High expectations for Lady Pros

By JUSTIN DAVIS Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Following a stellar campaign in 2021 that culminated in a second-place finish in the state, expectations for the Grant Union softball team this season are high.

The task of preparing the team for a tough Blue Mountain Conference schedule and managing those high expectations falls on Grant Union softball coach Zach Williams. Williams lost just three seniors to graduation last season, returning a crop of experienced players that can once again make a run at a state championship.

For Williams, the high expectations don't necessarily mean the season is state championship or bust, however.

"I won't disagree that a state championship is a legitimate possibility, but a lot of things have to go right for that to happen. Weather, team chemistry and luck will all play a role, along with the talent we have and the ability of the team to play together. The goal is always a state title, but I wouldn't say state title or bust."

Williams also says his coaching staff stresses taking the season one game at a time and refraining from talking about things further down the road.



Justin Davis/Blue Mountain Eagle

Riley Robertson makes contact with the ball on Friday, March 11, 2022, during practice with the Grant Union softball team.

"We've put together a very tough preseason schedule, and our goal is to compete in those games, see good teams with good pitching and gain experience that will help us as we move into our league schedule," Williams said.

Being competitive both in those preseason games and later in league play will rest heavily on Grant Union's veteran pitchers and balanced play on both sides of the ball.

"We definitely have experienced pitchers, although they are young. Both of our starters from last season are back as sophomores, and we have talented freshmen coming up as well as a senior returner that should help us out well," Williams said.

Offensively and defensively, coach Williams thinks the group is talented enough to make this season special.

"Our offense has good power and the ability to hit for average top to bottom," he said. "Our defense should be good as well; we have a mix of youth and experience in the outfield with good arms all over the field."

The team's biggest challenge will be navigating a tough Blue Mountain Conference and matching up with the best teams in the state if the Lady Prospectors make it into the postseason.

Echo/Stanfield Union, and Weston-Meewan are always tough. Aside from our league, I expect Kennedy to be very good again, and we have them in a preseason matchup on their field," said Williams.

Expectations are indeed high, but Williams wants his team to have fun and build memories playing the

"This is still high school sports, and I want these girls to have a great season, enjoy their high school years playing sports and make great friends."

Williams also wants to instill values in his team that will carry over when their playing days are over.

"We hope to build good character and teach lessons that go beyond softball or athletics," he added.

The Lady Prospectors begin the 2022 season on Thursday, March 17, at home against Burns. Williams hopes the presence of fans gives his team a nice home field advantage.

"The game starts at 3 p.m. and we would love to see people out cheering the girls on."

Justin Davis/Blue Mountain Eagle

Seniors Luke Jackson and Kate Hughes just before the start of practice on March 3, 2022. The two are among the many returning athletes bringing experience to the Grant Union boys and girls track teams this season.

Coming back strong

Grant Union track team enters season with plenty of experience

> By JUSTIN DAVIS Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — Longtime Grant Union head track coach Sonna Smith is set to begin the team's 2022 season with a plethora of senior leadership and a number of underclassmen with experience at the state meet.

Smith started coaching track at Grant Union in 1995 as the distance coach. Two years later she assumed the role of head coach while still specializing in distance running, sprints and relays.

The boys are the defending Wapiti League champions and were runners-up at the state meet last season, coming just 15 points short of a state title. The girls placed fifth in the Wapiti League last year and gained valuable experience for the upcoming season despite not placing at the state meet.

Smith says the team will benefit from a deep roster and the leadership and experience of the seniors, who make up a quarter of the squad.

"Our strength this year will rely on the number of athletes out. We have 19 girls and 20 boys. I have 10 seniors out this year, and we will be relying on their strength in events and on their experience," Smith said. Expectations for the boys

are high. After a second-place finish at state in 2021, Smith is setting her sights on a similar result in 2022.

"We are hoping to place top five in state for the boys again."

The boys team will rely on half of the defending state 4x100 relay team in seniors Justin Hodge and Luke Jackson. Hodge also placed third at state in the shot put. Junior Eli Wright placed third in the javelin at the state meet and rounds out the returning state placers for the boys.

Aside from the state placers, the boys have three other athletes with experience at the state meet.

While the girls didn't place in state last season, they return a host of district placers and athletes with experience at the state meet.

