the final game.

With pitcher Drewsey Williams in the circle, short stop Savannah Watterson caught a pop-up fly ball, also catching for the second out.

With one runner on base, Wenger nabbed a grounder and threw the final out to first baseman Halle Parsons.

"They played solid defense, put the ball in play hard and Drewsey threw strikes," said head coach Zach Williams, adding the team was patient on offense.

"They really did play as a team," the coach said. "All 13 girls contributed to the success of the team in this tournament."

Drewsey Williams said the team worked as a family and helped each other through it.

"I think the whole team just got together and talked about what we've accomplished this whole season and what we needed to think about in this last game," she said.

"It's definitely an accomplishment," she added. "The whole season, we were just excited to come back and redeem ourselves."

Last year, the Wildfire placed third at the state tournament.

Wenger said winning felt good.

"Our team really put their



Contributed photos/Tanni Wenger Photography

The Grant County Wildfire players gather to celebrate their win of the Oregon Little League Softball Championships in Medford July 23 along with the coaches, from left, assistant coach Marissa Williams, head coach Zach Williams, Ray Wenger and Levi Watterson.



Grant County Wildfire catcher Addie Northway goes after the ball in the state tournament.

heart into it and left it all on the field," she said. "It was cool to win and make it that far."

Catcher Addy Northway said the win took teamwork and was hard-fought. She said she enjoys making the calls as catcher and seeing the field and players from behind the plate.

"We were trying to push ourselves hard for that win because we've been wanting it all season," she said. "I want

to say thank you to the coaches, because they helped us all season."

Coach Williams said Northway played well.

"She blocked almost everything, which allows the pitcher to be confident throwing the pitches she needs to throw," he said. "Addy's quick release and throws down to second base kept the Del Norte runners from stealing second base



Grant County Wildfire pitcher Drewsey Williams is in action at the state tournament.

every time they get on first base, which is what usually happens at this level."

Drewsey Williams received the championship game ball from the tournament director for her efforts as pitcher — she pitched all 12 innings in the final two games.

"Drew had 14 walks in the championship series and a few timely hits along with aggressive base running that was

enough to put us over the top," the coach said.

The director also highlighted Watterson and Wenger for their contributions.

Coach Williams said the team has been battle tested, playing in many 12U tournaments this season — for a total of about 45 games.

"Their positive 'team first' attitude and making routine defensive plays really is the

key to winning under this kind of pressure," coach Williams said. "The experience these ladies have gotten over the past several years will do nothing but make them better in years to come."

The team is finished for the season, as there is no regional tournament for this age group, and they will celebrate with a barbecue at the coach's home soon.

The coach said his assistants Levi Watterson, Ray Wenger and Marissa Williams have played a vital part.

"They all bring something different and necessary to the team, and they love the girls," he said. "I absolutely couldn't do it without them, and the parents."

He added, "It's a really great team — everybody does their part."

Championship series notable stats
Drewsey Williams: 12 innings pitched, 2 wins, 10 strikeouts, 7 walks, 5 hits
Presley Lenz: 2 for 6
Halle Parsons: 3 for 6
Savannah Watterson: defensively responsible for 10 putouts or assists of 18 total in game two

Notable tournament stats
Preslee Lenz was 10 for 16
Halle Parsons was 11 for 10
Lauren Wenger was 5 for 10
Savannah Watterson was 6 for 18
Lexi McKrola was 2 for 6
The team hit .316 for the entire tournament, 48 for 152.

John Day swim team makes a splash at home meet

Hodge, Mead earn high-point awards

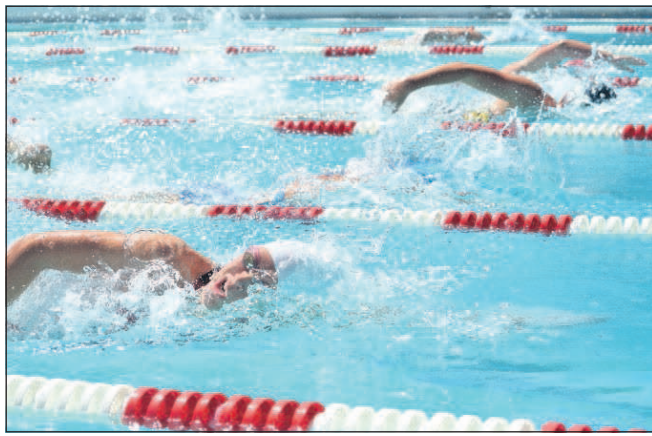
By Angel Carpenter
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Swimmers battled in fierce competition while fans packed the poolside at Gleason and John Day city park to cheer them on at the July 20-22 John Day Swim Meet.

Two members of the John Day swim team, Justin Hodge in the 13-14 boys division and Rhea Mead in the 15 and up girls division, proved themselves by earning high-point awards at the meet.

The John Day team, with 50 swimmers, placed fourth at the meet, earning 313.5 points.

Prineville finished first with 629 points, The Dalles second with 380.5 and Lakeview third with 378.5. In fifth place was La Grande with 308 points, followed by Hi-Desert



John Day swimmer Rhea Mead, left, is trailing, but gains on her opponents to win this event held on Saturday at the John Day Swim Meet.

(Burns) with 156 and Pendleton with 123.5.

John Day head coach Stephanie LeQuieu said she was pleased with her team's efforts, especially competing with some year-round swimmers.

"We had several kids who shaved off a bunch of time on their strokes," she said, adding one swimmer took 60 seconds off their record.

"They've improved a great deal in a short time this season," she added.

LeQuieu is the new head coach this season, picking up where Sabrina Howard left off.

LeQuieu, a Mt. Vernon resident, was assistant coach for two years before taking the lead, and before that was involved in officiating at the meets.



John Day's Justin Hodge stays ahead of opponents at the local swim meet.

This season, she's been focusing on the swimmers' stroke technique as well as building strength and endurance.

"I couldn't ask for a better group," LeQuieu said.

Out of the 50 swimmers, there are 20 in the youngest "fishies" group.

She said some of the middle division swimmers often ask to help with the younger

group.

"They are beginning to bond, and the younger swimmers look up to the older ones," she said.

Last weekend's home meet was the fourth district competition for the John Day team. They've also competed in Prineville, Lakeview and Burns.

The four teams make up the East Cascade District, and

will have their championship meet July 27-29 in Prineville.

LeQuieu said there have been several new swimmers join the group this year.

"I'm thankful for the new families, the new parents stepping up and being involved," she said. "I feel very supported."

John Day Swim Team first-place finishers

Girls 10 & Under 200 Yard Freestyle
Sierra May, 3:10.53

Girls 15 & Over 200 Yard Freestyle
Rhea Mead, 2:20.48

Girls 18 & Under 200 Yard Medley Relay

1) Rhea Mead 2) Amelia Hall 3) Deja Amsden 4) Torie Coalwell — 2:31.12

Boys 13-14 100 Yard Freestyle
Justin Hodge, 1:02.07

Girls 15 & Over 100 Yard Freestyle
Rhea Mead, 1:03.29

Boys 13-14 100 Yard Butterfly
Andrew Hunt, 1:14.22

Girls 15 & Over 100 Yard Backstroke
Rhea Mead, 1:16.24

Boys 14 & Under 200 Yard Freestyle Relay

1) Andrew Hunt 2) Jack Strong 3) Thomas LeQuieu 4) Justin Hodge — 1:59.51

Boys 13-14 100 Yard Breaststroke
Thomas LeQuieu, 1:26.17

Boys 13-14 50 Yard Freestyle
Justin Hodge, 26.15