

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE
KEEPING KIDS IN THE NEWS

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

www.highschoolsportsscene.com

- **Publisher**
Randy Miniard
randy@highschoolsportsscene.com
517-202-1808
- **High School Liaison**
Paul Hornak
phornak@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,
Gary Williams

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jraffel@gmail.com

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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

Are we finally getting back to normal?
While we haven't had a full winter season, at least we have had a season.

The state finals are right around the corner and so to hopefully is spring and the light at the end of the tunnel is getting brighter.

The wrestling season is speeding to an end with the team state tournament set to begin with team districts March 17 and 18. There is plenty of excitement in Alma, New Lothrop, Davison, Portland, Mason, Holt, Carson City and several other communities as our wrestlers set to compete for individual and team honors. It has been a wrestling season unlike any before but it appears we will crown team and individual champions again this year.

There were no champions in basketball last spring as the pandemic pulled the plug on post-season action in 2020. This year, while the regular season is shorter it looks like we will have a state tournament! Some tournament basketball in March will be welcome news to basketball fans and even better news is that more fans will be allowed into the gyms to experience the action.

No one knows for sure how the spring season will play out, but with warmer temperatures, more vaccines and more immunity the spring sports season looks promising.

Kudos to all the coaches, administrators, parents and athletes who helped us get through a winter sports season. It has taken a total-team effort to get the games and matches going and to try and keep everyone healthy.

Let's all pray that we can get the winter season finished and here's hoping to a vibrant and safe spring seasons. Are local athletes have done a fantastic job of adapting to the changes brought on by the virus. They have been turning in some outstanding efforts when given the opportunity to compete and hopefully we can be there to cheer them on!

See you on the field!

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

Hard Work Pays Off In Lofty State Ranking For Alma Wrestling Team

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

For the last several years, the Alma wrestling team has been working hard to become one of the premier Division 3 wrestling programs in the state. Those years of hard work are paying dividends as Alma has worked its way up the ladder to where it is one step away from the pinnacle of Division 3 wrestling in Michigan.

Ranked number two in the state behind Dundee at the start of the wrestling season, Alma has fought to remain in this position as the post-season team tournaments close in. At the end of the first week of March Alma has compiled a 17-3 record with the three losses coming to nationally-ranked teams



Solomon Rosales points to Alma crowd after pinning Hart opponent.

Davison, Lowell and Dundee.

"Things are going great," said Alma coach Randy Miniard. "We have some big wins and are losses have come against number one in Division 1 (Davison), number one in Division 2 (Lowell) and number one in Division 3 (Dundee). We've also had some big wins against New Lothrop, ranked number three in Division 4, Hart, ranked number six in Division 3 and Montrose, ranked number five in Division 3."

Alma features talented weight classes in all grades. Of Alma's 14 starters, a total of 11 are state-ranked by Michigan Grappler, which is the most since Miniard took over as head coach.

In the senior class, Dametrius Castillo (145 pounds), Solomon Rosales (140), Mason Everitt (285) and Dominic Anguiano (119) lead the way. Castillo is a three time state placer who was state champion as a freshman and state runner-up last year. Rosales finished fourth in the state last season. After taking his junior year off Anguiano is ranked second in the state in his weight class.

Alma also returns a slew of underclassmen starters to the lineup who are providing strong efforts in each match. Junior Jordan Pannill is a state-ranked wrestler at 103 pounds and sophomore Gianni Tripp (125) is a returning state qualifier. Junior Josiah Baltierra (130) was a state qualifier two years ago. After taking last year off junior Landon Bethka (135) has

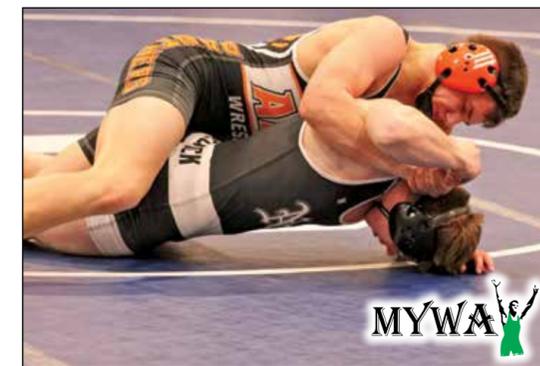
returned to become ranked in the state. Harrison Seeley returns to the lineup after missing last season due to a football injury. Seeley was a regional qualifier two years ago. Junior Jacob Munger (160) is a returning state qualifier who recently recorded an amazing 4 second pin. Junior Brenden Everdeen is a super-utility wrestler for the Panthers who has compiled a 9-1 record wrestling at different weight classes. Junior Jaden Morrow (189) has stepped into the starting lineup and has a winning record with a double-digit win total. Junior Adam Garcia (215) has an 8-1 record while junior Caden Adams has a winning record at heavyweight. Also at heavyweight senior Mason Everitt has been out of the lineup recovering from injury.

Alma also has a freshman making a big impact. Cole O'Boyle (171) has turned in a 17-3 record. Those three losses, however, have come against the cream of the crop including Alex Facundo, the number-one ranked 171-pounder in the nation from Davison, Dominik Lomazzo, a defending state champion from Dundee and Jacob Lee, ranked second in the state in Division 2 from Lowell.

"Cole will be a force to be reckoned with by the time he's done," said Miniard.

Miniard also noted praise for his remaining wrestlers including Grayson Ortiz, Joey Oberle, Carlos Martinez-Medina, Alberto Nieto, Will Shanklin and Corey Bell who show up everyday to improve and make the team better.

Dundee is the force to be reckoned with in Division 3 wrestling in Michigan and has been for years. Dundee has won the last three D3 state championships and six out of the last eight D3 titles. Dundee has a 36-25 win over Lowell, the No. 1-ranked team in the state in Division 2 this year. They have also defeated Temperance-Bedford, ranked fifth in the state in Division 1, 64-0. Dundee is the team that Alma and all the other D3 schools in the state are chasing year after



Jacob Munger tries to turn NL opponent.

year.
"Dundee is out of this world," Miniard said. "They are on another level. Taking second at state would



Dametrius Castillo and Coach Miniard talking strategy in recent action.

be would be like winning state. We're working really hard on improving and getting better. We're trying to get back to Kalamazoo and I think we have a pretty good team. It will take a great team to beat us and some great teams have this season."

Hard work has been the key to success for the Alma wrestling team as it worked itself up the rankings the past several years.

"We have a blue-collar approach," Miniard said. "Our team motto is to outwork everybody. Nobody outworks us during the regular season. We work out from 6:30 to 7:30 in the morning and then 3:00 to 5:30 at the end of the day. We even have some kids come back for a third workout. Our motto is not to be outworked."

While the Alma wrestlers put in vast amounts of hours working during the season, they are also all-around student athletes who have more to focus on in the offseason.

"Our wrestlers play football in the fall and other sports in the spring," Miniard said. "They are involved in 4H, Future Farmers of America and the county fair during the summer and plays, musicals, jazz band and activities during school."

Alma begins the road to Kalamazoo when it hosts the team district meet March 18. The regional meet will take place March 24 at Don Johnson Fieldhouse at Lansing Eastern High School with the team state finals set for Tuesday, March 30 at Wings Event Center in Kalamazoo.

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Young Holt Wrestling Team Showing Plenty Of Promise This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

In what is a very abnormal year for high school wrestling due to the Covid-19 virus, the Holt wrestling team is putting up some normal numbers.

One of the top Division 1 teams in mid-Michigan over the year, the Rams are piling up the wins in a normal fashion. Holt opened the season with a 16-1 record with the lone loss coming against national power Detroit Catholic Central.

"We have had a good year," said Holt coach Rocky Shaft. "We are 16-1 right now but it's hard to find

out exactly how you are doing. We usually go down to Ohio or Indiana for big 35-team tournaments but we were unable to do that this year."

The Rams were able to gauge their strength in the match against Detroit Catholic Central.

"We lost that match, but I thought our kids competed well," Shaft said. "I think we won three matches, but we lost five by two points or less. We were in a lot of matches."

The Rams have a young squad this year with two seniors in the starting lineup. A number of Rams

are turning in strong seasons. Junior Ralph Thompson (140 pounds), a regional qualifier last season, is off to a 15-0 record. Sophomore Ryan Mosher (112), who also qualified for the regional last year, has a 15-1 record.

The Rams also return a trio of state qualifiers. Heavyweight Josh Terrill has compiled a 13-1 record. Senior Zach Platte (125), a state placer two years ago, has a 14-2 mark while junior Nate Bremer (171) started the season 12-2.

Holt is also getting a strong season from Mariano Lopez, a regional qualifier last year who

is 11-3 this season. Jason Jones, a league champion last year, is 9-3. Jacob Harris and Alex Russell are both 13-2 this season.

"We have some kids who are doing very well this season," Shaft said. "We have about 15 kids that are very, very good. We hope to see some good things out of them the next few weeks and see them make a name for themselves. We have a team of mostly underclassmen so we are looking good for next year also."

Holt begins its post-season



Heavyweight Josh Terrill is one of several Holt wrestlers who are having standout seasons for the Rams who are ranked in the top ten in the state in Division 1.

march as it hosts a Division 1 team district that includes Jackson and Battle Creek Central.



Mason High School 2020 MHSAA Heavyweight Champion Jack Gilchrist.

Balanced Lineup Has Mason Wrestling Team Primed For State Tournament Run

David Cook Sports Scene

Graduation day hit the Mason wrestling program hard, but what the Bulldogs lack in experience this season they are making up for with numbers.

Thanks to a large group of wrestlers, the Bulldogs are off to a strong start in what is a Covid-19 condensed wrestling season. Mason opened the season by winning 14 of 15 dual matches and is ranked ninth in the state in Division 2.

"We have 30 kids on our roster which gives us flexibility if someone goes out with an injury," said Mason coach Brian Martel. "In the year of Covid, having 25-plus kids in a program is a rarity. We also have balance. We fill all of our weights with solid kids as well as having a good mix of older and younger kids in the lineup."

Mason returns just three starters this year, but that trio is getting the job done. Senior Logan Trimmer (140 pounds) is 15-0 this season. Trimmer is a four-year starter and

a team captain who has 130 victories as a Bulldog. Juniors Hayden Haynes (112) and Dylan Kanouse (130) are both 13-2 this season.

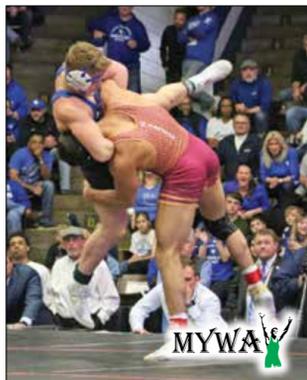
Blending with the veterans are a number of talented newcomers that are making a splash. In the upper weights, junior Landon Peiffer (189) is 14-1 while fellow junior David Fancher (215/hwt) is 12-3. On the opposite end of the lineup, sophomore Trent Keast (103) is 13-2. A pair of freshmen are also making big impacts. Derek Badgley (171) is 15-0 while AJ

Martel (160) is 13-2.

"We have lot of new kids in the lineup," said coach Martel, "and several good freshmen who start for us this year."

With the state tournament beginning March 17, the Bulldogs are looking to build momentum.

"We are excited about the post-season," Martel said. "We feel we have a balanced team that can make some noise. We have yet to field our strongest lineup this year, so come districts we could be even better than we are now."



- 103** Justin Gates, Davison, fr.
- Aden Williams, Davison, jr.
- Kendra Ryan, Fenton, sr.
- AJ Gray, Grand Blanc, fr.
- 112** Caden Horwath, Davison so.
- Jak Keller, Rockford so.
- Ryan Mosher, Holt so.
- Terek Engelter, Grand Blanc, jr.
- Connor Schelb, Midland sr.
- 119** Elijah Bunn, Rockford so.
- Mason Feudale, Swartz Creek, so.
- Mariano Lopez, Holt, so.

- Charles McClusky, Grand Blanc, jr.
- 125** Zach Platte, Holt, sr.
- Brendan Maybee, Davison, jr.
- 130** Cameron Freeman, Davison, jr.
- William Miller, Grand Blanc, sr.
- Jason Jones, Holt jr.
- Emilio Cabrera, East Lansing, jr.
- 135** Evan Herriman, Davison, so.
- 140** Owen Payne, Davison, jr.

- Ralph Thompson, Holt, jr.
- Cole Schelb, Midland, so.
- 145** Kyle White, Davison, jr.
- 152** Trenton Wachter, Rockford, sr.
- James Johnston, Davison, sr.
- Phillip Lamka, Fenton, fr.
- Alex Russell, Holt, jr.
- 160** Josh Barr, Davison, so.
- Max Callahan, Davison, so.
- 171** Alex Facundo, Davison, sr.
- Nathan Bremer, Holt, jr.

- Moses Bosscher, Rockford, sr.
- Brennon Larion, Swartz Creek, sr.
- 189** Aidan Wardell, Midland Dow, jr.
- Landon Kish, Davison, sr.
- 215** Jimmy Colley, Davison, jr.
- Bryce Simmons, Davison, so.
- 285** Tyler Jelinek, Davison, sr.
- Joshua Terrill, Holt, jr.
- Miklo Silva, Everett, sr.

Last years controversial call, Slam or No Slam? Davison vs. DCC finish looking at slam/no slam. Photos at www.highschoolsportsscene.com

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Large Group Of Seniors Has Lowell On Track To Defend Division 2 Wrestling Title

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

While the wrestling season has been drastically changed by the Covid-19 virus, one thing remains the same as usual. The Lowell Red Arrows are piling up the wins.

Winners of the past seven Division 2 state titles, the Red Arrows find themselves atop the Division 2 rankings this season as the wrestling red wave continues to roll.

"It's definitely been a different year," said Lowell coach RJ Boudro. "With the season being so short it's definitely added a lot of stress for teams but our kids have handled it well. We have a good group of seniors and are excited about wrestling for another state title."

The Red Arrows are led by a senior class that is well seasoned

and full of talented wrestlers. Seniors Doak Dean (160 pounds), Cole Huisman (140), Jacob Lee (171), William Link (152), Derek Mohr (189), Keegan Nugent (285), Zeth Strejc (130) bring plenty of experience and wins to the mat each match.

"These seniors are a big part of our success," said Boudro. "They are the core of our senior group leading the way."

