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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Hello sports fans.  
It's a great day at High School Sports Scene Magazine.

It has been nearly six months since we have published a magazine giving exposure and highlighting the accomplishments of our student athletes in this great state of ours.

We are so happy to be back!!!

One thing we all have learned through the past few months is to be patient, stay positive and to love and help all those around us.

I lost my best friend March 16th as this virus took not only our state but the nation and world by storm and I feel for all who have suffered with losses and pain during these trying times. But through it all life goes on. Treasure the precious times we have with each other and our loved ones.

Within this issue we concentrated on fall sports. Among the events we highlighted were the MHSAA golf and tennis finals and championships. We took a look at football teams and volleyball, soccer and cross-country teams heading into their respective state tournaments. With the pandemic bringing on such fluid situations, it is unknown if athletes in these sports will be able to complete their tournaments and seasons. No matter what, we will persevere. Our student athletes have great resiliency and have demonstrated a great ability to cope with whatever life and this pandemic deal their way. We all are doing the best we can and making the necessary sacrifices and adjustments to our daily lives.

We will make it through.

Thank you to all of our wonderful sponsors who have continued to persevere. Thank you to all of our teachers, coaches, administrators, first responders and to all of our loyal readers and supporters that help keep the focus on our kids.

See you on the field!



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# Athletes Beat The Pandemic To Keep Playing

## John Raffel Sports Scene

"We just want to play."  
Ever since the MHSAA canceled spring sports, because of COVID 19, athletes have echoed one general phrase: "We just want to play."

Through all sorts of meeting, discussions, compromises and solutions, fall sports took place while the MHSAA announced on Oct. 23 winter sports will continue.

Football was originally switched to the spring then came back to the fall. Schedules were abbreviated, face masks and social distancing were required. Fan participation was limited and many teams have had to go into quarantine.

But sports are still taking place. "The MHSAA has done a great job in keeping us informed as we work our way through this school year," Ithaca athletic director Terry Hessbrook. "Our school has been consistent in following the Governor's orders as they have been announced. We feel strongly that we are doing a good job. Obviously we can all do better but we are work in progress like everyone."

"The biggest challenge to our athletic office is the constantly changing schedules. We as an athletic department like to do things a certain way and we simply have had to adapt and adjust this year. Moving forward, we are not sure how the winter season will look but we will continue to follow orders placed in front of us."

Saginaw Heritage athletic director Justin Thorington agreed.

"To the best of the (MHSAA's) ability, I feel like they have navigated the political issues surrounding the virus while emphasizing student-athlete safety," he said. "By and large, our coaches and kids have done an excellent job -- especially considering we've never had to operate during a pandemic."

The biggest challenge for athletes: Masks.

Swimmers, golfers, tennis players and cross country runners have been exempted from wearing masks. "It is difficult to play in masks," Thorington said. "I feel for the

kids who are doing cardiovascular activities with a mask on. Even more of a challenge are some adults; there are spectators who also can't seem to respect the rules and wear a mask or wear it properly."

The MHSAA said for winter sports under Michigan Department of Health and Human Services requirements face coverings must be worn by athletes practicing and competing in basketball, competitive cheer, ice hockey and wrestling. "I feel the MHSAA has tracked and addressed the COVID issue as well as anyone else," Lakewood athletic director Mike Quinn said. "They continue to push forward when many didn't think they would, or could. Their efforts have provided our students with opportunities that few saw coming."

"I believe at this point, Lakewood has progressed along quite well, we have yet to have an event canceled due to any COVID issues on our end and have not had to send any student-athletes home or quarantine any. We felt we could do it, we felt we could do it safely, and we felt that we could provide honest competition for our student-athletes, and to this point, we have been right."

But ticket issues have been an issue for Quinn.

"Our community really supports our programs and having limited tickets available, I believe, has alienated some of our people," Quinn said.

"I feel that the MHSAA, and specifically, Mark Uyl, has done an exemplary job in advocating for our student-athletes and pushing back with the governor's office to make sure athletics happened," Karl Schmutge, Michigan Lutheran Seminary athletic director, said. "We have had no positive cases with complete in-person instruction, with students living in the dorms, eating in the cafeteria, and riding on buses." Schmutge agreed the biggest challenge has been "to encourage everyone to wear their face coverings properly, covering mouth and nose. And it has been a challenge to wade through all the guidelines and to find ways for our spectators to attend games."

Farwell athletic director Michael Groulx concurred.

"I do not believe we could have asked for



Ithaca and other football programs were slated for the spring but moved back to the fall.

a better organization to represent our school districts and fight for our student-athletes other than MHSAA," Groulx said. "They were transparent the entire way and worked tirelessly to have plans in place and adapted to all the changes with every new executive order. Safety was always at the forefront of their decisions."

"Kids are resilient and I believe not only our student-athletes, but the entire Jack Pine Conference student-athletes, have not blinked an eye in terms of compliance, sportsmanship and overall excitement."

Athletic director John Norton, of Cedar Springs has this concern of the future:

"Losing significant amount of team members during the state tournament due to contract tracing; safety first, but it could be an unfortunate ending to a senior's last season."

"With the information they had, the MHSAA probably handled it as well as they could have," Greenville athletic director Brian Zdanowski said. "Overall, I think competing interests kept athletic departments in an 'I don't know' mode for far too long and the back and forth, stop, start, stop, start back up was very hard on everyone involved."

"Our kids, coaches, and parents have been amazingly resilient."

"We have had the occasional person who did not want to follow procedures," Reese athletic director Kerry Messing said. "Also, some places and some individuals do not want to follow mask rules for various reasons."

"Frankly, I do not care. Wear a mask simply to care about someone besides yourself. I had a plethora of parents tell me in August they didn't care if they went to games, but they just wanted their kid to have a season. Immediately, as standards were set, some people just wanted to ignore them."

Being both students and athletes during the pandemic has been a challenge, Lansing Christian athletic director Bonnie Binioris said.

"Lansing Christian School crafted a plan over the summer months that prioritized in-person learning five days a week," she said. "We are able to not just meet the requirements, but exceed the recommendations which allow our students face to face education. We have a dedicated staff who comes to work each day, despite the risk, to educated students."

"We offer a synchronous learning option for students to engage remotely when unable to be on campus and teaches the ability to teach remotely, when they too, are unable to be on campus."

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Ithaca receiver Zach Poff has been a playmaker in the passing game for the Yellowjackets this season.

# Veteran Leaders Carrying On The Winning Tradition For Ithaca Football

## David Cook Sports Scene

Led by a talented and veteran senior class, the Ithaca football team is continuing its winning tradition this season.

Ithaca's senior class is a big reason behind the team's 5-0 start to the regular season. The Yellowjackets opened the season with a 47-27 win against Saginaw Nouvel and has not looked back since.

"The season has been very successful to this point," said Ithaca coach Terry Hessbrook. "We have lots of distractions like everyone but our kids have handled things very well."

A major reason the team has been able to overcome the distractions has been the leadership of the senior group.

"The team is a veteran

group," Hessbrook said, "so they have been very flexible with all of the changes that we have had to deal with since March."

Ithaca is a team with plenty of strong points on both the offensive and defensive side of the football.

"Strong points so far this season have been many," Hessbrook said. "We have a great group of guys together on this team. They have played together for a long time. The offense has been playing very well and putting up points each week."

On the offensive side of the football the Yellowjackets have been in top gear since the season-opening kickoff. Ithaca has scored 50-plus points in three of the five wins and more than 39 points in the other two wins.

Senior quarterback Brady

Hessbrook, who recently made a commitment to Wayne State University, is turning in a big season. Hessbrook tossed 17 touchdown passes in four games despite not playing in the second half of two of them. Hessbrook is a dangerous dual-threat quarterback who has passed for 1,174 yards and 19 touchdowns during the first five games of the season while rushing for 272 yards and six touchdowns.

Fellow senior Zach Poff, who has committed to the University of Dayton, has been one of the main receiving targets. Poff has hauled in 23 passes for 408 yards and six touchdowns.

"Zach is so explosive," Hessbrook said. "He has the potential to go the distance on any play. Our offensive line has to receive a great deal

of the credit because we go nowhere without them."

The Ithaca defense is also turning in a big season and improving from week to week.

"The strong point on defense has to be our team speed," Hessbrook said. "We get to the football very well." Derek Draher is our guy in the middle. We all rally around him. He is a very physical player that loves to make tackles."

The Yellowjacket lineup is filled with players stepping up big this season.

"Chance Risner is kind of our unsung hero guy," Hessbrook said. "He does a lot of the dirty work on offense. Jesse SOrsen has played very well on offense. Grant Weburg has been playing very well in the secondary on defense."r

# Young Fowler Football Team Overcomes Challenges To Post Winning Record

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Fowler football team may not have as much experience as usual, but with a drive to improve and learn the Eagles are learning their lessons fast and piling up wins in the process.

A young squad without a slew of veteran returnees, the Eagles opened the season with four consecutive wins before falling to defending Division 7 state champion Pewamo-Westphalia in week five. Fowler opened the season with a 40-6 win against Pottersville followed by a 35-14 win against Dansville, a 23-7 win against Sara-

nac and a 27-6 win against Bath.

"The season has been a slow process with all the youth on this year's team," said Fowler coach John Spicer, "but we improve every day. Our young kids have worked hard to continue to get better every day."

Along with getting acclimated to varsity football, Fowler's young players have also had to deal with the challenges of the Coronavirus.

"This group has done a great job of adapting to covid," Spicer said. "They stayed the course through all the ups and downs and continued to work hard."

The hard work has paid off. On

the offensive side of the ball the Eagles have showed plenty of skill in moving the ball while the defense has played strong the entire season and held the high-powered Pewamo-Westphalia offense to its lowest point total of the season.

On offense, junior quarterback Chase Pung has provided the team with steady play.

"Chase has been the standout offensively," Spicer said. "He's our junior quarterback and has done a great job running our offense."

On the defensive side of the ball a collective effort has been a key to the team's success.

"Defensively, our seniors have

been our strong points," Spicer said. "Dominic Horak has been our leader defensively. He was our leading tackler last year and has been so far this year. And Kaleb Thompson has been solid on the defensive line."

With the covid-shortened regular season coming to an end, the Eagles are looking forward to making a run in the Division 8 playoffs as all high school teams are eligible for the playoffs this season.



Defense has been a total team effort for the Fowler football team and the strong defensive effort has enabled the Eagles to start the season with a 4-1 record.

"This year I think the only way the playoffs work is to let everyone in," Spicer said. "Our goal is to continue to get better every day and play as much football as we can this year."



Mason senior quarterback Chance Strickland provides the Bulldogs with offense both as a passer and as a runner.

# Mason Football Counts On Total-Team Effort To Put Together A Winning Encore This Season

## David Cook Sports Scene

After turning in a 9-1 overall record last year the question for the Mason football team heading into this year was what could the Bulldogs do for an encore.

With the Covid-19 regular season coming to an end, the Bulldogs are turning in an impressive encore performance.

After opening the season with a 34-26 win against Haslett, the Bulldogs have strung together wins against Eaton Rapids, St. Johns and Fowlerville and then defeated defending Division 5 state champions Lansing Catholic 45-21.

"So far, the season has progressed very well," said Mason coach Gary Houghton. "We have

been getting better every week. I can't ask for anything more than that."

A variety of factors have led to Mason's success this year. Every unit on the team has come together and improved as well.

"The strong points have been our conditioning, our team chemistry, our running game and our defense," Houghton said. "Our passing game is catching up quickly."

The Bulldogs also handled the challenges of the pandemic.

"Our team has accepted the COVID-19 protocol changes very well," Houghton said. "They understand the necessity for our safety and to save our season."

