

## Bobby Doerr remembered in Cottage Grove

*A local connection to the Major League baseball hall of famer and friend*

By Zach Silva

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Larry Watkins always had a dozen brand new Rawlings baseballs with him at all times. Just in case.

"Bobby would show up, he would stop by in the store just to visit, and I would give him a dozen balls that he could have signed and then give them away," said Watkins.

Bobby Doerr, the Boston Red Sox legend who died last week at the age of 99, lived in Junction City during the offseason and permanently in the later years of his life. It's where he met Watkins struck up a friendship.

In 1986, the year Doerr was inducted into the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame, Watkins, the owner of a sports memorabilia store in Eugene, invited him to do a signing at Valley River Center.

"A friend of mine basically says, 'I think I can get a hold of Bobby Doerr to come and sign autographs,'" said the retired Watkins who is 68 and lives in a home just outside of Cottage Grove that is full of signed memorabilia. "So instead of calling him I wrote him a letter and shoot, he wrote me a letter right back with his phone number. So I called him, asked him if he would be interested in doing that and he said sure."

Doerr, who always made sure his signature was not just a scribble but legible, spent his entire Saturday at Valley River Center ("He was the first to show up," Watkins remembers) signing bats, balls and cards for all the excited fans that gathered around. He struck up conversations about baseball and took a genuine interest in each individual.

"When those guys do those signings they get paid a lot of money for it. And so I went to pay him for it and he said, 'No, I don't want any money.' He says, 'I enjoyed doing it and I want to do it for the fans.' And that's the way he was," said Watkins.

Watkins and Doerr became friends. They would talk frequently and began regularly visiting each other. Watkins then worked at Guaranty RV in Junction City and decided to call up his new friend to see if he could stop by for lunch. Doerr was happy to welcome him into his home.

"We would just sit there and talk about baseball because I had been a fan forever," said Watkins. "And he was a teacher and a fan himself and we just talked baseball."

Watkins invited Doerr to Guaranty for a sales meeting where he talked about what it takes to be great. The always-humble Doerr instead of talking about himself, a nine-time All-Star, talked about the success of his Hall of Fame teammate, and friend, Ted Williams.

"[Doerr] said, Ted one time - Bobby was the hitting instructor

Doerr: continued on B3

# STATE CHAMPIONSHIP BOUND



Cottage Grove's Dylan Graves attempts to stay in bounds after scrambling out of the pocket.

PHOTOS BY CGHS PHOTOGRAPHY CLASS/GABE GLENN

## Cottage Grove football rolls over Mazama in the semifinals

By Zach Silva

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Cottage Grove football is heading back to the state championship.

After a year of dreaming and working to get back to the title game where they lost a season ago, the top-ranked Lions kept their undefeated season alive Saturday night at Grants Pass High School as they powered past Mazama 54-35 in the semifinals. The Lions are headed to their third state championship football game in five years and will face the undefeated Marshfield Pirates on their journey to get their elusive first state football title in the school's history.

"I'm really happy for the kids. Happy for the seniors that made this their goal. Happy that they worked hard and that they're getting rewarded to get back here. I can tell by the look in their eyes that they're not satisfied with just getting there, they want to win it. And we're going to do everything we can this week to win this thing," said Cottage Grove head coach Gary Roberts.

In the semifinal, Cottage Grove had their hands full as they faced a one-loss Mazama team (a loss they avenged in the quarterfinals with a 50-0 win) that boasted a strong run game and a defense that had given up an average of just 10.8 points against them all season.

It was the Vikings who struck first - after recovering an onside kick on the opening kick that they converted into a rare passing touchdown - and took an 8-0 lead early in the first quarter. But

the Lions then unleashed an impressive stretch of football from the first quarter until the middle of the third quarter in which the offense rattled off 41 unanswered points while the defense gave up just 45 yards and three first downs.

"They came out and scored first but we knew exactly what we needed to do... We knew we could come right back and punch them in the face and put more points on the scoreboard than they did," said quarterback Dylan Graves who finished the game 17-of-24 for 166 yards with one touchdown.

