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# CONTENTS

- 3** | Area Grads Making Their Mark In College Basketball This Season
- 4** | Trio Of Big-School Girls Basketball Teams Ranked Among Top Ten In State
- 5** | Area Small School Girls Basketball Teams Among The Best In The State
- 6** | Mount Pleasant Coach Encouraged With Team's Showing
- 7** | Owosso Girls Bidding For Championships
- 8** | Ovid-Elsie Demonstrating Its Championship Potential
- 9** | Portland St. Pats Basketball
- 10** | Boys Basketball Round Up
- 12** | Wrestling Round Up
- 14** | Top Individual Wrestling Records By Division
- 15** | Alma Cheerleader Enjoying Extraordinary Season
- 16** | Swim Round Up
- 17** | Williamston/ Lansing Christian Swim Having Strong Winter
- 18** | Portland, Ithaca Bowlers Having Impressive Season
- 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.

The winter sports season is in full swing and area athletes are busy creating new memories. That said, can you believe the end of the season is in sight as conference wrestling tournaments are just around the corner with the team wrestling tournament set to begin Feb. 8 and 9.

Area wrestling teams are putting together some outstanding seasons led by Lowell which is gearing up for a run at an unprecedented 10th straight team state title. Area teams like Mason, New Lothrop, St. Louis, Portland, Montrose and Rockford are also ranked in the top ten in the state and have visions of a deep state tournament run.

Area basketball teams are turning in some outstanding seasons. The Capital Area Athletic Conference Blue Division is absolutely loaded this year with great teams and great young talent. Michigan State basketball fans are sure to remember the name of Kelvin Torbert. The former Flint Northwestern standout was one of the finest high school players in the nation in 2001 when he was a Mr. Basketball before going on to star at Michigan State. His son KJ is now a freshman at Okemos and is making a name for himself in just his first year of high school basketball.

Another team in the CAAC Blue to watch is Waverly. Flying a little under the radar, Waverly has the talent to make major headlines come March and is looking to remind Waverly fans of the glory days of the great Marcus Taylor when he led Waverly to the 2000 Class A state title.

A whole month of February awaits high school basketball fans with some great games coming up. Make sure you catch some of the fine basketball action before the state tournament shows up in March.



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# Area Grads Making Their Mark In College Basketball This Season

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The basketball talent that comes from the High School Sports Scene coverage area is as good as any in the state of Michigan. A host of area players are making their mark in college basketball this season both in state and out of state. Following is a look at how some of the area graduates are doing in college basketball this season.

Former Saginaw Heritage standout **Maira Joiner** is turning in a big senior season with the Michigan State basketball team. A 5-foot-10 senior guard, Joiner is averaging 9.8 points per game for the Spartans while shooting 41% from three-point range. Joiner had a season-high 20 points against Wisconsin after scoring 19 points against Maryland in her previous game.

Former Midland Dow standout **Molly Davis** is also having a big senior season in the Big Ten at Iowa. Davis, a 5-7 guard, is averaging 4.5 points on 40% shooting from three-point range



Maira Joiner lines up her shot during a recent Michigan State University game. Joiner, a former Saginaw Heritage standout is in her senior season as a Spartan.

and is an 80% free-throw shooter. Davis transferred to Iowa this season after three big seasons at Central Michigan where she was a three-time, all Mid-American Conference player who averaged in double figures scoring all three years.

Another area player making his mark in the Big Ten is **Ty Rogers** from Saginaw. A freshman at Illinois, Rogers is averaging 2.2 points and 3.4 rebounds while shooting 45% from the field. Rogers had a high game of eight points against Minnesota and a high-rebound game of eight boards against Ohio State.

**Jimmy Bell**, a former standout at Saginaw Arthur Hill, is turning in a big season at West Virginia. In a game against 14<sup>th</sup>-ranked TCU, Bell scored 15 points and grabbed a season-high 12 rebounds. For the season Bell is averaging six points and 6.1 rebounds.

A pair of area standouts are having big seasons at Western Michigan University. Junior guard **Hannah Spitzley**, a Pewamo-Westphalia grad, is averaging 7.5 points on 46% shooting from the field and is pulling down 4.8 rebounds per game for the Broncos. Senior **Maddie Watters**, a Williamston grad, is adding 5.4 points per game along with 1.6 assists and 1.4 rebounds for the Broncos.

A trio of players are making an impact at Ferris State University. Senior guard **Mallory McCarty**, a Saginaw Heritage grad, is averaging 10.5 points per game and leads the Bulldogs in assists with 5.8. Freshman **Mia Riley**, a Fowler grad, is having a solid first

year of college basketball as she is averaging 6.6 points per game along with 3.1 rebounds per game. Former Freeland standout **Kadyn Blanchard** was turning in a big season for the Bulldogs before suffering an injury. Blanchard was averaging 7.3 points per game before getting injured.

Ferris State rival Grand Valley State is also receiving big efforts from a trio of local players. Sophomore guard **Ellie Droste**, a Pewamo-Westphalia grad, is averaging 11 points per game along with 2.3 rebounds and two assists. Droste is shooting 40% from three-point and 44% overall from the field. Senior guard **Emily Spitzley**, also a Pewamo-Westphalia grad, is averaging 14.4 points per game along with 3.9 rebounds and 1.8 assists. Spitzley had a high game of 31 points against Wisconsin-Parkside. Junior forward **Courtney Sharland**, a Grand Ledge grad, is averaging 4.6 rebounds per game and one blocked shot per game while averaging 2.6 points on 59% shooting from the field.

The Saginaw Valley basketball team is led by a pair of Saginaw-area standouts. **Tre Garrett**, a junior guard from Bridgeport, leads the Cardinals in scoring at 15 points per game. Garrett is shooting 51% from the field and is also averaging 6.3 rebounds, 2.2 steals and 2.7 assists per game. Former Saginaw High standout **Freddie McIntosh** is averaging 14.7 points per game while leading the team with 3.6 assists along with 3.9 rebounds per game.

A pair of area standouts are leading the way for the Northwood University basketball

team. **Makenzie Todd**, a junior guard from Grand Ledge, leads Northwood in scoring at 14.8 points per game. Todd is shooting 41% from the floor and 86% from the free-throw line. Junior guard **Adele Kemp**, a Greenville grad, is also having a strong season as she is averaging 7.8 points, 3.1 rebounds and 1.8 assists. Kemp is also connecting on 84% of her free throws.

The Davenport University basketball team is led by a pair of area grads. **Scout Nelson**, a senior from Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart, leads the team in assists at 2.9 per game and is second in points with 9.3. Freshman **Ellie Toney**, a Corunna grad, is turning in a big freshman season. Toney is second in points at 8.6 per game and second in rebounds at 3.4 per game.

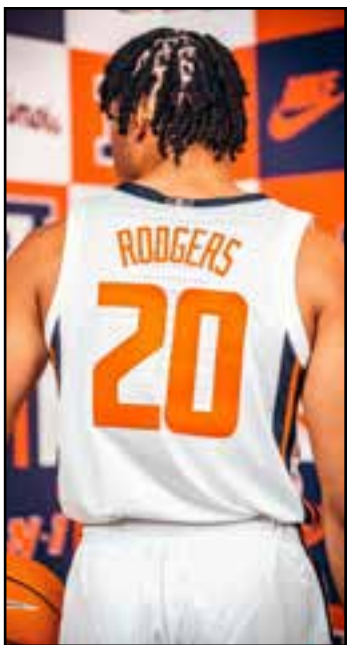
Former Okemos standout **Will Young II** is having a big freshman season at Northwood as well. The 6-foot-4 freshman guard is second on the team in scoring at 8.3 points per game and is adding 2.5 rebounds per game.

Former DeWitt standout **Sydney Mills** is turning in a big senior season at Hillsdale College. A two-time, all-conference selection, Mills is averaging a double-double this season with 10.7 points per game and 10.1 rebounds per game.

On the coaching front, former Freeland and Michigan State standout **Tori Jankoska** is in her first season as an assistant coach at the University of Virginia. Jankoska previously as the assistant the past three years at Missouri State.



Jimmy Bell is having a standout season in his first year playing for West Virginia University.



Ty Rogers has seen a lot of playing time as a University of Illinois freshman.

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# Haslett Leads Trio Of Big-School Girls Teams Ranked Near Top Of Hoops Rankings

## David Cook Sports Scene

A trio of mid-Michigan big school teams are ranked among the top ten in the state this season. Following is a look at those teams and some other Division 1 and 2 area teams that are putting together outstanding seasons.

### Haslett Off To Sizzling Start This Season

The Haslett Vikings are not only one of the premier teams in the Lansing area this season but are also among the best in the state. Along with starting the season with a 13-0 record, Haslett has climbed to sixth in the state in the Division 2 state poll.

Haslett is led this season by Emily Homan. A talented all-around player, Homan came up big in Haslett's battle of the unbeatens against DeWitt. Homan scored 18 points and added six rebounds, three assists and two blocked shots at the Vikings claimed a 55-52 win.



The Vikings have a talented lineup that also includes Grace Isenhath, Ellie Humble, Isabel Lindo and Maddie Fant. Lindo is a talented playmaker and defender while Isenhath is among the top rebounders on the team. Fant and Humble also play strong defense and add timely scoring. Defense is a big part of Haslett's success as they have held nine of their 13 opponents to 40 points or less this season.

### Rockford Ranked Number One In D1

After reaching the final four in Division 1 in last year's state tournament, the Rockford Rams are back for more this season.

The season is progressing well for the Rams who are ranked No. 1 in the state in Division 1 this season. The Rams are a perfect 6-0 in OK Red Conference play and have fashioned a 12-1 overall record. Rockford's lone loss came against Grand Rapids West Catholic, ranked No. 2 in the state in Division 2.

The Rams boast a talented lineup led by senior guard Alyssa Wypych who has been posting some impressive numbers this season. Junior guard Grace Lyons is a deadly outside shooter. Lyons set the new school career record for made threes with five in a game against Caledonia as she pushed her career total to 121. Sophomore forward Anna Wypych is also having a big season while freshman Sienna Wolfe is making a big impact for the Rams who have won all their games this season by at least a double-digit scoring margin.

Haslett remains undefeated after a recent victory against Mason.

### Frankenmuth Among Best In State In Division 2

The Frankenmuth Eagles recently honored their 1992 state championship team. This year's edition of the Eagles are looking to write their own chapter of history and are poised to do so being ranked third in the state in Division 2.

