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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 just getting started and what an action-packed, few months are in store for area athletes and fans.

If the first couple weeks of the boys basketball season is any indications, this promises to be an unbelievable season of action.

The Lansing area is home to some phenomenal young talent and some outstanding teams. Michigan State basketball fans will have to check out the talent at East Lansing. The Trojans have one of the finest Division 1 teams in the state and are led by the sons of some former Michigan State greats. Former Spartan legends Andre Hutson and Kelvin Torbert have sons playing key roles for the Trojans in junior Cameron Hutson and sophomore KJ Torbert. East Lansing is simply loaded this year and will be "must watch" basketball for area hoops fans.

Freeland has had some outstanding teams the past several years and this year's edition promises to add to the legacy with two of the top sophomores in the state leading the way in Wilson Huckleby and Tristan Comer.

In Saginaw, Heritage senior Tyler Ode will be making a case for Mr. Basketball while one of the premier basketball programs in the state of Michigan, Saginaw High, will be bringing down the curtain.

Last year was a huge year for area girls basketball teams and this season will be no different. Rockford won the Division 1 state title last season and Lansing Catholic cut down the nets as the Division 2 state champions. Both teams return plenty of talent and will be among the favorites at the Breslin Center come March.

On the wrestling mats, the Lowell Red Arrows have forged a dynasty second to none. Lowell has won a decades-worth of team state championships and this season a loaded Red Arrow squad is aiming for an 11th consecutive state title. With the talent returning this season the Red Arrows will be hard to stop.

In Division 4, St. Louis has been making a name for itself at the Division 4 team state finals and the Sharks are primed for even bigger things this season.

So buckle up sports fans, this promises to be a truly eventful winter of high school sports!

See you at the games!



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Alma Boys Basketball Team Eyes Another Huge Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Alma boys basketball coach Chris Brown and his players are confident of another winning season.

"Our 2022-2023 ended with a one-point loss in the District Finals to rival Shepherd," Brown said. "We finished the season with a 13-10 overall record, 8-6 in the TVC Red (4th place). Our top wins were over Freeland (17-7), at Shepherd (20-7), Garber (14-10), Frankenmuth (13-11), and at Chesaning (17-6).

"Our top graduating seniors from 2022-23 were Michael Howey, who was a four year varsity basketball player and started for three years, Also, Sam Rosales, was a two time All-State, 1st team All-TVC performer for us at the

point guard position. Sam led us in virtually every category including points, assists, rebounds, steals, and deflections. Both players were very experienced and played heavy minutes throughout their careers."

There are several good players on this year's team.

•Cade Sutherland, Senior, Guard
"Cade is the one player on our roster who has been through the heat of varsity basketball as he has started since mid-way through his sophomore season," Brown said. "He has the experience of playing in big games, winning a district title, and being someone with high expectations and a player who is significantly relied upon.

•Jacob Dunlap, Senior, Forward
"Jacob has played significant minutes as a starter for more of his junior season," Brown said. "He

will need to make the transition of being a go to player and a leader for us on both ends of the floor."

•Owen Seeley, Junior, Forward

"Owen was on varsity as a sophomore and played role off the bench. This season he will be a go to person offensively, especially in the post. He has great footwork and understanding of how to pivot in order to get good shots," Brown said. •Jack Lemerand, Sophomore, Guard

•Brayden Truman, Sophomore, Guard

"Both Jack and Brayden will split time at the point guard position throughout the season," Brown said. "Each player brings different qualities. Jack is savvy, strong, and confident in running the team. Brayden brings great speed and quickness, and the ability to defend players off the dribble. Both players will be learning under fire at a position that requires a great deal of leadership.

"I expect this group to grow tremendously throughout the



Alma coach Chris Brown discusses strategy with his players during a time out.

course of season and our goal is to seriously compete for a District title come March. This year's team is athletic, fast, and well-conditioned. With a large group of inexperienced players who are playing their first significant varsity minutes we are still finding our identity. We compete hard, but we need to work on being consistent and learning the rigor, intensity,

speed and physicality of the varsity game.

As for the conference, "The TVC-Red is very strong. Garber, Freeland, Frankenmuth, Bridgeport, and John Glenn are all very good teams with a number of significant returners from the previous season. Alma, Swan Valley, and Birch Run are going through some transition."



Ithaca Boys Basketball Team To Rely On Strong Defensive Effort This Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Defense is the name of the game for the Ithaca boys basketball team this season.

The Yellowjackets, who turned in a 10-14 mark last season, have set the focus on the defensive end of the floor as they look to climb above the .500 mark this season. Ithaca also returns an athletic mix of veteran players that should develop into a solid defensive squad.

"Our team's strength right now is on the defensive end of the floor," said Ithaca coach Josh Rayburn. "We also have a very hard-working and athletic group of kids that need to try and create extra possessions for us by

creating turnovers on defense."

Leading the way for Ithaca this season are a trio of senior veterans. Kaleb Hallock, Carter Adle and Preslee Chaffin are a trio of senior veterans who all played key roles on last year's team. All three will play key roles on both sides of the floor for the Yellowjackets this season.

Ithaca also returns a solid core of juniors who earned playing time on the varsity last winter. Jackson Conn, Ryley White, Collin Thrush and Bryson LaBaron are an athletic group of players who are poised to play even larger roles on the squad this season.

"Jackson, Ryley, Collin and Bryson were all on the varsity last year as sophomores," Rayburn said. "They are all expected to take

Ithaca coach Josh Rayburn has a hard-working group of players this season that are strong on the defensive end of the floor.

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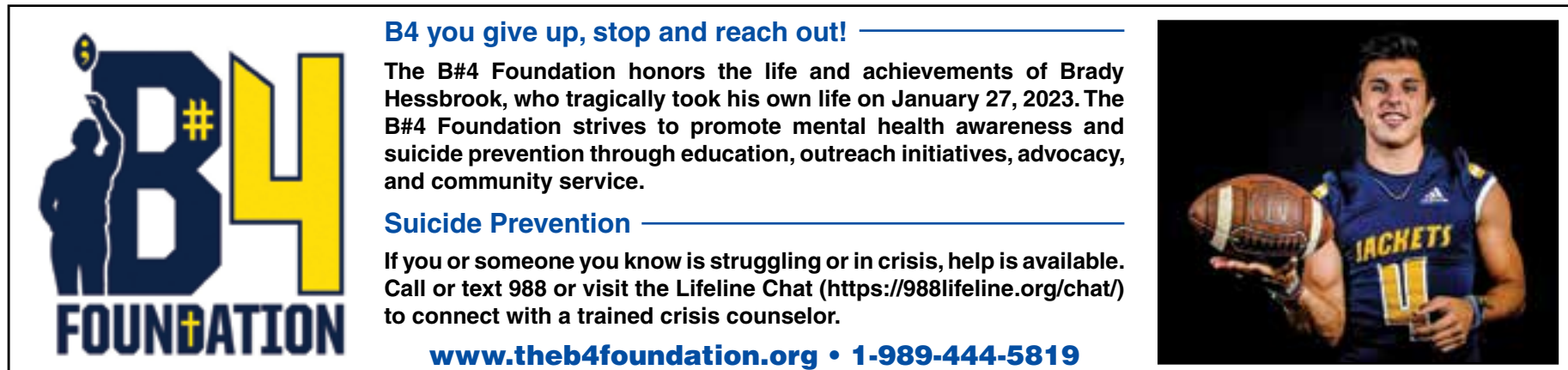
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The B#4 Foundation honors the life and achievements of Brady Hessbrook, who tragically took his own life on January 27, 2023. The B#4 Foundation strives to promote mental health awareness and suicide prevention through education, outreach initiatives, advocacy, and community service.

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P-W Boys Hope To Be Contenders Again

John Raffel Sports Scene

Pewamo-Westphalia hopes to be a force on the boys basketball court again this season.

Dominic Schneider is coaching a team which last year finished second in the CMAC, won their seventh straight district title, and won our second straight regional title.

"The highlight of the year was winning the regional title on a buzzer beating tip in," Schneider said, adding key graduates were "Jamison Eklund, team captain, "who lead us in points, rebounds, and assists; Luke Smith who was captain and guarded the best player and Ben Smith and energy guy,

tough defender and rebounder."

Top players include Grady Eklund, sophomore, point guard, second year on varsity and second year on varsity and second year running point for us. "Will have to take on the lead role for our offense and will have to continue to grow into his leadership role," Schneider said.

There is also Kash Pohl - Senior guard, second-year starter on the wing, "will need to step up his role on the offensive side of the floor and be our best defender. Will be our team captain."

Trevor Spitzley, Senior, forward "will be our big man in the middle that will need to lead us in rebounds, protecting the paint,

and being our team captain.

"We have a young team with 2 of our 12 guys being seniors so I hope our seniors can help lead the underclassmen and show them what it takes to be successful. We hope to be playing our best as the season progresses," Schneider said. "It's our chemistry. Our guys really get along and have done a great job so far holding each other accountable. We need to work on team defense and being quicker in our rotations."



