

Eagles earn pair of victories

Yoncalla goes 2-1 on the week with wins over New Hope Christian and Elkton

By Zach Silva
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Early in the second quarter against Yoncalla, New Hope Christian cut their deficit to six points. But instead of the game turning into a close contest, it was the Eagles (8-12, 3-6 Sky-line) going on a 40-10 run from the middle of the second quarter to middle of the third quarter to defeat the Warriors (3-14, 1-7) 77-41 last Tuesday at home.

"I talked to the team about being more energetic with their feet and denying the basketball playing man to man defense. And then we decided to go to a zone and anticipate the passing lane on their ball reversals and look for the steals," said Yoncalla head coach Darwin Terry. "I actually told them look for the steals, have some energy and that paid off as far as anticipation of steals and scoring a lot of points on transition."

During their explosive scoring stretch, nine different Yoncalla players scored. The easy offense that resembled the team's pre-game lay-up line was generated by a full-court press that plagued the New Hope Christian guards and created turnover after turnover.

"I was not worried about the scoreboard, obviously I wanted the game to be under control. Getting up by that many points you want to start subbing in and out, slowing down things," said Terry. "But the focus tonight was to execute, try to play clean basketball, reduce our turnovers and play every quarter. I told them, because we've had trouble, not playing a complete four quarters and I felt tonight we played a complete four quarters."

To start the game, it was Yoncalla's Trace Graham who found a scoring rhythm as he scored the team's first 10 points of the game.

"Well, I had a smaller guy on me and I knew I could take him down in the post. I just kept calling for the ball and my point guards, thankful to them ... they just got me the ball," said Graham who finished with a team high 16 points.

A testament to the team's balanced attack in this game, no one else on Yoncalla finished with double-figure scoring. Brody Best, Elijah Allen and Athoususs Gilbert - who scored all his points in the fourth quarter - each finished with nine points. New Hope Christian's Thad Hamilton finished with 21 points.

In the final quarter of play, Yoncalla was able to put their JV players into the game.

"What was exciting about that was New Hope was still playing hard and our guys that got in the game that don't get many minutes actually played with a lot of energy and a lot of positive attitudes towards it," said Terry.

Friday night on the road

EAGLES see B4

Lions score overtime win against Spartans



Cottage Grove's Reilly Kelty (41) celebrates after coming up with a defensive stop on the last play of regulation to force overtime. Kelty's 20 points helped guide the Lions to a 52-47 road victory over Marist.

Cottage Grove gets big Sky-Em win as they head into second half of league play

By Zach Silva
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The Cottage Grove girls came to play.

Against a Marist side (11-6, 3-1 Sky-Em) that entered the game undefeated in league play, the Lions (11-8, 3-2) handed the Spartans an overtime loss Friday night on the road in a thrilling 52-47 victory.

"Well, probably because of the magnitude of the game the girls came to play with their best effort tonight," said Cottage Grove head coach Steve Eastburn who was previously an assistant coach at Marist. "You know, you do that against the good teams. Or you should and the girls really stepped it up tonight."

Having an up and down season in a league with three teams ranked in the OSAA top 10, the 13th ranked Lions utilized their height against the eighth ranked Spartans. Led by junior Reilly Kelty with 20 points, Cottage Grove's scoring came from their core four frontcourt players - Kelty, sophomore Matty Ladd 12 points, freshman Gracie Arnold nine points, senior Ema Gardner eight points - who combined for 49 of the team's 52 points.

Aided by a 15-5 first quarter advantage, Cottage Grove controlled the game early and went to halftime up five.

"The first half, we weren't ready to play and give them credit, they didn't let us come back," said Marist head coach Britton Reeser. "You know, [Cottage Grove] did a lot of good things. They really did, they play hard and they have a

good coaching staff and they executed. And we didn't. We had many opportunities to get ahead but we just never capitalized."

Early in the fourth quarter, Marist's looming run came into fruition and the Spartans took the lead. There were five lead changes in the quarter and with just over a minute to play, Marist led 42-40. It was their biggest lead of the game.

In Cottage Grove's final offensive possession, the Lions called a pair of timeouts, grabbed three offensive rebounds and had a diving save from Kelty to keep the possession alive. It all led to Gardner being fouled with 15 seconds to play. She hit a pair of free throws and tied the game.

"It was very nerve-wracking and my anxiety was through the rough," said Gardner. "We all used our anxiety and pushed together and we leaned on each other."

On the ensuing Marist possession, it was lockdown defense from Kelty and Ladd that stymied the Spartans and forced overtime.

In overtime, Ladd's early three-point play was met with a three-pointer from Marist. But it was the Cottage Grove defense

getting stops when it mattered most, including an emphatic block from Gardner, to set up the offense. After missed Cottage Grove free throws and a Marist make, the Lions' lead was down to two with 13 seconds to play.

LIONS see B4



Point guard Mikaela Blomquist dishes out a pass on Friday night.

Finding success during senior year



Always working in tandem, Jasper Nichols-Ferguson (left) fires a pass as Creed Lufkin (right) cuts through the lane on Friday night against Marist. The pair of posts have worked their way from the end of the bench to the starting lineup.

With relatively little basketball experience entering the season, a pair of Cottage Grove big men have made their presence felt on the court

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Creed was tall and Jasper was even taller. They were both athletic and neither played a winter sport. So why not see what they can do with a basketball?

This was the thinking for former Cottage Grove High School basketball coach Nick Finley who, upon seeing Jasper Nichols-Ferguson at six foot six and Creed Lufkin at six four and a half, was determined to get the pair of basketball novices on his team.

"One thing I've always done coaching is always encourage kids to participate," said Finley in a phone call from Alaska. "Just having kids being part of a team is very important for high school." Finley, a Creswell native who previously coached high school basketball in Alaska, coached at CGHS during the 2017-18 season before returning back to Alaska for a job opportunity. During his one season at CGHS he helped get Nichols-Ferguson and Lufkin to join the team.

As juniors, the pair primarily sat the bench on varsity and were happy with any amount of playing time they received. But now as seniors, Lufkin and Nichols-Ferguson have not only both worked their way into the starting lineup as essential parts of the team but have become a dynamic duo making their presence felt across the Sky-Em

league.

Nick Finley enjoys getting people to play basketball. Whether coaching his daughter's kindergarten team or an eventual all-state player, he like the process. While coaching in Alaska at Ninilchik High School, Finley's wife was working as a dentist when she met a 6-foot-4 eighth grader by the name of Austin White. Upon learning White had never played basketball, she sent him to her husband.

White went to a team meeting that night, joined the team and in his junior and senior year led the team to back-to-back state titles and was named Alaska's Gatorade Player of the Year, the first time the award had been given to a player from the smallest classification. White is now on the University of Alaska An-

SUCCESS see B3

Athletes of the Week



This week's athletes of the week are the wrestlers of Lincoln Middle School. Last Saturday a group of 15 wrestlers capped a successful season by taking fourth place at the Valley League District Tournament. To read more, turn to B4.



The wrestlers of Lincoln Middle School celebrate a successful season. PHOTO C/O BEN DEATHERAGE