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- **Publisher**  
Randy Miniard  
randy@highschoolsportsscene.com  
517-202-1808
- **High School Liaison**  
Paul Hornak  
p1hornak@gmail.com  
989-331-1168
- **Editorial**  
John Raffel  
john.raffel@gmail.com  
616-894-2936  
Butch Harmon  
greg102300@yahoo.com  
616-655-9058
- **Photographers**  
Russ Pierce, Skip Traynor,  
Dana McCann, Kim Larner,  
Eric Sawatzki, Marvin Hall,  
Jaymee Beard, Lynn Munger,  
Greg Chrapek, John Raffel,  
Jason Barden, James Traylor

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Hello sports fans.  
It's a great day at High School Sports Scene Magazine.  
It took till mid-January, but the high school football season in Michigan finally realized a closure.  
And what a closure it was.  
For fans of DeWitt football, the wait was worth it as the Panthers won the first state football title in school history after coming up short the previous five times.  
Led by junior quarterback Tyler Holtz, the Panthers turned in a fabulous performance in defeating defending state champion River Rouge for the Division 3 state championship. The game put the caper on an amazing season for the Panthers of coach Rob Zimmerman who met every challenge in what was an unbelievable season of challenges for all high school sports athletes in Michigan.

DeWitt was joined in raising state titles by New Lothrop. Led by quarterback Cam Orr and big-play performers Will Muron and Julius Garza, New Lothrop held off a determined Traverse City St. Francis to win the Division 7 state crown.

Frankenmuth and Davison also finished the football season playing for a title on the field at Ford Field. For Frankenmuth, it was a memorable season as it reached the state finals for the first time in school history.

Area volleyball players and swimmers were also able to finish out the state tournament by competing for titles during the month of January.

Looking ahead, the winter sports season is a question mark. With Covid-19 continuing to keep its grip on the state, basketball teams, wrestlers and hockey players are waiting for the green light from the state of Michigan to begin competing.

Like everyone else, we are waiting and hoping for this deadly virus to begin to loosen its grip. While we wait for life to return to normal, stay safe, stay strong and keep optimistic.

See you on the field soon!



Randy Miniard  
Publisher/Owner  
517-202-1808  
[randy@highschoolsportsscene.com](mailto:randy@highschoolsportsscene.com)

# MHSAA's First Communications Director Retires After 33 Years

## John Raffel Sports Scene

In the Michigan High School Athletic Association, and among sports writers and sportscasters across the state, he has been affectionately known as "JJ".

John Johnson retired on Dec. 18 after 33 years serving the Michigan High School Athletic Association in a variety of roles including as its first communications director and most recently director of broadcast properties.

Johnson, along with being communications director for the majority of his three-plus decades at the MHSAA, also at different times during his tenure directed efforts in information technology, marketing and merchandising before spending his final years focused on the Association's growing broadcast presence.

The communications director position was created by now-retired executive director John E. "Jack" Roberts after Roberts was hired to lead the MHSAA in 1986.

Johnson was hired by the MHSAA in April 1987.

"The first hire Jack wanted to make was for a communications position," Johnson said. "It was something the association never really had. It had been done by different people at different times, some support staff, some assistant directors. There really wasn't a plan."

Johnson became a recognizable voice speaking for the MHSAA in thousands of interviews over the years, and he also pioneered the Association's broadcast endeavors - building one of the most highly-regarded and highest-producing Student Broadcast Programs in the United States while leading the charge to bring an abundance of playoff events to cable and digital platforms.

"It's everything with our television partners like FOX and State Champs, everything that we did with the NFHS and the school broadcasting program and our radio network had grown to the point where we had over 100 radio stations picking up 'This week in High School Sports' and were doing audio of nearly 100 events every year, most of it on the internet," Johnson said. "But we had 20 to 40 stations picking up the basketball finals every year. It really was an evolution to see how all of these things grew over time."

Johnson was one of the first communications specialists hired by a state high school sports association, and one of, if not, the first to carry such wide-ranging responsibilities.

"What people don't necessarily know is John is the pioneer in this field," MHSAA Executive Director Mark Uyl said in a statement. "The way he shaped this job over the last 30 years has been extraordinary - and has become the model for the 49 other states."

Johnson acknowledged his duties changed.

"To say there was an evolution would be an understatement," Johnson said. "The very first thing Jack wanted me to do when I came in was souvenir programs. That had been my strong suit at Indiana and Western Michigan before that, and then media relations. Over time, we added marketing and merchandising and radio and television and eventually IT and the internet. I was a director of IT for a very short time."

"After 10 years, we hired Rob Kaminski to be the publications guy. Rob was the first of several hires who took what I was doing on a small basis. The programs were not a small task. They took what I was doing and expanded on them. Over time, we develop a team to do all these things on a

larger scale. In the last 10 years, where that put me was more heavily on broadcasting."

Johnson also served multiple terms on the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) national record book committee.

Johnson served as the MHSAA's first director of broadcast properties. The MHSAA provides video broadcasts of nearly all of its MHSAA Finals - including football and basketball with FOX Sports Detroit. He guided the MHSAA's School Broadcast Program from its creation during the 2008-09 school year and helped the MHSAA take a leading role in the creation of the NFHS Network digital platform for live and on-demand school sports broadcasts. Michigan SBP schools are among the top content providers to the Network, regularly broadcasting upwards of 500 events per week.

Johnson attended Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart and then Michigan State University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in journalism.

He was sports information director and broadcaster at Albion College while still a student at MSU. After graduating from Michigan State in 1979 and working in the Ferris Sports Information office, for a few months, Johnson worked a little more than three years at Western Michigan University and then left to become the sports information assistant at Indiana University. He left Indiana Jan. 1986 for a promotions job with Michigan Farm Bureau. It was 15 months later when Johnson left to take the MHSAA position.

Memorable moments include 22-, 23-inning softball games.

"I'll always remember the Marysville winning streak in volleyball," Johnson said. "My favorite single game of all time is the

DeWitt-Farmington Harrison game of 1989 when Mil Coleman scored the winning touchdown with just over a minute to go in a less than one-minute drives. That was one of the classic games of all-time.

"What you remember the most of what makes high school sports special, like the things we did to rekindle relationships through our legends program in the 1990s and early 2000s, bringing back some of those old championship teams of 30, 40, 50 years ago for a last hurrah. When we first did it and I selected Chassell, which at that time, held the longest winning streak on boys basketball, it ran from 1956, 57 and 58 seasons with state titles in Class D. I was told, 'Johnson, you're never going to get all those people to come down from the Western U.P. But we got every single one of them who was alive. We had a blast with those type of things.'"

Johnson said he started considering retirement several years ago.

"It's no secret my wife has been in poor health for over a decade," he said. "We started looking at when things could fall into place. We thought somewhere turning into the 60 to 65-age range. I turned 65 (in mid-December and retired in the same week."

"It was time. I've had conversations with administrators and coaches. I got into a long conversation with (a former golf coach and athletic director) who had been retired for several years and he said, 'you'll just know it when



"JJ" John Johnson

it's time.' We made the decision two years ago this December would be the end of the trail as far as my full-time service to the association goes. Never in my wildest dreams would I imagine what would happen or not happen in 2020."

Johnson said it's also set up for him to possibly return down the line in a part-time archival role.

"You think of all of the ball-games out there on audio, video on 60mm film, it needs to be better organized and needs to be available for people to enjoy and not be sitting on a shelf," he said. "During the first third of the pandemic, we played with what we wanted to do and we put on about 140 old boys basketball games from 1949 to 1999 on the MHSAA sports YouTube channel. Some games had over 2,000 live views in the first 12 hours. People eat this stuff up."

"It doesn't make sense for boxscores and pictures to be sitting in files. They need to be out there so people can see and enjoy and remember. That will be the goal in coming back to get all of that stuff out there."

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# DeWitt Turns In Big Offensive Performance To Bring Home First State Title In School History

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

After banging on the door of a state championship and being denied entry its five previous tries, the DeWitt Panthers broke the door down in a robust way as they defeated River Rouge 40-30 to win the Division 3 state football championship at Ford Field.

Led by junior quarterback Tyler Holtz, the Division 3-4 Offensive Player of the Year, DeWitt turned in a thrilling offensive effort to lead the way for the first football state championship in school history.

"I'm super-proud of our kids," said DeWitt coach Rob Zimmerman. "I have known for a long time that this group was capable of this and it's certainly satisfying to see them finish. They put themselves in a position to accomplish it and it was great to see that happen."

Taking center stage for the Panthers was an offense that hit on all cylinders against a River Rouge team that came into the game as the defending Division 3 state champion.

The DeWitt offense struck first when Holtz connected with Blake Beachnau on a 15-7 yard touchdown pass in the first quarter.

River Rouge took its only lead of the game early in the second quarter with a touchdown and two-point conversion. The DeWitt offense began to roll shortly after that score and regained the lead when Holtz hit Andrew Deбри with an eight-yard scoring strike. The Panthers upped the

lead to 21-8 when Holtz fired a 35-yard touchdown pass to Nicholas Flegler.

DeWitt began to pull away from River Rouge during the third quarter. DeWitt scored a pair of touchdowns on a 25-yard touchdown pass from Holtz to Tommy McIntosh and a 37-yard

year's state semifinals against Muskegon.

"I think last year's semifinal loss to Muskegon was a big factor in this year's success," Zimmerman said. "We had a lot of underclassmen on last year's team and we lost a close game. They guys knew how close

was a huge challenge for us," Zimmerman said. "To get that victory was a huge confidence builder. These kids have been together since the fourth grade and have always wanted this. They believed all season they had a chance to win it."

The win capped a season that saw DeWitt put together a perfect 12-0 record with six wins during the regular season and six wins during the playoffs in a season and post-season that was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The season certainly was a challenge," Zimmerman said. "It was a challenge not only for us but for everyone playing fall sports. Having the playoffs shut down was tough. All the testing and not knowing from day-to-day who was going to be there and who wasn't going to be there, but that was a challenge for all the teams playing fall sports."

While only 150 fans for each school were permitted to attend the state finals at Ford Field, DeWitt knew it had the support of the entire community behind it. That support was on hand when the team busses pulled back into the high school late Saturday night.

"We had a great crowd send us off to the game and when we returned home we had an amazing number of people meet us," Zimmerman said. "There had to be over 1,000 people there when we got back home and we had fireworks greet us. The people were very, very excited for it. With the present climate with all the Covid and all the negative things, this was a huge plus for the community to be able to celebrate something positive."

I'm just unbelievably proud of this group of kids. It is such a great group. They are hard workers on the field and hard workers in the classroom. I am so proud they had the opportunity to win a state championship."



DeWitt captain Grant Uyl represents during ceremonial pregame coin toss.

touchdown run from Bryce Deбри that put the Panthers up 33-14 at the end of the third quarter.

River Rouge added a touchdown early in the fourth quarter before DeWitt sealed the game on a two-yard touchdown run by Holtz with four minutes remaining in the game.

That touchdown paved the way for an ultimate DeWitt championship celebration for the first time in six trips to the state championship game.

A big factor in winning this year's state title was the disappointment of falling short in last

year's state semifinals against Muskegon. "I think last year's semifinal loss to Muskegon was a big factor in this year's success," Zimmerman said. "We had a lot of underclassmen on last year's team and we lost a close game. They guys knew how close

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DeWitt running back Andrew Deбри (45) heads to the endzone for a touchdown against River Rouge in the Division 3 state championship game.

# Defense A Big Part Of DeWitt Football Team's March To Division 3 State Title

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

While the DeWitt football team boasted a high-powered offense that put up some amazing numbers in this year's march to the Division 3 state championship, the Panther defense put up some impressive numbers of its own.

Of the 11 games that DeWitt actually played this year, one win being forfeit, the Panther defense posted six shutouts. In three of the other five wins the DeWitt defense allowed sin-

gle digits with just two teams scoring in double digits all year.

While the defense relied on a total-team effort for its success, a trio of senior veterans provided the backbone for the defense. Along with being seniors, Andrew Deбри, Grant Uyl, and Connor Porchert were all two-year starters and two-year team captains.

"Andrew, Grant and Connor were the heart of our defense," said DeWitt coach Rob Zimmerman. "Along with being two-year starters and two-year team captains, they are all

great students with 4.0 grade-point averages."

Deбри and Uyl anchored the defense from their linebacking positions while Porchert anchored the defensive line at his tackle spot.

Deбри totaled 76 tackles this season along with two interceptions and a sack while Uyl added 65 tackles and a pair of sacks. Porchert totaled 25 tackles along with one sack.

The DeWitt defense turned in its 'biggest effort of the season in the state semifinals as it held the

Muskegon offense scoreless in a 14-0 win.

"Our defense played great the entire season," Zimmerman said. "Their best game came against Muskegon when we held them to 67 yards of total offense."

Along with the senior leaders, the Panthers had a number of defenders who turned in big seasons. Senior outside linebacker Blake Beachnau totaled 32 tackles along with four sacks. This season, Defensive back Cooper Brumfield added 46 tackles and an interception, defensive lineman Garrett Schutte had 28 tackles and four sacks and Connor McKean added 32 tackles and three sacks. Defensive



Defense a big part of DeWitt football team's march to Division 3 state title.

back Tommy McIntosh led the team with four interceptions along with 23 tackles while Nick Flegler picked off three passes along with 39 tackles.

# Tyler Holtz Wins Player Of The Year Honors, Leads DeWitt To State Title

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The DeWitt football program has produced plenty of talented quarterbacks over the year, but only one has brought home a state title.

Junior quarterback Tyler Holtz etched his name in DeWitt football lore with a dazzling performance in the Division 3 state finals victory against River Rouge that capped an

amazing season.

In DeWitt's 40-30 win against River Rouge, Holtz put on an impressive show as he completed 12-of-16 passes for 177 yards and four touchdowns. Holtz also ran the ball 15 times for 118 yards (7.9 avg.) and one touchdown.

