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Elliott Leads Freeland To 20-0 Regular Season

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Josh Elliott played no small role in a sensational regular season for Freeland's boys basketball team this season.

A 72-45 win over Sanford Meridian on March 1 clinched a 20-0 regular season for the Falcons.

It's Elliott's third year on varsity and has been his best year. After 18 games, he was averaging 19 points, 3.5 rebounds and 3.5 assists per game and shooting 58 percent from the floor, 47

percent in threes and 91 percent in free throws.

There's been a clear reason behind Elliott's success.

"We had a summer in the offseason and I was putting in work at the local gym," Elliott said. "I've been looking to be a leader, run the show and make the best decisions for our team."

He had 30 points in a win against Alma and he's had some others in the high 20s.

"I like to get to the rim and shoot threes," he said. "I'm mainly a three-point shooter so

most of my points come from there."

The key to being an effective three-point shooter "is repetition, mainly," Elliott said. "I worked during the offseason getting tons of shots up."

Shooting is not Elliott's only forte.

"We don't have a true point guard so I've tried to take on the role this year," Elliott said. "I try to find my teammates for good looks and make it tough for the other team to set up its offense and set the tone for our defense. Usually when teams press us I'll

handle the ball."

Elliott said coming into the season, Freeland had nine seniors who had played together for a long time. The expectations were high.

"It's been our chemistry," he said. "Most of us have played together since the fifth grade. We know when someone is going to be open. We work well together."

An impressive late season win for Freeland was 63-57 over 16-4 Pewamo Westphalia at P-W.



Freeland's Josh Elliott.

Vestaburg Boys Cherish District Championship

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Vestaburg boys basketball team is celebrating its first district title in 20 years.

The Wolverines were 11-9 during the regular season but won a dramatic 50-48 double overtime first-round victory over Midland Calvary Baptist. Next was a 41-31 semifinal win over Breckenridge and then 40-22 in the title game over Sacred Heart.

Coach Ty Warczinsky could not have been prouder of the Wolverines.

"The kids played with a will that would be not denied," he said. "We executed the game plan perfectly. Our focus and attention to detail was at an all-time high.

We competed for 32 minutes at a high level."

For the Wolverines, Hayden Palmer had 11 points, six rebounds and four steals, Cole Dailey had seven points and five assists, Levi Halliwill had six points and six rebounds.

"We have only had our full team for nine games," Warczinsky said. "It's why we have been a little inconsistent. We have had unbelievable leadership by our four senior captains, Levi, Cole, Hayden and Jaylin Maddox. The boys have worked so hard through the good times and bad.

"They have really bought into what I have been selling and have come to work every day. This is a



The district championship Vestaburg boys basketball team.

special group of young men that have been willing to be coached and pushed hard. I am so happy for this group and what they have been able to accomplish. It all starts with the work and the relationships that have been built. This is a special community and I couldn't be more happy to be a part of it."

Rockford Boys Basketball Piling Up Wins, Memories This Season

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

The Rockford boys basketball team has been on a roll the past several seasons and this year the Rams are turning in another big season.

Champions of the rugged Ottawa-Kent Red Conference last season, the Rams made it two in a row this season as they finished league play with a 13-1 record. The entire regular season was a productive one for the Rams who finished the season with an impressive 18-2 record. Rockford's lone loss in conference play was a 54-51 loss to conference runner-up Grand Haven while the only non-conference loss was a loss to Detroit Catholic Central over the Christmas holidays.

"This has been an incredibly memorable season," said Rockford coach Kyle Clough. "To win the OK

Red championship for a second-consecutive year, finish 13-1 in league play and 18-2 overall, is quite an accomplishment by these young men. More importantly, they are great people and coaching the has been a real honor."

The Rams have played consistent basketball the entire season. Rockford opened the season with three consecutive wins including non-league wins against Grand Rapids Union and Lansing Everett.

The win against Union was especially noteworthy as Rockford won the game 54-51 in overtime and that game also received national attention on ESPN Sportscenter.

"Against Grand Rapids Union we stole a pass and Andrew Landis, a sophomore, made a half-court buzzer beater to win," Clough said. "It was pretty incredible and ended up number two on the top 10 plays that night on ESPN. The only play

ahead of it was Steph Curry breaking the all-time, three-point record."

After the loss against Detroit Catholic Central at The Showcase at Cornerstone University, the Rams reeled off 12 consecutive wins. Included in the winning streak was a win against Grand Rapids Ottawa Hills in the Jam at the Van at VanAndel Arena in downtown Grand Rapids and a win against Forest Hills Eastern also at The Showcase. Following the loss to Grand Haven, Rockford responded with five wins to close out the regular season and clinch the conference title.

"We have had a lot of highlights this season," Clough said. "Playing at VanAndel Arena earlier this year, finishing 13-1 in league play and getting to the district title game."

Key to Rockford's success this season is a roster that features plenty of versatile and talented players.



The Rockford boys basketball team won the Ottawa-Kent Conference Red Division with a 13-1 record this season.

"This team has tremendous balance and depth," Clough said. "We have seven guys who average six points per game or more and we've regularly played nine guys in our rotation. They do not care who gets the credit, or scores more, they just want to win."

Rockford is led by a trio of all-conference players in Jack Lamancusa, Kyle Varady and Caden Pokorzynski. Charlie Deutsch is also an all-conference, honorable-mention player.

"These guys have been dynamic for us," Clough said. "We had also had six different leading scorers during the season."

The team work and effort that the players have displayed this season has made this team a pleasure to coach for Clough.

"This team has just been a joy to coach," Clough said. "We lost our two most experienced players prior to the season and these guys have just stepped up and been a resilient bunch."

Veteran Backcourt Leads The Way As Fulton Basketball Captures District Title

John Raffel
Sports Scene

The goal of every basketball team is to be playing its best basketball come tournament time and that is exactly what the Fulton basketball team is doing.

After going through the gauntlet that is the Central Michigan Athletic Conference, the Pirates captured a district title and opened regional play with a victory.

"We've been playing pretty well," said Fulton coach Todd Walden. "The last three or four weeks of the season we have been getting better and better"

The state tournament opened in

thrilling fashion as Fulton defeated Lansing Christian 46-44 in the district opener. Junior guard Bruce Thelen hit Joe Lung with a perfect lob pass and Lung layed the ball in for the game-winning points with 1.8 seconds remaining in the game to give the Pirates the win. Lung led Fulton with 16 points while Thelen added 15 in the win.

Fulton won another close game in the district semifinals when they avenged a pair of losses in the regular season to Fowler by winning a 46-42 thriller. Thelen led Fulton with 24 points while Lung added 10 points and 10 rebounds and Zach Saller added 11 rebounds.

"We really did a good job on the glass and defended them well,"

Walden said. "We gave up 72 points to them last time and this time we held them to 42. We defended their guards really well."

In the finals the Pirates put it all together to defeat top-seeded Webberville 75-49. Lung led the Pirates with 23 points while Thelen added 22 points and Xander Ramsey 14 points.

"Everything clicked," Walden said. "We shot the ball really well and defended really well."

The strong all-around play continued in the regional where Fulton defeated Vestaburg 56-41 in the regional semifinals. Lung totaled 24 points, seven steals and six rebounds while Thelen added




The Fulton basketball team celebrates with the district trophy after a 75-49 win against Webberville.

seven points and six assists and senior guard Xander Ramsey added 11 points.

"We have three really solid veteran guards," Walden said. "Everybody is doing a really good job of playing their roles. Zach Saller is a junior that is coming on really good and

our post players Walker Eyer, Renn Spalding and Dez Blair are doing a nice job defensively and on the glass."

The Pirates, who finished with an 8-8 record in conference play, improved to 13-11 overall with the post-season wins.

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Area Girls Basketball Teams Bring Home District, Regional Hardware

David Cook Sports Scene

DIVISION 1 East Lansing repeats as regional champs

The East Lansing girls basketball team won its second consecutive regional title with a 56-44 win against Battle Creek Lakeview. The Trojans received a big game from Soraya Timms and got a big lift from Payton Baker who returned from an ACL injury. East Lansing earned a berth in the regional finals after a thrilling win against Parma Western, ranked fifth in the state, in the regional semifinals. Timms led the way with 20 points in the win against Parma Western.

East Lansing advanced to the regional after defeating Haslett 70-44 to win the district championship. Ella Miller led the Trojans in the district title game with a 29-point effort.

Midland Dow wins fourth straight regional title

Midland Dow won its fourth consecutive regional championship as the Chargers turned back Grand Blanc 56-46 in the regional title game. Alexa Kolnitsy led the way for Dow as she poured in 29 points. Abby Rey chipped in 18 points as Dow improved to 23-1 for the season.

Dow earned a trip to the regional with a 73-43 win against Bay City Western in the district finals. Sophomore Klaire Caldwell came up big in the district championship game as she poured in 39 points. Caldwell tied a school-record with 11 three-point baskets in the win.

Rockford tops defending state champs for regional title

The Rockford Rams clinched a

berth in the Division elite eight in a big way by defeating defending Division 1 state champion Hudsonville 54-32 in the regional championship game. Elle Irwin led the Rams with 13 points and freshman Anna Wypych added 11 points as the Rams beat Hudsonville for the first time since the 2019 season. Rockford outscored Hudsonville in each quarter and the Ram defense held Hudsonville without a field goal in the second quarter.