On offense, the Bulldogs feature a strong ground game complemented by an effective passing

attack. Senior quarterback Chance Strickland paces the offense. In the win against Lansing Catholic Strickland connected on 12-of-15 passes for 146 yards while rushing for 46 yards and a touchdown. At running back Alex Charlot and AJ Martel have provided strong play. Charlot rushed for 96 yards and scored two touchdowns against Lansing Catholic while Martel rushed for 76 yards and two touchdowns. Jackson Lockwood, Ethan Bond and Chance Mullings provide excellent targets in the passing game.

The success of the defense has received contributions from all 11 players on the field.

"Our strong point on defense has been our defensive line and our whole team's ability to

do their job and rely on their teammate's ability to do their jobs," Houghton said. "Standouts on defense have been Mason Stewart, Ethan Bond, Chance Strickland, Jackson Lockwood, James Horn, Connor Williamson, Dawson Jenkins and Logan Trimmer."

With the regular season nearing an end, the Bulldogs are looking forward to making a deep playoff run.

"I like the expanded playoffs for this year," Houghton said. "Six games aren't the best way to determine who is in and who is not. Our goals for every game are to create three turnovers, limit our own turnovers to zero, limit big plays on defense and create big plays on offense. If we do these things, the wins will come."

# Veteran Players Have Williamston Football Team On A Winning Path This Season

## David Cook Sports Scene

Heading into the season, Williamston football coach Steve Kersten knew he had a special group of players. With the regular season winding down, those thoughts proved spot on.

With talented players on all levels of offense and defense, the Hornets opened the football season reeling off five straight wins.

"We had a great start," said Kersten. "We knew coming into the season that we had some real nice players both as athletes and as people. I had an inkling that these guys could be a real nice team and they have definitely proven that true. With their work ethic and the senior leadership we have on the team,

it's been a pleasure to coach them."

At the heart of the team is a smart and talented offensive line.

"Anytime you have a good offensive line in high school football good things happen," Kersten said. "Our offensive line has done an outstanding job of pass blocking and run blocking. They are also a super-intelligent group who together have a grade-point average of around 4.0. One of them, Preston Carpenter, may be the smartest student in the school."

Carpenter lines up at offensive guard along with Nate Holcomb, tackles Owen Denk and Jaegar Woelmer and center Miller McCutcheon. Tight end/H-back Zach Painter is also a big part of the blocking

schemes.

The line provides plenty of protection for quarterback Luke Mahaney and running back Sullivan Sparks.

"Luke is a tough, gutty competitor," Kersten said. "He is an accurate passer with a huge heart."

Sullivan is a tough kid with great vision. He finds the hole and puts his shoulders down and gets the tough yards."

The Hornets have a number of targets for Mahaney to throw to. Cade Conley provides a big target at tight end while Jacob Duncel and Elijah Douglass provide good moves and sure hands at receiver.

On the defensive side of the ball, Williamston has a number of veterans that lead the way. Defensive end Rudy

Gaytan and Painter at inside linebacker are strong against the run and in pass defense.

"Rudy has done a great job of stopping the run and getting after the passer," Kersten said. "He has taken his game to the next level this year."

Avery Lott is also a stand-out run stopper at inside linebacker. Holcomb and Woelmer provide strength against the run at nose tackle. Caden Plaxton has developed into a shutdown cornerback while Duncel is a standout at free safety and Conley has been a force at a defensive end position.

"We have a great bunch of kids this year," Kersten said. "We have a veteran coaching staff and the kids have bought in. Things are going very, very well."



The Williamston offense has been getting key contributions from a number of players including quarterback Luke Mahaney and running back Sullivan Sparks.

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# Hemlock Meets All Challenges As It Turns In Big Season

## David Cook Sports Scene

Playing in the rugged Tri Valley Conference West 1 Division, the Hemlock Huskies knew winning a league title would be a major challenge. Thanks to a determined group of players, the Huskies were able to meet all challenges and claim the league title.

"We are where we planned to be," said Hemlock coach Adam Clark. "We understood completely how difficult those goals were going to be. Our division is absolutely loaded with returning talent this season, including us."

Having an experienced core of players to build around has been key for a Hemlock that won its first five games this season.

"We are an experienced team," Clark said. "That matters if you have a group that learns from their previous experience. We do. We

are also very athletic for a public Division 7 team. As coaches, we are able to alter schemes every week that uniquely fit the schematics of the next opponent. That is not always the case from a physical skill standpoint or a mental understanding perspective. This team can handle alterations to best place them into positions to be successful."

Hemlock has used its athleticism on offense to score four or more touchdowns in four of its first five wins this season. Quarterback Dylan LaGrow and running back Robert Knapik are among the leaders of the offense.

"Dylan is the most cerebral quarterback I've had," Clark said. "I've had the privilege to coach seven all-state players at the quarterback position in my career. Dylan is highly intelligent and keeps us in advantageous situations a high percentage of the time.

At running back, Robert is about as explosive and skilled of an athlete you will see at this level. He is a special player that can produce six points on any given play."

Defense is also a strong suit for the Huskies. Hemlock clinched the league title by winning a 12-6 defensive struggle against Millington in the battle of conference unbeaten in week five.

"It starts with physicality," Clark said. "Brayden Green is a 6-foot-3, 225-pound inside linebacker that is all about being physical. It starts there. We are athletic up front and in the back end, while stout on the edge. Our kids are competitively intelligent, most of the time.

The Hemlock defense is also receiving strong play from JD Schnell at nose tackle, Jeremy Wazny at outside linebacker, LaGrow at cornerback, Corbin Larkin at free safety and Knapik at strong safety.

The Huskies have also had to

overcome adversity this season. Not only dealing with Covid-19 but injuries as well.

"One of our most talented senior players, Michael Zolinski, was lost to a season-ending knee injury during the first game," Clark said. "Michael is an athletic freak that stands 6-foot-4 and weighs 215 pounds. He and Green were about as intimidating an inside linebacker presence as it gets at this level. Losing Michael was an emotional blow to him personally and us as a team. I'm very proud of how Michael has handled the disappointment and is attacking his rehab to hopefully get back for basketball."



Hemlock running back Robert Knapik provides a big-play threat anytime he touches the ball for the Huskies.

With Zolinski out, a trio of players stepped up to make up for the loss.

"Espino Miller and Alix Brentritz have been outstanding on defense in Michael's absence and Max Dinninger has really flourished at tight end," Clark said. "Despite the disappointment, our team has rallied to keep on moving in a positive direction."

# Undefeated DeWitt Keeps Scoreboard Lighted Up With Points This Season

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The DeWitt football team has had some explosive offenses over the year and this year's edition is taking its place among the best.

Through the first five games of the Covid-19 shortened regular season, the Panther offense is putting up a blistering 49.4 points per game. DeWitt is also putting the points up against some of its top competition as it outlasted rival Grand Ledger 64-38 and bested Detroit Catholic League power Warren De La Salle 43-3.

"I'm extremely happy," said DeWitt coach Rob Zimmerman. "We

have been getting better every week and that is key to having a successful season."

With 16 starters returning this season, DeWitt knew it had the elements for not only a successful offense but a strong defense as well.

"We have a lot of experience," Zimmerman said. "We also have outstanding leadership and great team unity. The kids get along really well."

On offense, quarterback Tyler Holtz leads one of the most explosive passing games in the state. Holtz has completed 65-of-99 passes for 1,375 yards with 20 touchdowns and zero interceptions. Holtz has a wealth of receivers to throw to including

junior Tommy McIntosh (17 receptions, 480 yards and nine touchdowns), Luke Bresser (18 receptions, 341 yards and six touchdowns), Nick Flegler (eight receptions, 193 yards and one score) and Bryce Debr (13 receptions, 239 yards and two touchdowns).

"We have very good team speed and Tyler throws the ball extremely well," Zimmerman said. "Our defense has also been outstanding. Our defense is very physical and they pursue the ball very well. We allowed just three points against De La Salle and we have been getting better on defense each week."

Debr and senior linebacker Grant Uyl are team captains and are among

the leaders on the team along with senior lineman Connor Porchert and senior outside linebacker Blake Beachnau who has four sacks this season.

DeWitt has a long list of talented players making an impact on both sides of the ball. Kyren Geller is a two-year starter at center and is an anchor of the offensive line. Cooper Brumfield is a returning starter at safety. Garrett Schutte is a two-year starter returning on the defensive line along with



DeWitt quarterback Tyler Holtz has passed for 1,375 yards and 20 touchdowns during the first five games of the season.

Connor McKean also a returning starter on the defensive line.

Debr leads the DeWitt defense with 38 tackles followed by Uyl with 22, Brumfield and Beachnau with 20 and Flegler and Cameron Reynolds with 16 apiece.

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# Rebuilding Project Going On Schedule For Beal City Football Team

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

State finalists in Division 8 last year, the Beal City football team faced some rebuilding heading into this season.

With the Covid-shortened regular season nearing an end, the rebuilding project is progressing on schedule for the Aggies who opened the season with a 4-1 record.

"We have been doing pretty good," said Beal City coach Brad Gross. "We have a bunch of new guys filling in nicely and we are off to a good start."

On the offensive side of the ball,

quarterback Jake Gross has stepped in and provided the Aggies with timely passing and a threat as a runner.

"Jake has done a nice job of leading the team," said coach Gross. "He had a real good passing game against Mantion. He's done what we have needed him to do this year."

Ben Matthews and Cade Block have led the ground game for Beal City providing the team with a pair of talented running backs. Freshman Jamison Latham has also stepped up at running back and cornerback on defense.

Up front, the offensive line is led by Ethan Locke and Cam Lynch.

"We are a run-first team," Gross said. "That is something we've always kind of done. When the time comes you have to be able to throw the ball and we have been able to throw it when we've had to."

On the defensive side of the ball, Ethan Locke has been leading the way at his linebacker position. Senior Marcus Kent has stepped up at the cornerback position and senior Terrell Zuker along with Wade Wilson have been leaders on defense.

"We play more of a team defense," Gross said. "We depend on guys to do their jobs to make the defense strong."

Beal City running back Ben Matthews (5) looks for running room as Ethan Locke (56) provides the blocking.



# Midland Football Team Realizing Potential In A Big Way This Season

## David Cook Sports Scene

Heading into the season, Midland head coach Eric Methner knew he had a team with plenty of potential. Five weeks later, the potential has paid off with some impressive performances.

With plenty of speed and skill on offense, Midland has scored 40 or more points in all five of its wins as it is closing in on consecutive Saginaw Valley League Red Division championships.

"We have been playing good," Meth-

ner said. "We have a three-year starter at quarterback in Al Money and he is the straw that stirs the drink for our offense. We also have a two-year starter at running back in Drew Johnson and that gives us a pretty good one-two punch. We also have some very capable receivers led by Eli Gordon."

Midland has plenty of playmakers that it can call on offensively and that is a big reason why the Chemic are putting up 46.4 points per game. Junior Ty Smith has made plenty of big plays in the passing game and junior tight

end Drew Barrie is another playmaker on the perimeter.

While the offense has been busy lighting up the scoreboard, Midland's defense has proven to be a tough hurdle for opposing offenses to score on.

Drew Johnson leads the defense at his middle linebacker position while Eli Gordon is a three-year starter at safety. Hunter Kruger leads the charge along the defensive front with Chase Mahabir stepping up big at linebacker and Nick Dauer providing big plays in the secondary.

"We've been able to take our veteran leaders and supplement them with some pretty good juniors," Methner said. "We've also had some sophomores who were in backup roles last year step up and really help us out defensively."

Last season ended with Midland falling to eventual Division 2 state champion Muskegon Mona Shores by just seven points in the first round of the playoffs. This season, the Chemics are determined to make an even deeper playoff push.

"I like how we are progressing," Methner said. "One of our goals for the season is to get better each week and we are doing that. Obviously, we have some things to clean up execution wise but we are making progress. We're excited to be playing and really happy with how the season is turning out."

The Midland offense has been difficult for defenders to stop this season as the Chemics are averaging 46.4 points per game.



