

Boys' make CG history in best state track finish since 1977

The boys' squad did not receive a trophy for fifth place, but their overall performances racked up for the best finish Cottage Grove has seen since 1977

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

Over the course of two days, the Cottage Grove track and field squads made school history at the OSAA state meet this past weekend. While the girls brought seven competitors and were out of the team race for overall standings, the 11 boys from Cottage Grove finished in fifth place overall, the best finish for a Cottage Grove boys' team since 1977.

After taking complete control of the district meet, the boys set out to make a statement at Hayward Field in Eugene. Connor Howard, Michael Tharpe and Brad Geisler led the way for the boys, taking top-five spots in their events.

Howard, who swept districts (taking first in the 100, 200, 400 and 4x100-meter races), came out to rival Junction City sprinters James Palodichuk and Zach Rogers. Howard competed in the same four aforementioned events, which was the most out of any Cottage Grove athlete.

"Howard was attempting a workload that we have never had an athlete attempt during the 12 years I've been here," Head Coach Ricky Knutson said. Howard struggled early in the 100-meter dash but man-



Connor Howard crosses the finish line in the 100-meter dash at historic Hayward Field.

Photo by Sam Wright

aged to finish fifth with a time of 11.35 behind Palodichuk at 11.27 seconds. Tillamook's Rory Coon took first place after breaking 11 seconds in the preliminary round.

After a short recovery, Howard was sent to the starting line for the 400-meter run, where he took fifth again with a time of 51.20 seconds. He managed to

finish second in the preliminary round in 50.45 seconds, but fatigue had settled in.

Between the 400 and 200-meter races, Knutson managed to run down an exhausted Howard, who was informed by his coach that they were tied in fifth place with Marshfield.

"Connor put the team on his back one last time," Knutson

said. It was his seventh race in two days, and in one final push, Howard fought his way to a third-place finish in the 200-meter dash in 22.96 seconds, earning his team a much-needed six points.

Another top finish came from Tharpe in the 110-meter hurdles. The senior just came off from a weekend where he ran a per-

sonal best at districts and broke 15 seconds with a time of 14.93. However, at the state meet he finished just outside of the 14-second window with 15.08 seconds and a third-place finish. Tharpe also competed alongside Howard in the 100-meter. While he wasn't the favored 100-meter

Please see BOYS' TRACK, Page 2B

Baseball passes Blanchet Cath., CG sweeps All-League Special Awards

The 3A competitors were not to be underestimated as the Lions escaped with an 11-10 victory Saturday



Photo by Sam Wright

Hunter Harris tosses a ground-ball to Jaydin Osban to get the easy out against Blanchet Catholic.

ons team.

The Cavaliers started things off by hitting a solo home run in the top of the second inning. But Cottage Grove was quick to respond, rallying with six runs, three of which came from Payton Presley on a double deep into center field.

But the Cavaliers didn't go down without a fight. Blanchet

Catholic came back from a 6-1 deficit to tie the game at 10. The Lions, however, would not roll over and used their home-field advantage bring in one last run at the bottom of the seventh and put the game away.

Along with tacking on one more victory, Cottage Grove

Please see BASEBALL, Page 4B

Stewart named boys' soccer Head Coach, Dylan Ferguson to take over girls

After previous head coach Brian Fish stepped down to focus on other aspects of his life, an important vacancy was opened in the Cottage Grove athletic department. Three applicants applied for the position of head coach for the boys' soccer program, and there was one clear front-runner.

Vern Stewart, who won Coach of the Year for the 2015 girls' soccer team, was chosen to lead the Lions next school year. It was a hard decision for Stewart, as he helped lead his team to a league title and the girls' team will welcome back a lot of talent. But Stewart has grandsons

on the boys' team, which was a strong factor on why he made the switch.

"It was tough to make the choice, but I'm excited for the upcoming season," Stewart said. Stewart is also confident in his replacement, Dylan Ferguson, who worked as Stewart's assistant for several seasons.

"I believe he'll do very well, and he knows the kids is also a part of the faculty which is important," Stewart added. Athletic Director Gary Roberts agrees that Ferguson is a strong choice.

"He has a passion for the game and he's one of the most

popular staff members at the high school," Roberts said of Ferguson. He also pointed out that a large number of the girl soccer players are always eager to work out with him and improve their game.

"It's very motivating as an administrator to see that happen," Roberts said.

With Stewart at the helm of the boys' soccer program, there are likely to be a lot of improvements made as Stewart plans to hold his team to the expectation of three words to play by: respect, integrity and excellence.

Girls still thrive despite lack of depth

Although only seven girls qualified for state, their presence was still felt in several events



Photo by Sam Wright

Hannah Albrecht gives a final push on the last stretch of the 400-meter dash.

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The girls' team was in no position to contend for any high positions in the overall team scores, but that didn't hinder the seven competitors that qualified for state.

The girls' squad finished in second place at the district meet, with junior Hannah Albrecht and senior Breanna Wright leading their team to Hayward Field.

With only seven athletes (two of which were only 4x400-meter

relay alternates), there were not many opportunities for the girls' team to finish the season strongly, but the Lion girls definitely answered where they could.

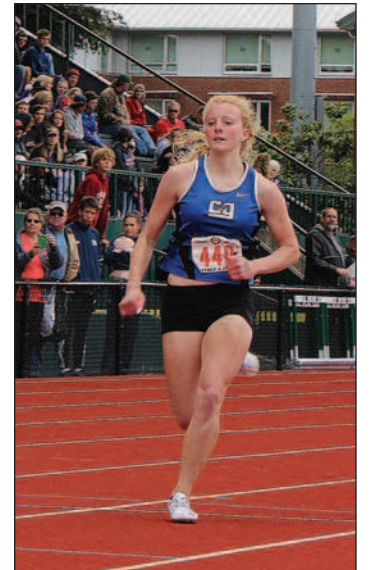
Wright ran a season-best by 18 seconds in the 3000-meter race, placing 10th with a time of 10:57.72. Then on Saturday, she ran another season-best in the 1500-meter race to take ninth place with a time of 4:58.51.

"I can't say enough about Breanna Wright," Knutson said, "her resiliency and drive inspired all of us, and we will really miss

her next year." Knutson recognized the hardship Wright had gone through with a serious injury her junior year, which kept her out for most of the season. However, he praises her ability to come back after nearly a year without racing to win two district titles and qualify for state.

One star that will return for one last year is Albrecht. The junior struggled in the 100 and

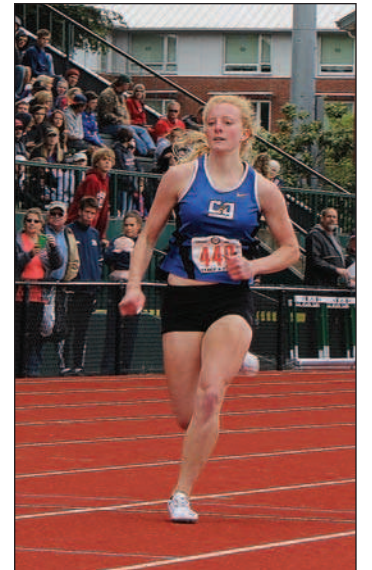
Please see GIRLS' TRACK, Page 2B



Out of the seven girls from Cottage Grove that qualified for the state meet (two being alternates), Hannah Albrecht was the only one who made it into a final heat. The junior fell just short of making the finals for the 100 and 200-meter dashes but managed to make it to the finals in the 400-meter race. She took seventh place after a season that tested her with injury. Albrecht also set personal bests in all of her events this season.

Athlete of the Week

Albrecht stands alone in girls' finals competition



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