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Start here — Oh hey Blotsters...



Next stop at the Dan O'Brien Track and Field Complex to chat it up with jumping coach Jason Graham.



Then go to the TLC and figure out why that one kid is always talking to the teacher.



Bored in class yet? Take a left to the party scene and you might find an unpleasant surprise.



Too much drama there, so take a right and discover some unknown treasure on campus.



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Head up the hill to the Cowan Spectrum. Game time.



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Blot multimedia

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In this issue



Photo by: Katherine Brown

03 Decades of Idaho

Jumping coach Jason Graham talks about his path from student to coaching NCAA athletes and All-Americans.

05 Help for teacher

TAs: Everybody has one, but what do they really do?

07 The making of a cheater

Ever been cheated on? It's not fun. But some people do it and others have to deal with it.

11 Modern treasure hunt

Capture some booty around the world with geocaching.

15 Taming the fear

Idaho's Wolf Education and Research Center prevents fear of the unknown.

19 Shots for silver and gold

Senior Jeff Ledbetter makes it look easy when he puts up the points.

21 Beyond the board game

Live out childhood dreams of being a mythical creature with Dungeons and Dragons.

wife-to-be at the Big West Track and Field Conference championship.

"She was the sister of ... our academics person in the athletics department," Graham said. "My wife came up to see her sister, met me, and yadda, yadda, yadda, we got married."

Graham returned to the track in 2004 as a coach for the women's high jump.

"I thought to myself, 'That couldn't get me into too much trouble,'" Graham said.

One of the two women Graham coached that year was Tassie Souhrada, Graham's first NCAA-qualifying athlete.

"The first time going to a national championship is like being invited to a club that you typically can't get into," Graham said.

Three years later, Souhrada's cousin Melinda Owen became Graham's second athlete to qualify for NCAA competition.

"I remember just being amazed by how athletic every single athlete looks," Graham said. "I was very

"I don't think a lot of people ever see how caring he is toward his athletes," Klas said. "He treats all of us as if we were his own kids."

Graham doesn't take himself too seriously, and his athletes and co-workers said they appreciate his dry humor.

"At practice, we laugh 90 percent of the time," Dahlgren said. "He does a really good job of being serious but keeping it light at the same time."

UI track and field coach Wayne Phipps, Graham's long-time friend and co-worker, agreed Graham is quick to joke around despite a stoic exterior.

"Sometimes he can come across as always being really serious," Phipps said, "but he's probably one of the funniest guys I know."

Phipps met Graham in 1995 when both men worked with the track team and attended graduate school.

"A year later we were roommates, so I've known Jay for a long time," Phipps said. "The stories I have of Jay Graham are just endless."

Whatever exploits may be in Graham's past, his legacy at UI is the

Jason Phipps

DECADES OF IDAHOO

Most of this year's graduating class has been alive for as long as Jason Graham has been at the University of Idaho.

As an athlete and undergraduate student, Graham competed on the track and field team in men's hurdles and the decathlon, earning three Big Sky All-Academic honors from 1988-92.

"For the most part I haven't left since then," Graham said. "After my years of (competitive) eligibility, I transitioned into a managerial position."

Idaho throwing coach Julie Taylor, another long-time member of Vandal track and field, hired Graham in 1995 to coach women's middle distance and hurdles.

"I took that opportunity so I could actually have official coaching responsibilities rather than just being the guy that runs stopwatches," Graham said. "I could actually have a group and start putting together a training program."

Graham earned his undergraduate degree not in athletic training or exercise science, but in secondary education with majors in math and physics. He returned for his master's in education, focusing on educational

technology and science education.

"It's weird," Graham said. "I did the coaching thing from '96 to '98, then just volunteered (as a coach) so I could work in the College of Education."

During his time in the College of Education, Graham worked on federal grants to develop online courses for the university.

"That was a very productive time for College of Ed.," Graham said. "I'd estimate that we brought in ... \$10 million in federal grants."

Those grant dollars went to work as Graham and his partner, Jason Abbott, designed some of the university's first interactive online courses. By 2002, budget cuts forced Graham out of his position and into a brief vacation from work at the university.

"I was ready for my professional career to explode," Graham said.

