

## Grove wrestlers befriend Kiwis

Local student-athletes host New Zealand national team

BY MATT HOLLANDER  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The Cottage Grove High School wrestling program hosted a New Zealand national team last week as part of the Oregon Wrestling Association's cultural exchange program. The Kiwis, ages 14-19, lived, trained and competed with the Lion wrestlers from Wednesday to Friday. Their stay was highlighted by a friendly tournament on Thursday night, which attracted athletes from around the county to compete in the freestyle bouts.

"The key of the program is cultural education," said Cottage Grove coach Kyle Temple. "Wrestling is just a vehicle for that opportunity."

The program is coordinated by Thurston coach

Mike Simons. Two months ago, Simons approached Temple, who had previously hosted a German national team while at Stayton, about finding host families for one leg of the New Zealander's two-and-a-half week trip to the country.

The Kiwis had the opportunity to see a day in the life of an American teenager while accompanying their host to school on Thursday and Friday.

"It was a lot of fun to sit down and chat with them about what it's like in New Zealand and how it's different here," said Cottage Grove's Aaron Boitz, who hosted New Zealanders Alan Latham

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photo by Matt Hollander

Cottage Grove's Beau Crawford and New Zealand's Kael Johnson exchange greetings and gifts prior to Thursday's friendly, freestyle tournament.



## Boys' golf team eyes league-leader Stayton

On Tuesday, March 31, the Lions boys' golf team placed third out of eight teams in a Sky-Em League match at Santiam Golf Club. Stayton took first place with a score of 373 and was followed by Junction City (375) and Cottage Grove (383).

Cameron Sandoval and Johnny Conrad, who shot 87 and 88, respectively, paced the Lions.

After two league matches, Cottage Grove trails Stayton by 22 strokes. Nick Russo, who has missed the first part of the season due to injury, was medically cleared to return and could shave 15-20 strokes off of the Lions' team total at each of the remaining three regular season Sky-Em matches.

Coach Kent Russo is hopeful that the team will be able to make a strong run at Stayton and an automatic berth to the state tournament.

Cottage Grove was scheduled to play at Diamond Woods on Tuesday and Langdon Farms on Thursday; both are Sky-Em competitions.



