

Warriors win league, again

For the fifth straight season, the North Douglas volleyball team goes undefeated in league play

By Zach Silva
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Continuing a dominant five-year stretch over the rest of the Skyline League, it was the North Douglas volleyball team with a pair of wins this week to secure another league title. On Tuesday they swept Yoncalla in straight sets (25-14, 25-23, 25-15) and scored a five-set victory over Days Creek (25-19, 20-25, 25-18, 14-25, 15-11) on Thursday. The Warriors last lost a regular season league game in October of 2013 (note: North Douglas lost to Skyline League opponent Days Creek earlier this season at a non-league tournament).

On Tuesday night at Yoncalla, the third-ranked Warriors were getting to their spots on the floor and at the net as they played their game and forced the Eagles into costly mistakes throughout the first set. Arianna Helgren was leading the way for North Douglas at the net gathering 14 kills to go along with 26 digs and three aces on the day.

What started as smooth sailing took a turn in the second set as it was Yoncalla, on senior night, coming out energized. An 8-2 run in the middle of the set gave the Eagles an advantage.

"They had some awesome moments. The second game was a great game. So if that's what we walk away with, they can be proud of that. They challenged that team and pushed them right to the end of it," said Yoncalla head coach Monet Sheffield.

The Warriors were out of their normal rhythm and Yoncalla's defensive style was working. The Eagles slow-it-down style of play that sees more passes sent over the net than spikes was grinding on the visiting team.

"We try to control the tempo; we don't want to play slow games. We want to stay up. So sometimes when you fall in the trap of playing their game and doing what they were doing, we just have to focus on playing our game," said North Douglas head coach Anne Campbell.

But with Yoncalla up 23-18, North Douglas answered with a run of their own. With Nicki Derrick's serve for the Warriors proving to be unhittable, North Douglas was able to rally back and take the set. Derrick, playing in her second game since returning from an ACL injury, recorded four aces in the final points of the set to go along with a kill from teammate Abby Whipple. Derrick finished the game with 15 digs, 14 assists, four kills and six aces. Whipple added 25 assists, 14 digs and seven kills.

"Nicki coming in and having that stretch of serves at the end was very good, too. She's very good at placing her serves. That's a good rotation for us with her serving. We've got Abby and Arianna in the front row, we do well in that rotation," said North Douglas head coach Anne Campbell. In the third set the Warriors were back to their old selves as they cruised to a victory.

Yoncalla's Bella Kloha and Cassidy Bragg each finished with 12 digs. Ali Van Loon added five kills, five assists and nine digs.

On Thursday night at Days

WARRIORS see B3

Making history: Lions secure league title



The Cottage Grove volleyball team celebrates winning the third league title in school history.

PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

CGHS clinched the Sky-Em volleyball league title last Thursday

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For the third time in school history the Cottage Grove volleyball team has claimed the title of league champions. The Lions previously won in 1973 and 2009.

"I am so proud of them. So proud of the entire time and how hard they work. It was a goal that they set out for themselves and we wanted to add 2018 to the banner in the gym and we did it," said head coach Kendra Anderson.

Before Thursday's league-clinching sweep (25-10, 26-24, 25-15) over Junction City, Anderson had a conversation with her team at Wednesday night's practice. She had the team divide themselves into two groups: those who like checking things off lists and those who like pressure situations.

"We all looked at each other, found out where we stood and said, we're all going to get what we want tomorrow night be-

cause we get to check something off our list and it's going to be a high-pressure situation," Anderson told her team.

It was that exact situation in Thursday's game. But before the match got underway, a technical malfunction in the playing of the national anthem led the Cottage Grove team to lead the crowd in a singing of the "The Star-Spangled Banner."

"We never have people that actually sing the national anthem so... all of us will sing it while they're playing the music. So, Avery (Hutchins) started going and we all just followed after and honestly, that was probably one of the highlights of my volleyball career," said Cottage Grove's Cassidy Herbert.

After a brief stint as an a cappella group, the Lions went back to volleyball where they came out firing on all cylinders. Cottage Grove was fired up and after three quick points, Junction City called timeout. It did not deter the Lions as they continued to score at will.

