

BASEBALL

Continued from 1B

“Those hitters at the top of the lineup are scrappy guys; they’re going to put the ball in play somewhere, and you can’t ask your pitcher to strike out every batter,” he said.

That the Lions were even in position to win the game was something of a miracle; three times they got out of innings with the bases loaded, and for the game, the Outlaws left 14 men on base.

“Offensively, we were not our normal selves,” Hodges said. “We weren’t aggressive in the counts we needed to be and watched too many pitches. That usually comes back to bite any team.”

Sisters got on the board first when Cody Kreminski hit an RBI single to score Harrer in the third inning.

But the Lions responded immediately with two runs of their own to take the lead. First, Presley hit an RBI double to score Allen, and Lucas Ward later drove in Presley with a single to left-center field.

Cottage Grove flirted with disaster in the

fourth inning. With two outs and two men on base, Harrer’s grounder down the left-field line went between the legs of Lions’ third baseman T.J. Bellamy, and Austin Ogilvie came in for the tying run.

After double steals by Harrer and Alex Olivier, and Cottage Grove pitcher Zach Thomason hit Ryan Funk, the Outlaws had the bases loaded. But Presley leapt high to snare a Kreminski hit that was heading for centerfield.

“Our kids don’t tense up in the big situations. Mistakes are going to happen; it’s what you do after that counts. They just keep playing, and I can’t exactly pinpoint why. But we work on those situations a lot in practice, and you hope it pays off in big games,” Geiszler said.

The Lions committed another error in the fifth inning to help Sisters load up the bases yet again. But Bellamy recovered from his earlier gaffe to field an Olivier grounder and assist on the putout at first base to end the inning.

“We made some mistakes that we nor-

mally don’t make. But we came through, like we’ve done all year. I guess I’m thrilled we didn’t play well and still won because it shows we can hang with the best teams in the state, even when we’re off our game,” Geiszler said.

Thomason allowed five hits in 5 1/3 innings, with three strikeouts and four walks. And Hunter Harris closed the game for Cottage Grove by retiring five consecutive batters — three by strikeouts.

Both teams entered the game ranked in the top five, and that could be the case when they meet again on April 24 and 28.

“We’ve played in a lot of meaningful games in the last four to five years,” Hodges said. “And we’ve had a lot of close calls during the streak, but we’ve always managed to come out on the winning end. Eventually if you don’t execute and make plays, someone is going to be able to beat you. Next time, we’ve got to be much better situationally at the plate.”

HOLLANDER

Continued from 1B

“In the past, that would have been a crushing moment. And when I saw it, I thought, ‘Oh man, here we go again,’” coach Dan Geiszler said of the error.

Exactly. The Lions weren’t just battling a powerhouse; they were battling their own futile history against the Outlaws.

“I do my best to never get on a kid for a physical error,” Geiszler said. “And it’s big when you have a kid like Payton, who’s one of our vocal leaders, telling everyone ‘don’t worry about it; just play on.’”

Bellamy clearly had no doubts about that, as he came back an inning later to assist on the final out with the bases loaded.

“We work on letting things go and being mentally tough. We all had T.J.’s back,” said Presley said.

Is it really that simple? It sure reads a lot like one of Crash Davis’ clichés from Bull Dur-

ham. But to hear it from Presley, and see it on the field in a variety of spots, you too could be convinced that these Lions have a knack for performing in the clutch.

While Bellamy’s error stood out in the moment, in retrospect the Lions dug themselves out of several holes over the course of the game. In the fifth inning, with his pitch count creeping into the 70s, Thomason walked the first Sisters batter and later committed an error that put two men on base — one in scoring position. But nobody was surprised when he struck out the next batter and put the Lions in position to get out of the inning.

“Zach really didn’t let his errors get to him. He bounced back by getting his curveball working, and he threw strikes. That game could have gone a different direction had that not happened,” Presley said.

After that inning one could sense a swelling volume and

confidence in the Lions dugout.

“Before the seventh inning we were going to all the players and asking, ‘Who’s going to be the one to get it done?’ and they all had the mentality of, ‘I’m going to be the one,’” Geiszler recalled.

Most teams stop at various levels on their climb up the mountain. These Lions skipped the part of playing Sisters close but coming up short, to just plain beating them.

Does this victory mean that the Lions are kings of the Sky-Em? Hardly. The Outlaws left 14 men on base, and Justin Harrer threw six strikeouts. That combination of success at the plate and on the mound typically leads to victory. And if Sisters didn’t take Cottage Grove seriously enough in this first game of their season series, there’s no chance for that in the next two.

