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Downtown basketball tourney promises fun

When the Heppner Merchants' basketball teams — the "Gold Trotters" and the "Blue Blazers" — take to the court at Heppner High School on Tuesday, April 2, they will be determined to leave a lasting impression in the minds of the fans.

The two teams shared the basketball floor at a practice recently, affording the press an opportunity to make a pre-game evaluation of the two and to interview some of the players.

Immediately obvious was the confidence of the Westside-Main team, the Blue Blazers. They are so sure of their skills and superiority, most of the team did not show for the practice. One team member added that the team does not plan to have all members present at any one practice because they do not want to reveal their strategies and key plays to the Gold Trotters.

(An unidentifiable source has confirmed that within the inner circle of the basketball world, the "Trotters" are actually known as the "Gold Walkers" and the "Blazers" are called the "Blue Bruises." When asked for an explanation, the informer said, "You figure it out.")

Adequate descriptions of the skills witnessed at the practice are difficult to produce. All players demonstrated levels of ball handling rarely seen on a high school floor. As the teams first discussed tactics, modesty kept players from taking credit for particular playing skills, but gradually everyone became aware of one another's capabilities.

Part of the evening was devoted to a light scrimmage between the two teams, giving each team and the press some ideas of what to expect at the April 2 game. The Trotters' "Scissorhands" Wright made the first basket of the scrimmage, a skill-filled lay-up behind a screen of four players. Almost immediately, however, the Blazers' "Silk" Van Liew was dead center with her shot from just inside the key. No video of the scrimmage exists, so one question cannot be answered: Did "The Big Cheese" Houweling drop the ball into the basket, while his feet remained on the floor?

Player-coaches of the two teams are "Dead Eye" Sweeney, for the Blue Blazers, and "AWOL" (the press's nickname at this time) Orr, for the Gold Trotters. Orr has all but disappeared since accepting the coaching responsibility, and many sources say that he is locked away, planning

various strategies for a win on April 2. He was not present at the practice to watch his opponent-coach miss two shots in a row. Sweeney, when asked to explain the failed attempts, said, "Strategy. Just remember the name! I didn't get that by missing!"

After his first opportunity to watch a few members of his almost-formed team practice, Sweeney offered this assessment: "I think they are twice as good as people half their age." Two of his team members volunteered hints of what they will be bringing to the Blazers' game: "Pokey Joe" Jepsen said he will offer "class," but did not elaborate... or exaggerate. "Hustlin'" Harrison revealed that she will be "forward." She added that she is confident that she will make a great showing because "Baseball is really my sport, and the ball is much bigger in this one. Much easier to hit."

The Trotters had obviously been coached to not disclose details about their individual talents, but some of the players did offer clues to their game plan: Sisters "Pansy" Helfrecht and "Scissorhands" Wright could be preparing a twosome maneuver of some sort. They both mentioned "run," though one also used the term "duck" and the other "scared" in conjunction with that. Helfrecht admitted that she also has an eagle eye that enables her to tattle to the refs when necessary. "Air" Shank alluded to being "hot." He cloaked this threat in a euphemism, however, by saying something about "warming the bench." Number 2x4 for the Trotters, "Plumb Bob" Bev Steagall, (with a piece of chalk hanging from a string around her neck?) said that she plans to be "useful as a scorer" in the game. "Blow-out" Kohlman, while pretending to be winded after the scrimmage, admitted that the team will be looking to her for "lightning speed." "Nail It." Fowler said that, yes, she is "good." "I am all over that ball and a sure-shot, and I have several tricks up my team jersey," she said. "Lean Machine" Taylor indicated that her advantage lies in being short and able to run between the tall players' legs.

The competitive spirit between these two Main Street merchants' teams continues to grow. These players concentrate on merchandising during the day but become determined dribbling, shooting, running machines at night. The press can only suggest

to the fans that the game on April 2 will be like none other they have attended. And by the time 7 p.m. rolls around that night, that secretive Westside team will have to be ready to take on the Eastside Trotters, who might have a slight edge. As "Hammer Head" Green, who last appeared on a basketball court 47 years ago, has cautioned the Blazers, "Eastern Oregon equals eastside of the state, the best side of the state. Figure it out. Eastside of Main equals the best side of Main." Fact or fiction? Players and spectators can find out on April 2.

