

The story of the 1974 Heppner High School 4x100 relay team

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athletes. In early morning handball sessions with Mike Bergstrom, Starr worked to build Mike's skills and confidence, particularly since Mike had a limited interest in academics. Assistant Coach Dale Conklin also played a vital role, motivating the team during critical moments, while Dean Naffziger contributed his expertise and leadership as both a coach and athletic director.

The Relay Team: From Dirt Track to State Champions

Each member of the 4x100 relay team brought unique strengths to their leg of the race, helping secure their record-breaking time and solidifying their place in school history.

First Leg: Matt Greenup

Background: A 1974 Heppner High School graduate, Matt transferred from David Douglas High School for his junior and senior years. He lived with his aunt and uncle, Don and Colleen Greenup, on Kilkenny Ranch. Matt's parents, Clarence and Rita Greenup, remained supportive from afar. Known for his explosive start, Matt was selected to run the first leg due to his powerful block starts and reliable speed.

Athletics and Music: A versatile athlete, Matt also played football as a halfback and was a talented drummer. He played in the Ackley Greenup Band, performing for various local events from 1973 to 1985. His connection to Heppner's band director, Jim Ackley, a fellow musician, led him to perform in

other local bands.

Career and Family: After high school, Matt worked in logging alongside his brother, Mark, before moving to Portland. He became a master welder, working from Portland, Maine, to Dutch Harbor, Alaska. Later, he worked at the Umatilla Army Depot until an injury, then spent over 20 years working on the French Ranch. He now resides in Pendleton with Susie French. Matt has a son Jeff.

Matt's Memory: "Coach Conklin gave me a thumbs-up before the race, and that's all I needed."

Second Leg: Mike Bergstrom

Background: Mike was known for his strength and endurance, which helped him maintain the team's early lead. He was married to Michele Earns Bergstrom for 48 years, with two children, Megan and Matt. His parents, Bob Bergstrom and Marlene, along with Randall Peterson, supported his athletic ambitions.

Athletics: Mike was a three-sport athlete and a standout in football, basketball, and track. He credited Coach Starr for his successes, noting how Starr would pull him into the gym for early-morning handball sessions to enhance his agility and reaction time.

Career: After high school, Mike worked in agriculture, primarily in irrigation management, eventually serving as the Irrigation Director for Agri Northwest for 42 years. He now works as a consultant for Umatilla County Irrigation and is an avid golfer.

Relay Memory from Mike: "Matt handed off the baton with everyone in good shape for leg 1. I was able to gain another stride or two for the lead, and Karl maintained and grew it further. He gave the baton to John Boyer with a slim Heppner lead. John held off Chris Moore from Sherman, who was the fastest sprinter in the state, to win the gold medal and set a new school record in the 4x100-yard relay at 44.9 seconds."

Third Leg: Karl Harrison

Background: Karl and his family moved to Heppner in the early 1970s. His father, Dave Harrison, was the manager of Columbia Basin Electric Co. and was instrumental in establishing the high school's dirt track. Karl's parents, David and Norma Harrison, supported his athletic achievements, and his father's involvement in the track's construction was particularly meaningful to him.

Athletics and Career: Karl was a standout three-sport athlete, excelling in football, baseball, and track. After high school, he worked in the well-drilling industry in Spokane, WA, before relocating to Portland, where he managed the jewelry department at Fred Meyer and later worked in sales at Frenco Furniture. Although unable to attend the 50th reunion due to health issues, his impact on the team remains celebrated.

Karl's Memory: "We felt the whole town behind us."

Anchor: John Boyer

Background: John, the final runner, is the brother-in-law of Karl Harrison and the husband of Kelly Harrison Boyer. The couple has two children, Brooke and Tyler. John's parents, Mel and Anita Boyer, were an integral part of his life, as was his sister, Valerie.

Athletics: A dynamic three-sport athlete, John excelled in football, basketball, and baseball. His talent led to All-American status in basketball, and he was selected to play in the Shrine Game, where he earned MVP honors.

Career: John began his career working alongside his father at Gar Aviation, where he learned to fly from a young age. He dedicated his career to being a spray pilot, eventually taking over the family business, which he managed until his recent retirement. Throughout his career, John and his wife, Kelly, have been active supporters of the South MC community, contributing to athletics, academics, youth programs, 4-H, and FFA. Now retired, John enjoys spending his time on the golf course.

John's Memory: "It was a nice day, and the crowd was huge."

The Dedication

On September 7, 2024, a special event commemorated the 50th anniversary of Heppner's record-setting 4x100 relay team. During the 50th class reunion, gold batons engraved with each member's name and the record time of 44.9 seconds were awarded, along with commemorative T-shirts in

the school's colors, featuring the team members' names and their remarkable achievement. Mike Bergstrom and John Boyer received their engraved batons and T-shirts at the reunion, while arrangements were made to ensure that Matt Greenup and Karl Harrison, who were unable to attend, would receive theirs.

"These four boys did something incredible on a small dirt track, and their record still stands today. We wanted to honor their achievement, their friendship, and the way they inspired a whole generation," shared Susan Healy Hisler, a 1974 Heppner High School graduate and a dedicated supporter of the school's athletic legacy. Susan eventually became the Heppner junior high track coach for over a decade.

In 2005, Susan helped raise the final \$40,000 needed to transform Heppner High School's dirt track into a six-lane, rubberized one. This vision was first set in motion by former principal Wade Smith, who masterminded the construction of the six-lane track, a crucial upgrade that expanded athletic opportunities for future generations. The tribute celebrated more than just the team's success; it honored Heppner's enduring community spirit and the dedication of coaches like Chuck Starr and Dale Conklin, who believed in their athletes' potential.