DIVISION 2 Portland wins second straight regional crown

Portland made it back-to-back regional titles as the Raiders defeated Chelsea 47-22. Portland opened regional play with a double-digit win against Marshall led by senior Ashley Bower who scored 20 points in the 58-34 win in the regional semifinals. Portland reached the regional by defeating Lansing Catholic 45-30 in the district finals. Bower scored 17 points and Ava Guilford added 16 points in the district title win. The Raiders also received a big effort on the boards and the defensive end from Alivia Densmore.

Ovid-Elsie caps off best season in 37 years

It was a memorable season for the Ovid-Elsie girls basketball team who accomplished things that had not been done in nearly 40 years.

Ovid-Elsie won its first conference title since 1984 when it finished the season with a perfect 14-0 league record to claim the Mid-Michigan Activities Conference title. The Marauders finished the regular season with a 19-1 overall record.

Ovid-Elsie continued to make news in the post-season as it won

its first district championship since 1984 with a 53-29 win against Chesaning. Evalyn Cole led the Marauders with 14 points and Caitlyn Walter added 12 points in the win. Ovid-Elsie finished the season with a 21-2 record after falling to Frankenmuth in the regional semifinals.

Frankenmuth ends regional title drought

Frankenmuth won its first regional title since 1996 as it defeated Swan Valley 42-28 in the regional finals. Senior Emma Kerkau led the Eagles with 13 points while Mia McLaughlin added 13 points and eight rebounds and Zoey Persails added six points and eight rebounds. With the win Frankenmuth improved to 22-2 for the season.

Williamston wins district title

The Williamston girls basketball team turned in a big season as it won a district championship and finished the season with a 17-7 overall record. Williamston won the district title with a 48-25 win against Ann Arbor Richard. Sammi Schultz led the Hornets with 16 points while Isabel Lindo added 12 points and two blocked shots. Williamston's season came to an end with a 48-46 loss to Chelsea in the regional semifinals. Lindo led the way for Williamston with 14 points while Reese Gaytan added eight points and nine rebounds.

Swan Valley claims district crown

The Swan Valley basketball team wrapped up the season with a 19-5 overall record and a district crown to their credit. Swan Valley defeated Freeland 43-36 to win the title at the Essexville-Garber district. Swan Valley defeated Belding in the regional semifinals before eventually falling to Frankenmuth in the regional finals.

DIVISION 3 Quartet of area teams win district titles

A quartet of area teams won district titles in Division 3. **Sanford-Meridian** defeated Farwell 43-38 to win the district title at Beal City. **Dansville** defeated Bath 56-39 to win the title at the Bath district. **Pewamo-Westphalia** won the Carson City-Crystal district title with a 47-31 win against Saranac while **St. Charles** won the title at Hemlock with a 48-43 win over host Hemlock.

DIVISION 4 Fowler looking to repeat as champs in D4

Defending Division 4 state champion Fowler is looking to repeat as state champs. The Eagles,



The Midland Dow girls basketball team added another regional trophy to the trophy case by defeating Grand Blanc for the regional title.

Meridian Girls End Championship Season At 20-3

John Raffel Sports Scene

A wonderful girls basketball season for Sanford Meridian ended in a disappointing 63-36 loss to McBain in the regional semifinal game

The Mustangs ended up 20-3. They were undefeated conference championships at 14-0.

Coach Tanner Smith led the Sanford Meridian Early College High School team to an 18-2 mark during the regular season.

The highlight of the season, Smith said, "was going undefeated in conference play and obtaining our first conference title since 2006. "It was very special for the girls who were a part of the 0-21 team, two years ago.

"I believe we met our expectations for the regular

season. The girls had a high standard for themselves after all the work they put in before the season and throughout the season. They reached for high goals and achieved what they set out to accomplish."

Leading scorer was freshman Halen McLaughlin, who averaged 17 points, seven rebounds and three steals a game. He had a 31-point game vs. USA.

Senior Taylor Hopkins averaged 13 points per game. She leads in 3-point percentage and 3-pointers made. She had a school record of six, 3-pointers made in a game at Breckenridge this season.

Sophomore Grace Chinavare averaged eight points, three assists and 3.5 steals a game.

Sophomore point guard Josie Barriger was the leader in assists, the team's floor general and "she



The 2021-22 Sanford Meridian girls championship team.

also guards opposing teams' best player every night," Smith said.

After the regular season, Smith said goals would to win first district title since 1988 and make a

deep playoff run. A 43-38 win over Farwell in the district title game did the trick.

"In order to reach those big goals the team will have to

continue to put the team first in everything we do," Smith said. "We have to be willing to play harder for longer than the opposition and have poise and composure in the big moments, of big games."

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Midland Dow Girls Posting Strong Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

It's been an excellent season for Midland Dow's girls basketball team, coached by Kyle Theisen.

Dow won 18 of its first 19 games.

"The first highlight was beating Hudsonville in their gym to start the season." Theisen said. "It was a rematch from the state semi-final last year where we lost to them. So winning on their court was special for the girls. The second highlight was winning the SVL title by beating Flint Carman-

Ainsworth on their own court. We were both undefeated in league play and it was an intense

game. That win made it 4 straight SVL titles.

"So far we have met expectations. We are currently

exactly where we want to be heading into

postseason play. We have more expectations to meet as the season progresses, though."

Outstanding players include Alexa Kolnitys.

"She is a senior and a potential Miss Basketball candidate," Theisen said. "Alexa can shoot,

pass and defend. She can do anything on the court and has a high IQ for the game."

Abby Rey, Theisen said, "is another senior who can score anywhere on the court. She is a matchup problem with her size and ability to shoot from the outside."

Klaire Caldwell, Theisen added, "is a sophomore who has expanded her game into being more than a shooter. She can get to the rim and has established herself as one of the top defenders in the

state."

Kourtney Fischer, Theisen said, "is a senior and a captain who understands the game at a high level. She is a great passer and screener who is always looking to set up her teammates."

Kennedy Caldwell, Theisen added, "is a senior who is an incredible athlete and playmaker. She plays great on ball defense and makes numerous hustle plays."

Jenna Butcher, Theisen said, "is a junior who has a knack for being in the right spot all the time. She can finish at the rim at a high percentage and has developed into



Midland Dow's girls basketball is having another banner season.

a good shooter.

"Our goals are to win districts, win regionals, and to keep winning after that. Once you reach the

quarterfinal round every team you face is great, but our team expects to win every game when we

step foot on the floor. To reach our goals it will take commitment and communication. The girls are extremely talented, but at this stage of the postseason it takes the whole team working together to achieve our goals."

Scully Leading Dynamic Attack For Sacred Heart

John Raffel Sports Scene

The season has been a good one for Mount Pleasant's girls basketball team and coach Damon Brown was hoping his team would save it best for last.

The Irish were 13-4 going into late February and confident of a typical strong postseason run.

"We keep getting better but we have more to work on," veteran coach Damon Brown said during the season.

Senior point guard Delaney Scully was leading the way all season and averaging in double figures.

"She's obviously our best player and has been leading us all season," Brown said.'

Scully was coming off a challenging junior season impacted by COVID restrictions last year. The Irish were 15-4 and lost in the regional finals

As a sophomore, she averaged 13 points, five rebounds and three assists per

game.

"It went pretty well that year," Scully said. "I had Scout Nelson to work with that year and that was good."

Scully averaged around eight points a game that season.

"That year, Scout did most of the work," she said.

She's also been strong defensively with steals.

MPSH was undefeated for most of the 2019-20 season and wound up 21-3.

"Defense mostly was the key," Scully said. "If we work on defense it creates the offense."

A memorable moment was a 52-49 overtime time win over Merrill that helped the Irish stay undefeated at 14-0 in the MSAC.

Scully has played basketball since elementary school and has been playing travel basketball for many years.

She also played volleyball for an outstanding Sacred Heart team that advanced to the regional.



It's been another big year for Mount Pleasant Heart's Delaney Scully.

Coleman Girls Turn Into A Championship Team

John Raffel Sports Scene

Coach Nick Katzinger has had his Coleman Comets girls basketball team headed in the right direction this season.

The team is 11-3 overall and 10-1 in the Mid-State Activities Conference for first place.

"The highlight of our season would be handing St. Charles their first loss in the conference since joining (50-45)," Katzinger said. "They're a really good team and we stepped up to the challenge that night."

"Last year we started two freshmen, one sophomore, and two juniors. We finished the season 12-7 losing to Sacred Heart Academy in the District finals. I would say the expectations are high this year for our team. Our three losses were all close games

and could have gone either way. These girls have definitely exceeded our expectations."

Top athletes so far include senior Katelyn Pnacek, averaging 19 points and 11.3 rebounds per game.

"Katelyn is a double-double machine," Katzinger said. "She comes out every night and leaves everything on the floor. She is a natural leader and the team looks up to her. She reached the 1,000-career point milestone earlier this year. Katelyn is so smooth on the offensive side of the ball. Defend her tight and she will drive by you, give her some slack and she will knock down the jump shot."

Sophomore Maddy Miller has been averaging 7.0 points and 4.0 steals per game.

"Maddy has been fighting



Coleman girls basketball team has had a successful season.

through injuries this season but you would never guess it," Miller said. "She goes out every night and contributes to the team and doesn't complain. I love watching her play defense, she is aggressive and can see the ball well to jump into passing lanes."

Senior Havahna Dejongh has

been averaging 6.6 points and 7.0 rebounds a game.

