

## Walton prepares for track season

*A new group of track and field coaches get ready for upcoming season at CGHS*

By Zach Silva  
 zsilva@cgsentinel.com

There is a new crop of track and field coaches at Cottage Grove High School this season. A season after Ricky Knutson stepped down as head coach, it is throws coach Gyna Walton, who has been coaching at the high school for the past three seasons, filling the role of head coach.

“Ricky Knutson was an amazing track coach so hopefully I can just follow in his shoes and do the best I can do and keep the program going,” said Walton, a 1990 CGHS graduate. While this is a new position for Walton, she has been coaching various teams around the area for nearly the past two decades. She has coached volleyball and basketball at the middle school level in addition to coaching middle school track and field.

Walton has been involved in track since she, herself, was in middle school at Lincoln, where she still holds the record in both shot put and discus.

“1985 and 1986. The kids look at (those records) and say, ‘Wow, you’re old,’” said Walton.

After attending nationals as an eighth grader, Walton was on varsity track all throughout high school and finished fifth place at state in the discus during her senior year. Walton competed for a year at Lane Community College and still competes in the United States Track and Field Masters Circuit where she currently has two national titles.

For the upcoming high school season, Walton is looking to continue on the recent success that the Lions have had as they enter a league that now features successful programs in both Marshfield and Marist. The Marshfield girls won the state title last year while their boys team finished fourth. For the Spartans, their boys were second in 5A while the girls finished fifth.

“We have won district championships for the boys the last three years and the co-ed for the last three years, also,” said Walton. “I guess our goal would be to do that. We’re going to need more numbers, we’ve always had a lot of numbers. But I would say that’s probably our biggest goal as a team, is to try to get those championships.”

Walton is being joined by a host of new faces in the track and field program. First year coaches include Lacey Guest, who will work with middle distance and distance runners and Kaalen Byrum, a 2013 Marist graduate, who will be the jumps coach. Kallie Black, a 2008 CGHS graduate, will be a throws coach. CGHS wrestling coach Christina Kent will also be assisting the program by leading a new weights program.

Also joining the coaching staff is hurdles coach Katie Springer. Springer is a 1995 CGHS graduate who still

**TRACK and FIELD** see B2

# Snow slows spring sports start



The snow slowly but surely begins to melt at Kelly Field in Cottage Grove on Thursday afternoon.

PHOTOS BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

## Winter storm halts first week of spring sports

By Zach Silva  
 zsilva@cgsentinel.com

While weather often plays a prominent role during the spring sports season, it was an especially ominous start to the year as local teams faced the cancellation of the first week of practice due to snow.

“For a minute there, I thought maybe Mother Nature hated softball,” said North Douglas head softball coach Jesse Rice. The first official day of spring sports for high school teams across the state was Feb. 28 which coincided with over a foot of snow accumulating and setting off a week of havoc around the area. The snow cancelled school – and practice – for the week at Cottage Grove, North Douglas, Yoncalla and Elkton. The first contests of the season are on March 11.

For Rice, who was temporarily unable to leave his house with closures along Hwy. 38, his typical first week of practice schedule is being altered.

“I like to start out the season working on just the basics and the fundamentals and kind of getting them used to what a softball actually looks like. I’m afraid we’re going to have to skip some of that

and try to get into a little bit more advanced areas as soon as we can,” said Rice in a phone call last Thursday. “We’re going to have a week (of practice) and then we’ve got a game.”

Adding, with a pause and a laugh, “Of course, depending upon the weather, who knows if we’ll actually have a game.”

More than the initial bout of snow what looks to slow the Warriors, and all area baseball and softball teams, is the water that is being left behind on the ball fields.

“The worst part about it is that as the snow melts, it’s just going to saturate the ground. There will be so much water in the ground that it won’t run off. So it’s definitely going to take – even when the snow is gone – it’s going to take extra time just to get all of that volume of water in the ground to dissipate,” said Rice. “It’s definitely going to hold us back.”

Teams will now do as much as they can in various indoor facilities. For Cottage Grove baseball coach Dan Geiszler, he sees that his team can do nearly everything they do outside inside.

“Really, offensively and pitching it probably hurts us the most just because we can’t go out and see any live pitching. And pitchers can’t really throw to guys

live so that is the two it probably affects the most,” said Geiszler. “Defensively, we’ll be fine. The only difference is we haven’t really been on the field but we can still do absolutely everything off the field that we could do on.”