However, the Lions didn’t exactly play their best game either. They committed three errors



Sky-Em Baseball			Gilkison & Dad	14	14
			Jim's Tire	13	15
			Dawgnauts	9.5	18.5
			Addi's Diner	8	20
			Gladiator's	5.5	22.5
			High Scratch Game		
			Individual: John Arnold 274		
			Team: Drain Chainsaw 1045		
			High Scratch Series		
			Individual: Butch Cardoza 796		
			Team: Who Cares 3217		
			League: Ball and Chain		
			Date: April 10		
			Team	W	L
			Elmira	3	0
			Cottage Grove	2	1
			Sweet Home	2	1
			Junction City	1	2
			Sutherland	0	3
			Sky-Em Softball		
			Team	W	L
			Elmira	3	0
			Cottage Grove	2	1
			Sweet Home	2	1
			Sutherland	1	2
			Junction City	1	2
			Sisters	0	3
			COTTAGE BOWL		
			League: Dynamic Trios		
			Date: April 7		
			Team	W	L
			Swearengin Design	28	12
			Grandma's Rule	28	12
			Advanced Eyecare	27	13
			H. Selective Log.	24	16
			H's Rowdy Bunch	23	17
			Golding Enterprises	21.5	18.5
			Cottage Bowlerettes	17.5	22.5
			New Creations	16	24
			K. Family Merc.	8	32
			R's Beauty Salon	7	33
			High Game: Mildred Hand 178		
			Margot Gotcher 178		
			Three-high Series		
			1. Patsy McNally 487		
			2. Margot Gotcher 479		
			3. Debbie Saldana 466		
			League: Meri Rollers		
			Date: April 7		
			Team	W	L
			Blue Sunshine	26	14
			Simand Chiro.	26	14
			Team Reliv	23	17
			Treasure Chest	22	18
			Mom's Girls	22	18
			Charlie's Angels	12	18
			Emerald Valley	21	19
			Ron's Girls	20	20
			Three Amigos	19	11
			Lucky Ladies	18	22
			Addi's Diner	16	24
			High Game: Jacki Jackson 217		
			Three-high Series:		
			1. Megan McNary 563		
			2. Robin Kwandt 562		
			3. Jacki Jackson 60		
			League: Cottage Mixers		
			Date: April 8		
			Team	W	L
			Commonwealth F.	48	8
			C.G. Speedway	34	22
			Bowling Stones	30	26
			Covered Bridge U.	28	28
			Jerry Brown Co.	27	29
			Cottage Bowl	27	29
			Funseekers	25	31
			Kelly's Trailer R.	25	31
			Swearengin Design	24	32
			Taylor's Towing	12	39
			High Game		
			Men: Butch Cardoza 256		
			Women: Mary Whetstone 246		
			High Series		
			Men: Butch Cardoza 671		
			Women: Mary Whetstone 246		
			League: Yamaha City League		
			Date: April 9		
			Team	W	L
			Who Cares	22	6
			Cottage Bowl	19	9
			Drain Chainsaw	17	11
			High Yield Tech	17	11
			Urban Honey	15	13

TRACK AND FIELD



photo by Matt Hollander

Under the lights of Silke Field, Cottage Grove's Hudson Weybright finished third in the 3000 meters of the Springfield Rotary Invitational.

Continued from 1B

40-09.5.

On the girls’ side, Courtney Hammel placed second in the discus with a throw of 105-10 — a PR that moved her into sixth in the current state rankings.

In the shot put, Conner Borigo was consistently throwing beyond 30 feet. She ended up placing third with a best of 34-02.25.

“I was just a few inches away from my PR, so I’m happy,” said Borigo, who just picked up the event last year. “Warm-ups have always been better than my actual throws. I’m trying to bring the same mindset to the competition, but I’m also going to try cutting down on my warm-ups, so I can have more explosion.”

Moving up from the middle distances, Hudson Weybright finished third in the 3000 meters in 11:52.80.

Lebanon won the boys’ competition with 172 points, and Cottage Grove came in second to last (22). South Albany eked out a close victory over West Albany in the girls’ meet, 91-87; Cottage Grove finished last with 37 points.

“I hate to say that this year is a rebuilding year, because we’re still a solid team, but I think next year we’re going to

be fantastic; there are lot of really good freshman coming up,” Weybright said.

So far in 2015, neither the boys’ or girls’ team have found much success in the team races. Coach Ricky Knutson said that the collective program has more question marks than in any previous year at this point, but the key is to remain optimistic.

“Track isn’t like other sports in that sometimes we leave a meet and the kids don’t know how we finished. In years like this, in which we’ve gone up against a lot of bigger programs, we downplay that component, and focus more on areas where we are showing well, like in the Sky-Em rankings,” he said.

The Lions will compete in just one meet in each of the next two weeks; they host a league meet on Thursday and travel to Sweet Home on April 23 for another league meet.

Knutson said he is looking forward to this stretch of lower-key meets. He said this is a good point of the season for solid training, and brining other athletes back from injury.

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