# New Lothrop Seems Set To Make Another Title Bid

## John Raffel Sports Scene

New Lothrop fired out to a 4-0 record and appears to be a serious state title contender again.

Among the reasons is the talents of Will Muron, a third-year varsity player.

"So far, Will has performed as expected and that's as one of the top athletes in the area," New Lothrop coach Clint Galvas said. "Week 2 vs Byron he scored four touchdowns in four different ways. He returned the opening kickoff 75 yards for a touchdown. Later he returned a punt for a touchdown and added two more throughout the game running one in and receiving one."

Will is a guy who wants the ball in his hands. When the lights are the brightest, he wants the rock. He has really grown this season as a tremendous

leader as well. I love his attitude every day. He comes in and can make you laugh with his personality, but when it's time to strap up he becomes another guy and wants nothing more than to dominate on the field.

"Will always has high expectations for himself. He wants to once again help lead this team on a deep run and get another crack at a state title. In his mind, nothing else will be acceptable. I stated above he works his tail off every off-season. He has really focused on his agility and mobility this off season and it has been evident early on. He is one of the top track runners in the area. Also, he runs indoor track in the winter."

Galvas likes the looks of this season's team. New Lothrop had an 11-1 record last season, finishing as league champs

and district champs before losing to PW 36-35 in the regional finals.

"I think our running attack on the offensive side should continue to shine as we have two all state caliber backs with an experienced offensive line," Galvas said. "Defensively I believe our front 7 is as good as we have ever had here at New Lothrop. Offensively, I believe the more games and experience we get under our belts the more dangerous we can be. Cam (Orr) is continuing to grow as a quarterback and will continue to get better and better throughout the season. He is a big strong athlete with a great arm and know what it takes to win. He was the 215-pound state champion in wrestling. He has what it takes to lead our team to another successful season."

Will Muron, a third-year varsity player, is a dangerous weapon for New Lothrop football.



Will Muron, a third-year varsity player, is a dangerous weapon for New Lothrop football.

# Football Playoffs Wide Open This Year As Every Team In The State Is Eligible

## David Cook Sports Scene

The MHSAA football state tournament has a totally new look this year as every team in the state is eligible. Following is High School Sports Scene Magazine's look at what should be a wild and crazy football playoff.

### DIVISION 1

The top contenders: Clarkston, Plymouth Canton, Belleville.

Local teams to watch: **ROCKFORD;** Led by junior quarterback Zak Ahern, grandson of Lansing Catholic and former Ithaca head coach Jim Ahern, the Rockford Rams have turned in an unbeaten, although abbreviated season. A dangerous dual-threat quarterback, Ahern led the Rams to a big conference win against

undefeated Grandville in the regular-season finals.

**DAVISON;** Last year's Division 1 state champions, the Cardinals still feature standout quarterback Brendan Sullivan who is capable of leading the team along way along with running backs Carter Cryderman and Te'Avion Warren.

### DIVISION 2

The top contenders: East Lansing, Port Huron, Muskegon Mona Shores.

Local teams to watch: **EAST LANSING;** ranked first in the state in Division 2, the Trojans are loaded and are looking to capture their first state championship since winning a Class A state championship in 1991. East Lansing feature a versatile and high-powered offense led by

quarterback Ambrose Wilson and standout wide receiver Andre Anthony operating behind a powerful offensive line led by tackle Ethan Boyd.

**MIDLAND DOW;** With quarterback Al Money firing passes to receivers like Eli Gordon, Ty Smith and Martin Bradley the Chemics can score points with any team in the state. Remember, Dow fell by just a touchdown to last year's eventual D2 state champion Muskegon Mona Shores in the opening round of last year's playoffs.

### DIVISION 3

The top contenders: Muskegon, Chelsea, DeWitt, River Rouge.

Local teams to watch; **DEWITT;** The Panthers fell seven points short against Muskegon in last year's state semifinals. With a high-powered offense led by quarterback Tyler Holtz, the Panthers are on a mission to make it to the championship game. Having 16 returning starters helps.

**MASON;** The undefeated Bulldogs enter the playoffs off impressive back-to-back wins against Lansing Catholic and Williamston. With a potent offense and stingy defense Mason can make a long playoff run.

**MT. PLEASANT;** Quarterback Ryan McIntyre pilots a productive offense that can move the ball both through the air and on the ground behind a pair of talented running backs in Mark Goenner and Da-Vee Abinojar.

### DIVISION 4

The top contenders: Grand Rapids South Christian, Edwardsburg, Detroit Country Day.

Local teams to watch: **WILLIAMSTON;** The Hornets started the season fast winning five in a row before falling to Mason

in week six. Williamston can put points on the board in a hurry behind quarterback Luke Mahaney along with running back Sullivan Sparks and wide receiver Jacob Dunkel.

**ALMA;** The Panthers turned in a 2-4 regular-season record but with a few breaks that mark could easily have been 4-2 as Alma dropped a three-point decision to Bullock Creek and a four-four game to Freeland. Quarterback TJ Arens is capable of hitting the big pass play while Jacob Torrez and Cam Wright are a pair of capable running backs.

### DIVISION 5

The top contenders: Grand Rapids Catholic Central, Kingsley, Marine City.

Local teams to watch: **FRANKENMUTH;** The Eagles have been flying high this season. The defense has yet to allow more than a touchdown in any game this season while the offense has scored 35 or more points in five of the six wins.

**PORTLAND;** Since an opening-week loss to DeWitt, the Raiders have won five straight highlighted by a 21-7 win against Lansing Catholic. With the weather turning back Portland's ground game led by quarterback Haden Gretchell and fullback Reis Phillips will be tough to stop.

**FREELAND;** After falling to Frankenmuth in the first game of the season, the Falcons reeled off five straight wins and won the TVC Central title. Quarterback Bryson Hucyby leads an offense that gets better each week.

### DIVISION 6

The top contenders: Montague, Muskegon Catholic Central, Blissfield.

Local teams to watch; **CLARE;** The Pioneers are poised for a big post season after winning the Jack Pine Conference with a perfect 6-0 record. The Clare defense posed three shutouts in those six wins.

**MILLINGTON;** Lone loss was a 12-6 defensive struggle against Hemlock.

**SANFORD-MERIDIAN;** Gave both Clare and Beaverton all they could handle losing by just six points in both cases.

### DIVISION 7

The top contenders: Pewamo-Westphalia, Schoolcraft, New Lothrop, Ithaca.

Local teams to watch: **PEWAMO-WESTPHALIA;** Defending D7 champs will be a load for anyone to stop. Loss to Lansing Catholic in regular-season finale may provide extra motivation.

**ITHACA;** Senior talent and will to win may make the difference this year.

**NEW LOTHROP;** Cam Orr leads one of the most explosive offenses in the state.

**HEMLOCK;** Running back Robert Knapick is one to watch.

**BEAVERTON;** Capable of a deep playoff run.

### DIVISION 8

The top contenders: Reading, Iron Mountain, Addison.

Local teams to watch: **BRECKENRIDGE;** Lone loss this season came against defending state champ Reading.

**SAGINAW NOUVEL;** Dangerous team that can score points on anyone.

**BEAL CITY;** Aggies have done an impressive rebuilding job.

**FOWLER;** Eagles have a long and storied playoff history.



East Lansing quarterback Ambrose Wilson leads a potent East Lansing offense that is on a mission to win the school's first state title since 1991.



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# Fedewa Pacing Dangerous Running Attack For St. Patrick

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Portland St. Patrick got off to a 5-0 start and among the reasons was the play of explosive running back Derec Fedewa.

"We graduated many seniors Alex Kissane, Riley Kissane, Jeff Davlin, Zach Spitzley, Bret Weller, Tyler Coyne, Ned Smith and John Schneider," St. Patrick coach Pat Russman said. "They each added a great Catholic identity to

the team. They also set a foundation of great work ethic that made every practice and game fun to be a part of.

"We expect Connor Cross (Sr. QB) to continue to take the team to new levels on the offense. Brian Kwiecinski (Sr. OL/DL) returns as an outstanding offensive and defensive lineman."

Chase Fitzsimmons (Sr. OL/DL) is playing his first year of high school football

but is really excelling as a dominant force and an emerging team leader. Brice Cook is off to another great year on the offensive and defensive lines. His work ethic and positive attitude helps guide the team."

Fedewa (Jr./LB/RB) returns as a starting line-backer and is improving each week as a running back in how he sees and understands the game. Payton Russman (So. RB/DL) is continuing to get better each week in both

positions. Seth Frawley (Jr. DB/WR) is doing a nice job in the secondary and runs great routes on offense."

Fedewa was also happy with the team's impressive start.

"My strengths are hitting the hole fast," he said "and getting downfield as fast as I can."

One of Fedewa's most impressive games was against Webberville. He ran 14 times for 208 yards.

"Our whole team played

amazing," he said. "The strength of the team is our offensive and defensive lines."

Fedewa, also a linebacker, is confident the Shamrocks can go a long way in the playoffs.

He also plays basketball but said his best sport is football. He's among the many football players enjoyed to be playing this fall instead of the spring.

"We'll fortunate to be able to play," he said.



Derec Fedewa has been an explosive running back for Portland St. Patrick's 8-player team.

# Sacred Heart Looking Like State Power Again

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart appears very much on its way to being a power in 8-man football under coach John Ruggles.

After four games, the Irish suffered a 28-22 loss to state 8-player power Peck. They

outscored their other three opponents 54-0, 80-0 and 70-0. It's a whopping 226-28 points advantage.

Sacred Heart had 12 straight playoff appearances prior to last season. All teams qualify for the playoffs this year but it appears the Irish will be a major playoff factor.

The Irish have a lot of talent. This includes junior quarterback/cornerback Gabe Ruggles who is 40-of-55 in passing for 963 yards for 17 touchdowns, no interceptions, 36 yards and one rushing touchdown.

On defense, Ruggles has 40 tackles, three for losses, one sack, two interceptions.

One fumble recovery and one blocked punt.

Luke Priedium is a senior wide receiver/cornerback who has caught 569 yards and 11 receiving touchdowns. He has a punt return touchdown and has total TDs.

Senior Ben Wilson tight end/middle linebacker who

had 37 tackles, eight tackles for losses, five sacks, three punt blocks and three fumble recoveries.

Andrew Courtright is a senior fullback/linebacker. He has 15 carries for 237 yards, four rushing touchdowns, 50 receiving yards on three catches and one receiving TDs.

He has 60 defensive tackles, one sack and two fumble recoveries.



Sacred Heart's Gabe Ruggles.

# Fabus A Solid Player For Ashley's Football Team

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Senior Jimmy Fabus is having a fabulous season for a much improved Ashley team in 8-player football.

It's his fourth year on the varsity. He is averaging 136 yards rushing per game with eight touchdowns so far in three games. He's also averaging 10 tackles on defense with six sacks on the season so far.

On defense, Fabus has 30 total tackles, 6 sacks, 1 interception and 1 fumble recovery. Offensively, he had 55 carries for 407 yards, eight touchdowns, and three catches for 43 yards.

He's had four kick returns for 115 yards

"It's his work ethic, plus he's willing to listen and learn, and has stepped up to a leadership role this year," Ashley coach Kevin Saylor said. "Jimmy ran really good at the end of the year last year but he came out of the gate running hard this year and I think defensively, he believes in the scheme and doesn't rely strictly on his own talent this year.

"Jimmy's the guy I get after when I need more out of the team and when I go to him, he's always respectful and willing to convey my wishes. I remember his sophomore

year, he was slated to start at the running position. In pregame, he was unsure of himself and hesitant when he ran so I pulled him and started another kid. That lit a fire under him and once he earned that running back position back, he's never looked back. I expect him to stay around where his average is even though teams are starting to and will continue to key on him. Defensively I think he may get better as the year goes on."

