

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE
KEEPING KIDS IN THE NEWS

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

www.highschoolsportsscene.com

- Publisher**
Randy Miniard
randy@highschoolsportsscene.com
517-202-1808
- High School Liaison**
Paul Hornak
p1hornak@gmail.com
989-331-1168
- Sales**
Patricia A. Remp
patriciaremp@gmail.com
989-620-4600
- Editorial**
John Raffel
john.raffel@gmail.com
616-894-2936
- Greg Chrapek
greg102300@yahoo.com
616-655-9058
- Photographers**
Russ Pierce, Skip Traynor,
Dana McCann, Gary Williams,
Kim Larner, Eric Sawatzki,
Marvin Hall, Jaymee Beard,
Joe Vozar, Lynn Munger,
Yoland Hayward, Lori Melton,
Greg Chrapek, John Raffel,
Dan Seeley, Jason Barden

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CONTENTS

- 3** | Ithaca Basketball
- 4** | Ionia's Kirby Having Impressive Season
- 5** | Experience Pays Off For East Lansing
- 6** | Alma Boys Basketball Rebuilding
- 7** | Basketball Round Up
- 9** | Alma's Paige Seeley
- 10** | Boys Basketball Rankings
- 12** | DeWitt Cheer Bids For State Title
- 13** | Breckenridge Player Finishing Hockey Career
- 14** | Oiler Goaltender Having Solid Season
- 15** | Area Swim & Ski Round Up

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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

Where did winter go? It seemed like just yesterday we were heading down to Ford Seemed to follow the exploits of the Pewamo-Westphalia, Lansing Catholic, Davison and Beal City football teams and now we are on the tournament trail of the P-W, East Lansing and other fantastic boys and girls basketball teams.

This basketball season has seen some outstanding teams and players across mid-Michigan. The undefeated Mt. Pleasant boys, the once-beaten East Lansing boys and a host of outstanding girls basketball teams like Ithaca, East Lansing and Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart. What a thrilling season it has been.

The great performances spill over to the ice arenas, swimming pools and bowling alleys. Our area athletes are turning in some outstanding performances this year. A big shout out goes to all the local athletes who are making us all proud.

With the boys and girls state basketball tournaments tipping off, now is a good time to get out and experience some great high school basketball.

To all athletes, coaches and fans, enjoy your tournament games and check us out online at www.highschoolsportsscene.com and like us on Facebook. Enjoy this issue covering team state wrestling and previews for upcoming finals.



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

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Both Portland Girls Teams Eye State Contention

John Raffel Sports Scene

It's another spectacular year for Portland's two girls basketball teams.

Coach Jason Haid's girls team is 16-3 as it gets ready for districts, having won the Capital Activities Area Conference White Division.

Portland has had a 14-game win streak and was ranked as high as No. 3 in the state.

"Key strengths have included unselfish team play," Haid said. "We

have four girls, all sophomores, who average close to double digits."

Those girls, and their points per game averages, are Ashley Bower (15.1); Ava Guilford (9.0); Brecklyn Werner (8.8) and

Alivia Densmore (7.9).

"We have a tough district but we will look to rely on toughness and teamwork to compete," Haid said.

St. Patrick is led by legendary coach Al Schrauben, whose teams have won several state championships. "A quality win," Schrauben said "was beating

Laingsburg. We have two tight losses with Fowler. We're playing pretty solid defensively but are up and down offensively. Good rebounding and defensive play have been our strength."

St. Patrick is 14-4 and ready to make a strong Division 4 postseason run with two of its losses to defending state champion Pewamo-Westphalia and the other two to Division 4 power Fowler.

Katlynn Russell leads the team in scoring and rebounding and Lydia Meredith leads in steals and assists.

Schrauben is hopeful of a good postseason.

"We could lose the first game of the district or we could make the final four," he said. "Time will tell."



Legendary St. Patrick Coach Al Schrauben is hopeful of a long tournament run for his girls team.



Vermeesch Ignites Ithaca Girls

John Raffel Sports Scene

Ithaca's girls basketball team is having an outstanding season at 17-1 and among the reasons has been the play of Sam Vermeesch.

She's been on the varsity four seasons.

"My freshman year we went to the regional championship game and we won the league and were district champs," Vermeesch said. "We were pretty young last year but it's paying off this year."

Vermeesch said she's having her best season. She's averaging 7.8 points, 3.5 assists, 5.6 steals and 2.4 rebounds per game.

"She's just all-around playing great,"

Samantha Vermeesch has been a leader for Ithaca this season.

coach Ty Warczynsky,

"Vermeesch has twice been second team all-conference.

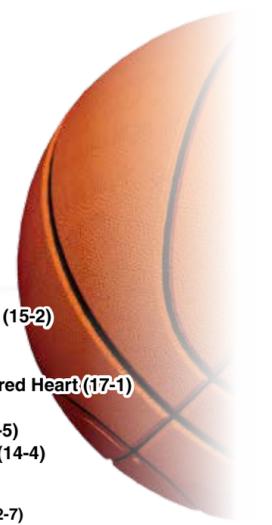
"I've had to step up as a leader a lot," Vermeesch said. "The last two years we've been young. I've had to be a leader and role model on the floor.

"We've been doing super good. We beat Nouvel by one point. We have a lot of fight. We try to do the little things right to win games. Our goal is to win the league and carry momentum into districts and see where we go from there; we have to focus on ourselves. We need to execute what we're going to do and we'll be fine."

Softball is her top sport. She recently signed to play softball at Lansing Community College.

Girls Basketball Rankings

- Divisions 1-2**
East Lansing (17-1)
Midland Dow
Williamston (14-3)
Big Rapids (15-1)
Goodrich (14-2)
Portland (17-2)
Freeland (14-4)
Ionia (14-4)
Eaton Rapids (13-5)
Holt (14-4)
- Divisions 3-4**
Pewamo Westphalia (15-2)
Ithaca (17-1)
Hemlock (17-2)
Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart (17-1)
Flint Hamady (18-2)
Saginaw Nouvel (13-5)
Portland St. Patrick (14-4)
Fowler (14-4)
Morrice (13-3)
Carson City-Crystal (12-7)



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Taylor Kirby (5) has enjoyed a strong season for Ionia.

Kirby Having Impressive Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Ionia girls basketball coach Scott Pischea has had a lot of fun coaching Taylor Kirby.

