

CGHS *from B1*

Grove simply wasn't ready to match the raised energy and intensity level of the Vikings that evening. After the loss, the girls met on Friday to practice, knowing that the

playoffs were a possibility. "We knew that there was a chance," said Ladd, "because we knew they were going to pull two second place [teams to the playoffs], so we practiced on Friday anyway. I told the girls, 'If we go to the playoffs, at least we practiced. And

if not, let's end on a more positive note. Let's just have a fun practice. Let's just play. Let's be together. Let's be a team." After putting a bit of positive closure on the season, Ladd received a pleasant surprise. "As I was walking out of

the gym," she said, "I got a text from our athletic director that we were going to go to the playoffs. So, I was like, 'Bring it back, ladies!' I let them know that we were going, and they were all excited about the opportunity." The top eight teams of

the Sky-Em League played Tuesday (April 6), including Cottage Grove, who played against Sweet Home. Going into the game, Ladd said, "We're all very excited and hopeful for this opportunity. I'm hoping they hold on to that and realize that this is

a very lucky opportunity, and they play like they're excited to be there." Unfortunately, the Lady Lions were unable to take the win Tuesday, ending their playoff run — But still with a standout record in a season that was challenging for all.

Elks *from B1*

impressed with our defense for the game." The Warriors did try to make a comeback in the second half. "Siletz, I'll give them all the credit in the world, they came out firing in the second half, and it was it was a battle for sure." Siletz was able to score 14 points in the third quarter to Elkton's seven, bringing the score to 45-26. Lockhart ex-

plained that the Elks were determined to hold the Warriors, regardless. Going into the fourth quarter, the Elks kept pushing. Both teams turned the ball over on downs several times as the clock ran down. "By that point, it was about three minutes to go," said Lockhart. "We made a couple first downs, and then we just kneeled it down because they didn't have any more timeouts." With neither team scoring in the fourth quarter, the final

score was 45-26 with the Elks coming out victorious. Statistically, the Elks had another great week. Peters had 16 carries for 244 yards and five touchdowns on the ground, as well as one conversion on the ground. In rushing, Nathan Rausch had three carries for 20 yards, as well as a successful conversion. Passing, Clevenger was five of 14 for 159 yards and two touchdowns, as well as one conversion through the air. Receiver Ben Bowen had

three receptions for 111 yards, one touchdown and one conversion. Defensively, Clevenger was a beast for the Elks. "This was definitely his best defensive game that I've ever seen him play," said Lockhart. "He had 16 tackles. He was wreaking havoc through the middle. He also had a fumble recovery, and he had an interception." Also notable on defense, Anthony Alimenti picked the ball on a conversion play, getting a solid stop for the Elks.

Finally, Paul Yearous had the only quarterback sack of the game. Looking forward, Elkton has one final league game on Friday (April 9), and next year they plan to stay as a six-man team for the time being. The Elks will lose five seniors, and while there will be several incoming freshman signing up, their numbers will likely not support an eight-man team just yet. According to Lockhart, the decision was the best one for this school year, and it allowed

Elkton's program to perform their best given the issues at hand. "It was definitely the right decision for us to go to six-man for this year," said Lockhart. "I think it's the right decision for us next year. But we'll see, again, we're not opposed to ever going back to eight-man. But this is a lot of fun, and the kids are loving it and that's the most important." The Elks' final game this Friday is against Eddyville, beginning at 4 pm.

Lions *from B1*

their means, the Lions got some much-needed experience this season to begin to rebuild their program and, fortunately, it is a year where no one's records would have been normal. Polamalu said he was grateful for the time he did get with his players this season, as it helped to set a strong foundation for what will hopefully be a more normal season in the fall. Now that football is over,

Polamalu is encouraging his players to continue athletics this school year. "From here on out, a lot of sports and other events are coming into play," he said. "I was sharing with [my team] how important I think it is for them to participate in other activities, and to stay in a very competitive state of mind and stay active." Next school year, Cottage Grove will return to playing varsity football, which everyone was hoping would be the case.

"We will go varsity," said Polamalu, "this was just kind of one of those situations, I think we were young and inexperienced, but next fall is next fall, it's back to normal. That's our push. We had a long time to spend with our current 25 to 27 players, really to implement a lot of things, and we've just got to get back to work in the beginning of July." One major benefit the coach will have is that he is not losing any seniors in the next school year, and all of his returning players will have

had this season's experience of practice and bonding under their belts as a unit. While it was a short season, Polamalu and his players made the best of it. "Technically, we were together for nine weeks, and the last three weeks we played," said the coach. "But we got to know each other, and the routines, expectations and drills, and all those things that hopefully as we come into [next year], expectations are somewhat in place." Above all, Polamalu is

hopeful that sports in general will return to some semblance of normalcy. "Information will be coming out as far as dates of workouts and participation, and we're really pushing hard to get kids out and involved and back in a similar routine during the summertime, following the OSAA calendar year," Polamalu said. At this point, the Cottage Grove football program has a better foundation laid than it has in recent years and, moving forward — provided

the pandemic doesn't throw further wrenches in the game — Polamalu is on the road to success with his team. "As far as looking farther down the road, we're always saying, 'Okay, it's going to be back on schedule,' but you know as well as I know that things could change day to day or week to week," he said. "As far as I'm concerned, I'm looking at that old schedule, and I know what time to show up. I know what time we'll start. And until somebody says 'No,' we're moving."

Soccer *from B1*

school and going from there. So, it's important as a coach to develop a strong program regardless of who comes in; you may not win state championships, but that's not what's important to me as a high school coach. My importance is for the kids to have the best experience that they possibly can." Stewart also acknowledged that in a short season like the one they just experienced, there isn't as much time to create the connections a coach normally would in a full sea-

son. However, Stewart and his team absolutely made the best of the situation, and still managed to have a winning season. This season, the Lions had three total shutout games, winning 8-0 against Junction City, Siuslaw, and Elmira at different points in the season, as well as two other very comfortable wins and a tie to go along with three losses. "The first meeting against Marist, that was a humbling experience," Stewart admitted. "But then we came back, and we played one of our best games that we've played."

Stewart is truly proud of his team — and he should be. He has developed a program where the players genuinely care for each other and are in each other's corners regardless of whether they win or lose. "After we were finished playing and we lost our last game against Marshfield," he said. "One of the coaches who rode the bus said you would have thought that we had just won the state championship with the amount of singing that was going on." Then, when he got home, Stewart said he got a call asking if the team could practice

the next day. "I said, 'Guys, but it's over!' But we ended up going out and practicing the next day," said Stewart. "It wasn't a practice really, we just basically split the teams up and had two hours of fun kicking the ball around. "But they didn't want it to end. So, that's what a good program is all about." It is no surprise that Stewart continues to run the program at Cottage Grove. As a unit, they are clearly strong. "I guess at my age, that's what keeps me coming back," said Stewart. "I know all of

the other things will dissolve and come to an end; all good things have to come to an end at some point in time, but the memories that I have — I can

go back to so many things, and so many personalities of different teams that I've had the privilege of coaching. And every one of them is unique."

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