The 2023-24 Pewamo-Westphalia boys basketball team.

The CMAC "once again is one of the strongest small school conferences in the state. The past few years we have had multiple

quarterfinalists in the postseason. I hope we can be competing and playing meaningful games in the league as the season ends."



MLS Boys Eye Banner Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Michigan Lutheran Seminary boys basketball coach Seth LaBair enjoyed last season very much and is especially hoping to enjoy this year

"We ended last year 11-13. The team won their first district title since 2015. We played really well at the end of last year and picked up some wins against some solid teams," LaBair said. "We graduated a few seniors. Mark Vogel was a part time starter but played a lot of minutes. Justin Blaine was also in the rotation. Senior Carson Koehler also had knee surgery and won't be playing this year. Junior Ethan Wakefield was a starter last year as a sophomore but isn't playing basketball this year.

"There are three starters back from last year's team. We could've potentially had all five starters back but things have happened and we'll adjust. Junior Will Salgat returns after being named first team all conference.

conference. Will can do a lot of different things. He will handle the ball a lot, he can score, and he's one of our best defenders. Junior Logan Broekhuizen also returns in the middle. He's a dominant rebounder and his mobility helps on defense. Sophomore Noah Reif is back for a second year on varsity. He's probably our most improved player. Noah has lots of potential. He can play many different positions and we're expecting big things from him this year. Seniors Caleb Iles and Michael Stehle give us good depth in the paint. Junior Gavin Morse adds speed and brings some different skills to our team."

MLS will enjoy some experience.

Our team has some experienced guys.

"We thought we were going to be deeper but we've still got guys who give us a chance to win each night. Some guys will have to step into roles and contribute. Our younger guys will need to grow as the season moves. I think we can get a few more wins than last year but we'll have to improve as the year goes

on," LaBair said. "Our team has good size. We don't have a lot of height but we've got some solid guys. Some of our guards are taller which gives us good flexibility to do a variety of things. We should be a good rebounding team.

"We will need some guys to step up on the perimeter. We don't have as much depth at the guard position but I'm confident guys will be able to do what's needed to be successful. We'll also have to count on big minutes from a few guys. We lack the depth that we were expecting."

LaBair said the conference is solid.

"Nouvel is probably the favorite to win the conference," LaBair said. "They've got the best two shooters and other role players that make them tough. The other side of our conference will also be tough competition. Standish and Millington should be the top two teams on that side. I believe that we can compete with any of these teams but we'll have to play tough. We could be predicted to be second on our side."

Lakewood Boys Basketball Counting On Total-Team Effort This Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

For the Lakewood-Lake Odessa basketball team this year, a total-team effort will be the key to the season.

This year's Viking squad does not have a major go-to player to count on so contributions from every player will be the key to success.

"This team doesn't have a single kid that averaged more than six points last year," said first-year Lakewood coach Jason Solgat. "The plan for this team is to work as one and build on what we are all individually good at. We don't have a lot of size but do have smart, fast players that can shoot."

Last year's Lakewood squad turned in a 12-11 record and finished in third place in the Greater Lansing Athletic

Conference. Gone from that team is Jayce Cusack, a four-year varsity player now playing at Trine University.

This year's squad is built around senior Blake Price, a four-year varsity player at guard. Fellow senior Landon Makley is a second-year varsity player who is positioned at center. Senior Garret Feighan is also a two-year varsity player and will play at guard or forward. Junior Troy Acker is another two-year varsity player who can play guard or forward. A pair of first-year varsity players who are looking to play key roles are junior guard Logan Faulkner and junior Seth Willette.

"This team is fast, smart and can shoot," Solgat said. "They are also able to bring pressure. We need to work on taking care of the ball more and playing with more discipline. We need to work on



The Lakewood-Lake Odessa boys basketball team is counting on a total-team effort to make the difference this season.

playing as a team versus playing as lone wolves."

With conference play on the horizon, Solgat looks for a close,

competitive title chase.

"The conference is up for grabs this year," Solgat said. "Lansing Sexton is picked to win, but at this

point it looks like anyone can grab the top spot. If we continue to play together as one, we should be able to make the top half of the league."

Vestaburg Boys Basketball Will Be Vastly Improved

John Raffel Sports Scene

Ty Warczynsky is the head coach of the Vestaburg boys basketball in the Mid-State Activities Conference and hopes to be a factor in the league race.

Vestaburg finished 10-14 last year.

"We have everyone returning and are adding a couple of pieces," Warczynsky said. "We have everyone back."

Top players back are:

•Landon Arntz junior, Forward.

"Last year Landon played a huge role for us. He led us in rebounding second in scoring and had to guard their best big," Warczynsky said.

*Janson Scholer sophomore guard.

"Janson was our main ball handler and defended their best guard. He was top three in scoring. I expect Janson to take his game in all areas to another

level."

"Keegan Beetley, junior guard.

"Keegan led us in scoring and hit some big shots throughout the year," Warczynsky said. "Him and Jayden Hilding are starting the season out injured. We expect them both back and will be a huge help. Trevor Patch (senior) and Brehm Warczynsky (freshman). Both are going to play huge roles for us this year. Trevor is coming off an injury and we are adding Brehm as a

freshman.

"Once we are fully healthy our depth will play a large role for us. I want to continue to get better each and every day. Strength this year should be our depth. When fully healthy we should be 8 or 9 deep. Getting healthy (is critical) and we are still young. We only have one senior but he is coming of a season ending injury."

In the MSAC, "Montabella and Sacred Heart are two of the favorites," Warczynsky said.



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Area Boys Basketball Teams Set To Make Their Marks On State Level

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The following is a look at some of the top boy basketball teams in the area.

East Lansing

Last season, the Trojans reached the Division 1 state quarterfinals. This year, with plenty of talent back plus some key additions, the ceiling is even higher. East Lansing brings back a team loaded with talent. Junior guard Cameron Hutson (6-foot-6) is a high-scoring perimeter player who is a matchup nightmare for opposing defense. JI Branson (6-4) adds even more size and scoring ability in the backcourt. BJ Windham (6-1) and Jayce Branson (6-4) add even more talent to a loaded roster. Up front, the Trojans are led by senior Christian Dun (6-7) while fellow senior Charlie Baker (6-4) can fill it up from outside. Added to the mix is Okemos transfer KJ Torbert (6-4) who is one of the premier sophomores in the area.

Lansing Waverly

The CAAC Blue is home to some outstanding teams in East Lansing and Waverly. Waverly has a team loaded with talent and opened the season with a 4-2 record with wins against Detroit King and Flint Carman-Ainsworth and a thrilling overtime win against Lansing Sexton. Senior guard Keenan Harris is an outstanding ball handler who can also take over a game with his ability to put the ball in the bucket. Sophomore guard Derek Thomas is another player who can take over a game as evidenced by his 37-point outburst against

Carman-Ainsworth. Senior guard Deunte Phifer (6-foot-6) is an multi-talented guard who can take a game over with his floor game while junior center Treyvon Miller (6-5) is an explosive force around the bucket with a silky shooting touch.

Saginaw Heritage

The Hawks are primed for a huge year led by senior Tyler Ode (6-5) who will continue his career next season at the University of Toledo. Ode is an outstanding all-around talent who will make a run at Mr. Basketball this season. Heritage also has plenty of size with junior Tamarrion Kindle who is set for a breakout year and sophomore Noah Arnold (6-8) who brings even more height to the post.

Saginaw Arthur Hill

The Lumberjacks are off to a fast start this season winning five of their first six games. Senior Lyna Brooks (6-3) is a talented all-around player who can fill a stat sheet. Sophomore guard Boop Hardy (5-11) is an explosive backcourt player primed for a big breakout season. Junior forward Tyler Dorsey (6-4) is a smooth, athletic frontcourt player who can fill it up or clean the boards.

Freeland

The Falcons are poised to fly high this year led by high-scoring guard Wilson Huckeby. Huckeby is a 6-foot-3 sophomore guard who has been pouring in the points as Freeland has sprinted out of the gate to a 6-0 record with wins against teams like Mt. Pleasant, Grand Ledge and Frankenmuth. The Falcons

also have an outstanding inside presence in 6-foot-6 sophomore Tristan Comer who averaged 12.8 points, 8.9 rebounds and 2.1 blocked shots last year.

Saginaw

It will be the end of an era at Saginaw this season and the Trojans have some talented players to make it a memorable season. Brandon McCune (6-4) can light it up from outside while junior Torrion Stevenson (6-1) is poised to be one of the premier juniors in the area.

Grand Ledge

The Comets were hit by some graduation losses but still have plenty of talent to work with. Junior Carson Daly (6-2) is a skilled guard while senior Elyjah Hendricks (6-3) is another force in the backcourt. Sophomore center Braden James (6-8) is a rising post player who is ready to breakout for a team that has a win against Saginaw this season.

