

Bulldogs triumph

Cottage Grove girls soccer fall in game with playoff implications

By Zach Silva
zsilva@cg sentinel.com

With a home loss last Thursday to Sutherlin, the road to the playoffs is now filled with barriers for the Cottage Grove girls' soccer team.

The clearest path to the playoffs for the Lions is finishing in the top three in league play. The top three teams in each league get automatic bids while any team below has to depend on the OSAA ranking to determine if they will be a non-automatic qualifier. The Lions now sit in fourth place and the non-automatic qualifiers are based on overall record which hurts the Lions because of their slow start to the season has them ranked 31st of the 40 4A teams.

Going into Thursday's game, the Lions and Bulldogs were neck and neck in the league standings. And because of an Elmira loss to top seed Junction City earlier in the day, a win could have vaulted the Lions to second but the 1-0 loss to Sutherlin dropped the team to fourth.

"Very disappointing," said head coach Reed Levings. "We have to bring the intensity from the beginning. We can't wait until there's three minutes left on the scoreboard to decide, 'Hey, we're down we got to go get a goal.'"

In the first half it was Cottage Grove who opened the game up in control. The best opportunity came on a corner kick delivered by Payton Cameron right in front of the goal that was corralled in by the Bulldogs.

As the rain continued to pour down, Sutherlin began to take over the game. Starting in the 20th minute, they flipped a switch and starting creating chance after chance. It started after a Cottage Grove foul set up a set piece from 35 yards out bounced around the box but was saved by Lions goalie Irene Ferguson.

When it looked like the Lions had a strong counterattack in the 27th minute, Sutherlin's center back was able to stop the ball, pass it forward and suddenly what looked like a Lions advantage turned into a Bulldogs' two-on-one against Guzman. Hadley Brooksby slipped the ball by and it dribbled along the soaked turf and into the back of the net for the only goal of the game.

"I think the main thing was we weren't connecting on our passes like we typically do. We didn't stick to the basics and we got frustrated when we went down and stopped making good passes," said Levings. "We can't just make it right through their defense, we got to move up the field as a unit and pass around them."

This continued to be a problem in the second half as the Lions could not get by the Sutherlin back line that were set up at the midfield line.

Cottage Grove struggled to possess but after a Sutherlin foul in the 20th minute, they had a chance in the form of an Annie Gibson shot attempt that was saved. The Lions found some energy in the last ten minutes and started attacking and got into the Sutherlin half of play. With just two minutes left to play, a ball was played into the box and a collision caused Sutherlin's goalie to go down and have to come out of the game with an injury. With a backup goalie in, the Lions had a corner kick but could not create a real opportunity.

"Oh I wanted to get that W," said Levings.

The Lions play in their final regular season game of the season tomorrow at Sweet Home.

Lions keep 'chipping away' as they win big



Cottage Grove running back Chad Bortorff jukes out a Junction City defender on Friday night.

PHOTOS BY ZACH SILVA

Cottage Grove football flattens Junction City in home victory

By Zach Silva
zsilva@cg sentinel.com

It was not a perfect or the prettiest of games for Cottage Grove last Friday night but when Junction City came to town, the Lions powered their way to a 48-6 victory.

Cottage Grove committed three interceptions, had three fumbles (all of which they recovered) and some brief injury concerns on their way to their fifth win by over 30 points on the season.

"It wasn't like we came out and it was 48-0 at the end of the first quarter and just coasted. We faced some adversity turning over the ball," said head coach Gary Roberts. "It is good that our kids are getting to play full ball games or

close to full ballgames because we need that. Because we need to just keep chipping away and chipping away and make things happen."

And through it all, it was the defense that held strong for the Lions. While Junction City is no offensive powerhouse and were a meager 2-of-10 passing, the Cottage Grove defense limited the Tigers chances. Junction City had just 118 yards on the game with 78 coming in the fourth quarter, leading to their lone score of the night, against the Lions second string unit.

Offensively, the Lions got off to a slow start but were able to find their stride late. After a three and out to start the game, Cottage Grove got the ball back and were in rhythm with a Jacob Woods 17-yard reception and a Juice Clafin 37-yard touchdown run. Clafin finished the game with 10 rushes for 121 yards and three touchdowns.

"We had a couple mistakes, execution errors, but yet we played with ev-

erything we had," said Clafin. "There were times that all of us were hurting ... but you do it for the team. You can't be selfish about it, you have to be able to pursue."

In the second quarter, Graves was intercepted and then made the touchdown-saving tackle at the Cottage Grove five-yard line. Junction City was poised to tie the game but the Lions stopped the Tigers rush attempts on four straight plays. Cottage Grove then started their next drive from the one-yard line and marched down 99 yards in 14 plays for another Clafin score.

"I'm really proud of our effort tonight. We were sloppy, we did some sloppy things, but our effort was there," said Roberts. "And that's what is important. The kids play with passion, they play hard and I was proud of them for how they kept sticking with it."

The Lions struck again before the half when a screen pass to Chad Bortorff turned into a 56-yard touchdown

reception from Graves to go up 21-0. Graves finished the game 11-for-18 for 244 yards, two touchdowns and three interceptions.

In the third quarter, Graves took a hit that caused him to limp off to the sidelines. With backup quarterback DeJean Alonzo at home with the flu, Clafin lined up at center and took the ball and ran it for 66 yards and a score.

On the next two drives it was Jacob Woods who took over the game. He capped off each drive with a 43 yard receiving touchdown and a 10 yard run in which he found himself running backwards after a bad pitch yet was still able to race into the end zone.

"We came out here and executed pretty well," said Woods. "It feels great. Our main goal is to make it state and prove what our little town is worth."

On Friday the Lions will take on Sutherlin (2-5) at home in the final regular season of the game.



Cottage Grove's Dylan Graves rolls out of the pocket as he looks for a receiver down field.



Cottage Grove's Erick Giffen keeps the ball on a fake punt and rushes for the first down.

Not your average football player

Freshmen girl Tayla Swearingin is 'one of the boys' on the Elkton High School football team

By Zach Silva
zsilva@cg sentinel.com

The game of football is seen as sacred. It is a place where boys become men as they prove their toughness play after play; it is the pinnacle of strength as the players give everything they have to gain a yard or make a stop and then line up and do it again.

But this boys club has a new member in Elkton High School's Tayla Swearingin.

Tayla, who is listed on the roster at 5'7 and 175 pounds, is a freshman on the offensive and defensive line at Elkton and is in her fifth year of playing football – the game she loves. And unlike the rest of her teammates and her opponents, she is a girl; a girl who is committed to working hard every day; a girl who gets real playing time

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Tayla Swearingin (right) and her cousin Trystn Woody get ready to go in a recent football game for Elkton.

Athletes of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are the girls of the North Douglas volleyball team. The Warriors finished undefeated in league play and with the number one ranking in 1A. For more on the team, turn to B5