# Area student athletes honored

By STEVEN MITCHELL Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Grant County student athletes were among the best and brightest in the state this

With fall sports coming to a close, the Oregon School Activities Association has announced its season-ending awards, with area student-athletes bringing home a number of honors.

Grant Union's boys and girls cross country teams both got nods for academic excellence, landing on the top 10 lists in their respective divisions.

The OnPoint Community Credit Union Academic All-State Program recognizes outstanding achievement in the classroom. Teams in OSAA-sanctioned events earn 25 points for their schools by getting a 3.0-grade point average or higher, with teams in the top 10 of their sports making additional points accord-

ing to an established scoring system. Those points go toward the OSAA Cup, awarded at the end of the school year.

Grant Union's boys cross country finished fifth in the 2A/1A division with a collective 3.47 GPA, while the girls' squad placed ninth in the 3A/2A/1A division with an overall GPA of

The Grant Union football team was recognized with a number of all-league selections in the Blue Mountain Conference.

Justin Hodge, a senior, was a first-team selection at running back, defensive back and punter. Parker Neault, a senior, made the second team as a defensive back. In addition, Tanler Fuller, a senior, received an honorable

Rylan Cox, a senior, was named to the first-team offensive line, while Alex Finley, a sophomore, was named to the second team. Finley was also an honorable mention for the defensive line. Talon VanCleave, a sophomore, was named second-team linebacker, while Sheldon Lenz, a junior, was an honorable mention.

Maverick Miller, a senior, was named to the second team as a quarterback, while Fuller was named to the second team as a receiver. Neault received an honorable mention as a receiver.

Several members of the Prairie City volleyball team earned all-league selections in the High Desert League.

Betty Ann Wilson, a junior, made the league's first team, while Laken McKay, a junior, earned a second-team nod and Hannah Wall and Jaycee Winegar were honorable mentions.

Prairie City's football coach, Nick Thompson, was named Coach of the Year, while Cole Teel was named Offensive Player of the Year and first-team running back. Teel was also named to the second team as a kicker.

Prairie City's Eli Wright made the first team on the offensive and defensive lines. Wes Voigt was named to the first team as a linebacker and second team as a quarterback. Meanwhile, Tucker Wright was an honorable mention as a running back and a second-team linebacker.

John Titus was named to the second team as a wide receiver, while Cody Reagan was named to the second team as an offensive lineman and Trey Brown was named to the second team as a defensive lineman. Doyal Lawrence was named to the second team as a returner.

Grant Union volleyball players Grace Taylor and Lauryn Pettyjohn were named to the Blue Mountain Conference first team. Paige Gerry, Carson Weaver and Drewsey Williams were named to the second team. Freshman Adeline Northway was an honorable mention.



Dale Valade/For the Blue Mountain Eagle The .30-06 Springfield may be the only gun you'll

### SHOOTING THE BREEZE **Ode to the .30-06**

In the history of self-contained cartridges, I'm not sure if there has been a single cartridge which has been more iconic nor prodigious. Love it or hate it, the .30-06 in all of its military and civilian glory is a legend and arguably the best all-around cartridge ever devised.



much development and experimentation, which I will not go into here, gave us the Spring-

After our troops encountered

For the sake of brevity it became known as the .30-06, pronounced thirty-aught-six.

From both a military and a sportsman's outlook, it was an instant hit. Theodore Roosevelt was the first hunter of note to adopt it as a favorite, finding it adequate for dangerous game on his 1909 African adventures. He preferred its lighter recoil to the big bore weapons on his safaris as well as when hunting stateside. After World War I, doughboys returning home with war surplus rifles were largely to thank for America's change in trend from lever-action to bolt-action rifles. Other hunters of note that preferred the .30-06 include but are not limited to Ernest Hemingway, Stewart Edward White, Robert Ruark, Gary Cooper, Clark Gable, Johnny Cash and Hank Williams Jr.

Today, the .30-06 remains a top five seller in From both a factory ammunition and handloaders standpoint, hundreds of different styles of bul-

But surely anything 125 years old cannot seriously compete with today's technology, right? Much to the chagrin of the "Magnum means better" and the 6.5mm fans, the .30-06 is still the measuring stick against which all newcomers are pitted. While I enjoy shooting everything from the smaller calibers up to the big bores as much as the next person, the .30-06 for me will always be the ultimate all-around hunting cartridge. It has been successfully used to take every kind of animal on the planet. When loaded with the right bullet, there isn't any job it can't handle. To paraphrase an old friend, "It may be perfect for nothing but it works

If the .30-06 lacks anything, it's pizazz. All my childhood heroes arrived and left on horseback or in farm trucks, but kids today expect more pomp and circumstance, and therefore the .30-06 might seem a bit wrinkly and dim. But I assure you, it's as useful, versatile, powerful and deadly as ever. The .30-06 might not be the only gun you'll ever want, but it may well be the only one you'll ever

Are you a .30-06 fan? Write to us at shoo-

love for the outdoors, handloading, hunting and shooting.