Holt

The Rams are not a team to overlook. Senior guards Carter Bishop and Donye Thomas are returning all-conference players with solid all-around games. The Rams also have a pair of talented sophomores ready to blossom in Brandon Mercer and Michael Aimery.

Mason

The Bulldogs have a core of talented players back from a team that won a conference title last season and reached the regional finals. Senior guard Luke Marlan (6-2) and senior post Kaleb Parrish (6-5) return after earning all-state honors last season. Junior guard Levi Stambaugh brings more scoring punch in the backcourt. Seniors Tyler Baker and Nick Wells and junior Cason Carswell add to the talent back for Mason.



Look for plenty of action above the rim from some of the top area high school basketball teams this season.

Carson City-Crystal Boys Basketball Rebuilding After Strong Season

David Cook Sports Scene

It will be a rebuilding year for the Carson City-Crystal boys basketball team. The Eagles had a large senior class last season and that group of seniors left a solid legacy as the Eagles posted an 18-6 overall record and 15-3 league mark.

This year the Eagles have a number of promising juniors looking to make an impact and a new coach in Nate Lindloff.

Standouts from last year's team like point guard Mason Smith and power forward Brayden Clark have moved on. Carson City, however, does have one veteran back from last year in Gavin Reeder.

"Gavin is a great rebounder and will be our centerpiece on defense," said Lindloff. "Gavin can stretch the floor for us

offensively and will be a great leader for us."

Leadership will be key as the bulk of the squad is comprised of juniors.

"This season we will be very young with only four seniors on our team and a multitude of juniors," Lindloff said. "We graduated a large senior class last season, so finding the right chemistry on the floor will be a challenge for us early on."

Lindloff counts team speed and defense as being strong points of this year's team. Staying competitive on the boards will be a key for the Eagles.

"Our team will be small," Lindloff said, "so rebounding will be a challenge for us. Our team is also very young, so finding the right chemistry early on will be challenging for us."

Overall, Lindloff is looking forward to

seeing what this year's team can accomplish.

"Our season looks very promising," Lindloff said. "Although we lost several seniors from last season, we have a great core of young players that will help lead the way. I am looking forward to seeing the growth our players have throughout the season."

Lindloff is also looking forward to what should be a wide-open title chase in the Mid-State Activities Conference.

"Our conference this year has some strong teams but I wouldn't say there is a favorite to win the conference," Lindloff said. "It will be a battle between three to four teams to claim the conference championship. We will have a young and inexperienced team but are looking to be competitive in our league this season."



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Alma Wrestling Team Looking To Continue Winnings Ways This Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Alma wrestling team has been one of the premier programs in Mid-Michigan the past several years and the Panthers are looking to continue the success this season.

Last season Alma turned in a 16-13 record and claimed a sixth consecutive team district championship.

While the Panthers suffered some key graduation losses, the team is gearing up for another strong season.

Alma is led this season by a talented veteran nucleus of wrestlers. Senior Cole O'Boyle is poised for a big season. A three-time state qualifier, O'Boyle (190 pounds) was unable to compete at state as a freshman due to Covid but came back to placed fifth at state as a sophomore and take third place last

year. O'Boyle has his sights set on reaching the top of the podium at this year's state finals.

Junior Buddy Leonard (138) is another wrestler that is chasing a state title. Leonard placed third at last year's state finals.

A pair of juniors will be looking to also make the trip to individual state this season. Diego Silva (106) and Daniel Rosales (144) were both regional qualifiers last season who are poised to step up this season.

While the Panthers have some younger wrestlers moving into the starting lineup this year, the expectations are still the same.

"We expect to earn another team district championship and be in contention for a regional championship," said Alma coach Randy Miniard. "We are looking to improve our individuals so they can be wrestling their



The Alma wrestling team has experienced plenty of success the past several years and the Panthers are poised to continue their winning ways this season.

best during the district, regional and state tournaments."

The blend of talented veterans and promising newcomers has the Panthers working hard to improve.

"We have some very talented wrestlers in our room who are very good at helping out their novice teammates," Miniard said. "Our room is very hard working and improving each day. We just have to work on constant improvement. Each wrestler needs to be

better than they were the previous day."

The Panthers will also be facing a challenging league schedule as they prepare for the state tournament.

"Bay City John Glenn is the favorite this year with Freeland right behind them," Miniard said. "Both are ranked in the top 10 in Division 2. We will be fighting our way to compete and see where everything shakes out."

Portland Poised For Another Strong Wrestling Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Portland wrestling coach Andy Pulling likes the prospects for his 2023-24 team.

"The 22-23 season brought many historical moments in our program, as we became back-to-back-to-back academic all-state, back-to-back-to-back league champions, back-to-back-to-back district champions and advanced to team state for the first time in 13 years.

Key graduates included:

Jake Olson - Regional Qualifier, NWCA & USMC Leadership & Character All American/

Connor Gleason - Regional Qualifier, Character All American.

Ethan Webert - 2x State Qualifier, All State.

Drew Miller - All State, 150 career wins.

Isaiah Pelc - 2x All State, 137 career wins.

Deakin Guidi - Regional Qualifier.

John Dodson - State Qualifier.

Branson Goodman - 2x All State, 114 career pins.

Top wrestlers this year include:

Mark Meyers 12th 285 Regional Qualifier, 2nd Team All-League, expecting to be a team captain.

Barrett Spitzley 11th 215 2nd Team All League, expecting to be a team captain.

Andrew Feldpausch 10th 120 1st Team All League, expecting to be a team captain.

Brad Meyers 10th 165, expecting to be a team captain.

Gunnar Williams 10th 190 1st Team All League, expecting to be a team captain.

Mason McGregor 11th 150, expecting to be a team captain.

"Portland is an exciting team with high expectations in the classroom and on the mat," Pulling said. "They graduated a large and high-achieving senior class, but are still focused on hanging their 3rd consecutive



The 2023-23 Portland Wrestling team.

Academic All-State Banner in their wrestling room as well as returning to K-Wings Stadium for Team States.

"Portland is also excited as they are in their inaugural year of girls wrestling, and having eight girls competing. We operate as a team and are hard working."

His wrestlers need to improve on "technique and learning the sport and what

it takes to get to our goals," Pulling said. "CAAC White brought in two teams and got stronger, we have multiple preseason state ranked teams."

This is Pulling's predictions: Lakewood, Portland, Eaton Rapids, Charlotte, Ionia, Olivet, JW Sexton, Lansing Catholic.

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Area Wrestling Teams Geared Up For Big Seasons

David Cook Sports Scene

The following is a look at some of the top wrestling teams in the area by division.

DIVISION 1

Davison

Davison is ranked fourth in the state in the early going. Several Davison wrestlers turned in big performances at the Grappler Gold Invitational where Davison placed in fourth. Senior Charlie Armstead (190 pounds), sophomore Andrew Brown (157), senior Alexander Holmes (285), sophomore Cavlin Martz (132) and junior Tanner McDunnah (144) all placed third. Sophomore Brandon Glisson (215) and freshman Julius Pacheco (138) placed fourth. The Cardinals opened the season with a statement win when they defeated fifth-ranked Clarkston 38-26 in a dual match.

Rockford

Rockford is ranked ninth in the state in Division 1 and is off to a fast start this season. The Rams reeled off wins in the first seven dual matches of the season before falling to second-ranked Hartland (36-23) and eight-ranked Brighton (34-18) at the Brighton Quad. Included in the winning streak was a 35-27 win against Greenville, ranked seventh in the state in Division 2.

The Rams are led this season by senior Ryan Ahern who placed second in the state at 190 pounds last season and Braylenn



Aulbach who placed seventh in the state at 120 pounds.

DIVISION 2

Lowell

The Lowell wrestling dynasty is back again this season and is looking to win a state-record 11th consecutive state championship. The Red Arrows are ranked No. 1 in the state in Division 2 and turned in a strong performance at the Grappler Gold Invitational where they finished second to Dundee.

Lowell was led at the Grappler Gold by Jarret Smith (106 pounds) and Casey Engle (190) who won individual titles. Smith placed third at the individual state finals last season. Placing second for Lowell were Trevor Boone (138), Owen Segorski (144), Ari McFarland (215) while Carter Cichocki (126), Jared Boone (165) placed third. Both Segorski and Cichocki placed second at the individual state finals last season.

Also placing for the Red Arrows were Logan Dawson (4th, 132), Tacho Gonzales (5th, 150), Cody Foss (6th, 126), Braddock King (6th, 113), Kenny Kinyon (6th, 285), Mason Saylor (7th, 113) and Jack Lamoreaux (7th, 157). Dawson was also a state placer last season.

Bay City John Glenn

John Glenn is ranked third in the state in Division 2 and is primed for a big season. The Bobcats opened the season winning seven straight dual matches including wins against Gaylord (40-23), the fifth-ranked team in Division 2, and Temperance-Bedford (33-27), ranked seventh in the state in Division 1. The Bobcats are led this year by Logan Demarest, who placed fifth in the state last year at 175 pounds and Izaak Kukulski who took fifth at 106 pounds. John Glenn also returns Ruben Rivera who took sixth at 113 pounds and Garrett Forgash who was eighth at 165.

