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555 E Downie St
Alma, MI 48801
(517) 202-1808

www.highschoolsportsscene.com

- **Publisher**
Randy Miniard
randy@highschoolsportsscene.com
517-202-1808
- **High School Liaison**
Paul Hornak
plhornak@gmail.com
989-331-1168
- **Editorial**
John Raffel
john.raffel@gmail.com
616-894-2936
- Butch Harmon
616-655-9058
- Dave Cook
- Scott Keyes
racinitnews@yahoo.com
989-890-4036
- **Photographers**
Skip Traynor, Dana McCann,
Eric Sawatzki, Marvin Hall,
Jaymee Beard, Lynn Munger,
John Raffel, Jason Barden,
James Trayor, Yoland Hayward,
Shari Mandell, Lynne Munger,
Lizzy Neal

Vol. 14, Issue 145 - January, 2023

CONTENTS

- 3 | Alma Boys Basketball Looking To Build On Last Year's Success
- 4 | St. Johns Basketball Team Uses Defense, Motion Offense To Start Season Fast
- 5 | Ithaca Basketball Team Off To A Solid Start To New Season
- 6 | Strong Inside, Outside Game Has Grand Ledge Off To A Strong Start
- 7 | Talented Core Of Veteran Players Has Mason Basketball Starting Season Strong
- 8 | St. Louis Basketball Team Building Around Promising Group Of Young Players
- 9 | Hockey Round Up
- 10 | Yeager Twins
- 12 | Veteran Core Has Ithaca Wrestling Team Heading In A Winning Direction
- 13 | Deep Holt Wrestling Team Gearing Up For Another Run At Team State Finals
- 14 | Alma Wrestling Team In Rebuilding Mode This Year After Last Year's Tourney Success
- 15 | Talent, Depth Has Mason Wrestling Team Ranked Among The Tops In The State
- 16 | Alma Girls Have Championship Goals
- 17 | Hemlock Set To Be Championship Contender
- 18 | Ithaca Girls Basketball Starts Out 8-0
- 19 | The Student-Athletic Corner / Healthy Living

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Hello sports fans, it's another great day here at High School Sports Scene Magazine.

I hope everyone had a great Christmas and New Year. Hopefully you were able to spend quality time with your friends and loved ones.

With the holidays behind us the winter sports scene ramps up in a big way.

Area wrestlers are plenty busy and racking up some impressive performances. As usual, the area is home to some outstanding high school wrestlers. The area also has several teams that will be among the best in the state in their divisions including Holt, Rockford, Lowell, Mason, Portland, Bay City John Glenn, Freeland, New Lothrop, St. Louis and Lakeview.

The basketball season is also in high gear for both the girls and the boys. Several area teams are off to sizzling starts and roundball fans have a host of options to catch some outstanding high school basketball by area boys and girls.

The action on hockey rinks is picking up as well as in the swimming pools as boys swimmers take to the water. Area ski teams are also ramping up their skills as the weather cools and the action heats up on the slopes.

With the weather cooperating, it's a good time to get out and check out how our local athletes are doing. No matter where you are located in central Michigan you can find an outstanding game or match going on close to you. So get out and enjoy winter and the great winter sports we have going on.



Randy Miniard
Publisher/Owner
517-202-1808
randy@highschoolsportsscene.com

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Alma Boys Basketball Looking To Build On Last Year's Success

David Cook Sports Scene

With a talented nucleus of players returning from a team that experienced plenty of success last season, the Alma boys basketball team is focused on working to meet the potential they have.

Alma turned in an 18-5 record last season and reached the regional semifinals. Several key players return from that team and the key to success this year is working to tap into that potential and become more consistent.

"I think this year's group has some tremendous potential, but right now we need to work on being more consistently physical, tough minded and competitive," said Alma coach Chris Brown. "We are still trying to build our chemistry as a single unit. For spurts we look very good, but at other moments we look like we're all reading a different book. Having a week less to prepare for game competition has affected everyone early on."

Alma is paced by a trio of returning starters. Senior forward Michael Howey is in his fourth season on the varsity. A returning all-state and all-conference player, Howey averaged 12.8 points and 6.4 rebounds per game last year. Senior point guard Sam Rosales is also a returning all-state and all-conference player. Rosales does a little bit of everything as he averaged 10 points, 7.3 rebounds, 4.1 assists and 3.1 steals per game last season. Junior shooting guard Cade Sutherland is also back. An athletic guard who is developing into a strong defender, Sutherland has outstanding shooting range and has had games in his career where he connected on five and six three-point shots.

"We have the potential and athletic ability to be a very strong defensive team," Brown said. "We are still learning exactly what that takes and trying to get everyone to compete together on

each possession. I think we also have the ability to play quickly or slow things down in the half court as long as we are constantly in attack mode. We want to be the aggressor on both sides of the floor."

Blending in with the returning starters are a solid group of players who are seeing increased minutes. Senior Delvon Pascoe-Ward is a physical presence in the lane both defensively and on the boards. Senior Treyvin Painter is one of the team's hardest worker day in and day out. Juniors Jacoby Dunlap and Daniel Ash and sophomore Owen Seeley have shown glimpses of what they can do and are making the adjustment to varsity basketball.

"Our entire group of young men have some fantastic attitudes and they compete hard to make each other better each day," Brown said. "The more quickly we become consistent in all aspects of the game, the sooner we will turn a corner in being



The Alma basketball team is facing a difficult non-league schedule along with plenty of tough challenges in the TVC 8 conference.

successful. The TVC 8 is a very strong league. Two teams have gone to the (state) semis in the last two years. I also think that almost every team in our league has the potential to be better than they were last season. Our non-conference schedule is also

difficult with three rivalry games, five teams that won 15-plus games last season and a couple Class A schools. I'm hoping the challenges we face throughout the season helps to mold us into a team that is ready for a tournament run in March."

Mt. Pleasant Blending In New Players As It Gears Up For Big Basketball Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

With just one starter back and four returnees overall, the Mt. Pleasant boys basketball team is going through a period of adjustment this season.

The Oilers graduated the bulk of last year's squad that turned in a 17-5 overall record last season and reached the district title game before falling by two points to Midland.

"We are trying to figure out what our strong points are right now," said Mt. Pleasant coach Dan Schell. "We can score, we have four or five kids who can put the ball in the basket and are fairly athletic. We are

inexperienced and we have to learn how to play with each other and in the system. We have to get the continuity down and learn how to trust each other."

The Oilers are off to a winning start this year with a 4-2 record through the first six games of the season. All six games have been close including a 66-60 loss to DeWitt and a 72-66 overtime loss to Grand Lege with wins against Alma, Bay City Central, Midland and Freeland.

Leading the way for the Oilers this season is junior forward Logan Borodychuk. The lone starter returning from last year's team, Borodychuk returns bigger and stronger this season

and that is showing up on the court as he is averaging around 19 points per game along with 10 rebounds per game. Andrew Barbee (6-foot-3) also saw extensive playing time last season and is starting at forward. Mt. Pleasant also returns senior guard/forwards Aidan Klein (6-2) and Scooter Polk (6-0) who are starters this season and seeing extensive court time.

A large group of newcomers to the varsity round out a deep and versatile Oiler roster. Senior Amonte Greene is a transfer from Roseville who is stepping in at point guard. Sophomore guards Easton Day and Nick Dise provide quality depth and are playing substantial minutes

in the backcourt.

The Oilers also have a foreign exchange student this season on the roster. Carlo Rosetti is from Italy and adds to the depth on the roster. Aidan Klein's younger brother junior Shaye Klein is a backup at center and providing solid minutes in reserve. Carter Dole and Chip Hovey add more depth at guard/forward along with Jerik Kremreiter.

"We have started out the season ok," Schell said. "We've played six games and we've had six close games. We figured out how to win four of those six. We lost by six to DeWitt in a game we were up at intermission and we lost in overtime to Grand Ledge."



The Mt. Pleasant basketball team started the season strong winning four of its first six games including a big win against Alma.

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St. Johns Basketball Team Uses Defense, Motion Offense To Start Season Fast

David Cook Sports Scene

The St. Johns boys basketball team is relying on strong defense and a motion offense to make up for a lack of height this season and the early results are resulting in a winning record.

With a roster that is void of anyone over six-foot tall, the Redwings have relied on their effort and skill to make a difference. The small-ball formula is working out according to plan as St. Johns opened the season with four wins in its first five games.

"It's been a big difference from the previous few years," said St. Johns coach Nate Wade. "We had a 2-19 record last year but we actually played pretty good basketball. We were in every game and lost a couple of overtime games. The junior class last year was pretty decent but we are very, very small so over the summer we had to learn how to win playing small ball. We went all around the state figuring out ways to win and I thought we had a very good summer."

The Redwings carried over that success into the regular season.

Playing tenacious defense is one of the keys to success. The Redwings look to run on offense but also know when to slow it down and go into their motion offense and how to get the ball to their three-point shooters.

Leading the way for St. Johns this year are a pair of returning starters. Carson Pieters is a three-year starter while Jack Ballard (6-foot) returns at center where he uses his physical strength to battle on the boards. Logan Schroeder, Joe Leonard and Landon Mikula brings strong work ethics to the floor and do what it takes to get the job done. Junior Chuck Miller (6-foot) is the backup center and is another strong player with good mobility. Junior point guard Anthony Dupuis brings old-skill point guard



The St. Johns basketball team opened the season winning four of its first five games thanks to strong play on defense and a productive motion offense.

skills to the floor and has a non-stop motor. Junior guard Chris Stewart adds more depth in the backcourt with his shooting skills and decision making with the ball.

"We have a bunch of 5-foot-9, 5-10, 5-11 kids who go into every game playing nasty on defense,"

Wade said. "They just believe in themselves and the team. They play 100 miles per hour on the defensive end and no how to turn it down and be patient and move the ball on offense. They are some of the hardest working kids I've been around."

