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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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

The weather outside is warming up and area high school teams are really turning up the heat as the spring sports season kicks into overdrive!

On the baseball fields, several area baseball teams are off to strong starts this spring. In Division 1, Bay City Western and Rockford are among the top ten in the state. In Division 2, Flint Powers is stationed atop the polls with several schools in the top 20 including Freeland, Williamston, Swan Valley, Portland and DeWitt. Area schools are well represented in Division 3 with Montrose, Pewamo-Westphalia, Laingsburg and Lansing Catholic all ranked in the top 20. Division 4 is dominated by Mid-Michigan schools. Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart is ranked first in the state followed by Fowler in second and Beal City ranked third. Merrill and Portland St. Patrick are also ranked in the top 20.

Over on the softball diamonds area school are also making an impact. In Division 2, Essexville-Garber and Frankenmuth are top-ten teams while Swan Valley is among the honorable mention. In Division 3, Laingsburg is off to a sizzling start and is ranked second in the state. Clare is also a top-ten team while Evert, Ithaca, New Lothrop and Sanford-Meridian are ranked among the honorable mention. In Division 4, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart is ranked third in the state while Portland St. Patrick and Beal City are honorable mention.

On the soccer field, Midland Dow, Midland, Mason, Flint Powers and Frankenmuth are all ranked in the top ten.

Mid-Michigan has always been a hotbed for track and field and that is the case again this spring. In boys track, Frankenmuth is ranked third in the state in Division 2 while DeWitt is ranked fifth and Gladwin seventh. In Division 3, Chesaning is ranked second in the state while Ithaca is ranked fourth. In Division 4 Morrice is a top-ten team.

A number of girls track and field teams are also off to strong starts this spring. A trio of area teams are ranked in the top ten in Division 2 with Shephard ranked third, Frankenmuth fifth and Gladwin eighth. Division 3 has even more area teams ranked in the top ten. Chippewa Hills leads the way ranked second in the state followed by Ithaca ranked fourth, Chesaning ranked sixth and St. Louis ranked eighth.

With the calendar turning to May, the heart of the spring sports season is upon us. Why not take advantage of this great weather and make it out to a local ball diamond or track and support our area athletes.

See you at the games!



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Heartbreaking Tragedy Becomes “Tremendous Opportunity” For Former Ithaca Head Football Coach, Terry Hessbrook

Andrew Seavey Sports Scene

Brady Hessbrook seemed to have it all together.

He was the star quarterback at Ithaca High School from 2017 to 2020, earning the 2020 Division 7 and 8 Player Of The Year and securing a scholarship to Wayne State University to continue his athletic career.

Hessbrook had a passion for fishing, often spending summer days with his father, Terry, in their small motorboat patrolling the ponds of Mid-Michigan.

He had a smile that could light up a room, and his family, girlfriend, Alli Walden, friends and former teammates, and the entire community of Ithaca could never forget the positive impact he had on their lives.

“Our son Brady had a future,” Terry Hessbrook said. “He was a role model among his peers. He was a leader.”

The lives of those around him dramatically changed on Friday, January 27th, 2023, when he made the decision to take his own life, shattering the hearts of his loved ones and

leaving them in a state of shock.

“The only thing we didn't know was our son Brady was hiding something from everybody,” Hessbrook said. “He wore a mask constantly.”

He suffered from depression and anxiety.”

The Hessbrook's only son was 20 years old and pursuing a degree in business at the time.

Brady's father, Terry, had recently concluded a coaching career that was about as impressive as anyone had ever seen.

He claimed five state championships and had one of the most impressive feats in Michigan High School Football history, amassing 69 consecutive wins from 2009 to 2014, most of which Brady was on the sidelines as the team's manager.

However, nothing could have prepared him for the heart ache he'd encounter over that tragic day.

Rather than throwing in the towel and giving up, Terry and his family chose to keep fighting, believing that Brady would want them to do so.

“We can lay down on the floor, curl up on the floor, and cry like a

baby,” Hessbrook said. “Or we can try to help others.”

Terry created the B#4 Foundation which aims to promote mental health awareness and suicide prevention through education, outreach initiatives, advocacy, and community service.

He hopes that Brady's story will save the lives of others, so that they don't have to experience the same pain that his family and community have experienced.

“Now we feel like we've been given tremendous opportunity. We've been given a platform to share our son's story to hopefully help somebody in this crowd who may be struggling, so your family, community, and loved ones don't have to go through what we're going through.”

According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, almost one in four teenagers have had serious thoughts about suicide.

“Poor mental health, anxiety, and depression don't discriminate,” Hessbrook said.

The foundation hopes to encourage people to check in on each other,

and for those struggling to share their pain with trusted people in their life.

“You don't know what that person next to you is going through,” Hessbrook said.

“It's okay to not be okay, but tell somebody.”

Hessbrook, who currently serves as the Ithaca High School Athletic Director and Assistant Principal often visits local high schools and colleges speaking to students and young adults and spreading awareness of the fact that poor mental health, anxiety, and depression are a disease.

He knows that there is a lot of shame, embarrassment, and a stigma surrounding the reality of suicide,

but he believes that is part of the problem, and the only way to solve it is to share Brady's story.

The B#4 foundation has a logo, that consists of several features that make sure Brady's legacy and impact live on.

Blue and yellow make up the color scheme for the logo, representing Ithaca's colors, while the number four signifies the digit Brady represented while wearing the Yellowjacket uniform.

On the right side of the design is a silhouette of Brady tossing a football in the air. Inside the football is a semicolon, which in grammar means a sentence is not over, illustrating that Brady's story is not complete.

The logo also includes a cross within the word foundation, representing Brady's strong faith.

T-Shirts and other merchandise include the logo, representing Brady's life and reminding those who look at it to get help before you make a decision that could end in tragedy for so many around you.

“It's okay to not be okay, but tell somebody,” Hessbrook said.



Former Ithaca head football coach Terry Hessbrook and his family created the B#4Foundation with the goal of preventing some other families from going through the pain of losing a loved one, like their son, former Ithaca quarterback Brady Hessbrook, to suicide.

Ithaca Debuts With New Baseball Coach

John Raffel Sports Scene

Tim Palmer is the new varsity baseball coach at Ithaca High School.

Palmer graduated from Ithaca in 1988. He's been an assistant softball and baseball coach for 20 plus years. The past two years he has been assisting Ithaca varsity baseball.

“Last year's team was 16-21,” Palmer said. “A highlight was beating Hem-

lock 5-2 in District Semi Final. Last year's seniors were Charlie Martyn, Kaleb Peska, Trenton Polash and Jacob Jerome.

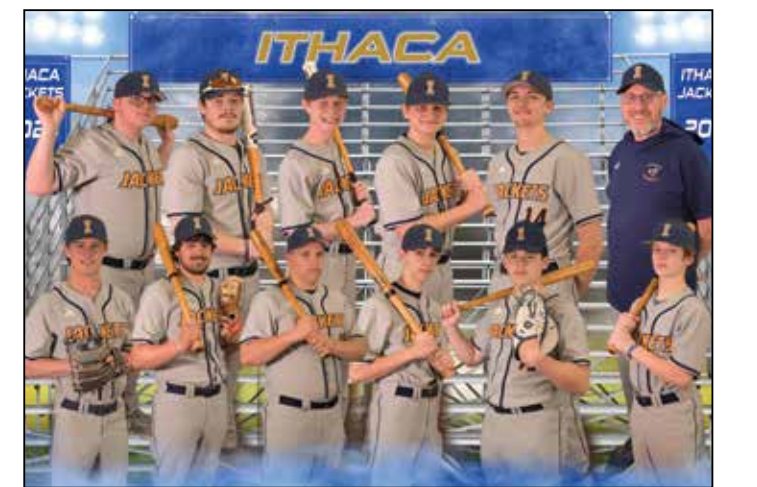
All were hard workers. Kaleb Peska and Charlie Martyn started every game. Charlie is now playing baseball at Alma College.”

The 2024 roster: Rylee White- Junior P, SS; Brady Paradise- Sophomore P, OF; Lucas Little- Freshman OF;

Devyn Fisher- Freshman OF; Connor McMurphy- Freshman P, IF; Colton Pratt- Junior 1B; Hayden Hull- Freshman Utility; 12. Jackson Conn- Junior P, IF; Carsen Shankel Freshman, C, P; Collin Thrush- Junior OF, P; Gunner McDaid- Freshman IF; Lincoln Peters- Freshman Utility

Key players are Rylee White, Collin Thrush, Brady Paradise, Carsen Shankel and Connor McMurphy

“White and Thrush will be key contributors offensively,” Palmer said. “Paradise will be a key contributor pitching. I expect these three to be all league players. Shankel and McMurphy are freshmen who will be relied upon to be leaders defensively and offensively.”



The 2024 Ithaca baseball team.



B4 you give up, stop and reach out!

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.

Suicide Prevention

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or visit the Lifeline Chat (<https://988lifeline.org/chat/>) to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

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Ithaca Softball Hoping For Banner Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Shelby Shankel is coaching an Ithaca softball team excited with its 2024 spring prospects.

"The Yellowjackets had a rough season last year. We had a lot of talent, but our team chemistry was lacking. We ended the season with a 17-20 record," Shankel said. "We had three seniors graduate who all went on to play in college: Megan Mankey-Delta Community College, Lauryn Humphrey- Wilmington College, Madison Carman- Alma College."

