

Despite round-two elimination, baseball sees best finish in 25 years

The Lions lost to Astoria in round two, but the victory over Baker in round one marks the best finish the team has had in a quarter of a century

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel



Photo by Sam Wright

Lucas Ward slides to third attempting to avoid being tagged out against Baker on Wednesday.

It's not only track that is showing a stellar finish this spring; baseball has set milestones too. After a victory against Baker, the Lions finally lost at home to Astoria in extra innings, but it's the best finish Cottage Grove has had in 25 years.

The first playoff match came Wednesday when the Baker City team came to town. This is the third different sport where Cottage Grove has faced off against Baker in the postseason, and last week's game put Cottage Grove up 2-1 in games against the Bulldogs.

Baker came into the game ranked at number 13 in the state, while the Lions were ranked fourth. The 13-13 Bulldogs faced a stronger 19-7 Cottage Grove squad, but they weren't counted out.

The Lions went up early with four runs that included a triple by Payton Presley. The Sky-Em Player of the Year managed three hits and three RBIs throughout the game.

The Bulldogs responded in the next inning with just one

run that was mostly due to an undeniably questionable call off of a stolen base. But the Lions held a 4-1 lead until the top of the fourth inning, where Baker managed to bring in two more runs, putting them just one run away from a tie.

Both teams' defenses were steadfast and not a single run was scored for the remaining 2.5 innings, and Cottage Grove came away with a 4-3 victory.

The Lions suffered through more of a struggle with Astoria. After a long, low-scoring battle, the Fisherman pulled away with two runs in the ninth inning, and Cottage Grove succumbed, 4-2.

"We played really good defense in both games but just couldn't get the hits we needed against Astoria," Head Coach

Dan Geiszler said.

Geiszler is still proud of the team and where they got, as the Lions didn't make it past the first round of the playoffs last year.

The team will lose an elite crop of seniors next year, but there is plenty of potential for younger players to step up, including Brett Ollivant, who won the Sky-Em Pitcher of the Year award.

"It's sad that they have to leave, not only because they're great players but because they're a really great group of people," Geiszler said of his seniors. But there is still excitement to see who will be the next leaders of the team.

"You'll always know the type of talent that will return next

year, but you never know who will step up and become leaders," he added. There are only three returning seniors (currently juniors) for next year, so there will be a lot more room for younger players to step up.

The Lions finished with an overall batting average of .293 and a 40.2 on base percentage, both slightly above the national average for prep baseball. Their 90.8 fielding percentage also ranks slightly higher than the national average.

After a Sky-Em Championship season, Cottage Grove finished with a 20-8 overall record. Those returning to the team next year will begin the summer league on Friday.



Athletes of the Week

Strength in numbers



Cottage Grove baseball made a statement this year by taking the Sky-Em League and snagging a playoff win over a tough Baker team. Although the Lions lost to Astoria in round two, the team finished its season better than any previous team in the past 25 years. Head Coach Dan Geiszler's team has rejuvenated the program and will look to keep improving the team despite the loss of four seniors.

Top Right to Left: Jaydin Osbin, Lucas Ward, Coach Geiszler, Sr. Coach Gardner, Coach Hutchins, Head Coach Geizler, Ryan East, Hunter Harris
Middle Row Bottom Right to Left: Payton Frieze, Emry Foster, Wyatt Sayles, Mason Cox
Bottom Right to Left: Jace Cox, Brett Ollivant, Bryce Allen, Payton Presley, TJ Bellamy

Golf season meets expectations; potential improvements to come next year

Placing third at districts and qualifying for the state tournament were among Kent Russo's goals

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The Cottage Grove High School golf team had certain goals set by head coach Kent Russo. Although these goals were met, there is still room for improvement for next year.

Russo said that the Lions' original goal for the district tournament was to place third and make it to state. This displays the realistic perception Russo has on his team and that he understands that many players are still working their way to a higher skill level.

"We weren't going to threaten for first or second this year," he said. And they didn't, but Cottage Grove met its goal and put themselves in a comfortable third place and qualified for the state tournament. Junction City walked away with the district title, and Sutherlin followed in second place.

On day one, Jessy Thomason achieved a career best, shooting 92 in the first round, while senior and team leader Nick Russo shot a solid score of 86. These two performances helped put Cottage Grove in a 20-stroke lead over North Marion. On the next day Russo shot 89 and kept pace with the top players of the tournament and eventually took third place individually.

