



Contributed Photo

The author with his hard-earned Barbary sheep.

## SHOOTING THE BREEZE Barbary Sheep rhapsody

Every once in a while a hunting opportunity comes along that simply seems too good to be true. Growing up in the areas that I did, we regularly saw California bighorn sheep roaming the hills. Being as bighorns are a once-in-a-lifetime draw here in Oregon, that had cast a shadow upon my enthusiasm for hunting sheep altogether. Working closely with my friend Zach Bruce of AOA Outfitters, a sheep hunting adventure finally came to pass.



Dale Valade

The Barbary sheep — or aoudad, as they are more commonly called — is seen throughout the Western United States. Places like Texas and New Mexico have especially seen huge booms in Barbary sheep proliferation. The dry, rocky and steep terrain is perfect for these and other implanted species of sheep, such as the ibex of Arizona and mouflons here in Oregon. As they are not indigenous to these areas, some states consider these animals to be feral and don't regulate them with tags or season limits, but a hunting license for whichever state you choose to hunt will still be required.

For hours we glassed rims, hillsides, thickets, saddles and draws. Seeing bighorn sheep and mule deer was encouraging, but there was no sign of the elusive aoudad. Hiking around in the rocks, my old friend and I were able to catch up on all manner of subjects, from family matters to major world events. Fair-skinned as I am, I felt like the wind and the sun were in a deeply contested race to see who would be first to redden my skin. Half the day passed, and we hiked back to the truck thinking our hunt was over.

After reflection, Zach thought of one other place he wanted to check out before we threw in the towel. Finding a consolation prize in the form of a shed forked-horn mule deer antler, our luck was about to completely change. As we traveled to the area to do our one last check, I thanked him for the day and expressed my gratitude for our chance to be out in the hills hunting together just like old times.

Nearly instantly after setting up his Swarovski spotting scope, Zach excitedly spotted a group of Aoudads feeding on a rim. They looked stunning stretched out across the hillside, rams, ewes and lambs. After planning a stalk, I took everything superfluous out of my hunting pack to minimize weight, grabbed my rifle and shooting sticks and off we went. Our stalk was slow and methodical as we made our approach. We were reduced to crawling the last few yards to set up a shot. The wind was right, allowing us to get within 150 yards of the small herd.

At last, the moment of truth. The only problem was, I couldn't shoot through a barrier of brush from any field positions. Thankfully I had brought along my Bog-pod, a lightweight, collapsible hunting tripod. Slowly I placed my .30-06 over the rest and, kneeling behind it, still found myself unable to take the shot.

The sheep were getting nervous, uncertain of what we were. Locating a small window in the brush through which to pilot my bullet while simultaneously arranging myself and my rifle to the proper angle for the shot proved difficult. Finally, Zach set my pack between my legs and bottom which propped me up to the exact necessary angle.

Flicking off the safety, I held the crosshairs on the center of the shoulder on the largest ram. Taking in a breath, I started to slowly exhale as I squeezed the trigger.

At the shot, the ram was down in an instant. I cycled the action but there was no need — he was done as the rest of his band disappeared in a flash. As I stood up, the quivers of excitement caused my hands to shake. I uttered a short prayer of gratitude as I bent down to pick up my empty brass case. Zach smiled and patted me on the back, the unspoken congratulations between old friends and finally said only, "That will do!"

After getting pictures and dressing the ram, we loaded him onto our packs and started the descent back to our vehicle.

This will forever live as a special hunt in my heart. The uniqueness of the aoudad, the physical requirements of the hunt, the resourcefulness required for the shot and, most of all, the camaraderie of two country boys getting to share yet another great adventure together.

Do you love to hunt sheep? Write to us at shootingthebreezebme@gmail.com and check us out on Facebook!

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



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# A life in wrestling

Prairie City man's contributions to sport earn a place in Hall of Fame

By JUSTIN DAVIS  
Blue Mountain Eagle

These days, 82 year old Tobe Zwegyardt operates a ranch outside Prairie City.

Before getting into ranching, however, Zwegyardt was a fixture on the wrestling scene, in Oregon, nationally and internationally. His accomplishments on the mat and his lifetime of service to the wrestling community have led to his selection for inclusion in the Oregon chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame.

Zwegyardt started wrestling in the small town of St. Francis, Kansas, when he was in the sixth grade. Back in those days, a children's wrestling program didn't exist, so Zwegyardt didn't get his start in the sport until he was in middle school. The middle school and high school wrestling programs in the area were run by Maynard Skinner, a former Colorado standout wrestler and eventual California Wrestling Hall of Fame inductee.

When Zwegyardt was a senior, Skinner departed the St. Francis wrestling program and was replaced by coach Frank Brown. Zwegyardt would go on to win a Kansas state wrestling championship under Brown.

Following his high school wrestling career, Zwegyardt headed out West to wrestle for Oregon State University in 1958. Oregon State was coached by eventual Hall of Fame wrestler and coach Dale Thomas at the time. Zwegyardt says the presence of Thomas at Oregon State was one of two rea-



Justin Davis/Blue Mountain Eagle

**Tobe Zwegyardt at his home in Prairie City on Thursday, April 14, 2022. Zwegyardt will be inducted into the Oregon chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame in October.**

sons he sought to wrestle for the program.

"I loved hunting and fishing and Thomas was at Oregon State, so I came out. It was a good move on my part."

Under the coaching of Thomas, Zwegyardt would go on to be the Pacific Coast Intercollegiate runner-up in 1960 and the Pacific Coast Intercollegiate champion in 1961 and 1962.