Although his plans for upward mobility didn't work out as he imagined, Graham's life changed when he met his

awestruck. It was like, 'I don't know if I'm supposed to be here.' That was a pretty big moment."

Graham's connection to his athletes has only grown throughout the years.

All-American pole-vaulter and recent graduate, KC Dahlgren, returned to Moscow solely to train with her former coach.



www.jmp/ihQA9J

"There's no other coach that I want to work with," Dahlgren said. "He's extremely intelligent and he knows the vault better than any person I know."

Outside of track, Graham's athletes said he cares about their general happiness and success.

"He's really good at taking care of us no matter what we're doing," Dahlgren said. "He's a coach, a mentor, a parent — all wrapped into one package."

Junior Jeremy Klas, Idaho's first indoor All-American pole vaulter, qualified for NCAA competition in the event. Graham has supported him in athletics as well as academics.

athletes he has trained and the pole-vaulting program he has built. This year, Graham is coaching all jumping events at Idaho, a feat few coaches have attempted.

"He's had to take on the most, in terms ... of athletes and events," Phipps said. "There are not too many people in the nation who could handle doing all the jumps like he does."

Graham's personal investment in his athletes has contributed to their success, not only in track but also in life. "He's just really passionate," Phipps said. "He's one of the most thorough coaches I've ever met."

The Vandal track and field program considers Graham an irreplaceable member of its family.

"He has the biggest heart," Dahlgren said.

Klas summed up his feelings about Graham in one sentence, saying:

"The one thing you miss most about Moscow, Idaho — if you're Jay's athlete — is Jay." ●

The Cage

Cage during the course of a weekend and hauled it to Moscow on a flat bed truck from their home in Coeur d'Alene.

The 600-pound apparatus features pulleys, rings, pegs and levers that adjust to each athlete's needs. The Cage allows vaulters to practice their swing and inversion in a controlled environment. It bridges the gap between training and actually flinging through the air. When athletes are injured or preparing for a meet, they can still workout different parts of the body by using elements incorporated into The Cage.

During his career at Idaho, Jason Graham has introduced a variety of new training apparatuses. When the jumping coach was a student athlete, Idaho's track and field program lacked even the most basic pole-vaulting equipment, but that is no longer the case. Idaho now boasts one of the most unique and innovative pole vault training systems in the nation.

Graham began designing a 14-foot tall iron beast he calls The Cage more than four years ago. His concept became a reality in 2010 when senior Lucas Pope volunteered his family's metal shop. Pope, along with his brother and father, constructed The

HELP FOR TEACHER

Challenges arise when one teacher is trying to manage and educate a class of 140 to 150 students. That's why Kenton Bird takes advantage of teaching aides, to make life just a little bit easier.

Bird, director of the School of Journalism and Mass Media, said with a class that big, there are challenges just with classroom management and the logistics of collecting, recording, grading and returning papers and exams.

Bird said he only utilizes TAs for JAMM 100 and usually tries to find three or four juniors or seniors who have taken the class before, received a good grade and demonstrated they had a good understanding of the subject matter.

"The main function for the JAMM 100 TAs is my eyes and ears in the classroom," he said. "With a class that big, students are often intimidated. I try to have a TA there at every class session to just have them be accessible, to respond to student concerns."

Bird said TAs become really valuable to the students in individual study sessions because not everybody can make it to the formal test reviews.

"In the past I've used the TAs as sort of writing coaches to work with the students on their papers and look at drafts or outlines, because all of the TAs have written the assignment or something similar," Bird said.

When Bird has the TAs grade papers, he has them grade for structural purposes, including grammar, punctuation and organization. The TA then recommends a grade to Bird and if the TA has been through it once, he can tell by the number of marks whether it's a good paper or a bad paper.

"Just returning 144 exam scores or 144 papers is made easier just by having the TAs," Bird said. "If I didn't have TAs, I'd have to bring in somebody else to help me with the exams just because with the class being so big I've got to have people keep an eye on the class to prevent cheating."

Because the students chosen are juniors or seniors, they've had some other JAMM courses. Bird said he usually tries to get at least one journalism, advertising, public relations, and sometimes broadcasting majors.