Following are the team rosters:

Gold Trotters: # 10—"Nail It!" Kay Fowler; # 1—"Hammer Head" Cliff Green; # ¼ ac—"Camo" Tiffany Greenup; # triple 16—"Pansy" Rhonda Helfrecht; # 5. g—"The Tool Man" Russ Hickerson; # 2#—"The Big Cheese" Bert Houweling; # 15"r—"Blowout" Amy Kohlman; # 20—"Ice Man" Bruce Lindsay; # 3—"Wannabe Cheerleader" Sandy Matthews; # 23—"O.O.R" Jeff Orr; # 6 ply—"Retread" Richard Schmidt; # 0 psi—"Air" Jeff Shank; # 2x4—"Plumb Bob" Bev Steagall; # 16%—"Lean Machine" Janet Taylor; # 10 penny—"Galvanized" John Wight; # vo5—"Scissorhands" Leann Wright.

Blue Blazers: # 0—"City Slicker" Jerry Breazeale; # 20% down—"Hustlin'" Sharon Harrison; # size 9—"Slow Shoe" Jerry Hollomon; # 123456789101112—"Whatever!" Claudia Hughes; # over 55—"Pokey Joe" Bob Jepsen; # \$150 per—"The Brief" Bill Kuhn; # \$\$—"Banker's Hours" Linda LaRue; # 7¼ apr—"Speedy" Missy Lindsay; # 52—"Abstract" Tom McElligott; # Rx—"Make My Day" John Murray; # 25%—"High %" Harley Sager; # 9 to 4:30—"Claims" Brenda Sherrill; # 6' under—"Dead Eye" Pat Sweeney; # 17x34—"Silk" Sandra Van Liew.

Ladies' fun day planned at Willow Creek Country Club

The Willow Creek Country Club ladies' golf will start the 2002 season with a "fun day" on Tuesday, April 2. Breakfast will be held at 9 a.m. followed by the semiannual club meeting and tee-off at 10 a.m.

The officers will host the event, so "just bring yourself, your golf clubs and come ready to play," said a spokesperson.

Medical district losing money, but receives critical access designation

Morrow County Health District accounting supervisor, Nicole Mahoney, presented the district's financial report at their regular meeting March 25 in Boardman. The report reveals that the district lost more than \$50,000 in the month of February. Mahoney pointed out the district is losing an average of \$28,157 per month.

Victor Vander Does, MCHD CEO, informed the board the hospital renovations are nearly completed. The carpet in the main hall will be installed this week. On a bright note, the renovations, which were financed with an USDA loan, came in under budget. The extra funds will be used to make additional improvements throughout the district.

It was announced the

budget process is currently underway, and the first budget meeting will be held following the next regularly scheduled board meeting on April 29, at the school district office in Lexington. The April meeting will have a 6 p.m. start, to allow extra time.

With no complications, the budget will be ready for the required public hearing in May, with adoption slated for June.

Board member Ed Glenn submitted a proposal for a resolution to publish a summary of revenue and expense by facility and function. Vander Does and Mahoney explained to the group that with Pioneer Memorial Hospital's recent change (as of March 1) to being a Critical Access Hospital, which applies district-wide, it would be quite difficult to accurately

change how the financial reports viewed. This was discussed at length, with the consensus that Mahoney will contact Mike Bell, the district's accounting consultant, for advice on if, and how, this could be accomplished.

Several board members, as well as Vander Does, plan to attend the Boardman Chamber of Commerce focus group on Wednesday, April 3, to take part in discussions regarding the medical wants and needs of the Boardman area. The MCHD board and administrator have also been invited to attend the Latin Commission meeting, tentatively scheduled in Boardman, for May 8.

The next MCHD board meeting will be held at the school district office in Lexington, on Monday, April 29, at 6 p.m.

Fifty-five Alive class offered

A one-day Fifty-Five Alive class will be offered in Heppner on Thursday, April 11, at the Columbia Basin Electric conference room from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The course consists of classroom instruction for mature drivers age 50 and over. Laws and safety will be stressed. Many insurance companies offer premium discounts to drivers age 55 and over who complete the class.

The cost is \$10 payable to AARP at the class. Pre-registration is required as minimum enrollment is necessary to hold the class. To sign up, contact Anne Morter, BMCC coordinator at 422-7040 or instructors John and Judi Swanson, at 922-9568.

Service club plans luncheon, presentations

The annual Senior Girls' Luncheon and presentations on "Spring Planting" and "The Dying Teach Us To Live," plus necessary business, outline upcoming April meetings of the Willow Valley Service Club. The club meets on Thursdays at John's Other Place in Heppner from 12-1 p.m.

Margo Scherer, Ione, treasurer and chairperson, announced the WVSC-sponsored annual Senior Girls' Luncheon on Thursday, April 4, will be held once again at All Saints Episcopal Church, Heppner. Lunch will be catered by the Episcopal Church women. Reservations are by invitation only.

Chuck Bailey, Heppner Garden Club president, will return to offer suggestions for "spring planting" at the Thursday, April 11, meeting.