Geiszler, who is from Minnesota and has first-hand experience preparing for baseball season with limited time outdoors, had his mind eased by the fact

that teams all over Lane County were in a similar situation in which they, too, could not practice.

“Not being able to do that is frustrating. But I feel fortunate that our kids have worked pretty hard up to this point,” he said. “We’ve had kids working since October, whether it is pitching or hitting or doing infield stuff, and so I feel pretty

**SPRING SPORTS** see B2



The weight of the snow bends in the top of the fence at the Cottage Grove softball field last Thursday afternoon.

# Golf courses, Speedway take beating from snow

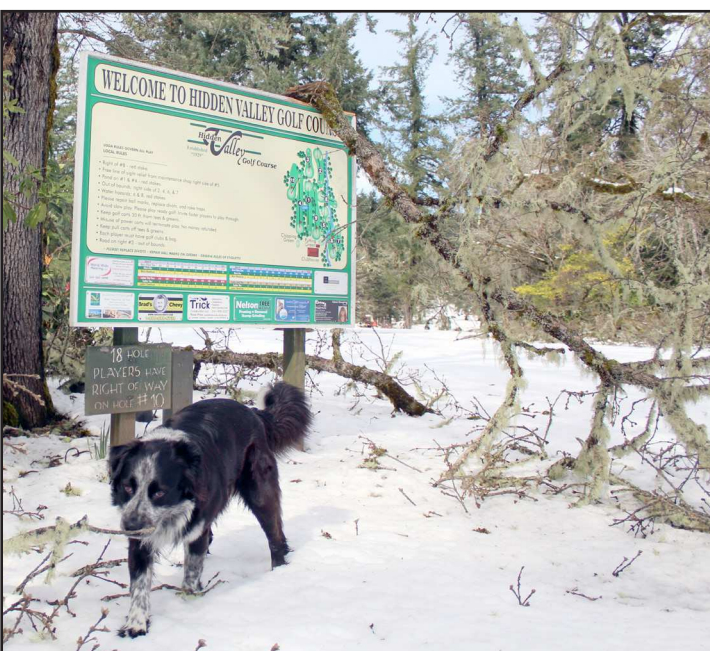


PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

Hidden Valley owner Dan Nord’s dog, Willie, explores the damage done to the golf course.

By Zach Silva  
 zsilva@cgsentinel.com

As was apparent to anyone who looked outside anytime in the last week, it was a tough time for trees. While the snow came down, so, too, did trees across the city.

Falling on sidewalks, houses and garages the trees were also downed on golf courses and the local race track.

“It’s a war zone, it’s horrible. We’ve lost trees, it’s horrible. Middlefield (Golf Course) got some damage but we really got hit because we have some really super old oak trees out here and they just didn’t hold up to the weight of that wet snow,” said Hidden Valley Golf Course owner Dan Nord. For the course

that is lined with oak and fir trees, Nord estimates that at least 50 percent of all fir trees on the course were damaged by the snow.

Nord was at the course last Monday as the first day of snow hit Cottage Grove bringing at least 18 inches of snow to the grounds.

“I come outside and it’s still snowing like a banshee. And you could just hear, crack, crack, ka-boom. When this fell,” Nord said pointing to an oak tree that is over 150-years old, “it was just earth-shattering. It just shook the buildings.”

For the most part, the damage stayed off the fairways which will allow play to resume sooner than later. But for each tree that was damaged, Nord estimates a

10 to 20-yard radius around it of fallen branches that now need to be cleaned up. The process could take up to a month, though, play will be able to resume before everything is cleared.

“First thing we’ll do is concentrate on the areas that are in play so we can open back up and get business going and money flowing in here to help clean this up. So the tee boxes and the greens have to absolutely be finished right away. That’s the priority,” said Nord on the order of operations for the cleanup effort. “Then we’ll start on the rough and start working methodically through the course that are in play.” Additionally, Nord also has to wait for the snow to melt before the course is ready. While

**SNOW** see B2

## Athlete of the Week



*This week’s athlete of the week is North Douglas senior Abby Whipple. On Monday, Whipple was named player of the year for the Skyline League. To see all area athletes named to all-league teams, turn to B3.*



Whipple starts the fast break against Days Creek earlier this season.

PHOTO BY BECKY GERRARD