

Senior Spotlight

THERE'S NO PLATE LIKE HOME

Colville's Justin Berg reflects on a lifetime spent playing baseball and finding where he belongs

Taylor Newquist
Statesman-Examiner

Colville senior Justin Berg lived in a lot of places before finding his home in Stevens County, but all along he knew where he really belonged -- on a baseball field.

To Berg, the sport means everything.

"I've devoted so much time over the years, missed out on so many things just so I could play," He said. "The relationship I've had with my dad because of it. It's one of the few things that I really feel at home. I've lived in four different states, spent time in others and the baseball field is the one thing that is consistent."

"It's one of the few times I feel natural doing something and confident. It's something that I don't want to be done and something I'm trying everything I can to keep going."

Berg moved from small towns in Oregon, Montana and Kansas before landing in the second biggest place he'd ever lived -- Colville.

From sixth grade, Berg has been playing baseball with his current senior class and he's loved every minute of it.

"It was the first place I'd like to say everyone genuinely enjoyed me being there," Berg said of moving to Colville. "People around here were really quick right off the bat to enjoy your presence. They welcome you so well."

Berg made his mark on Colville's baseball program, seeing playing time since his freshman year and being an integral part of last year's team that was the best in Indian history, reaching the final four. This year, Berg was set to be the No. 1 pitcher and was poised to have the best season of his life after playing fall ball and training all winter long.

"You're sitting there all winter and you're just edging to get going," Berg said. "You feel like you're about to have the best year of your life and then it's all postponed until late April to early May at the luckiest ... I'm just hopeful

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Photo by Taylor Newquist

Colville senior Justin Berg poses in front of the Indians' scoreboard at Hofstetter Field last Wednesday. Berg had seen varsity playing time since his freshman season and is a returning all-league pitcher, who is poised to find his way onto a college roster.



Throwing fear to the wayside

Kettle Falls' Mary Sauvola builds confidence through sports, sets off for a journey into unknown waters

Taylor Newquist
Statesman-Examiner

Kettle Falls senior Mary Sauvola may appear shy from the outside, but she's no stranger to taking on challenges.

Growing up Sauvola played a mixed bag of sports, going from T-ball to soccer, dance in middle school, and even being the lone Kettle Falls girls wrestler last winter, where she tallied two pins in the consolation bracket of the district 7/9 tournament. Through all the sports, track always stuck with one event in particular -- javelin.

As a sophomore, Sauvola made state for the first time and placed No. 14 in javelin with a 86-foot 9-inch mark. As a

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Photo by Taylor Newquist

Kettle Falls senior Mary Sauvola poses at the Bulldog's track last Wednesday. Sauvola will attend the University of Hawaii Pacific next fall.



Running to her own tune

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Photo by Taylor Newquist

Kettle Falls senior Zarah Johnson poses at KFHS last Thursday. Johnson often sang the national anthem to start sporting events, even before one of her own races at state.



Photo by Taylor Newquist

Chewelah senior Lily Kirry poses at the Cougar's track last Wenesday. Kirry has won state track titles in both the 1A and 2B classifications.

The Cougar's champ

Chewelah's Lily Kirry has four state titles, she's just getting started

Taylor Newquist
Statesman-Examiner

Chewelah senior Lily Kirry heard about track from her aunts and uncles and started in camps as early as fifth grade.

In middle school, she never placed less than third place in any individual event she entered, from the

100-meter dash, 200-meter dash, 800-meters, 100-meter hurdles, javelin, triple jump and high jump.

A heptathlete was in the making, even if she didn't know it yet.

She began training in the hurdles with high schoolers, which would become her focal event, winning a 300 hurdle state title, adding two

second places and winning two 100 hurdle state titles. Before rising to the top of the podium, the hurdles were a little intimidating.

"It's a mental game," Kirry said. "Both literally and figuratively just get over it. You have to get over the concept of jumping and once I did it,

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Photos by Taylor Newquist

Chewelah senior Lily Kirry poses at the Cougar's track last Wednesday. Kirry has won two 100-meter hurdles state championships, a 200-meter dash championship and a 300-meter hurdles championship. She is going to be a heptathlon athlete at the University of Massachusetts.

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it was all I wanted to do."