Carolyn M. Willey, WVSC president, will use her six years of experience as a full-time employed chaplain with a large hospice in Florida and her 22 years on church staff as the basis for her presentation, "The Dying Teach Us How to Live," on Thursday, April 18. The Rev. Willey, native of Buhl, ID, now retired, came to Heppner as a permanent resident three and a half years ago.

Services provided the community in March by WVSC included sponsorship for and work shifts for the American Red Cross Blood Drive, coverage of the Chamber of Commerce Information Booth and greeting the Tri-City Irish Dancers during the St. Patrick's Weekend events.

Anyone interested in the WVSC April meetings are invited to attend, with the exception of the Senior Girls' Luncheon.

County, economic development specialist discuss contract

By Doris Brosnan

At the March 20 meeting of the Morrow County Commissioners, economic development consultant Martin Davis addressed his proposal of a contract to consult with the county for his services. He said he has not terminated his employment with the Port of Morrow yet but has given notice. The court agreed to have county counsel review the contract, with a scope of work as an attachment, and they approved the contract subject to his endorsement. Judge Terry Tallman agreed to write a letter to terminate the contract with the port to share the employment costs for Davis's services.

Davis and Carla McLane of the planning department updated the Court on the proposed city/library/county building in Irrigon, sharing the diagrams that they are working with. The commissioners offered some input as several issues were discussed.

To keep the Court informed, McLane and Carol Michael reported on two applications the Heritage Trail Committee has made, one for a grant to fund signage and one to the National Park Service for consideration as host of the traveling exhibit. They added that the Confederated Tribes are working on the project in Umatilla County. Michael showed pictures of the type of trail-access panels they hope to obtain with grant money.

Davis advised the Court that a letter was sent to the State E-Board regarding the money that is to come to the County from the land sale in the north Morrow County. He said that the land sale will not go through until the County is satisfied on the road easement, which is a condition of the sale.

Judge Tallman reported disagreement between the purchaser and the owner of adjacent property on how the easement should be laid out. The commissioners noted that public works director Burke O'Brien has informed the purchaser where the County wants the easement, so the County now awaits the purchaser's completion of that easement.

Michelle Long of ODOT spoke to the Court about the proposal for the formation of the Northeast Area Commission on Transportation, now signed by Union and Wallowa counties. Commissioner Dan Brosnan and Martin Davis suggested some changes in wording, and, after some discussion, the Court approved the proposal with the corrections.

Brosnan reported on the Animal Damage Committee meeting of March 19. The State plans to hold a meeting regarding the migration of wolves into Oregon. Brosnan asked the Court to research whether or not the Coun-

ty has a resolution prohibiting wolves and added that the shooting of a wolf now carries a federal penalty. He recommended that the County be involved in a meeting on April 11 at the ODFW office in Portland.

Commissioner John Wenzel reported on the budget for the Special Transportation fund, which will, he believes, remain the same. He also said that Special Transportation will move forward on bus purchases for Irrigon and Boardman and sell the replaced Boardman bus but keep the Irrigon one for backup.

Wenzel also reported that the Boardman City Council agreed on March 19 to pay half the attorney fees, up to \$10,000, on the dairies-building-permit issue. He added that the council had found prudent the County action that had already been taken.

O'Brien reported on the meeting of the Parks Committee of March 19. Park hosts will be Carolyn Paris at Anson Wright and Judy Horton at Cutsforth. DEQ will not allow dumping in the new septic system at Anson Wright Park, but the County will try to make the other system in place work for that.

O'Brien and Karen Wolff reported having met with a representative of the State Parks and representatives of the Morrow County Fair Board to discuss use of the fairgrounds facility for a regional training site for ATV safety training programs. Wolff detailed how the grounds buildings would be used and discussed the need for qualified trainers. Already the department has received inquiries, resulting from an item in The Oregonian and from information on the web site, Wolff added.

O'Brien noted completion of work on the contestant parking lot at the rodeo arena and reported repair and improvement work at the shop building. He said the crew had plowed snow on Willow Creek and Blake Ranch Roads and had put out traffic counters on Tower and Kunze Roads as part of a traffic study. O'Brien also offered an update on the Valby Road project.

He said he expected the cone unit for the crusher to arrive this day and reported having advertised for bids on a crawler tractor for the rock pit and bids for hot mix asphalt for summer projects.

Judge Tallman opened the one bid on the purchase of a jaw crusher. Learning from O'Brien that it meets the bid specifications, the Court approved purchase of a rebuilt 1960 Pioneer jaw crusher from Spokane Machinery.

The Court also approved \$1000 from tipage fee discretionary funds for the Willow Creek Symphony.

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Rentals Available Here!
Morrow County Grain Growers
Lexington 989-8221 • 1-800-452-7396 For farm equipment, visit our web site at www.mcgj.net