

Lions capture first win of the season

By Zach Silva
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Three games into the season, the team sat with two losses, a tie and a bad taste in their mouth; the Cottage Grove boys' soccer team was ready for a change.

With a shift in the team's formation and a strong defensive performance, the Lions shutout Hidden Valley at home on their way to a 4-0 victory last Tuesday.

"Something clicked because after having three tough games, we were tired. We were like, this isn't us. We were like, we weren't playing like we play," said senior George Cervantes who recorded a brace on the night. "We were playing in an artificial way... We were just doing basic but now we're getting back into the game we're enjoying. And it started off great."

Operating in a diamond formation instead of a 4-3-2-1, Cottage Grove took control of the game from the opening kick. The Lions dominated possession early which resulted in three goals in the opening 18 minutes of play. In the eighth minute, Cottage Grove forward Konrad Raum was looking for the ball in the box, it was played to him and he was pulled down by a defender resulting in a penalty kick.

"Every time I take a penalty I don't look at the goal keeper because that psyches you out. You don't want to look at them, you look at the ball and forget about everything and just place the ball," said Cervantes.

Cervantes took the penalty for the Lions and went lower left corner past the goalie's outstretched reach for the early lead. Five minutes later the visiting Broncos thought they had a clear counter opportunity that was quickly broken up by the Lions. Cottage Grove's Jasper Nichols-Ferguson played the ball to Raum who was on the edge of the 18 and he slipped by a defender and slid the ball past the goalie with ease.

Another five minutes, and it was the Lions coming up with a steal in the midfield that resulted in a ball played into the box where both Raum and Paesen Timm were ready. Timm settled the ball and found the back of the net.

"The first half was phenomenal. Just movement, everything was great. We talked about we have a lot of possession but we don't have possession with purpose," said head coach Vern Stewart. "It doesn't make sense to have 99 percent of the possession if you don't score... So we talked about possession with purpose. I think we did that, at least for the first 20 minutes."

About halfway through the half, the Cottage Grove subs came on. The Mustangs gathered more possession of the game but were still unable to put together a viable attack. Hidden Valley's first shot came in the form of a strike that was wide left from 35 yards out with just over 10 minutes left in the half.

"I feel that the subs and stuff, they may not have scored or anything, but they still had the intensity. The level of play didn't go down and it gives the starters a chance to rest and stuff. I just feel that we came out with a lot more

BOYS SOCCER see B2

Cottage Grove mounts rally, fall short



PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

Stayton's quarterback Ben Rash evades a group of Cottage Grove defenders on Friday night. Rash finished the night with 192 rushing yards and two rushing touchdowns to go with 119 passing yards and a passing touchdown in the road victory.

Stayton stops game-winning two-point conversion after Cottage Grove's frenzied fourth quarter comeback

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It was an incredible Cottage Grove comeback. Until it wasn't.

Last Friday at home, the Lions put together a fourth-quarter rally against Stayton (1-2) that featured three Cottage Grove (2-1) touchdowns in the closing minutes of the game. The Lions ultimately fell short, 28-27, as they were unsuccessful on a two-point conversion to win the game in the final seconds of play.

"When we were on defense, I talked to (offensive coordinator) Marty (Johnson) upstairs and I said, 'Coach, we get the ball back and score, we go for two, right?' He said, 'Yup.' We were both on the same page," said Cottage Grove head coach Gary Roberts.

Earlier in the game, the Lions ran the same two-point conversion play to success but the second time around, it was Stayton's Sean Bodi who knocked down the pass to secure the Eagles win.

"Gutsy call. They have a lot of confidence. The ironic thing about that is... that's the same two-point play we practice for us all week," said Stayton head coach Randy Nyquist. "I put it in this week. It came down to, they ran the last play of the game and it was the same play that we had practiced all week for our two-point play."

"They're really, really well coached. I tip my hat to the program. That is a classy bunch of individuals as far as coaches and kids and they should be proud of who they are and what they've done. So I feel really fortunate and blessed to have the opportunity to play them tonight and have a chance to win the game."

With just over seven minutes to play in the game, an optimistic ball boy on the Cottage Grove sideline asked one of the other ball boys, "What if this is the greatest comeback in Cottage Grove history?" At the time, the Lions were trailing 28-6 and the offense had been in a rut throughout the game.

