

NE Oregon facing football ref shortage

By DICK MASON
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A shortage of football referees is looming ominously as the start of high school football season in North-eastern Oregon approaches.

The Northeast Oregon Football Officials Association, which provides officials for high school and middle school varsity and junior varsity games in Union, Wallowa, Baker and Grant counties, has just 19 people available to officiate this season, seven short of the minimum needed, according to Pete Caldwell, commissioner of the association.

"It is the lowest number we have had," said Caldwell, who has been with the Northeast Oregon Football Officials Association for about 25 years.

Caldwell attributes the decline to the fact that many members have been retiring.

"I don't know why more younger people are not getting involved in officiating. It is a mystery," said Caldwell, noting that the average age of his association's members is now 61.5 years.

He said that unless the Northeast Oregon Football Officials

Association is able to recruit more people to officiate, it will face the prospect of requesting schools on some occasions to change their schedules so that all games can be played. For example, on Fridays, when there are a high number of games scheduled, schools may be asked to move some contests to Thursday or Saturday to reduce the logjam, making it possible for officials to be provided for all of them.

Caldwell, who noted that rescheduling had to be done several times in 2021 when there was also a shortage of officials, said it is not easy.

"It is a huge headache," he said.

Doug Hislop, of La Grande, an official with the Northeast Oregon Football Officials Association for the past 52 years, said rescheduling games is not an ideal alternative. He said he fears that the complications created by the process may lead some schools to cancel some contests.

Caldwell is hoping people will step forward to serve as officials to reduce the shortage. Previous officiating experience is not needed.

"We can teach anyone to be an

official," he said.

Caldwell said those starting out may first be assigned to middle school and junior varsity games before officiating varsity contests. This will allow them to develop their skills in a less pressure-packed environment, he said.

Caldwell said many people who serve as officials are driven to do so because they want to help youth.

"They want to give back to the community and kids," he said.

Hislop said this is a motivating factor for him, noting that he will never forget how referees made it possible for him to participate in athletics as a youth growing up in Idaho.

"I had the opportunity to play football and wrestle because we had officials," he said.

Others are drawn to officiating because of their love of a specific sport — football, for example.

"It gives people a chance to be part of the game," Caldwell said.

Officials are paid on a per-game basis, making \$73.50 for officiating Class 4A games. Officials are paid a little less for officiating varsity games involving schools in the 3A, 2A and 1A classifications for smaller schools.

SHOOTING THE BREEZE Sometimes memories are worth more than inches



Rod Carpenter

Almost 30 years ago, I drew a Murderers Creek antelope tag and shot a buck that scored 82 Boone and Crockett inches. The thing is that it wasn't much of a hunt. I knew where he was and almost drove right up to him. The stalk was short, the shot less than 100 yards. I had him home by 8 a.m. on opening day. Not much of a story.

This year I drew another tag and began dreaming about big bucks. I asked a friend for permission to hunt his ranch and he was kind enough to agree. He hadn't done much hunting before and asked me if he could tag along on my hunt.

On the first evening we kicked around and turned up a few bucks, but nothing to get excited about. The next morning we were up and at it again. None of the bucks we found were anything to get excited

about. I did try to get a shot at one, but the sagebrush was just too dang tall and I could never get a steady shot.

We finally bumped the herd and they took off. My friend thought he knew where they were headed and we took a long walk trying to find them. No luck. As we headed back to the side-by-side we had to go through a finger of timber. He had just asked if antelope ever hang out in the timber when we jumped a buck.

He wasn't spooked and was trotting in a circle in front of us from right to left. He stopped often, but was always screened by brush. Finally he stopped in a little opening about 200 yards away. I leaned

up against a tree and he dropped at the shot.

I knew how big he was well before I decided to shoot him, and knew that he was no monster. I could have hunted a few more days looking for a bigger buck, but my buddy had to get back to work. It had been a fun hunt and I made the decision to end it with my friend at my side. After a few pictures and a quick tutorial on how to clean a big game animal, we took him back to the ranch.

