



Athletes of the Week



Talon Temple (left) was one of over 200 area kids who competed in a wrestling tournament at CGHS on Saturday, Jan. 2. The tournament was open to kids age four through eighth grade; athletes competed by age and weight class. Talon is pictured with his father, Kyle, who is the head coach of the varsity team.



Lions pinned by Elmira in Sky-Em opener

Elmira won 12 matches (eight by pin) in a 66-12 rout of Cottage Grove

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

VENETA — In the first Sky-Em League dual meet in four years, Elmira steamrolled Cottage Grove 66-12 on Thursday night. Junior Andrew Bordeaux was the only Lion to defeat an opponent as he continued his dominance in the 160-pound weight class.

To the untrained eye, it may have appeared that Bordeaux was struggling to deliver a winning move against Ethan Agnes, as Agnes avoided being pinned

until there was 23 seconds remaining. But Bordeaux said he was using the competition for practice.

“It was a pretty easy match. I wanted to work on some moves early on, and in the third round, when my coaches told me to end it, I was able to get the pin,” he said.

While Bordeaux extended his string of strong performances, the team certainly experienced a let down in its first meet of the New Year.

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photo by Matt Hollander

Cottage Grove's Andrew Bordeaux was in complete control of his match against Elmira's Ethan Agnes. Bordeaux won by pin in the third round.

Down and out in Dallas

Oregon falls to Ohio State 42-20 in championship bid

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

ARLINGTON, Texas — You all know this already, but for posterity's sake here's what happened:

The Ohio State Buckeyes defeated the Oregon Ducks 42-20 on Monday night in the inaugural College Football Championship Game behind 372 yards rushing and four touchdowns from running back Ezekiel Elliott. Heisman-winning quarterback Marcus Mariota accounted for 372 yards and two touchdowns in what very well may have been his final game in an Oregon uniform; should he declare himself eligible, the redshirt junior is projected to be a top pick in this spring's NFL draft.

That being said, I've been here before; both this place —AT&T Stadium for the 2011 Cowboy Classic against LSU, a 40-27 rout — and this situation —the 2011 BCS National Championship Game against Auburn, a 22-19 heartbreaker on a game-ending field goal.

Monday's final was in many ways the worst of those two games; a contest that Oregon wasn't close to winning yet still felt like a punch in the stomach when the golden confetti rained down on the Buckeyes. And once again, Duck fans were outnumbered two to one. But at least that made it a quick and easy getaway, as 60,000 Ohio State fans stayed behind to soak in the celebration.

It also felt like a more honest defeat than either of those two aforementioned losses. And that actually tells me that Oregon is getting closer to the ultimate prize.

In Phoenix in January 2011, and eight months later in Dallas, it was the Oregon system that was exposed on the national stage and was — at



photo by Matt Hollander

With the game out of reach late in the fourth quarter, Oregon fans started to head for the exits at AT&T Stadium.

least in the eyes of the analysts and commentators —proven to be inferior against better teams. Those SEC powerhouses stifled Oregon's lauded running game and produced a blueprint for how to beat the Ducks.

In Ohio State, Oregon faced a team that was in many ways a mirror image. The difference was the Buckeyes executed early on, and pulled away behind an unstoppable running game.

You certainly can't say that the system failed against Ohio State. But given the success of this season, and with Mariota at the helm, you can't say that it was successful either. But while Oregon was largely forced to abandon its bread-and-butter plays against Auburn and LSU, Ohio State didn't have that same devastating impact.

Without watching any of the highlights, it's hard to point anywhere else but the two first-quarter drops as the turning points of the game. Both would have extended Oregon drives at a time when the offense seemed to have found a rhythm. The Ducks finished 2-for-12 on third-down conversions.

We did, however learn something very important about the Oregon system: it doesn't allow for one single player to lift the team on his back — the way many of us hoped Mariota could have done when the Buckeyes succeeded in locking down his weapons.

Given that Ohio State lost two all-America level quarterbacks to injury over the season, it's difficult to feel

that Oregon was any more unfortunate in that department. But the Ducks surely would have benefitted from the availability of wide receivers Devon Allen, Darren Carrington and cornerback Ifo Ekpr-Olomu.

This new playoff system is both a benefit and a detriment to Oregon. As shown this year, the top-four selection allows for the Ducks to be imperfect, but it also means that they have to win two games against the very best teams. However, I think that the Ducks have proven that they will be knocking on the door every season for the indefinite future, and maybe they will once again make it back to this stage.

And perhaps that's what it takes to win a national championship in college football. So many things can

happen in a season, be it injuries or an unfortunate bounce of the ball in a key situation; you just want to be in the hunt each and every year. Even if you make it through the regular season unscathed, the margin between the teams at the top is so thin that the matchups become critical. Could Alabama have been a more advantageous opponent for Oregon? It's certainly possible.

I stand by what I said in last week's issue: this will have been Oregon's best chance to win a national championship for a while. The one caveat is that Monday's outcome leaves the door open for Mariota to return. Maybe it's unlikely, but if that happens I expect the Ducks to be right back in the championship hunt next year.

Lions fade under Cougs' third-quarter pressure

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The Lions battled hard against a much larger and more experienced Cascade team but fell victim to a 16-4 third-quarter run by the Cougars, from which they were never able to recover. Cottage Grove lost 66-52.

For nearly two and a half quarters, the Lions never trailed by more than six points and even held brief leads against the top-10 ranked Cougars. But in Cascade (7-3), Cottage Grove (5-8) faced a team whose starting five players all measured 6'1" or taller and were all juniors or seniors.

When the Cougars ratcheted up their full-court pressure in the third quarter, this size and experience allowed them to force key turnovers and convert at the opposite end.

While the Lions might hoped to have carried over more momentum from their win over South Umpqua the previous Friday, coach Donn Pollard said that he still saw improvement in the loss.

“I thought we played pretty well, other than three minutes of the game, and that cost us,” he said. “Cascade defended pretty well. Obviously they're taller and more physically mature than



photo by Matt Hollander

Cottage Grove's Chance Hopkins goes up for two of his team-high 13 points against Cascade on Friday night. The Lions lost 66-52.

Strategy, weapons key to Cascade's win over Cottage Grove

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The visiting Cougars went on a 40-5 run over the second and third quarters to pull away from the Lady Lions for a 60-33 victory on Friday night. Cascade's inside-outside combination of Alix Biddington and Halle Wright was too much for Cottage Grove as they combined for 45 points.

Cottage Grove (6-5) was actually leading Cascade (9-0) midway through the second quarter. At that point in the contest, senior Conner Borigo already had 12 points, and the Lion guards were managing the Cougars' notorious full-court pressure. However, Cascade coach Mark Stevens made several adjustments to free up his star players.

“We did exactly what we practiced for, and I thought it went very well in the first half,” said Cottage Grove coach Kerry Clawson. “But Stevens made some adjustments against our defensive plan: the first was a high-post shade that created space for Biddington to shoot the 3-pointer.”