That performance put the pressure on the River Rouge defense from the beginning of the game to the end.

"He's able to throw the ball on the run," said River Rouge coach Corey Parker, "obviously that creates threats to defenses like no other. Throwing the ball on the run, that's truly a dual-threat guy."

Holtz was a consistent source of offense for DeWitt throughout the season as he completed 122-of-185 passes (65.9%) for 2,396 yards. Named the Division 3-4 Offensive Player of the Year, Holtz also tossed

35 touchdown passes against just two interceptions. Holtz also rushed for 424 yards (5.7 avg.) and scored four touchdowns.

According to his coach, Holtz saved his best performance for last.

"Tyler has had a lot of good games this season," said DeWitt coach Rob Zimmerman, "but this was one of the best, if not the best game he had all season. He has a lot of the attributes you want in a quarterback, but the one thing that stands out is his work ethic. We have a ton of kids on this team with tremendous work ethics, but Tyler's work ethic is off the charts. He is relentless in his goal to be as good as he can be."



DeWitt junior quarterback Tyler Holtz earned Player of the Year honors in Division 3-4 and led the Panthers to the Division 3 state title.

# Rob Zimmerman Of DeWitt Named Detroit Lions High School Football Coach Of The Year

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Just days after guiding the DeWitt football team to a first-ever state title, DeWitt head football coach Rob Zimmerman snagged a major honor as he was named the 2020 Detroit Lions High School Football Coach of the Year.

Zimmerman was informed of his selection in a surprise phone call from new Detroit Lions head coach Dan Campbell who informed Zimmerman of the honor.

"I really appreciate it," Zimmerman said, during the Zoom call with Campbell and members of the Detroit Lions media, "It's a

great honor."

Zimmerman has compiled an impressive legacy during his 22 years as head coach of DeWitt, a legacy that impressed the new Lions head coach. During his 22 years at DeWitt, Zimmerman as led the Panthers to a 222-45 record. Zimmerman has guided DeWitt to five state final appearances, 12 state semi-final appearances, 12 regional titles, 14 district titles, 18 conference titles and has led DeWitt to the playoffs 20 times during those 22 seasons.

A 1984 graduate of Perry High School, Zimmerman played football at Northwood University for one year and at Central Michigan

University for two years. Zimmerman coached at Shepherd High School, Olivet College and Spring Lake High School before getting his first head coaching position at Cedar Springs High School in 1996. Zimmerman took over as head coach at DeWitt in 1999.

Zimmerman was inducted into the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2016 and was named the Detroit Lions High School Football Coach of the Week in week 7 of the 2004 season.

What makes Zimmerman's accomplishments at DeWitt even more impressive is that DeWitt is a closed district, meaning every player on the DeWitt team lives in DeWitt.

This accomplishment of this year's team puts the caper on the success of the past 20-plus years at DeWitt.



Along with coaching DeWitt to its first-ever state football title, Rob Zimmerman was also named the Detroit Lions High School Football Coach of the Year.

"The greatest thing is this group of kids got rewarded," Zimmerman said. "They did everything that we could have possibly asked of them. They are a great role model not only for teams at DeWitt, but for other schools for how to go about things from a character standpoint in the classroom and on the football field."

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# New Lothrop Uses Big First Half To Put The Wraps On Division 7 State Championship

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

For the New Lothrop football team, the 2020-21 season was all about meeting challenges. When the final second ticked off the clock in the Division 7 state title game against Traverse City St. Francis, the Hornets completed the final challenge and emerged with their second state title in the last three years with a 42-35 win.

"The game was similar to our season," said New Lothrop coach Clint Galvas. "It had its ups and downs, but in the end, we were able to overcome adversity. Our motto is to adapt and overcome. I was so proud of the way we were able to adapt the whole season. It was a season like no other."

New Lothrop experienced plenty of ups during the first half of the state title game. Senior Will Muron put the Hornets up 7-0 with a 27-yard touchdown run in the first quarter. After St. Francis responded with

a touchdown, New Lothrop senior Julius Garza broke loose for an 83-yard kickoff return that put the Hornets up 14-7.

"We worked on it in practice all week and we knew we could break one," Galvas said. "The guys got the blocks perfect and I just broke free and scored."

The New Lothrop offense continued to flex its muscles in the second quarter as it scored three touchdowns to go up 35-7 at halftime. Senior quarterback Cam Orr hooked up with Garza for a 65-yard touchdown strike. Garza later added a three-yard touchdown run while Orr ran in for a touchdown from 11-yards out.

"Going into halftime up 35-7 against a great St. Francis team, obviously, a lot of things were going right," Galvas said. "We had some quick strikes in the first half. We also had some big first-half stops on defense and created some turnovers."

Traverse City's ground game began to

flex its muscles in the second half. The Gladiators scored a touchdown and added a two-point conversion in the third quarter to cut the deficit to 35-15.

St. Francis continued to chip away at the New Lothrop lead and with a pair of touchdowns early in the fourth quarter cut the deficit to 35-28.

With the pressure mounting, New Lothrop's offense responded with an impressive drive that was capped by Garza running in for a touchdown from nine-yards out with 2:26 remaining in the game.

"The guys stayed positive throughout," Galvas said. "They have had positive attitudes all season and would always come back with a smile on their faces. They always stayed positive and in the end that was the difference for us."



Orr led the way for the New Lothrop offense as he connected on 11-of-15 passes for 222 yards and a touchdown while rushing 17 times for 122 yards (7.2 avg.) and one touchdown. Garza finished the game with 248 all-purpose yards and scored four touchdowns.

The New Lothrop defense was paced by Alec Mangino who totaled 12 tackles and Garza who added nine tackles. Bryce Cheney totaled seven tackles and an interception while Garrett Mangino added seven tackles. Muron totaled six tackles and an interception while Isiah Pasik and Kody Krupp both added six tackles.

Along with the big plays by the Hornets on the field, Galvas pointed to the major contributions from his coaching staff as

being a big key to the team's success.

"I truly feel like we have the best coaching staff in the entire state" Galvas said. "Our defensive coordinator Brad Barnette, defensive assistant Trevor Beach and offensive/defensive line coach John Long along with our whole staff have put in a lot of time. People don't see those contributions. These guys have put in a lot of time and effort to help us accomplish this."

The contributions of the entire senior class also played a crucial role in the team's success.

"These seniors set a great example for our underclassmen for what a successful team looks like," Galvas said. "They are a very unselfish group. They set the bar high for the next generation."

# Trio Of Big-Play Performers Lead The Way For High-Powered New Lothrop Offense

## David Cook Sports Scene

Led by the senior trio of quarterback Cam Orr, Will Muron and Julius Garza, the New Lothrop football team featured an offense capable of striking from anywhere on the field.

New Lothrop's offense averaged 47.9 points per game this season with the lowest

point total of the season being 35 points scored against Mt. Morris in the season opener.

Orr paced the offense from the quarterback position where he completed 71.8% of his passes for 2,069 yards and 28 touchdowns. An athletic, dual-threat quarterback, Orr added 843 yards rushing (8.0 avg.) and 19 rushing touchdowns.

"Cam had a huge season for us," said New Lothrop coach Clint Galvas. "He orchestrated our offense and is a very good decision maker in our RPO (run-pass option) and jet-read schemes. He's a big, strong kid who is a strong runner and got better in the passing game as the season went on."

Garza and Muron provided plenty of big plays as both runners and receivers and also in the return game. Garza, who is being looked at by a number of colleges including Northwood, Saginaw Valley, Mt. Union of Ohio, Valparaiso and Siena Heights, caught 22 passes for 570 yards (25.9 avg.) and eight touchdowns. Garza added 247 yards rushing and four touchdowns and returned

a kickoff for a touchdown.

"I thought we were pretty explosive," Muron said. "We have a couple of speedsters in the backfield and Cam is a big guy who can run down the middle. We had speed and power."

Muron is also being looked at by several college programs. Muron ran for 827 yards (15.0 avg.) and nine touchdowns, caught 29 passes for 628 yards (21.7 avg.) and 10 touchdowns and returned a pair of punts for touchdowns.

"Will and Julius are both tremendous athletes," Galvas said. "Traverse City really keyed on Will in the finals and that opened Julius up for a lot of one-on-one matchups and he responded with a huge game."



The senior trio of Cam Orr (6), Will Muron (8) and Julius Garza (3) put up some big numbers for a New Lothrop offense that put up 49 points per game this season.

# New Lothrop Football, Wrestling Teams Provide Each Other With A Cross-Training Assist

## David Cook Sports Scene

Over the years, New Lothrop has forged an impressive legacy for producing all-state wrestlers and teams that annually compete for state team wrestling titles. During the fall, many of those wrestlers make their mark for a New Lothrop football team that annually makes deep runs in the state playoffs.

The wrestling and football teams at New Lothrop mirror each other's success and that is no accident according to the New Lothrop coach Clint Galvas.

"There is a lot of similarities between the two programs," Galvas said. "A lot of wrestlers play football and the work ethic is very similar between the two programs. We have three or four starters on the offensive line and defensive line that are also wrestlers. We have a number of all-state wrestlers on the team and our quarterback, Cam Orr, is a state-champion wrestler."

Orr, who won the Division 4 state championship at 215 pounds last year, is a big believer in the benefits of playing both sports.

"I think wrestling helps me in football a lot," Orr said. "We've always been known

as a wrestling school and I think over half the football team is wrestlers. You use your hands a lot in both sports and there are a lot of one-on-one battles in both sports. You go against the guy in front of you in both football and wrestling and you have to win that individual battles."

Orr was joined at the state wrestling finals last year by fellow football teammates Bryce Cheney who placed second at 152 pounds, Andrew Krupp who took second at 125 pounds and Isiah Pasik who took third at 285 pounds.

"We want the wrestling team to have success and the wrestling team wants us to



Bryce Cheney (4), Kody Krupp (61) and Isiah Pasik (71) are among the numerous wrestlers who also played key roles for the New Lothrop football team this season.

have success," Galvas said. "Jeff (wrestling coach Jeff Campbell) and I work really well together. I want my football players to go out for wrestling and he wants his wrestlers

to play football. It's been a great marriage between the two sports and has resulted in a lot of success for both programs."

# Lansing Catholic Football Team Overcomes Covid-19 Hurdles To Reach State Semis

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Covid-19 virus hit the Lansing Catholic football team hard this season but while the virus left the Cougars shorthanded at times, it could not take away the team's spirit.

With a next-man up attitude the Cougars overcame a lack of numbers and reached the Division 5 state semifinals before dropping a 35-14 decision to Frankenmuth.

Catholic Central entered the playoffs with a 4-2 regular-season record. The Cougars opened the playoffs with wins against Berrien Springs, South Haven and Olivet before the playoffs were halted in mid-November. When the playoffs resumed in early-January the

Cougars were shorthanded with 13 players unable to play against Grosse Ile. Despite the numbers crunch, the Cougars were able to claim a 28-5 win.

"That game was a huge win for us," said Lansing Catholic coach Jim Ahern. "We had a very young team and we were inexperienced in places but the kids played exceptionally well. We only had a week to get ready so I was extremely proud of our kids."

The Cougars also suffered a major player loss on the first offensive series of the Grosse Ile game when standout junior quarterback Joey Baker broke his collar bone.

The following week in the state semifinal game the numbers crunch caught up to the Cougars as

Frankenmuth wore them down.

"We only had 24 kids make the trip to Frankenmuth and that included all of our junior varsity players," Ahern said. "We were missing some really key kids. We hung in there with the kids that we had but Frankenmuth was much better. They are well coached and they just wore just wore us down. We were able to make some big plays and hang around but they (Frankenmuth) just controlled the game."

Playing without Baker, an all-conference and all-regional quarterback hampered the Cougars. Catholic turned to Alex Waters, who earned all-state honors this season, who stepped in to run the offense.

Watters was not the only Cougar to earn all-state honors as defensive lineman Bo Poljan was also named all-state.

Jake Maloney and Bronson Abbott both earned all-region and all-conference honors this season while Mason Knippen earned all-conference honors as a line-



The Lansing Catholic football team needed contributions from the entire team as injuries and covid-19 virus cases took its toll. Despite being down several players, the Cougars reached the Division 5 state semifinals.

backer and offensive lineman.

"I'm extremely proud of the efforts of all our kids," Ahern said. "From way back in the spring through summer and the start and stop of the season and playoffs. They gave all they could and that is all you can ask for as a coach. The season was like a rollercoaster ride with all the ups and downs. They adapted well from all the way back in the spring and gave everything they had."

They gave all they could and that is all you can ask for as a coach. The season was like a rollercoaster ride with all the ups and downs. They adapted well from all the way back in the spring and gave everything they had."

# Lansing Catholic Football Coach Jim Ahern Retires After 53 Years Of Coaching

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

After 53 years on the sidelines of area football fields, Jim Ahern has announced his retirement as a football coach.

Ahern coached at Ithaca and Lansing Catholic along with Gobles high school. Ahern spent the last 12 years coaching at Lansing Catholic where he led the Cougars to the 2019 Division 5 state championship. During his time at Lansing Catholic Ahern led the Cougars to four league titles, five

district titles and five regional titles and led Catholic to the playoffs all 12 seasons.

"God definitely has a plan for us," Ahern said. "I was very fortunate, that at a difficult time in my life, I was hired at Lansing Catholic. It has been an important part of my life both physically, mentally and spiritually. The support that I have received from the administration, my assistant coaches the parents and the students has been amazing. I have been fortunate to have players that gave everything that was asked of them. It is with mixed emotions that I am retiring, but

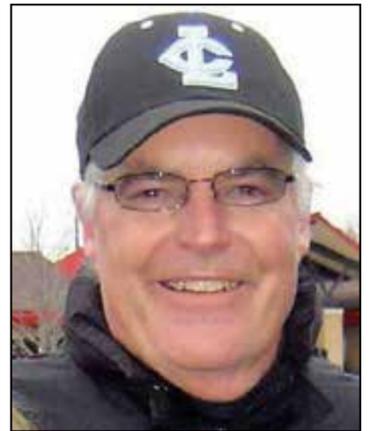
I feel that it is time."