She's a senior in her fourth varsity season. She has averaged 13.9 points per game along with 2.4 assists and 2.7 steals. She has totaled 17 threes.

"I have never coached a player who worked as hard and put in as much time as Taylor," Pischea said. "From last year, she has improved tremendously. We are a better and deeper team than last year so it doesn't necessarily show up statistically, but Taylor does so much for us this year. "She is

scoring more efficiently. She is a better one on one defender and has been tremendous in tight games. There's been moments where she hits a big shot, gets a steal, rebound, help defense. She does everything well."

For the rest of the season, Pischea expected Kirby "to finish strong. I have never had a player work as hard and put in as much time as Taylor. She would ask to get in to the gym and shoot all summer long and the fall even though she was in volleyball." Kirby also plays volleyball and tennis. "She is a wonderful young lady, a tremendous student and a very focused and driven individual," Pischea said. "We are 14-4 and third in our league."

Eaton Rapids Having Powerhouse Girls Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Eaton Rapids has been enjoying a successful girls basketball season at 13-5 and coach Daniel Langeland is looking to make a lot of noise before the winter campaign ends.

"We're balanced," Langeland said. "Our top scorer is sophomore Adi Sysum averaging 9.8 points a game. Our second top scorer is Emily Cline averaging 9.5 per game and senior point guard Peyton Benjamin is averaging 9.1 points.

"We average 16 to 17 steals per game as a team," Langeland said. "Some games are more some games are less."

The Greyhounds are optimistic as they look ahead.

"We have a tough district draw," Langeland said. "We have to play the No. 2 team in the state in Chelsea. But we're a very dangerous team."

Beating Lansing Catholic twice were two quality wins, Langeland said, adding wins over Leslie, Fowlerville and St. John were top wins.



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Senior Leadership, Balanced Offense Key To Success For Okemos Boys Basketball Team

Greg Chrapek Sports Scene

Led by a deep and talented group of seniors, the Okemos boys basketball team is not only hanging out atop the Capital Area Activities Conference (CAAC) Blue divisions standings, but the Chiefs are among the top Division 1 teams in mid-Michigan.

With a 12-3 record at the three-quarter mark of the regular season, Okemos has benefited from the outstanding leadership and play from a large group of seniors.

"I believe our success thus far is connected to our senior leadership," said Okemos coach Jeff Wonch. "We have seven seniors who are focused on improving every day. They have also played in some big moments in the past and are an experienced group."

The seniors have helped Okemos navigate not only a rugged CAAC Blue schedule but a rugged non-conference schedule as well.

"Our season has been progressing well," Wonch said. "We are fortunate to be able to learn, grow as a team and still manage

to win some games. Our schedule has proven to be extremely challenging and we are focused on playing some of our best basketball every night."

Several players have stepped up to lead the Chiefs this season led by senior point guard Noah Pruitt. A four-year starter at point guard, Pruitt averages 13.4 points per game along with 4.4 assists.

Austin Gibson is also a source of offense as he is averaging 10.5 points per game. Grant Holtzer provides the team with a strong post presence as he leads the squad with 8.3 rebounds per game

while averaging 7.2 points per game. Sophomore Will Young is a big addition to the squad this year as he is averaging 9.9 points per game. Balanced scoring is a strong point for Okemos with Mitchell Sambaer and Grant Hinterman both adding 7.1 points per game.

"We have a very balanced team that shares the ball," Wonch said. "I don't think I have ever had a team where six guys are averaging more than seven points per game."

Senior point guard Noah Pruitt is a four-year veteran and is one of a large and skilled group of seniors for Okemos this season.

Experience Gained In Early-Season Overtime Wins Pays Off For East Lansing

Greg Chrapek Sports Scene

The East Lansing boys basketball team was tested early and often this season, and those pressure-cooker games are paying off as the regular-season winds down.

With a 14-1 overall record and a 10-1 league record heading into the final quarter of the regular season, the Trojans are one of the premier Division 1 teams in mid-Michigan. The seeds of that success were planted early as East Lansing needed to go to overtime to earn wins in three of its first six wins of the season.

"These guys had to scrap and claw to pull out victory in three of the first six games of the season," said East Lansing coach Ray Mitchell. "I knew those wins bode well for the future. The guys came together and scrapped for wins. They have gelled and they play together and play for each other. It really helps when young people care for each other and

play for each other."

With just 10 players on the roster, East Lansing is a small team in numbers but has plenty of depth as all 10 players are key contributors.

Junior point guard Marcus Wourman is a three-year varsity player and team leader on both ends of the court. A talented all-around guard, Wourman is getting college looks from high Division 2 and mid-major Division 1 schools.

"Marcus played on our regional final team with Brandon Johns two years ago," Mitchell said. "He is definitely our leader at point guard."

His dad played high school basketball at Detroit Southwestern back when Jalen Rose was there. His dad coaches an AAU team, the Prospectors, so it's nice having a coach's son out there and a lot of our guys play on that same AAU team."

Wourman hit the game-winning shot

with 1.5 seconds left in East Lansing's win against Okemos that avenged East Lansing's only loss this season.

Junior wing Andrei Anthony is one of the most athletic players on the team. A standout football player, Anthony has 18 football scholarships and counting including offers from Michigan State, Michigan, Penn State and Wisconsin.

Like Anthony, Malakai Matthews is another standout on the East Lansing football team. A 6-foot-5 wing who plays safety in football, Matthews is another super-talented athlete who plays with a lot of energy. An excellent defender, Matthews has the ability to guard players at any position on the court.

Up front, the Trojans have a pair of Ethans that can match up size-wise with any center duo in the state. Ethan Boyd, who stands 6-foot-8 and weighs 280 pounds, is a tackle on the football team that is being recruited by Vanderbilt University along with some

Big 10 teams. Sophomore Ethan Dunn is a 6-foot-10 big man who is showing improvement by the game and teams with Boyd to give the Trojans plenty of muscle in the paint.

East Lansing has even more options on the perimeter. Senior Garrett Christiansen if a 6-foot-4 lefty is a smooth shooter from the perimeter who can guard multiple positions. Christiansen put on an impressive performance in East Lansing's season-opening win against Williamston.