## Fall grass good news for game peratures would have yielded a

**By JAYSON JACOBY** 

jjacoby@bakercityherald.com

BAKER CITY — When Brian Ratliff gazes at the south-facing slopes that loom above the Snake, Powder and Burnt rivers in Baker County, he's gratified by the soft green haze he sees.

Better that than brown. Or, worse still, white.

The green fuzz — detectable

even from miles away — reveals a crop of tender grass that has sprouted, nourished by the periodic rains that arrived in Northeastern Oregon soon after the conclusion of a summer defined by severe drought.

This forage, coming as it has before snow has accumulated at the lower elevations that serve as winter range for many species, could spare deer and other wildlife from the potentially fatal deprivations of winter, said Ratliff, the district wildlife biologist at the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Baker City office.

"Right now it's great," Ratliff said on Wednesday, Nov. 10. "If we had had a dry fall and then gone right to snow, we would be in a lot worse shape. I'm very, very happy that we got (the fall grass)."

That grass is especially vital for deer, Ratliff said.

The source of nutritious food allows deer to amass a layer of fat that can sustain them during the frigid weeks and months to come.

Fawns are particularly vulnerable due to their smaller body mass, which can't generate as much heat.

But Ratliff said bucks, which are in the rut now and thus burning more calories than usual, are also vulnerable to dry falls when most of the available forage has been left desiccated by the hot, dry summer.

Dry grass isn't as nutritious as the new flush of growth spurred by rains in October and early November.

Elk and bighorn sheep tend to be hardier than deer, but those ani-



Brett French/TownNews.com Content Exchange Whitetail deer and other wildlife stand to benefit from a bumper crop of fall grass in Northeastern Oregon.

greenest falls I've seen."

mals also benefit from the crop of nutritious grass just before winter descends.

Ratliff said he would have preferred to see the greenup begin a bit earlier, in late September or early October, which would have given animals more time to pack on pounds.

Although daytime temperatures have been near average. Ratliff said frequent sub-freezing nights have limited grass growth on north-facing slopes, which get much less sunlight.

Most of the new grass is confined to south slopes, with winter ranges in the Snake River country faring better than along the lower Powder and Burnt rivers, Ratliff

#### **Grant County**

Ryan Torland, district wildlife biologist at the ODFW office in John Day, calls the fall grass crop in Grant County "tremendous."

"Following a hot and dry summer, it's certainly going to help a lot," Torland said. "It's one of the

Unlike Baker County, where the lushest grass is mainly confined to south-facing slopes, Torland said fall rains have resulted in a more widespread crop of new growth, including at higher elevations and in forested areas.

"We definitely got enough rain

#### **Union County**

The situation is similar in Union County, said Matt Keenan, district wildlife biologist at ODFW's La Grande office.

"We're definitely seeing a fall greenup, and it's a pretty welcome sight after such a dry summer," Keenan said. "It's definitely going to help. It's super crucial for deer and elk to add to those last-minute fat reserves."

Like Ratliff, Keenan said the rain would have been even more beneficial had it arrived earlier in the fall, when warmer temmore bountiful grass crop.

During winter, deer, elk and bighorn sheep burn their fat reserves to produce body heat. So long as those reserves last, the animals can withstand even subzero temperatures for extended periods, biologists say.

But once those fat layers have been shed, deer in particular struggle to find enough to eat to keep their body tempera-Even with the welcome flush

of new green grass this fall, Ratliff said deer could be vulnerable this winter. "If we have a whopper of a

winter again, we're going to lose deer," he said. During the last such winter, 2016-17, deep snow and prolonged periods of frigid tem-

peratures devastated deer herds in Baker County and other parts of Northeastern Oregon. In response to the loss of hundreds of animals, ODFW cut

hunting tags by up to 50% for the 2017 hunting season. In many units, deer herds have yet to recover enough to

prompt state officials to increase tag allocations.

#### **Benefits for birds**

Autumn grass also benefits upland game birds, such as chukars and quail, that eat grass, Ratliff said.

Birds don't need as much forage, of course, as the much larger deer and elk.

But Ratliff pointed out that birds are much less capable of digging through snow to reach grass compared with

Snow doesn't pose a major problem for deer unless it's capped with an ice crust, he said.

But for birds, several inches of snow can keep them from reaching the grass, Ratliff said.

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