Prior to coaching at Lansing Catholic, Ahern coached at Ithaca High School. Elected into the Michigan Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 1996, Ahern capped his coaching career with a record of 309-155-6, tying for eighth place in career victories in the state of Michigan.

In his retirement, Ahern is looking forward to spending more time with his family, which includes watching his grandson Zak play quarterback for Rockford High School.

Ahern was able to watch one of his grandson's games this year.

"It was real exciting," Ahern said. "He felt it was one of his worst games but I felt he played pretty good. He has exceptionally quick feet and a strong arm. He has some good players around him. The junior class is real strong and he's in a good program. He had a heck of a season this year."



Lansing Catholic football coach Jim Ahern is retiring after a 53-year coaching career that included stops at Ithaca and Gobles along with his time at Lansing Catholic.

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# Senior Leadership Pays Off With Deep Playoff Run For Williamston Football Team

## David Cook Sports Scene

Thanks to some invaluable senior leadership, the Williamston football team overcame the challenges of a Covid-19 impacted season to make a deep playoff run that resulted in the Hornets reaching the Division 4 state semifinals.

Williamston turned in a 9-2 overall record this season highlighted by a 38-21 win against Milan for a regional championship before dropping a 12-0 defensive struggle to Detroit Country Day in the state semifinals.

"These young men made history," said Williamston football coach Steve Kersten. "It was a memorable 2020-21 season that saw us playing and practicing in December and January. The season was on and off several times, but the whole time the kids stayed together and we had incredible leadership from our

seniors. In every pause of the season our seniors provided great leadership and made us stronger."

That leadership was evident in the regional title game when the Hornets clawed back from a 14-7 first-half deficit to defeat Milan.

"That was a huge win for our program," Kersten said. "The guys overcame a tough first half to get a win against a really good Milan team. We didn't have a game for eight weeks and we had a slow start but the guys kept battling."

Quarterback Luke Mahaney and running back Sullivan Sparks were among the seniors providing outstanding leadership and standout play on offense.

"Sullivan ran for over 200 yards against Milan," Kersten said. "He's an unselfish kid with a lot of heart. Luke also has a heart of steel and did a great job making plays for us."

Providing plenty of blocking for

the backfield was an offensive line anchored by seniors Nate Holcomb, Jaegar Woelmer and Miller McCutcheon.

"Our line was outstanding this year," Kersten said. "Most of them had a grade-point average of 3.75 or above and we had a lot of 4.0 students. They are smart and watched a lot of film together. During the eight-week break during the playoffs they spent a lot of time in the weight room and came back even stronger."

Williamston boasted an outstanding receiver corps led by senior Cade Conley at tight end along with Elijah Douglass and Dunkel at wide receiver.

"Cade received a walk-on offer from Central Michigan University," Kersten said. "He had a breakout game against Milan. He caught four passes for over 100 yards and hurdled their cornerback on a play for a touchdown."

Behind the scenes, Williamston's offensive coaches played a big part in the success of the offense.

"Our offensive staff led by Jacob Gailitis and Joel Emmmons did an outstanding job of putting our players in position for success. Our offense really rolled all season."

Williamston also boasted a

solid defense with leaders like Jacob Dunkel at free safety and Caden Plaxton at cornerback.

"Jacob was the quarterback of our defense," Kersten said. "He got our defense in the right place and the right coverages. Cade was a lock-down cornerback for us for three years. He would lock down the opposing team's best receiver."

Up front, the defensive line was led by defensive ends Rudy Gaytan and Avery Lott with Woelmer and Holcomb filling in strong at defensive tackle.

Along with the seniors, the Williamston defense received contributions from several juniors and a sophomore. Junior linebackers Zach Painter, Colin Dewane and Jackson Newman, sophomore linebacker Joey Mahaney and junior defensive back Spencer Feig all turned in solid seasons. Painter was also a key blocker on offense at tight end

"Zach is a real smart player who did a great job making tackles and blocking on offense," Kersten said. "Spencer had a huge game against Milan. I think our three junior linebackers will have amazing senior seasons."

While the seniors will be missed next year, Williamston is looking



Williamston running back Sullivan Sparks rushed for over 200 yards in the regional final win against Milan and helped the Hornets turn in a 9-2 record this season.

to carry over the success from this season.

"We feel good about next season," Kersten said. "We had a real nice junior varsity team and we have some guys coming up that will fill in some spots. Our juniors and sophomores are very good football players. I'm hoping that they took notice of the way our seniors led. If they take the example of our seniors and apply the same leadership, we will have a lot of fun next year as well."



# Frankenmuth, Davison End Playoff Runs Playing For State Titles At Ford Field

## David Cook Sports Scene

It lasted four months, but the MHSAA football state tournament finally came to an end with a total of four area teams reaching the state finals at Ford Field. DeWitt and New Lothrop came away with state titles while Davison and Frankenmuth took home runner-up trophies.

It was a history-making season for the Frankenmuth football team as the Eagles reached the state

finals for the first time in program history where they dropped a 48-21 decision to Grand Rapids Catholic Central.

Led by quarterback Davin Reif, Frankenmuth averaged 36.8 points per game this season. Defensively, the Eagles boasted a strong defense that held eight of 12 opponents to single digit outputs this season.

Frankenmuth reached the state finals by defeating Marine City 31-7 in the regional title game and Lansing Catholic 35-14 in the state

semifinals.

In the title game against Grand Rapids Catholic the Eagles were led by Daniel Barger, Konnor Roche and Reif who all scored touchdowns. Cole Lindow led the team with 99 yards rushing while Reif added 85 yards.

"I can't ask any more of our kids," said Frankenmuth coach Phil Martin. "They came out and fought hard. We got a little behind early. Field position kind of put us in a bind, and we didn't convert a couple first downs early, and they were able to take advantage of that field position."

Defending Division 1 state champion Davison made it back to Ford Field to defend its state title but playing shorthanded, the Cardinals dropped a 41-0 decision to West Bloomfield.

Davison played the game

without all-state quarterback who enrolled early at Northwestern University in the beginning of January. The Cardinals also lost all-state linebacker Harrison Unger to an injury in the first quarter.

The loss, however, could not take away from what was a successful season for the Cardinals. Davison turned in an 11-1 record this season. Along the way Davison defeated Grand Blanc 48-19 for the district championship, defeated Detroit Catholic Central 20-7 for the regional title and defeated Rockford on the road 27-3 in the state semifinals.

"I'm very proud of our kids for battling all the adversity this year," said Davison coach Jake Weingartz. "With the stop and start and losing our quarterback to early graduation. Obviously, this is not how we wanted it to end."

Frankenmuth quarterback Davin Reif drops back to pass against Grand Rapids Catholic Central during the Division 5 state championship game.

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# Freeland Football Team Calls On Past Experience To Make Deep Playoff Run

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

With a roster heavy on juniors, along with several sophomores and some freshmen, one would think the Freeland football team experienced a rebuilding season. While young, the Falcons did have plenty of experience and that seasoning played a big role in Freeland's march to the Division 5 state semifinals.

"We knew we had a chance at having a special season," said Freeland coach Kevin Townsend. "We lost in the regional championship game to Kingsley last year and that team had 10 sophomores and a freshman starting, so we knew we had a chance to have something special this season."

Freeland put together a special season made all the more impressive

considering the obstacles that the Covid-19 virus presented teams all across the state. After opening the season with a loss to Frankenmuth, Freeland reeled off five straight wins to end the regular season with a 5-1 mark. The Falcons then claimed four straight playoff wins before falling to defending Division 5 state champion Grand Rapids Catholic Central in the state semifinals.

"I think our depth and the experience that our guys have had playing in the playoffs previously helped us this season," Townsend said. "Our quarterback, Bryson Huckleby, started as a freshman on a team that made it to the district finals, and last year he led us to the regional finals. He had a great season for us."

Huckleby was one of seven Freeland players who earned all-conference honors on offense this season.

Joining Huckleby on the all-conference offense is senior running backs Easton Armstrong along with junior running backs Jacob Kunding and Garrett Pistro. Senior offensive lineman Cole Wiese earned all-conference along with senior receiver Ben Wellnitz and junior receiver Alex Duley.

Wiese anchored the offensive line for the Falcons.

"Cole was a second-team, all-state lineman on offense and first-team, all-conference defensive lineman," Townsend said. "He had a great season for us."

Wellnitz and Duley provided a pair of sizable targets for Huckleby. For Duley, the season had even more challenges as he broke his ankle in week four before coming back for the state semifinals game.

On defense, Wiese was joined

on the all-conference team by Kunding at linebacker and senior Nolan VanLoo at defensive back.

Overcoming challenges was a hallmark of this year's team which also demonstrated plenty of dedication.

"The kids had to do a lot on their own this season," Townsend said. "During the summer they had to work out on their own. After the season was halted during the playoffs they got together and ran the bleachers together and worked out in small groups at the Freeland Sports Zone. They stayed motivated and did a lot of work on their own. They tested for Covid three times a week and did not traveling over Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years. They were very dedicated and we were led by



Freeland junior quarterback Bryson Huckleby is a three-year starter who helped guide the Falcons to a 9-2 overall record this season.

our nine seniors who were all very dedicated leaders who just wanted a chance to play."

# Portland St. Patrick Finishes As State Runner-Up In 8-Player Football

## John Raffel Sports Scene

It was worth the wait, almost.

Portland St. Patrick came back from the two-month shutdown with Michigan fall sports to win its semifinal game and advance to the 8-player football Division 2 title game against North Central from the Upper Peninsula on Jan. 16.

St. Patrick had defeated Kinde North Huron 34-12 to take a 10-0 record into the title game vs. North Central on Jan. 16 at the indoor Legacy Center facility in Brighton.

St. Patrick fell behind 10-0 but got a touchdown pass from Connor Cross to Seth Frawley of 1 yard to make it 10-6. It was

18-14 when Cross threw 41 yards to Jacob-Hayes-Henning. In the second quarter, Cross had a 1-yard run to make it 26-22, North Central.

In the third quarter, an 11-yard pass from Cross to Shane Cook cut the NC lead to 34-28. North Central extended its lead to 54-34 in the fourth. St. Patrick kept coming and narrowed it in the fourth quarter to 54-42 on Cross' 32-yard pass to Seth Frawley. Later, Cross threw an 18-yard scoring pass to Shane Cook and it was 62-48. North Central scored the final eight points.

Cross was 25-of-37 in passing for 375 yards and six touchdowns. Cook caught 13 passes for 180 yards and three touchdowns.

It's the second time in three years



Portland St. Patrick's 8-player football team celebrates the runner-up trophy for Division 2 eight-player football.

St. Patrick has finished as state runners-up.

"I thought our kids really stepped up and made plays," St. Patrick coach Pat Russman said. "Defensively, we needed to get a couple of takeaways here or there and we just weren't able to. Central did a nice job of executing their offense. I thought our kids did a nice job of adapting and making plays on our offensive end as well."

"It was an up and down game that

was fun to be a part of. We needed a couple more stops."

It was a unique season in many ways.

"I have a profound respect for the parents and the student-athletes for their ability to adapt and overcome all the different obstacles that are in their way," Russman said. "It was a fun group of people to be around and an experience any of us will not forget very soon. It was a humbling experience to go through."

Russman complemented the players for handling the experience of nearly two months without football.

St. Patrick enjoyed playing in Brighton's Legacy Center.

"It would have been nice to have had access for a few more fans," he said. "But the playing surface was really good. Once they got used to the lines, it wasn't an issue. It's a nice place. We were allowed 125 (spectators) and we had room for the cheerleaders, which was nice."

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# Ithaca Football Team Overcomes Covid-19 Challenges To Turn In Memorable Season

## David Cook Sports Scene

It was a football season unlike any he had experienced, but in the end, Ithaca coach Terry Hessbrook couldn't be any prouder of his players.

With Covid-19 restrictions hampering all high school football programs from last spring through the summer and during the regular season and playoffs, the Yellowjackets of Ithaca made the best of the situation. Ithaca finished the regular season with a perfect 6-0 record. During the playoffs Ithaca won three playoff games, including two by forfeit, before falling to Cass City 50-24 in the regional finals after not having played a game in over two months.

"This was one of the most rewarding seasons that I have ever been a part of to be honest with

you," said Hessbrook. "This team faced more challenges than any team that I have ever coached. The thought that we would not even play, to starting and stopping numerous times. The overall length of the season was unbelievable. The participation in the Covid-testing pilot program. These are things that this team will never forget.

Despite all the challenges, the Yellowjackets showcased a high-powered offense this season that scored over 50 points in four of six regular-season games.

The senior class provided the backbone for Ithaca's success this season.

"The senior class led us the entire time," Hessbrook said. "I would have never wanted to endure what we did with anyone else. This senior class was so mature and handled all of the constant changes like professionals."

Many of the seniors earned all-conference honors for their contributions to this year's team. On offense, quarterback Brady Hessbrook, wide receiver Zach Poff and offensive lineman Johnny Crawford earned all-conference honors. Seniors earning defensive all-conference honors included linebackers Derek Draher and Chance Risner, defensive lineman Brayden McMullen. A pair of juniors earned all-conference honors were Mason VanCamp at offensive line and Jacob Belles at defensive line. Earning honorable-mention, all-conference honors were junior lineman Gabe Pritchard and fresh-



Led by 12 seniors, the Ithaca football team overcame the difficulties of a Covid-19 season to win a 12th consecutive conference championship and reach the regional championship game.

man running back Kaleb Peska.

Along with qualifying for the playoffs for a 12th straight season, Ithaca won a 12th consecutive conference championship. The 12 seniors on this year's squad played major roles in winning the 12th straight title.