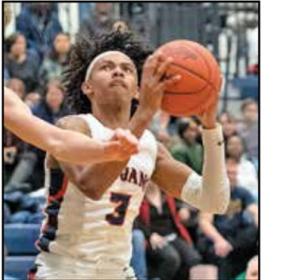
Sophomores Mason Woods and Brevin Jackson are spark plugs in the backcourt.

"Mason is a silent assassin," Mitchell said. He can shoot from anywhere on the court. Brevin is a point guard who is a great slasher and has an outstanding floor game. He can drive to the basket and has a fantastic touch."

Senior Tyrese Windham and junior Donald Wilkerson add even more versatility to a versatile team.

"Tyrese is a super-athletic wing who plays power-forward for us," Williams said. "He can jump out of the gym and can guard anyone from a one to a four.

Donald is a heady, smart player and a great shooter. He is our 'Mr. Versatility'."



Junior guard Andrei Anthony (3) is a dynamic athlete both on the basketball court and on the football field for East Lansing.

He knows how to play all the positions."

One trait all the Trojans have in common is the ability to play outstanding defense.

"Our strong point is our defense," Mitchell said. "Defensively, we can match up with anyone. We have a lot of size and a lot of athleticism. We are quick on the wings and in the backcourt and have a 6-foot-8 and a 6-foot-10 guy inside. We can defend any style of basketball that we see."

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Rebuilding Year Progressing On Course For Alma Boys Basketball Team

Greg Chrapek Sports Scene

With seven seniors having graduated from a team that won a fifth straight district title and added a regional crown last year, the Alma boys basketball team knew that some rebuilding was in store this season.

That rebuilding project has gone right on schedule for the Panthers. While Alma dropped its first two games of the season, the Panthers found their groove and won 12 of its next 15 games and has a 12-5 record heading down the stretch of the regular season.

"We've definitely made some great strides this year," said Alma coach TJ Cleveland. "We've won

12 of 15 games and we've defeated some very good teams. The kids are coming together and they are showing improvement every time out."

While graduation saw seven seniors move on, the Panthers have a foursome of seniors this season that are keeping the winning atmosphere intact. Seniors Brice Austin, Case Martin, Drake Martin and Liam Wert not only provide the Panthers with strong leadership but they fill a variety of roles on the floor.

Austin, an outstanding student who has been accepted to Yale University, has been averaging a double-double in points and rebounds during February. Case Martin is Alma's leading scorer

while Drake Martin has been stepping up in a big way. Wert is an outstanding defensive player and is also a standout in the classroom. Wert has already earned a Navy ROTC scholarship and is trying to get accepted to the U.S. Naval Academy.

Alma's junior class is also contributing in a big way to the team's success. Paul Gadde is one of the top all-around players on the team as he leads the squad in steals and is second in points and assists. Cade Frillici has developed into a steady source of offense and is third on the team in points. David Apple has stepped into the point guard spot and has a two-to-one assist to turnover ratio. Juniors TJ Arens and Ethan St. John bring hard-working attitudes to the floor

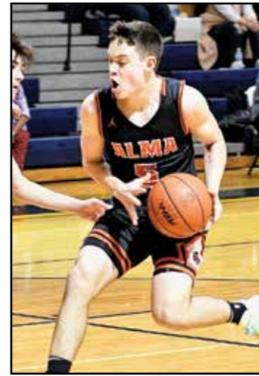
at practice and junior AJ Omans is a lockdown defender that gives the team defensive versatility.

Sophomore big man Sam Leppien provides an impact in the paint as he is second on the team in blocked shots and third in rebounds. Freshman Michael Howey is another key addition to the squad this year who recently recorded a 10-point game.

"All of these players are hard-working kids," Cleveland said. "We have been steadily improving on defense. We play with good pace up and down the floor and with our depth it allows us to wear teams down in the third and fourth quarters."

Team chemistry is also a strong point along with the depth.

"We have some great kids with great character," Cleveland said. "I'm pretty fortunate the last few years to have some great kids who get along great together. If you don't have that good mix of kids



Alma guard Cade Frillici, one of several newcomers making an impact this year, drives to the basket.

who get along you're not going to be the best team you can be. We've also had really good leadership and that has been a staple of our teams the last eight to ten years."

Hemlock Freshman Having Sensational Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Hemlock girls basketball fans could make a claim for Regan Finkbeiner freshman of the year if there was such an award.

She's a main reason the Huskies are having an excellent 16-2 season for coach Scott Neumeyer's team. Finkbeiner has been the team's

leading scorer.

"It's really fun," Finkbeiner said. "It's a big difference from middle school to high school basketball, that's for sure. I've been in travel ball for awhile and it kind of led up to high school. It's definitely quicker. Playing against bigger people, I had to adjust to it a lot. Being a small guard, you have to adjust to bigger people."

During summer practice, Finkbeiner worked with the varsity.

"I got the feeling I was going to be moved up (to varsity)," Finkbeiner said.

She has started every game at shooting guard.

"When we played Ithaca, they were undefeated and we knew it would be tough," Finkbeiner said. "We also had to play our hardest and we had all had to contribute. I think it was our best game all around."

Her highest point total was 30 points in her first game against St.

Charles. Outside shooting has been a strength.

"I do pump fake and drive and get a layup," she said. "I get a lot of my points from the 3-point line. I'm really good at defense."

Three returning players have helped the Huskies "to improve individually and as a team," Finkbeiner said. "I think we'll get really far (in the postseason). Our defense is able to stop teams and help us win games a lot."

She also plays volleyball and softball and runs track.

Regan Finkbeiner, a freshman, has led Hemlock to an excellent season.



Area Boys Basketball Teams Rounding Into Form At State Tournament Draws Near

Greg Chrapek Sports Scene

With the state tournament just days away, area basketball teams are fine-tuning their games for the beginning of district play that tips off the week of March 9. The Mid-Michigan area is home to several teams capable of making deep post-season runs and some other teams that can surprise.

WILLIAMSTON

The Hornets have been one of the premier teams in the state in Division 2. Williamston features a dynamic sophomore guard in Mason Docks who can dominate games with his scoring, playmaking and defense. Junior forward Brandon Hunt has become a force in the paint with his scoring and rebounding. The Hornets are a deep squad that has also received key contributions from a number of players including senior guard Mitchell Cook, senior forward Sam Schikorra, sophomore shooting guard Jay Wallace and versatile junior guard Cade Conley.

