

Sooter ends first PHS season in No. 6 spot

By JENNIFER HERNANDEZ
STAFF WRITER

When Ashley Footer first stepped onto the tennis court for tryouts at Peoria High School, she never expected to play in the No. 6 spot on the varsity roster.

As a junior, she decided to take chance at the sport of tennis. Her best friend, Katy Martin, had been playing on the junior varsity team and encouraged Sooter to give it a try.

"It was going to be a big change from volleyball, but I thought I would at least try it out," Sooter said.

Sooter said she had no expectations when she

made the team. Her plan was to just see where it could take her. She said she was just happy to be on the team and have an opportunity to learn a new sport.

"I am proud of myself for making varsity, but it also made me nervous playing in the No. 6 position," she said. "I would be going up against players who have been playing for quite some time and I tried to use my nervousness and turn it into excitement for this new challenge."

Sooter said the most difficult part of the game is getting back to ready after every stroke.

"You have to have great



Photo by Jennifer Hernandez

Junior Ashley Footer competed in her first year of tennis for the Peoria Panthers varsity team.

endurance to get to every ball and back to ready for another hit," she said. "Before you know it, you are staying in the point and it is a lot of fun."

After transitioning from the air-conditioned volleyball court to a tennis court being blasted with the sun's heat was a big change.

"When you are tired and hot, you just feel like giving up," Sooter said. "But you just have to stay focused and stick it out."

Although she is used to the nonstop action in volleyball, Sooter said tennis has challenged her physically.

"It is tough to go from tennis practice to club vol-

leyball, but I just try to drink a lot of water," she said. "Tennis has really kept me fit."

Sooter said when she first began, she was always worried about embarrassing herself on the court. She knew her opponents could pick out her weaknesses, but she tried to take advantage of theirs as well and use what she struggled with to improve in her next game.

With one year left to compete for , Sooter said she hopes to become a lot better and play higher than the No. 6 position.

Reach the reporter at jhernandez@star-times.com, or 623-847-4610.

Mountain Goat Challenge down, Mystery Mountain to go

Seven-year-old surpasses rock-climbing benchmark

By JENNIFER HERNANDEZ
STAFF WRITER

After climbing 9,252 feet in the 2009 Mountain Goat Challenge at Rio Vista Recreation Center, 7-year-old Logan Heiser is officially the first to complete the challenge this year.

The five-state quest began for Logan in early January and in the month of April, he completed the challenge, advancing to the Mystery Mountain Challenge, which is designed for people ages 13 and older. The Mountain Goat Challenge was designed for kids ages 5 through 12.

Prior to Logan's first climb, his fear of heights held him back from simple tasks. But after trying the climbing wall for the first time and releasing his grasp at the halfway point, Logan spent the next day conquering his first climb and has never looked back.

"Climbing is not hard for me," he said. "When they change the

rocks around, it is a little hard."

Just three weeks ago, Logan conquered the white rocks on the climbing wall, which capped off the hardest of the climbs.

"Even Logan, who climbs nearly every day, could not finish the most difficult route," Rio Vista Recreation Center Director Jackie Stanley said. "But, for two months, he kept trying and just recently conquered it."

After Logan completed each climb, he was awarded a prize by the center and said his favorites were the backpack and buddy pass he received to Solid Rock.

Despite his smaller size and amazing strength, Logan said he does endure some pain.

"I usually hit up against the rocks on the way up and even coming down," he said.

Logan climbs the wall at least five times a week and said he enjoys racing the older kids because he can sometimes beat them.

Logan's mother, Cindy Heiser, said climbing has really helped him from a behavior standpoint in school.

"If he gets his color changed at school, he knows he cannot go to Rio Vista to climb," she said. "He knows he has to do well in school and come home and get his homework completed in order to go to the center."

Cindy said Logan thinks about his behavior in school a little more because he does not want to miss out on climbing.

Cindy said the people who work the wall and in the center are very friendly and extremely good with Logan.

"They share a unique relationship and challenge him on the wall, so they have also impacted him as well," she said.

Stanley said the center tries to put fitness within reach of the younger population.

"The program was created to help motivate children to climb on a consistent basis," she

said. "Climbing improves flexibility, burns calories and builds strong muscles and bones."

Stanley said the most unique aspect of their wall is the routes are created with different degrees of difficulty, which helps build confidence and self-esteem as children challenge themselves to reach the summit of each route.

With the program, participants are given a new mountain each month. If they complete the number of climbs, they are entered into a prize drawing. It should be noted that the programs would be difficult to fund for prizes if it were not for the sponsorship of Credit Union West for the Mountain Goat Challenge and Solid Rock Gym for the Mystery Mountain Challenge.

In the 2008 Mountain Goat Challenge, approximately 125 individuals participated and 40 completed the task.

Reach the reporter at jhernandez@star-times.com, or 623-847-4610.



Photo by Jennifer Hernandez

Seven-year-old Logan Heiser has made the climbing wall at Rio Vista Recreation Center a second home.



GLENDALE • 623-842-1005
7105 N. 51st Ave.

Vans, trucks, SUVs and commercial vehicles by estimate. Bodywork, rust repair, and stripping of old paint extra. MAACO® Auto Painting & Bodyworks centers are independent franchises of MAACO® Enterprises, Inc. Prices, hours and services may vary.

AMERICA'S BODYSHOP™

TAX REFUND SPECIAL

\$50 OFF

ANY PAINT SERVICE

Must present coupon at time of estimate. Hurry...Offer good through May 2009.

We are the West Valley's Only Certified MAACO Center



FREE ESTIMATES
INSURANCE CLAIMS WELCOME

