

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS ZONE

SOFTBALL RECAPS

■ **Cottage Grove:** The Lions closed out the regular season with an 0-3 week, losing to Junction City 12-7 and falling in a doubleheader at No. 14 Marist Catholic 18-3 and 20-4. **Emily Pacheco** had 9 Ks against JC, while **Addison Hitt** had 2 hits, 2 runs and 1 RBI. In Game One against Marist, Pacheco had a three-run home run, and in Game Two, Pacheco had 2 hits, 2 runs and 1 RBI. Looking ahead, the Lions end their regular season at 8-13 and ranked No. 20. This means Cottage Grove will travel for a play-in game on Saturday, although the time and opponent are unknown as of deadline. Either way, the Lions will need Pacheco's arm to carry the load if they hope to advance to the postseason.

■ **Creswell:** Creswell had a tough series against No. 14 Elmira, losing the three games 15-7, 11-1 and 10-8. **Hope Ukolov** had 6 Ks in Game One and **Ashelyn Sharkey** chipped in 2 hits and 3 runs. In Game Three, the closest contest of the series, Creswell made a good comeback attempt that fell short, scoring 6 runs in the final two innings. Sharkey had 2 hits, 2 runs and 1 RBI, while **Lexie Smith** finished with 2 hits and 3 RBIs. Although Creswell (14-8, ranked No. 16) has essentially clinched an at-large bid for the playoffs, the Bulldogs could jump into the top-three in the Mountain Valley Conference with two wins against Pleasant Hill on Tuesday, after deadline, grabbing an automatic qualifying spot and a higher seed.

■ **Pleasant Hill:** The Billies took control of their own destiny in the Mountain Valley Conference title race with a dominant series against Siuslaw, winning the three games 14-2, 16-4 and 12-0. In Game One last Tuesday, **Shyanne Fenley** had 2 hits, 3 runs and 2 RBIs, while **Bella Black** pitched all 5 innings and recorded 11 Ks. **Karley Bloxham**, with 7 Ks, and Kiley Campos, with 3 hits, 3 runs and 3 RBIs, led the way in Game Two, and Campos went 3-for-4 with 4 RBIs in Game Three. The most important matchup of the week



PIERRE WEIL / CHRONICLE PHOTO
Thurston's Bailey Tovey singles in the fourth inning of the Colts' home game against Crater last Tuesday.

is Pleasant Hill's doubleheader against No. 16 Creswell on Tuesday. Pleasant Hill has a postseason berth locked up, but two wins would clinch the MVC crown for the Billies, and potentially give them a top-five seed heading into the playoffs.

■ **Springfield:** The Millers had a tough series against No. 18 Eagle Point, losing all three games 11-1, 17-0 and 23-0. **Kayla Morris** had two hits in Game One and **Jacey Smith** scored the team's only run of the week.

■ **Thurston:** Thurston faced off against No. 7 Crater in a series last week, going 0-3. Crater remains undefeated in the Midwestern League. Game Three was the most competitive of the series, a 6-4 loss. **Emily Spain** had a 2-run home run in the 4th inning, while **Sadie Decker** had a solo homer in the 6th.

— All capsules by Pierre Weil,
The Chronicle

BASEBALL RECAPS

■ **Cottage Grove:** After a tough series loss to No. 3 Marist last week, the Lions had an important upset on Monday over Class 3A No. 17 Siuslaw. Cottage Grove won 5-3 thanks to **Micah Spear's** 3 hits, 1 run, 1 RBI and 8 Ks. The win boosted the Lions to No. 25 in Class 4A, giving them an outside shot at a play-in game. The Lions will know if they've made the play-in Tuesday night, and would have to travel to a top-10 team if they make it.

■ **Creswell:** Creswell had its best week of the season, going 2-1 in a series against Elmira. The Bulldogs won Game One 6-5 thanks to **Landon Palmer's** 3 hits, 1 run and 2 RBIs. Creswell then took Game Three of the series 13-11 behind **Tyler Pratt's** 4 hits, 3 runs and 2 RBIs, as well as **Jayden Kubishta's** 3 hits and 2 runs. Creswell finishes its season at Pleasant Hill on Tuesday. The Bulldogs are 5-15, and will miss the postseason no matter the result.

■ **Pleasant Hill:** The Billies went 2-1 in a series against No. 13 Siuslaw, putting themselves in position for an automatic-qualifier spot. Pleasant Hill won Game One thanks to **Caden Richardson** pitching all 6 innings, allowing only 5 hits and

recording 10 Ks. The Billies won Game Two as well, a 9-1 victory fueled by **Alejandro Ziolkowski's** 9 Ks and only 2 hits allowed. The Billies need to win both games against Creswell on Tuesday to clinch an automatic qualifier in the Mountain Valley Conference. At the very least Pleasant Hill will get an at-large bid and start its postseason early next week.

■ **Springfield:** Springfield went 1-2 in a series against No. 16 Eagle Point, winning Game One 5-3 before losing the next two 13-5 and 13-12. In the Game One win **Dylan Leas** had 6 Ks and allowed only 1 hit, while **Corban Hein** had 1 hit, 1 run and 2 RBIs. **Noah Roemen** had 2 hits, 1 run and 1 RBI in Game Two.

■ **Thurston:** Thurston moved to 15-0 in the Midwestern League with a series win against No. 15 Crater, clinching the MWL crown for the fifth-straight year in the process. Pitching was the key for the Colts. **Grady Saunders** had 7 Ks and allowed only 2 hits in Game One's 2-0 win and **Connor Molony** threw a no-hit-ter in the 13-0 Game Two victory.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Brennen Murphy, Track & Field



Murphy

Murphy excelled at the Wally Ciochetti Invitational at CGHS. He won the 400m in 49.96, becoming the second person in school history to run sub-50. Murphy also won the 200m (22.56) and came in second in the high jump (6' 0).



PIERRE WEIL / CHRONICLE PHOTO

Cottage Grove's Brennen Murphy clears the high jump bar at the Wally Ciochetti Invitational last Friday. Murphy, a senior, hadn't high jumped since middle school and finished second.

Murphy pacing contending Lions

BY PIERRE WEIL
PIERRE@CHRONICLE1909.COM

"I think a lot of us have a chip on our shoulder. And I think we're ready to get a trophy."

— Brennen Murphy

COTTAGE GROVE — Brennen Murphy, a standout performer on Cottage Grove's boys track and field team, completed a record-breaking day at the Wally Ciochetti Invitational at CGHS on Saturday, becoming only the second athlete in school history to run the 400-meter dash in less than 50 seconds. His final time was 49.96.

"It feels really good to finally break 50. It's been a couple of years coming," Murphy said after the race. "I'm just happy to keep climbing up, and I've PR'd pretty much every time this season, so I'm feeling good."

Last season Murphy came in second at the Class 4A state meet in the 400m. This season his new mark puts him as the second-fastest Class 4A time of the season, and he leads the classification in the 200m.

For Murphy's head coach Ricky Knutson, the sub-50 is exactly what he wanted to see at this point in the season.

"I'm excited for him. He's been putting in the work, and when you finally break through those barriers, it's just reassuring that you're headed in the right direction," Knutson said. "I think he still has some left, for sure, which is great because we want to be fastest in the next two weeks. So we're trending in the right direction and this time of year, that's what we want to see."

High school and college track and field is unique compared to the professional level. It's an individual sport, but also a team sport, with athletes earning points for their

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