Young Ashley Basketball Team Relying On Strong Work Ethic This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

What the Ashley boys basketball team lacks in height and experience this year, they are making up for with a high-level work ethic.

"We are a young team with little size that has to depend on speed and athleticism," said Ashley coach Marty Cartwright. "We have a good group of hard-working young men. Our strong points are that we are young and have young men that are willing to work and continue to strive to get better."

Veterans leading the team include senior Logan Drummond. Drummond brings experience to the court and is a hard worker who handles pressure well and makes others around him better. Sophomore Carson Litwiller is a good athlete who has increased his strength this season and has good range on his shot. Junior Chase Kral provides a presence in the paint but can also move outside to knock down a shot while senior Caden Passmore is a strong and athletic player who adds depth.

Blending in with the veterans is a promising freshmen group that brings plenty of skills to the floor.

William Long is fast and athletic and a strong defender. Jason Gibson adds depth in the post but can play multiple positions. David Johnson is another bright player who has the skill to play different positions. Robert Kral is a versatile freshman who brings length and athleticism to the court and can stretch the floor with his shooting and help with the ball handling chores. Trent Bylsma is another athletic freshman who can play multiple spots while freshman Sabastion Harrell adds depth up front and has a knack for getting open on the offensive end.

"We are looking to improve each



The Ashley basketball team has a nucleus of young and improving players this season.

outing and continue to get better as the year goes on," Cartwright said. "Being a very young team, we will be finding our identity throughout the year. We will be tested each

outing and will continue to improve throughout. Our guys are very hardworking and excited to continue to improve as we compete."

Ithaca Basketball Team Off To A Solid Start To New Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Graduation hit the Ithaca basketball team hard last spring but so far this season the Yellowjackets are continuing their winning ways.

A total of seven players graduated from last year's squad that turned in a 16-6 overall record. This year, Ithaca has four seniors from last returning along with four juniors and four sophomores. Those players have meshed together for a strong start to the season as Ithaca opened with wins in three of its first four games.

"So far so good," said Ithaca Josh Rayburn. "We lost to Chesaning in our first game and they have a very good team this year.

We then beat Valley Lutheran in overtime and then Central Montcalm and St. Louis heading into Christmas break. We are a taller team this year. Last year our seniors were a great group but we did not have a lot of size. We started only one guy over six foot. This year we start only one guy under six foot."

Leading the way for the Yellowjackets are the four seniors. Charlie Martyn is at point guard while Ethan Hull is at shooting guard. David Bakker (6-foot-4) is providing the team with strong play in the post. Martyn, Hull and Bakker are also Ithaca's top scorers so far this season. Bronson Bupp rounds out Ithaca's senior class. Bupp, who logged heavy minutes last season, has been unable to play this season due to a twisted ankle suffered in a pre-season scrimmage but is expected back after the first of the year.

Ithaca has a trio of juniors playing extensive minutes this season. Kaleb Hallock and Carter Adle are a pair of 6-foot-3 juniors that give the team good defense and rebounding up front. Junior Preslee Chaffin is a hard-working defender off the bench who is usually assigned to cover the opponent's best offensive player.

"The guys have been playing well and we hope to keep getting better as the season goes on," Rayburn said. "We have to continue to grow and get better and learn to play together. We went into the season



The Ithaca basketball team started the new season strong winning three of its first four games.

with the mindset of playing better on the defensive end and we are trying to generate offense on defense. We are trying to bring our offense along every week. I'm also really pleased to see how hard we play for each other."

Frankenmuth Gearing Up For Basketball Success After Deep Run In Football Season

David Cook Sports Scene

Thanks to the deep run by the football team, the Frankenmuth boys basketball teams is taking their time getting up to speed in the new season. That football run, however, bodes well for the hoopsters as many of this year's basketball players bring that winning mentality to the court.

Even though it took the Eagles some time to get in basketball shape, Frankenmuth has started the basketball season fast with wins in four of its first five games. Frankenmuth's

lone loss was even a close 43-42 decision to a powerful Bridgeport squad.

"We have a strong group that really plays the game the right way," said Frankenmuth coach Andy Donovan. "We're still trying to find some rhythm coming off our football run, but the boys are working hard."

A talented core of veterans lead the way for the Eagles this season. Travis Brenner is a versatile player who does a little bit of everything for the Eagles. Brenner is a good defender and playmaker on offense who also

brings good veteran leadership. Aidan Hoard is a versatile big along the front line. Hoard has good range on his shot and is also effective scoring around the rim. Carson Knoll is a crafty scorer on the offensive end of the floor. Knoll is also an excellent defender and rebounds well. Riley Hubbard is an effective slasher on the offensive end. Hubbard is another strong defender who anticipates well defensively and can make plays on the defensive end.

Frankenmuth also features good depth this year with a

talented core of players that bring versatility to the squad. Will Soulliere, Thomas Conzelmann, Johah Sholten, Jared Watchorn and Logan

Lipka are all part of a rotation that gives the team good balance and depth.

"We're a good defensive and rebounding team and are pretty athletic," Donovan said. "I think as time goes on, we'll be a very good shooting team as well, but we're not there yet."

The Frankenmuth boys basketball is hoping to pick up where the football team left off as it prepares to make a long post season run this season.



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 Love, Mom, Dad, and Eli

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Bath Basketball Team In Rebuilding Mode Following Last Season's Tourney Run

David Cook Sports Scene

Last basketball season was a memorable one for the Bath basketball team as the Bees reached the state quarterfinals. With a total of eight seniors graduated from that squad, this year looks to be a rebuilding season for the squad.

"We only return one player with experience from that team," said Bath coach Gabe Sowa, "so the beginning of the year is going to be a learning experience for many players. We have talent, but with juniors and a couple of sophomores getting extended minutes, it is going to take some time to be running on all cylinders. I think once that happens, we could be a team that makes some noise the second half of the year."

Bath does return one key player in guard Devondre Chandler. A skilled guard who can shoot or get to the hoop, Chandler scored 20 points in two of Bath's first four games this season.

Grant Duncel also brings some experience to the squad. Duncel worked hard in the offseason and brings a nice touch around the rim and is a good rebounder who will see plenty of time at the center position.

"This team plays with a lot of effort and intensity," Sowa said. "We have a lot of depth at the guard and forward positions. Playing good defense and trying to force turnovers will be a key to our season. We are ok at that right now, but if we can become good at it, it will make a difference in our season."

Bath has several newcomers that are making an impact this season. Sophomore center Jake Kuhn is another hard-working post player who has a nice touch around the rim. Kuhn also put in a lot of work outside of practice to improve his game. Junior guard Cole Chamberlain brings good shooting skills and a high work-ethic to the backcourt.

Sophomore Remi McCrimmon is an athletic wing player who plays strong defense and is aggressive on the offensive end of the court. Junior forward Max Parry is the team's top rebounder and is also the glue to the Bath defense. Parry communicates well on defense and anchors the back of the Bees' point zone. Junior guard Bradlee Uhlmann is another hard-working defender. Uhlmann has good



The Bath basketball team is in a rebuilding mode after a deep state tournament run last season.

quickness on defense and uses his quickness to get to the hoop on offense.

"Our mantra this year is to get better each day," Sowa said. "We have a really tough schedule to

start the year, so that makes it hard with guys getting used to varsity-level basketball. If this team can gel and work together, they have the potential to be a very good team the second half of the year."

developing into key contributors. Carson Daily is a sharp-shooting sophomore who drained 17 three-point shots in the first six games of the season. Freshman Braden James is a 6-foot-7 big man who is poised to put up some good numbers this season. Sophomore Alex Moran is logging heavy minutes this season and does a great job of handling the basketball and making the right decisions both on offense and defense.



Grand Ledge is firing on all cylinders as it prepares to make a solid run at the post season.

"I think this team can shoot the ball really well from outside," Charter said. "Teddy is a monster for us in the paint and that gives us a good inside/outside combination. If we continue to play defense with the same intensity we've been showing, I think we will continue to have success. We are in a really, really tough conference, the CAAC Blue. Everybody is tough in this conference and Okemos, Waverly

and East Lansing are all ranked in the state. That says a lot about our conference."

lead by example type of kids," Charter said.

Sophomore Preston Bonet was moved up to the varsity last season and is another key returning player. Bonet is a versatile player who can play any forward or guard position and provides the team with steady offense and strong defense.

The Comets are also receiving a big defensive effort from Daymon Ware. A senior with no previous varsity experience, Ware is a defensive dynamo who is all over the floor giving great effort on defense.

The Comets have several other varsity newcomers who are

building some confidence in our younger kids."

It helps having a force in the middle to build around and Grand Ledge has just a force in senior center Teddy Williams. An all-state football player headed to Grand Valley State, Williams is pumping in 18 points per game and hauling down 15 rebounds per game for the Comets

With Williams manning the post, the Comets also have an outstanding senior point guard in Caleb Estrada. Estrada is a strong, physical point guard who gets the job done on both ends of the floor.

"Teddy and Caleb are two really

Strong Inside, Outside Game Has Grand Ledge Off To A Strong Start

David Cook Sports Scene

Thanks to a powerful inside force and some outstanding play on the perimeter, the Grand Ledge boys basketball team is off to a solid start this season.

Under first-year head coach Luke Charter, Grand Ledge opened the season winning five of its first six games. The Comets picked up impressive wins against Caledonia, Holt, DeWitt and Mt. Pleasant with their lone loss coming in overtime against Petoskey by two points.

"So far we have been doing well," said Grand Ledge coach Luke Charter. "We are 5-1 and we are

Talented Core Of Veteran Players Has Mason Basketball Starting Season Strong

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Led by a large group of talented veterans, the Mason boys basketball team is off to sizzling start to the season.

