

Cottage Grove Lady Lions earn playoff berth, top Madras

Athlete of the Week



Reilly Kelty, Ema Gardner, Keara Murphy combine for 42 points



Kelty (left) Gardner (mid) and Murphy (right) had 17, 13 and 12 points respectively on Saturday evening. The "three" or "triple towers" have been a powerful force for the Lions and have since helped turn the season around for Cottage Grove.



CYAN MAGENTA YELLOW BLACK

Ema Gardner attacks the hoop against Madras on Saturday. Gardner finished with 13 points on the night and five assists.

By Sam Wright
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For the past few weeks it has been the same incredible story for the girls' basketball team. The Lady Lions have had one of the best second halves of a season in recent years, and on Saturday, Cottage Grove secured a playoff spot with a thrilling win at home over Madras.

It wasn't an easy game to win, and although it was a close game, Cottage Grove was clearly the better team on Saturday.

The Lions started quickly in the first quarter. Seniors Hudson Weybright and Hannah Albrecht easily found a way to get the ball to their tall posts and score easy baskets. The White Buffaloes do not list the height of their players on their roster, but no one came close to being able to challenge the height of players like Keara Murphy, Reilly Kelty or Ema Gardner. But as one CGHS student spectator pointed out, it's not size that always matters, it's stamina, too.

After taking a 19-11 lead in the first quarter, Cottage Grove then saw the tenacity of its opponent.

Madras went on a 21-8 second-quarter run and took the lead over the Lions before ending the second half. At 31-27, the White Buffaloes seemed to carry all the momentum.

But a four-point deficit was nothing to truly worry about for Cottage Grove. What the Lions had to do was subdue the scrappiness of Madras. Although their size wasn't on par with the Lions, the White Buffaloes made up for it with scrappy and aggressive defense that, to the benefit of Cottage Grove, drew a lot of fouls.

Madras held onto its lead for the entirety of the third quarter, stretching it to as much as seven at some points. But the Lions stayed resilient and answered back, outscoring the White Buffaloes 13-10 in the third quarter, shrinking their deficit to just one point as they entered the final period.

The game saw its third and final lead change in the fourth quarter. Cottage Grove took a 43-42 lead, and the team held its ground against Madras' attempts to fight back.

At a key moment with less than three minutes remaining, Weybright was fouled while driving to the basket. The Lions held a 47-46 lead, and much like in the second Elmira game, Weybright held her cool and confidently sank both free throws to give the Lions a three-point lead.

"It was really nice to see Hudson Weybright step up to the free throw line and hit those two free throws," Head Coach Kevin Yoss said.

Then, with less than a minute on the clock, Sierra Blomquist stepped up to the free throw line. Although she only sank one of her two shots, it put the Lions up by four points, making it nearly impossible for Madras to tie up the game or win it in the final seconds.

While the free throws were the clutch shots of the night near the end of the game, the offensive production goes to "the three towers" on the Lions roster.

Kelty, Gardner and Murphy scored 42 (84 percent) of the Lions 50 points on Saturday. Kelty finished the game with 17 points, Gardner finished with 13 and Murphy with 12. It's extremely hard for a team to lose when three different players score over 10 points.

"[They] came through again with an amazing shooting performance," Yoss said.

The win earned Cottage Grove a spot in the first round of the playoffs and are set to face the toughest opponent they have faced all season.

Since the Lions come into the playoffs as the 16th ranked team in the state (the last spot for the playoffs), they are put against the top-ranked team, Cascade. Cascade sits undefeated at 19-0 on the season and have a 30-point win over Cottage Grove that happened in early December.

But Cottage Grove is a different team than it was in December. The size is now in sync with the coordination. The ball handlers and guards have much better chemistry with the posts, and Cascade's roster holds no one taller than six-foot-one, Kelty stands at six-foot-three.

The game is set for March 4, at 6 p.m. at Cascade.

Online reporting now available for licensed furtakers

Reports due April 15

ODFW launched an online reporting system earlier this year to make it easier for Oregon's licensed furtakers to report the results of their season and confirm their report has been received. The online reporting system can be found at the Furbearer Hunting and Trapping page.

Furtakers are licensed to hunt, trap, and pursue furbearers such as beaver, bobcat, marten, mink, muskrat, river otter, raccoon, red and gray fox and unprotected mammals such as coyotes, nutria, skunks, and opossums under authorized seasons. Furtakers must report the results of their season by April 15 each year, providing details on the number of furbearers harvested, nights they spent trapping or hunting, number of animals released, and other information. Furtakers who fail to report on time can't get a license the following year until they submit the late report and pay a \$50 late fee.

Thanks to furtaker reports, ODFW gets information which helps the department monitor and manage 17 wildlife species. "Without these reports, little would be known about many of these species,"

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Win gives boys playoff homecourt advantage

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Cottage Grove racked up its second consecutive Sky-Em League title by beating Sisters in a 34-21 victory over the Outlaws last Tuesday. The game was scheduled as a tiebreaker at a neutral site in Sweet Home, as the Outlaws and Lions both held the same 8-2 league record.

It was an overall defensive battle with both teams held to under 35 points, but the Lions' late surge in the fourth quarter gave them the edge over Sisters.

Neither team could separate itself from the other. The game was tied at 13 at halftime, the lowest-scoring half of the season for the Lions. Each team scored eight in the first quarter and then five

points in the second. By the end of the third quarter, the game was still tied at 18.

Cottage Grove managed to kick it into gear in the fourth quarter. The Lions outscored the Outlaws 16-3 in the final period to finish the regular season and take home a victory in what was essentially a Sky-Em Championship game.

Cottage Grove shot for 40 percent from the field, which isn't a bad rate of shooting from the field, it was just that Cottage Grove couldn't get off as many shots; they made 10 of 25 that night. Still, the Lions held the Outlaws to only 36 percent from the field. Cottage Grove also forced 13 turnovers and outrebounded Sisters 20-16.

With such a defensive battle, it is impressive that Cottage Grove managed to hold its personal fouls to under 10 on the game. The Lions only fouled seven times in both halves combined, and Sisters nearly doubled that with 13.

Kory Parent led the team in scoring with 12 points, all from beyond the three-point arc. The senior sank four of his seven three-point shots and made no attempts from two-point range.

Sentman finished with 10 points, including five free throws. Sentman also finished with seven rebounds, two assists, two blocks and one steal. Overall Cottage Grove had 10 steals on the night.

Although he finished with no points, senior Hunter Gipson finished with three steals and four assists. Tucker Porter had seven points on the night and tied Gipson for steals.

The highest scorer for the Outlaws was Ty Horner with just seven points.

This was the third game the Lions played against the Outlaws. Cottage Grove beat Sisters in their first encounter of the season, but the Outlaws returned the favor earlier this month.

The win now puts the Lions as a top-seeded winner, and they are now awarded a home game to kick off the first round of the playoffs against Banks.

Cottage Grove sits at the seventh place in the OSAA rankings, and ninth-ranked Sisters travels to Gladstone.

The Lions host Banks at 7 p.m. on March 3.



PHOTO BY GARY ORDWAY