

Memories of the heat



SAM BARBEE FROM THE SIDELINES

There was this one weekend in Longview that was absolutely unbearable. I was 12-years-old, and temperatures had skyrocketed into the 100s in a place where 85 is considered outrageously hot.

I remember playing first base, the hot dirt burning upward and the blazing sun burning downward. I'd take my hat off after each pitch and wipe the sweat from my forehead, silently imploring the pitcher to get one, two, three more outs so I could retreat into the cool dugout with my awaiting water. The thing, though, about Longview heat is it's a very moist heat. In some ways, it feels almost tropical. We get enough warm ocean air that it makes 85 feel like 95, and 100 feel like 110.

I remember playing in a tournament in Yakima years later where it was so hot I could barely think, and I pitched six innings in a loss. That was in a dry heat more reminiscent of Hermiston, though.

None of these thoughts were in my head as I drove to Irrigon on Saturday to watch some Little League softball. My car doesn't have air conditioning at the moment, so most of my attention was focused on not putting my arm a place that was so hot it felt cold.

Those girls in Irrigon, playing in 110-degree heat, had something I never had: misters. These awesome little hoses have holes in them to send water spraying and keep the players cool in the dugout. You see them on NFL and college football sidelines on especially hot days, in the south, or on fields with turf.

I remember one time at Disney Land when I was 7, it was a hot Anaheim day and I sat in front of a big round fan/mister. My dad had a video camera and asked me what it was. I said it was a mister, not all that excited about being interviewed on tape by my dad.

It was so hot Saturday, in fact, that the 10/11-year-old game took an hour-long heat delay. In one season, I've seen two things I've never seen before: a glare delay and a heat delay.

What's interesting, though, is if you told that 10 or 11-year-old Sam that one day he'd be living in the desert and consistently walking out into 95, 100-degree temperatures, he wouldn't be very happy. November's sub-freezing temperatures weren't that bad at all. I sleep cold, after all.

I'm acclimating, slowly but surely. I've realized this when temperatures drop below 80 degrees and I instantly grab a sweatshirt.

But I remember exactly what it was like playing in that kind of heat. I remember that tournament from when I was 12. We hosted it and won it over the Fourth of July weekend. I mostly remember the heat and needed a new shirt after warm-ups. I remember telling myself I would never live somewhere hot, that I can't take it.

Well, that worked out. — Sam Barbee is a sports reporter for the Hermiston Herald and East Oregon based in Hermiston. He can be reached by phone at 541-564-4542 or by email at sbarbee@hermistonherald.com. Follow him on Twitter @SamBarbee1 and Herald Sports @HHeraldSports.

Barrier-breaking golfer enjoys Northwest swing

BY SAM BARBEE STAFF WRITER

Big River Golf Course owner Ron Holsek has a friend in a high place, and he had no qualms about bringing that friend to town.

His friend's name is Lee Elder and he is an important figure in the world of golf.

Elder's story is one of trials, racism, perseverance and dedication. Born in Dallas, Texas he was an orphan by 12 and hung around the local golf course. He slept under trees at night and shagged balls by day. He fell in the love with the game. He worked as a caddy and eventually joined a professional golf tour, where he would meet his wife at a tournament in Washington D.C.

But Elder, 80, is best known in the golf world for breaking the color barrier at a place no one thought it could be done: Augusta National in Georgia. In 1975, Elder withstood death threats as he teed up as the first African-American to play in the Masters Golf Tournament. He changed clothes in his Cadillac because he wasn't allowed in the all-white clubhouse.

Flash forward a few decades and Elder met Hol-

sek at a charity golf tournament at White Horse Golf Club in Kingston, Washington on the Kitsap Peninsula. He was there with former Seattle Seahawks running back Randall Morris, and they were talking about the charity tournaments they run. Morris hosts a tournament in his name benefiting childhood burn victims, and Holsek helps with the Meadowood Springs Fundraiser Tournament and another tourney for children with speech difficulties. Elder told Morris he'll come back as long as Morris wants it, and he told Holsek he would come out to Big River.

That was in September 2014. A few short months later, Holsek called Elder on short notice to see if the golfing legend could attend the Meadowood tournament. Elder canceled a previous event and stayed the whole weekend.

Holsek has had success in luring celebrities to the Meadowood tournament. Former Washington Redskins tight end Clint Didier has come the last 14 years. Bobby Gross, formerly of the Portland Trail Blazers, has come the last seven years. Former Oregon Duck Mike Walter has come for the last nine.

But the chief get this year was Elder.

He stayed all day Saturday and even hit the



PHOTO COURTESY JAN SCHROTH

Golfing legend Lee Elder (right) poses with Big River golf Course owner Ron Holsek at the 35th annual Meadowood Golf Tournament last month.

opening tee shot. He answered questions and took pictures. He gave tips. He shared memories.