Mason came out of the gate fast winning five of its first six games. The Bulldogs opened conference play with a 2-0 mark and checked off one of its goals for the season when it won the holiday tournament it hosted. What makes Mason's start even more impressive is the fact it has not been at full strength in the early going due to a variety of reasons.

"We haven't been healthy yet,"

said Mason coach Lee Chaney. "We have been dealing with injuries, some from the football season, and a lot of sickness. We finally got everyone back during our win against Kalamazoo Loy-Norrix."

When at full strength, Mason is one of the teams to watch this season in the Lansing area. The Bulldogs have a host of talented returning players like junior Luke Marlan. A three-year varsity player, Marlan earned first-team, all-league honors last year. Fellow junior Kaleb Parrish also earned all-league honors last season as a sophomore.

The Bulldogs also bring back sophomores Levi Stambaugh and

Cason Carswell who played as freshmen on the varsity squad last season. Juniors Tyler Baker and Nick Wells are back after playing as sophomores on last year's varsity team. Senior Colin Page also returns to the varsity lineup.

The Bulldogs also feature plenty of size in the post with senior Austin Stone (6-foot-7) and senior transfer Jack Wendt (6-foot-8).

"I like the depth and athleticism of this group," Chaney said. "We also have a lot of experience. Our guard play is good, we have shooters and have good size on the front line."

With the talent on hand, Mason is aiming for some lofty goals this

season. Mason is focused on winning a league title for the first time since 2007 and a district championship for the first time since 1999.

"The biggest strength of our team is probably that we can score in different ways," Chaney said. "We may have a different leading scorer each night which has been the norm so far. If guys buy in and work to improve each day we will get better."

Another strong point is that many of the players on the basketball team know what it takes to win big from their experience with the Mason football team that saw them reach the state semifinals the past two seasons.

"The nice thing is six of our



The Mason basketball team is off to a strong start this season winning five of its first six games.

players went to the state semifinals in football and bring that toughness over to the basketball court," Chaney said. "Our expectations are high for this season. We challenged ourselves this summer and during the exhibition period to prepare for the season."

Montabella Boys Basketball Team Building On Last Year's Success

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Last year's season was a successful one for the Montabella boys basketball team, but the ending left the team hungry for more. With a host of players back from last year's squad, the Mustangs are focused on satisfying their hunger.

Montabella turned in an 18-4 record last season. The Mustangs shared the conference title and eventually fell to Ravenna in the district title game. This year, the Mustangs are in no mood to share the title or have a district title elude them.

"Last year we shared the conference title and lost the district title on a buzzer beater," said Montabella coach Jared Simon. "The guys were not satisfied sharing the title and losing in the district final. They are pretty hungry this year."

The Mustangs opened the season showing plenty of determination. After opening the season falling to a much bigger school in Lansing Catholic in a tough non-conference matchup, the Mustangs reeled off five straight wins.

Montabella has a veteran team this year led by four senior returning starters. JT Smith is a returning all-state player who

eclipsed the 1,000-point mark for his career in a game early this season. Forward Drew Kelsey is

a returning all-conference player who averaged 15 points and eight rebounds per game. Senior guard Evan Judge is a three-year varsity player who is an athletic slasher that can get to the rim. Forward Rayce Sackett is an athletic forward who is also a very good defender.

Junior center Austin Foster rounds out the starting lineup. A 6-foot-5 center with good athleticism, Foster came up to the varsity at the end of last season and is an outstanding rebounder who also has an excellent shot.

A pair of juniors provide a lift off the bench. Cooper Bolton is an athletic forward who provides length up front along with good

defense and rebounding. Brady Carlson is another big, strong big who plays both forward and center who is an outstanding rebounder.

The Mustangs are also looking forward to the return of Chase Burggren. A starter last year as a sophomore, Burggren is recovering from a shoulder injury and is hoping to be back on the court by the end of January. A defensive stopper, Burggren is Montabella's version of Draymond Green in that he can play all five positions on the court and help in a variety of ways.

"I like our experience," Simon said. "We have multiple guys who have play multiple years on the varsity and that helps. I also like our length and athleticism. Our starting five goes 6-foot-1, 6-1, 6-3, 6-3 and 6-5. For Montabella, that is unheard of. Having that height across the board really helps us. We are also pretty skilled across the board. Everyone is capable of



The Montabella basketball team is picking up where it left off last year when it won 18 games.

handling the ball and shooting. That is a luxury a coach can be spoiled with."

St. Louis Basketball Team Building Around Promising Group Of Young Players

David Cook Sports Scene

The St. Louis boys basketball team is light when it comes to varsity playing experience and that lack of experience has led to some growing pains for the young Sharks so far this season.

While the Sharks have some talented young players, a lack of experience is a big reason St. Louis started the season with a 2-3 record.

"We have yet to put together a full game," said St. Louis coach Nic Gibbons. "We play well for a quarter or a half but we haven't

put together a full game yet. We have some young guys this season. A freshman, a couple of sophomores, so it takes time getting use to the varsity level and the speed of the game."

One veteran of the Sharks do return is senior Thomas Zacharko. The versatile 6-foot-2 senior is off to a strong start this season averaging 20 points and nine rebounds per game. Zacharko is also the squad's best all-around defensive player and can play point guard, shooting guard or small forward.

The Sharks also have a solid point guard in Wisdom Zanquo.

Zanquo is a vocal leader and gives the team a steady point guard to build around.

After that, the rest of the squad is new with no varsity experience.

Junior Josh Dew returns to the team after not playing last year. Dew rebounds the ball well and is a good defender. An outstanding all-around athlete, Dew is one busy athlete during the winter months as he is also a wrestler on the St. Louis wrestling team.

In the post, the Sharks have a pair of players seeing playing time. Junior Kaiden Pavlik is 6-foot-4 and junior Colby Taylor is 6-foot-

6 and they are both working to be the go-to big in the paint.

In the backcourt, sophomore Landon Pestrue is a solid defender who is working on improving his offensive skills. Freshman Noah Tripp is a talented young guard that is also looking to supply more minutes.

"We are seven deep right now," Gibbons said. "We have a couple of guys out with injuries that we hope to have back at the start of the new year and that will give us more depth and versatility. That will allow us to be more flexible and do some different things."



The St. Louis basketball team opened the new season with a 2-3 record.

Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart Looks For Bounce Back Season Behind Veteran Leaders

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Two years ago, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart reached the Division 4 state semifinals. Last season, with a vastly younger team, the Irish turned in a 10-8 mark. With a more veteran squad this season, the Irish are primed to once again be one of the teams to watch in Division 4.

Sacred Heart graduated 80 percent of its scoring heading into last season. This season, it's a different story as the Irish have plenty of talent and offense returning. That returning talent has Sacred Heart out to a fast 4-0 start this season with all four wins

coming by 25 points or more.

"Last year we started two freshmen, two sophomores and a junior," said Sacred Heart coach Justin Sherlock. "We had to take our lumps and figure out how to play this game at this level. We figured things out as the season went along and reached the district finals where we fell to Vestaburg."

Back this year is a group led by guard Grady Pieratt. The 5-foot-9 guard was the team MVP as a freshman last year and comes back this year a more experienced player. Pieratt is a very good defender and a great three-point shooter.

Inside, the Irish welcome back

senior center Josiah Howell who is an anchor of the team in the post. The 6-foot-6 center improved his game over the summer and is averaging 14 points on 73% shooting this year along with seven rebounds per game.

Junior Luke Taylor is back for his third season on the varsity. An excellent defender and good shooter, Taylor is averaging seven points per game and is shooting 40% from three-point range. Taylor has moved into a starting spot this year and does a lot for the team on both ends of the floor.

Sophomore Jason Boge is a 6-foot-1 wing player who is adding eight points per game. Boge is a gifted athlete who can shoot it or get to the bucket.

Noah Zion is a freshman point guard making a big impact. Zion is averaging 10 points and five assists

per game. Zion is extremely quick and is a good ball handler who also has good shooting range.

The Irish are also looking for a big boost come the end of January. That is when junior Aidan Halliday is expected back from an injury suffered during football season. Halliday was a key part of Sacred Heart's tournament run as a freshman and gives the team another talented big man to help up front.

Seniors David Hunter and Sam Powell add even more depth and experience. Hunter brings plenty of energy and rebounding to the floor while Powell is a backup center who gives the team more rebounding and defense around the basket.

Junior Alex Latham and sophomore Joe McDonald give the team added options. McDonald is an athletic player who plays bigger than his size while Latham is an excellent shooter off the bench.



With more experience on the roster the Sacred Heart basketball team is off to a strong start this season.

"I'm proud of the way the guys have come out of the gate," Sherlock said. "We are still a young team and we have some tough non-conference games coming up. The league is also very tough and we added Fulton to it this year."

Pewamo-Westphalia Basketball Team Looking To Be A Factor In D3 Title Chase This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

Year in and year out the Pewamo-Westphalia boys basketball teams is one of the top programs in the state in Division 3. That is no different this season as the Pirates again have a squad that can make a run at the Division 3 state title come the month of March.

Pewamo-Westphalia is off to strong start this season winning three of its first four games. The Pirates posted impressive wins against Grand Rapids West

Catholic and Portland St. Patrick with the lone loss coming against a solid Division 2 Ionia squad.

"I think we have really come out of the gates playing some confident basketball," said Pewamo-Westphalia coach Dominic Schneider. "I think we need to play tougher and really come ready to work every day to make sure we are improving and playing our best basketball come March."

This year's squad is led by team captains Luke Smith and Jamison Eklund. The two veterans lead the way for a relatively young Pirate

squad that has three sophomore and one freshman on the varsity roster.

The Pirates are also receiving solid minutes from veterans Brandon George and Ben Smith who were in a reserve role last year but have been needed to step up this season.

"We have some really good inside and outside play," Schneider said. "We also have a lot of guys that have stepped up like Brandon and Ben. Luke and Jamison have really set the tone in practice day in and day out. We are a young team

and these guys have done a good job bringing some new faces under their wing and bringing them along."