Saylor credits Fabus for his hard work during the offseason.

"Before COVID, Jimmy was in the weight room all the time," Saylor said. "He pulls a drag bag every practice and he always wants to improve. They talked him into playing basketball this past season, he says he's not a basketball player but I have no doubt the coach was glad he played. He also plays base-

ball, I believe he's the catcher.

"Jimmy is the type of kid that you dream to get as a coach. He's always wanting to get better, his work ethic is unmatched, and he's developed into a good leader."

As for the team, "we are 2-1 on the season, 2-0 in conference" Saylor said. "We are doing OK so far, I'd love to get more numbers as we only have 10 on the team. These young gentlemen have a ton of heart, we finished the last contest with just 8 and started with 9. We feel like we let the first game slip as we didn't play particularly well, but we've rebounded nicely and hope to gain ground on the good things we've done so far.

"Win or lose I'm beyond proud of these young men that are on this team. We continue to see teams with 18-to-25 players on their side and we're lucky to look and see one



Ashley's Jimmy Fabus.

sub on our sidelines. The heart of this team and all the teams that I've been a part of at this school is a testament to the community and the players themselves. I hope to get more numbers to work with in the future, but for now, I'll gladly go to battle with these young men."

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# Ithaca Boys, Girls Both Ranked Among The Top 10 Cross-Country Teams In The State

## David Cook Sports Scene

Like the colorful autumn leaves, times have been steadily falling this season for both the Ithaca boys and girls cross country team.



Both teams are ranked in the top ten in the Division 3 state rankings and both teams have their sights set on a lofty finish at next month's state finals.

The Ithaca girls are ranked third in the state this year and are determined to improve on last year's sixth-place finish at the state meet.

Junior sensation Lani Bloom leads the way for the Ithaca girls as she continues to drop her time and set new school records almost every time she races.

Bloom is joined in the Ithaca lineup by several solid runners. Senior Abi Whitford, who placed in the top 25 as an individual at

Grace Weburg (bottom left) and Braxton Lamey (top right) are among the runners turning in strong seasons for the Ithaca boys and girls cross-country teams.

least year's state finals, has posted a personal-best time of 20:25.6 this year. Fellow senior Grace Weburg has placed third at three events this season and has a personal-best time of 19:44.6. Junior Rachael Sierakowski has improved her times this season with a personal-best time of 20:11.7 to her credit. Sierakowski also placed second overall at the Ithaca Early Invitational.

Freshman Liliana Lehnst has stepped in and provided strong efforts. Lehnst placed fourth at the Ithaca Early invite and has a personal best of 20:07.1 this year. Senior Josie Morrow is having a solid season that has included

three, top-ten finishes.

"We are just trying to get better every meet," said Ithaca coach Gene Lebron. "The girls have been doing very well and we have a real strong core."

On the boys side, Ithaca is ranked sixth in the state in Division 3.

The Ithaca boys are led by senior Braxton Lamey. A returning all-state runner, Lamey placed seventh as an individual at last year's state meet with a time of 16:20.4. Lamey has posted a top time of 15:42.7 this year and has won three TVC jamborees along with two more invitational titles.

Sophomore Parks Allen who posted a time of 17:11.9 in placing 57th at last year's state meet, has lowered his time to 16:13.7 this year. Allen turned in a huge effort in winning the Greater Lansing Cross Country Championship.

Junior Espen Lehnst has placed third at a pair of TVC jamborees this season and has a personal-best



time of 16:22.9 to his credit. Fellow juniors Hector Sanchez, Devyn Whitford and Keegan Ouillette are also making key contributions and are all looking to crack the 18-minute mark down the stretch.

"The guys put in a lot of work during the summer," Lebron said. "They are all doing great jobs and doing everything they are supposed to do. I am very proud of the work they have put in."



# Lani Bloom Turning In Record-Breaking Times For Ithaca Cross-Country Team

## David Cook Sports Scene

If it seems like Lani Bloom sets a new record every time she runs a race for the Ithaca cross-country team it's because she usually does.

In her junior year, Bloom is already the most talented runner in school history. The school record holder coming into the season, Bloom has set new personal and school records in just about every race she has run this season.

After opening the season with a time of 18:21.7 at the Ithaca Early Invitational, Bloom has not only set new records, but has shaved large

Records are being set almost every time Lani Bloom takes to the course for the Ithaca cross-country team.

amounts of time of her previous marks. Bloom turned in a time of 17:57.9 at the Ithaca Yellowjacket Invitational and then turned in a time of 17:40.3 at the Shepherd John Bruder Classic. In a show-down of two of the premier runners in the entire state, Bloom set a new personal record time of 17:26.5 at she placed second to Abby VanderKooi of Muskegon West Michigan Christian at the Allendale Invitational.

The matchup against VanderKooi was one that Bloom looked forward to as it gave her the opportunity to test his skill against the top runner in the state.

"She (VanderKooi) is amazing," Bloom said. "I was really hoping to have the chance to race against her."

Bloom's lowered the record even more when she won the Shepherd Bluejay Invitational in a time of 17:22.5. While Bloom did not break her record, she also took first place at the Greater Lansing Cross Country Championships.

Bloom, who finished sixth at the state meet as a freshman and 18th last year, was turning in some strong times during the indoor track and field season before the Covid-19 virus hit and took away the spring track and field season.

Despite the halt in competition, Bloom continued to work hard training and dropping time.

The hard work paid off as Bloom began the cross-country season with a new record time and has seen her times continue to drop.

"It feels great," Bloom said. "From the first race this season I've continued to lower my times. It's been a real fun season so far."

The performances are no surprise to Bloom's coach.

"Lani is one of the best runners in the state and the country," said Ithaca coach Gene Lebron. "She just keeps getting better and better. She ran the best time in the indoor mile for all divisions in the state during the winter indoor track season. She is an extremely hard worker and all her hard work is paying off."

# Mason Sumner On The Path To A Big Junior Season For Breckenridge Cross-Country Team

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

After winning the Division 4 individual cross-country state championship last year, the question for Breckenridge junior Mason Sumner is what can he do for an encore this year?

As the cross-country season heads into the home stretch, the answer is a resounding plenty. Sumner has picked up where he left off last season by turning in strong performance after strong performance for an improving Huskie team. Sumner turned in his best time of the season at the Allendale Invitational in mid-September when he clocked a time of 15:53.4. Sumner followed that effort up by taking

first place at the first Mid State Athletic Conference event of the year and then placed first at the Olivet Invitational.

It took Sumner, as well as all cross-country runners, a few events to get up to speed this season due to the fallout from the Covid-19 virus. An outstanding distance runner during track and field season, Sumner had to wait until the end of summer for his first action since winning the Division 4 state title with a time of 16:07.5 last fall.

"It was hard not being able to compete without track season," Sumner said. "I just had to keep training and continue to get better."

Sumner is continuing to put in

the miles and the work towards defending his title at the Division 4 state finals. Sumner has been a fixture at the state finals the previous two years as he placed sixth as a freshman before winning the title last year.

"So far it is definitely going in the right direction," Sumner said. "It felt really good winning the title as a sophomore. I feel like I can go even faster. I think time-wise and strategy-wise I've improved."

Along with having lofty individual goals, Sumner is also focused on helping Breckenridge to a lofty finish at the state meet as a team. Through the middle of October, the Huskies are ranked sixth in the state in Division 4.

"We lost four seniors from last year's team and they filled some critical roles," Sumner said. "We are doing some rebuilding and we are getting better. I think our team will continue to get better and better."

Breckenridge gave evidence of its team strength as it won the first league meet of the season and also took first place at Olivet.

At the first league meet senior Colt Vine placed fourth while junior Trent Cole took sixth followed by freshman Isaac Humm (ninth), freshman Sawyer Stoneman (13th) and freshman Jaden Ostrander (16th). At the Olivet invite Carter placed fifth overall followed by Vine (eighth), Humm (12th), Stoneman (15th) and Ostrander (17th).



# St. Louis All-State Runners On The Move Again

## John Raffel Sports Scene

St. Louis has always been a popular spot for cross country runners. This is the case again this season with returning all-staters Nate March and Libby Munderloh.

March has a season record of 17:04 "and my favorite moment from the season was when we won the Greater Lansing championship as a team. One of our key members was Austin Aldrich. He was always super positive and made everyone work harder."

"Our varsity team this year consists of Aaron Bowerman, Keegan Hoing, Ben March, Nate March, Joe Erickson, Dylan Marr and Alex Davis. So we haven't exactly gone where we wanted to go thus far, however we are entering the championship part of the season and that is usually when we run our best."

March said the team needs to work on mental toughness.

St. Louis is led by returning all-staters Nate March and Libby Munderloh.

"It's a matter of being able to keep pushing even when your body and mind are screaming stop," he said. "You have to get tough and keep going. For the TVC the champions have already been decided and that was Ithaca and we will see them again in the regional and state meets, and I am very confident in our ability to beat them in the bigger meets."

As far as Munderloh is concerned, the last few weeks of the season is what it's all about.

"The biggest highlight I have experienced thus far for the 2020 season was running a PR at the John Bruder Classic at Shepherd's high school course," she said. "It was earlier in the season, but I ran a new time in the way I thought was one of my best approaches on a race. I felt really relaxed, so it gave a lot of hope for the later half of the season. I'm still looking to improve my time, so I'm really excited for some new girls to race shortly. "Team-wise I think we are all still looking for our big moment this season, but we are doing a lot to get

there and I'm hopeful things will fall into place when they need to. We have a great group of talented girls so now it's just a matter of learning how to run the way that will ultimately be best for our team as a whole." Munderloh said her team is starting to grow. "Mikenna Borie has always been a strong runner for us and she is really starting to take on a dominant position in the races now," Munderloh said. "Mikaila Borie is our senior and she is fine-tuning her best ways to race I believe. Jaiden Dickman and Monika Borie are our main varsity freshman and they have been a great component to the team in many ways."

"Payton Kuhn, Sela Delgado, Laney Pestrue and Natalie Lemert are all also considered our varsity runners and it's more than seven because we have a lot of girls constantly fighting for that spot, which will be really beneficial in our final races. Overall, it's a great group of girls who I think have an ability to still do even more great things for the program."

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# Morrice Runner Set For Best Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Jenny Howard is coaching a Morrice High School cross country team which has a very talented runner in senior Caleb Rivers.

This marks River's fourth years on the varsity.

"Caleb is an extremely hard worker," Howard said. "He runs every practice his hardest and pushes himself to be better. He finds time to run on his own and sets personal running goals. Caleb is a leader. He encourages teammates to run with him and wants them to succeed and get faster. He also focuses on team goals and encourages others to help meet the goals."

Rivers place second in the league, first all-conference GAC and is ranked fifth in the region.

"I think the keys to his success is hard work and practicing on his own," Howard said. "He strives to be better in everything he does and very competitive. He also comes to meets prepared physically and mentally to run. I feel that Caleb has mentally grown as an athlete. He is finding his race and shows his leadership skills within the team."

"Caleb's race at Whitmore Lake was a highlight of his season. He felt good and just ran his race. He received second place and was 24 seconds off of his personal best. It was a great race to watch. To see an athlete run their hardest and try their best is all you can ask for as a coach. All courses and races have different variables. Things that can play into a race day are weather, illnesses, injuries, and course

condition. Being mentally and physically prepared for a race are also important. This day Caleb was on his game and it is always great to see an athlete have a good race."

Rivers was 14th in the Division 2 state meet last season. His season record is 16:48.6.

"I would like to see Caleb PR and make top 10 at our state meet," Howard said. "Caleb runs on his own through the summer and encourages others to run with him. He also runs on his own on off days and weekends when there is not a meet."

Rivers also runs track and plays basketball.

"During COVID we have experienced lots of changes in our sport," Howard said. "We are thankful for each meet that we

were able to run. During this time Caleb has kept a positive attitude. He also tries to keep others motivated and moving forward even though the sport feels different this year. Working together as a team and cross country family keeps them going and excited to run."