Along with the seniors, the Red Arrows have plenty of younger wrestlers providing an impact. Ramsey Mutschler (125) is a state-ranked wrestler. Easton Lyons (112) is providing wins in the lower weights and freshman Tacho Gonzales (145) has stepped into the lineup in a big way. Carson Crace (160) and Carter Blough (215) are a pair of newcomers to

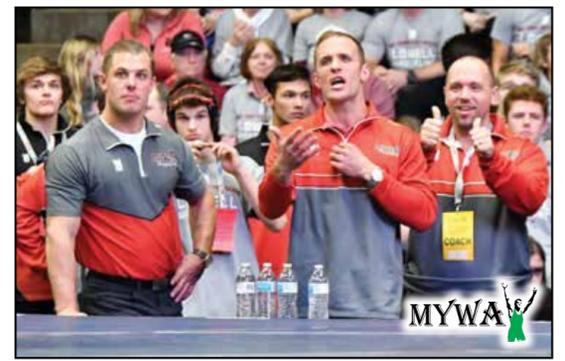
the starting lineup who have been piling up wins and moving up the rankings.

The Red Arrows have been busy preparing for the state tournament by taking on the best competition in the state. Lowell has dropped three duals this season but the losses have come against Detroit Catholic Central, Davison and Dundee, all three nationally-ranked teams.

"We take pride in having a tough schedule," Boudro said. "Are kids actually did very well in those matches."

Winning an eighth straight title will be a challenge as Boudro sees plenty of strong challengers on the state level.

"There are some really good teams out there in Division 2," Boudro said. "Gaylord is back



Lowell coach RJ Boudro and his Red Arrow wrestlers have their sights set on winning an eighth-straight D2 state championship.

again. Stevensville-Lakeshore is a really good team and so is Jackson Northwest. Warren Woods-Tower has a ton of talent and they will be a huge threat."

The Red Arrows, however, have plenty of talent to stay on top.

"I think we are in a really good spot to make another run," Boudro

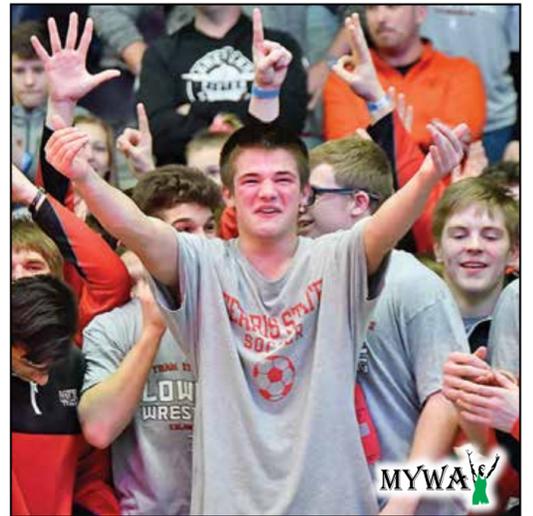
said. "I feel we have a great team. We have been wrestling the best competition we can find this year. I'm really happy we have the opportunity to wrestle this year and I'm really happy the kids have the opportunity to wrestle. With all the uncertainty this year the kids need to wrestle and need to play sports."

D2 INDIVIDUAL WRESTLING RANKINGS

- 103** Easton Lyons, Lowell, so.
- Noah Webster, Mt. Pleasant, fr.
- Kaden LaPaugh, DeWitt, fr.
- Braylen Parker, Eaton Rapids, fr.
- Clay Cook, Lake Fenton, fr.
- 112** Dakota Forgash, Bay City Glenn, jr.
- Aidan Lupisella, Bay City Glenn, so.
- Alex Kolar, Haslett, jr.
- Adrian Sigurani, Eaton Rapids, jr.

- 130** Jacob Brya, St. Johns, sr.
- Zeth Strejc, Lowell, sr.
- Robert Davids, Eaton Rapids, sr.
- Caden Peterman, Greenville, sr.
- James Link, Lowell, sr.
- 135** Carson Richards, Goodrich, jr.
- Logan Trimmer, Mason, jr.
- Cole Riedel, St. Johns, so.
- 140** Logan Haughton, Charlotte, jr.
- Nate Cleaver, Lowell, jr.
- Logan DeMarest, Bay City Glenn, fr.
- Noah Hall, Lake Fenton, fr.
- Nathan Dobson, Greenville, fr.
- 145** William Link, Lowell, jr.
- Eli Severns, DeWitt sr.
- Jack Conley, Lake Fenton, so.
- Rodney Richards, Flint Kearsley, sr.
- Zam Thompson, Eaton Rapids, jr.
- 152** Luke York, DeWitt, sr.
- Brady Benson, Goodrich, so.
- Tacho Gonzales, Lowell, fr.
- Taylor Kellum, Greenville.

- 160** Doak Dean, Lowell, sr.
- Jimmy Roti, Linden, sr.
- Carson Crace, Lowell, so.
- Justice Gonzalez, St. Johns, sr.
- Ashton LaGuire, Charlotte so. 26-8
- 171** Jacob Lee, Lowell, sr.
- Derek Badgley, Mason, fr.
- 189** Cameron Macklem, Goodrich, jr.
- Derek Mohr, Lowell, sr.
- Jacob Marrs, Clio, so.
- Cameron Eager, Bay City Glenn, jr.
- Garrett Forgash, Bay City Glenn, fr.
- 215** CJ Krum, St. Johns, sr.
- Carter Blough, Lowell, jr.
- Wyatt Gocha, Linden, jr.
- Ethan O'Kelly, Clio, jr.
- 285** Keigan Nugent, Lowell, sr.
- Conner Pochert, DeWitt, sr.
- Dominik DiGenova, Flint Kearsley, so.
- Zach McMillan, Greenville, jr.
- Aidan Clute, Ionia, sr.



Lowells Doak Dean Celebrates at last years finals as Loweel won their 7th consecutive MHSAA TEAM TITLE.

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Quality Over Quantity Has Portland Wrestling Team Ranked Among The Top In D3

David Cook Sports Scene

What the Portland wrestling team may lack in numbers this year, they more than make up for in skill and heart.

With just 18 wrestlers on the roster, the Raiders may not have the depth as many of their opponents, but the low numbers don't reflect the firepower the team brings to the mat.

Ranked sixth in the state in Division 3, Portland opened the season with an 11-3 record. The Raiders have posted some impressive wins including a 37-31win over rival Eaton Rapids and double-digit wins over rival Lakewood-Lake Odessa

and Williamston. Portland also defeated larger schools like Grand Blanc and Charlotte. Portland's three losses came against Division 1, state-ranked Holt, a one-point loss to D2 powerhouse Gaylord and a two-point loss to DeWitt.

"We've had some ups and downs with injuries and the season starting and stopping," said Portland coach Andy Pulling. "On the other end we've had some good positives. We are one wins away from winning our first league title in 25 years. We have a good group of kids, a good group of parents and some really good coaches. They are all so supportive and engaged. That is what makes our program work. That has made this season a

pleasure."

On the mat, Caiden Pelc and senior Chandler Murton (189 pounds) have led the way. Pelc has battled injuries to put together a strong season while Murton, a transfer from DeWitt who also played football, has been a key component.

The Raiders are also getting strong efforts in the upper weight classes from Jackson Weygandt and Brandon Goodman.

"Jackson has been doing a good job at 215 pounds," said Pulling. "Branson is a good, strong guy who has also come in and done a good job."

In the lower weights, Ethan Weber has stepped up and is having a strong season.

Portland has just two seniors on this year's roster. Along with Murton, senior Nathan Zimmerman (189) brings the squad senior leadership.

Drew Miller (135) and Trent Trierweiler (145) are also stepping



The Portland wrestling team picked up wins against Charlotte and Lansing Everett while dropping a decision to Division 1, state-ranked Holt at the Holt quad. Photo by RENAE GOODMAN

up with strong efforts.

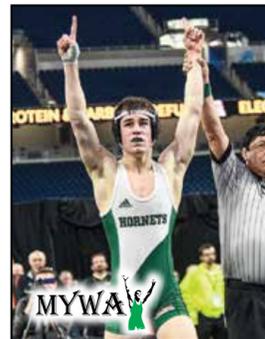
"Drew was behind Caiden last year," Pulling said. "He has been doing really good in the lineup this year. Trent is a strong wrestler who we can put out against the other team's toughest kids."

The strong schedule Portland is facing will pay off when the team state tournament begins in mid-March.

"I think we should do ok," Pulling said. "We have Lakewood in our district. We did fine against them early in the season. The team regional will be a tough slate. Alma is a team we could see at the regional and they are definitely a tough team. They have a lot of state-ranked wrestlers and have wrestled a lot of tough teams."

D3 INDIVIDUAL WRESTLING RANKINGS

- 103** Jack Chambers, Williamston, jr. Talan Parsons, Ovid-Elsie, fr. Noah Graham, Freeland, fr. Cameron Bacchus, Durand Jordan Pannill, Alma, jr. Robert VanVleet, Chippewa Hills jr. Ashton Clark, Lakewood-Lake Odessa, so. Joaquin Campos, Corunna, jr. Dawson Gielda, Birch Run, so.

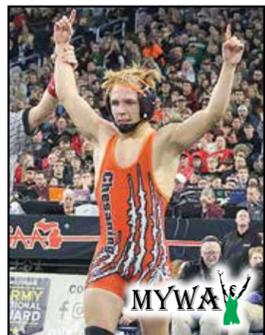


Williamstons Ryker Joncheck

- 112** Tyler Ueberroth, Swan Valley, so. D'Angelo Campos, Corunna, jr. Hunter Coxon, Montrose, so. Tyler Geer, Chippewa Hills, fr. Ethan Hawkins, Durand
- 119** Dominic Anguiano, Alma, sr. Seth Coffin, Montrose, jr. Michael Boyd, Carrollton, sr. Gabe Serbus, Corunna, sr. Evan Tanner, Birch Run, so. Ty Fielder, Durand, so.
- 125** Aiden Bernerd, Montrose, jr. Hunter Norris, Millington, sr. Caiden Pelc, Portland, jr. Zachary Gibson, Lakewood Lake Odessa jr. Caleb Cline, Shepherd, sr. Gianni Tripp, Alma, so. Ian Boden, Tri-County, so. Greg Dion, Williamston Gavin Miller, Chippewa Hills, sr.
- 130** Jake Elavich, Montrose, sr. Brock Holey, Durand, sr. Luke Sherman, Millington, so. Tyler Tomasek, Freeland, sr.

- Camden Johnecheck, Williamston, so. Josiah Baltierra, Alma, jr. Drew Miller, Portland, so. Brady Sleeper, Big Rapids, so.
- 135** Ryker Johnecheck, Williamston, jr. Luke Mahaney, Williamston, sr. Bobby Skinner, Montrose, sr. Darrin Alward, Durand Daylin Wittig, Chippewa Hills, sr. Riley Bacon, Mt. Morris, sr. Landon Bethka, Alma, jr. Max Spiess, Ovid-Elsie, jr.
- 140** Solomon Rosales, Alma, sr. Jack Sherman, Millington, sr. Carson Hayes, Chippewa Hills, sr. Cody Ueberroth, Swan Valley, so. Isaiah Pelc, Portland so. Alex Goodson, Sanford-Meridian, so. Blake Greenman, Montrose, jr.
- 145** Dametrius Castillo, Alma, sr. Jon Bouchey, Clare, sr. Cole Fournier, Freeland, jr. Trent Trierweiler, Portland, jr. Jared Bloom, Williamston, jr.
- 152** Peyton Brooks, Bullock Creek so. 42-5

- Nick Dodman, Sanford-Meridian, sr. Xavier Anderson, Corunna, so. Keegan VanAlstine, Lakewood-Lake Odessa, sr. Harrison Seeley, Alma, jr. Brock Ryan, Central Montcalm, sr. Evan Becker, Essexville-Garber, sr. Ty Emmendorfer, Montrose, jr.
- 160** Connor Owens, Flint Powers, so. Hayden Holmes, Millington, jr. Jacob Munger, Alma, jr. Nolan VanLoo, Freeland, sr. Nicholas Basket, Essexville-Garber, sr.
- 171** Chandler Murton, Portland, sr. Cole O'Boyle, Alma, fr. Amaron Gibson, Flint Hamady, sr. Konner Roche, Frankenmuth, sr. Cody Smith, Montrose, jr. Matthew Massman, Belding, jr.
- 189** Randy Pyrzewski, Gladwin, jr. Trenten Wiggins, Chippewa Hills, sr. Jake Schultz, Sanford-Meridian, sr. Jaden Morrow, Alma, jr. Hunter Spaulding, Durand, sr. Jack Ward, Belding, fr. Jake Nelson, Tri-County, jr.



Chesaning's Jordan Rodriguez

- 215** Branson Goodman, Portland, so. Carl Whipple, Chippewa Hills, sr. Adam Garcia, Alma, jr. Bryan Brown, Shepherd, sr. Evan Schmid, Belding, jr.
- 285** Levi Harber, Montrose, jr. Colby Roosa, Chippewa Hills, sr. Kyle Barton, Shepherd, sr.

Veteran Talent Has New Lothrop Wrestling Team Poised For Run At D4 State Title

David Cook Sports Scene

Led by a deep and talented group of wrestlers in the upper weight classes, the New Lothrop wrestling team is aiming for another run at a Division 4 state championship.

New Lothrop reached the Division 4 team state semifinals last season and the Hornets have the talent to again be in the thick of the battle for the top spot at the state finals.

Pacing the team are a deep group of wrestlers in the upper weights. Those wrestlers have helped the Hornets to a strong start this season and a No. 3-ranking in the state in Division 4.

"We're talented up top with a lot of depth," said New Lothrop coach Jeff Campbell. "From the 160-pound weight class up we have two or three guys at each weight class that will expect to see varsity action."

Senior Cam Orr (215 pounds) is one of the standouts in the upper weights. Orr returns after winning an individual state championship last season. At heavyweight, junior Isiah Pasik is a returning state medalist while senior Kody Krupp (189) is a returning regional qualifier.

In the middle of the lineup, senior Harry Helmick (152/160) is a returning state qualifier. Senior Bryce Cheney (145/152) is a returning state medalist while senior Andrew Krupp (135/140) is another state medalist back in the lineup.

In the lower weight classes, sophomore Daven Lockwood (103) is a returning state medalist while sophomore Caleb Sharp (119/125) is a returning regional qualifier.

Along with the returning veterans, New Lothrop has a solid group of young wrestlers ready to flex their muscles.

