

## Lion head football coach to speak at regional sports clinic

*Despite success, recognition, Roberts says he's staying at Cottage Grove*

**BY MATT HOLLANDER**  
*The Cottage Grove Sentinel*

Cottage Grove Head Football Coach Gary Roberts is among a select group of coaches from around the country who were asked to present at the Northwest All Sports Clinic, Feb. 5-8 in Seattle.

Since 1972, the annual conference has drawn top rated high school, college and professional coaches and now features 10 different sports. Past speakers have included Lou Holtz, Mike

Krzyzewski and Pat Summit.

"We go after the very best coaches and more often than not they are successful," said All Sports director Jim Harryman. "The high-school coaches have typically a few state championships, but we weren't dissuaded that Gary hasn't won one yet; he's still regarded by his peers as one of the top football coaches in the state of Oregon."

From 1980 through 2007, the Lions were 92-170. Cottage Grove is 40-33, with a 23-14 record in the Sky-Em,

since Roberts was hired in 2008. In 2013, the Lions went 10-3 and played in the 4A state championship game.

Roberts has never before spoken at a sports conference and said that it's nice for the program to be recognized. He plans to present on three topics: program structure and practice planning for success; installing a no-huddle, spread offense; and the spread screen game.

Roberts is one of five Oregon high school football coaches who were asked to speak at the four-day clinic. Those others include: Bill Volk of Aloha; John Mannion, who led Silverton to the 5A state championship game last fall; Greg Lawrence, whose Sherwood Bowmen

won 5A state titles in 2010 and 2012; and Steve Pyne, who has won back-to-back 6A championships at the helm of Central Catholic.

Given this public recognition of Roberts' accomplishments while at Cottage Grove, it's natural to wonder if any other schools have inquired about his services.

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**Lion football coach Gary Roberts has compiled a 40-33 record since 2008.**

file photo



photo by Matt Hollander

Cottage Grove's Delia Nichols-Ferguson was one of four Lions to score six or more points in their 59-25 win over Sweet Home.

## Lions bounce back against Huskies

*Cottage Grove trounced Sweet Home 59-25 in first game post Sutherlin blowout*

**BY MATT HOLLANDER**  
*The Cottage Grove Sentinel*

SWEET HOME — With the motto being, 'Don't let Sutherlin beat us twice,' Cottage Grove rebounded from a dispiriting loss to the No. 1 ranked team in the state with a resounding 59-25 win over Sweet Home last Tuesday (Jan. 27).

Senior Conner Borigo turned in a dominating performance with 30 points, but Hannah Arnold, Delia Nichols-Ferguson and Taylor Sayles chipped in with six points each as the Lions showed a much more balanced offensive strategy than in their loss to the Bulldogs.

"We talked about getting our train back on Lion track, and coming out to play a complete game and do the things that we've practiced," said Cottage Grove Coach Kerry Clawson. "I hope the last game served as motivation to play better defense and pass the ball better. Obviously Sutherlin and Sweet Home are two different teams, but I liked the way we played tonight."

Cottage Grove (10-8, 3-1 Sky-Em) jumped on top of Sweet Home (1-13, 0-4 Sky-Em) from the open-

ing tip and never let up. A different Lion starter accounted for Cottage Grove's first five scores as they built a 20-8 first-quarter margin.

"We've definitely become more of a team-oriented scoring system, which is nice because when we're working together things open up," Borigo said.

In the second quarter, however, it was all Borigo and defense. She scored all but one of Cottage Grove's 13 second-quarter points, and Sweet Home scored just three points and committed seven turnovers.

Cottage Grove implemented a new offensive strategy against the Huskies: a two-man game to share ball-handling duties. And while the Lions had limited opportunities to test the new approach against Sweet Home's primarily zone defense, they committed just 11 turnovers compared to the 30 that Sutherlin forced with its full-court trap.

"That's what we want to have happen. We want to distribute the ball and be patient. And when we were impatient we saw a lot of the same results that we don't like," Clawson said.

With the victory over Sweet Home, Cottage Grove has a solid grasp on the no. 2 position in the league standings. And while hosting a home play-in game would be an accomplishment, the Lions won't be content to float in no-man's land; they'd rather chase the Bulldogs.

