

## Lions win third-straight league title

### Cottage Grove tee'd up for state

BY MATT HOLLANDER  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Cottage Grove golf has made quite a tradition of winning district titles.

The Lions shot 717 over the two-day 4A Special District 2 Tournament, held May 11 and 12 at Tokatee Golf Club, to capture their third-straight league crown over Junction City (732) and

Stayton (747).

Despite the comfortable final margin of victory, Cottage Grove ended the first day with just a four-stroke advantage over Junction City and a nine-stroke lead over Stayton. The Tigers even held a brief lead over Cottage Grove on day two.

But as they have done many times before, the Lions played their best when it mattered most. Cottage Grove shot 352 on the second day of the tournament to pull away from all challengers. Senior Johnny Conrad shot 78 and 79 to win the individual title, and Cameron San-

doval shot 87 and 84 to finish tied for second place.

"They certainly seem to peak at the right time," said Cottage Grove coach Kent Russo. "The past three years in a row, they've played their very best golf on the second day of the district tournament. They did what they had to do when it mattered."

By virtue of winning the regular-season league title, the Lions had already punched their ticket to the 4A state tournament. However, there was no

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photo by Matt Hollander  
Cottage Grove sophomore Jeremy Hall (pictured), along with Johnny Conrad, Nick Russo, Cameron Sandoval and Dylan Wooten, won the District 2 Championship last week and are competing at state this week.

## Cottage Grove yields title to Sisters

### Borigo, Hammel — district champions — and Weybright qualify for state

BY MATT HOLLANDER  
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JUNCTION CITY — For the first time since 2012, the girls' Sky-Em League track and field crown will not belong to Cottage Grove. But the Lions left the district championships, held Thursday and Saturday at Junction City, knowing that it was not for lack of effort.

"There were a few more things that could have gone our way today, but for the most part we got everything we could out of this group of girls," said coach Ricky Knutson.

After Thursday, Cottage Grove trailed Sisters 46.5 to 39. But the Outlaws just had too much firepower left to go. They scored 123 on Saturday for a grand total of 169.5 points. Junction City edged Cottage Grove for second, 113.5 to 113.

"Things didn't get off to a great start this year," said sophomore Hudson Weybright, who scored 17.25 points for the Lions. "They did start to pick up [midway through the season] but then some girls got hurt (Cottage Grove was without former state meet qualifiers Chelsey Bottorff and Breanna Wright at districts). I still feel like we did our best, though, and next year is going to be even better as the underclassman get a better grasp of what they need to do and fill different roles on the team."

The Lions were within range of Sisters after day one thanks in part to Conner Borigo's victory in the shot put. She threw 36-2.75 in the prelims to easily outdistance her competitors.

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Above: Cottage Grove's Michael Tharpe leans at the finish line of the 110 meter hurdles to claim his first Sky-Em district title Saturday at Junction City. Below: Conner Howard took a big lead into the final curve of the 400 meters and held on for the victory.

photos by Matt Hollander

## Howard snuffs out candles with the competition

### Geisler, Ledford and Tharpe also advance to the state meet

BY MATT HOLLANDER  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

JUNCTION CITY — Connor Howard sure was showing his age on Saturday.

The Cottage Grove junior celebrated his 16th birthday with a Sky-Em district championship in the 400 meters.

Running the event for just the fifth time in his career, Howard used the backstretch to power away from the field and held off Sweet Home's Trey Reed in the closing meters to capture first place in 50.62. He is now tied with Jon Schneider for the fastest automatically-timed 400 in school history.

"It goes to show that hard work does

pay off, and it was fun to be able to show what I can do," said Howard, who will be seeded third at the state meet, which begins Thursday at Hayward Field. He also qualified for state in the 200 by placing second in 23.26.

Until recently, Howard's focus had been on the 100 and 200. But his success in the longest dash comes as no surprise to Cottage Grove sprint coach Bruce Vogel.

"He does a great job of getting out well and floating down the back stretch. But what I thought he did really well today was relaxing and gathering in the final curve. With 10 meters to go the tank was empty, but he just wanted to win so badly," Vogel said.

Cottage Grove got another individual victory from Michael Tharpe, who held

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## Athlete of the Week



## Cottage Grove drops two to Sweet Home, limps to the postseason



photo by Gary Ordway Sports Action Photography

Cottage Grove's Brett Ollivant looks for a putout during the Lions 8-4 loss to Junction City on May 6.

### Lions plays at North Marion on Thursday in the play-in round

BY MATT HOLLANDER  
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Sweet Home's Brandon Keanon smashed a three-run homer in the top of the first inning to lead the visiting Huskies (15-7, 11-4) to a 5-1, season-finales victory over Cottage Grove on Saturday. Hunter Harris drove in the Lions' lone run (14-11, 6-9) with a double in the bottom of the first inning.

The Huskies also defeated Cottage Grove at home on Friday, 13-5. Payton Presley had three hits for the Lions, who gave up nine unearned runs.

However, there is life after death for Cottage Grove. The No. 19 Lions snuck

into the play-in round of the 4A play-offs as the final non-automatic qualifier, and they will face North Marion (13-3, 10-5 Oregon West) on the road Thursday at 5 p.m.

While the teams have comparable overall records, they certainly seem to be trending in opposite directions. The Lions are 2-9 in their last 11 games, and both victories came against lowly Sutherlin (3-22, 1-14 Sky-Em). Meanwhile, the Huskies have won six of their last eight, including victories over two playoff-bound teams.

"We're glad to have a second chance," said Cottage Grove coach Dan Geisler. "[Despite the losses,] I haven't seen a lot of difference in how we've approached the plate; we're still going up with confidence. And I think the guys understand that we ran into a bad streak of us playing poorly and others playing

their best."

The Lions and Huskies had a trio of common opponents this year. Against Cascade, Philomath and Stayton, Cottage Grove went 2-1, and North Marion went 6-3.

"You can definitely learn things about an opponent based on teams that you've both played. But, unfortunately, so can they. And since those teams are in the same conference (the Oregon West), they will probably share things with North Marion about us, that they won't share with us about North Marion," Geisler said.

Geisler said that he expects to face a defensive-minded team based on the Huskies' run differential.

Cottage Grove was scheduled to play Far West champion North Bend on Tuesday for its endowment game.

BLACK  
YELLOW  
MAGENTA  
CYAN

# Cottage Grove Speedway

SATURDAY, MAY 23 & SUNDAY, MAY 24

Saturday Events: Clark Printing Extreme Sprints, IMCA SportMods, Street Stocks & Hornets

Sunday Events: 360 Sprints: Western Sprint Tour, Late Models, IMCA Modifieds & Hornets