

Lions fall to Bulldogs in play-in

Free throws guide Baker to a victory over Cottage Grove

By Zach Silva
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The road trip that was the Cottage Grove boys' basketball season came to its final stop last weekend.

A season that saw the Lions play just six home games all year – and play the first 11 games on the road including in Alaska – ended prematurely from Cottage Grove's point of view as they lost to Baker 77-68 in a state play-in game on Saturday night.

"The last two years I've been fortunate enough to end my season on a win," said first year Cottage Grove head coach Nick Finley who had most recently won back-to-back state titles while coaching at Ninilchik High School in Alaska.

The Lions – who began the seven-hour trip to Baker on Friday morning and returned on Sunday night – were the third-place finishers in the Sky-Em league and faced the Bulldogs who finished second in the four-team conference of the Greater Oregon league.

Things looked promising for the Lions as the Bulldogs had just seven players suited up to play and recently dismissed the tallest player on their team.

The Lions trailed after the first quarter but behind an 11-0 run in the second quarter, the team took a 38-28 lead with two minutes to play in the half.

"They were winded. They had to call timeout – I remember looking down the sideline at their bench and they had a kid down almost on all fours, he was that tired," said Finley.

"I was thinking at that point, we're running. We got them right where we want them. We're playing this game at our pace, keep running them. And then [Baker head coach Brent Gyllenberg] called two or three timeouts in the second quarter and the momentum changed. He killed what we had going, which was great on their part, it was great coaching. And then the rest of the game they dictated the pace we played."

Buoyed by four missed Cottage Grove free throws in the final minutes of play in the first half, Baker was able to cut their deficit to just three points going into halftime.

"We had 11 missed free throws in the game. We were eight-of-19. Not to mention a few of them were one-and-ones so you could say 14, 15 missed opportunities. If we make our free throws in the first half, we're up 15," said Finley. "But, we didn't and we gave them life and they took advantage of that and they played tough."

The Lions got a lead by as many as five in the third quarter but a Bulldogs 9-0 run gave the Bulldogs a lead that they never squandered. The Lions momentarily tied the game behind a Jesse Ellingworth lay-up but Baker continued to turn up the pressure and the team took a six-point lead heading into the fourth.

"I had a number of fans, their AD, other coaches from

LIONS continued on B3

Yamhill-Carlton contains Cottage Grove



A group of Yamhill-Carlton defenders swarms Cottage Grove's Ema Gardner as she pulls down a rebound.

PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

Strong second-half performance leads the Tigers to a play-in victory

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While Cottage Grove has relied on their height – and the many benefits related to height on a basketball court – throughout the year, Yamhill-Carlton was prepared to combat the Lions.

"We have height in our league. We're going against 6-foot-3, 6-foot-2 girls all season long. So, nothing new. But going into tonight we were well prepared," said Yamhill-Carlton coach Nile Seibil whose Tigers are in a league that features four of the top 12 teams in the state.

"We've had 12 straight playoff games already." The preparation was apparent as Yamhill-Carlton came into Cottage Grove and beat the Lions 49-39, including 35 second-half points, in a state play-in game on Friday night.

After losing to Junction City last Tuesday (see page B3 for the game recap) in a game to determine the top seed in the Sky-Em league, the Lions became the two-seed out of the league. Eighteenth ranked Yamhill-Carlton, who lost nine of their last 11 games, finished fifth in the especially competitive Oregon West Conference and made it into the play-in round via their ranking.

Cottage Grove misses at the rim and Yamhill-Carlton turnovers kept the game close throughout the first half and the teams were tied 14-14 at halftime in a game that was a display of missed opportunities.

"I'm disappointed... we had an opportunity to go ahead in the first half if we would have rebounded and

they just completely outrebounded us the first half and led to the tie score," said Cottage Grove coach Kevin Yoss. "Otherwise I think we would have been up six to eight and I think that would have changed the whole complexion of the game and you know, I think that was the difference."

In the second-half, the Tigers continued to crowd the lane defensively and not allow Cottage Grove to get comfortable.

"Last night when we were preparing the biggest thing was pack the paint. We knew they weren't great outside



Cottage Grove Reilly Kelly grabs a rebound in the fourth quarter on Friday night.

PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

shooters, we were going to give them those if they took them," said Seibil.

Despite defensive pressure, the Lions continued to find ways to score – primarily at the basket led by guard Tara Child who finished with 11 points – and trailed by three points going into the fourth quarter.

After a three pointer brought the Yamhill-Carlton lead to eight points in the opening minutes of the fourth quarter, the Lions worked to rally back. As the game sped up, the teams began trading baskets and the Lions clawed their way back behind a pair of baskets from Keara Murphy with just over two minutes to play that cut the deficit down to four. Murphy finished the game with 10 points.

On the offensive possession after Yamhill-Carlton made a pair of free throws, Cottage Grove's Reilly Kelly grabbed a rebound and hit a layup to cut the lead to four points again with 1:12 left to play. Kelly also finished with 10 points for the Lions.

As Cottage Grove intensified their defensive pressure on the ensuing inbound play, the Tigers went deep where they came up with an easy layup that all but sealed the game.

"It was a little disappointing, we gave up some lay-ins that you know, when you're trying to steal it at this end sometimes you do but I think we could have done a little better at that end to keep it closer longer," said Yoss.

"I thought we competed but again, just came up a little bit short."

Aliya Seibel led Yamhill-Carlton in scoring with 13 points. The Tigers will play top-seeded Marshfield in the first round of the playoffs on Friday.

Hosanna Christian downs Elkton and North Douglas

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On back-to-back nights Hosanna Christian put their dominance on display for the Skyline League as they defeated the Elkton girls on Tuesday night and the North Douglas boys on Wednesday in Klamath Falls.

After taking third place in the league tournament the weekend before – that included an inexplicable loss to Camas Valley and a comeback victory over North Douglas – the 15th ranked Elks fell 61-29 to the 12th ranked Lions.

Coming off a league tournament loss to fifth ranked Triad, Hosanna Christian was looking for a win. The team got what it wanted as it held the Elks to four points in the first quarter and went into halftime up 38-12.

The Lions came away with 18 steals as Elkton turned the ball over 32 times in the game. While Elkton gave the ball away throughout, they outrebounded Hosanna Christian 34-30.

The Elks were led by Alexis Halstead who had 12 points and 12 rebounds. Hannah Maxwell and Kiernyn Carnes ended with six and five points respectively.

On Friday, the Lions continued their winning ways as they beat South Wasco County 37-24 on the road. Hosanna Christian is now headed to Baker City for the quarterfinals where they will face Powder Valley tonight at 6:30 p.m.

On Wednesday night, it was fourth-ranked Hosanna Christian boys overpowering fourteenth ranked North Douglas 69-37 at home.

Coming into the game, the Warriors had just beat Glendale in the third-place game in the Skyline League tournament to clinch a playoff spot. For the Lions, the team had a 19-game win streak snapped by Triad in the district tournament.

The Warriors were outmatched from the start and were outscored 16-3 in the first quarter.

Caleb Parks finished with 20 points for North Douglas and eight other Warriors added in 17 points combined.

Last Saturday, the Lions travelled to Triangle Lake where they defeated the Lakers 68-58 despite a 30-point performance from star-player Parker Wynn. Hosanna Christian will now face top-ranked Pacific in the state quarterfinals in Baker City.



North Douglas' Carson Burris fights for a rebound on Tuesday night.

PHOTO BY BECKY GERARD

Athlete of the Week



This week's athlete of the week is Cottage Grove's Jesse Ellingworth. In his last game as a Lion, Ellingworth finished with 28 points in the loss to Baker.