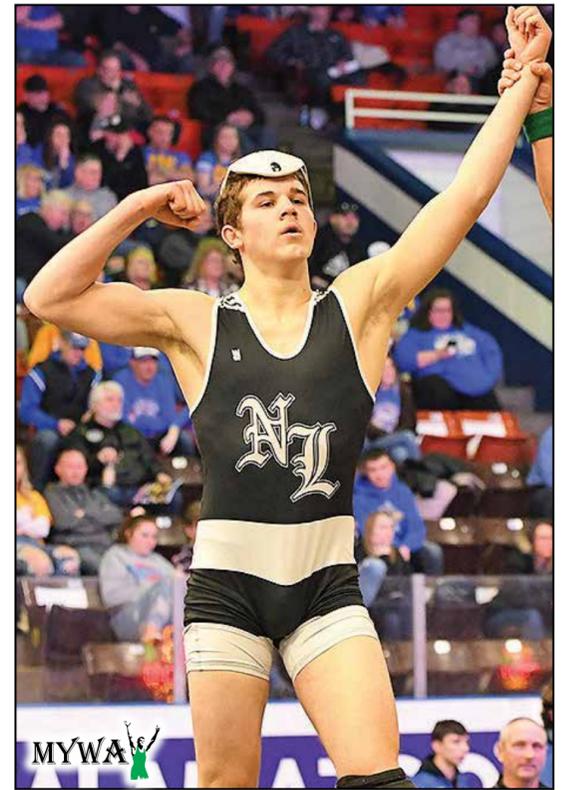
"For every returning state or regional qualifier that we have among our upperclassmen, we have younger guys right behind them that have been putting in the work," Campbell said. "It's an exciting time when we view our depth and project our lineup over the next couple seasons."

A key to making a deep tournament run this spring is developing the wrestlers in the lower weight classes.

"We don't expect to see as much movement in our lineup this year as we typically have," Campbell said. "2021 Michigan High School Athletic Association rules only allow wrestlers to compete one class lower than their initial weigh-in. Early lineups may have a few gaps down low as our lighter weight guys work toward their target weight class."

In conference action, Campbell sees a competitive battle shaping up.

"Montrose is positioned to be highly competitive in the MMAC," Campbell said. "With the development we have seen of Lakeville's team, we also expect to see them push toward the top of the conference. Our matchups with those teams will heavily depend on getting our weight classes filled down low and collecting bonus points when we can get them. As always, we hope to peak as a team in the postseason."



The New Lothrop wrestling team is looking to flex its muscles at the Division 3 sate tournament this spring.

D4 INDIVIDUAL WRESTLING RANKINGS

- 103** Tyler Akin, Carson City, sr. Leo Bauman, New Lothrop, fr. Ben March, St. Louis, fr. Westin Miedema, Lakeview, fr.
- 112** Isaiah Mullins, St. Charles, jr. Daven Lockwood, New Lothrop, so. Blake Baker, Dansville, jr. Robert Long-Terwilliger, St. Louis, jr. Timothy Plamondon, Valley Lutheran.
- 119** Gabe Mullins, St. Charles, sr. Jared Shepler, Carson City, sr. Bryce Jacobs, Lakeview, so.
- 125** Nate March, St. Louis Matias Escamilla, St. Charles Ramiro Jimenez, Montabella Jarrett Weigold, Hemlock

- Jack Wiggins, Coleman, jr.
- 130** Jaron Johnson, Carson City, sr. Derek Mayle, Breckenridge, jr. Dylan Marr, St. Louis, so. Lucas Mooney, Leslie, sr. Joesph Dawe, Ithaca, fr. Reuben Adams, Beaverton, jr.
- 135** Jacob Orweller, Perry, sr. Jack Kulhanek, New Lothrop. Jesse Miedema, Lakeview
- 140** Andrew Krupp, New Lothrop, sr. Cole Stone, Carson City, jr. Gage Vasold, Breckenridge, so. Connor Risner, Leslie, sr. JD Schnell, Hemlock
- 145** Josh Collins, Hemlock, jr.

- Jayden Carson, Montabella Jackson Knieper, New Lothrop, sr. Hunter Doyle, Leslie, jr. Seth Grooms, Perry, jr.
- 152** Bryce Cheney, New Lothrop, sr. Grant Weber, Leslie, sr. Bryce Stanley, Carson City, jr. Tarik Jack, Lakeview
- 160** Grant Weber, Leslie, sr. Harry Helmick, New Lothrop, sr. Blain Mitchell, Carson City, sr. Ethan Sumner, Breckenridge, sr.
- 171** Cole Tilton, Ithaca, sr. Tristan Almanza, Edmore-Montabella, jr. Kyle Boechter, Laingsburg so. Noah Ruddy, New Lothrop
- 189**

- Kody Krupp, New Lothrop, sr. Justice Onstott, St. Louis, so. Josh Wardlow, Hemlock Andy Fuller, Montabella
- 215** Camden Orr, New Lothrop, sr. Benjamin Smieska, Leslie, sr. Jeremy Wazny, Hemlock, sr. Jake Fischer, Beaverton, sr. Cole Staton, Byron, sr. David Jahnke, Valley Lutheran, sr. John Row, Montabella
- 285** Isiah Pasik, New Lothrop, jr. Corbin Hamilton, Ithaca, sr. Matthew Johnson, Byron, jr. Bryce Middleton, Coleman, sr. Mason Potter, Saranac, jr. Andrew Munro, Montabella Luke Maxwell, St. Louis

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Area Wrestlers, Coaches Piling Up Impressive Numbers As Season Winds Down

David Cook Sports Scene

TRIO OF WRESTLING COACHES REACH MILESTONES

A trio of mid-Michigan are wrestling coaches passed milestones for wins this season. Holt coach Rocky Shaft, Mason coach Brian Martel and Montabella coach Shaun Balhorn all passed significant win marks. Shaft won his 600th career dual when Holt defeated Okemos in the first match of the year. Shaft has been coaching at Holt for 41 years and has totaled 615 career wins as of March 7.

"I never think about the wins," Shaft said. "The 600 wins was never on my list. It's all about the kids. Those 600 wins should also include my assistants for having to put up with me all these years."

Martel reached the 500-career win mark during a quad meet on Feb. 27. "It was a fun night of celebration," Martel said. "It was humbling to hear from so many former wrestlers and

parents who have been part of our program over the year." Martel began coaching the wrestling team in 2004. During his time at Mason he has compiled a 506-106 record. He has coached Mason to 16 team district titles, seven regional championships, two team state championships and one state runner-up. Martel has also been named regional coach of the year six times and is a two-time state coach of the year.

"My success is built around a great wrestling community, dedicated coaches at the high school, middle school and youth levels and awesome kids to work with," Martel said. "I owe so much of my success to Jeff Pitman who coached Mason for 20 years before me and mentored me through my early years at Mason High School."

Martel began his career as an assistant coach at Mason from 1995 to 2003 before taking over as head coach.

Balhorn reached win number 500 when his Montabella team earned

wins against St. Charles and St. Louis on March 2.

"This accomplishment is an extraordinary feat for any coach, especially a wrestling coach," said Montabella athletic director Marty Weese. "Shaun has been at it since 1998."

CARSON CITY-CRYSTAL RANKED IN D4

The Carson City-Crystal wrestling team is ranked among the top ten in the state in Division 4. The Eagles have wrestled an ambitious schedule taking on larger schools like Byron Center, Port Huron Northern, Mt. Pleasant and Ionia.

The Eagles more than held their own in those matches coming away with a 40-30 win against Port Huron Northern, a 54-21 win against Mt. Pleasant and a 57-24 win against Ionia.

Carson City-Crystal has a total of six wrestlers ranked in the state by Michigan Grappler. The Eagles are paced by senior Jaron Johnson who is ranked third at 130 pounds. Senior Jared Shepler is ranked ninth in the state in D4 at 119 pounds.

Carson City-Crystal hosts a Division 4 regional on March 17.

DEWITT WRESTLERS LOOKING STRONG

The DeWitt wrestling team has compiled a 13-5 overall record as of the first week of March.



The Carson City-Crystal wrestling team has its eyes set on a return trip to the team state finals this season.

The Panthers opened the season with a big effort with wins against Lansing Everett, Fowlerville and Williamston at the opening quad of the season and have made steady progress since.

The Panthers have a total of six wrestlers ranked by Michigan Grappler. The Panthers are led by senior Luke York who is ranked number one in Division 2 at 152 pounds and senior Conner Porchert who is ranked second at heavyweight. Freshman Kaden LaPaugh is ranked eighth at 103 pounds.

DeWitt will travel to St. Johns for the team district on March 17 and will be joined by Lansing Eastern and Haslett along with the host Redwings.

ST. LOUIS POSTING WINNING RECORD

The St. Louis wrestling team began the month of March with a winning record.

The Sharks have turned in a number of solid efforts this season highlighted by three wins at the first TVC quad of the year and two wins at their own quad.

St. Louis is led by sophomores Dylan Marr (135 pounds) and Justice Onstott (189) and freshman Ben March (103) who are all ranked in the state in Division 4 by Michigan Grappler.

The Sharks will travel to the Beaver-ton district on March 17 for the team district that includes the host Beavers and Coleman.

Defense A Strong Point For State-Ranked Pewamo-Westphalia Boys Basketball Team

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Pewamo-Westphalia boys basketball team is hanging its hat on playing strong this season and the results have the Pirates in a familiar position.

With the defense leading the way, Pewamo-Westphalia opened the season with seven straight wins. That undefeated record has the Pirates along atop the standing in the Central Michigan Athletic Conference and ranked fourth in the state in Division 3 in the first state rankings of the covid-19 shortened season.

"We are just so thankful to have

lying on our defense," Schneider said. "I think I can speak for most coaches in the sense that on the offensive side of the ball it has been harder to get the fluidity down since we have been so limited on time, but we have relied on our defense because we know we can control that side of the ball much easier than we could on the offensive side of the ball."

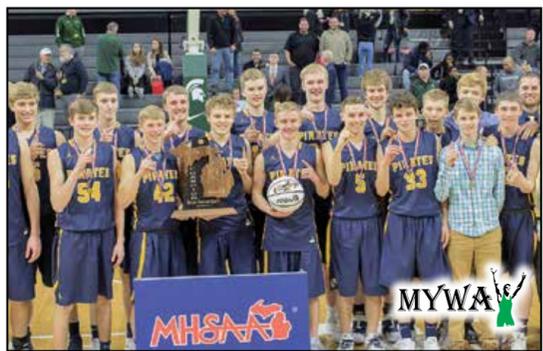
Having all the players buy in rely on each other is another strong point.

"Team chemistry seems really high this year," Schneider said. "The guys are so happy seeing other have success. It has been such a blast to see these guys implement some things we have not only coached but then see the joys on the faces of the players just being able to go out there and play with their friends, since this season was so up in the air just a few weeks back."

Leading the way for the Pirates are seniors Tyler Droste and Zach Simon. Droste and Simon have set the tone in practice day in and day out. Returning veterans Brock Thelen and Jamison Eklund have also stepped up this season. Thelen and Eklund have

worked to expand their games and have become threats on the offensive end of the floor. The Pirates are also getting strong play at point guard where Blake Smith and Cam Cook have done an excellent job of taking care of the ball and organizing the offense.

Balance is key for Pewamo-West-



The Pewamo-Westphalia basketball team is looking for another long post-season run similar to 2019 when they won the D3 state championship.

phalia on the offensive side of the court.

"We have had four different leading scorers in our games so far this season," Schneider said. "All of our starters are within five points of each other so we are very balanced with the ball."

Hemlock Boys Basketball Team Checks All The Boxes This Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

With size, experience, depth and athletic ability, the Hemlock boys basketball team has just about every ingredient for success a high school basketball team would want.

The Huskies are showing off all their assets this season as they strung together nine straight wins to begin the Covid-19 shortened season.

"I think we are a team that has most of the necessary ingredients for success," said Hemlock coach Matt Bauer. "We have a few ball handlers, a couple of excellent shooters, some size, some speed and athletic ability and some veteran leadership."

A main source of Hemlock's shooting and veteran leadership is senior guard Nolan Finkbeiner. A four-year varsity player, Finkbeiner

recently eclipsed 1,000 points for his career.

"Nolan is the engine that ignites us," Bauer said. "He is an incredible shooter and he handles the basketball like it's on a string. He can go right or go left and he can finish with either hand. He is a real gym rat and with his experience it's like having a coach on the floor."

In the post, senior Michael Zolinski brings more veteran leadership. A three-year varsity player and two-year starter, Zolinski is averaging 11 points and 9.5 rebounds per game.

"Michael is a 6-foot-4, 225-pound kid who is a real good athlete," Bauer said. "He's a double-double guy in points and rebounds."

Like Zolinski, senior Brayden Green brings more size and experience to the floor. Green is 6-foot-3, 230 pounds and will be playing

college football at Northwood University.

"Brayden has usually played inside for us," Bauer said, "but with his ability to shoot he's been able to play on the perimeter for us. He's shooting over 40 percent from the three-point line this year."

At forward, junior Jacob Shelagowski has brought versatility to the court. An athletic player, Shelagowski can also add offense as he has a season-high game of 19 points this year.

"Jacob is a defensive stalwart," Bauer said. "He's fast and athletic. He can guard shooters and ball handlers and at 6-foot-3 he is also a very bouncy player."

Senior shooting guard Dylan LaGrow adds even more outside shooting to the offense.

"Dylan is our team's marksman," Bauer said. "He is shooting over 40

percent from the three-point line. If team's want to come out on him, he also has the ability to drive to the basket."

Max Dinninger and Carter Miller bring depth and versatility off the bench.

"Max is a 6-foot-11 junior who is a two-year varsity player," Bauer said. "He has a lot of ability. He is more of a playmaker but is also one of our top defenders."

Carter is a 4.0 student who can play any position for us. He is a very versatile player who is having a very good year for us."

Hemlock is also hoping for the return of backup point guard Bryce Murphy. Murphy suffered a stress fracture of his fibula in practice before the return to play but may be back for the post-season.

Hemlock is looking forward to the post-season after having last season come to an end just before the district final showdown with Reese when Covid-19 hit. Both Hemlock and Reese appear headed for the district finals again this year in what should be one of the games of the year.



The Hemlock basketball team is turning in a big season as the Huskies have put together a 10-0 record.

"Reese is undefeated as well this season," Bauer said. "It looks like we could get a repeat of last year and see Reese in the finals if we are both fortunate to get there. It will be a real good district. St. Charles is having a good season and Vassar also has a winning record."

Senior Backcourt Has Sacred Heart Boys Basketball Team On Winning Path

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Led by a backcourt with college potential, the Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart boys basketball is off to a sizzling start this season.

With seniors Zach Wentworth and Luke Predum providing a unique one-two punch in the backcourt, the Irish opened the basketball season with wins in eight of their first nine games and are on top of the standings in the Mid State Activities Conference.

Wentworth and Predum both average around 20 points per game and present plenty of problems for opposing defenses.