Mason

A late start to the wrestling season due to the football team reaching the state finals is having a limited effect on the Bulldogs. Mason, ranked fourth in the state, opened the wrestling season with seven straight wins

The St. Louis wrestling team would like to be raising their arms several times at the team state finals this season.



The Rockford wrestling team is ranked in the state in Division 1 this season led by all-stater Ryan Ahern.

including a pair of wins against state-ranked, Division 4 squads Manchester and Bronson.

Mason is led this season by Derek Badgley who placed third in the state at 175 pounds last year while Jady Grimes placed eighth at 157. The Bulldogs are also waiting on the return of standout AJ Martel who was injured in the state finals football game and have even more talented wrestlers including Tex Smith (144 pounds) and Jordan Evans, Jakob Mullins, Cecilia Williams and Darius Ambts in the lower weight classes.

Greenville

The Yellowjackets are back among the top ten in the state as they are ranked seventh in the early going. Greenville has posted wins against Mt. Pleasant, Caledonia and West Ottawa and dropped a 35-27 decision to Rockford, ranked ninth in Division 1. Greenville is led by Case Johnson who took third in the state at 215 pounds last season. The Yellowjackets also return state placers Alex Buskirk (8th, 126), Liam Dailey (8th, 138) and Alex Buskirk (8th, 126).

Freeland

With a large group of talented veterans back, the Falcons are poised for a big season. Freeland is ranked 10th in the state and picked up a big win at the George Hamblin Invitational which included Richmond among other strong teams. Freeland had several individual champions at the tournament including Malachi Hill (120), Joseph Klopff (126), Colin Ott (138), Fabian Facundo (150), Noah Graham (157), Gibson Shepard (175), Elijah Murphy (190) and Bringham Smith (215). Ty Fournier (144) and Easton Rosebush (113) placed second.

St. Johns

The Redwings started out the season strong with dual wins against Dansville and Lansing Waverly and some individual performances at the Don Johnson Invitational.

St. Johns was led at the Johnson invite by Sean Pettigrew (120 pounds) and Ryan Dimmick (285) who both won individual championships. Pettigrew is a returning state placer who finished eighth in the state last year at 113 pounds. Taking second place for the Redwings at the invite were Reagan Ward (113) and Ben Krajniak (150). Also placing for St. Johns were Tyler Riedel (3rd, 126), Jayden Keys (3rd, 165), Gavin Moreno (3rd, 215), Cohen Larrison (6th, 144) and Brady Heibeck (6th, 157).

DIVISION 3

Chippewa Hills

Look for Chippewa Hills to make a splash in Division 2 this season. After dropping a 43-27 dual against Division 1 heavyweight Grandville on opening night, Chip Hills has responded with a big 42-33 win against Bay City John Glenn, ranked third in the state in Division 2, and a first-place finish at the Hemlock invite. Chippewa Hills is led by Tyler Geer who placed sixth at the state meet at 132 pounds last season and Natalie Gibson who finished second in the state in the girls tournament at 105 pounds.

Lakewood-Lake Odessa

The Vikings are off to a strong start this season going 8-1 in their first nine matches. Lake Odessa went 5-0 at the Vicksburg tournament with the lone loss in the early

going coming against Mason, ranked fourth in the state in Division 2. Lakewood is led this season by Joel Simon who placed third in the state at 215 pounds last season.

DIVISION 4

St. Louis

The St. Louis wrestling team has been a familiar face at the Division 4 team state finals the past couple years and the Sharks have a squad the is primed to make a deep tournament run again this February. Ranked third in the state in Division 4, the Sharks are off to a strong start this season. The Sharks kicked off the season with wins against Hart and Leroy-Pine River and then followed that up with a third-place finish at the Howell invite, finishing in the middle of a top five that included Division 1 schools Clarkston, Hudsonville, Grand Ledge and Howell. The Sharks were led at Howell by Owen Fogel (106 pounds) and Alex Rodriguez (113) who won individual championships and Colin Kuhn (126) and Martine Wiggins (144) who both placed second. Also placing for the

Sharks were Laythan Haworth (4th, 138), Ray Frye (4th, 215), Drew Challender (5th, 157), Ramon Anguiano (5th, 215) and Josh Dew (6th, 165).

St. Louis has a trio of returning state placers this season as Rodriguez took second at 113 last year, Kuhn was third at 106 pounds and Fogel was sixth at 106.

New Lothrop

As usual, the Hornets of New Lothrop can be found in the top ten state rankings as they are eighth in Division 4. New Lothrop dropped a pair of duals against Division 2 schools Fenton and Lake Fenton. New Lothrop also placed seventh at the Howell invite. New Lothrop was led at Howell by Jack Kulhanek who won the title at 165 pounds along with Dalton Birchmeier (2nd, 157), Colton Symons (3rd, 190), Blake Wendling (7th, 113 pounds) and Hunter Wolf (7th, 120). Symons and Birchmeier are returning state placers as Symons placed fifth at 175 pounds and Birchmeier took eighth at 132 pounds last season.



The Lowell wrestling team is taking aim at an 11th straight team state championship this season.

Saranac Wrestlers Continue To Make Strides

John Raffel Sports Scene

Saranac Schools and wrestling coach Jeremy Winsor continue to make impressive progress with their mprogram.

Saranac competes in the CMAC.

"After officially starting the varsity program in 2020, Saranac had their first state qualifier," Winsor said, referring to Nathan Prinns, 106 pounds state qualifier.

Winsor said Evan Mouch (Sr.) 144, will be looking for his first state finals appearance after coming up short in regionals last

season.

"Landen Winsor (Jr) 150, was unable to compete at the individual district last season due to an end of the year injury. He will be looking to make a long postseason run this year."

"Ryan Bollone (Jr) 138, will be a key wrestler for the team this season and has aspirations for a state tournament run.

"Aiden Bussell (Fr) 126 will be a good addition to the lineup this year as a Freshman. We are looking for him to score a lot of team points this season.

"Seth Purchase (Jr) 144 will be

an asset when making match time decisions for team dual meets.

"Andrew Whittenbach (Jr) 165 has the potential of making a long run in the post season also. We are looking for him to be a strong competitor for Saranac this season."

Winsor said he is looking for "continue growth of the program. We have kids who have put in a ton of work prior to this season. They are looking forward to testing themselves in competition this season. Kids are appreciating the work involved in getting better. They come to practice with the



Saranac's Evan Mouch (Sr.) 144, will be looking for his first state finals appearance after coming up short in regionals last season.

mindset that they have the power to push themselves and their teammates.

We have a lot of young wrestlers who just need more mat time. Improvement will happen as we are

in competition"

In the CMAC, "Laingsburg and Dansville will be competitive," Winsor said. "We are looking to surprise some teams this year even with voiding some weight classes"



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Returning Nucleus Has Frankenmuth Wrestling Team Looking Forward To A Big Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Frankenmuth wrestling team had several noteworthy achievements last season, and with the majority of the wrestlers who accomplished those feats back, the Eagles are poised for another interesting season.

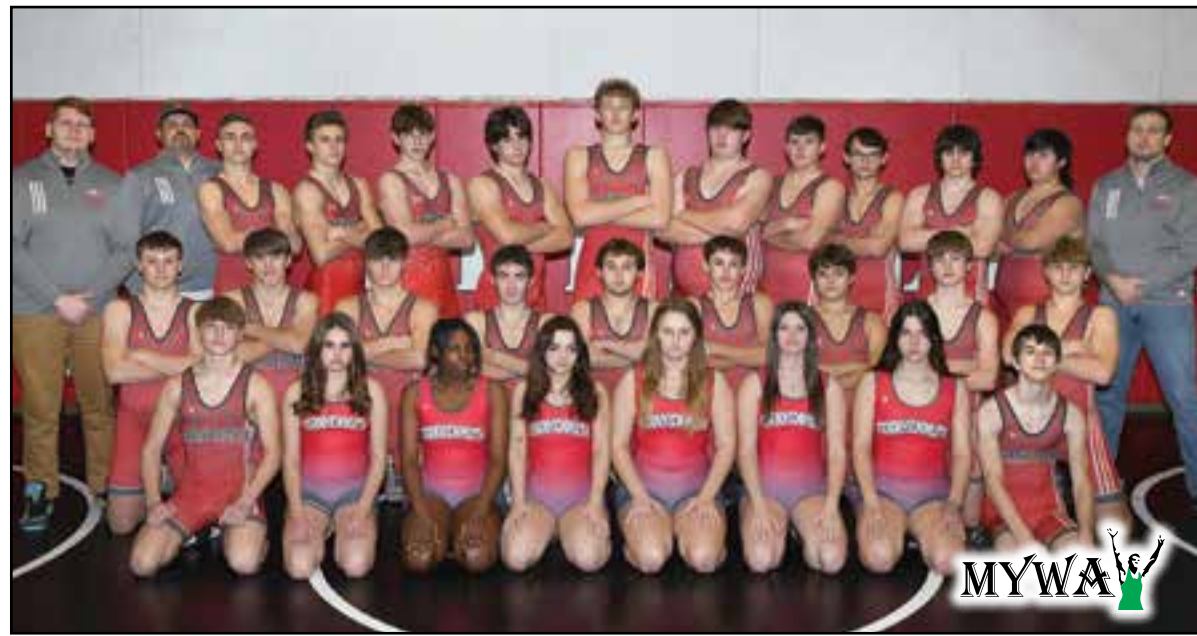
"We are coming off a remarkable season," said Frankenmuth wrestling coach Skylar Ley. "The season was highlighted by Kaleb Reece's 42 wins, strong performances from Griffin Clontz and Bradyn Curtis and Tiffany Anderson's status as a two-time state qualifier. Those achievements set a high standard for the team."