The young players are stepping up in a big way so far this season. Grady Eklund is our starting point guard and he is a freshman," Schneider said. "He has done a great job really picking up our sets and understanding our style of play. Kash Pohl has stepped into a starting role nicely



The Pewamo-Westphalia basketball team started the season strong including winning a title at the Cornerstone University tournament.

and has really improve from last season to this season. Reece Thelen is another sophomore that is being thrown into action. He has done a great job acclimating to the varsity speed."

New Coach Has Shepherd Bluejays Soaring In Early Stages Of Hoops Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

A new coach and a new system are creating a winning formula for the Shepherd boys basketball team as the Bluejays reeled off five straight wins to open the new season.

Jayme Fazi is the new Shepherd

coach and he has the Bluejays soaring this season, especially on the defensive end of the floor. Through the first five games this season Shepherd has allowed 25 or fewer points in each of the wins. In two of Shepherd's wins, they allowed just 16 and 17 points while allowing 21, 23 and 25 points in the other three wins.

"We are off to a 5-0 start and defense has been the biggest part of that," Fazi said. "I'm very blessed to have this group of guys, especially in year one back in the program."

An Alma College grad, Fazi was a varsity assistant at Shepherd under Travis Balzer and was a head coach at Hopkins High School.

Fazi has a balanced and deep squad that gets the job done on both ends of the court.

Point guard Joel Bendele leads the way. Bendele is a very good scorer and a tenacious defender. Bendele is also a very smart point guard who does an excellent job of running the offense.

Bendele and fellow senior Mitch Walters provide strong guard play for the Bluejays.

The Bluejays are also getting strong play from big men Justin Flannery and junior Cam Williams who both stand around 6-foot-4, 6-foot-5 and give the team scoring inside and strong rebounding. Colton Dysinger is another key contributor who is stepping up at guard.

Shepherd also has plenty of depth and options in reserve. Senior Andrew Maas is a versatile player who can play the wing or forward position. Junior guard

Nolan Caszatt adds to the quality depth at the guard position. Sophomore TJ Powell is another versatile player who can fill in at a variety of positions. Juniors Rex Lumbard, Anthony Schaeffer and Marcus Kendall round out the roster.



Through the first quarter of the season the Bluejays are looking to be one of the top contenders in the Jack Pine Conference. Through the early going Shepherd is along in first place in the Jack Pine Conference with a 3-0 record with Beaverton, Gladwin and Sanford-Meridian all a game back at 2-1.

FNV Griffins Off To Impressive Start

John Raffel Sports Scene

The FNV Griffins have skated out to a 5-2 record, which included a 4-3 early-season win over Midland Dow's hockey team.

The team also had wins of 6-2 over Sandusky, 5-2 over Essexville Garber, 9-2 over Saginaw Swan Valley and 8-2 over Mount Pleasant.

Players come from a variety of schools. Goalie Cayden Geurts, defenseman Remmi

MacDonald, Cadan Wolgast, Duncan LeBel, Christopher Morgan, Dade Doud, and forwards, Tristan Pohl, Thomas Jacoby, Peyton Essex and goalie Ryan Quakenbush are from Freeland.

Defenseman Hayden Simerson, Brady Kingsbury Sean O'Grady and forwards Joey LeFevre. Peter Shaheen, and Lance Karwat are from Saginaw Nouvel. Forwards Trace Atkin and Joey Furbush and from Frankenmuth. Defenseman Peter Shaneen is from Reese. Defenseman Jake Mulder is from Saginaw Valley Lutheran.

Defending Division 3 state champion Midland Dow has found itself in a rebuilding season, losing eight of its first 10 games. The Chargers have a new coach with Cody Keefer.

The Midland Chemics started out 8-3 and had an impressive win over Lakes Area United 8-0. Key players for the Chemics have been Tommy Kroll and Cade Sanborn who had two goals and two assists apiece in that game, plus Ryder Zastrow who had two goals and an assist, plus Ben Haney with a goal and four assists and Konnor White with a goal and assist.

Other top players have been Midland goaltender Aidan O'Malley who had 18 saves against Lakes Area.

Saginaw Heritage has started off 7-4 and Bay City Western is 8-5.



The FNV Griffins is a co-op high school team from Freeland, Nouvel, Valley Lutheran, Frankenmuth and Reese.

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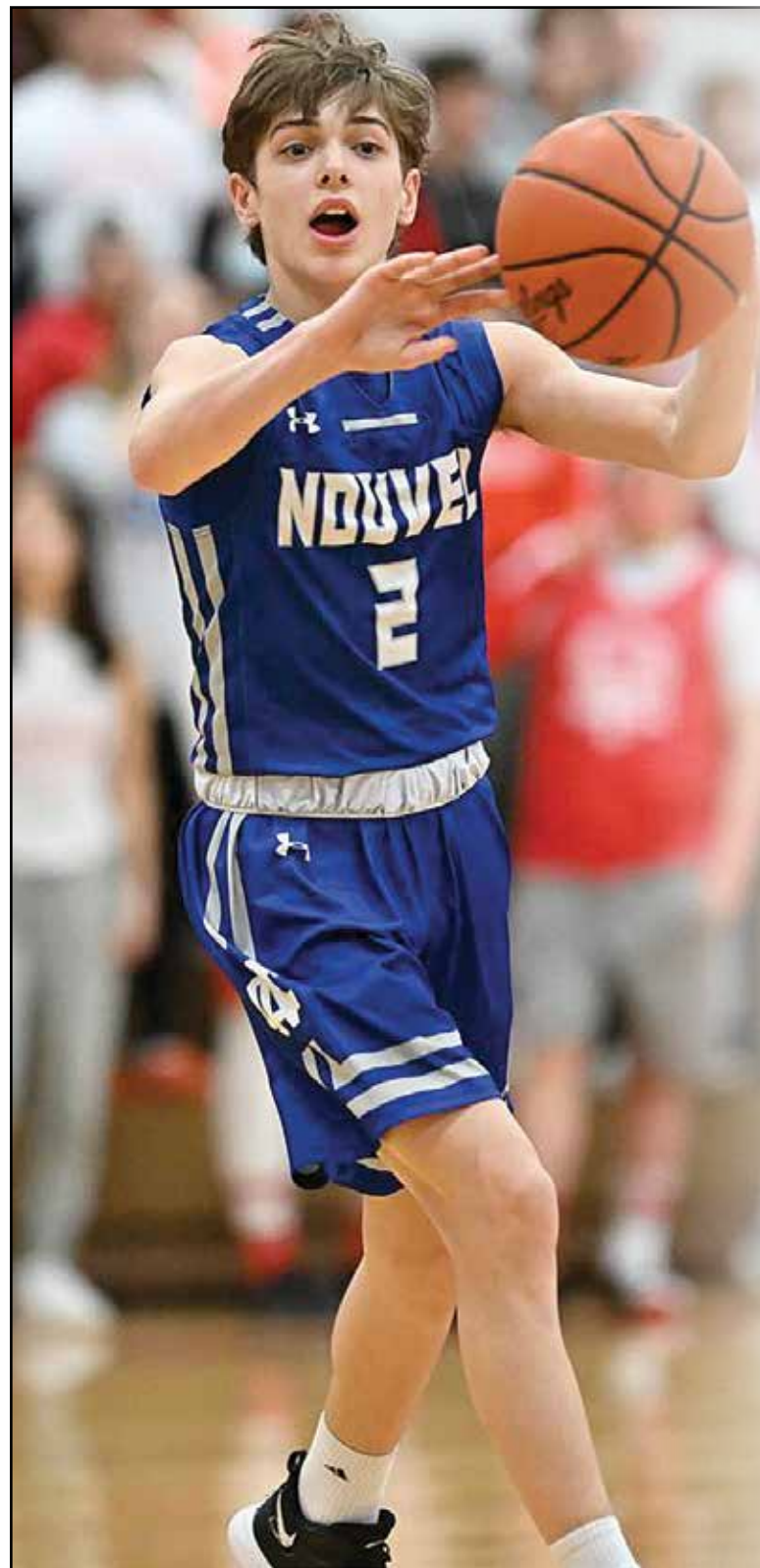
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DOUBLE VISION

Yeager Twins Put In Work; Results Showing Up On Court For Panthers

**Scott Keyes
Sports Scene**

MJ and Donny Yeager are what you call gym rats in hoops lingo.

They are the first to arrive at the gym and the last ones to leave. There are some instances where the brothers hoist up thousands of shots during a morning or evening practice perfecting their skill.

The Yeager's practice hard and play even harder in game situations.

It has been a worth ethic instilled in the twins as early as they can remember.

"Our dad Mark (Yeager) always wanted us to play basketball even before we were born," said MJ Yeager. "Dad grew up as a wrestler and let me tell you we tried everything growing up. We played football, baseball, soccer and gymnastics, we tried them all, but basketball was something that stuck."

The Yeager twins burst on the local hoops scene around the second and third grade cleaning up at local Gus Macker events. There are hundreds of Macker Trophies at the Yeager Gym from events through the years. Dedication and hard work has definitely paid off through the years.

It was about that time the Twins teamed up with local Hoops guru Jason Otter and OtterBasketball and started making it to various camps around the country

during the summer months building lasting relationships and connections that started to pay huge dividends as the got older in life.

"I am going to say this I worked with former Mr. Basketball Brad Redford back in 2007 I'm going to say," Otter said. "Brad was a shooter and had tremendous range. Donny and MJ are cut in that same mold. They work extremely hard. Playing above their athletic skill set for as long as I can remember. They have been doing it for so long and now people are beginning to take notice. Donny and MJ are two of the hardest working players I have ever worked with."