"Each of them can help me stay current with changing development in each area of mass media," Bird said.

Abby McElligott, dance cardio instructor, said she also utilizes TAs because of the size of her class and for student safety.

"My TA helps me a great deal, I have a very large class at this point and there are so many bodies," McElligott said. "Safety is our No. 1 concern as teachers, so having that extra set of eyes is helpful, having that extra creative mind, that extra energy next to me...it's very helpful."



www.j.mp/fqj6ae



Brianna Boland, McElligott's TA, said she frequently assists with class.

"There's no way anyone can see Abby as clear as they'd like to, so being off to the side probably helps break that up," Boland said. "If either of us drops the ball, we don't lose a beat because the other one has it."

In her first two semesters of teaching, McElligott didn't have a TA. She said she was able to run the class, but if she was ill or having an off day, the entire class would suffer.

"It was really unfortunate, and I think that's when I realized I needed someone else there to help lead the class," McElligott said. "I can choreograph and plan everything by myself, but actually doing it is a totally different thing."

Boland said she believes starting out as a TA is a great way to get integrated into teaching. Jodie Nicotra, director of writing, said in some departments TAs actually become the course instructors.

"The TAs in the English Department are unlike other TAs. They are actually the instructors in the classroom so they're not just helping grade," said Nicotra, who is responsible for training all of the TAs.

"We have three programs in the English Department. Some people come in with Master of Arts degrees already and then they just go into the Master of Fine Arts program. We also have an MA program, and those are people who are studying more academic stuff such as literature, rhetoric and composition," Nicotra said. "Then we have a Masters of Arts in teaching, and that's teaching English as a second language."

Some of the TAs hired come in right from being an undergrad. Nicotra said the average age for a TA is usually late 20s.

"We have a pretty rigorous training program for them. First of all, they have to learn the curriculum (what we teach in English 101 and 102). They come in the fall and have a week long orientation and the whole semester they are taking composition pedagogy class," she said.

The TAs are then expected to write their own assignments, and they move to learning teaching techniques, Nicotra said.

"Probably 90 percent of the TAs' student evaluations for the quality of instructor and quality of class give it between a 3.5 and a 4.0, so they're doing pretty well," Nicotra said. "My sense is that students who are in 101 and 102 feel comfortable around a TA."

McElligott said she thinks having the opportunity to be a TA at some point is a fantastic experience.

"That's how I got the job. I was a teacher aide, I learned so much and I loved it," she said.

THE MAKING OF A CHEATER



It was just another college party, but it led to a make-out session that ended a relationship.

"It was one of those things, it's in the moment we were at a party and things just kind of got out of hand," Brittany Leupold said. "The outcome basically was me and my boyfriend broke up and the person I cheated with, him and I don't really even talk anymore."

Leupold, a UI freshman, told her long-distance boyfriend about the incident after it happened and since then, she said she has also been on the other side.

"I've been in the situation where I've been basically lied to about someone being in a relationship with someone. Basically I really liked this guy and he told me that

him and his girlfriend were done."

She said she later she found out he was still engaged to the other girl.

Leupold said she and her ex are back together now.

"It's going good, I mean him and I are pretty much back to normal," Leupold said. "I mean we talked about what happened and stuff, and like how he doesn't want it to happen again of course, and how we're going to try and be better to each other and be there for each other even though its long distance, we're going to try and work on it more."


Leupold said even though her boyfriend doesn't show he has trust issues, she could understand why he would, but she wouldn't cheat on him again.

"I've got so much respect for my BF and like us talking about it," Leupold said. "Communication helps a lot and I feel like that's one of the main things that kind of helped get us back together — we talked about it, about what happened and how much we really wanted to be with each other."

Travis Jones said cheating encompasses more than just a sexual dishonesty.

"Cheating in a relationship for me is not just the act of sex with another person but if you treat somebody better than what you treat your partner, that's definitely an indicator of cheating," Jones said.

Nichel Kernin said there are "no ifs, ands or buts about it" when it comes to cheating, and to her making out qualifies as well. She



said she hasn't cheated because she wouldn't want it done to her and there is no good excuse for it.