Williamston will be the place to be when the district begins as the Hornets host a district that includes rival Lansing Eastern and Lansing Catholic Central.

LANSING EASTERN

The Quakers have been coming on strong in the CAAC Red and turned in one of their best efforts of the season when they defeated Williamston 57-50 to tie the Hornets for first place in the conference. Sophomore standout Willie Curtis pumped in 16 points and pulled down nine rebounds in the win. The Quakers will be a team to watch at the Williamston district.

LANSING CATHOLIC

The Cougars have battled Ionia for the top spot in the CAAC White all season. Lansing Catholic, which has only lost to Ionia and Williamston this season, boasts a deep and talented roster.

Senior Charlie Nylander is a major force in the post. A standout on the football team as well, the 6-foot-5, 235-pounder turned in an impressive effort with 21 points and 20 rebounds in a win against

Lansing Sexton. Sophomore guard Alex Watters, another standout on the football team, led the Cougars with 15 points and scored the game-winning bucket on a length of the court layup in the final seconds of a big win against Eaton Rapids. The Cougars have also received big efforts from seniors Zach Gillespie and Sam Gonzalez along with DJ Ferguson and Josh Risner.

BRIDGEPORT

Ranked second in the state in Division 2, the Bearcats are poised for a deep post-season run. Bridgeport has a deep and talented team with skilled players at every position. Junior guard Jaylen Hodges is a big-player performer who is averaging over 15 points per game. In the middle, senior center Kevin Mills (6-foot-8) continues to improve and is a threat to record a double-double in points and rebounds every time he steps on the floor. Seniors Landon Williams and Bryce McNair and juniors AJ Pipkins, Ameir Pickett and Omarion Wilkins add even more talent to a team with goals of reaching

the Breslin Center at the end of March.

CARROLLTON

Ranked sixth in the state in Division 2, few teams can match the offensive production of the Cavaliers. Carrollton has a variety of options on offense including three-point marksman DJ Voltz along with Tay Jones, Mar'Kel Martin and Chris Coleman. Carrollton opened the season with 15 straight wins and scored 64 or more points in all but one of those wins.

PEWAMO-WESTPHALIA

The defending Division 3 state champions, P-W has picked up where it left off with a 14-1 record heading into the home stretch of the regular season. A loss in week two against Laingsburg is the only setback the Pirates have suffered this season. P-W hosts a district this year where conference rival Potterville will be one of the top challengers.

LAINGSBURG

The lone team to defeat Pewamo-Westphalia this season, Laingsburg has played solid basketball all season. The Wolfpack are led by Gabe Hawes who is averaging around 18 points per game this season along with four rebounds and two assists. Zach Hawes is adding 13 points per game while Connor Thomas, senior center Jesse Gugel,



The Williamston basketball team has been one of the top teams in Division 2 this season.

Austin Randall and Aidan Soeltner have also been key contributors.

MT. PLEASANT SACRED HEART

The Irish took a big step closer to winning the Mid-State Conference championship with a big win against Coleman. Luke Predum led the way for Sacred Heart with 24 points in the win. Sacred Heart will be part of a rugged Division 4 district tournament at Fulton-Middleton. Along with host Middleton, the district includes a talented Breckenridge team.

Clare, Midland Dow Boosted By Special Players

John Raffel Sports Scene

Clare's Pioneer girls basketball team has again had an admirable year as coach Dave Maxwell's team was getting toward the end of the season with a 15-3 record and inching closer to the Jack Pine Conference title.

Bailey Taylor has been on the varsity since her freshman season. She was all-conference as a sophomore.

She's averaging near 14 points seven rebounds and three assists per game and is a 71 percent free throw shooter. Taylor is also first-team all conference.

"Bailey has fine-tuned her game to take advantage of her teammates' evolving skills, is a captain, and our go-to ball handler when the pressure is on. She is a great student, and three-sport athlete, including soccer and volleyball," Maxwell said.

As for the team's success, "it's been our development on the defensive end since the beginning of the season," Maxwell said. "Our offense can still be a little inconsistent. Defensively, we've played solid ball

and it has continued since the season has gone on.

"We took out Houghton Lake, who took us out twice last year when they were in our conference," Maxwell said. "The only team we had trouble with has been Pinconning."

Jada Garner, Midland Dow

Jada Garner has had an impressive year for Midland Dow's girls basketball team, averaging 11.6 points, 4.2 rebounds, 3.3 assists, and 2.0 steals per game, while shooting 46 percent from the field.

Midland Dow is 17-2 and planning on making a lot of noise in the postseason.



Bailey Taylor (23) has been leading Clare to championship success.

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DeWitt Junior Having Another Solid Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Hannah Kurncz played a key role on a Dewitt girls basketball team which went to the Division 1 quarterfinals.

After 18 games, DeWitt was 13-5, and Kurncz, a 5-foot-11 junior, was averaging a team-leading 10.4 points and 6.1 rebounds.

"Hannah was a sophomore on our varsity team last year that advanced to the Division 1 quarterfinals," DeWitt coach Bill McCullen pointed out. "She spent most of the season as the sixth man but then was thrust into a starting role during the tournament when two of our senior starters had injuries and that allowed Hannah to gain some valuable experience heading into this season."

"She has led our team to a (13-5) record so far on a tough schedule,

with two losses to No. 1 ranked East Lansing, an overtime loss to Howell and a loss at the buzzer to Williamston."

Kurncz also plays varsity volleyball in the fall but her love is basketball.

"She is very dedicated and it's not unusual if you come into our gym in the off-season that you would see Hannah, and her younger brother, Bryce, a freshman on the varsity boys team, getting a workout in," McCullen said. "Her

goal is to play basketball at the next level and so far we have had some contact with several smaller schools who may be interested."

"Hannah is a great shooter, but she is starting to develop more of a physical game around basket. In addition to leading us in scoring for most of the season, she many times draws the most difficult defensive assignment, like Nye from East Lansing, or Clerkey from Okemos."



Hannah Kurncz (30) continues to play key role for DeWitt's basketball team.

Junior Captains Lead Nouvel

John Raffel Sports Scene

Saginaw Nouvel has had an outstanding season in the TVC West for girls basketball, and are led by two of the juniors who are serving as captains: Catherine Buko and Isabelle Patel.

Both are juniors and are this year's varsity team captains.

