

# Stories of the Year

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at the buzzer. The Tigers bested the Lions in overtime, winning 41-39.

The Lions went 14-11, and what made the loss more painful is that they swept Junction City in both games during the regular season; both wins were by over 10 points each.

## 8. Mootz signs to TCU

In November, senior Josie Mootz signed her letter of intent to attend Texas Christian University on a scholarship for the equestrian team. Although she is known for her skills on the soccer field, Mootz wows audiences and judges alike with her skills on a horse.

Mootz said she has been riding horses all her life. Her mother described her starting out as a "champion stick-horse rider in our living room." At the age of eight, she won the title of regional walk trot champion in Nampa, Idaho on her quarter horse named Amber. Mootz eventually ended her quarter horse career with "numerous buckles, all around awards and two saddles."

After quarter horses, Mootz began showing paint horses, for which she also has received numerous accolades.

Since winning the walk trot regional in Idaho, Mootz was taken under the wing of Tammy Mills, an equestrian trainer who, along with her husband, Rob Mills, was considered like "second family" to Mootz.

"They have spent long hours together on the road, waiting for classes to start when it's freezing out, and even getting up before light to feed and get horses ready," Mootz's mother explained in a speech.

Mootz has since been around the country to places like Ohio and even competed in competitions at Texas A&M University. However, obtaining a student-athlete offer from a school like

TCU and in a sport like horseback riding is no easy task. Mootz had to create her own video reels and send them out to schools and hope she got recognized. She received one other offer from Delaware but jumped at the opportunity to play for TCU, as there are only 18 division one equestrian teams in the country.

## 9. Golf takes league title

The Lions' golf team won its third-straight league title this year. Cottage Grove shot 717 over the two-day 4A Special District Tournament 2 against Junction City and Stayton.

The Tigers 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 Sandoval shot 87 and 84 to finish tied for second place.

Cottage Grove then took sixth place at the Class 4A boys' golf state championships held May 18 and 19 at Quail Valley Golf Course in Banks.

The Lions were in seventh place after a 375 opening round, but they shot 356 on the second day to move past district foe Stayton for sixth place. Seaside won the tournament with a score of 623. Valley Catholic was second with 643.

## 10. Track and Field does well

Conner Borigo was already assured of taking home a medal from the state track and field championships. But there was still one competitor she wanted to surpass: herself.

The Cottage Grove senior finished with her best throw of the day — 36-6.25 — but came up eight inches short of a new life

time best.

Sophomore Hudson Weybright made her second straight 800-meter final for the Lions, where she finished seventh in 2:25.51. Five of the six runners who finished ahead of Weybright are seniors.

In the team race, Astoria held off Newport 76 to 69 despite a heroic effort by Rachel Vinjamuri, who won the 100 (12.02), 200 (24.57) and 400 (56.88) for the Cubs.

The Lions scored seven points to finish tied for 25th.

Connor Howard made it to the finals in the 200 and 400-meter races, but a recurring hip problem got in the way. He finished in fifth place in the 400-meter race. Michael Tharpe also made it to the finals for the 110-meter hurdles and even had a personal best of 15.22 seconds.

In the team race, Henley scored 75.5 points to outpace North Bend (64.5), Philomath (52) and Elmira (41.83). Zach Beltz, who was named athlete of the meet, won the 100, placed second in the long jump and took fourth in the 200 for the Falcons.

The Lions scored 11 points to finish in a tie for 20th.

While Cottage Grove has previously sent more athletes to the state meet and brought home more medals, coach Ricky Knutson said that this year's group was high in quality.

"It will be very hard to replace Conner and Courtney," he said. "I thought it was valuable for the guys just to get here, and hopefully they'll get to come back next year and take another step forward."

## Bonus: New Sports Editor

After reviewing the work my predecessor did for the 2014 stories of the year, I found it interesting that the Sentinel had yet again found a new sports editor. Matt Hollander stepped down after being unable to keep up with a second job and the posi-



Josie Mootz had a memorable day when she signed her letter of intent to TCU on Nov. 16.

tion found its way to yours truly. It's a long story how I wound up working in the small Oregon town, and it's treated me well since I've started.

I was born in Washington D.C., where I lived for two years before being shipped off to Australia with my family. I lived in Perth for about four and a half years before I moved to Danville just east of San Francisco. Two months after my eighth birthday, my family was moved yet again, only this time to Singapore, a far more exotic place than I've

ever lived before. That small city-state island of a country became my home for the next 11 or so years, where I grew up on a Southeast Asian diet and was forced to learn Mandarin. After high school, my father brought me to visit the University of Oregon, where I immediately fell in love with the beauty of this state (although the winter weather came to be a bit of a shock). I finished school with a bachelor's degree in journalism this past June and found myself in the post-grad shock of now

being shoved out into the real world. It took me until late July to find the opening at the Sentinel, and Jon gave me the opportunity to work as a sports editor and learn how a real newspaper is run. Though I consider myself less experienced than Matt or Jerry Thompson and realized I'm a slow learner, I'm beginning to get a hang of the media industry and appreciate the support and constructive criticism from the community. Here's to making improvements in 2016.

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