Faith Fisher is an outfielder and third baseman who has committed to Mid Michigan College. Senior Alysa McPherson is second baseman-outfielder who was all-league honorable mention a year ago and has committed to Albion College.

Kennedi Ryan is a junior shortstop, pitcher and outfielder and Emmalee Shankel a junior catcher and outfielder who both have offers but haven't committed yet. They were both all-league last season.

Three other key players are juniors

Ivy Davenport, Hayden Whitmore and Quinne McMurphy who are all outfielders. Davenport is also a pitcher and shortstop. Whitmore is also a first baseman, McMurphy is also a third baseman. Davenport was all-league last year.

"These athletes are all returners as 3-to-4 year varsity players," Shankel said. "We have a very talented roster this year with these players as well as our incoming freshmen. We have major potential of doing some damage this year, but we are remaining focused and trying to regroup the best we can from our season last year. Making the improvements that needed to be made during the off-season and coming together as a team have been our main focus points."

"Ivy Davenport and Kennedi Ryan are strong pitchers that have been on the mound a majority of their freshman and sophomore years, and we will look to them to continue to grow and be strong

contributors in the next few years. Emmalee Shankel has been our starting catcher for

the past two years, as well as this year and she has an incredible bat."

Shankel added: "Our two seniors, Faith Fisher and Alyssa McPherson, are both solid players; both of which are committed to continue playing after high school. Faith Fisher put in a lot of work in the off-season and so far this year her bat has been very hot, so we are looking for that to continue."

She is an incredibly strong outfielder and I look to both her and Alyssa McPherson as leaders on and off the field.

"Hayden Whitmore has also been and incredible outfielder for us this year and she is so consistent with her bat. Lastly, Quinne McMurphy is working hard filling the role in a new position this year."

The expectations are high.

"I want my team to play fearlessly and play to their potential," Shankel said. "They have the potential to be fierce competition for anyone, we just



The 2024 Ithaca softball team.

have a lot of work to do to get them to believe

that. I also expect them to be a WE team not a ME team, and we have put in a lot of work discussing the importance of this in the off-season.

"We have a lot of talent. We have a strong pitching staff and some really good bats. We also have a large group of girls that have played together in some capacity since they were very little. Our team just needs to work on being consistent."

As for the league, "our conference is a little on the weaker side I would say. We definitely have teams that could potentially be good, but many teams in our conference lost some important

contributors this past year, where we kept most of our roster. If our team can remain focused and ready to play, I can see us walking away with a league title. If we do, it will be the first title since somewhere in the 1990s."

Chesaning Baseball Team Looking To Repeat As Champs In Mid-Michigan Activities Conference

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Last season, the Chesaning baseball team won both conference and district titles. With some talented players returning from that team, the Indians are focused on defending their title in the Mid-Michigan Activities Conference (MMAC).

Chesaning started its defense of their MMAC in a big way by winning its first six league games. Chesaning also won seven of its first 10 games overall this season.

"So far we have been improving

every day and working to be the best team we can be," said Chesaning coach Robert Sager. "We have gotten off to a strong start in the MMAC, but we have plenty of tough teams remaining on our schedule."

Chesaning returns a number of players from last year's team and that experience will be key to defending their title.

"Our biggest strong point is we have a lot of guys back from our MMAC and district championship team from last year," Sager said. "So, we have experience and understand how to win. However, we don't have

much depth this season. With only 12 guys on the varsity we all have to be able to play multiple positions and we have to stay healthy this season."

Heading the list of returning players for Chesaning are senior Nash Wendling and junior Brady Sager.

Wendling is a returning first-team, all-state player who will pitch and play first base. Wendling is off to a fast start this season with a 2-0 record in 17 innings pitched with a 2.88 ERA and 21 strikeouts. Wendling is also a standout at the plate with a .562 batting average in the early going along with six RBI and

six runs scored.

Sager is an infielder and pitcher who earned honorable-mention, all-state honors last year. So far this season Sager is 3-1 as a pitcher with a 0.63 ERA and 48 strikeouts in 22 innings pitched. Sager is also a force at the plate with a .424 batting average with 10 RBIs, 10 runs scored and 11 stolen bases.

Eli Keck is also off to a strong start for Chesaning. Keck has a .385 batting average with seven RBIs, seven runs scored and seven stolen bases. Keck also has a keen eye at the plate with six walks.

In all, Chesaning has 10 players returning from last year. Wendling heads up a solid senior class that includes Blain Butcher, Keighan Stoddard, Blake Laskowski, Ethan Hinojosa and Nathan Ruth.

Chesaning also returns a quartet of juniors in Sager, Keck, Adam Woodcock and Max Volk. A pair of newcomers to the team this year are



With a solid core of players returning from last year, Wendling heads up a solid senior class that includes Blain Butcher, Keighan Stoddard, Blake Laskowski, Ethan Hinojosa and Nathan Ruth.

senior Nate Ferry and junior Luke Barta.

Well-Rounded Sacred Heart Academy Baseball Off To Terrific Start

Andrew Seavey Sports Scene

It's no secret that the Sacred Heart Academy Baseball has the talent to make a deep run in the postseason and even capture a Division 4 state title.

So far this season, they're track record says that they have the capabilities to make it a reality.

After finishing last season, 31-8, the Irish have opened the year on a tear, beating numerous state-ranked opponents including pre-season Division 4 third-ranked Rudyard, 14th-ranked Norway, and a series split with number one-ranked Beal City.

"If we play good, we can play with anybody in any class," 41st-year Head Coach Earl Hartman said. "I have that good of a team."

The biggest factor in their success you might ask. Their dominance on the mound, which sports a 2.00 earned run average mid-way through the season.

A five-man rotation of 1st-Team All-State pitcher, Joe MacDonald, Brady Davis, Aidan Halliday, Grady Pieratt, and Jason Boge give Sacred Heart all of their returning pitching decisions and challenging stuff, making life difficult for their opponents.

Although MacDonald has faced some growing pains early in the season, he has proved to be a staple of the Irish's rotation after going 10-2 last season with his only losses coming to Bay City Western and state champion, Beal City.

Davis, a crafty lefty has been nearly unhittable this season, pitching three scoreless innings against Division 1 power, Bay City Western.

It doesn't come as a surprise as he led the team with a 1.68 ERA and had five wins as a freshman last year.

After posting an 8-1 record last season, Halliday has also become a routine force on the mound for Sacred Heart.

"It's nice having a five-man, frontline pitching staff," Hartman said. "Any one of those five I can give the ball and we can compete with anybody in any class."

Behind the plate, the Irish boast one of the best catchers in the state in 1st-team All-State finisher, Connor Stempky.

Stempky has been a staple of the Sacred Heart lineup for three years now, and he led the team with 51 RBIs on a .453 batting average last season.

On offense, Sacred Heart has a team batting average of .370, making them a threat from top to bottom of their lineup.

Last season, Halliday earned 2nd-team All-State honors following a terrific hitting season which saw him hit .453 on the season with 49 RBIs and 40 runs.

Pieratt also swung the bat well, hitting .420 with 61 runs and 40 stolen bases.

With a pitching and hitting combination as good as the Irish's, there isn't a lot of concern for the team, but they have seen some defensive struggles despite their hot start.

"The big concern is they are Division 4 kids, they're teenagers and sometimes they pile some mistakes on top of each other that shouldn't be made," Hartman said. "Against some really good clubs you might not be able to come back."

The team still has some of their biggest challenges ahead of them with matchups against Division 1 opponent Kalamazoo Central, Division 4 second-ranked, Fowler, and 15th-ranked Gaylord St Mary's looming.



Ionia Baseball Expecting Big Things, Following Impressive Season In 2023

Andrew Seavey Sports Scene

Coming off a 26-12 season, the Ionia baseball program believes they have the talent and numbers to be stronger than last year.

The team has 17 players at the Varsity level including six seniors, ten juniors, and one sophomore.

"We had such a great season last year, and we lost some really good seniors, but I'm excited to see how this year's group responds to how well we did last year," Ionia Head Coach Jason Lundstrom said.

Even with the loss of so much starting firepower, the Bulldogs believe that they could be a better

team than last year.

"We might be more talented this year than we were last year," Lundstrom said.

Ionia lost ace-pitcher, Ethan Bowen to graduation, but his counterpart, Carter Castillo has gladly stepped up into the top role.

"Last year had a 1-2 punch in Ethan (Bowen) and Carter (Castillo) and when you have two good pitchers like that, it keeps you in games," Lundstrom said.

On the field the team will look to senior outfielder, Matt McCoy to lead the way.

"He's your perfect leader," Lundstrom said. "He's a good kid, works

hard, and even when the other kids might not be working hard, he's always putting in the extra time and effort."

Alex Barr, a pitcher and infielder for the Bulldogs will be a vocal leader for Ionia this season.

Pacing the Bulldogs offensively will be slugging third baseman, Tyson McDiarmid.

"Tyson is just a good offensive player, and we hope to see him continuing to have big hits for us," Lundstrom said.

Outside of their skill on the field, the Bulldogs rely heavily on their chemistry, which has been in the works since before Christmas.

"We always come in and start hitting and throwing everyday starting in early December," Lundstrom said. "You start to build relationships with kids in those offseason times."

"We already have the bond," Lundstrom said. "We already know who we are."

Ionia will have their hands full in the new-and-improved Capital Area Athletics Conference White division which will feature newly added, Olivet and Lakewood, as well as old foes, Portland, Lansing Catholic, Charlotte, and Eaton Rapids.



