

Track kicks off with first meet; relay runners head to Portland

Lions give good performances at icebreaker meet and relay runners experience the World Indoor Championships

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The Cottage Grove track and field team hosted its first meet known as an "icebreaker" meet on Thursday, March 17. The team invited several out-of-league schools, some of which were class 5A schools. Head Coach Ricky Knutson was eager to see how his team would compete against teams that weren't in their league.

The Lions played host to Marist, Thurston and Crescent Valley high schools in a friendly meet which gave us a peep into how well the team will perform this year.

Several athletes stood out this week, including junior Hannah Albrecht, who took home first place in the 200-meter dash. Out of 18 competitors, Albrecht finished the race in 27.87 seconds, just 0.03 seconds

faster than Marist's Madelyn Nowicki. Knutson also pointed out that Albrecht's split time in the 4x400-meter relay was 61.8 seconds. "[That] is a really good time for this early in the season," he said. Last year, Albrecht spent most of the season coming back from some knee issues, and Knutson predicts she will perform at a much higher level this year.

On the boys' side of the 200-meter sprint, Cottage Grove's Chris Clure took home second place after finishing with a time of 24.84, just a half-second behind Adam Yarbrough of Marist.

Jacob Woods and Brynden Howell made their presence known in the 100-meter dash, as they finished with times of 12.22 and 12.37, respectively.

Freshman Konrad Raum, who made an appearance at the state cross-country race, placed

fourth in the 1500-meter run with a time of 4:35.06. On the other side, Hudson Weybright finished second with 5:33.32, just a second behind Marist's Hope Powell.

Another top finisher was Hayden Glenn who placed first in the 110-meter hurdles for the Lions.

Several other top athletes of the Cottage Grove track squad didn't compete in order to rest for the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to compete at a high school exhibition in Portland next to the World Indoor Championships.

Four Cottage Grove athletes were invited to compete in a relay competition against various other high schools in the Northwest.

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Athletes of the Week



Photo courtesy of Ricky Knutson

From left to right: Tucker Porter, Jayden Tucker, Connor Howard and Konrad Raum were invited to the IAAF World Indoor Championships to compete in a high school exhibition.

Softball players not discouraged by losses

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The story of the Cottage Grove softball team so far is not about how bad the Lions were beaten in their first three games of the season, but how those losses fail to deter Cottage Grove from putting in work on the field.

The Lions opened up their season at North Bend, where they lost in a brutal 22-1 rout. They then traveled to Creswell, where they suffered another harsh loss,

19-1. Then Cottage Grove went to Philomath, where similar defensive struggles occurred and the Warriors ran away with a 17-1 win.

There is currently an underlying issue that makes the Lions struggle in each game. Cottage Grove's Head Coach Cheryl Frieze attributes the defensive struggles to the young and inexperienced pitchers. This is not to say the blame is cast only on these pitchers; after all, there's not much offensive production

either. But when there aren't any experienced pitchers on the mound, the result can be crippling. Since the first game, there have been a large amount of walks, including walks via accidentally hitting the batter.

Frieze and her team are not discouraged by this, however. The game plan is to get the defense to step up and to back up their pitcher.

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Photo by Gary Ordway

Cottage Grove's pitching game will be an aspect that will see improvement with time.

Lions down Cascade, fall to Philomath

With one win and one loss, Cottage Grove can see what they do best and what they need to work on

BY SAM WRIGHT
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With the cancellation of the Siuslaw game, the Cottage Grove Lions debuted their 2016 season against Cascade on St. Patrick's Day. Coming into the game, Cottage Grove boasted five experienced upperclassmen with great offensive potential at the plate.

However, the Cougars and Lions were deadlocked through the majority of the game.

By the top of the fourth inning, junior pitcher Brett Ollivant had yet to give up a hit. This allowed the Lions to take an early 1-0 lead at the bottom of the fourth.

Cottage Grove shut out the Cougars through five straight innings and earned another run in the fifth to increase their lead to 2-0.

But at the top of the sixth, Ollivant and the Lions found themselves trying to fight off a Cascade rally. After giving up two hits, one with an RBI, Head Coach Dan Geiszler took out Ollivant to rest his arm, and freshman Wyatt Sayles took the mound. Sayles gave up one more run before shutting down the sixth inning. The Lions couldn't get on base in the bottom of the sixth inning, but the defensive play made sure that the Cougars wouldn't take the lead.

In the bottom of the seventh, the Lions had two runners on second and third base. With a win in sight, senior Peyton Presley stood up to the plate and smacked a deep ball into center field, just missing the fence. The hit effectively ended the game and the Lions won 3-2.

