

## Sky-Em Champ Lions down Elmira to cap off a perfect regular season

Cottage Grove gets its first undefeated regular season in school history

BY SAM WRIGHT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The 2016 Cottage Grove High School football team has made school history. For the first time ever, the Lions have gone 8-0 in an undefeated regular season, which has earned them a first-round bye in the playoffs this year.

Last year, the Lions went 4-5 with a loss to Baker in their play-in match, and in 2014 Cottage Grove went 2-7, just one year after making it to the state championship. The current seniors were freshman when the Lions last won the Sky-Em League and went on to the 4A state final in 2013. Players such as Kory Parent and Blake Sentman have seen many ups and downs to the program over the last few years, but now the seniors have taken control of their team and led Cottage Grove to a perfect regular season.

The Lions once again had control for the entire game. Cottage Grove pounded the ball with se-



Zane Levings pushes through the Elmira defense. The senior racked up nearly 100 yards on 16 carries Friday night.

Photo by Gary Ordway Sports Action Photography

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## Flurry of personal bests for CG harriers



Photo courtesy of Jim Settlemeyer

Jacob Justis and Adam Marsh tread through the mud at the Oregon Country Fair Grounds last Wednesday.

The CGHS cross country team crashed out of its unplanned no-race trance to set a large number of personal records in a water-drenched race Wednesday at the Oregon Country Fair Grounds. The run, hosted by Elmira High School, allowed the Lions to race once again after the crazy uncertain storm front that moved through the area had caused Head Coach Jim Settlemeyer to cancel their involvement in a run near Gervais last Saturday.

In spite of a course involved

in numerous encounters with standing water and slick footing, 22 of the 31 competitors who ran set season or personal records led by the whopping 4:10 improvement from Allie Gifford with her 31:59 effort. Others setting personal records were Savannah Davis (24:57), Kenzie Parsons (25:30), Emma Sexton (28:44), Jenn Simons (26:06), Rylee Williams (30:35), Nadia Witt (24:32), Eric Cortez (19:18), Jesse Ellingworth (17:49), Justin Francis (19:27), Mitchell Johnson (23:42), Jacob

Justis (23:19), Matteo Liserre (22:00), Adam Marsh (22:46), Konrad Raum (17:01), Cody Smelser (20:49) and Paesen Timm (17:40).

Settlemeyer says that the Lions hope to ride these great efforts to a strong finish this week at the Sky-Em Cross Country Championships on Thursday at Lane Community College. The Lion boys led by last year's district runner up, Konrad Raum, enter the meet seeded third. Their goal is to jump Elmira or Junction City and hold off

the other district teams in their quest to capture one of the top-two team spots and qualify for the State meet. The girls' team is working to improve on its projected fifth place finish. Sabrina James (seeded ninth) has the best chance to qualify for state as an individual for the girls, but she will have to finish in the top five in a tough field. Both JV teams are also preparing to perform at a high level in the upcoming district meet.



## Athlete of the Week

Kory Parent is the back bone of Cottage Grove's defense



Kory Parent is quite possibly the best overall player on the Cottage Grove football team. In the absence of starting quarterback Blake Sentman, Parent stepped in and threw the ball with near-perfect accuracy, moving the ball through the air with precision. Even when Sentman was in the game, Parent has a couple of touchdown passes from plays where he would receive the handoff on an end-around play and pull up to throw a deep pass. If plays such as that broke down, Parent had the ability to tuck the ball and run. But as much of a weapon as he is on offense, the senior is the leader of the defense. Saturday's win over Elmira featured Parent making a crucial interception after the Lions had turned the ball over on a fumble. With Parent at the helm, Cottage Grove's defense has only allowed an average of eight points per game.

## Soccer: boys fall flat, girls end tough season on high note

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It hasn't been an easy year for Cottage Grove's soccer program. Both the girls' and boys' varsity teams were introduced to new coaches and new systems, and coaches were introduced to new players. Vern Stewart switched from being head coach of the girls' team (and leading the team to a Sky-Em title last year) to the boys' head coach after former head coach Brian Fish stepped down. The girls' team was introduced to what

could almost be described as an "interim" head coach in Samantha Shine, Stewart's daughter, who is visiting her family from Georgia.

The struggles of these teams don't fall on any one coach or any one player; it's safe to say that it's just been a bit of a weird year for CG soccer. Stewart is a veteran soccer coach who has had tremendous success on both the girls' and boys' programs in Cottage Grove, along with coaching at Northwest Christian University up in Eugene. But the team was new to him,

and Stewart was forced to spend most of his season looking into which player fit best.

"I found that some players who would, for example, typically play forward were much more useful and talented on defense," Stewart said. The head coach also had trouble figuring out if his system was a good fit for the players.

Like he did with the girls' team, Stewart implemented a 4-2-3-1 lineup on the field, but a few tough losses left him wondering if the system was right for the players.

Regardless of the strategy, the soccer team consistently stood behind its coach and trusted his decisions. The team stepped away from the 4-2-3-1 for a while and then went back to it a few games later. Cottage Grove ended the season with three losses in a row to Junction City, Sweet Home and Sisters. The losses are disappointing, as the Lions have usually been able to bounce back after at least two losses, but a harsh 5-0 loss to Sisters put Cottage Grove in fifth place in the Sky-Em only in front of Sutherlin, a team that

went 0-9-1 in league matches.

The disappointing end by no means indicates that the soccer program is moving in the wrong direction. Stewart has been Sky-Em Coach of the Year before and he will be again. The team needs to get settled with its new identity with Stewart at the helm and the Lions could soon be back to being a top-performing team.

The girls' team struggled just as much. The Lions went 1-7-2 in league play with their one win coming from their most recent game against Sisters, 2-0.

The last time those two teams played each other, Sisters ran away with a 4-0 victory. Cottage Grove saw a lot of detrimental injuries. Star forward Kia Hemenway had to sit out for a few weeks during the season, making the Lions' offense less potent. The fate of the girls' team is a bit more up in the air, as Shine will return to Georgia before next season starts and Cottage Grove will have to look for a head coach who can bring them another Sky-Em title.

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