"Our team leaders were too many to mention," Hessbrook said. "This team was led by our seniors.

All 12 of them played a huge role in our 12th consecutive league championship."

Along with success on the football field, many of Ithaca's players stood out in the classroom. Earning Academic All-State honors and having grade-point averages of 3.5 and over were Johnny Crawford, Derek Draher, Brady Hessbrook, Zach Poff, Grant Weburg and Riley Vernoff.

# Ithaca Football Coach Terry Hessbrook Steps Aside After 17 Years At The Helm

## David Cook Sports Scene

After guiding the Ithaca football team to 17 years of success and countless memories for the community, Terry Hessbrook is stepping down as head football coach of the Yellowjackets.

Hessbrook announced his decision at this year's football banquet.

"It was my plan all along," Hessbrook said. "For many, many years the plan was to step aside with this senior class, which includes my son Brady. I wanted to finish during Brady's senior year and it just so happened to be the longest season in football."

Stepping down leaves Hessbrook with the time to follow Brady as he makes his way to continue his playing career at Wayne State University.

"It's time to take a break and be a dad in the stands," Hessbrook said.

"Brady has a chance to play at the next level and I want to be there for him."

Hessbrook steps down from Ithaca with a 177-25 during his time as head coach. During his time as head coach, Hessbrook guided Ithaca to five state championships and seven state championship game appearances. During that time Ithaca compiled a 69-game winning streak, second-longest in state history, and a 73-game regular-season winning streak, third-longest in state history.

"It's been a great experience," Hessbrook said. "I graduated from Ithaca and this is something I've always wanted to do, to be the head coach of Ithaca."

This past season was a special one for Hessbrook as he was able to coach Brady and his senior teammates for their senior seasons.

"The highlight for me was watching this group of young men develop

throughout their careers," said Ithaca coach Terry Hessbrook. "I started with this senior class in youth football and watched them from the very beginning."

Hessbrook was especially proud of being able to coach Brady to a special season that saw Brady earn All-State Player of the Year for Division 7-8.

"Coaching Brady will be one of the memories that I will cherish the rest of my life," said coach Hessbrook. "We were able to share something that not many get the chance to enjoy. Our bond on the field will be with us both forever. I enjoyed watching him overcome the adversity that he faced early in his career. Getting the chance to see him and his teammates succeed brings a smile to my face."

Having the opportunity to impact hundreds of other Ithaca athletes and the community during his time as head coach is also something

Hessbrook will not soon forget.

"Looking back, it brings a smile to my face for sure knowing that I've been able to make an impact on and off the field in so many of the lives of my players," Hessbrook said. "Not just the players but even members of the Ithaca community. I've seen how football can bring an entire community together."

The relationships with fellow coaches is another experience that Hessbrook treasures.

"I will miss the bond with our assistant coaches and miss the competition with the other coaches in the area," Hessbrook said. "Just being able to compete against them



Terry Hessbrook steps down after 17 years as head coach of the Ithaca Yellowjackets where he led the team to a 177-25 record.

each week."

Post football, Hessbrook plans to remain as athletic director at Ithaca, spend more time with his wife Kristy and his family, and maybe spend some time hunting and fishing.

"I want to send a big thank you to the Ithaca community," Hessbrook said. "I want to thank all of Jacket Nation for the support and opportunity that I've had."

# AREA ALL STATE FOOTBALL PLAYERS

The following football players earned all-state honors from either the Associated Press or the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association.



Brady Hessbrook, Ithaca

**DIVISION 1**  
**DAVISON:** Carter Cryderman, RB; Payton Pizzala, DB; Brendan Sullivan, QB; Harrison Unger, LB.  
**GRAND LEDGE:** Noah Warren, SP.  
**HOLT:** Malachi Davis, DL.  
**ROKFORD:** Alex Karas, LM; Jayden Kolekamp, LM; Luke McLean, DB; Ben Tadych LB.  
**SAGINAW HERITAGE:** Chris Parker, WR.  
**SWARTZ CREEK:** Casey Lanigan, LM.

**DIVISION 2**  
**EAST LANSING:** Andrel Anthony Jr., WR; Ethan Boyd, OL; Evan Sundermann, P; Ambrose Wilson, SP.  
**LOWELL:** Doak Dean, QB; Keegan Nugent, LM; Josh Rau, LM.  
**MIDLAND:** Eli Gordon, SP; Hunter Kruger, LM; Chase Mahabir, LM; Al Money, QB.  
**MIDLAND DOW:** Hayden Hetherington, K; Dawson Studebaker, LB.

**DIVISION 3**  
**BAY CITY CENTRAL:** Mike White, DL.

**DEWITT:** Luke Bresser, WR; Andrew Debr, LB; Tyler Holtz, QB; Tommy McIntosh, WR; Grant Uyl, LB.  
**MASON:** James Horn, LM; Jason Lockwood, LB; Mason Stewart, LM; Chance Strickland, QB.  
**MT. PLEASANT:** Kory Davis, LB; Chase Preston, LM; Anton Ricumstrick, LM; Josh Schell, DL.  
**SAGINAW ARTHUR HILL:** Jordan Pierce, LB.  
**ST. JOHNS:** Brock Miller, RB; Adam Waszak, LM.

**DIVISION 4**  
**ALMA:** David Apple, WR.  
**BAY CITY GLENN:** Kevin Wisniewski, LB.  
**CHARLOTTE:** Ashton Laguire, RB; Andrew Taylor, LM.  
**EATON RAPIDS:** Eddie Jewett, K.  
**FLINT POWERS:** Donovan Franklin, RB; Logan Murray, OL.  
**WILLIAMSTON:** Zach Painter, LB; Caden Plaxton, DB.

**DIVISION 5**  
**BELDING:** Ethan Schmid, OL.  
**BULLOCK CREEK:** Peyton Brooks, RB, Gage Chapin, LB; Nathan

Rivard, LM; Keygan Tolliver, WR.  
**CARROLLTON:** DJ Voltz, DB.  
**CHIPPEWA HILLS:** Carl Whipple, DL.  
**CORUNNA:** Jacob Lloyd, LM, Nick Steinacker, LM; Porter Zeeman, LB.  
**ESSEXVILLE-GARBER:** Logan Anthony, WR; Alex Christie, LB; Blaise Millar, K; Tommy Szczepanski, QB; Brayden Swartout, LM; Alex VanSumeren DL.  
**FRANKENMUTH:** Ethan Jacobs, LB; Cole Jankowski, DB; Cole Lindow, RB; Kyle Main, OL; Davin Reif, QB.  
**FREELAND:** Bryson Huckleby, QB; Jacob Kunding, SP; Cole Wiese, OL; Ben Wellnitz, TE; Nolan VanLo, DB.

**LAKELAKE LAKE ODESSA:** Sawyer Stoepker, DB.  
**LANSING CATHOLIC:** Bo Poljan, OL; Alex Watters, DB.  
**PORTLAND:** Chandler Murton, LB; Cameron Roof, P; Reese Townsend, LM.  
**SWAN VALLEY:** Graham Arndt, DL; Ben Fordney, LB.

**DIVISION 6**  
**CLARE:** Jon Bouchev, LB; Dawson John, WR; Al Warner, SP.  
**DURAND:** Brock Holek, SP; Hunter Spaulding, LM.  
**MILLINGTON:** Brendan Callahan,

DB; Brady Germain, LM.  
**MONTROSE:** Owen Emmendorfer, DB; Levi Harber, LM; Bobby Skinner, QB.  
**SANFORD-MERIDIAN:** Gabe Mutai, K.

**DIVISION 7**  
**BEAVERTON:** Mitch Hall, LM; Trent Reed, DB.  
**HEMLOCK:** Brayden Green, LB; Hunter Hahn, LM; Robert Knapik, RB; Dylan Lagrow, DB.  
**ITHACA:** Derek Draher, LB; Brady Hessbrook, QB; Zach Poff, WR.  
**LAINGSBURG:** Zach Hawes, WR.  
**NEW LOTHROP:** Julius Garza, SP; Will Muron, DB; Cam Orr, DL; Will Taylor, LM.  
**PEWAMO-WESTPHALIA:** Nick Noel, LM; Corey Schaefer, DL; Brock Thelen, DB; Jake Thelen, QB; Logan Wertman, LB; Tanner Wirth, RB.  
**ST. LOUIS:** Trae Garcia, RB; Luke Maxwell, LM.

**DIVISION 8**  
**BEAL CITY:** Ethan Locke, OL; Ben Matthews, RB; Aidan Mindel, LB; Matt Oswald, LM.  
**BRECKENRIDGE:** Garrett Fitzgerald, LB; Luke Saunders, QB; Cam Valliere, RB.  
**CARSON CITY-CRYSTAL:** Zane Forist, QB; Carter McAlvey, WR;



David Apple, Alma

Cole Stone, LB; Kyler Stone, RB.  
**COLEMAN:** Bryce Middleton, OL; Connor Schrank, DB.  
**DANVILLE:** Jared Bristle, DB; Riley Hawkins, ATH; Carson Voss, P.  
**FLINT BEECHER:** Micah Brown, LB; Deonte Redwine, DB; Devin Rannels, OL.  
**FWLER:** Dominic Horak, LB; Kaleb Thompson, LM.  
**SAGINAW NOUVE:** Darren Chinery, DL; Jack Kujawa, QB

# HSSS FOOTBALL STATS

**PASSING YARDS**  
 Tyler Holtz, DeWitt 2,396  
 Cam Orr, New Lothrop 2,069  
 Brady Hessbrook, Ithaca 2,002  
 Tommy Szczepanski, Essexville-Garber 1,997  
 Joey Baker, Lansing Catholic 1,617  
 Dylan Lagrow, Hemlock 1,343  
 Bryson Huckleby, Freeland 1,329  
 Al Money, Midland 1,320  
 Luke Mahaney, Williamston 1,304  
 Jacob Recker, Clare 1,091

Jack Bakus, Midland Dow 1,084  
 Brendan Sullivan, Davison 1,012  
 Parker Edwards, Saranac 974  
 Ambrose Wilson, East Lansing 940  
 Doug Matthews, Laingsburg 903  
 Cameron Metzger, Sanford-Meridian 878  
 Avery Goldensoph, Swan Valley 846  
 Davin Reif, Frankenmuth 786

**RUSHING TOUCHDOWNS**  
 Cam Orr, New Lothrop 19  
 Davin Reif, Frankenmuth 17  
 Robert Knapik, Hemlock 14  
 Cole Lindow, Frankenmuth 13  
 Alex Christie, Essexville-Garber 11  
 Carter Cryderman, Davison 11  
 Al Money, Midland 11  
 Tanner Wirth, Pewamo-Westphalia 10  
 Andrew Debr, DeWitt 9  
 Khyree Harris, Swan Valley 9  
 Brady Hessbrook, Ithaca 9  
 Drew Johnson, Midland 9  
 Will Muron, New Lothrop 9  
 Trent Reed, Beaverton 9  
 Darius Thomas, Carrollton 9  
 Jay Baker, Lansing Catholic 8  
 Jacob Kunding, Freeland 8  
 Garrett Pistro, Freeland 8  
 Jacob Recker, Clare 8  
 Konnor Roche, Frankenmuth 8  
 Ambrose Wilson, East Lansing 8

**RUSHING YARDS**  
 Robert Knapik, Hemlock 1,296  
 Cam Valliere, Breckenridge 1,199  
 Cole Lindow, Frankenmuth 1,184  
 Sullivan Sparks, Williamston 1,018

Alex Christie, Essexville-Garber 980  
 Carter Cryderman, Davison 900  
 Davin Reif, Frankenmuth 878  
 Cam Orr, New Lothrop 843  
 Will Muron, New Lothrop 827  
 Asher Gregory, East Lansing 799  
 Darius Thomas, Carrollton 768  
 Trent Reed, Beaverton 750  
 Conner Schrank, Coleman 737  
 Te'Avion Warren, Davison 722  
 Drew Johnson, Midland 705

**RECEPTIONS**  
 Logan Anthony, Essexville-Garber 54  
 Alex Watters, Lansing Catholic 42  
 Eli Gordon, Midland 41  
 Logan Hugo, Essexville-Garber 39  
 Nick Steinacker, Corunna 36  
 Tommy McIntosh, DeWitt 34  
 Zach Poff, Ithaca 33  
 Luke Bresser, DeWitt 31  
 Carter Kohtz, Midland Dow 31  
 Will Muron, New Lothrop 29  
 Andrel Anthony, East Lansing 28  
 Tucker Pomranky, Midland Dow 28  
 Chad Pratt, Ithaca 28  
 Zach Hawes, Laingsburg 26  
 Dawson John, Clare 25

**RECEIVING TOUCHDOWNS**  
 Tommy McIntosh, DeWitt 14  
 Nick Steinacker, Corunna 13  
 Logan Anthony, Essexville-Garber 12  
 Dawson John, Clare 12  
 Luke Bresser, DeWitt 11

Tommy McIntosh, DeWitt 781  
 Zach Poff, Ithaca 712  
 Eli Gordon, Midland 689  
 Logan Hugo, Essexville-Garber 680  
 Alex Watters, Lansing Catholic 675  
 Nick Steinacker, Corunna 670  
 Dawson John, Clare 630  
 Luke Bresser, DeWitt 625  
 Zach Hawes, Laingsburg 557  
 Julius Garza, New Lothrop 510  
 Andrel Anthony, East Lansing 508

**TACKLES**  
 Brayden Green, Hemlock 117  
 Derek Draher, Ithaca 114  
 Mason Knippen, Lansing Catholic 104  
 Jacob Maloney, Lansing Catholic 104  
 Bo Poljan, Lansing Catholic 95  
 Garrett Fitzgerald, Breckenridge 93  
 Konnor Roche, Frankenmuth 81  
 Zach Painter, Williamston 79  
 Alex Watters, Lansing Catholic 79  
 Alex Christie, Essexville-Garber 77  
 Jon Bouchev, Clare 76  
 Dawson Studebaker, Midland Dow 76  
 Matt VanSumeren, Essexville-Garber 76  
 Stuart Hamilton, Lansing Catholic 75

**SACKS**  
 Ben Reinert, Frankenmuth 9  
 Dylan Lagrow, Hemlock 7  
 Alex Watters, Lansing Catholic 7  
 Alex Jankowski, Frankenmuth 6  
 Cole Jankowski, Frankenmuth 6  
 Eddy Evans, Ovid-Elsie 5  
 Scout Jones, Corunna 4  
 Tommy McIntosh, DeWitt 4  
 Carter Miller, Hemlock 4

Will Muron, New Lothrop 10  
 Eli Gordon, Midland 9  
 Julius Garza, New Lothrop 8  
 Logan Hugo, Essexville-Garber 8  
 Zach Poff, Ithaca 8  
 Alex Watters, Lansing Catholic 8

**INTERCEPTIONS**  
 Bryce Cheney, New Lothrop 8  
 Dylan Lagrow, Hemlock 7  
 Alex Watters, Lansing Catholic 7  
 Cole Jankowski, Frankenmuth 6  
 Eddy Evans, Ovid-Elsie 5  
 Scout Jones, Corunna 4  
 Tommy McIntosh, DeWitt 4  
 Carter Miller, Hemlock 4



Eli Gordon, Midland

Ethan Jacobs, Frankenmuth 6  
 Jake Punsch, Clare 6  
 Nick Steinacker, Corunna 6



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Carson City Crystal's Coleman Clark beat the 16-minute mark at the state meet.