Frankenmuth did graduate a pair of key wrestlers from last

year's squad in Lance Keinath and Nevaeh Gleeson. Gleeson, however, will be back on the sidelines this season as the two-time state qualifier is back as a coach for the girls wrestling team where she is adding a great presence in the wrestling room.

Frankenmuth does return Reece, Clontz, Curtis and Anderson.

"Having Kaleb, Griffin, Bradyn and Tiffan back is crucial to this season's success," Ley said. "Their past achievements and ongoing potential are central to the team's competitive strategy."



The Frankenmuth wrestling team has several talented veterans returning to the lineup this season.

Added to the mix are senior captains Ashton Edie, Kaden Miller and Jaden Hansen.

"Ashton, Kaden and Jaden have stepped up big for us in the past to help us win important duals and lead the team to victory," Ley said.

With a mixture of young and seasoned talent, the Eagles are primed for a strong season.

"The team's strengths are rooted in our talented and diverse roster, from freshmen to seniors," Ley said. "Kaleb Reece sets a strong momentum and the team's unity, heart and family-like bond significantly contribute to its competitive edge. The collective support and effort underline the team's spirit."

Those strong points have the bar set high this season.

"The primary objective is to qualify for the team state tournament as one of the top eight teams in the state," Ley said. "We also have an overarching goal of daily improvement and surpassing previous performances."

DeWitt Wrestlers Set For Another Huge Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Brian Byers has been coaching DeWitt wrestling for 23 years and his program is getting ready for 100-win milestones.

Top wrestlers include Trenden Bashore, a junior 132-pounder who was a third-team all-stater.

Kaden LaPaugh is a senior 138-pounder who was fifth in the state last year and was All-League.

Jamie Cook is a junior 125-pounder who is second team in the state last season and all-league. Elianna Hillard is a senior 135-pounder who is fourth in the state last year and was all-league. Ryleigh Ruiz is a junior

105-pound State qualifier who was all-league last season Isaac Sovo is a junior 175-pounder who was All-League a year ago.

Top newcomers and other contributors will include freshman 157-pounder Tyler Bashore; Byers is ranking the league this way: Holt, Grand Ledge, DeWitt, Waverly, East

Lansing, Everett, Okemos.

The Panthers are looking tough returning a great group of upperclassman with a lot of younger wrestlers to compliment the line-up," he said. "The girls team is poised to again be one of the dominant female teams in the state."



Sanford-Meridian Wrestling To Count On Mix Of Veterans And Promising Freshman

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

With a mix of experienced wrestlers and some talented newcomers, the Sanford-Meridian wrestling team is poised for a strong season.

The Mustangs turned in a 10-15 record in dual matches last season and placed second at the Mio Invitational. With a strong core of wrestlers back from that team the Mustangs are poised for improvement this season.

"We will be a very solid team for both the individual and team tournament we participate in," said Sanford-Meridian coach Jeremy Sampson. "Many of our freshmen have years of experience to go along with a great group of upperclassmen. It should make for

a fun year."

The Mustangs will miss Alex Goodson who graduated last spring as a member of the 150-win club, the 100-pin club and was a two-time state placer who finished second in the state last season.

While Goodson has graduated, the squad still has plenty of veteran talent. Reece Teer and Elliot Noys are both returning two-time state qualifiers. Justin Wood and Dawson Kolka round out what is a solid senior class for Sanford-Meridian.

The Mustangs have a pair of juniors to watch for in John Durfee, a returning regional



With a blend of experienced wrestlers and promising freshmen the Sanford-Meridian wrestling team is poised for a solid season.

qualifier, and Ethen Methner. Sophomore Logan Brawt returns to add depth in the middle weights.

Rounding out the Mustang lineup is a promising group of freshmen that include Alex Sampson, Brodie Pierce, Karson Yancer, Austin Baurassa, Eliza Briston, Nick Lampherd, Cylus

Hopkins, Scott Garrison, Cooper Walser, Sandy Richardson and Logan Parsons.

"We need to continue to add depth," Sampson said. "Although talented, we aren't deep in several weight classes."

In the Jack Pine Conference,

Sampson sees Clare as the team to beat followed by Gladwin and Beaverton with the Mustangs being in the upper echelon as well.

"I can't wait to see the growth of this team from the opening practice to the end of the season," Sampson said. "We will work hard and improve rapidly."

Laingsburg Hoping For Another Strong Wrestling Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Laingsburg wrestling coach Shawn Baynes is looking forward to another strong wrestling season.

"Last year, we qualified to team regionals and lost to

Clinton in the regional finals," Baynes said. "We were second in the league with a close loss to Lakewood. Big losses to the program were All-State wrestlers Mikey Brooks and Aden Baynes. Key wrestlers back at Seth Sivak (state qualifier), Jack Borgman (regional qualifier),

Bryce Smith (regional qualifier), Marlon Graham, Riley Kiffer and Ethan Schneebberger. "I hope to have all these athletes qualify to the post season," Baynes said. "We want to be District and Conference champs. We will have lots of experience." Depth will be a

key for Laingsburg. Laingsburg expects to be a contender for the league title.

"I think Perry has a strong line up this year and it will be between the two of us for the championship," Baynes said.



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Ionia Wrestlers Boast Several Fine Athletes

John Raffel Sports Scene

Luke Smalley is coaching an Ionia wrestling team which hopes to be a contender in the CAAC White Conference this season.

Ionia's team finished 12-10 and 3-1 in the conference last season. Killian Campbell and Nathan Clute were regional qualifiers last season.

Key wrestlers for the Bulldogs will be: Chad Campbell (113) Freshman; Jackson Stoakes (132), Sophomore; Carter Castillo (138), Senior; Bryce Hoppes (144) Sophomore; Hunter Barker (150) Senior.

"I have high expectations for all the wrestlers this season and think they all have the ability to

be state qualifiers this season," he said. "We have a very young team this year. My expectations are to still be in the top of our conference and wrestle tough the whole season.

"We have a great group of wrestlers this year with always great effort and attitude. I would say our strength is the team is very coachable and willing to learn and do what is best for the team. Our team just needs more mat time and more experience. They are working extremely hard right now and it will pay off.

"Our league is tough and we added a couple new schools this season, Olivet and Lakewood, which only makes it tougher. It is very early in the season to tell but we will be working very hard to be in the race."



The 2023-24 Ionia boys and girls wrestling teams.

Carrollton Wrestlers Set For Exciting Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Justin Hayward is putting his Carrollton wrestlers on the mat with high hopes this season in the Tri-Valley Conference.

Last season "Lenton Patrick was a state qualifier at 175 with a record of 46-9," Hayward recalled. "Ernesto Garza was a regional qualifier at 113 with 28 wins. We had two key seniors graduate including Lenton Patrick and Brayln Martindale. Both were key contributors in the middle of our lineup."

Key wrestlers, Hayward said, will include junior Ernest Garza "who was a regional qualifier last year. He will be looking forward to making the next step this season and advancing farther in the state tournament. Senior (215) Cody Sanada will be looking to get back on track this year. He was a 30+ win wrestler his sophomore season but had an injury last season preventing him from competing until late

in the season. Senior (285) Angelo Borrero started coming on strong towards the end of last year and will be looking to grow on that success.

"We have several second year wrestlers looking to take the next steps in sophomore (132) Logan Peavey, sophomore (157) Ethan McDonald, sophomore (126) Tori Rueda, and sophomore (138) Zoe Venema. There are several first-year wrestlers who will be trying to leave their imprint this year in senior (113) Chris Zapata, junior (285) Bryce Dupuis, sophomore (285) Kameron Beemon, and freshman (106) Andre Gonzales."

Hayward added: "We expect to be real competitors at the weights that we have on our team. The sky's the limit for some athletes. Our strength is their willingness to compete against anyone. They are a team that holds each other accountable and wants to improve every day. The biggest thing we need to work on is getting all 14 spots

filled. The wrestlers that are on the team will be able to compete very highly in their respective weight classes."