"Zach is our finisher around the basket," said Mt. Pleasant Sacred

Heart coach Justin Sherlock. "He is also able to shoot outside and plays very good defense."

The 5-foot-10-inch Predum is an athletic guard who will be playing football in college at Madonna and may also play basketball as well.

"Luke is a prolific scorer," Sherlock said. "He is a great shooter who is also able to take it off the dribble to the basket."

Wentworth is also looking to play college basketball but has yet to select a school.

For a Division 4 school, having a pair of players with the ability to play at the next level is special.

"It is really unique for a school in this division to have two college athletes on the basketball court,"

Sherlock said. "Sacred Heart has had players with college talent in the past play here but not two of them together at the same time."

Sherlock, who is in his first year coaching the Irish, knows what it takes to play at the next level. A player of the year at Mt. Pleasant during his high school years in 1998 and 1999, Sherlock previously coached as an assistant at Northwood University and was the varsity coach at IMG Academy in Florida.

Sherlock is able to coach another player who may have college choices down the road in freshman Aiden Halliday. The 6-foot-2 freshman is averaging nine points per game this season.

"Aidan has really come along the

last month," Sherlock said. "He's averaging about 11 points per game and we've really needed a third scorer to step up as teams were concentrating on Zach and Luke. Aidan played football and is a real good baseball player. He is a special talent."

Senior Ben Wilson and junior Gabe Ruggles round out the starting lineup.

"Ben has been playing well for us," Sherlock said. "He does not have a lot of basketball experience but he's come in and played well. He is doing a great job of rebounding and playing defense."

Gabe is the quarterback on the football team. He is a long athlete who plays great defense. He has done a great job of filling his role."

Along with winning a league title, the Irish are also aiming for a strong showing at the district that they host.



Led by guards Zach Wentworth and Luke Predum, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart is battling Carson City-Crystal for the top spot in the Mid State Activities Conference this season. Photo by JIM LAHDE, MORNING SUN.

"We are just taking it one game at a time," Sherlock said. "We are hosting the district and we hope to play well."

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Deep, Talented East Lansing Basketball Team Among The Top In The State In Division 1

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

While the Covid 19 virus is costing the East Lansing boys basketball team games, that is about the only thing slowing down the Trojans who are undefeated and ranked among the top teams in the state in Division 1.

East Lansing opened the season with five straight wins and is alone atop the CAAC Blue standings with wins against top challengers DeWitt, Grand Ledge and Holt.

"The season has been going as expected so far," said East Lansing coach Robert Mitchell. "We have had to grind out some early victories against some well-coached conference teams. I know everyone is in the same boat, but it's like pulling teeth watching offensive execution right now. We are a little lucky because we have four veteran players with a lot of experience starting with our all-state senior point guard Marcus Wourman."

A four-year varsity player for the Trojans, Wourman is the leader of the squad.

A do-it-all type of point guard, Wourman runs the offense and leads the team in scoring, assists and steals. Wourman also guards the opposing team's best guard each game.

East Lansing is strong in the backcourt a veteran guards David Wilkerson and Brevin Jackson also return. Wilkerson is a three-year varsity player who is an excellent outside shooter and possesses an outstanding overall floor game. Jackson is a junior combo guard in his second year on the varsity who has a knack for finishing around the basket with a wide variety of moves.

Giving the Trojans a physical presence down low is 6-foot-10 junior center Ethan Dunn. A three-year varsity player, Dunn is the anchor of the defense. An outstanding rebounder, Dunn is a great passer out of the post and is an unselfish team player.

The strong point of our team is our ability to play defense," Mitchell said. "With our offense being a little sluggish, we have had to hang our hat on our de-

fense to pull out some close games early on in the season. Our three guards are a tough matchup for our opponents because each of them can score at all three levels and go for 20 points on any given night and with the big guy in the middle, teams have to pay special attention to him on every possession, so that opens things up for the rest of our team."

Sophomore wing Evan Boyd rounds out the starting lineup.

"Evan brings athleticism to the table at 6-foot-4 and plays above the rim," Mitchell said. "He does a little bit of everything and has a chance to be a big-time player before it is all said and done."

East Lansing also has plenty of talented options off the bench. Senior guard Gabe Montes brings energy on the defensive end of the floor and unselfish play on offense. Junior guard Evan Sunderman is a three-point specialist with good size. Freshman forward Christian Dunn is a 6-foot-6 big man who can play both post positions and is gaining valuable experience.

"Christian is going to be one of the best players in the state by his senior season or sooner," Mitchell said.

Junior center Marshall Kambasha is another big-bodied player that comes off the bench and gives the team good minutes.

"This group is very motivated to make a run this year," Mitchell said. "It's also been a joy to coach them all."



The East Lansing basketball team has a variety of talented players including 6-foot-10 junior center Ethan Dunn.

Solid Guard Play And Strong Work Ethic Has Lansing Catholic Off To Strong Start

David Cook Sports Scene

With a talented backcourt leading the way, the Lansing Catholic basketball team is off to a strong start this season.

With size, experience, depth and athletic ability, the Hemlock boys basketball team has just about every ingredient for success a high school basketball team would want.

Challenging for the top sport in the Capital Area Activities Conference - White Division, the Cougars opened the season reeling off six consecutive wins.

"I am really happy with how

our team has stayed focused and continued to do what it can to be ready to play," said Lansing Catholic coach Brian Dartt. "During delays the boys were working hard on skill development, after we got the go-ahead to play, these boys competed with a mature focus."

Hard work is a key to Lansing Catholic's success as all the players on the team put in the time during the offseason working to better their skills.

"Most of our success comes from the immense talent we have on our entire team," Dartt said. "Each player has worked to develop themselves into the

best version they can while placing the team first. The amount of time recorded during the off-season was as high as I had ever observed in my 25 years of coaching."

On the court, Lansing Catholic's backcourt of seniors Sammy Jacobs and DJ Ferguson and junior Alex Watters has been proving difficult for opposing teams to handle.

"They are an impressive unit that makes the entire team better," said Dartt.

Ferguson leads the team in scoring at 20.4 points per game while Watters is adding 15.7

points and Jacobs 12.4 points per game. All three guards are also pulling down over four rebounds apiece per game and adding two or more assists per game.

Senior Quinn Dartt and sophomore forward Luciano Guerrazzi round out Lansing Catholic's starting five.

"Quinne and Luciano are big glue-guys willing to do all the dirty work of rebounding, running the floor and setting screens," coach Dartt said. "Their stats do not represent how important they are to the group."



The Lansing Catholic basketball team is off to a strong start this season and is challenging Eaton Rapids for first place in the CAAC White Division.

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Senior Core Leading The Way For Carson City-Crystal Boys Basketball Team

David Cook Sports Scene

With a talented group of seniors leading the way, the Carson City-Crystal boys basketball team is off to a strong start this season.

Carson City opened the season winning seven of its first eight games and is challenging for the top spot in the competitive Mid State Activities Conference.

The Eagles have been busy this season trying to play as many games as possible in a limited amount of time due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

"This season has been challenging for preparation and scouting with teams playing

three games a week," said Carson City coach Cory Schneider. "I think the players enjoy the schedule and all the games."

The senior core of Kyle Stone, Riley Terry, Caleb Weber and Carter McAlvey lead the way for the Eagles. Stone and Terry provide the team with strong rebounding as they both average six rebounds per game. Weber is a consistent source of offense as he is shooting 53% from the field.

"The players ability to work together and make adjustments have been some reasons for our success," Schneider said. "We are fortunate to have four seniors on the team with Kyle, Riley, Caleb and Carter. They have been good leaders for the rest of the team no matter what role they have."

The Eagles have also been helped by freshman Collin Farmer. Farmer is a skilled

player with a 1.73-to-1 assist to turnover ratio.

"Collin has handled the ball very well for us," Schneider said. "I think our team does a great job at valuing the ball and defensively making the other team take tough shots."

The Eagles are also receiving strong efforts from a pair of sophomores and a large group of juniors.

"Sophomores Mason Smith and Olsin O'Grady are solid defensively and have great work ethics," Schneider said. "Juniors Gavin Gage, Zane Forist, Ashton Keiffer, Mitchell Wing and Jason Schaffer are great team players."

Along with battling for the league title, the Eagles are preparing for what will be a challenging Division 3 district at Kent City. Along with Kent City, the district includes Pewamo-Westphalia, Grand Rapids North-Pointe Christian and Saranac.



With a strong senior core leading the way the Carson City-Crystal is challenging for the top spot in the Mid State Activities Conference this season. Photo by JIM LAHDE, MORNING SUN.

"Our team motto this year is to get better every day," Schneider said. "I think the kids have bought into that during games and practice."

Bradford, Toliver Leading The Way For Improving Bullock Creek Basketball Team

David Cook Sports Scene

With strong play from senior standouts Seth Bradford and Keygan Toliver, the Midland Bullock Creek basketball is rounding into form heading into the post season.

Bradford, a 6-foot-3 perimeter player, is a three-year starter who is building on an impressive junior season. A second-team, all-conference player and first-team, Midland Daily News player last year, Bradford led Bullock Creek in scoring last year and

was second in rebounding.

This season Bradford has turned in a number of strong efforts highlighted by a season-best 24 points in a win at Saginaw Nouvel. An excellent outside shooter, Bradford knocked down five three-point shots against Midland and four treys against Hemlock.

Toliver, a 6-foot-1 guard, is also taking his game to the next level. Toliver scored a career-high 25 points in the win against Nouvel. Toliver is also an excellent outside

shooter who recorded three treys in a win against Ithaca.

"Keygan is a very good athlete who is one of our top scorers, defenders and rebounders this year," said Bullock Creek coach Doug Bradford.

Bullock Creek is also receiving strong play in the post from senior Kody Simmons. Along with providing strong work rebounding, Simmons is an excellent defender.

After a slow start, Bullock Creek came on in the final week of February and early March by winning four of six games.

The Lancers have played a rugged schedule that has included games against Division 1 teams Midland and Midland Dow.

In tournament action, Bullock Creek is headed to the Division 2 district at Essexville-Garber. The district includes host Garber, Bay City John Glenn, Carrollton, Freeland and Swan Valley.



Senior Seth Bradford provides a scoring threat and is a strong rebounder for the Bullock Creek basketball team.

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Rayburn Fulfills A Life Long Dream And Becomes New Ithaca Basketball Coach

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

A 2005 graduate of Ithaca High School, Josh Rayburn has been around Ithaca athletics, and in particular Ithaca basketball, for much of his life. When the opportunity to take over the basketball program when legendary Yellowjacket coach Jim Thompson stepped down came up, Rayburn was more than thrilled to take over the program.

"It's been a dream of mine to fill Jim Thompson's shoes," Rayburn said. "What Jim did for the program was great. He won several league titles, a few district titles and a regional title. He really laid a great foundation for the program. I am very happy to be able to take over and build and maintain the success that Jim had and carry on the tradition."

Rayburn had a front row seat

to seeing how Thompson ran the Ithaca basketball program. Rayburn played basketball during his high school years at Ithaca along with playing football, baseball and track for a few years and playing golf.

After high school, Rayburn attended Central Michigan University where he obtained his teaching degree. After graduating from Central Michigan Rayburn returned to Ithaca where he began teaching physical education in the K-2 building.

For the previous 11 seasons Rayburn coached the junior varsity basketball team.

Rayburn credits Thompson for much of his basketball knowledge.

"I learned a lot from coach Thompson," Rayburn said. "While at Central Michigan I volunteered to coach a couple of AAU

basketball teams. I learned a lot from some of those coaches in my younger years."

As Ithaca's new coach, Rayburn is carrying on the tradition that Thompson built.

"First and foremost, we want the kids to compete and work hard and do the right things on and off the court," Rayburn said. "As far as our offensive and defensive philosophy, we want to be aggressive on both offense and defense. We will look to create mismatches on offense. Beyond that, we will look at the kids in the program and make tweaks and adjustments to the talent we have."

"Grant and Brendon have been very consistent on offense," Rayburn said. "We have a lot of other kids who are filling in and doing a nice job defensively."

With the Yellowjackets improving from game to game, the upcoming district tournament that Ithaca will host will be interesting. Along with Ithaca, the district includes Lakeview, Montabella, Mer-



A multi-sport athlete who graduated from Ithaca in 2005, Josh Rayburn is in his first year as coach of the Ithaca boys basketball team.

rill, Breckenridge and St. Louis.

"We feel that we have an opportunity to compete for a district championship," Rayburn said. "We have played a challenging schedule that I feel has prepared us to compete for a district championship on our home court."

Senior Standouts Have Alma Boys Basketball Team On Track For A Winning Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

In this condensed high school basketball season due to the Covid-19 virus, it helps to have some talented, experienced seniors to lean on. The Alma basketball team has some of those seniors and their leadership has the Panthers turning in a strong season.

With the senior class leading the way, Alma strung together four straight wins to begin the season and a 6-3 record through early March.

"We are making progress," said Alma coach TJ Cleveland. "I think we are doing all right. We lost three games to three very teams in Bridgeport, Frankenmuth and Freeland. With so many games in

such a short span, the season has been a blur so far."

Having a returning all-state player like senior Paul Gadde helps. The 6-foot-3 senior who will be playing college basketball at Albion College is turning in a big season for the Panthers. Gadde connected on nine-of-ten shots in a recent win over Birch Run and has been Alma's leading scorer in four games this season.

Senior guard Cade Frillici is also turning in a big senior season. Frillici is being looked at by colleges like Trine, Hope and Calvin.

"They have been our two leading scorers this season," Cleveland said. "They are both very talented guys. They can shoot and score in a lot of ways and have worked hard on their games."

Fellow seniors David Apple and AJ Ohman are also providing key contributions before they head off to play college football at Alma College next season.

"David is a terrific floor general at point guard," Cleveland said. "He is averaging about six assists a game, a couple of steals and six or seven points. AJ has also had some big games. He had 15 points and eight steals against Birch Run. The eight steals were almost a new school record."

Blending with the seniors are a number of talented younger players. Sam Leppien is a 6-foot-9 junior providing an inside presence. Leppien is averaging three blocked shots per game and leads the team with seven rebounds per game. Sophomore Michael Howey

is stepping up in a big way and provides the team with a physical presence. Junior Connor Lemerand has taken his game to the next level this season. Lemerand scored 19 points off the bench in a win over Garber this season. Backup point guard Mason Stambaugh is also providing the team with key minutes and solid play at the point.

"The guys continue to work hard and continue to improve," Cleveland said. "We are getting there. I think we have a chance to have a nice run in the tournament as long as we keep improving."