Along with playing some solid baseball on the field, the Ionia baseball team also has a new scoreboard at their field.

"We are looking forward to the season," Lundstrom said. "We know there are high expectations, but we also know that it's going to be a grind, and hopefully we have guys step up in bug situations when we need them to."

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Bradford Uses Smart Softball For Pitching Success

Jeff Steers Sports Scene

Some high school sports fans believe speed is the only success in the sport of softball.

Ada Bradford of Leslie is proving that wrong.

The LHS senior went over the 1,000 mark in career strikeouts on the mound for the Blackhawks earlier in April.

So, what is her secret for being the queen of K's?

"Most pitchers believe speed is the main key to becoming a successful pitcher," Bradford said. My pitching instructor has taught me to use movement and spin.

"We also use the umpire's zone (on that day)."

The 'we' is her father Rich - who coaches the Blackhawks - and her former AAU coach who now coaches

at Brighton.

Bradford has been consistent over three-plus seasons as the main pitcher for the Blackhawks.

She has more than 80 wins and has averaged more than 300 strikeouts per season. If she continues to average that strikeout number, Bradford will finish her high school career in the top 20 as far as strikeouts for a career - according to the Michigan High School Athletic Association softball records - with more than 1,200 strikeouts.

She has averaged better than .470 at the plate and is a two-time all-state player for the Blackhawks.

Bradford has been playing softball since early elementary school and her father - a former standout baseball player at LHS - has been her travel coach for most of those seasons. She also spent years playing AAU softball playing with a number of local players.

She joined the varsity squad as a freshman and felt comfortable right away as her father had been the head coach for a few seasons and Bradford was the team manager for the Blackhawks in basketball - getting to know most of the older players.

"Becoming the main pitcher as a freshman was nerve wracking but the seniors were very supportive," Bradford said.

The combination of a good senior class and Bradford on the mound led the Blackhawks to its first Greater Lansing Area Conference softball league title. Leslie has also won the league and district titles for three consecutive seasons.

Bradford has played with a group of six seniors for a number of years.

"The good thing is you can hold one another accountable... and it is not disrespectful," Bradford said. "You can trust everyone on the team."

Leslie joined the Cascades

Conference this year and the Blackhawks will face teams top teams like Grass Lake and Hanover-Horton.

"I have grown up with a number of these players (from Cascades Conference team) on AAU or travel softball," Bradford said. "I know them, and they know me."

Next year Bradford will take her talent to Aquinas College in Grand Rapids. The setting is important for the LHS senior.

"I like how small the campus is and it is right downtown Grand Rapids, so you get the bigger feel," Bradford said. "I know a lot of people going to college around Grand Rapids."

The senior should not have trouble in the classroom with nearly a 4.0

grade point average at Leslie. She would like to major in accounting.

But she won't forget the Leslie community who has supported the Blackhawks all these years.

"I like Leslie because of community and how they support their teams," Bradford said.



Ada Bradford got her 1,000th career strikeout during a game against Hanover-Horton earlier in April.

Evart Softball Team Has Sights Set On Another Long Tournament Run

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Evart softball team ended the season last year falling to the eventual state champions Standish-Sterling in the regional round of the state tournament. This season, the team is on a mission to take things even farther come tournament time.

With plenty of talent returning from last year's squad, the Wildcats are poised for a big season and a deep run in the state tournament come June. Evart started the season strong winning five of its first six games including a sweep of Clare in a doubleheader and a split with Traverse City St. Francis.

Evart graduated a pair of key

seniors from last year's squad but returns a large group of talented players. Behind the plate, the Wildcats return senior catcher Ally Theunick who if off to a strong start hitting .429 with two home runs and nine RBI. Senior outfielder Kate Gostlin is hitting .316 with a homer and five RBI after the first six games. Sophomore Mattisen Tiedt is hitting .571 with eight RBI in the first six games while fellow sophomore Kyrrah Gray is hitting .409 with eight runs scored and five RBI. Gray also leads the pitching staff. A standout as a freshman last spring, Gray is 3-1 this season with an 0.84 ERA and 28 strikeouts in 25 innings pitched.

Evart also returns senior Brooklyn Decker who starts in right field along

with senior second baseman Kayanne Tiedt who was an all-state selection as a sophomore.

"We have four seniors who started on our state championship team four years ago," said Evart coach Shaun Gray. "We have a sophomore pitcher who is doing really good who was our backup pitcher last year. We have quite a bit of talent back this season."

Evart has enjoyed a run of success the past few years that the school has never seen in softball. This year the Wildcats are going for their fourth straight conference and district championships.

"Before this run I think the last conference or district title we won was back in 1999," Gray said. "This



The Evart softball team is off to a fast start this season and is one of the top teams in Division 3.

group of girls have some pretty big goals. It's hard making a deep post-season run as it can all end in the snap of a finger, but this group is determined. I think defense is our strong point and starting pitching is

a strong point also. I've coached most of these girls in travel ball the last five years. They play softball all year long. I have a large group of girls who I can put in the game and feel very confident in."

Laingsburg Softball Team Off To A Sizzling Start At The Plate And In The Circle

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Laingsburg softball team has enjoyed plenty of success the past several seasons, and with plenty of talented players back this spring, the Wolfpack is off to another strong start.

Laingsburg opened the season strong winning the first 10 games it played.

"We are off to a great start so far," said Laingsburg coach Jeff Cheadle. "We defeated the number-three ranked team in Division 4, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart, in a doubleheader last week. We are also 4-0 in league play. We are playing pretty well so far."

Leading the way for the Wolfpack is one of the top softball

players in the state of Michigan. Senior Ashley Bila has been one of the premier hitters in the state the past few seasons and this spring she has been on a tear at the plate. Bila, who has signed with Central Michigan University to continue her softball career, is off to a sizzling start hitting .826 as she went 19-for-23 at the plate while also drawing 17 walks. Bila totaled five doubles, four triples and stole 20 bases in the first 10 games of the season while also scoring 31 runs.

In the junior class, Addyson Buchin is putting up some amazing numbers as well. As a pitcher, Buchin is 6-0 with a 0.00 ERA. Buchin has racked up 54 strikeouts in 28 innings pitched. At the plate, Buchin is hitting a robust .583.

Laingsburg also has a trio of



The Laingsburg softball team is looking to continue its run of post-season success this season.

talented sophomores who are putting up some impressive numbers. Sophomore second baseman Bella Latuszek is hitting .607 with 21 RBI's. Sophomore first baseman Savvy Stirm is hitting .458 with

16 RBI's while sophomore catcher Harper Strouse is hitting .400 with 13 RBI's.

"I believe that our experience will be a strong point," Cheadle

said. "With the tournament run last season with a relatively young team, they gained great confidence. We have good pitching with some depth. Our defense has been strong and our offense is scoring runs."

Healthy Swan Valley Softball Team Primed To Achieve Success This Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Swan Valley softball team entered the season with some high hopes thanks to the return of a talented core of players. While injuries have slowed the Vikings a little, the team is still primed for bigger things this season while trying to avoid further injuries.

Swan Valley started the season strong this spring winning five of their first eight games. Strong

hitting and solid pitching have been a key to the solid start for Swan Valley.

Among the returning players leading the way for Swan Valley is senior pitcher Milagro Perez. Perez has thrown in all eight of Swan Valley's first eight games this season since the squad's number two pitcher broke her foot during basketball season. Through the first eight games of the season Perez recorded 48 strikeouts. Perez is also the team's top hitter batting .429 in

.385 batting average with four RBI's.

"Hailey has done a great job for us this year moving from third base last year to first base this year," said Swan Valley coach Tara DeLine.

The Vikings also have a pair of sophomores who have been stepping up in the early going. Izzy Cofel is stationed at second base where she is batting .419 with eight RBI's. Fellow sophomore Shiloh Charboneau is starting in left field. Charboneau is off to a strong start hitting .429 with nine RBI's.

Overall, the Vikings have been showing plenty of promise at the

plate.

"The strong point of this year's team is our hitting," DeLine said. "We are a great hitting team through the lineup. We've focused a lot on situational hitting this year and it has shown with the team scoring 73 runs this season."

Getting healthy will be a key for Swan Valley as the team gets into the heart of the conference season.

"We've had an interesting season with injuries," said DeLine, "however, we have hung tough with some great teams such as Freeland and Garber."



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Ionia Softball Has New Coach

John Raffel Sports Scene

Jim Batista is the new head coach for Ionia softball.

Ionia was 16-21-1 last season.

Melayna Braman, Raj Esquivel, Chloe Witter, London Brown were all senior starters that graduated in 2023.

Here's some key players for this season: Seniors, Kam Perry (IF/C) Emma White (OF) Nevaeh Stanard (OF), Kaidence Thomas (P/IF), Allyson Strasser (IF).

"Our team will be led by our seniors," Batista said. "Our five se-

niors have a combined 14 seasons of experience at the varsity level. The pillars of our team's success are to have fun, play hard, be coachable and play as a family. Our team's strength will be the leadership of our seniors.

"Many players will be playing new positions for the first time. Being coachable and working hard in practice every day will be key to our success. Our division of the CAAC has drastically improved over the last few years. Portland, Eaton Rapids, Lakewood, and Lansing Catholic, all look to be very strong contenders for the league title."