Frankenmuth opened the season with a loss against 4<sup>th</sup>-ranked Lake Fenton but have since reeled off 11 straight wins including wins against state-ranked teams including Freeland, Swan Valley and Hemlock.

The Eagles are led by senior Lexi Boyke. One of the most versatile players in the area, Boyke fills the state sheet in Draymond Green fashion. In the win against Hemlock, Boyke scored 11 points to go along with seven rebounds, five blocked shots, three steals and three assists.

Junior Mia McLaughlin is also turning in a big season for the Eagles. An outstanding outside shooter, McLaughlin totaled 23 points in the win against Freeland and had 15 points on five threes in the win against Hemlock.

Sophomore Clare Conzelmann is also turning in a big season and is one of the top scorers on the team. The Eagles have also received strong efforts off the bench from junior Ella Persails who is another outstanding outside shooter.

### Defense Key To Strong Start By DeWitt

DeWitt is off to a strong start this season thanks to some strong play on the defensive end of the floor.

DeWitt opened the season with a 12-1 record and are 4-0

in the CAAC Blue. The lone loss DeWitt has this season was a 55-52 decision against Haslett in a battle of unbeatens. Defense has been the key to DeWitt's success this season. In the first 13 games of the season the Panthers have allowed their opponent to score more than 40 points just twice.

Leading the way for the Panthers on the floor is the talented sophomore backcourt of Tara Kurnzc and Madison Uyl. The sophomore duo are a steady source of points on offense and are both outstanding defenders. DeWitt is also receiving strong contributions from Gabbie Brya, Alex Charles and Gabrielle Stafford.

### Janae Tyler Has Holt Off To A Big Start This Season

Led by one of the top post players in the state, the Holt Rams are off to a strong start this season.

Janae Tyler, who will be playing her college basketball at Kent State University next season, is making her last season of high school basketball a big one for the Rams. Already Holt's all-time leader in career rebounds, Tyler eclipsed the 1,000-point mark for her career this season. Led by Tyler's scoring and rebounding, Holt opened the season by winning 12 of its first 14 games and is 5-0 in the CAAC Blue.

Tyler has plenty of help in leading the Rams to a strong start this season. Guard Rhema Dozier has turned in several big games while Claire Tobias, Abby Metzger and Bailey Hosford have also been key contributors.

### Lowell Ranked In Top 20 In Division 1

Led by one of the top juniors in



Zar'ria Mitchell has put up solid numbers during her senior season at Heritage

the state, the Lowell Red Arrows are ranked among the top 20 in the state in Division 1.

With junior Braxcynn Baker leading the way, the Red Arrows won their first 10 games this season and are ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in the state in Division 1. A junior shooting guard, Baker scored the 1,000<sup>th</sup> point of her career in a game against conference rival Grand Rapids Christian. Already one of the most productive players in Lowell history, Baker set single-game and single-season scoring marks last season as she averaged over 20 points per game. Baker has picked up where she left off last year.

Lowell is far from a one-player team as the Red Arrows boast a balanced and talented lineup. Junior forward Piper Risdon provides scoring in the post and is an outstanding rebounder. Junior point guard Taryn Jackson is a tough defender and an excellent distributor on offense who gets the offense in motion. Senior Lexi Howell is a solid all-around player who has committed to playing in college at Alma College.

# Area Small School Girls Basketball Teams Among Best In State

## David Cook Sports Scene

Year in and year out, small school girls basketball teams in the mid-Michigan area are among the best in the state. This season is no different as several area schools are among the best in both Division 3 and 4 on the state level. Following is a look at some of the D3 and 4 teams in the area that are making an impact.

### Dansville Dominating Out Of CMAC

The Central Michigan Athletic Conference (CMAC) is annually home to some outstanding teams. In three of the past four years a CMAC team has won a state title in girls basketball and the Aggies of Dansville would like to add their name to the list.

Dansville is ranked seventh in the state in Division 3. The Aggies are 12-1 this season with the lone loss coming against Dearborn Divine Child and are 8-0 in conference play.

The Aggies are led by junior guard Megan Zeitz. The high-scoring juniors guard has turned in some impressive efforts this season including a 27-point effort against Division 1 Okemos. Zeitz has plenty of help as Kourtney Mack and Elizabeth Carpenter are also turning in solid seasons.

Defense is a big key to success this season as well. The Dansville defense has allowed 40 or less points in 10 of the 13 games the Aggies have played in this season.

### Portland St. Patrick Ranked In Top Five In D4

The Shamrocks of Portland St. Patrick give the CMAC two teams ranked in the top ten in the state.

St. Patrick is ranked fourth in the state in Division 4.

Fowler, also a member of the CMAC, won the last two Division 4 state championships and St. Patrick would like to make it three in a row for the league. St. Patrick defeated Fowler 48-40 in their first meeting this season. St. Patrick has tested itself against the best in the state having played Grand Rapids West Catholic, ranked second in the state in Division 2, and unbeaten Lansing Catholic on the CAAC.

The Shamrocks are led by veteran coach Al Schrauben. Earlier this season Schrauben coached the Shamrocks to his 700<sup>th</sup> win of his career in a win against Morrice.

St. Patrick features a balanced attack that relies on stingy team defense. Laynie Meredith leads the way for St. Patrick on both ends of the floor with plenty of help from Natalie Teachworth, Rylee Scheurer and Gracelyn Rockey.

### Fowler Looking For A Three-Peat

Fowler has won the last two Division 4 state championships and the Eagles are not about to give up their crown without a fight.

Fowler is ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the state in Division 4 and has an 8-6 overall record and a 5-2 mark in the CMAC. Fowler has been tested by a rugged schedule that has included non-league games against Division 1 Midland Dow, Division 2 unbeaten Haslett, Kent City, the Division 3 state runner-up the past two seasons, and undefeated Lansing Catholic.

Kelcie Pung leads the way for the Eagles with plenty of help from Avery Koenigsnecht, Grace O'Hare and Tayler Weber.

## Evert In Charge Of The Highland Conference

Not only are the Evert Wildcats dominating play in the Highland Conference this season, but the Wildcats are making an impact on the state level.

After an opening-night loss against Sanford-Meridian, Evert has reeled off 12 consecutive wins. Along in first place in the Highland Conference with a 9-0 conference record, Evert is also ranked sixth in the state in Division 3. Evert has been winning in impressive fashion as 10 of the 12 wins have been by double-digit margins.

The Wildcats feature a balanced attack with points on offense coming from a variety of sources. Addysen Gray has been among the leaders on offense. An excellent outside shooter with three-point range, Gray has had several offensive outbursts and is also a disruptive force on the defensive end. Freshman Kyray Gray has also been putting up some big numbers. Not only is Kyray Gray a productive scorer, but she is a strong rebounder and outstanding defender who can come up with the blocked shot or steal when needed. Brooklynn Decker is another strong rebounder and defender. Emma Dyer is also turning in some big efforts on offense. Dyer is also a strong defender and is also an effective rebounder.

Strong defensive play has been a key to the run. During the 10-game winning streak the Marauders held seven of their opponents to 30 points or less.

### Ovid-Elsie State Ranked After Slow Start

The Ovid-Elsie Marauders may



Ithaca is one of several area basketball teams ranked in the state in Division 3 or 4 this season.

have started the season with a few rough spots, but they have been on a tear since.

After losses against Pewamo-Westphalia and Dansville in two of their first three games this season, Ovid-Elsie has reeled off 10 straight wins. The Marauders are a perfect 9-0 in the Mid-Michigan Activities Conference and have risen to 11<sup>th</sup> in the state in the Division 3 state rankings.

Strong defensive play has been a key to the run. During the 10-game winning streak the Marauders held seven of their opponents to 30 points or less.

Ava Bates has been one of the leaders for Ovid-Elsie during the streak. An offensive force, Bates is also a playmaker on the defensive end of the court. Evalyn Cole is another all-around player who can lead the way on offense along with playing strong defense and rebounding. Braeden Tokar is also turning in solid play on both ends of the floor and is a playmaker on offense.

### Ithaca Turning Fortunes Around This Season

After winning just nine games last season, the Ithaca Yellowjackets have turned things around in a big way this season.

As the season passed the halfway point the Yellowjackets have 12 wins against two losses. Ithaca is also 4-0 and in first place in the conference. Ithaca's two losses came against state-ranked teams in Ovid-Elsie and Hemlock.

Delaney Seaman has been a big factor in Ithaca's success this season. Earlier this season Seaman eclipsed the 1,000-point mark for her career. Seaman has turned in a number of big offensive efforts this season including a 22-point game in a big non-league win against Alma.

Seaman is getting plenty of help from her teammates this season. Lauryn Humphrey has turned in several big games on offense and the Yellowjackets have also received strong efforts from Ivy Davenport and Olyvia Saxton.

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# Bullock Creek Girls Continue Their Strong Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Jeff Kozak is the head coach for a girls varsity basketball at Midland Bullock Creek, which is having a promising season.

"The highlights have included pulling out close wins such as Gladwin and Midland," Kozak said. "Also there was a close loss against

Meridian where both teams played hard until the end.

"We have a solid group from top to bottom but one of our top performers consistently is senior Mattie Midkiff. "She is kind of our do it all player who can play a post or wing. She does a great job doing whatever needs to be done on a given night."

Bullock Creek is a team trying to

mobilize on its strengths

"I feel the biggest strengths are the player's willingness to work hard and leave it all on the court," Kozak said. "We've only had a couple conference games and have the bulk of it still to come with some tough games against teams like Hemlock and Standish.

"We want to be competitive with whoever we play," Kozak said.



The 2022-23 Midland Bullock Creek girls basketball team.

"We need to keep working on little improvements each week rather

than trying to attain to big goal all at once."

# Beal City Guard Continues To Shine

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Lilly Leppert is having an excellent season for Beal City's girls basketball team, and it doesn't surprise coach Chadd Fletcher.

Leppert is a sophomore point guard-shooting guard.

"As a freshman I asked Lilly to try the point guard position for the first time at the varsity level," Fletcher said. "We were looking for a person that had great ball handling skills, lead and could help run the offense. She learned a lot and grew tremendously as a player

over the course of a full varsity season. She plays a huge part in improving our girls basketball program."

Leppert is leading the team in points (12.3 ppg.), assists (2.4 apg) and deflections (3 PG).

"Lilly is a complete gym rat," Fletcher said. "Year round she is constantly in the gym getting shots up and working on her game. She also plays AAU basketball in the summertime and also works with a basketball trainer in the off-season. Lilly has an improved jump shot and leads our team in 3-point

makes. Her court vision, defense, ball handling and confidence have also improved from last season to this season.