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photo by Gary Ordway Sports Action Photography

## Athlete of the Week: Conner Borigo

## Boys' slide continues at Sweet Home

*Huskies rout Lions 67-43*

**BY MATT HOLLANDER**  
*The Cottage Grove Sentinel*

SWEET HOME — Both Cottage Grove and Sweet Home entered Tuesday (Jan. 23) night's Sky-Em League game in serious need of a victory to get back into the playoff hunt. It was the home Huskies who played like the more desperate team in their 67-43 triumph over the Lions.

"I kind of felt that it was a must-win game because of where we were in the standings," said Sweet Home coach Brandon Gaskey, whose team entered the contest with a 5-8 record. "We're trying to make our climb right now. We wanted to play well, and it showed tonight."

The Huskies moved to 2-2 in the Sky-Em and are in prime position to make a push for the postseason entering the second half of league play. Cottage Grove (4-12, 0-4 Sky-Em), meanwhile, lost its seventh straight game and appears to be losing ground after coming up just short against Sisters and Junction City earlier in the month.

"I don't profess to have a lot of answers right now other than we've got to hang in and keep our heads up," said Lion coach Donn Pollard. "We do some good things in practice, but we're not seeing it on the game floor. Maybe that's just the mark of a young team."

Over the second and third quarters, the Huskies only outscored Cottage Grove 23-22. But it was the bookends — where the Lions were outscored 44-21 — that doomed Cottage Grove.

Sweet Home took control of the game early and never allowed the Lions much of a chance to get back in. It was, in fact, very similar to Cottage Grove's previous game against Sutherlin. However, while Noah Caillier penetrated the Lion defense with quickness, Hunter Jutte led the Husky offense with power.

The reigning Sky-Em co-MVP scored nine of his game-high 20 points in the second quarter. Jutte went coast-to-coast for his first two baskets. And just when it looked like the Lions would close the half on a 10-0 run, he hit a step-back 3-pointer at the buzzer to steal the momentum back from Cottage Grove.

"All season long we've been running isolation plays for Hunter to end a quarter or a half, and more often than not he's come through in those situations," Gaskey said.

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## Aqua Lions compete hard against large schools Ashland, North Eugene



photo by Matt Hollander

Tori Raade leaps in for the anchor leg of the 400-yard free relay.

**BY MATT HOLLANDER**  
*The Cottage Grove Sentinel*

EUGENE — The boys' and girls' swimming teams both finished a distant third in Friday's triangular meet with Ashland and North Eugene, but many Lions set new personal records while trying to keep up with the 5A athletes.

"North Eugene is our sister school in swimming and water polo, so we're quite familiar with each other," said sophomore Clover Rudicel. "It's tricky because we know they're faster, but at the same time it's really fun because if we're keeping up with them we know we're swimming fast times."

In the 100-yard breaststroke, Rudicel set a new PR of 1:25.60 while finishing second in the race — just behind North Eugene senior Akari Seiner (1:25.22).

Rudicel would return to the pool for the very next event: the 400-yard free-

style relay, in which she teamed with Rose Witt, Sophie Edelbute and Tori Raade to finish second in 4:30.95.

Raade also had a great meet for the Lions — who finished with 65 team points, behind Ashland (120) and North Eugene (112). The sophomore won the 500-yard freestyle and placed third in the 100-yard backstroke with new PRs of 5:54.90 and 1:13.47, respectively.

A week after breaking the one-minute barrier for the first time ever, Josh Ireland lowered his PR in the 100-yard freestyle by two seconds (57.74).

Senior Jarett Raade topped the field by nearly seven seconds in the 500-yard freestyle (5:41.40).

"I knew it would be an easy swim, so I saved some energy for my next event," said Raade, who later teamed with Ireland, Ian Miller and Seth Chambers to place fourth in the 400-yard freestyle relay (4:03.70). "I wanted to focus on

the second half of the race, so I swam smart for the first 300 and then worked on finishing the last 200."

Cottage Grove finished well behind North Eugene (142) and Ashland (85) with 52 points, but Raade said you have to take the outcome with a grain of salt.

"[Against these teams] victories signify good accomplishments, as do close losses because they could easily go the other way," he said.

Lion coach Tyson Pilling said that it was a very good meet all around.

"It's nice to see everyone dropping and holding about the same times of where they need to be," he said.

Pilling also said that Friday's triangular with Junction City and Springfield will act as a dress rehearsal for the district meet, in which the team will make final decisions on the individual entries and relay orders.

BLACK  
YELLOW  
MAGENTA  
CYAN