"Havahna is an energizer bunny for us,"Katzinski said. "She never runs out of energy and is always going 100 MPH. She is the backbone of our defense. She has the fastest first step on the offensive end which makes her hard to

guard. She's always got a smile on her face and is a joy to be around.

"Our first goal was to win a conference title which hasn't happened in Coleman girls basketball since 1994. Another goal would be to win a district title. We have to play as a team, everyone has to function as one."

Hemlock's Girls Season Has Been An Impressive One

John Raffel Sports Scene

It's been another competitive season for coach Scott Neumeyer's girls basketball team, which won 13 of its first 18 games and had hopes for another strong season.

Neumeyer was hopeful of another strong finish for his team, similar to a year ago.

"We finished the season 14-8," he recalled. "We won district and regional titles and advanced to the Division 3 Final Four before a positive COVID test forced us to withdraw from the MHSAA Tournament just before we were to depart to play in the semifinal game against Grass Lake at the Breslin Center.

"Cassidy Peake was our lone senior on the team last year. She

was a four-year varsity point guard for us. She was second team all-conference last season and honorable mention all-area by MLive. She was an outstanding leader and defender. She finished first in school history in steals and second in school history in assists."

Regan Finkbeiner is a 5-foot-6 player who received 1st Team All-Conference, MLive honorable mention all-area, BCAM honorable mention All-State, Detroit Free Press honorable mention All-State. But she missed most of regular season due to injury.

Chloe Watson is also an all-stater from last year;

Breanna Turner is a 5-foot-6 junior all-conference honorable mention standout who is "a terrific defender, can play inside and outside and will have an expanded

offensive role this year," Neumeyer said.

Samantha Venegas. Averi Hall, Kylee Miller, Jaedyn Mallek and Alyssa Dearman are key returning players.

We're not big, but this is the quickest and fastest team that I've ever had," Neumeyer said. "If we can play the type of defense that we're capable of, we can be competitive on most nights. From top to bottom, this is the fastest, most athletic team that I've had at Hemlock. It's also the best shooting, passing, and ballhandling



The Hemlock girls basketball team is having another outstanding season.

team. We lack size, so we're going to have to force the pace and make the game as fast as possible.

"We need to get stronger and gain experience. Even though we're

experienced, we still only have one senior on the team," Neumeyer said. "If we could all find a way to grow a few inches, that would help as well."



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St. Patrick Girls Turning Into A Power Again

John Raffel Sports Scene

Al Schrauben is up to his old tricks again as girls basketball coach at Portland St. Patrick.,

Schrauben's Shamrocks has gotten off to a 15-0 start and appears to be legitimate candidates for what would be Schrauben's seventh state championship in hi coaching career.

St. Patrick already has two victories over the defending class D state champion Fowler.

"This team has exceeded my expectations," Schrauben said. "With Fowler and a very

competitive conference schedule, I didn't expect to be undefeated but I knew we would be very good."

Lydia Meredith is a Saginaw Valley State University signee and a four-year varsity starter.

"She is just an excellent all-around player," Schrauben said. "She leads our team and is one of the area leaders in scoring (19.5ppg), steals (6 spg), and rebounding (7.1 rpg)."

Katelyn Russell and Mara Schrauben "are also four-year varsity players," Schrauben said. "Katelyn leads us in 3-point shooting and Mara is an excellent post player.

"Natalie Teachworth, Laynie

Meredith, Riley, Carly, and Addison Scheurer are all part of our regular rotation and really set the tone defensively for us. Jamelyn Forest and Hayley Fleischer are very helpful off the bench."

The goals are lofty for the Shamrocks.

"Our goals for the rest of the season is to win our league (CMAC) and our District," Schrauben said. "We will need to continue to improve defensively and be more consistent in putting the ball in the basket.

"Overall this team is a joy to coach and I am very pleased with where we are at to this point."



Portland St. Patrick hopes to make a bid for another state title.

P-W Girls Enjoy Turnaround Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Pewamo-Westphalia has been a force in CMAC girls basketball this season and climbed in back into title contention under coach Steve Eklund.

Eklund has had several outstanding players.

Jenna Pung is a senior forward "who is expected to bring lots of energy on both ends. We look for her to rebound and get loose balls and provide a scoring punch on offense," Eklund said.

Brooke Kramer is a senior guard "who is expected help space the floor by knocking down outside shots as well as take care of the ball on offense," Eklund said.

Sierra Schneider, a junior center, "is expected to provide a big defensive presence in the paint, while giving us some inside scoring on offense," Eklund said.

Aylah Smith, a junior guard "is expected to knock down outside shots as well as take care of the ball on offense," Eklund

Mackenna Weber is a junior guard "who will be expected to take care of the ball on offense and bring some defensive pressure/energy on opposing guards," Eklund said.

"With a lack of numbers and a lot of youth on the team this year, we expect our team to learn and grow as the season goes on," Eklund said. "Hopefully we will be able to get everyone up to speed by the time the tournament starts and compete for a District. We have some good size so hopefully we can own the glass and get some easier buckets in the

paint to open up the perimeter.

"With low numbers, we will need the kids to be in great shape and will need the kids to learn to give maximum effort when on the floor."

It's been more fun for PW and other teams compared to COVID restrictions from a year ago.

"It was definitely beneficial to have a normal summer program/preseason for the kids to learn and get some development in and for them to be able to bond with each other," Eklund said.



Jenna Pung is a senior forward "who is expected to bring lots of energy on both ends," her Pewamo-Westphalia coach said.

Potterville Basketball Girls Bid For Championship Glory

John Raffel Sports Scene

Potterville High School's girls varsity basketball team has a new head coach Al Adams, who is poised to lead his team to district title contention.

"We have exceeded expectations, but to us, we are not quite there yet," Adams said. "Each week we continue to move up."

Top athletes include senior guard Darby Lienerth "who is our leader on and off the court, leads our team in assists and steals and is one of the top guards in our conference," Adams said. "She is the true definition of a role model."

Junior forward, Kaylee Bush, "is our leading scorer and rebounder," Adams said. "She is relentless in the post and

also leads the team in 3-pointers made.

"The goal for the rest of the season is to win the district championship. It will not be easy, but the girls are determined and they are working hard every day to achieve this goal. To win the district championship the team needs to work together, remain relentless on defense and continue to get better every day."

Adams likes the direction in which the team is headed.

"For being my first year coaching here at Potterville, I could not have asked for a better group of young ladies," Adams said. "They are all hardworking on and off the court. We have turned into a small family and this is something that will help us achieve our goal."



Pottersville girls basketball team has exceeded its expectations.



Frankenmuth Wraps Up Season With Trip To Division 2 State Quarterfinals

John Raffel Sports Scene

Frankenmuth's 16-1 start in girls basketball under Joe Jacobs was highlighted by defeating Division 1 Midland Dow, which was ranked No. 1 at the time at home.

"Our entire team is athletic, play multiple sports, and is great in the classroom," Boyle said. "We are led in scoring by sophomore guard Mia McLaughlin. She is averaging 15

points a game, 5.5 rebounds, to go along with five assists and four steals."

Senior Emma Kerkau is averaging 13 points and 5.5 rebounds per game, and senior Zoey Persails is averaging 12 points and five rebounds per game.

Making it to state finals is among Frankenmuth's goals.

"We need to stay healthy. We are missing the Mlive player of the year, from a year ago, Lexi

Boyke," Jacobs said. "Lexi tore her ACL and had season-ending surgery Dec. 23. As a team to reach these

goals, each girl has to understand their role, whether practice or games, and push each other. We have to shoot the ball well and also be able to score."

Boyke is a junior, who has committed to Central Michigan and averaged 15.7 points per game and 8.9 rebounds per game last year and averaged 1.7 blocks

per game and 1.7 steals.

"Lexi was our best player," Jacobs said. "She was a captain, voted by her peers. She was the focal point of every coach coming into our game(s). She shot 58 percent from inside the three-point line and was 32 percent from behind the arc."

Boyke's injury left a hole which has been filled by other including Persails. who has verbally committed to Davenport University to play basketball.



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Shepherd Girls Bowling Team Proves Clutch Enroute To Winning First-Ever State Title

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Shepherd girls bowling team proved to be clutch in the key situations and the result was the first-ever bowling title in school history.

Not only did Shepherd win a first-ever state bowling championship, but the Bluejays also won first-ever league and regional championships this season.

“This was the first time I ever took a team, boys or girls, to the state meet period,” said Shepherd coach Dave Carson. “I had expectations we could make it this year. Last year, with basically the same team, we had a shot to make it to state. We just fell a little short at the regional. This year they really jelled as a team.”

The Shepherd girls bowled solid throughout the year and won a tough battle for the Jack Pine Conference championship. Shepherd then qualified for the state tournament by taking third place at the regional meet.

Shepherd put it all together at the state meet. After making it out of the qualifying round, the

Bluejays were unstoppable in the head-to-head matchups at the state meet. Shepherd finished in the top eight of the qualifying block in the finals and drew top-seeded Kent City in the quarterfinal round. Gaining momentum as the match progressed, Shepherd defeated Kent City 1,073 to 1,061.

In the semifinal round, Shepherd turned back Flint Powers Catholic 1,117 to 1,094. That win sent the Bluejays into the finals where they defeated Cheboygan 1,041 to 987 to win the Division 3 championship trophy. In the head-to-head game against Cheboygan the Blue jays were led by junior Kendra Walch with a 187.

“Kendra was our anchor bowler,” Carson said. “She is a pretty good bowler in the clutch.”

Sophomore Sara Montney followed with a 140.

“Kendra and Sara compliment each other well,” Carson said. “They average in the high 150s, low 160s. When one might roll a 150 game the other will roll one in the 180s or 190s. That’s what they did at the state tournament. They compliment each other really well.”

Senior Shelby Rolston also came up big as the state finals.



The Shepherd girls bowling team poses with the first-ever state championship trophy in school bowling history.

Rolston rolled a 133 game in the Cheboygan match.

“Shelby really helped us out,” Carson said.

Senior Karlie Misenholder added a 125 game while junior Amelia King rolled a 112. Sophomore Kasina Laughlin and junior Natalie Hyde rounded out a balanced Shepherd squad this season.

“Our core five averaged around 140 for the season,” Carson said. “The big thing about this team is that they trusted themselves and each other. They would help each other out all season. When one of them might be down someone else

would pick them up. They really gelled this year as a team.”

The Bluejays also displayed an ability to hang in games and come on strong at the end. That was a key element to the win against top-seeded Kent City in the quarterfinal round.

“I knew that if the girls kept it close, we could get them at the end,” Carson said. “I liked my five girls against their five girls in the Peterson games. There was no one big turning point, just a bunch of little things that happened. The semifinal game against Flint Powers was the same way. We fell behind by 47 early but I knew that we could beat them head-to-head.”

Shepherd had plenty of big-game experience during the regular season enroute to winning the Jack Pine Conference. The Jack Pine was a rugged bowling conference this season as three league teams reached the girls team state finals including Clare in Division 3 and Beaverton which qualified for the team state finals in Division 4.

While the Bluejays will graduate some bowlers from this year’s squad, a solid nucleus returns next year.

“It will be interesting to see how we handle it,” Carson said. “The expectations will be to repeat the process. We will see how we handle the pressure of repeating.”



Portland’s girls bowling team has been winning its share of trophies this season.

Portland Bowling Girls Take CAAC Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

Coach Joe Whitford has a championship team with his Portland High girls bowlers.

Portland was undefeated at 10-0 in the CAAC conference and is the CAAC Division Champs. “This year as a coach I had a great feeling that our girls would prevail because of the love, dedication and the passion along with the competition to the sport to

continue on being the league champs,” Whitford said. Among the standouts for Portland has been Jessie Whitford, who has made an appearance in the state finals every year.

“In the CAAC conference singles tournament she qualified in sixth place to make it into match play,” Joe Whitford said. “As our anchor bowler in several matches/tournaments she was solid as a rock and I believe that’s why one of the reasons we had a great season. Right now we are

concentrating on our spares. Strikes will come, but you have to make your spares to move forward in the game.” Whitford will retire after this season. He’s been head coach for more than 20 years. “Since I’ve been the head coach I have not had a losing season,” he said. “Over the years we’ve been regional champs and have won several awards/tournaments. We have been the CAAC conference champs, I believe, for the last five years in a row.”

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Midland Boys Bowling Team Reaches Final Four At Division 1 State Finals

David Cook Sports Scene

The Midland boys bowling team followed the blue print for success and the result was a state tournament run that ended with an appearance in the final four of the Division 1 state tournament.

“They finally drank the kool-aid for what we’ve been teaching and coaching them,” said Midland coach Trevor Terrill. “We tried to stress to them the importance of picking up spares and pocket percentage. We stressed picking up spares and that is what they did at the state meet. We were 90 percent on picking up spares and were in first place after qualifying. We were picking up spares and that was what we were teaching all year.”

The Chemics turned in a strong effort at the state finals as they opened play by totaling a score of 3,748 in the morning qualifying block to earn the top seed heading into match play.

In match play Midland opened by defeating Jenison 1,435 to 1,168 in the quarterfinal round.

second at the DeWitt Baker tournament. Midland also placed third in a power-packed Saginaw Valley Conference that included state-ranked teams from Davison and Grand Blanc.

The season was also a bit of a rebuilding one as Midland entered the year having to replace one of the premier bowlers in the state in Izaak Goergen, a two-time individual state champion who graduated last year.

“A lot of people wrote us off after losing a bowler of the caliber of Izaak,” Terrill said. “I was happy with the way the team responded. We bowled as a team and didn’t rely on just one bowler. We didn’t have that one outstanding bowler but we had a team with six good bowlers. Everybody bought in and that was important. This was also one of my funnest teams to coach.”

Livonia Franklin eventually defeated Utica Eisenhower 1,451 to 1,214 to win the state title.

The Midland bowlers turned in strong efforts the entire season. Midland opened the season with a top-five finish at the Bay City Western Bakers Dozen tournament and took

Hunter Blackhurst, Evan Daly, Nick Kruger, Ruberto Mosqueda, Nathan Palmateer and Colin Terrill.

Kruger, Palmateer and Terrill provided the team with strong senior leadership. Blackhurst and Mosqueda provided more strong contributions and experience while Daly is a promising freshman that came through during the regular season and post season. Freshman James Rutledge also gained experience during the post season run.

“All but two of our guys bowled a 300 game during a practice session this year,” Terrill said. “This was truly a competitive team. Somebody was always having a big score for us. I think our highest average was 193 and we had guys average between 193 and 175. Nobody had a really high average but everyone had a good average. Somebody was always stepping up for us. It didn’t surprise me that these guys did what they did because

I knew they were going to make a run.”

The team also benefitted from a strong coaching staff that included Ruben Mosqueda and Carney Brink.

“We had a really great coaching staff that helped us out a lot,” Terrill said. “They are some great coaches that made my job easier.”

Midland qualified for the team state finals by placing second at the Division 1 regional that took place at Royal Scot Lanes in Lansing. The regional format consisted of six Baker games and three Peterson games. The Midland bowlers averaged 197 in the Baker games. In the Peterson games Midland was led by Evan Daly who totaled 672 for the three games. Ruberto Mosqueda added 402 in two games while Colin Terrill added 560.

Davison won the regional title with a score of 4,068 while Midland was second with a 3,974 score and Holt was third with a 3,964 total.



The Midland boys bowling team capped a big season by reaching the final four at the Division 1 state finals.

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Breckenridge Girls Bowling Team Reaches State Finals In Third Season As Program

David Cook
Sports Scene

Over the past several years, the Breckenridge boys bowling has established a tradition of winning bowling. In just its third year as a program, the Breckenridge girls are making a name for themselves.

In just its third season, the Breckenridge girls reached the pinnacle of girls bowling in the state of Michigan by reaching the Division 4 state finals.

“We were thrilled for the Huskie girls to make states,” said Breckenridge bowling program manager and boys coach Aaron Wise. “Our girls squad was re-introduced after a long absence only three seasons ago. We had two returning girls entering their third season and six brand-new bowlers so the squad that finished second at the regional and went on to represent our Huskies for the first time at states actually had four brand-new bowlers. We as coaches feel this was quite the

Beth Toner averaged 129, Julie Becker a 122 and Shyla Joliff a 118 average. Ripley had a high game of 185 this season while Laurenz had a 174 high game and Toner a 169 high game.

“I think the biggest thing that stood out to me during the state tournament was the fact that I saw maximum effort on every ball thrown,” said Breckenridge girls coach Brett Marquiss. “Whether the result was good or bad the girls left it all on the lanes and I couldn’t ask for any more than that.”

The Huskies showed the

type of grit needed for a deep tournament run at the conference tournament.

“We didn’t have the best record or the highest averages entering the conference tournament but the team chemistry displayed that day showed me this team had what it took to make Huskie history,” Marquiss said. “The team was firing on all cylinders as they won the Baker team competition and Rylie won the singles tournament later that day with Rachel and Julie finishing third and fourth respectively.”

Having so many new bowlers stepping up made it even more special.

“I’ve never seen so many new bowlers pick up the game and grow this quickly,” Marquiss said. “The new bowlers came in and showed the more experienced members of the team that they are her to do something special. My returning girls responded to the challenge by stepping their games up which resulted in our squad qualifying for our first state tournament. This team has that natural chemistry that cannot be taught.”



The Breckenridge girls bowling team reached the Division 4 state finals in just the third season after the program was re-introduced.

Mason Girls Bowling Team Overcomes Inexperience To Reach Division 2 Title Game

David Cook
Sports Scene

Who says you have to have experience to make a run at a state title?

The Mason girls bowling team showed that even a young team can make a run at a state title as the young Bulldogs advanced all the way to the Division 2 state finals before falling short against Flint Kearsley by just 35 pins.

“It is a very impressive accomplishment for an inexperienced team to not only make it to states, but to make a run to the final match,” said Mason coach Russ Whipple. “We (the coaches) are very proud of and happy for this team. We went from 20 years of varsity experience last year to six years this season so it is a great accomplishment.”

Success on the bowling lanes is nothing new for the Mason girls bowling team as the Bulldogs won a state title in 2020, reached last years finals and the state semifinals in 2019 along with a quarterfinal appearance in 2018.

This year’s title run was not a total surprise as while Mason had inexperienced bowlers, they did have talented bowlers.

“We knew the team was inexperienced, but we also knew there was talent and potential,” Whipple said. “The team average increased 14 pins from tryouts. All the girls improved and a few improved dramatically. The most impressive was how they handled

the pressure of team tournament bowling right from the beginning but especially at states where the team performed its best of the season.”

Mason was paced this season by senior Alexis Beach who sported a 169 average. Beach threw a 278 in the regional singles and a 223 at

states in qualifying.