The league race is expected to be very challenging

"The Tri-Valley Conference is one of the strongest conferences in the state for wrestling," Hayward said. "If you look at the number of teams and individual wrestlers that are at the state tournament each year it speaks for itself. The league favorites on our side of the conference right now would be between a couple of schools but every team can compete. There is no favorite on the other side of the conference as there are a handful of teams that could be at the team state tournament. We are always vying for a conference championship but our conference is very tough so we will see where we end up.

"We have a good staff committed to helping this team improve and grow each day."



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Area Girls Basketball Teams Set To Make Their Marks On Local And State Stages

David Cook Sports Scene

The following is a look at some of the top girls basketball teams in the area by Division.

DIVISION 1

Rockford

The defending Division 1 state champions are picking up where they left off last season. Rockford brings back plenty of talent from last year's title team led by Anna Wypych and Sienna Wolfe. Kate Higgins and Jordan Mateer will also make an impact for the Rams who opened the season with a 62-34 win against a Byron Center team it defeated in last year's regional championship game.

DeWitt

DeWitt won league and district titles last season and despite losing some key seniors off last year's squad, the Panthers are poised for another big year. DeWitt reeled off three straight wins to start the new season. The Panthers have one of the strongest backcourts in mid-Michigan this season in the junior duo of Madi Uyl and Tara Kurncz. The 5-foot-6 guards are excellent shooters, ball handlers and defenders.

East Lansing

East Lansing is looking to bounce-back this season and have started out winning two of its first three games. The Trojans have a solid inside-outside combination in senior center Carmel Eiland (6-foot-2) and senior guard Sophie Klinger. Junior Maeve Hadden (5-7) is a talented player who can play guard or forward.

Midland Dow

The Chargers are led by a solid senior core that includes Klaire Caldwell, Lauren VanSumeren and Riley Shikorra. Sophomore guard Melanie Kolnits and junior post Dalton Deboer also play key roles for a Dow team with a big upside this season.

Grand Ledge

The Comets have a solid veteran core of players led by forward Alayna Armstrong (5-foot-9) and senior guard Olivia Navin who both earned all-conference honors last season. Grand Ledge also has several younger players that will make an impact this season.

Holt

A trio of all-conference players return to

lead the way for Holt. Rhema Dozier and Claire Tobias head up a skilled backcourt with Allison Metzger providing scoring punch on the wins. The Rams also have some talented younger players poised to contribute.

DIVISION 2

Lansing Catholic

The Cougars captured the Division 2 state championship last year and with plenty of veterans back a repeat is the ultimate goal. Leading the group of returning players are seniors Anna and Leah Richards. Both Anna and Leah earned all-state honors last season and will be attending Hope College. The Cougars also welcome back senior guards Gabby Halliwill and Tessa Roe along with senior forward Morgan Wilcox who all earned all-conference honors last season.

Portland

Portland won 15 games last season and with the bulk of the team returning this season, even more success looks to be in store. The Raiders opened the new season with four straight wins. Senior guard Malia Thelen leads the way for Portland along with her sister, sophomore Lilly Thelen. Both Thelens earned all-league honors last season. Senior Alexa Thelen (5-foot-10) is a veteran post player who provides the team with strong play in the paint. Freshman Kayla Weber (6-foot) is a newcomer to watch for.

Williamston

The Hornets are led by senior veteran Reese Gaytan (5-11). A three-time, all-league selection who is headed to Grand Valley State. Gaytan averaged 12.2 points and 8.1 rebounds per game last season. Senior guard Claire Casey is another skilled veteran while Addie Feig is a senior forward. The Hornets also have several young players poised to step up.

Haslett

Rebuilding is the name of the game at Haslett where a large group of players from a team that went 22-2 last year have graduated. The Vikings will build around senior



The Rockford Rams are gearing up to defend their Division 1 state title this season.

veterans Abby Brooks, Durgen McIntosh (5-foot-11) and Jadelyn Trotter along with junior Danielle Cleveland. Sophomore Alexis Turner also saw varsity playing time last season. Haslett also has several sophomores and a freshman looking to contribute.

St. Johns

The Redwings are off to a strong start this season under new coach Rondi Fillwock. St. Johns won three of its first four games and are led by senior center Maddy Robinson (6-foot) who has been putting up double-doubles in points and rebounds. Senior guard Isabel Thelen is a strong all-around player while junior Joce Kotowicz is another source of points on offense and is a good defender.

DIVISION 3

Ovid-Elsie

The Marauders won 22 games last season and fashioned an undefeated league record on their way to a berth in the state quarterfinals. More success looks to be in store this season as Ovid-Elsie won its first five games. Senior Ava Bates (6-foot) earned player of the year honors in the conference last season. The Marauders also welcome back seniors Hailee Campbell (5-10), Evelyn Cole and Braeden Tokar who also garnered all-conference honors last season.

Ithaca

The Yellowjackets won a conference

championship last season and turned in a 19-4 record. While the squad is replacing several veterans, they do welcome back junior guard Ivy Davenport (5-foot-11) who earned all-conference honors last season. Senior Karlee Whitmore (5-11) is a veteran in the post while a number of sophomore guards are poised to step up.

DIVISION 4

Fowler

The Eagles reached the Division 4 state semifinals last season. While all five starters are gone from that team, the Eagles are primed to reload. Senior guard Grace O'Hare is a veteran guard and leads a solid backcourt that includes juniors Ella Hufnagel, Kelcie Pung and Katie Spicer. Senior Rebecca Smith steps in at center with junior Brooke Weber at forward. The Eagles started the season winning three of their first four games with the lone loss coming by single digits against Division 1 Midland Dow.

Portland St. Patrick

St. Patrick is traditionally a threat in Division 4 and this year is no different. Senior guard Laynie Meredith is a returning all-state player. Seniors Addie Scheurer and Riley Scheurer bring veteran leadership at guard and forward respectively. Freshman Grace Rocky (5-foot-8) is a returning all-conference player who played varsity ball as a freshman last season.

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Hemlock Girls Will Defend Their State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

Scott Neumeayer recalls his Hemlock girls basketball team had a slow start last year.

"Despite a slow start, we had a very successful season. We won our conference as well as the Division 3 state championship. We finished with a final record of 26-3," he said. "We lost five seniors off of last year's team. Our two key losses were Regan Finkbeiner and Chloe Watson. They finished first and second in career scoring history at Hemlock with about 3,000 career points between the two of them. Not only were they tremendous four-year varsity players, but they were outstanding leaders who will be sorely missed, both on the court and off of it."

Hemlock has key players including Lauren Borsenik (Sr., 6-2, 1st Team All-Conference, MLive Honorable Mention All-Area, BCAM Honorable Mention All-State), "excellent post player who can also shoot from the perimeter, committed to Concordia University - Ann Arbor).

There's also Hannah Borsenik (Senior, 6-0, 1st Team All-Conference, MLive Honorable Mention All-Area), "much improved player who can score inside as well as outside, will look to have more expanded offensive role this season).

Also:

•Victoria Hauffe (So., 5-7, All-Conference Honorable Mention, very good shooter and ballhandler who will have an expanded offensive role this year)

•Kyle Miller (Sr., 5-5, returning starting point guard)

•Izzy Krueger (Jr., 5-5, guard=forward, excellent defender, will have a more expanded offensive role this season)

•Klaira Salo (Jr., 5-3 guard, started one game as a freshman before breaking her arm and missing the last two seasons, excellent defender who gets better with each game as she gets experience)

•Izzy Curry (Jr. 5-9 forward, outstanding athlete and defender who will be a key



Hemlock won the 2022-23 girls basketball state championship.

contributor for Hemlock this season)

•Carly Siler (Jr., 5-7 guard, excellent athlete, shooter, and defender, was on JV last year, but will be a key contributor to Hemlock this season.

•Jaedyn Mallek (Sr., 5-9, center, missed last season due to a knee injury)

•Addison Stockford (So., 5-4 guard, was the starting point guard on JV last season)

Ava Graham (Jr., 5-7 forward, was on JV last year, will miss the start of the season due to injury)

"After the season we had last season, everyone has high expectations for this season. I think people sometimes forget how difficult it is to win and that we graduated five very talented seniors. We

do, however, have several key players back, but we will be inexperienced, particularly on the perimeter," Neumeayer said. "Many players will have expanded roles this season, particularly in crucial situations in games, so there will be a learning curve.

"We put together a tough schedule, so they will be challenged. If we stay healthy, I think we can be a pretty good team by the end of the season, but it will be a roller coaster ride to get there. We always like to hang our hat on our defense, and I think that will be the case again this year. I think our athleticism and pressure can once again bother some people. We also have size inside with the Borsenik girls. We have some talented perimeter players who can handle the ball and shoot, but they need experience."

Neumeayer added: "We need to gain experience. Even though we have three returning starters, they will be asked to do more this year with Chloe and Regan gone. Our younger players will need to get used to the speed and size of the varsity game and learn to slow the game down in their heads, but I think they'll get there by the end of the season.