"I expect Lilly to take on a lot for our team this season. Being a point guard she really is the 'quarterback' of our offense. I expect her to score when she has her opportunities, but also distribute the basketball and put her teammates in successful situations. Lilly loves the game of basketball and works on her game year round. As a sophomore her teammates voted her team captain mainly because they all take notice



The 2022-23 Beal City girls basketball team.

of how much time she puts in the gym. As a program we piloted an online program that has a total shot tracker for each player. In the months of July and August she led our program and was able to log and track 15,745 jump shots."

Fletcher also runs cross country and participates in track and field.

"If Lilly keeps working hard and developing her skills, I do believe that she has potential to play college basketball," Fletcher said.

# Mount Pleasant Coach Encouraged With Team's Showing

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Mount Pleasant's girls basketball team has been making some noise in the Saginaw Valley league this season under coach Rachel Derusha.

"We had a really strong December, winning six games in a row, probably one of the best starts for the girls team since the Megan Starnes era," Derusha said. "We have great kids that work hard and are coachable. This year, even when

we haven't played our best, we have found ways to win."

The Oilers have some outstanding athletes.

"Sophomore Jordyn Egger is a returning varsity starter. She has led us in scoring and was averaging 20 ppg at one point," Derusha said. "She's probably roughly 15 ppg now. She is also one of our top defenders and is our second leading rebounder. Senior Katie Schell is a four-year varsity player. Our leading rebounder and all

around leader, she isn't one of those kids that has stats in every area but it is noticeable when she isn't

on the floor. Junior three-year starter Lakyn Karr is back this year. She is our top defender and often guards the best player on the other team. She is a true slasher and can get to the rim for us. Newcomer, sophomore Ava Petrino, has been a great addition to our team. She has settled in well with our program the last few months and has started the last three games. She brings energy on offense for us.

"Our strength this year has been our defense. We love to pressure

the ball and put the other team in uncomfortable situations. Our girls have played together since they were kids, and it shows with their tenacity and ability to build off each other on the defensive end. Our team needs to continue to work on our basketball IQ and what to do in certain situations in the game. We've lost two conference games and are currently 3-2 in the conference. We lost a really tough one to BCW."

Derusha adds: "We have the possibility to win at least 15 games this year. We are aiming to be top 2 in our district. We have to continue to get better and learn from each game, keep to our game plans and understand our potential."



Jordyn Egger (left) had a strong season for Mount Pleasant's basketball team.

# Owosso Girls Bidding For Championships

## John Raffel Sports Scene

The Owosso girls basketball team has started out strong.

A 45-40 win over Okemos has been among the highlights. The Trojans started out 6-3.

Owosso coach Jeremy Dwyer noted the Trojans were playing their third game in four days against Okemos, and came out firing in the first half building a 26-15 lead.

The Trojans got early baskets from Skotti Ball-Duley, Peyton Spicer, and Lexi Hemker added two threes. "It was an outstanding effort from the girls as we were

down to six girls, and playing back to back nights," Dwyer said. The Trojans got some big minutes from some underclassmen helping out with Cali Read, Paxson Tyrell, Kara Yerrick and Audri Hrncharik. Danica Dwyer had 16 points and four assists and Lexi Hemker had nine points and three assists.

### Breckenridge

Coach Philip Baldwin's team continues to post a winning record. Megan Goward scored 23 points in a win over Ashley.

"Megan Goward is a junior point guard who is averaging around 18 points per game and five rebounds," Baldwin said.

"Kayla Goward is a Sophomore forward who is averaging 7.6 points per game and 12 rebounds per game. "Our team's strength is our defense. We pride ourselves on our full court defense and try to get teams to play our game. We would like to see a more balanced attack offensively. We are young so we are still learning how to read defenses and react to how they defend us. We are currently 5-4 in our conference. We feel like we've won some close games and lost some close games. As we start our second time around the conference we plan to work hard and bring our best to each game. The kids are motivated and still very focused on being successful." Baldwin has set

some clear goals for his team.

"Our goals moving forward are to work hard, show improvement and give ourselves a chance to make some noise come district time," Baldwin said. "Our effort and focus each day is in practice and games. We have a strong team bond. We need to continue to build on that as we come down the final stretch of the season if we plan to



Megan Goward (right) focuses on defense in a recent game for Breckenridge.

accomplish any of our goals and stand up to the adversity that we are sure to see moving forward."

# Midland Calvary Baptist Player Passes 1,000 Career Points

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Caitlyn Dickerson of Midland Calvary Baptist Academy scored her 1,000th career point on Jan. 3 against Farwell.

She currently sits at 1,147 career points.

"Caitlyn is having a great senior season and enjoying her teammates," her father and coach Mark Dickerson said. "She continues to be a leader on both ends of the court, as well as off the court. The team is playing better than expected (including an 11-3 start), thanks in a big way to her ability to make everyone around her better. She frequently faces defenses designed to get the ball out of her hands, yet in spite of

that, still leads the team in points, assists and steals."

As of Jan. 25, Dickerson was averaging 21.6 points, 4.4 rebounds, 2.4 assists and 5.3 steals per game.

"Caitlyn wants to always do her best to honor God with the abilities and opportunities that have been given to her," Dickerson said. "This drives her to practice hard all year long, but also to be a great teammate. Her dedication to developing her skills and elevating her athleticism with strength/conditioning training, has given her a great physical package to work with, but her study of the game and scouting opponents has given her an even better mental understanding of the game. She is a great communicator and quite

literally a 'coach' on the floor.

"Caitlyn had a great junior year and her individual statistics are not drastically different.

However, the 10-9 team from last year had several seniors who contributed a lot. With only two other returning varsity players, Caitlyn's leadership has turned a very young, inexperienced team into a really strong competitor regardless of the opponent."

Dickerson added: "Her intangible skill of communication is at a level I have never seen from a high school player in 27 years of coaching, and she is the best defender on the court every single night."

On Jan. 16, Caitlyn scored 25 points in the first half, including 5 3-pointers, in a 51-27 win over Harrison.

"One of her goals is to win a district title this year," Dickerson

said. "We have a really tough, seasoned opponent in our district (St. Charles) who will make that very difficult, but I am hopeful that her leadership will take us there.

"Caitlyn is either running, lifting, shooting, or working other skills nearly every day of the week, even when she is playing other sports. She played AAU Basketball with the Michigan Mystics in the spring and summer, and

attended several basketball camps as well. She also coaches young players in summer camps and skill development workouts.]"

Caitlyn plays volleyball and soccer for her high school as well.

"I am biased because she's my daughter, but I am incredibly blessed to be her coach this season," Dickerson said. "There's not a team in the state that wouldn't want to have a player of



Caitlyn Dickerson of Midland Calvary Baptist Academy scored her 1,000th career point on Jan. 3 against Farwell.

her skill, dedication, effort, IQ and teamwork on their roster."



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# Hemlock's Two Four-Year Seniors Have Been Dynamic

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Chloe Watson and Regan Finkbeiner have been forming a dynamic one-two-punch for another season with Hemlock's girls basketball team.

Both are four-year starters who have scored more than 1,000 points



in their careers.

Finkbeiner has high hopes for her senior season.

"I definitely think it will be a good year," she said. "We'll take it one game at a time."

Her role on the team, Finkbeiner said, has basically remained unchanged from last season.

"I'm there to score and help my teammates to score as much as possible," she said. "I switch back and forth between point guard and wing."

Finkbeiner's moves to the basket have especially been a strength along with her 3-point shooting.

Finkbeiner also plays softball and

Chloe Watson (left) and Regan Finkbeiner (top right) lead the way for Hemlock's girls team this year.

volleyball at Hemlock. She has committed to Madonna University to play softball.

As for Watson, "Chloe has had an outstanding career," Hemlock coach Scott Neumeyer said. "She's an elite ballhandler and shooter who can also score inside. She's also become a much-improved defender and rebounder."

Watson has averaged 14.3 points, 3.9 rebounds, 2.1 assists and 2.1 steals a game. She shoots 54.8 percent from the floor.

"Chloe is a tireless worker and a gym rat," Neumeyer said. "She's always working on her game in order to get better. On top of that, she watches the game in order to better understand the game and how to play it. She was a

manager on our team when she was in fifth grade when her older sister, Olivia, was on the team, so she's been around our program for a long time and understands our program's culture. She's a great example of what hard work and commitment can do.

"Chloe's become a better

defender and rebounder. She's also grown in her understanding of the game. The game has slowed down for her, and she's not forcing things like most players do when they are younger. She's also become a more vocal leader, and that has helped the team as well. Chloe has had an outstanding career at Hemlock.

Not only is she one of the leading scorers and shooters in program history, she has helped her team to a conference championship, two district championships, a regional championship, and a berth in the Final Four when we were unable to play due to a COVID case."

Watson ended last season at 998 career points.

"I got to 1,000 points my first game this year, that was a lot of fun," she said. "I had to wait two months for three points."

Watson is hoping this year's team can also go far.

"I think Chloe can certainly play



at the college level," Neumeyer said. "Quite frankly, I'm shocked that more colleges haven't been after her. She's received some D3, NAIA, and community college interest, but I think she can play at the D2 level. I know she has a goal of playing college basketball. Any team that gets her is getting a steal this late in the recruiting process."

Watson indicated she'll play basketball at Mid Michigan College in Mount Pleasant.

Finkbeiner and Watson have played together since middle school.

# Ovid-Elsie Demonstrating Its Championship Potential

## John Raffel Sports Scene

The Ovid-Elsie Lady Marauders showed how dangerous of a team it can be when they knocked off 8-0 Ithaca shortly after the holiday break ended.

Dr. Ryan L. Cunningham is coaching the team.

Returning players are Kiah Longoria, Hadley Bukantis, Isabella Loynes, Murphy Alexa, Katie Lorio, Rylee Lewis, Ava Bates, Braeden Tokar, Evalyn Cole, and Hailee Campbell

Newcomers are Madison Thornton, Aubrey Kurka, Elyyanna Carman, and Malena Diaz

"We graduated three outstanding seniors but return

the bulk of our team from a 21-2 season last year in which we won the conference and district titles," Cunningham said. "Our team has great chemistry, speed and quickness. Having a core group of returners, the players have a solid understanding of the system that we run and tremendous basketball IQ."

"We need to continue to focus and improve on the little things like setting screens and boxing out. With added games this year we will have less practice time to prepare for a very tough non-conference schedule. We opened up with Ionia and PW."