The Bulldogs also relied on junior Adriana Thomas who averaged 162, sophomore Olyvia Mollitor who averaged a 162, freshman Avery Beach who averaged 159, junior Olivia Palmer who averaged 158, freshman Clara Rue who averaged 152 and


sophomore Neveah Rohder who averaged 144.

“This team won as a team all year with different girls stepping up when needed,” Whipple said. “The state bowling tournament is a very grueling event. You can be in the bowling center for more than 12 hours, bowling almost all the


time with few breaks. It requires discipline, focus, determination and emotional fortitude. The Mason girls demonstrated all of these characteristics when the vast majority of them had no idea what they were walking into. It was a proud day to be involved with the Mason program even though we did not win the final match.”

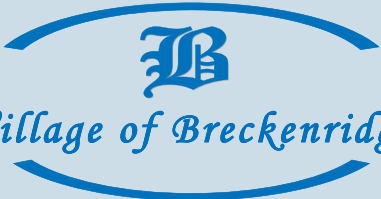


The Mason girls bowling team overcame a lack of experience to finish second in the state at the Division 2 state bowling finals.





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Lowell's Ski Team Enjoys Productive Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Karla Byrne has had reason to be happy with her team's winter season.

The men's team took first and second place finishes at local conference races

The women took second and third at local conference races.

"On our men's team we have junior, Colton Byrne, who has been consistently on the podium with either first, second or third place finishes in conference races, except for one slalom race where he took fifth place," Byrne said. "At our regional race, Colton took fourth in both giant slalom and slalom, securing his spot at the state finals. Preston Sobeck, a senior, has also had consistent third and fourth place finishes in conference racing

so far and at regionals he qualified for states in slalom with a ninth-place finish.

"On our women's team, senior, Kaylee Byrne, has been at the top of the podium with first through third place finishes in both giant slalom and slalom conference races. Most recently, she took first place in slalom at our regionals and second place in giant slalom, earning her a spot at the state finals as well. Kaylee also qualified for Team Michigan as one of the top 12 high school skiers in Michigan. She will compete at the 2022 Eastern High School Championships at Attitash, NH in March."

Emma Schmidt, a senior this year, has shown progression and speed this season with third and fourth place finishes in two of our conference races.



"As individuals competing at the state finals at Schuss Mountain, were hoping to see all three of our athletes in top 10 finishes for GS and slalom," Byrne said. "Commitment, work ethic and ideal snow conditions can't hurt."

It's been a remarkable for Lowell's ski team.

Skiers Take Final Trips Down The Hill At State Ski Finals

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Area skiers took one final trip down the ski hill at the Michigan High School Athletic Association state ski finals. Following is a recap of the state ski finals.

DIVISION 1 GIRLS

Traverse City Central won the girls competition with a score of 77 while Traverse City West took second with 84 and Grand Rapids Forst Hills Northern placed third with 97. Individually, Katie Fodale of Rochester Adams won the slalom while Maddy Stern of Marquette won the giant slalom.

DIVISION 1 BOYS

Traverse City schools dominated the boys Division 1 competition as Traverse City West won with a score of 38.5 followed by

Traverse City Central with 75 and Rochester Adams with 90. Caleb Lewandowski of Traverse City West was the individual slalom champion while Nathan Dehart of Rochester Adams won the giant slalom.

DIVISION 2 GIRLS

Cadillac came away with the state title in a closely contested Division 2 state final meet. Cadillac finished with a total of 104 points followed by East Grand Rapids with 110 points and Harbor Springs with 112 points. Individually, Sydney Schulte of Notre Dame Prep won the slalom while Marley Spence of Petoskey won the title in the giant slalom.

Lowell skier turns in pair of top-five efforts

Kaylee Byrne of Lowell wrapped up a successful high school ski

season in style by placing second in the giant slalom and third in the slalom at the Division 2 state ski finals. Byrne, who plans on skiing in college at Northern Michigan University, followed up her high school effort by skiing for Team Michigan at the Eastern National Championship races.

DIVISION 2 BOYS

Petoskey won the Division 2 boys team state title with 86 points while Pontiac Notre Dame Prep placed second with 99 points and Cadillac took third place with 116 points. Individually, Connor Abraham of Gaylord won the slalom while Reed Heathman of Houghton won the state title in the giant slalom.

Mt. Pleasant places at state ski finals

The Mt. Pleasant boys ski team wrapped up the season by placing



Lowell's Kaylee Byrne. Photo courtesy of Sports in Motion.

8th at the Division 2 state ski finals with a 223 total. Mt. Pleasant was led by Aiden Percha who placed 24th in the slalom and 23rd in the giant slalom. Lincoln Gott placed 26th in the giant slalom and 32nd

in the slalom while Aidan White placed 41st in the slalom and 44th in the giant slalom. Kyle Sytsema placed 43rd in the slalom for the Oilers.

Midland Dow Hockey Team Wraps Up The Wins For Another Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

It's been another amazing year for coach Dick Blasy and his Midland Dow hockey team.

Dow was 16-5-3 going into the regional title game with Flint Powers Catholic.

"It's been going very well," Blasy said. "The boys have been playing well all year. We played a strong schedule and the boys have performed well against that schedule. We've beaten or tied 14 to 15 ranked opponents. We played Flint Powers, ranked No. 1, overall, Gabriel Richard when they were No. 2 overall and Marquette when they were No. 2 overall."

Top players for Midland Dow have included senior forwards Billy VanSumeren and Ryan Pomranky.

"We gave good depth this year, Blasy said. "Everyone competes, and everyone plays hard. We have great defensemen and great goaltending."

Defensemen have been Michael Kahl, Reilly Wagner, Tucker Pomranky, Conor Donlap, Zach Pider, Ryan Stadelmaier, and Keegan Luck.

Goalies are Justin Schafer and Collin Lemanski.

Other forwards included seniors Andrew Morrison, Maximus Rastello, Jack Wolohan, Caden Chritz, Jack Coppens, and Nick Sanders; junior Isaac Skinner, sophomore Jack Smith and freshman Ethan Menzies

"This team is capable of going as far as it wants to go," Blasy said.

Impressive wins have been



Midland Dow's hockey team's bench and coach Dick Blasy watches the action from the bench during the regional semifinal win over Cadillac.

9-1 over Freeland, 8-0 over Lapeer, 7-0 over Detroit Country Day, 3-1 over Saginaw Heritage, 6-0 over Big Rapids, 4-1 over Howell, 4-2 over

Traverse City Central, 5-0 over Midland High, 3-2 over Grandville, 4-3 over Grosse Pointe Woods University Liggitt, 5-0 over Bay City

Western, 3-0 over Byron Center, 5-1 over Grand Rapids West Catholic 7-0 over Davison., 8-1 over Traverse City St. Francis and 9-0 over Cadillac.

Midland Hockey Teams Shine During State Tournament Action

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The ice hockey season ended in thrilling fashion for a pair of Midland hockey teams during action in the Michigan High School Athletic Association hockey state tournament. Following is a recap of the hockey state tournament.

DIVISION 3

They say a hot goalkeeper can take you all the way to a championship in ice hockey and the Midland Dow hockey team is proof of that.

The Chargers took advantage of some outstanding play in net from Collin Lemanski to win the first state hockey championship in program history with a 2-0 win

against Orchard Lake St. Mary's in the Division 3 state title game.

Lemanski turned away all 32 shots that St. Mary's fired on goal as the Chargers completed a memorable ride to a state title. The game was scoreless until the third period when the Dow offense broke through with a pair of goals. Nolan Sanders scored the first goal of the game with an assist from Conor Dunlap and then Ryan Pomranky tacked on an insurance goal for Dow which was making its first-ever appearance in the hockey championship game.

Dow reached the finals by defeating Calumet 4-3 in the semifinals. Lemanski totaled 28 saves in the semifinal win. Billy VanSumeren led the offense with a pair of goals including the eventual game-winner early in the third

period. Chaden Chritz also scored a pair of goals for the Chargers. Ryan Pomranky added a pair of assists while Sanders also had an assist.

Dow reached the semifinals by defeating East Grand Rapids 3-1 in the state quarterfinals. Lemanski totaled 31 saves in the quarterfinal win. Ryan Pomranky paced the offense with two goals and an assist while VanSumeren scored a goal and notched two assists. Tucker Pomranky, Conor Dunlap and Isaac Skinner also added assists. Dow advanced to the finals by defeating Flint Powers 3-2 in a triple-overtime contest in the regional finals.

DIVISION 1

The Midland hockey team ended a memorable postseason run of its

own in the Division 1 state semifinals where it dropped a 6-0 decision to Detroit Catholic Central. Detroit Catholic Central eventually won the state title with a 5-1 win against Brighton.

Midland reached the state semifinals by edging Capital City 1-0 in the quarterfinal round. Midland goalkeeper Aiden O'Malley recorded a shutout as he turned away 19 Capital City shots. Cole Carpenter and Ryder Zastrow scored the goals for Midland while Ayden Spencer added an assist. The Chemics reached the quarterfinals in thrilling fashion by defeating Howell 2-1 in double overtime in



Midland Dow's offense was top notch all season

the regional finals.

DIVISION 2

Hartland won the Division 2 state finals. The Division 2 championship game went to double overtime with the Eagles claiming a 3-2 win against Trenton.

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Gymnasts Showcase Skills At State Gymnastics Finals

David Cook Sports Scene

The high school gymnastics season came to an end with the Michigan High School Athletic Association state finals that took place at White Lake Lakeland High School. Following is a recap of the state gymnastics finals.