"The first set was probably one of the best sets we've ever played when it came to unforced errors and everything. So I think that's really what, since we were just

so excited because we knew what was on the line," said Herbert who finished with 20 kills and 12 digs.

In the second set, it was the Tigers coming out strong and putting up a fight.

"In the second set - they're a good team - they started to dig. They are on a winning-streak as well so I think they got a little more fired up with their defense. We just had to power through and realize that they were going to dig a few up that they didn't dig up in the first set," said Anderson.

Junction City pulled away with a lead in the middle of the set. The Tigers had a 20-14 advantage but the Lions remained loose. Trailing during a timeout the team was not worried but rather were dancing to the music that was playing.

"I think that as a team when we put pressure on ourselves and we stress ourselves out, we do not play good. And we all know that," said Herbert. "And so I think all the dancing at timeouts and during and in between sets, it's kind of our way to realize that this is a game. This is fun!"

It became even more fun for the Lions as the team honed in on Junction City's

weaknesses and were able to rally for a second-set win.

"We just started getting more consistent and persistent and having faith in ourselves and our teammates. Trusting each other again. We get that way that you start playing by yourself or you won't trust the system and try to do it. I think we were kind of starting to realize that and we realized it and snapped out of it," said Herbert. With all momentum on their side, the Lions ran away with the third set to take the match. Lauren Witty had 36 assists, Reilly Kely 11 kills and Sam May had 12 digs.

After competing at the Marshfield tournament over the weekend and playing Marist on Tuesday night (after The Sentinel's press deadline) the Lions are now getting ready for the start of the playoffs.

By winning league, the Lions are an automatic qualifier to make the 16-team state playoff bracket and will play the winner of a play-in game. The first-round playoff game is scheduled for Saturday October 27 with the winner going to the quarterfinals at Forest Grove High School.

Forging a friendship through football



Erick Giffen (left) and Dylan Graves lineup on defense together earlier in a game earlier this season.

Cottage Grove's Dylan Graves and Erick Giffen created a bond that extends beyond the game they love

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Dylan Graves and Erick Giffen are pretty simple.

They're a pair of 17-year-old boys not unlike an average 17-year-old boy. They like listening to Lil Uzi Vert, watching "SportsCenter" and playing NBA 2K. They talk football, get food together and make jokes on Twitter.

They're also seemingly inseparable, they get sad when the other leaves town for too long and have achieved a level of friendship that allows them to walk into each other's house unannounced. They are state football champions and the leaders of the Cottage Grove football team.

Staples in the program, their friendship has elevated their play as they have become a focal point for all opposing teams. After successful high school careers, Friday night marks senior night and the last regular season game for the duo that coaches around the Sky-Em League will be excited to see go.

"They're continuing to mature as young men and put themselves in a spot to go, maybe to go play at a small college when they are done here. I don't know if that necessarily would have been

the case when they were freshmen, academically, especially," said head coach Gary Roberts. "But they've worked hard at becoming better men and I think that over time that is going to continue to help them."

Dylan and Erick were not always friends. Erick moved to Cottage Grove from Eugene after third grade and Dylan came from California after fifth and they had no plans of getting along.

"Me and Dylan used to have a hard core beef in middle school," said Erick. "We would just butt heads all day sixth and seventh grade. We thought about fighting each other a couple times." As the pair laugh about their middle school antics and folly they reflect on the times when Dylan, a wrestler at the time, and Erick, a basketball player, would talk down at the other's sport.

Animosities and sharp words turned to friendship and playful jests after they got on a football field together. After realizing they had more in common - a love of sports (Erick even got Dylan to drop wrestling and play basketball), video games and spending hours on the weekends with their friends at the bowling alley - they began to get along. For the most part.

"Was it eighth grade when we did the squad game?" Erick asks Dylan who lets out a groan mixed with a laugh as he immediately knows where this story is going.

In a game that featured a combination of Cot-

LIONS see B4



Athletes of the Week

This week's athletes of the week are the members of the Cottage Grove volleyball team for winning the Sky-Em League. For more pictures of the team, see B12.



Reilly Kely goes for a kill against Junction City last Thursday.

PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL