



HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE
KEEPING KIDS IN THE NEWS

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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

It has also been a great spring sports season for all of our local athletes, coaches, students, administrators and officials. With the Covid-19 virus seemingly lifting its grip, more and more of us are able to get outside and compete. While there still has been interruptions this spring, the season is being completed and we can look forward to a more normal state tournament season.

And what a tournament season it should be! The area is loaded with outstanding softball and baseball teams. From Grand Ledge to Beal City to New Lothrop, Owosso and Mt. Pleasant outstanding teams and players are thrilling local sports fans.

Outstanding performances are also taking place on the tracks, soccer fields, golf course and tennis courts in the area. With the weather improving and the virus letting up, the coming weeks will provide plenty of opportunities to get outside and support our local student athletes.

We here at High School Sports Scene will do are part to keep our local athletes in the news! Shoot us an email or give us a call if you think of a local athlete or team that deserves some mention.

A big thank you to all our advertisers and sponsors, without you there would be no High School Sports Scene Magazine.

See you at the games!



Local Umpire Has Spent Over A Half Century Working Prep Softball, Baseball Games

David Cook Sports Scene

If you've ever attended a high school softball or baseball game over the years, it's a good chance you've seen Dean Parling, although you may not have known it.

Hundreds of softball players, baseball players and coaches know who Parling is, as the Ithaca resident is in his 55th year of umpiring high school softball and baseball games. Since first strapping on the gear in the spring of 1966, Parling has umpired thousands of baseball and softball games. Along with a full slate

of high school games every spring, Parling has also worked countless recreation softball games during the summer months.

While Parling calls the balls and strikes and makes the out calls, he has a style of umpiring that leans more towards teaching the game. That should come as no surprise as Parling spent 38 years teaching upper-level math classes at Ithaca High School. Along with teaching at Ithaca, Parling also coached both girls and boys basketball during the winter months and girls basketball when it was played in the fall before the move to winter.

Parling began his umpiring career shortly after becoming a math teacher at Ithaca.

"I got into umpiring by accident," Parling said. "I was teaching math and physics and hanging around the gym and the coaches. I coached ninth-grade boys basketball and in the spring one of my friends said why not get involved in umpiring. I remember my first game I was paid five dollars.



Ithaca resident Dean Parling has been an umpire for both softball and baseball for over 55 years.

Back in 1966 five dollars was a pretty decent fee."

After working that first game Parling caught the umpiring bug and dove in head first.

"I worked behind the plate mostly and kept getting better and better at it," Parling said. "I went to some clinics and learned as much as I could."

Parling sharpened his skills as an umpire and over the years moved up the ranks, eventually working state championship games in both baseball and softball. Parling, who turned 79 years old on May 26th, is also believed to be the oldest official to work a state championship game in the state of Michigan as he worked the 2019 state finals at the age of 77.

Along with Ithaca softball coach Dar Peska, Parling also helped found the Heart of Michigan Officials Association. In addition to his umpiring duties, Parling works as an assigner for the organization, assigning football officials during the fall, basketball officials during the winter and baseball and softball officials during the spring. This year has been an especially challenging one for Parling due to the Covid-19 virus pandemic. The virus has thinned the

already thin ranks of available umpires. Having games postponed and made up adds even more variables to the puzzle. Parling is usually busy at his computer filling games with umpires from nine in the morning to around 2:30 in the afternoon before heading out to umpire games.

Having umpired thousands of games, Parling has countless memories, although a couple stand out.

"In the mid-1980s I worked a baseball tournament game in Ionia," Parling said. "It was a district semifinal game between Lansing Waverly and Ionia. Waverly pitched John Smoltz who was drafted by the Tigers and Ionia had Jack Skoog pitching who would go on to play quarterback at San Diego State for former Michigan State coach Denny Stoltz. Smoltz and Skoog were two of the better high school players of that time. Waverly led 2-1 in the bottom of the sixth inning with two out when an Ionia kid hit a two-run home run. On his way to first base, he tossed his helmet off celebrating. The field umpire called him out before he reached first base so none of those runs counted. That was one of the reasons that rule was eventually changed."

In the 1990s Parling worked another high-profile baseball game. That was a regional game in Brighton that featured Brighton's Drew Henson going up against Birmingham Brother Rice and their 6-foot-7

pitcher TJ Marx. Henson would go on to play quarterback at Michigan, starting ahead of Tom Brady, and eventually played for the New York Yankees. Marx was drafted and signed by the Detroit Tigers.

"Henson was throwing in the mid-90s and had the national home run record with 72 or 73 home runs," Parling said. "I worked the plate that game and it was a great pitcher's duel. There were like 6,000 fans at that game. They surrounded the field about six to eight people deep. Marx signed with the Tigers for \$750,000 right after that game. The Yankees offered Henson something like \$7 million but he decided to play football at Michigan."

While those types of games stand out, Parling has a lifetime of other memories working with local umpires, coaches and players that are just as special. Parling has worked with many umpires over the years but spent many years working with Dave Natali, Bob Anderson and Ed Howes as partners in two-man crews.

"It's been an enjoyable experience," Parling said. "I've gotten to know a lot of great people over those years. I'm working games now of some of the grandkids of players that I worked their games in the early years. It has been interesting and a lot of fun and full of a lot of good experiences."

Talented Senior Group Leading The Way For Ithaca Softball Team

David Cook Sports Scene

With a talented core of seniors leading the way, the Ithaca softball team is turning in a solid season this spring.

With the state tournament drawing near, Ithaca sports a 22-7 record with a number of impressive wins to its credit. Playing a challenging schedule that has included games against Millington, the No. 1-ranked team in the state in Division 3, along with Hemlock, Bullock Creek and Standish-Sterling, the Yellowjackets are prepared to compete for the title at a

challenging district at Hemlock that includes the host Huskies, Sanford-Meridian, Shepherd and St. Louis.

"We have been playing decent softball," said Ithaca coach Dar Peska.

Leading the way for the Yellowjackets have been some outstanding seniors. Senior pitcher Lydia Davenport has a 15-2 record with 188 strikeouts heading into the final days of May. Davenport will be playing college softball at Lansing Community College next season.

"Lydia is just a very tenacious and very competitive pitcher,"

Peska said.

Senior third baseman Natalie Novakowski is getting the job done both in the field and at the plate. Novakowski is hitting .470 with 4 home runs and plays an excellent defensive third base.

Senior catcher Mady Snyder is also a standout defensively and at the plate where she is hitting .400.

"Nobody runs on her arm," Peska said. "She has one of the best throwing arms of any catcher I've ever had."

At first base, the Yellowjackets have received a lift with senior Lottie Carman returning from injury.

"Lottie gives us a lot defensively," Peska said. "She also had three hits in her first game back from injury."

Senior designated hitter Brianna Miksell provides the offense with plenty of punch. Miksell has two home runs to go along with a .380 batting average.

A pair of sophomores are making major contributions this season. Sophomore centerfielder Megan Mankey leads the team in



With a solid core of seniors leading the way the Ithaca softball team has won over 20 games this season. Ithaca photos courtesy of Ellie Martyn.

home runs with six and RBI with 44. Sophomore second baseman Mady Carman has two home runs and provides the team with strong defense. Carman also helps as a pitcher.

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Beal City Baseball Team Keeping Winning Tradition Alive

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

While it has been a while since the Beal City baseball team took to the diamond, the Aggies are picking up where they left off.

One of the premier Division 4 baseball teams in the state on a yearly basis, Beal City opened the 2021 season with 17 straight wins and the No. 1 ranking in the state. Having a lofty ranking is not new for the program as Beal City has

won four baseball state championships with the most recent state title coming in 2018.

This season, the Aggies have started strong at the plate and are mixing in some excellent pitching.

"The boys are hitting the ball very well," said Beal City coach Steve Pickens, "although the pitching seems to be a little less than average this year, probably because of the non-season last year. Our pitchers pitch to contact and don't

walk many batters which is a major part of our success."

Beal City's sizzling start to the season is even more impressive considering the schedule the team plays. A Division 4 school, Beal City plays in a league with all Division 3 schools and only has four Division 4 teams on the schedule.

Beal City is paced by a strong core of veteran starters. Senior catcher Cameron Lynch is a four-year, varsity player who excels in the field and at the plate.

"Cameron hits for average and has good pop in his bat," Pickens said. "He is a left-handed batter with good baseball knowledge."

Junior pitcher/first baseman Brendan Martin played on the varsity as a freshman. A 6-foot-6 inch right-handed pitcher, Martin opened the season with a 4-0 record and no runs allowed.

Junior Braydon Haynes is a versatile player who pitches, plays the infield and catcher.

"Braydon is a right-handed hitter with power," Pickens said. He is a consistent player who uses all field at the plate."

Junior Kaiden Andrews is a right-handed pitcher who also plays shortstop. Andrews, who played on the varsity as a freshman, bats leadoff for the Aggies and is a contact hitter with power and good foot speed. On the mound Andrews is off to a 2-0 start.

Beal City boasts a deep squad both in pitchers and hitters.

Centerfielder Wade Wilson hits with power and is an above-average runner with a good baseball knowledge. Wilson is also 3-0 as a pitcher.

Senior Aidan Mindel is also 3-0 as a pitcher where he relies on his good command. A third baseman when not on the mound, Mindel has signed to play college baseball at Cleary College.

Junior Konnor Wilson also saw some varsity action as a freshman. Wilson is 2-0 as a pitcher and plays both the outfield and in the infield. Wilson is a consistent contact hitter to all fields.

Along with their skills as players, Pickens likes the makeup of this year's squad.

"They have fun being at the ballpark," Pickens said. "They are good teammates. They listen and learn. They study the game and want to be competitive at a higher level. They work hard to develop in the area they are less skillful at. We have a good number of pitchers,

no one really overpowering, but they throw a variety of pitches. We swing the bats well and play good defense."

Pickens sees a competitive title chase ahead in the Highland Conference this spring.

"Evert shared the conference title two years ago and has many returning players in the skilled positions," Pickens said. "They have a good coaching staff and are always in the mix. LeRoy-Pine River also has a good program, good coaches and are always very competitive in the league. Newcomer Roscommon looks to be right there by brining a good core group of players to the league. Any team in the league could take a victory from you at any time."

Like all teams this spring, the Aggies are still dealing with the fallout from the pandemic but are looking ahead to a full season.

"We will be glad when there is a sense of normalcy back in everyone's lives and we can just play baseball without the concerns of a pandemic," Pickens said. "We were saddened by the loss of the season last year, not only for the sake of the seniors that would not get a chance to finish their careers in baseball here, but for the underclassmen that were primed to compete after having experience on the varsity in prior years."



The Beal City baseball team is ranked No.1 in the state in Division 4 and is primed to make a long run in the state tournament.

Stahl's Pitching Makes Lakewood A Dangerous Team

John Raffel Sports Scene

Brent Hilley has a very young softball team at Lakewood this season.

But the Vikings are very dangerous on the softball diamond for one special reason in particular: pitcher Morgan Stahl.

"Morgan is off to a great start at 10-1 with the only loss by one run," Hilley said. "She has 151 strikeouts and an ERA of 1.4."

For Hilley, it's easy to explain Stahl's keys to success.

"Morgan has always been open to change and working to get better," Hilley said.

"Between her freshman and sophomore year, she completely changed her delivery. She worked hard all off-season and her sophomore year, she broke the yearly strikeout record at Lakewood with 325. She was voted all-league, all-district, all-region and honorable mention All-State.

"Morgan has always challenged herself by playing up an age level in travel ball. I credit her and her parents for this. Most parents want to see their child dominate their age groups. Morgan's wanted her to be challenged and improve even if it meant struggling at times.

enough to see the improvement Stahl has made on the diamond.

"Morgan has worked hard to gain more command of her upper zone spins this year," Hilley said.

Winning the GLAC title in 2019 was a major achievement for Stahl and the Vikings.

"We went into extra innings with both Olivet and Stockbridge," Hilley said. "Her composure was amazing for a sophomore. I expect her to break her own strikeout record and be in the voting for all state."

Stahl is also an all-league

golfer.

Those struggles build mental toughness."

There obviously wasn't a 2020 season, but Hilley recalls 2019

enough to see the improvement Stahl has made on the diamond.

Winning the GLAC title in 2019 was a major achievement for Stahl and the Vikings.

Stahl is also an all-league

"Morgan is the perfect teammate," Hilley said. "She has been a great captain. She is so humble and cares more about the team success than her own. I have never coached a player with a more positive attitude. When I think about her graduating, obviously it will leave a huge spot to fill next year but it's her dugout presence and the way she interacts with her teammates that I will miss the most. That speaks to the kind of person she is.

"Wherever she goes in life, she will bring a sense of good that is definitely needed in these times."

Lakewood is off to a good start at 11-2.

"We're very young and are starting three freshman," Hilley said.

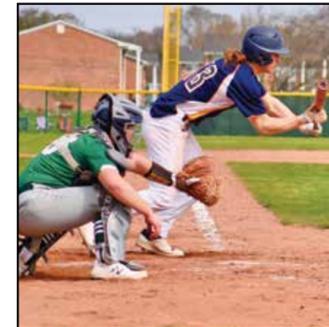


Morgan Stahl was off to a great start at 10-1 with the only loss by one run. She has 151 strikeouts and an ERA of 1.4.

Strong Cast Of Pitchers Has Mt. Pleasant Baseball Team Piling Up Wins This Spring

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Year in and year out, the Mt. Pleasant baseball team can be counted on to be one of the pre-



mier teams in the mid-Michigan area. This spring is no different as the Oilers are racking up the wins in impressive fashion.

Led by a deep and talented pitching staff, the Oilers passed the halfway mark of the season with a 17-6 overall record and 8-3 mark in Saginaw Valley League play. Mt. Pleasant won multiples games against strong teams like Alpena, Essexille-Garber, Flint Powers, Grand Haven and Flint Carmen-Ainsworth along with wins against Bay City Western, Midland, Midland Dow and Davison.

A talented group of seniors is leading the way for the Mt. Pleasant baseball team this season. Photo by Paul Beroza/Morning Sun

Heading up the pitching staff are a pair of college-bound pitchers. Senior Josh Schell will be pitching at the Army Academy while Michael Coffland will pitch at Mid Michigan College next spring. Senior pitcher Andrew Funnell and junior pitcher Michael Whitman are also being looked at by college baseball programs.

Senior Brody Hovey will also be playing college baseball. A catcher and third baseman, Hovey is headed to Mid Michigan College. Senior Kyle Borodychuk, a catcher, is also receiving interest from local colleges.

Senior Anton Ricumstrick, a pitcher and outfielder, will play

football in college at the University of Buffalo. Senior Tanner Payton is also playing college football at Northwood University and may also play baseball. Senior centerfielder Own Kole may play baseball at Mid Michigan College.

Seniors Mark Goenner and Own Foust round out the platoon of outfielders. Senior Caden Schlicht, Logan Bandlow and Brady Pifer are infielders who bring versatility to the infield that is anchored by first baseman Zack Seeley who is an excellent fielder. Seeley is also a key at the plate from his three-spot in the batting lineup.

Mt. Pleasant also has a skilled group of non-seniors to call on including juniors Ryan McIntyre (inf/of/p), Kyle Sytsema (catcher), Wyatt Ervin (inf/p), Carter Norris (inf), Max Sly (1b) and Ryan Maxxon (of). Sophomore Max Humphrey (inf/c/p) is a skilled player with a bright future.

"Our juniors will need to fill many shoes next year," said Mt. Pleasant coach Luke Epple. "Max is already on the radars of many colleges and has the skills and athletic abilities to play at the next level. Max plays shortstop, does some pitching for us and is an excellent catcher also."

The Oilers need contributions from every play with the challenging schedule they face.

"We play a tough schedule in a strong league," Epple said. "If we are to contend for a league championship and advance in the state tournament our deep pitching must stay healthy and be efficient. We also must make the plays consistently and get timely hitting and move runners up on the basespaths. We have the depth to contend and will give the best effort to get the job done."

New Lothrop Baseball Team Looking To Continue School's Sports Success This Year

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

New Lothrop is turning in a memorable sports year with a football state championship in the fall and a wrestling state runner-up during the winter. This spring, the New Lothrop baseball team is looking to make its contribution.

A talented team that includes several players that played on the football or wrestling teams, New Lothrop is collecting wins and ranked is ranked 10th in the state in Division 4. This year's Hornet squad has a mix of veterans and younger players making their mark.

"We have a nice mix," said New Lothrop coach Ben Almsay. "We have six seniors which helps and

we have some good young players that keeps the ball rolling."

New Lothrop got on a roll quickly this spring. After dropping the opening game of the season against Division 1 Farmington, the Hornets reeled off 17 straight wins before falling to another Division 1 team, Saginaw Heritage in a close 9-7 game.

"It's been a crazy year," Amasy said. "We started out by getting whipped pretty good. Farmington is a quality team and we weren't ready to play that type of competition yet. That game showed us pretty quick what we need to work on."

Since then, New Lothrop has been rolling behind a potent offense and a strong group of pitch-

ers. New Lothrop's offense has scored in double-digits in 16 games this season while the pitching and defense has allowed three runs or less in 15 games.

Pacing the offense is junior Brady Birchmeier who has committed to Bowling Green State University. Birchmeier is hitting .552 this season with 9 home runs and 46 RBI. As a pitcher Birchmeier is 5-0 with a 0.93 ERA and 48 strikeouts in 30 innings pitched.

"Brady is a fantastic hitter," Almsay said. "He is probably the best hitter I've ever coached."

Senior Cam Orr, the quarterback of the football team and all-state wrestler, is putting up some huge numbers. Orr is hitting .516 with 15 doubles, 5 triples and 32 RBI. As a pitcher he is 4-1 with a 2.00 ERA.

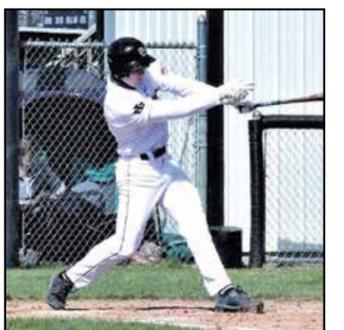
Sophomore Ty Kohlmann, the fastest player on the roster, is hitting .591 with 22 RBI. Senior Avery

Morse is hitting .448 with 10 doubles, 2 home runs and 26 RBI.

Senior Julius Garza, a big-play receiver on the football team, is hitting .293 and is 10-for-10 in stolen bases. Garza is also 5-0 as a pitcher with a 2.86 ERA. Fellow senior Matt Kiefer leads the team with 13 stolen bases in 14 attempts and is hitting .344. Freshman Alex Henige is making a big contributing. A natural shortstop, Henige moved to the starting catcher position when New Lothrop's returning catcher was injured during wrestling season. Henige is hitting .271 with 13 RBI and is playing strong defense behind the plate.

New Lothrop has a history of playing good baseball. Two years ago, the Hornets turned in a 32-8 record and reached the regional finals.

"We were really young two years ago," Almsay said. "We have



New Lothrop senior Cam Orr is hitting over .500 at the plate this season and has a 4-1 record as a pitcher.

five guys from that team on this year's squad and that helps a lot. We could get back to that spot this year. It's been fun this season. Baseball is a crazy game and you only get one shot in the playoffs so you have to be ready to go."

New Lothrop hosts a district tournament this year with the winner advancing to the Mt. Morris regional.

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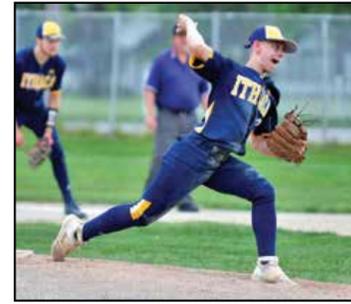
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Hard Work Paying Off With More W's For Improving Ithaca Baseball Team

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Building a successful baseball program takes a lot of hard work. At Ithaca, the Yellowjackets have been putting in a lot of work



the last few years to improve the baseball team and that hard work is producing plenty of dividends this spring.

With the baseball season past the halfway point Ithaca has reached double figures in wins and has an 11-7 record.

"We have greatly improved from years past," said Ithaca coach Brian Lebaron. "The program has really taken off. We won nine games my first year here and 13 the second year. This year we are on our

Improvement has been the name of the game for the Ithaca baseball team this season. Currently the Yellowjackets are vast improvement since the beginning of the season.

way to surpass that total. They guys have been putting in the work. They have been showing up in the offseason in four-man groups. The offseason work is where it's paying off and the talent level is definitely improving. We have some really good young kids in the program."

Junior pitcher/shortstop Chad Pratt is one of those talented players. Pratt has a 5-1 record as a pitcher this year and is hitting .360 at the plate. Sophomore outfielder/pitcher Ethan Hull is also turning in a solid season. Hull is hitting .350 this season. Senior centerfielder Reed Thomas is hitting close to .400 this spring.

That kind of production has enabled Ithaca to turn in some impressive performances this season. Ithaca has three walk-off wins in the last inning this season. The Yellowjackets also won the Carson City-Crystal tournament. One of the highlight wins came in the title game at Carson City. That was

when the Yellowjackets came from behind to win by plating a run on a squeeze play in the bottom of the eighth inning to defeat Caro by a run.

Senior second baseman Grant Weburg who is hitting .300 this year came up with the defensive play of the year in the Caro game.

"Grant made a diving play to save the game against Caro," Lebaron said. "They (Caro) had a chance to win the game but Grant made a diving catch of a line drive that was probably the defensive play of the season."

Sophomore Charlie Martyn is also turning in a strong season. A versatile defender, Martyn plays shortstop and catcher and is also a pitcher. At the plate Martyn is hitting .325.

Like many baseball teams in the area, Ithaca is low on numbers. The program has no junior-varsity team this season and all 17 players

in the program are playing varsity baseball. With no junior varsity team, the Yellowjackets play many of the younger players in games to get them experience.

With the team showing improvement, the excitement around the baseball program is evident not only in the win-loss record but the number of fans showing up at games.

"We have had some incredible fan support which is great to see," Lebaron said. "It has been exciting to see the support from the community. I've also had a tremendous amount of support from Joe Mc-Daid and our assistant coaches. We have been getting good leadership and the kids are learning how to win. A little success gets the kids wanting to play. I'm really pleased with the effort of the kids. They never quit. Even in games where we are trailing they continue to battle and score runs in the late innings."

Alma Baseball Team Gaining Experience After Losing Last Season Because Of Covid Virus

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Like most baseball teams, the Alma baseball team is experiencing the effects of the Covid virus elim-



inating last baseball season and having effects on this season.

With few players in the program having varsity or even any high school baseball experience, this season is a learning one for the Panthers. Alma is making the most of the experience as the Panthers have hovered around the .500 mark.

"We really, really lack experience," said Alma coach Denny Kreiner. "It has been like taking a junior-varsity team and throwing them into a varsity schedule. It's challenging, but we have

A core of seniors leads the way for the Alma baseball team that is rounding into form after not having a season last spring.

a good group of kids who really missed baseball and love having it back."

Alma is built around a handful of seniors who have some limited varsity experience. Senior David Apple is a versatile player who has seen action at shortstop, second base, the outfield and pitcher.

"David is our leadoff hitter and he loves playing baseball," Kreiner said. "The kids follow his lead. He makes things happen for us. He enjoys playing and makes it fun for everyone."

Senior Brayley Munro is another versatile player. Along with being Alma's number-one pitcher, Munro also sees time at third base, catcher

and the outfield.

"Brayley picked up a little varsity experience as a sophomore," Kreiner said. "He is our most effective pitcher and has been eating up a lot of innings for us. He has also had a lot of good at bats and puts the ball in play from the upper part of our batting order."

Junior DJ Thompson also brings some experience to the lineup as he came up to the varsity during his freshman season. Thompson sees action at shortstop and first base and is also a pitcher.

"DJ probably has the most varsity experience of anyone on the squad," Kreiner said. "Hitting wise, he is probably the best hitter we have returning."

Senior Ryan Fachting has stepped in at the catcher position.

"Ryan has done a fantastic job behind the plate," Kreiner said. "He has also pitched some innings for

us and has had some success on the hill."

The remainder of the team is new to varsity baseball. With 17 players total in the program, Alma has mixed in the sophomores and freshmen on the varsity lineup. Those freshman and sophomore have also played junior-varsity games on days the varsity does not have a game scheduled giving the younger players as much playing experience as possible.

"We are excited just to be able to play with all the uncertainty coming into the season," Kreiner said. "I have a great group to work with. The kids enjoy playing baseball and are working hard. I've been teaching baseball for 31 years and I have been teaching more this year than in any other year. It has been a very interesting year with the gap year last year. The kids have been doing a great job. I can't ask for a better group."

Area Baseball Teams Looking To Hit Their Peak As State Tournament Begins

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Grand Ledge baseball team is back among the top teams in the state this season. Heading into the last week of May Grand Ledge is ranked second in the state in Division 1 with a 22-2 mark. The Comets were ranked No. 1 in the state for a while this season.

Grand Ledge is a deep team that features a wealth of pitching and a stacked lineup featuring good contact and power hitters.

Grand Ledge locked up a share of the Capital Area Activities Conference (CAAC) Blue Division title with a doubleheader sweep of rival East Lansing. Grand Ledge won the first game 4-3 thanks to a walk-off RBI single by Logan Todd. A two-run home run by sophomore Caleb Estrada was also key in the win.

Grand Ledge won game two by a 14-4 score. Senior Kaden Nowak paced the offense with three hits and five RBI including a two-run home run. Estrada also added his second home run of the day and the season.

Todd, who will play college baseball at Davenport University next season, has been a leader of the offense this season. Todd is hitting .486 with 35 RBI.

Senior Kaden Nowak, who will play college baseball at Hillsdale College, is another offensive catalyst. Nowak is hitting .443 with two home runs and 27 RBI. Nowak collected the 100th hit of his career during the doubleheader with East Lansing.

Senior Noah Warren, who is headed to Kellogg Community College, is hitting .432 with three home runs and 28 RBI. Senior Aiden Alsbaugh, who will football in college at Trine University, is hitting .414 with three home runs and 30 RBI.

Grand Ledge is equally deep in quality pitchers. Junior Cole Mance has a 5-0 record this season with a 0.97 ERA. Warren is 4-1 with a 1.82 ERA while senior Dillon Pfau is 3-0 with a 0.00 ERA. Senior Jack Franco and juniors Nathan Droste and Carson Winans are both 3-0 this season.

DeWitt baseball ranked in top 5 in DI

On the heels of winning a state football championship in January, the DeWitt baseball team is ranked among the top five in the state in Division 1.

The Panthers are ranked fourth in the state in Division 1 with a 21-2 record. DeWitt clinched a share of the CAAC Blue division title when it defeated Waverly 9-7 in the completion of a suspended game.

DeWitt features a potent offense led by Grant Uyl who is hitting .493 with 39 RBI and Nate Deppen who is hitting .444. The Panther offense has also received big efforts from senior Andrew Debri along with Ohlen Bond, Ethan Fogel and Kaylor Mills. Debri helped DeWitt to a 16-11 win against Okemos in a key game down the stretch with a grand slam home run. Bond came up big in the second game of the doubleheader with Okemos as he hit a home run in the bottom of the fifth inning that keyed a 2-1 win.

St. Johns snaps league title drought

The St. Johns baseball team made history this season as it won its first league title since 2014.

St. Johns clinched the CAAC Red title by sweeping Williamston 3-1 and 5-4. With the wins St. Johns improved to 16-11 for the season.

The Redwings are led this season by Brody Kusnier who is hitting .509. Logan Keilen is also having a big season with a .422 batting

average along with three home runs and 21 RBI. Landon Mikula is hitting .395 with 15 RBI. On the mound, the Redwings have received solid pitching from Alex Owen, Grant



The St. Johns baseball team won its first conference championship since 2014 as it won the CAAC Red title.

Armbrustmacher and Mikula.

Pewamo-Westphalia ranked in Division 3

Thanks to solid pitching and a potent offense, the Pewamo-Westphalia baseball team has been ranked among the top teams in the state in Division 3 this spring.

The Pirates upped their record to 23-1 this season and are ranked seventh in the state in Division 3.

Tanner Wirth leads the Pewamo-Westphalia offense with a .537 batting average while Nate Simon is hitting .537. Zach Simon has been a source of power with three home runs. The Pirates have also received timely hitting from Ty Nurenberg, Conner Russell, Austin Schafer, Caleb Stocpzynski, Brock Thelen, Connor Thelen and Logan Thelen. Team speed is also a strong point for the team as the Pirates have stolen a school record 196 bases this season.

Pewamo-Westphalia is also strong at preventing runs thanks to a deep pitching staff. Zach Simon has a 7-0 record with a 0.78 ERA while Ty Nurenberg is 7-0 with a 1.47 ERA. Austin Schafer is 3-0 with a 0.74 ERA and Drew Nurenberg is 2-1 with a 3.13 ERA.

Campau turning in big year for Bullock Creek

Led by junior standout Carter Campau, the Bullock Creek baseball team is turning in a big season.

A junior catcher who has committed to playing college baseball at Central Michigan University, Campau is hitting .468 heading into the final week of May.

Campau and his Lancer teammates are ranked among the honorable-mention in the state in Division 2 and have an 18-4 record.

Along with Campau, the Lancers are receiving strong efforts from a number of players including Obie Mathis and Sam Midkiff.

Establishing a solid foundation the theme at Ashley

Building the program is the theme for the Ashley baseball team this season under new coach Marty Cartwright.

Along with adjusting to a new coach, Ashley is like all the other area teams who are playing this season after the one-year layoff due to the pandemic that eliminated spring sports last year.

"Not having spring sports in 2020 set us behind as it was my first year with the program," said Cartwright. "We had to wait a year in order to implement a new system."

Ashley is building around senior infielder Aaron Drummond. Drummond is a mainstay for Ashley both at the plate and in the field.

Senior infielder Grant Malek is another team leader for the Bears. Malek is a steady defender in the middle of the infield and a leader at the plate.

On the mound, junior Evan Litwiller heads up the pitching staff.

Improving every day and building the foundation of the program are the most important goals for Ashley.

"We want to establish our system and continue to make strides to give us a chance to have an opportunity to win each game," Cartwright said. "We have been working to get better each outing while building consistency and toughness on the mound and at the plate. We are also working on becoming more aggressive on the base paths and offensively."

While the Bears have experienced growing pains, the continue to battle and learn.

"Our strength is our resiliency," Cartwright said. "We have a lot of new skills and systems we are implementing. Our guys are learning on the go while competing. They have been working to overcome any mistakes and build to get better."



The DeWitt baseball team earned a share of the CAAC Blue division championship this year along with Grand Ledge.

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Central Montcalm Softball Team Sets New School Record With League Title

David Cook Sports Scene

It took an extra year to accomplish the feat, but the Central Montcalm softball team created a new standard when it won the league championship.

With a pair of standout pitchers leading the way, Central Montcalm set a new school record when the Hornets won the Central State Activities Association Gold Division title. The league title was the sixth consecutive for the softball team and established a new school record for consecutive league titles.

"It was nice to make a little history with the team," said Central Montcalm coach Bruce Nicholson. "We were hoping to get to finish the season on the field and win the

league title. It was nice that Covid was not able to interfere with the season. We have a really good group of kids who work really hard. They are unselfish and a pleasure to coach."

Having a pair of pitching aces is a pleasure that any softball coach would like and the Hornets have two standout pitchers in seniors Izzy Doyle and Gabby Hirkaway. Doyle, who is a power pitcher, reached the midpoint of the season with a 10-1 record along with 89 strikeouts and a 1.04 earned run average. Hirkaway, a control pitcher who pitches to contact, began the season with an 8-1 record with 60 strikeouts and a 1.35 earned run average.

"We pitch it well," Nicholson said. "We also have a pretty good

lineup and team offense.

Senior leadoff hitter Grace Flanigan sets the Hornet offense in motion and has a .478 batting average through the halfway point. Sophomore Zoey Bacon is a skilled left-handed batter with a .500 batting average while Kam Nicholson is hitting .390. Hirkaway provides the team with plenty of punch as she is hitting .548 with five home runs.

Central Montcalm is solid defensively where it counts up the middle of the diamond. Senior catcher Kenzie Failing calls a good game and keeps runners in check. Senior shortstop Brin McKay



The Central Montcalm softball team established a new school record by winning its sixth consecutive conference title.

and junior second baseman Kam Nicholson form a solid double play tandem. Sophomore centerfielder Lauren Alexander has outstanding range and tracks down fly balls in the outfield.

The combination of excellent pitching, hitting and defense enabled the Hornets to open the season with 18 wins in their first 20 games and a ranking in the top ten in the state in Division 3.

The ranking reflects Central

Montcalm's outstanding play the past several years including a berth in the state quarterfinals in 2018. Five seniors on this year's team were members of that quarterfinal team as freshmen.

"We have five seniors on the team this year and a couple of juniors and a couple of sophomores who are real good players," Nicholson said. "Our younger players have demonstrated a lot of confidence and poise. As a group we have a pretty confident team."

Area Softball, Baseball Teams Experiencing Success Down The Stretch

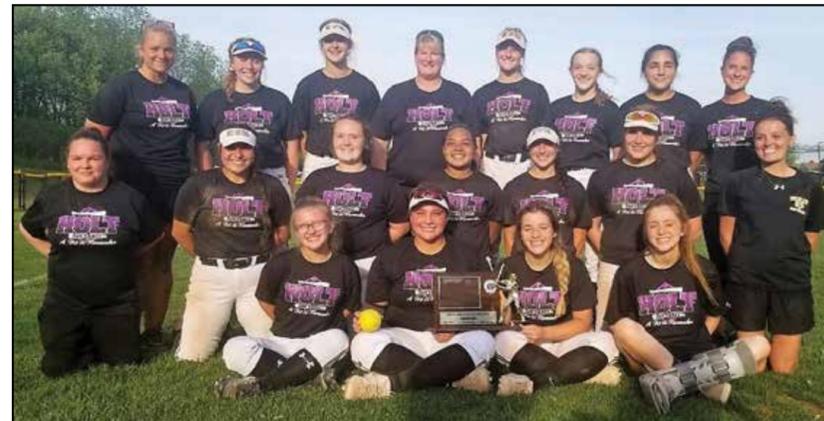
David Cook Sports Scene

The Holt softball team secured the title in the Capital Area Activities Conference (CAAC) Blue Division. The Rams are paced by senior standout Elyse Brittain who is having a big season both at the plate and in the pitching circle. Brittain is a dominating pitcher that is averaging 11 strikeouts per game. In a non-league game against Williamston Brittain tossed a no-hitter with 10 strikeouts. At the plate Brittain is hitting over .500. Brittain is also a source of power for the team and hit three home runs during the Holt tournament. Junior Eva Curtis is also having a strong season at the plate. Curtis turned in a big week with three

doubles, two triples, two home runs and 10 RBI in wins against Waverly, Farmington and Livonia Churchill.

Eaton Rapids baseball team wins CAAC White
Led by senior standout Zachary Green, the Eaton Rapids baseball team clinched the CAAC White baseball title. One of the top hitters in the area, Green is hitting .443 this season. Eaton Rapids is ranked fourth in the state in Division 2 and has a 20-4 overall record.

Eaton Rapids softball team claims league crown
The Eaton Rapids softball team has been on a roll this year. Thanks to a potent offense led by Shelby Kunkel who is hitting over .600 this spring, the Greyhounds captured the CAAC White title. Senior Maggie Etue, who has committed



The Holt softball team is turning in a solid season highlighted by winning the CAAC Blue division title.

to St. Clair Community College, is also turning in a big season. It is also a landmark season for Eaton Rapids co-coaches Scott Warriner and Pat Reinecke. The duo notched the 500th wins of their softball coaching careers this season. 500 wins is nothing new to Warriner who also eclipsed the

500-win mark during his time as head coach of the Eaton Rapids wrestling team.

Midland softball turning in strong season
The Midland softball team is flexing its muscles in Division 1. The Chemics are ranked among the honorable-mention in the state in

Division 1. The Chemics are led by seniors Taylor Sanborn and Gabby Schloop. Sanborn has committed to play college softball at Calvin College while Schloop will be attending Northwood University. Midland is also receiving strong efforts from pitchers Rachel Mecca and Grace Schloop.

Talented Newcomers Leading Way For Tradition-Rich Coleman Softball Team

David Cook Sports Scene

Before this spring, the last time the Coleman softball team competed on the diamond they were playing in the 2019 state semifinals. While few players are back from that team, the Comets have done a solid job of re-stocking the roster. While battling through the effects of the Covid-19 virus, the Comets opened the season with a 7-5 record and are ranked in the honorable-mention in Division 4 in the state rankings.

While the wins are nice, just getting back on the field is a highlight for the Comets.

"Taking the field for the first time in 677 days with our full roster back on April 22nd was a highlight for us," said Coleman coach Chad Klopf. "With basketball making the district final, we didn't have those girls at practice week one then in

week two we had kids quarantined. So, the first time our full roster was together this season was that first game day. It was a rocky start, but it was great to be back on the field."

Coleman has just one player back from the 2019 state semi-final team but that player is a standout in junior Katelyn Pnacek. A starting catcher who also plays some third base, Pnacek is a force at the plate. Through the early portion of the season Pnacek is hitting a sizzling .628 with seven home runs, seven doubles, 31 RBI and five stolen bases.

"Each and every at bat Katelyn Pnacek takes is a highlight," said Klopf. "She has put a lot of time into her game over the last two years and it is paying off for her at the plate."

Freshman Maddy Miller is making a huge impact for the team. A pitcher with a 4-3 record and 49 strikeouts, Miller tossed her best game of the season in a win over

Anchor Bay, the No. 7-ranked team in Division 1. When not pitching Miller plays shortstop, third base or second base. At the plate, Miller is hitting a robust .588 with nine triples, 16 RBI and has stolen 14 bases.

Freshman Nevaeh Chaffee is stepping up big this spring. Chaffee plays shortstop and is the Comets' leadoff hitter. Chaffee is batting .444 with four doubles and eight RBI.

Freshman Harley Lattimer starts in the outfield. Lattimer is a force at the plate where she is hitting .480 with two doubles, one home run and 13 RBI. Those numbers would be even higher but she has missed a few games due to Covid contact tracing.

Sophomore Brooklyn Lattimer has stepped in at first base and has totaled nine RBI at the plate. Lattimer is playing first base for the first time and has done a great job of shoring up the team defense.

Seeing how the young squad is improving from day to day has been gratifying for the coaching staff.

"Watching our extremely young team grow up week by week,



The Coleman softball team is keeping the winning tradition going thanks to some strong efforts from several freshmen and sophomores.

game by game, that has been a highlight," Klopf said. "With one junior returning with varsity experience we are very young. No season for the JV girls last year and starting six freshman most games can make things interesting."

While the Comets are young, they make up for a lack of experience with a competitive attitude.

"Despite our youth, I would say we are for the most part very mentally tough," Klopf said. "There are

days that things don't go right. Maddy Miller is a freshman being asked to be our team ace and her defense is a lot of freshman and first-time varsity players. That can be a recipe for a few errors and mistakes. We have not shown that any mistake has caused us to break. We have stayed mentally strong and when we get back on offense we tend to make up for those mistakes with our bats. Many teams this young could easily fold and roll over, but this group has yet to show that."

DeWitt Senior Is One Of The State's Best Leadoff Hitters

John Raffel Sports Scene

Adam Nolen is DeWitt's softball coach and may have one of the best leadoff hitters in the state with Cassie Sustrich.

She's a senior in her third varsity season.

"Cassie has been an outstanding leader for our team," Nolen said. "She bats lead-off and has mastered slap hitting and being a triple threat player with her speed. She also plays centerfield and is one of the

best defensive players I have had out there. Her growth from her sophomore year to senior year has been extraordinary and her aggressive play has led to success for our program this season."

Sustrich has a batting average of .441 with 26 hits, 27 runs scored and 20 stolen bases.

The key to Sustrich's success has been "Outstanding work ethic; commitment to off-season opportunities and consistency in her play every game," Nolen said.

"In 2019, Cassie was learning and transitioning from being a right handed hitter to a slap hitter on the left side. She worked hard, handled failure well, and continued to improve her craft. It has really paid off and she leads our team in most offensive categories."

"She is good in slap hitting and pitch recognition. Cassie also understands situations very well. She stole home against Grand Ledge in 2019 to tie the game. It was a momentum swing for us and helped us capture the second game

and eventually win the CAAC Blue championship."

As for the rest of the season, "I expect her to continue to lead our team and help us challenge for championships at the end of the season," Nolen said. "She is very active as a volleyball player and softball player. Most of her time is dedicated to improving in those sports."

Sustrich will be attending Aquinas College to play volleyball next fall.



DeWitt's softball team may have one of the best leadoff hitters in the state with Cassie Sustrich.



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Talented Group Of Outfielders Leading Alma Softball Team To A Winning Season

David Cook Sports Scene

Thanks to a mid-season winning streak, the Alma softball team is heading into the state tournament with some good momentum.

Led by a talented and veteran outfield, the Alma softball team is making steady progress with the state tournament coming up.

"We've had a couple of hiccups throughout the year," said Alma coach Troy Anderson. "Covid got us once and knocked some of our

A veteran outfield and an improving pitching staff has the Alma softball team looking to make a state tournament run.

players down but we got them back and we've bounced back. We had a nice little winning streak and that was a big bonus to get us to believe in ourselves."

Leading the way for the Panthers are senior outfielders Alyssa Leister and Dalanie Mott. Leister, a center-fielder, has 4 home runs this season and is hitting close to .500. Mott is also hitting close to .500 and has used her speed to total 7 triples.

"Alyssa and Dalanie are both good team leaders," Anderson said.

"They have done a great job of leading our younger players."

The Panthers are also receiving strong play from three more veterans. Sara Adams is stepping into the pitching rotation and is also a catcher. Angelina Lanham is also one of the team's starting pitchers and plays left field. Lanham is also hitting around the .400 mark. Alyssa Beechler anchors the infield at first base and provides plenty of pop in the batting order with seven home runs and a batting average close to .400.

Alma is also getting a big boost from freshman third baseman Bailey Walkington. Along with hitting in the mid .300s, Walkington provides the team with excellent defense at the hot corner.

"Bailey is one of the best freshmen third basemen I've seen in many, many years," Anderson said. "She has a great glove. On offense she is very quick and produces runs."

Alma brings plenty of momentum into the upcoming district at Chippewa Hills. Big Rapids will be a major hurdle for Alma to get past if it wants to claim the district title.

"We have a good shot at the district if we play well," Anderson said.

Bullock Creek Softball Team Rounding Into Form As State Tourney Approaches

David Cook Sports Scene

With a roster loaded with talented young players, the Bullock Creek softball team is turning in some impressive efforts this spring and continues to improve as the state tournament closes in.

Thanks to some solid pitching and strong hitting, the Lancers compiled 17 wins in their first 25 games this season and the outlook is even more promising.

"We are doing all right," said

Bullock Creek coach Ben Borsenik. "We are right on the cusp of being a very good team. We just have to get better at getting the little things right. The strong point for us is that we have a bunch of kids who love to compete. They don't back down and don't give up."

Pitching is a strong point for this year's squad and juniors Heidi Nagel and Sydney Borsenik give the Lancers a pair of aces. Nagel began the season with an 8-3 record while Borsenik started with a 6-1 record.

Sydney Borsenik is also a force

at the plate. A contact hitter with power, Borsenik is hitting .481 with seven doubles and three home runs. Freshman twins Lauren and Hannah Borsenik are keeping pace with their older sister at the plate. A first baseman, Lauren is hitting .471 with seven doubles and 29 RBI. Hannah Borsenik has a .397 average with three doubles, a home run and 20 RBI.

Emma Lovelace provides more punch to the lineup as she is hitting .418 with eight doubles and two home runs. Allie Young is also having a big season as she is hitting .405 with 11 doubles. Young is one of three seniors on this year's team along with Anna DeBolt and outfielder Courtney Niswander.

Bullock Creek starts a total of four freshmen including the Borsenik twins. Freshman outfielder Emmah Hanson is the fastest



The Bullock Creek softball team has been steadily improving this season and is looking to peak as the state tournament closes in.

player in the program and fills a big need for the team with her outstanding range in the outfield and speed on the bases. Freshman catcher Avery Campau is providing solid defense and is a strong competitor.

"We have some young kids with a lot of talent," coach Borsenik said. "We also have some older kids with experience who are leading the way. Our pitching staff is experienced and they are doing a good job of leading the way."

Ionia Shortstop Enjoying Banner Season

By John Raffel Sports Scene

Ionia's Michaela Castle is having a standout senior season at shortstop for the Bulldogs.

This marks her fourth varsity season if the canceled 2020 campaign is counted.

Her list of athletic achievements at Ionia has been impressive. She was Ionia Athletic Advisory Committee Secretary 2019-2021; MHSAA Scholar-Athlete Scholarship Award 2021 recipient;

all-conference honorable mention shortstop in varsity softball in 2019; all-conference honorable mention in varsity volleyball in 2020; IHS Scholar Athlete Award all seasons applicable; CAAC All Academic Award all seasons applicable; Independent Bank Athlete of the Month in 2020; IHS Citizen of the Month all years applicable; IHS Student of the Month in 2021; Ionia Varsity Volleyball Spark Plug Award in 2020; Ionia varsity softball Most Valuable Player in 2019; varsity softball team captain from 2019 to present; varsity volleyball team

captain in 2020.

Her on-base percentage as a softball freshman was .600.

With the 2020 cancellations, "I was naturally disappointed because I lost out on a season," Castle said. "I felt bad for the seniors, knowing they weren't going to get the closure I felt they deserved. I think we all really worked hard for the season.

"So far this season, we have a winning record and I'm, looking forward to having some goals coming up. We have a lot of potential."

Castle has been hitting around

.500 and indicated it's been the best of her career.

"The key is the mindset and going up with the confidence and idea you can do it," she said. "When you're in the box there's no room for hesitation. You have to go up there ready to go and that you're going to hit the ball."

She started playing shortstop as a freshman but had played in the younger levels.

Castle was able to play travel softball over the summer and will play this summer for Grand Rapids Elite. She will be attending the University of Michigan this fall for strictly academics.



Michaela Castle is playing shortstop and hitting around .500 for Ionia.

Area Softball Teams Turning In Big Seasons, Prepping For Tournament

David Cook Sports Scene

Led by a pair of returning stand-out seniors and a talented junior pitcher, the Breckenridge softball team has been on a roll this season.

Breckenridge improved to 17-1 for the season and wrapped up a share of the Mid-State Activities Conference title with a doubleheader sweep of Vestaburg.

Senior all-state players Cassidy Smith and Summer Smith anchor the Huskie lineup. Cassidy Smith, a catcher, led the team in almost every offensive category two years ago and has picked up where she left off this season hitting in the three spot in the batting order. Summer Smith, a shortstop, is a returning all-region player who hits in the leadoff spot.

"Summer really came into her own in 2019," said Breckenridge coach Mike Ricco. "She is an outstanding softball player."

In the pitching circle, junior Morgan Westall has built on an outstanding freshman season when she

won 10 games. Westall also brings a strong bat to the lineup as she is hitting .589 with 9 doubles, one home run and 18 RBI. Westall has been dominant in the circle at times this season including tossing a perfect game in game one of the doubleheader with Vestaburg and striking out 20 of 21 batters in a no-hitter against Merrill two days prior.

"Our expectations were to win a league championship and to win another district championship," Ricco said. "We knew it would be a difficult challenge after not playing the past year. The sky is the limit for this team as long as they keep working and getting better each and every day."

Essexville-Garber turning in strong season

The softball season has been a successful one for the Essexville-Garber softball team this spring. The Dukes are off to a 22-4 record and are ranked among the honorable-mention in the state in Division 2.

Garber is receiving strong pitching from Sarah Basket who has a 14-2 record with a 1.08 ERA and 161

strikeouts. At the plate, shortstop Payton Dueweke is hitting .523 with 16 stolen bases and 23 runs scored. Ella Wagner is providing plenty of punch with a .420 batting average, 7 home runs, 31 RBI and an .815 slugging percentage.

"We are a very strong team in all areas," said Garber coach Christopher Kokaly. "All the girls have played travel and most high-level class A travel. This is a young team with seven sophomores and one freshman but the skill level they have has been more than adequate for a successful high school team."

Laingsburg claims CMAC softball title

The Laingsburg Wolfpack have been on the prowl this season.

Laingsburg wrapped up the Central Michigan with a perfect 16-0 record. Heading into the final week of the season the Wolfpack have a 24-4 record.

Senior Hailey Bila, a Michigan State recruit, is leading the way for the team along with her younger

sister, freshman shortstop Ashley Bila who hit a sizzling .737 the first week of May.

Veteran Laingsburg coach Jeff Cheadle also won his 800th career game this season.

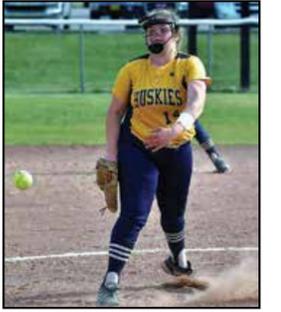
Owosso pitcher turning in big season

Owosso junior pitcher Macy Irelan is racking up some impressive numbers this season. Irelan, who has committed to play college softball at Kent State University, struck out 30 batters during a doubleheader against Clio. That kind of pitching is a big reason why Owosso is ranked sixth in the state in Division 2. Irelan has also been providing plenty of punch at the plate during a doubleheader sweep of Swartz Creek. Irelan totaled eight hits including three doubles and a home run in the opener and another home run in the second game. The wins against Swartz Creek improved Owosso's conference record to 19-1.

Andin Bommarito leading the way for Saginaw Heritage

A varsity player since her freshman year, Andin Bommarito is leading the way for the Saginaw Heritage softball team this spring.

The cleanup hitter in the Heritage



Breckenridge junior Morgan Westall has been dominant in the circle and at the plate, helping the Huskies earn a share of the league title. (Photo credit Morning Sun)

batting order, Bommarito is hitting .433 this season.

"Andin has done a great job at the plate," said Heritage coach Lacy Tol-free. "She is doing exactly what she needs to do as a junior and a cleanup hitter. She knows she is a great hitter and steps in the box every time knowing she will be successful."

An all-around athlete, Bommarito plays basketball during the winter months and also plays travel softball during the summer.

AREA SOFTBALL STATS

Batting average

Ava Johnson, Williamston .693
Shelby Kunkel, Eaton Rapids .638
Morgan Westall, Breckenridge .589
Katelyn Pnacek, Coleman .588
Maddy Miller, Coleman .558
Olivia Bell, Swan Valley .546
Arika Hines, Montrose .518
Cassidy Smith, Breckenridge .511
Summer Smith, Breckenridge .500
Aubree Emmendorfer, Montrose .493
Payton Dueweke, Essexville-Garber .482
Sydney Borsenik, Bullock Creek .481
Alyssa Leister, Alma .480
Dalanie Mott, Alma .480
Zoey Bacon, Central Montcalm .477
Lauren Borsenik, Bullock Creek .471
Natalie Novakowski, Ithaca .470
Isabelle Kammerzell, Montrose .438
Grace Flanigan, Central Montcalm .435
Andin Bommarito, Saginaw Heritage .433
Makayla Allard, Montrose .425
Hannah Koch, Swan Valley .425
Emma Lovelace, Bullock Creek .418
Delaney Conley, Gladwin .417
Allie Young, Bullock Creek .405

RBI

Megan Mankey, Ithaca 44
Makayla Allard, Montrose 35
Olivia Bell, Swan Valley 34
Sydney Borsenik, Bullock Creek 34
Ella Wagner, Essexville-Garber 34
Katelyn Pnacek, Coleman 31
Lauren Borsenik, Bullock Creek 29
Jackie Brinkman, Essexville-Garber 28

Home runs

Ava Johnson, Williamston 10
Natalie Novakowski, Ithaca 10
Alyssa Beechler, Alma 7
Katelyn Pnacek, Coleman 7
Ella Wagner, Essexville-Garber 7
Gabby Hirkaway, Central Montcalm 6
Megan Mankey, Ithaca 6
Emma Miller, Essexville-Garber 5
Jackie Brinkman, Essexville-Garber 4
Alyssa Leister, Alma 4

Natalie Novakowski, Ithaca 4

Doubles

Allie Young, Bullock Creek 11
Summer Smith, Breckenridge 9
Morgan Westall, Breckenridge 9
Emma Lovelace, Bullock Creek 8
Lauren Borsenik, Bullock Creek 7
Sydney Borsenik, Bullock Creek 7
Katelyn Pnacek, Coleman 7

Triples

Maddy Miller, Coleman 9
Dalanie Mott, Alma 7

Stolen bases

Rachel Resio, Swan Valley 37
Arika Hines, Montrose 28
Aubree Emmendorfer, Montrose 24
Ava Slieff, Michigan Lutheran Seminary 20
Isabelle Kammerzell, Montrose 20

Wins

Morgan Westall, Breckenridge 16-1
Lydia Davenport, Ithaca 15-2
Arika Hines, Montrose 15-4

Izzy Doyle, Central Montcalm 12-1
Olivia Bell, Swan Valley 12-5
Gabby Hirkaway, Central Montcalm 10-1
Delaney Conley, Gladwin 10-8

ERA

Morgan Westall, Breckenridge 0.73
Izzy Doyle, Central Montcalm 0.99
Alexis Linton, Essexville-Garber 1.34
Sarah Basket, Essexville-Garber 1.37
Hannah Koch, Swan Valley 1.49
Gabby Hirkaway, Central Montcalm 1.50
Arika Hines, Montrose 1.55
Olivia Bell, Swan Valley 1.68
Delaney Conley, Gladwin 1.93

Strikeouts

Morgan Westall, Breckenridge 236
Arika Hines, Montrose 232
Delaney Conley, Gladwin 224
Lydia Davenport, Ithaca 188
Sarah Basket, Essexville-Garber 183
Olivia Bell, Swan Valley 170
Izzy Doyle, Central Montcalm 110
Hannah Koch, Swan Valley 104

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Alma Runner Going To State Finals, Then To Ferris

John Raffel Sports Scene

Andrew Shafley recently committed to join the cross country and track and field programs at NCAA Division II power Ferris State University.

But he also continues to enjoy a pretty good high school season for Alma.

Shafley qualified for the state meet in the regional by placing

second in his two open events with a 2:03.77 in the 800 meters and 4:33.19 in the 1,600 meters. His 1,600 meters time was a personal record while his PR in the 800 meters came on May 14 in the Alma Invitational at 2:03.61.

Shafley has been the anchor of the 4x800 relay, which placed fourth and the 4x400 relay which placed eighth at the regional meet.

"It's hot, thank God for the clouds," Shafley said after the

meet.

Shafley said he plans on going into mechanical engineering program and was attracted by Ferris' campus.

"With COVID and not being able to run my junior year, I didn't get too many offers."

Shafley had focused on sprints and the pole vault prior to his junior year.

He hopes for a medal in his

events at the state meet.

"I try to stick with the guy in the lead and hope I can outkick him," Shafley said.

He indicated track is his best sport and the 800 is his best event.

When the season ends, Shafley will continue to run. He has a summer running plan all set.

Running in college was a plan which just recently came up, Shafley said.



Andrew Shafley will be running collegiately at Ferris State.

Alma Sprinter Set For State Meet

John Raffel Sports Scene

Alma junior Trinity Greer could not have picked a better time to have his personal records in the 100 and 200.

It came in the regional championship meet on May 22 at Chippewa Hills. She won both events with personal records of 12.74 in the 100 and 26.15 on the 200 meters.

She was also the third leg of the 4x100 relay which was second and the 4x200 relay which was first at the regional. This means she will be running four state finals events on June 5 at Zeeland.

"I exceeded my expectations, but I'm willing to push myself further for the state finals," Greer said, adding she considers the 200 to be her best event. "I have a love for the 100 but I'm doing better in the 200s this year.

"I have a great acceleration in the middle of my race and confidence is also what keeps me going. I think the season has gone pretty well. Now we're not taking meets for granted. Everytime we run, we do at it 100 percent."

Her outstanding season "definitely" makes up for last year when COVID canceled the season, Greer said.

Looking at the state meet, "I

definitely want to have more confidence, stay relaxed and stay smooth," she added. "I'm always grateful for the opportunity."

As a freshman, she ran at the state meet in the 4x100 relays.

"I know exactly what it's like," Greer said. "I'm going to be nervous. But overall, I'm going to be ready. I'm going to focus on detail work and mostly coming out of the blocks."

Alma's Trinity Greer will be in the state meet in four events.



AREA TRACK STATS

BOYS LEADERS

100 meters: Charlie Steinhaus, Breckenridge, 11.01
 200 meters: Braden Crosby, Rockford, 22.20
 400 meters: Noah Reuter-Gushow, Midland Dow, 50.84
 800 meters: Brady McArdle, Davison, 1:58
 1,600 meters: Kenny Minto, Davison, 4:21.26
 3,200 meters: Braxton Lamey, Ithaca, 9:26.62
 110 hurdles: Gage Martin, Rockford, 14.74
 300 hurdles: Gage Martin, Rockford, 39.32
 4x100 relay: Dorjan Jackson, Pierre Butler, Malachi Barendila, Alex Hosey, East Lansing, Rockford 42.59
 4x200 relay: Shawn Sims, Jacob Peck, Gage Martin, Braden Crosby, Rockford, 1:28.72
 4x400 relay: Joshua Barr, Dominic Owen, Josiah Burr, Noah Reuter-Gushow, Midland Dow, 3:26.96
 4x800 relay: Jayden Page, Matthew Zeieke, David Ferguson,

Nathan Faust, East Lansing, 8:09.01
 Shot put: Zane Forist, Carson-City Crystal, 64-7.5
 Discus: Zane Forist, Carson-City Crystal, 200-11
 High jump: Jalen Nelson, Dansville, 6-8; Ben Arens, Pewamo-Westphalia, 6-8
 Pole vault: Adam Blue, Grand Ledge, 14-6
 Long jump: Derrick Voltz, Carrollton, 23-2

GIRLS LEADERS

100 meters: Comari Hawkins, East Lansing, 11.83
 200 meters: Comari Hawkins, East Lansing, 24.05
 400 meters: Morgan Hetherington, Grand Ledge, 57.69
 800 meters: Lani Bloom, Ithaca, 2:16.22
 1,600 meters: Lani Bloom, Ithaca, 4:50.46
 3,200 meters: Lani Bloom, Ithaca, 10:28.04
 110 hurdles: Aimee Zang, Rockford, 15.49

300 hurdles: Allison Hawk, Davison, 46.58
 4x100 relay: Olivia Dirske, Avery Wilson, Alison Hawk, Davison, 49.39
 4x200 relay: Janell Brown, Iyana Coates, Corinne Jones, Comari Hawkins, East Lansing, 1:41.41
 4x400 relay: Karlie Gardner, Kate Zang, Grace Flanders, Emma Flanders, Rockford, 3:59.08
 4x800 relay: Jenna Abell, Payton Kuhn, Jaiden Dickman, Libby Munderloh, St. Louis, 9:33.32
 Shot put: Jayden Ray, Midland, 38-9.75
 Discus: Jayden Ray, Midland, 124-2
 High jump: Kaylee Diamond, Lowell, 5-5
 Pole vault: Morgan Vargo, Rockford, 11-6
 Long jump: Morgan Vargo, Rockford, 18-7.75

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Chippewa Hills Track Girls Extend Championship Streak

John Raffel Sports Scene

The loss of a 2020 spring season didn't deter the Chippewa Hills girls track team from running away with another title.

The Warriors made it 18 straight conference titles this season, defeating the likes of Central Montcalm and Fremont have some quality athletes that will push our girls," Hatfield said. "Our team's focus on doing well in big meets is incredible. Our freshman and sophomores have shown they can go after it at a high level just like our upperclassmen."

Chippewa Hills went 7-0 in its league duals and won them comfortably.

Distance runner Sarah Storey

went and raced the elite 3200 at the Shepherd Invitational. She ran well and has the second fastest 3,200 in school history (11:19.38). Coach Zach Hatfield expected the CSAA Gold Conference finals to be a big meet. "Central Montcalm and Fremont have some quality athletes that will push our girls," Hatfield said. "Our team's focus on doing well in big meets is incredible. Our freshman and sophomores have shown they can go after it at a high level just like our upperclassmen."

Ariana Todd as a freshman has been dominating the sprints in

dual meets.

Hatfield was slated to take over as coach last season before it was shut down.

"It has been difficult to pinpoint. I have seen a lot of varying response to losing a season," Hatfield said. "Some kids are more focused than ever to enjoy every moment and others have left the joys of being on a team and those experiences behind.

"Last year's senior class was special as all are for us. I still remember quickly calling all the seniors to try to tell them before word was out that we were finished

was an easy decision for me, as her coach to keep her jumping."

Feldpausch said it's easy to explain Wieber's success.

"She is driven to have success and enjoy her last season as an athlete at Fowler High School," Feldpausch said. "Leah was on the team in 2018 and 2019 when our girls team won the state championship. Leah ran at the state meet both as a freshman and sophomore and is excited to get back there again this year. She had mono in 2019 so this year she has had huge improvements.

"I expect Leah to be on the podium at the state meet. Leah runs cross country and plays basketball in the winter so she came into the

last spring. That was a terrible day. Kyla Thorne was a senior state qualifier in the pole vault and conference champion. Natalie Newcombe had put in tremendous work and had a phenomenal career in both cross country and track. Madelynn Webster in the sprints always came through in big meets and one of the best in the area. Emma Smith was always a smiling face in the throws for us and enjoyed being a positive influence for the team."

Key contributors this year:

Emily Fredrick, Elle Lowery, Rachael Miller, Raina Abbott, Margo Sisco, Tori Snyder, Sarah Storey, Katelynn Webster, Kendra Ray Shelby Fall, Sienna Matheny, Ari Todd, Lindsey Gibson, Brooklynn Webster, Ava Hollandsworth and Haylee Livermore.



Sara Storey (left) of Chippewa Hills led her team to an 18th straight league title.

Wieber Sparks Fowler's Amazing Relay Teams

John Raffel Sports Scene

It continues to assist Fowler girls coach Jill Feldpausch on the season being enjoyed by her senior, Leah Wieber, on the track and field team.

"Leah has excelled all expectations I had for her this season," Feldpausch said. "As a freshman, Leah ran mostly mid-distance and as a sophomore he had mono which greatly affected her season. Now that she is a healthy senior, I

can actually see now much sprint speed she has as well.

"Leah is a key relay runner and runs in the 4x200, 4x200, 4x400 and 4x800. Our 4x400 and 4x800 currently are among the top two teams in the state. For fun, she wanted to try long jump at her last dual conference. She practiced it two different days before competing at meet. Her best jump of the day was 15 feet, 8 inches. That puts her in second at our regional and in the top 10 at the state. It

was an easy decision for me, as her coach to keep her jumping."

Feldpausch said it's easy to explain Wieber's success.

"She is driven to have success and enjoy her last season as an athlete at Fowler High School," Feldpausch said. "Leah was on the team in 2018 and 2019 when our girls team won the state championship. Leah ran at the state meet both as a freshman and sophomore and is excited to get back there again this year. She had mono in 2019 so this year she has had huge improvements.

"I expect Leah to be on the podium at the state meet. Leah runs cross country and plays basketball in the winter so she came into the

season in pretty good shape. Since our girls basketball team won the Division 4 state championship and since that season got started late, Leah missed the first three weeks of the season due to basketball and then she missed the next two weeks due to quarantine. Her success so far this year has been achieved after missing the first five weeks of practice."

Leah, Feldpausch added, "is a leader with a lot of enthusiasm. She is a great captain and was really missed when she was out with basketball and quarantine. She is the type of athlete others like to be around as she is always cheerful and encouraging even when working hard."



Leah Wieber is a key relay runner and runs in the 4x200, 4x200, 4x400 and 4x800.

St. Louis Girls Enjoy Regional Championship Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

St. Louis track teams were up for another strong season this spring.

The girl Sharks on May 21 edged Shepherd 120-100.5 for the regional crown.

St. Louis girls, coached Brian Tomanek, have been a power in the TVC and recognized as among the best teams in Division 3.

Top athletes have been Chloe O'Boyle in the 100 meters, Libby

Munderloh in the 300 meter hurdles, 200 meters (27.16), Jaiden Dickman in the 800 meters, 1,600 meters and 3,200 meters, Munderloh in the 4x200 relay, Mikaaaila, Mikenna and Monika Borie in the 4x400 relays, along with Chloe Boyle, plus Natalee Hoyt in the long jump.

Mikenna Borie won the 3,200 meters at regionals in 11:48.28. Dickman was second in 11:51.73. Monika Borie was second in the 300 meter hurdles (50.91). The

Sharks placed in the top three in all four relays and won the 800 in 9:42.20. Korah Honig was second in the discus and shot put.

Jay Puffpaff is coaching the St. Louis boys

"It definitely took a bit longer to round into form this season," Puffpaff said. "However, I was very pleased with the work our athletes have put in and the resilience that they have shown over this past year. We were young last season so most are back."

Leaders for the Sharks are in the sprints: Iggy Jackson and Andrew Taipalus, in the throws Ben Dou-suah and in the distances: Keegan Honig, Aaron Bowerman, Nate March, Ben March, Dylan Marr and Joe Erickson.

"The goals for the season are to continue to progress and to be



St. Louis girls celebrate another regional title.

performing our best at the end of the season during the championship phase of the season," Puffpaff said. "The athletes have worked extremely hard to get back up to speed and give themselves the best opportunity to compete well in those championship meets.

"Our strength lies in the depth

in our distance crew. We will be relying on them heavily to overcome other areas in which we are not as deep. We are just looking for our athletes to continue to work hard and focus on the things in our control as we move through the season and try to prepare for the end of the season."

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Carrollton Long Jumper Having Sensational Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

David Jaworski is both head track coach and varsity football offensive coordinator at Carrollton High School and has had the pleasure of coaching Derrick Voltz in both sports.

Voltz has had three years of



varsity football and three years of basketball plus two with track with a year lost due to COVID.

"DJ has done an excellent job for us so far this season," Jaworski said. "He has done everything that we have asked and he continues to improve each week. He is at practice every day and works hard to get better when he is there. He usually runs the 100 and 4x100, he long jumps and then splits time between the 200 or high jump."

Voltz's longest jump of the season is 22 feet and 2.5 inches.

His best 100 time of the year is 11.04 seconds

"His keys to success has been a lot of just maturing physically and mentally as a young man," Jaworski said. "He has

been a part of a lot of meaningful games throughout his career here at Carrollton. He has played in two playoff football games, made a district finals game as a sophomore and a regional game as a junior in basketball and was in the 100-meter dash state finals as a freshman. He has also travelled and played a lot of AAU basketball against some very good players throughout the country and all that high level of play has allowed him to stay grounded in big moments.

"We did not have a season last year and he did not long jump as a freshman. This is his first year long jumping, but he has gone from jumping 18 feet to jumping over 21 feet or so consistently. It has been a tough year because many of our meets have seen some not so nice weather and no one is going to PR when the weather is not nice. We are hoping that as he becomes more consistent with his approach and take off, the distance will continue to improve."

Voltz's asset has been his speed.

"His biggest thing is using all his

Derrick Voltz has been a standout long jumper for Carrollton.

speed he has and jumping ability but yet staying under control on his approach," Jaworski said. "We try to tell him not to focus and faulting too much and just focus on hitting your best jump and our long jump coach will adjust his steps to make sure he does not fault. This is coming from two years ago in track, but his biggest improvement is just his attitude in which he practices.

"As a freshmen, he relied in his athletic ability to get him by and do well, and for the most part he could win quite a bit doing that, in all three sports. As he has gotten older and matured, he has really focused more on his technique and form. He has improved his running form, worked on blocks and has improved each week with his long jump form."

The most memorable moment "for Voltz has been his 22 foot, 2.5-inch jump," Jaworski said. "Originally he had hit a 21-6 jump before that and did not plan to attempt another jump. He went and started working on handoffs and blocks to get ready for the races.

His father, who is a huge supporter of him and Carrollton, and I might have told him another person beat him by a couple inches. Needless to say, he came back with some of the team, faulted his second attempt and hit his 22-2.5 on the next one."

Jaworski expects plenty from Voltz. "I expect him to beat his current jump and make the state finals in long jump, make the state finals in the 100, perhaps even the 200 and then work with our 4x100 team to get to the finals also," Jaworski said. "He is always doing something. Last year was a little different with COVID, but in most years he is traveling all over the US playing AAU basketball, while also being at almost all of our football off season training.

"This year he plans to attend football camps at Grand Valley, Central Michigan, and Wisconsin and I am sure will attend others as well. We are going to look at doing some indoor meets next year if his schedule allows him to continue to work on long jump."

DeWitt Pole Vault Continues Strong Performances

John Raffel Sports Scene

Ron Womboldt is the assistant track and field coach at DeWitt and Michael Price is the pole vault coach.

They've enjoyed working with vaulter Jon Popowitz who has had a sensational season.

Popowitz has participated in

varsity track all four years.

"This season, Jon has worked extremely hard to improve his vaulting skills," Womboldt said. "He participated in this past spring's pole vaulting championships and took ninth place. He reached a height of 13 feet, 6 inches. The key to his success is training in the offseason. Jon puts in a lot of time in the offseason and stays in good condition year around.

"Since 2019, Jon has become a taller, stronger and faster athlete. He has increased his personal pole vault record by three feet. This year, Jon has also contributed in sprint events, running in the 4x100, 4x200 relays where he runs anchor for both teams.

A memorable moment for Popowitz was "when the Coach was thinking he could beat me in a 200-meter race," Womboldt said.

Womboldt's hopes for Popowitz is he would break the DeWitt High School pole vault record of 14 feet and qualify for the state meet.

"Even though Jon doesn't participate in any other sport, he is a model student that gets good grades and is respectful towards others," Womboldt said. "During practice and meets, he always gives his personal best. He is a great young man with a successful future in front of him.

"The boys team has done fairly well. We are looking forward to some solid regional performances in a couple of weeks."

Popowitz's PR has been 12-9 this season. He has also been in the 200 meters and on the relay squad.



Dewitt Pole vaulter Jon Popowitz has enjoyed a sensational season for the Panthers this Spring.

Saginaw Sprinter Has Been Tough To Beat

John Raffel Sports Scene

Saginaw senior sprinter Aida Adams is having a remarkable season in track and field. She won two events in the Division 3 regional with a time

of 12.790 for the 100 and 26.62 for the 200.

Earlier this year, she had a 12.50-second clocking for a personal record in the 100.

Her coach is Raphell Cooper.

"She's had a great season," Cooper said.

Adams has also been in the sprint relays. She was an all-stater as a sophomore. Cooper expects her to be a strong contender at the state meet.

"She's good in building up her speed," Cooper said, adding that despite not having a 2020 season, "she's picked up where she left off. She runs summer track with a track club. She has run indoor also with a track club."

Adams also plays volleyball but has

focused on track as her main sport. She is planning on going to a college track program at a Big 10 school but will announce later which school she is attending, Cooper said.



Saginaw's Aida Adams will be running at a Big 10 school.



Mason Sumner is having another strong season for Breckenridge boys track.

Breckenridge Boys Track Squad A Powerful Force

John Raffel Sports Scene

Breckenridge track and field Coach Kurt Gulick has a boys team that's exciting to watch this season.

He's very appreciative of having a spring sports season.

"I feel like no spring sports has had a big impact on this season so far," Gulick said. "We are still improving but I feel like if we had a season last year, this year would be

even better."

Graduates from last year were Colton Chovanec, Ashton Gillis, Jon Markley, Weston Wise, Baily Saunders, Spencer Ramereiz, Myra Marr and Annie Laurenz.

"These individuals were all team leaders and did so much for our program," Gulick said. "Last year would've been really special with these athletes. They still show up to things for this year's team and still want to be involved."

Lani Bloom Leads Strong Ithaca Attack

John Raffel Sports Scene

Daryl Dawe likes the prospects for his 2021 Ithaca girls track team

The Yellowjackets are again competing in the TVC West.

With having no spring sports in 2020, "the biggest impact is with

the freshmen and sophomores," Dawe said. "I can really see the lack of experience. Their eyes are wide open and they fire off 1,000 questions. The juniors and seniors have a little experience and half the girls ran cross country, so that builds confidence."

Looking ahead to 2021, "Lani

Bloom, Grace Weburg, Josie Morrow, Mary Culp, Jozlyn Baxter, Alli Derby Rachel Sierakowski are going to be the keys to our team," Dawe said.

"This is my first year with this team. Our distance and high jump are our bread and butter. We need more sprinters and we need to improve on our confidence but that will come with time and experience."

Bloom, a sprinter, has set personal records this season in the 200 meters (28.34), and 400 meters

(1:00.16). She also has a PR in the 1,600 meters in 4:50.46 and in the 3,200 meters of 10:28.04. She has also had success with relays.

In the TVC, "I would have to think St. Louis, MLS, and Ithaca are the strongest teams," Dawe said.

Dawe didn't think the late ending of the winter season had any impact on the spring sports season.

"I had a few basketball players, but as long as the kids are doing something, then their late start did not bother me," Dawe said

Lani Bloom leads the way for Ithaca's girls track team this season.



Lansing Catholic Athlete Very Versatile

John Raffel Sports Scene

Tim Simpson is track and field coach at Lansing Catholic and has enjoyed watching senior Noel Spence, who has been with the program ever since he was a freshman.

"At the outset, we viewed Noel's season in three parts," Simpson said. "We had our dual meets and invitationals, regionals, league meet and state meet, and the possibility of a post-season national meet," Spence said. "Our first goal is always to stay healthy and so far we have been able to do that. We also had goals for our team, such as placing high in our league, maybe winning an invitational or two, and scoring at the state finals. A lot of our athletes, boys and girls, were

talented enough to cover a lot of different events at meets and that helped us stay competitive.