"The team is excited about it regionals and trying to make it to states as a team. We have been working hard at practices and are looking forward to running hard and giving it all we got at pre-regionals and regionals. Last year our team placed second at regionals and went to the Class D State meet as a team. Our goal this year is to make it to states again. This year is different with pre-regionals and then regionals. So we need to advance to regionals."



Caleb Rivers, all-state runner from Morrice, is a senior.

Morrice has five seniors.

"We have all ran together for the past five years," Howard said. "We know each others' strengths and weaknesses. We all push each other to be our best."

# Shepherd Boy And Girl Runners Are League Champs

## John Raffel Sports Scene

The Shepherd girls cross country team claimed its 11th straight conference title with this one coming in the Jack Pine Conference. Grace Wolf was 29th but got a PR 23:40.47.

Elle Himebaugh also had a solid PR and broke 23 minutes for 19th in 22:58.70.

Nico Lopez and Silas Howard were 2nd Team All Conference for the Shepherd boys, who also won the league title.

Carley Lynch, Jolie Fisher and Lilly Bailey were second

team all-conference for the girls.

Josh Warner and Mason Cross were 1st Team All Conference for the boys while Cross was conference MVP and runner of the meet.

Carly Judge, Ariel Warner, Madde Skeel and Amelia Gouin were first-team all con-

ference with Gouin claiming MVP honors in the Jack Pine.

It was the Clare Pioneer boys had won the 11-straight JPC titles while the girls had won nine straight. But Shepherd is now in the Jack Pine and the Bluejays have taken over league supremacy.



Shepherd girls get ready for their final league race of the season.

# CC-Crystal Runners Continue To Excel

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Carson City-Crystal almost always has solid cross country runners and this year has been no exception.

Coleman Clark and Ashton Keiffer are returning all-staters who continue to get the job done.

Grant Woodman is again coaching the team.

Clark was second in the state last year behind Breckenridge's Mason Sumner. Clark had a 16:16.8 at the state meet. He's a senior and Sumner is a junior.

Keiffer, a junior, was 17th in 17:05.7.

Clark, "has pretty much been in the

No. 1 position all season," Woodman said. "He was the state champion in the 3,200 meters in the last track season we had. He and Ashton have both been putting in a lot of work. They both started when the pandemic started. They've been busting their tails since then. And are continuing to do so."

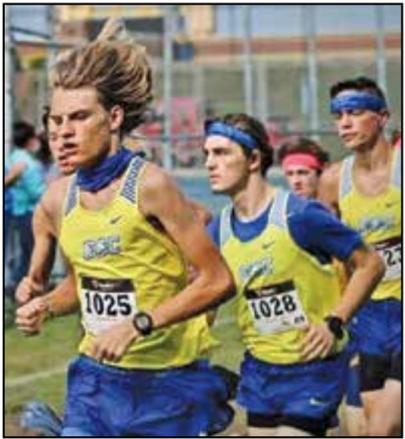
"We had to have a couple of weeks forced layoffs because of positive tests at our school, so we were out of racing shape for a little bit," Woodman said. "We're back on that train and are doing well. Coleman ran well at the Greater Lansing Invite and winning his division race by about 20 seconds. He did well against one of the contenders for the division title, Nathan Lott of Webberville. It's

his senior season and he's looking to go out on top. He can definitely do that."

Woodman noted Keiffer, as a freshman, wasn't in his team's top 7.

"His sophomore season, he put in a boatload of work and made All-State," Woodman said. "He's increased his workload and is next to Coleman in every single workout. I'm looking for him to increase his All-State status. They have both been good leaders during the season and for their careers. They're doing well."

Coleman Clark (1025) and Austin Keiffer (1028) have been leading the way for Carson City Crystal runners this fall.



# Saranac Runner Pursuing All-State Honors Again

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Saranac coaches Diana and Erric Smith are excitedly waiting for senior Grayson Rasmus, a four-year varsity runner, to save his best for last this season.

"Despite the season's challenges, Grayson has performed beyond what we have expected," Diana Smith said. "He has placed in the top three in every race he has run this year. He set goals and has met his first

by winning our league."

Rasmus' personal record of 16:17 was set at the end of this season as he became the Central Michigan Athletic Conference champion

"Grayson is extremely coachable," Smith said. "He considers every aspect of a race. He puts a lot of thought into his workouts and races. He takes care of his body by eating well and stretching correctly. He has considerably improved from last year. He has taken off

30 seconds from the previous year.

"He has become more coachable. He has become a good leader for his team. He has concentrated less on stats, focusing on his own health and growth. Grayson's two most memorable moments were earning All-State his freshman year, exceeding all our expectations. His other most memorable moment was yesterday's CMAC final league meet. He was our league's champion, but

as important to him was the fact that we won league for the first time in Saranac's history."

Smith has high hopes Rasmus will be an All-Stater again. She pointed out he puts in 40 miles per week during the summer and 30 miles during the winter.

"Grayson runs distance in track," Smith said. "He has also played basketball twice in his high school career. He may also play this year, but he is uncertain at this point."



Grayson is a four-year varsity runner and All-Stater for Saranac.

# Freeland Runner Having An Exceptional Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Kiera Hansen is team captain for Freeland's girls cross country team, who is in the middle of another middle season. "Team wise, we're doing OK," Hansen said. "We all get along well. We have a pretty young team with three solid freshmen who will help our scoring. Individually, since CC is a mix of individuals working together, my season has not gone as I was hoping. I haven't felt strong and I've struggled to maintain times. Things are starting to improve a little with the help of my basketball coaches getting me in the weight room now that they have opened up from COVID. My teammates have also been awesome and help during races."

Her personal record from freshmen year in 18 minutes and 32 seconds. She was All-State as a freshman and sophomore; first team all-conference freshmen, sophomore, and junior. She was regional champ her freshmen and sophomore years.

The key to her success, Hansen said, "is definitely working outside of practice trying to gain back that leg-speed I had while in middle school. Like any sport, you can't be good if you don't work extra on your own time. Weight-lifting, stretching, rolling out, hot tubs and ice baths, watching my nutrition, and trying to improve my form have all

helped.

"Covid really had an impact because track got cancelled. That cost me a lot of work on my leg-speed. Up until the last few weeks we've run almost only mileage. Not getting the speed work from track and missing out on summer basketball hurt agility and quickness. But, the last few weeks in practice we've been doing more speed work and I can feel the difference. Hopefully we will do more of that and I can finish the season strong and reach my goals."

Hansen has been working hard.

"I am working on getting back to running more consistent splits like I did in middle school," Hansen said. "I am improving by working through a plateau. Every athlete has obstacles come up, how you react determines your success? I'm trying to get more rest and improve my diet. The school schedule, going to school every other day, makes it challenging to stay on a routine, but we have to stay disciplined. I'm improving on staying positive."

Memorable moments for Hansen include being all-state as a ninth and 10th grader and running in the state meet.

"It's memorable when I run a smart tactical race," Hansen said. "One of my best memories was the summer after my seventh-grade year when I ran a 10:51 in the

3k at AAU Nationals and placed seventh in the country. That pace is almost 18 flat 5k. Hopefully I can get back to that tempo soon. I want to set a new PR and get the school record. I want our team to place top 10 in states. I expect everyone on the team to be ready at regionals and states. I want to run in college, so hopefully I can reach my goals."

In offseason, Hansen said she's run six days a week putting in over 500 summer miles and weight lifted.

"Hopefully the off-season conditioning will be a good base for the speed work at the end of the season," she said. "I've done more this past offseason than any other time, hopefully it starts paying off."

Hansen is also in basketball and track.

"Cross country is my favorite sport, but basketball really helps my running and I enjoy the players and coaches," she said. "I miss hanging out with Coach Z on Saturday's refing little kids games, eating cookies, and ragging on my sister's officiating skills together. But Coach H is super positive and really builds everyone up. It's awesome to have other coaches and teams pull together like Freeland does."

"My parents have helped me out a lot with running. They've taken me, and my brother and sister, all over the country to run."

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# Sacred Heart Boys Runners Getting The Job Done

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart's boys cross country team hopes to be a state contender again led by Matthew Nowak and Brock Lynch.

Nowak is a senior in his fourth year with the Irish cross country.

"Matt is having a great season and has several notable finishes at large invitationals so far," coach Nikki Taylor said. "He is running healthy and strong and continues to show his determination

out on the course.

"Matt has run his lifetime PR this season, with a time of 16:12. He is currently ranked second in our region and fifth in Division 4 for the entire state. Matt came into the season with a fantastic base and a lot of running experience. He has support from both of his parents and especially his father, Al Nowak who helps as an assistant coach. Both he and his sister have run very successfully for championship teams at Sacred Heart."

Matt's times are comparable to where he ended his season last year, Taylor pointed out.

"His PR is currently nine seconds faster than last season," Taylor said. "One difference has been his consistency. Overall, his times have been consistently faster this year. This is my first year as Matt's coach but I would say his performance at the Ottawa Hills Invite where he ran his PR was very memorable. He raced strong and had an impressive finish at that race."

"Matt would really like to break 16:00. We are doing our best to make that happen but more importantly I want to see a strong and positive mental attitude all the way through the end."

Brock Lynch continues to have a strong junior season of cross country and is currently ranked 8th as an individual for D4 in the state. Photo credit to Andrea Moore.



Matt is very committed and runs daily throughout the year. Matt also runs track. Matt is very committed and very hard working. He is intense and focused and is very passionate about his running."

Lynch is also a junior.

"Brock is having a great season and has several notable finishes at large invitationals so far," Taylor said. "Brock has an incredibly strong finish, if you can't sprint really fast and he is within 50 yards of you with a quarter mile to go, you will get passed. Brock has run his lifetime PR this season, with a time of 16:27. He is currently ranked third in our region and eighth in Division 4 for the entire state."

"Brock came into the season with a fantastic base and a lot of running experience. He has a brother who also ran for Sacred Heart and has grown up running cross country for Sacred Heart. His years of experience and excellence are starting to pay off. He has also become increasingly committed to cross-training and taken his strength, core and stretching work more seriously this year than in the past. Brock's current PR is 23 seconds faster than his PR last season."



Matt Nowak is a dominating presence on the cross country course in D4 this season. He is currently ranked 2nd in the region and 5th in the state. Photo credit to Andrea Moore.

Compared to last year, "I think Brock looks stronger and seems to have more pop in his legs compared to last year," Taylor said. "His finishing kick is absolutely deadly."

# Sacred Heart Girls Want Another State Title

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Plenty is expected of by coach Nikki Taylor Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart cross country runners Olivia Ervin and Riley Hacker.

Ervin is a sophomore in her second varsity season.

"Olivia has had a season of tremendous mental growth," Taylor said. "She is learning to be more comfortable and focused and becoming increasingly dangerous for other athletes to race against."



Olivia's current PR this season is a 20:43. She has won both of our MSAC league meets. She is ranked fifth in our region and 26th in Division 4 but I believe both of those stats underestimate where she is capable of finishing.

"Olivia had a tough start to the season. She didn't have her usual base and there was so much uncertainty and change from last year. She is doing an incredible job growing and maturing and that is increasingly showing in her performance on the course. Olivia has not yet run her times from last year but her mental game is much stronger. Her base was not as large this season and I expect to see some nice times from her over the next couple of weeks."

Taylor pointed out Ervin is racing more intelligently.

"She has discovered that she likes to not go out too fast as she enjoys the energy she gets from passing and she is able to finish stronger," Taylor said. "I coached Olivia for two of her middle school seasons and have spent many races cheering for her and supporting her. My most memorable times have been the evenings we've gone for a run together and talked about running and

Riley Hacker is currently second in the MSAC league standings and ranked first in our region. Here she is, helping to lead the Irish ladies to a perfect score in Ashley on 10.3.20. Photo credit to Andrea Moore.

life. On the race course, her Apples to Apples meet performance during her eighth-grade season will always stand out. She nearly passed the golf cart going down a big hill on her way to a commanding first-place finish."

