

## Elks crack against Cougars, down Devils

*Elkton girls basketball have split results at North Douglas Winter Invitational*

By Zach Silva  
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The Elkton girls basketball team is moving in the right direction.

The team got a chance to look at its progress on the young season last week as it faced Country Christian, the defending state champs, for the second Friday in a row. In the first matchup the Elks lost 53-37 and at the North Douglas Winter Invitational last week they fell to the Cougars 52-49.

"Country is a good team, probably a top-10 team. And so playing them on a neutral court like this and having a chance to be in it, I told them, that shows us where we are," said Elkton head coach Rob Parker. "We just need to keep working at it, getting better. Who knows where we'll be at the end of the season if we keep working. So yeah, this was like a test to see where we were."

Holding Elkton to eight points in the first quarter, the Cougars were in control early. Throughout the second quarter the Elks seemed poised to make a run but were unable to string buckets together until they came alive for a 9-3 run that tied the game going into the half.

When the Elks were at their best on Friday night it was when the offense was coming from across the board. Four Elkton players scored in double digits led by Margaret Byle and Alexis Halstead with 12 each. Aspyn Luzier had 11, including three three-pointers, and Kieryn Carnes finished with 10.

In the third quarter, the offense came from across the board as the teams traded buckets and the Elks put an emphasis on getting to the rim.

"That was something that we worked on all week because we hadn't done that yet. And we know this team, they play mostly man and when they close out, they close out really fast," said Parker. "So we wanted to fake and go while they were closing so they were off balanced and they weren't ready to cover us. And we got some of that."

Led by Byle with six points in the quarter, Elkton had a three point lead with under two minutes to play. The Elks then slowed down their offense to try to drain the clock which prompted the Cougars to play an aggressive, trapping defense that led to a pair of Elkton turnovers in the final minute of the game which resulted in fast break buckets for the Cougars.

For Country Christian it was Sarah Phillips coming up big as she had all night with a layup with 25 seconds to play to give the team a lead that they would not relinquish. Phillips ended the game with 25 points including nine in the fourth quarter.

"We worked on (our spread offense) this week, too so I'm thinking we're not

**ELKS** see B2

# Female wrestlers find early-season success



The Cottage Grove girls wrestling team posing with their first place trophy from the Coast Classic.

PHOTO C/O CHRISTINA KENT

*Cottage Grove has assembled a successful girls wrestling team after OSAA adds female state championship*

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She was nervous. She was hyperventilating. She thought she might throw up.

After looking across the gym full of eager spectators and excited competitors, Arleth Serratos Hernandez had to remind herself to focus. She was there to compete; she was there to do her best. She was there to wrestle.

Hernandez, who is wrestling for the first time in her life, is one of eight girls on the first-ever Cottage Grove girls wrestling team.

"I wanted to try something new and sometimes new means stepping out of your comfort zone. So I decided I wanted to step out of my comfort zone and try something kind of wild and crazy," said Hernandez, a Cottage Grove senior. "And for me that was wrestling."

Historically, the Cottage Grove wres-

ting team has, like most wrestling teams around the state, often had a handful of girls involved in the program but this year marks the first year of girls wrestling being recognized by the OSAA in the state of Oregon.

While in the past girls would wrestle against boys at a designated weight class, this year girls have the option to compete in a female-only wrestling at the state tournament. Oregon is the eighth state to offer high school wrestling for both boys and girls.

"Prior to this change those were exhibition matches and now they are recognized as championship bouts. And state championship teams. So that's obviously a huge change for these young ladies," said OSAA assistant executive Brad Garrett in an interview with the National Federation of High School Associations.

Logistically, nothing really changes for the Cottage Grove team. The boys and girls still practice together as they have done in years past and attend most of the same meets together. But coach Christina Kent sees that this designation as a new way for the girls to stand out.

"For me, I think the most exciting part

is just to see girls being willing to put themselves out there because it is not a typical female sport. It is one of those sports that really pushes your confidence," said Kent. "It's not about appearance or anything like that but about how strong you are, how fast you are and how confident you are and really pushing yourself. And seeing the girls' program is its own entity allows them to be recognized as girls wrestlers and not under the radar with the guys."