"I think it's wonderful," Elder said of Eastern Oregon after his first visit here. "It's a little more isolated than a bigger city, but that's not to say that a person couldn't enjoy living there. There's lot of things it has to offer, just like many other areas. And the people are just so wonderful, I tell you, I just can't express enough as to how we enjoyed the people and



PHOTO COURTESY JAN SCHROTH

Lee Elder, golfing legend and personal friend of Big River Golf Course owner Ron Holsek, meets a patron last month at the 35th annual Meadowood Tournament at Big River in Umatilla.

SEE ELDER/A9

All-star football game teaches life lessons

Former Bulldogs gain friend, confidence going into college

BY SAM BARBEE STAFF WRITER

Landon Gammell and Carson Morter were unsure what to expect.

The two Hermiston products were members of a handful of east-siders who were selected to play in 68th Les Schwab Tires Bowl in June at Pacific University in Forest Grove.

The Les Schwab Tires Bowl is an all-star football game between the top 5A and 6A football players in the state of Oregon. Proceeds go to the Oregon State Athletic Association's general scholarship fund, and in the week leading up to the game the players engage in various nightly activities, interacting with hospital patients and at-risk youth.

Morter was selected outright, and Gammell got a spot when someone dropped out.

"I didn't know anyone," Gammell said. "There were a bunch of guys ... We knew the Silverton quarterback (Cole Chandler) was there and we were like, 'We're probably gonna hate him.' I don't know, we thought we heard all these names that we'd known from Marist and stuff. 'Man, this isn't going to be fun.' Me and Carson were saying that."



PHOTO COURTESY OF WAZMIXPIX

Hermiston's Landon Gammell (97), to the right of the frame, celebrates with his South teammates after they defeated the North 42-21 in the annual Les Schwab Bowl senior all-star football game on Saturday, June 20 at Hillsboro Stadium. Also on the South team was Hermiston's Carson Morter (not pictured).

FOOTBALL

Because there were so few east-siders on the South squad, Gammell and Morter found themselves on the fringes at the beginning. They watched as guys from Salem, Eugene, Medford and Bend greeted each other and already knew each other's names, while they stood awkwardly on the outside.

"I felt kind of like an alien," Gammell said.

But that all changed rather quickly.

At that first banquet, the coaches said that the players would meet "a bunch of their best friends" that week.

"At first, we were (dubious)," Gammell said.

Then after the first practice, with Sheldon's Lane Johnson running the show, the players bonded. Walking back to the dorms, they found common ground in Johnson's strictness, and that galvanized the group. One day after practice, Gammell and his roommate, Connor Fohn from South Salem commenced the all-star football game tradition of trading helmet stickers. Morter was given four by his former head coach Mark Hodges before the trip, but Gammell had none because he was a last-minute replacement.

So Gammell took one purple "H" off his helmet and gave it to Fohn, who supplied Gammell with a black "S." From there, they went up and down

the dorm hallway, trading stickers and bonding further.

"It is kinda crazy how quickly people can connect on a friendship level in a short amount of time," Morter said.

For both Gammell and Morter, the Les Schwab Tires Bowl was an opportunity for them to gauge their talents, Gammell especially. He used the game as a litmus test to decide whether he should continue to play in college.

It went pretty well. He finished with six tackles, four solo, with two tackles for loss and a forced fumble. He looked around during the game and realized that he can compete with the best talent in the state.



PHOTO COURTESY TRACY GAMMELL
Recent Hermiston graduates Landon Gammell (left) and Carson Morter pose after the 68th Les Schwab Tires Bowl two weeks ago at Hillsboro Stadium.

He will attend the College of Idaho in the fall and he will play football.

With a state championship in hand, Gammell couldn't think of a better way to end his high school career.

"That is definitely icing on the cake, just being able to go to that and get all the recognition," he said. "The Springfield coach (Dave Heuberger) was there, super cool guy, really good coach. All the other 5A coaches were there. I talked to Marist's coach (Frank Geske) after the game and he was like, 'Good job' and everything. It was a good note to go on to college football with."

Morter agreed.

"It taught you a lot more than just football," Morter said of the week. "You kinda just gotta go out and start talking to someone you don't know. For a kid in high school, you kinda take for granted how much you don't do that. You have all your friends all the

SEE FOOTBALL/A9

Hermiston pair help squad to Hoopfest title

A pair of Hermiston men helped a four-man 6-foot and over three-on-three basketball team win a bracket at Spokane Hoopfest, the largest three-on-three basketball tournament in the country.

Rylie Smith and Mike Royer, Hermiston natives and Western Oregon alumni, helped WOU's Woes teammates Roy Curry of Portland and Nate Ambriz of Spokane to the Bracket No. 408 6-foot and under rec championship with



a perfect record of 5-0. Smith, Royer and Curry are alumni of WOU.

— Sam Barbee

Host Stanfield claims tourney

BY SAM BARBEE STAFF WRITER

In a trio of games over the weekend, the Stanfield AAU baseball team took its own tournament after beating Sunnyside Christian 13-2, then splitting a pair with Riverside/Irrigon 13-7, a loss, and the tournament-clinching 9-5 win.

Klay Jenson threw five innings of two-run, two-hit ball to stifle Sunnyside, and Adrian

BASEBALL

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