Her freshman year, Kirry won the 1A 300-hurdles with a time of 45.45 seconds, after coming in third in the preliminary race. She was fifth in the 100 hurdles in 15.78 seconds and added an 11th place in the 200 with a time of 26.89 seconds. Her sophomore year, Kirry was second place in the 300 hurdles with a time of 45.42 seconds and won the 100 hurdles in 15.38 seconds, as her only two state events.

Kirry's junior season, Chewelah dropped down to 2B where she again finished second in the 300 hurdles with a time of 44.96 seconds. She again won the 100 hurdles with a time of 15.72 seconds, claiming a 100 hurdles state title in two different classifications. Kirry added a championship in the 200 in 25.67 seconds.

"I would say the competition in the 2B is just as fierce," Kirry said. "There were some negative thoughts on going down to the 2B, but for me it's been a really good experience because of all the strong athletes."

Adding to her junior season, Kirry competed in the heptathlon at the Washington State Combined Event Championship, placing sec-



Chewelah senior Lily Kirry poses at the Cougar's track last Wednesday. Kirry has won two 100-meter hurdles state championships, a 200-meter dash championship and a 300-meter hurdles championship. She is going to be a heptathlon athlete at the University of Massachusetts.

ond overall with a score of 4,190 points. She is going to the University of Massachusetts to compete in the heptathlon, on a team that is the defending Atlantic-10 champions. Still, she wanted to add more accolades to her

high school career before the school closures. More than that, she wanted to help build the sport in her community.

"I was hoping to meet some other goals," Kirry said. "I made it to a college team, so I wanted to get more state ti-

ties. I wanted to reach 18 feet in the long jump. I wanted to build the team ... Now I'm trying to maintain a sense of normalness."

Kirry has seen the Chewelah track program come a long way, from run-

ning on dirt her freshman year to the new track they have now. Part of her goals for her senior season was to repay the community that delivered that new track by helping along the underclassmen in the program.

"I was pretty devastated because we had such a large turnout this year," Kirry said. "I was hoping that as a senior I could show some leadership skills and instill a strong track culture. Since the community paid for this new track I really wanted to show that we appreciated it and wanted to build some school pride."

Now Kirry will be building new school pride across the country. She's working hard to stay healthy and maintain her training with body weight movements and building her own workouts.

"I'm going in as a freshman to this really amazing winning program," Kirry said. "I want to at least contribute to the team. I don't want to be one of the freshmen who is just developing, I want to win points for the team."

While she doesn't have a plan for a major yet, Kirry's big dream is to do research and help athletes with eating disorders.

"I've seen it in athletes and it's really scary to see in other people," Kirry said. "I want to go through nutrition and dietetics or kinesiology or maybe biology and do some research to create programs to decrease eating disorders."

Though her track career is far from over, Kirry is going to miss all the time spent with her friends and teammates at practice and singing songs on long bus rides.



Photo by Taylor Newquist

Colville senior Justin Berg poses at Hofstetter Field last Wednesday. Berg is poised to find his way onto a college roster, despite school closures.

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right now we get the end of that season."

As the prospects of the 2020 season grow slimmer, Berg's ambitions of playing haven't changed. His ultimate goal is to land on a college program next year.

"I'm going to absolutely have to look at playing summer ball," Berg said about garnering interest from colleges without a spring season. "I was planning on using the summer to earn money to go to college. The thought process now is you have to think about walking on. You have

to look at what schools you have a chance at."

Colville head coach Blake Sjordal said his heart breaks for Berg and all of the seniors.

"This is their chance, it's finally about them and I can't imagine," He said. "[Berg] would have had a really good year this year. He's one of those kids that did everything right, lifted year round, went to camps and did everything he could to be a better baseball player. Walking away from the final four this group made a point that they were going to be back next year and they were working toward that all offseason. To see that not happening now is heartbreaking."

Berg's favorite baseball memories from high school are hitting his first home run and throwing a no-hitter against Newport last year.

"It didn't feel like the ones in little league where it's definitely gone," Berg said. "But I hit it and it is just moving! I hit it and it was gone. I think it was gone by the time I hit first base and I just ran around the bases."

Berg believes this year's Colville team could have been just as good as last year, if not better. Now in all likelihood, he'll turn his focus to making a junior college team by fall.

"You have to maintain hope that you have a shot at the next level," Berg said. "You have to be ready to take that opportunity when it comes and you have to be willing to do what it takes."



Graphic by Taylor Newquist