Rockford Wins Team State Title

The Rockford Rams came away with the team gymnastics state title thanks to a balanced, all-around performance. The Rams finished with a team score of 143.825 to edge second-place Grand Ledge by .325 of a point. The Rams were first on the beam and took third

place on both the floor and vault. Lacey Scheid and Anna Tracey led the way on the beam while Scheid led the Rams on the vault. Scheid also led Rockford on the uneven bars and the floor. Rockford also received strong performances from Joey Gair on the beam and floor, Kate Tracey on the uneven bars and Olivia Schubert and Kayley Burke on the vault.

Grand Ledge Gymnasts Take Runner-Up Honors

The Grand Ledge gymnastics team ended the season bk taking second place at the gymnastics state finals with a total of 143.5 points. Grand Ledge gymnasts came away taking first place in

both the vault and the floor. The Comets were led by Alaina Yaney who led the team on the vault and uneven bars and Lydia Beaton who led the squad on the balance beam and floor. Grand Ledge also received strong efforts from Kennedy Sabin in the vault, Karis Filipiak on the uneven bars and balance beam and Emma Olds on the floor.

Fowlerville Competes At State Gymnastics Finals

The Fowlerville gymnastics team wrapped up the season by taking sixth place at the state gymnastics finals. Fowlerville gymnasts stood out on the floor portion of the event where it took second place. Kylie Bickel, Morgan Thomas, Sarah Litz and Hannah Ray led the team on the floor. Bickel, Thomas, Litz and Ray also paced the team on the vault where they placed fifth in vaulting.



The Rockford gymnastics team edged Grand Ledge to win the team gymnastics state title.

Area Competitive Cheer Teams Finish Season With Trip To State Finals

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Area competitive cheerleaders turned in some impressive performances this season with several area teams reaching the Michigan High School Athletic Association competitive cheerleading state finals. Following is a recap of the state cheer finals.

DIVISION 1

Rochester Adams won the Division 1 state championship followed by Rochester Hills Stoney Creek and Plymouth. A veteran team, Adams

won the state title in Division 1 for a third straight season.

DIVISION 2

Allen Park won the Division 2 state championship this season followed by Gibraltar Carlson in second place and Southgate in third place.

DeWitt placed fifth at the Division 2 state final marking the fourth straight season the Panthers finished in the top six at the state finals. DeWitt placed runner-up at the state meet last year. The Panthers qualified for the state meet this year by winning the

championship at the Kenowa Hills regional.

Cedar Springs placed 10th at the Division 2 state finals. The Red Hawks finished second at the Kenowa Hills regional and qualified for the state finals for a fourth consecutive season.

DIVISION 3

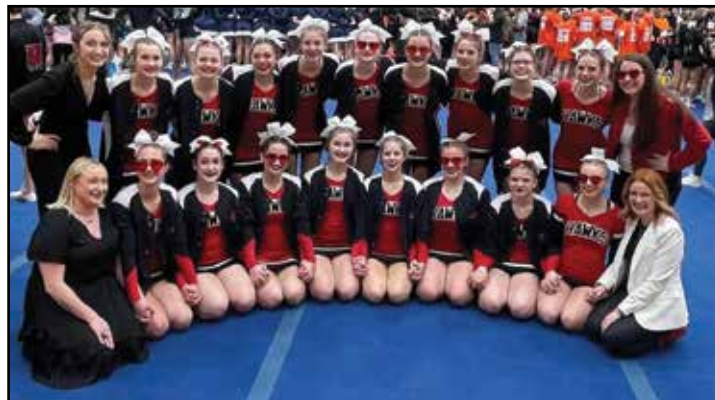
Richmond won the Division 2 state championship followed by Paw Paw and Pontiac Notre Dame Prep.

Portland finished in sixth place. Portland, who qualified for the state meet by placing second at the Rockford regional, qualified for the first time in program history. The Raiders also won the league title for the fourth season in a row.

Lakewood-Lake Odessa placed seventh at the state meet. Lakewood placed fourth at the Rockford regional and qualified for the state tournament for the first time since 2018.

Howard City-Tri County placed eight at the state meet. The Vikings

The DeWitt competitive cheer team placed fifth at the Division 2 state cheer finals.



Cedar Springs' competitive cheer squad competed in the Division 2 state meet.

won the Central State Activities Conference title this season and qualified for the state tournament for the first time since 2019.

DIVISION 4

Hudson won the Division 4 state championship this season followed by Adrian Madison and Lawton.

Montrose finished in fourth place at the state finals. Montrose took third place at the Michigan Center regional as it qualified for the state finals for the first time in program history.

A young Pewamo-Westphalia

team finished in sixth place at the state meet. State champions in 2019 and state runner-up the past two seasons, half of this year's squad was comprised of freshmen. The young Pirates qualified for the state meet by taking third place at the Jenison regional.

Beal City returned to the state cheer finals for the first time since 2001. Beal City won a district championship this season and finished second at the Jenison regional to qualify for the state finals where the Aggies placed seventh overall.

Beal City Cheerleaders Enjoy 'Record-Breaking Season'

John Raffel Sports Scene

Bailie Erway couldn't have been prouder of her competitive cheer team this season

Erway has coached three sideline and four competitive seasons at Beal City.

The 2022 team competed in the Division 4 state finals meet and placed seventh. The Aggies were 4.22 points behind sixth-place Pewamo-Westphalia, a perennial state power.

"It was amazing," Erway said. "It was our fourth year back as a competitive team and we were finally able to bring home a district champion trophy. We broke many records for our school this year. It was also the first time in 20 years that Beal City cheer made it to the state finals.

"Our goal at the beginning of the season was to place third or fourth at districts and we ended up winning districts. We had no clue we would end up as regional

runner ups and going to states. So we couldn't have been happier with our seasons outcome."

"We had some changes hit us due to the team losing a couple teammates but we made the changes needed and pushed on," Erway said.

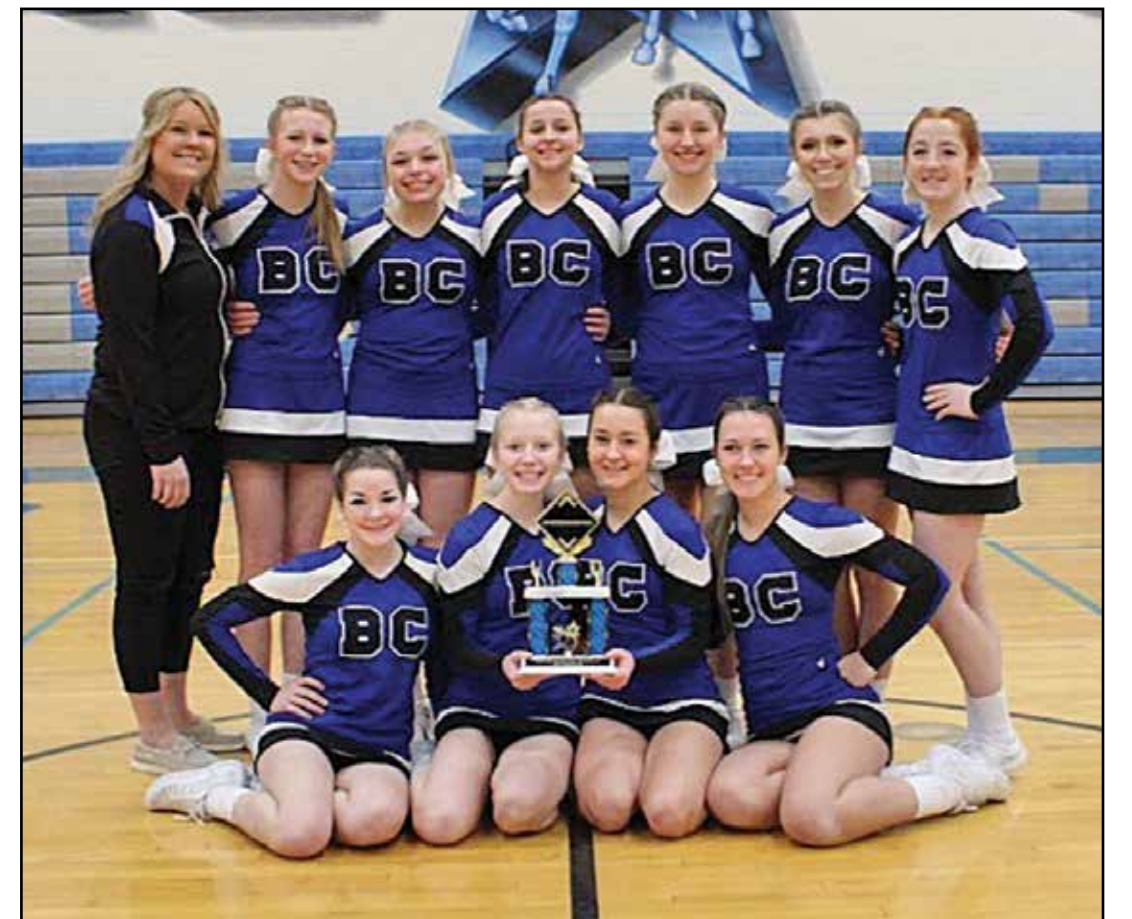
The Aggies had some exceptional athletes on the team

"Zeta Zeneberg is a senior and she was very crucial in all three rounds for years now," Erway said. "All of my seniors were amazing leaders. This was the first year that I could walk into practice and the seniors were already starting warm ups without me. They had such passion and drive. It made coaching very awesome this year."

