

A turning point for girls' basketball

With two wins in a row over South Umpqua and Philomath, can the Lions turn around their season and come back from a 1-10 start?

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

It's been a tough season for the girls' basketball team and new Head Coach Kevin Yoss. After making a close playoff run last year, the Lions started the season 0-6 before grabbing their first win at Siuslaw, beating the Vikings 47-44 on Dec. 18. Just as things were looking up, the Lions went on another losing streak, dropping four games in a row. This week, however, Cottage Grove saw new life, as the team won both games against South Umpqua and Philomath.

We'll start with the game against the South Umpqua Lancers. This was a game that conveyed a sense of urgency within the Lions, and in turn they dominated the Lancers throughout the entirety of the game, winning 45-21. After losing five games by over 20 points, Cottage Grove was able to reciprocate with a 24-point win.

The Lancers were outscored 16-6 in the first half and 29-15 in the second. The Lions showed a much-improved field goal percentage of 40 percent, although they only shot 18.75 percent from the free-throw line.

Taylor Harsh led the team in scoring with 14 points (six of which were from three-point shots); the senior also had three steals on the game. Behind Harsh was sophomore Keara Murphy with 10 points and two assists. Other scorers were Hannah Arnold (six), Dana Caro, Carly Sand (three), Kassidy Whisler, Hannah Albrecht, Sierra Blomquist and Ellie Brown (two), along with Tara Child (one).

The statistics will tell you that



Photo by Sam Wright

Melissa Thielman came back from an injury on Friday to help her team overcome Philomath 37-33.

a game like this was not a fluke nor was it due to a simply poor performance from the other team. In fact, the Lions were missing starting point guard Melissa Thielman to an injury and also lost their starting post, Delia Nichols-Ferguson, to a concussion early in the third quarter.

Cottage Grove out-rebounded South Umpqua 37-32 and had a whopping 24 deflections. The difference in the game was the Lions defense and their ability to turn turnovers into points. The Lions had 20 points off of turnovers (compared to the Lancers' 3) and in the end overwhelmed South Umpqua, emerging with a decisive victory.

And then it got even bet-

ter. On Friday, Jan. 8, Cottage Grove hosted and defeated the Philomath Warriors 37-33, a victory that did not come as easy as their previous one.

The Lions were up 13-2 at the end of the first quarter and finished the first half with a 19-10 lead. However, in the second half, that lead diminished to as little as two points as the Lions found themselves fighting off a Warrior comeback. Philomath outscored Cottage Grove 23-18 in the second half, but their second-half effort was not enough to overcome the Lions lead, and Cottage Grove escaped with a four-point victory.

"These kids have been working so hard, it's just great to see it finally pay off," said Coach

Yoss directly after the game. After starting 0-6, the Lions have improved their streak by going 3-4 in the last seven games.

The Lions again shot 41.38 percent from the field, a big improvement from the previous two weeks.

It was Arnold leading the way in scoring this time with 11 points, three rebounds and a steal. Murphy was close behind with seven points and eleven rebounds, the most on the night. Previously injured Thielman returned, racking up five points, three rebounds and three steals. Albrecht scored two points but had the most assists of the Lions on the night with five.

It was another performance where the Lions won the re-

bound battle (46-34), but a game where mistakes almost cost them the game. Cottage Grove had 37 turnovers, and Philomath had a total of 20 steals. The Warriors racked up 18 points off of turnovers, which helped keep them in proximity to tie the game on several occasions. But a 50 percent free-throw percentage helped the Lions keep the game out of reach as the girls were sent to the line frequently in the final minutes of the game.

Two wins in a row could mark a turning point for the Cottage Grove girls' basketball team as the Lions move to 3-10 with one final game left before starting their Sky Em schedule on Jan. 15.

"We've already made lots of

improvements, so I'm excited to see what we can do when league starts," said Nichols-Ferguson. Their first Sky-Em opponent will be Elmira (6-6), a team that is ranked 13 in the state (Cottage Grove ranks 31).

"Our team comes to practice six days a week, having a passion to improve our game. We continually are working harder and harder each day knowing it's not about being the best, it's about being better than we were yesterday, and that's the motivation we set for ourselves," said Blomquist reflecting on the wins this past week.



Photo by Sam Wright

Chance Hopkins jumps for two against Philomath.

Winning big

Boys' basketball defeats the number one ranked Philomath in overtime, moves up in OSA rankings

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Nearly halfway through the season and just days before the beginning of league play, Cottage Grove finds itself in a great position to become a serious playoff contender. The Lions (previously ranked eight, now ranked seven) walked away this past week making a statement out of two impressive victories against Philomath and South Umpqua.

