

Lions run, leap into district — land at state



PHOTOS BY NED HICKSON/FOR THE SENTINEL

The Lions track & field team competed at districts over the weekend, earning spots at the upcoming 4A state meet at Siuslaw High School (May 21-22) Among the top placers were Matelynn Ladd (far right), Isaac Stere (above) and the boys 4x400-relay team (top center). Events begin at 11 a.m. both days.

Yoncalla softball eyes a bright future

Youth and Inexperience Led to Hiccups in 2021, But Optimism Abounds

BY JON STINNETT/FOR THE SENTINEL

With a lot to learn, and not a lot of time to do it, the Yoncalla Eagles softball team still managed to make strides this spring and lay a foundation for future success.

It's been a whirlwind season that hasn't always featured ideal outcomes for Yoncalla. The team won its first game, a run-fest against Glendale that found them ahead 24-23 after the final out. The Eagles also bested Riddle, 22-10, and won in another high-scoring affair at Oakland, 26-25 on May 6, then topped Lowell in the second game of a doubleheader the following day.

Last week, Yoncalla dropped a heartbreaker to Glide (May 10.) The Eagles retired the side in the first and second innings and plated a couple, but mental errors led to a 6-run inning and a lead for Glide that they'd never relinquish. On Friday, Lowell bested Yoncalla, 21-11, in a JV-style game meant to get a little more playing time for younger players.

There have been lopsided losses for Yoncalla this year, though for a very young team that doesn't boast a lot of softball experience, perhaps that's to be expected.

"So far, we've had a really good season for the young team that we've got," said Eagles' Manager Chad Ashbaugh. "The girls have really stepped up and filled positions. They've improved and helped us out in many ways."

Ashbaugh laments that many of his team's scores could've been closer, and that the finer details of the game at times cost the Eagles.

"We should've been in pretty much all of our games," he said. "Things fall apart in one or two innings, and we have trouble keeping momentum from start to finish."

Still, Ashbaugh believes the future looks bright for

softball in Yoncalla, with youth there playing organized softball for the first time in a while and the Eagles making improvements. He said he's also been actively recruiting players to build for the future.

"There are a lot of girls playing youth ball, and I think they're willing to come out and try out next year," he said. The Eagles will be losing five seniors after this season, so next year's squad will be young once again, but Ashbaugh says he can count on younger players to step up and take part in the team's success.

This year, Yoncalla has leaned heavily on contributions from senior Kenzie Walton, an all-around player that steps up to produce whenever called upon. Another utility whiz, Ceci Potter, can step up and pitch to help the Eagles get out of a tight spot. And Ashbaugh remains excited about the play of Ali VanLoon, a junior who plays lights-out defense despite not having played softball since sixth grade.

"I can't wait to see what next year brings for her," he said.

The Eagles were scheduled to wrap their season with a doubleheader at Elkton last night (after press deadlines)

Elks baseball battles tough league competition

BY JON STINNETT/FOR THE SENTINEL

With such tough competition in the Skyline League, and with very little time to play teams outside the Skyline, Elkton's baseball squad knew it faced an uphill battle this season.

"We knew our league would be difficult with Umpqua Valley Christian, Glide and

Glendale all being very tough this year," said Elks Manager Devin Luzier. He added that it "would have been nice to play a few more non-league games, but there just isn't enough time in this shortened season."

Still, Luzier said he's pleased to have seen improvement this year, even in such a tight timeline. Elkton trav-

eled to Creswell and defeated the Bulldogs 18-10 early in the season, and the Elks took a pair of wins from Riddle during a May 7 doubleheader. They were blanked by UVC, 13-0, last Tuesday, and dropped a close rematch to Creswell on Monday.

Luzier credits his team's seniors with leadership that set a positive tone for the entire

squad. And many Elks should return next season, bringing this season's experience with them. Of the 17 players on this year's team, only three seniors will graduate, and the team features only one junior. "The rest are sophomores and freshmen, so we should have a solid foundation to build on for the next several years," Luzier said.

Lion softball drops tough double to elmira

BY JON STINNETT/FOR THE SENTINEL

The Lion softball team had played the Elmira Falcons tight in their first meetup this season, eventually losing to Elmira, 8-6, on April 27.

As such, Kris and Danielle Challburg had good reason to expect another exciting matchup for the first game of Saturday's doubleheader in Elmira. The first inning, though, proved problematic — to say the least.

Elmira put up eight runs in their half of the first to take a lopsided lead they'd never relinquish, and despite putting runners on base, Cottage Grove couldn't manage to score a run and lost 10-0. The game was cut short due to the 10-run rule and a tight timeline to start game two of the doubleheader.

"I'm not sure what went wrong," Danielle Challburg said to sum up the loss.

Though stunned by defeat in the first game, the Lions



Cottage Grove's Peyton Baird lines up for an RBI single for the Eagles. (PHOTO BY JON STINNETT)

came out battling in the second. Cottage Grove plated three runs in the first inning. Elmira evened the score at 3-3 in their half of the second inning, and Cottage Grove stranded the bases loaded in the top of the third.

Elmira struck back with two runs in the bottom of the third to lead 5-3. Cottage Grove senior Kailey Cox got the fourth inning started with an infield single, and Kayla Challburg followed with a single that sent Cox to third on an Elmira overthrow. Peyton Baird

smacked a double to score both Challburg and Cox and tie the game 5-5.

Elmira responded again, though, with a four-run fifth inning. The Lions plated another run in the top of the sixth, and a sacrifice fly by Baird made the score 11-7. Hailey Sowa crushed a first-pitch double in the top of the seventh and would later score on a passed ball to make the score 11-8, but Cottage Grove

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Lion bats quiet at elmira

BY JON STINNETT/FOR THE SENTINEL

"We need more hits." While also acknowledging that the Lions' baseball team needed to improve in "several areas of the game," Cottage Grove Manager James Berry succinctly summed up his team's major shortfall.

Berry said as much after the Lions' disappointing 15-4 loss in the first game of a doubleheader played against the Elmira Falcons on a beautiful Saturday afternoon. In the opener, Elmira's Troy Anderson had pitched four innings of no-hit ball before command issues forced the Falcons to seek relief.

By then, the score stood Elmira 12, Cottage Grove 1, with

see **LION** on B2

Athlete of the Week



This week's athlete of the week is Cassidy Humphrey



Senior Cassidy Humphrey smacked a homerun for the Lion softball team's lone run against Marshfield on Tuesday, May 11, then pitched admirably in a tough 11-8 loss in the team's second game against Elmira on Saturday.