About a month into the season the girls have quickly put themselves on the map. Competing at the Coast Classic at North Bend, the team was able to beat out schools of all sizes (including schools from the 6A classification) and walk away with a first-place team trophy. During the tournament Raina Herzog took first in her weight class while Sabrina James and Hannah Cook each took second.

"It's absolutely validation. It shows that we can do it and even with a small team we can do it and the excitement was fun. It's not something we necessarily went into thinking we're going to take the whole tournament," said Kent. "It really has kind of set a precedent for us for

the whole season that we want to reach a certain level and keep at a certain level. It was exciting."

Last weekend at Liberty, the team placed sixth of the 32 teams competing. James added a second place finish while Herzog and Adelle Kent took third. Richelle Rolfe was fourth while Cook was consolation runner-up.

The goal down the road is to grow into a team of 15, 20 or maybe even 25 female wrestlers. Kent, and the Cottage Grove coaching staff, want to continue to build their program to show that all girls are welcome in the wrestling program.

"I want to show the other girls out there that may be on the fence. They have thought about wrestling but haven't done it because of the stigmata or the singlets or anything like that, I want them to see that it's possible," said Kent.

"I want them to see that girls can do this sport just as well if not a little bit better than the boys in some cases because our bodies are different and we can do things differently. And just really that sense of accomplishment for these girls that are opening that path for the girls that are coming up."

## Lions outdone by Outlaws in double OT



Cottage Grove's Creed Lufkin battles for position against Sisters last Tuesday.

PHOTO BY ANGELICA MANUNTAG/CGHS PHOTOGRAPHY

*Cottage Grove still searching for first win after Sisters secures thrilling victory*

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Sisters may not be in the Sky-Em league anymore, but they are still causing problems for Cottage Grove on the basketball court.

On Tuesday the Lions (0-4) fell to their former league foe in the Outlaws (4-1) 58-55 during a heartbreaking double overtime loss at home. Sisters, now members of the Oregon West Conference, are ranked at number seven in the 4A coaches' poll.

"You know, you kind of just relate it back to life, sometimes that happens in life. Sometimes the ball doesn't fall your way or something goes your way," said Cottage Grove's first year head coach Seth Hutchison. "So I'm challenging them, there's two ways you can go about it: let it defeat you or you can let it challenge you to get better."

Trailing by 10 points in the opening minutes of the fourth quarter, the Lions began to craft a comeback with just under five minutes to play as

Dylan Graves and Erick Giffen hit a pair of three pointers. Suddenly down four with under four minutes to play, Cottage Grove did what they had been doing all game: finding Creed Lufkin down low. Lufkin finished with 18 points on the game including 10 in the fourth quarter and overtime.

"Creed played one of his best games I've seen all year. He was physical, he wasn't throwing up soft shots, he was going into the guys and finishing. And you can see that tonight," said Hutchison. The Lions had dominant play from their bigs all night as Jasper Ferguson added 10 points for the team.

"Their bigs killed us. They just pounded the crap out of us," said Sisters head coach Rand Runco. "What a great lesson for us. I thought we did a great job on the perimeter because we couldn't handle the bigs."

A Lufkin bucket at the block cut the Sisters lead to one before the Outlaws extended their advantage to four after getting to the foul line on back-to-back possessions. Included in those fouls was a foul from Cottage Grove guard Erick Giffen, the only returning player on the Cottage Grove team with significant varsity playing time.

**LIONS** see B4

## Athlete of the Week



*This week's athlete of the week is North Douglas' Jake Gerrard. During the North Douglas Winter Invitational, Gerrard finished with 12 points on Friday and 28 on Saturday to help guide the Warriors to a pair of wins. To read more about the weekend of games in Drain turn to B2 and B3.*



North Douglas junior Jake Gerrard pulls up for three against Lowell last Friday.

PHOTO BY BECKY GERRARD