# Carson City-Crystal Boy Runners Land Division 4 State Crown

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Coleman Clark had a big day and Carson City-Crystal's boys cross country team is on top of the boys Division 4 state spotlight after narrowly defeating Breckenridge at Michigan International Speedway in early November.

When the dust settled and the scores were tabulated, the Eagles had 157 points compared to 162 for the Huskies.

It was CC-Crystal's first boys cross country team title since 1994. For the Eagles, Clark was first (15:58.55), Ashton Keiffer 18th (17:38.74), Brayden Clark 28th (18:05.43), Jared Shepler 31st (18:10.68) and Calvin Clark 50th (18:51.34).

Clark was also first in the team race.

Clark set his best time for his very last race. He had his personal record of 15:58.6 at the state meet for first. He was second the week before in the Division 4 Region 33 meet at DeWitt. He finished

second his first two meet of the season at the Ithaca Early season invitational and Ithaca Yellowjacket invitational. He took first place at the 2020 Shepherd John Bruder Classic (16:18.0) in the Evert Invitational (16:55.2), the

Greater Lansing cross country championship (16:19.9), the Montabella Mustang Invitational (16:54.20), the MSAC conference jamboree in St. Charles (16:06.2) and the pre-regional at Carson City-Crystal (16:52.6).

Grant Woodman is Carson City-Crystal's coach.

Clark had 11 races for the season with seven first places and four second places.

"We knew if there was going to be a season we'd have a real good shot at it," Woodman said. "We returned six of our top seven from last year's fourth-place team. We knew it was going to be a tough race but we pulled it out. We knew it was going to be tough because Saugatuck dropped down from Division 3 to 4. Breckenridge, the defending

champs lost two of their top five so we knew we were going to have to compete with them. Webberville was up there and so was Concord."

Divisions were split into two because of COVID.

"It was split by the regionals," Woodman said. "The top two regional teams, first and second, were in one race (the second), and the third place teams and the individuals who qualified were in the other race (the first).

"I think splitting it was OK but I didn't like it all that much. We couldn't see where we were at comparatively speaking. In the latter stage of the race where you fight for spot after spot...because they combine all the times of the two races, we had to wait a good 15 to 20 minutes before we knew we actually won. Even with the live scoring it was kind of nerve racking."

Keifer was also an All-Stater as a junior. His personal record for the season was 16:51.1. He's the leading runner returning for the

Eagles.

Next year, the Eagles will be losing three of the top five runners.

"I have pretty much a second squad coming in," Woodman said. "That's a good problem to have. They were pushing each other all year."



Carson City boys were state champions in 2020.

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Ben March (174) of St. Louis looks to make a solid finish at the state race.

# St. Louis Boy Runners Celebrate Division 3 Cross Country Title

## John Raffel Sports Scene

It was close but St. Louis was able to emerge as Division 3 boys state champions in November at Michigan International Speedway.

For the boys, St. Louis was first with 103 and Hart second at 116.

Leading the St. Louis boys in the team race were Aaron Bowerman fourth (16:26.66), Keegan Honig in ninth (16:35.0), Ben March in 16th (16:46.59) and Joe Erickson 50th (17:35.54).

Keith Honig, a senior, was fourth at the Dewitt regional with his personal record of 16:33.8.

Bowerman, a junior had his personal best of 16:23.4 during the season at the TVC overall championships

in Ithaca. He then clocked a 16:36.2 at Ithaca during the prerregional and had a 16:46.8 for sixth place at the regional.

The boys also won the state title in 2005.

"We went in and we felt we had a real good shot of winning it," St. Louis coach Jay Puffpaff said. "We knew we were one of those teams. We just had to have a good day. It was collective effort. The whole team laid it on the line and all seven of them had an outstanding day."

Temperatures were warm the first weekend in November.

"The boys ran in the morning, for the earlier races, but it wasn't too bad yet," Puffpaff said. "Conditions were OK for the boys race."

Winning the state title "is something we were working for," he said. "Coming into the year, with all the adversity going on, we knew had to take a big step forward. Early on, it took us awhile to make that jump. Ithaca beat us in our conference and our guys from that point on took it upon themselves to take that next jump."

As for next year, "we have a good core coming back," Puffpaff said. "We do lose three of our seniors in our top seven. They'll be difficult to replace. We have a good core and some good young talent coming up."

The St. Louis girls were fourth, led by Mikenna Borie in eighth (19:21.38), Libby Munderloh in 14th (20:02.54) and Jaiden Dickman in 33rd (21:03.62).



St. Louis boys celebrated a cross country state title.

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# Weburg Twins Enjoying Solid Sports Career At Ithaca

## John Raffel Sports Scene

It's been quite a senior season for Ithaca's Grace Weburg and her twin brother Grant Weburg.

Grace is in cross country and track and field. She helped the Yellowjackets to a second-place finish in the Division 3 state finals



on Nov. 7 at Brooklyn's Michigan International Speedway. She was 23rd in 19:59.3. Her personal best came in the 2020 Shepherd Bluejay Invitational with a 19:44.6.

"We knew we were going to be pretty good this year," she said. "We have a lot of returners back. We were kind of ranked a little lower than we thought. We moved up and wound up getting second. Getting 23rd for all-state, if you look at it a couple of years ago, that was something that was unrealistic for me to think of. But through hard work, I got it.

"Here it was with a pandemic and early in the summer, not knowing if we were going to have a season. It was an exciting season for all of us."

Weburg and her teammates were able to overcome warm temperatures at the state meet.

"Our plan was not to go out too fast and work our way up throughout the race," she said.

Grace Weburg is an All-State cross country runner

Weburg will now prepare for track season. She usually runs the 4x8 plus the 1,600 and 800 and the 4x4.

"My goal is to qualify (at the state meet) for the 4x8 and also qualify individually and hopefully place and be all state in some of those events," Weburg said. "I haven't had a real track season. I started running my sophomore year which was a learning experience. I haven't had a track season to run super fast times. I'm excited for this year to prove myself."

There was no spring season because of COVID. Weburg is planning on running in some indoor meets. She has signed to run at Northwood in both track and cross.

"I like them both but I'm more of a cross country girl," Weburg said.

She and her brother both got academic all-state honors in the fall.

Grant Weburg plays football, basketball and baseball. He's applied to colleges academically and is waiting to hear back. He indicated he's not planning on a collegiate sports career.

For football, Grant was a wide receiver and safety and started both ways. He was all-conference

as a defensive back. This was his second full varsity season and was his best season.

Ithaca lost in the regional finals on Jan. 9 after a two-month suspension of sports.

"You just want to go out and play," Weburg said. "You put in all that work during the preseason and you want to play. We finally got our chance. It was a roller-coaster of emotions on if we'd be allowed to finish the season or not."

Playing football, rather than basketball on Jan. 9 was definitely weird, Weburg said.

Cass City won 50-24. "I felt we tried our best," Grant said. "Cass City was really good."

Weburg is now waiting for basketball season to get the green light.

He usually plays a wing guard. He was both a starter and came off the bench last season

"I like my defense and my knowledge of the game," he said.

"We're looking pretty right now," Weburg said. "But it's hard to say because we're not allowed to do any (contact). We can only do shooting drills and things like that.

"I would say all my sports are pretty much equal," he said. "I like all the sports I play."



Grant Weburg plays football, basketball and baseball at Ithaca.

It will be his third year on varsity.

In baseball, Weburg plays second base.

"I grew up playing second base," he said. "My freshman year, I played shortstop on varsity. Then I went back to second base."

Defense and his speed on the basepaths are strengths.

"I would say all my sports are pretty much equal," he said. "I like all the sports I play."

# Ithaca Girls Take Second Place

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Ithaca's girls cross country team couldn't overcome a strong Hart opponent but was able to take the



second-place trophy in Division 3 in the state cross country race in November at Michigan International Speedway.

Hart won handily with 59 points, followed by Ithaca with 114 and Calvin Christian with 121.

For Ithaca in the team race, Lani Bloom was third (18:32.26), Grace Weburg 13th (19:59.29), Abi Whitford 18th (20:13.27), Rachael Sierakowski 24th (20:39.07) and Liliana Lehnst 28th (20:50.51). Amongst all individual runners, Bloom, Weburg and Whitford were in the top three for All-State honors.

"It was a great year for us," Ithaca coach Gene Lebron said. "We came into year ranked in the

Ithaca's Abi Whitford (288) was 18th (20:13.27) and was among the key runners for Ithaca's second-place team at the Division 3 state meet.

top five and we knew if we could perform like we could and we were healthy, we could make a run for the podium, which is top two. We knew the first-place team was out in their own stratosphere, Hart. They're very good.

"We knew if we ran our race and stayed healthy, we could be second. That's what the girls did. They stayed focus throughout all this craziness, and did all the things they're supposed to do. At the end of the day, they put it all together."

Lebron added: "They all ran great. Grace Weburg had one of her best races ever and saved the best for last. Everybody else just ran great. Lani, our leader, was third overall. Having someone like Lani is helpful. Our two to six are pretty interchangeable. We also have a solid seven."

Lebron expects to have a strong team.

"We have girls who understand the system and know if they keep

working, their time will come," he said. "We lose Weburg, Whitford and Josie Morrow. But three of our top five are coming back. We'll have girls who will make improvement. We're committed to the process right now."

The boys were seventh for one of Ithaca's highest performances ever. Braxton Lamey, Parks Allen and Espen Lehndt were All-State runners.

Lamey was third overall in 16:10.84 in leading his team to a seventh-place finish.

"It's been pretty darn successful in my book," Lamey said. "The team had no idea where we would be coming in. We ended up top 10 in our division, which has only been done one or two times on the boys side. That as cool.

"Individually, I got third and am the highest placing Ithaca runner ever. You can hardly beat that in my opinion."



Braxton Lamey (87) was third overall in 16:10.84 in leading his team to a seventh-place finish.

Lamey will run track in the spring. He's attending Indiana Tech the next four years on a scholarship. He also considered Wayne State and Northwood.

# Lansing Christian Runners Celebrate State Title

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Lansing Christian celebrated the Division 4 girls cross country final with 93 points on Nov. 7, at the Michigan International Speedway near Brooklyn.

Lansing Christian had a big margin over second-place Kalamazoo Christian, which was at 142.

Lansing Christian had three runners in the top 10.

Ashlyn Kephart was fourth (20:06.35); Natalie Tebben was sixth (20:18.43) and Madison Volz ninth (29:24.95).

Also for the champs, Hope Tebben was 35th (21:33.38) and Mia Judd 39th (21:41.05).

Volz is a senior, who was third in the state in 19:30.2 last year.

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

"It's gone pretty good so far," she

said prior to the state meet. "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.

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 mindset 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."



Lansing Christian's Madison Volz seems to have picked up a unique escort during the Division 4 cross country race.

# St. Johns Runners Earn Runner-Up Trophy In Division 2

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Fremont was clearly the top Division 2 boys cross country team this season with 61 points.

But St. Johns was clearly No. 2 with 126, finishing ahead of third-place Otsego, which had 187.

For the Red Wings, Ryan Brown was sixth (16:05.96), Bryce Brown was 15th (16:35.55), Griffin Armbrustmacher 11th (16:41.46), Michael Dennis 34th (16:55.97), and

Jacob Dennis was 45th (17:06.04).

Bob Sackrider is St. Johns' coach and said it's the highest a team has finished in his coaching career. He said the team had the inkling it could do this well coming into the meet.

"This year was different," Sackrider said. "With no real invitations around, it was harder to get a sense of what everybody had. There were about five teams we figured were in the mix for the top five with Fremont certainly

the strongest going in, and proved that to be. We figured we could compete with any of the five.

"There was a lot of pressure coming in. They knew what the expectation was. I think anything less than second place would have felt like a disappointment for the kids. That's difficult. But the boys took that type of pressure to the side, performed and did what we knew they could do."

Sackrider indicated the team has been consistent all season.

"As whole, one through seven, did what they were able to do."

St. Johns will lose five of its top seven.