Additionally, Dale Conklin's stat booklet—a compilation of team and individual records—has

become a source of motivation for countless young athletes. By documenting the school's athletic achievements and setting benchmarks, Conklin's booklet has inspired generations to strive to break records and earn a place on the all-time top 10 list, fueling a legacy of ambition and pride within Heppner's track and field community.

The Race: A Record-Breaking Performance

On the day of the state championship, the Heppner relay team delivered an unforgettable performance. The meet was held at Pleasant Hill on a rubber track, a distinct advantage over the dirt track the team was accustomed to at home for both practices and local meets. Matt's explosive start put them in a strong position, Mike maintained their lead, and Karl further extended it. When John took the baton, he faced tough competition from Chris Moore of Sherman, one of the fastest sprinters in the state. But John held on, crossing the finish line with a time of 44.9 seconds, setting a new school record. This record, measured in yards rather than meters, remains unbroken after 50 years—a testament to the team's skill, determination, and the support they received.

Heppner High School Today: A Legacy Built on Community Spirit

Thanks to the dedication of community members, Heppner High School has grown significantly since the days of the dirt track. In 2005, a new six-lane rubber track was built.

Apparent progress made amid continued tension on CDA board

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a little more tied up in the corners and have a written form," he said.

Puzey said he agreed but advised a high-level view of what had been accomplished.

"At the Pentagon in March of '23, the staff got us across the finish line with the largest transfer of federal property to a local authority in 20 years, and the fourth largest in the nation's history," Puzey said. "I don't know how you describe a lack of performance for a staff who got to that point."

At that point, Tovey called for a point of order, saying they were supposed to discuss the evaluation process, not conduct an evaluation.

"And that's what you're doing, Mr. Puzey, is trying to evaluate the actual performance of the staff," he said. "What we're trying to do is to create a process by which we do the evaluation."

Puzey commented that they were searching for attorneys to help with the process, but Taylor said he didn't think it was necessary.

"This board could do it," he said.

Morrow County Board of Commissioners alternate David Sykes agreed. "What's the purpose of having attorneys do this process?" he asked. "I don't understand what you want the attorney involved for."

Taylor presented the Port's evaluation form and said that, while it might not be perfect, he would suggest using it.

"It's a nice, easy form," he said.

Puzey said he had no objections. Umatilla BOC representative John Schafer said the board had discussed evaluation forms at its Oct. 11 meeting, but he thought part of the issue had

been ambiguity about who Smith worked for.

"Did he work for us or for the Port?" he asked. "If he's not our employee, why are we doing the evaluation? But it sounds like we're getting closer to an acceptable answer and, if we have that answer, why don't we just use those forms?"

"Does the staff want to put together a proposed form?" asked Puzey.

"No," Schafer replied quickly. "We don't want the staff to put together an evaluation form to evaluate themselves."

Puzey commented that it could at least be a starting point for the board.

When asked, Smith replied that he thought his last evaluation had been seven or eight years ago.

"And from that point on we just navigated within the grant process," Smith said.

Sykes suggested the board form a committee to create a process. Taylor and Puzey both agreed to be on the committee and said they would have something prepared by the November meeting.

Puzey said he would like to see the CDA board resolve its problems and move forward.

"I don't know how many times I have said I would work with you, and I will say that again," he said to Schafer. "In the absence of that, we continue in this state of conflict."

He added that he would like to see the staff back at the salary that was recommended in the contract with the federal government.

"I think they are doing an awesome job," he said pointing out that one staff member was already absent. "We have issues that need to be resolved or we're going to be in worse shape than we are now."

Schafer seemed to agree. "Let's put that mo-

tion back on the table and let's get that resolved so we can start working again," he said.

After what seemed to be a grunt from Smith, Schafer turned to him and said, "You say no?"

"I didn't say anything," Smith responded. "It's up to you five."

Meanwhile, Tovey said he took exception to the notion that Doherty and he were responsible for tension on the board.

"Some of this is actually effective oversight," he said. "The fact that we don't have an operational budget, the fact that an individual thought that an approval of a grant equated to a salary increase, that's effective oversight of public funds."

"I do not take any of the blame for any of the consternation that's happening on the board when I am trying to provide effective oversight for public funds and a public organization," he added.

Smith apologized and said he would ask members to read the narrative in the budget before voting in the future.

When it came to the ongoing litigation between Umatilla County and CTUIR and the other three members of the board, Schafer said he had a proposal he thought everyone would agree to but that he needed to have it on the agenda to discuss it. He said Puzey refused to put the issue on the agenda.

"I want everybody to hear that you're refusing to put a fix that all five members would agree to on the agenda," Schafer told Puzey.

Puzey replied that the issue had been put on the agenda twice and that a second vote had reaffirmed the action, but that the Port of Umatilla would be happy to meet and work something out.

"We have repeatedly put it out to you, John, that we will work with you, we will work with you, we'll work with you, but we are under the constraint of the lawsuit because we are defendants in a suit that you brought against us," Puzey said.

He added that Schafer had repeatedly called him a liar. Schafer replied that he had not called him a liar but had said he negotiated in bad faith. He also said he would not discuss his idea with other board members outside of a CDA meeting due to meeting laws.

"You said you want to work with me?" he added. "Then put this on the agenda, because you don't know what I'm going to say."

Tovey moved to have Schafer's item put on the next agenda and to have the Umatilla County commissioner send out information to all board members prior to the meeting.

"All we'll be doing is getting that information and then we can have a further discussion on it," said Tovey.

Sykes commented that he understood the need to get the ball rolling but said it was difficult to have discussions with a lawsuit hanging over their heads.

"It can all go away," said Schafer, "but you've got to hear the proposal."

The board voted unanimously to put Schafer's discussion item on the November agenda. The next

scheduled meeting of the CDA is November 26 at 1 p.m.

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