"I wouldn't want it to be done to me and it's been done to me and it's not fun for anybody, and it's not worth it," Kernin said. "If you even have thoughts of it you may as well just end the relationship and go do something else."

For Kernin, cheating is grounds for ending the relationship.

"I actually found out two months later my ex had cheated on me twice out camping with his ex-girlfriend and it was done that day," Kernin said. "I was not going to have that."

Jones also said there isn't an excuse for cheating to happen.

"Well the movie(s) will make it

seem like there's a good reason to cheat on somebody but...I guess if you are in fact in love with somebody and your relationship is terrible, then...I think the best route after that would not be to cheat but simply break off the relationship and then you can start your new one," Jones said.

Erin Chapman, assistant professor in Family Consumer Sciences, said cheating can take different forms, not only sexual and physical, but emotional as well.

"I think people cheat because something's not good in that primary relationship, there's trouble," said Chapman, who teaches an intimate relations class. "I also think cheating can kind of happen, with any age really, if you get alcohol and drugs into the mix — people are not

thinking straight. That's no excuse in my opinion, but that does definitely contribute to cheating."



www.j.mp/hWdp2t

Chapman said something else that contributes to cheating, especially in young relationships, is when the definition of the relationship isn't clear — if the relationship is exclusive or open to see other people, etc.

"I think some people think they can get away with it, almost like it's a game, maybe it's exciting to be juggling more than one partner," Chapman said. "Sometimes there's maybe peer pressure ... just to be young and fun and go with things. Sometimes friends can put you in interesting situations."

Chapman said the longer the human species lives, the more research shows people weren't

meant to be with one person that long, but she thinks people are capable of it.

"You have to be realistic about it, you're not going to have the butterflies, the sweaty palms and the goo-goo eyes the entire relationship," Chapman said. "Things are going to change, you're going to change, he/she is going to change and you just have to go with that."

Chapman said research shows a few more men report cheating than women.

"In our society I think it's more accepted and expected that men are more sexual," Chapman said, "whereas women...it's that double-edged sword, so maybe that's why we see men more likely to report it because it seems like more accepted. Whereas a woman cheats, she's a homewrecker and she's a slut, how could she do that to her family?"

Kernin said if someone had cheated before, it might cause her to question getting into a relationship with him.

"I obviously don't want to know somebody's complete background of their relationships 'cause I want like a new start with that person, but if it happened like many times in the past that I had known of, it would kind of make me hesitant," Kernin said.

Jones has been in his current relationship for more than four years, and said he thinks it is normal for people to feel attracted to another person, but it shouldn't be pushed further.

"Don't cheat. It's definitely a hard thing, obviously people always have physical attractions and I think that's pretty normal," Jones said. "It's just when you go beyond the physical and it becomes more emotional, that's when the biggest cheating goes on."

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Modern treasure hunt

Geocaching: More than just a hike in the woods

Currently, there are nearly 1.3 million geocaches around the world waiting to be discovered.

Starting a little more than a decade ago near Portland, Ore., this high-tech scavenger hunt has quite the following in the Northwest. The basic idea of geocaching is to find hidden caches using a global-positioning system and then share one's experience online at geocaching.com. All caches have a log to sign and some have trinkets that can be traded out.

Brad Jordan is an avid geocacher who likes to include his family on the adventures, especially if the destination is somewhere interesting or

involves a moderate hike.

"We went to an airplane crash in the Palouse mountains that I never would have known about without geocaching... It's a tour guide to places no tourist flier would tell you about," Jordan said.

Jordan said after finding a cache, the finder logs it online to share how it was found or write a thank you note to the person who hid it. By logging the cache, the finder also adds the caches to the total count of caches found. Geocaching.com creates statistics for each user, and Jordan said it can get competitive.

"There's a lot of different

things about this game and you can make it your own," Jordan said. "A lot of people do worry about numbers, and I do count my numbers and see how many I've found in what day... Then there's other people who just hate the numbers and they just go out to do something with the family or to go on a long hike and find something they've never found before, and I do that also."

