



HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE
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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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

While we are in the midst of the winter sports season state tournament time is fast approaching.

So far this winter season has seen some outstanding performances by area teams and athletes. Be it on the basketball court, the wrestling mat, swimming pool or bowling lanes area athletes are putting up some amazing efforts.

The first state tournament that is coming up is the individual and team wrestling state tournaments. As always, the mid-Michigan area is loaded with outstanding individual wrestlers and also some outstanding teams.

On the team side, the St. Louis Sharks have solidified themselves as one of the premier Division 4 wrestling programs in the state. The Sharks, who reached the state semifinals last season, are ranked second in the state this season and have their sights set on reaching the championship match this year and taking a crack at perennial powerhouse Hudson.

In Division 2, Lowell, one of the premier wrestling programs in the entire state, is going to try and it extends its streak of team state titles. The Red Arrows, who are ranked No. 1 in the state in Division 2, are aiming for an 11th consecutive Division 2 state title.

The area has several more teams gearing up for a big post-season wrestling charge including Davison and Rockford in Division 1, Freeland and Bay City John Glenn who are on a collision course in the district in Division 2 and Lakeview in Division 4.

The area is also home to some outstanding girls and boys basketball teams this winter. On the boys side, East Lansing is ranked second in the state in Division 1 and is one of the premier teams entire state. Rockford, Freeland, Lansing Waverly, Chesaning, Laingsburg, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart and Saginaw Nouvel are also having big seasons on the boys side.

In girls basketball, defending Division 1 state champion Rockford is having a big season again as is defending state champion Hemlock in Division 3. Also having big seasons are Midland Dow, Frankenmuth, Freeland, Alma, Ovid-Elsie, Sanford-Meridian, St. Charles, Fowler and Portland St. Patrick.

With the season heading for the home stretch, its not too late to get out to a game and take in some of the great high school sports action. There are many great basketball games coming up for both the girls and the boys teams. With the weather taking a break, take advantage of the opportunity to get out and support our local athletes.



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Alma Girls Basketball Team Turning In A Solid Season, Looking To Finish Strong

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Competing in a league with state-ranked teams like Freeland and Frankenmuth is no easy task for a team with just one senior on the roster, but the young Alma girls basketball team is more than holding its own this season.

With the season arriving at the halfway point, the Panthers have fashioned a record of 8-2 overall with a 4-1 record in the conference. The Panthers are not only accomplishing that with a young roster, but they also have a small roster with just eight players plus a pair of players from the junior varsity team that are eligible for some playing time each week due to the new fifth-quarter rule adopted by the Michigan High School Athletic Association that enables players off to junior varsity or freshman teams to suit up for the varsity for a limited time each week.

Overall, Alma has one senior, five juniors, one sophomore and

one freshman on the varsity. All of the players contribute and team unity is a strong point of the team.

"Our strong points are that they all work really well together," said Alma coach Alaina Sunken. "They all get along and we move the ball well on offense and that makes it easy to coach them as we have no drama."

Alma is led on offense by junior guard Gracie Mellinger. Mellinger is a versatile guard who can bring the ball up the floor and score from outside or on drives to the basket. Mellinger is averaging 17.5 points per game and has connected on 47-of-60 free throws this season. Alma's biggest strength on offense is scoring in transition and Mellinger excels at getting to the bucket.

Senior Bailey Walkington is the lone senior on the team. Walkington is a dynamic defensive player who set records for steals last season. This season Walkington is averaging 4.7 steals per game along with pulling down

6.8 rebounds per game.

In the post, junior Kendall Town is a 6-foot center who provides strong rebounding and protects the rim. Town is pulling down 10.9 rebounds per game and is blocking 3.1 shots per game.

"Kendall is a true post player," Sunken said. "She is a very consistent player and experienced."

Freshman Giovanna Clark has been a major addition to the squad who is playing key roles on both ends of the court. An excellent outside shooter, Clark is connecting on 56% of her shots from beyond the three-point line and is averaging three steals per game on defense.

Sophomore Lauren Seeley is a strong player in the front court where she plays both a small forward and post player role.

"Lauren can play inside or outside," Sunken said. "She can play the small forward spot or play like a post player. She has been doing a nice job for us."



The Alma girls basketball team is turning in a strong season and is ranked among the honorable mention in the state in Division 2.

Rounding out the roster are juniors Victoria Clark, Kierstyn Hodges and Kaleigh Johnson who provide valuable minutes and contributions to the squad.

"So far our season is going well and we continue to keep improving as the season goes on," Sunken said. "We have been performing well, but I don't think we have peaked yet. We are still figuring out what works best for us and the team dynamic. I think we have a stronger mindset going into the second half of the season and that is exciting to see."

With a challenging second half of the season coming up and the state tournament down the road, the Panthers are looking forward to finishing strong.

"We want to win 16 or 17 games this season and win a district title," Sunken said. "Belding won the district the last two years and the district was at Belding the last two years. This year the district is at Central-Montcalm and we feel that this is our strongest year yet going into the district. We also hope to continue to improve and develop the program as a whole."

Sanford-Meridian Girls Basketball Team Putting Together Memorable Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Sanford-Meridian girls basketball team has developed a winning culture the past several seasons, and this year's squad is keeping that tradition going as the Mustangs are piling up the wins.

As the season reaches the halfway point Sanford-Meridian is 9-0 overall and in first place in the Jack Pine Conference. The Mustangs are going after their third consecutive, undefeated conference title and also a third consecutive 20-win season.

"The girls are playing a selfless brand of basketball on the offensive end," said Sanford-Meridian coach Tanner Smith. "We have a deep bench and they are more concerned with the team scoring rather than any one individual

scoring. All 12 players have played in every game this season. The girls play a fun brand of basketball to watch as they get up and down the floor in transition at a rapid pace. I've been pleased with our offensive time and improvement in our halfcourt offense. Defensively, the girls are playing five as one on the floor. It's been a joy for me personally to see how relentless they are as a collective unit."

Sanford-Meridian is led by a solid group of returning players this season. Halen McLaughlin, a returning all-state player, is averaging 23 points per game along with eight rebounds and three steals per game. Senior Grace Chinavare, who also earned all-state honors last season, is averaging 16 points per game along with five steals and three assists.

Senior McKenna Pratt is adding eight points per game along with six rebounds, four steals and three assists while senior point guard Josie Barriger is adding six assists, five rebounds, five steals and two blocked shots per game.

"We have dynamic guard play," Smith said. "We have five girls on the floor with the ability to breakdown the defense off the dribble and distort the defense with the ability to make a read on defense and make the right pass to shooters when needed. Full court pressure defense is our calling card. We want to apply constant pressure, looking to turn defense into offense all game."

The Mustangs also have some newcomers making an impact this season including a pair of freshmen. Kam Fillmore is a



The Sanford-Meridian girls basketball team is looking for a third straight league title and a third straight 20-win season this year.

freshman making an impact at guard.

"Kam has scored in every game," Smith said. "She provides great spacing on the floor with her deep three-point range. She also has great basketball awareness and contributes in all phases of the game."

Up front, 6-foot freshman Mariah Gaskell is making an

impact in the post.

"Mariah has displayed great poise so far this season for a younger player," Smith said. "She has great court vision and the ability to make great passes over the defense. She also has the ability to stretch the floor with her three-point shooting and has shown the ability to score inside the paint with her back to the basket moves."



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Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart Boys Basketball Among Best In The State In Division 4

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Year in and year out, the Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart boys basketball team is one of the premier Division 4 boys basketball teams in the entire state. This season is no different as the Irish are turning in a big season and are ranked third in the state in Division 4 going into the final week of January.

The Irish have fashioned a 12-1 overall record and a perfect 10-0 league mark in the Mid State Activities Conference. Sacred Heart has recorded some impressive wins this season including a double-digit win against Division 4 state-ranked Marine City Cardinal Mooney and a big non-conference win against rival Beal City. The Beal City game was played at Central Michigan University and brought out a big crowd to watch the Irish claim a 64-51 win over a Beal City squad that is ranked among the honorable-mention in the state in Division 3. Sacred Heart's lone loss of the season came in the second game of the season when they fell at Wyoming Tri-unity Christian, the number-one ranked team in

the state in Division 4 at the time and a state finalist last season.

"We've been doing well," said Sacred Heart coach Justin Sherlock. "We are 12-1 and ranked in the state. We have beaten some good teams."

The strength of this year's team is found in the backcourt where the Irish have three experienced guard. Sophomore Noah Zeien returns at point guard while junior Grady Pieratt is a three-year starter and junior Brody Cherry is a transfer who has stepped in and made an impact.

"We are led by our guards," Sherlock said. "Noah leads us in scoring and assists and is second in rebounding. He can do it all on offense. He creates shots for others and is also a good scorer. Grady is a very good shooter and is our second leading scorer. He is also a very good on-ball defender. Brody is a transfer student and is a very highly skilled player. He is a good shooter and is becoming a good defender."