MJ Yeager is averaging close to 30 points a game for the Panthers this season. Mind you they are only juniors, but MJ just broke the school record for three-pointers made in a career. Yeager made nine 3-pointers as part of a 42-point game, leading Saginaw Nouvel to an 82-68 non-conference win over Kalamazoo Hackett. He shattered the old record of 167 made three-pointers and the record will continue to grow over the next year and half.

"MJ is probably one best shooters in the state," Otter said. "MJ has the ability to slow the game down and controlling pace. When Donny and MJ push pace in a game they are even better. One of the best ways to get them shots is in transition. If they are open they are likely to nail the shot."

As freshmen and sophomores the Yeager Twins showed glimpses of what their future

held on the court knocking down shots that sometimes left their opponents in awe of what just happened.

Now fast forward to their junior season the Yeager Twins are no longer flying under the radar and they like it that way.

"When you want something you will go after it in life," Donny Yeager said. When you put in all the hard work through the years and you start to see all the amazing results it's pretty special to watch."

Otter agrees.

"MJ and Donny both put a lot of time in and they deserve everything that is coming their way," Otter said. To be honest they are even better leaders off the court. Donny is just coming into his own and people haven't seen a duo like these two come along in quite some time. Shooters like Donny and MJ don't get rattled. They are steady as they come. They have to continue to pick their spot, create tempo, relax and let the game to come to them. It has been a fun ride watching them grow into young men on the court."

Mark and Shannon Yeager are definitely proud of the boys basketball accomplishments, but off the court you can't find more down to earth teens than Donny and MJ.

Donny and MJ Yeager are two of the most deadliest perimeter shooters that the Tri-Cities have seen in nearly 15 years. The Yeager Twins are only juniors and expect them to only get better in the coming seasons. MJ (right) recently broke the Saginaw Nouvel three-pointers made record of 167 and counting. Bottom: As youngsters Donny and MJ pose with Greg Lawson III during one of their Gus Macker victories. Lawson is also a high D1 prospect playing at Davison High School.

Special thanks to contributing photographer Mike Kollath.



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Veteran Core Has Ithaca Wrestling Team Heading In A Winning Direction

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

With a talented core of veteran wrestlers leading the way, the Ithaca wrestling team is moving in a winning direction.

Although small in numbers and experience, the Yellowjackets have some solid wrestlers that will put up a fight in any match they wrestle.

"We only have two seniors on this team and we are led by a great group of juniors," said Ithaca coach Daryl Dawe. "These guys are really working hard each day in practice and continue to get better. With the football season lasting as long as it does, we get a little behind the ball when it comes to weight, but when we get settled to where we need to be we will be tough."

One talented senior who Ithaca is building around is heavyweight Mason Vancamp. A big, strong and quick wrestler, Vancamp has battled injuries the past few years but is able to compete with the best heavyweights in the state when healthy.

Junior Joe Dawe is a returning state placer who took fifth at state last year. Wrestling at 144 pounds, Dawe is a battler who is always on the attack. Dawe is incredibly strong for his size and is a great student of wrestling according to his coach.

Owen Mikulka is a junior at 157 pounds. Mikulka has been Dawe's drill partner for the past three years and has learned a lot from their daily workouts. Mikulka has also put in the time at summer camps to improve and is poised for a solid season.

Junior Brandon Pass has only been wrestling for three years but is making an impact at 215 pounds.

"Brandon could quite possibly be one of the strongest kids I have ever coached," said coach Dawe. "He is a gym rat and takes practice very seriously. He constantly picks stuff up from Mason and when Brandon wants to take over a match few can stop him."

Freshman Kenny Daniels is a newcomer to watch at 190 or 215 pounds. A hard worker with outstanding strength, Daniels will only get better as he gains more experience and a go-to move.

"Leadership is our strong point," said coach Dawe. "We lost a captain and state qualifier in Noah Risner during football, but others like Joe Dawe, Mason Vancamp,



Owen Mikulka is part of a talented core of Ithaca wrestlers poised for big seasons.

Owen Mikulka and Brandon Pass have taken up where he left off. In terms of wrestling, I feel that this team has a little more heat than some past teams and a little more drive in them. We still give up a

few too many weights to really be competitive for the top spot in the league, but we will get our fair share of wins and put some fear into others."

St. Louis Wrestling Team Focused On Building Off Last Year's Success

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Last Season Was A Memorable One For The St. Louis Wrestling Team And With A Strong Group Of Wrestlers Back To Lead The Way, The Sharks Have Their Sights Set On More Success This Season.

Last Year's St. Louis Team Accomplished Several Goals. Along With Winning A League Title, The Sharks Won A Regional Championship And Then Finished In The Top Four In The State At The Division 4 Team State Finals.

"We Have Some Pretty High Expectations For The Team This

Year Especially Coming Off Of A Regional Title And Top Four Finish Last Year," Said St. Louis Coach Kevin Kuhn. "With That Being Said, We Have A Ways To Go To Putting Together Our Best Lineup."

St. Louis Is Led By A Talented Core Of Wrestlers That Includes Four Returning State Medalists. Those State Placers Include Sophomores Colin Kuhn (106 Pounds) And Martine Wiggins (144) And Seniors Dylan Marr (138) And Justice Onstott (190).

"We Also Have Some Tough Freshmen Who Are Taking Some Lumps Early, Going Through Some

Growing Pains, But Will Be Strong For Us In The Post Season," Said Coach Kuhn. "Freshmen Alex Rodriguez (113), Owen Fogel (106), Laythan Haworth (132) And Drew Alspaugh (132) Are Going To Be Key Contributors."

The Sharks Have A Pair Of Talented Wrestlers At 126 Pounds. Junior Ben March And Sophomore Genaro Soto Are A Pair Of Regional Qualifiers Who Both Missed Being State Qualifiers Last Season By One Match. They Are Both Hard Workers Who Do A Lot For The Team And Give The Squad Options In The Lineup According To Coach Kuhn.



The St. Louis wrestling team is looking to build on last season's success and make a return trip to the team state finals.

"We Hope To Defend Our Tvc Title And Make Another Run At Team State," Said Kuhn. "Our Regional Will Be Tough With Front Runners Like Hesperia

And Lakeview Possibly Being In The Way. Like Anyone Else, Our Season Will Rely On Whether Or Not We Can Stay Healthy And Put Our Best Lineup Out There."

Deep Holt Wrestling Team Gearing Up For Another Run At Team State Finals

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

After turning in a strong season last year, the Holt wrestling team is working on an even stronger follow up.

With a deep group of returning wrestlers to build around, Holt is ranked in the top ten in Division 1 and is primed to make a return trip to the Division 1 team state finals.

"This year is a very interesting year for our wrestlers," Holt coach Stan Granger said. "We have a great group of student-athletes. The biggest question is 'will they step up

to the challenge on the mat?'. This group in particular has traditionally been 'second string' behind to last year's very skilled graduating group for several years. So, this is their year to step up and I have no doubts that they can. However, they must believe in themselves as individual and as a group. We have several returning starters who also will need to step up into the very unfamiliar waters of leadership roles."

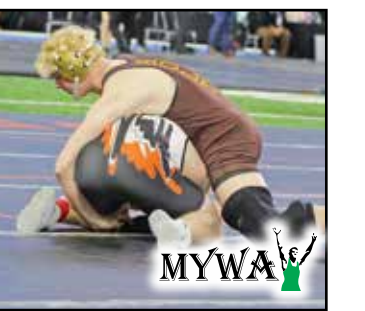
Holt returns a strong group of talented veterans led by seniors Mariano Lopez (120 pounds) and Ryan Mosher (113). Lopez finished second at individual state last year while Mosher placed fifth at state.

"Ryan and Mariano are both in my opinion strong candidates for state titles," Granger said. "Both of them will need to step up and help guide the team with not just mat prowess and wrestling knowledge, but also with role modeling and mentoring their teammates."

The Rams also return seniors Clara Holtry (145) and Cole Newman (215) who were state qualifiers last year and junior Jacob Harri (126) who also qualified for state. Holt also returns a trio of regional qualifiers in seniors Sawyer Hosford (106) and Ty Hafke (175) and junior Kaleb Bentley (138).

The Rams also have a number of wrestlers looking to step up this year including seniors Carter Hodges (150), Jackson Bremer (190) and Connor Crepeau (285) and sophomores Gieselle Parker (110), Ayden Mosher (144), Aaron Czewski (157), Kalem Pick (165) and Seth Holtry (215).

"We have also experienced a strong rise in numbers for girls wrestling," Granger said. "We have always had girls but now that we have a platform just for them to display their skills. Our numbers have gone from one or two to 10 and continue to grow on a weekly basis. Adding 10 girls to our program has been an awesome addition to the Holt wrestling program. These girls have embraced the hard work and effort to become better technically, physically and also mentally. It has been extremely impressive to see



The Holt wrestling team brings back several wrestlers from a team that reached the Division 1 team wrestling finals last season.

the overwhelming support from our community and support from the school to make sure that these ladies have all the resources that they need to be successful. I have no doubt that they will have a great season as well."

Large And Talented Senior Class Has Portland Wrestling Team Poised For A Big Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

With a roster full of experienced and talented wrestlers, the Portland wrestling team is primed for a big season.

The Raiders feature a lineup stocked with talented seniors. In the upper weights, senior Branson Goodman (215 pounds) is a returning conference champion with 81 career pins. In the lower weights, the Raiders return sophomore Colin

Fernholz (113), a returning regional qualifier. Senior Jake Olson (120) is a returning regional qualifier while senior Connor Gleason is a three-year varsity wrestler. Senior Ethan Webert (132) is another returning regional qualifier.

Portland is also stocked in the middle weights. Senior Drew Miller (138) is a returning conference champion and state qualifier who has 98 wins for his career. Senior Isaiah Pelc (144) is another returning state qualifier and has 105 career

wins. Senior John Dodson (150) is a returning all-conference wrestler while senior Deakin Guidi (157) is a three-year varsity wrestler and two-time, all-conference performer.

