



Bailey McCracken, a freshman at Grant Union High School, competes at the National High School Rodeo in Lincoln, Nebraska, last month. She placed 51st out of 187 riders in barrel racing.

# IN THE FINALS

## McCrackens compete at National High School Finals Rodeo

By Steven Mitchell  
Blue Mountain Eagle

Last month, two siblings from Grant Union High School competed at the National High School Finals Rodeo in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Bailey McCracken, a sophomore, finished in the top third overall in barrel racing, an event where a horse and rider attempt to run a pattern around barrels in the fastest time.

In Bailey's third performance on her horse, Chex, she clocked a time of 18.412, and came back in the eighth with a time of 18.162. Overall, Oregon's Rookie of the Year finished in the top 51 out of 187 racers in the aggregate.

In her other event, girls cutting, she finished 59th overall.

Bailey said it was "really exciting" just to compete at the national level.

"It was exciting to be there with all of those people, trailers and horses everywhere," she said. "And there was a really big crowd."

Sam McCracken placed 72nd in boys cutting, an equestrian competition where a horse and a rider demonstrate both the horse and rider's ability to handle cattle before a panel of judges.

Sam made his best run on his horse ever at nationals, but, in his third performance in the pattern, he turned the wrong direction, which cost him a mandatory 40-point deduction, and he was too far behind to catch up.

If he could have gotten the points back, he would have finished 37th overall. Nevertheless, Sam came back in his sixth performance and scored a 181.

Sam has taken the top spot in the state in boys cutting the last two years and second place in 2019. This was the third time he has competed at the national level.

Additionally, because of his accomplishments, Sam, a senior this year, was nominated by his peers in the National High School Rodeo Association to "Team Cinch," for how he has carried himself both in and out of the arena.

**"IT WAS EXCITING TO BE THERE WITH ALL OF THOSE PEOPLE, TRAILERS AND HORSES EVERYWHERE. AND THERE WAS A REALLY BIG CROWD."**

—Bailey McCracken



Sam McCracken, a senior at Grant Union High School, competes at the National High School Finals Rodeo in Lincoln, Nebraska, last month.



Baldemar Vargas with his 2020 private land cougar.

## SHOOTING THE BREEZE

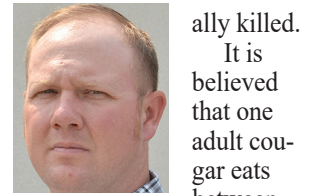
# Cat scratch fever

Despite my chronically habitual clichéd column titles, I hope you'll stay tuned in — I think at least in this case that Mr. Ted Nugent would approve. Recently I read a study taken in one of the Western states wherein white-tail deer revealed something of a 50% death loss with their fawns. After collaring and extensive study the following year, black bears proved to be the culprit in most cases, yet wolves and cougars were partly to blame. Ray Charles could see that here in Oregon we have been experiencing a steady decline in our once legendary mule deer numbers.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not merely trying to kneecap the blame solely upon predators. The problem, as usual, is far more complex and merits a more complex answer than to merely grab your gun and shoot something. That being said, of the many complexities involved with our declining deer population, one we hunters can have a direct effect upon is predator populations.

Both black bear and cougar have general season (over the counter, no lottery) tags. Each costs a mere \$16, and you can buy a second tag for each species after filling your first tag. Spring bear is a draw hunt, but fall black bear general season starts Aug. 1, and cougar general season runs year around.

Coyotes, which require no tag (you still need a hunting license on public land) to hunt, too play a smaller role in the lessened survival rate of deer fawns and elk calves each year. Yet, unlike cougars, coyotes will eat whatever carrion they encounter; a mountain lion will typically not eat something it has not person-



**Dale Valade** ally killed. It is believed that one adult cougar eats between one and two deer per week. That's roughly 50-100 deer each year, per cougar. The average hunter would be hard pressed to take that many game animals in a lifetime. The latest estimate I've heard from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is that there are somewhere in the neighborhood of 8,000 cougars in the state of Oregon alone. Even at one deer a week per cougar, that works out to over 400,000 deer per year at 8,000 cats.

