

SHOOTING THE BREEZE Caught with your pants down

Hunting (like life) is 90% being in the right place at the right time. Of course, it takes skill, discipline, continual training, but nothing can take the place of standing in the exact right location when luck comes to call. Of course, when that does happen you need to be prepared or you may just miss out.

Many years ago, a friend of mine and I were hunting elk in the mountains. We hiked and hiked all morning hoping to get a shot at a bull as that is what we had tags for. Upon cresting a summit overlooking a small bunch of trees, we stopped to glass before proceeding. Biology being what it is, I felt the call, and so I leaned Old Reliable up against a tree and took a few steps away to get some privacy. No sooner had I unzipped my fly and passed the point of no return when my buddy exclaims, "There's a bull!" Trying to hurriedly finish taking a leak, without frantically zipping up the family jewels in the fly of my pants while grasping for a rifle that I conveniently left out of reach, led to missing our only chance at a bull. I never got a look at him, nor did I see a bull elk the rest of the season.

I've seen cheechakos and pros alike neglect to remove scope caps, forget to load their rifles or omit to disengage the safety in the heat of the moment. I've heard of a fella who get so excited that he ejected all of the cartridges from his .30-30 without once touching the trigger. Maybe just a little buck fever.

Another tethered their .270 to a pack animal with such amazing efficacy that when he jumped a big buck just off the trail it took him several minutes to get it free and into action, and of course, by then the buck was long gone. Frequently, variable-power scopes get turned to the maximum setting in anticipation of a long-range shot only to rob us of a 40-yard shot at a moving animal who doesn't permit us the necessary time for any scope adjustments.

Then there are the dudes who left their ammo at home or, worse yet, brought the wrong caliber. The list literally is endless and gets longer each year.

Then are those times where everything just works to come together, and campfire lore becomes reality. The pictures and taxidermy stand idyllic, as it were, as a sort of monument to correct choices meets proper preparation. And it is worth every moment of work that it took to get there.

Who's to say which outcome it will be each time we take to the woods? Moral of the story is this: All the fancy gadgets and preparation in the world are for not if you aren't ready at the moment of truth. When that moment comes, don't get caught with your pants down.

Want to sound off? Write to us at shootingthebreezebme@gmail.com!

Dale Valade is a local country gent with a love for the outdoors, handloading, hunting and shooting.



Dale Valade



Contributed photo/Marissa Williams

The Lady Prospectors 18U softball team gathers for a team photo Sunday. The girls took third overall at the North American Fastpitch Association Summer Nationals Tournament in Newberg last weekend.

Lady Pros take third at national tourney in Newberg

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

When COVID-19 canceled the Lady Prospectors' softball season, head coach Zach Williams told the girls, no matter what happened, he would keep trying to salvage some semblance of a season.

As soon as the fields opened up in June, Williams put together a team of mostly Grant Union girls and got them to commit to showing up for practice.

The perseverance paid off last weekend when the 18U Lady Pros took third at the North American Fastpitch Association Summer Nationals in Newberg.

Out of the six tournaments, he registered the team to compete in, Newberg's NAFA tourney, which was the only tournament the girls were able to play in, the rest canceled due to COVID-19.

"In the end, it was short and sweet," he said. "But we ended it on our terms."

Williams said he tried to put together a team of only Grant

TEAM ROSTER	
Grant Union	La Grande
Taylor Allen, going to Mt. Hood Community College in the fall to play softball	Ali Brock, going to University of Montana in the fall to play softball
Shaine Madden, going to Columbia Basin College in the fall to play softball	Jayce Seavert, going to Oregon Tech in the fall to play softball
Harli Grove	Grace Neer
Riley Robertson	Kara Gooderham, currently an Eastern Oregon University student and soccer player
Paige Weaver	
Raney Anderson	

Union girls, which, in years past, is what he has always done with the older players, and they treat the summer league as a high school softball season. He said he could not get the numbers this year.

Williams said, in addition to seven Grant Union players, he brought four high school players from La Grande High School.

The four-day national tournament kicked off Thursday.

The Lady Pros won both of their pool games, shutting out Northwest Mayhem 8-0 and

besting South Valley Storm 4-3 on a walk-off by Jacee Seavert, a La Grande High School graduate who will play softball for Oregon Tech in the fall.

As a result of winning their first two games, Williams said the Lady Pros were seeded first in their pool and placed in the gold bracket.

He said, in a 16-team tourney, the top eight teams place in a gold bracket, and the bottom half place in silver, or platinum, brackets.

The girls defeated the

Northwest Thunder, 5-0, but the Diamond Bandits shut out the Lady Pros 10-0 in their quarterfinal game.

With their backs against the wall, the Lady Pros had to step up and win Saturday.

"We had to win our way back to play for the championship," Williams said.

The girls bested the Diamondbacks 7-3 in their only game Saturday. Sunday morning, the girls handily defeated the Cascade Christian Challengers, 6-2.

Needing one more win to play for the championship, the girls fell to the South Valley Storm, 13-3, taking third place overall.

Williams said it was good to have all of the girls back on the field before moving on to fall sports or college.

He said four of the girls on the team would play college softball in the fall and another plays soccer while the other five will be returning to their high school teams next season.

"We had a great time," he said. "And I think everyone got better."

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