Jordan has his own stats card that is similar to a baseball card, but the picture on the front is one of his family and the statistics on the back count total caches found and number of caches he has hidden. Jordan also included his



University of Idaho senior Jacob Sevigny closes a geocache made from an old ammunition box Feb. 5 near Hello Walk on campus. The geocache was hidden in the shrubbery near the benches and the steps leading up to the walk.

number of first finds, meaning he was the first to discover the cache after it was published on the website, something Jordan said is a coveted title for a geocacher.

Karen Humes, a professor of geography at the University of Idaho, said geocaching has only been made possible within the last 15 years. She said a system of satellites in space that was put up by the Department of Defense makes the technology-based treasure hunt possible.

“The way it works is sort of like triangulation. The satellites are at different locations in the sky, and they all send out a radio signal that the little handheld GPS system that we carry around with us,” Humes said. “There’s a little receiver just like your cell phone is a receiver, they receive those radio signals from the satellites.”

Humes said triangulation can be thought of in terms of three friends. Two of the friends are satellites in space and the third is holding a GPS.

“You can see two other people at two other

locations, then using the angles to those two other people and the distance from those two other people, you can figure out where you are...” Humes said. “That’s how it works with the GPS system, since we know where the two of them are, the third person who makes up the triangle on the ground with the GPS unit triangulates to get your position on Earth by knowing what the position of the satellites are at a particular time.”

Humes said GPS has evolved drastically in the last 30 years.

“One of the things that is real interesting to me is that I worked for NASA, for the jet propulsion laboratory in Pasadena ... in the early ‘80s, and I got to see the beginning of the GPS technologies and in the beginning... the antennas were about as big as a living room couch,” Humes said.

Humes said it’s the decrease in size that has made GPS more accessible and revolutionized navigation not just for hobbyists, but airplanes, ships and emergency vehicles.



www.j.mp/hOjT6X



Brad Jordan tells a story Feb. 2 in the Idaho Commons about a geocache where he found a dried bird claw.



Blotcache

Want to try out geocaching? Check out the Blot caches hidden around town by visiting geocaching.com and search blot.idaho.

Blotcache

Want to try out geocaching? Check out the Blot caches hidden around town by clicking [here](#). Happy hunting Blotsters.

"I think it's a combination of wanting to be tech savvy, but then also wanting to do something fun and interesting with the technology, it's kind of technology mixed with a treasure hunt — and everyone likes a treasure hunt," Humes said.

Geocaching can be done by downloading the geocaching app to most smartphones, or as Jordan does with a handheld GPS unit. Jordan said for urban-cachers — who only hunt for caches within a town's limits — a smartphone works well because it's easily accessible. Although there are advantages to having a sturdy, reliable GPS unit, Jordan said he recommends people try out geocaching with a smartphone before they spend what could be hundreds of dollars on a GPS unit.

"It's waterproof, you can drop it and it's not going to break. Whereas your phone is a lot more delicate and it doesn't stand up when you get out away from phone coverage," Jordan said. "A lot of them aren't very accurate and their battery life is really short and when it dies, it dies."

Amanda Cayler, a junior, went geocaching for the first time last year and said her Sprint smartphone works great for finding caches. She said she first heard

about geocaching from her boss at Papa Murphy's, but only got into it because of how easy it is with the use of a smartphone.

"I like that it gets you outdoors and active," Cayler said. "It's different every time because there's millions out there."

Cayler said she and some friends once discovered a travel bug in a cache near the train tracks in Moscow. A travel bug is a trinket with a dog tag attached to it that indicates what the original owner's mission for the travel bug was. Normally the mission is to travel to a different cache location.

"It gives you information on where it's from, who started it and where they want it to go," Cayler said. "The last one I got was a Thomas the Choo Choo train, and it was supposed to basically go in another geocache near a railroad track."

Cayler moved the travel bug to a cache near the old railroad tracks in Kendrick, Idaho.

During the past decade, geocaching has evolved into much more than just a hobby. Jordan said the increase in popularity has created "geo-tourism."

"There's a power trail on the

RUN FOR ASUI SENATOR OR PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

Filing begins on February 22nd. Petitions and platforms are due on March 4th in the ASUI office at 5pm. Mandatory candidate meeting on March 8th at 8pm.



Brad Jordan demonstrates how to use a GPS to search for geocaches around a particular area.