In the frontcourt, the Irish are led by senior Aidan Halliday, a 6-foot-2, 220-pound post player with plenty of experience. Halliday leads the team in rebounding and

gives the team a strong low-post presence.

Jason Boge is another key player along the front line for the Irish.

"Jason is a 6-foot-2 forward with the ability to score and rebound," Sherlock said. "He is also working hard to improve on defense. He is an overall very good athlete and is a go-to player for us."

Senior Luke Taylor is another solid backcourt player the Irish rely on.

"Luke is a very good three-point shooter," Sherlock said. "He is also becoming a very good defender and rebounder. He plays a great role as a sixth man for us and helps us in scoring and on defense."

Offense has been a strong point all season for the Irish. Sacred Heart has twice scored over 80 points in a game this season and has eclipsed the 70-point mark in four other games.

"Our experience is one of our keys to success," Sherlock said. "We are also a fast-paced team that likes to score a lot of points. We like to press and get the game going up and down the court. We do have some work to do on defense."

Sophomore guard Noah Zeien (3) is one of the leaders of a high-scoring Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart basketball team that is ranked third in the state in Division 4 this season.

Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart Turning In A Strong Season In Girls Basketball

David Cook Sports Scene

Led by a pair of senior veterans and a stingy defense, the Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart girls basketball team is off to a strong start this season.

The Irish are ranked among the honorable mention in the Division 4 this season and have fashioned a 11-1 overall record and 8-1 conference record as the season reaches the halfway point.

"This year's season has started well with the girls coming in and ready to go each day," said Sacred Heart coach Andrew Doerr. "Seniors Ella McDonnell and Kate Liscomb bring great energy and willingness to do what is necessary

for the team. As we turn toward playing our conference opponents a second time, we look to adapt to the improvements that teams have made and compete for all 32 minutes."

The Irish are also getting strong play from juniors Chelsea Lynch and Sophie Hauck. Lynch, a forward, and Hauck, a point guard, have provided the team consistent play with each averaging around 8.5 points and 4.5 rebounds per game.

Freshman guard Karis Terwilliger is also stepping up for the team. Terwilliger is leading the team in scoring at 12 points per game.

"Karis has shown great growth from the beginning of the season,"

Doerr said. "She has brought a level of speed and scoring for us this year that opens up other opportunities for her teammates."

The Irish are also getting strong play in the post from sophomore Savannah Jones. Jones leads the team with 5.5 rebounds per game and is becoming more of a scoring threat with her speed and length.

Team defense is also a big element behind the success of the Irish.

"A strength of ours is the up-tempo, man-to-man defense we play," Doerr said. "The girls have put a lot of effort and time into



The Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart girls basketball team is ranked in the honorable mention in Division 4 and have put together an 11-1 record.

fine-tuning the details, making sure they understand rotations and pursuing to get better each day. The ladies take great pride in playing team defense and having each other's backs."

The Irish are also looking to parlay the strong start into a solid finish.

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Ovid-Elsie Girls Basketball Team Continuing Success Of Last Year's Squad

David Cook Sports Scene

Last season was a memorable one for the Ovid-Elsie girls basketball team as the Marauders reached the state quarterfinals. With several key players back from that team, Ovid-Elsie is picking up where it left off.

Ovid-Elsie opened this season by reeling off seven straight wins and have a 9-1 record heading into the final week of January. The Marauders are also ranked sixth in the state in Division 3.

"I think we are doing well this season," said Ovid-Elsie coach Ryan Cunningham. "Last year we had a couple of early losses that helped us refocus. This year, I think we were 7-0 before getting beat by Portland St. Patrick. Again, that helped us refocus and we turned around and beat Lakeville who was 8-2 at the time and then

Petoskey (8-3) the next day (at the Cadillac Showcase). Right now, we sit at 9-1."

Leading the way for Ovid-Elsie is a solid group of seniors along with some strong juniors.

"We return four starters from last year's quarterfinal team and two juniors who received some significant playing time last year," Cunningham said. "We also have a very talented sophomore class so I feel like we are a little deeper this year. I have coached this senior class since they were in seventh grade so I feel that our relationship and overall connectedness is strong. I have great team leadership and our chemistry is great."

Ovid-Elsie is led by Ava Bates and Evalyn Cole. Bates is averaging 13.9 points per game and 45% shooting from the floor. Bates is also pulling down 4.5 rebounds per game and averaging 3.5 steals. Cole

is averaging 13.6 points per game and is shooting 49.3% from two-point range. Cole is also averaging 5.2 assists per game and 5.2 steals per game.

Braeden Tokar and Hailee Campbell are also turning in strong seasons for the Marauders. Tokar is averaging 7.2 points per game and has hit on 53.1% of her two-point shots. Tokar is also averaging 4.4 assists per game. Campbell is adding 7.6 points a game and is shooting 61.9% overall. Campbell is also pulling down 4.9 rebounds per game and is averaging 3.4 steals per game.

The Marauders also have plenty of options and depth they can throw at opponents. Ellyanna Carman is a junior who has stepped into the starting lineup after being the team's sixth-

man last year. Carman is a great rebounder and defender and is also



Ovid-Elsie opened the season winning nine of its first ten games and is ranked sixth in the state in Division 3.

an excellent shooter and finisher. Junior Tava Kvalevog played on the junior varsity last year but has given the team a strong post presence. Kvalevog is a great rebounder and finishes well around the basket. Francesca Giacobbe, an exchange student from Italy, is a strong point guard with a high basketball IQ.

The Marauders also have a trio of sophomores stepping up. Aly Moore is a strong guard who is a strong defender and outstanding shooter. Lily Bates is a solid all-

around player. She is a great hustler and defender and is a knockdown three-point shooter. Dannika Campbell is another solid all-around player who runs the floor well, rebounds hard and isn't afraid of contact."

"This is simply a great group to coach," Cunningham said. "I am blessed. The kids work hard and but into our game plans. No matter the final outcome, I will always look back with fond memories of this group."

St. Charles Girls Basketball Adding To Legacy After First Regional Last Season

David Cook Sports Scene

The St. Charles girls basketball team made history last season by winning the first-ever regional title in program history. Despite losing several players to graduation from that squad, the Bulldogs are on their way to another outstanding season.

St. Charles lost eight seniors from last year's team that made a trip to the state quarterfinals. Instead of rebuilding, however, the Bulldogs are in the midst of a reloading season. After dropping the first game of the season to defending Division 3 state champion Hemlock, St. Charles has reeled off nine straight wins and is ranked among the honorable mention in Division 3.

"I don't say rebuilding, I say we are reloading," said St. Charles coach Andre Williams. "We run

the same system from the seventh grade up. The kids coming up have a real good idea of what we want to do. They understand our concepts and we just plug them in. Every year we seem to have two or three guards that really help us. Our focus is on player development and when the girls get to the varsity level they are ready to go."

This year's squad is comprised of two seniors, two sophomores and the rest of the team being comprised of juniors.

"We are right about where I thought we would be," Williams said. "I like this team and it continues to grow and get better."

The Bulldogs are led in the backcourt by sisters Emily and Allison Zelinko. Emily, a senior, is a leader of the offense averaging 20.1 points per game and is also a defensive stopper with an average of six steals per game.

"Emily does about everything for us," Williams said. "She is also close to 1,000 points for her career."

Allison, a sophomore, is also a solid all-around guard.

"Allison is just a tough kid," Williams said. "She gives us everything we need when we need it. She leads us in assists with four a game and is second in steals. She leads us field goal percentage and also is our leading rebounder at 5-foot-5. It looks like the game comes easy to her but she is a very hard worker."

The Bulldogs are also receiving strong efforts from sophomore forwards Kendall Harger and Alivia Hafner. Harger is a good three-point shooter who can stretch defenses with her outside shot while Hafner is an excellent passer who can make plays on the offensive end of the floor.

Senior Jenna Trevillian has



After winning the first regional title in program history last season, the St. Charles girls basketball team is state ranked this season.

stepped up to fill a larger role on the team this season as well.

"Jenna didn't get a lot of minutes last year so this is kind of new to her," Williams said. "She has stepped up her scoring average and is also averaging about two assists and two steals per game. We just have a lot of good, team players that we rely on."

Defense is also a strong point of the team.

"I think our defense is our strong point," Williams said. "We

average about 20 steals per game and also about 15 assists per game. Our defense leads to a lot of transition baskets for us. We are not a big team but we play with a lot of intensity."

St. Charles is also looking to win the Mid-State Activities Conference for a fourth year in a row. St. Charles has a 9-0 record and is in first place at the halfway mark. The Bulldogs also have their sights set on another deep post-season tournament run.

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Morley Stanwood Girls Basketball Team Looking To End League Title Drought

David Cook Sports Scene

It has been nearly ten years since the Morley-Stanwood girls basketball team has won a league title, but this year's squad is on a mission to end that drought.