Alma will be looking to add to its streak of seven consecutive



Senior standouts have Alma boys basketball team on track for a winning season.

district titles this season. The Panthers host a district this year with Shepherd, Central Montcalm, Belding and Tri-County among the other teams in the district.

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Mount Pleasant Skiers Have Two State Qualifiers

John Raffel Sports Scene

It was a short and sweet ski season, but Mount Pleasant coach Aaron White was happy his boys and girls varsity and JV teams were able to compete in the Ski Central Alpine Ski Conference.

"2021 was off to a slow start and we didn't have a lot of time to

prepare for the season with all the COVID restrictions," White said. "We normally start the season after Thanksgiving with some dryland training to help get the legs ready. We would normally have a 3-day camp in December to get the kids on the hill. We would run gates and put our game plan together for the start of the season just after winter break.

"We didn't get a chance to do any of that so one of my biggest highlights was my kids adapting to a difficult situation to a season that was not going to be a normal one or one at all. We were the only sport that was allowed to start and that was a lot of pressure for the kids with all of the restrictions and they stepped up to the challenge."

While most winter sports were delayed to a mid-January or early February start, skiing was given an earlier go-ahead because of the nature of the sport.

"We got to practice one day before the start of the season so



The 2021 Mount Pleasant boys and girls ski teams.

needless to say we started out slow," White said. "We did have two athletes, one from the boys team and one from the girls team that

qualified for states. Aiden Percha, a freshman, qualified for the boys and Rean Angera a senior qualified for the girls."

Okemos Skier Takes State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

It wouldn't be surprising if Sara Guggemos was sorry to see the snow leave.

It was a state slalom championship season for the Okemos senior skier.

"I was very pleased," Guggemos said. "Winning the state championship was always a goal. To accomplish that was great. It was almost like a weight had been lifted off me."

Guggemos said entering the state meet, "I knew I had a chance but I didn't think I'd

win. I was shooting for the top five. I knew I'd be up there."

The key to success, Guggemos said, "were my mom, dad and coaches and all the supporters I've had since day one. They've played a big role."

The state meet was up north at Nub's Nob on Feb. 22. Her times were 33.21 and 37.39.

To be a championship skier, the key "I think is patience," Guggemos said. "Everyone has off days and offseasons. Last season, I had not the best season, but I kept working at it."

Guggemos said she's been skiing since she was three and

has been racing in the last 10 years.

"My mom was a racer growing up and my grandpa (Robert Stein) was the one who taught me how to ski," Guggemos said.

The COVID factor impacted her dryland and offseason training, Guggemos said.

"We wore the masks and we followed social guidelines but everything else was pretty much normal," she said.

Guggemos also plays soccer and will be doing the sport at Hope College.



Okemos' Sara Guggemos was the slalom state champion for Division I.

Saginaw Heritage Skier Places At State

John Raffel Sports Scene

Avery Kenny led way for Saginaw Heritage's ski team this season and was a placer at the state meet in February.

"As a sophomore, Avery finished ninth in slalom and sixth in giant slalom at the regional to qualify as an individual for the state finals two seasons ago," coach David Corcoran said. "At the state final, Avery finished 12th in giant slalom and 20th

in slalom.

"Last year at the Division 1 Regional at Cannonsburg, Avery qualified as an individual for the state final meet with a 18th-place finish in giant slalom and a 14th-place finish in slalom.

At the Division 1 state final, Avery Kenny had a DSQ in slalom and finished 70th.

In the 2021 state meet, Kenny was 17th in GS and 18th in Slalom at D1.

"Avery's key to success is his hard work and dedication along with his focus on continuous improvement," Corcoran said. "Avery is physically more mature, bigger and stronger. Avery is older, wiser and more experienced."

Member of the Heritage ski team, were Emma Adelman, Logan Boardman, Nick Brown, Jenna Burr, Madison Copus, Ben Freigang, Kaydence Kalbfleisch, Avery Kenny, Reece Kenny, Steven Maurer and Wyatt McGovern. Okemos had skiers Michael Benivegna and Mitchell Forsberg placing in the giant slalom.

For the girls. Sarra Guggemos

of Okemos won the girls slalom by 19 hundredths of a second over Traverse City Central's Elle Craven, whose second run was 0.20 faster.



Avery Kenny was 17th in the state finals giant slalom for Saginaw Heritage.

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Freeland Senior Reaching New Heights

John Raffel Sports Scene

Freeland has had many standout girls basketball players over the years and coach Matt Hirschenberger has another good one in senior forward Hannah Niederquell.

She's been averaging 13 points a game for Freeland. Niederquell was pulled up as a sophomore and

Hannah Niederquell has been tough for Freeland opponents to stop this season.

started as a junior for a 20-4 Falcons team last season.

"That was a pretty good thing," Hirschenberger said. "This year, she's taking more of a lead role, being our leading scorer. She was honorable mention conference last year."

On the court, "she's an excellent 3-point shooter," the Freeland coach said. "I believe she's a much stronger player this year. She's able to take

people down in the post area. I think her work in the weight room has helped her in that. She's helped the team realize we can improve this year."

Niederquell will be going to Michigan State next year for the rowing team.

"One of her top qualities is her discipline as an athlete," Hirschenberger said. "She works extremely hard. Athletes like that are valuable. I can see Michigan State's rowing team could see that, even without her rowing. A lot of times what a university does is take a girl with those type of attributes who is a competitor. She's

worked hard, like in the offseason, for basketball. She has spent some time in the weight room and has really worked on her basketball game. It's been a part of her early season success.

"They reached out to her. She's a big Michigan State fan and has always been following the university. It's been her dream not just to go there but to compete in a competitive sport. She still loves basketball. I could see Hannah playing club or intramural basketball. A lot of the girls on the row team are competitive athletes as well. I think she loves basketball too much to stop playing."



Vestaburg Senior Girls Basketball Standout Tops Single Game 40-Point Mark

John Raffel Sports Scene

Jenna Dove has been scoring a lot of points for Vestaburg's girls basketball team this season.

Sometimes it's been in the 30s or 40s for the Wolverine senior. She's been team, MVP two years and was the top offensive player her freshman season. Last season, she averaged double digits

in rebounding and scoring.

Dove plays post and wing position. She scored 41 points against Ashley. She also had 38 points against Coleman.

"My team has been seeing me well and passing the ball well," Dove said. "I had my confidence up during those games and was taking the ball to the rim, knowing I could finish. The

confidence on the team helped them to see me."

Dove admitted the lengthy sports shutdown because of COVID was tough. She did all she could to stay in basketball shape despite gyms being shut down.

"Basketball has always been my sport. We were all sad, and didn't know what to do or expect, especially when everyone was second-guessing if we would have a season," she said. "I would just go out and shoot every day, in hopes I would get my season back. Our seniors were wondering if we'd get that season in

and have some closure. When they announced we were able to go back, it was like a light lit up. We realize we couldn't take things for granted.

"We practiced for three hours straight every practice and put all we had into it because you didn't know if it would be your last."

Before the season ends, Dove wants to be the first Vestaburg player to break the 1,000-point career mark. As of late February she was at 850.

She also plays volleyball and softball but has played hoops since the fourth grade. She has been in AAU since the seventh grade.

Portland St. Patrick Looking At Being A State Contender Again

John Raffel Sports Scene

It wouldn't be much of a shock for girls basketball fans to know veteran girls basketball coach Al Schrauben has another highly successful basketball team in the works at Portland St. Patrick.

The Shamrocks have won six of their first eight games with the only losses being to Laingsburg twice.

It's his 37th year at St. Patrick.

"The kids played very poorly in their opener," Schrauben said.

and averages around 10 points a game," Schrauben said.

Katelynn Russell is a junior who last year, "was one of our better shooters," Schrauben said. "She averages around 11 points a game and is a much improved rebounder this year."

Mara Schrauben is a post player "who is very solid around the rim but can also shoot the three," said Al Schrauben, a cousin.

St. Patrick lost in the district final to Fowler a year ago. The teams meet in the last game of the regular season in a contest which could determine the

league title.

As for wearing masks, "generally

it hasn't bothered them too much," Schrauben said. "It's been a nuisance more than anything else."



The 2021 Portland St. Patrick girls basketball team.

Smith Leads Attack For Breckenridge Basketball Team

John Raffel Sports Scene

Summer Smith expects to be among the top basketball players in the Mid-State Activities Conference.

Phillip Baldwin is the Breckenridge coach and his team started the season 8-3 before losing its junior point guard for the season.

Key players who graduated include Phillip Baldwin and Emily Saunders.

"Grace Staley was a good shooter for our team," Baldwin said. "Emily Saunders was a leader on the court that we will miss."

Smith is a senior guard for the Huskies.

"I expect Summer to be a leader for our team and a scoring threat," Baldwin said. "She was first team all-conference as a junior and I think she has the tools

to repeat that honor."

Alexis Alonzo is a senior point guard.

"I expect Alexis to be a leader on the floor and make our offense run smoothly," Baldwin said. "She is a smart player who recognizes things happening before they happen."

Alivia Cross is a senior center.

"I expect Liv to be a threat inside and out," Baldwin said. "She is a versatile player who is constantly moving on the floor. She will be very important to our team's success this season."

Kiera Goward is a senior guard.

"I expect Kiera to make an impact on defense," Baldwin said. "She knows her role and does it well."

Impactful newcomers include junior power-forward Kara Whiting.

"Kara is a taller player that moves

well and plays fast," Baldwin said. "She has the ability to score from all over the court and I think she will display that early and often. Her motor on the court is impressive."

Olivia Valliere is a guard.

"Olivia is another impressive junior who will join us this season," Baldwin said. "She is a scoring threat all over the court and is known for her speed. She is tough to guard because of her speed on the court. This also makes her a tough defender."

Morgan Westall is a junior post player.

"Morgan is a player who knows her job on the court," Baldwin said. "She is good at finding her spots on the court and making herself available to her teammates. I think you will see Morgan making her presence known inside this season."

"I expect us to have a solid year. If we can stay healthy and continue to improve throughout the season we will be successful. It will be a very different season for everyone so I think our senior leadership and experience will hopefully benefit us greatly. Our seniors

have a combined 11 years of varsity experience. They are smart and have been in the system. They know what to expect."

Experience is definitely a strength.

"We have plenty of girls who are ready to play at the varsity level and I think that helps us out," Baldwin said. "I don't think we need one player to do all the work. We can count on anyone to make an impact any given night. Understanding the game and making the right decisions at the right time (is critical). I mentioned that we are a veteran team and we have smart players but I don't think they can ever stop working on game knowledge. We need to continue to grow throughout the season learning from our mistakes and make sure we are putting ourselves in the best positions to win games."

"I think we have a league that is building. The league overall lost a lot of seniors last season and that always impacts teams early. There are a lot of good athletes in the conference so I don't expect it to take long for new faces to stand out. Sacred Heart and Carson City. They have been on top the



Summer Smith is looking for her best season at Breckenridge.

last few years and until that changes you can't argue any different. I expect my team to play hard every night. We'll see where that puts us at the end of the season."



Mariah Thelen is a senior captain for P-W.

P-W Girls Hoping For Another Strong Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Pewamo-Westphalia girls basketball coach Steve Eklund is hoping to have another state contender.

But it won't be easy replacing several players from last year's team which was CMAC league champs, district champs, and regional finalist.

"We graduated nine players from last year's team," Eklund said. "They were the

winningest class ever in PW basketball history with a record of 98-7, compiling a state title, runner-up, three Final Fours, and also were still alive in the tournament last year when the shutdown hit."

Senior guard Mariah Thelen, "will be expected to help pick up the scoring that we lost from last season," Eklund said, adding

Makala Hengesbach, a senior guard, "will be expected to provide much needed leadership for our team with having so

much youth on it."

Senior forward Nicole Hengesbach, "will be expected to be our verbal leader on defense and be a calming influence on the floor, as well as being very active on the glass," Eklund said, adding junior forward Jenna Pung "will be expected to be our energizer bunny. She will need to own the boards and battle for every loose ball."

Junior guard Brooke Kramer "will be expected to be a knock down shooter for us when she gets open looks," Eklund said. "With a lack of experience and a lot of youth joining the team this year, we expect our team to learn and grow as the season goes on. Hopefully we will be able to get everyone up to speed by the time the tournament starts and compete for a

district.

"We have some good size so hopefully we can own the glass and get some easier buckets in the paint to open up the perimeter. With 11 underclassman on the team, there is so much learning that needs to happen. With the loss of a normal offseason to help get the young kids up to speed and get them some experience, we are trying to fast forward that learning."

In the CMAC, "the top of the conference is very strong with Fowler and St. Pats set to battle it out for the top spot and both are probably state title contenders in Division 4," Eklund said. "After those two teams, I see the conference being a bit of a log-jam the rest of the way which should make for some very competitive games every night."

Midland Girls Eye Championship Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Jeff Tuck is coaching a Midland girls basketball team that has started out impressively with a 9-1 record.

The key behind his team's success "is probably our seniors," Tuck said. "I have a four girl senior group and all have started multiple years. They have good chemistry on the floor. They kind of move together as a unit on offense and defense. They provide the leadership and they provide the chemistry of

the team. All four play 25-plus minutes a night and it's hard to take anyone off the floor because they do so many great things."

The seniors are Anna Tuck, Olivia Carpenter, Emma Rekeweg and Sydney Schafer.

Tuck plays all five positions on the floor.

"She's our leading rounder and tied for the lead in scoring," Jeff Tuck said. "She's the leader in assists and blocked shots. She's our best free-throw shooter. She's a coach on the floor who is direct-

ing most things."

Carpenter is getting six steals every game and is tied for the team lead in scoring.

"Anna and Olivia are kind of a one-two punch that not many teams have figured out how to slow hem down. Olivia is a senior point guard. We have big guards who are athletic and skilled. It's hard to stop both of them."

Rekeweg "is another tall guard," Tuck said. "She has stepped in as our 3-point specialist and is a great defender; she came off the bench last year and probably only got something like seven minutes a game. But right now, she has the second most minutes on the team. She has really stepped up in her senior year."

Schafer is a senior guard.



Midland seniors are: from left: Anna Tuck, Olivia Carpenter, Emma Rekeweg, and Sydney Schafer.

"She doesn't make a mistakes on defense," Tuck said. "She's always where

she needs to be. She's always doing the right thing."

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Nouvel Girls Set To Be State Title Contenders

John Raffel Sports Scene

John Wilson is coaching a Saginaw Nouvel girls basketball team expected to be a contender this season in the Tri Valley West and in the state.

"Last year's regular season highlights were beating Hemlock at their place, winning the district championship and making it to the regional final game with a 19-5 record before we were shut down due to Covid 19," Wilson said. "There were no seniors on last year's team that made our tournament run."