Graduating are Jenna Faber, Zeta Zeneberg, Kyleigh Konwinski and Emma Gross.

Returning are Alexis Zeneberg, Gabby Breuer, Victoria Proton and Brooklyn Hanner.

"I have a lot of tumblers coming back," Erway said. "We hope to



Beal City's cheerleaders were seventh in the state.

get more kids to try out and come back just as strong next year."

our best in two of the three rounds and ended up in seventh," We were just happy to have the experience and I think it will help the younger

girls in seasons to come. I am so proud of this team. They worked hard and it paid off in a record breaking season."

At the state meet, "we did not do

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Rockford Gymnastics Team Earns State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

Rockford gymnastics coach Michelle Ankney had her team geared up for what she hoped would be a strong bid for a state title.

Rockford won the team title with a 143.825 score on March 11 to edge Grand Ledge 143.825-143.500.

The team consists of Kate Tracey, Avery Renberg, Hailey Hill, Emily Pittman, Claire Adams, Kayley Burke, Addi Pitzer, Sara Merritt, Ellie Wilcox, Mael Stelma, Anjaleah Barraza, Kennedi Wood, Joey Gair, Olivia Schubert, Anna Tracey, Ainsley Jehnzen and Sydney Taylor.

Scheid, Tracey, Schubert, Burke, Tracey, Gair and Hill were competitors for Rockford in the team finals.

"We were undefeated in our conference this season," Ankney

said. "We came in first at the Lowell, Kenowa and Canton invite, and we came in second at the Flip Flop Invite, our first meet of the season. Our biggest highlights have been winning the Canton Invite and for having an awesome conference meet this year. These meets are highlights because we are showing improvement at each competition.

"I think we are currently meeting expectations. We had lots of returners this year, and we are just trying to build upon what we did last year. We are making the improvements we need to make, and we hope to make a strong appearance at state this year."

The Rams have several outstanding athletes on the team.

Lacey Scheid "has been working a lot on consistency this year," Ankney said. "She is strong across all four events and is especially strong on floor and bars,"

Anna Tracey, "is one of the

most consistent athletes I have ever coached," Ankney said. "She works extremely hard, and she is a beam all-star. She also has upgraded both her vault and bars making her a very strong all-around gymnast."

Joey Gair "is team captain and the leader of this team," Ankney said. "She is strong and consistent across all the events, and a vital part of our team score. She shines on beam and floor."

Ankney made it clear what her team going into the postseason what her team wanted to pursue.

"Our big goal. the dream super big goal," she said, "is we would love to be regional and state champions this year. As a coach though, my biggest goal for the team is to help them



Can Rockford gymnastics win another title?

believe in themselves, to dream big, and to celebrate all they have accomplished regardless of outcome. To be regional and state champion, we need to keep working our upgrades to try to get the maximum scores that we can. We have a few more improvements on each event that would help us be competitive in the run for the state title.

"We also will continue to work on the mentality of the sport. There is a lot of pressure to be perfect, and we will continue to work on

celebrating all accomplishments and take things one day, one moment, one skill at a time. We are a team of 18, and each member of the team plays a vital role. We are all each other's support system, encourager, and friend. Our team isn't complete without any one of them."

For individuals, Alaina Yaney of Grand Ledge was second and Lacey Scheid of Rockford was third. In Division 2, Anna Tracey of Rockford was first and Lydia Beaton second.



Rockford's Zac Ahern is taking his talents to Ferris State.

college coaching ranks.

"I'm trying to get Jim to come up here and help us now," Annese said.

"We were at a prospects camp at Comstock Park and Zac was there," Annese recalled. "Halfway through the camp I said 'all right, we're offering him. He ran well and what was most impressive is we were short of receivers and DBs that day and had too many quarterbacks. I asked if anyone wanted to play DB and Zac went over there and played DB. His versatility and athleticism is really special. We're excited about Zac's future here."

Ahern is the grandson of retired Lansing Catholic coach Jim Ahern who just might be entering the

package.

"It's a great fit for us. Zac just keeps getting bigger and looking better. He's a very athletic quarterback. We've led the country in rushing by a quarterback eight of the nine years we've been here. Zac fits that mold. He's a fast guy and tough guy. He's a committed guy."

Annese left open the possibility Ahern could help the Bulldogs in another position if necessary. The squad has plenty of quarterbacks on its roster.

to an 11-1 mark. His offensive coordinator was former Ferris two-time Harlon Hill Trophy winner Jason Vander Laan.

"He's a complete package," Ferris coach Tony Annese said. "His versatility and athleticism is invaluable. We're excited about his future. It's a great fit for us. We've led the nation in rushing for a quarterback eight of the nine years here. Zach kind of fits that mold. He's a fast guy, a committed guy. The whole Rockford community thinks great things about him. He's the total

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Area Swimmers And Divers Compete At State Swimming And Diving Finals

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

DIVISION 1

Ann Arbor Pioneer came away with the Division 1 state title as the Pioneers totaled 365 points. Northville placed second with 267 points while Holland West Ottawa was third with 195 points.

Rockford swimmers compete at state finals

The Rockford swim team placed 17th at the Division 1 state finals with a total of 39 points.

Rockford was led by their divers as two Ram divers finished in the top ten. Sophomore Julian Cardenas led the way as he placed second in the diving competition with a score of 413.55. Senior Ben Giera took eighth place in the diving.

In the pool, sophomore Will

Cheney placed 12th in the 50 freestyle. Rockford's 200 freestyle relay team of Joe Reinsma, Christian Wagen, Nate Cheney and Will Cheney placed 14th.

DIVISION 2

Ann Arbor Skyline won the Division 2 swim championship as it totaled 291 points. University of Detroit Jesuit was second with 266 points and Grosse Pointe South was third with 238 points.

Okemos swimmers finish in top 15th at state meet

The Okemos swim team placed 13th overall at the Division 2 state swim finals.

Okemos was paced by a pair of relay teams. The 200 free relay team of Evan Singletary, Alex Huang, Jason Latimer and Gustavo Arellano placed eighth while the 200 medley relay team Singletary,

Huang, Arellano and Latimer finished 10th.

Singletary also placed ninth in the 50 freestyle and 12th in the 100 freestyle. Alex Huang also finished ninth 100 breaststroke.

Saginaw Heritage place in top 20 at state

The Saginaw Heritage swim team wrapped up the season by placing 17th overall at the Division 2 swimming state finals.

Heritage was led by senior Daniel Gladki who placed 14th in the 200 freestyle and 15th in the 100 freestyle.

Gladki was also a part of a pair of Hawk relay teams that earned all-state honors. The 400 free relay team that included Daniel Gladki Tyler Hammis, Andrew Gladki and Wilson Borrello placed 10th while the 200 free relay team of the same

swimmers placed 10th.

DeWitt swimmer, diver earn all-state honors

A trio of DeWitt athletes earned all-state honors in Division 3. Sophomore Aaron Thomas led the way as he won the title in the 50 yard freestyle paralympic race. Junior Erik Keisling placed 12th in the 500 freestyle while Panther senior Rory Kauffman placed 16th in the diving competition.

Grand Ledge swimmer earns all-state honors

Grand Ledge senior Eli Mull earned all-state honors in Division 2 as he placed 10th in the 500 freestyle.

DIVISION 3

East Grand Rapids came away with the Division 3 swimming and diving state championships as the Pioneers totaled 272 points. Holland Christian was second with 214 points while Spring Lake took third place with 191 points.

Mason places in top 15 at D3 state swim finals

The Mason swim team finished 14th at the Division 3 state swimming finals.

Senior Liam Boomer led the way for Mason as he placed second in the 100 butterfly and third in the 100 backstroke. Senior Tommy Hebert placed 11th in the 100 freestyle.

The Bulldogs also had a pair of relay teams earn all-state honors. The 200 free relay team of Evan Collins, Nick West, Hebert and Boomer placed 10th while the 400 free relay team of the same four swimmers also placed 10th.

Alma swimmers turn in big efforts at state meet

The Alma swim team turned in some big efforts at the Division 3

state swimming finals that helped the Panthers total 24 points and finish 21st as a team.

Sophomore Jack Chiodini led the way for Alma as he earned all-state honors in a pair of events. Chiodini placed sixth in the 200 individual medley and placed eighth in the 100 breaststroke. Connor Adams finished 26th in the 100 freestyle and set a lifetime best mark in the process.

Haslett athletes earn all-state honors

A pair of Haslett athletes earned all-state honors at the Division 3 swimming and diving championships. Sophomore diver Gryffin Porter placed fourth in the diving competition while junior Ben Trotochaud took 12th in the 500 freestyle.

Williamston swimmer earns all-state in pair of events

Williamston junior Brodey Millerov earned all-state honors in a pair of events. Millerov placed sixth in the 100 breaststroke and 10th in the 200 IM.

Eaton Rapids swimmers earn all state

Eaton Rapids junior Avery Jones claimed all-state honors in a pair of events at the Division 3 state meet. Jones placed eighth in the 200 freestyle and 12th in the 100 freestyle. Senior Tommy O'Brien placed 16th in the 50 freestyle.

Corunna, St. Johns swimmers earn all-state honors

Corunna and St. Johns each had a swimmer earn all-state honors in Division 3. Corunna junior Grant Kerry placed 15th in the 50 freestyle while St. Johns senior Koy Grams placed 14th in the 100 breaststroke.



