



## Lions on deck for Sky-Em three-peat

Girls will need a full-team effort to defend their title; boys will have potential to climb up the podium

BY MATT HOLLANDER  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

It would be a tall order for the 2015 Cottage Grove girls' track and field team to top last year's seventh-place finish at the state meet. Seniors Ahsha Mootz, Sylvia Dean and Destiny Dawson accounted for 21 of the Lions' 28 points, and it remains to be seen if any big guns will emerge to replace their firepower.

However, a third consecutive Sky-Em championship is not out of the question. And that is what coach Ricky Knutson has tried to sell his team during the opening weeks of the season.

"The [2014] District Championship was not won by an individual. Nineteen girls scored to defeat Sisters, 157-145," he post-

file photo

**Cottage Grove sophomore Hudson Weybright placed fourth at the state meet in the 800 meters.**

ed on the team's social media page in early March.

Despite the team's losses — especially Mootz, who won both short dashes and was a member on the first and second-place relay teams — Knutson expects the team to be neck-and-neck with the Outlaws at the district meet, which will be held May 14 and 16 at Junction City.

"I don't want to ever minimize what Ahsha meant to this program, both on and off the track, but it's not like she scored 40 points. Losing her was rough, but I wanted the girls to realize that it wasn't just her who won the championship," he said.

While last year's squad was able to overcome the loss of 2013 graduates Kristine Dunn and Tricia Ingraham with comparable star power, this year's team will likely need to find contributions in unexpected places.

"We're going to have to squeeze out points wherever we can, and so we will spend a good part of the season figuring out

where to put people in extra events. It may be a while before we know what we have," said Knutson.

Cottage Grove does, however, have several known entities.

The Lions expect to have a formidable middle-distance crew with returning state qualifiers Breanna Wright (1500, 3000, 4x400), Hudson Weybright (800) and Chelsey Bottorff (4x400). Hannah Albrecht placed fourth in the 100 and 200 at districts and was a member of the fifth-place state 4x100 relay team. Seniors Conner Borigo and Courtney Hammell will anchor a small but potent group of throwers. And sophomore Celeste Pelham returns after top-five finishes at districts in both hurdle events.

Freshman Chelsea Armstrong, Sydney Boxberger and Halle Petersen could also be key factors in the Lions' bid for a three-peat at the conference meet.

Having finished third at last year's district meet, expectations for the boys aren't quite as high — especially since league champion Elmira returns many key contributors.

Please see Track and field, Page 2B

## Girls golf begins anew with Temple

Wrestling coach answers the call

BY MATT HOLLANDER  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Kyle Temple was in the homestretch of the Lions' wrestling season when his wife, Lesli, called him about the recently posted position for the girls' golf coach.

She suggested that he look into it.

Although Lesli was imminently expecting their third child — who arrived on the eve of the state wrestling tournament — Temple saw an opportunity to reinvest in the community he became a part of last summer.

"I feel that it's important to be involved in the community where you live and work," he said. "And even though I've been the wrestling coach here, I welcomed the chance to coach a group of young athletes I wouldn't normally get to work with."

As this team is short on both experience and numbers, there figure to be lots of opportunities for coach and athletes to work together. Sophomores Elizabeth Poe and Alexia Alonzo are first-year players; sophomores Carly Sand and Kalea Borrelli each have one season under their belts, and senior MacKenzie Husko has played all four years.

Temple played golf in high school, and continued to play as a "less stressful" activity to wrestling, but he has never coached the sport. The opportunity came about when former coach Linda Levings announced that she would not be able to return to the team due to health issues.

Upon accepting the position he spent some time reviewing,

Please see Girls Golf, Page 2B

## Tomato, Tomahto: Cottage Grove takes same-old approach into new conference alignment



file photo

**Cottage Grove senior Johnny Conrad shot a career-best 77 over the final 18 holes of the 2014 Sky-Em district championship to lead the Lions to a come-from-behind victory over Sweet Home.**

Lions return four from last year's championship team

BY MATT HOLLANDER  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

After back-to-back Sky-Em League championship seasons, it's fair to say that the Lions are well equipped to handle the occasional blind approach — at least on the golf course.

This year, Cottage Grove will be tested with a different type of unknown. The OSAA has blended the traditional leagues into four special districts, and in addition to the district championship tournament, which will be held May 11 and 12 at Tokatee Golf Club, five regular-season meets will determine which teams qualify for the state tournament.

Coach Kent Russo said that he doesn't know much about the new competition, which includes North Marion, Cascade, Newport, Stayton and Sutherlin — which joined the Sky-Em for all sports prior to the 2014-15 school year. Instead, he said, the team chooses to focus on things within its control.

"We really think about enjoying ourselves," said the ninth-year head coach. "We don't get caught up in the competition part. Sure we want to win, but we really focus on having fun. Golf is a good game, and it's a hard game. But even when it's frustrating, it's still really enjoyable."

It's hard to question that approach given recent results.

The Lions experienced a breakthrough two years ago in defeating perennial Sky-Em power Sisters and came from

Please see Boys Golf, Page 2B

## Athletes of the Week



courtesy photo

**Back row (from left): Megan Schatz, Ema Gardner, Kaila Ollivant, Reilly Kelty, Madison Giffen. Front row (from left): Tori Weston, Nicki Derrick, Kate Bachelder. Not pictured: Chloe Malmstedt; coaches Greg Ollivant and Jeff Derrick.**

Cottage Grove's seventh grade girls' basketball team won four games en route to the championship of this past weekend's Oregon Amateur Basketball tournament. They defeated teams from Sheldon and Amity on Saturday, and they beat West Salem and Thurston in Sunday's semifinal and championship games, respectively.

"The girls showed a lot of heart and hustle limiting Thurston's offense and getting some easy baskets in transition," said team parent Tracy Ollivant of the title game, which Cottage Grove won 47-30.

## Equestrian team rides to top-five finishes

The Cottage Grove equestrian team performed well in its second South Valley District meet of the season, held March 6-8 at the Oregon Horse Center. Several athletes turned in top-five finishes in their respective events and remained in contention for berths to the state meet — which are determined based on cumulative point totals from three district meets.

The bi-rangle teams of Ashley Goertzen and Shania Schueller, and Justin Hill and Ty Schueller moved up in the league standings to third and fourth, respectively.

Goertzen also took fourth (out of 68 riders) in the barrels, third in pole bending and fourth in figure eight, out of 65 riders.

In her individual competitions, Shania Schueller took second in both barrels and steer daubing. Other Lions who placed in steer daubing included Ty Schueller (second) and Ellie Harold (fifth).

Hill finished fourth in both pole bending and individual flags. Sara Witty placed third in the latter event.

Despite an injury to senior Tia Barkley, the drill team moved up from fourth to third in the league standings. Harold, the team's alternate, had just one week to learn the six-minute routine.

Team advisor Shannon Simons also commended the efforts of new riders Shaelynn Huffman and Breanna Massey.

The final South Valley district meet will be held at the Oregon Horse Center over the first weekend of April.



courtesy photo

**Cottage Grove's Ty Schueller competed in the barrels at the South Valley district meet, which was held over the first weekend of March at the Oregon Horse Center.**