Extraterrestrial Highway right outside of Rachel, Nev., and there's 1,000 geocaches in a row," Jordan said. "Six-hundred or 700 people have found those caches and really what it does is people from all over the world are flying into Vegas and doing that power run, but when they do they have to buy gas from the local businesses, they have to buy food, they have to stay in a hotel. So the geo-tourism dollar is really becoming a substantial tourism draw."

Rachel is not alone in cashing in on this growing hobby. Richland, Wash., made a geocache coin for its centennial and gave them out to participants who found all 10 of the caches they hid. The geocoins each have a unique tracking number that allows them to travel from geocache to geocache or pass through many hands and still be tracked online. This code allows for the geocoins to collect stories along their travels, and allow the makers to see how far their geocoins have traveled. Jordan said this is becoming more popular because it shows off the beauty of the county, while at the same time bringing in tourist dollars.

Collecting geocoins is also part of the fun of geocaching. Jordan said he's gone to great lengths to

collect a rare geocoin placed by a legendary geocacher who goes by the username Moun10Bike.

"He invented travel bugs, he invented geocoins, he's pretty much a local icon," Jordan said.

Jon Stanley, or Moun10bike, is also credited for placing the first geocache in Idaho. Stanley has his own geocoins that are called "coinaments," and are a highly prized coin to have in the geocaching world.

"I was really sick one day, I had stayed home from work...I had the flu really bad," Jordan said. "At 10 o'clock at night I saw a post that somebody from Spokane had dropped that coinament out in my cache out by Fishtrap Lake."

Jordan said it was nearly a three-quarter of a mile hike in, down into the canyon where his cache was hidden in addition to the 45-minute drive from his house. His wife thought it was a little crazy, but Jordan said he had to go claim this rare coinament.

"Sick as a dog, with a fever and barely able to breathe, I hiked a mile and half in record time," he said. "It was freezing cold, I should have worn some pants or just thought a little clearer, but it was all just to get the coinament."

APPLY TO BE AN ASUI INTERN

Accepting applications to become a summer intern; as well as interns for the 2011-2012 academic year in the ASUI Volunteer Center, ASUI Graphic Designers, and ASUI Leadership. Applications will be available March 28 - April 8, 2011

Taming the fear

Wolf packs kept for education



Himtuuqin, or "Bearded One," sniffs the air to inspect the intruder in his space. Himtuuqin is the alpha male of the Owyhee pack.



www.j.mp/g8cvLu

“If you talk to the animals, they will talk with you, and you will know each other. If you do not talk to them, you will not know them, and what you do not know you will fear – what one fears, one destroys.”

These words, spoken by Chief Dan George of the Tseil-Waututh Nation, are on a sign visitors first see when walking up the path to the Wolf Education and Research Center in Winchester, Idaho. The quote seems to encapsulate one of the main goals of the WERC: Education.

The WERC is a 500-acre compound just outside of Winchester that is home to both the Owyhee pack and the Sawtooth pack. The non-profit organization began with the Sawtooth pack, which consisted of eight wolves. Because of age and other natural causes, only one wolf remains of the Sawtooth pack. In 2008, the WERC adopted five wolves from a sub-standard facility in Southern Idaho. These wolves became the Owyhee pack.

Wildlife biologist Jeremy Heft has been involved at the WERC since 1997, and lives on site in a cabin with no electricity or plumbing. He takes care of most of the day-to-day upkeep of the facility and makes sure nothing interferes with the lives of the wolves.

“I’m like a big brother to them,” he said. “When something is wrong, they flock to me because they know I fix problems.”

Heft said because of a lack of funding, not a lot of research goes on at the WERC anymore, but they still try to accomplish their main goal of educating the public about wolves. ●





Top right: Kuckuc, or "Little Gray Girl," appears from behind a tree as she moves across a field. Kuckuc is the least social toward humans and most unlikely to allow herself to be seen by visitors at the WERC. At the time of this photo she was the omega female of the Owyhee pack, which means she was the lowest ranking. Since then, a breeding season dispute resulted in a leg amputation for MiyooXat, or "The Wise Giant," which changed the hierarchy of the pack.