All players returned. Several past seniors who have contributed to the Nouvel basketball program have been Micala Lewis, Jade Patel, Briana Greene, Allyson Sova and

Karly Skocelas.

But this season, "I am fortunate to have Isabelle Patel and Catherine Buko, the best two athletes in the senior class playing basketball," Wilson said. "Both girls have good fundamental skills but more importantly both have very high IQ's with a strong understanding of their basketball fundamental skills and abilities. Both Isabelle and Catherine have been our captains for the past two seasons. They bring leadership and respect to the team."

They are both seniors. Patel is a senior forward and Buko a senior guard.

Other athletes are Madison Looby, Grace Chacon, Sterling Solek, Grace Buckingham, Faith

Buckingham, Mackenzie Sprauge, Riley Hirschenberger, Iris Patel, Sara Wilson and Molly Wilson.

"Last year, the girls reached several of their goals and were on their way of achieving several more before the dramatic end to the season," Wilson said. "Over the summer this team stayed together through technology: Google Classroom and Zoom. The seniors put together daily workout sessions and competitions which brought the team closer together. We also were fortunate to have former Michigan point guard Spike Albrech do a live dribbling workout for the girls thanks to our boys coach Mike Kessler."

The focus for Nouvel Catholic has been fundamentals.

"The girls have been well coached in the middle school level and AAU by their coaches Chris Buckingham, Jenny Sprague and Suj Patel," Wilson said. "This team's strength is to continue to

achieve their individual and team goals they made at the start of the season.

"The four P's of defense we take pride in daily along with continue to learn the game and improve individually which collectively will make the team improve. Additionally, we include faith-based values and sportsmanship, win or lose."

The Tri Valley Conference West Conference title is a prize Nouvel dearly wants.

"The Tri Valley Conference West has strong teams where any team can bring you a loss," Wilson said. "This year, Hemlock, Michigan Lutheran Seminary and Standish



Saginaw Nouvel's girls team is ranked high in state polls again.

Sterling are leading our conference. We will take each game one at a time and continue to keep the energy positive and productive by playing smart, playing hard and playing together. We strive to follow the TEAM concept: Together Everyone Achieves More."

Sacred Heart Girls Are Strong Again

John Raffel Sports Scene

Veteran Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart coach Damon Brown expects to have another powerhouse team with Sacred Heart this season. Last year, the Irish posted MSAC and district championships. Sammy McDonald and Lauren

Munley were key athletes who have graduated from the team.

Delany Scully is a strong returning point guard and leading scorer for the Irish. Maddie Munley is a strong post player and second leading scorer. Ali Hauck will give the team key senior leadership.

Brown expects the team to compete for its 12th MSAC cham-

pionship.

"A strong returning core of players and team depth," will be team strengths," Brown said. "Being in a COVID season, we have to make adjustments to the adjustments and try to get better even though there really isn't time to get better."

"The league race will come down to three teams: Sacred Heart, St. Charles and Carson City."

After six games, Sacred Heart was 5-1 with its only loss being to Coleman (36-33). Wins were over Carson City Crystal (31-30), Merrill (33-19), Ashley (66-20),



Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart's girls basketball team has championship aspirations.

Vestaburg (49-31) and Breckenridge (40-38).

Coleman and Sacred Heart might meet in the districts in late March. The district will be at

Sacred Heart.

A perennial championship contender, Sacred Heart won the Class D state title in 2014 and were runners-up two years later.

Dow Girls Hope To Be State Contender

John Raffel Sports Scene

Kyle Theisen expects to have another strong girls basketball team at Midland Down this season.

Dow plays in the Saginaw Valley League.

"We were 21-3 last season and ranked in the top 10 in the state," Theisen said. "We were about to play in the regional final against Davison, a team we beat by double digits previously that season, when

the season was shut down. We had a rough start to the season losing two games early, but without two of our key contributors. Once our team became healthy, we were much better and got on a big win streak to end the season.

"Our only senior last year was Alyssa Keptner. She is now playing volleyball and lacrosse at Trine University."

Starters this year have include Jada Garner, a senior point guard,

leading scorer and team leader. Alexa Kolnitys is a junior guard and big-time scorer who is a good shooter and high level defender. Senior guard Chloe McVey always defends other team's best guard and is a high energy player."

Abby Rey, a junior forward, "is a great shooter and can drive still too and is a match up nightmare," Theisen said, adding freshman guard Klaire Caldwell "is a high level shooter and great athlete

"Also starting some games for us is Kourtney Fischer. She is a junior forward who does all the little things a team needs. She rebounds, screens well, and moves the ball."

The team has high expectations.

"Each year all we ever talk about is going out to win the next game on our schedule," Theisen said. "We don't talk about going undefeated, but expecting to win each time we step on the floor. When you come to play for Dow the expectation is winning at a high level. The girls understand the tradition we have here and work to maintain it. We are a guard oriented team who can shoot and attack at a high level. We are also very good defensively in speeding up the other team to play at our pace.



Midland Dow's girls basketball team.

"I see us competing for the SVL title again this year. The other top teams are Grand Blanc, Midland, Davison, and Heritage."

Hemlock Girls Hope For Another Shot At Regional Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

Scott Neumeyer's Hemlock girl basketball team wouldn't mind taking another crack at a regional title after being denied the opportunity last March when COVID started taking control.

"We had a successful season," Neumeyer said. "We were 21-2 before being sidelined by COVID in the regional final. We won our conference for the third year in a row and our district for the fourth year consecutive year. We lost three seniors as well as three other players who opted not to play this season."

"Sydney Peake and Kylee Ryder were four-year varsity players as well as the bulk of our size, so their leadership and size will be very difficult to replace. Kylee struggled through a torn ACL for much of the season. Sydney was a first team

all-conference player and honorable mention all-state player."

There is some impressive returning talent for Hemlock. "Even though we lost several key players from last year, we were very young, so we return quite a few as well," Neumeyer said. "Cassidy Peake is a four-year varsity player at point guard for us. She was a first team all-conference player last year. She's a tremendous leader, ballhandler, and defender that we will lean on a lot this season."

"Also returning are four sophomores. Regan Finkbeiner was our leading scorer. She was a second team all-conference player as a freshman as well as an honorable mention all-state player. Chloe Watson was a second team all-conference player for us as a freshman who was a starter and major contributor for us last year. Breanna Turner was a freshman last year

who, due to Kylee Ryder's injury, received a lot of playing experience and really helped us, especially defensively. I expect her to take a big step forward offensively this season."

Another returnee is sophomore Averil Hall.

"She missed most of last season due to a concussion, but she is back for us this year," Neumeyer said. "She is a very quick guard who will be a key contributor for us. We also add junior Samantha Venegas, a transfer from Freeland, who will give us a little bit of size and another shooter. Sophomore Ella Wardlow will give us some much-needed size and physicality."

"We also have two freshmen - Kylee Ryder, a very strong ballhandler and shooter, as well as Jaeyden Mallek, a 5-10 post player who will give us some size and whom I expect to really improve throughout the course of the season."

Neumeyer expects to have a solid season.

"Obviously, the COVID shut-

down has had a major impact on our team and our preparation," he said. "We have a lot of team speed, but we are lacking in size. How well our new players learn our defensive system, and how well we rebound and play physically without fouling will be major keys for us."

"This is by far the best ball-handling team I've had. We've got guards who can really handle the ball well. We also shoot the ball pretty well. Even though we're very small, we are very quick and athletic. Hopefully we can use that speed to force turnovers and play a fast, fullcourt game in order to negate the size disadvantage that we will have most nights."

Rebounding will be a key factor for Hemlock.

"With all of the restrictions that have been in place, we haven't been able to work on that," Neumeyer said. "We're also learning some new systems, so that will take some time. If we pick them up and rebound well, I think we could be a good team by the end of the season."

"Our league is quite strong this



Regan Finkbeiner was Hemlock's leading scorer last season.

year. Nouvel also had a strong season last year and return everyone. They will be in contention for the league title as well. Michigan Lutheran Seminary has added some size, and although Ithaca and Valley Lutheran lost some key players, they should be solid as well. With our lack of size, we'll have a tough time matching up most nights, but we hope to be competitive in the league as well."

New Coach Leads Alma Basketball Attack

John Raffel Sports Scene

Alma High School's Mark Guyette is a first-year basketball coach whose team is off to a 5-4 start.

Returning players are senior guard

Alyssa Leister, senior center Alyssa Beechler and sophomore guard Jordan Cleveland. All three started last year.

The rest of the team is three juniors and four sophomores with no varsity experience.

"The team is very young and inexpe-

rienced. We're a middle of pack team," Guyette said. "The TVC is a very tough conference, both Frankenmuth and Bay City John Glenn are rated in the top 10 of state."

Alyssa Leister is a four-year starter on varsity and is committed to play for Wayne State next year. She is averaging 17 points, eight rebounds and five assists a game. Jordan Cleveland started as a freshman on last year's varsity and is averaging 15 points and three steals a game.

Ithaca Girls

Jim Vermeesch is coaching Ithaca girls team led by sophomore Delaney Seaman who is leading the team offensively. Four-varsity starter Lydia Davenport has been doing the job defensively and rebounding. Natalie Nowakowski has also been an impressive player for the Jackets.

"We're doing OK," Vermeesch said. "We lost four seniors from last year. We're finding our way."

Haslett United Boasts Talented Gymnastics Team

John Raffel Sports Scene

The two-month winter sports shutdown was especially a challenge for gymnastics team, including Haslett United, which consists of athletes from St. Johns, Bath and Williamston.

Haslett United lost some key players from last season including four-year team member and captains Immy Kniss and Heidi Scott. Both were all-league and all-region. Scott was All-State.

Top performers include Jessej

Adams (second year), 10th grade, who is coming back from surgery and growing strong in all around events. Her strength is beam and floor.

Sydney Eiler (first year) is a freshman and her strength is bars. "She is an all-around competitor and working to upgrade," coach Marcie Durso said.

Kate McCloskey is a freshman and "strong all around competitor. She works hard in execution and upgrading all events."

Durso added junior Paige

Naimo is a "strong all around competitor and works hard in execution and upgrading all events," and the same applies to sophomore Hannah Spitzley.

Alicia Viaches is a freshman whose strongest event is beam.

"She is working through injuries to come back in all around events," Durso said.

So far this season, "it is going very well, considering the amount of time spent in the gym," Durso said. "We were in the gym four days in the beginning of November and shut down. We started back in the gym on Jan. 19 and started competing on Feb. 8. We are very proud of the dedication of this team and how hard they worked to stay healthy and continually move

forward. They have accomplished a lot of team and personal bests in a very short period of time.

"We have depth and quite a few freshman and sophomores on the team. This team has a tremendous bond and support for each other. They are coachable and have a willingness to learn and want to reach their team and personal goal. This team is a talented team. There is quite a



The Haslett United Gymnastics team for 2021.

bit of depth on all events. We are working on growing their confidence as a team and owning their talent. One place for improvement would be bar skills and execution."



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Rockford Looking To Be State Gymnastics Contenders

John Raffel Sports Scene

No one realizes how heartbreaking it was than Rockford's gymnastics coach Michelle Ankney and her athletes to have the 2020 winter season canceled because of COVID two days prior to the state meet.

Rockford is again competing in the OK Rainbow Conference.

"Our season ended abruptly the day before team state last year," Ankney said. "We entered state as regional champions and had the highest score across all the regions. We had been hopeful for a state win, but what we hold is the memory of an amazing season last year. We only had one loss last year, and we continued to get stronger and stronger each competition. We had gained some new skills prior to state and worked a lot on consistency in routines. We were thrilled with our regionals performance, and ended on that high note last year. We are still bummed about missing State, but we know we had a successful season last year.

"Six seniors graduated last year. All six of them would have participat-

ed in some way at the state meet, so having them all graduate at the same time was a huge loss for our team. We have been lucky enough to welcome nine new faces to our team this year. We are definitely missing Morgan Case, who was our top all arounder last year. She upgraded several routines and was team captain. We counted on her on all the events, and my guess is she would have placed very well at the state meet."

Ashley Faulkner, Ankney said, "was also a strong all arounder in which we counted on her scores across all the events as well. With bars as her speciality, she is hard to replace on our team this year where bars still trends as our weakest event. Ashley also upgraded her vault at the very end of last year."

Averi Nixon, Ankney said, "was full of power. Her explosive floor routine and her new vault she gained at the end of last year made her a strong athlete for our team. We miss all the seniors from last year very much. Their season was cut short, and their goals left unfinished, but they finished the year strong. I'm so

very proud of all of them."

But as usual, Rockford is returning a lot of talent.

"Sophomore Lacey Scheid is on the team for her first year," Ankney said. "We are excited to have Lacey on the team this year. It is her first year, and she is full of energy and power. She has big dreams, and we are excited to see where her career takes her. She is a strong all arounder, so keep an eye out for her on all events.

Junior Anna Tracey is in her second year on the team.

"It is great having Anna back for another year," Ankney said. "Anna continues to improve on all events, and the best part about Anna is you can count on her. She comes in the competition floor and hits her routines there. Her consistency and clean form, along with her difficult skills, make her invaluable to the team."

Junior Joey Gair is in her third year.

"Joey is a leader through and through, and she helps guide the team well," Ankney said. "She is consistent across all events, and continues to get stronger every day."

Senior Caleigh Kusmierski is in her fourth year on the team.

"Caleigh is a senior who has unfortunately suffered several injuries over the years," Ankney said. "She has taken the time, though, to really fine

tune her beam routine. I am so excited to have her compete her upgraded beam routine to finish out the season."

There are 18 girls on the team with two seniors - Caleigh Kusmierski and Avery Labbe; six juniors, Joey Gair, Anna Tracey, Olivia Schubert, Ainsley Jehnzen, Sydney Taylor, and Trinity Simon; three sophomores Maya Anderson, Melanie Hintz and Lacey Scheid; seven freshman Kayley Burke, Addi Pitzer, Sara Merritt, Anjaleah Barraza, Ellie Wilcox, Kennedy Wood, and Mael Stelma.

"Honestly, my only expectation is that we will continue to fight to get better and stronger every single day," Ankney said. "Because of Covid, we haven't gotten to see many schools compete this year. We also lost several weeks of our season due to pauses in the sport. Our main focus is to keep dreaming, keep improving, and to have fun this year."

"Our team strength is having fun. We know how to keep it light out on the competition floor. I would also say consistency is our strength. This team works hard to fight for every tenth in their score. We hope our slow and consistent progress will bring us far this season. We need to continue



Joey Gair performs her beam routine for Rockford.

to work on vault and bars. Those are our weakest events, and if we could upgrade a few more skills on those two events, it would be very beneficial to our team."