On Jan. 5, the Lions stormed into South Umpqua and ran away with a decisive victory, dominating the Lancers 76-54. Cottage Grove was on pace to score well over 80 if not 90 points in the game had they not taken their foot off the gas pedal. Junior Kory Parent didn't play for the entire fourth quarter, and the Lions only scored three points in the final period. Prior to that, Cottage Grove was av-

eraging 24.3 points per quarter in the first three quarters, which means they could have put up at least 96 points by the end of the game.

The Lions were 60 percent from the field and a season-high of 53 percent from beyond the three-point line, sinking eight out of 15 three-point shots. The team also combined for a 75 percent free-throw rate, along with out-rebounding the Lancers, 28-19.

It was a season-high for Parent, who scored 18 points with seven assists and two steals on the night. The junior took no breaks during the first three quarters of the game until Head Coach Donn Pollard benched him after reaching a comfortable 27-point lead. Other top scorers included junior Blake Sentman with 13 points, four rebounds and four assists on the night. Senior Chance Hopkins and junior Tucker Porter both

scored 12 points. Hopkins had six rebounds and Porter had four and three assists.

The Lions had 12 turnovers compared to South Umpqua's one, but it didn't phase Cottage Grove as their ability to put up points proved far too overwhelming for the struggling Lancers team, who shot only 39 percent from the field, 25 percent from three and 47 percent from the free-throw line.

Cottage Grove dominated an average 6-6 South Umpqua team, showing that they are well above the standard competition of 4A schools and deserve their spot in the top 10 of the OSA rankings.

But it wasn't until Friday, Jan. 8 that the Lions found their win of the season so far. Cottage Grove hosted Philomath, the undefeated top-ranked school in the state (12-0 at the time). It was a game to remember. Cottage Grove went up early in the first quarter, leading 13-10, but the second and third quarters fell in favor of the Warriors, who went on a 13-9 and a 16-12 run. The game went back and forth with lead change after lead change, and at one point the Warriors were up by eight early in the third quarter, and it looked like Philomath was about to begin a rally to run away with the game. But the Lions kept their poise and found themselves outscoring Philomath 15-10 in the fourth quarter, including a last second buzzer-beater by Sentman to send the game into overtime.

With 3.7 seconds left in the game, Kory Parent looked to inbound the ball after a timeout. After a bunch of shuffling and wild attempts to get open, Parent found Sentman open at the top of the key with no one between him and the basket. The

junior dribbled twice and laid the ball into the hoop as time expired, giving the Lions four more minutes of play.

Cottage Grove scored two more buckets early in overtime, but Philomath answered with a two-point jump shot. But the Warriors would not score again, and it was Sentman again who put the game out of reach by sinking two free-throws with just seconds left.

Sentman had 19 points (the most by any Lion this season), eight rebounds, four assists and one steal on the game. Parent racked up 15 points and Hopkins had 12 points with seven rebounds. Other scorers on the night were Porter with five points and Jayden Tucker and Hunter Gipson with two points each.

The Lions and Warriors were even from the field, shooting 42 percent on field goals. However, Cottage Grove shot 70 percent from the free-throw line (14 out of 20) which ultimately prevented Philomath from putting the game out of reach or taking the lead near the end of the game.

Philomath only fell to the number two spot in the state, while the Lions moved up one spot from eight to seven. As league play approaches, only Junction City sits in front of the Lions from the Sky Em League at number five. The Lions will host 15th ranked Elmira, a team that holds one more win over the Lions at 9-3 (Cottage Grove being 8-3).



Athlete of the Week



Hannah Arnold contributed immensely to her team this past week. The senior scored a total of 17 points in both games and shot 57 percent from the field against Philomath for a team high of 11 points.

Miller scores 11 strikes in a row

Cottage Mixers bowler seemingly on a roll

It had seemingly gone unreported until last week on Wednesday, Jan. 6, that secretary of the Cottage Mixers bowling league Barbara Hornick was informed that on Dec. 23, 2015, Errol Miller from Brad's Chevy/GMC team had bowled 11 strikes in a row.

"I had already sent in an award sheet for his 289 game and 702 series for that night, but no one told me he bowled 11 in a row," said Hornick.

Hornick also included in the award sheet for that night that he had bowled a 275 game on the same night.

Brad's Chevy/GMC is ranked seven out of 12 teams in the Cottage Mixers league; the team won round one and aims to do the same in round two. And with Miller bowling 11 strikes in a row, it doesn't seem to be too far off of a possibility to take round two.

BLACK
YELLOW
MAGENTA
CYAN