"Catherine started out the season with a sprained ankle which for a team's point guard is tough to see happen," coach John Wilson said. "As a coach I wonder if Catherine was healthy, to begin the year, if our first few losses may

not have occurred. With Catherine at the point she is a true leader who calls the plays and directs the team. I also love her competitive nature which is hard to teach but she has it which makes her very special to this team."

"Isabelle is fundamentally gifted with the ability to play defense on the other team's best player no matter if she is guarding a guard or a post player. To have a player who can do this is priceless and this is who she is for this team - priceless. Isabelle this year offensively is in the post with great post moves but she also has the ability to shoot the outside three

pointer. She leads the team in rebounding as well as free-throw percentage."

Buko has had five games were she has scored double digits and in the game at Valley Lutheran she had almost a double-double with 11 points with a total of nine assists."

Isabelle leads the team in plus minus number the team keeps per game and she is at a plus 14, meaning throughout any game she is doing the hard work such as getting deflections on defense, getting steals, creating turnovers, diving on the floor etc."



Saginaw Nouvel's Catherin Buko (Left) and Isabelle Patel (Right).

Alma Athlete Overcomes Injury To Achieve Her Goals

John Raffel Sports Scene

Alma's Paige Seeley has not allowed a severe injury to keep her out of the sports scene.

"After being injured her senior year, you can see how dedicated and committed she has been to her teammates in basketball and volleyball her senior year," athletic director Steve Humm said. "She battled through last spring in track and ran in limited meets. As a sophomore, she had qualified and ran at the state finals in Division 2."

"She is currently rehabbing from a surgery over the winter and plans to run track this spring."

Seeley said she was originally

hurt last year inbetween basketball and track.

"We had gone to different doctors and sports therapists but nobody knew what was wrong," she said. "They all said it was just muscle tightness. So I continued to run track season. It wasn't the track season I wanted. I was hurt but didn't know what was wrong. So I continued through my junior year of track and my senior year in volleyball."

"Halfway into October, we went to Helen DeVos, and they figured out it was a torn labrum. I couldn't play sports. I had to stop all physical activity. The fastest time they could get me in for surgery was Dec. 16. I had to

wait though the end of volleyball and get through the beginning of basketball."

She is currently rehabbing and planning to run track in the spring.

"My clear date to be able to start running is March 10," Seeley said. "I'm hopeful for a good track season."

Seeley had qualified for the state finals in three events as a sophomore: the open 800 meters, the 4x400 relay and the 4x800 relay. She was 13th in the 800.

For this spring, "I'm really confident," she said. "I've been doing a lot of rehab. I've been swimming. All I need to work on is getting back into it."

Last year she was four seconds off of the school record in the 800 despite being injured. She hopes to break the school record and qualify for the state meet.

"My family has helped me out a lot," she said. "If they weren't there to tell me to take it slow, I'd probably would keep trying to run right now. It's been hard to sit on the sidelines and watch all the sports."

Seeley has been given a track offering at Aquinas College and hasn't officially accepted it, but has given verbal confirmation. She will be a mid-distance runner in the NAIA.

"The key is having



Paige Seeley and Alma athletic director Steve Huff.

determination and working hard in every practice," Seeley said.

Sacred Heart Girls Hope To Be Contender

John Raffel Sports Scene

Alma's Paige Seeley has not allMount Pleasant Sacred Heart can't go undefeated, but the girls basketball team is still hoping to have a special postseason.

The Irish were 16-0 before losing

their first game of the season in mid-February, 42-31.

But Damon Brown still has high hopes for his team.

He's been coach 12 years.

"It's been a great season," Brown said, adding highlights include league wins over Merrill,

Breckenridge and Carson City-Crystal.

"We were very young last year and we spent a lot of time learning how to win," Brown said. "We have learned how to win close games."

Sophomore Delaney Scully "is having an excellent year. She has

developed into a solid scorer and had a career high 30 points vs. Vestaburg," Brown said, adding sophomore Madison Munley is providing a great inside scoring punch and solid defense.

"I like my players' energy and their passion for the game."



Delaney Scully is leading the way for Sacred Heart.

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East Lansing Hopeful Of State Contention

John Raffel Sports Scene

East Lansing girls aren't planning on being outshined by the boys team.

Led by Aaliyah Nye, the girls are steamrolling past the opponents with a 17-1 record as they head into the playoffs.

Nye is averaging 16.6 points and 5.4 rebounds per game, but isn't the only one contributing to the East Lansing attack

Sue Williams is at 3.2 assists per game, Sanaya Gregory at 2.6 steals per game and Ella Miller at 1.7 blocks per game.

East Lansing's only loss was to Aaliyah Nye (32), has led East Lansing to a 17-1 record.

Detroit Edison 65-48. But while East Lansing is in Division 1, Edison will be in a lower division for the post season,

With a few exceptions, most of East Lansing's wins have been lopsided. The Trojans, coached by Robert Smith, were slated to take on two-time defending champion Saginaw Heritage in late February.

Nye was first team All-state last year and third team All State in 2018. A scouting report on her called her an athletic combo guard who manufactures shots, delivers off the dribble in mid-range game, dribble-drive attack collapses the defense and is a 3-point opportunist.

Boys Basketball Rankings

Divisions 1-2

1. Mt. Pleasant 16-0
2. East Lansing, 15-1
3. Okemos 12-4
4. Williamston 16-2
5. Bridgeport 17-1
6. Carrollton 15-1
7. Ovid-Elsie 17-0
8. Ionia 13-3
9. Lansing Catholic 14-3
10. Lansing Eastern 11-5

Divisions 3-4

1. Pewamo-Westphalia 15-1
2. Hemlock 16-1
3. New Lothrop 15-2
4. Beaverton 13-3
5. Sanford-Meridian 14-3
6. Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart 13-3
7. Laingsburg 13-3
8. Saginaw Nouvel 11-5
9. Clare 12-5
10. Shepherd 12-5



Midland Bowler Leads Team To 13-0 League Mark

John Raffel Sports Scene

As far as Midland varsity boys bowling coach Trevor Terrill is concern, Izaak Goergen is among the reasons Midland is having such a successful boys bowling season.

Goergen is in his third varsity season. "He has done well but much more can be done," Terrill said. "He's fifth high in average in the SVL League. Outside of high school, he has rolled 299 and 300 this season. (Keys are) practice and bowling a lot. He's also working

on things that he wasn't successful at the last time he bowled. He's more of a leader, more controlled of the atmosphere around his teammates.