Front Row left to right- Kaidence Thomas (#2), Tori Gutierrez (#7), Liberty Stanard (#11), Mariah Stoakes (#4), Kennedy Batista (#15), Gabbi Meyers (#1) ;Back Row left to right- Coach Jim Batista, Kam Perry (#9), Lauryn Schmid (#13), Allyson Schmid (#8), Nevaeh Stanard (#5), Emma White (#3), Allyson Strasser (#25), Coach Tom Batista Not pictured- Coach Bill Perry, Bella Delgado (#26)

Saranac Softball Coach Eyes Championship Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Bob Richardson is varsity softball coach for Saranac which last season lost in the district championship to Calvin Christian in the bottom of the seventh inning.

"We rallied from five down and we were on run away from tying with the bases loaded. It was a tremendous comeback against one of the areas top Division 3 programs," Richardson said. "We graduated our catcher Maddie Hesche an All-District player, Jayden Kirby our starting 2nd baseman, Grace Hopkins our starting All Conference Shortstop, Makalya Seese a key reserve, Jordan Sterzick our All-Conference, All Region and three-year starter at third base

and finally, Brenna Simmons a three-time All Conference, 2 time All-District, 2 time All-Region and 2 time All-County Centerfielder.

"Each was a major contributor to our success and took us to the district championship where we were defeated by one run in the bottom of the seventh inning with the bases loaded."

Key players include Delaney Reagan-12th Grade-Pitcher.

"Delaney had 197 strikeouts as a junior and was named All-Conference, All-District and All-Region and All-County," Richardson said. "We expect Delaney to continue her success in the circle and exceed 200 strikeouts this season while also anchoring our hitting lineup in the clean up spot."

Natalie Tucker is a senior centerfielder.

"Natalie is a two-year starter who will have a key role in leading our younger players," Richardson said. "She is a tremendous defensive outfielder who will also have great success at the plate this season."

Laural Lee is a senior leftfielder.

"Laural is a returning two-year starter who was All-Conference as a junior. Laural hit over .400 last season and will lead off our line-up this season," Richardson said. "We expect Laural to repeat as an All-Conference outfielder and much more. We have newcomers Madie Murillo, Abby Ferguson and Irelynn Pauchulski and all 10th graders who will break into the

starting line-up. Madie will hold down the majority of the catching innings while Abby, a transfer from Northpointe Christian will start the season at shortstop.

"We expect a winning record and a chance to compete for both conference and district championships," Richardson said. "Pitching will be this year's strength. Delaney Reagan will lead a group of young pitchers and be able to teach them what is necessary to reach the level she has achieved. Outfield play will also be a strength this season with two returning starters and a newcomer, this will be the fastest outfield we have ever had.

"The team will work on both defense and hitting. Pitch selection and plate discipline will be keys to our success."

As for the CMAC, "we have a very strong conference with Laingsburg being the league favorites. They made it to the semi-finals last season and did not graduate any players. Our team will compete for the top 20 percent in the league standings. We will play fast and aggressive and will be able to compete with every team in our league."



"Irelynn will start the season in left field. It is worth noting that Irelynn is only in her second year of organized softball. She is an amazing athlete who also runs track and plays football who has quickly excelled at softball."

Saranac expects a huge season.

Clare Softball Team Eyes Banner Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Clare's softball team, coached by Shane Kelly, traveled won the Chippewa Hills Invitational on April 13 to pave the way for what the Pioneers hope will be a wildly successful season.

The Pioneers edged Greenville 5-4 in the title game after beating Chippewa Hills in the semifinal round.

"We battled, we didn't have our a game but the girls never gave up," Kelly said. "That's our second extra inning game.

The first one was against Gaylord; they're doing their job. If they're struggling, it's just one at bat and one play. And then we get back at it and keep battling."

Madison Fritz and Maddi Jones have been top pitcher for Clare

"Addie McMillan is killing the cover off the ball right now," Kelly said.

Clare fell to 6-3 with losses of 3-2 in extra innings and 7-1 at Evert on Tuesday. Madi Jones had a strong pitching performance in the first game for Clare, Evert coach Shaun Gray said.

"It was two big wins against a quality opponent," Gray said. "We still have some things to clean up defensively and at the plate. I thought tonight was a positive in the right direction. In game one, we fell behind twice and answered right back both times and in extra innings we faced adversity and our pitching and defense got us out of a couple of jams."

After this loss, Clare went on a seven-game winning streak which included victories in its home invitational. The Pioneer swept Midland Dow 6-2 and 5-4.



Clare's Tessa Kelley (11) gets set to fire a throw to first base in the Chippewa Hills Invitational.



Clare Baseball Team Hopes To Be Contender

John Raffel Sports Scene

Clare's baseball team has gotten off to a 7-3 record and is hoping for a championship season.

Last year, Clare had a season record of 19-14, finished fourth in the Jack Pine with an 8-6 record.

"We ended up district champs, winning our second in a row, and lost a tough game in regionals to Standish Sterling last year," coach Dave Gould said.

Key players include Westyn Bryant

Chase Randall among Clare baseball's top pitchers.

(Senior) catcher, pitcher, third baseman, "will be one of our top pitchers, catchers, and leaders on this year's team. His arm has gained a lot of strength and we look for big things from him behind the plate and on the mound."

Miles Haggart - (Senior) 1B, 3B, "Pitcher, one of our best hitters we have," Gould said. "Miles took over our top pitching spot part way through the season and we expect to see him take control on the mound again this year.

Carter Smedley (Senior) 2B, OF, "he took over the second base job last year and did

a great job," Gould said. "We look for him to play some outfield as well this year. He is another leader on the team and we look forward to seeing him on base a lot this year."

Jayden Arthur (Junior) catcher, pitcher, 3B, "He is one of our most consistent pitchers and most versatile player on the team," Gould said. "He will be a key player for us this year both on offense and defense. He has been on varsity since his freshman year."

Ryan Louch (Junior) SS, he is one of our top hitters and takes control in the infield. Ryan has been on varsity since his freshman year," Gould said.

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Alma Softball Team Putting The Focus On Improvement This Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Improvement is the name of the game for the Alma softball team this spring as the Panthers are putting the focus on their young team on getting better from game to game.

"I expect the team to gain a lot of experience," said Alma coach Jake Gulick. "We are still a pretty young team, despite having a lot of returning players. I expect that we will improve immensely as the season goes on."

Leading the way for the Panthers this season is senior shortstop Baily Walkington.

"Baily will be a great contributor this season," Gulick said. "I expect her to be a leader. She plays outstanding defense and will be a big contributor at the plate as well."

Fellow senior Eliana Rodriguez is another veteran that is leading the team. Rodriguez is a pitcher for the Panthers and also plays first base.

"Eliana will also be providing leadership," Gulick said. "Eliana is a strong presence at the plate and I expect she will have many RBI's this season."

Along with the senior veterans, the Panthers have some promising freshmen that add to the talent level on the squad. Freshman Shelby Sparks will be pitching for the Panthers and also seeing time in the outfield.

"Shelby will be the main pitcher for us this season," Gulick said. "I expect Shelby to gain experience and continue to develop her pitching skills."

Freshman Teagan Adams will be handling the bulk of the catching duties for Alma this season.

"Teagan has a great attitude and I expect that she will provide leadership on the field in her style of play," Gulick said. "I also expect Teagan to be a threat offensively, providing out team with many RBI's."

With the combination of veterans and



The 2024 Alma Softball Team.

young players, Alma is poised to be a team that improves from game to game as the season progresses.

"Our team shows great potential and a definite willingness to learn," Gulick said. "The seniors demonstrate strong play for the younger players to learn from."

Alma is banking on that willingness to learn to pay dividends during the season and for the future.

"We need to develop depth in some key

areas," Gulick said.

Development is a big key for Alma as the Panthers compete in a Tri-Valley Conference that is loaded with outstanding softball teams.

"Our conference is extremely strong in softball," Gulick said. "Some of the favorites have to be Essexville-Garber, Frankenmuth and Freeland. Our goal is to finish somewhere near the middle of the pack of the league race."

Charlotte Baseball Team Off To A Strong Start For A Second Straight Season

David Cook Sports Scene

The Charlotte baseball team started the season strong last year and this year the Orioles are off to another solid start.

Heading into the final week of April, Charlotte has fashioned a 12-7 overall record.

Charlotte was led last year by a pair of all-conference players. Jady Smuts anchored the pitching staff last year as a three-year varsity player who earned also earned all-conference honors. Eann Spott was Charlotte's top hitter last year who also earned all-conference honors.

While those two players graduated, the Orioles has a

strong core of players they are built around this season. Providing the nucleus of this year's team is a talented group of seniors. Leading the way is senior Landon Jackson. A two-time all-conference player who is headed to Delta College next season, Jackson is a standout defensive catcher who can shut down the opposition's running game. Jackson is also a solid hitter. Senior Clark Aapala is a four-year varsity player who brings a solid bat to the plate and can pitch and play infield or outfield. Senior Aiden Laverty is a returning all-conference player and four-year varsity player. Laverty is an outfielder and also pitches. Senior Nathan Penfield is another four-year varsity player who previously

earned all-conference honors. A pitcher, first baseman and outfielder, Penfield has an excellent arm and is a team leader. Senior Greyson Seavolt is also a four-year varsity player. A solid defender who plays short, third or second base, Seavolt is poised

for a breakout year at the plate. Senior Aaron Brown is a three-year varsity player who pitches, plays third base and the outfield.

The Orioles also have a trio of newcomers making an impact. Sophomore Ty Bowzer is a solid hitter who can pitch and is a utility player able to fill in at a variety of positions. Freshman Karter Jackson is also a pitcher and a catcher and can fill in as a utility player in the field. Jackson also brings a solid bat to the lineup. Freshman Ethan Cheyne is a promising pitcher who will also see action in the outfield and along the infield.