"Noel was one of these versatile athletes and, in fact, is one of the most versatile athletes in the state of Michigan this season, maybe even nation-wide. During the first part of the season, Noel participated in a lot of different events to help the team score points. Now, we are headed into the second part of the season and we hope look forward to competing in four events, probably the high jump, long jump, open 400 and the 4x400 relay."

Spence is extremely versatile.

"As evidence of his versatility, Noel has won 10 different events this season at dual meets or invitationals including all five field

events, 400, both hurdles, and two relays," Simpson said. "He also has placed in the top 3 at invitationals in the 100. During the indoor season, he was all-state in the pole vault, high jump, discus, and was the indoor state champion in the long jump. Between the indoor and outdoor season, he has high jumped 6-6, long jumped 22-1, ran a 51.6 in 400, an 11.63 in 100, pole vaulted 13-6 and thrown the shot put 42 feet. Areas of needed improvement are in the hurdles and discus.

"Like all successful athletes, Noel trains hard. He is focused, doesn't take time off at practice, and has goals. He isn't afraid to try different events and, in fact, welcomes the challenges. Noel has improved his long jump numbers from the 2019 season by about 10-to-12 inches and his 100 and 400 times are markedly improved. However, what might be more impressive is the number of events in which he is competitive."

Simpson has noticed two areas

of improvement since his last competitive season: his speed and strength.

"He is nearly a full second faster in the 100 and 2-to-3 seconds faster in the 400," Simpson said. "He has gained 5-to-7 pounds since 2019, all muscle, and that has helped his speed and throws. He will need to continue gaining strength to participate at the next level in college."

Plenty is expected of Spence.

"If Noel stays healthy and performs up to expectations, he has a chance of being at the state finals again and scoring some points," Simpson said. "He was all state in the high jump as a freshman, and all-state in the high jump and long jump as a sophomore. This season he has a chance to repeat that feat, as well as be on the podium as part of our 4x400 relay team and the open 400.

"Noel was recently accepted to participate in the decathlon at the National Scholastic Athletic Foun-



Lansing Catholic's Noel Spence has been exceptional in field events.

ation (NSAF) meet at historic Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon. This is a select field of only 12-16 decathletes who qualify. This will be a great opportunity for him as Michigan does not contest the decathlon at the high school level. He will also be heading to Michigan State in the fall and hopes to compete in the decathlon at the Big Ten level."



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New Lothrop Seniors Rule Relay Teams

John Raffel Sports Scene

Jamie Krupp is New Lothrop High School's boys track and field coach and has enjoyed working with seniors Carson Mulcahy and Will Muron.

"Both have been on the varsity since their freshmen season," Krupp said. "Both have been members of the 4x100m and 4x200m relays since their freshmen season. Will has had to battle through some injuries. He has not been 100 percent since early in the season. He won the 100-meter dash at the Fowler invite and placed second at the Breckenridge Invite in the 100 meters (season best 11.21). Will also won the 100 meters and 200 meters at the first MMAC League Jamboree.

"He was a member of the 4x100m relay that also placed first.

He participated in the shot put, an event he took up this year to help the team, and placed third. He is currently healing up and hopes to be 100 percent for Regionals."

Mulcahy is having his best season of his career.

"He has set PRs in both the 100 meters (11.74) and 200-meter (23.61) dashes," Krupp said. "He was runner-up in both the 100 and 200-meter dashes at both MMAC league jamborees. He is a regular on our 4x100 and 4x200m relays. Carson is also battling injuries of late and we are hoping he will be 100 percent for the regionals.

"Both athletes want to get better each day. They come to practice with a great attitude and a willingness to learn. Will has made tremendous strides in the sprints. He ran indoor track and field during the 2019/2020 indoor season. He was ready to make a big jump in

the outdoor season in 2020, but the pandemic derailed those plans. If he can get back to near 100 percent, he will be a factor at the state finals in the 100-meter dash."

Carson, Krupp pointed out, "has gone from a contributor on the relays and placing in the 100 and 200-meter dashes in dual meets, to an athlete that has a really good shot at qualifying for the state finals in the 200-meter dash. He is one of the leading scorers on our team this season.

"Will has improved his sprint mechanics (frontside) and how he prepares for races. Some little things he didn't enjoy in 2019 such as hurdle mobility and warming up are things he excels at now. Carson has improved his block starts. Early in the 2019 season he was using a two-point standing start. Now he pushes much longer from the blocks and his event times reflect that. He also has improved on how he approaches his races."

Both athletes have had memorable moments at New Lothrop.

"By far the most memorable moment was the 4x100m relay team at

the 2019 MHSAA State Finals," Krupp said. "The relay was seeded fourth entering the state finals, but we were able to win the state championship in the event. Carson was the opening leg and handed off to Will our second leg of the relay. Also, both were members of the 4x200 meters relay that placed second that same season. During their freshmen seasons (2018), both were members of the 4x100 and 4x200 relays that placed at the state finals.

"If both are healthy going into regionals and the state finals we expect both athletes to be on the podium for relays or individual sprint events. They both spend a lot of time in the weight room in the off season. Like I said earlier, Will ran indoor track for the first time



Pictured from two years ago is New Lothrop's 4x100m Relay State Championship Relay. From (L-R) Carson Mulcahy, Will Muron, Trevor Bishop and Aidan Harrison. Mulcahy and Muron have been on this season's team.

in 2019/2020. They were both regulars for our winter conditioning program this year. Both participate in football. They were members of this year's state championship football team."

New Lothrop won the first MMAC Jamboree (April 28th) and placed second (Chesaning was first) at the second jamboree (May 5). The team also won the Webberville Invitational (April 30).

Greenville Girls Sporting Another Solid Track Team

John Raffel Sports Scene

Greenville girls track coach Cari Scholtens has anticipated having another strong team this season.

"Not having a season in 2020 has impacted us greatly," she said. "We are left with a very young team. Most years I have to teach the freshmen the ropes of track and field. This year I have to teach freshmen and sophomores. But as problems go, I'm pretty glad mine is having a lot of young athletes. That'll serve us well in the coming years.

"We will miss Sara Yob, Teryn Creasap. Both of these young ladies were real spark-plug athletes willing to jump into whatever place

and sprints) was the best shot-putter in our conference. She will be competitive again this year."

Greenville, like all other girls track teams, have been challenged with numbers.

"Frankly, this year is about rebuilding," Scholtens said. "COVID has gutted our most valuable numbers and now it is about recruiting, developing and retaining young athletes. I think we are already shining in that regard and I am excited to see where we go from here.

"We have a lot of strength in the field events and are beginning to build a competitive set of relays. Our team is putting in the work. Any weakness we have is no fault of the girls who are present. We need more distance girls. We have a bigger squad of them than in 2019 and hopefully our numbers will continue to grow. No pun intended but this season has been a sprint not a

marathon. They are trying to jam as much into a shortened period as they can, which I appreciate greatly. That said, it's hard on the kids who get contact traced and have to be out for two weeks. That constitutes a good chunk of the season this year.



Greenville girls get ready for a meet earlier this season.

"I am truly pumped for the future of women's track at Greenville. In a year when most are struggling for numbers, our girls numbers are skyrocketing. With the guidance and leadership of my older girls and a healthy squad of younger girls, I think the future of this program is bright."

confidence heading into the championship season. His shot put is coming along, but once he hit 50 feet, he has stayed there. He's getting ready to put together big throws there, too."

Carson City-Crystal Boys Hope To Be State Contenders

John Raffel Sports Scene

Zane Forist leads the way for a talented Carson City-Crystal track and field team, which could be a contender to go all the way.

There are 10 returning starters from last season.

Newcomers to watch are Paul Wright, Collin Farmer, Brayden Clark and Taiden Robinson.

Cavanaugh Barker and Ashton Keiffer are captains.

Key athletes include Zane Forist in throws, Coleman Clark in distances, Ashton Keiffer (distance), Cavanaugh Barker (hurdles & jumps), and Cole Stone (long sprints/mid distance).

"Forist, Clark and Barker will all contend for state titles in their events while Keiffer and Stone will be in the mix for All-State honors," CC-C coach Grant Woodman said.

"Navigating the Pandemic regulations and keeping people on the field," has been a challenge, Woodman noted.

"The boys have the goal of winning the MSAC and contending for a state championship," coach Grant Woodman said. "With Forist, Clark, and Barker contending for state titles, and the influx of underclassmen coming out, the boys team has the depth to make a championship run."

Woodman also has high hopes for his girls team. Key graduates from last year were Allyson Stevens (Olivet), Sarah McCrackin (GVSU) and Aoife O'Grady (Calvin).

Newcomers to watch Mary Beth Hyatt, Elia Gravalos, Paige Fleisher and Aubrey Hessbrook.

Captains are Molly Dailey (mid distance) and Lyvia Halfman (throws).

Key athletes this year are Molly Dailey, a returning All Stater in the

800 meters), Aubrey Hessbrook (sprints, multi-events), Paige Ewalt (long sprints/mid distance), Lyvia Halfman and Mary Beth Hyatt (distance).

"These ladies, led by Molly, will all be key scorers in their areas," Woodman said. "They will be key in how the team performs as a whole through their attitudes and performances."

Depth will be a challenge, Woodman said.

"We lost three multiple time state qualifiers in Stevens, O'Grady and McCrackin," Woodman said. "We have some incoming freshmen that will help provide a spark for the team. The goal is to contend for the MSAC title and get as many qualified for the state meet as possible."



Zane Forist continues to have an impressive season in the throws for Carson City-Crystal's track and field team.

Laingsburg Pole Vaulter Bidding For State Crown

John Raffel Sports Scene

Brian Borgman is Laingsburg High School's head boys and girls track coach and has one word to describe Shaily Baynes' season so far: "Unbelievable!"

"She broke her own school record in pole vault that she set as a sophomore from 9-6 to now 11," Borgman

said. "She was also on the 4x100 relay team that set a new school record of 51.76."

Baynes has been working out for offseason training at Landon Athletics "and she absolutely kills it in the weight room, and she is now the No. 1 vaulter in D3 by 1 foot. It's been memorable watching her and her team beat the season record by more than one second in 4x100, and she

continues to set her pole vault record higher by the week.

"If she remains healthy, I expect her to win the D3 women's pole vault."

Baynes also runs cross country and plays basketball. She has signed a letter of intent to vault next year at Aquinas College.

"We are 3-1 in conference meets

with only 20 girls and eight of them are also dual sporting," Borgman said. "We are talented but not very deep. Our only real weakness is distance runners right now."

Baynes has won the pole vault in all eight competitions so far including a 10-6 for first place in the Region 29 Division 3 meet at Bath

BC Western Thrower Continues To Excel

John Raffel Sports Scene

Mike Nesbitt is coaching at Bay City Western for boys track & field and has Justin Doty in the roster for four successful seasons.

"Justin has been throwing consistently in the 170s in the discus, instead of just hitting one throw," Nesbitt said. "That should give him

confidence heading into the championship season. His shot put is coming along, but once he hit 50 feet, he has stayed there. He's getting ready to put together big throws there, too."

His PR has been 175 feet 4 inches in the shot put and 53-2 in the discus.

The keys to Doty's success has been "staying healthy and continuing to work during the

covid breaks and shutdowns," Nesbitt said. "His PR's are pretty close to his 2019 stats. The biggest improvement is his consistency. In 2019, he had big throws here and there. Now, he is throwing big and multiple good throws every time he steps into the ring."

Nesbitt added Doty has improved in his footwork and release.

"Making all-state in 2019 along with winning the Saginaw Valley League championship in the shot put and discus," have been highlights for the BC Western standout, Nesbitt said. "I expect him

to get better as the competition gets tougher in the championship time of the season. He thrives on competing and the better the field of competitors, the better he performs.

"Over the years, Justin has traveled to train with a throwing group in the Farmington area. Just being around those types of kids, creates an environment to excel. Plus, our throws coach, Paul Jacobs, has worked with the throwers a couple of days a week during the winter.

Doty also had an excellent football career for Western.



Justin Doty has been throwing consistently in the 170s in the discus.

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Thelen Enjoying Another Outstanding Season For P-W

John Raffel Sports Scene

Sophia Thelen has been a stand-out sprinter and pole vaulter for Pewamo-Westphalia's track and field team.

It's the fourth year of track for the P-W senior.

