

Rain delays Speedway start (again)

For the fifth consecutive weekend, Speedway kept off the track because of weather

By Zach Silva

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It was a sunny week that featured clear skies and multiple days the temperature exceeded 70 degrees. But on Friday night the rain rolled in, stuck around until Saturday morning, and caused the Cottage Grove Speedway to cancel races for the fifth weekend in a row.

"We were so excited because we'd already had four rainouts and we were ready to go. We've been working so hard down here and everything was all set, we thought for sure it was going to happen," said Speedway general manager Heather Boyce. "But it just rained so hard and with all of the horrible weather we've had all winter, the ground is already so saturated that little bit of rain couldn't soak in and go away. It just puddled up and made a mess."

In addition to a wet track, the pit area that holds the various haulers remained too wet to be open which led to the dreaded cancellation on Saturday morning.

"It was definitely a somber morning around here. We did not want to have to cancel and the fans were so excited, the drivers were so excited," said Boyce. "We were so sure we were going to get that one in."

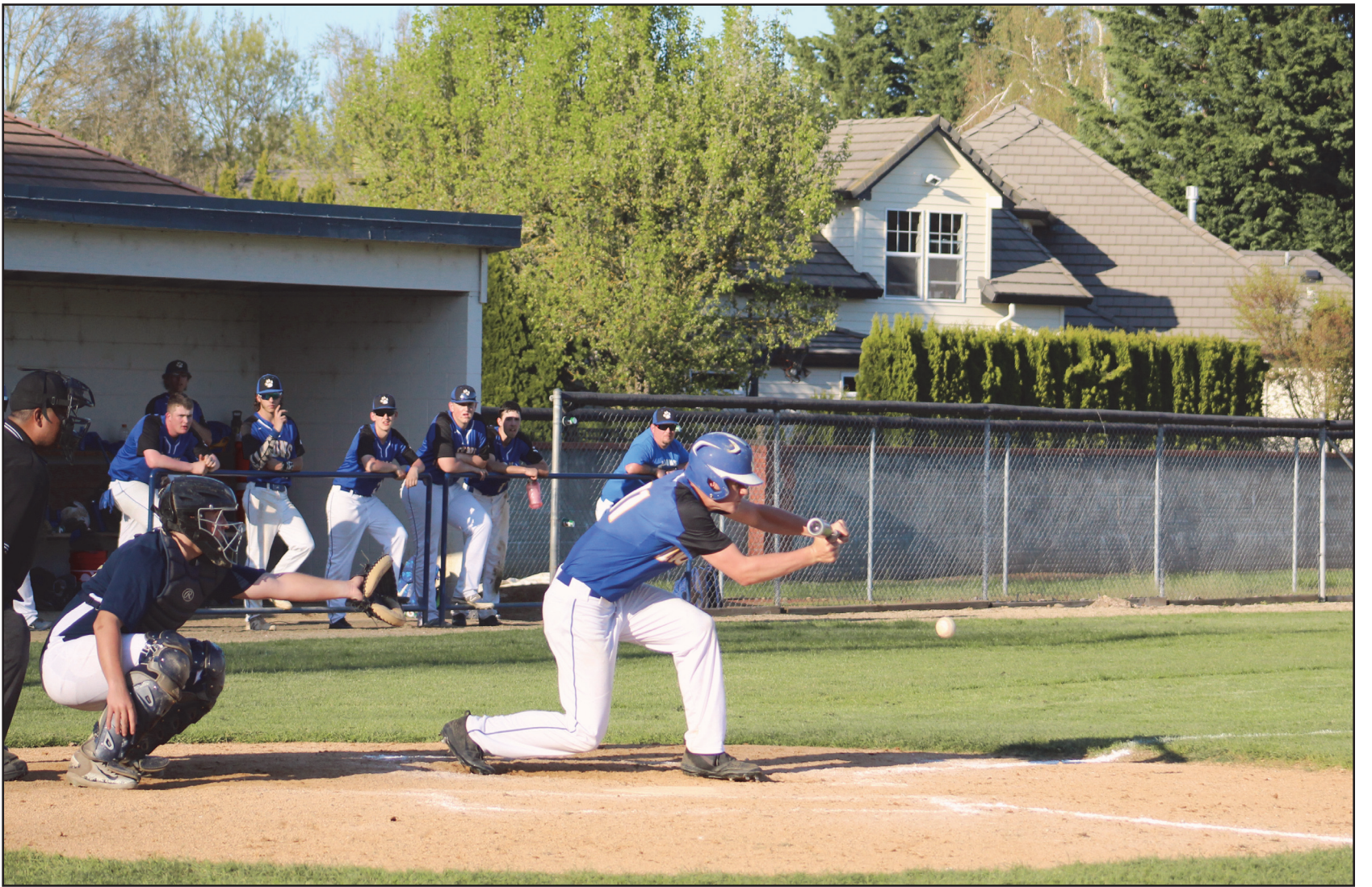
For Boyce, who is in her seventh year in various capacities at the track, it is setting up for the latest opening to a season since she has been on the scene. She remains optimistic that this upcoming weekend - after what appears to be a sun-filled week - will finally see the track come to life for the first time this year.