"I'm excited about our team this year," said Portland coach Andy Pulling. "We have a great team led by an experienced and focused senior class. We have competed well against quality opponents and look forward to our league duals. Our strong point is a well-balanced and united team. We have a focused and determined

senior group that is supported by motivated underclassmen willing to work hard every day."

The Raiders have a solid group of newcomers to the lineup that add to the depth and versatility of the team. Those wrestlers include freshman Andrew Feldpausch (106), sophomore Isaac Kramer (138), sophomore Mason McGregor (150), freshman Brady Meyers (157) and sophomore Barret Spitzley (175).

Along with being standout wrestlers, the Portland wrestling team also gets the job done in the classroom.

"Perhaps more important than being good wrestlers, this team is focused on being academic all-state



With a large and talented group of seniors leading the way the Portland wrestling team is looking to make a deep state tournament run this season.

by improving our team average grade-point average," said Pulling. "Their work in and outside of the wrestling room is evident."

Rockford Wrestling Team Among The Top Teams In Division 1 This Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

After falling short of a trip to team state last season, the Rockford wrestling team is on a mission to get back to the state finals this season.

With a balanced lineup anchored by a trio of state placers, the Rams have a squad equipped to make a deep tournament run.

A pair of senior state placers

highlight the Rockford lineup. Elijah Bunn placed second at individual state last year and is at 138 pounds this season while Jake Keller took third at state and is at 144 pounds this season. Junior standout Ryan Ahern rounds out the list of returning state placers as he took third last year and will wrestle at 190 and 215 pounds this season. All three started the season strong this year with undefeated records through the Kent County Classic

where all three won titles.

"We are off to a pretty nice start so far," said Rockford coach Brian Richardson. "We have won a couple of tournaments and won the Kent County Classic although Lowell only had a handful of their starters there."

The Rams also welcome back three more state qualifiers. Braylenn Aulbach is at 120 while Louis Bosscher is at 182. Madelynn Portko qualified for girls state and is at 120

pounds.

Junior Amilcar Ruiz-Diaz (113) was a regional qualifier last year as was James Diel (126) who is off to a strong start this season. Diel also won a title at the Kent County Classic this season.

Senior Nathan Wescott has made substantial improvement as has Bryce Gordon. The Rams also have some talented newcomers to the starting lineup that are making an impact. Sophomore Corbin Starkey (170/182) is doing a nice job for the Rams along with freshmen Liam Fitzpatrick (132) and Logan Hammingh (160).

"We are pretty solid up and down



The Rockford wrestling team is among the top teams in Division 1 this season.

our lineup," Richardson said. "We don't have a whole lot of holes in the lineup. We have a solid team and are looking to get better as the season moves on."

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Alma Wrestling Team In Rebuilding Mode This Year After Last Year's Tourney Success

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Rebuilding is underway in Alma this winter as the Panther wrestling team must replace 11 seniors who helped the team to the finest season in school wrestling history last year that culminated in a berth in the Division 3 state finals.

"The kids have been working hard so far but we don't have the experience we had in the past," said Alma coach Randy Miniard. "When you lose 11 seniors it's going to be hard for anyone. The kids are working hard but we don't expect the success that we've had the last six, seven or eight years. This is the first time we're not state ranked in the last six or seven

years."

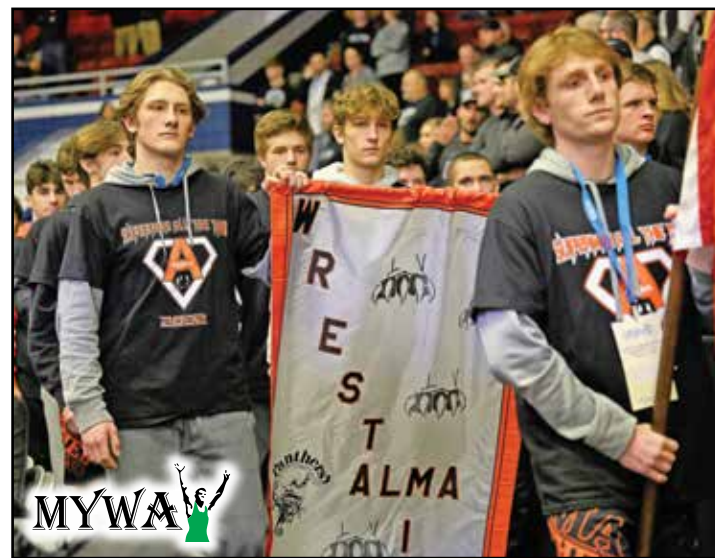
While the Panthers are young as a whole, they still have a nucleus of four wrestlers who stack up against any team in the state. Sophomore Fabian Facundo (144/138 pounds) and junior Cole O'Boyle (190) are both ranked first in the state in their weight classes in Division 3 while senior Gianni Tripp (144/138) and sophomore Buddy Leonard (132) are both ranked third in the state in their weight classes. Tripp picked up a big in the Grappler tournament in early December when he defeated Lowell's Owen Segorski, a returning individual state champion in Division 2 last year. Leonard won MVP honors at the Chippewa Hills invitational earlier this season and won an

individual title at the event as did Tripp and Leonard. Facundo, however, has missed much of the season due to an injury but is expected back by the end of January.

Tripp is one of three seniors on the team along with Carlos Martinez-Medina and Joey Oberle while O'Boyle is one of two juniors on the team along with Will Shanklin. The remainder of the team is comprised of sophomores and freshmen.

A sophomore stepping up this season is Daniel Rosales who has compiled a 7-3 record while wrestling at 132 pounds.

"We have a lot of youth in the lineup and they are all getting experience," Miniard said. "The



The Alma wrestling team is missing a large group of seniors who graduated after leading the Panthers to the Division 3 team wrestling title match last season.

kids are working hard and trying to get better every day. Our goal is to have enough kids in good enough shape to win a team

district and possibly competing for a regional championship."

Freeland Wrestling Team Starting The Season With Strong Efforts

David Cook Sports Scene

With a host of talented wrestlers back, the Freeland wrestling team is off to a fast start this season. What is even better news for Falcon wrestling fans is that the vast majority of the team is comprised of non-seniors meaning the best may be yet to come.

A total of eight Freeland wrestlers made it to the individual state finals last season and six of those wrestlers return this season. Freeland also

experienced quite a bit of team success as the Falcons reached the regionals before falling to Montrose.

"We started the season pretty good considering we haven't had a full lineup," said Freeland coach Scott VanLuven.

Leading the way for the Falcons this season are the returning state qualifiers. Joseph Klopf (113 pounds) is a returning state placer while Malachi Hill (120) also placed at state last season. Noah Graham (114) is a third Falcon that also placed at state. Ty Fournier

returns at 138 pounds while Gibby Shepard (157) and Eli Murphy (175) round out the list of returning state qualifiers.

Blending in with the state placers are a promising core of wrestlers who have stepped up in the early going. Colin Ott is a junior who is making an impact at 132 pounds. Braydon Honsinger is a senior who is back wrestling after taking the last two years off and is giving the team strong efforts at 126 or 132. Freeland is also getting strong efforts from Blake Petrie at 165. A pair of freshmen that

are stepping up are Easton Rosebush at 106 pounds and Bringham Smith at 190.

"We have a lot of juniors on the team this year," VanLuven said. "We are going to do well this year but we are really excited about next year."

Freeland is ranked in the top ten in the state in Division 3 this season and is challenging Bay City John Glenn, Birch Run and Alma for the league title. The Falcons are also working to gear up for a deep tournament run in the team state tournament.

The Freeland wrestling team is piling up the wins both as individuals and as a team this season.



Talent, Depth Has Mason Wrestling Team Ranked Among The Tops In The State

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Ranked in the top three in the state in Division 2 as of early January, the Mason wrestling team is poised for a big season.

The Bulldogs our coming off a solid season last year that saw the team reach the team state finals. With a wealth of talent returning from that squad, Mason is determined to take the next step at the team state tournament.

Mason started the season strong. The Bulldogs defeated Division 2 state-ranked power Gibraltar Carlson and placed second at the rugged Marquette Challenge that included Division 1 10th-ranked Grandville, Division 2

fifth-ranked Gaylor, Division 4 second-ranked New Lothrop and Division 4 sixth-ranked Iron Mountain as well as Wisconsin powerhouse Pulaski.

"We excited about the potential of this team," said Mason coach Brian Martel. "We have a very good balance of young and veteran wrestlers. The strong points of our team are balance and depth. We have 47 wrestlers on our roster and we are spread out well through all 14 weight classes. We have a good dual-meet team and enough top-tier talent to do well at individual events as well."

Mason's senior class is led by Tayden Miller (126 pounds). A three-time, all-state wrestler, Miller is currently ranked third in his weight class. Senior Trent Keast (126/132) is a returning

regional qualifier.

The junior class is led by Derek Badgley (190). Badgley is a two-time, all-state wrestler who is ranked second in his weight class this year. Fellow junior AJ Martel (165) is a returning all-stater ranked fourth in his class this season. Junior Tex Smith (138) is a returning regional qualifier ranked ninth in his class.

In the sophomore class, Matt Ausel (113) is a returning state qualifier ranked seventh in his class.

The Bulldogs also have three of the top freshmen in the state including a top-three nationally-ranked girl. Cecilia Williams (113/120) is ranked number one in the state in her weight class and is a nationally ranked girls



The Mason wrestling team is looking for a return to the Division 2 team wrestling finals thanks to a large group of talented veteran wrestlers.

and Fargo All-American. Williams started the season 11-1 in boys matches and placed third at the Marquette Challenge with a win over the No. 3-ranked boy in Division 4.

Dylan Granger (144) is ranked as the number one, pound-for-pound freshman in the state and is ranked

fourth in the state in his weight class in Division 2. Freshman Darius Ambros (106) is ranked seventh in the state in his weight class.

