

Opinions

Our View

Lovell bouncing back to 2A

The long winter sports season came to an end Saturday at the state Class 3A basketball tournament and athletes jumped right into track and field practice two days later.

Such is the life of a high school athlete.

Lovell has competed well in Class 3A during the last two seasons, with spring track and golf seasons yet to come. The girls basketball team went 38-14 over the last two seasons as the smallest school in Class 3A, and the boys hoops squad won four postseason games this season in a strong comeback for the program.

Lovell has also competed well in volleyball and individually in wrestling and track and field, although the school simply doesn't have enough athletes to compete for team titles in the large-group-tally sports like track and wrestling.

And now it's back to Class 2A for Lovell, where the Bulldogs will once again be in the same conference with local rivals Rocky Mountain, Greybull and Riverside.

There are advantages and disadvantages to "dropping down." Lovell has certainly enjoyed the competition and "big school atmosphere" of 3A, but being the smallest 3A school means the Lovell teams generally don't have the depth of schools three times Lovell's size. So it was especially gratifying for local fans to see the girls and boys basketball teams do so well this year (and last year for the Lady Bulldogs).

It will be good to see the Bulldogs back in the Five Rivers Conference again, though, renewing conference rivalries and attending the same post-season tournaments meets. The 3A schedule just didn't jibe well with the 2A schedule, which made things difficult for fans of both schools – and for newspaper coverage.

And in Class 2A the winter and spring seasons don't crowd each other as much. Lovell basketball players attending the state tournament last week missed an entire week of track and field practice.

What's frustrating, of course, is how the Wyoming High School Activities Association forces "bubble" schools – those near the enrollment cutoff lines --to continually switch from one class to another – putting even numbers before fairness. We understand the difficulty of aligning conferences and planning post-season events, but the WHSAA's refusal to consider natural breaks in school enrollment when setting classes is maddening. Jackson, for instance, will compete in Class 4A for the next two years because of a one-half student difference in enrollment with Riverton, which drops to Class 3A. That makes no sense whatsoever.

Who knows, maybe Lovell will be back in 3A again two years from now and playing conference games against Riverton, a school nearly four times Lovell's size. Wouldn't that be strange!

— David Peck

Letter to the Editor

It's the government, not CWD

Dear Editor,

I have been an avid sportsman in Northwest Wyoming for 50 years. I know the deer herd population fluctuates from year to year. I have never seen the deer population as low as it is now.

The government wants to blame this on several factors, the main one being Chronic Wasting Disease. I look at this theory as only being partially true while the main reason has been the constant slaughter of thousands of does and fawns over the past 20 years.

It is true that CWD does kill deer, but I believe it is nature's way of culling the herds. The ongoing killing of all the does and fawns is a man made cause of the devastation of our deer herds. I believe there are deer that die from CWD, but I also believe there are a lot of healthy deer who have a natural immunity to the disease but the constant slaughter of our

does and fawns is not giving them a chance to repopulate the herds with healthy animals.

I can't see where the government has the knowledge or the wisdom to make a judgement call against the brookies saying the cutthroat should be here instead of the brookies because the cutthroats were here first. Through time I'm sure there was something here before cutthroats. I think this is just another way of the government catering to the special interest groups, just to avoid a lot of pressure from these groups, and because of the financial gain they receive from these groups.

I believe the government should stop playing mother nature and start adopting some hands-off policies. I also believe the special interest groups should be booted out of our state because their interests are not in the public's best interest.

Rand Christensen

HAPPY ST. PAT'S DAY!

TH' WIND WHIPPED
AN' BLEW TH' CLOTHES,
THEY TOSSED AROUND
FOR FAIR
— BUT TH' THING
I LIKED TO WATCH
TH' MOST
WUZ DAD'S GREEN
UNDERWEAR!

Poem by Jim Edwards



Guest Editorial

The Ten Commandments for open meetings

BY BRIAN J. HUNHOFF
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Yankton County (S.D.) Observer

"I think heroic deeds were all conceived in the open air."

The quote atop this editorial is from Walt Whitman's Song of the Open Road – a cheerful 1856 tribute to freedom and the great outdoors.

