

Girls' water polo routs North Eugene; boys fight hard with a lack of depth

The girls' team took care of business in a 20-6 victory, but the boys struggled against a very stacked North Eugene team

BY SAM WRIGHT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel



Austyn Carey reaches to defend a North Eugene player on Thursday.

Photo by Sam Wright

The Aqua Lions have recently finished their season with strong results from both the boys' and girls' teams. Cottage Grove water polo has seen a huge improvement over the years, and for the girls, Thursday's performance against North Eugene put an exclamation mark on a dominant season.

It was senior night for Cottage Grove and a very important one for the girls' squad, as the team features seniors who have played together since their freshman year.

Tori Raade, Emma Meyers, Clover Rudicel, Sophia Edelbute and Madisen Kelty have been teammates since they first made the varsity water polo team four years ago. Since then, the team has shown a great incline in performance. During their freshman year, the current seniors were lucky to win one game all season, and now they have won almost every game except a few losses to strong teams like South Albany.

The girls' team dominated North Eugene on Thursday in a 20-6 rout. Scores like this haven't been rare this season for the Aqua Lions. Cottage Grove has managed to consistently score well above 15 points, while keeping its opponent's scores well under 10.

The most outstanding win would be a 23-5 beating of Medford followed by a 10-2 victory over Churchill directly after.

Based on scores like these, Head Coach Tyson Pilling isn't lying when he says that defense is the number-one priority for his teams.

"A good defense will always give you a good offense," Pilling said. Their blowout scores can attest to his strategy.

There have been a few games

that the Lions have let slip. Teams like South Albany and Ashland have been able to topple the dominant Cottage Grove team.

The Aqua Lions' first encounter with South Albany resulted in a 15-6 loss, but last Tuesday they put up a much stronger fight and lost 12-11 in a thrilling match.

Thursday's match was the last time the seniors got to put on their Lions caps at the Warren

H. Daugherty Aquatic Center.

"It's just their experience and ability to work as a team and being able to communicate properly," Pilling said of the girls' team.

The boys' team has also vastly improved since last year, although it hasn't seen such dominating results as the girls.

The Cottage Grove boys' team lost 7-3 against North Eugene, but these Aqua Lions have a huge issue that Pilling says

they've been able to overcome fairly well. The boys' team only has seven players, meaning that they don't have the ability to substitute and rest players. North Eugene outnumbered Cottage Grove more than two to one.

But the extra strain on the players is something both Cottage Grove teams are used to.

"We've always been about conditioning and 'swimming them down,'" Pilling said. Ev-

ery player on the team is fit and conditioned enough to play a full four quarters without a substitution break.

"What they've done for only having seven players is incredible," Pilling said.

The boys' team says farewell to only two seniors this year: Seth Chambers and Ian Miller.

Lions roll Bulldogs, prepare for Elmira

Cottage Grove's Sky-Em dominance in Football continued as they rolled over Sutherlin 57-0 on Friday. The Lions now prepare for perhaps their toughest league opponent, though recent weeks have shown weaknesses in the Elmira football team.

Even if the Elmira Falcons pull off an upset on Friday, Cottage Grove will hold on to a Sky-Em championship. The worst-case scenario is that Cottage Grove loses to Elmira and Sisters beats Sweet Home (the latter will probably happen). Even then, Cottage Grove and Sisters will be 4-1, and the Lions have the tiebreaker over the Outlaws with the 34-22 victory at the end of September.

The best-case scenario is that the Lions go 5-0 in the Sky-Em League and 8-0 overall, capturing a perfect regular season. While it seems many of these games have been a breeze for the Lions, Head Coach Gary Roberts and his team aren't letting up on the hard work. In fact, it may be because the team has yet to be truly tested that the Lions are working hard to ensure they don't get caught flat-footed. Roberts believes that

the team has yet to secure a signature home win, though the win over Scappoose was a very newsworthy game. Aside from that 24-21 win, Cottage Grove has beaten every opponent by two scores or more. Five out of the seven games played so far have been decided by 42 points or more. Now Cottage Grove looks to unleash the same wrath against the Falcons this Friday.

During the first half of the season, it looked like Elmira would be a league rival for the Sky-Em title, but recent weeks may have Falcons' Head Coach Justin Peeler a little more concerned now.

The Falcons suffered their first loss on Oct. 7. A devastating 27-3 loss to Sisters was the start of Elmira's derailment. Then, as the Lions ran away with their rout over Sutherlin, Sweet Home managed to take down the Falcons, 13-10.

The two losses could make the Falcons a dangerous team. Cottage Grove will be going head-on against a team that started off 5-0 and will do everything in its power to avoid finishing 5-3.

Lions, Tigers and weather: Cottage Grove struggles vs. JC

Boys' soccer dismantles Sutherlin and weather made Junction City a more difficult opponent

It's been a crazy season for the Sky-Em League in boys' soccer. There has been a lot of upsets and ties throughout the league, and Cottage Grove, too, has had its fair share of strange games.

The first game last week was an exception, however, as the Lions beat Sutherlin 7-0. This was an outcome that could be expected, as Cottage Grove beat Sutherlin 6-0 in their first matchup a few weeks earlier. But while Tuesday's victory came easy, Thursday's loss was a disappointing battle against Junction City.

Weather had an immense effect on the game. The torrential rain and heavy winds had rained on passes and goals. Goals were made that normally

wouldn't have been made and the game slowed down.

Junction City opened up with a goal early in the first half. It was a deep shot, and with the wind at the Tigers' back, the weather helped push the ball to the back of the net.

Similarly, Cottage Grove responded with a deep shot by Jesus Urenda. The ball initially appeared to be going over the goal, but a headwind drove the ball down just over the goalie to tie the game. But weather favored Junction City, and the Tigers were able to squeeze in one more goal before the end of the first half. Neither team scored again, and Cottage Grove suffered a 2-1 loss.

"They made the right choice by picking the side with the wind

at their backs," Head Coach Vern Stewart said. The Lions maintained possession of the ball in Tiger territory for most of the second half, but Junction City dropped back to a six-man defense and the Lions couldn't find the back of the net.

"I think we ended up panicking," Stewart said. Cottage Grove entered the game viewing it as a must-win situation, and when the final whistle blew, disappointment set in.

"It was hard to get a pulse; the weather was just so atrocious and everyone just wanted to go home, I couldn't get a feel for individual attitudes," Stewart said. Despite the disappointing loss, the Lions have maintained a strong attitude throughout other tough periods of the season.



Athletes of the Week

Girls' water polo team ends season on a high note



The Cottage Grove Aqua Lions have finished off a dominant season with a variety of blowout victories. Many of the seniors have been playing together since they were freshman, and their veteran experience has brought the team a lot of success this year.



By Sam Wright

Jesus Chuy Urenda fights through a Junction City defender and torrential downpour.

BLACK
YELLOW
MAGENTA
CYAN