"Due to some teams leaving at the end of the season, this will be the last year of our division as we know it. If we stay healthy, I think we should be competitive in our conference. I think Millington will have a solid team as will Standish and Bullock Creek. On the other side of the West Conference, I think Ithaca and Michigan Lutheran Seminary will

Goward Leads Way For Breckenridge

John Raffel Sports Scene

Phillip Baldwin is coaching a Breckenridge girls basketball team which last season went 13-10 and finished in third in the MSAC.

"Megan Goward was our leading scorer with 377 points," Baldwin said. "We lost two players from last year's team. Caliegh Dutton contributed to our team in many ways. She was the type of kid that would slow the game down and take control at times. We will miss her leadership. Calista Goward was a hard worker and a leader by example. We will miss her calmness and experience on the court."

Senior point guard Megan Goward "is the leader of this team and a four-year varsity player. She is a kid that does a lot of things well and can score in bunches. Megan is determined and gives a lot of effort. She totaled 377 points last season and I expect her

to lead this team to a successful season."

Junior power forward Kayla Goward "is a 3-year varsity player and is a force inside," Baldwin said. "Kayla had eight double-doubles as a sophomore and finished our first game this season with a double-double. You can always expect Kayla to play hard and leave it all on the court. I expect Kayla to have a good season and fill the stat sheet as she is a force on defense as well."

Senior shooting guard Tori Most "is a second year starter and a kid that knows her role on the team. She can score and plays good defense. Tori is a leader by example and she will help motivate the other players and keep us focused on our goals," Baldwin said.

Senior shooting guard Maddie Breece "is young but she will also be a contributor on this team. Maddie is long and physical. It

will take some time for her to get on the same page as everyone else but when she does it will be better for it," Baldwin said. "My expectation for the team this season is that we will compete for a conference title and play tough all season. I believe we will be a tough out come March.

"We just have long physical girls all over the floor. We can score but our defense will set the stage for our success this season. We need to continue to build that team bond and play as one on the court. We have the players we will just need to limit the mistakes and work hard on defense to create opportunities for ourselves."

As for the MSAC, "I believe there will be 3-4 teams playing for the top this season. We have no clear favorite like last season," Baldwin said. "Both Sacred Heart and St. Charles are going to be tough and have won the league many times in the past. I expect both of them to be in the conversation. I'm hopeful that we will play good enough to give ourselves a chance to compete as well."



Megan Goward (right) was Breckenridge's leading scorer with 377 points

Mount Pleasant Girls Hope To Be Contenders

John Raffel Sports Scene

Mount Pleasant girls basketball coach Josh French is looking for his team to be contenders in the SVL this season.

The Oilers went 14-10 overall last season and 7-6 in the SVL/

The Oilers also finished runner up to Dow in the District Final 56-46.

"Katie Schell will be missed on both ends of the rebounding for us. We

graduated three seniors in total including Wheaton and Quigno," French said.

He added: Seniors Autumn McIntyre (G), Lakyn Karr (G), Abi Bailey (F), and Giselle Wiitanen (F/C) "will all play pivotal roles for us this year Adding to the mix of contributors will be Sophomore Kylie Hutchins (C), and Juniors Ava Petrino (G/F), Bella Colores (G/F), and Jordyn Egger.

"We want to be able to compete for 32 minutes up and down the 84

feet. Maximize our senior leadership opportunities, and play

good basketball. We are very athletic. We are gonna have to battle to get rebounds and be smart with the basketball."

As for the conference, "I think the SVL is very strong, especially in the south," French said. "Carman Ainsworth, Grand Blanc, Midland DOW I would think would be top competition within the League."



Mount Pleasant girls look to have another solid team this season.

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Defending State Runners-Up Frankenmuth Girls Bidding For Another Huge Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Joe Jacobs is coaching a Frankenmuth girls basketball team which last year was 25-3 overall, 14-0 in the Tri Valley and lost in the State Championship game to Lansing Catholic. Two of the losses were to LCC. Frankenmuth had the Mlive player of the year in Lexi Boyke, who had a full ride to CMU.

"We lost Lexi Boyke, four-year starter and two-time Mlive player of the year," Jacobs said. "She tore her ACL in the first quarter of her junior season. She rehabbed and came back strong for her senior year. She was a six-foot forward. We also lost Amy Kern, 6-foot forward and Tiffany Keller who was a guard.

"Mia McLaughlin is a senior and has signed to play at Ferris State next season. She will be one of the premiere shooters, not only in the area, but the state. This is Mia's 4th season on the Varsity. Clare Conzelmann is a junior and back for her third season. Clare is a great defender and a great scoring

option for us. Izzy Bernthal is back for her second season,

She is a junior. Izzy is a tough nosed kid who can find rebounds even though she is undersized."

Jacobs added: "Rosemary Brenner, junior, is back for her second season. Rosemary, along with Izzy-Clare-Mia

were starters last season. Rosemary is the smartest player I've coached in my 13 years of coaching. She is an extension of the coaching staff. She is a versatile guard/forward. We bring in a freshman, Grace Brenner. Grace is an athletic point guard who will make us so much better because she makes the right decisions. She had 53 in an eighth grade game last year so she knows how to score as well.

"Alyson Peterson is a sophomore who will play a reserve roll for us this season. Very athletic guard who will attack the rim on offense. Freshman Lucy Conzelmann will also serve as a backup guard that will give us some tenacity on defense.



Transfer Dakota Thompson will bring us some energy, along with Senior Maddie Shaw. Kierstyn Bully, Senior, had off-season surgery and we are hoping to have her back the first of the year. We did lose Ella Persails, Senior Sharp-shooter, to a season ending ACL injury suffered in September."

Expectations are high. "Our goals are to win another TVC title, along with district and regional titles," Jacobs said. "We have athletic kids that will allow us to do some things on offense/defense we couldn't do a year ago. We are undersized. We

lost three six-footers. So we will need to play physical." As for the TVC, "The league always has good players that move onto the next level. We hope to remain undefeated. Freeland will be tough."

Sanford Meridian Girls Looking To Be Strong Again

John Raffel Sports Scene

It was a memorable season in 2022-23 for Sanford Meridian girls basketball team. But coach Tanner Smith is looking for it to be even more memorable in 2023-24.

SM last season had a 20-2 record, was JPC conference champions and lost a tight game to eventual state champs Hemlock in the district final

A key loss was Lauren Brawt.

"She was the first four-year varsity player I got the opportunity to coach," Smith said. "She saw the program at the lowest point and the highest points it's ever been her final two years. Her hustle will be missed."

Key players this year for SM are Halen McLaughlin, junior. 23.5 PPG; Grace Chinavare, Senior. 17.5 PPG, five steals; Josie Barriger, senior point guard, 6 assists per game and four steals; McKenna Pratt, senior. 9 PPG.

Kam Fillmore. Freshman. "Halen and Grace were the best duo in the area, as far as scoring goes," Smith said. "Both were BCAM Allstate players, combining for 40 points a game. Veteran group with a ton of basketball experience and high expectations for themselves and the team.

"We are going for our third conference title in a row and chasing a deep run in the playoffs. Our team strengths will be experience, speed, and unselfishness."



Fulton-Middleton Girls Poised To Make A Run At Conference Basketball Title

David Cook Sports Scene

While the Fulton-Middleton girls basketball team graduated a pair of key players from last year's squad, enough talent returns to have the Pirates looking forward to a big season this winter.

Fulton turned in a 14-10 record last season and took fourth place in the Mid-State Activities Conference. The Pirates graduated a pair of key seniors from that team in Abby Warnke and Avery Walden who were three-year varsity players and provided the team with plenty of leadership.

While Warnke and Walden will be missed, Fulton has some key players returning. Up front, junior

Kaya Canfield returns at forward. "Kaya is our hardest worker," said Fulton-Middleton coach Brandon Trefil. "She will do anything us coaches ask of her. She led us in scoring last year and we will need her to do even more for us this year."

Junior guard Jaci Canfield is another versatile player that returns.

"Last year we asked a lot of Jaci," Trefil said, "but this year she won't have to do as much. She can score at all three levels and will be our best defender."

Sophomore guard Dayten Lambert is another key returning player.

"Dayten played up as a freshman

last year," Trefil said. "This year she is going to have to take on a bigger role defensively and be more of a scorer for us offensively."

With plenty of talent along with some experience, Fulton is primed for a strong season.

"Our coaching staff has high expectations for this team," Trefil said. "If everyone can buy in and play for one another, we have a chance to win the league. We are fast, athletic and long on the wings and play with a lot of effort."

Rebounding, playing strong



With several players back from a team that won 14 games last season Fulton-Middleton is positioned to make a run at the conference title.

defense and keeping good spacing on offense are some of the things the team is working on to improve.

Trefil is looking for the Pirates to be up among the leaders in the conference this season.

"Our conference will be a little down from last year," Trefil said.