The Warriors, who are led by their five senior veterans, are in the top spot in the Central State Activities Conference with a 5-0 league mark at the halfway point of the schedule. Morley-Stanwood is 10-1 overall this season and is also ranked 11th in the state in Division 3 in the state rankings.

"We are a veteran team with five returning senior starters," said Morley-Stanwood coach Bob Raven. "We were optimistic heading into the season that we could compete for a conference title. It's been quite a while since Morley-Stanwood has won one, I think 2016. There is still a long way to go but it has been a fun year so far."

One of the highlights of the season so far was a triple-overtime win against long-time league powerhouse Kent City. Morley-Stanwood also won the Reed City Tournament with wins against

Alpena and Fremont.

Senior Lila Hoisington leads the way for Morley-Stanwood as she is averaging 17.3 points per game along with 7.7 rebounds. Senior center Makenna Martin is averaging 12 points and seven rebounds per game while senior guard Lynsey Biller is adding 13 points and 3.1 assists per game.

Senior forward Alaina Christensen and senior point guard Miranda McNeil round out the starting lineup.

"Alaina has a good overall game," Raven said. "She rebounds well and defends well and is also an excellent passer. Miranda is the catalyst of our offense. She runs the show and is a top defender averaging three steals per game."

The Mohawks also have solid depth. Junior guard Grace Walch has provided valuable minutes and senior guard Sienna Ososki is



The Morley-Stanwood girls basketball team poses with the hardware it won by capturing the Reed City tournament

another talented guard the team can count on. A pair of sophomore forwards are also supplying plenty of production up front. Lexi Martin and Katelynne Nawrot are both solid rebounders who can also score in the post.

"Our strong point is our five seniors," Raven said. "We have a veteran group with a lot of experience. We pride ourselves in pushing the ball and playing up tempo. We also play some tough defense."

Freeland Girls Basketball Team Continuing Long History Of Success

David Cook Sports Scene

Year after year, the Freeland girls basketball team is one of the best in the mid-Michigan area. This season is no different as the Falcons are not only one of the top teams in the area but in the state as well.

Ranked eighth in the state in Division 2, Freeland has an 11-1 overall record and a 6-1 conference record at the halfway point of the season.

"The season is going really well," said Freeland coach Matt Hirschenberger. "We have played a very competitive schedule and we've been in a lot of close games."

The Falcons, who turned in a 20-6 record last year and reached the regional finals, have a strong group of returning players leading the way. Senior twins Faith and Paige Kloha lead the way for Freeland. Paige Kloha has an outstanding all-around game and has a knack for making the play the team needs. Paige is a strong defender and passer who

can also knock down shots when needed. Faith Kloha is also an outstanding all-around player but has had her season hampered by injury and has missed several games. Faith is a tough rebounder and defender that the team hopes to have back soon.

Juniors Karie Keefer, a guard, and Addie Seemann, a forward, are team captains and leaders for the squad. Keefer leads the team in scoring at 20 points per game and also leads the squad with six assists per game. Seemann leads the team in rebounds with eight and is second in assists while also averaging close to 14 points per game.

"Karie and Addie complement each other very well," Hirschenberger said. "They are both excellent passers who are able to get the rest of their teammates involved in the offense."

Jenna Kowalski, an excellent three-point shooter, rounds out the starting five. Kowalski is also a defensive standout who leads the team in charges taken.

Freeland also boasts solid depth.

Freshman guard Jozelynn Begick is a solid all-around player who has shown a big improvement through the first 10 games of the season. Juniors Makayla Martinez-Hines, Brynn Jaime and Emma Northrop and sophomores Gia Johnson and Mia Maxwell have all shown up and made major contributions during the season.

Hirschenberger also points to his coaching staff as being a major part of the team's success.

"We have a great coaching staff," Hirschenberger said. "Jason Kowalski, John Wilson and Tim Hansen and our junior varsity coach Jill Keefer have done an outstanding job. One of the strengths of our team is our coaching staff. These coaches pour their energy into the kids and I can see the difference in their play with what our coaches do for them. Our assistant coaches



The Freeland girls basketball team is turning in a big season and is ranked eighth in the state in Division 2 this season.

volunteer their time and have done a lot for us. I also want to mention Andy Secor, our shooting coach from Make More Shots. He has worked with us all season and you can see the improvement."

Mason Boys Basketball Team Piling Up The Wins For A Second Straight Season

David Cook Sports Scene

A year after winning 21 games, the Mason boys basketball team is in the process of stacking the wins up again.

With the season at the halfway point, Mason has fashioned a 11-2 overall record and has a two-game lead over the competition in the rugged Capital Area Activities Conference Red Division.

"The season has gone not too bad," said Mason coach Lee Chaney. "We are still trying to get better and it's a long season but we are 11-2 overall

and 5-0 in the league."

The Bulldogs are also a fun team to watch with a high-scoring offense. Mason is averaging nearly 68 points per game.

"We have four guys who are averaging in double figures scoring," Chaney said. "The guys really share the ball well. The nice thing about this group is that we don't have one or two kids leading in scoring all the time. We have had five different kids lead us in scoring throughout the season."

Junior Cason Carswell leads the Bulldogs in scoring at 18.5 points

per game. Caleb Parrish is averaging 13.5 points per game followed by Luke Marlan at 12 points per game and Levi Stambaugh at 11.5 points per game.

"A nice thing about this group is that if one guy is having a bad night, we have another guy ready to step in and pick up the slack," Chaney said. "We also have a couple of kids that average six to eight points a game and that helps."

Mason has a deep roster with a number of players stepping up



The Mason boys basketball team has put together a 10-2 record this season and is averaging 68 points per game.

this season. Senior guard Nick Wells is a three-year veteran with plenty of experience. Juniors Ryan Greathouse and Collin Winters also bring solid all-around games to the floor. Connor Osypczuk and Mason Dowdy are a pair of young players who are also adding strong contributions.

"We are not a one-dimensional team," Chaney said. "We can score

at all three levels and we tend to share the ball. The biggest thing is we have to become more consistent. I still want to see improvement from the guys on the bench the rest of the year. Our goals are the same this year. We want to win the league again and we have the opportunity to do that. Last year we won 21 games and that is something that we want to do again but we have a tough schedule still in front of us."

Saginaw Nouvel Boys Basketball Finding Its Groove This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

The Saginaw Nouvel boys basketball team may have started the season slow, but the Panthers have quickly found overdrive.

Ranked ninth in the state in Division 4, Nouvel has reeled off nine wins heading into the final week of January after dropping three straight games to open the season.

"This year's team is a great group," said Nouvel coach Mike Kessler. "We have a lot of experience back and can win in a number of different ways, playing both inside and out. We started the season a little slow out of the gate but have picked up from there. We are currently on a nine-game winning streak."

Nouvel is led by the dynamic guard combination of brothers MJ and Donny Yeager. Both Yeager

brothers are off to sizzling starts this season. MJ Yeager is averaging 17.4 points per game along with 5.6 assists and just 1.4 turnovers per game. An outstanding shooter, MJ has made 34 three-point shots (40%) this season and is shooting 97.1% from the free-throw line.

Donny Yeager is averaging 15.3 points per game with 4.9 assists and 3.5 steals. Donny is shooting 88.2% from the free-throw line.

"We have two of the best guards in the state in MJ and Donny Yeager, but that is not all," said Kessler. "Both Preston Otter and Jack Wilson give us X-factors this year with size and athleticism. We also have guys that can do a little of everything in Tristen Elizalde and Cam Kaul. Our biggest strength would be able to win games while scoring 70-plus points or win games where we hold teams

under 40 points." Otter has been turning in a big season for the Panthers as he is averaging 12.5 points per game on 61.7% shooting from the field. Otter is also pulling down eight rebounds and adds three steals per game.

"The players who have stepped up the most from last year are Tristen Elizalde and Jack Wilson," Kessler said. "Tristen is a real leader for us. He is very vocal and can guard every position on the floor. He is tough as nails and thinks the game well. He can also knock down the three ball.

Jack Wilson is a 6-foot-6 big man who is always in the right spot defensively. He leads the team with nine rebounds per game and is our fourth leading scorer at 9.1 points per game. He could score more, but he is very unselfish. He's also a great passer for his size."

The season has also seen some memorable moments so far. MJ Yeager set the school record for



The Saginaw Nouvel basketball team is 10-3 this season including a win against Imlay City at the Motor City Roundball Classic.

points in a career against Standish-Sterling, passing former Nouvel and Rhode Island University great Preston Murphy's mark of 1,302 career points. MJ also holds the record for most career threes at Nouvel, most threes in a season (also second in Michigan High School Athletic Association history) with 118 made threes last year and most threes made in a game with 10.

Nouvel is also looking for a strong

end to the season, especially after dropping down to Division 4 for the state tournament this season.