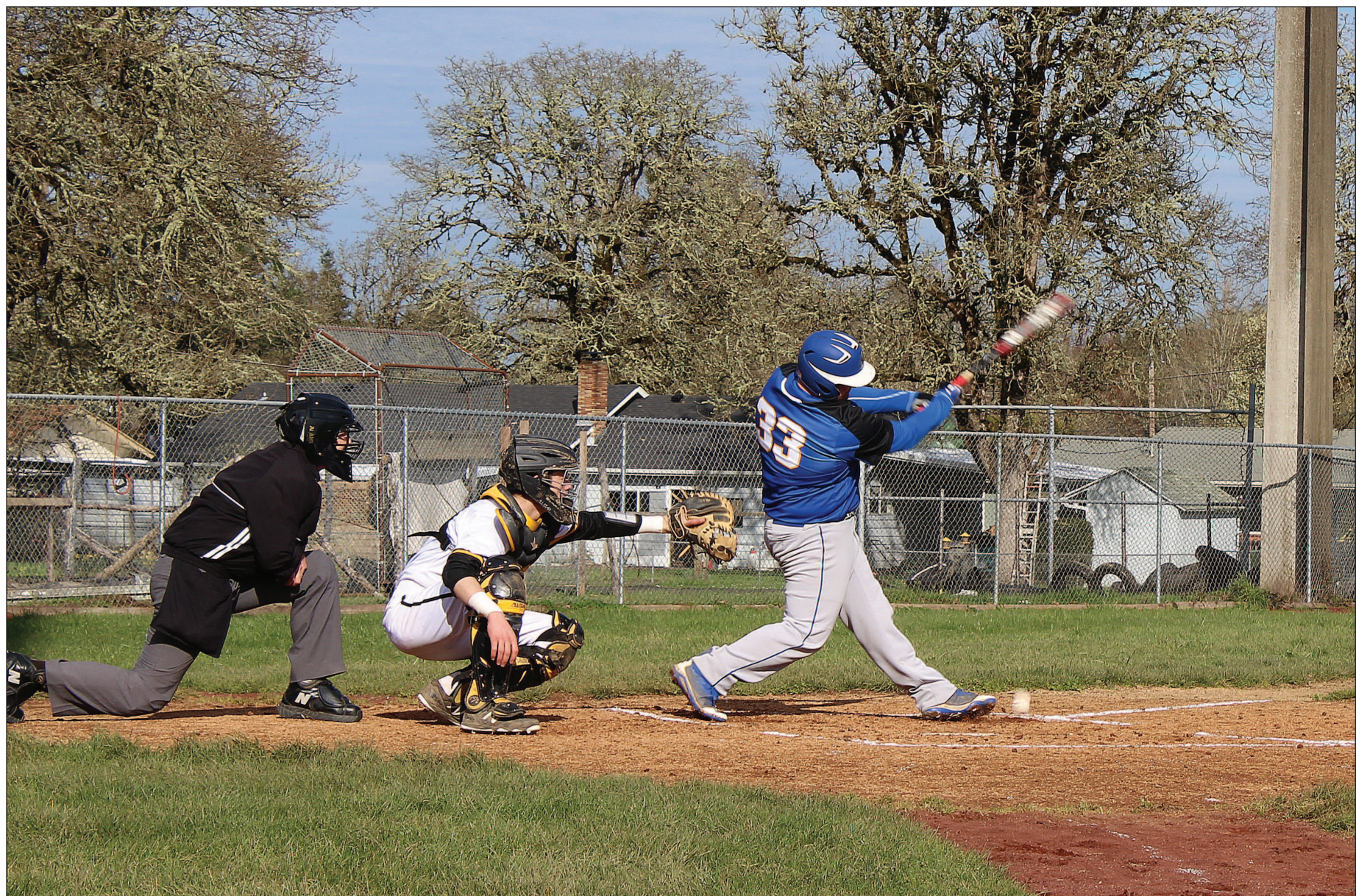


Photo by Sam Wright

Jaydin Osban foul-tips the ball against Philomath. The junior had a .250 batting average on the game.

Cottage Grove had only three players in their lineup that didn't get a hit against Cascade. The top hitters were Presley with a batting average of .750, senior Hunter Harris with .667 and Ollivant with .500. In total the Lions' batting average came out to .357.

Geiszler knows who his top hitters are, so he says he's looking to see which of the younger players will step up.

"We've got five guys that I know can hit," he said, "now we

just need to see if the other four can perform as well."

The Lions then traveled to Philomath the very next day to play the Warriors, where they played a game with an entirely different pace.

Philomath scored three runs during the first inning. The overall pitching by the Lions wasn't as sharp as Geiszler would have hoped, but they weren't out of the fight yet. At the top of the third, the Lions got on base four times and rallied to get three

runs and tie the game. Cottage Grove gave up one more run in the fourth inning, but it seemed like their defense would hold the Warriors to under five. But then the fifth inning occurred, and Cottage Grove seemed to be on their way to a win but unraveling in the bottom of the inning. The Lions racked up five runs in the top of the fifth and took a solid 8-4 lead over Philomath. But the Warriors answered back and answered hard. Junior Jaydin Osban took the mound in

the fifth inning but soon had to step down after giving up six runs on four hits. Philomath racked up eight runs in the bottom of the fifth and put the game out of reach.

"Our pitching wasn't very good against them," he said. The Lions walked a total of nine batters, a few errors led to some unearned runs, and the Lions fell short, losing 12-8.

Although Cottage Grove ended up surrendering 12 total runs, racking up eight runs is

still encouraging. Geiszler feels positive about his team and their ability to win.

"I feel pretty good. We're hitting the ball really, well and overall we're fielding and throwing the ball very well," he said. As the season progresses, Geiszler will watch for younger players maturing and gaining experience to help the more veteran players.