On the Lions first offensive series the team had two successful fourth down conversions. After a botched snap, it was Graves who scrambled out of the pocket for an 11-yard gain and got tackled on the out of bounds line. As he got up, the Mazama defender was in his face and the two exchanged words resulting in a Vikings unsportsmanlike conduct.

"I thought they were more of a respectful team... They started pushing up in my facemask and grabbing at my face and that really got me amped up and then I was like okay now I really want to punch you guys even harder," said Graves.

A play later it was Chad Bottorff who found the end zone for his first of two touchdowns on the game. Bottorff finished with 13 carries for 81 yards.

After forcing a three and out, one of four on the day, Cottage Grove struck again, but this time needed just one play. Graves threw a backwards pass to receiver Hayden Glenn who then pulled the ball back and found an open Jacob Woods downfield for a 57-yard touchdown. Woods finished the day with 10 catches, 140 yards receiving and two touchdowns.

"At first we definitely started out a little slow but then we realized what we were doing and everybody got a lot more into the game and then we just

started executing good," said Woods.

The Lions continued to pour it on with a second Bottorff score, two Juice Claffin rushing touchdowns and two made field goals by Erick Giffen.

The Vikings then strung two quick scores together at the end of the third quarter with a Zach Gibson 43 yard reception and a Brandon McVey three yard rushing touchdown that followed a Cottage Grove fumbled handoff on their own five yard line.

Back on offense, the Lions wasted no time as Graves found Woods for a 50 yard strike. After a turnover on downs, Claffin took over and scored his third touchdown of the game to put the Lions up 54-21 in the fourth quarter.

Mazama scored twice in the last eight minutes of the game but it was too little too late and the Lions advanced to the championship game.

"Absolutely the best feeling ever," said senior offensive and defensive lineman Nate Farrell on getting back to the championship. "We set a goal to go there and we're going there. The goal is to take the trophy this time and that's the dream, the goal - everything right now."

The championship game holds extra significance for Cottage Grove head coach Roberts who grew up in Coos Bay, attended Marshfield High School and while on the Pirates football team played in the state semifinals and finals.

"I'm really happy for John Lemmons, the head coach there at Marshfield. He's a great guy, one of the best people I've ever been around. I'm really proud for him and the kids down there but when we suit up next week there isn't an ounce of me that wants them to win," said Roberts.



Cottage Grove's defense shuts down Mazama's running game last Saturday.

PHOTOS BY CGHS PHOTOGRAPHY CLASS/GABE GLENN

## STATE TITLE STATE OF MIND

"It's going to take everything we've got. You know we're going to give it our all again and we're going to win it this time."

- Juice Claffin, senior running back and defensive lineman

"It's the best feeling in the world."

- Chad Bottorff, senior running back and linebacker

"He's in a class by himself, really, in terms of the level of success. Most teams don't go to the state championship three times ever and three times in the last five years, two years in a row, all time winningest coach in his school's history. He's a special freaking coach and sometimes that really gets overlooked but god, he's amazing. He really is."

-Mike Ingman, CGHS principal, talking about head coach Gary Roberts

"We know what it feels like to lose... It's like a festering wound and it's time to come back and take care of it."

- Cooper Ladd, senior offensive lineman and linebacker

"We know it's going to be a hard game next week but we know our goal is to take home that blue trophy."

- Jacob Woods, senior wide receiver and defensive back

## Athlete of the Week



Giffen sprints to a first down earlier this season.

This week's athlete of the week is Cottage Grove football's Erick Giffen. In Saturday's semifinal, Giffen made his presence felt in each phase of the game.

While on offense he had a quiet game with just one catch for 11 yards, everywhere else he excelled:

on defense he had an interception, he had three punt returns for 111 total yards (including an especially exciting 61-yard run), two punts for a total of 86 yards (including one that rolled out at the Mazama one-yard line), 2/2 on field goals and was 6/7 on PATs.