"Being moved down from Division 3 to Division 4, expectations are high for us," Kessler said. "We understand that going one day, one practice, one game at a time will be vital in our success. The group is very competitive and practices have been intense."

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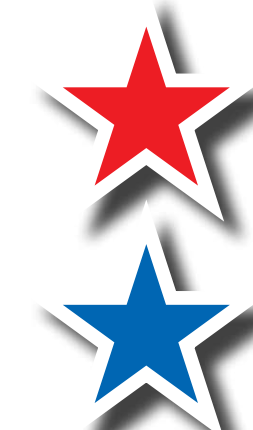
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Chesaning Boys Basketball Team Making School History This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

History is being made this season at Chesaning where the boys basketball team is putting together a season the people in Chesaning have not seen since man landed on the moon.

Chesaning has fashioned an 11-0 overall record as the season reaches the midpoint. The Indians are in first place in the Mid Michigan Activities Conference with a 7-0 record and are also ranked in the top ten in the state basketball poll for the first time since 1968 as they are ranked eighth in Division 3. Chesaning is also chasing the best start in school history as the 1938 Chesaning squad started out the season with a 16-0 record.

"We are very excited for our players and how they have started the season off," said Chesaning coach Matt Weigl. "Last year we graduated five senior who played almost 70

percent of our minutes, so we knew there would be a process of finding out who we were exactly early on. During that time, we had some really tough challenges on the schedule and our guys showed unbelievable toughness to find ways to win. We feel like we've settled into an identity and are really beginning to gel together as a team."

Chesaning has a deep and talented squad led by senior Mason Struck. Struck, who scored the 1,000th point of his career earlier this season, is averaging 22.2 points per game while pulling down 6.2 rebounds per game. Senior point guard Nate Ferry is averaging 7.5 points per game along with four assists and 4.3 steals per game.

"Nate is as steady as they come at point guard," Weigl said, "and he is arguably the best defender we've ever seen.

Junior Luke Barta is making a

big impact in his first season on the varsity as he is averaging 6.5 points, 4.5 rebounds and 2.5 steals per game.

"We are also getting huge lifts from seniors Chaz Slankard and Dylan James as well as juniors Brayden Florian, Brady Sager, Eric Barancik, Max Volk, Seth Schlicht and Charlie Clover," said Weigl.

Each of those players brings a unique skill set to the team. "Slankard is a strong player who can score inside and out while James has the ability to set his teammates up and create turnovers on the defensive end," said Weigl. "Florian is an outstanding athlete who can do a little bit of everything while Volk is an intense competitor who can score off the drive or hit the three and is a great defender. Sager is an outstanding athlete who can get into passing lanes, disrupt ball handlers and attack the rim on



The Chesaning basketball team defeated Carrollton at the Louis O'Neal Classic at Saginaw Valley State earlier this season.

offense while Barancik is one of the most improved players on the team who is earning more and more minutes every week and has the potential to be a great finisher on offense. Schlicht is big and strong with tremendous footwork and great touch and skill around the rim while Clover is a knockdown, three-point shooter."

Defense is one of the strong points of the team this year as Chesaning is allowing just 41 points per game and forcing 25 turnovers per game.

"This is a very competitive group," Weigl said. "Over the years they have

had tremendous success in every sport they play and they've done a great job in the classroom as well. This is also a very mentally tough group. We talk about handling the highs and lows of a game, season and life all the time. They've taken that to heart and carry a 'next play' mentality with them on the court. This team is as level headed as they come. All these guys care about is doing their jobs. Preparing the best they can every day and competing every possession of every game. It's a special team and a special culture. We feel very lucky to be a part of it."

Laingsburg Boys Basketball Team Putting Together A Strong Encore This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

After reaching the state quarterfinals last year and turning in a 25-1 record, the question around the Laingsburg boys basketball team this year was what can they do for an encore.

So far, the Wolfpack are doing plenty for an encore.

Ranked 11th in the state in Division 3, Laingsburg has reached the midpoint of the season with an 11-0 overall record and a 9-0 record in the rugged Central Michigan Athletic Conference (CMAC). The Wolfpack have a two-game league in the conference highlighted by a

pair of wins against league challenger Pewamo-Westphalia, the only losses that Pewamo-Westphalia, ranked sixth in the state in Division 3, has this season.

"We are off to an 11-0 start and are starting to improve in areas such as rebounding, team defense and making the extra pass," said Laingsburg coach Tim Beebe. "This group has a fairly high basketball IQ, and they embrace big-game opportunities. We have some good shooters and like to play up tempo."

Leading the way for the Wolfpack is Zander Woodruff. An outstanding all-around player, Woodruff is averaging 30 points per game this

season and has connected on 32 three-point shots. Woodruff is also pulling down 6.5 rebounds per game to go along with 4.6 assists and 2.2 steals per game.

Cameron Ballard is also having a solid season as he has connected on 18 three-point shots this season and is averaging 4.3 assists per game. Jackson Audretsch is hauling down seven rebounds per game while Ty Randall is an excellent passer who is adding four assists per game.

A junior stepping up in a big way this season it 6-foot-3 Mitchell George.

"Mitchell is playing very well as a first-year varsity player," Beebe said.



The Laingsburg boys basketball team is ranked 11th in the state in Division 3 this season and has fashioned an 11-0 record.

"He has been very consistent with his effort and had a season-high of 12 points on Jan. 23 against our league rival Pewamo-Westphalia."

Laingsburg also claimed wins against CMAC contenders Perry and Fowler during the first go around the league schedule. The Wolfpack also added non-league wins against

Haslett and Plymouth Christian Academy.

Along with the remainder of the CMAC schedule, the Wolfpack face a number of solid opponents down the stretch including non-league games against Freeland and Ovid-Elsie as they prepare for another state tournament run in March.

Area Boys, Girls Basketball Teams Turning In Noteworthy Seasons On Journey To March

David Cook Sports Scene

The following is a look at some of the top boys and girls basketball teams who are making news in the area.

BOYS TEAMS

Saginaw, Saginaw Arthur Hill To Meet For Final Time

It will be the end of an era when the two great Saginaw high school programs, Saginaw and Saginaw Arthur Hill meet twice during the month of February. The two schools are synonymous with basketball excellence and have met for countless thrilling games over the past decades. All of that history comes to a close after this year when the two schools merge at one. The final two clashes between the Trojans and Lumberjacks take place in mid-February. On Feb. 10 Saginaw High will travel to Arthur Hill and on Feb. 16 the two teams will meet for a final league matchup at the Dow Event Center.

Together, Saginaw and Arthur Hill are among the legendary basketball schools in the state. Saginaw has won six state titles, the last coming in 2012, while Arthur Hill has won two state titles, the last coming in 2006. The legendary players that have suited up for either of the schools is like a basketball who's who. Among the greats that wore the black and gold of Saginaw High have been current Golden State Warrior standout Draymond Green, Anthony "Peeper" Roberson, Lou Dawkins, current Los Angeles Lakers coach Darvin Ham, Tony Smith, a 1970's legend and Ernie Thompson from the 1960's. Wearing the navy blue and gold of Arthur Hill have been former Michigan State standout Jason Richardson, Dar Tucker, Maurice Jones and Craig Dill.

Both teams are closing the books on historic runs by turning in solid seasons. Saginaw High is 5-0 and in first place in

the Saginaw Valley League. The Trojans, led by Brandon McCune and Torrior Stevenson are 10-4 overall and have fashioned a five-game winning streak through the middle of

January.

Arthur Hill is in second place in the SVL with a 4-1 record and have a 10-3 overall mark. The Lumberjacks have plenty of talent of their own led by senior Lyla Brooks along with standout sophomore guard Boop Hardy and junior forward Tyler Dorsey.

Being on hand to watch these two icons hoop it up for the final times will be historic.

East Lansing

Expectations were lofty for East Lansing coming into the season and so far the Trojans are giving their fans plenty to cheer about. East Lansing opened the season reeling off 13 straight wins before dropping a 62-54 decision to Warren Lincoln, the No. 2 ranked team in Division 2. East Lansing, led by standouts like junior Cameron Hutson and sophomore KJ Torbert, is ranked second in the state in Division 1. The Trojans have a depth roster with players like JL Branson (6-4), BJ Windham (6-1) Christian Dun and Charlie Baker making big impacts. East Lansing is along in first place at 5-0 in the CAAC Blue and has posted key wins over conference rivals Okemos and Lansing Waverly along with non-league wins against state-ranked Detroit King along with East Kentwood and River Rouge.

Freeland

The Falcons of Freeland came into the season featuring some of the top young talent in the area and so far the Falcons are making plenty of waves.

Freeland is ranked fifth in the state in Division 2 this season. Led by standout sophomore guard Wilson Huckeby and 6-foot-6 sophomore Tristan Comer the Falcons are stamping themselves as a team to watch once the state tournament comes around. Freeland has fashioned a 12-1 record heading into the final days of January with the lone loss coming against Division 1 Saginaw Heritage. Freeland is 7-0 and

in first place in the league. The Falcons have also posted some impressive wins against the likes of Division 1 teams Mounty Pleasant, Grand Ledge and Flushing.