## Athlete of the Week: Elias Stock

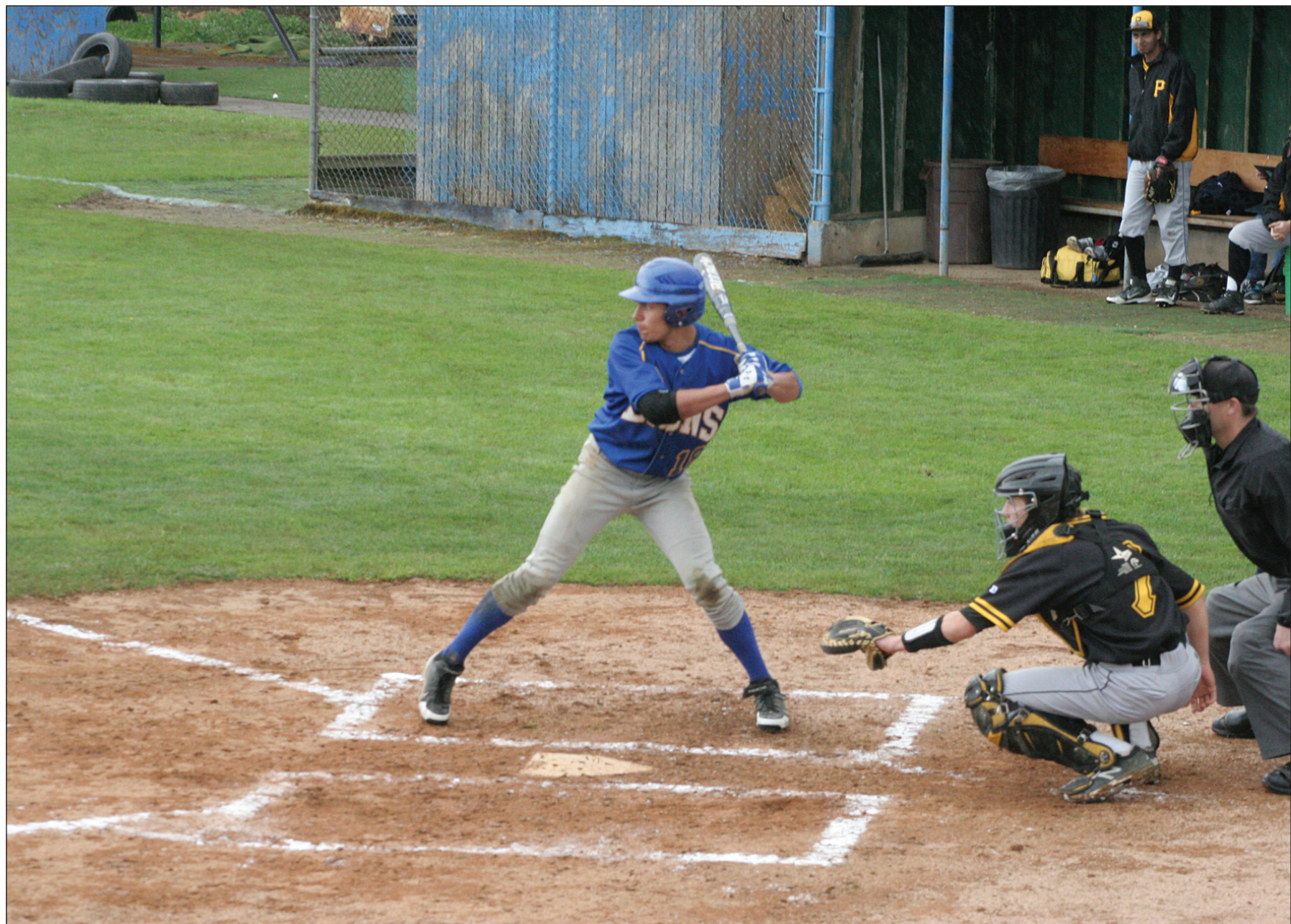


photo by Matt Hollander

Cottage Grove Elias Stock went 1-for-2, drew two walks and hit an RBI single in the seventh inning to lift the Lions past Philomath.

## Stock, Lions rally in the seventh against Philomath

Cottage Grove wins top-10 bout on Stock's walk-off hit

BY MATT HOLLANDER  
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Cottage Grove's Elias Stock delivered in a situation that many baseball players have dreamed of. With two outs and the bases loaded in the bottom of the seventh inning of a tied ball game, he hit a walk-off single to right-center field that scored Hunter Harris and gave the Lions a 5-4 victory over then No. 6 Philomath last Wednesday.

"I wanted something good; something that I could hit," said Stock, whose shot capped a three-run seventh inning for then No. 10 Cottage Grove.

Trailing 4-2, Payton Presley started the Lions' rally with a single to left

field. Warriors' pitcher Casey Croy subsequently walked Lucas Ward and Harris.

With the bases loaded, Zach Thomason scored Presley on a single down the left-field line to bring Cottage Grove within one.

Up next, T.J. Bellamy hit a shot to centerfield, which was mishandled by Philomath's John McGary, allowing Ward to tie the game.

After Tristan Mihan was put out by Warrior shortstop Riley Davis for the Lions' second out of the inning, Stock came to the plate and drove in the winning run.

"Those types of games can define your season," said Cottage Grove coach

Dan Geizler. "When we look back at the end of the year, I think we'll see this game as one of those defining moments."

Philomath got on the board first when Carson Callder scored off of a single by Brandon Simons in the second inning, but Cottage Grove picked off Simons at second base to end the inning when he tried to turn his hit into a double.

When it appeared that the Lions would have two men on base with two outs in the top of the second inning, the Warriors turned in a near identical play to pick off Mihan at second base.

Stock tied the game for Cottage Grove in the third inning, scoring on a sacrifice fly by Brett Ollivant.

Philomath countered in the fourth inning when Cal Stueve hit a single to score McGary.

"These teams were very similar in every aspect," Geizler said. "We went toe-to-toe on a lot of plays, and whoever made the final play was going to win the game."

During the fourth, fifth and sixth innings, the Lions struggled to convert on scoring opportunities, leaving seven men on base — a stat that Geizler was not pleased about.

"We were hitting for the air instead of hitting for the ground," he said. "When we have a guy on second base: two ground balls and he scores; two fly balls and he's out. We have to make those plays."

Through four innings, Thomason had thrown two strikeouts, walked/hit six and allowed four hits. And while it,

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## Lions left searching for answers

Cottage Grove lost its fourth in a row against Pleasant Hill

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After starting the season 3-0, the Lions dropped their fourth consecutive game on Thursday against Pleasant Hill, 16-2, in five innings.

Erin Skelton doubled, tripled and drove in three runs, and Emily Waits and Erica Skelton combined on a two-hitter to lead the visiting Billies to victory over Cottage Grove.

The final score obscured a promising start for the Lions. Cottage Grove forced Pleasant Hill to go 0-for-3 in its first three at bats, and in the top of the first inning, Liz Wiltse drove in Taylor Sayles for a 1-0 lead.

However, the Billies (6-3) scored four runs in the second inning and did not allow another runner on base until the top of bottom of the fourth in-

ning — by which point they had built a 9-1 lead. "That was pretty rough," said Cottage Grove coach Cheryl Frieze. "We're good for about two innings, maybe three, but we haven't got the endurance yet to keep fighting a whole game — especially against tougher teams."

Through the start of the fourth inning, Sayles had thrown three strikeouts and allowed five hits. Lindsey Clarke gave up seven hits in the fourth inning before Sayles returned to finish the game.

"We had not anticipated bringing in Lindsey so soon, but we could see that Taylor was getting frustrated. Lindsey is a great follow-up, and it paid off to get Taylor back in the game later on," said Frieze, who added that Sayles is still trying

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photo by Matt Hollander

For Cottage Grove, hits were tough to come by against Pleasant Hill last Thursday. K'alea Galbreath put this ball in play in the fifth inning but was tagged out at first base.