Then the offense found its rhythm via a two-play drive. Things got rolling as Dylan Graves found receiver Erick Giffen for a 35-yard score. After a successful two-point conversion, to Giffen, the Li-

ons trailed 28-14 with 6:39 left to play.

After holding the Eagles, the Lions got the ball back where they made quick work scoring in :55 seconds, again via a Graves to Giffen connection, from two yards out. The play was set up by a 31-yard reception from Matt Zumwalt.

Down 28-21, it was the Cottage Grove defense that came up big for the team. Attempting to squeeze everything they could out of the clock, the Eagles came up short on fourth down giving the Lions the ball back with just over 1:30 remaining in the game.

"Final six and a half minutes, I've never shaken as much in my life, that's how I'm going to describe it. It was insane," said Stayton quarterback Ben Rash who finished with two rushing touchdowns and 192 yards on the ground to go with 119 passing yards and a touchdown through the air. "We had a hard time executing, their energy was so high. They were full-go. They were everywhere."

With the ball and no timeouts, Cottage Grove faced third and 11 with the clock running low. Graves found Dunn for a gain of 10 to bring up fourth down. Graves then hit Giffen for 19 yards with just under a minute to play. Graves found

Giffen again for a touchdown, this time from 34 yards out, to bring Cottage Grove within one. The Lions elected to go for two and Graves' pass to Giffen was knocked down.

Graves finished the game 23-of-45 passing for three touchdowns and two interceptions and with 87 yards rushing. Giffen ended with three touchdown receptions and 114 yards receiving.

"We're just going to enjoy this and we're going to enjoy the bus ride home. It's going to be really fun. We're so excited, we're so excited," said Rash. "They were a heck of a team. A heck of a team. We haven't seen a team like that ever. They have such talent. We played as a team and if we can do that, we can be really successful."

In the first half of play, both teams struggled to finish drives as the Lions ended the half with a pair of Giffen field goals and Stayton scored in the final minute of the second quarter to take the lead.

"For three quarters we played pretty poor. We didn't execute, we made a lot of mistakes, we left a lot of points on the board. And then finally, in the last quarter we kind of rallied a little bit and got a spark," said Cottage Grove's Roberts. "We

FOOTBALL see B2

Lions, Pirates finish in scoreless draw

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PHOTO BY BRENNAN BOUCHE/CGHS PHOTOGRAPHY

Cottage Grove's Sawyer Weybright looks to get a shot off against Phoenix.

There were plenty of parallels between the Cottage Grove and Phoenix girls' soccer teams after their game last Thursday. Both teams were pleased with their defense, their goalies and were just waiting for a final offensive touch that never came. While it was a goalless draw for the teams, it was a game that saw plenty of action.

Getting the game going early was the Cottage Grove offensive attack. The opening 10 minutes of the game the Lions controlled possession in the final third but were ultimately stymied by the Pirates defense. Cottage Grove had five shots on goal in the first half.

"We've just got to connect. That last little connection," said Cottage Grove head coach Ned Levings. "We've just got to capitalize on those shots."

Phoenix was able to hold off the Lions and began to possess the ball. With the speed of midfielder

Marcella Badillo, the Pirates counterattack continued to keep the Lions on their toes. But throughout the game, it was Cottage Grove center back Cameron Anderson coming up big with clearance after clearance.

"She's one of the captains, she's the heart of the defense. She has to be on top of her game 24/7 because if she messes up, now it's one-on-one with our other captain (goalie Irene Nichols-Ferguson). Both of those guys together, it's a double-duo and it's amazing," said Levings.

Nichols-Ferguson was able to hold down her spot at the goal and twice in the final 15 minutes of the half came up with big saves; in the 28th minute she stopped a one-on-one attack and in the final two minutes of the half recorded a diving save that was headed for the back of the net.

In the first 30 seconds of the second half, Phoenix worked down field and had a goal-scoring attempt that sailed wide of the net. Throughout the

GIRLS SOCCER see B3

Athletes of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are the members of the Cottage Grove volleyball team. The Lions improved to 8-1 on the season with a pair of wins last week. To read more about the week in high school sports, turn to B3.



The Cottage Grove team walks off the court after a victory over Siuslaw last week.

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