"He's mentally matured from bowling in high pressure situations. (Highlights have been) getting email saying he made first team all state last year. And watching both 299, 300 this year. (We expect) great bowling during the postseason and being the teammate we need to get this team to be successful at the next level. He's put in a lot of work, many singles tournaments and JR Gold Nationals. He's working on his game to

get to the next level."

Bowling is Goergen's lone high school sport.

"He's an all-around good kid, a true student of the sport and takes in a lot around the bowling alleys," Terrill said.

Midland just won the SVL 13-0, and is ranked No. 5 in Division 1.

"We are just where I thought we would be," Terrill said. "We have some work to complete our season. Highlights were shooting 2179 against Davison, second place at Mel Wolf Open and going undefeated in a tough SVL."



Midland bowling team.

Ithaca Boys Earn A League Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

Coach Wally Schneider's Ithaca bowling team had several excellent bowlers who contributed to a TVC championship season; He offered the following comments on each bowler:

Izzy Baumann - "Izzy is a junior in his first year on varsity. Izzy has had some great games for us this year and is another bowler that could be key for us in the post season. Izzy is usually the first person coming in off the bench for us. Izzy has improved tremendously this year and will be one of three returners next year."

Preston Pitcher - "Preston is a senior

leader of the team. He has been on varsity for three years. He finished this regular season with a 191 average and has a 278 high game."

Riley Vernon - "Riley is a junior on this year's team. This is his second year on varsity. He shares time at the anchor position with Pitcher. He is averaging 194 on the year."

Logan Coleman - "Logan is a senior on this year's team. This is his first year on varsity and he is averaging 186 on the year. Logan missed last season due to some personal issues but picked up right where he left off his sophomore year and has become a real leader on the team with a high game of 287."

Aaron Warn - "Aaron is

another senior on varsity for his first year. Aaron has been on the rise for the last 3 years on the JV program. Aaron has bowled solid all year and is one of the keys to our postseason goals."

Lucas Gruesbeck - "Lucas is a junior starting on varsity for the first time. Lucas has improved tremendously this year and has really solidified his spot as a starter on this year's squad."

Haden Avery - "This is Haden's first year bowling and he came out as a senior and made varsity. I really wish he would have come out as a freshman. Haden is extremely coachable and a good athlete. He is a very good spare shooter and that is going to serve us well in the postseason."



The Ithaca championship Ithaca boys bowling team.

Ithaca Girl Bowlers Snap Bullock Creek's Winning Streak

John Raffel Sports Scene

Feb. 15, 2020: Quite a day in TVC girls bowling history.

Ithaca's girls bowling team needed to snap Midland Bullock Creek's three-year 42-0 match play wins streak to get a share of the TVC title.

Ithaca got the job done.

"In match one against Bullock Creek, they shot out of the chute winning both bakers and a 10-0 lead," Ithaca coach Dan Macha said. "In the first Peterson they rolled to a 746-690 win and another seven points to

lock up the win. In game one, first-year bowler Sydney Sheets tossed a great 178-153 pair of lead off games to get us on track. Maddyson Space tossed a 166 and Fiona Woodrow a 160 for the crucial first game win. In game two, with the match in hand, they lost a close game 684-664. In game two, sophomore Skylar Cruz tossed a 168 to lead the team."

The final was Ithaca 22, Bullock Creek 8.

"Needing to finish the job the Ladyjackets came out on fire against the Carrollton squad," Macha said. "After starting off with a pair of Baker game wins and a 10-0 lead, they stayed focused and bowled a season

high game of 861 defeating the Cavs 861-617. Fiona Woodrow 224, Skylar Cruz 168, Maddyson Space 173, Megan Hunt 147 and Mary Silvers 149 posted the scores for season high game. They defeated the Cavs 28.5-1.5

"This team never fails to give me all they got. You girls really worked hard for this and I am geeked at what you did to cap off the season today. Winning the conference and halting a great team's 42-match win streak is quite an accomplishment. This group of bowlers worked really hard. One bowler decided to come out as a senior and was a pivotal reason we won. It's a rel determined team."



The Ithaca championship Ithaca girls bowling team.

Ithaca won the state title in 2016 and Macha said "this team kind of reminds me of that team. They're really determined."

Woodrow is a senior captain and has bowled for Macha since she was a freshman.

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DeWitt Cheer Bids For State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

DeWitt's competitive cheer squad is making a bid to move from sixth place last year in the state Division 2 finals to No. 1 this season as the state meeting approaches.

It's Candace Heskitt's 12th season as competitive cheer coach.

The team was CAAC Red league champs.

"It has been really fun watching the team grow this season," Heskitt said. "We got a late start due to a very successful fall football season so the girls are improving

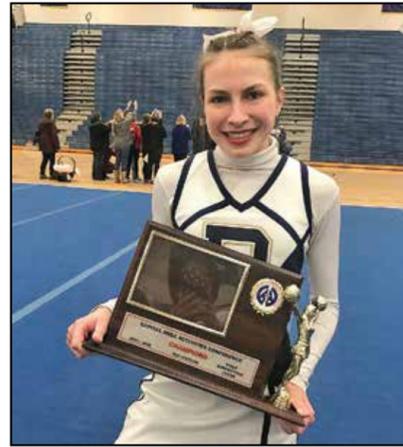
and peaking to the best of their ability at a great time. They are such a smart and strong team, physically and mentally. It's been very interesting to watch them grow.

"We have several returning athletes, so they have continued to improve as a core group while bringing new teammates into the fold. We have several returning 3 round athletes- Gabby Cooney, Aubrey McKinley, Mariah King, Maddy Boyle, Ashley Austin, Aubrey Chamberlain, Kyleigh Greenhoe, Anneliese Phillips and Hilary Ballard

Aubrey McKinley is a Center in Rounds 1 and 2 and Tumbler and Base in Round 3.

"I have had an incredible junior year," she said. "This season I have gotten very far mentally, but also physically and emotionally. I have learned to push myself past breaking points, and I have learned to find drive and motivation when I feel I am running on an empty tank. I have improved aspects of myself in every single round, and I am so excited to see how much I will improve going into finals.