The MMAC, Cunningham said, "is wide open this year but we expect to compete for another title.



The Ovid-Elsie girls varsity basketball team.

Preseason finishes look like: Ovid-Elsie, Durand, Chesaning, New Lothrop, Montrose, Lakeville, and Mt. Morris.

"As a group, we understand that whatever we accomplished last year is in the past. We know that we have a target on our back and

that we must prepare each and every day for the team directly in front of us. We will not take any team for granted. These girls are hungry and ready to prove that this team is equally capable of winning a championship."

In late January, O-E had a huge

40-29 win over New Lothrop. "This was just a great high school basketball with two teams laying it all on the line," Cunningham said. I thought both teams played extremely hard defensively but we just made a few more plays down the stretch." OE is 11-2 overall and 9-0 in the MMAC.

# Simon Leads Strong Portland St. Patrick Attack

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Portland St. Patrick coach Curtis Meyers likes the way his team has been playing this season.

Highlights for the season include a win over Saranac at home while putting up 72 points and playing aggressive defense, Meyers said. The team later went on a three-game win streak and was playing hard and having fun.

"We have a very small team this year with a lot of young players," Meyers said. "Brayden Simon is the hardest worker we have, and is always looking to improve. He is very strong around the hoop and is a good shooter when given the chance. Charlie Thelen's knowledge and understanding of the game is wonderful. He has phenomenal footwork and can really shoot it when given the chance. Jerry Scheurer (8th Grade) is very young but just really knows and

understands the game. He gets after it on defense, handles it well, and is one of the best shooters we have. Landon Simpson is starting to get after it defensively, handles the ball well for us, is starting to learn how to hunt, and shoots better now playing off the ball with being a good shooter.

"Alex Fedewa is one of the most experienced on the team, works hard, can make the open shot when needed and also can get downhill with his athleticism. Payton Russman is really embracing the role of being the senior leader, is one of the hardest workers on the team, can shoot it when given the chance, and really rebounds well for us. Devin Cook really gets after it defensively for us and helps us on the defensive and offensive glass getting us extra possessions. Davide Cannilla is a wonderful teammate always pushing others to get better. He really breaks down

film on opponents letting us know what to expect. He is a fantastic person and is having fun while improving his own skills as well as helping the team however he can."

As for his team's strength, "we really work hard on the defensive end allowing us to compete against teams much bigger than us. We have guys who can shoot the ball when getting out in transition and sharing the basketball," Meyers said. "We switched offenses and defense this year so we are still figuring out things on both ends. We need to continue to work and improve on both sides of the ball and also rebounding the basketball.

"We need to continue to improve to be able to compete against teams at the top of the conference. We need

for everyone to continue to strive to get better each day as both a player and a person and continue to build a culture of working hard and getting after it. Hopefully by the end of the year we will be able to compete in districts were it has been a very long time since we have won a district title. We need to continue to improve on defense

and offensively. We have to be engaged and in the right spots and continue to play hard."

Meyers added: "Our high school has 73 kids in it which allows 8th graders the opportunity to compete at the high school level if needed. With the team being so young it's great to see the older guys embrace the younger guys both on and off the court. Also it is great to see the young guys get the opportunity to help out and push the older guys. With only 3 seniors (one being a foreign exchange) and 1 junior playing this year, without the younger guys it would be a real struggle."

Simon is averaging 13.1 points 6.5 rebounds and 1.6 steals per game.

"We changed our offense and defense this year and he is soaking it all in," Meyers said. "He leads by example by being a hard worker. Keys to his success is being a very coachable and hard working kid, first one in last one out of the gym. He has improved a lot from last year. He's bigger, faster, and stronger. He has put in a lot of work in the weight room as well



Brayden Simon continues to have a strong basketball season for Portland St. Patrick.

as the court. He is bigger faster and stronger. His shot has also improved. He works hard around the hoop and is starting to get more comfortable in our new offense and defense."

# Meredith's Season For St. Patrick's Girls Has Been Impressive

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Al Schrauben has had excellent players in his coaching career with the Portland St. Patrick girls basketball team.

A player to be added to that list is Laynie Meredith who is a third-year varsity player who has had an exceptional season.

"She's rounding into shape

after starting the season injured," Schrauben said. "She's a basketball junkie and gives us great effort. She is averaging 4.66 assists and steals per game. She is leading the team as a point guard."

Meredith said it's personally been her best season.

A strength would be "mainly my leadership," she said. "I communicate on an off the court with my teammates. I'm the point

guard so I try to get my teammates as open as possible."

She focused on defense as a freshman but is working more on offense this year, Meredith said.

A home win against defending champion Fowler was a major highlight, she added. Meredith had 16 points in that game

Schrauben said Meredith's shooting and ability to score has

been her strengths.

Meredith was a part of St. Patrick's rotation for the 2021-22 season when the team was 21-1 and she was second team all-CMAC.

"She's one of our leading scorers and a team leader," Schrauben said. "She plays a great amount of summer ball. Meredith also runs cross country and plays softball. The team was 7-5 and has been competitive, Schrauben said, against a tough schedule."

"We lost five seniors last year and have been in a rebuilding stage," Meredith said.



Laynie Meredith continues to be a team leader for Portland St. Patrick.

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# Area Boys Basketball Teams Turning In Memorable Performances This Season

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Area boys basketball fans are being treated to season of outstanding performances from area teams and players this season. Following is a look at some of the teams and players making an impact in the area this season.

### Laingsburg Turning In Dominating Efforts

Few teams in the state are winning as much and as in as convincing fashion as the Laingsburg Wolfpack are this season.

Ranked third in the state in Division 3, not only is Laingsburg winning but they are winning big. With an 11-0 mark at the halfway point of the season, Laingsburg has

won all 11 games by 18 or more points. Their two closest games this season have been a 68-50 win against Corunna, ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the state in Division 2, and a 64-46 win against tradition Division 3 powerhouse Pewamo-Westphalia.

Laingsburg can score points with anyone as it has totaled 60 or more points in nine of 11 games this season. Leading the offensive assault are brothers Eli and Zander Woodruff. Eli, a senior, has turned in a number of big performances highlighted by a 35-point effort against Dansville while Zander, a sophomore, has been equally as effective as evident by a 28-point game against Perry.

The Woodruff brothers have plenty of help as Laingsburg has

a deep and talented roster. Senior center Luke Snyder is a 6-foot-5 post player that is a source of points in the paint along with 6-foot-2 junior Ty Randall. Senior guard Jacob Essenberg can light it up from three-point range. Senior point guard Brayden Thomas is an excellent ball handler as is junior guard Cam Ballard.

### Okemos Giving Glimpse Of Exciting Future

Not only is Okemos among the top teams in the Lansing area this season, but the Wolves have as bright a future as any team in the state thanks to the play of a pair of dynamic freshman.

Okemos freshmen KJ Torbert and Trevor Smith have been turning in some big efforts in their first



seasons of high school basketball.

Torbert, son of former Michigan State standout Kelvin Torbert, is proving he is among the top freshmen in the state. Torbert produced a highlight-reel moment in late December when his half-court shot at the buzzer helped the Wolves defeat Howell 52-49. Torbert also turned in a solid all-around game when Okemos defeated Waverly 48-41 in mid-January. Torbert scored 18 points along with three assists in the win. Torbert also had a 23 points, eight-rebound effort in a win against Holt.

Smith a 6-foot-8 big man ranked among the top freshmen in the nation, has also been putting up some impressive numbers including a 10 point, 10 rebound effort against Holt.

Along with the freshmen, Okemos is receiving big efforts from its upperclassmen. Senior Hudson

Grienke turned in a massive effort in a win against Eaton Rapids in December. In that game Grienke set a new school record with eight, three-point shots made, breaking the previous record held by former Okemos and Division 1 players Travis Bader and Chris Harrison-Docks. Grienke finished the Eaton Rapids game with 32 points.

Juniors Brennan Walton, Colin Alexander and Collin Walton have also been turning in strong efforts for an Okemos squad that is 10-1 overall and 4-1 in the CAAC Blue heading into the final week of January.

### Rockford State Ranked In Division 1

The Rockford Rams are turning in a solid season with a 9-3 overall record at the halfway mark of the season along with being ranked 17<sup>th</sup> in the state in Division 1.

Balance has been the key for



the Rams who three losses have all come against state-ranked Division 1 squads from Muskegon, Grand Haven and East Kentwood. Senior forward Caden Pokorzynski leads the way for the Rams along with junior Andrew Landis. The Rams are also receiving strong efforts from seniors Charlie Deutsch, Cayden Lepper, junior Drake Irwin and sophomore Mikey DeKuiper.

### Veteran Big Rapids Squad Ranked In Top Ten

Led by a talented group of seniors, Big Rapids is ranked in the top ten in the state in Division 2.

Big Rapids is 9-1 overall and 4-0 in the league and is ranked ninth in the state in Division 2 as of the final week in January.

Leading the way for the Cardinals is the brother combination of seniors Dawson and Mason Dunn. Returning all-conference players, the Dunn brothers are talented all-around players that can fill up the hoop. Dawson turned in a memorable 37-point effort in Big Rapids' 92-84 loss to Hart in an early-season matchup of state-ranked teams in Division 2.

The Cardinals also return a pair of senior guards who earned all-conference honors last season. Jack Ruggles and Ben Knuth are outstanding all-around guards that impact the game on both ends of the floor.

Senior Karlito McKinney is another talented veteran that is making an impact this season. Junior Riley Vennix adds more talented depth while sophomore Gabe Njenga is a talented young player that has turned in some highlight-reel plays season.

### Ovid-Elsie State Ranked And Leading League

The Ovid-Elsie basketball team is turning in a big season as it is state ranked and leading the way in the Mid-Michigan Activities Conference (MMAC).

As the season reaches the halfway point, Ovid-Elsie is 10-1 overall and 8-1 in the MMAC and is ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the state in Division 3.

Leading the way for the Marauders has been the one-two combination of seniors Logan Thompson and Clay Wittenberg.

Thompson is a multi-talented guard who can score, distribute the ball, rebound and play solid defense. Wittenberg is also a well-rounded player who is among the top scorers on the team as well as provide rebounding, strong defense and playmaking. The Marauders are also receiving strong play from senior point guard Braxton Stenger who is an outstanding playmaker and defensive standout. Senior forward Beau Price, junior guard Gunner McCreery and sophomore guard Tryce Tokar have also been turning in big efforts this season.

### Corunna Making An Impact Division 2

The Corunna basketball team has been among the premier Division 2 teams in the area this season.

