

## Finley readjusts to Alaska

Former CGHS basketball coach discusses his move North

By Zach Silva  
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What started as a fishing trip to Alaska, turned into a new job for former Cottage Grove basketball coach Nick Finley.

Finley, who coached the Lions for one season after coaching in Alaska, announced his resignation earlier this month and citing a return to Alaska.

While fishing, a friend noted a fitness position that was struggling to be filled. Looking for a candidate with a PE and Health degree, Finley fit the mold and agreed to sit down for an interview.

"I thought okay, that would be harmless. Why not? And so I come in and by the time I leave the interview...they offered me the position," said Finley.

Needing time to talk with his wife, who recently gave birth to their third child, the couple went over their options. While both enjoyed living Oregon, it seemed there was only one way they would make the move.

"We talked about it and she goes 'Well, the only way we are going to move up here is if they pay us a certain amount of money, if you make a certain amount of money it is worth our while to move up here.' Their offer was what we wanted," said Finley.

Finley was offered the position of fitness supervisor for the Kenaitze Indian Tribe where he receives benefits, works four 10-hour days a week, has time off and an increased salary.

"I didn't expect them to do that and so all of a sudden reality hit me and I said, 'Oh crap, we're not going to be in Cottage Grove anymore.' We just went down there and I felt like I built a pretty good foundation with not only the basketball team but in the school," said Finley. "I established myself and my position there at the school as a career and college specialist and we had some really good things going. And the impact that I had and the impact the kids had on me last year was just incredible."

Finley and his family have moved back to Nilchik, Alaska where he coached Nilchik High School from 2011-2017 including back-to-back state titles at the end of the run. With his job he will be working in Kenai, Alaska but has no plans of coaching in the immediate future.

"I think I'm young enough that I think I still have time to make a life for my family and then come back and coach. I think I have a solid resume that I can hopefully coach again. But at this time, I'm hanging up the whistle and going to take some time off. It's going to be fun but it's going to be weird," said Finley.

Staying involved in the community, Finley plans to start giving basketball lessons and join the state basketball seeding committee. But he also intends to enjoy not waking up early to open the gym, staying late for practices and traveling on

FINLEY see B2

## Jamboree puts Lions back in action



PHOTOS BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

Erick Giffen races down the sideline and into the end zone against North Bend on Friday night during Cottage Grove's jamboree. The Lions begin their season Friday night at home against Cascade.

### Jamboree signals start of football season for Cottage Grove

By Zach Silva  
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With new faces up and down the roster and last year's championship season in the books, the Cottage Grove football team got to focus on this year's team at Friday night's jamboree as they prepare for the upcoming season.

"When you have as many new bodies as we have you kind of go into not knowing... that we're not what we were last year but we don't know how far we're off. So it's good to go out and play against another team tonight and get to hit and tackle and block against somebody else," said head coach Gary Roberts.

With nine new starters on offense and eight on defense, the Lions hosted North Eugene and North Bend for 18 plays on each side of the ball. In the first matchup against the Highlanders, it was familiar faces striking on the second play from scrimmage as returning first team all-state quarterback Dylan Graves found honorable mention all-state receiver Erick Giffen for a 34-yard touchdown. The pair connected throughout the night and Giffen also had a touchdown against North Bend.

"Ever since I moved here from California, me and Erick just clicked as soon as I got here. We've been best friends ever since and me and him are the only re-

turners from last year's team playing on the field so we just kind of have that connection," said Graves.

Graves was also impressed with the Cottage Grove offensive line that brings back no returning starters from last year's team.

"In the first scrimmage against North [Eugene] our line really started out and pushed really hard and got a great push. We got a lot of good runs which was really surprising to me because against ourselves on the scout time sometimes they have a little bit of trouble getting that first push but they came out fired up and that's what I loved about it," said Graves.

The other scoring play for the Lions came from David Cox's one-yard rushing touchdown.

The offense of North Eugene and North Bend both exposed breakdowns in the Cottage Grove defense during their matchups. The Highlanders scored three times while the Bulldogs found the end zone twice.

"Kind of sloppy," Roberts said of the Lions offense and defense. "I told the kids at the end that if you would have looked at the jamboree film of last year and said, 'Hey, you guys, this team is going to win a state championship,' you wouldn't have sounded very smart. Or maybe you would have been really smart because I would have said no way. We made a lot of mistakes last year in the jamboree. We did not look crisp and polished. And it's the same tonight. We looked sloppy but

it wasn't completely out of the ordinary and it gives us room to build. We didn't look terrible by any means."

Now the Lions begin to look forward as they host Cascade on Friday night at 7 p.m. in their first game of the season.

"[Tonight] was a jamboree, obviously, so we were just focusing on getting better we weren't focused on winning,"

said Giffen. "I rallied the team together, me and Dylan both, and we had some conversations about what we need to improve on and how next week we just need to focus on we need to get a lot better defensive wise and offensively, we have a lot to do also. We just need to focus on Cascade and thinking about beating them."



Logan Nelson breaks out a run during the jamboree against North Eugene.

## Hutchison named CGHS basketball coach

### 2007 CGHS graduate takes over varsity boys' program

By Zach Silva  
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Seth Hutchison is coming home.

The 2007 graduate from Cottage Grove High School is returning to the school where he will be the varsity boys' basketball coach.

"It's a dream come true. It's

pretty great to come back to my hometown where I grew up, went to school K-12. Played in the program all four years. It's a dream come true to come back and kind of give back to the community that raised me and kind of turned me into the man I am now," said Hutchison. "It's very cool and not many people get a chance to do that. I take great pride in this so it's pretty exciting."

Hutchison, 29, was called about the position after Nick Finley, who coached one season

at CGHS, began a job in Alaska earlier this month. Hutchison applied for the job a season ago.

After graduating from CGHS, Hutchison became a manager for the Oregon State basketball team. After graduating from OSU, he was the head coach of the freshman team at Marist High School and then assisted his high school head coach, CGHS alumni Bart Pollard, with Marist's varsity program.

Following his time with the Spartans, he was offered a job as the JV coach for Pleasant Hill

and was head coach for the past two seasons. Which now leads Hutchison to his first time as head coach at the varsity level.

"It's exciting and I'm a little bit nervous but there's going to be a lot of learning in this process but I'm up for the challenge on that. I love to learn, I love to continue to grow professionally. I'm very excited for this opportunity," he said.

In addition to coaching, Hutchison has a teaching license from OSU and will be teaching PE at his former school

Bohemia Elementary.

With three months until the basketball season begins, Hutchison's attention now turns to his team.

"I don't know much about them and I view that as a good thing. Every one of these kids comes in with a blank slate," he said. "Whatever happened their freshman or sophomore or junior year, I don't care about that. You're coming in with a blank slate."

## Athlete of the Week



This week's athlete of the week is Yoncalla's Kaleigh Soto. Last Friday, Soto recorded 27 digs over two games against Crow and Elmira. For more on that game, see B2.



Soto, center, during a practice last week.