GIRLS TEAMS

Rockford among best in the state in Division 1

The defending Division 1 state champions are back among the best in the state in Division 1 again this season. Rockford is ranked second in the state in division 1. The Rams opened the season by reeling off 10 straight wins before falling to conference rival East Kentwood by six points at Kentwood. The Rams then picked up the pace with three straight wins since that loss including a win against Lansing Catholic, last year's Division 2 state champs. The Rams have a deep and talented roster led by Anna Wypych and Sienna Wolfe along with Kate Higgins and Jordan Mateer.

DeWitt atop CAAC Blue

DeWitt is atop the standing in the rugged CAAC Blue this season as the Panthers started the season with a 5-0 league record. Overall, DeWitt has a 12-2 mark with the lone losses coming against Haslett (10-3 record) and Byron Center (9-3 record). The Panthers, led by the junior duo of Madi Uyl and Tara Kurucz have been piling up double-digit wins this season and feature a high-scoring offense.

Portland, Lansing Catholic Battling In CAAC White

The CAAC White is home to a pair of standout teams in defending Division 2 state champions Lansing Catholic and Portland. The two teams have combined for 18 wins this season against four losses. Portland's lone loss this season came in the league showdown with Lansing Catholic. Lansing Catholic has three non-league losses. Those losses, however, have come to Rockford, the No. 2 ranked team in the state in Division 1, Detroit Renaissance, the No. 3 ranked team in Division 1 and Ann Arbor Richard, the No. 2 ranked team in the state in Division 2. Both Portland and Lansing Catholic have an impressive history in the state tournament as



The DeWitt girls basketball team is ranked among the honorable mention in the state in Division 1 this season.

the two schools have won two out of the last three Division 2 state titles. Portland won the Division 2 state title in 2021 while Lansing Catholic won the Division 2 state title last year.

Hemlock Back Among The Top In Division 3

Hemlock captured the Division 3 state title last season and the Huskies are back among the top teams in the state in Division 1 this season. Hemlock is ranked third in the state in Division 3 this season. The Huskies opened the season with four straight wins before falling to Goodrich 1 Midland Dow and Division 2 Goodrich. Since then, the Huskies have regained their winning ways and have reeled off five consecutive double-digit wins. The Huskies feature a balanced offense with senior Lauren Borsenik averaging 10.8 points per game followed by junior Carly Siler with 9.3 points, senior Hannah Borsenik with 9.3 and sophomore Victoria Hauffe with eight points per game. Lauren Borsenik is pulling down 8.1 rebounds per game along with dishing out 2.5 assists and adding 2.5 steals. Hannah Borsenik is adding 5.1 rebounds, 2.9 steals and 2.4 assists per game while Hauffe is adding 2.4 steals per game.

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St. Patrick Hungry For More Titles

John Raffel Sports Scene

Al Schrauben is Portland St. Patrick's girls basketball coach and has been sitting on the bench for 40 seasons and has won a lot of state titles, not to mention league, district and regional crowns.

Could this be another championship season?

Portland St. Patrick girls basketball team is again having a fine season.

It appears to be headed in that direction.

The team record is 7-2 overall and 5-1 in the league.

"We been very competitive and are getting better each game," he said. "We are a little short of what we hoped for on our expectations."

Highlights have included victories over Pewamo-Westphalia and Ovid Elsie

"We lost a very tough game to Fowler, both teams played well," Schrauben said.

Top athletes have included senior Laynie Meredith "a point guard who can score," Schrauben said. "Freshman Grace Rocky is a very solid rebounder and scorer."

Schauben's teams have been in 13 state title games and have won six of them. The last title came in 2002.

Ithaca Girls Team Eyes Strong Second Half Of Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

A promising girls basketball season is continuing under coach Khris Nevins.

It's Nevins' third season as coach.

"We have been in every game except the Ovid Elsie game," Nevins said. "We were leading all of those games in the fourth quarter. We need to get better at closing games out. We are working hard every day at practice, getting better. We feel we need to work harder on defense and display more patience offensively."

"We have lost three games we shouldn't have. Opening league play with a win over a tough Saginaw Valley Lutheran squad (was

a highlight). Our game management was on point and we were able to finish the game. We are young. These young ladies can be challenging but at the end of the day they never disappoint me."

The Yellowjackets have some very fine players.

"Libby Maurer is averaging 16.7 points per game and has scored 100 points in six games," Nevins said. "She is only a sophomore and has a lot of room to grow. I expect her to only get better as the season goes on. She has done a really good job handling the ball as our primary point guard, she faces a lot of on the ball pressure and handles it well."

"Ivy Davenport is averaging 15.2 points per game and has scored 91 points in 6



The 2023-24 Ithaca girls basketball team.

games. She is also averaging 9.3 rebounds per game. Only 0.7 rebounds away from averaging a double-double. Ivy is well rounded in everything she does on the floor for us."

Ithaca is hoping to make a lot of noise in the postseason.

"We hope to start finishing close games on the winning side. Work hard, and get better every day," Nevins said.

Beal City Coach Approaches 300 Wins

John Raffel Sports Scene

Cam Gatrell is having another successful boys basketball coaching season at Beal City. He has coached 27 years with 12 at

Beal, 11 at Montabella and 4 at Clinton Community Schools.

Beal City is 13-3 overall, 9-2 in the league.

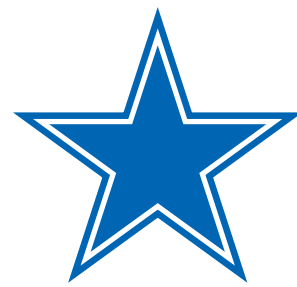
"We had another late start from football, so we started off slow,"

Gatrell said. "We are playing much better now. I feel we have so much to grow... generally at Beal we don't play our best basketball until February."

Austin Small is averaging 19.7

pts/game.

"I didn't know this until my dad had mentioned this before the season, but I will be getting my 300th win real soon. He says I'm at 298," Gatrell said.



Fulton Girls Team Off To Excellent Start

John Raffel Sports Scene

It's been quite a girls basketball season so far for coach Brandon Trefil's Fulton Pirates in the Mid State Activities Conference.

It's his second season as coach.

At the midway part of the season, Fulton was 8-4 overall and 6-2 in the MSAC.

"We have had a good start to the year," Trefil said. "We are a young team that has made improvements throughout the season. We are starting to put the pieces together and playing our best basketball coming up. The second half of the season is starting for us and we want to be playing our best

basketball in the next few weeks leading into the tournament.

"Currently we are fourth in the league. We are hoping to make a run during the second half of league play and push towards the top."

Fulton started off the season with wins over Saranac 45-22, Montabella 48-3, Coleman 47-31, Carson City Crystal 46-22 and Merrill 42-26. Fulton then suffered losses 46-41 to Ithaca and 55-40 to St. Charles. That was followed by a 57-46 win over Vestaburg and a 44-24 loss to Breckenridge. It was then 66-24 over Ashley and a 37-27 loss to Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart, then came a 50-39 win over Montabella.



The 2023-24 Fulton girls basketball team.

P-W Looking For Strong Second Half Of Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Steve Eklund is in his 15th season of coaching Pewamo-Westphalia's girls basketball team and is looking for a strong finish to the season to duplicate some of the past successes Pirate teams have enjoyed.

"We played a very tough schedule to start the season with losses to Williamston, East Lansing, Fowler, Portland St Pats and Dansville. We're taking things one day at a time. Lots of areas that need improving. As we begin to put things together, I believe the wins will come. Learning to win is a process. We are

competing on a daily basis. Practices have been great.

"Kids are getting after it. Coaches do not have to spend time motivating or energizing in practice. We're striving to be more consistent and to get more leadership from the players with in-game situations. Some of the things that were thought to be weaknesses going into the season have not (team rebounding) but in other areas (taking care of the basketball) we need to be better."

There have been some big highlights for P-W.

"Our team Christmas party was a big hit," Eklund said. "Santa made an appearance,"

There were some impressive gingerbread houses built. This is a fun group of girls. We're valuing the off-the-court stuff as much as on-the-court. Looking forward to seeing what we can do on the bowling alley next month.

"Elly Bengel is off to a great start this season. We really missed her judging from the outcome of the Williamston game. She does a lot for us in so many different areas of the game. She leads us in about every individual category (13.5 points per game, 5.6 rebounds per game, 2.5 assists per game, 2.4 steals per game)."

Pewamo-Westphalia has huge goals for the second half of the season.

"We want to work ourselves back into the upper half of the



conference standings," Eklund said. "We need to be more consistent on both ends of the court and think we can get on a hot streak."

The 2023-24 Pewamo Westphalia girls basketball team.

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Alma boys basketball players huddle during a game.