Battling for the top spot in the Flint Metro League, Corunna is 9-2 overall at the midpoint of the season and is ranked 11<sup>th</sup> in the state in Division 2.

The Cavaliers have a deep and balanced team led by some outstanding all-around players. Junior forward Wyatt Bower is one of the team leaders. Bower came close to a rare quadruple double in Corunna's win over Clio when he finished with 11 points, 14 rebounds, eight steals and seven assists. Junior forward Braylon Socia just missed a double-double in the same game as he totaled 10 points and seven rebounds. Senior guard Brevin Bailor has also been turning in some standout games including a game against Fenton when he connected on five, three-point shots. Senior guard Peyton TerMeer is another leading scorer for the Cavaliers who are also receiving strong seasons from junior Tarick Bower, senior guard Logan Roka and junior Parker Isham.

### Waverly Making Waves In CAAC

Lansing Waverly is sending notice that it is a team to watch the remainder of this season. Tied for the top spot in the loaded CAAC Blue, Waverly has the resume to make a deep state tournament run.

With an 8-4 overall record and 3-1 league mark, Waverly has tested itself against the best in the state with the losses coming against state powers Detroit Renaissance, River Rouge and Davison while recording

impressive wins against Grand Ledge and Detroit Henry Ford.

Waverly features one of the top all-around talents in the state in 6-foot-6 senior Darrius Welch, a high-flying athlete with outstanding all-around skills. Senior point guard Deonte Roberts and senior shooting guard Nassan Jackson head up a talented backcourt while 6-4 junior Deunte Phifer and 6-5 sophomore Treyvon Miller add even more talent to the mix.

### DeWitt Standout Shines In Game Of Year

DeWitt senior Bryce Kurncz turned in a huge effort in what was the game of the year so far.

Kurncz scored 39 points and pulled down 11 rebounds to help DeWitt outlast East Lansing 79-77 in an amazing five-overtime thriller. During the game Kurncz also eclipsed the 1,000-point mark for his career. Kurncz has plenty of help in the win as Adam Flannery added 25 points and eight rebounds while Grant Crawley added 13 points.

### Ionia On Top In CAAC White

The Ionia basketball team is atop the standings of the CAAC White as the season reaches the halfway point.

The Bulldogs have a 5-0 conference record and are 10-1 overall at the midpoint of the season. Ionia, which is ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in the state in Division 2, opened the season with 10 straight wins before dropping a 60-44 decision to CAAC Red leading Mason.

Ionia is led this season by 6-foot-6 senior Lance Atkinson. Atkinson is leading the way in scoring and rebounding for the Bulldogs and turned in 22 points and eight rebounds in an overtime win against Charlotte in a showdown for first place in the conference. Senior guard Miles Gregory is also having a big season for the Bulldogs. Ionia has a deep squad and is also receiving strong efforts from junior Mason and Max Doty and Travis Tucker along with sophomores Henry Castle and Spencer Tooker.

Area boys basketball teams have put in solid efforts entering the stretch run of the season.





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# Area Wrestling Teams Rounding Into Form As Post-Season Draws Near

## David Cook Sports Scene

With post-season tournaments drawing closer, area wrestling teams are fine-tuning their lineups and getting into peak shape. Several area teams are ranked highly in the state and the post-season looks to be a memorable experience.

Following is a look at some of the teams and players making an impact in the area this season.

### Lowell Looking For Title Streak To Reach Double Digits

The Lowell wrestling team added to its record streak of nine team state titles in a row last season as it defeated Goodrich for the Division

2 state title. This year, despite the graduation of a large and talented group of seniors, the Red Arrows are on a mission to make it 10 in a row.

Lowell is ranked No. 1 in the state in Division 2 this season and has been piling up some impressive wins throughout the season. As usual, the Red Arrows have taken their share of losses as they annually face one of the toughest schedules in the state and go far and wide across the Midwest seeking out the toughest competition it can find. Two of Lowell's losses came at the Detroit Catholic Central Super Duals where the Red Arrows fell to Detroit Catholic Central, ranked No. 1 in the state in Division 1 and Ohio superpower Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward.

Lowell wrestlers also took part in the Brecksville Holiday Tournament that featured some of the finest individual talent in Ohio and the Midwest. Sophomore standout Jackson Blum led the way for Lowell as he placed second at 120 pounds and Maddox Simcoe placed third at 150 pounds. Also placing for the Red Arrows were Jared Boone who took fourth at 165 pounds, Carter Cichocki who placed fifth at 113 pounds, Carson Crane who took sixth at 190 pounds and Jarrett Smith who finished eighth at 103 pounds.

Lowell also took first place at its own Gary River Invitational where the Red Arrows picked up wins against Rockford, Richmond and Plainwell.

### Davison Wrestlers Facing Major Hurdles

Like Lowell, the Davison wrestling team takes on any challenge it can find. Ranked third in the state in Division 1, the



New Lothrop will be looking to knock off Hudson against in this year's Division 4 state team finals.

Cardinals have faced plenty of big-time challenges this season.

Like Lowell, Davison fell to Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward at the Detroit Catholic Central Super Duals. The Cardinals also fell to Center Grove, Indiana and Dundee, the No. 1 team in Division 3.

Davison also made the trip to Brecksville Ohio for the holiday tournament. Cardinal senior Josh Barr led the way at Brecksville as he won the title at 175 pounds. Justin Gates placed second at 138 pounds while Remy Cotton was second at 190 pounds. Also placing for Davison were Evan Herriman who took third at 144 pounds and Caden Horwath who took fifth at 126 pounds.

Davison wrestlers also turned in some solid efforts at the Detroit Catholic Central Invitational. Remy Cotton placed first at 215 pounds while Kyle Jelinek (144 pounds), Max Callahan (165) and Herriman (138) placed fourth and Alexander Holmes (285) placed sixth.

### Holt Wrestling Team Rounding Into Form

The Holt wrestling team continues to round into form as the

Rams have turned in some strong efforts this season including a second-place finish at the Temperance-Bedford invite and a third-place finish at the Holt duals.

A trio of Rams came away with titles at the Temperance-Bedford tourney. Reaching the top of the podium for the Rams were Ryan Moseher (113 pounds), Mariano Lopez (120) and Ty Hafke (175). A quartet of Rams placed second including Sawyer Hosford (106), Ayden Mosher (144), Aaron Czewski (150) and Jackson Bremer (190). Three Holt wrestlers placed third including Jacob Harris (126), Kaleb Bentley (138) and Connor Crepeau (285).

### Bay City John Glenn Ranked In Top Ten

The Bay City John Glenn wrestling team is turning in a solid season and is ranked sixth in the state in Division 2.

John Glenn wrestlers tested themselves against some of the best in the state when went to the Detroit Catholic Central invitational. Connor Greer led the way as he placed third at 120 pounds. Freshman Izaak Kukulski placed fifth at 106 pounds while

Logan Demarest took sixth at 190 pounds.

A total of seven John Glenn wrestlers placed at the Wayne Brady Classic. Four Bobcats won titles including Aidan Lupisella at 126 pounds, Garrett Forgash (165 pounds), Demarest (175) and Shane Senske (285). Placing second for John Glenn were Zayden Rose (113), Perrin Dimmitt (132) and Isaiah Hoffman (144).

### St. Louis Continuing To Pile Up Wins In D4

The St. Louis Sharks continue to be one of the top teams in the state in Division Sharks. With a solid lineup from top to bottom, St. Louis is ranked third in the state in Division 4.

St. Louis wrestlers turned in an impressive effort at the Alma Duals where the Sharks won four of five duals. St. Louis picked up impressive wins against Division 2 schools Hastings (39-33) and Muskegon Reeths-Puffer (42-27) and also defeated Division 3 state-ranked Portland 39-29.

St. Louis also placed second at the Bob Threloff Invitational it hosted. A trio of Sharks won individual titles including Colin Kuhn (106 pounds), Alex Rodriguez (113) and Martine Wiggins (144). Laythan Haworth (132) and Justice Onstott (190) both placed second.

A trio of St. Louis wrestlers placed at the Hudson Super 16. Onstott placed third at 190 pounds, Kuhn was sixth at 106 pounds and Rodriguez was sixth at 113 pounds.

### Montrose In The Top Ten In Division 4

The Montrose wrestling team was hit hard by graduation last season but is bouncing back in a big way this season. The Rams are ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the state in Division 1 and have turned in some impressive efforts.

A total of four Montrose wrestlers placed at the New Lothrop Hall of Fame tournament. Daxton Looney (215 pounds) and Jerrold Atwell (285) both placed third while Noah Szwed (126) and RJ Cummings (157) placed fifth.

Montrose also had a total of four wrestlers place at the Williamston tournament. Atwell took second at 285 pounds while Hunter Coxon (144) placed third and Szwed (132) and Looney (215) placed fourth.

### Alma Trio Place At Hudson Super 16

A trio of Alma wrestlers placed at the stacked Hudson Super 16 tournament. Cole O'Boyle led the way for the Panthers as he won the title at 175 pounds. Gianni Tripp placed second at 144 pounds while Buddy Leonard took third at 138 pounds.



Mason wrestlers have been piling up the pins and wins this season.

### Portland Among Top Ten In Division 3

The Portland wrestling team is gearing up for at the run at the Division 3 team state finals this season. The Raiders are ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the state in Division 3 this season and have turned in some impressive performances this season.

Portland wrestlers turned in a strong effort at the Comstock Invitational where the Raiders won the overall title. A total of six Raiders won titles including Connor Gleason (120 pounds), Ethan Webert (126), Drew Miller

(132), Gunnar Williams (175), Branson Goodman (190) and Mark Meyers (215). Barrett Spitzley also placed second at 175 pounds.

### Mason Gearing Up For Team Finals Run

The Mason wrestling team is ranked third in the state in Division 2 and are primed for a deep run in the team state tournament.

The Bulldogs have piled up a number of wins this season. Mason is turning in a 5-0 record at the Fowlerville Dual where it picked up wins against Division 1 Lake Orion and Yale. Finishing the day with 5-0 records at Fowlerville were Darius Ambs (106 pounds), Matt Ausel (112), Tex Smith (138), Jady Grimes (150) and Derek Badgley (190).

Mason also went 4-0 at the Stevensville-Lakeshore Super Duals which included wins against Lakeshore (38-30) and Division 1 Hudsonville (38-18).

A trio of Mason wrestlers placed at the loaded New Lothrop Hall of Fame tourney. Badgley won the title at 175 pounds while Dylan

Granger took third at 144 pounds and Darius Ambs third at 106 pounds.