I dream of big bucks and bulls just like everyone else, but what I really value are the experiences I collect along the way. I rarely tell the story about my big buck, but my buddy and I will be laughing and talking about this year's hunt for the rest of our lives.

Rod Carpenter is a husband, father, and a huntin' fool.

SENIOR Outlook Chester's

Prairie City Seniors

Rose Coombs



Prairie City -- First, I have to rectify a couple of omissions from last week. I forgot to mention our sponsor for the Asian meal. It was the Friends of Prairie City. Then I forgot

the signature of an Asian meal, the fortune cookie! We each got two. One of mine said "Burnt bridges are hard to cross." Can't argue with that!

Found out what the orange square — plus blue triangles and red circles — was all about. "They" are going to put a bus stop sign someplace around the center. Hmm. Don't we get any say in the matter? We're not against it, but it would have been nice to have some input. The one that I saw someplace else was quite nice.

A new scent is in the air in Prairie City since the mill started operating — cut wood. And it is heartening to hear the whistle throughout the day. We're not a ghost town yet!

The \$\$ from the state finally arrived, and we have signed off on the first project: kitchen countertops. The cooks can hardly wait!

And our cooks — Pam and Pam — did a bang-up job today! We had fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, cottage cheese/fruit salad, and then — drum roll, please — strawberry

shortcake for dessert. Everyone commented on how good it all was. And for the first time in I don't know how long, we had 70 names in our registration book! Thanks so much for coming, you all. The sponsor for the day — Joel Coombs General Contractor — even ordered a meal to be delivered to him by Derrol. (He was working a little too far out for our other volunteer drivers to go to.) The winner of the gift certificate donated by Chuck's Little Diner was Gunther Clark. Thanks, Valeria, for doing this.

Our volunteers included Mary, Carla, Tom, Josiah, Theresa, Chris, Gwynne and Ginger. Tom's birthdays of note included Davy Crockett and Mae West. The table that got to go through the serving line first had to answer the question of how old was Davy Crockett when he died. I guessed 46, but the answer was 53. That was actually a fairly old age in those days. You do know that he was killed at the Alamo...

Just had an interruption. A phone call from a person in the class of 1960 at Prairie High who reads the BME in California! He and wife and sisters plan to be in Grant County soon to see the old stomping grounds. Stay tuned.

We extend our condolences to the family of LaTrona Smith. She was a sweet lady and we will miss her gentle presence.

Jude 1:24, 25 To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

John Day Seniors

Elise Huskey



August is half over and once again we wonder where the time went. Since June I have been so busy I cannot even remember what I did. Hmhmhmhm.

On Monday, Aug. 15, Darlene Nodine and Carol Roe greeted 22 in-house diners to check them in and get their names in the drawings for the day.

Darlene was the announcer. Millie Lysne led the flag salute and asked the blessing. Carolyn Stout, Kathy McPheeters, and Millie Lysne from the Living Word Church were our servers and delivery drivers for today. Thank you, ladies, for all your service and dedication to our community. They delivered 54 fresh meals and 35 frozen meals. We had a total of 111 meals today. Our volunteers put in 14½ hours today. Great job, Shay and Kim, for preparing, packaging, serving and cleaning up for all of the mess made while in preparation. Today we had taco salad, chips and dip, and strawberry shortcake for dessert. This meal was made especially for Angie Uptmor as we heard these were her favorite foods. Angie is retiring from being our senior service agent for the past three years here in Grant County. We wanted to honor her service and send her off with our best wishes. Some diners from Monument and Prairie City were in attendance to share in this celebration. Congratulations to Angie for all the years she has helped in this capacity. She is so friendly and helpful to all of us, so we will miss her smiles and comforting help. Thank you, Angie.

Along with the donations from Chester's Market, there are also greeting cards on the back table for anyone to have if they want.

The winner of the Len's card was Deda Porter and the free meal went to Elsie Huskey. Congrats to both of us.

On Thursday, Aug. 18, Carol and Darlene were at the desk to greet the 11 in-house diners, register them and put their names in the drawing for the day.

