

CGHS *from B1*

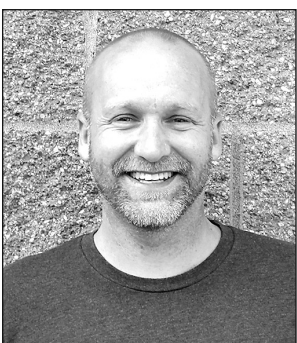
I made during that time, we're still in touch to this day. Those experiences had a tremendous impact on my life. So, it's exciting to have the opportunity to instill a culture that could potentially have a big impact on the lives of students that participate."

Knutson is excited for the results that could come from having programs aligned. The consistency in athletes, training programs, and academic engagement can do wonders for the students and our community. "You look around the

state and the most successful track and cross country programs are connected," he said. "Having the opportunity to connect our track and cross country programs could be a huge step for our athletes. We're excited to have that continuity between the two programs."

Looking at the sports themselves, track and cross country are often seen as individual sports. One usually competes by themselves, but one of Knutson's goals for the upcoming season is ensure the team experience isn't left behind for new and returning athletes.

"One challenge is so



Ricky Knutson

many people view track and cross country as individual sports. So, developing that team culture and getting the student athletes to buy into the idea that they're part of something bigger than themselves is valuable." He added, "It's

the success they can have if they work together and do things for each other as opposed to just focusing on their individual goals, which we look at as well. Obviously, it's nice to have a personal best and improve individually, but it's a lot more fun when you stand at the starting line with a group of people at the state championships versus all by yourself."

Coming off the roller coaster with the pandemic year and the uncertainty around high school athletics, programs statewide saw drops in participation across all sports and drawing some students back is

something all head coaches are eager to do.

"The biggest thing coming off the COVID-19 year, participation was down across the board for all sports last year," Knutson said. "So I think the biggest focus is just getting those numbers back up and getting kids excited again. Some kids who are juniors or seniors may have jobs already and it may be difficult to pull those kids back in, but we are hoping to get them back this year."

During Knutson's time as the track and field head coach he has led the Lions to 12 total Sky-Em league championships between

boys, girls and co-ed titles. He also adds to his coaching resume a top three finish for the Cottage Grove girls track team at state in 2013, along with sending multiple athletes to compete in the 4A state championships every year.

Now fostering a new, fun and competitive environment for the cross country program at CGHS is an exciting new challenge for Knutson. He has already seen a growth in voluntary off-season participation leading up to the start of the season and is looking to build onto that heading into his first season as head coach.

AQUATIC *from B1*

athlon. The race was available for all kids from kindergarten to 5th grade, with all participants receiving ribbons for their efforts.

Currently, the center is offering swimming lessons and group fitness.

The swimming lessons are available for kids of all ages while the group fitness classes are available to adults of all ages. Both programs are divided into subgroups, with swim lessons splitting up by ability and group fit-

ness separated by class like boot camp or physical therapy.

Now the center is turning their attention towards a physical therapy membership.

"We've partnered up with some local physical therapists to allow them to use the therapy pool with their clients, and we've set up a new membership where with a physician's approval, any member of the community can get a full membership for a reduced rate for up to three months," Norton said.

The importance of physical activity and exercise with the circumstances of the last year was emphasized thoroughly by Norton and the rest of the Aquatic Center.

"We all need an outlet — physical or mental — no matter the age," Norton said. "The pool is great both because you're here with your kids and the lifeguards are making sure they're safe, which is mental relief. At the same time, though, you are also swimming laps and getting your physical outlet. It's the best of both worlds."

Whether you're looking



DANIEL FRIIS/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

The Aquatic Center is currently offering swimming and group fitness lessons.

to participate in one of the classes, or you're looking to join the staff, the Aquatic

Center is always looking for new faces.

To sign up, go to its web-

site at cgpool.slane.k12.or.us, or visit the center itself at 1440 S 8th St.

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running order. Winebarger took control of the top place position on lap six earlier in the race when he maneuvered around Springfield's Shawn Hand.

Pope dominated the rest of the way to earn his first career victory in the Royalty Core IMCA Northern Sport Mods and KMJ Performance Oregon State ac-

tion. He is the third driver to win on the final night of the CGS Mod Nationals in Sport Mod competition.

Fellow Roseburg racer Jordan Henry wound up second with Aaron Bloom, now living in Winston, grabbing third. Springfield's Dustin Comer and Matt Sanders of Brookings were fourth and fifth in the finishing order.

It was to be a wild and crazy Todd's Auto Body

Sprint Car show. Tyler Thompspon, in the Brian Crockett equipment, took charge on the opening start. Thompson, from Harrisburg, was off to a dominating performance before a mechanical problem on lap twelve forced him to bow out early.

On the restart, Kyle Alberding was the new leader. Alberding of Roseburg held on the top place position despite a heavy chal-

lenge coming to the white flag. Kyle scored his second win of the year at CGS.

Junction City veteran Shane Forte was a close second while Justen McConville, from Dundee, ended his night third. Cottage Grove's Justin Lemon was scored fourth, while Medford native Camden Robustelli finished the race fifth in the T.J. Winningham-owned machine.

Lebanon's Brian Smith

was the winner of the Hardtop main event. Kyran Greene and Jimmy Smith ended their weekend second and third. Zach Toll and Chuck Jacobs were the rest of the top five finishing order. Pat Desbiens put on a clinic in the Senior Sprint division. It is the Sutherland driver's first win in the class.

Cottage Grove Speedway returns to racing on Friday, Aug. 6, and Saturday, the 7,

for the return of the Marvin Smith Memorial Grove Classic.

\$4,100 will be paid out to the winner of the 360 Sprint Car feature on Saturday evening. Late Models will be on hand both nights while Street Stocks appear on just Friday and IMCA Sport Compacts Saturday only.

For more information, check out the track website and Facebook page.

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