

### Football from B1

the second time in three years that North Douglas' season was cut short by the Lions in the Round of 16.

"Our kids played great," said head coach JJ Mast after the game. "I couldn't be more proud of them. Great coaching staff. I can't say enough how much these guys, every single coach on our staff, helps out ... they really bought into it and that really helps the kids too."

Mast was quick to praise his team despite the less-than-desirable finish and despite the team having opportunities to close the scoring gap in the first half.

With five minutes left in the first half, the Warriors trailed 22-14 and were driving. Senior quarterback Austin Frieze, a steady presence for North Douglas throughout their win streak, reared back and lofted the ball downfield. The coverage wasn't what he and Mast were expecting.

"That's certainly one Austin wishes he got back. He's so strong mentally, it was great to see him stay in it," Mast said.

The Lions intercepted the ball, returned it for a touchdown, converted a two-point try and, instead of a one-score halftime deficit, the Warriors found themselves in a 16-point hole that they couldn't recover from.

"You give up a big momentum play on the road and they get going. We were never really able to get it back after that," Mast added.

Though the play permanently shifted momentum in the do-or-die game, the Warriors players came in with a game plan to play physical and tough for four quarters. Hosanna had given up 18 points on defense in the 2019 season. North Douglas finished with 28.

"All the kids stayed in it. They didn't hang their heads, they didn't quit, they kept battling," Mast said.

"Hosanna ended up being the better team that night. What else can you say, but, like I told the kids afterwards, they should be so proud of how far they came this year. It was really fun to watch and a fun

thing to be a part of."

Frieze and junior running back Wyatt McDaniel, central cogs for the Warriors offense, were key parts of the physical game-plan and each contributed two scores on the ground. Defensively, the Warriors wanted to neutralize the Lions' speed and athleticism on the outside, partly by covering standout junior running back Mikey Sanchas and forcing Hosanna to spread the ball around.

"That was the plan and that's where we had our success, running straight at them and not letting their athleticism overwhelm us," Mast said. "When you're playing straight-at-you football, it's a toughness game and that was our advantage. You get behind though and you're playing against the clock ... ultimately that's what got us."

Though the season ended on a losing note, the contributions from departing seniors, the play of a number of underclassmen and juniors and a strong coaching staff have all but ensured that the football program at North Douglas will remain strong.

"I can't thank these seniors enough for what they've done for the program and what they've instilled in the younger kids," Mast said.

"That's probably the most important thing, is how they act and how they react in certain situations and they've really just been positive all the way along. The young kids see that and that's what they'll take into next year."

### Soccer from B1

nando Soto-Cruz (sr.), Aldo Rea (fr.) and Shane Raum (sr.). Jayden Cameron (so.) and Evan Snauer (jr.) made Second Team All-League and Ty Kishen (so.), Cory Butts (jr.) and Jesus Torralba (fr.) were named to the Honorable Mention List.

The team also remains up for the 2019 OSAA Sportsmanship Award which will be decided after the conclusion of the state playoffs, though for Stewart, the verdict on his team's 2019 season is already in.

"As far as I'm concerned we've won it already. My guys know how they are and who we are and how we act. For somebody else to pat us on the back, just even the nomination is great, but we've already won it in our eyes."

#### Missed goals, missed opportunities for Lady Lions

Where the boys' squad suffered a final 15 minutes that went decidedly against them, the Lions' girls' team experienced the exact inverse in their first 15. Unfortunately, their fates were ultimately the same.

Last Tues., Nov. 5 Cottage Grove (8-7, 6-2) took on North Valley (12-2-2, 8-1-1) and, despite receiving two penalty kicks early in the first half, fell to the number-two ranked team in 4A girls' soccer, 3-0, ending the Lions' successful 2019 season on a less than satisfying note.

"It was a winnable game," said head coach Reed Levings, frustrated that victory fell from their grasp, often by way of their own doing.

"Last season we went down to Hidden Valley and they just outright beat us. It was like, 'I applaud you, you guys are the more skilled team,' but it was beyond frustrating to know we were the better team [against North Valley] and we just didn't have our composure at certain times."

Senior Annie Gibson-Becker and juniors Chanel Leach and Sawyer Weybright were finding room early, leading to fouls and the fateful penalty kicks. The first was turned away by the North Valley goalie and the second sailed through the football goal posts behind the net.

The missed opportunities seemed to ruffle the Lions' focus. They had multiple chances within the six-yard box, but failed to finish, opening the door for the Knights to score two quick goals just before halftime. They never looked back, scoring another goal for good measure in the second half.

"We had a few opportunities in the second half. We definitely had more scoring opportunities than they did, but we didn't capitalize on them," Levings said.

Nonetheless, when evaluating this team and its performance this fall, it is useful to take a wider lens on their recent run, particularly under Levings' tutelage.

"[These seniors'] freshman year, the varsity team won, I think, one game all year. I think they scored a total of, I think, three or four goals. And that became their expectation in the first year I got here," Levings said. However, for three years now, the tide is turning.

In 2016 Cottage Grove finished 1-7-2, last in Sky-Em League play. Levings took over in 2017, coaching the Lions to a fourth-place finish (out of six) in her inaugural year. 2018 then saw a rise to second in the league and the feat was matched this fall, an encouraging sign of growing consistency in the program.

"We've seen consistent improvement every year," Levings added confidently.

The Lions will say goodbye to five seniors graduating in the class of 2020 - Katlyn Bachelder, Cameron Anderson, Annie Gibson-Becker, Payton Cameron and Jasmine Izucar - but will return many contributors from the ranks of the freshmen, sophomores and juniors including Leach, Weybright, goalkeeper Raina Herzog and perhaps some late bloomers that intrigued late in the season.

"One girl who stepped out during our last game, who shut down their best player was [so.] Teanna Child," Levings said.

"I was just like, 'Hey, you're fast. I gotta have you back on defense. I know you've never played this position but you've gotta stop this girl,' and she played probably 70 of the 80 minutes of that game and she shut her down."

With the upward trajectory and a promising crop of players returning for next year, Levings has just as much reason for excitement as Vern Stewart on the boys' side, or any Lions team for that matter.

After the conclusion of the regular season, Sky-Em coaches voted on All-League Honors and seven Lions were named. Weybright (jr.), Leach (jr.) and Anderson (sr.) made First Team All-League, Cameron (sr.) and Gibson-Becker (sr.) were named Second Team All-League and Herzog (jr.) and Meghan Hawley (fr.) received honorable mentions.

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Tie-Breaker: 49

LARRY This Week Stats: 5-6 Season Stats: 63-65

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