"I feel the season I have led the team and motivated people to do their very best not only on the mat, but in practice as well. I feel this season is going to end very successful."



Paige Smith clutches the league championship trophy.

P-W Girls Hoping For Another State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

Memories still exist of Pewamo-Wesphalia's stunning Round 3 performance at the Delta Plex in Grand Rapids on last season to go from third place to first in the Division 4 state competitive cheer meet.

It's the school's ninth state title in the sport but first since 2010.

"It's exciting, very exciting," P-W coach Staci Myers, who has three state titles to her head coaching credit, said after the results were announced.

When the scores were announced, in reverse order, it was Meridian (762.68) in fourth, Adrian Madison (764.10) in

third, Hudson (780.06) in second and P-W by 0.36th of a point in first (780.42) by the narrowest of margins.

"We had a very exciting round 3," Myers said. "We had two major flipover stunts that were one of the big things we've done this year. We have a really good round three. They go out there and perform well. They're excited doing it. They hit it every time. We knew if they could hit it and do it flawlessly we could win."

"The other two rounds I thought were very good, too. We told them to have three solid rounds and they could win it."

Members of the P-W team were Miya Beech, Isabella Droste, Olivia Ferguson, Esmeralda Gonzalez,

Paige Hengesbach, Amalie Hillgsoe, Rachel Kent, Halie Myers, Ellie Pohl, Lindsey Pohl, Olivia Richard, Kelsey Russell, Ella Simon, Ella Smith, Anna Spitzley, Emma Tabor, Emma Thelen, Lauren Thelen and Cierra Van Ellis.

It's a new team this season but after winning the Chippewa Hills Invitational in mid-January, Myers was confident of having a special team once again.

"It's going really good," she said. "They're working real hard. They're working on all of their rounds to perfect them."

The Pirates graduated five seniors from last year's team.

"We had three freshmen join the team this year," Myers said.



Pewamo-Wesphalia Cheer Team.

"Everything is looking really well. They're peaking when they're supposed to be peaking, they're doing amazing. They're bonding well and having fun and really enjoying this year."

impressive performances at various meets this season. They took a divisional first place at Chippewa Hills.

"They're doing a lot better this year," coach Jenna Brown said. "We just restarted the program this year. We've been overcoming a lot of struggles."

Swan Valley

The Swan Valley team has had

Rockford Again Leads Field Of Gymnastics Teams

John Raffel Sports Scene

When it comes to contending for a state title, Rockford, as always, is expected to go after a state title, again.

Michelle Ankney is once again coaching the team in the OK Rainbow Conference

"We are undefeated in our conference," Ankney said. "We have won 2 of the 3 invites we have been to this year, placing second behind Farmington at the other invite. So far this team is meeting and exceeding expectations. There is a lot of talent on the team, and they are performing very well this season. They have big dreams coming up as we having conference, regionals, and state coming up in the next month.

Winning the Flip Flop Invitational in January was one of our biggest highlights of the year. Winning that meet meant that we beat last year's state champions (Farmington). At all three invitationals we have been at this year, the team

has been led by 5 all around athletes (Morgan Case (sr), Averi Nixon (sr), Ashley Faulkner (sr), Joey Gair (so), and Anna Tracey (so). At each invite, all five of the all arounders have placed in the top 10 for Division 2, which is an amazing accomplishment.

"There is a lot of improvement from last year. There are lots of new skills and lots more consistency from the athletes. We have been working on going out and hitting each routine. To be clean, precise - all while performing difficult skills. Their routines are fun to watch and they are all continuing to work on improving their routines.

Morgan Case, Ankney said, "Morgan has been our top all arounder this season. She is team captain and leader of the team. Her strongest events are floor and vault. She won all-around at both the Flip Flop Invitational and Kenowa Invitational."

Ashley Faulkner "is consistent on all events. She is continually working to improve her

events. She has a strong bar routine and helps lead our team with her strong bars. This year her beam has continued to improve and she won the beam title at the Kenowa Invitational."

Averi Nixon - Averi also competes all around. She is full of energy, strength, and no fear. She is a trickster and her top event is floor. She won floor at the Flip Flop and Kenowa Invitational.

Joey Gair - Joey is a stable and consistent contributor to the team across all events. She can be counted on to hit a routine when it is needed most. She has also continued to improve upon her routines throughout the year.

"Every member of the team is important, and everyone has made improvements since the beginning of the year. The most enjoyable part of coaching is watching everyone



Rockford's Morgan Case performs during a meet.

improve. It is also very enjoyable watching them all get along, cheer each other along, and have big goals for this season."



Breckenridge Player Finishing Hockey Career

John Raffel Sports Scene

When he can't play golf, Chase Schmitz loves playing hockey.

Being from Breckenridge, he plays for the Tri-Valley Titans co-op hockey team.

Besides Breckenridge, the other schools involved in the coop are Swan Valley (primary team), Hemlock, Michigan Lutheran Seminary and Bullock Creek. They practice at the Dow Center and usually play their games at the Saginaw Bay Ice Arena.

Schmitz is a senior playing this third year for the team.

He plays center.

"We're doing all right, but not a good as we want," Schmitz said. "We're around .500."

Schmitz has scored a combined 20 points.

"This is my best year so far," he said. "It's a matter of more practice and growing in the offseason."

An overtime win over Freeland-Valley Lutheran remains a career highlight.

Schmitz is the only Breckenridge player. He's been in the sport 11 years. He previously played for the Saginaw Junior Spirits, the Midland North Stars travel team and the Tri-City Ice Hawks.

He's also on the golf team. Last year, he switched between being the No. 1 and two golfer. He averages in the low 40s for nine holes.

"I like hockey and golf about both the same," Schmitz said. "I might try to play club hockey (in college)."

Chase Schmitz of Breckenridge. Photo courtesy of Heidi McGrandy.

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The Midland Dow Hockey Team.

Midland Dow Off To 18-4 Start

John Raffel Sports Scene

Dick Blasy's Midland hockey team enters the postseason with high hopes of going for a few titles.

The Chargers were 18-4 after their first 22 games and looking to do more.

"We play a pretty tough schedule," Blasy said. "At the end of December, we had six games in a short period of time, it was a grind. There some of these wins that were very rewarding. You could tell we were tired. But yet, we found a way to win, just by digging and grinding.