Deda Porter led the flag salute and Sherri Fieger asked the blessing. The server today was from the Methodist church: Sherri Fieger. Thanks, Sherri, for doing a fantastic job today. Sherri served us cheeseburger pizza, fruit, and brownies. The whole meal was delicious, but that dessert was the best sendoff to a great meal. Thanks, Kim. Shay and Kim do a great job preparing tasty food for all who attend and take out and get delivered to.

Our delivery drivers for today were Michael Shockley, Peggy Melnick, Cindy Combs and Mike and Patty Davis. They delivered 54 fresh meals today. Forgive me if I have spelled your name wrong. The total meals from our kitchen today were 65. Shay and Kim are responsible for getting these meals ready for the drivers. There is a lot of work entailed in this service for our community.

Scott Knepper won the Len's card and Judy Thomas won the free meal. Congratulations!

Volunteers are needed to help at our greeting desk. This is a pleasant time spent and not much physical activity needed, so anyone could do this. Consider giving it a try so we can give Carol and Darlene a break. Thanks.

Linda Stoltz, our librarian and decorator, needs our help. On Thursday, Aug. 25, right after lunch, she would like us to meet together to help her with some flower arrangements for our building. Please mark this on your calendar and not let Linda down. She has done a great job and seldom asks for help. Thanks in advance.

Tomorrow, Aug. 25, we will dine on meatloaf and baked potatoes, salad of cook's choice, and peach pecan cake. Sounds yummy. On Monday, Aug. 29, we will be served pork chops, garlic mashed potatoes (yum), fruit, and chocolate cream pie. Oh, that makes my mouth water! Come enjoy this meal with us. See you there.

Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12 I am chosen by God, forgiven and justified through Christ. I have a compassionate heart, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.

Monument Seniors

Soo Yukawa



For some reason, I thought we were going to have the meal that we are going to have in another week. Nope, we had meatball sub sandwiches, curly french fries, fresh

green salad, and fruit cobbler for our dessert. We thank our cooks Terry Cade and Carrie Jewell immensely for preparing for us these delicious meals.

Our greeters at the table were Bob Cockrell and Sue Cavender. Sue checked in the guests and did the paperwork, Bob collected and counted up the money. We thank our volunteers for their help. Bob led us in the flag salute and Judy Harris made the announcements. Yours truly prayed the blessing over the meal. Don't forget that we have the Buckaroo on Sept. 24.

There are two raffles going on. The two items are a quilt made by Jeannie Strange and a battery-operated chain saw donated by Aaron Harris and Ray Davis. These raffles are in support of our Monument Senior Center.

I still have my friend's mini-donkeys. They are proving to be an asset to my little farm. My hubby and I went down to investigate some weird crying sounds by the goat pen and barn. It was pretty dark so we had to wear our headlamps. We thought they sounded like coyote pups. We took one of our dogs with us.

The donkeys and the wild male goats were all hunkered down for the night under the barn but of course they came to investigate why we were there. Hubby went out into the field to have a look around and I told our dog to go with him. So I was waiting around by the barn when the dog came back.

Well, Eeyore the donkey did not like the dog and started chasing him! I think Eeyore was ready to bite and kick our dog. I had to call the dog over to me and tell Eeyore that he was not a predator. We could not find where the crying sounds were coming from and it was super-dark so we just called it a day. But now I know those donkeys are protective of my goats! Go figure. Ha.

A young neighbor came by and saw my baby goats and was falling in love with them. I think she may purchase a few to help eat down the foliage around her house. Since my goats are on the smaller side, they are easier to manage.

Sometimes they can be a pain in the butt, though. They eat what you don't want them to eat. I put Shay and Kiki a little too close to a young peach tree. The next thing I know, they had pushed in the wire fencing around the tree and ate all the leaves off the bottom part of the tree! Ugh! I am coming to the realization that one must fence off what you don't want them to eat as well as fencing them in where you want them. In case they escape, they can't get to what I don't want them to eat.

Psalms 25:1 O LORD, Thou art my God, I will exalt Thee, I will Praise Thy name, for Thou has done wonderful things. Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

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