"I'm looking forward to seeing what this team can accomplish," Martel said, "and with only two senior starters what they can accomplish next year too."

New Warrior Wrestling Coach Optimistic

John Raffel Sports Scene

A familiar face has taken over the reins of Chippewa Hills wrestling hoping to keep the Warriors in the championship limelight.

Chippewa Hills has had a long tradition of championship wrestling and new coach Tyler Vogel is hoping it continues.

Vogel had been a Warrior assistant in various capacities for 10 seasons under Nate Ethridge and Kevin Edwards coming into this season. Ethridge left for Georgia four years ago. Edwards took over and vacated his duties after last season, but plans to do some work at the junior high level.

Like other wrestling teams, the Warriors were busy with practices over the break and resume action the first week

of January. Vogel officially took over during the summer. He is a special education teacher in the high school.

"I've been a part of this program as a coach and I also wrestled for and graduated from Chippewa Hills (2011). We did some things during the summer. We had a lot of stuff here. We had a little camp here. A lot of these guys play football or run cross country."

Vogel is also girls assistant track coach.

But his focus now is on wrestling and keeping the Warrior as a championship contender

"The kids show up ready to work, there's no complaints there," he said. "We have about 23 on the team, which is about average for the last couple of years. COVID kind of took our numbers down a little bit. We're starting to increase that." The Warriors are hoping to take the CSAA title.

"Tri County and Reed City always put together pretty good teams," Vogel said. "It will be fun to wrestle those guys."



Tyler Vogel has taken over the coaching reins of Chippewa Hills' wrestling program.

Corunna Wrestling Team Counting On Young Wrestlers To Make Progress

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Youth is the name of the game for the Corunna wrestling team. With few seniors on the squad, Corunna is developing a host of young wrestlers that make up the majority of the team.

"We have a few guys back but we lost four seniors," said Corunna coach

Dave Wilbert. "We are a fairly young team outside of our two seniors."

The seniors that Corunna lost helped the Cavaliers post a strong season last year as Corunna won a district title before falling to Alma in the regional. Corunna also placed third in the conference.

The seniors that do return are

standouts poised for big seasons. Seniors Xavier Anderson (175 pounds) started the season with a 19-0 record while classmate Decklan Davis (157) opened the year with an 18-0 mark.

The Cavaliers also return a couple of sophomores that saw varsity action last year. Dayne Zeeman (165) and Caden Minton (175) give the squad experience in the middle weights.

Bryce Edington started last season and won 16 matches while sophomore Dontae Chunko (144) is a newcomer that is showing promise.

A major problem the Cavaliers face this year is one of depth as they are unable to fill all the weight classes.

"We are giving up 24 points in voids due to our low numbers," Wilbert said. "The guys that are in the lineup are doing well but it's tough to go into a match giving up that many points. We are hoping to get some guys down a weight to take away a void or two. Each year it's a guess as to if you will

have the wrestlers to fill all the weight classes."

Corunna also faces the challenge of being the smallest school is a rugged wrestling conference. Competing in the Flint Metro League, the Cavaliers must deal with the likes of Division 2 powerhouse Goodrich along with bigger schools like Kearsley, Fenton, Lake Fenton, Flint Kearsley, Swartz Creek, Holly and Owosso.

"We welcome the competition," Wilbert said. "It helps us prepare for the state tournament."

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Former BV, Notre Dame Standout Tory Jackson Finds Home At Grand Blanc

Scott Keyes Sports Scene

Tory Jackson knew what he was inheriting when he accepted the boys basketball position at Grand Blanc High School back in May.

A team that was coming off two Class A finals appearances over the past two years and a squad that was returning an abundance of talent this season.

He knew there were a lot of challenges in front of him, but Jackson is a type of person that doesn't step back from adversity.

Everything he does, he does with passion and conviction.

Jackson, who played at Saginaw Buena Vista and Notre Dame, has been hired to replace Mike Thomas after the latter resigned to

one season there before the school closed in 2013. From there, he moved on to Bay City John Glenn and after compiling a 21-40 record in three seasons at John Glenn. He then was named the head coach at Saginaw Heritage.

But Jackson resigned before ever coaching a game at Heritage after a complaint was submitted to the MHSAA accusing him of making illegal contact with a player from John Glenn.

It was those two years away from the game that has provided Jackson with the wisdom of this huge undertaking of taking over the Grand Blanc program.

"During those two years away from the game I was able to head down to Notre Dame and pick the brains of my former college coaches a little bit and better prepare for this opportunity," Jackson said.

"To me that whole situation was like a blessing in disguise and how everything came about, but I truly feel it has made me a better man and coach because of it."

As of Jan 9, Grand Blanc

was 5-2 on the season with the teams only losses coming to Birmingham Brother Rice and North Farmington, two teams that could make runs at a Class A title this season.

Jackson loaded up the schedule this season with heavyweights, including Warren DeLaSalle, the team that beat the Bobcats in the finals last year, not to mention teams from the Saginaw Valley League, a conference that is as tough as any in the state.

But with returning players include two-time All-State point guard R.J. Taylor, who should be a candidate for Mr. Basketball this season along with two-sport standout Tae Boyd, who is headed to Ferris State University in the fall, Grand Blanc should have a solid nucleus to make a run the rest of the way this season.

"Coach Tory's transition was just like lets not miss a beat when he came in," said Taylor. "He wants us to get back where we were the last two year's. We have a great senior group and we have been playing together for awhile and we all really want this and I think Coach



Tory Jackson returns to the sidelines after a two-year break to lead a talented Grand Blanc squad that has made it to the Division 1 final game the previous two seasons.

Tory really wants this too. We would love to bring back another state title to Grand Blanc."

Alma Girls Have Championship Goals

John Raffel Sports Scene

Alaina Sunken is coaching an Alma basketball team which has started out 6-2 and is zeroing in a district championship bid.

"We thought we would start the season with 17 players in the program," Sunken said. "We had two injuries in preseason which brought us down to 15 players. At one point we were down to 11 players in the program due to injuries. Now we have 16 players. Having 16 girls is our big highlight

so far. Seeing everyone overcome injuries and life circumstances and still trying to play and not give up has been everyone's highlight this season."

Jordan Cleveland is at 17.4 ppg, 8.5 rebounds per game, four steals per game and four assists per game. Gracie Mellinger is at 16.4 ppg and five steals per game. Bailey Walkington is at 6.7 steals per game (10 in a game, twice) and 4.5 assists per game. Kendall Town is at 8 ppg, and 11 rebounds per game. Zoe Jackson is at nine rebounds per game.

"Jordan Cleveland has all around been the biggest threat this season for other teams

offensively and defensively," Sunken said. "Jordan Cleveland, Zoe Jackson, and Ava Atchinson's senior leadership on and off the court has been tremendous. They have had great leadership and have been a great example to the JV and varsity team. Our team's biggest strengths are scoring in transition and our defense. We do not have many players, but we are in great shape and can run the floor well on offense and defense.

Also, our senior leadership has been doing a great job setting an example to the rest of the players.

"We need to continue to improve on our mindset and setting the tone

of the game. We tend to play to the level of other teams instead of coming out strong from the get go. We have only had two conference games so far. We won one game to Birch Run and lost

our other game to Garber. It is too early to tell how conference play is going for us."

The sky is the limit as far as Sunken is concerned.

"We want to win a district championship and end the season with a 500 record or better," Sunken said. "We need to stay injury free and work on our mindset going into games. We already have good athletes, have improved our skill set over the summer, and now we just need to work on the mental aspect of the game."



Jordan Cleveland is having a strong season for Alma. Photo taken by Jasper Warner.

Hemlock Set To Be Championship Contender

John Raffel Sports Scene

Scott Neumeyer is Hemlock's girls basketball coach and likes the start his team is having.

"We're currently 5-2 overall and 2-0 in conference," he said. "We've beaten Essexville Garber, Millington, Nouvel, Carrollton, and Ann Arbor Pioneer. We lost to Swan Valley by six and Freeland by four. I think we have the potential to be very good by the end of the season. We've had a number of people out with injuries to start the season. We should get Lauren Borsenik back in the next week or so. She's a 6-foot-2 junior who transferred in from Bullock Creek. She will give us an important scoring threat inside.

"Her sister, Hannah, a 6-0 junior transfer, missed the Freeland game, but she's now back. Klaira Salo, a sophomore point guard who broke her arm in the first game

last season, is hoping to be back by early February. She's an elite on-the-ball defender who will help elevate our defense as well as give us another point guard who can handle the ball and run the offense."

Neumeyer pointed out his team put together a tough non-conference schedule with the likes of St. Charles, Frankenmuth, Midland Dow, and Bay City Western on the horizon. "We're hoping that the challenging non-conference schedule will help prepare us for the post-season," he said.

Seniors Chloe Watson and Regan Finkbeiner have led the team in the early-going. "They're four-year starters who have each scored over 1,000 points in their careers, and they are playing well for us once again," Neumeyer said. "They are outstanding ballhandlers and shooters. Junior Kylee Miller has stepped up for us as the

point guard so far this year, and Hannah Borsenik has given us some much-needed size, scoring, and rebounding. Sophomore Izzy Curry has been outstanding for us defensively. She is primarily a better soccer player, but she's becoming a better basketball player each day.

"Seniors Averi Hall and Alyssa Dearman, sophomore Izzy Krueger, and freshman Victoria Hauffe have also been valuable contributors for us. We've got a pretty good blend of experience and youth, which is good. We have a lot of team speed, and we hope to use that to our advantage, particularly on defense, and in transition. With the addition of the Borsenik girls, we have size, interior scoring, and rebounding that we haven't had in a couple of years."

Hemlock is also an excellent perimeter shooting team..