"It's a great group of boys. You can see they all compete and they all play hard. coaches sleep well at night when coaches are trying their hardest. We do a good job with our speed of suffocating other team's players and not giving them time or space."

Luke Blasy, a senior, has been leading the team in scoring. This marks his third varsity year.

"Personally, I'm a scrappy player. I get the puck down low and I try banging it in," he said. "I get shots on net. If it's there, it's there."

From the standpoint of

consistency, it's been Blasy's best season.

"The key to Dow's success "is coming out on our toes," Blasy said. "If we're ever flatfooted, we might be caught on our heels which we shouldn't."

Blasy is hopeful Dow will make a strong run in the tournament.

"We can't have any major setbacks, but go uphill and stay there," Blasy said.

"The team had an eight-game win streak in January with wins over opponents such as Grand Blanc Big Rapids, Midland and Flint Powers.

Oiler Goaltender Having Solid Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Mount Pleasant has been enjoying a winning record, thanks especially to the reliable talents of goaltender Stuart MacDonald

MacDonald has been on the varsity four seasons.

"Stuart has been the backbone of our team this year. He has given us the chance to compete every night," coach Steve Watz said. "He has over 90 percent save percentage. He has high work

ethic, dedication to his position, excellent conditioning and the highest compete level of anyone on his team.

"He's bigger, stronger, quicker, more technical at his position than he was a year ago. When pulled from last year's Regional Final, he came off the ice smiling (down 6-0). He said it was the best experience in his career and he was excited about next year already. We want him to continue his level of play and if possible, ramp it up."

MacDonald was in a Futurepro goalie camp and split season AAA in Lansing.

"Stuart is a great leader in the locker room and a huge inspiration/role model to our incoming goalies," Watz said.



Mount Pleasant goalie Stuart MacDonald.

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AREA SWIM/SKI ROUND UP

Area Swimmers Rounding Into Form As State Meets Approach

Greg Chrapek Sports Scene

MIDLAND DOW

Ranked third in the state in Division 2, the Midland Dow swim team is in the midst of a standout season.

The Chargers flexed their muscles at the Tri-Cities swimming and diving championships which they won for the 18th straight season. Senior standout Collin Che led the way for Dow as he won both the 100 butterfly and 200 freestyle in meet-record times. Che was also a member of the 200 free relay and 200 medley relay teams that took first. Luke Lezotte picked up wins in the 50 and 100 free and was also part of two relay wins. Louie Sun and Conrad Varhola were part of three wins while Mark VanHeel and Joseph Krzciok were two-time winners. Freshman

Thomas Bacigalupo made a big splash as he won the 500 freestyle.

Dow swimmers followed up that performance with some big efforts at the MISCA state meet at Michigan State University. The 400 free relay team of Che, Brendan Ladwein, Krzciok and Lezotte and the 200 free relay team of Che, Krzciok, Sun and Lezotte both took first place.

DEWITT

The DeWitt swim team is ranked among the honorable mention in the state in Division 3. The Panthers picked up a close league win when they edged East Lansing 97-89. Dillon Blair led the way as he won the 100 butterfly and 100 freestyle while Nathan Schluckebier won the 100 breaststroke and 500 freestyle.

OKEMOS

Defending state champion diver Hunter

Hollenbeck is turning in a huge year. Hunter took first place in the diving competition at the MISCA state meet with a score of 524.70, winning the title by almost 30 points over his closest contender. Evan Singletary is also putting together a strong season as he has the top times in the CAAC Blue in both the 50 and 100 freestyle.

MASON

Led by junior standout Jonas Cantrell, the Mason swim team is ranked ninth in the state in Division 3.

A returning all-state swimmer, Cantrell won the 200 freestyle and placed second in the 500 freestyle at the MISCA state meet. The Bulldogs lead the way in the CAAC Red this year led by Cantrell along with diver Gavin Smith and Liam Boomer who has the top time in the league in the 100 butterfly.

HASLETT

Haslett is led by a pair of the top swimmers



Mason junior Jonas Cantrell is a returning all-state swimmer and is one of the top all-around swimmers in mid-Michigan.

in the CAAC Red. Benjamin Trotochaud has the top time in the league in the 200 freestyle while Carl Gillengarten has the top time in the 100 breaststroke.

Mount Pleasant Skiers Shine

John Raffel Sports Scene

Martha Zeiter has been coaching a Mt. Pleasant High School boys and girls Skiing team that has done well in the Central Alpine Ski Conference.

"Overall we had a good season, improving from last year's results," Zeiter said. "We had several strong individual finishes at the bigger races. Boys and girls both finished second in conference standings behind Clare. We knew our boys' team was strong going into the season.

We had some tough breaks with a few athletes at several races, but overall we met expectations.

"Our boys' team won the first two conference match-ups. Rena Angera, Gabby Moutsatson, Adam Friedlein, and Brett Seelye received All-Conference awards in both slalom and giant slalom. Rena Angera and Adam Friedlein qualified for state finals in both events. We graduated two senior girls from last year, so the girls' team was very young this year. Our boys' team improved significantly and placed well in

conference races."

Rena Angera, a junior, was all-conference slalom and giant slalom, All-Region, and qualified for state finals in both events.

Adam Friedlein, a senior, was all-conference slalom and giant slalom, all-region, and qualified for state finals in both events.

"Both teams should be strong next year, especially the boys," Zeiter said. "They are losing two strong seniors, but will be gaining a very talented freshman."



Rena Angera and Adam Friedlein of Mount Pleasant.



Clare Skiers Take Titles

John Raffel Sports Scene

Tim Gariglio has been coaching skiing at Clare for 21 and had two unique teams for 2020.

Both teams were conference conference champions and fourth in the regionals, Leah Palmer

state qualifier in GS.

"Both teams have really been a surprise this season," Gariglio said. "Last year I lost six seniors (four boys and two girls). The girls have been a force in the conference as they have dominated every race. Girls won the conference championship. The boys lost the

first two to Mount Pleasant and bounced back and won the last three, also claiming the conference championship."After losing some really good skiers last year both teams have really stepped up, worked hard, and improved a lot this season. Both teams were so close to qualifying for the state finals. I don't think

anyone expected that at the end of last season. Every week a different skier has shined on both these teams."

As for the future, "the girls are young this year and the boys are picking up three incoming freshman who are going to make some noise. The future looks very good for this program."

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