Ervin plays basketball and runs track.

"Olivia is very compassionate and genuine," Ervin said. "She is hard working with an incredible tolerance for pain and extremely coachable." Ervin and Hacker and leading a team which could take the Irish back to state championship status.

"We are currently first in the MSAC league and had a perfect score of 15 points at the last MSAC meet," Taylor said. "They are a strong team and currently ranked third in the state although I have not yet had a race where the entire team was present and healthy. We will make a run at the state title this year but more than that, we will control our controllables and give our absolute best."

Hacker has run her lifetime PR this season, with a time of 20:13. She is currently ranked 1st in our region and 16th in Division 4 for the entire state.

"Riley came into the season strong after a



Olivia Ervin finished in first place at the MSAC league meet in Ashley on 10.3.20. Photo credit to Andrea Moore.

summer of consistent running," Taylor said. "She stepped into a void that was left when we graduated runners last year and has been a mentally tough leader all season. Riley's current PR is 19 seconds faster than her PR last season. She has run much more consistently this year with faster overall races since the beginning of the season."

# Beal City All-Staters Remain Hopeful

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Beal City has an impressive share of talent this season, led by junior Rachel Weber and sophomore Kaylee Locke.

At the Division 4 state final a year ago, Locke was eighth (19:53.9) and Weber 10th (19:54.7) in the state.

Rachel Weber, a junior, has had a season's record of 20:44.6.

"Having the chance to make the state meet as a team was a highlight," Weber said of the 2019 season when the Aggies were 17th. "We're doing good this year. We actually have a shot at being state champions."

The depth is impressive for the Aggies this season, said Weber, who feels she's having her best season.

"I'm slowly getting back to being as good as I was last year," Weber said. "I hope to hit in the 18:50s. It definitely will take a lot of dedication and moti-



Rachel Weber and Kaylee Locke are all-state runners for Beal City.

vation.

"I usually try to be in front of the pack, but run my own race, kind of."

Weber also runs distances in track. She said cross country is her favorite.

"It's one event and you're done, there's no break," she said.

Weber has a 19:42.4 for a personal record from last season.

There was no track season because of COVID but Weber and her teammates have rejoiced in having a cross season. Even without track season, they still had a chance to keep running during the summer.

"I don't feel some of us ran as much but we were definitely running," Weber said.

Locke has a personal record of 19:20.4 from last year. Her best this season has been 19:38.8.

"Last year, I got eighth place, but wanted to do better," she said. "I guess I



did pretty good. I've been doing OK this year. But you have less competition most meets (because of COVID restrictions). I'm doing OK. I'm pacing myself better. I really want to beat 19 minutes, but we'll see if I get there."

# Krupp, Hersch Top Runners For New Lothrop

## John Raffel Sports Scene

New Lothrop's Clara Krupp continues to be a standout cross country runner.

Her best time so far this season, as a junior, has been 19:39.3. Her personal record is from her sophomore season with a 19:13.4. She was 11th in the Division 3 state finals last year in 19:16.4.

One of the coaches is Vera Root.

"She's doing fine, she's won several of the races she's run this year," Root said. "I think she can be all-state again."



New Lothrop's Clara Krupp and Carson Hersch are two of the top runners in the state.

Krupp has been running since the seventh grade.

"She is very consistent all the way through," Root said. "She's a kid that runs in the offseason and puts in a lot of miles all year round."

Krupp also runs track, and although the season was canceled last spring because of COVID, she just kept running to get ready for cross country.

"Her parents coach track for New Lothrop," Root said. "She focuses on running."

New Lothrop has won the Mid

Michigan Activities Conference this season for both boys and girls.

"We've won boys at times and both girls at times but have never won both boys and girls at the same time," Root said.

Senior Carson Hersch ran a 15:30 at Shepherd earlier this season for a personal record. He was third in the state meet.

"Two years ago, he broke our school record and late year he broke it again by a whole minute and this year he bettered it by another 16 seconds," Root said. "He'll have the same competition he had last year."



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# Lansing Catholic Runner Eyes High State Finish

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Sophomore Hannah Pricco is a cross country runner from Lansing Catholic anxious to accomplish a lot before the season ends. Her best so far this season has been 19:00.2.

Pricco was 16th in the Division 2 state meet last season in 18:54.1.

"She was an all-state runner last year as a freshman," her coach Tim Simpson said. "I've known her for a long time and knew she was a good runner with

talent. I think she met her potential. It's hard to tell until you see her under the pressure of having to race well against other runners and how they're going to step up.

"We had another real good runner who finished second at the state meet last year (Jaden Theis). Hannah was able to perform without the pressure of being the No. 1 runner on the team. It relieves a little pressure. This year, she is clearly the best runner on our team. She's meeting expectations on leadership and how well she's raced in response

to having to be at the top and having to run well." Pricco would have been a freshman during the track season, which was canceled because of COVID.

"This year has been a little different since there aren't as many big invitationals," Simpson said. "A runner with her ability isn't always pushed to get her fastest time by other runners. She's run some good times like low 19s by being far ahead of everybody else. When she gets in the regional or

state meet when she has some people pushing her, I definitely think she'll go under her time from last year.

"She has a lot of speed but hasn't really utilized it at this point. She's a naturally good athlete. She paces herself pretty good in the races so she doesn't go out too fast. I think she's a smart runner and eventually when it comes time to really race people...with the raw talent she's right there with the (best) ones we've had."



Lansing Catholic's Hannah Pricco and other runners bid to be among the best in the state.



# Lansing Christian Girl Runners Hope To Be State Contenders

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Lansing Christian remains strong in girls cross country this season with all-state performers like Madison Volz and Ashlyn Kephart.

Volz is a senior, who's having a strong season, and was third in the state in 19:30.2 last year.

She's been an All-Stater all three seasons.

"My sophomore year I got second and my junior year I got third," she said.

Her season's best has been 18:47.7.

"It's gone pretty good so far," she said. "We've done pretty well. We're hoping for a state championship, both individually and as a team. That's the goal. Once we get good competition, I'm hoping the times will drop real fast."

"My strength is definitely my first mile, and then the last 800-meter kick," she said.

Volz plays basketball in the winter

After losing track to COVID last spring, being able to have a cross country season is "wonderful," Volz said.

She's hoping to eventually

determine her college future, in probably running.

Kephart as a sophomore, recalls her goal last year was to break 20 minutes. She was 20th in 20:25.5 at state. Her best time this year was 20:02.3.

"I felt great and I was hoping to be faster later in the season," she said. "I reached my goal so I was happy."

Kephart is hoping to set her personal record late in the season.

"I think one of my biggest struggles is focusing mentally and keeping a positive mind-

set throughout the whole race," Kephart said. "I usually lead out pretty quickly and try to stay up with the leaders. Then I try to settle in and stay ahead of people but don't over pace myself and maintain that through miles two and three."

As of mid October, the team has been doing "very well," Kephart said. "We are so far undefeated. That in itself is a pretty big accomplishment. We want to stay undefeated, win regionals and win state. I definitely think we can win regionals. State will be tough but I think we can do it."

Ashlyn Kephart (left) and Madison Volz are Lansing Christian's All-State runners.

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# Allison Cui Of Okemos Wins Individual Title, Lansing Catholic Girls Second As A Team At State Golf Finals

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The MHSAA girls golf state finals had a totally different look to it this season as the normally two-day state finals was reduced to a one-day tournament for each class that utilized the courses at Forest Akers Golf Course in East Lansing.

Following is a wrap up of the state tournament and including how area golfers and teams fared.

### DIVISION 2

While the tournament had a different format this year, a familiar face came away with the individual championship as Allison Cui of Okemos won her second straight championship. The Division 1 champion last year, Cui won the Division 2 title this year as she fired a 2-under par 70 to win the title by three strokes.

"I'm ecstatic," Cui said. "I really never imagined (two in a row). I thought there was a chance I could win, but for it to happen, it's just surreal."

Cui's performance helped Okemos

to a third-place finish as a team. South Lyon won the Division 2 team title while Grand Rapids Forest Hills Northern placed second.

Along with Cui's 70, Okemos was led by Jessica Hinterman with an 89 and Ashley Cho and Audrey Chen who both carded 93s.

Haslett finished four strokes behind Okemos in fourth place. Haslett was led by senior Olivia Stoll who carded a 77 to finish in a tie for third place individually. Mina Yoo added an 85 and Sydney Dausman added an 87 to lead Haslett.

A pair of area golfers just missed finishing in the top ten. Kaitlyn Lawver of DeWitt and Grace Whipple of Mason both shot an 85 to finish in a tie for 11<sup>th</sup> place.

Midland Dow placed 17<sup>th</sup> as a team. The Chargers were led by Abbey LLeuter who carded a 98.

Mt. Pleasant also qualified for the state finals and placed 18<sup>th</sup>. The Oilers were led by senior Ashley Troost who shot a 100 and junior Rilee Borgan who shot a 103.



Allison Cui of Okemos won her second straight individual golf state championship winning the Division 2 title this year.

### DIVISION 3

Birmingham Marian won the Division 3 state team title with a score of 312. Marian was paced by Shannon Kennedy who won medalist honors with a 70.

Flint Powers finished in fifth place as a team in Division 3. The Chargers were led by Jolie Brochu who placed ninth as an individual with a round of 78. Alexandra Sexton added an 85 for Powers while Lilly Isaac shot an 89.

Freeland finished in the top ten as a team as the Falcons took eighth place overall. Senior Lydia Back led the way for Freeland with an 81 while senior Grace Pumford added an 85. Ava Mata carded a 93 and Zoey Markey shot a 97 for the Falcons.

Big Rapids finished in 14<sup>th</sup> place as a team. The Cardinals were led by senior Lauren Posey with an 82 and senior Avery Chaput who carded a 97.

Charlotte finished in 17<sup>th</sup> place as a team. The Orioles were paced by senior Sarah Owens who fired an 83 and sophomore Hannah Robinson who carded a 91.

Ella Smith of Frankenmuth finished in fifth place individually with a round of 76. Senior Leah Nielsen of Frankenmuth also qualified as an individual and carded a 90.

### DIVISION 4

Montague took home the top team honors in Division 4 with a team total of 343. Kamryn Shannon of Michigan Center High School won the individual title as she carded a 74.

Lansing Catholic golfers enjoyed a strong tournament. The Cougars took second place as a team with a total of 370. The Cougars were paced at the tournament by junior Amanda Melling who placed ninth as an individual with an 86. Sailor Somerville added a 90 for the Cougars while Sophie Hauser shot a 96 and Maya Blonshine fired a 98.

Durand finished in fifth place as a team with a score of 389. The Railroaders were led by senior Emme Lantis who placed fourth as an individual with a round of 80. Madison Raley added a 101 for Durand while Olivia Holek and Kennedy Pawloski both shot 104.

Remus Chippewa Hills finished in the top ten as a team as it placed ninth with a 394 total. Freshman Ryleigh Allen led Chippewa Hills with a 93 while junior Hanna Herman added a 97. Juniors Felicity Chapman and Kerstin Stadtfeld both



South Lyon Division 2 Team title winners.



Montague Division 4 Team title winners.

shot 102.

Shepherd placed 12<sup>th</sup> as a team. The Bluejays were led by senior Madde Skeel with a 91 and sophomore Grace Bohannon with a 96. Junior Olivia Lawson added a 103 and sophomore Lily Dean shot a 108.

Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart took 14<sup>th</sup> as a team. Anna Terwilliger led Sacred Heart with a 99 followed by Brooklyn Chomchai with a 102, Emma Reid with a 104 and Taylor Cotter with a 106.