Hopefully, Mr. Whitman would have approved use of his prose to promote open, well-aided government. It's unlikely the great poet favored government secrecy and closed-door meetings. He also wrote, "Out of the dark confinement, out from behind the screen!"

For today's purposes, Whitman's "screen" represents the executive session – a self-important term for a classic oxymoron: closed public meeting.

Too many elected boards seek every opportunity to meet out of sight of the public they serve. Some schedule executive sessions as a regular agenda item. Some hold up to three executive sessions in a single meeting. Some have executive sessions that last longer than the open portion of their meeting.

In most cases, executive sessions do not violate open meeting laws. The closed-door discussions are often suggested or encouraged by an elected board's legal counsel.

But legality and necessity are two different things.

Guest Column

The Value of Wyoming Agriculture

BY DOUG MIYAMOTO

Wyoming agriculture is strong. Wyoming is one of the few states in the last Census of Agriculture to add agricultural lands and ranked first in average size of farm and ranch in the country. Not only does ag in Wyoming contribute more than a billion dollars annually to the state economy, it also preserves the open spaces we all love, as well as the culture and heritage that make Wyoming great. Simply put, agriculture is imperative to the State of Wyoming economically, culturally and historically.

While this is widely known in the state of Wyoming, the agriculture industry sometimes falls to the back of people's minds as generations move further from the farm or ranch. It's important to take this opportunity to talk about the positive impacts this industry has not only on the state of Wyoming but the United States and World. It's also important to recognize the challenges our industry faces so citizens can understand the issues this vital industry faces to provide food and fiber.

Wyoming agriculture continues to move in a positive direction. Along with the money agriculture brings to the economy in Wyoming, agriculture brings great value

to the state of Wyoming. Agriculture provides the open spaces we love and stewards of the land who care for it by protecting the land in ways that are beneficial to everyone in the state. Not only do our producers work the land, they sustain and preserve it for future generations while providing habitat for wildlife and other uses.

While the agriculture industry provides these significant values to our state, arguably the most important are the people. Hard working, honest and value driven, these citizens provide quality products for their family, community, state, nation and people around the world. The people from the agriculture industry are great citizens who can be, and are ambassadors for this way of life.

While I hope younger generations that want to return to the ranch or farm will have the opportunity if they choose, their agricultural backgrounds will still serve them well moving forward if they have other interests. Our industry and others benefit from more Wyoming ranch kids occupying important positions regardless of what career they choose. The connection they have to agriculture can be shared with a multitude of people outside the industry. While there are many

with frequent phone, email or text dialogues with other members. Reach consensus at the meeting.

EIGHT: Do not make a habit of whispering or passing notes at meetings. You were elected to speak for us. Tell what you have to say out loud and proud.

NINE: Allow public input at every meeting. Include it on every agenda.

TEN: Be as transparent as possible. Do not hold executive sessions simply because counsel advised it is "legal" to do so. Ask yourself: "Is it absolutely critical we discuss this privately?"

That should be the standard because legality and necessity are two different things.

We appreciate our local commissioners and board members. They serve for minimal compensation. They make tough decisions. They sometimes lose friends and make enemies. Their dedication to community is admirable.

We simply ask elected officials to think twice before kicking the public out of public meetings.

Strive for fewer. Less is more. A closed meeting should be a rare occasion, not a habit.

(Brian Hunhoff writes for the Yankton County Observer in Yankton, South Dakota. His editorials about open government won the 2015 Freedom of Information award from the National Newspaper Association.)

WYOMING PRESS ASSOCIATION



MEMBER 2015

2014 Award-winning Newspaper

Postmaster: Send address changes to:
The Lovell Chronicle, USPS 321-060
234 E. Main, Lovell, Wyoming 82431
(307) 548-2217

Published every Thursday

Periodical postage paid at Lovell, Wyoming
Publisher/Editor: David Peck

News Editor: Patti Carpenter
Production: Karlie Voss,
Dustin McClure
Staff: Dorothy Nelson, Marwyn Layne, Teressa Ennis, Paul Roland, Leonora Barton, Sam Smith

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
In Big Horn and Park Counties \$30 In
Wyoming \$44
Outside Wyoming \$50
Single copy 75¢

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