

SHOOTING THE BREEZE

TO REBUILD OR TO REPLACE?

Some guns, like cars, are simply classics, and classics never go out of style. A few years back, my favorite rifle (christened long ago as “Old Reliable”) was at a fork in the road. The barrel was not giving any sort of consistent, acceptable accuracy. Extensive research and precision equipment revealed that the barrel was toast. It was time to make a decision.

When your favorite fire-tick is suddenly throwing wild groups, regardless of the loads you feed it, it could be symptomatic of a ruined barrel. Now before you get a speeding ticket making your way to the gunsmith, a proper diagnosis is key. My barrel was inspected with a borescope, a digital camera on the end of a small rod which when inserted into a rifle’s barrel can reveal any micro imperfections or problems on your computer screen. These “problems” can vary in origin and severity.



Dale Valade

Not all accuracy problems stem from a burnt out barrel. Improper bedding or poor cleaning practices are often to blame, neither of which require a new barrel.

Poorly crafted or inconsistent ammunition is also frequent. Some rifles can be impudently picky about what bullets they will or will not shoot well. Wooden stocks swell or shrink in moist or artificial climates, scopes wear out and break. Many are the potential candidates causing accuracy issues in our rifles.

An improper diagnosis of issues can lead to unnecessary treatments of the same. In medical terms, one would not undergo a heart transplant if the issue was merely an ingrown toenail. Once proper diagnostics indicate a bad barrel, there really are



Contributed photo

Columnist Dale Valade sights in his rebuilt .30-06 rifle in the spring of 2016.

only two options, to rebuild or to replace. Such was my decision to make at the aforementioned fork. A quick perusal of new firearms proved dissatisfactory and quickly led me to look into a new barrel. What can I say, I love classics. The newer guns just don’t have the aesthetic appeal that classic rifles such as the Winchester Model 70 holds for me. After

making a call to my gunsmith I learned that the cost of rebarreling was roughly the same price as a replacement firearm of equal brand value. Without hesitation, I pulled the trigger. Pun very much intended. After several weeks, Old Reliable was back at it again, better than ever. Quality takes time. You’ll have to be patient while your gunsmith works his magic.

When going the rebuild route, you can be certain you aren’t getting a lemon, and you can have it built for any caliber that your action is compatible with.

Obviously not everyone will choose to rebuild but rather to replace when the time comes. Whatever your budget, there are options. Many of my friends like the new cartridges, the look of carbon barrels, chassis stocks, obtuse bolt handles and muzzle breaks. Reinventions of the wheel abound with technology improving by the year. Some of the newer designs are very basic and practical while others are much more complex. Anything that gets us out shooting is a good thing. Whatever might be your taste, there is something out there for you.

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Dale Valade is a local country gent with a deep love for hand-loading, hunting and shooting.

Boys

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these guys had an incredible season,” he said.

He said it was hard for the seniors to end their high school career with the loss, but added they had a great year for Grant Union.

“Their leadership and contribution to our program will definitely be missed,” he said.

Sharp said the future is bright for his team, with some depth developed and all of their pitchers returning.

“I was very proud of the boys that they kept compet-



The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Grant Union/Prairie City Prospector first baseman Roen Langum catches for an out in the second-round playoff game against the Lakeview Honkers.

ing,” he said. “They could have easily given up, but they didn’t. They battled until the end. They represented our community very well.”

He added, “They know that our chances for next year look very good. I know I’m already looking forward to next season.”

Baseball

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Grant Union hit the gas in the bottom of the second inning.

The Prospectors tied the score when Langum singled and Mason Morris doubled, sending his teammate home. Peyton Neault, Logan McCluskey and Jacob Vaughan also doubled in the inning to gain a 5-2 lead, McCluskey with 2 RBIs.

The Honkers had two runners on base in the fourth. Then Tristan Morris struck a batter out, and another Honker was out at first.

Lakeview had the bases

loaded when Mason Morris made the grab for the final out of the inning.

Sharp said Mason “went all out” for the sinking line drive.

“That, right there, might have been the difference in the game,” Sharp said. “If he misses that ball, it gets by him, that’s three runs. That was a heck of a play by a freshman kid ... an incredible catch.”

Grant Union made steady gains with one run in the third and the fourth.

Prospector Russell Hodge, ninth in the lineup, hit a double in the sixth inning and scored a run off of Tristan Morris’ double to bring up the 8-4 lead.

Tristan Morris is Grant

Union’s leadoff hitter, and Sharp said he’s been a pleasant surprise as pitcher.

“He came halfway through the season and said he’d like to pitch,” Sharp said. He noted the junior had previously injured his wrist and wasn’t sure if he’d gain mobility back.

“We got him in the bull pen,” the coach said. “It was just like — holy cow, he can pitch.”

He said his team plays with a lot of confidence, and though they were down early in the game against Lakeview, they didn’t let it rattle them.

“They just stay focused, they stay positive, and they just keep grinding away,” he said.

Girls

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unable to score any runs, senior Prospector Hailie Wright had two hits, including a double in the third inning. She singled in the fifth, advancing to third base while senior Madi McKrola was at bat and drew a walk. Tiler Voigt, a junior, singled in the fourth.

McKrola was walked twice, and Wright and junior Taylor Allen were also walked.

North Douglas scored on some of Grant Union’s errors, including a couple runs in the seventh when an overthrown ball landed out of play.

“Part of what got us into trouble at the end was trying too hard,” Williams said.

On the defensive side, Grant Union’s three outfielders — Allen at left field, center fielder junior Baylee Combs and right fielder Kori Jo Girvin — caught fly balls for outs.

Grant Union senior first

baseman Marissa Smith caught a foul ball for an out in the third inning, and forced several runners out at first base.

“We had a really great season, and even though it didn’t end the way we wanted it to, I wouldn’t trade this team for the world,” Smith said. “I’m very proud of every single one of them.”

Williams said, although they didn’t reach their ultimate goal of winning state, he’s still proud of his team.

“My girls have never given up, they never gave up that game, they kept trying,” Williams said. “They’ve had a great career. ... They’re awesome.”

He said his seniors Strong, Smith, Wright, McKrola and Girvin “cannot be replaced.”

“They’ve left a legacy with the other girls that I hope just continues to get passed down of how to be a leader, how to lead your team, how to be human and have good character, and they’ve done a good job,” Williams said.

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The Eagle/Angel Carpenter

Grant Union/Prairie City Prospector Macy Strong pitches the Wednesday, May 22, game against the Lost River Raiders in the second-round state playoff game in John Day.

Softball

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as somewhat of a surprise to Williams.

“We didn’t do everything wrong obviously, but we made some mistakes that we don’t generally make,” he said.

“I think we were just really jacked up,” he said. “We’ve been playing for this forever.”

He added, “When you’re playing No. 1 vs. 16 and you get to the fourth inning and you’re 0-0 you start to tighten up and get really nervous.”

The fourth inning made the difference in the game as well as Macy Strong’s pitching, he said.

“We got some big hits from the bottom of the lineup, and it was huge,” he said. “We’re excited to get away from here with a win.”