Alma Boys Enjoying Promising Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Chris Brown has been in the Alma boys basketball program 27 years and is in his third as head coach. He likes the direction his team is taking. Alma is 3-2 in the league and 7-4 overall.

"Overall, I'm pleased with the progress we are making each day," Brown said. "Our boys are developing an identity, we have solid chemistry, and have shown good fight

whenever we have faced adversity. Playing 8 of our first 12 games on the road has probably helped us focus in and grow a bit closer early in the year. Nine of our 11 games have been pretty tight and we have shown solid composure and grit during those games.

"Our team is starting to understand what we are best at and the weaker areas we need to continue to develop in order to reach our end of the season goals. I think we have probably

played better than some people expected us to, but our own expectations, growth, and goals are what we are continuing to focus on."

Highlights for the season so far have been "rivalry wins versus Ithaca and at Shepherd, a win over a veteran Garber team on the road, and the first time in program history that our varsity has won at Bridgeport," Brown said. "We have had five different players lead us in scoring and our balance and depth has been a big positive.

"Opening the season with eight road games out of our first 12 has been a bit of a grind, especially with a rather inexperienced group, but I think

it has helped our focus and chemistry early on."

Top athletes have been: Cade Sutherland - Senior - Guard; 11.6 pts pg, 4.0 reb pg, 2.7 ast pg, 3.5 stl pg

Jacoby Dunlap - Senior - Forward; 9.5 pts pg, 3.8 reb pg

Owen Seelye - Junior - Forward; 9.5 pts pg, 3.8 reb pg

Jack Lemerand - Sophomore - Guard; 7.8 pts pg, 3.0 ast pg, 3.2 reb pg, 1.5 stl pg.

"We will continue to make daily adjustments and to grow to our potential. We look forward to the opportunity to play at home in the District tournament," Brown said.

P-W Boys Making Waves This Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

It's been a special year so far for Pewamo-Wesphalia's boys basketball team and coach Dominic Schneider.

He's been coaching the Pirates for four seasons.

The team is 8-1 overall (5-1 CMAC).

"So far this has been a rewarding season in the sense that it feels like we are continually getting better," Schneider said. "This team comes

to practice hungry

and ready to take the next step each and every day. Our only loss has come to conference foe, Laingsburg. We have done very well in our non-conference games against some bigger schools and competition.

"I would say we have met expectations but have not yet exceeded. We have some work cut out to exceed the high expectations that we set for ourselves."

Highlights, Schneider said, "have been winning Cornerstone

University showcase game vs Forest Hills Northern and winning on the road at Williamston. Beating two of the top teams in Division 4 in Saginaw Nouvel and Fowler were nice wins for our program as well.

"Losing to Laingsburg at home in the second game of the season was tough but that has fueled us to get better each day since. Kash Pohl, senior captain has really come on the past 5 games as he is averaging nearly 15 points per game in that span. Grady Eklund has done a nice job at our point



The 2023-24 P-W boys basketball team.

guard position and is averaging 27 points per game right now."

The hopes are high for the rest of the season.

"Our ultimate goal is to be playing our best basketball come playoffs and we hope to make a deep playoff run," Schneider said.

Midland Dow's Boys Basketball Team Thrives Under New Coach

John Raffel Sports Scene

Mike Skinner is in his first year as boys varsity coach at Midland Dow and is hoping for a strong finish to the season.

We had to replace 4 starters from last years team so it's a work

in progress. We are hoping to improve as the season progresses," Skinner said. "We always want to do better but all things considered we are doing well. Ian Balch, 6-5 senior forward, is having a very good season, highlighted by his 35-point performance against Midland High School. He has

taken his game to a new level this season which has helped our team.

"Ben VanSumeren, 6-4 junior forward, has also elevated our team averaging 12 points and

13 rebounds per game. I would say our team highlight was our win against our crosstown rival, Midland High School, back in December. Being a younger team with a lot of new players we have had a couple games we were in position to win but didn't close

very well. We are hoping this improves as the season progresses.



Ian Balch has led the team this year averaging 23 points per game and 9 rebounds per game.

"Ben VanSumeren is also having a good season averaging 12 points per game and 13 rebounds per game," Skinner said. "Jacob Jensen is our top defensive player, always having to guard the best player on the opposing team. He gives great effort and definitely makes us a better team with his defense and ballhandling.

"We would like to continue to improve and hopefully play our best at towards the end of the season."

Vestaburg Boys Look To Be Postseason Competitor

John Raffel Sports Scene

Ty Warczynsky has had a very strong competitive boys basketball team at Vestaburg this season.

The Wolverines started out at 6-5 overall and 4-3 in the MSAC.

It's Warczynsky's third season with the team.

"We have been up and down," he said. "Even with the game. We are looking for consistency. My hope is we become a team

that when faces adversity it rises to the challenge."

There has been plenty of highlights for

the Wolverines.

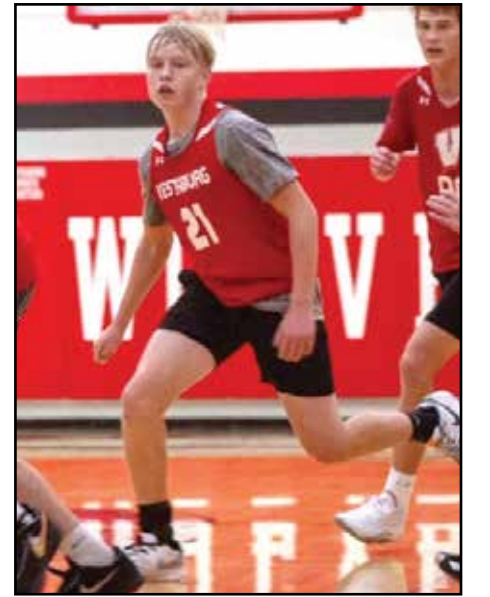
"We played in the championship game at Marion Holiday Tournament. We lost a tough one in the Championship but again played a good half and poor second half," Warczynsky said.

Top players include Brehm Warczynsky (14.5 ppg, 2.4 rpg, 3.5 apg).

"He is having a solid freshman year," Ty Warczynsky said. "He has played really well for his freshman year so far."

Landon Arntz (9.9 ppg 6.5 rpg.) has been

Brehm Warczynsky works on his game during a Vestaburg practice.



a standout. "Landon has really been solid on both ends of the floor," Warczynsky said.

Jansen Scholer (8.6 ppg 3.7 rpg 3 apg.) is also contributing.

"Jansen has played a great floor game and is getting the ball where it needs to be," Warczynsky said.

Keegan Beetley (8.5 ppg 1.2 rpg) is having a strong season.

"Keegan is coming off injury, which is very difficult to do. He has played really well. Each game is getting better and better," Warczynsky said.

The rest of the season looks bright for the Wolverines.

"I hope we continue to battle and come to work each day," Warczynsky said.



Chippewa Hills Athlete Scoring Lot Of Points In Two Sports

John Raffel Sports Scene

Chippewa Hills senior Jordan Hansen has emerged as one of the area's top basketball scorers this season average in the high teens for points, including a 48-point performance this year.

Early in the season, he scored is

Chippewa Hills' Jordan Hansen is a prolific basketball player and excellent bowler.

his 48 points leading the team to a 75-70 double overtime thriller over Howard City Tri County.

"Jordan had 26 by halftime, 22 more in the second half," Chippewa Hills coach Steve Darnell said. "48 points in a game, we believe, is the men's high school record. Jordan has put in a lot of work this offseason to

improve his game."

His role has been point guard for the Warriors. He acknowledged in preseason his strengths would be shooting. His outside and midrange shots have been a strength and he was focusing on improving his ball handling.

The key thing was getting the win. But Hansen was still thrilled with his extraordinary point total.

"It feels great," Hansen said. "It was a really good game. It was fun. It was a really cool experience."

Hansen had five 3-pointers and

was able to make the most of his other points with 2-point shots and free throws.

"I had a lot of free throws and quite a few layups and mid-range shots as well," he said.

Hansen is also an excellent high school bowler and hopes to make the state finals.

Jordan is coming into his Senior year ready to prove himself," Warrior bowling coach Casey Russell said. "Jordan also finished off last year doing very well at Regionals and expects to improve on that this year."

Undefeated Portland Bowlers Eye Strong Finish

John Raffel Sports Scene

Dan Graef is in his fourth season coaching boys bowling at Portland which is currently 7-0.

"We haven't faced our toughest test yet," Graef said. "A majority of the teams in our division are going through a rebounding season and we have been able to capitalize on that. I am happy with our record but I don't think our team is battle tested enough yet. I hope our next couple of matches and tournaments help test the team mentally and physically.

"I would say currently we have

met expectations but a lot of season left. So far the top highlight of the season is our match against Ionia on Jan. 9 as we bowled the highest game I have on record for boys bowling a 981 which is a 196 average. I say the same thing every season the first two weeks is always challenging as the students don't bowl in the offseason so we have to dust the cobwebs off and get the kids sharp. After that time it is just a slow build up for the physical games and mental games. I would never call a moment coaching these kids a disappointment as I enjoy seeing all of their growth."