Legislative changes in 1994 have in effect hamstrung hunting efforts by prohibiting the use of dogs to pursue and tree mountain lions and bears. Still, each year, many Oregon hunters continue to punch tags on both species simply by being out in the hills.

Whether or not you agree with the morality of hunting these creatures, it is permitted with the proper licensing and is necessary to maintain the proper predator-prey balance in the ecosystem. And as a hunter I encourage you, our readers, to do some research, buy tags and hit the hills.

These additional hunting opportunities are more good excuses to be outdoors, and you'll be helping to further perpetuate the existence of our deer and elk herds for future generations.

How do you feel about the cougars and black bears? Write to us at shootingthebreezebme@gmail.com!

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

**RAY CHARLES COULD SEE THAT HERE IN OREGON WE HAVE BEEN EXPERIENCING A STEADY DECLINE IN OUR ONCE LEGENDARY MULE DEER NUMBERS.**

**Balance Today with Retiring Tomorrow**

No matter where you're starting from, COUNTRY can help you achieve financial security in retirement. It starts with listening to your situation. Then we help you build a straightforward plan with step-by-step guidance. Call me to get started today.

**Debbie Ausmus**  
245 South Canyon Blvd.  
John Day, OR 97845  
**OPEN WED. & THUR.**  
9 am - 5 pm  
**541-575-1113**  
24 hrs/7 days wk

debbie.ausmus@countryfinancial.com

**COUNTRY FINANCIAL**

**BAR WB**

**FAIR TIME & BACK TO SCHOOL APPAREL**

**BOOTS \* JEANS \* SHIRTS \* HATS**

Mon-Fri 9am-6pm • Sat 9am-5pm  
234 NW Front St., Prairie City • 541-820-3675

**CANYON CREEK Clinic**

Shawna Clark, DNP, FNP

**541-575-1263**

235 S. Canyon Blvd. John Day, Oregon 97845

Accepting new Patients! Go to:  
**www.canyoncreekclinic.com**

**Leaf Filter** GUTTER PROTECTION

**BACKED BY A YEAR-ROUND CLOG-FREE GUARANTEE**

EXCLUSIVE LIMITED TIME OFFER!

**15% OFF** & **10% OFF**

**5% OFF** TO THE BEST QUALITY

**CALL US TODAY FOR A FREE ESTIMATE** 1-855-536-8838

**A Smarter Way to Power Your Home.**

**GENERAC PWRCELL** SOLAR + BATTERY STORAGE SYSTEM

**REQUEST A FREE QUOTE!**

**ACT NOW TO RECEIVE A \$300 SPECIAL OFFER!**  
1 (844) 989-2328

**Prepare for unexpected power outages with a Generac home standby generator**

**REQUEST A FREE QUOTE! 877-557-1912**

**FREE** 7-Year Extended Warranty\*  
A \$695 Value!

**Special Financing Available**

**Your home is only as smart as your Internet.**

**AT&T Internet \$40/mo**

Plans up to 100 Mbps\*  
Free Smart Home Manager App with Parental Controls.\*  
The bandwidth to power multiple devices at once.  
Get a seamless whole-home Wi-Fi experience with AT&T Smart Wi-Fi.†

**888-486-0359**

**dish BRING EVERYTHING YOU LOVE TOGETHER!**

**Blazing Fast Internet!** ADD TO YOUR PACKAGE FOR ONLY \$19.99/mo.

**2-YEAR TV PRICE GUARANTEE \$64.99/mo.** America's Top 120 Package **190 CHANNELS** Including Local Channels!

**CALL TODAY - For \$100 Gift Card** Promo Code: DISH100

**1-866-373-9175** Offer ends 11/15/21.

**One solution for oxygen at home, away, and for travel**

Introducing the INOGEN ONE - It's oxygen therapy on your terms

No more tanks to refill. No more deliveries. No more hassles with travel. The INOGEN ONE portable oxygen concentrator is designed to provide unparalleled freedom for oxygen therapy users. It's small, lightweight, clinically proven for stationary and portable use, during the day and at night, and can go virtually anywhere—even on most airlines. Inogen accepts Medicare and many private insurances!

**Reclaim Your Freedom And Independence NOW!**

**Call Inogen Today To Request Your FREE Info Kit**  
**1-855-839-0752**