

Lions poised to take Sky-Em after thrilling win against JC

After two wins in a row, Cottage Grove is just one win away from claiming the Sky-Em title after knocking down the Tigers twice

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

After two aggravating losses in a row, the boys' basketball squad did not want to end their season falling short of first place for the Sky-Em League. The Lions came out fiercely against Sisters on Tuesday, Feb. 9, defeating the Outlaws 55-35.

It did not start off as explosive as the score may depict. With a low score of 17-9 at halftime, the Lions were looking to find their rhythm in the second half. And find it they did. In the third quarter, the Lions went on a 30-9 run, all within eight minutes, putting the game out of reach for Sisters, despite a 17-8 comeback attempt by the Outlaws in the fourth quarter.

Kory Parent led the game in scoring with 16 points, and senior Chance Hopkins had a double-double in his penultimate home game with the Lions. Hopkins scored 14 points with 10 rebounds.

But the story of the week and perhaps the story of the year came on senior night on Friday, where the Lions hosted a rematch with a Junction City team hungry for revenge. The Tigers came into the game ranked sixth in the state and the Lions ranked fifth, giving the game more than just Sky-Em league implications, but impacted the OSAA 4A rankings statewide.

It wasn't easy, but Cottage Grove came out once again as the victor in a 60-57 game that came down to the last second. In a game so close, there were only two lead changes the entire game.

Junction City came out strong in the first quarter, sinking multiple three-pointers and taking a 21-12 lead. The nine-point lead would be the largest of the game, and the Lions refused to let the Tigers run away with their game and potentially their Sky-Em championship. While Cottage Grove kept within striking distance of a tie and was down one point just before half-time, Junction City denied the Lions with a half-time lead by forcing a turnover and hitting a buzzer-



Photo By Gary Ordway

Blake Sentman leans in for two early in the first quarter against Junction City.

beater to go up 31-28.

The second half didn't start off exactly as the Lions would have hoped, but the third quarter proved to be the most pivotal of the game. Cottage Grove found themselves down by three, then five, then seven until Parent drove to the basket to get the first points of the half for the Lions, and that's when they found their rhythm. Nearing the end of the third quarter, down 41-43, Cottage Grove's possession turned into a score with a strong lay-up by junior Blake Sentman for the tie. After an error by the Tigers, the Lions had an opportunity to

inbound the ball from mid-court with just over three seconds left. Sentman again scrambled his way to open space and received the inbound and just before time expired, he unleashed a three to end the third quarter and put the Lions up 46-43. It was the only three-point shot made by Cottage Grove all night.

"I wasn't thinking," Sentman said of the shot. "I just saw the clock and shot it."

After that, the Lions focused on holding off any chance of Junction City to retake the lead. Cottage Grove had the advantage in the foul game and was

automatically sent to the line early in the fourth. Near the end of the game, a pair of free throws by Jayden Tucker hindered Junction City from tying the game. In a familiar ending, Parent sunk two more free throws to put the Lions up by three. With one last final attempt by the Tigers, Hayden Martinez threw up a prayer of a three-point shot from the corner and it sailed long. Cottage Grove recovered and time expired almost immediately after.

Parent had a game-high of 26 points accompanied by 16 and 12 from Sentman and Hopkins

respectively.

The win has put Cottage Grove at 16-5 overall and 7-1 in league play and now have a two-game advantage over Junction City for first place, making their 5-19 season last year a distant memory.

"I'm really proud of them, we've come a long way," head coach Don Pollard said of his team. "That was a scrap."

The two wins now put Cottage Grove back in the top four in the state, while Junction City fell one spot to seven. With only two games left in the regular season, the Lions still can't just

sit back a relax. Two losses by the Tigers would put the teams in a tie for first place. Cottage Grove will need one more win to become the undisputed top team in the Sky-Em League.

"It's right there, we just have to go get it Tuesday at Sutherlin," Pollard said.

The remaining opponents however, are ones that Cottage Grove has handled easily. Their first win against Sutherlin came with a confident 54-40 score, and the Lions blew out Sweet Home 78-48 a few weeks earlier.