### New Lothrop Poised For Deep Run In D4

The New Lothrop wrestling team is gearing up for a run at the top spot in Division 4.

The Hornets are ranked second in the state in Division 4 and have a squad capable of making a run at the team title in Division 4.

New Lothrop wrestlers have been turning in some strong performances this season. A total of six Hornets placed at the loaded New Lothrop Hall of Fame tournament. Grayson Orr (285 pounds) and Jack Kulhanek (165) led the way as they both won individual championships. Joseph Torres (190) and Daven Lockwood (120) both placed fourth while Parker Noonan (144) placed fifth and Colton Symons (175) placed sixth.

A trio of Hornets placed at the Hudson Super 16. Orr won the title at 285 pounds while Torres (190) and Symons (175) both placed fourth.

The Bay City John Glenn wrestling team will be a tough out during the Division 2 tournament that kicks off later this month.



The Lowell wrestling team will be looking to raise their hands in victory for a tenths straight state title.

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# Top Individual Wrestling Records By Division

## DIVISION 1

106 pounds  
Oliver Senkowski, Midland Dow 26-7

113 pounds  
Ryan Mosher, Holt 15-0

Almicar Ruiz-Diaz, Rockford 19-5

Ken Aguilar, Rockford 18-6

120 pounds  
Mariano Lopez, Holt 18-1

Braylenn Aulbach, Rockford 25-6

126 pounds  
James Diel, Rockford 26-5

Jacob Batha, Midland Dow 28-9

132 pounds  
Liam Fitzpatrick, Rockford 21-8

138 pounds  
Elijah Bunn, Rockford 32-2

Justin Gates, Davison 17-2

144 pounds  
Jak Keller, Rockford 31-2

150 pounds  
Evan Herriman, Davison 18-4

157 pounds  
Logan Hammingh, Rockford 22-7

Bryce Gordon, Rockford 26-8

175 pounds  
Ty Hafke, Holt 15-3

190 pounds  
Josh Barr, Davison 17-0

Jackson Bremer, Holt 16-4

215 pounds  
Remy Cotton, Davison 10-1

Ryan Ahern, Rockford 31-2

Chase Cavello, Eaton Rapids 21-5

132 pounds  
Oliver Senkowski, Charlotte 24-9

138 pounds  
Grant Stahl, Mt. Pleasant 18-0

144 pounds  
Jayden Schwartz, Charlotte 31-1

Cole Riedel, St. Johns 22-2

Killian Campbell, Ionia 21-4

150 pounds  
Gabe Chapates, Eaton Rapids 22-4

Hunter Barker, Ionia 23-5

165 pounds  
Jason Stevens, St. Johns 20-5

175 pounds  
Lanson Parker, Eaton Rapids 25-1

Nathan Clute, Ionia 21-6

285 pounds  
Ryan Dimmick, St. Johns 23-1

## DIVISION 3

106 pounds  
Ethan Hawkins, Durand 21-5

Bryce Gordon, Rockford 26-8

175 pounds  
Ty Hafke, Holt 15-3

190 pounds  
Josh Barr, Davison 17-0

Jackson Bremer, Holt 16-4

215 pounds  
Remy Cotton, Davison 10-1

Ryan Ahern, Rockford 31-2

106 pounds  
Drew Holovac, Eaton Rapids 22-4

113 pounds  
Sean Pettigrew, St. Johns 21-3

126 pounds  
Noah Webster, Mt. Pleasant 12-0

106 pounds  
Drew Holovac, Eaton Rapids 22-4

113 pounds  
Sean Pettigrew, St. Johns 21-3

126 pounds  
Noah Webster, Mt. Pleasant 12-0

Buddy Leonard, Alma 27-5

138 pounds  
Carter Moore, Charlotte 24-9

138 pounds  
Grant Stahl, Mt. Pleasant 18-0

144 pounds  
Jayden Schwartz, Charlotte 31-1

Cole Riedel, St. Johns 22-2

Killian Campbell, Ionia 21-4

150 pounds  
Gabe Chapates, Eaton Rapids 22-4

Hunter Barker, Ionia 23-5

165 pounds  
Jason Stevens, St. Johns 20-5

175 pounds  
Lanson Parker, Eaton Rapids 25-1

Nathan Clute, Ionia 21-6

285 pounds  
Ryan Dimmick, St. Johns 23-1

Waylon Lingemann, Central Montcalm 26-1

Nathan Rivard, Bullock Creek 23-6

## DIVISION 4

106 pounds  
Noah Prins, Saranac 25-1

Blake Wendling, New Lothrop 18-7

Jackson Beardsley, Montrose 23-8

113 pounds  
Cameron Perez, Lakeview 32-2

120 pounds  
Joe Perez, Lakeview 28-4

Daven Lockwood, New Lothrop 15-5

126 pounds  
Mattias Escamilla, St. Charles 24-5

132 pounds  
Tim Plamondon, Saginaw Valley Lutheran 23-8

138 pounds  
Braden Bila, St. Charles 24-2

Alex Baker, Dansville 23-5

Landon Winsor, Saranac 22-7

144 pounds  
Evan Mouch, Saranac 22-7

Parker Noonan, New Lothrop 19-8

150 pounds  
Hunter Coxson, Montrose 33-4

Logan Storey, Dansville 25-7

157 pounds  
165 pounds  
Jack Kulhanek, New Lothrop 18-5

Riley Ransom, Ewart 22-7

175 pounds  
Cole Hopkins, Ewart 31-0

Landon Johnson, Lakeview 22-6

Colton Symons, New Lothrop 20-6

190 pounds  
CJ Copeland, Lakeview 27-8

285 pounds  
Grayson Orr, New Lothrop 22-1

Jerrold Atwell, Montrose 30-4

Alex Burhans, Ewart 29-4

## Schwartz Having Outstanding Season At Charlotte

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Charlotte wrestling coach Robert Knapp has been impressed with Jayden Schwartz who is in his final chapter for high school wrestling.

Schwartz is currently 31-1 on the season. He took seventh in the state in 2021 and was 24-2 last season before sustaining a season ending injury. He is currently ranked No. 1 in the state in Division 2 at 138 pounds by Michigan Grappler.

"Jayden is a two-year capitan for the Orioles and is a wonderful leader," Knapp said. "Jayden leads by example both on the mat and in the classroom. The keys to his

record which currently sits at 142." Knapp added: "Jayden plays soccer in the fall as that helps him prepare his shape for wrestling. He also does a lot of offseason wrestling any chance he can. Jayden has been wrestling since he was a little kid and is currently uncertain on what his plans are for college."

Midland Dow Andy Brown is the head coach for a Midland Dow team which has many excellnt wrestlers

Oliver Senkowski(106) has been one of our top wrestlers this year," he said. "He is doing well as a freshman this year with a 26-7 record. He has had a couple good wins this year, his best being against New Lothrop (No. 8 at the time). He's a tough kid, and one that we aren't afraid to bump up to get matches. We are expecting some good things to come in his

high school career. "Jacob Batha(126) has been a top guy this year on our team with a 28-9 record as a junior. He's not afraid to work and is super coachable. Jacob also does a great job helping guide our younger wrestlers as one of our captains on the team. Elliott Kozel(132) is another one of our top guys with a 20-10 record as a Junior. He does well in the top position. With his length, he can slow guys down and gets a lot of turns. He is also helpful in the room with our younger guys. Landen Gotts(165) is also one of our top wrestlers with a 23-10 record as a sophomore. Landen is also tough in the top position. He can create a lot of pressure on top and he gets a lot of pins for us."



Jayden Schwartz is looking to bring a state mat championship to Charlotte.

and wrestle hard every match. As a young/inexperienced team, we have had quite a few matches that don't go our way. They keep battling, and they keep coming into practice looking to improve. I think the biggest thing our team needs to improve on is believing in themselves, and trusting in their ability to execute what they have been practicing during matches."

## Alma Cheerleader Enjoying Extraordinary Season

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Brianne Elliott is the Alma head coach of Varsity Competitive Cheer and has had some strong participants, including Kendal Malarney, a junior in her third season.

"Kendal is a 3-round athlete that performs in the front of each round," Elliott said. "She has grown as an all around athlete as she continues to shine in the aspect of tumbling and this year gained lots of skill as a flyer. Kendal is hard on herself and expects a lot which leads her to hard work and

accountability. She does what needs to get done to be an Allstar athlete on this team and does not expect any praise or benefit from it."

There's been substantial improvement, Elliott can see.

"Kendal has grown as a cheerleader and a leader. As an upperclassman and one of the few veteran cheerleaders, she has stepped up in leading the team to great success. She is someone all the young girls can look up to," Elliott said. "Kendal decided to try cheerleading after previously being a

dancer for the majority of her life. Her first year she was timid, and afraid of changing her ways from dance to cheer. As I have seen her grow the past 3 years, she has fully embraced the

sport and become an impressive athlete.

Kendal plays volleyball in the fall and soccer in the spring. Throughout the summer she attends both volleyball practices and cheer practices. I expect her to continue to grow into an amazing woman and find herself a lot of success within the sport of cheerleading."

Other top Alma athletes include:

Shelby Irvin- Senior, flyer and tumbler who proves her worth being center in every round.

Olyviah Although- Junior, base and tumbler "who has the biggest



The 2022 - 2023 Alma Cheer Team.

work ethic and the best attitude of anyone I have ever met," Elliott said.

Brilyn Garcia- Senior, flyer and tumbler, "who is a strong leader who has put the team first countless times," Elliott said.

## Rockford Gymnastics Team Eyes State Title

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Rockford gymnastics coach Michelle Ankney doesn't hesitate to point out her team is hoping for a state championship.

"We have had a great start to the season," she said. "We have won both the invites we have attended as a team. We have also had several place well individually. We are excited for such a strong start to our season, but we also still have a lot of room for improvement. We are excited to see where this season takes us."

Senior Lacey Scheid "contributes in the all around," Ankney said. "She is strong and consistent. She has set high goals for herself for her senior year."

Elise Watkins "for her first year on the team, is contributing in the all around,"

Ankney said. "Her best events though are beam and floor. Elise has a great dance background along with strong gymnastics skills. She is a lot of fun to watch on these two events."

Claire Adams "contains a lot of power and energy," Ankney said. "She has worked very hard at making her vault and bars powerful and strong."

Kayley Burke is a junior.

"Kayley's strong suits are floor and vault, but she is showing herself to be a strong all-arounder too," Ankney said. "Kayley's power and willingness to try new skills has made her strong across all the events."