Call Inogen Today To Request Your FREE Info Kit

Seniors Kate Hughes and Carson Weaver are both members of the 4x100 relay team that placed third in district. Hughes also runs the 300 meter hurdles and placed third in that event at the district meet last season. Weaver placed third at district in the high jump.

Junior Katie Rigby completes the list of district placers for the girls, placing second in the triple jump last

Despite the finish last year, Smith sees progress on the horizon for the girls team given their performances in the years prior to the COVID pandemic. "Last year was a rebuild-

ing year for the girls, and we will continue to improve this year," she said. Prior to the pandemic, the girls team won a state cham-

pionship and followed that up with three straight second-place finishes in state. Part of making state aspirations a reality will be navi-

gating an always tough Wapiti League. "We have one of the toughest 2A track leagues in the

state, especially in the distance events," Smith said. The pandemic has made

scouting the league as a whole tough for Smith, however. "Because of the last two

COVID-altered seasons, I don't have an idea on which teams will be the strongest in our league this year," she said. "We hope to be one of the top contenders for both the girls and boys.'

Grant Union will play host to a pair of meets this spring, and coach Smith says the team can always use help.

"We have two home meets this season, April 5 and May 6," she said. "We always need lots of volunteers to make the meets run smoothly."

Smith also stressed the importance of family support in creating a home field advantage.

"I would also like to thank parents in advance," she said. "They are always a huge support for the team and at meets.'

Grant Union begins competition for the 2022 season at the Ice Breaker Meet in Prineville on March 17. Field events start at 4:30 p.m and track events start at 5:30 p.m.

SHOOTING THE BREEZE .220 Swift has long history but it can still do the job

reeing the increasing public interest in high-velocity smallbores spurred primarily by a growing varmint hunting community, Winchester designed the first commercial cartridge to reach a muzzle velocity of 4,000 feet per second. In 1935, the Winchester Model 54 in .220 Swift was released, spitting a 48 grain bullet to the never-before-achieved speed of 4,140 feet per second!

The 6mm Lee Navy cartridge was the parent case and was simply necked down from .244 to .224 caliber. The debut of this rubber-burning cartridge



Dale Valade

was met with glee and skepticism alike. The 48 grain bullet was the subject of both praise and scorn. One hunter would write in that he had killed a giant bull elk or bear with a single shot while another would despair of an opposite experience, pumping round after round into a gangly mule deer or desert sheep before it bit the dust.

It led to head-scratching and extreme prejudice in many cases. Most seasoned hunters scoffed at the idea of using such small, frangible bullets on any big game. Opinions varied as widely as the reported results.

As time passed, certain gun writers began to decry the Swift for its semirimmed case and growing reputation as a "barrel burner." They claimed accuracy tapered off as early as 200-300

Power Outages

& Save Money

REQUEST A FREE QUOTE! ACT NOW TO RECEIVE A \$300 SPECIAL OFFER!*

(844) 989-2328



Contributed Photo

The .220 Swift, left, next to its more popular competition, the .22-250 Reming-

matter what you needed to plan on a new barrel at 1,000 rounds.

Some rifles, shot repeatedly (as with ground squirrels) would have likely worn out early with such high-velocity performance. Others were likely the victims of mercuric primers, poor cleaning practices and bad press.

Despite what you may have heard, the Swift is no different than any other

PWREED

ing, they will continue to perform for a lifetime without having to use kid gloves. And with modern components, the Swift is capable of reaching higher velocities and making smaller groups Its closest competition has always

cartridge. With proper care and clean-

come from the .22-250 Remington, the old .250-3000 Savage necked down to .224 diameter. The .22-250 is more ubiquitous in both rifles and ammo, but it won't outrun the Swift if both are loaded to max potential in rifles of com-My own personal Swift is a rebuilt

hand-me-down Ruger M77 Bicentennial. The original factory barrel was marked commemorating 200 years of United States independence. It now wears a brand new, heavy contour Douglas barrel installed by the skillful hands of Randy Wills out of Bend. After refinishing the stock and putting it all back together, I would say we are ready to go come what may.

For the country boy or country girl in search of a unique, light-recoiling, extremely flat-shooting rifle capable of dispatching varmints, predators, the occasional deer, antelope or beef steer, the .220 Swift is a cartridge with a long history that still can make the cut today.

Are you a fan of the .220 Swift? Write to us at shootingthebreezebme@ gmail.com and check us out on

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

and

S283690-

W CONSTRUCTION, LLC

Featuring;















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!

ınogen