The competition was intense at the MHSAA state swimming and diving finals.

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Ithaca's Lani Bloom: 'I Love Indoor Track'

John Raffel Sports Scene

Lani Bloom doesn't believe in taking any time off.

The senior Ithaca runner, who won the state cross country championship in the fall, is in the middle of a very



successful indoor track season.

On Saturday, March 12 the Ithaca High School senior won the Championship Mile

at the NSAF Nike Indoor National meet from the Ocean Breeze Track Complex on Staten Island. There were 11 girls competing. Competitors had to meet a certain standard to qualify. Bloom won it in 4:52.47 "I thought it went really well," she said. "At the beginning, I wasn't expecting to be in the lead so the race went out slow. I was in front. I was nervous about it. Usually when it happens in the national races, whoever has the lead doesn't win. I was trying not to expend all my energy in the middle so I could have my kick at the end. I won right at the finish in 0.07 of a second. "It was a cool experience. It was awesome to win on a kick. Timewise, it's my fourth best time. It wasn't as fast as I was hoping it would be." Indoor track is not an MHSAA-sanctioned sport and Bloom runs in the meets as an unattached athlete. "I love indoor track," Bloom said. "I think it's really great for keeping the intensity there through the really long, otherwise dead winter season."

She was first in the 11th annual Saginaw Valley State University MITS distance festival.

Bloom clocked the 800 meters in 2 minutes, 10.41 seconds. She was fourth in the 3,200 meters on 10:23.70 at the Grand Valley MITS meet 3,200

"I've had a pretty good season," Bloom said. "It's started out pretty slow and took me some races to get back into it."

Bloom said she's run indoor track since the sixth grade. She and other indoor track athletes usually run a lot at Saginaw Valley State. There's also indoor facilities they've been able to use at Central Michigan University and Grand Valley State.

At Ithaca, most of the boys and girls cross country runners came out for indoor track, Bloom noted.

"Technically we're with the Ithaca track club but we run meets unattached," she said.

She's committed to run sports at Purdue University but will soon start focusing on her final outdoor season at Ithaca. Practices for spring sports can begin on March 14 followed by competition starting later in the month.

Lani Bloom will be in her senior season of outdoor track at Ithaca.



Ithaca Set To Install New Field Turf

John Raffel Sports Scene

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"I've had a pretty good season," Bloom said. "It's started out pretty slow and took me some races to get back into it."

She also had a state meet coming up and will be running nationals in New York City.

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Bloom said she's run indoor track since the sixth grade. She and other indoor track athletes usually run a lot at Saginaw Valley State. There's also indoor facilities they've been able to use at Central



Ithaca will soon be installing field turf.

Michigan University and Grand Valley State.

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soon start focusing on her final outdoor season at Ithaca. Practices for spring sports can begin on March 14 followed by competition starting later in the month.

Local Athletes Recognized By MHSAA

Courtesy of MHSAA

The Michigan High School Athletic Association has selected several student-athletes from Class A member schools to receive scholarships through the MHSAA/Farm Bureau Insurance Scholar-Athlete Award program.

Farm Bureau Insurance, in its 33rd year of sponsoring the award, will give \$2,000 college scholarships to 32 individuals who represent their member schools in at least one sport in which the Association sponsors a postseason tournament. The first 30 scholarships are awarded proportionately by school classification and the number of student-athletes involved in those classes; also, there are two at-large honorees who can come from any classification.

Students applying for the Scholar-Athlete Award must be carrying at least a 3.5 (on a 4.0 scale) grade-point average and have previously won a letter in a varsity sport in which the Michigan High School Athletic Association sponsors a postseason tournament. Other requirements for the applicants were to show active participation in other school and community activities and produce an essay on the importance of sportsmanship in educational athletics.

The 32 scholarship recipients will be recognized March 26 during the MHSAA Boys Basketball Finals at the Breslin Student Events Center in East Lansing.

The Class A Scholar-Athlete Award honorees include: Alexis Maloney, St. Johns; and Colin Koot, Mason. Whitney Farrell of Freeland was recognized in Class B. Korah Honing of St. Louis was recognized on Class C. Mia Riley of Fowler was honored in Class D.

ALEXIS MALONEY, ST. JOHNS

Playing third season of varsity basketball and will play fourth of varsity tennis this spring; also played junior varsity volleyball as a freshman and sophomore. Earned all-conference and all-academic honors in basketball and tennis, helping tennis team to league championship and Regional runner-up finish. Served as captain for both varsity teams. Playing fourth year in marching band and third with symphonic band and has served as tenor drum and drumline section leader. Earned "1" competition ratings as part of both bands. Participating in fourth year on school's Student Athletic Leadership Committee, and serving as social media director, and participating in second year of National Honor Society. Also participating in fourth years of school's Compassion Club (serving on leadership board), Renaissance Club, Garden Club and church youth group. Will attend Trine University and study mechanical engineering.

Essay Quote: "When given the chance to congratulate, help, or support your opponent, do it. There will never be any negative backlash from the positivity you give to them, and know that makes you a better person. Sportsmanship is much like the golden rule; treat others the way you want to be treated. Take these lessons from the game and make them a part of your every day."

COLIN KOOT, MASON

Playing second season of varsity basketball and will play second of varsity baseball this spring, and played four seasons of varsity tennis. Helped tennis team qualify for MHSAA Finals all four seasons and earned all-conference in tennis and baseball. Helped baseball team to academic all-state award. Served as tennis team captain for three seasons. Participating in fourth year of Youth in Government and second as delegation leader, and received servant leadership award as sophomore. Participating in second year of National Honor Society. Participated in Future Farmers of America as a freshman and sophomore and won state championship in Greenhand Conduct of Meetings as a freshman and National



Silver Award as a sophomore. Served as school newspaper sports editor-in-chief as a freshman and has umpired baseball throughout high school. Is undecided where he will attend college but intends to study biomedical engineering.

Essay Quote: "Overall, competitive sportsmanship is the most important facet of educational athletics. The ability for an individual to compete at a high level while maintaining good sportsmanship is crucial in transforming from a person who wins to a person who succeeds. Success is measured in many different ways, but a successful athlete understands that there is more to athletics than just the scoreboard."

WHITNEY FARRELL FREELAND

Playing fourth season of varsity basketball, ran four seasons of cross country and will participate in her fourth of track & field in the spring. Qualified for MHSAA Finals in cross country and track and helped 2019 basketball team to Division 2 runner-up finish. Earned all-state in cross country and track and all-conference in basketball, and served as captain of all three teams. Serving third year on student council and second as part of National Honor Society, and also participating in fourth years of Be The Change club and Students Leading Students. Served as youth basketball coach and referee throughout high school. Will attend Ferris State University and study architecture. Essay Quote: "Prior to my 2019-20 varsity basketball season, I truly believed that good sportsmanship was offering to help an opponent up off the court or shaking every single opponent's hand after a game. I had participated in sports since the age of 3 and that was sportsmanship in action. However, my experience with and understanding of sportsmanship completely changed throughout the 2019-20 basketball season ... (as) each of our opponents was metaphorically helping us up off the court by recognizing the loss of our beloved coach."

KORAH HONING, ST. LOUIS

Played four years of varsity volleyball and will participate in her fourth of track & field this spring. Earned all-league and all-



region in volleyball and qualified for MHSAA Finals in shot put and discus as a junior. Served as captain of volleyball and track teams and earned academic all-state in the latter. Participating in fourth year of student council and has served as vice president. Also participating in fourth years of school's marching/concert, pep, jazz and steel drum bands and church praise band and is proficient playing 10 instruments. Served as section leader for drumline and clarinet sections. Also participating in quiz bowl and as sportswriter for school newspaper, and in fourth year of pep club. Will attend Indiana Institute of Technology and study business.

Essay Quote: "The definition of sportsmanship is when a sport is enjoyed for its own sake and a sense of fellowship with one's competitors. The reason sports exist is because people enjoy playing them, and sportsmanship is what keeps the love of the game alive. Sports are more than winning but also building relationships and good competition."

MIA RILEY, FOWLER

Playing fourth season of varsity basketball and played four of varsity volleyball. Named all-state in basketball for second time as a junior in leading team to Division 4 Finals championship. Also earned all-state honors two seasons in volleyball. Served as captain of both teams. Carries 4.0 GPA and has been dually enrolled for three years at Lansing Community College; made LCC's President's list. Participating in third year of National Honor Society and has served as chapter vice president, and participating in first year on student council. Participating in fourth year of Business Professionals of America, serving as club president and having qualified for national competition. Has volunteered with church throughout high school. Will attend Ferris State University and study biology and pre-optometry. Essay Quote: "Entitlement, foul play, 'trash talk,' and plenty other unsportsmanlike conduct is prominent in sports. These are all things that I do not want my character to reflect when I participate in educational athletics. Instead, I strive to act ... with nothing but respect, understanding, and kindness towards others in sports. It is unselfish, sportsmanlike acts ... that help us to refocus our purpose for participating in sports in the first place: to compete with our teammates and have fun."

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The MHSAA is a private, not-for-profit corporation of voluntary membership by more than 1,500 public and private senior high schools and junior high/middle schools which exists to develop common rules for athletic eligibility and competition. No government funds or tax dollars support the MHSAA, which was the first such association nationally to not accept membership dues or tournament entry fees from schools. Member schools which enforce these rules are permitted to participate in MHSAA tournaments, which attract more than 1.4 million spectators each year.



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