

Stronger, faster and more mature Lions start spring practice



Cottage Grove returns over 20 players with varsity experience

BY MATT HOLLANDER
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

It's been a long six months since the Lions last took to the gridiron. But after two days of spring practice, coach Gary Roberts could already see the results of a productive offseason.

"Mentally they're where I hoped they'd be. They're really fired up to be out here. Physically I always wish everybody was 20 pounds heavier and five inches taller, but you can tell there are kids who invested time in the weight room getting bigger and faster," he said after Wednesday's session.

Over 50 players came out for last week's voluntary practices. Each session balanced fundamen-

photo by Matt Hollander

Fabian Corona-Rodriguez (left) and Brad Geisler dig in for the tire tug-of-war at the end of Wednesday's practice.

tal football skills and conditioning with a specific area of emphasis, such as screen passes or outside running.

Roberts said he was thus far pleased with the effort and turnout — which was noticeably higher than last year — but also with the balance of numbers across all four classes. With perhaps its youngest team in school history (just two seniors played last year), Cottage Grove went 2-7 in 2014, including a 1-4 mark against the Sky-Em.

"We had a hiccup last year, but the hiccup didn't have anything to do with lowering expectations or not having the same desire and work ethic to be successful. We had a small senior group that was injured, and our younger kids fought, but they weren't quite physical enough to be in there. I was really proud of our kids last year because they came to play every week," he said.

While many young and inexperienced players had to step into meaningful roles last year, the Lions will hope to reap the benefits of those growing pains by returning over 20 players with varsity experience.

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Forty years later, Prefontaine is still unforgettable

Artist James Cloutier recalls the experience of photographing Pre

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Forty years ago last Friday, Steve Prefontaine ran his final race, winning the 5,000 meters at Hayward Field.

Just hours later — shortly after midnight on May 30, 1975 — Prefontaine was leaving a post-race party when he crashed his 1973 MGB convertible into a stone embankment on Skyline Boulevard. Pinned under the vehicle, he suffocated and died before help could arrive.

At the time of his death, Prefontaine was 24 years old and held every American distance record from 2,000 meters to 10,000 meters. He was the nation's most popular track and field athlete and an international star. Prefontaine was also considered a favorite for the gold medal in the 5,000 meters at the 1976 Olympic Games.

To this day, the legacy of Pre, as he was often called, lives on in countless ways: the annual meet named in his honor draws dozens of the best athletes in the world to Hayward Field; Pre's Rock, the memorial on Skyline Boulevard, is always decorated with keepsakes left by fans of all ages and abilities; two feature films, a documentary and

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photo by Matt Hollander

Local artist James Cloutier, who photographed the late American distance runner Steve Prefontaine at the 1972 U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials, talks with John Thuo, a professional marathoner from Ngong, Kenya, after the first day of the Prefontaine Classic Friday at Hayward Field. Saturday was the 40th anniversary of Prefontaine's death.

Guns and Hoses raise \$1,600 for Senior Grad Party



Athlete of the Week:
Dennis Miles

South Lane Fire and Rescue piled up 34 hits en route to a 27-11 victory over the Cottage Grove Police Department in the third annual Guns vs. Hoses softball game, held Saturday at Lincoln Middle School.

Dennis Miles hit four homers and drove in nine runs, and Tim Eckstine had four RBIs for the Hoses. Jarrod Butler had two doubles and an RBI, and Austin Branstetter had three hits for the Guns. The event raised \$1,600 for the Cottage Grove High School senior party.

"For some time there has been a friendly rivalry between the police and firefighters here in Cottage Grove,"



said police officer Sean Branstetter. "This year we thought we could channel some of that energy into a good cause, and supporting a party that gives kids an alternative to drinking after graduation is a great cause to get

behind." Both organizations were very pleased with the results of this year's event, and they plan to bring it back again next year.

Cottage Grove Speedway

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