Senior Lydia Davenport of Ithaca also qualified as an individual and shot a 106.

Senior Kaitlyn McKeown of Central Montcalm qualified as an individual and shot a 110.

### DIVISION 1

Northville won the Division 1 state team championship. Kate Bradley of Grand Blanc captured medalist honors as she fired a 70.



Ithaca's Lydia Davenport enjoying her MHSAA State Golf Finals experience.

Rockford finished fifth as a team in Division 1 led by Jessica Jolly who tied for ninth as an individual with a round of 76.

Individually, Nateda Her of Holt placed 14<sup>th</sup> individually with a round of 79.

Senior Juanita DeLaCruz of Saginaw Heritage also qualified as an individual and carded a round of 100.

# Williamston Tennis Had Impressive Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Karen Battist is the coach of a Williamston boys tennis team which has been enjoying an impressive season, led by a strong No. 1 player Nic Burton.



"The team is doing great this season," Battist said. "We are not undefeated but we have had some great competition and well earned wins."

"Nic had a rough start this season with an injury to his wrist," Battist said. "He has bounced back quickly and continues to improve his record as he has gotten back on the courts and involved in match play. Nic has been playing some of his best tennis late season. Nic has great wing span. At 6-foot-6 he has an incredible serve with unmatched power."

Burton has shown impressive improvement.

"Last year as a junior, Nic was matched up against very talented

experienced players," Battist said. "As a senior this year, Nic has gained match play experience and competes right along with the top players of our league."

"Nic continues to improve his serve and consistency of ground strokes. His volleys have really improved this year as well. As a player that only started tennis in high school, he has quickly developed the skills that match athletes that have been training since a young age. Nic is still improving and hasn't peaked yet."

Off-season tennis stats include a player UTR 5.16 record of 13-8.

"Nic continues to drill and play year round," Battist said.

Williamston entered the season facing some immense challenges.

"Josh Glynn and Avery Weaver were Red League Champions and made it to the semifinals at states last year," Battist said.

Maxwell Battist, senior, and Chris Kemler, senior, are line 1 doubles "and make a great team complimenting each others skills," Karen Battist said. "Chris played singles last year and has transitioned nicely to a doubles player. Chris has the powerful baseline shots while Maxwell has the touch and power at the net. This is their first year playing together even though have been

on the same team and have really adjusted well.

"We have met expectations and are striving to exceed expectations at states," Battist said. "The team is peaking at the right time. We finally have all lines present and healthy. The team needs to work on consistency. We have a lot of shotmakers that make good plays, we just need them to do it more consistently."



Williamston's tennis team has had an outstanding season, led by Nic Burton.

# Midland Dow Tennis Team Finishes Banner Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Midland Dow High won its 13th consecutive regional in early October to advance to states after beating Bay City Western and Saginaw Heritage 8-0.

Dow's record stood at 20-2-4 on the season, entering the state tournament

"Great day to be a Charger," Dow coach Terry Schwartzkopf said after the regional. "Our guys were focused and came to get business done. Closest set was 6-2. Any coach knows that teams want to peak at the end, and today I saw our guys continuing to improve. I couldn't be in a better situation heading into states. From what I have seen, there are six teams that are legitimate contenders under the rules for states this year, and states might be

determined based on tie break scenarios due to how close these teams are. Dow is one of those six teams.

"I don't know where we will end up, but I do know that these boys are working hard, we have achieved two of our three goals, and we have just as good a chance to bring home the gold as anyone else. That is going to make this state tournament one for the ages, I think."

The Division 2 state tournament came and Dow beat North Farmington 8-0, but in the quarterfinals lost to Grand Rapids Forest Hills Central 5-3.

Players for Dow were, in singles; Joaco Argibay, Tom Wood-Gavin Killmaster and Aaron Li; in doubles, Caleb Qiu-Zakey El-Nachef; Thomas Ladwin-Logan Hyu; Aiden Tanis-Bo-Bo Qiu and Marshall McGaugh-Roofy Elsaadany.



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# Lakewood Tennis Standout Finishes Another Strong Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

It was quite a senior season for Lakewood tennis standout Brady Gawne.

He was 17-6 and a state qualifier as a junior.

Gawne came into October of this year with a 12-1 record.

Brady Gawne has finished a strong tennis career at Lakewood.



"He's been having a great season," Lakewood coach Karrie Carter said. "He stays focused during his matches. He is in the zone. He looks for his opponents' weaknesses and uses it to his advantage."

"Brady is a stronger athlete in stature. He plays defense well and can hit a winner when he

sees an opening to do so. Brady's backhand and serve has improved greatly. Brady had two big wins against Ionia and a nice win with Thornapple-Kellogg. Brady takes lessons when he can. His sport is baseball and he travels a lot with his travel team."

Gawne also plays high school basketball and baseball.

"He's a great person who I have seen mature over the last two years," Carter said. "Our program is down in numbers. We only have 1, 2 and 3 singles and 1 and 2 doubles. So we start every match three points down. I have five juniors this year. I am looking to have a more successful year next year."

# Okemos Has Top Tennis Team, Top Player

## John Raffel Sports Scene

The greatness of Okemos boys tennis was put on display again at the Division 1 state finals in October.

Okemos won the team title for the third time in the last four years. The previous two were in Division 2. This year it was in Division 1.

It was a fitting way for coach Chris Silker to end his career at Okemos.

"It's my 11th year and I am done," Silker said. "It was an incredibly special season."

We had eight seniors on the team this year. Any time a team has that type of leadership, it's great. It just so happened these seniors are very talented driven young men. We thought we had a shot at it. We worked very hard. We were waiting for the court to get pulled so to speak, due to COVID.

"But after we kept going, we thought we had a shot at finishing,

doubled down our efforts and focused on finishing the season the right way."

In the state finals, Okemos defeated Grand Blanc 8-0, Novi 7-1, Troy 7-1 and Ann Arbor Pioneer 8-0.

The Chiefs had an impressive lineup:

No. 1 singles: Josh Portnoy, senior, season record 27-1, team champion, No. 1 state champion over Gabe Brown of Troy Athens to avenge his only loss earlier in the season 6-1, 6-1.

"He's been playing tennis for a very long time," Silker said. "He's been focused on playing college level tennis for a young age. Our guys have created a strong peer group that grows and pushes each

other to the highest level possible. Our top four guys trained out of the Grand Rapids Racquet Club. They started out 10 years ago when they were young. Josh was a part of that."

Portnoy has committed to Michigan State University

No. 2 singles: Rohan Shah, senior, season record 25-1; only loss was to Chakor of Ann Arbor Greenhills.

No. 3 singles: Colson Wells, sophomore, season record 22-1.

No. 4 singles: George Fan,



junior, season record 24-0

No. 1 doubles: Shrey Patel, senior, Druv Talluri senior season record 24-0

No. 2 doubles: Siddharth Nagisetty, senior, Ethan Portnoy, freshman. Season record 22-0

No. 3 doubles: Abhi Shukul senior; Diego Casagrande, senior. Season record 22-2.

No. 4 Yoonho "Jimmy" Cho senior, Ben Wei sophomore, 19-4.

**Check Our MHSAA Tennis Finals Photos at www.highschoolsportsscene.com!**

# Hemlock Tennis Player Finishes At 16-0

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Call him Mr. Undefeated.

Max Hauffe is a four-year senior for Hemlock who finished the season undefeated at 16-0.

"Max has had an incredible season," coach Chad Ludwig said. "Max practices very hard and has taken lessons at the Saginaw Athletic Club. Max was a solid

player last year, but has improved tremendously. Max's net game and ability to take the ball out of the air from anywhere on the court has pushed his game to the next level. "The most memorable moments came when he was given the chance to play some players from bigger schools. He played really well against Jackson Keefe from Midland Chemics who gave him the toughest match of the year. My hopes are that he will be recognized by the com-

mittee that selects No. 1 singles for the state finals."

But that did not turn out to be the case.

"Unfortunately he was not given the opportunity to go to states this year," Ludwig said. "Any other year he would have been a shoo-in for states."

But it was still quite a season.

"Max works all year long at tennis," Ludwig said. "He does not

participate in other sports. Max is one of the nicest most polite players. He is a true gentleman on and off the court.

"We finished the season with a 6-7-3 record. We were a bit disappointed in how the regional tournaments had to be held due to COVID regulations, but we were very happy that we were able to get the season in without any cases or any need to cancel our matches."



Max Hauffe had a 16-0 season for Hemlock tennis.

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# P-W Girls Hope To Be Volleyball Power Again

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Pewamo-Westphalia could prove to be a power again in Division 3 volleyball.

Coach Jon Thelen points out last season's team was 33-6-3, won the league and district before losing in the regional finals.

"We graduated 10 seniors, losing two 4-year starters in Katie Lehman and Annabelle Schafer as well as two three-year starters in Jordyn Hanes and Makenna Thelen," Thelen said. "Between them were first and second team all-conference awards and an all-region

award helping to lead our team to so much success.

"Senior Callie Smith is my only returning starter and a middle blocker who is leading the team on the offensive side of the court as well as a huge block.

Sophomore Dani Pohl is an outside hitter that has been my highest percentage hitter and leading kill getter in most games so far this season as she looks to continue to grow as a force for us. Senior Riley Hanes is a setter who got to learn behind two seniors last year and has been our leading assist setter in our 6-2."

Freshman Taylor Smith is a setter.

"She had to run a 5-1 while my senior setter was out and did a great job running the court learning how to adjust to the speed of the game and making correct choices," Thelen said. "At 6-0, she is going to be a force in years to come."

The team started out a 6-3.

"We have exceeded my expectations after graduating 10 seniors and losing players at various times this season," Thelen said. "We finally have the whole team back together and am excited to see how much better this team will get.

Our strength is our hard work and young talent that is growing and learning each game. We are young but we have gotten better every week as we learn to play together and grow into the vision I have for the team.

"As a young team, we make a lot of youthful errors and poor decision making. The conference (CMAC) has two undefeated teams left in us and Fowler with a mixture of 1 and 2 win teams through the conference. Each match has presented its own challenges and ideally we are fighting to defend our conference title and are on pace to do so."



Katie Lehman was among the key graduates from last year's team.

# 1,000 Kills; Alma's Alyssa Leister Hits Milestone

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Alma's Alyssa Leister has proven how dangerous she is as a weapon for the Panther volleyball team.

She now has more than 1,000 career kills.

That's an awful lot of kills which is why Leister continues to be a talented area athlete.

"I actually had no idea I was even close to it," Leister said. "I had no clue. I had no idea I was

even close to it."

There's a trick to getting 1,000 career kills, Leister pointed out.

"You have to be smart about where you're going," she said. "Getting a kill doesn't necessarily mean hitting the crap out of the ball. You have to be smart about the placement."

The key in having a good hard kill, Leister said, "is definitely your technique. It comes from your abs and how hard you pull yourself forward.

A majority of the time because it's high school and not travel, there's a thing they call the campfire which is right in the middle at the 10-foot line where their middle blocker would be playing. That's usually open."

Leister is also one of Alma's setters in a 6-2 attack.

"A majority of the time, I give my hitters a good hit to put away," she said. "I could obviously do better at everything."

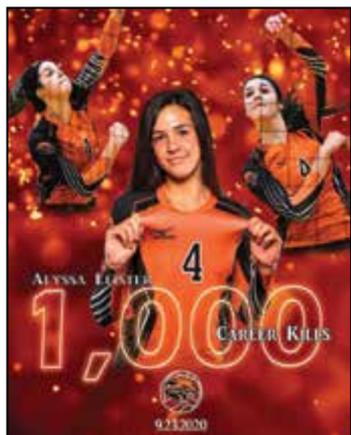
Leister has been happy with

what the team has been able to accomplish.

"It's been going pretty good," Leister said. "Obviously, we've had our ups and downs like any other team does. We can really do some damage. We can win a district title for sure."