"We will play with a team-first approach offensively and defensively," said Charlotte coach Lance



The Charlotte baseball team is off to a strong start this season.

Beasley. "If our players buy into their roles and stay off individual results we will win a lot of games."

Playing in the strong Capital Area Activities Conference White Division that features strong teams from top to bottom, the Orioles need to buy into the team-first approach to be successful throughout the season.

"We have a strong conference

with several teams that made the Diamond Classic and a team that won the Diamond Classic last season," Beasley said. "We have a chance to make a push for the top, but the team will have to decide that they don't care who gets the credit. Setting aside personal accomplishments and feelings for the only stat that matters, the score, is something this team needs to work on."

Focus On Working Together Has Freeland Soccer Team Ranked Among The Top In The State

David Cook Sports Scene

Ranked in the top 15 in the state in Division 3, the Freeland soccer team has started the season strong and is looking to carry that momentum on to the state tournament at the end of the season.

Freeland has fashioned a 6-1-2 overall record as the calendar turns into May. The two ties came against state-ranked teams Frankenmuth and Essexville-Garber with the loss coming against Linden.

"The season is looking great so far," said Freeland coach Autumn Kloha. "The effort, drive, commitment and attitude the girls have is amazing. They all work very well together. I believe we have a

well-bonded team this year with determination and drive from each individual to do our best as a team. There is still so much work to do and always room for improvement. This team has so much potential to be even better than they already are. I am also proud to say that I have a deep bench with lots of talent."

Freeland is paced by a talented mix of seniors and sophomores this season. Senior center midfielder Paige Kloha is off to a strong start with three goals and three assists through the first six games. Senior outside back Haille Martinez-Hines has added one goal.

A talented group of sophomores are also making an impact. Center midfielder Cessaly Fichtner has

totaled five goals. Center back Mia Nietzke has one goal and an assist while center midfielder Reese Conlee has one goal. Sophomore keeper Adelyn Senkowski is providing strong play in goal.

A commitment to teamwork is a key to success for the squad so far this season.

"The strong points that I have noticed from this year's team is that they all work very well together," Kloha said. "It is hard to have a group of girls who do not always play together and expect them to bond and adapt to each other's playing styles. We have worked a ton on communication and positioning this year and I believe that is one of our top strengths. I would also have to say that our defensive



Putting the focus on teamwork is paying off for the Freeland soccer team this season.

line and defense all around is very solid. We are also blessed to have multiple athletes who are fast and can anticipate play."

Kloha is in her first year as head coach of the team and having a squad that values teamwork and pulling together has been a huge benefit.

"I would like to say that with this being my first-ever year as a

varsity soccer coach, I am grateful for the way the girls have adjusted," Kloha said. "It is not always easy for players to adjust to a new coach. This group is truly special and the work ethic and potential they hold not just as athletes but young adults is astonishing. They all have very bright futures ahead of them if they continue to put in the work."

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Midland Dow Soccer Team Looking To Win A Third Straight League Title

David Cook Sports Scene

The Midland Dow soccer team turned in a solid season last spring and early results this year have the Chargers continuing their winning ways.

Last spring, Dow won the Saginaw Valley League title for the second straight season with an undefeated record. The Chargers turned in a 9-0-2 mark in the league and finished the season with a 14-4-4 overall record.

This season, Dow is off to a strong start. The Chargers were ranked 14th in the state in Division 1 heading into the final week of April and started the season with a 6-0-1 record. With that strong start, the Chargers are poised for another big campaign.

"I think our team should be competing for a conference championship as well as trying to win the district championship," said Dow coach Spencer Sandow.

Dow did graduate some key players from last year's squad in Alaina Schalk and Lind-

say Hart who were three-year varsity players. Schalk and Hart lead the team in scoring and assists respectively and both also earned all-state honors.

While Schalk and Hart will be missed, the team does return a solid group of veterans that form the nucleus of this year's squad.

Up front, Dow is led by sophomore forward Melanie Kolnitys with solid contributions from Allison Stockton and Aubree Bills giving the Chargers a potent attack.

The Chargers are also solid in the midfield with senior Rachael leuter and juniors Ivy Beall and Mallory Brandt.

On the defensive end of the field senior defenders Sarah Sharpe and Sydney Lambert anchor what is a solid defensive group along with Avery Lehman, Carley Gatrell and Jessica Neal who combine to give the team a strong defensive unit.

"Those are some of our main returning players from last year and we also have others as well," Sandow said. "I expect all these players to be leaders and the have been part



The Midland Dow soccer team is looking to repeat as champions in the Saginaw Valley League.

of some great Dow teams so they know what it takes to be successful."

With plenty of experience returning in the midfield and on defense, those areas look to be strong points for the team.

"I think defensively we will be strong," Sandow said. "We return a lot of our midfield and defensive players so we want that to be a strength of our team this season. We have been very good defensively limiting the other team's chances. We want to be a good defensive team because if you can limit your opposing team's chance you are going to give yourself a good chance at winning."

While the Chargers have started the season strong, there is still plenty of improve-

ment left to work on.

"It's still early in the season, but I would like us to be a little more hungry when we get in front of the net," said Sandow. "We are continuing to work on creating chances and when we get those chances, we need to make sure we are putting the ball in the back of the net."

Winning a third straight conference crown will be a tall task as the league includes plenty of outstanding soccer squads.

"We have a lot of strong teams this year," said Sandow. "I think Dow, Midland, Grand Blanc, Davison and Flint Powers could all win the league. It will be fun to see ow it all shapes up."

Potterville Eyes Winning Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

David Cates is coach of a Potterville girls soccer team eager to have a winning record in the Central Michigan Athletic Conference.

"We graduated our starting back four last year," Cates said. "Our outside backs, Paige Monroe and Kylie Austin were seniors, and our inside backs, Elisa Urso and Celia Ochoa were foreign students. Also, our starting left mid, Kaylee Bush, is now at the University of Olivet playing basketball."

Potterville has a heavy junior class. Here's six key juniors:

Brenna Vermetti, midfield, controlling the midfield defensively.

Emily Cates midfield, holding possession, buildup.

Kelsey Stiver forward, speed in space.

Brooke Glover midfield, defensive containment.

Ella Losey, midfield, defensive containment.

Mallory Fee, keeper, active hands and great decision making.

Sophomore Bailey Martin defense, center-back commanding the back line.

Freshman Kendall Lienerth midfield/forward, offensive build-up with great leg power.

Freshman Kayla Blake defense/forward, defensive containment.

"We have a fundamental growth in a young, third year program. Replacing key defensive components lost from last season," Cates said. "We have had year to year growth from our junior class, while continuing to build up our underclassmen. We have to improve on field vision/awareness and



The 2024 Potterville girls varsity soccer team.

being disciplined/committed to defensive containment.

"I believe the CMAC is the toughest small school conference in the state. During conference play, there are no days off. Bath, Laingsburg and Lansing Christian should be a battle for the

top spot. We will be at the bottom with Perry," Cates said. "Our lack in experience is due to not having a true youth program to feed our high school team, so we have to do a lot of teaching right away, and that unfortunately puts us behind many other communities."



2023-24 Boys Basketball Dream Team

Lyna Brooks, sr., Saginaw Arthur Hill: A first-team, Division 2 all-state player, Brooks came back from a severe knee injury suffered last year to lead Arthur Hills to the regional finals. A dynamic all-around guard, Brooks will lbe playing his college basketball at Barton Community College in Kansas. This season Brooks averaged 21 points along with four rebounds and three assists.

Cameron Hutson, jr., East Lansing: One of the premier juniors in the state, Hutson is a versatile 6-foot-6 junior with the ability to take over a game. A Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan (BCAM) Best team selection, Hutson is already being recruited by several Mid-American Conference teams. Already with over 1,000 career points, Hutson averaged 17.5 point per game this year while pulling down six rebounds per game.

Tyler Ode, sr., Saginaw Heritage: One of the top players in the state of Michigan this year, Ode finished second in the voting for Mr. Basketball as the best player in the state. A two-time, first-team all-state selection, Ode will be continuing his career at the

University of Toledo next season. Ode, who scored a school record 43 points in one game this season, averaged 22 points and nine rebounds per game this season.

Deunte Phifer, sr., Lansing Waverly: Phifer was one of the most explosive players in the state this season as he posted numerous highlight-reel plays. A first-team, all-state pick in Division 1, Phifer boasts an outstanding all-around game and averaged 20 points per game for Waverly. The 6-foot-6 wing will be continuing his basketball career at Lansing Community College next season.

Zander Woodruff, sr., Laingsburg: Woodruff was named the Player of the Year in Division 3 this season as he led the Wolfpack to an undefeated regular season and a berth in the regional finals. Headed to play his college basketball at Lansing Community College, Woodruff wrapped up a storied career at Laingsburg with 1,789 career points. Woodruff averaged 32.3 points per game this season along with 6.6 rebounds and 4.1 assists.



Saginaw Heritage senior Tyler Ode finished second in the Mr. Basketball voting and will be playing in college at the University of Toledo.