"We do have some depth so



St. Johns took runners-up for the boys in Division 2.

we'll still be good," Sackrider said. "We've been successful for awhile

now. We're fairly good but we graduate a lot of our scorers this year"

# First-Time Montabella Cross Runner Is All-Stater

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Montabella's Dakota Dykhuis put in an All-State effort for his program in the Division 4 meet. He was 19th in 17 minutes, 24.78 seconds.

The top 30 finishers earn All-State honors.

"He did incredible considering he was doing football and cross country," Montabella coach Jeff

Kauffman said. "He joined after football ended for two weeks (with the initial intention to have it in the spring). He had great work ethic and was an extremely competitive runner."

This was the first time Dykhuis ran cross country. He was first team All-MSAC running back and defensive back in football.

"He's run middle school track before for me," Kauffman said. "I knew he was really fast. I didn't

think he'd do this fast. At regionals is where we had this huge drop in time. He dropped 40 seconds at regional. After that, I thought he had a chance to get All-State. It was still a tough day to run in the heat and the wind. He did really well.

"I was thankful we got him this year. He's planning on running next year. We have to figure things out." Dykhuis was on the Montabella varsity team and played defensive back and tailback. He

was a starter.

"Thankfully with football, he didn't have a ton of Saturday meets," Kauffman said. "He had one or two races when he played football the night before. Most of the time he played football on Saturday and ran on Friday, the day before."

Dykhuis plays basketball in the winter and runs track and field in the spring.



Dakota Dykhuis had an All-State season for Montabella.

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PROGRESSIVE

# Mason Freshman Takes Second In Girls Division 2 Race

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Mason's Meghan Ford was rather impressive in the Division 2 girls cross country race at the MIS in November.

As a freshman, she took second with a time of 18 minutes, 18.08 seconds, almost four minutes ahead of the third-place girl. Emma Squires of Petoskey won it in 17:54.56.

Mason, as a team, was 11th.

Temperatures were unseasonably warm for early November.

"At the state meet, Meghan's goal was to be in the top two," Mason coach Charles Miller said. "I did not know if she could beat Emma Squires but she certainly wanted to give it a try. She had run against her early in the year and had lost to her at the Shepherd Invitational. She got out with Emma a little bit. But then she unfortunately got dehydrated a little and that kind of put an end to competing with

her and was more about survival at that point.

"But she ran well. But she finished and this year at the state meet, that's saying something. She was a hurting girl at the end but she did get through it. Second place for a freshman is obviously very good. It was all good at the end."

Miller said, in his opinion, Ford exceeded expectations.

"In her opinion, probably she met them," Miller said. "She's a

competitor, 100 percent, all the way through. She would have liked to have placed one higher spot. I've known her forever all through grade school and middle school. It was obvious, she could be somebody special. She's put all the work in to realize that.

"We knew she could have a great season."

Ford will be running track.

"I think she enjoys track probably a little more than cross," Miller said.



Meghan Ford took second in Division 2 girls.

# Freeland Girls Finish Strong Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

George Drown had an enjoyable season with his Freeland cross country team.

Freeland's girls team took 12th place in the Division 2 state finals on Nov. 6 at the Michigan International Speedway.

Junior Kiera Hansen finished a strong season by taking sev-

enth in 18:54.41.

"I have no doubt that as long as she's healthy, she's going to be on that podium again," Drown said midway during the season. "She's done it two years in a row and the one thing that counts is experience."

Hansen was 17th as a sophomore at the state meet and 28th as a freshman.

"The MIS is a totally different beast compared to most cross country courses because it's a one loop," Drown said. "The more runners get a chance to run it, the better they do. Kiera's been fortunate enough to work hard enough to be there as a freshman and sophomore. Every year we target them to try to improve anywhere from 15 to 20 seconds depending on the level of the athlete. Kiera is a top tier athlete. She has worked her tail off."

"Basically, we flipped the calendar back in March to cross country. As soon as we found

out the MHSAA was canceling the track season, I met with all of my track girls who were also cross country girls as well as our boys to ask them what they wanted to do. If they wanted to take a break or get right into it. They wanted to go right into it. Kiera logged over 500 miles this summer. She's stronger and a smarter racer."

Also for Freeland, Mara Longenecker was ninth in 19:05.55. Other runners who scored for Freeland were Bella Reed, Sasha Seegobin and Allyson Harvey.

The Freeland boys were 21st.



Kierra Hansen had another huge year for Freeland.



# Beal City Girl Runners Miss Getting Trophy By One Point

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Beal City's cross country girls made a statement in the 2020 Division 4 state finals at Michigan International Speedway.

The Aggies have all six of their runners returning from a team which finished third in the state this year with a score of 143 behind Lansing Christian (93) and

Rachel Weber led the way for Beal City girls.

Kalamazoo Christian (142). Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart was fourth (158).

For Beal City in team standings, junior Rachal Weber was third (19:57.55), sophomores Tailor Onstott 10th (20:25.43), Kaylee Locke 11th (20:38.81) and Hadyn Armstrong 46th (22:03.31) and freshman Genevieve Lasager 70th (23:50.22).

"It was a good performance for us," coach Dave King said. "The disappointment was we were third

by one point. The disappointment was missing the hardware for runner-up by one point. But overall, we came into the season hoping we could work our way into something like a top five finish. We started out a little rough. We started out with a bad loss in a dual meet to Sacred Heart. They put it to us pretty good.

"Toward the end of the season, we beat them three times in a row. We improved considerably and that showed up in the state meet with the third-place finish. We've had two state championships, but other than that, that's our best finish."

Weber "really stepped up that day," King said. "She finished

fourth (among all runners) which is the best finish for a Beal City runner we've had. She had been pretty consistent."

Onstott and Locke were all-state.

"We had eight on the team and only one is a senior," King said. "Our top six is coming back. Things look good."

King said it's his last season as coach.

"I've had some good assistants," he said. "I think the program will carry on."

King was head coach for boys and girls 20 years and one year before that was an assistant. He also coached junior high at the same time. He also coached track 26 years at Beal City.

# Breckenridge Boy Runners Barely Miss A State Title

## John Raffel Sports Scene

It was another solid year for Breckenridge cross country four-year coach Kurt Gulick with a boys Division 4 state runner-up finish.

"I felt like the boys had a really good season and they definitely exceeded many expectations that others had of us," he said. "After graduating four seniors last year, we replaced them with three very solid freshman and only had six guys on the team.

"We were always on the outside looking for the podium places but

the boys worked hard all season even when we had to quarantine for two weeks during the middle of the season. They improved steadily throughout the season like they should and it worked out just fine."

Finishing second place in the state was special for Gulick. Carson City-Crystal edged the Huskies 157-162.

"Taking state runner-up (was a major highlight) when we were ranked 6 or 7 all year and going into finals we were fourth-ranked but we proved a lot of that wrong by finding ourselves on the podium

only 5 points away from winning back to back, Gulick said.

One disappointing note for the Huskies was being in a two-week quarantine late in September and early October.

At state meet, All-Staters for Breckenridge were Mason Summer in third (16:31.278), Trent Carter in eighth (16:53.18) and Colttion Vine in 20th (17:25.89).

The future is bright for state title contention.

"Colttion Vine was our only senior this year," Gulick said. "He was a big piece for our program for four years. We return Mason Summer (junior), Trent Carter (junior), Isaac Humm (freshman), Jaden Ostrander (freshman), Sawyer Stoneman (freshman), and we will gain Aimon Humm (8th

grader) along with hopefully some other boys we can try to get out so we can have at least 7 runners for a varsity squad.

"It was a hard season for every team in the state including us but having a season was the main thing for us and I know every other program as well. Just letting the kids competing was huge and I am glad we were able to have a season for them. It's going to continue to be tough moving



It was another special season for Breckenridge's cross country boys team.

forward but if this season was any indication of the future then the future is bright for these boys. Our team motto is Bring It and DOMINATE!!! And they will keep doing just that."

# Sacred Heart Runners Finish Another Strong Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart's cross country teams were not necessarily state contenders as they've been in past seasons. But it was still a championship season for the Irish.

Former middle school school coach Nikki Taylor was in her first season coaching both teams.

The girls were MSAC champions, second at regionals, fourth at state, first at the Bluejay Invitational, first at pre-regionals, second at Cougar Falcon, and first at Michigan Catholic Invitational.

The boys were third in the MSAC, first in pre-regionals,

second in regionals, 13th at state, and second at the Cougar Falcon Invitational.

"I think we exceeded expectations for the men with some injuries at the start of the season and new freshmen recruits that we didn't have set expectations for," Taylor said. "I was extremely pleased that the men's team made it to the state finals as a second-place finisher at our regional meet. There was a lot of growth on that team this year. I think we met expectations for the women.

"We had a couple very talented new runners this year and a great pack. The stress of 2020 was a real factor for some of us this year and

the way that we grew in mental strength and as a team was incredible. We are looking to come back even stronger in 2021."

What were some top highlights for the team?

"Watching all the PRs at our regional meet was a big highlight," Taylor said. 12 of the 14 regional runners ran PRs that day. Our women had five runners in the top 10 competitors at the regional meet.

"The heat at the state meet was tough for some of us and for runners from other schools as well. Several runners collapsed on the course. We weren't prepared for mid-70s in November after having trained in the 40s for a few weeks prior. It was tough that one of my most talented runners missed all-state by a couple places after a tremendous effort all season."

For the Sacred Heart boys, Matt

Nowak and Brock Lynch were first team all-conference. Luke Taylor and Nik Moore were honorable mention.

For the girls, Olivia Ervin, Riley Hacker, Delaney Scully, Lily Deja and Abby Spencer were first team all-league. Anna Plum, Olivia Middleton and Katie McDonald were second team all-league. Ashley Plum and Jacqueline Morton were honorable mention.

"We will miss having Matt Nowak, who finished fourth at the state in Division 4 this year," Taylor said. "Brock Lynch will be leading the men's team as they work to build on success and develop the younger runners.

"None of the varsity girls are graduating this year and we will return all of our scorers. We will miss Ashley Plum, our senior girl who did a tremendous job encouraging other athletes all season.



Matthew Nowak (951) was fourth for Sacred Heart at the Division 4 state meet.

"It was a great season with many positive moments. Control the controllables was a major theme for us and we are looking to do that and come back running strong next year."

# Area All-State Cross Country Runners

(Top 30 runners)

### DIVISION 1 BOYS

7-Connor Vachon, Rockford, 15:35.32; 17-Matthew Crowley, Midland, 15:48.0; 27-Nathan Faust, East Lansing, 15:57.98.

### DIVISION 1 GIRLS

9-Elsa Rustoven, DeWitt, 18:21.73; 10-Kaitlyn Hynes, DeWitt, 18:24.42; 11-Abbie Draheim, East Lansing, 18:24.70.

### DIVISION 2 BOYS

7-Ryan Brown, St. Johns, 16:05.96; 23-Bryce Brown, St. Johns, 16:35.55; 29-Griffin, St. Johns, 16:41.46.

### DIVISION 2 GIRLS

2-Meghan Ford, Mason, 18:18.08; 4-Mary Richmond, Frankenmuth, 18:39.16; 7-Kiera Hansen, Freeland 18:54.4; 16-Hannah Pricco, Lansing Catholic, 19:11.95; 8-Sophie Nedoff, Frankenmuth, 19:15.86; 29-Delaney Knoll, Frankenmuth, 19:43.09

### DIVISION 3 BOYS

3-Braxton Lamey, Ithaca, 16:10.84; 4-Carson Hersch, New Lothrop, 16:13.59; 9-Aaron Bowerman, St. Louis, 16:26.66;

12-Parks Allen, Ithaca, 16:28.75; 14-Keegan Honig, St. Louis, 16:35.00; 15-Espen Lehnst, Ithaca, 16:37.46; 17-Nate March, St. Louis, 16:39.47; 23-Ben March, St. Louis, 16:48.01; 25-Grayson, Rasmus, Saranac, 16:50.17.

### DIVISION 3 GIRLS

2- Lani Bloom, Ithaca, 18:32.26; 13-Mikenna Borie, St. Louis, 19:21.38; 19-Jenna Sweeney, Reese, 19:50.60; 22-Amelia Smith, Pewamo-Westphalia, 19:58.56; 23-Grace Weburg, Ithaca, 19:59.29; 24-Libby Munderloh, St. Louis, 20:02.54; 26-Miranda McNeil, Morley Stanwood, 20:05.86.

### DIVISION 4 BOYS

1-Coleman Clark, Carson City-Crystal, 15:58.55; 3-Mason Sumner, Breckenridge, 16:31.27;

4-Matthe Nowak, Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart, 16:38.69; 8-Trent Carter, Breckenridge, 16:53.18; 14-Brock Lynch, Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart, 17:13.84; 19-Dakota Dykhuis, Montabellia, 17:25.89; 20-Colttion Vine, Breckenridge, 17:25.89; 25-Ashton Keiffer, Carson City-Crystal, 17:38.74; 28-Matthew Kolb, Beal City, 17:43.06.

### DIVISION 4 GIRLS

4-Rachal Weber, Beal City, 19:57.55; 6-Ashlyn Kephart, Lansing Christian; 9-Natalie Tebben, Lansing Christian, 20:18.4; 12-Madison Volz, Lansing Christian, 20:21.83; 13-Tailor Onstott, Beal City, 20:25.431 14-Kylee Locke, Beal City, 20:38.81; 19-Amelia Thompson, Big Rapids Crossroads Academy, 20:49.12; 22-Olivia



Each of the divisions at the state finals this year were split into two heats to compensate for COVID 19 social distancing.

Erwin, Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart, 20:52.06.

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# Alma Enjoys District Championship Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

It was a season which will be remembered a long time for Alma's boys soccer team.

Coach Nick O'Neill's Panther squad won a district title, the second in school history.

In the districts, Alma edged Midland Bullock Creek 5-4 and Freeland 4-3 in a shootout and blanked Hemlock in the title game 4-0. Alma lost in the regional to Macomb Lutheran North 5-1. The final record was 10-5-2.