Senior night not so successful for girls' basketball

Despite a great win over Sisters, the girls' basketball team wa unable to top a tough Junction City squad

BY SAM WRIGHT
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It was the last time for six of Cottage Grove's girls' basketball players to step foot on the Lions' home court in a basketball uniform on Friday, and the result wasn't the best outcome. The Junction City Tigers came to town and ran away with the game on Friday, ending a three-game winning streak for Cottage Grove. Three days earlier, the Lions managed to upset Sisters with a 31-28 win over the Outlaws, marking their third win in a row, the longest win streak all season.

Despite a 6-16 record, there were a lot of positives to take away from the season, which is still two games away from being over. Head Coach Kevin Yoss believes there was (and is) success still to be found within this season.

"We started way more behind than we could hope to catch up for," he said, "but we stayed with the same practice plan all year and really saw a lot of improvement." The Lions still wait to play against Sweet Home, a

team they handled with ease 52-15 the last time they played them. The team will take advantage of the time they still have in the season to continually improve their game.

Although Cottage Grove will say goodbye to six out of their 11 players, Yoss is optimistic about the returning roster next year.

"We have a lot of good talent still coming back," he said.

Freshman Tara Child has proven to be a quick and scrappy player on both sides of the ball and even showed finesse with an in-your-face three-pointer against Junction City on Friday.

The concern will be the loss of size when the seniors leave. Delia Nichols-Ferguson, Melissa Thielman and Hannah Arnold will be missed on the rebound game and in-the-paint points. Taylor Harsh, Dana Caro and Cassidy Whisler will be missed in the scoring game and ball control. However, Sierra Blomquist and Hannah Albrecht have stepped up as potential leaders in next year's roster. Ke-ara Murphy has also shown her ability to make an impact on the



Junior Hannah Albrecht has made an impact on her team this year and will be a big returning player for next season.

court as a young sophomore.

The team will also be more comfortable and in sync with coach Yoss.

"I think everybody now knows my expectations and we should have a much better season in terms of wins and losses," he said.

As for the rest of this season, it would be expected of the Lions to finish 7-17 and finish either fourth or fifth in the Sky-Em League. But perhaps they could surprise everyone and go out in style with an upset win over Sutherlin.

Aqua Lions take sixth, fourth at district meet

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The District Four Swimming Championships were held in North Bend over the weekend where the Cottage Grove 'Aqua' Lions placed in sixth place for the boys and fourth place for the girls out of a total of 11 competing schools. The boys fell just behind St. Mary's, with Phoenix, North Bend, and Marshfield taking first, second and third

place.

The girls' team from Cottage Grove was just outside of the top three: North Bend, Marshfield and Henley, teams that seemed to dominate across the board all weekend.

But the Lions managed to stay competitive in perhaps their most challenging meet of the season yet.

The pace was set when the girls' placed fifth in the preliminary round of the 200-yard med-

ley relay with a time of 2:19.50 and the boys placed third with 1:52.81. The teams ended in the exact same placements in the finals for the same race, only this time the girls finished in 2:21.39 and the boys' time was 1:54.00.

In the finals, Cottage Grove finished with eight state qualifiers. For the boys it was Johnny Witt, Seth Chambers, Ian Dukes and Ethan Burleson. For the girls, Sophia Edelbute, Tori Raade, Rose Witt and Clover Rudicel all qualified for the state meet.

Head Coach Tyson Pilling said that the team exceeded his

expectations in North Bend.

"Everyone swam really well and we managed to move up a spot for the girls' last year," he said.

Within the state qualifiers, Raade placed sixth in the 200-yard freestyle race, finishing with a time of 2:16.47 just after Edelbute who finished in 2:15.47, however she placed seventh due to her preliminary time of 2:18 and Raade's of 2:09. Dukes placed fourth in the same race for the boys with a speedy time of 2:00.21.

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Athlete of the Week

Hopkins impresses at last home games in CG



The senior saw his last games in Lion country last week (pending the playoff picture). Hopkins had a double-double with 14 points and 10 rebounds against Sisters and contributed 12 points to help his team win against Junction City, despite being in foul trouble at one point.