"Also we're hoping to have a little more balance offensively than we've had in the past, Neumeyer said. "We haven't had everyone healthy yet to see what type of team we actually have, but if we can get everyone healthy, I'm

excited to see what the team can become as the season progresses.

"The number one thing we need to work on is getting healthy and staying healthy. Injuries, sickness, and COVID have hampered our program for the last few years. We haven't had our complete team healthy for over three years now, so we're hoping that we can turn that tide, and we're taking steps to hopefully do that. On the court, we need to be a better rebounding team. Offensively, we just need to get some pieces back and get time together in practice and in games in order to get everyone on the same page. With all of the people out, it's been difficult to do that."

Neumeyer expects Standish-Sterling and Bullock Creek to be two of the top teams in the conference this year.

"If we can get healthy and stay healthy, I think we have the



The 2022-23 Hemlock girls basketball team.

potential to have a very good season and make a deep post-season run," he said. "We have a tough district with Sanford Meridian and Valley Lutheran in our district/ With the restructuring of our conference schedule, we were able to take on more non-conference opponents this season, and I think that will help us in the post-season. I told our players that our schedule wasn't designed for a perfect regular season. It was designed for a perfect post-season. Time will tell if that works out for us.

"Our biggest challenge will be putting together all of our pieces as they become available and developing our new players."

Dore Takes Over As Chippewa Hills Coach

John Raffel Sports Scene

Chippewa Hills had a new girls basketball coaching change as Aaron Dore replaces DJ Newman, who resigned at the end of last season. Dore worked with his players during the summer.

"The program lost a number of seniors last year, who had been varsity players for four years," Dore said. "This team has been left with four seniors and only two saw extensive playing time last year."

Desi Brown is a senior who brings key leadership to a young team.

Brown's season high has been 16 points.

"It was a matter of trying to get open shots and trying to drive and do whatever I can do," she said.

Her role last season was mainly being a shooter, Brown recalled.

"This year, I'll definitely be handling the ball a little more," Brown said, adding the key to breaking the press continues to

be "trying to get the ball to the middle."

Karley Densmore is a senior who hit the 20-point mark in the season opener in a win against Crossroads Charter Academy.

"The key was learning how to pass down low and attacking and opening up that defense," Densmore, who scored most of her points on putbacks, said. "I think we did really well but there's still a lot of stuff we have to work on like making sure we can drive and limit our turnovers."



New Chippewa Hills coach works with his players at a practice.

It's Densmore's fourth year on the varsity.

been building," she said. "I started out fast, not having a JV season."

"The first three have definitely

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Ithaca Girls Start Out 8-0

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Ithaca's girls basketball team got out to an 8-0 start before Ovid-Elsie handed the Yellow Jackets their first loss 55-44 shortly after New Years Day.

But the Yellow Jackets scored an impressive win in the Reed City Holiday Tournament, topping the home team with a 57-50 win in the title game.

Delaney Seaman led the Yellow Jackets in scoring with 20 points in the title game and freshman Libby Maurer had some key 3-pointers.

"It was a great tournament," Ithaca coach Khris Nevins said. "Kudos to Reed City for putting it on. We're playing well. There's a

lot of stuff we can do to get better. I don't feel we've hit our groove yet. We've been grinding out. When the girls hit their niche and started getting everything together right, we'll be good.

"We need to improve on our passing, the motion of our offense, and our boxing out big-time."

Olyvia Saxton, Natasha Nowakowski, Agathe Pollet and Lauren Humphrey are the other seniors, along with Seaman on the team. Key juniors are Faith Fisher, Karlee Whitmore and Emma Menendez and sophomores Ivy Davenport, Emmalee Shankel, Madison Montgomery and Kennedy Ryan are making key contributions.

Humphrey scored 13 points in a tournament semifinal win over Holton.



Ithaca's girls basketball team won the Reed City Holiday Tournament title.

Nevins said the game against Ovid Elsie "would be a tough test for us. Then we get into our league. Everyone in our league has

everybody back except Saginaw Nouvel which graduated everyone."

Ithaca Senior Continues To Score Well

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Delaney Seaman is considering various offers to continue her basketball career on the community college level

But right now, she's focusing on the rest of the 2022-23 Ithaca girls basketball season.

Seaman is averaging 20 points a contest after nine games for Ithaca.

"It's going pretty good, we're 8-1," she said, noting the only loss has been to Ovid-Elsie. "They are

in our district so we play them again. We will have to take care of the ball better. We had quite a few turnovers. We were down a starter, too, so we were down on numbers."

It's Seaman's varsity year and so far has been her best one especially with all of her experience and offseason work.

"I would say my ability to see the court is one of my strongest features," she said. "I can see the court really well and it helps me get to the basket and see my

teammates."

Her best game was vs. Chesaning when she had seven triples and wound up with 33 points.

"I played well overall," she said. "I was just feeling it that night."

Seaman also plays volleyball but basketball has been her main sport.

She has three offers from community colleges and has narrowed it down to two schools and is undecided on her future.



Ithaca's Delaney Seaman recently scored her 1,000th career point for the Yellowjackets.

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The Student-Athletic Corner

Even During The Holidays A Student-Athlete Is Always Working

Even during the Christmas break I was in the gym with my dad. We went through a lot of reads off of actions we run. Helped me stay sharp on the days we have off practice. It helps a lot because my dad knows a lot about the game and knows a lot of the different counters to every reaction to the defense.

Coach (Mike Williams) gave us a few days off Christmas Eve New Years Eve and New years. The grind this season has been much different my preparation for this season was so much different.

I approached it as a revenge season, not just for me but for my teammates and for my coaching staff. You don't realize how much

teams want to beat you and they celebrate every time like it's the Super Bowl because of who my coach is and the reputation he has and the winning pedigree he has.

We are a lot better today than we were at the beginning of the season. It's about being the best team in March. My personal grind is getting up at 5 a.m. getting my work in before school, coming home getting dressed before 6:25 a.m. out the door making it to school before 7:25 I sacrifice a lot of time people think the commute is easy everybody can't do that every single day.

Playing in the holiday tournaments are extremely important because you're likely

matched up against a top team in the state. We played River Rouge our first tournament game at North Farmington. We lost 75-71 but we are a lot better now than we were then as a team.

Our second game was against Lansing Waverley we won that one 71-62 we had a great team effort and it showed how much we have grown. We had four players in double digits. Things are so much different from this year to last year. We trust each other a lot more than last year. The whole season last year you heard in the stands that it's the freshman show and people really didn't care too much for me and it hurt the

team a lot.

This year we are playing for each other instead of playing against each other. We have bought in more to coach's style and coach has adjusted to us as well. We have learned to compete more this year we aren't were we want to be yet we have more work to do stay tuned.



Greg Lawson
Sophomore
Davison High School

The Ups And Downs Of Being A Student-Athlete

Being a student-athlete has its hardships, especially if you're trying to play in college.

I'm currently a junior in high school, playing two varsity sports, and playing for a national travel softball team based out of Southern Michigan. My goal is to one day play college softball at a high level.

This dream also comes with added work in the form of emailing college coaches, ACT/SAT prep, weekly 3-hour round trips to my four-hour travel softball practice, college visits, and college prospect camps. In the month of January alone, I have four different

prospect camps at different universities throughout the state of Michigan. Juggling all of this and still trying to get good grades in high school and daily varsity basketball practices leaves little time for other hobbies, friends, or relaxation.

All this can sometimes be very stressful. There are days when it is hard to get out of bed and go to practice. I wouldn't say I like coming home and doing homework and studying after practice. Some college camps are long and boring. I don't always like being in a different state all summer. Sometimes

I want to relax in my pool with my friends from home.

Being a junior in high school is tough enough.

So why do it?

The simple answer is, I love the game. I enjoy meeting new teammates and creating new friendships with them. I get to travel and experience so many new places. I love softball enough to know that I want to continue to play after high school. I love putting on my cleats and stepping on

the field. Even after bad games and hard practices, I will always love softball. Am I worried that I won't get recruited, absolutely?

But as Babe Ruth once said, "Never let the fear of striking out keep you from playing the game."



Grace Gilbert
Junior
Swan Valley High School

Healthy Living

Biggest Misconceptions with Student Athletes and Conditioning

Being in the Strength and Conditioning field over the last four years I have seen a thousand different ways on how to train athletes. In my early career, I have seen more misconceptions on how train athletes, opposed to principles and methods that have been tested over time. Here are some misconceptions when it comes to student athletes and conditioning.

One of the biggest misconceptions that I have seen is having athletes run endless miles to test their conditioning. Today's athletes have become stronger, faster, and more powerful. The old mantra of "no pain, no gain" has been outdated for quite some time. Instead of

athletes lining up on the goal line and running 16 110's to see who the last man standing, a different approach can be taken to enhance their performance. Train high quality outputs through sprinting, jumping, and position specific drills to help athlete's performance skyrocket. Performing high outputs drills and exercises will enhance the efficiency of the athlete's nervous system. The more efficient the nervous system, the more muscles are recruited, and leads to more power output from said athlete. This is where college coaches notice how "twitchy" or "bouncy" a perspective recruit can be.

A second misconception is the old thought "mental toughness" and doing mindless conditioning to see who can rise above the rest. Mental toughness is not running high amounts of gassers or down and backs but being able to help student-athletes make the choice of doing small details correctly and being resilient when times get tough. Don't get me wrong, I am all for hard things, however they are overdone. Athletes should be prepared for their sport by working back from game demands and making sure they are available for their coaches. This is done by being specific on what they need and making sure they are developed accordingly. However, a little hard never hurt anybody and

is great to callous the mind for the rigors of a long season. Not to mention, it allows for them to build trust with their teammates.

As mentioned before, I have seen different ways in my early career as a strength and conditioning coach. Being able to sort through all the information and to do what is best for your athletes allows an individuals to build a championship program.



Zachary Mendoza
Director of Olympic Sports,
Strength and Conditioning
Abilene Christian University

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