

Talley leads Lions

Jimmy Talley crowned Sky-Em champion

By Zach Silva
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Going into the Sky-Em District Championship cross country race, Cottage Grove's Jimmy Talley had a plan. The idea was to hang back, run from second place and attempt to win the race in the final mile. But once the starting gun sounded, his plan was promptly thrown out.

"We kind of started out way slower than I thought we were going to so I decided, I don't know, I'll try leading for once," said Talley who charged ahead to first place. "I didn't like it."

But for Talley, his new plan worked out just fine as he raced his way to a wire-to-wire first place finish to be crowned Sky-Em champion in a time of 16:04 Thursday afternoon at Lane Community College. It is the first time a Cottage Grove runner has won the individual league title since Ken Scoggin won in 2005.

"It's pretty cool. In track this year (won districts), but this is definitely the first time for cross country so that's a pretty cool experience. I'm really excited to go to state, too," said Talley.

Throughout the race Talley had a lead of a couple seconds and was running alone up front but often looked over his shoulder to see where the second place runner was. Second place, filled by a cast of Marist runners, never quite lost contact and entering the final 300 meters – run on the LCC track – it was as close as first and second had been since the start of the race.

"I'm just not used to leading so I thought, I was nervous he was going to come up behind me," said Talley. "I have a pretty decent kick when it comes to like other runners so I wasn't too worried about it but I was still, I didn't know exactly who was behind me."

Talley had enough left in the tank as he cruised on the blue track to secure first. Marist's Evan Villano finished two seconds behind Talley.

With the top time in the 4A, Talley is looking to keep it that way at the state meet at LCC on November 3.

"I'm going to try and get what I'm ranked as right now. But I'm actually going to try to do what I was going to do today," said Talley. "I think it will be a little easier because that one is definitely going to go out fast. That's going to go way faster because it's state. Everyone has that mentality that they're going to PR, it's competitive."

Konrad Raum was the next Cottage Grove finisher in 12th place with a time of 16:58. Also scoring for the Lions was Paesen Timm (18:46, 33rd place), Justin Francis (19:50, 39th place) and Jaden Thuesen (19:58, 40th place). Cottage Grove finished fifth of the six teams in the league with 125 points. Marist took first with 23 points and the team had six runners place in the top 10. Siuslaw took second.

On the girls side, it was a heart-breaking race for Cottage Grove sophomore Annah Nyburg. With the top five runners advancing to state, Nyburg finished sixth, one second behind Elmira's Kaitlin Cook in fifth place. This means that despite having the eighth fastest time in all of 4A,

Lions survive and advance in playoffs



Cottage Grove's Dylan Graves celebrates after running in for a first half touchdown at Newport last Friday.

Cottage Grove football survives scoreless second half to move on to first round of the state playoffs

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The recipe for winning a play-in football game does not generally include playing on the road against a higher ranked opponent, heavy fog, heavier rain, injuries to the team's all-state players, a scoreless second half and committing 14 penalties for 135 yards.

Generally,

But on the road at Newport on Friday night, Cottage Grove was able to weather the storm – both literally and figuratively – to come away with a 32-24 victory that sends the team to the first round of the state playoffs.

"I'm kind of at a loss for words – to be honest with you – about the whole thing," said head coach Gary Roberts after the victory. "(Coordinator Marty Johnson) and I were talking to each other and we're...both saying, 'Hey, we've never been a part of anything like this.' And at the same time, thinking, how can we handle any more adversity than we have?"

In the first half, Cottage Grove's first bump in the road was when quarterback Dylan Graves was injured while in at safety while on defense. Coming up with a tackle, he took a helmet to the leg that kept him down after the play. Playing with a slight limp throughout the rest of the game, Graves was able to rely on throwing the ball while still being able to scramble for extra yards. Graves finished the day completing 23 of 30 passes for 240 yards, three touchdowns and an interception while rushing for 76 yards and a touchdown.

But guiding the offense – despite also suffering a leg injury later in the game – was Erick Giffen. Giffen was everywhere on offense including at quarterback where he took direct snaps throughout the game.

The perfect encapsulation of Giffen's mark on the game was in a drive in the second quarter where he took over for the team. Backed up on their own one-yard line – thanks to the Cottage Grove defense stopping the Cubs on fourth and goal – Giffen took the snap and ran for 59 yards. A play later he found Jaden Doolittle for a 34-yard pass and capped the drive with a touchdown reception from Graves and, for good measure, a successful point after attempt.

"I just have to shoutout to me and Dylan's line because that protection on all the plays where I was able to break them loose, I was untouched. So kudos to my line, said Giffen. He finished the day with 165 rushing yards, 125 receiving yards,

43 passing yards and three touchdowns.

"Erick's a great football player. He's good at times ad-libbing. Sometimes it hurts him, sometimes it helps him but he's a good football player and I'm really proud of the way he came up big for us," said Roberts. "We have to have big plays from Dylan, we have to have big plays from Erick for us to be successful and we got those tonight."

Jaden Doolittle also scored in the first half for Cottage Grove on a 22-yard reception. Doolittle finished the game with 84 yards receiving on five catches. Jacob Dunn added 62 yards on five catches.

After throwing an interception on the first play of the game, Newport favored the run game. Cottage Grove came away with four interceptions on the day -- one a piece from Zumwalt, Giffen, Doolittle and Trace Nelson.

With Cottage Grove leading 32-8 at the half, it was Newport starting the

FOOTBALL see B4

CG Volleyball heads to quarterfinals



Cottage Grove's Reilly Kelty gets a kill against Banks on Saturday night at home.

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It has been a season of checking things off their list and on Saturday night the Cottage Grove volleyball checked off another important box. This one was to qualify for next weekend's state quarterfinals at Forest Grove and by taking down Banks in straight sets (25-17, 25-15, 25-20) at home, they did exactly that.

"We're going back. This was on our list but I think since we've been there before – last year – we have higher expectations of going in and have the goal of taking the tournament," said Cottage Grove head coach Kendra Anderson. "That's what they're reaching for."

After an 11-day break since

their last game, the third ranked Lions started off slow and the 14th ranked Braves seized an early five-point advantage. After a timeout, Cottage Grove regrouped and the first point back was a Reilly Kelty kill that showed the team that they were going to be just fine. Kelty led the team in kills with 12 on the day in addition to seven digs and four aces.

In the second set, the Lions lacked some of their normal intensity but their depth helped guide them to the victory. Cassidy Herbert finished the day with 11 kills, 10 digs and four aces; Lauren Witty had 37 assists and six kills; Matty Ladd recorded six kills and three blocks; Sam May had 12 digs.

"Our energy wasn't like when we won league necessarily. It

was just like, another thing on the list to do," said Herbert. "I feel like we just made it – okay, we're going to go out and play this game. It's a check."

It was more of the same in the third set but this time the Lions trailed 19-13 when they simply decided to flip the switch.

"They just need to turn it around they made the decision. We called a timeout, they made the decision," said Anderson. "Nope, we're not going to a fourth set, we're changing it now. They went right back out and they did it."

The Lions were able to finish the set on a 12-2 run to secure their place among the top teams in 4A. It is the second season in a row for the Lions to be playing at Forest Grove. Last season they were an 11-seed that lost in

VOLLEYBALL see B3

Athlete of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are the players of North Douglas' volleyball team for earning a spot at the quarterfinals for the fifth season in a row.

See B4 for more on the game.



The North Douglas girls celebrate on the court.

PHOTO ZACH SILVA