

PAYING IT FORWARD

Grant Union hoops teams bring back youth basketball camp

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

The Grant Union boys and girls basketball teams are busy these days, practicing and preparing for the start of the 2022-2023 season.

But the teams took a brief pause on their preparation to help the next generation of Grant County basketball players sharpen their skills at a youth camp held on Friday, Nov. 18, at Grant Union High School.

The event marked the return of a tradition that was temporarily derailed by the pandemic, said RC Huerta, the head coach of the Prospectors boys.

“Pre-COVID I used to have two skills camps. I would have a ball-handling camp and a shooting camp,” he said.

“I wanted to continue those, and we obviously weren’t able to do that. So then I was like, we’re bringing this back and let’s make it happen.”

Huerta added that the goal is to have a youth camp every year from here on out with the hope that the focused skills camps make their way back into the program.

“I would like to go back to hopefully doing some more skills camps where we



Justin Davis/Blue Mountain Eagle

Members of the Grant Union High School boys basketball team coach youth skills camp attendees on proper ball-handling skills.

just do shooting camp, focus three days on shooting, focus on ball-handling and do three days of ball-handling,” he said. “I just want to continue to get the youth excited about playing basketball and out there having a good time.”

The reason for putting on the camp is twofold for Huerta. On the one hand, he and the current team are building the skills of the next generation of basketball players. On the other hand, Huerta said he’s just happy to see kids and community members out doing something.

“I love basketball,” he said. “Basketball is a fun game to play. I think a lot of times it’s

taken so seriously that it ends up almost being a detriment to a certain degree, so I want them to have fun when they’re doing it so they get better. Then absolutely with the end goal of being where they’re ready to play with us.”

Huerta is hoping the success they found toward the end of last season carries over into 2022-23. The Pros return nine players from last year’s squad with just a single senior on the roster.

Last year’s team only won four games during the regular season but still found their way into the league playoff after a play-in victory over Pilot Rock. The team picked

up another win in the league playoff before falling to Union in the second round of the tournament.

“There was some good upside in our program that we were going to be able to really compete and just get better and better,” Huerta said. “I just have juniors and sophomores and freshmen again this year, so I feel pretty good about the future of our program.”

Last season was kind of a school of hard knocks for the Prospectors, according to Huerta, who is looking at last year’s late-season successes as the foundation for a stronger 2022-23 campaign.

“That’s my hope for sure,” he said.

“The camaraderie at practice has been incredible,” Huerta added. “The guys, they’ve been picking up the offense better. They’re really buying into the idea that defense wins championships. They’re looking out for each other, they’re encouraging. It’s been really good, so I feel like it’s just continuing to be in the up-and-up.”

The first game for the Grant Union boys basketball team will be on Saturday, Dec. 3, at the Elgin Lions Tournament. Three days later the team is back home for a renewed rivalry with Prairie City on Tuesday, Dec. 6.



Dale Valade: Contributed Photo

A good day’s hunt can put some meat in your stew pot.

SHOOTING THE BREEZE

Try some wilderness stew

Full is the perfect weather for making stew. Some of my most favorite meals are quite simple, and so it is with stew. The glory of it is you can put whatever you want into it and usually it’s at worst still edible.

I recently decided to go bird hunting. I grabbed my grampa’s EAA Baikal over and under shotgun and some shells and headed out. Duke, my yellow Labrador retriever, was already waiting excitedly by the tailgate of our pickup when I came out of the house. After stopping for some snacks, we made for the hills.



Dale Valade

Duke has had no formal training in obedience, or hunting for that matter. So taking him practically anywhere is always a test of my patience. A good bird dog should stay close so the birds don’t flush out of shotgun range. Duke believes in being way out front no matter how many times I call him back. Luckily, that was not a hindrance that day.

Our plan was to go for quail. California quail — or Callipepla californica, as they are formally known — are one of the most beautiful of the upland game birds in this part of the world. We would’ve also settled for chukars, grouse or doves if we could find any.

Duke flushed three different coveys, all at relatively close range, and four of the five shots I fired found their mark. That’s an average that I wish I carried more consistently. “Maybe it’s time I got my own over and under,” I said aloud. We also flushed a single covey of mountain quail, but I didn’t get off a shot before they crossed the river. I had no desire to go swimming to recover a downed bird, so I held fire.

On our way back to the pickup, Duke flushed a cottontail rabbit. This shot was the best one I made all day as I had mere fractions of a second to swing, aim and fire before Br’er Rabbit made it to cover. The 20 gauge shouldered quickly, and as I tracked the rabbit, the bead settled just in front of his nose as I squeezed the trigger. He tumbled to a stop, the FIOCCHI number 7.5 shot having found its mark. Duke panted excitedly as I picked up the rabbit, feeling proud of himself no doubt for his expert flushing job.

Back at home, I took out my Case XX pocketknife and dressed the four quail and the rabbit. Then I let their meat cool in some lightly salted water. Emma decided to put them into her plans to make stew for dinner. In addition to rabbit and quail sautéed in butter, she added genuine Idaho gold potatoes as well as corn and carrots and various spices. It was a hearty meal and one of the best ways I’ve had rabbit and quail meat.

Small game is usually quite plentiful, and in a stew it can go much farther than it would seem. Just another excuse to get out and enjoy the cooler weather while putting food on the table. It’s a win-win. Now if I can convince grampa to extend the loan of that 20 gauge a little longer, I’ll be set!

Do you hunt birds or rabbits? Write to us at shootingthebreezeme@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.

Grant County athletes nab honors

By JUSTIN DAVIS
Blue Mountain Eagle

GRANT COUNTY — The 2022 fall campaign led to multiple Grant County high school athletes being recognized as all-league athletes in both the High Desert League and the Blue Mountain Conference.

All-league honors for the Blue Mountain Conference in volleyball and football are as follows:

Volleyball first team: Drew Williams, junior, Grant Union; Brilynn Combs, junior, Grant Union; Addy Northway, sophomore, Grant Union

Volleyball second team: Kynlee Pettyjohn, junior, Grant Union; Halle Parsons, junior, Grant Union

Volleyball honorable men-



Justin Davis/Blue Mountain Eagle, File
Prairie City running back Cole Teel, left, was named High Desert League Offensive Player of the Year for the second time.

tion: Sivanna Hodge, junior, Grant Union; Jaydika Anderson, junior, Grant Union

Football first team: Alex Finley, junior, linebacker/offensive line, Grant Union

Football second team: Riddick Hutchison, senior, defensive line, Grant Union; Preston

Boethin, senior, receiver, Grant Union; Talon VanCleave, junior, defensive back/quarterback, Grant Union; Till Winegar, junior, defensive back, Grant Union

Football honorable mention: Preston Boethin, senior, linebacker, Grant Union; Andrew Hunt, senior, linebacker, Grant Union; Jack Strong, senior, linebacker, Grant Union; Isaiah Adams, freshman, receiver, Grant Union

All league honors for the High Desert League in volleyball and football are as follows:

Volleyball first team: Laken McKay, senior, Prairie City

Volleyball second team: Betty Ann Wilson, senior, Prairie City; Reece Jacobs, junior, Prairie City

Volleyball honorable mention: Jaycee Winegar, junior, Prairie City; Bethany Wilburn, sophomore, Dayville/Monument; Jin Bo Ciochetti, sophomore, Dayville/Monument

Football first team: Cole

Teel, senior, running back, Prairie City; Eli Wright, senior, offensive line/defensive end, Prairie City; DJ Heikes, senior, punter, Dayville/Monument

Football second team: Trey Brown, junior, defensive end, Prairie City; Cody Reagan, junior, offensive line, Prairie City; Cole Teel, senior, defensive back, Prairie City; Ethan Thompson, junior, linebacker, Dayville/Monument; DJ Heikes, defensive back, senior, Dayville/Monument

Football honorable mention: DJ Heikes, senior, quarterback, Dayville/Monument; Ethan Thompson, running back, junior, Dayville/Monument; Payton Whitmore, freshman, noseguard, Dayville/Monument

High Desert League Offensive Player of the Year: Cole Teel, senior, running back, Prairie City

High Desert League Player of the Year: Eli Wright, senior, defensive end/offensive line, Prairie City

Conserve

Recycling Awareness Week

Grant County has designated November 20-27 as “Recycling Awareness Week.” Recycling bins for tin cans, newspaper, magazines, and cardboard are located at Clark’s Transfer Station, 26431 Luce Creek Road, John Day, OR. Routine recycling makes a real difference and contributes toward waste prevention. We all can make it a daily practice to recycle, reuse, and compost. Grant County promotes recycling and waste reduction within the Grant Wastehed as required by OAR 340-090-0030 and 340-090-0040. For more information, contact Grant County at 541-575-0059

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