Middle right: XayXayx, or "The White Watcher," moves through the trees, keeping her distance from humans. XayXayx received her name because of her tendency to watch visitors as they move around the compound.

Bottom right: Seventh graders from the South Side Christian School in Spokane use binoculars to try to spot wolves from the Owyhee pack at the WERC during a tour Jan. 14. The tour was led by educational coordinator Randy Stewart and involved walking to viewing decks around the enclosures and an educational session in the lodge.

Left: Himtuuqin walks along a snowy path in the two-acre enclosure that the Owyhee pack calls home Jan. 11. All the wolves at the WERC have Nez Perce names that were chosen by Nez Perce tribal elders based on physical and character traits that were observed by WERC staff.



Shots for silver and gold

#2

Everything was on the line — the Vandals' four-game winning streak, sole possession of second place in the WAC and the big-shot reputation of Idaho guard Jeff Ledbetter. As the clock ticked down the final seconds in overtime, the Vandals, who were trailing by two on the road against Cal State Bakersfield, got the ball into the hands of Ledbetter, who rose over the Roadrunner defense and put up a 3-point shot at the buzzer.

"When I got the ball, the only thing that went through my mind is to step up and knock it in," Ledbetter said.

He did just that, beating the buzzer and giving the Vandals a one-point victory.

Ledbetter, a 22-year-old senior business major from Fullerton, Calif., started playing basketball at a young age. His father, Mark, played one year at Biola University and quickly put basketballs into Ledbetter and his two brothers' hands.

Ledbetter followed an untypical path of college basketball players. After finishing at Orange Lutheran High School, he received Division II scholarships and only a few small Division I offers. Following his senior year, Ledbetter also injured his shoulder, leading to his decision to spend two years at the junior college level.

"I knew I could play (Division I) if I put in the work," Ledbetter said. "(Junior college) gave me some extra time to put on some weight and get better as far as shooting and other skills go."

Ledbetter landed at Irvine Valley Community College as a member of the Lasers basketball squad. In his second year with the team, he led the Lasers in scoring at 13.7 points per game, assists with 2.7 per game and steals at 2.1 per game. He was also named a first team all-Orange Empire Conference member that season.

After finishing up at IVCC, Ledbetter committed to play for the Vandals the following season. He accepted Idaho's offer, the first one he received.

He said he knew and had heard about Idaho

through former IVCC teammate Kashif Watson, who graduated the year before Ledbetter and moved to Moscow.

"I just started talking with him, and he said how much he liked the place and how fun it was up here," Ledbetter said. "I fell in love with the place after that and knew it would be a good fit for me."

Idaho basketball coach Don Verlin said he heard about Ledbetter through both Watson and IVCC coach Jerry Hernandez. In only his third season as the Vandals coach, Verlin still relies on junior college transfers like Ledbetter.

"We like to have a good mix of both high school and junior college players here at UI," Verlin said. "With as many DI schools as there are and not as many players to fill all those schools, you have to look elsewhere, and we've been very lucky in getting some good junior college players."

Ledbetter, who is one of three seniors on this year's squad, has grown close during the past two years with teammate Shawn Henderson, another junior college transfer.

Henderson who grew up in Renton, Wash., and went to North Idaho College in Coeur d'Alene for two years before joining the Vandals. Henderson said he was drawn to Ledbetter because of his ability to lead and his positive outlook.

"Jeff is never negative," Henderson said. "Me and him, we never panic under the pressure. Whenever I am having a bad game he always comes to me and says, 'You got this, you've been doing this all your life.'"

Ledbetter plans to graduate this spring, and even though basketball may not be the first thing on his mind, he said if the opportunity comes to play again he will take a look at picking the ball back up.

"I have some buddies who have a new business we want to start up when I'm done," Ledbetter said. "Maybe get into real estate or some other little things, but I definitely have options."



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BEYOND THE BOARD GAME

In as little as three hours, those who venture into Safari Pearl can escape reality to encounter deranged Nazis, demonic animals and divine beings.

This can all happen in a single playing session of Dungeons and Dragons.