BIG SCHOOL DIVISION 1 AND 2

FIRST TEAM

Jayce Branson, jr., East Lansing
Adam Flannery, sr., DeWitt
Derek Thomas, so., Lansing Waverly
Kelvin Torbert, so., East Lansing
Brennan Walton, sr., Okemos

SPECIAL MENTION

Gavin Andres, Belding; Logan Borodychuk, Mt. Pleasant; Cutler Brandt, Charlotte; Tristan Comer, Freeland; Kaden Dickerson, Portland; Daniel Duley, Freeland; Jordan Hansen, Remus Chippewa Hills; Wilson Huckleby, Freeland; Carson Knoll, Frankenmuth; Andrew Landis, Rockford; Ben Smith, Williamston; Braylon Socia, Corunna; Cade Sutherland, Alma; Markell Tate, Durand; Colin Walton, Okemos; Sean Wesolek, Bay City John Glenn.

SMALL SCHOOL DIVISION 3 AND 4


FIRST TEAM

Grady Eklund, so., Pewamo-Westphalia
Sawyer Moloy, sr., Sanford-Meridian
Mason Struck, sr., Chesaning
MJ Yeager, sr., Saginaw Nouvel Catholic
Noah Zeien, so., Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart


SPECIAL MENTION


Austin Foster, Blanchard Montabella; Carter Gensch, Hemlock; Oliver Long, Morrice; Nick Metzger, Sanford-Meridian; Grady Pieratt, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart; Bryson Sattler, Fulto-Middleton; Brayden Simon, Portland St. Patrick; Ayden Wilkes, Vermontville Maple Valley; Brehm Warczinsky, Vestaburg; Layk Woodruff, Beaverton; Donny Yeager, Saginaw Nouvel Catholic.






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2023-24 Girls Basketball Dream Team

Braxcynn Baker, sr., Lowell: A first-team, Division 1 all-state player, Baker finished her career with over 1,800 points scored. Headed to play college basketball at Murray State in Kentucky, Baker averaged 23 points per game this season along with 5.3 rebounds per game, 2.4 steals and 2.1 assists per contest.

Mia McLaughlin, sr., Frankenmuth: A four-year varsity player who is headed to Ferris State University next season, McLaughlin was selected to the Basketball Coaches Association of Michigan (BCAM) Best team. A versatile guard, McLaughlin averaged 16.7 points per game along with 4.6 rebounds, two assists and two steals per game.

Anna Richards, sr., Lansing Catholic: Headed to Hope College to continue her career following high school, Richard was a BCAM Best team honoree this season.

BIG SCHOOL DIVISION 1 AND 2

FIRST TEAM

- Katie Keefer, jr., Freeland
- Grace Lyons, sr., Rockford
- Gracie Mellinger, jr., Alma
- Madi Uyl, jr., DeWitt
- Sienna Wolfe, so., Rockford

SMALL SCHOOL DIVISION 3 AND 4

FIRST TEAM

- Kyrah Gray, so., Ewart
- Halen McLaughlin, jr., Sanford-Meridian
- Laynie Meridith, sr., Portland St. Patrick
- Katie Spicer, jr., Fowler
- Megan Zeitz, sr., Dansville

Richards averaged 14.4 points per game this season as she added 4.2 assists and 2.4 steals and helped the Cougars to a 20-6 record this season.

Lexi Ringley, sr., Saginaw Heritage: Ringley finished her career as the all-time career scorer in school history breaking the record of Moira Joiner. A first-team, all-state player in Division 1, Ringley averaged 19 points per game while pulling down 5.1 rebounds, adding 2.7 assists and 1.8 steals per game.

Anny Wypych, jr., Rockford: An outstanding all-around guard who helped lead Rockford to the Final Four in Division 1, Wypych averaged 16 points per game this season. Named as a BCAM Best team selection, Wypych also pulled down three rebounds and dished out three assists and three steals per game.

SPECIAL MENTION

Alayna Armstrong, Grand Ledge; Audrey Ball, Essexville-Garber; Grace Carlson, Cedar Springs; Clare Conzelmann, Frankenmuth; Christina Dixon, Haslett; Rhema Dozier, Holt; Reese Gaytan, Williamston; Lakyn Karr, Mt. Pleasant; Melanie Kolnity, Midland Dow; Tara Kurnzc, DeWitt; Emily Putnam, Central-Montcalm; Piper Risdon, Lowell; Alison Rockburn, Belding; Addie Seemann, Freeland; Brooke Swartz, Bay City Western; Malia Thelen, Portland.

SPECIAL MENTION

Ava Bates, Ovid-Elsie; Elly Bengal, Pewamo-Westphalia; Hannah Borsenik, Hemlock; Lauren Borsenik, Hemlock; Lydia Brogan, Lansing Christian; Grace Chinavare, Sanford-Meridian; Evalyn Cole, Ovid-Elsie; Ivy Davenport, Ithaca; Sadie Day, Midland Calvary Baptist; Payton Goodine, Morrice; Megan Goward, Breckenridge; Lila Hoisington, Morley-Stanwood; Natalee Hoyt, St. Louis; Lily Johnston, Vestaburg; Grace Rockey, Portland St. Patrick; Aubrey Rogers, Morrice; Karis Terwilliger, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart; Gabi Thiel, Saginaw Nouvel; Aubri Torok, Bath; Nadiyah Walsh, Montrose; Katelyn Wendling, New Lothrop; Chloe Williams, Midland Calvary Baptist; Allison Zelinko, St. Charles; Emily Zelinko, St. Charles.



Mia McLaughlin of Frankenmuth will be continuing her career in college at Ferris State University.



The relays continue to be a shining spot for Potterville's track team.

Potterville Track Teams A Factor In CMAC

John Raffel Sports Scene

Taryn Almquist is the girls head coach and Stacy Almquist the boys skipper at Potterville for track and field and both are expecting their teams to be factors in them CMAC.

Last year "one of the top moments was having our women's 4x400m team qualify for the state meet," Almquist said. "At regionals, we knew that we had another team right behind us and only the top two finishers at Regionals can go to states unless you qualify by time.

In 2023 we were able to take 5 athletes to the Division 4 State Meet in 5 events: the women's 4x400 meter relay (Team of: Cypher Henrys, Karah Stiver, Emalee Scott, and Autumn Reynolds), the women's 300 meter hurdles (Karah Stiver), the women's 3200 meter run (Autumn Reynolds), the men's 800 meter run (Logan Cooper) and men's 1600 meter run (Logan Cooper).

"We graduated some very talented individuals whose contributions to our team are deeply missed this season: Bryce Kauffman - Sprints; Colin Smith - Distance; Donny Mitschke - Throws and Sprints; Jason Miller - Sprints and Hurdles; Logan Cooper - Distance."

Potterville has many standouts from last year:

- Karah Stiver - 11th Grade - Key in the Hurdles and 4x400m Relay.

- Autumn Reynolds - 11th Grade - Key in the Distance events (1600m Run, 800m Run; 3200m Run) and 4x400m Relay.

- Emalee Scott - 11th Grade - Key in Long Jump and the 4x400m Relay.

- Cypher Henrys - 10th Grade - Key in the Mid-Distance events (800m Run) and 4x400m Relay.

- Gracie Gurd - 9th Grade - Key in the Sprints and 4x400m Relay.

- Isaiah Woloszyn - 10th Grade - Key in Long Jump, High Jump and Sprint Relays (4x100m and 4x200m).

- Keegan Bennett - 10th Grade - Key in Throws (Shot Put and Discus).

- Andrew Wright - 11th Grade - Key in Throws (Shot Put and Discus).

- Reid Jackson - 11th Grade - Key in the 400m Dash and 4x400m Relay.

- Kaleb Batterham - 12th Grade - Key in Sprints (100m, 200m) and Relays (4x100m, 4x200m and 4x400m).

- Ezariah Taylor - 11th Grade - Key in Sprints (100m, 200m) and Relays (4x100m, 4x200m and 4x400m).

- Markeil White - 11th Grade - Key in Sprints (100m, 200m) and Relays (4x100m, 4x200m and 4x400m)

- Sheldon Lienerth - 12th Grade - Key in Hurdles.

- Aaron Crittenden - 11th Grade - Key in Distance (1600m and 800m) and Relays (4x800m and 4x400m)

- Tyler Langfeldt - 10th Grade - Key in Distance (1600m and 800m) and

4x800m Relay

"We have a ton more amazing, talented athletes and we wish we could highlight them all," Alquist said. "I think all of the coaches expect this season to be a breakout year for our young team. We only have two seniors so we have some time to figure out team dynamics and how we can work together the best. We also have a young coaching squad with a first-year head boys coach and a 1st year assistant coach.

"Our team's strength is our grit. We are one of the smaller schools in our Conference, but we have kids who can get the top spots. It isn't easy being the only Potterville kid on the line in some races, but the athletes don't let it bother them one bit. One thing we need to work on is shifting our culture. With the coaching staff being fairly new, we are completely rebranding our team and the culture, which can be a big adjustment for anyone."

As for the CMAC, "our conference is very strong. Favorites for our conference are definitely Pewamo-Westphalia, Bath, and Laingsburg. Sometimes they beat us just on sheer numbers because we don't have enough kids to fill all of the events. I expect us to be somewhere in the middle and in a few years, I expect us to be close to the top," Almquist said.

"A big shout out to the Potterville Track and Field families and community that supports us. We couldn't do it without you."

Chippewa Hills Eyes 21st Straight League Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

The Chippewa Hills Warriors girls track and field team won their 20th consecutive conference championship a year ago and the Warriors also finished seventh at the team state championship and recorded the highest team GPA of all the teams

competing at the meet.