"I think it's going to be probably one of the best openers we've had in a few years. We did have a phenomenal opener I think the first year I had leased the track. I had over 100 cars and the grandstand was packed and I kind of expect it to be the same way," said Boyce. "And this weekend is looking good and it's already a bigger special event show. So I think when you combine the fact that it's going to open with that big show, we're likely to have some pretty big turnouts."

If all things go to plan, this weekend features races on Friday and Saturday night including 360 Springs, IMCA Modifieds, IMCA SportsMods and on Saturday night, Hornets.

"We've got a lot of guys coming to town driving -wise and there are still a lot of tracks that aren't open yet and that will attract a lot of drivers from out of the area that we maybe don't see on a weekly basis," said Boyce. "And we love our local drivers but it's always fun to see those guys you only get to see once or twice a year. We're pumped."

Lions use extras to best Spartans



Cottage Grove's Ezra Senters puts down a sacrifice bunt in the ninth inning to score teammate Gavin Sowa. The Lions went on to defeat Marist in 10 innings last Thursday on the road. PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

Cottage Grove rallies to defeat Marist in second game of double-header

By Zach Silva

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The Cottage Grove baseball team was on the brink of losing to Marist at every turn of last week's contest. But when the pressure increased and the game was one the line, it was the Lions refusing to fold as they fought their way to a dramatic extra inning victory.

In a road double-header at Marist last Thursday, it was Cottage Grove (6-8, 3-2 Sky-Em) losing the first game to Marist (8-6, 4-2) 13-3 before they were able to put together a 5-4 10-inning team victory to close out the week.

"Just the perseverance - everyone played a pretty big role in that. Just the mentality to come back from 13-3 - it's 80 degrees outside, it's very easy to go, 'Oh crap, here we go again.' Fold it up. But they didn't," said Cottage Grove baseball coach Dan Geiszler.

"I'm proud of them for doing that for sure."

Trailing by two runs early, the rest of the game was a sequence of Cottage Grove scoring, Marist threatening to score a host of runs but the Lions finding a way - including with two key double-plays in late innings - to get out of the inning.

Marist runs in the first and second inning gave the Spartans a lead that could have easily been greater. The team left four runners on base in the first two innings and appeared to score in the third inning but instead of another run on the board, a base-running error after the Marist runner didn't touch third base, resulted in an out for the Lions. The score was then evened up at two runs apiece in the fourth inning thanks to a shot to leftfield from junior Iverson Bascue that scored teammates senior Wyatt Sayles and junior Gavin Sowa.

On an unusually warm 79-degree April day, the action continued to heat up in the sixth inning when the

Lions took the lead off of a dribbler hit to first base from Sowa which scored junior Hunter Sharkey.

As the Lions looked to close the game out in the seventh, the Spartans had other ideas as they tied the game on a bunt and had then had the bases loaded with one out. Searching for the winning run, Marist runners raced forward as a bunt was popped up in the air, caught by Cottage Grove catcher Walker Humphrey who threw the ball to third to complete a double play to send the game to extra innings.

"That play that Walker made - what is he, on his 12th inning of catching at that point? And he comes out, makes a great play and throws him out at third," said Geiszler. "It seems like we just stick with it and did what we needed to do to keep ourselves in the game."