Jeremy Hall shot a solid 95 on day two, which Russo says is a good score for the course.

"The greens were extremely fast, which made pitches, chips and putts very difficult," he said.

Russo also noted the potential of Trey Husko, who shot 99 on



Photo by Sam Wright

Kent Russo tees off at Middlefield Golf Course for an end-of-the-season game last Wednesday.

day two, breaking 100 for the first time. He shot 42 on the front nine but shot 57 the rest of the way.

"He will improve dramatically over the next couple of seasons," Russo said.

Cottage Grove took its five varsity players to state the next week. Aside from Russo, Thomason, Hall and Husko, senior Dylan Wooten was also part of the varsity squad.

Thomason led the board, shooting 96 on both rounds for a total of 192, while Russo was just behind him after shooting 102 in the first round and 95 in the second round (197 total).

Hall came out with the best individual round of the team with a score of 94 in the first round but shot 110 in the second round. Wooten broke 100 in round one (99), but totaled 206 after a 107 score in round two. Husko capped them off with 96 and 112 for a total of 208.

Although the team placed last, it wasn't a disappointing performance. While improvements can definitely be made and scores will need to be lowered in order for more success against the state competition, there will be a return of players such as Husko, Hall and Thomason who can possibly strive

for a higher place in the district tournament.

In the meantime, Russo urges players to keep playing golf in the offseason.

"They can play for free; even once a month would be good," he said. Russo says he also has verbal confirmation that Kory Parent and Blake Sentman will participate in golf next spring.

"They will definitely be nice to have on the team," Russo said. But before that happens, there may be more frequent sightings of younger faces at Middlefield Golf Course.

Roger Crockett wins night one of Memorial Grove Classic

BY BEN DEATHERAGE
For the Sentinel

Saturday, May 28 was the opening leg of the Marvin Smith Memorial Grove Classic. An impressive 38 360 Sprint Cars traveled from Oregon, Washington, California, as well as the Canadian provinces of British Columbia and Alberta. For the IMCA Modifieds 20 entries were in the house.

Defending race winner Jason Solwold of Burlington, Washington led the opening lap of the 360 Sprint race. Solwold got passed on lap two by Roger Crockett. Crockett, from Medford, built a decent lead, but just as lapped traffic was coming into the picture, a caution occurred.

A few more cautions came out, and it was right about when traffic was beginning to become a factor. Crockett was very good on the restarts and really had no issues the rest of the way. It was the second win of the 2016 season at CGS for Roger and the No. 11 KPC.

Solwold ended the night second, followed by Paradise, California's Kyle Hirst in third. The balance of the top five consisted of Henry Van Dam of Enumclaw, Washington, while Central Point native Garen Linder was fifth. The top four finishers of Crockett, Solwold, Hirst, and Henry Van Dam were locked into the Sunday night feature.

With so many cars in attendance the field was split in half with two groups of qualifiers.

Solwold was fastest in the first wave, while Hirst was on top of the second group. Justyn Cox of Clarksburg, California, Roger Crockett, Central Point chauffeur Chadd Noland and Albany's Bricen James were the four heat race winners. Kyle Miller, from Eugene, was the winner of the Dot's Trophy Shop Trophy Dash.

Despite a number of cautions in the main event, the IMCA Modifieds put on quite an entertaining race. Coquille's Ryan Baker got into the lead on lap one. Curtis Towns, of Cottage Grove, was able to get around Baker to take over the top place position. Towns built a decent lead but kept having it cut down due to cautions.

Kreg Britton, also out of Cottage Grove, tracked down Towns and made the pass underneath for the lead on lap ten only to lose it the following lap. Curtis Towns was able to hold on for the rest of the distance to win his first race of the season at Cottage Grove.

Albany's Craig Hanson got second, while Kreg Britton crossed the line third. Pulling off double duty Bricen James was fourth, followed by Eugene's Jesse Williamson in fifth.

Steven Sturdevant of Springfield was fast time of the night. Picking up heat race wins were Sturdevant, Springfield's Jake Mayden and Curtis Towns. Craig Hanson would be victorious in the Dot's Trophy Shop Trophy Dash.

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Cottage Grove Speedway

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