

## Lions pile up victories against Sky-Em opponents



*Ledford, short relay spark the boys; girls sweep in the throws*

**BY MATT HOLLANDER**  
*The Cottage Grove Sentinel*

The Cottage Grove track and field program had a break-through performance on Thursday, winning a combined 14 events in a Sky-Em League triangular meet at Herald White Stadium. The boys got the day rolling with a victory in the 4x100 meter relay. The team of Michael Tharpe, Connor Howard, Jacob Woods and Brynden Howell brought the stick around in 44.62, which ranked as the seventh-fastest time in the state.

Cottage Grove coach Ricky Knutson said that it was nice to see the team clicking after dealing with hand-off issues the week before at the Springfield Rotary Invitational, and that Woods, a

photo by Matt Hollander

**Cottage Grove's Brynden Howell pulls away from Elmira in the 4x100 meter relay.**

freshman, looked very strong in his first time running the event this year.

Freshman Tyler Ledford kept the momentum rolling with an emphatic victory in the 1500 meters. After trailing Elmira's Ben Douthit by nearly 50 meters midway through the race, Ledford used a big kick to reel him in and beat him to the finish line, 4:25.75 to 4:26.25.

"I knew he started out too fast, so I just wanted to catch him in the end," said Ledford, who added that while it was a big confidence booster, he knows that he still has a long way to go before thinking about a berth to the state meet.

Knutson said he felt a noticeable uptick in energy around the track after Ledford's dramatic come-from-behind victory.

"I hadn't seen much of that so far this year. It really set the tone for the day, and I felt that kids were more excited to compete," he said.

Brad Geisler broke out of a slump in the discus to set a personal record of 128-05 on his first attempt.

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## Clawson announces retirement

*CGHS begins search for new girls basketball coach*

**BY MATT HOLLANDER**  
*The Cottage Grove Sentinel*

After eight seasons as the head coach of Cottage Grove's varsity girls' basketball team, Kerry Clawson announced her retirement last Wednesday.

"I've been incredibly fortunate to live my dream. I agonized over this decision — just as I did with the decision to accept the job in the first place. But having made the choice, I know now that it's the right thing to do," she said.

During her time at Cottage



**Kerry Clawson**

Grove, Clawson led the Lions to a 136-71 record, four league championships and the 4A State Championship in 2010, in which the Lions defeated Marist 53-51 in the title game. Cottage Grove finished as the runner-up in 2009.

Clawson also coached at Barlow High School from 1987 to

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photo by Matt Hollander

**Cottage Grove's Kassidy Whisler beats the tag at home plate to score the game-tying run in the bottom of the seventh inning.**

## Cottage Grove takes Elmira to the brink

*Lions lose in extra innings, 7-4*

**BY MATT HOLLANDER**  
*The Cottage Grove Sentinel*

On Friday, the Lions came close to doing something they haven't done in six years: beat Elmira. And if not for a few controversial calls in the latter stages of the game, they may have been able to finish the job.

For most of the contest, it appeared that the Falcons (9-3, 5-0 Sky-Em) were well on their way to a 19th consecutive victory in the series, but Cottage Grove (5-8, 2-3 Sky-Em) scored three runs in the bottom of the seventh inning to tie the game at four runs apiece.

After a scoreless eighth inning, Elmira's Alyssa Nelson was sent to first base when Cottage Grove's Taylor Sayles, who had

retired seven of the previous nine batters, was called for an illegal pitch.

The call required a lengthy discussion between the umpires, and their decision was highly disputed by Lion players and coach Cheryl Frieze.

When the game resumed, Miranda Jensen hit a double to deep centerfield that put two men in scoring position.

This play also brought Frieze out of the dugout. She believed that Jensen's foot was out of the batter's box when she made contact with the ball and should have been an automatic out. But her plea came to no avail.

And after Brittany Wahl hit an RBI single to score Nelson for the go-ahead run, the Falcons scored two more runs on a series of errors by Cottage Grove.

The Lions were eventually able to close out the inning without allowing any more runs, but the damage was done.

"The illegal pitch definitely had an effect

on the team," said Frieze. "I wasn't happy with the explanation, but sometimes you have to accept that."

Kalea Galbreath led off the bottom of the ninth inning with a single to shallow centerfield. And it appeared that Cottage Grove would have two runners on base and no outs when Sayles — the next batter — made solid contact with the ball. But Jensen, who finished with nine strikeouts, snared the ball on its way back to the pitcher's mound and made the out at first base for the double play.

After that, Kassidy Whisler flew out to third base to end the game.

"It was frustrating, honestly," said first baseman Katie Lyons. "We feel like a lot of things didn't go our way, but we should have picked it up earlier in the game instead of leaving it all to the end."

Of course, the Lions needed some

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## Athlete of the Week

The Cottage Grove boys' golf team won't need a heroic comeback at this year's district tournament, thanks in part to Johnny Conrad, who paced the Lions to the regular season league championship and an automatic berth to the state tournament.

In the final league match last Wednesday at Agate Beach, Conrad shot a season-best 79 to help the Lions hold off a late charge by Stayton to finish eight strokes ahead of the Eagles, 1844-1852, for the season.

With a league-low 419 strokes in the five league matches, Conrad was named the individual champion. Teammate Cameron Sandoval was second with 432.

Stayton had one of its best outings this year at Agate Beach, shooting 338 to outdistance Cottage Grove (366). However, the Lions came into the day with a 36-stroke cushion.

Cottage Grove will compete at the Umpqua Resort on Friday and Black Butte Ranch on Tuesday.



**Johnny Conrad**

## Lions can't muster Kelly Field magic, lose in extra innings



*Cottage Grove loses a 10-inning heartbreaker to Sweet Home*

**BY MATT HOLLANDER**  
*The Cottage Grove Sentinel*

Cottage Grove fans who were at Kelly Field for last Wednesday's Sky-Em League game against Sweet Home were no doubt feeling confident when the Lions — winners of two memorable walk-off wins in the previous two weeks — came to the plate in the seventh inning of a tied game.

But after a quick three-and-out, one could start to feel that it just wasn't their day.

In the top of the tenth inning, the Huskies used three straight singles to push across the go-ahead run. Payton Presley got to second base in the bottom of the inning, but Cottage Grove was unable

photo by Matt Hollander

**Cottage Grove's Zach Thomason threw seven strikeouts against Sweet Home.**

to cash in.

Sweet Home prevailed 3-2 and ended the Lions seven-game winning streak.

After scoring 31 runs in their previous two contests, the Cottage Grove struggled mightily at the plate, going 6-for-35. Huskies' Cole Ashcroft struck out seven and walked four in 9 1/3 innings.

"I was a little disappointed in some of our at-bats, and not because of the outcome," said coach Dan Geisler. "We were chasing a guy who is pretty predictable, watching pitches go by and not taking aggressive swings. I'd rather see a kid take three aggressive swings and strike out than hit a weak pop-up somewhere."

Cottage Grove put the first run on the board when Lucas Ward, who got on base with a double to left field, scored on an error by Sweet Home shortstop Justin Tow.

Meanwhile, Zach Thomason was off to a wicked pace on the mound. The senior pitcher retired 15 of the first 16 Sweet Home batters. In 9 1/3

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