"The senior classes at all schools were strong last year. I think the favorites would be St. Charles, Sacred Heart, Breckenridge and us. I think we have a chance to compete with the best in the conference and win the conference championship."

Shepherd Girls Eye Another Successful Season

David Cook Sports Scene

Shepherd's girls basketball team hopes to be in the championship picture this season.

Coach Cody Hoover likes the story his team took last season.

"Last season was another building block for our program going 10-13," Block said. "We had a handful of games that came down to the buzzer with us coming out on top in all of them. Madi Gates had a couple of buzzer beaters. When playing Central Montcalm she hit some free throws as time expired.

"We lost seven girls last year (to graduation and are losing some major minute girls). As a whole this group started growing the excitement for the program and helped changed the culture and made their stamp that this years team is trying to build on. Some of our key losses last year was Ellie Sickles, Abby Robinson, Carley Lynch, Emma Wood, Mikehalah Gimmey."

Key players are expected to include juniors Madi Gates, Katie Robinson, and Morgan Bloniarczyk and sophomore Jayla Trepanier.

"These athletes all have the ability to make an impact on the game and our hope is that they keep improving and seeing the game easier to make it easier on themselves as a group," Hoover said. "We have a young team this year with only two seniors so we are looking at just stepping on the floor and competing every night and trying to improve. The girls are hoping that they keep building on what the group did before them and try to improve that mark that they started.

"So far on the season we have done a decent job of taking care of the ball and looking up the floor for some fast break opportunities. We have to get better at rebounding the ball and making sure that we do not have some defense lapse that

leads to other teams getting easy buckets."

As for the Jack Pine, "Being our season has just started I think as whole our league might not be as good as it was last year with a lot of competitive games but only time will tell," Hoover said. "The league favorites would definitely have to be Sanford Meridian as they have not lost a conference game in two years which is a heck of a run and one they should be proud of.

"I would think that Clare would be the next team up to be able to battle with them. I think if we play to the way that we are capable of we should be right around that 2-4 spot being Meridian is tough and we are going to have to play a heck of a game to beat them."



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Saranac Looking For Hard Work To Pay Off This Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Thanks to a busy off season of working out and training, the Saranac girls basketball team is looking forward to a successful season.

"We are going to be improving big time from a tough season last year," said Saranac coach Chance Wells. "We had plenty of girls in the gym all the time during the offseason and the girls are hungry to improve as a program."

Saranac will miss Jordan Sterzick and Brenna Simmons from last year's team. The duo provided the team with strong leadership and helped to lead the team to a win in its Purple Game of Cancer Awareness that was a highlight of last season.

Sophomore center Maycee Reed is one of the players to watch on this year's squad.

"Maycee is going to be a leader for us on both sides of the floor," Wells said. "She has come a very long way over the last year and is going to be a difference maker for us."

Saranac also has a deep group of talented guards led by senior Madie Trahan.

"Madie was a big part of our team last

year," Wells said. "She has worked very hard to improve and has already been making impact plays for us this year."

Junior Mya Griffin handles the point guard spot for Saranac while senior guard Abbey Janson and Kayla Sterzick offer more options in the backcourt.

"Mya is taking the keys to our offense for the rest of her high school career," Wells said. "She is very skilled and we are excited to see how she develops. Abbey and Kayla are two of our hardest workers and our captains."

Saranac is a hard-working team and that work is especially evident on defense.

"Our defense is our team strength, one-hundred percent," said Wells. "We like to mix things up there and really make our opponents uncomfortable. We have a roster full of girls who work extremely hard and it makes my job easier."

Improving on the offensive side of the



The Saranac basketball is counting on plenty of offseason work to pay off this year.

floor is a goal for the team.

"Sometimes we take that energy from flying around on defense and have a hard time flipping the switch when we get back on offense," Wells said. "That is something we are working on and have made massive strides in."

Wells looks at the conference being a

strong as ever.

"I think Portland St. Patrick, Fowler and Dansville are going to be tough this year," Wells said. "We finished last in our conference last year. I would like to move several spots up and have a couple of signature wins against our conference favorites."

Veteran Core Looking To Carry On Winning Ways For Belding Girls Basketball

David Cook Sports Scene

The Belding girls basketball team turned in a winning season last year, and with a solid core of players returning, the Black Knights are primed to keep the winning going.

Belding turned in a 12-10 record last season and won a district title for the second consecutive season. While the team lost some key players like forward Alayna Sims and guard Grace Cooper, several talented veterans return to lead the way.

Senior Hope Kanouse is a four-year starter who was second on the team in scoring last season. Kanouse is also a defensive standout and gives the team solid production on both ends of the floor.

The Belding offense is also led by Alison Rockburn, a three-year starter. Rockburn led Belding in scoring a year ago. Rockburn is also a defensive leader who will be defending the other team's best players this season.

Mylie VandenToorn is a two-year starter who returns at point guard. VandenToorn led the team on the floor last season and is back to run the Belding offense.

Emma Rehkopf is another two-year varsity player returning. Rehkopf is one of the top shooters on the squad and is moving into the starting lineup. Rehkopf is also a solid defender.

"I'd say our team strength this year is our speed," said Belding coach Shad Breimayer. "We are a very quick team. The biggest thing I'd like to see improvement on this year from last

year is limiting turnovers."

Belding also looks to be one of the top contenders in the Ottawa-Kent Silver Conference this season.

"The conference should be pretty competitive this year as most of the teams are returning their stars," said Breimayer. "I give the nod to NorthPointe Christian and Calvin Christian as probably the two favorites right now. I feel like we should be able to compete at the top half of the conference."

Belding is also looking to be playing its best basketball come March.

"Our expectations are to compete for a conference title and three-peat districts," Breimayer said, "and of course break through on a regional title."



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Potterville Basketball Team Looking For A Year Of Experience To Pay Off

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

A young team a year ago, the Potterville Vikings are banking on a year's worth of experience to pay dividends this season.

With a young starting lineup last season, Potterville turned in a 11-12 record last year and were in position to accomplish even more.

"We won some tough games against Pewamo-Westphalia, Lansing Christian and Cassopolis," said Potterville coach Al Adams. "We also dropped some close games that could have been won with a little more experience and depth. We had a young starting five and Kaylee Bush was the only senior to

graduate."

Bush is a major loss as she reached 1,000 career points and was a four-year varsity player who is now playing at Olivet College.

This year's squad is built around junior post player Kyra Marciniak. Marciniak is a returning starter and team captain and has the skills to lead the team in most stat categories this season. Marciniak is an outstanding team leader with a great knowledge of the game that improves every day.

The Vikings have the makings of a strong backcourt. Junior guard Emily Cates is a returning starter and the floor leader of the need. The Vikings will rely on Cates to lead the young team.

A freshman to watch is guard Aubrey Gasch. Look for Gasch to be an offensive force as she is an outstanding shooter with a high basketball IQ.

"With a young and inexperienced team we will be looking to get better each day and battle in a tough Central Michigan Athletic Conference (CMAC)," Adams said. "Our end goal is to compete in districts. Our team has good cohesion and leadership. Our players are always looking to get better and learn more about the game."

As usual, the CMAC will be a loaded conference. Fowler and Portland St. Patrick again look to be among the teams to beat in the league.



Point guard Emily Cates and post player Kyra Marciniak (12) are a pair of key players returning for Potterville this season.

Combined East Lansing-DeWitt Gymnastics Team Primed To Take Next Step

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

In what was a rebuilding season, the combined East Lansing-DeWitt gymnastics team made plenty of progress last season. This year, with a year of experience to work with, the team is primed to show improvement.

Leading the way for the team this season are senior captains Maddie Baldwin (DeWitt) and Sarah Bollman (East Lansing). Baldwin and Bollman provide the team with strong leadership and are talented gymnasts.

Also returning are talented sophomores Bella Arriaga (DeWitt) and Maggie Crowe (East Lansing). Arriaga is a skilled gymnast who is coming off a big freshman year. Arriaga earned all-league, all-region and all-state honors last season capped off by top-ten efforts at the state finals in both the balance beam and floor exercise.

The team is also counting on another skilled newcomer this season in freshman Taliyah Andrews (East Lansing). Andrews

is already making contributions to the squad and is part of a promising young core of gymnasts on the squad.

"This team's strength is to build on their growth in numbers and to expand their expectations of themselves," said East Lansing-DeWitt coach Angela Madden. "This team is young but up and coming."

Madden also expects this year's squad to make an impact in the conference this season.

"I expect this team to move up in the league standings and easily qualify for the regional meet," Madden said. "This team is young. They need to become more confident in themselves and know that they are just as talented as everyone else."

In the conference, long-time league powerhouse Grand Ledge will again be the



The combined DeWitt-East Lansing gymnastics team is looking for a solid season led by a number of talented gymnasts.

team to beat and one of the top teams in the state.

"Grand Ledge is consistently the league

favorite and they are constantly challenging for a spot in the team final," Madden said. "We are rebuilding, but our goal is to finish in the top three."

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