"Many PR's individual championships and all state efforts also highlighted the season at the varsity level," Warrior coach Zach Hatfield said. "Lindsey Gibson, Sienna Matheny, Madison Biller, and Alivia Martin were four multi-year varsity athletes that we will miss not only

from their contributions to the team in the different events but also their presence on the team as leaders and motivators for the underclassmen.

"We look forward to all of our athletes being key players in the diverse team that a track and field team is. We look forward to seeing how they all contribute to the success of the team."

Ari Todd, a sprinter, and Avelina Hollandsworth, a distance runner, are among the top point getters for the Warriors.

"We have great leadership on this team that have learned from the generations of women track and field athletes at Chippewa Hills," Hatfield said. "The key is continuing to improve and work hard every day."

Hatfield is confident his team can take another title.

"Central Montcalm, Big Rapids, and Kent City all have their own strengths and will be quality league competition on the team side as well as all the teams in our league who have impressive individuals that we are competing against," Hatfield said.



Chippewa Hills' Ariana Todd is among the area's top sprinters.

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Frankenmuth Girls Track Team Reloading After Big Season Last Spring

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Last season was a successful one for the Frankenmuth girls track team. Along with winning a Tri-Valley Conference title, the team claimed a regional title, placed second at the MITCA team state finals and 14th at the MHSAA state finals. While the Eagles graduated an outstanding senior class, a talented group of athletes look to carry on the winning ways this spring.

"The team has set some lofty goals this season," said Frankenmuth coach Mike Snyder. "We want to win the TVC-Red championship, win regionals, win the MITCA team state and finish in the top five at the MHSAA state finals."

A deep and talented group of athletes are poised to reach those goals. Frankenmuth is loaded in quality sprinters, distance runners, throwers and jumpers.

In the throwing events, the Eagles have Julia Stamper and Makenna Corlew in the shot put, Raquel Hernandez in the discus and Cate Retberg in both shot and discus.

In the distance runs, senior Mary Richmond is a talented runner in all the distance events. Richmond finished in the top four at the state meet in both the 1,600 and 3,200-meter runs. Senior Kaitly Miller is in the relays and middle-distance runs. Sophomore Gabby Cleveland competes in relays and middle distance while sophomores Natalie Foltz and Elise Barden compete in relays,

middle and long-distance runs. Freshman Lucy Conzelmann is middle distance and relays.

In field events, the Eagles bring back senior Madison Paten who took seventh in the state in the pole vault last year. In the long jump the Eagles have sophomore Sarah Leach and freshman Lainey Swackhamer.

Frankenmuth has a deep corps of sprinters. Kierstyn Bully and Swackhamer lead the way in the 100 meters. Rosemary Brenner and freshman Maxie Schmidt lead the way in the 400 meters. In the hurdles, the Eagles have senior Cassidy Hart and Rosemary Brenner in the 100 hurdles and freshmen Grace Brenner and Nyla Sholten in the 300 hurdles



While the Frankenmuth girls track team graduated a number of talented athletes from last year's squad the team is regrouping around a strong core of athletes.

along with Audrey Geer and Hart.

The Eagles have a deep group of runners competing in the relays including Danie Titsworth, Peyton Tutt, Rosemary Brenner, Bully, Geer, Hart, Leach, Sholten, Schmidt and Swackhamer.

"We are very strong in our distance events which we usually can count on strong points in that area in the larger meets," Snyder said. "Our sprint events are coming along and we can compete, including in the hurdle events, a good level in this

area. We have a few long jumpers and pole vault athletes that we are looking to do well. Our top throwers will be placing well this season also."

The Eagles have started the season strong and Snyder looks for the team to continue to progress as the big meets come up later in May.

"We simply have to continue the pace and direction they are going and keep the personal records and season-best marks coming," Snyder said.

Avery and Mackenna are seniors this year. They are both strong throwers as well. They are not only gifted in the sport, but they also serve as senior throws captains."



Brianna Locke is one of the most versatile athletes on the team. Locke competes in runs from the 200 meters through the 800-meter run. Locke was third in the conference in

the 800-meters last year and qualified in the 800 and 1,600-meter relay for the state meet.

Nolee Leppert is another talented freshman making an impact this season. Leppert won the Highland Conference cross-country championship last fall and is a huge asset to the team's middle distance and distance squads.

With the strong start to the season, the Aggies are looking to gain momentum heading into the big meets at the end of the season.

"In conference meets we are entering athletes to score as many points as possible with the goal of winning the meet," Locke said. "We always want to qualify as man athletes as possible for the state finals, so the entire season is preparation for regionals and an opportunity to figure out how to best meet that goal."

Beal City Girls Track Team Off To A Strong Start This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

Led by a talented core of athletes, the Beal City girls track team is off to a strong start this season.

Competing in the rugged Highland Conference, the Aggies are showing that they can compete as they have turned in some solid performances so far.

"So far we have been really pleased with the start of the season despite difficult weather conditions," said Beal City coach Stefanie Locke. "As a combined program, we approach interval training with the hope of scoring

well as a team, but also with the future in mind, giving the athletes the opportunity to run faster and fresher."

One of the strongest areas of the team is the throwing events.

"Depth in throws will be huge for us," Locke said. "Over a third of our female roster is throwers. Our throwers are a very committed group and we have talent to back up the numbers."

Freshman Bryn Gilde is making a big impact in the throws.

"Bryn is a freshman thrower who

was very competitive in middle school," Locke said. "She won our first conference jamboree in discus with a personal record of nearly 24 feet. She is very driven to work hard every day to improve but also help the team."

Seniors Avery Wilson and Mackenna Sellers and freshman Katelyn Schultz add to the talent and depth of the throwing group.

"Katelyn is another very competitive thrower that we have gained as a freshman," Locke said. "She is another driven and disciplined athlete committed to improving herself.

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Sanford-Meridian Boys Track Team Primed To Build On Last Year's Success

David Cook Sports Scene

The Sanford-Meridian boys track team turned in some outstanding efforts last spring, and with a roster full of talented athletes, the team is primed for more accomplishments this season.

The Mustangs had plenty of memorable moments last year. Sawyer Moloy was a state champion in the high jump while the team had numerous state qualifiers in the sprints, relays and jumps. Among that talented athletes that graduated were state qualifiers Brayden Riley, Madix Saunders and Kenny Emerson along with Johah Shephard who moved on to run at Ferris State University.

This year's squad has an outstanding nucleus of athletes leading the way. One of the main athletes back is Moloy. The returning state champion in the high jump is poised for another big season both in the high jump

and the long jump.

"I expect Sawyer to break his current school record and also become a key contributor in our sprints and relays as the season continues," said Sanford-Meridian coach Matt Shephard. "Sawyer will be running collegiately next year and has the mindset and work ethic to propel himself forward into this next stage of his track career."

Senior Nick Metzger is another talented sprinter returning. Metzger will be competing in the 100, 200 and 400-meter sprints along with the long jump.

"Nick had a frustrating state championship last year, but I expect him to bounce back with a senior year that sees his fastest times in the 400-meter and a very competitive season in long jump," said Shephard. "Having two of the best jumpers in the state with Nick and Sawyer put our team in a unique position to be very competitive at every meet.

It would not surprise me to see Nick finish among the top in the state in both sprinting and jumping at the state meet this year."

In the field events, Sanford-Meridian is led by senior Dawson Kolka in the discus and shot put.

"Dawson has been training throughout the off season to have his strongest showing yet as a Mustang," said Shephard. "He is committed to competing collegiately next year and has the respect of the entire team with his work ethic and leadership. Early into the season, Dawson is already throwing qualifying distances for the state finals. I believe this will be a season to remember for Dawson."

Leading the way in the distance runs is junior Tyler Heal who competes in both middle and long-distance runs.



With a solid core of veterans returning the Sanford-Meridian boys track team is poised for a big season.

"Ty is coming off a very strong cross-country season where he finished among the best at the state finals at MIS," Shephard said. "I am pleased with the competitive spirit and fire that Ty brings to our team. I believe he will be putting up some of the fastest times in the 800-meters, 1,600-meters and 3,200-meters that our school has seen in recent history."

Overall, Shephard likes the leadership that his veteran athletes are providing and the drive being shown by the younger athletes.

"In addition to our senior leadership, I see many young, hungry athletes who are devoted to this sport and our future success," Shephard said. "We have some of the best jumpers in the state laying

the ground work for the future and several young sprinters and distance runners who are experiencing success this early into the season. Our throwers are strong, young and hungry and led by some outstanding upperclassmen. I am very excited about the future of this growing team."

With the depth talent and drive the team has, Shephard is excited about the rest of the season and what the Mustangs can accomplish.

"I expect our team to be competitive in our conference and to have several regional and state qualifiers," Shephard said. "With a core of seniors who experienced the state meet last year, I am confident their hunger will spread to our younger athletes as the season progresses."

Young Sanford-Meridian Girls Track Team Working Hard To Move Up

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Optimism abounds around the Sanford-Meridian girls track team this spring. With plenty of talented young athletes, the Mustangs are experiencing success this season and have an even brighter future.

Andy LaFave is in his first year as head coach of the team and is pleased with how the program is developing.

"With a young core, our future is bright," LaFave said. "We expect to finish in the middle of the pack in the Jack Pine Conference. We have

a bunch of hard-working girls so I am excited to see how much we will improve."

A pair of seniors lead the way for the Mustangs this season. Josie Barriger is a versatile athlete who can compete in any number of events.

