

Junction City denies Cottage Grove's bid for first league win

Tigers ride hot-shooting third quarter to a 52-41 win over the Lions

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

When Cottage Grove held an 8-7 lead after the first quarter of Tuesday night's Sky-Em League game against Junction City, it looked like the teams were about to stage a rerun of last month's meeting that came down to the final play.

As it turned out, Junction City was just late to show up for the rematch. The Tigers started 1-for-15 from the field but then hit 16 of their next 21 shots to pull away for a 52-41 victory over Cottage Grove — which lost its 10th game in a row.

"They're all tough at this point," said

Lion coach Donn Pollard when asked if this defeat was any more disheartening than the others.

Cottage Grove (4-17, 0-7 Sky-Em) trailed 22-15 at halftime. And while they were by no means lighting up the scoreboard, the Lions found success attacking the middle of the Tiger's defense. Chance Hopkins scored eight of his 10 points in the first half and drew four shooting fouls.

Junction City (13-8, 5-2 Sky-Em) shifted to a 2-3 zone after halftime, but while the adjustment limited Hopkins' opportunities, it created driving lanes for Cottage Grove's guards. Hunter Gipson took advantage of those openings for six third-quarter points.

At the opposite end of the court, however, Cottage Grove had no answer for Junction City. Hayden Martinez and Josh Hutchinson combined for 19 third-quarter points, as the Tigers extended their lead to 43-29.

"We started taking the ball to the hoop instead of settling for outside shots," Martinez said his team's offensive explosion.

Pollard noted that Cottage Grove only had eight turnovers in the game but gave up too many second-chance opportunities.

"We really went to the old boards in the second half. During the first half we were just standing there," said Junction City coach Craig Rothenberger, whose team corralled 11 offensive rebounds.

The Lions began the fourth quarter on a 9-2 run that included back-to-back hoops by Jordan Hagewood. But it was too little, too late for Cottage Grove. The Tigers countered with lengthy possessions that milked the clock and wrapped up their fifth league victory.

Meanwhile, Cottage Grove was left still searching for its first Sky-Em win. Gipson said the Lions are trying to take each game as they come but that the losing streak has become a burden.

Entering the contest, the Lions' strength of schedule was rated as the fourth-toughest in the state. They had lost to five teams currently ranked top-10 teams, including No. 1 North Bend.

Pollard said Junction City's home-court advantage contributed to the wider margin of victory than in their 49-48 loss on Jan. 20, but he also expressed his frustration with the officiating.

"I thought in the first half we were getting hit and it was not being called. But that's how it was called, and we needed to adjust and play from there," he said.

Martinez led all scorers with 21 points. Kory Parent led the Lions with 11.



photo by Matt Hollander

Cottage Grove's Hunter Gipson scored six points during the third quarter by driving into the middle of Junction City defense.

Tuesday, Feb. 10

Junction City 52, Cottage Grove 41

| | | | | | |
|---------------|---|----|----|----|------|
| Cottage Grove | 8 | 7 | 14 | 12 | — 41 |
| Junction City | 7 | 15 | 21 | 9 | — 52 |

Cottage Grove: Parent 11, Hopkins 10, Tucker 7, Gipson 6, Hagewood 4, Murphy 2, Sentman 1
Junction City: Martinez 21, Hutchinson 11, Osburn 10, Prescott 4, Brown 2, Gibson 2, Potter 2

GIRLS BASKETBALL



photo by Matt Hollander

Cottage Grove's Melissa Thielman scored 11 points in the win.

Continued for 1B

She was, however, surprised that they continued to give her wide-open looks after making two 3-pointers.

The Lions extended their lead to 21-13 by halftime as Conner Borigo scored nine of her game-high 25 points in the second quarter.

The pace of the game noticeably slowed down in the third quarter. However, while both teams patiently cycled through their offenses for good shots, Cottage Grove made more than Junction City. Taylor Sayles scored five points for the Lions as they built a 12-point cushion heading into the final frame.

Tiger coach Liz Bolton said Cottage Grove did a good job of dictating the tempo after halftime. She said her team prefers to get out in transition but that was hard to do when the Lions were making baskets.

At times this season, Cottage Grove

has struggled to close out games. But that was not a problem against Junction City. The Lions started the fourth quarter on a 13-7 run en route to building a 20-point lead.

Ashlee Neely, who was with Josie Mootz in Sunday's car accident, scored four points in the final frame and Borigo blocked three shots down the stretch.

"Coming off last week's one point loss, we really wanted a win tonight," Thielman said. "We beat Junction the last time we played them, and that gave us confidence that we could do it again."

Clawson said that patience continues to be key for the Lions' success on offense. She noted that Borigo did a good job of passing out of double teams, and the two-man game at the guard spot was once again effective — especially when Borigo got involved as a screener.

Despite the loss to Sisters, the Lions still have a firm grasp on the league's number-two seed. And with the rebound victory over Junction City, Cottage Grove has not lost consecutive games since before Christmas.

"I'd say tonight was one of our best games," Thielman said.

Tuesday, Feb. 10

Cottage Grove 47, Junction City 32

| | | | | | |
|---------------|----|---|----|----|------|
| Cottage Grove | 12 | 9 | 11 | 15 | — 47 |
| Junction City | 5 | 8 | 7 | 12 | — 32 |

Cottage Grove: Borigo 25, Thielman 11, Sayles 5, Neely 4, Arnold 2
Junction City: Thompson 9, Straube 7, Graton 4, Hansen 4, Mehlbrech 3, A. Devorak 2, Hanson 2, E. Devorak 1

Find businesses a hop, skip, and jump away.



shoppe™

Keep it local.