For Marist head coach Noah Breslaw, it was a calculated play that just didn't work out.

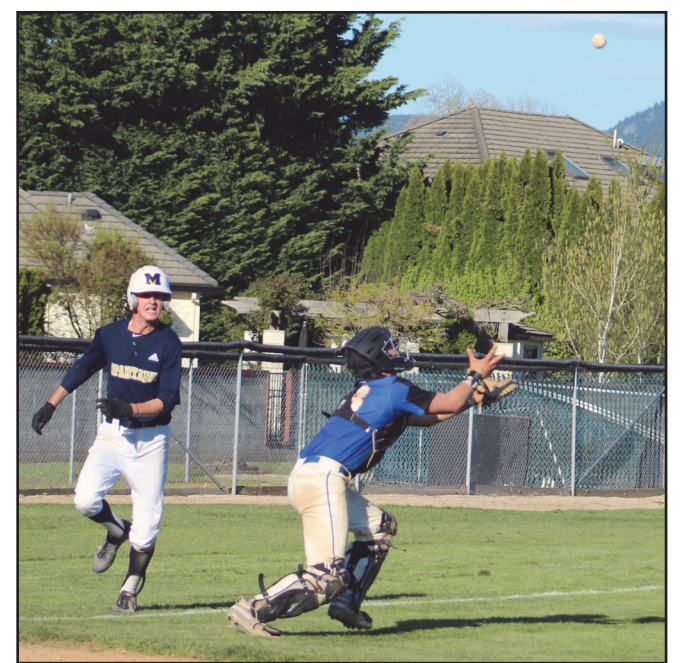
"If you run a squeeze,

that's the gamble you go with. If that ball is down, that game is over and seven and you're talking about how we squeezed in the winning-run. Instead it goes up. I made a calculated decision and honestly, the worst case scenario is he bunts the ball

up," he said. "Even if he misses it, we've got second and third. Bases aren't loaded but we can live with that. The only thing that can't happen is a ball up in the air?"

In a scoreless eighth inning

LIONS see B3



Cottage Grove junior Walker Humphrey races out from behind home plate to catch a popped up squeeze bunt and record a double play in the bottom of the seventh inning against Marist. PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

Derrick's no-hitter guides Warriors to win



North Douglas pitcher Nicki Derrick was in control against Oakland on Monday night as she gave up no hits and struck out 20 batters. PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL

The junior ace throws 20 strikeouts on the way to 1-0 North Douglas win

By Zach Silva

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On Monday night, Nicki Derrick was unhittable.

In a playoff-esque road game against 15th ranked Oakland (9-2, 5-1 Special District 3), Derrick led the third-ranked Warriors (15-1, 8-0 Special District 3) to a 1-0 victory as she struck out 20 batters on her way to a no-hitter.

"I was really excited for this game. It was the first game

that I really, really got up to. Honestly, it was like a playoff mentality going into it and I think that was the same for the whole team," said the junior Derrick who is back in the pitching circle after being sidelined by an ACL injury last season. As a freshman, Derrick helped lead the Warriors to a state title and was named 1A/2A state softball player of the year. "When you have that mentality going into the game, it's a lot easier to get up and kind of clear your head."

Only slowed down by a few illegal pitches that led to a pair of walks, Derrick was in control the entire game.

The first time the Oakers put the ball in play was a ground-er to first base in the bottom of the seventh inning.

"Nicki did good. The best part about it was she struggled with staying in the lane there in the very beginning and didn't let it get in her head and stayed focused," said North Douglas head coach Jesse Rice. "And man, she was throwing the ball hard."

Oakland head coach Johanna Held was also impressed with Derrick's stand-out performance.

"Give her all the credit in the world. She's been work-

WARRIORS see B4

Athlete of the Week



This week's athlete of the week is Cottage Grove's Gavin Sowa. In a win against Marist on Thursday, Sowa recorded four hits, scored two runs and tracked down a fly ball in centerfield to record the final out of the game.



Head coach Dan Geiszler and Sowa talk strategy on the base paths while the Marist team met on the mound. PHOTO BY ZACH SILVA/CG SENTINEL