"Josie is our best all-around athlete," LaFave said. "It doesn't matter what event she enters, she will compete. The hardest part about having an athlete like Josie is we don't know what event to put her in. She is also one of the hardest workers on the team which will be key to creating a solid team."

Senior Kailee Charrette is also

a versatile athlete the Mustangs rely on.

"Kailee is our best hurdler," LaFave said. "She can also run a little mid-distance."

The Mustangs also have a pair of talented juniors making an impact. Alexis Cryderman was on last year's state qualifying relay team and runs in the short sprints this year. Isabella Merryman also runs the short sprints and was on the state qualifying relay team last season.

Last year's squad finished in fourth place in the league. Josie Barriger finished in the 300-meter hurdles

The Sanford-Meridian track team has some talented veterans this season and a promising group of young athletes.



at the state meet while the 800 and 1,600-meter relay teams both placed 10th at state.

Blending in with the veterans are a promising young group of athletes.

"We have a strong ninth-grade group that is showing some promise for the future," LaFave said.

Developing depth is also a focus

for Sanford-Meridian as it competes in the rugged Jack Pine Conference.

"The conference is always a battle between Clare, Shepherd and Gladwin has been on the rise," LaFave said. "We will finish after those three teams. I hope the girls get the itch to stick our nose in the battle for the future."

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Large Group Of Experienced Players Has DeWitt Tennis Team Primed For A Big Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

With a large group of players returning from last season, the DeWitt girls tennis team has some high expectations.

"I believe we have a really good team this year from top to bottom," said DeWitt coach Mike Hitchcock. "We should finish in the top three for our league. For our region we should be in the top four teams, but the competition is top notch for sure."

DeWitt features a deep roster with plenty of returning veterans along with some promising new-

comers.

In the singles lineup, DeWitt will have freshman Amanda Mickelson at No. 1 singles. Junior Courtney Novak is at No. 2 singles with a pair of freshmen, Maddie Utrup and Cassity Kirkham filling in at No. 3 and No. 4 singles respectively.

The doubles lineup is anchored by seniors Jordyn Crawley and Sydney Thorne at No. 1 doubles. Senior Ella Reid and junior Sydney are at No. 2 doubles. Maddie Baldwin and Spencer Wood are at No. 3 doubles with Omi Alicia and Hailey Arens at No. 4 doubles.

"This is a very deep team," Hitchcock said. "The three freshmen coming has really helped with the quality and depth of our team. It will be a fun year to watch what we can do. We are trying hard to qualify for the state finals this season."

A key to success for the Panthers this season is the depth the team has. That depth can come in handy once the state tournament begins.

"Our depth is our key," Hitchcock said. "Our singles and doubles



The DeWitt tennis team is counting on strong depth to make a push for conference and regional honors this season.

are both deep. We should compete at both singles and doubles equally this season."

Gaining experience as the season progresses will be a key to improvement.

"We need experience, especially against great competition," Hitchcock said.

As usual, the team is facing plenty of tests playing in the rugged Capital Area Activities Conference Blue Division.

"Our conference is difficult, especially at the top," Hitchcock said. "The normal teams of Okemos and East Lansing are always up there at the top. They are great programs that we are hoping to be someday."

each other. It is really something special to see."

While the Comets have shown the ability to put the ball in the back of the net, it's the play of the defense that is the strong point of this year's squad.

"One of the big things for us this year is the play of our defense," Rodriguez said. "Laney Evans and Marissa Evers are two seniors who are doing a great job for us. Through the first five games of the season, they have not allowed a goal on a left-side crease which is very impressive."

Grand Ledge is also a large and diverse team. Half of the Grand Ledge basketball team is playing lacrosse this season. The team also has three foreign exchange students on the squad representing three different countries including France, Italy and Spain.



"The foreign exchange students bring so much personality to the team," Rodriguez said. "It's wonderful to see. The girls on the team love having them and it really brought out a sense of community and brought the team together. We have their national flags behind the bench and it's opened the eyes of all our girls to the sense of community. It's fun to see and fun to be a part of."

Grand Ledge Girls Lacrosse Team Off To A Strong Start This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

The Grand Ledge girls lacrosse team turned in a solid season last spring and the early returns this spring show the Comets making even more progress.

Grand Ledge came out of the gates fast this season winning four of its first five games. That success is a continuation of a solid season last year that saw the Comets placed third in the Capital Area Activities Conference.

"We are off to a good start," said Grand Ledge coach Reo Rodriguez. "We had one of our better seasons last year that Grand Ledge

has ever had in girls lacrosse and things are looking good this year. I would say our program is on an upward trend."

Grand Ledge is led on offense by the senior duo of Ava Clark and Ellery Curtis. Clark and Curtis have been a steady source of goals for the Comets this season.

Grand Ledge, however, is far from being just a two-player threat on offense as the entire team has chipped in to help with the scoring.

"We have had 17 different goal scorers so far this season," Rodriguez said. "We also have had 12 assisted goals through the first five games. These girls literally play for

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Swan Valley Golf Team Looking To Keep Regional Title Run Going This Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Swan Valley boys golf team has been on a roll the last few years and the Vikings are working hard to keep the good times flowing.

Swan Valley has won a regional title two out of the last three years and with some key players returning another regional trophy could be secured this season. Swan Valley also capped the season in a big way last year with a third-place finish at the

Division 3 team state finals.

Getting back to the state meet will be no easy feat, however, as the team graduate some key golfers from last year's squad. Ashton DiBlasi was the number-one golfer for Swan Valley the past three years and racked up multiple top-10 finishes at the state finals. John McCarthy was Swan Valley's No. 2 golfer last year while Owen Galsterer started every varsity match and was a contributor to last year's state-placing squad.

Returning to anchor the team this season are Alex Galsterer and Issac Beougher. Both Galsterer and Beougher were starters on last year's team and give the team an experienced core to build around.

"The strength of our team is our maturity, work ethic and humbleness," said Swan Valley coach Brian Allen. "One thing we have to work



The Swan Valley boys golf team is looking to win a third regional title in the past four years.

on is our short game, like all of us in the golf world".

Allen has several goals for the team as the golf season progresses.

"We want to improve and to have fun," Allen said. "We will not quit and I expect the guys to learn about the game and to learn about being a

great person."

As usual, Allen sees the conference as being very competitive.

"We have a very strong conference that always reloads," Allen said. "Hopefully we will compete for a league title."



Simpson Leads Portland St. Patrick Golf

John Raffel Sports Scene

Portland St. Patrick coach Aaron Thelen has a strong team competing in the CMAC.

"We had a great year of growth last season," he said. "We had a lot of young

guys that really took a liking to the game and worked hard to improve. Landon Simpson, was also First team all conference. We were fortunate enough to keep our roster intact. We didn't have any seniors.

"Though small, our roster is solid

from top to bottom. Landon Simpson will likely lead the way in his junior season after making all-conference last season. Junior Gabe

Wernet is also looking to have a strong season after playing most of last year, recovering from a knee surgery. We also have three sophomores looking to improve. Brody Beckhold, Logan Krieger and Auggie Teachworth will all play vital roles for us. Our team will go as they do."

As for 2024, "Expectations are high for us this season," Thelen said. "We have some talent that is finally varsity

age and have a couple seasons under their belts. I would look for us to really make some noise in the conference this year. Work ethic is where we can separate ourselves from the rest. With our team being so small, we have to work extra hard to improve every day.

"As is common in golf we need to work on our consistency. We will need to make our bad days a little less so."

As for the league: "The CMAC has been pretty top-heavy for the last handful of

years. It should tighten up a bit this year, and I expect us to be in the hunt"

Portland St. Patrick Track Teams Building On Last Year's Success

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Last season was a memorable one for the Portland St. Patrick track team and with plenty of athletes back from that squad, this year promises to be another exciting campaign.

The St. Patrick girls turned in a memorable season last year when they won the first regional track and field title in program history. The Shamrocks capped things off by placing second at the Division 4 state finals. The St. Patrick boys also qualified a pair of athletes for the state finals.

This season, the girls team is back for more with a number of athletes returning. Rylee Scheurer was a state champion in the 200-meter run last year while the 1,600-meter relay team of Siena Schafer, Izzy Kissane, Sophia Schrauben and Kenzie Fedewa placed second.

Fedewa, a junior, is one of the team's top returning athletes as she is a seven-time, all-stater. Schrauben, a senior, is an eight-time, all-stater while Kissane, a senior, is a seven-time, all-state performer. Rylee Scheurer is a returning four-time, all-stater while Schafer and senior Kyra Kinsman have also earned all-state honors during their careers.

On the boys squad, sophomore Nick Pung is a returning all-state performer from last season.

"The girls team is small, with only 13 athletes, but has tremendous depth and talent," said St. Patrick coach Dawn Fedewa. "After earning a state runner-up finish and a regional title last year, they should be in the mix for a team trophy again this year, along with a second regional title."

The St. Patrick boys team is on the young side this year and is looking to build.

"The boys team is young, made up of all freshmen and sophomores," Fedewa said. "They are eager to im-



The Portland St. Patrick girls track team won a regional title last year and finished second at the state finals.

prove and will build a base for future success."

Both teams look to be competitive in the Central Michigan Athletic Conference (CMAC), one of the toughest small-school track leagues in the state.

"The CMAC continues to be one of the top small school leagues in the state," Fedewa said. "Pewamo-Westphalia and Fowler will likely fight for the league championship. The St. Patrick girls should finish in the top half, while the boys will likely be toward the lower end of the league."

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