

Howard shines in season debut

Hammel moves into the state's discus Top-10

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Seasoned track-and-field athletes understand that it's difficult to start a new season where they left off previously; it takes time to round into peak condition.

But Cottage Grove junior Connor Howard defied that logic by setting two personal bests in his 2015 debut at the Springfield Rotary Invitational last Friday.

Howard ran 11.54 in the 100 meters and 24.14 in the 200 meters. Without any marks for seeding purposes, he ran in the slower heats, yet still placed in the top five of both events.

Howards' meet was only marred by a botched handoff in the 4x100 meter relay. But with the team settling into positions, he expects they'll be-

come more accustomed to each other and won't have issues passing the baton in the future.

Michael Tharpe lowered his PR in the 110 meter hurdles to 15.66 at last week's Marist Classic but injured his foot in the process; he still ran 16.04 in a third-place performance on Friday.

"I spent a lot of time this week concentrating on my foot," Tharpe said. "And it was feeling better before the race, but I lost a bit of control midway through. I still think I'll be in good shape for districts, though."

Tharpe came back later in the evening to set a seasonal best of 44.14 in the 300 meter hurdles, which placed fifth.

Brad Geisler came within an inch of his PR in the shot put, placing fifth with a throw of

Please see **Track and Field**, Page 2B

photo by Matt Hollander

Cottage Grove's Connor Howard (far right) won his heat of the 100 meters and placed fourth overall.



photo by Matt Hollander

Top: Cottage Grove players rush to meet Elias Stock at home plate after he scored the winning run against Sisters last Wednesday. Left: Payton Presley hit the walk-off single to score Stock.

Presley's walk-off hit lifts Lions to historic victory

Cottage Grove hands Sisters its first league loss in four years

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

History was made at Kelly Field last Wednesday. Cottage Grove beat Sisters 3-2 on a walk-off single by Payton Presley, snapping the Outlaws' 50-game league winning streak that dated back to 2011.

It was nothing short of a watershed moment for the Lions, who climbed to No. 3 in the state rankings following the victory.

"I was thinking about this game before the season even started," said Presley, "because I knew how good we would be, and this was going to be our chance to take control of the league. Tonight, we made that statement."

Sisters (8-2, 1-1 Sky-Em) had previously not lost to Cottage Grove (10-2, 2-0 Sky-Em) since 2009 — a streak of 14 games, in which the Outlaws had outscored the Lions 156-29.

"We don't talk a lot about beating a particular team, but all our kids knew what this game meant," said Cottage Grove coach Dan Geiszler. "The way they played,

it was exciting. And I'm really proud for our seniors, who got it done against this team for the first time."

'Exciting' might be an understatement for the Lions' final at bats.

Through six innings, Cottage Grove managed just four hits off of Sisters' ace Justin Harrer, but Tristan Mihan, who was batting in the seven spot, led off with a single to left field.

After falling behind 0-2, Elias Stock drew a walk to put two men on base.

Bryce Allen then hit into a fielder's choice, and Brett Ollivant struck out swinging to give Sisters two outs.

But up next, Presley took his very first pitch deep to centerfield, and Stock avoided the tag at home plate to score the winning run from second base.

"Coach Geiszler teaches us to want that situation; to be the hero. I was hoping that the guys in front of me would get on base, and that I'd win the game for us," said Presley, who went 2-for-3.

Entering the seventh inning, Harrer had retired nine straight batters. But Sisters coach Steve Hodges wasn't surprised that Cottage Grove was able to get men on base in the final frame.

Please see **Baseball**, Page 2B



Athlete of the Week:
Payton Presley



Cottage Grove reclaims the lead in boys' golf standings

With two first place finishes last week, the Cottage Grove boys' golf team overcame an early-season deficit to Stayton to reclaim the top spot in the league standings.

The Lions finished first at Diamond Woods last Tuesday with a score of 358, well ahead of Junction City (373) and Stayton (386). Their scoring team consisted of Cameron Sandoval (84), Johnny Conrad (86), Nick Russo (92) and Jeremy Hall (92). It was Hall's first round under 100, and coach Kent Russo said that he has solidified himself among the varsity five.

On Thursday, the Lions continued to distance themselves from both Stayton and Junction City. Cottage Grove shot 366, while the Tigers and Eagles scored 391 and 396, respectively. Contribut-

ing to the team score were Conrad (84), Sandoval (87) Russo (93) and Hall (102). Derek Carlton shot 110 as the Lions' fifth, non-scoring member.

Conrad leads the race for individual league champion by one stroke, and Sandoval is also in contention.

Coach Russo said that the team figures to be even more lethal when Carlton emerges from his current slump and Nick Russo, who missed the first part of the season due to injury, gets back to scoring in the 80s.

Cottage Grove is at Agate Beach today for the final regular-season league match. The Lions will then play three more events before the district tournament, which will be held May 11 and 12 at Tokatee Golf Club.

Ladies golf club to host open house

The Middlefield ladies golf club is hosting an open house on Wednesday, May 6. Perspective members are invited to come play a round of nine or 18 holes, free of charge. Tee time is at 8:30 a.m., but those who are interested are encouraged to arrive early for coffee and doughnuts, and to learn more about the club.

"It's a very fun and active group," said secretary Linda Franklin. "And we welcome new members of all skill level."

The club, which has approximately 35 active members, began playing this month and will continue meeting on Wednesday mornings through the end of October. In addition to weekly games, the club participates in a variety of fundraising tournaments.

Other officers of the club include president Pam Hirsh and treasurer Linda Levings, who was awarded Oregon Golf Association's member of the year in 2013.

Those seeking more information may call Hirsh at 541-345-5822, or Franklin at 541-335-9802.

The play that didn't beat the Lions

Cottage Grove overcame a key error in its win over Sisters

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The Outlaws of Sisters came into Cottage Grove last Wednesday, the winners of 50 consecutive Sky-Em League games. During that streak, they outscored their opponents 530-81 and had more games end in five innings than close contests.

So how exactly did the Lions bring that freight train to a halt?

They made plays, lots and lots of plays.

Of course, the game ended with a great one: Payton Presley gave Cottage Grove its second walk-off win in as many weeks. And there were several others along the way that the Lions could not have done without.

But perhaps the most impressive play was the one that they did not allow to beat them: T.J. Bellamy's error in the fourth inning, which allowed Sisters to tie the game, 2-2.

Besides being on the opposite side of the field, it had the look of Bill Buckner's infamous play in the 1986 World Series. And there was a collective gulp by the Cottage Grove fans at Kelly Field, who all surely thought that the scrappy upset bid had ended.

When facing a juggernaut, missed opportunities feel like omens. The law of averages says that a team like Sisters won't stay down for long, and you can't afford to help them at all.

And when Cottage Grove pitcher Zach Thomason hit the Outlaws next batter to load up the bases, Lions' fans were probably just hoping that the game wouldn't get ugly.

But Payton Presley snared the third out, and the Sisters squall was neutralized before it had a chance to set in.

Please see **Hollander**, Page 2B

CHGS cheer members selected for all-star game

Three members of the Cottage Grove High School cheer team were chosen to participate in Oregon's 63rd annual East-West Shrine all-star football game, which will showcase some of the best players from 1A-4A. Justin Epperson, Hayley Evans and Destiny Silke were selected for spots on the 28-member squad that will cheer during the game, which will be held on Aug. 1 in Baker City.

In addition, coach Melissa Hatling was chosen to help lead the group of cheerleaders.

Over the summer, Epperson, Evans Silke and Hatling will spend time fundraising and working in Portland's Shriners Hospital for Children.

BLACK
YELLOW
MAGENTA
CYAN