"We had a good combination of upperclassmen and underclassmen and a really talented team that had really nice balance," O'Neill said.

"Because we were going through a pandemic and because of all the changing rules and guidelines and procedures and protocol, it was hard to think about what our goals would be. I thought this was a group that when they got to be upperclassmen and seniors that they had a shot to do something special.

"But going into the season, this was probably the furthest thing from my mind. We played three (district) games against good teams. Each of them were pretty exciting. We had to beat a very good Freeland team to get over the hump. They beat us pretty soundly during the regular season during conference play. It had been a few years since we had beaten them. I



Alma seniors posed for a photo after their final game in the regional semifinals in Flint.

know our seniors had never beaten them. That was a big hurdle for us."

In the title game vs. Hemlock, "we came out on fire and scored some early goals," O'Neill said. "We put them on their heels right from the start. You could tell the kids

wanted it bad."

Connor Lemerand was an all-state honorable mention pick as a junior. His brother Cole was a key midfielder for the team.

"We had a lot of talented seniors on the backline with Corben Yates,

Dom Anguiano and Ryan Thompson, all seniors," O'Neill said. "They were a rock for us especially in the offseason."

Dom Prince was goalkeeper.

"He got an opportunity to shine his senior year," O'Neill said.

# Holt Soccer Team Celebrates Strong Season

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Holt's soccer team celebrates a special moment.

junior. His brother Cole was a key midfielder for the team.

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Dom Anguiano and Ryan Thompson, all seniors," O'Neill said. "They were a rock for us especially in the offseason."

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"He got an opportunity to shine his senior year," O'Neill said.

# Okemos Coach Reflects On Solid Soccer Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Okemos' boys soccer team was coming off a 19-2 season a year ago and high hopes for another banner season.

But with a pandemic putting the extra challenges to the season, Okemos had to navigate uncharted waters.

Assistant coach Keith Miller noted his team was 5-3-4 but won district title.

"Our only expectation was to complete the season, as we feel this was a gift, since we weren't given the go-ahead from our school board till Sept. 8 and we made it through our season,"

Miller said. "We were probably a bit disappointed not to win our league, but we also won what was arguably one of the most difficult districts in D1."

Miller had to admit, however, there were some disappointments.

"There was the late-season loss to Grand Ledge when we had a chance to win the league, and especially in the manner in which we lost, giving up a last-minute goal in a game in which we carried play," Miller said.

In postseason awards for Okemos, first team all league was Jack Guggemos (8 goals, 4 assists), Aidan Antcliff (1 goal, defensive midfield).

"Cooper Derath, Ian Buckwalter, Aidan Hanchett, and Alex Trouten will be missed next year, the latter two being our two keepers," Miller said. "We will return our core of Jack Guggemos, Owen Brewer, Aidan Antcliff, Owen Zimmerman, Ben Hussey, Leo Arana, Will Swihart and Alex Ghandi.

"We as a coaching staff were happy that we were able to give the boys a couple months of 'normalcy' during this bizarre school year. Winning our district that featured Fenton and Grand Blanc, who would both have undoubtedly been top 10 teams in the rankings was a huge accomplishment and showed a lot of toughness and grit. We embraced the underdog role this year."



Jack Guggemos paved the way for a solid Okemos soccer attack.

# Williamston A State Semifinalist In Boys Soccer

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Williamston's memorable boys soccer season ended in the Division 3 state semifinals with a 4-0 loss to eventual state champ Grosse Ile in the semifinal round.

Steve Horn coached the team, which had a 12-7 record.

"We've been to the state finals three times before that," Horn said. "It was the first time we were in the state semifinals since 2015. We were in the state finals three of four years. 2012, 2014, 2015."

A 1-0 win over Macomb Lutheran North put Williamston in the state semifinals.

Against Grosse Ile, "we knew it was going to be a tough game," Horn said. "We came in and started out pretty good and had some opportunities to score early. We didn't score them. They scored on a penalty but we had an opportunity to equalize it but their keeper made some big saves. We made some mistakes down the stretch and it cost us the game.

"It was a good year considering we came in not knowing if we were going to play at all. It was a roller-coaster of emotions. It was exciting and we were grateful we had the chance to get on the field. The seniors had a chance to end their careers on the field. It was a great year in that regard. The deep playoff



Williamston's soccer team advanced to the state semifinals.

run made it even better"

Horn anticipated the Hornets could do as well as they did in the playoffs.

"I always believed in my guys and I knew we had a talented group of kids," Horn said. "They put it all together at the tricky part and we played our best soccer toward the

end of the year and it carried over into playoffs. I thought we could make a run."

Top players for the Hornets were junior midfielder Tommy Drake, who was first team All-State with 11 goals and 20 assists; junior forward Andrew Palmer, who was also first-team All-State with 23 goals and

eight assists; Aidan Tarkin, junior forward, who was second team All-State and finished with 15 goals and nine assists; and junior goalkeeper Caleb Bond, who was also second team All-State.

"Those four guys really kind of led us and were the guys we needed to perform," Horn said.

# Athletes Make Commitments To College Teams

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Several area athletes have so far made commitments to the college level.

Alma softball player Alyssa Beechler is going to Delta College to play softball. She's a Class of 2021.

"My freshman year I received honorable mention and most improved player," Beechler said. "My soph-

omore year I received 2nd Team All-Conference and Sportsmanship Award from our league. I am now a team captain this year."

### Ithaca High School athletes

Evan Houck, football, will be signing with Adrian College.

Brady Hessbrook of the football team will be signing with Wayne State University; Zach Poff, football will be signing with the

University of Dayton.

Braxton Lamey of the cross country team signed with Indiana Tech.

Lydia Davenport of the softball will be signing with Lansing Community College.

Gracie Weburg of the cross country team will be signing with Northwood University.

### More football:

Zamarion Foster, quarterback, of Saginaw Arthur Hill, has committed to Lincoln University of Missouri in Jefferson, Mo.

Jose Medina, center, of Lansing Sexton, has committed to Michigan State University

Sirquarius Ball, Bridgeport, wide

receiver

### Volleyball

Anna Grace Marshall, defensive specialist, Dewitt, has committed to Cleveland State University.

Sage Kisman, Mason, outside hitter, she has committed to Ashland University.

Sage Schumacher, outside hitter, Mount Pleasant, she has committed to Arkansas Tech University.

Sarah Veale, Fowler, outside hitter, has committed to Saginaw Valley State.

Alyssa Leister of Alma has signed with Wayne State for basketball.

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# Lakewood Volleyball Team Takes Runner-Up State Finish

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Lakewood's volleyball team was in a familiar spot on Jan. 16 when the Vikings competed in the Division 2 state championship match at Battle Creek's Kellogg Arena.

It was the fifth time since 2014 the Vikings had been in the title match. Lakewood was hoping to get the title this time after going 0-4 in the final match. But for the third straight season, Grand Rapids Christian prevailed for the title 25-20, 25-20, 25-19.

Coach Cameron Rowland's team had to do just as all other regional champs across the state: wait for Nov. 16, when the state's shutdown of sports started, and come back for the quarterfinals on Jan. 12. Lakewood got into the semifinal round and swept Pontiac Notre Dame Prep 25-15, 25-13 25-22.

In the three games, Aubrey O'Gorman

had 17 kills and Maradith O'Gorman eight kills. Skylar Bump had 23 assists and Maradith O'Gorman had 15 digs while Bump and Carley Piercefield had two apiece.

Lakewood ended its season at 42-3. The school record for wins is 64.

"From the very first day of the year when we started practicing outside, we knew we were going to be really good and be able to put together a body of work, which would be impressive even with the tough schedule we had in place during the year," Rowland said. "We played five of the other seven other finalists that played in the state finals. We played all other teams in the Final Four of Division 2. At the end of the year, we were playing our best volleyball. Christian's volleyball was just a little bit better than ours."



Lakewood's volleyball team celebrates the state runner-up trophy in Division 2.

AddieVanderWeide had 10 kills and 11 digs for Christian.

Despite the unusual circumstance of a two-month layoff, "the team handled it very well," Rowland said. "They didn't go to family Christmases or do those things because they didn't want to get contact traces because they knew we had a shot to compete for a

state championship. They made the necessary sacrifices. I'm super grateful to them for that. Our bodies were fresh when we came back. As soon as we got back in the gym, our ball handling drills were still there."

Both O'Gormans were all-state. Aubrey was a second team All-American. Bump and Piercefield were second team all-state.

# Lowell Volleyball Team Second In The State

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Lowell's girls volleyball team finished runner-up in Division 1 for the second straight season.

The Red Arrows were still in the quarterfinals when the season, postponed on Nov. 16, returning the week of Jan. 12.

Lowell beat Portage Central 3-0 in the quarterfinal, Novi 3-2 in the semifinals but lost in the title match 3-0 to Bloomfield Hills Marian 25-17, 25-20, 25-19.

"The girls were really excited to get back into the gym and get to

back to work," Lowell coach Jordan Drake said. "Yes, it was difficult to start and stop and start and stop, but we were just excited to be able to be in the gym and continue our season to compete for a state championship. We definitely had to spend some time getting the girls back in shape, but the girls were fantastic throughout the entire season."

This season was Drake's third.

Lowell had an overall record of 35-5 and a league record of 8-2 for second in the OK-White.

"Our goal for the season was to

win a state championship," Drake said. "We did not meet our overall goal, but we did get very close and are proud of the achievements we had. We had a lot of kids on the team who had little to no varsity experience going into the season and they did a great job throughout the season. Top highlight was playing in the state championship match. We also beat Byron Center and Grand Rapids Christian later in our season after losing to both of them in the first few weeks of the season. This showed our kids how much better they were getting throughout the season."

"I think balancing everything with the Covid Restrictions and rules that were in place was the toughest part. It was definitely a bummer that we couldn't have our Arrow Nation crowd with us during the post season as our fans are amazing and so is the following.

Our kids definitely played their hearts out and never gave up. We didn't play our

best match that day and unfortunately that is what it takes to win it all. Our touch on the ball was a little off and Marian put a ton of pressure on us with their serving. It was a bummer we did not have our best match, but I am still proud of the way our kids fought until the end."

Jenna Reitsma, was a senior outside hitter, and MIVCA first team All-State, All-Region, OK-White All Conference and had 897 kills for 11th best in MHSAA history in a single season, .317 hitting percentage, 63 aces, 43 blocks and 431 digs.

Sophie Powell is a senior setter and MIVCA and first-team All-State, All-Region, OK-White All Conference player, who had 1,250 assists, 32 aces, 141 kills, .381 hitting percentage, 288 digs and 26 blocks.

Emma Hall is a senior libero, MIVCA 1st Team All-State, All-Region and OK-White All Conference with 487 digs, 74 aces, and 124 assists.

Emily Struckmeyer, junior middle blocker, MIVCA 2nd Team All-State, All-Region, and OK-White All Conference with 274 kills, .307

hitting percent, 70 blocks, 33 aces and 178 digs.

"We lose Jenna, Emma, and Sophie who all were starters for me the last three years and were all 1st team All-State this year," Drake said.

Key returners include juniors: Emily Struckmeyer, who was second-team All-State and Sydney Zandstra, who started every match at outside hitter for us this year.

Key sophomores coming back were Aubrieh Oswald, who was out all season with a torn ACL, and Alyssa Spanbauer, who started every match as a middle blocker for us this year.

Freshman was Piper Risdon who started every match at middle blocker for Lowell.

"Overall it was a great season and I could not be more proud of the culture that these girls have created for our program," Drake said. "I especially want to thank the seniors for their last three years of hard work and have helped grow the program into a perennial state contender. They have helped raise the expectation and standard for Lowell volleyball and have changed the program forever."



Lowell was the second place Division 1 team for the second straight year.

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# Lansing Christian Falls Shy Of State Title Bid

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Lansing Christian was among the volleyball teams that won a regional title on Nov. 12, and then had to wait two months to play its quarterfinal round match because of the pause enforced by the state health department.

Coach Casey Hilts' team ended its season on Jan. 12 with a 3-2 loss to eventual

state Division 4 champion Battle Creek St. Philip. Lansing Christian lost game five 16-14.

What was it like to come back after the delay?

"The skill drop was very noticeable like having a state tournament to start a season," Hilts said.

The team had a 27-6 season and split two five-set matches with BC St. Philip.

Beating a number of Division 1 schools was a highlight for Lansing Christian

"We were playing short almost all season with COVID-19 quarantines in place," Hilts said. "My right side broke her ankle the day before quarterfinals."

Ashley Nordmann was a first team all-stater with 551 kills and hitting 42 percent.

Anna Rottman was a sec-

ond team all-stater with 436 kills and hitting 35 percent.

Seniors graduating are Nordmann at outside hitter, Sydney Shanks at defensive specialist and Irene Nielsen at libero.

Anna Rottman is back at outsider hitter along with sophomores Maddy Rottman at setter, and Eliza Worts and Grace Leavitt in the middle.

Freshman Kate Rottman is a rightside hitter.

"Our youth could not overcome the two-month shutdown, losing in game five 14-16 to BC St. Philip," Hilts said.



Lansing Christian girls celebrate a volleyball regional championship.

# Fowler Volleyball Team Advances To Quarterfinals

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Patty Feldpausch has coached the Fowler team for a dozen years and No. 12 was indeed a unique one. The team won a Central Michigan Athletic Conference title, plus a district and regional title.

"After starting the season late, we were thankful for each and every time we could play, knowing that we could be shut down at any time," Feldpausch said. "When they wouldn't allow us to play the quarterfinal match in November, the big question was, 'Will they let us finish?' Because of shutting girls' basketball down the night of regional finals in 2020, we were extremely skeptical about them letting us finish our season."

Fowler was 10-0 in the league and 26-8 overall.

"Our first goal was to be undefeated and win the league and we did it," Feldpausch said. "Our second goal was to make a big postseason run and we accomplished that, too. During districts and regionals, we were peaking as a team, and then we shut down. It was extremely disappointing. The waiting game began and the start, stop, and start again kept us on edge.