Portland has some very fine



The 2023-24 Portland High School boys bowling team.

bowlers.

"Eli Dakin is averaging 192 and has taken a leadership role for the team. Jack McBride picked up where he left off last season

averaging 196 and has been our best morale builder as he cheers loud for every shot," Graef said. "Last but not least is Nate Pierce who is in his first season on varsity but has been solid. He is

averaging 190 so far in limited competition and has also been a great teammate.

"My goals this season is to win our conference, place at regionals and make match play at states."

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Cole O'Boyle Putting Finishing Touches On Outstanding Wrestling Career At Alma

David Cook Sports Scene

One of the finest wrestlers in Alma program history, Panther senior Cole O'Boyle is putting the finishing touches on an already outstanding high school wrestling career.

A two-time state placer, O'Boyle is having a huge senior season at Alma. Heading into the month of February, O'Boyle has put together a 34-0 record and is ranked No. 1 in the state in Division 3 at 190 pounds. So far this season O'Boyle has also won individual titles at the Hudson Super 16 Tournament and the New Lothrop Hall of Fame Tournament.

"The season has been going really good," O'Boyle said. "Winning the Hudson tournament and the Hall of Fame Tournament were probably my

biggest highlights. At the Hall of Fame Tournament, I beat the kid that beat me last year (Derek Badgley of Mason) 7-2. That was probably my biggest win. He was a state runner-up in Division 2 as a sophomore and finished third last year."

O'Boyle knows a thing or two about placing at state as well. As a sophomore O'Boyle placed fifth at the state meet and last year, he finished third at 175 pounds at the Division 3 state individual finals.

After a productive summer of training and working out, O'Boyle feels like he is positioned to make a strong run at reaching the top of the podium at this year's state finals.

"I'm more confident this year," O'Boyle said. "I also feel really healthy this year and stronger. I lifted a lot of weights over the strong and feel a lot bigger and stronger."

I've been working really hard and just have to keep at it."

With his high school career winding down, O'Boyle has amassed an impressive resume at Alma. O'Boyle recently won 150th career match and has a career record of 153-12. If not for the Covid pandemic during his freshman season, O'Boyle would have an even larger victory total.

Finishing his career with a state title is the ultimate goal for O'Boyle and one that his coach believes he can attain.

"Cole is on a mission," said Alma coach Randy Miniard, "and when it's all said and done, he will go down as one of Alma High School's all-time greats."

After high school, O'Boyle plans on attending college where he also hopes to wrestle.



Cole O'Boyle is having a big senior season for the Alma wrestling team that has included titles at the Hudson and New Lothrop tournaments.

Veteran Talent, Team Depth Has Mason Wrestling Team Among The Top In Division 2 This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

Ranked fourth in the state in Division 2, the Mason wrestling team is off to a strong start this season. While the start is impressive, what really has the Bulldogs looking forward to the rest of the season is getting their lineup back to full strength.

While a number of wrestlers have been out of the lineup due to injuries and illness, the Bulldogs have continued to roll this season thanks to some impressive depth and plenty of wrestlers ready to step in when their name is called.

"We have a very solid, very

balanced team this year with a good mix of freshman through seniors," said Mason coach Brian Martel. "We are currently 14-0 and in first place in the CAAC Red. We have not fielded our strongest team yet and have several all-state wrestlers eyeing a return to the mat in the next couple of weeks."

Having a solid group of seniors and a large roster has been a strong point for Mason this wrestling season.

"We have a strong senior nucleus along with solid underclassmen," Martel said. "With a roster of 47 wrestlers, we have had the strength and depth to overcome some early-season challenges and injuries to

remain perfect on the year so far."

Mason has plenty of solid wrestlers up and down the lineup. At 113 pounds, sophomore Cecilia Williams is a returning girls state champion and is ranked among the top five girls in the country at 115 pounds. Williams is also currently undefeated in boys matches. At 120 pounds sophomore Darius Amb is coming off a 42-2 freshman campaign. At 132 pounds is junior Matt Ausel who was a state qualifier at 113 pounds last season.

The Bulldogs also have plenty of talent in the middle of the lineup. Senior Tex Smith is at 114 pounds after being a state qualifier at 138 pounds last season. Sophomore Dylan Granger is at 150 pounds after placing fifth at state at 144 pounds last season. Senior Jady Grimes is at 157 pounds where he finished eighth in the state last season.

Mason also has plenty of talent at the upper weight classes. Junior Gavin VanKirk is a returning regional qualifier at 165 pounds and has a 17-3 record this season. Senior AJ Martel is at 175 pounds.

Martel placed fifth in the state at 160 pounds last season. Senior Derek Badgley is at 190 pounds. Badgley is a three-time state placer who has finished fifth, second and third at the state meet during his career.

Several young wrestlers and newcomers to the starting lineup have also stepped up this season. Among the wrestlers making an impact this season are sophomore Jordan Evans (106 pounds), freshmen Jakob Mullin (113) and

Boone Smith (132) and seniors Grant Gilchrist (215) and Kaleb Parrish (heavyweight) in the upper weight classes.

"It has been an odd season after having back-to-back tournaments cancelled due to the weather," said coach Martel. "We have less on our resume than expected at this point but we will be a tough out, especially if our full lineup is together for the post-season."



The Mason wrestling team poses with hardware won at the Jackson JAWS wrestling tournament during the early season.

Bay City John Glenn, Freeland Wrestling Teams On Collision Course In District

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

It is a tournament dual worthy of being a state semifinal match, but the Bay City John Glenn and Freeland wrestling teams will square off at the district level in what will be one of the premier matches of the upcoming team state tournament.

With the regular season coming to an end, Freeland is ranked second in the state in Division 2 while John Glenn is ranked third in Division 2. Combined, the two teams have won 46 matches against five defeats this year with all the losses coming against highly-ranked team in the state. The two teams also met once this year back with Freeland coming away with a 32-31 win in a dual where each team won seven matches apiece.

"It's a little bit unfortunate that the No. 2 and No. 3 team in the state meet in the district championship when it could be a state quarterfinal match," said John Glenn coach Matt Bishop. "It is great if they could've had some way to seed teams around midseason to get the top teams seeded but it's never been done. Both of our teams are 100 percent capable of getting to the finals but one will have to go home after districts."

Freeland, which moved up to Division 2 this season after competing in district 3 the last several years, knew it was entering uncharted territory.

"We've never been in District 2 so we knew we were going either north or south," said Freeland coach Scott VanLuven. "If they sent us south, we could be in a district with Goodrich or if they sent us north we would be in with John Glenn. Either way we went we knew we would have to wrestle somebody really strong. We just prepare to wrestle who is in front of us."

FREELAND TOURNING IN MEMORABLE SEASON

With a lineup loaded with seniors, Freeland knew this season had the potential to be something special. The Falcons just missed qualifying for team state last year when they fell by one point to Portland in the team regional in Division 3.

"It's been a good year," VanLuven said. "We started the season with high hopes. We were moving up a division so we did not know what to expect."

So far the Falcons have been racking up impressive wins Along with edging John Glenn, Freeland picked up a big win against Division 1 state-ranked Brighton and also won the Tri-Valley Conference title for the first time since 2016.

Freeland features a roster peppered with state-ranked wrestlers up and down the lineup. Freeland's list of state-ranked wrestlers includes Easton Rosebush (106 pounds), Malachi Hill (120), Ty Fournier (144), Fabian Facundo (150), Noah Graham (157), Gibby Shephard (165), Eli Murphy (175) and Brigham Smith (215). Several Freeland wrestlers have also reached personal milestones this season or are approaching milestones. Shephard, Graham and Hill have all recorded their 100th career wins this season while Joseph Klopff is three wins away from 100 and Murphy is 12 wins shy of the century mark.

Overall, Freeland has is led by its senior class that includes Klopff, Fournier, Graham, Shepard, Murphy and Colin Ott at 138 pounds.

Freeland also boasts a pair of the top girls wrestlers in the state. Ell Mae Klopff (106) and Violet Cabrera (140) are both state-ranked and turning in big seasons.

"These seniors have been through a lot during their four years," said

VanLuven. "Especially the seniors who wrestle and play football. They have went through a lot of really, really close and devastating losses. In football they lost two playoff games by one point to Goodrich the last two seasons and they loss by one point in the team wrestling regional to Portland last year. Those are some devastating losses that take a lot out of you. I know they will show and leave everything out there and have no regrets."

BAY CITY GLENN HAVING MILESTONE SEASON

The John Glenn wrestling team is also in uncharted territory this season with the amount of success it is having. Along with 28 wins, the losses the Bobcats have experienced have come against Hudson, the No. 1 team in the state in Division 4, Lowell, the No. 1 team in the state in Division 2 and Freeland, the No. 2 team in the state in Division 2.