First up is winning the conference title.

"We have already competed against everyone in our conference twice, and we are excited to be undefeated," Ankney. "Our final conference tournament is on March 8, and we hope to do well. There are lots of strong gymnasts in our conference, and we are all slowly trying to regain skills after such long breaks this past year. It is fun to see everyone get stronger and stronger throughout our shortened season."

St. Louis Poms Team Endures Challenging Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

It has been a unique but challenging season for St. Louis' poms team and coach Amiee Taylor.

"This season started out better than the past few years as we started with 12 girls on the team," Taylor wrote in a statement. "Guidelines were a little different as we had to practice outside up until after football season and then we could start practicing inside. We were able to perform at one football game and that has been the only performance that we have done all season.

Our season was looking up until virtual learning hit the students and it was tough for them to juggle

classes and poms which was showing in their grades. "With being my third year coaching, it was one year for the books that I do not want to ever experience again as it was tough on us to try and motivate the students to get schoolwork turned in early, go to class online/in class also to show up to practice with a smile on their face and want to continue the season like normal."

But the season continued.

"Myself and my two assistant coaches this season pushed through all the struggles we have had this season and still made a rock-solid routine that we were super excited to teach and really hoped to compete this year," Taylor said. "The ruling states you must have at least six or

more girls on the team to compete, which we currently have now with six, but with a few girls failing one or more classes, it does not give us the chance to compete.

"But I wanted to give the girls as much normal end of season as I could, so I was able to get the girls to perform at two of the games with this routine that we have been working so hard on for the last four months."

Taylor indicated her team would be performing on Tuesday March 9 at the varsity boys' basketball game at halftime and on March 16 at the varsity girls' basketball game at halftime.

"It will be the last performance for half of my team, and I want these games to be just as important to them as competing as that is all they have left of the season," Taylor said. "With how the year has been, I think these student athletes have suffered



The 2021 St. Louis poms team.

the most."

"After I graduate, I will miss the feeling I get while performing," senior Autumn Bradbury said. "It's like every single worry and every single problem is gone."

"One characteristic that I learned from poms that I can apply to my life after high school is persistence,"

senior Emily Dill said. "After being a part of the poms team my whole high school career, I have learned that persistency is key."

"You aren't allowed to say 'can't' in (Taylor's) practices, because you can if you actually put your mind to it, as nothing is impossible," senior Amiya Garcia said.

St. Charles Cheerleaders Eye Another State Finish

John Raffel Sports Scene

St. Charles' Jetta Stimac is varsity competitive cheer coach of a team expected to do well in the post-season.

For the 2019-2020 season, St. Charles was district champs, TVC champs and sixth in the state meet.

"We lost seven seniors after last season, including standouts Madison Stikeleather and Addison Stimac," Jetta Stimac said. "Addison is a current cheerleader at Alma College for her cheer/stunt and NCA National team. All seniors contributed to the leadership and strength of the program. In a four-year period, the team went from being last place at every competition to heading to states and placing sixth. It was an incredible season for this 2019-2020 team."

Senior captains are flyers Kirsten Franzel and Brea Lennox.

"Kirsten Franzel is a dynamic cheerleader," Stimac said. "She trained as a Bohaty dancer for a decade, she knows how to control

her body and contort into unbelievable flairs at the top of one legged extensions. She nailed a perfect scorpion stunt that catapulted our team to states last year.

"Brea Lennox has been a stand-out leader since her freshman year when she joined the team. Brea is the kid that if she gets knocked down, no one can stop her from rising again. She has had many things that have tried to stop her from being an amazing woman, but she can't be stopped. She has been in all three rounds for our competitions since her freshman year."

It's a young team, "but feeling very hopeful," Stimac said. "So far this year, the Bulldogs have competed in multiple competitions placing first and second against schools from a variety of divisions. Our biggest accomplishment so far was beating a strong Sanford Meridian team and also scoring a 683.30 at our home competition."

"Our team strengths are stunting and perseverance. This team is smart and can handle any last

minute changes that I throw at them. Tumbling has always been a weakness. A lot of schools hire tumbling coaches to come in and work with their teams. We have not had the funds to do that in the past. We need to get stronger and get in the weight room this year. Our new football coach, Aaron Gordon, is going to help us get a weightlifting program started for our team. It could make all the difference."

St. Charles moved to the MSAC which is a lot smaller with fewer competitive cheer teams.

"In our conference, we have St. Charles, Merrill, Breckenridge and Coleman," Stimac said. "St. Charles went to states last year and placed sixth. Breckenridge has won the state title many times in the past and Merrill has also competed at states. I would say that we are all currently rebuilding our programs, but the future's looking bright for the MSAC. I think St. Charles has a chance to be the top team in the MSAC if we can stay healthy and focused."

Kirsten is a third-year varsity player.

"Kirsten had a rough start to the season due to losing her graduating bases last year," Stimac said. "She is one of our top flyers, but we



The 2021 St. Charles competitive cheer team.

struggled to find the right combination of girls to help show off her amazing skills this year. She has been lucky to have her strong back spotter, Zoe Pease, for three years and they have amazing chemistry. After many adjustments, we have found the right fit of bases and she is beginning to shine again. Kirsten has stepped up for the team and is completing all of our required skills in our round three. She is in all of our rounds and has stepped up for the team in the last few years.

"We have competed 18 rounds so far this season and Kirsten has been in 100 percent of those. She has completed 22/22 perfect twist cradles so far this season. Kirsten spent over a decade of her life as a Bohaty Dancer under Karolyn Bohaty. She has learned discipline, flexibility, tumbling skills and impeccable arm precision and placement. The strength in her feet and beautifully pointed toes put her a step above other flyers in our sport."

P-W Expects To Be Division 4 Competitive Cheer State Contender Again

John Raffel Sports Scene

A week before sports were halted last spring because of the COVID pandemic, Pewamo-Wesphalia was able to complete its season with a state runner-up finish.

But veteran coach Staci Myers is happy her team will have a chance to compete.

"2019-2020 was another amazing year for Pewamo Westphalia competitive cheer," Myers said. "We were second at state finals and had three amazing performances. I had four seniors last season and all of them were a huge contribution to our success last year, each in their own way. They were all driven, hardworking leaders throughout the whole season."

"We have another awesome group of seniors this year that are being great leaders for this team. It has been a crazy season and throughout the whole time they have been positive, motivating and still working towards having a memorable season. The five seniors are Ellie Pohl, Ella Smith, Ella Simon

Miya Beech and Miranda Platte."

Myers is anxious to see what her team can do.

"We can all agree that this season has been like no other we have had before," he said. "One of the first conversations with this team were just this, what are the expectations of this season? With everything so unknown and going day by day, we came to one conclusion, work hard like it is a normal year but also savor and take in each and every moment that we are allowed with this team as things could change very quickly. We were focused on being in the moment each day and making those memories."

"I feel with them being focused on this that it has made them closer as a team and more like a family. It is a bond like no other. This team has many strengths this year. They are very hardworking; focused on what skills and stunts they want in their rounds. They like to be very involved in their choreography of the rounds, whether that be words they are saying or stunts that go up in the air and this has truly made each round more

special and gives them more motivation to make them look amazing."

Myers expects to have a team which improves a lot.

"We are in a good place right now and improving each week. This team is focused on cleaning up each round to be prepared to go into Districts," Myers said. "Division 4 has lots of strong teams and it is always fun to watch who will be on top. We are doing great things as a team and really hoping to be in the top 3 this year. This season will be one for the story books, masks, quarantines, the season is on then off and back on again, shortened competitions, new restrictions and through it all I would not change anything with this team."

"They have truly been amazing to work with and seeing their perseverance through it all and I am beyond proud of every single one of them. We have a team motto this year,



Pewamo-Westphalia's cheerleaders are ready for another championship season.

"Born for This" and I truly know that each athlete on this team was "Born for This," born to be on this team and going through this unpredictable year together and born to do what is in their blood, being part of this legacy as a competitive cheerleader for Pewamo Westphalia.



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Breckenridge Cheer Team Continues To Have Strong Cheer Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Breckenridge's Cassidy Smith has established herself as one of the area's top competitive cheerleading athletes.

It's her third year on the Breckenridge varsity for coach Nicki Smith.

"She has always been an excellent base, this year she has stepped up to be a leader," Nicki Smith said. "She has really improved her skills this year, as she has been needed in all three rounds this year. The key to her success is she hates to lose. She uses that as the fuel

to drive the team and herself every day in practice and it shows on competition days. This year we only have four girls so everything that the girls do is exposed. Last year she could focus on just two rounds and not worry as much about the skills required for round two. This year, she has had no choice and has really helped her become a well-rounded athlete.

"Without a doubt her jumps and skills have greatly improved over last year. I enjoy seeing her in the state championships for the first time, and the drive has now to get back there. I

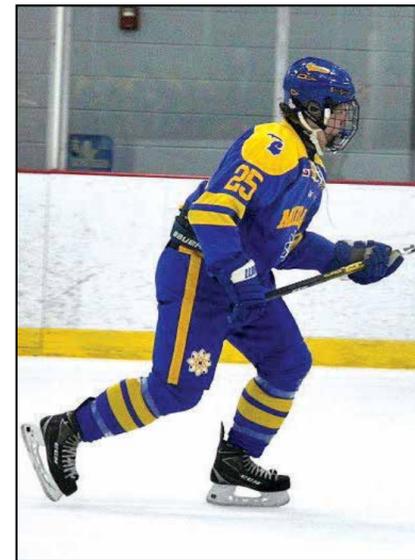
expect Cassidy to lead this team in consistency and show improvement each week. Cassidy is a three-sport athlete, so there's really no offseason. She puts all she has into each sport and has improved each year exponentially."

Breckenridge continues to have a strong team.

"The team currently has one 1st place finish and three 2nd place finishes," Nicki Smith. "The team is getting better every day and we expect to make some noise in the State Championships this year, starting with the Districts on March 20th and Beal City High School."



The 2021 Breckenridge cheer team.



Matthew Witt expects to have a strong season for Midland's hockey team.

Midland Hockey Team Having Solid Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Midland's hockey team has one of the top scorers in the area and is anxious to assert itself as one of the top squads in the state.

Steve Witt is head coach of the Midland High Chemics who compete in the Saginaw Valley Conference.

"Last season was full ups and downs," he said. "Key injuries resulted in not playing to where we felt we could be."

Key graduates included Matthew Babinski, an NAHL draft pick; Tyler Pritchett, a forward who had 40 points; and Nathan Witt, a defenseman, who had 18 points.

"We lost three great leaders on the ice who logged many minutes," Witt said.

Key players included forward Matthew Witt with 40 points; forwards Ben

Haney and Brady Pinwar, defensemen Cole Carpenter, Tanner Squires, Jed Brown, Cole McMillan, and Alec Albrecht and goalie Taylor White.

"We have a very young but hard working team featuring 11 new players on the roster," Steve Witt said. "We have much more depth up front than years past and have very strong goaltending. We need to work on consistency game in and game out.

"We have a very strong conference. Flint Powers is one of the top teams in state as well as Saginaw Heritage, Midland Dow and Davison. I see us right in the mix this year. We have beaten Dow and Davison."

Midland skated out to a 4-2-1 start.

Matthew Witt is a forward co-captain who is in his third year on the varsity.

"Matthew had a tremendous off season despite COVID," Steve Witt

said. "He was able to step up his off ice workouts and participated in the MDHL Fall program. He stepped right into the 2020-21 season as a leader both on the ice, in the locker, and in the classroom. He is driven to compete and wants to make players around him better. He is a great teammate and leads by example.

"He has gotten much stronger and has added strength to his shot. He has shown improvement in his responsibilities on both ends of the ice. This season, he scored a natural hat trick in the third period of a 6-4 win in Gaylord. He followed up the next week with a 2-point performance against Davison including the winner in overtime. We expect him to continue to make players better around him and lead us down the stretch and into the playoffs."

Midland High was 4-2-1 after seven games.

High School Hockey Co-Op Team Keeps Winning

John Raffel Sports Scene

It's been a powerful season for the Mid-Michigan Marauders, a co-op varsity hockey team.

The team, coached by Rob Husulak, has Holt as the host school with other contributing schools being Eaton Rapids, Grand Ledge, Portland and Pottersville.

The team plays in the South Central High School Hockey League. It won seven of its first nine games.

Key players who graduated from last year's squad included captain Carson Finney (forward) Holt, captain Evan Blackmer (forward) Portland, assistant captain A) Stallone (goalie) Eaton Rapids, Jadon Reimer (defenseman) Grand Ledge, Danny Abdouch (defenseman) Holt and Eli Reimer (forward) Grand Ledge.

"The season is going very well, we have had quite a few big wins and lost to a very good Mona Shores team," Husulak said. "We

have a lot of players scoring, and at this time we are ranked second in the state for total goals although we played two less games than the team with most goals, at 68 goals, and ranked first for goals per game (7.57 average).

"Every player needs to continue to develop individual skills and team skills, but in this shortened season, it's culture as championship teams stay focused on every shift and the end-of-season goal. Mistakes can and are going to happen, just minimize them in a team play so teammates are able to support."

It's a very competitive conference.

"Our conference has good balance and any team can catch another team and beat them on any given night," Husulak said. "Right now, we (Marauders) are the team to beat, but Lumen Christi has always been a consistent and dominating program. There's been a lot of good competition.

"It's been a tough year for stu-

dents and I am glad that they have the opportunity to play this season. We do our part by social distancing and wearing masks at all times to stay healthy for the Marauders and other programs. The Marauders also contribute to the local community in assisting the Give A Kid Program by unloading trucks. The team works hard and shows improvement each week and we strive to peak for playoffs.

"We have two players that are at the top of the individual leader stats for the state," Husulak said. "Carson Finney is third in assist points and Eli Reimer is fourth in goals."

Finney is a third-year varsity player.

"Carson is having a great season as a Captain of the Marauders, showing leadership by example of hard work and holding players accountable for efforts," Husulak said. "Every year he was worked hard to improve and make those around him better. Last year, Carson had 56 total points in 25 regular season games and so far this year, he has



The Mid-Michigan Marauders, off to 7-2 start, has Holt as the host school with other contributing schools being Eaton Rapids, Grand Ledge, Portland and Pottersville.

30 points in nine games.

"He has very quick acceleration and fast overall speed. He always has his head up looking to create time and space to make plays with the puck. He is very good in setting up plays to support teammates and has a good shot with a quick release. Carson hustles and is committed to defense also. His work in the off season and being a multi sport athlete has shown improvement with the Marauders and every year his grades improve. He is a good student."