"The mandatory testing resulted in one positive test and five players forced to quarantine due to contact tracing, five seniors and one junior. That was a huge loss for us. We created a new lineup to use in quarterfinals. We had five practices

to work out the kinks. The girls were positive and very competitive. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough."

Despite the loss in the quarterfinals, "I am proud of how we fought," Feldpausch said. "Our seniors played very well. Although this season we were a very strong serving team, we served timidly. We played well at times and had our chances, but couldn't find a way to finish."

In the districts, Fowler beat Ashley, Vestaburg, and Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart. In the regionals, they beat Muskegon Catholic Central and Onokama.

Fowler in Division 4 won team academic All-State honors with a 3.73 GPA.

"We are graduating seven seniors. They all helped us have a successful season," Feldpausch said.

The seniors are Sarah Veale, outside hitter; Kiley Bengel, defensive specialist; Jordan Myers, libero;

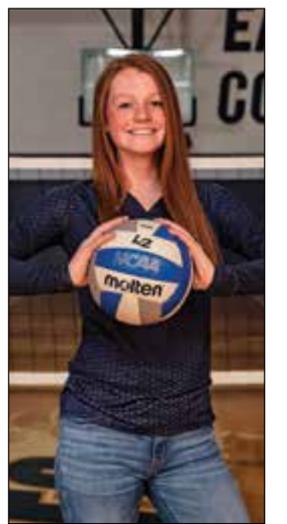
Lauren Speers, right side hitter; Adalee Thelen, outside hitter; Amy Feldpausch, right side/middle hitter and Christi Spitzley, middle hitter.

Key returners are Mia Riley, three-year setter; Maddie Wirth, two-year outside hitter; Emma Halfmann, defensive specialist and Emily Epkey, middle hitter.

Academic All-State awardees were Bengal, Myers, Spitzley, Thelen and Veale. Veale had 1,000 kills and 1,000 digs in her career.

She was first team All-State. She, Riley and Wirth were also all-region and all-conference. Myers was second team all-conference. Epkey was honorable mention.

All State honorable mention honors went to Riley and Wirth. "With all of the ups and downs of the pandemic/shutdowns, my team appreciated every minute they had on the court. This season was truly a blessing," Feldpausch said.



Sarah Veale was a key player for Fowler this season.

# Area All-State Volleyball Players

Michigan High School Volleyball Coaches Association

## Division 1

### First Team

Emma Hall, Lowell; Jenna Reitsma, Lowell; Sophie Powell, Lowell.

### Second Team

Emily Struckmeyer, Lowell

## Third Team

Mackenzie Delacher, Rockford; Alina Anderson, Rockford; Grace Marshall, DeWitt.

### Honorable Mention

Ava Horton, Rockford; Sage Kissman, Mason.

## Division 2

### First Team

Aubrey O'Gorman, Lakewood; Maradith O'Gorman, Lakewood.

### Second Team

Carley Piercefield, Lakewood; Sylar Bump, Lakewood.

### Honorable Mention

Hailey Breach, Lansing Catholic; Melissa Meachnaun, Lansing Catholic.

## Division 3

### First Team

Braelyn Berry, Morley Stanwood; Molly Gerow, Beaverton

## Second Team

Brooke Brauher, Morley Stanwood; Sydney Krause, Saginaw Valley Lutheran;

### Third Team

Sage Schumacher, Beal City; Peyton Bartnikowski, Saginaw Valley Lutheran

### Honorable Mention

Bailey Torpey, Beal City; Macy Vondoloski, Beal City; Ashlyn Martin, Saginaw Valley Lutheran; Aydan Dalak, Reese; Maddi Osantowski, Reese.

## Division 4

### First Team

Sara Veale, Fowler; Ashley Nordmann, Lansing Christian

### Second Team

Maddie Munley, Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart; Annaliese Rottman, Lansing Christian.

### Third Team

Catherine Buko, Saginaw Nouvel Catholic Central; Alison Hauck, Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart;

### Honorable Mention

Mia Riley, Fowler; Madison Wirth, Fowler; Isabelle Patel, Saginaw Nouvel Catholic Central.

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# Breckenridge Volleyball Team Wins First District Title

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Breckenridge's volleyball team had a volleyball season it will not soon forget.

Mindy Horman was the coach of a championship team, which went through some unique adventures.

"Our season was crazy to say the least," she said. "We started on a sand court not knowing if or when we would see the inside of a gym. As a team, we decided early that we would think of every day as maybe our last day so we knew it was important to give 110 percent each time we came together. From day one, our team had goals. We kept focused, we worked hard, we kept pushing."

This was Horman's third year as the varsity volleyball coach. She coached the seventh grade middle school volleyball team for two years before that.

The Huskies were 27-5 overall and district champions for the first time in school history. Breckenridge was 6-2 in the MSAC, finishing second place this season.

"I think I would have to say that this season exceeded our

expectations because we had a season," Horman said. "Honestly there were many times during the season that I thought we would never move any further than the sand court. Once we started practicing in the gym, I still wasn't sure how many weeks of volleyball we would be playing. Our first several tournaments were cancelled and games on the schedule kept getting pushed back.

"As the season progressed, and we were winning more and more, districts was something that I thought was probably not going to happen because it seemed like the number of covid cases were increasing. I remember telling our team to stay focused and remember the goals we wanted to achieve and keep pushing and we did. We won our first district championship in school history. That was an amazing moment and totally was one of those moments that our team will cherish forever."

Six of Breckenridge's players received MSAC award honors for their play this season

One player received All-Region honors Team Academic All-State Award for a team GPA of 3.8.

"This whole season was challenging," Horman said. "We had to follow all of the covid protocols as far as masks, temperature checks, sanitizing, etc. We could not play in true tournaments and could not hold our own like we normally would. We had very few spectators...really just parents.

"My team missed our student body. They missed their friends cheering them on, but as the season progressed and some rules changed, more spectators were allowed, and we had a terrific student section cheering us on for our last two matches

"Our last game played was in the regional finals. It was a dream to be in that position. Our team had a goal to win districts and they did that; beyond that, we had exceeded our expectations. We said to ourselves...why stop now? Let's keep going."

Horman felt her team was well prepared for its last match.

"We had watched game film on the team we were going to play, we had put in the practice time and we had a game plan moving forward," Horman said. "I think the girls started out a little tentative but had



Breckenridge's girls volleyball team had a championship season.

moments where they showed why we deserved to be there. (Saginaw) Valley (Lutheran) is a great team and they dug up everything that night. We had to be at our best and on that night, some of the breaks just didn't go our way.

"As disappointed as we were to see it all come to an end, we talked as a team about how unreal this whole season had been. I told the girls how proud they needed to be of themselves."

Senior middle hitter Cassidy Smith was first team all-conference, with 257 kills and 51 blocks.

Kennedy Hadanek was a senior outside hitter who was first team

all-conference, all-county and had 240 kills and 46 aces in 31 matches.

Kya Horman was a junior libero and second team all-conference player who in 31 matches had 341 digs and 31 aces.

Summer Smith was a senior setter and second-team all-conference and all-county with 57 aces and 610 assists.

Kara Whiting was a junior middle hitter who was honorable mention all-conference and in 31 matches had 115 kills and 81 aces.

Katie Steinhaus was a junior outside hitter and honorable mention all-conference.



Saginaw Valley Lutheran's volleyball team was in the state semifinals for the second straight year.

All-state players were senior setter Sydney Krause, senior outside hitter Peyton Bartnikowski and middle hitter Ashlyn Martin. Senior Sydney Krause was the libero. An-

other senior was defensive specialist Autumn Eischer. "We have a lot coming back," Frank said. "We have 10 out of 14 coming back."

# Valley Lutheran Volleyball Team A State Semifinalist Again

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Saginaw Valley Lutheran's volleyball team defeated Breckenridge 25-13, 25-18, 25-12 for the regional title on Nov. 12.

Then came the pause and the next match for the Chargers wouldn't be until Jan. 12, when they defeated Royal Oak Shrine Catholic 25-15, 25-16, 25-23 in the quarterfinals.

Next up was Schoolcraft in the state semifinal at Battle Creek's Kellogg Center. In 2019 at the semifinal against Schoolcraft, Valley Lutheran fell 25-10, 25-11, 25-12 and was determined to come back with a stronger effort.

But because of COVID, Valley Lutheran had to forfeit and call it a season at 32-2.

"We had a veteran setter, a three-year setter, along with a couple of four-year varsity players as seniors," Frank said. "We really had four good options in the front row. A lot of teams will have one, two or maybe three. They have to shut down four attackers. It was a weird and short season."

Frank said after winning the Tuesday quarterfinal, "on the following morning, we had a COVID issue and found out we had to forfeit."

Had the team been able to play, Frank said he felt good about the Chargers' chances against Schoolcraft, "a lot better than last year. Schoolcraft is still very good but we improved some things from last year. I thought we had a much better shot. We still would have been underdogs."

# MHSAA Completes Fall Season, Now Focuses On Winter Sports

## John Raffel Sports Scene

The MHSAA was able to start and end a fall sports season.

It wasn't easy.

Trying to get in any type of a winter sports season might be another trick.

When COVID numbers started rising in mid-November, the state health department put a pause on the season. Football, volleyball and girls swimming had not yet ended.

The MHSAA vowed to have the seasons end and such was the case with state finals in January. The football finals on Jan. 22-23 capped the very long fall season.

The next question was winter sports. The MHSAA came up with a schedule, the latest being for con-

tact sports to start full practices on Feb. 1 with noncontact workouts starting on Jan. 16. Sports could then start on Feb. 4 for cheer, basketball, hockey and wrestling (Feb. 5) classified as contact sports.

Noncontact sports including skiing, boys swimming, gymnastics and bowling were given the green light to start competition.

But on Jan. 22, the state said the contact sports couldn't have contact through Feb. 21, which then put everything up in the air.

"We found out about this decision at 9:30 a.m. like everyone else, and we will address it as quickly as possible after taking the weekend to collect more information," Uyl said on Jan. 22. "We did not anticipate this delay in winter contact practices and competition, and this

announcement has created many new questions.

"Obviously, this is disappointing to thousands of athletes who have been training with their teams over the last week and watching teams in other states around Michigan play for the last two months."

On Jan. 29, Uyl conducted a press conference in which he said the MHSAA requested the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to reconsider its extension and allow winter contact sports to proceed immediately.

Uyl cited statistics showing sports have been proceeding safely and with an extremely small percentage of COVID positive results.

Uyl said the MHSAA partnered with the MDHHS to get the fall sports completed with its rapid



Chippewa Hills' girls basketball players partake in a practice in early November before the state closed down sports on Nov. 18.

testing program which included more than 5,300 individuals with players, coaches and team personnel.

"Only one percent of those individuals had a positive test in 3 1/2 weeks of the program," Uyl said. "We'll get one final update

from MDHHS. The last report was 30,000 tests had been completed and reported and the negativity percentage 99.8 percent. We thought the numbers would be good but the numbers were extraordinary good."

# DeWitt Standout Jordyn Shipps Sails Away With Pair Of State Swimming Titles

## David Cook Sports Scene

**DIVISION 1**  
Rockford places in top ten as a team at D1 state meet

The Rockford swim team finished in eighth place at the Division 1 state finals that was won by Ann Arbor Pioneer.

The Rams were paced by senior Sara Kraus who placed second in both the 200 IM and 100 backstroke. Junior Ashley Lund earned all-state honors in a pair of events as she placed third in the 50 freestyle and fifth in the 100 free.

A pair of Rockford relay teams also earned all-state honors. The 200 medley relay team of Kraus, Josie Geers, Lund and Taylor Scott placed second while the same four swimmers teamed up to place sixth in the 200 free relay.

**DIVISION 2**  
Shipp leads DeWitt to 11<sup>th</sup>-place finish in D2 swimming finals

Led by senior Jordyn Shipps, the DeWitt swim team placed 11<sup>th</sup> in Division 2.

Shipps was a dual-winner for the Panthers as she won both the 100 freestyle and 200 IM. Shipps also teamed up with Allison Flannery, Jane Thomas and Anya Hopek to place seventh in the 200 medley relay. Elise Snyder also placed fourth place in the diving competition.

Midland Dow placed 14<sup>th</sup> overall as a team. Pacing Dow was sophomore Ella Roberson who placed fourth in the 100 free and sixth in the 200 free.

Okemos placed 23<sup>rd</sup> as a team. Caroline Li led the way for Okemos as she placed second in the diving competition.



**DIVISION 3**  
Bay City Glenn, Flint Powers places in top 10 at D3 swim finals

The Bay City John Glenn swim team placed fifth at the Division 3 state finals that was won by Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Kingswood.

Senior Katie Haag led the way for John Glenn as she placed sixth in the 100 butterfly. Haag also teamed up with Saree Schlitt, Kaylene Darbee and Ella Yantz to take sixth in the 200 medley relay. The 200 free relay team of Haag, Belle

Area swimmers and divers compete for state titles and all-state honors at the MHSAA state swimming and diving finals.

Beges, Olivia Leasure and Yantz placed eighth.

Flint Powers placed eighth as a team. The Chargers were led by senior Lara Wujciak who took first place in the 100 butterfly. Wujciak also placed third in the 100 backstroke. Senior Emily Snyder finished third in the diving competition.

Williamston finished in 19<sup>th</sup> place. The Hornets were led by junior

Gwen Eisenbeis who won the 50 freestyle. Eisenbeis also took second in the 100 backstroke. Eaton Rapids junior Maggie Monroe earned all-state honors in a pair of events as she placed sixth in the 200 freestyle and eighth in the 100 freestyle.

Owosso junior Macy Ireland placed seventh in the 100 freestyle while Ionia sophomore Madeline McGee took eighth in the 100 backstroke.

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