She also plays basketball and softball, and said basketball is her best sport because she puts the most time into that. Leister has committed to Wayne State to play basketball.

It was celebration time when Alyssa Leister got kill No. 1,000.



Jenna Reitsma is a senior for Lowell.

# Lowell Players Hope To Make Team State Contender

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Jenna Reitsma is coming off a Lowell team which lost 3-1 to Farmington Hill Mercy in the Division I volleyball title match last season.

This is her senior season.

"It's going really well," she said. "We're getting a lot of work in. We're really improving and we're having a lot of fun competing. We've been up and going in the past few years and it's been a lot of fun competing with some of the top teams in the state."

Reitsma is again an outside hitter. It's her fourth season on the varsity.

She formally played as hitter outside but has moved to inside.

"I think as an outside hitter, I do a good job finding the court and different places where to score and finding a way to put the ball down," Reitsma said.

She is also used as a server and passer.

Reitsma was first-team all-state as a junior and second team as a sophomore. She's played volleyball since the seventh grade.

In the era of COVID, playing with masks "is definitely different," Reitsma said. "There's different ways of catching your breath, communicating, not being able to read each other's lips. We're willing to do it. We just want to compete. It's not too bad, you just can't think about it."

Reitsma has committed to Marquette University.

"I pretty much play volleyball year round," she said.

Another key Lowell player is senior setter Sophie Powell.

She's been a setter since she

started playing volleyball in middle school.

"I did not volunteer, but my club coach asked me to set," she said. "I wanted to be a hitter. Now, I'm just a setter. I think setting is a really fun position. I really like all the strategy that goes into and being able to set the ball and control the game. I'm happy I'm a setter.

"You have to know when to set your hitters and who to set and to put them into a position to score."

She was second team all-state last season.

# Beal City Senior Sparks Volleyball Team To Outstanding Record

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Beal City volleyball coach Jade Kennedy has been enjoying the opportunity to coach Sage Schumacher, and for obvious reasons.

This is Schumacher's senior season with the Aggies. She's been on the varsity all four seasons.

"She's always been one of the kill leaders in the front row," Kennedy

said. "She's a middle blocker. For this year (as of early October), she has 189 kills so far, 49 aces and 30 blocks. She also has 101 digs.

"She has always been a strong hitter for us and a strong blocker. That's originally what she was on the varsity to do since she was a freshman. She recently became one of our stronger defensive players as well with 101 digs. She is taking

a majority of the balls in the back row and she is very strong with her serving as well, which is pretty new for her to be consistently in the game for us, with 49 aces."

Overall, "she is a really good player," Kennedy continued. "I can put her wherever I need to and she does an excellent job."

Schumacher has been among the reasons Beal City fired to a 15-2

start.

"We have a really good senior class that is very good with leadership and everyone seems to be on board with what we're talking to them about and buying into the program. Everyone seems to be there for the same reasons."

Volleyball is Schumacher's only sport. But she's obviously very good at it.



Fowler's Sarah Veale was first-team all-stater last year as an outside hitter.

# Fowler Hitter Having A Unique Volleyball Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Sarah Veale has been leading the way for a strong Fowler volleyball program.

It's her senior year and her third varsity season.

She was first-team all-stater last year as an outside hitter.

"Last year she was outside," Coach Patty Feldpausch, of Fowler

said. "Her sophomore year, she played middle and outside."

Veale's abilities as a hitter have been impressive.

"She can crush the ball, she can do a roll shot and score points, she can tip, she looks at where the defense is and puts it where they're not," Feldpausch said. "You don't know where she's going to put the ball, if you're an opponent. That makes it valuable to us. She's not

predictable. You don't know where she's going to put it. Opponents struggle to dig the ball.

"She's gotten better every year. All of the shots she can take, hard shots, hitting the line the hard angle, she can do it all. She's gotten better with placement and accuracy. She has a really aggressive jump serve. She can put the ball in any zone. She can mix it up on her serves. She's very effective in serving. She can put it wherever

we need her to. She's also a very good defensive player. She reads well. She helps her teammates by talking a lot and calling out what's going to happen. She's an all-around solid player."

Fowler started out 5-0 in the CMAC. Fowler has lost in the regional finals the last two years.

Veale also plays softball. She has verbally committed to Saginaw Valley to play volleyball.

# Okemos Sophomore Among The State's Top Volleyball Players

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Taylor Stephens is a sophomore for Okemos' volleyball team but has an enormous amount of talent and potential for an excellent program.

She was on the varsity as a freshman.

"It went well," she recalled. "I played all-around for the whole season. It was pretty good for my freshman year. Outside hitter would probably be my best posi-

tion. For me I like to use my arm strength and I like to go to spots where the defense isn't."

Stephens likes the progress the team has made this year and being able to overcome restrictions imposed by COVID to have a season.

"We're really excited to play despite the coronavirus and everything," she said. "We're getting better every day. It's going pretty well so far, especially defense wise."

The Chiefs were gearing toward first place in the Capital Area Ac-

tivities Conference. Wins over East Lansing and Lansing Waverly were impressive victories coming off of three weeks of preseason practice.

"Especially if we keep improving we'll have a good chance of winning conference and hopefully state," Stephens said. "Our defense has done really well this year. The play of our outside hitters has been really good."

Stephens has played volleyball five years and has played for a national team called Far Out in

Grand Rapids for two years.

"My dad (Duane) coaches basketball for Michigan State and we watching an MSU volleyball game one day," Stephens said. "I fell in love with the sport right there and started going to Okemos camps and stuff like that. I did play basketball at one time but started focusing on volleyball primarily.

"Volleyball is such a team sport that relies on leadership and communication. You have to work together, fully, to win."



Taylor Stephens is a sophomore hitter for Okemos.

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## New Soccer Coach Building Heritage Program

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Ross Gibson is the new coach for a Saginaw Heritage High boys soccer team looking to build a championship program.

Heritage has been looking to be a factor in the Saginaw Valley League.

"A moment I recall well was an incredible performance against Midland High after they just beat top two in the conference Midland Dow," Gibson

said. "We came from behind to tie 1-1 and nearly stole the winner after lots of shots on goal. I would actually like to pay tribute to Brian the former coach who I think did an outstanding job and left me with a great set of boys."

Senior Jack Bowerman has "been a real standout this year, absolutely solid at the back, fearless, brave and a great kid too," Gibson said. "Will Paquette is one of our Captains and has been an incredible leader, some-

one I can always depend on and who leads by great example. Brendan Trier is another incredible leader by example, battles all day long until the tank is empty and is also ever reliable."

Gibson likes the progress his team has made.

"I would say we're still growing but we are getting closer and closer to our targets and goals," he said. "I've never had a team that is so persistent no matter the score, true warriors that I

am proud to coach. Sometimes our attacking movement could be better, it would definitely help us to score a lot more goals as we have great strikers."

As for the Saginaw Valley League, "I would say it is one of the strongest in the area, clear league favorites are Grand Blanc."

Grand Blanc finished 10-0 in the conference, finished by Midland High and Midland Dow.

Saginaw Heritage's Coach Ross Gibson.

## Okemos Junior A True Year-Round Soccer Player

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Okemos coach Keith Miller has had a winning record this soccer season and gives a lot of credit for that success to junior Jack Guggemos.

"Jack is probably the most complete player we have had at Okemos since I have been on the staff," Miller said. "He is great individual defender, understands defensive shape, is very crafty on the ball, a very good passer and distributor, and a good finisher, plus, his knowledge of the game is very high."

In nine games so far this season, Guggemos has seven goals and four assists.

"Jack is a year round soccer player who is incredibly driven," Miller said. "He has played on several high level club teams, and continues to improve every year. He wants to be the best player he can be, and combine that with a natural athleticism for the game, you end up with a pretty formidable player. Jack had several seniors who played large roles last year, and he was just a part of the machine. This year his role has changed to being the spark that makes the machine go.

"Every aspect of his game has

improved, but the main improvement is that he can play at a high level at a very high pace. Jack makes complicated things look simple. So many of the plays he makes to keep the ball and keep a play going often go unnoticed, but it is not lost on his teammates and coaching staff. We expect Jack to lead this team- in every aspect."

Soccer is Guggemos' only sport.

"He never stops working, whether it's with a club team or in his backyard," Miller said. "His effort is tireless. I have watched Jack play since he was very young, and it is fantastic to watch him bloom into one of the best players in the state. He has been the best player on the field in every game we have played this season."

Okemos is coming off a 19-2 season from last year.

"Realistically, this team was just hoping for a chance to have a season this year, so just being able to get in our games so far was fantastic for the boys, because in August we were pretty confident we wouldn't be having a season," Miller said. "As one would expect, when we don't start playing/practicing till after Labor Day, we have had very inconsistent results."



Jack Guggemos has been a complete player for Okemos this season.



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## Alma Boys Soccer Team Celebrate District Championship

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Alma's boys' soccer team is celebrating its second district title in school history and first since 2011 after a 4-0 title win over Hemlock on Oct. 22.

Coach Nick O'Neill's team improved to 10-4-2 with the district title win.

The Panthers, in the semifinals, beat Freeland on penalty kicks.

"It's been a matter of getting better as the year went on," O'Neill said. "We didn't finish as high in the conference standings as we had hoped. We dropped a tough game to Freeland during the regular season and to a really good Franckenmuth and Garber teams. We hit districts and had a mind shift and the boys went to work and had a

great week last week, and won some big games under some high pressure moments. They're really playing good soccer right now." O'Neill called it an "upperclassmen-led team. The seniors and juniors surely lead the way."

He has three defenders starting on his backline with Ryan Thompson Dominick Anguiano and Corbin Yates, plus keeper Dominic Prince.

"It's a matter of minimizing goals scored," O'Neill said. "Then we counterattack with some pretty talented offensive players. We have brothers Cole and Connor Lemerand who are our top goal scorers on top. Connor is leading



Alma's district championship soccer team celebrates the title.

the team with 19 goals this year and freshman forward Leo Richter is contributing to the offensive attack as well."

Alma was set to play Macomb Lutheran North in the regional.

"It was great for this year's team," O'Neill said. "They've put in the work to earn this accomplishment."

DeWitt It's been a big soccer season for DeWitt, which scored district wins

of 6-0 over Fowlerville and 2-1 over Mason for a district title. They played at Dearborn Divine Child on Oct. 27 in the regional.

Coach Joe Ishraidi's team entered the regional at 10-4-2.

## Dow Ends Soccer Season Too Soon

### John Raffel Sports Scene

It was a fabulous soccer season for Midland Dow's boys team, although coach Drew Emrich wishes it had lasted longer.

Dow lost in the district semifinal 2-1 to Traverse City West with the winning goal coming in the last 19 seconds

The season ended at 10-6-1.

"We finished 8-2, second in the (Saginaw Valley League) to Grand Blanc," Emrich said. "With everything going on like COVID and the start of the season, not going on, we played our first three games of the

season in the Traverse City area and played well. We lost a lot of really key seniors last year and this year we had 10 seniors and some key roles that needed to be filled by key players.

"We were happy with our season. We had a rough patch week where we

face three strong teams and came out on the losing end of all three games. It was a big downer for us. But the week after that we came out in some really strong games. Last year we were high flying. We were ranked in the top five in the state for most of the season and were 15-3 overall. To go from that in my

first season at Midland Dow to this season...we were looking back at it, and it was a good season."

Ethan Schwartzentruber was among the team's top players at left mid and striker and had 11 goals.

"Hes a very athletic, talented kid," Emrich said. "We also lost him for three games from injury and I think that kind of put a damper on things. Hes a good threat for us in goal scoring."

Jack Wolohan, a junior was a versatile player and strong defender for Dow.

Jeb Snead had a sophomore slump of sorts after 13 goals as a freshman.



Ethan Schwartzentruber (23) was Midland Dow's top player this season.

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