Kate Tracey is a sophomore.

"Kate also is strong in the all around, but shines brightest on bars and beam," Ankney said. "She has been working new skills and really strengthening herself on those events."

Hailey Hill a junior "is just coming off an injury, but her consistency in the all around has been missed," Ankney said. "We will be

excited to have her back in that position this week."

According to Ankney, "currently, we are strongest on vault and floor. We have a lot of power, and those events allow us to use that power well. Another strength for us, is that we are a team through and through. We cannot do this without each other. There are so many individuals stepping up, learning new things, and trying their best to improve. This will be an asset as we continue to look to improve our scores and try for another state run.

"Our main focus right now is on bars," Ankney said. "This is by far our weakest event, and we are continually brainstorming on what we can do to improve this tricky event. Conference has been going well for us. We are currently undefeated, and we are about halfway through those competitions. "Our first goal is to raise our bar score. We have some new skills we will be trying in the next few weeks, and we hope to see some more improvement on our overall bar score total. Our team goal is to continue to work together, improve each week, dream big, and support each other

no matter what. Our bigger overall goals are to repeat as Conference, then Regional, and then hopefully State champions. The key will be to continue to work on the mental battles the sport brings to perform new skills and at competitions. It is easy to doubt, and we are focusing on taking small steps forward to improve the way we think about skills and improving one step at a time."

Ankney added: "Overall, we aren't Rockford gymnastics without every member of the team. It is amazing how each person contributes in big and small ways."



Senior Lacey Scheid is having a strong gymnastics season for Rockford.

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# Area Swimmers, Divers Ramp Up Intensity As Season Hits Midpoint

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

With the high school swimming season reaching the midpoint, area teams are rounding into form, following is a look at some of the top performances by area teams.

### Midland Dow Swim Team Wins Tri-Cities Meet

The Midland Dow swim team turned in a big effort in winning the Tri-Cities Championship.

Noah Buist led the way for Dow as he won the 200 freestyle (1:46.82) and the 100 backstroke (55.65). Thomas Bacigalupo won the 50 freestyle (22.47) and took second in the 100 freestyle. Eli Soderberg won the 500 freestyle (4:59.76) and took second in the 100 butterfly while Harry Shuster was second in the 50 freestyle.

The Chargers also won a pair of relays as Buist, Soderberg, Bacigalupo and Shuster teamed up to win the 200 medley relay and the 200 free relay.

### Jack Chiodini Has Big Day For Alma Swim Team

Jack Chiodini turned in a big day for the Alma swim team at the Tri-Cities Championship. Chiodini was a dual winner at the meet as he won the 100 breaststroke (1:01.10) and the 200 IM (2:03.88). The wins by Chiodini helped Alma place fifth overall as a team. A junior, Chiodini earned all-state honors in both the 200 IM and the 100 breaststroke last season.

Chiodini was also a part of a pair of Alma relay teams that took second place. Chiodini teamed up with Conner Adams, Keegan

Crowe and Issac Winn to take second in the 200 medley relay while Ben Cary, Crowe, Adams and Chiodini teamed up to take second in the 400 free relay.

Adams also turned in a pair of strong individual efforts as he took second in the 100 backstroke and third in the 100 freestyle. Crowe placed fourth in the 50 freestyle while Winn finished fifth in the diving competition.

### Saginaw Heritage Takes Second At Tri-Cities

The Saginaw Heritage swim team took second place at the Tri-Cities Championship.

The Hawks were led at the Tri-Cities meet by Tommy Mackley who won the 100 freestyle (48.95) and took second in the 200 freestyle.

Tyler Hammis placed third in the 50 freestyle and fourth in the 100 freestyle while Nathan Booth placed third in both the 100 backstroke and the 200 IM.

Heritage swimmer also won a relay as the 400 free relay team of Mackley, Hammis, Booth and Anderson Li took first in a time of 3:24.34.

### Owosso Swim Team Collects Wins

The Owosso swim team is turning in a solid season. The Trojans opened the new year with a pair of solid wins against Ortonville-Brandon (101-82) and Swartz Creek (112-69).

In the win against Brandon Blake Binger led the way as he set a new personal record in winning the 200 free and also won the 500 free. Danica Dwyer won the diving competition while Alex Binger



Area swimmers and divers are rounding into form for the state finals as the season passes the halfway point.

won the 100 free. The team of Nick Nidiffer, Peyton Dwyer and both Binger's won the 200 free relay while the Bingers, Nidiffer and Jay Tuttle teamed up to win the 400 free relay.

In the win against Swartz Creek Blake Binger won both the 200 and 500 free. Alex Binger won the 50 free, Danica Dwyer won the diving and Peyton Dwyer won the 100 butterfly. The Trojans also won both the 200 and 400 free relays.

### Holt Swimmer Take Second At Haslett Invite

The Holt swimming team turned in a strong effort as they finished second to Jackson at the Haslett Invitational. Jackson won the title with 349 points while the Rams took second with 334 points.

Casey Sparks was one of the leaders for Holt as he took third in the 50 freestyle and fourth in the 100 freestyle. Brogan Sutterlin

placed third in the 100 backstroke and fifth in diving while Pete McKinney was third in the 500 freestyle and sixth in the 200 freestyle.

The Rams also placed second in a pair of relays. Sutterlin, Jase Lund, McKinney and Sparks were second in the 200 medley relay while the team of Sutterlin, Clayton Myers, Lund and Sparks took second in the 200 free relay.

### Haslett Swimmers Turn In Strong Efforts At Own Invite

The Haslett swim team had several athletes turn in strong efforts at the Haslett Invitational where the Vikings placed fourth as a team.

Benjamin Trotochaud led the way for the Vikings as he won the 200 freestyle (1:52.32) and took second in the 500 freestyle. Gryffin Potter won the diving competition. Luke Waters placed second in the

100 breaststroke, Oliver Costello placed fifth in the 100 butterfly and Christopher Anderson took sixth in the 100 freestyle.

Haslett also took second in a relay as the team of Anderson, Costello, Dylan Lydie and Trotochaud placed second in the 400 free relay.

### St. Johns Swimmers Turn In Strong Efforts

The St. Johns swim team had some strong efforts in a close 94-81 loss to Swartz Creek. Preston Longoria won the 500 freestyle in a time of 5:36.75 while Sebastian Luce won the 100 backstroke in a time of 1:07.26. The Redwings also swept the diving competition with sophomore Parker Beebee taking first place followed by Vinent Manas and Christian Simmons. St. Johns also won a relay event as the team of Ethan Gibson, Longoria, Luce and Brayden Hirschman took first in the 200 medley relay.

# Williamston/ Lansing Christian Swim Having Strong Winter

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Williamston/ Lansing Christian Madeline Stewart has had a swim which is very competitive in the tough CAAC Red.

A highlight was its dual win at Waverly

"Aidan Bellinger is chasing the D3 state cut in the 50 free and the 100 butterfly varsity record." Stewart said. "Michael Villalba is in the hunt for the D3 cuts in the 100 freestyle and

100 backstroke," Stewart said. "We are a dangerous dozen as we have fast times, but we

are small. We know every swim counts and we really learned how to utilize that."

The team "needs to improve on Working together as a team and not leaving a teammate

behind," Stewart said. " We had a slow start, and are hoping to break even by the end of regular season."

Goals are "getting a 200-yard Medley relay to D3 states for the third year in a row and taking at least two individual qualifiers to D3 states," Stewart said, adding the key "is working hard every day and remembering why we are here. It's a bumper our record doesn't show how good this team

really is. Being able to secure 6th place out of 11 teams really opened the team's eyes to how solid of a team they are."



The 2022-23 Williamston/Lansing Catholic swim and dive team.

# Heritage Boys Swim And Diving Team Making Noise

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Nick Rzeszutek is among the standout swimmers for coach Mason LeRoux's Heritage High School boys' varsity swimming and diving team which compete in the Saginaw Valley League

"So far this season, our highlights have been at our County meet this past weekend (Jan. 21) in which

two of our swimmers got some of their state cuts," LeRoux said. "We also got our 200 Free Relay and 400 Free Relay qualified for state's. We had a lot of fast times and improvements from our swimmers. One of our swimmers took first in the 100 freestyle. Tommy Mackley is a captain and one of the top swimmers on our team. Over the past weekend, he received state cuts in the 100 Freestyle and the 50 Freestyle. He was on the two Freestyle relays that we qualified. Tyler Hammis is another captain and one of our top swimmers. He received a state cut in the 50 Freestyle this past weekend as well. He was also a part of the two Freestyle relays.

"Anderson Li is our third captain and is one of our best distance swimmers. He was a part of the two Freestyle relays that qualified. Nathan Booth is a good stroker and his best stroke is the Backstroke. He was the fourth swimmer in the two Freestyle relays. Nick Rzeszutek is a good distance swimmer and hard worker. He has put a lot of work into the season and out of the

season. He has proven himself a fast swimmer at the County meet. Alex Ballie is a freshman who has proven himself a value part of the team. He surprised me at the County meet by placing in the Top 8 on both the 100 Butterfly and the 100 Backstroke. I have high hopes for him and hope he wants to strive to become a crucial part of the team."

LeRoux likes his team's dedication.

"We have a team how so dedicated to swim and they want to work hard to get faster," he said. "The swimmers have a good drive, and they push themselves to break their limits. We need to work on some of our fundamentals and to push ourselves to challenge to not want to do things, but to realize that we don't need to do them. Some of the swimmers need to put more work in and want to get fast by being here and pushing themselves.

"So far, we are 5-0 in our conference. Our most challenging two opponents are coming up and we will be training hard to try and beat them. I have goals for individuals and as a team. The team goals are to get more swimmers into the league meet finals. To have

season and personal bests by the end of season and possibly get a couple more state cuts for a couple more swimmers. The key is to attain these goals is for the swimmers to be at practice as much as they can and to put everything into every practice and to push themselves to make practice harder. I can only give them sets and tell them how to work them, it's up to them to want to get and be better."

Rzeszutek is a junior in his third varsity season.

"Nick has shown himself to be a dedicated swimmer and has changed how he puts his efforts to attain his goals," LeRoux said. "He has improved greatly from last season and it is clear that he wants to get the most out of his training and stand with the best on the team. So far this season, he dropped 60 pounds from last year and has joined our morning group swimmers. He asks a lot of important questions and is also making sure that he is putting his effort into practice, as usefully as possible so he can get the most out of his workouts. He has improved all around as a swimmer.