"Our season has been going pretty good so far," Bishop said. "We've been able to secure some wins against some top ten teams in the state. We have quite a few guys ranked in the individual rankings. It has been one of those seasons where it is all coming together. This is uncharted territory for us. This is the highest we've ever been rated."

The Bobcats have wrestled a stacked schedule this season and have racked up some impressive wins against that rugged slate. John Glenn has defeated Division 1 state-ranked teams in Temperance-Bedford, Davison and Oxford, defeated Division 2 state-ranked team Hamilton and St. Joseph and defeated Lakeville, ranked in Division 3.

"Our schedule is brutal but we do that by design," Bishop said. "It's all about getting better every day. We wrestle the toughest teams



The Bay City John Glenn wrestling team is ranked third in the state in Division 2 and has a 28-3 record in dual matches.



The Freeland wrestling team is ranked second in the state in Division 2 and has fashioned an 18-2 record in dual matches.

we can find on Wednesday and Saturday and then come back to practice and fix what we have to fix. For us, we want to wrestle the best and no matter what happens we go back to the drawing board and see where we can get better."

John Glenn also features a roster with state-ranked wrestlers up and down the lineup. Logan Demerest is 26-1 this season and is ranked fourth in Division 2. Connor Greer is 24-2 and is ranked number one at 132 pounds. Garrett Forgash is 25-1, freshman EJ Smith is 26-4 and ranked eighth at 106 pounds and Ruben Rivera is 21-1 and ranked fifth at 113 pounds. The Bobcats are also getting solid seasons from Izaak Kukulski who is 15-3 at 120 pounds and Jackson Vrabel who is 16-4 at 215. John Glenn also has a solid group of freshmen that are blending in with the returnees. Among the freshmen making a big impact are Johnathan Ford at 157, Garrett Hilborn at 144, Liam O'Loughlin

(126) and Smith. "This is the best freshman class that we've had in a long time," said Bishop.

Another big plus for John Glenn is the number of wrestlers in the program John Glenn has 35 wrestlers at the middle school level while the varsity team has close to 40 wrestlers this season. That kind of depth enables John Glenn to send out three varsity squads to different tournaments most weekends.

"I give a lot of credit to our coaching staff for that," Bishop said. "When you have that many wrestlers you need a large coaching staff to take advantage of that. You need more quality coaches to give your kids the opportunities to wrestle. We have quality guys on staff who know their stuff and prepare our kids for success. We have kids on our B team who have had upwards of 30 matches this year and that helps a lot."

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Chippewa Hills' Natalie Gibson will be going for a girls state wrestling title this season.

Chippewa Hills Wrestlers Eye 20th Straight District Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

District titles are old habits for Chippewa Hills' wrestling team. And it's a habit the Warriors don't want to get rid of.

Last season the Warriors were 12-5, won their 19th straight district championship and had seven state qualifiers and three all-state wrestlers. They were also Academic All-State as a team.

Tyler Vogel is coaching the team his second season.

Ley athletes that have graduated from last season's team included Lindsey Gibson - first 4-time state placer.

Top wrestlers are Tyler Geer - Senior; Jon Koepf - Junior; Hunter Sellers - Senior; Austin Humphrey - Junior; Natalie Gibson - Junior; Raymond Irwin - Junior. Natalie Gibson placed second for girls at the state finals and is bidding to be a state champ this year.

"These athletes will be expected to be leaders on our team and give our newer

athletes a good example of what it means to be a Chippewa Hills wrestler," Vogel said.

The Warriors started off the Central State Activities Association season at 6-0 and were expected to contend for another title.

"I expect our team to be competitive in the season and the post-season. We will be working towards our 20th straight district championship," Vogel said. "Our team will be tough. The team is continuing to work on their belief in themselves and commitment to their abilities.

"Our league is always tough, and we are looking forward to the opportunity to compete for a league title."

The Warriors will have to beat the winner of the Clare-Reed City semifinal to make it 20 straight district crowns.

Lutheran Seminary Wrestlers Enjoying Success

John Raffel Sports Scene

Josh Wakefield is head wrestling coach at Michigan Lutheran Seminary in his second varsity and the team continues to win.

"The team has been getting better each week. We are a young team but have everyone making contributions to the line up," he said. "I am excited about our

effort and their work ethic as we navigate a tough schedule, especially in the Tri Valley conference. There are a lot of good wrestling schools and coaches, so you have to work hard to stay competitive.

"We have good numbers this year with 32 wrestlers on the roster and for the first time we have 3 girls competing as well. Emilia Rivera Senior 140 has some wins on the season competing in the girls division. A highlight for us so far

was placing 11 wrestlers at the Saginaw County Meet and taking runner up honors at the Bad Axe Team tournament and the Mayville Individual tournament.

Some athletes records:

Ridley Wakefield Freshman 18-5 106; Noah Adams Freshman 17-4 157; Gavin Frederick Senior 11-6 150; Brock Ochoa Junior 12-7 165; Ethan Wakefield 21-1 Junior 190.



Ridley Wakefield Ethan Wakefield Gavin Frederick



Noah Adams Brock Ochoa

Lakeview Wrestling Coach Continues To Build Strong

John Raffel Sports Scene

Lakeview wrestling coach Todd Barton is in his 12th season and continues to build a very strong program.

Barton in recent seasons has had one of the strongest programs in the Central State Activities Association and continues that tradition this

season. The only CSAA loss has been to Chippewa Hills.

"The kids are looking good," he said. "We just had a quick talk on how work ethic in the practice room carries over into the matches. We're going to continue to grind."

A 42-35 win over Reed City was among the highlights to a 5-1 league record.

Top wrestlers have been Cam Perez at 126 pounds, Lucas Veil at 165 and Landen Johnson at 190 and CJ Copeland at 190.

"But records don't explain the showing," Barton said. "We've had some kids with good quality losses, who have performed for us."

Lakeview is in Division 4 for wrestling and expects to do extremely well with individuals in the post season. The Wildcats have had a competitive team for many years.

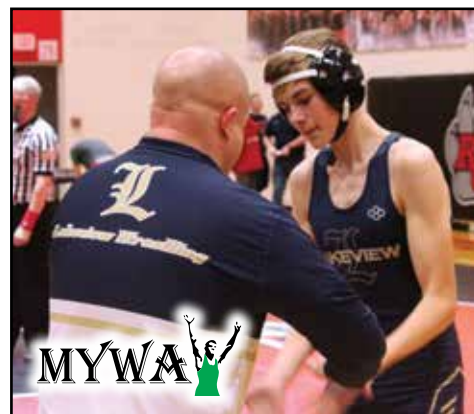
"We've been on a decent run,"

Barton said. "We're hoping to continue and stay strong as a team."

Lakeview has 26 wrestlers and has been able to fill all 14 weight classes.

At the recent 24-team Reed City Invitational, Cam Perez won his first-place match over Elijah Alvarado with pin in 43 seconds.

Landen Johnson won his first-place match over Gabe Gair with a 9-4 decision. CJ Copeland lost his title match against Emmett Lingeman of Central Montcalm.



Lakeview wrestling coach Todd Barton (left) gets one of his wrestlers ready for a match.

Ionia Dance Team Having Strong Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Stephanie Batista is the Ionia High School Varsity Dance Team Head Coach in her first season. She previously coached the Ionia Middle School Dance team for two seasons 21/22 & 22/23 as well as the Varsity team from 2006-2011.

"Our team is excited to be competing in several upcoming competitions including the 33rd Pistons Classic on Jan. 28th and at Davenport University on Feb. 10," Batista said.

"This team has worked very

hard learning new choreography for every game, putting in time for strength training and technique classes. This is a young team with only two returning varsity members and the new team members have stepped up and worked hard to keep the level of performance at a top notch.

"The team is looking forward to competing in several categories including competition pom and jazz," Batista said. "I am looking forward to watching each dancer reach personal goals and to also see their hard work pay off at competitions."



The 2024 Ionia dance team.

Saginaw Heritage Skiers Having Strong Season'

John Raffel Sports Scene

David Corcoran is head coach at Saginaw Heritage for the Alpine ski team in the Central Alpine ski league. He's been coach for 38 years.

"It's a slow start due to no snow, three days on snow but unable to set gates for training then first meet Jan. 18.

Heritage was third in its meet and have been meeting expectations.

The team is meeting

expectations, Corcoran said.

"This year's highlight will be returning to Marquette Mountain for regionals," he said.

The lack of snow Corcoran said, has definitely made life challenging.

"Reece Kenny from our Nouvel co-op finished fourth of 60 teams in the slalom in Benzie Invitational at Crystal Mountain," he said.

For the rest of the season, Corcoran said his hopes are "having at least one individual qualify for the state meet."



Saginaw Heritage's Reece Kenney is pictured front row kneeling second from right.

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