D&D is the most popular of role-playing games, a hobby that involves creation of characters and scenes to carry out an alternate reality. University of Idaho student Nathan Mulch, a triple major in linguistics, philosophy and creative writing, said it's "kind of like acting ... except you get to help choose the story."

Mulch said in role-playing games, there is a group of people going on what is called a "story," which is run by a game master. The GM organizes the game and the players, giving them a fantasy world into which they can bring their own characters.

In addition to the game master, there are player characters and non-player characters. The PCs are the people who actually participate in the game with their self-created characters, and the NPCs are bystanders who merely affect the situations — for example, they could be other people who live in a town, or monsters the PC might encounter. The GM is responsible for running those as well.

"It's improvisational acting where, instead of acting out a specific script, the GM tells you the external world events and you, based on how you've created your



character's personality ... act how they would," Mulch said. "Generally there's some sort of goal to the characters."

Tabitha Simmons, co-owner of Safari Pearl, said there are rulebooks for players that explain creating a character, types of combat and different types of movement in a game. Simmons said anytime there is an outcome that isn't certain during a game, a player rolls the dice and adds whatever they rolled to the specific skill they're using.

"If say a character decides they want to throw a punch at a merchant rather than talking to them, they would then roll to see if the merchant is dexterous enough to avoid it," Simmons said. "It's just whenever you want to do something and interact with any of those other characters, you roll a die. Sometimes the person running the game can just tell what the outcome is."

Role-playing games originally started as pen-and-paper games, but expanded to accommodate computer versions and LARP, or live action role-playing. In LARP, players actually act out the actions of the character they have created. Mulch said there used to be a larger LARP community in Moscow, but now the nearest one is in Spokane, which he said has a "very, very, very active vampire LARP" that has been going on for 10 to 15 years.

"Gamers tend to look down on LARPer how most people look down on gamers," Mulch said. "A lot of people who are into LARP are really overdramatic about it."

Mulch said there are hundreds of types of role-playing games, and many of them don't involve any sort of combat, but are purely social. Mulch said he prefers tabletop role-playing, and he plays a game called GURPS, which stands for Generic Universal Role-Playing System. He



said many games have a specific setting, like fantasy or cyber-punk, but GURPS is just a system of general rules that can be used for a variety of settings.

Mulch said he generally acts as GM, and is currently creating a setting with a friend right now. He said the setting they are working on has a “variant WWII” storyline.

“It’s a historical fiction ... what if the Nazis had won? So the characters in that game would play Freedom Fighters in London still trying to win the war,” Mulch said.

Dustin Hubbell, a UI senior studying broadcast, has been playing D&D for six years and also prefers to be the Dungeon Master — D&D’s specific name for a GM — instead of a PC or NPC. He also plays games such as GURPS, Scion and Pathfinder.

Hubbell said his favorite part about being Dungeon Master is seeing the players’ reactions to the creatures he creates in his stories.

“They might encounter a cat that has enslaved the entire town, and they have to figure out how on Earth a cat has this sort of power,” Hubbell said. “I tend to work with a very Greek-esque way of things, where deities and Gods walk among the Earth. Players may come up to a beggar on a street corner, dismiss them or interact with them, but

(unbeknownst) to the players, it could be a God.”

Simmons said games can go on for years and usually end with a player either accomplishing their goal, completing the story or dying. Hubbell said he usually doesn’t try to design goals in his stories, but prefers the PCs find goals for themselves.

“A good GM over time will find that if they lay out this long story from beginning to end, the players will find some way to shipwreck it — just completely destroy any chance against the ending. So you just gotta watch where the players go and adjust accordingly.”

Hubbell recently finished a three-month long story as Dungeon Master and started a new one, where he said the PCs will be going on an expedition into a region called an Interior Veil.

“They’re being hired by a dwarf who wants ... to create a homestead out in this dangerous region for his own reason,” Hubbell said. “So the players will see what unfolds from that.”

As a fiction writer, Hubbell said he loves role-playing games because, “it allows a certain amount of freedom and creation of things ... D&D it feels like a character out of a story, so you get the same relation you do out of a good book.”



Chris Curtis plans out his next move during a game of Hero-Clix at Safari Pearl. There is a game day Wednesdays for others, like Dungeons and Dragons.



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