"His sprinting and his distance have improved greatly and is an important part of the team. Last year, he was someone who



Heritage's Tommy Mackley recently qualified for the state meet for the Hawks.

filled a spot in a race and did well or decent, and now he is a top finisher and someone I can rely on. I expected his distance times to improve a lot from last year, but his sprinting is what I am impressed by. He has risen to be one of the fastest swimmers on

the team. I expect him to be one of the top swimmers in the Valley conference and he is a potential to be a state swimmer, if he continues to put in work and has the drive to want to succeed."

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# Female Coach Leads The Mid-Michigan Raptors

## John Raffel Sports Scene

The Mount Pleasant Oilers have consolidated this season for high school hockey into a co-op team called the Mid Michigan Raptors.

The team has started out a 2-8 and is coached by Brittany Knoop. She is recognized by MHSAA as the first female hockey coach in MHSAA history;

Besides Mount Pleasant High and Sacred Heart other players come from Alma, Clare, Ithaca and Shepherd.

The goalies are Jaxon Dern and Ethan Leaman from Mount Pleasant and Brendan Kusbel from Shepherd. Defensemen are Tucker

VanAlstine from Shepherd, Dylan Montross, from Sacred Heart, Brayden Liedke from Alma, Ethan Cook from Clare and Ben Ross from Mount Pleasant.

Forwards are Nate Koster, Daniel Lee, Ian Kennard, Wyatt Ross, Brady Beebe, Ben Dvorak and Brendan Houser from Mount Pleasant; Gegek Webkamigad of Shepherd; Connor Stempky and Joey Likavec of Sacred Heart, Currin Billman of Clare and Callum Krause of Ithaca.

The home rink is in Mount Pleasant.

"A big highlight for our team was taking second in our Mid-Michigan Invite out of four teams," Knoop said. "We have also won 2

games so far in our season, which didn't happen last year until the end of the season. Every day each player has improved their game play.

"Joaquin Jackson is our leader in goals this year. Conner Stempky is leading in assists and second in goals for the season so far. Brendan Kusbel has been our top goalie and kept us into a lot of games. He sees 50-to-75 shots a game he plays."

The team, Knoop said, "has the will to learn and grow as a team and individuals. The key is playing



Mid Michigan hockey coaches encourage their team earlier this season during a game at Ferris State.

a full game of hockey and systems."

The conference season "has been going alright," Knoop said. "I do wish they had us under a different conference that is more comparable to our skill level."

The goal for the team is "to win four games in the regular season and make it to the second round of playoffs," Knoop said, adding the key would be "staying healthy and conditioned."

# Portland, Ithaca Bowlers Having Impressive Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Portland girls bowling coach Ryan Humphrey has been impressed with how his team has been doing in the CAAC this season. "The team is currently 6-1 in second place in their division," Humphrey said. "The girls won the Huskie Invitational in Kalamazoo." Anna Humphrey has the high average for the team. She finished 11th in singles at the Huskie Invitational. Mya Kahn is co-captain and Lily Keller is co-captain and anchor bowler "After a rocky start, the team has come together emotionally and they are very supportive of each other." Humphrey said. "Spare shooting is always the Achilles heel of this team.

"We have been division champs several years in a row. Ionia has a very strong team that may take that streak away from us. Our

rematch with them will probably decide the championship. This team is good enough to qualify for the state tournament in Division 3. That has been the goal since the start of the season. This has been the most closely knit team we've had in a long time. We are hopeful this helps with our goal of going to team states."

### Ithaca Bowling

Wally Schneider Ithaca's bowling team another season.

"This has been an interesting year for the boys bowling team at Ithaca," he said. "Last year we graduated all but one bowler in the program. So we were worried whether we were even going to have a team but we had 14 guys sign up and make the Varsity and JV teams. These bowlers, for the most part, do not have any formal bowling experience. They are, however, very motivated and work hard to get better everyday in

practice and on non-practice days you will usually find many of them in the bowling alley practicing on their own. With all that being said, the team is currently 5-3 (as of 1-21-23), bowling mostly against teams that have been established. So far, it has been a very successful year for a bunch of 1st year bowlers.

"Bryson Lebaron (10th grade) is a 2-hander and is leading the team right now. He also plays basketball so he has to sneak in bowling practice when he can. Broden Peska (10th) has increased his average almost every week, and is one of those guys that will be in practicing almost every day. Karter Araujo (10th) is another guy trying to master the 2 handed release, but his consistency is improving and with that, so are his scores. Brandon Hephner (10th) fills in at anchor sometimes, he is usually very consistent and covers his spares well. Our last starter is David Munroe (10th). David is a lefty and like most of these new guys is working on consistency, which is the hardest part for people new to the sport. But these guys are competitive and they want to win."



The 2022-23 Portland bowling team.

### Fowlerville High School Bowling

Fowlerville Last week we competed against Eaton Rapids at home on the 19th and away on the 20th. At a home match the boys took a sweep of all 30 points with Tyler Gordon rolling a 229 and a 194. While away versus Eaton Rapids, Fowlerville we took a win of 26-4 with Noah Piontek rolling

a 175.

The girls won both their away and home matches with high games going to Keir Mahon with a 172 and Emma Wilber with a 165.

Fowlerville went up against Lansing Catholic with the boys taking a loss even with Ethan Hall rolling a 202. The girls won their match with Keira Mahone rolling a 169.

# The Student-Athlete Corner

## Pressure On A Student-Athlete Can Be Extreme

Recently, if you've been keeping up with the sports side of things... you should know that student-athletes' mental health is a big topic right now.

A National College Health Assessment reported 48% of female and about 31% of male NCAA student-athletes reported having depression or anxiety symptoms each year the test was issued in 2008 and 2012 according to Collegiate Athletes' Mental Health Services Utilization.

Athletes take on a lot of difficulties, and not many people have noticed them until now. But are we making changes? Schools want athletes to attend school every hour of the day to be able to participate in practice or games.

But should they be punished for having a bad day or just needing a break? Students participate in extracurriculars to enjoy themselves and do something that makes them happy. So why would we take that away?

Now let's put it in an athlete's perspective, you've had a long week: you've gone to school for seven hours of the day, then you have a two-three hour practice, and after that, you head home to take a shower and eat dinner. By that time it's late and you're ready for bed. But that's not all, you've got five classes of homework all due by 11:59 p.m. Not every student-athlete's schedule is the same, but they're all busy and sometimes stressful. This can negatively affect anybody's mental health, having one Friday night

basketball game dedicated to mental health awareness isn't enough. We as a society can make more of an effort to improve our student-athletes' mental health.

Let's end the stigma of mental health! Donate and Take the Pledge to Reach Out today at www.athletesforhope.org

Grace Gilbert Junior Swan Valley High School



## Saginaw Valley League Is Tough

As a kid coming up I've seen my granddad coach in the Saginaw Valley League.

I can remember far back as to watching Pookie play who is my all time favorite player and the reason that I wear the number 10. Pookie vs Trey Ziegler was one of my favorite games.

Ty Rodgers and I were the ball boys for the team and we would always talk about how good we would be when it was our time to play at the Hill in the Saginaw Valley League and how many championships we would win playing for my granddad.

Watching Eric Davis, who is my second favorite player and another reason I wear

No. 10. It was like watching pros play in high school him and Tugs Bowen were a crazy duo.

The Saginaw Valley League was loaded with talent and great teams like Saginaw High was always good Midland High, Flint Northwestern and Mt. Pleasant.

Now I'm playing in the Valley.

When I look back it's unreal I used to dream about playing in those games as a kid.

Grand Blanc is on top of the conference now they have a great team and a coach I came up watching a leader of young men Tory Jackson. Crazy thing I used to tell Tory when I was a kid I wanted to break his

scoring record 2,500 points is a lot points though!

But the emergence of Midland Dow this year, it is crazy they have a really good team. Tyler Ode is a monster and Heritage is playing good basketball right now. Saginaw High is tough with Poochie, Var, and Munchie they also have the most slept on guard in the state TJ when he gets going it'll take them over the top.

Arthur Hill has the best freshman in the area with Boop and they also have Lyna who is a crazy athlete. Chris McIlavish is a dog we played him the other day and he had 28. We are undefeated so far and at the top with Grand Blanc. We have two tough games this

week playing Powers, who beat us earlier this year and one of the hottest teams in the state in Grand Blanc they just beat Dow by almost 40. RJ Taylor is a floor general Tae Boyd is a tough match up. Bryce stretches the floor and he's 6'7 they have a good bench.

Looking forward to the rest of our match ups we have probably the hardest remaining schedule in the Valley to and the season but I'm ready and we are ready!

Greg Lawson Sophomore Davison High School



# Healthy Living

## Misconceptions Of A Collegiate Strength And Conditioning Coach

It's five thirty in the morning and walking down the hall you hear some type of load rap music being blasted through the stereo. At this point you see a jacked-up man come through the door and is yelling "get your mind right" or "time to finish the week." Most people would assume that this is the team's strength and conditioning coach about to lead his team through the hardest training session of the week. Early on in my career I was taught that I needed to be the thermostat to set the temperature of the room to make sure there was an energetic buzz and a high standard being set for the team I was training. Now and again that individual needs to bring "the juice" and get their athletes excited to train at a high level. However, we are more than that person you see on ESPN with that cut off polo or

wearing that "sh-medium" on the sidelines.

Strength and Conditioning professionals have made enormous strides since the beginning of this profession. There is more preparation than only what sets and reps and what exercises you are going to program for their teams. We are mentors, scientist, and psychologist to help our student athletes perform and have the highest level of success that their sport will take them. It is our job to make sure we have a pulse on what everyone on our sport staff is planning around us so we can manipulate our factors to help accommodate to the team's success.

We plan for what we want to accomplish throughout the training year but must be adaptable

to the changing world that is college athletics. Athletes spend most of their time with their strength and conditioning coach. We must constantly create a positive environment for our student athletes to continue to develop and be equipped with the right tools to have success. Now, there are those tough parts that someone may see in videos where we push them to the brink, but it is our job to educate our SAs why we are doing what we are doing. Ultimately, we are there for them and to serve them during the time they are in our program.

When athletes walk down the hallway of the facility at the early hours of the morning, and they hear the music they know they what to expect. At the end of the day, we as strength coaches are there for

our student athletes. We are there to mentor and help our athletes cultivate tools that will stay with them when they are far removed from the program and are having success in their adult lives. The next time when you are watching ESPN and you see a muscle-bound guy jumping up and down and bringing the energy, understand that there is more to it than only hype.

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



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