

DAILY INTER LAKE



KALISPELL RESIDENT Lauren Bergman set a new world record at the U.S. Women's Pro Championship Standing Block Chop on July 26, 2025, with a time of 26.36 seconds.

Kalispell woman breaks world record in women's standing chop block

By HANNAH SHIELDS
Daily Inter Lake/Report for America

Growing up, every time her family went camping, Lauren Bergman would wander into the woods with an ax and happily chop up the firewood.

"I was always a bit of a tomboy," she said.

Little did she know the experience would come to serve her as a competitive logger athlete, let alone beat a world record by the time she was 32.

Bergman's competitive logging journey started at Flathead Valley Community College, after her brother encouraged her to join the college's logging sports team.

"He wanted the team to win, and he knew I could help them win," Bergman said.

She decided to give it a shot and ended up leading the team to a few victories. She was particularly skilled at the standing block chop, an event she consistently won.

In this competition, a vertical piece of wood sits on a metal stand, and the athlete cuts at it with the ax from both sides. The first person to split the log in half wins.

Thirteen years after joining the community college's logging team, Bergman set a new world record at the U.S. Women's Pro Championship on July 26 with a time of 26.36 seconds. The previous record was set by Samantha Graves in 2024 at 30.02 seconds.

There are 12 qualifying spots in the U.S. Women's Championship, which is held in the four-discipline women's competition format, according to STIHL Timbersports.

Monday
PROFILE
Lauren Bergman

"For whatever reason, I've been blessed to have confidence in my abilities and not too afraid to hurt myself," Bergman said. "I'm able to have some good technique and put some full power into it."

Bergman preps for each chop by thinking of a phrase to focus on while she's hitting at the wood with her ax. The day she set a new world record, the logger athlete had one focus — hit the mark.

"My focus was just making each hit count," Bergman said. "A couple hits in, I realized, 'Wow, this iws going really good. Don't screw this up, keep doing what you're doing.'"

Bergman turned around to look at the clock as soon as she finished. She knew she'd just set a record.

"I didn't expect that to happen," Bergman said, recalling feeling excited and grateful in the moment.

Her husband and two daughters sat in the audience, cheering her on; however, her 6-year-old slept through the whole thing.

Very few people make it as serious logger athletes, Bergman said. She and her husband, whom she met at college when they were partnered in sawing competitions, are among the few on their team who continued competing after graduation.

"That's part of the reason why I kept in this sport," Bergman said. "Both my husband and I really love it."

Bergman's husband is a professional arborist, and they run a tree servicing business together called Big Sky Arborists. He's been supportive in Bergman's training, she said, providing wood for her to practice on and helping take care of her gear.

Axes and saws for competitive logging run about \$800 and \$2,500 apiece, respectively, Bergman said. There's a wide range of axes and saws that are used for different kinds of wood.

"It's quite a bit of an investment," she said.

While she hasn't had any sponsorships yet, Bergman said she's earned a few donations over her career. One came from Australian ax maker Pete Flentje, owner of Engineered for Axeman, where she purchased axes from regularly.

"He said I was a pretty good chopper and that I had pretty good potential," Bergman said.

In return, she recommended his axes to other logger athletes to drive more business his way. For the next season, Bergman is searching for sponsorships to help cover travel and equipment expenses. She usually competes in eight to 10 competitions per year.

Meanwhile, both she and her husband are encouraging their daughters to enter competitive logging. Each has already been gifted their own little ax, and the family is traveling to Idaho soon for an event.

"I'm trying to talk [my daughters] into competing," Bergman said. "I know I can talk them into it if they know they can get a Barbie at the end of it."

Reporter Hannah Shields may be reached at 758-4439 or hshields@dailyinterlake.com.

PETERSON SCHOOL
City to consider elementary parking request

By JACK UNDERHILL
Daily Inter Lake

Kalispell City Council on Monday will mull over a request from Peterson Elementary School to build a parking and loading area along Second Street West.

Council meets Aug. 25 at 7 p.m. in City Hall, 201 First Ave. E.

While the parking lot across the street at the former Armory property has been used for student drop-offs and pick-ups in the past, construction of the new Samaritan House apartments on that lot has created the need for another option, according to a memo from Public Works Director Susie Turner.

The area directly in front of the school would be designated for short-term parking and student loading. A bus loading area would be situated just east, in front of the paved lot. The crosswalk to the Samaritan House would also be removed, according to a project graphic.

Authorizing the short-term parking lot requires a city code change and the bus and student loading areas require permits.

Reporter Jack Underhill can be reached at 758-4407 and junderhill@dailyinterlake.com.

Pentagon
says some Guard units in Washington are now carrying firearms

Trump threatens to expand military to more Democratic-led cities

By JONATHAN J. COOPER and LEAH ASKARINAM
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Some National Guard units patrolling the nation's capital at the direction of President Donald Trump have started carrying firearms, an escalation of his military deployment that makes good on a directive issued late last week by his defense secretary.

A Defense Department official who was not authorized to speak publicly said some units on certain missions would be armed — some with handguns and others with rifles. The spokesperson said that all units with firearms have been trained and are operating under strict rules for use of force.

An Associated Press photographer on Sunday saw members of the South Carolina National Guard outside Union Station with holstered handguns.

See TARGETED, A6

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417 SIRUCEK LANE, KALISPELL

Welcome home to country living in the heart of the Flathead Valley! Sheltered by old-growth pines to the west, this 5.29-acre 6400+ sq ft 7bd/5ba property is ready for animal lovers or sports enthusiasts. Craggy rock exterior accents compliment the massive craggy rock fireplace in the great room. Relax with sunrise views across the meadow to Glacier National Park, North Fork or Columbia & Swan Mountain Range. Interior finishes present a compliment of cherry cabinetry, rich oak floors, tasteful stained-glass accents, & an abundance of natural light w/floor to ceiling window collection. Log-accented media/entertainment room boasts a wet-bar, gas fireplace & private covered patio. Enjoy the 1100+ sq ft terraced deck, fire pit, or catch a game of tennis/basketball on the sports court. 2-car att. +3-car det. garage/workshop, plus 3-stall horse barn & RV Bus Barn w/50-amp power await.

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