

# Former Heppner resident to run Barkley 50K



Jennifer Rankin shows off her marathon medal.

Former Heppner resident, Jennifer Rankin has been invited to participate in the most difficult 50K in the world, the Barkley Fall Classic. People are on the waiting list for years before getting invited. Rankin told the Gazette, "I got in. A girl from Heppner, Oregon, who was on the track team is about to try the most difficult 50K in the world. When I received the invitation, there was no way I wasn't going to go. When I received the golden ticket, I had to try."

There is a nine-hour cutoff to complete the 22-mile event and the course is designed to push every human limit possible. The Barkley Fall Classic 50K is a running race in Wartburg, Tennessee consisting of a 50K Trail Run designed to give anyone interested in

ever applying for the real Barkley marathons a taste of what the course is like.

Rankin was born in Oregon City in 1978 and her parents moved to Heppner when she was three months old. Her sister, Bobbie, was born in Heppner and her other sister, Tracy, was born in Hermiston. Jennifer attended school in Heppner until her senior year. When her grandfather passed away the summer before her senior year she moved to Oregon City to live with her aunt.

"Both of my sisters are really great runners," Rankin continued. "Even my father completed a half-marathon long before I ever contemplated doing one. Bobbie tried to convince me to join her Cascade Lakes relay team and I couldn't comprehend

doing that." She continued saying she never thought of herself as a distance runner, although she did a handful of 5K races.

While attending school in Heppner she remembers Mr. Grant and Mrs. Gentry making the PE classes run a mile up the hill behind the fairgrounds and that everyone dreaded it. She said she remembers seeing Mr. and Mrs. Beck running from Heppner to Lexington be-

Just after turning 40, she ran her first half-marathon. Of that race, she said, "I wasn't sure if I could run 13.1 miles. I wasn't fast but I was a lot stronger than I thought I would be." Just over a year later and eight more half-marathons, she ran a marathon. A mentor and local running legend, Chris Regan, gave her some advice, "Marathons hurt so you just need to tell your brain to tell your legs to



Bobbie Bates (Jennifer's sister), Shari Baird Pollard, April Defrancesco, Deanne Archibald admire the scenery.

fore school every morning.

Rankin competed in the pole vault event in high school track and Mr. Conklin would drive her to Lone to practice since there was no pit in Heppner. At one point she even held the school record. At a track meet in The Dalles she decided to also run the 3,000 meters race, but said she had no reason to even be in that race. She was lapped several times, but decided she was going to finish, making it one of her most memorable experiences.

keep moving when you hit that wall." Regan has run a marathon in every state and has run thousands of half-marathons. "I now understand why Chris and Mr. and Mrs. Beck ran as much as they did/do. I finished that first marathon and started looking for my next marathon," Rankin said. She ran one half-marathon and a 50K in 2020 and then COVID hit, when every race was deferred or became virtual.

She was scheduled to run a marathon along the



Jennifer and her sister Tracy Rankin.

Maine coast but ended up just running in a park near her home in Newburgh, NY. After that she hit a bit of a slump, which was intensified by a sprained ankle from a trail run in August 2020. Not long afterwards she watched a documentary about the Barkley marathons, which is called "the race that eats its young." She said she then started to build herself back up and while visiting her sister in the fall, she completed her sister's first 25K with her. After that, she was out of her slump.

New Year's Eve 2020 she decided to join a group that was running the Chroton Aqueduct. She ran two marathons and a 50K in seven weeks, then paced a marathon in West Virginia in the dark with over 1,900 feet of elevation gain. For her sister Bobbie's 40th birthday, she and her sisters did a 37-mile ultra-marathon in the Eagle Cap wilderness. Her goal was to run 50 miles sometime in the next couple of years and 100 miles before she is 50. Then after seeing

the Barkley Fall Classic, she decided to sign up. "I knew there was no way I was getting in, so I decided to get on the waitlist. The next morning, I saw a post on Facebook about some unlucky soul getting an invitation. I got in! I freaking got in!"

"Heppner is the small town in the middle of nowhere that prepared me for this," she noted. "Heppner wasn't always the easiest on me, but we are taking on the Barkley Fall Classic together. We are in this together Mr. and Mrs. Beck, Mr. Grant, Mrs. Gentry, Mr. Conklin and Mr. Brownfield."

She ended saying, "Bobbie, Tracy and I live 3,000 miles apart, but we always try to do epic things together. Mom and Dad support us, and dad will even run a half-marathon with us. I'm sure most people wonder why anyone would ever attempt any of this. The same thing I would wonder when I would see Mr. and Mrs. Beck running from Heppner to Lexington. Why not?"

# Mustangs punish Toledo



Tucker Ashbeck forces the quarterback from the pocket. -Photo by Damon Brosnan.

By Blake Carter

Heppner Football traveled to Toledo for their first game of the year where they walked away with a 19-0 victory. The Mustangs looked to start the

season right where they left off after completing a 5-0 record in a shortened season. Toledo was a familiar foe for the Mustangs after Heppner was able to defeat the Boomers 46-6 in their

last game of the condensed season.

The Mustangs opened the scoring in the first quarter as sophomore Caden George picked off the Boomer quarterback and



Conor Brosnan tackles Toledo runner and forces the ball loose. -Photo by Damon Brosnan.

took it 51 yards to give the Mustangs an early 7-0 lead. Heppner then added to their total as Brock Hisler scored from 45 yards out, which stretched their lead to 13 as they headed to halftime. The second half remained a battle of the two defenses. The stalemate in the second half broke when sophomore Cameron Proudfoot intercepted a pass and returned it for a Mustang touchdown as they completed their 19-0 win to start the season.

Heppner's defense was able to keep the Boomers quiet. Caden George and Cameron Proudfoot were both able to return interceptions, providing much needed points while the Heppner offense sputtered. Brock Hisler led the Mustang Defense, as he finished with



Brock Hisler runs the ball as Jake Lentz blocks. -Photo by Damon Brosnan.

14 tackles, Conor Brosnan added 12 tackles, Tucker Ashbeck had 10 tackles and added a sack.

While they only produced one touchdown, the Mustang offense still had its bright spots. Heppner was able to punish Toledo on

the ground as Brock Hisler racked up 164 yards rushing and a touchdown.

Heppner will continue their season as they host the visiting Warrenton Warriors (1-0) on Saturday evening, September 11. Kickoff is scheduled for 5 p.m.

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