

Al's World: Where everyone has a chance to pursue excellence

Kennedy has fostered Cottage Grove basketball's competitive spirit for 50 years, and is now preparing to step away from Lincoln M.S.

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Members of the Cottage Grove basketball community can't help but chuckle and roll their eyes at the suggestion of retirement for Al Kennedy, but that is exactly what the long-time coach intends to do after his Lincoln Middle School eighth graders play their final game of the season this afternoon at Creswell.

This skepticism, however, is not founded in Kennedy's conviction so much as the understanding of what it has meant for him to teach this game to Cottage Grove's youth over the

past 50 years.

"He's been talking about it for a few years, so I'll believe it when I see it," said boys varsity assistant Scott Shepherd. "Al has done so much that I don't know I can do justice for what he means to Cottage Grove basketball, and in such a variety of capacities: his time and coaching; financially supporting younger teams and kids that may not have had the opportunity to play in big tournaments; and he has had relationships with the local coaches for so long that everybody knows him. I think he truly has a heart for the kids and enjoys seeing them be successful."

That sentiment was ever-present during the high school's final home games last Tuesday, when no fewer than 10 individuals, spanning multiple generations, came over to catch up with their old coach.

It was a particularly special evening for Kennedy, who got to see girls that he coached as seventh graders go out as winners on Senior Night.

"I chose to coach middle school so they could be my heroes on nights like this," he said.

Kennedy was the varsity girls' head coach from 1989 to

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photo by Matt Hollander

Al Kennedy sits with members of his eighth grade Lincoln team, (from left) Konnor Owens, Clayton Schoenleber and Allen Cohen at the varsity girls' game on Feb. 17.

Raades go faster at state meet

Jarett and Tori Raade represented Cottage Grove High School at the OSAA Swimming Championships, held this past weekend at Mount Hood Community College. Although neither advanced to the finals, both Jarett and Tori saw significant improvements from their performances at last year's state meet.

Jarett placed ninth and 12th in the prelims of the 500 free and 200 free, respectively. His time of 2:04.03 in the 200 was .28 faster than his qualifying time, and his time of 5:33.75 in the 500 was nearly nine seconds faster than what he swam in last year's meet.

Tori held onto her 11th place standing from 2014, but her time of 5:49.34 was an improvement by almost eight seconds.

Both Raade's finished fourth in their respective events at the district meet the weekend before and had to wait to see if they qualified based on time.

"I knew from the year that our district is very fast in the free-style events, and that I had a chance to get an at-large spot. But I was still nervous and very relieved when I found out that I had made it," Jarett said.

Jarett, a senior, said that this state meet had a much different feel from last year's, when the boys won the team championship, but it was still exciting to be at a meet with 300-400 people.

Tori, a sophomore, qualified for her second state meet, and she said her goal for next year is to make the finals or place in the top-three at districts.



photo by Gary Ordway Sports Action Photographry

Tori Raade



photo by Matt Hollander

Cottage Grove's Blake Sentman drives past Sweet Home's Junter Jutte (21) and Ryan Adams(1) for a layup midway through the fourth quarter of the Lions victory.

Winless no more!

Lions down Huskies for first league victory

BY MATT HOLLANDER
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Entering the final week of the season, the Lions were determined to snap an 11-game losing streak and avoid a shutout in the Sky-Em League. They delivered an emphatic victory at home against Sweet Home on Tuesday.

Four Lions scored in double figures

and Cottage Grove held off a late-game surge by the Huskies to win 62-55.

"We attacked pretty well tonight, and finally shot how we're capable of from the outside," said Cottage Grove coach Donn Pollard. "It was a step in the right direction and hopefully a sign of things to come."

The Lions (5-18, 1-8 Sky-Em) came out guns-a-blazing against the Huskies (6-13, 2-7 Sky-Em). Blake Sentman jolted himself out of a midseason slump by scoring seven first-quarter points — including a three-point play

in the opening seconds — as Cottage Grove built a 19-12 lead.

"We were sick of losing and walking around school hearing people say how bad we are," he said.

After multiple +20-point games against nonconference opponents, Sentman's production trailed off in league play. He said that over the past few weeks he has kept his head up and trusted that his scoring touch would return.

"He penetrated well, was more patient with his shots and got us going

right off the bat," Pollard said of Sentman, who finished with 18 points on 7-of-11 shooting.

Kory Parent kept the Lion offense rolling by scoring nine straight points to open the second quarter. However, Sweet Home's Ryan Adams countered with eight straight points of his own to pull the Huskies back within nine.

At that point, it seemed as though Sweet Home had found an offensive rhythm reminiscent of its previous game against Cottage Grove

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Hard luck hits at state

BY MATT HOLLANDER
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Cottage Grove entered this past weekend's state bowling tournament in Salem hoping to come away with a pair of trophies. But both teams encountered just enough bad luck to keep them off of the podium, as Bend and Roseburg won the boys' and girls' state championships, respectively.

The girls qualified for Sunday's finals in first place but were eliminated by Springfield in the fourth round. However, Gracie Stewart was named MVP of the tourna-

ment. The senior closed 89 percent of her frames on Saturday, and 85 percent on Sunday.

"I knew I was doing good, but I didn't know I was bowling that good," she said. "I knew that if I looked at my numbers I would psych myself out."

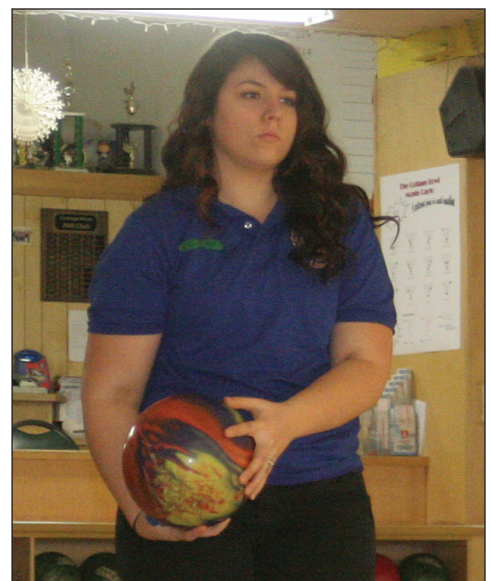
Despite her outstanding start, Stewart only stood in seventh place after day one. She topped the field with a higher-percentage of strikes on Sunday.

"It meant a lot to go out on top because in the past I've always looked up to the MVP.

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Athlete of the Week:
Gracie Stewart



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