Finney has shown the physical strength and patience with the puck to make plays.

"He is very fast and able to see plays start to set up," Husulak said.

"A standout goal is against Fenton Linden in which Carson was breaking up the ice with a defender on him putting on pressure. His very quick release shot beat the goalie short side upper corner. He also had several breakaways using his speed and making a play to beat defencemen.

"He leads by example, working very hard and having a lot of fun. Most of the games and practices, he is smiling and laughing with teammates. He's having fun while working hard and it spreads throughout the team. Carson works out at a gym and also is a multi-sport athlete. He is a great young man that is coachable and the team wants to be around him."

Dow Hockey Team Expects To Be Contender

John Raffel Sports Scene

Midland Dow expects to have another championship contending season in the Saginaw Valley Conference and in the playoffs.

Dow was 22-6 last season.

"Beating Grand Rapids Catholic Central in triple overtime to win the state quarterfinals was the highlight of our season," Blasy said. "But it was followed by having the state semifinals canceled less than 24 hours before the game due to Covid-19."

Key players graduated from the team, including Alec Newton, Luke Blasy, Austin Ieuter, Lucas Churchfield, Miles Trump and

Zach Seipke. "These boys led us to our first Frozen Four in a long time," Blasy said. "They created a family and a togetherness like I have never seen in my coaching career. They were leaders by example and great people."

Collin Lemanski, Billy Van-Sumeren, Ryan Pomranky, Cam Patty, Ryan Stadelmaier and Conor Dunlap are key players for 2021.

"We have 15 players returning from last season's Frozen Four team, so I'm expecting to pick up where we left off," Blasy said. "The challenges everyone has faced this year has definitely made things more difficult. We have a lot of high school hockey experience on this team and we are a strong, fast

skating team.

"We need to work on our grit in front of both nets."

In the conference, "I believe Flint Powers is the team to beat this year, but I expect we'll be near the top," Blasy said.

Billy VanSumeren, a junior, is in his second varsity season.

"So far, Billy is one of the main boys that we've put our saddle on to produce points for us," Blasy said.

VanSumeren, in six games, has seven goals and seven assists.

"Billy is 6-foot-5 and weighs 215 pounds," Blasy said. "He really uses his size and his reach to his advantage. He has a quick release and a heavy, accurate shot. Billy is bigger and stronger in all areas of his game.

"I think the biggest improvement that Billy has made is in his puck distribution and leadership.



Midland Dow's hockey team is off to a promising start.

Billy attracts flies and using his teammates gives them time and space to make plays and him time and space when the puck returns to him.

"Last year Billy was a sophomore on a team with great senior leadership," Blasy said. "Those seniors have graduated and Billy has really stepped up as a leader. He works hard in practice and is always the first one on the ice and brings the

puck bucket with him."

Blasy added: "Billy has the ability to score from anywhere which makes him fun to watch. He has scored a lot of big goals for us. I expect him to continue to do what he's been doing.

"Billy worked hard during our summer and fall workouts. Away from the game, Billy has a passion for all things hockey."

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Swan Valley Bowler Hopes To Be State Contender

John Raffel Sports Scene

Swan Valley bowling coach Tony Bremer is happy to have Zack Mitchell on his bowling team again this season.

Mitchell is a senior on his fourth year on the team.

"Zack has picked up right where

he left off last year," Bremer said. "He is averaging in the mid 190's to the low 200s. He was an All-State first team last year and finished 6th in the state for singles. He went from a one hander to a two-hander after his sophomore year. He is a very good listener and very coachable and willing to learn as much as he can. "He has become a strong team leader and is always

helping out his fellow teammates. He is focused and driven to become a better bowler. He has improved on covering his spares. Most memorable moments would have to be watching him grow as a bowler and qualifying first at the state finals last year on his way to a sixth- place finish."

Bremer has high expectations for Mitchell "I would like to see him take the next step and win a state title in singles this year," Bremer said. "He is always in the bowling alley during the offseason working on his game. He will be missed when he graduates this

year." Junior James Corriveau is expected to be another key bowler for Swan Valley.

"We want to compete for a league title, regional title and make states," Bremer said. "The team needs to work on spares and staying focused.

Our conference is very strong with John Glenn, Garber and Fran-kenmuth and the league favorite is John Glenn. "We look to continue to get better with each practice, each match so we can be ready for the postseason."



This is Zachary Mitchell for the Swan Valley bowling

Breckenridge Bowlers Eye Another High State Finish

John Raffel Sports Scene

Aaron Wise is coaching a Breckenridge boys bowling squad, which finished sixth at the state meet last season after qualifying third.

Aaron Stephens finished third in the state singles as a junior, senior Weston Wise

finished 18th and sophomore Trent Carter took 32nd.

"This year we have four from last year's states team and should be able to give it a solid run at regionals hopefully making our fourth consecutive year at states," Wise said.

The team consists of Dakota Hadanek, Trent Carter, Aaron

Stephens, Trapper Gillespie, Conner McCaw, Kris Wetherell and Chase Mapes.

After 16 games, Stephens has a 199 average with high games of 246, 227 and 222. Carter, in 15 games, is at 178 average with high games of 244, 225 and 212. Gillespie in 14 games has an average of 162 with high games of 193, 186 and 178. Hadanek,

after 13 games, has an average of 151 with high games of 222, 168 and 159. Mapes, after 12 games, has an average of 138 with high games of 169, 164 and 161. Wetherall, after 12 games, has an average of 127 with high games of 172, 148 and 139. McCaw after eight games, has an average of 112 with high games of 182, 129 and 111.



Breckenridge boys bowlers.

Garber Girl Bowlers Seek Another State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

Essexville Garber's girls bowling team is coming off a huge season and is looking to accomplish even more in 2021.

Garber competes in the Tri Valley East.

"2019-20 was a record year for Garber girls bowling," Garber coach Jim Tessner. "We won our conference, conference tournament, and we were also regional champions and state champions in Division 3 and we had an undefeated season. This was the first team

state championship in any sport in the 56-year history of the school.

"Maya Janowicz was our top bowler last year. She came through in the clutch in the final game at the state finals needing a mark to win the championship as we won by only five pins. Brittany Rohde, our other senior, had the high game in the final game of the championship match to help win the title."

Tessner is excited for this season.

"All of the athletes on this year's team will be key players," he said. "We had seven last year and this

year we only kept five of the returnees from last year.

The expectations of each player and the team is simple, keep improving at your own game which will help the team succeed."

Key bowlers include seniors Ireland Michalak, Alena Grawburg and Taylor Osterhout, and juniors Brooke Binder and Taylor Adams.

"The team's strength is that each of these girls are coachable and have a great and positive attitude," Tessner said. "At the start of the season, us and Birch Run were considered the league favorites, but

they beat us a few weeks ago and they are undefeated and looks like they will end up that way, so at this point, the best we can hope for is second place. So now we have to focus on regionals and getting back to the state finals, and from there we will see what happens.

"We were also named team of



The defending state champion Garber bowlers.

the year for any sport in the bay area. Quite an honor."

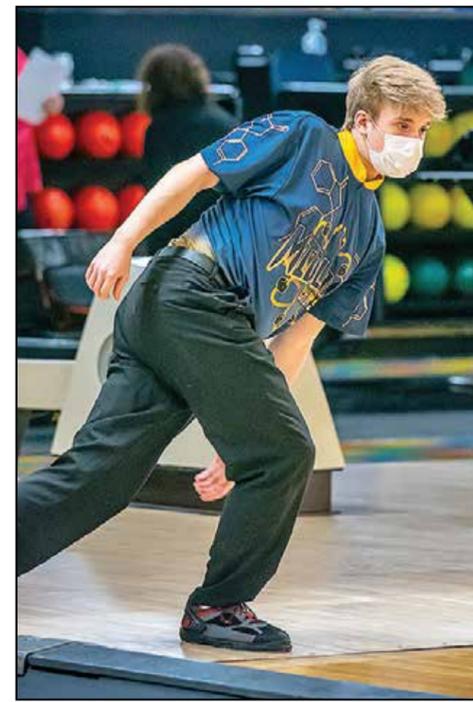
Midland Bowler Pursues Another State Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

It was a memorable 2020 bowling season for Midland's Izaak Goergen. He's hoping the 2021 season will be just as memorable.

As a junior last season, Goergen won the state individual title

"I had been bowling really well going into the postseason," Goergen said. "I finished second in the regional and we got to practice at Thunderball beforehand. Going into the tournament, I felt very confident. Winning it was something I did not expect. I felt I knew I could. But being able to execute it was a dream."



Izaak Goergen of Midland is the Division I state boys bowling champion.

In the title match, Goergen defeated Dylan Kelley of Utica Eisenhower 414-345.

"I was the first time I felt mentally sound for an entire day of bowling. I felt like I was in a groove," he said. "Nothing really phased me, which is something I've had trouble with in the past. Bad shots would get in my head. I made sure I executed every shot the best I could do and worked out."

Despite the COVID delays in starting the season, "it's going well," Goergen said. "I have a bit of a slow start trying to get back in the swing of things. Right now, I'm sitting on a 202 average and it's only going up."

Goergen said he'd like to say, from last year, he's improved "100 percent. I feel like I'm always improving, always learning. I focus intently on my weak spots. With all the work I've been able to put in, I feel I've improved a bunch."

"We lost three seniors from last year and had to pull up a couple of kids from our junior varsity team. They are very talented and athletic with a lot of potential."

Goergen said the lockdown made it tough to stay in shape.

"There were a lot of tournaments outside of Michigan I was able to participate, in thankfully, to help me keep my competitive edge."

Portland Bowler Eyes Return To State Finals

John Raffel Sports Scene

Portland's bowling teams have been a powerhouse this season. The Raiders'

Joe Whitford coaches the girls squad and among his best bowlers has been Jessie Whitford.

Jessie Whitford is a junior in her third year on the varsity

"She was struggling a bit, but will be just fine with her experience and determination," Joe Whitford said. "After her first four matches and only three practices before our season started, she is averaging 165 right now.

There are three factors, Joe Whitford gives, for Jessie's success.

"First is being coachable," Joe said. "Second, it's in her blood, third she is competitive. With her dad and two other sisters who bowl, one that is currently a collegiate bowler, she has a lot of competition to keep up with."

Jessie has improved by 10 pins this season.

"Mentally she has gained confidence and strength," Joe Whitford said. "She has the concentration and relaxation. She has made

it to the state finals every year in her high school career, with that being said. It's all great memories when you make it to states.

She supports and helps keep the team together mentally. She carries two jobs. But she bowls and practices as many times as she can. She is a star in volleyball and is one of the best setters in the area."

Jessie Whitford has led the team to first place in the CMAC.

The girls were 6-1 and the boys 8-0 coming into March.

Dan Graef is the boys coach and said Josh Rutkowski has been an outstanding bowler for the team.

"I could not be any happier with how the season has gone," Graef said. "He has been a little unlucky so far this season with pin carry. If a couple of shots go his way his average would be pushing 190. But he hasn't

let his bad luck affect his attitude. He has been great with his spare shooting and team morale is at an all-time high.

"He is tied with Cooper Haskins for first on our team in average at 179. His spare shooting and consistency had been key to his success this season. I expect him to keep improving and be a great leader like he has been all season."

Graef pointed out Rutkowski and his teammates weren't able to practice much if at all with bowling centers being closed during the offseason.

"But during the season I have seen Josh and all of our varsity team up at Wagon Wheel lanes practicing multiple times," Graef said.



Portland's undefeated boys bowling team.



Jessie and Joe Whitford of Portland's girls bowling team.

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Mason's Girls Bowling Team Wants Another State Title

**John Raffel
Sports Scene**

Mason girls bowling head coach Russell W. Whipple has been very upbeat about the season as defending state champions.

Mason competes in the Capital Area Activities Conference.

A year ago, Mason had an undefeated regular season (12-0), won two tournaments, had all six girls qualify for the final 16 of league singles tournament with two girls making it to the semi-final, won the team regional by 322 pins, saw four six girls finish in top-ten of regional singles and qualify for state singles, and boast the top qualifier in the Division 2 state tournament qualifying round by 61 pins and defeat Kearsley in the state semifinal by 88 pins against a team which had won the last six state titles and seven of last eight).

Mason defeated Tecumseh in the state final after being

knocked out of the State tournament by them the previous two years and after being beaten by them in the Mel Wolfe tournament final earlier in the year.

Last year's squad won the first state title for Mason girls bowling and the first girls team state title for Mason High School.

Coach Terry Dormer was the Division 2 State Coach of the Year.

"We had no graduates," Whipple said. "The team consists of four seniors, one junior, and one sophomore. The seniors and junior are returning from last year."

Grace Ann Whipple is a senior and fourth-year varsity bowler, who is in her third year as team captain, and won a conference all-academic award.

Emilee Hendershot is a senior and fourth-year varsity bowler in her third year as team captain and is committed to bowl for Spring Arbor University.

Senior Alivia Kuch is a third-

year varsity bowler as is junior Alexis Beach. Senior Leigha Rue was a third-year varsity bowler, who has committed to bowl for Cleary

University. Sophomore Adriana Thomas is a first-year varsity bowler.

"There is a lot of experience on this team," Russ Whipple said. "Hendershot and Whipple have competed in three Division 2 team state tournaments, finishing third, seventh, and first. Kuch, Rue, and Beach have competed in two Division 2 team state tournaments (seventh, first). Thomas is an excellent young bowler who has competed in tournaments as a JV bowler.

"This is a true team. Any girl can be the top bowler on any given day. Our expectation is that they continue to improve and win the league, regional, and state championships for a second consecutive year. We want to repeat with undefeated regular season, regional title, and state titles."

Whipple said his team's strength is "experience and a close-knit team attitude. The bulk of this team has bowled to-



The Mason bowling team.

gether for many years and they are each other's biggest fans. When one girl is down, the others pick her up. We want them to maintain their focus on great bowling and not worry about the other teams.

"The distractions caused by COVID, especially how it relates to how high school bowling has changed, can be difficult to manage. But if this team bowls up to its potential, they will be competitive with any girls team in the state."

In the CAAC Red Division, "Mason should be the favorite but Charlotte has some very good

bowlers and will be a challenge every time," Whipple said. "The girls on the team are all very talented bowlers. The seniors have been aware of their potential for years. Division 2 girls bowling has been dominated by a short list of schools since bowling was added as a varsity sport. In the 17 years of bowling, only seven schools have won a state championship. Last year the Mason girls finally began to believe they could compete with any other team.

"Also we are playing to honor our head coach from last year, Terry Dormer, who passed away unexpectedly in September."



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