The year 1962 would also see Zwegyardt become an alternate on the USA world championship wrestling squad in Greco-Roman wrestling as well as coaching the South African Springbok Greco-Roman team at those same world championships. The spot on the Greco-Roman world championship team was even more special than it normally would be because Zwegyardt had no exposure to Greco-Roman wrestling before his time in college.

His foray into coaching in 1962 came about because the South African team lacked a coach at the world championships. Zwegyardt was suggested as a potential coach and accepted the responsibility. After coaching the South African team in 1962, Zwegyardt joined the Peace Corps and coached for the Federation of Youth and Sport in the Ivory Coast and Senegal in West Africa.

A return to Oregon State

as an assistant coach under Thomas following his time with the Peace Corps in 1965 was Zwegyardt's next coaching gig. After the season at Oregon State, Zwegyardt transitioned to head wrestling and track coach at Hedrick Junior High School in Medford for the 1966 and 1967 seasons.

After moving to Grant County in 1971, Zwegyardt would work on various ranches throughout the county before starting the wrestling program at Prairie City High School while simultaneously directing the youth wrestling program in 1978.

Zwegyardt's final act as a head coach saw him travel back to Africa in 1982 with the Collegiate Cultural Exchange tour in South Africa.

Apartheid still held sway in South Africa at the time, but Zwegyardt says Thomas, the Oregon State wrestling coach, saw sport as a way to break down the country's system of racial oppression. The result was a team composed of college-aged wrestlers from around the Pacific Northwest traveling to South Africa to compete against club teams throughout the country.

Zwegyardt found other ways to stay connected to the sport as well. He refereed on a regular basis after his own com-

petitive wrestling days were done. He refereed in the Oregon School Activities Association wrestling championships and Pacific Coast Intercollegiate Championships before three consecutive years as a referee in the NCAA Division I Wrestling Championships. In 1980, Zwegyardt was the co-floor director of the NCAA Division I championship tournament held in Corvallis.

Zwegyardt was just as active in his community as he was around the mat, spending four years on the Prairie City School Board, serving as president of both the Lions Club in Prairie City and the Grant County Ranch and Rodeo Museum. Zwegyardt was also voted the Grant County Tree Farmer of the Year in 1990 and the Grant County Stock Grower of the Year in 2007.

Zwegyardt will be inducted into the Oregon State Wrestling Hall of Fame in a banquet at the Embassy Suites in Portland this October.

Zwegyardt says he never thought he'd be inducted into the Oregon Wrestling Hall of Fame and credits his childhood community for giving him a good start in the sport. "I grew up in western Kansas, and fortunately it was a wrestling community."

His size growing up had a lot to do with why Zwegyardt chose wrestling over other sports early on. "Being so small, basketball was out of the question. I played football, but I wasn't ever very big. I weighed 145 pounds my senior year. I didn't think I would succeed much in the collegiate level in football, so wrestling was a good option."

"I'm honored and humbled by the selection into the Hall of Fame. There is a saying, 'Humble thyself in all things, for he who knows himself is a rich man.' Being selected to join this group, I'm humbled and I'm a rich man," Zwegyardt said.

## Anthony Lakes wraps up successful ski season

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

ANTHONY LAKES — It wasn't the snowiest winter on record, but Anthony Lakes Mountain Resort had plenty on its slopes to keep skiers and snowboarders sliding all season. "Overall we had a great season," said Chelsea Judy, marketing director for the ski area in the Elkhorn Mountains about 35 miles northwest of Baker City.

A dearth of early storms delayed the start of the season until Dec. 18.

But once the resort was open, the snow base was sufficient, despite a prolonged dry stretch that lasted for most of February, to keep Anthony Lakes on its usual schedule through the final day, Sunday, April 3.

The importance of the resort's elevation — 7,100 feet at the lodge, the highest base elevation among Northwest ski areas — proved itself yet again, Judy said.

Anthony Lakes' lofty position largely insulates it from thaws that can force less-elevation ski areas to temporarily close or reduce operations due to a lack of snow.

Much of the winter's snow fell in December and early January.

March, which in many years brings the biggest storms of the winter, was something of an anomaly this year, with only about two feet of total snow.

Nonetheless, "we had great skiing all year and the snow-pack held up great," Judy said.

She didn't have visitor numbers available, but Judy said this season was "definitely quieter than last year."

During the first year of the pandemic, outdoor recreation proved popular across the West as the cancellation of most large events prompted people to seek other forms of entertainment.

Camping and hiking in the summer were attractive since social distancing was simpler.

And the trend continued into the winter of 2020-21, with skiers, both downhill and cross country, flocking to Anthony Lakes and other resorts.

This winter was more typical in terms of attendance, Judy said, although last winter's growing popularity of cross country skiing continued this year.

## SPORTS SCHEDULE

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20**  
3 p.m.: Grant Union softball, doubleheader @ Lakeview

**FRIDAY, APRIL 22**  
10 a.m.: Grant Union golf, 1A/2A Invite @ Buffalo Peak Golf Course, Union  
2 p.m.: Grant Union track, Wayne Invitational @ Vale High School

2 p.m.: Grant Union softball, doubleheader @ Elgin/Imbler

**SATURDAY, APRIL 23**  
11 a.m.: Grant Union baseball doubleheader vs. Dufur

**TUESDAY, APRIL 26**  
2:30 p.m.: Grant Union softball vs. Baker/Powder Valley  
4 p.m.: Grant Union track, Crane Invitational @ Crane High School

4p.m.: Grant Union baseball vs. Pilot Rock  
Home games in bold



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