"So far I'm really happy with how this season is turning out," Thelen said. "I have been able to get some personal records in my events which

is always exciting. I was a little nervous going into the season because we missed last year's season, so you could say we have doubled the freshmen. We have a young team but everyone has stepped up and really tried their hardest this year and I am so proud of them.

"I have been dedicating myself to my goals and putting in the work to achieve them. Coach trains us to be the best that we can and peak at the right times in the season so for me,

I do my personal best every practice and trust the process."

Thelen notes she has been able to PR in 100 (12.24), 200 (25.6), and in pole vault (10-0).

"I am very close to breaking my school record in both the 100 and 200 which has been a goal of mine throughout high school and plan to get them before the season is over," she said. "One of my favorite track memories will always be winning the state championship in 2019 with my girls team but also watching the boys 4x400 meter relay that night. They didn't end up winning and took runner up for the whole meet but everyone left at the meet and was running back and forth across the

football field cheering as loud as they could. It was just such an amazing thing and I will never forget it."

Thelen expects to break the 200 record and then win the state title again.

"I have been training all winter, between lifting and doing workouts that coach would put together for us," she said. "I felt ready for this season and what it had in store for me.

"On the girls side we have won every meet this year. We are very strong and I am looking forward to how fast we get at the end of the season."

Mason Thrower Has Enjoyed A Dominant Spring In Both Shot Put, Discus

John Raffel Sports Scene

He's a senior and Mason thrower James Horn is having another capable season.

Coach Eric Haynie has been impressed with his athlete's four-year varsity career.

"Jimmy has done a great job this season," Horn said. "He shows up every day and works hard. He has been a consistent performer his entire high school career. As a sophomore, James was league champ in shot put and

qualified for states in the shot put, finishing 12th. He is excited to have a chance to improve his performance at the state meet and looks to qualify in the discus this year as well."

At the regional meet, Horn notched his 12th win in 12 meets this season in both events and threw personal records. He had 54-2 1/2 in shot put and 154-2 in the discus.

"Jimmy is very driven," his coach said. "He continued to work on his throwing last sum-

mer and fall. This winter he found some warehouse space that he could use when he was unable to throw outdoors."

From the 2019 season, Horn threw the discus 49 feet, 2 1/2 inches and has thrown it 53-4 this season, His discus throw went from 134 in 2019 to 148-9 in 2021.

"Jimmy has worked hard to transition from the glide to the spin in the shot," Haynie said. "He has put a lot effort into improving his footwork. I am very excited for Jimmy and all of the senior

athletes who are able to compete this spring. He was extremely disappointed that he was unable to compete last spring. He wants to compete at the next level in college and felt missing last season was a setback."

Horn also played varsity football all four years at MHS.

"I think his most impressive physical attribute is his explosiveness," Haynie said. "When the shot leaves his hand, it is with a tremendous amount of force."

Mason finished 5-0 in the league, and won the Lakewood and Mason Invitational.

"Jimmy earned first place in both shot and discus in all of the competitions he has been in this year," Haynie said.



James Horn has won all 12 of his meets in the shot put and discus and is regional champ in both.



Lowell Lacrosse Team Gets Off To Promising Start

John Raffel Sports Scene

Coach Austin Buckius' Lowell boys lacrosse team got off to an 11-3 start and is expected to be a top contender for the season.

Lowell competes in the OK White Tier 3 Conference.

"Our whole 2020 season was cancelled so we have had some kids that have not played in 21 months but we also had some players who

were able to play a little travel," Buckius said. "We are no worse off though than most other programs. One of our players, Grant LaBarre was a dedicated FOGO who never had a chance to compete his senior year. We would have liked to have seen him win a few more faceoffs."

Lowell standouts are Carter Sherman, senior (goalie), Sam Lixie, senior (Midi), Jake Hessler, senior (FOGO), Connor Lixie, sophomore (Midi), Owen Carpen-

ter, junior (attack), Cole Huisman, senior (attack), Sam Kaminski junior (LSM, D Pole), and Andrew Rogers, freshman (attack).

"They have to play to their fullest potential," Buckius said. "They need to focus on the strategies and fundamentals taught by coaches and respect each other and our opponents. There are always high-level teams that are in West Michigan with many players going on to play in college. Our team will

be competitive in the conference this year."

Lacrosse, like other high school sports, has had to overcome the negative effects of COVID 19.

"We had players who did not come out this year to play lacrosse as there was little to no time to recover from winter sports," Buckius said. "The whole disruption has been difficult for many spring programs."



The Okemos boys lacrosse team is not only experiencing a winning season this spring, but the squad also won a league title for the first time since 2016.

Okemos Boys Lacrosse Team Captures First Conference Title Since 2016

David Cook Sports Scene

Heading into the season, the Okemos boys lacrosse team was just happy to be playing after having the 2020 lacrosse season lost to the Covid 19 virus. Once the season began the Chieftains craved even more satisfaction.

The lacrosse season has become even more joyful as not only is Okemos compiling a winning record, but the team won its first conference title since the 2016 season.

Okemos clinched the league title with a come

back behind victory against Haslett. Trailing 5-2 after one period, Okemos stormed back to defeat Haslett 8-6.

With the win Okemos improved to 8-2 for the season. Okemos then added a win against Ypsilanti in the opening game of the state tournament to improve to 9-2.

Team unity is the key to success for Okemos this season as the team has meshed into a solid unit.

"The biggest strength of the team is how well the guys complement each other," said Okemos coach Mike Van

Antwerp. "Guys are filling the roles we need and excelling in those roles and that's a huge part of any success we are having."

On the offensive side of the field, Mitch Chermak is leading the way with 33 goals and 10 assists. Sawyer Van Antwerp is turning in a big season on the offensive end with 16 goals and 27 assists. Gabe Perkins is also coming up big on offense with 15 goals and six assists.

On the defensive end of the field Torben Blaxton has caused 11 turnovers. Casen Faustyn, a long-stick middle, has caused eight turnovers

this season. The team is receiving strong play in goal from goalkeeper Preston Steljes who has a 51% save percentage. The Okemos defense was at its best in the later part of the game with Haslett as the defense limited Haslett to one goal in the final three quarters of the match.

"Just being out there playing together and competing for a league title has been a highlight for us," Van Antwerp said. "We were excited to play for our league championship and we are going to try and win a regional championship."

DeWitt Girls Lacrosse Team Wins First League Championship In Program History

David Cook Sports Scene

Years of hard work paid off in a major way for the DeWitt girls lacrosse team as the Panthers won their first-ever league championship with a big win against Okemos.

The title was the culmination of years of hard work. That hard work has been paying dividends all season as the Panthers opened the year with 10 wins in their first 13 games and are ranked sixth in the state in Division 2. Unbeaten in league play, DeWitt's three losses came against East Grand Rapids, Midland and Brighton, all schools ranked in the top ten in the state.

A total-team effort is the key to success for the team this season. On the offensive side of the field the Panthers are led by Kerrigan

Brown with 63 goals and 28 assists and Caleigh Randall who has 51 goals and 15 assists. DeWitt can rely on offense from several other players as well including Sawyer Gustafson (24 goals, 10 assists), Kiley Ward (13 goals, 7 assists), Sam Woodland (9 goals, 4 assists), Ireland Brown (10 goals, 5 assists) and Isabelle Gilmore (11 goals, 4 assists).

A position change by Gilmore is also making a huge impact for the Panthers.

"One of the biggest impact players this season has been Isabelle Gilmore," said DeWitt coach Marv Hardy. "She recently switched positions from defense to midfield. The result of this switch Kerrigan Brown, Caleigh Randall and Isabelle work together on the draws, winning 75% of them since then."

Karah Preston and Crystabelle

Knight are among the defensive leaders. Knight is entering her senior year as the team's starting goalie for the third consecutive season. Knight is second in career wins at DeWitt. Preston leads the team in ground balls with 29 and has forced 16 turnovers.

"As great as the offense has been this year, credit for our success has to be given to Karah Preston and her defense," Hardy said. "Entering the season Karah was the only defensive field player to have any varsity experience. The seven other defensive field players have a combined one year of high school playing experience and six of them have never played lacrosse before. Karah spent countless hours before the season preparing these young ladies to play at a high level. Without her leadership we would not be having this much success this



The DeWitt girls lacrosse team made program history this year by winning the first league championship in program history.

season."

That kind of unselfish play and leadership is a big reason why the Panthers have taken the program to the next level this season.

"The strength of our team this year is our commitment to each other," Hardy said. "We pride ourselves on our team culture. When I say to the team that no one does team like us, the players not only agree, they can easily give examples of what that means. Our junior varsity and varsity programs

have a total of 10 first-year player and they are all impressed by the inclusiveness and support of all of their new teammates. Much like Karah Preston and the new defensive players, many other players are quick to help out and mentor the new players. All players, regardless of age or skill ability, are included and encouraged each practice and game. The varsity team attends all junior varsity games, even if they don't play after them."

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Area Golfers Sharpening Skills As Post-Season Tournament Closes In

David Cook Sports Scene

The Haslett golf team has enjoyed plenty of success this season and is looking for a strong finish. Ranked 10th in the state in Division 2, the Vikings started the season strong and have been rolling ever since. A highlight of the early season came when the Vikings won the large school division at the Dick's Sporting Goods tournament at Greenbrier. Haslett finished with a 329 total led by Korben Leung who fired a 74. Josh Tuley and Justin Dixon both added an 83. Haslett also captured the championship at the East Lansing Invitational. Josh Tuley and Korben Leung both fired rounds of 77 to place the Vikings. Haslett also turned in a solid performance at the Mt. Pleasant

Oiler 36 tournament at the Pohlcac. Tuley led the way for the Vikings at the tournament as he placed fourth individually with a round of 73. **Sacred Heart golfers ranked in Division 4** The Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart golf team is aiming to make a run in the Division 4 state tournament. Ranked fifth in the state in Division 4, the Irish are led by standout senior Michael Zanoni. Zanoni has committed to play his college golf at Saginaw Valley State and is looking for a strong showing at the state tournament where he finished second individually as a sophomore two years ago. The Sacred Heart lineup also received a boost from the return of senior Ben Wilson. A varsity golfer as a freshman, Wilson missed his sophomore season with a broken arm and missed his junior season

due to the pandemic cancellation. Wilson came back strong this year and earned second-team, all-conference honors.

Holt golfers place second at own tournament

Holt golfers turned in a strong effort in taking second place at their own Holt Varsity Invitational. Holt totaled a 323 team total to finish six strokes behind Chelsea. Zach Kelly led Holt with a 77 while Zach Johnson and Ethan Johnson both shot rounds of 79.

Williamston golfers making a move in D2

The Williamston golf team has been ranked in the top ten in the state in Division 2 for much of the season and are ranked third in the latest poll. The Hornets have posted several impressive rounds including a first-place finish at the St. Johns Redwing Invitational. The Hornets posted a sizzling round of 301 to win the tourney by 32 strokes. Wyatt Vogel and Caleb Bond both fired 72s to lead the team while Sam Havey was just behind with a round of 73. Williamston also turned in an impressive performance in winning the Mason Optimist Invitational at Eldorado by 16 strokes with a 315 total.



The Haslett golf team has turned in a number of strong efforts this season and is ranked 10th in the state in Division 2.

Vogel led the team with a 74 while Havey carded a 76 and Bond shot an 80. Vogel has been one of the premier golfers in mid-Michigan this spring as he also won medalist honors at the Dick's Sporting Goods tournament with a round of 68.

Shepherd golfers win fourth straight league title

The Shepherd golf team won its fourth straight league title and first Mid Michigan Golf Conference title. The Bluejays finished with a team total of 358 while Clare placed second with a 385. Zach Bendele won medalist honors as he fired a round of 78. Korrbin Gluch placed fourth overall in the conference and earned first-team, all-conference honors. Owen Moey earned second-team, all-conference honors while

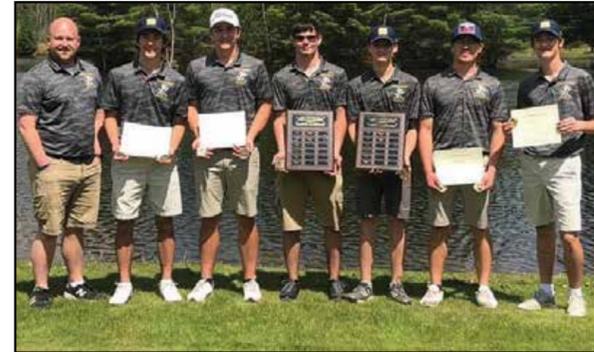
Joel Bendele earned honorable-mention, all-conference honors.

Midland golfers shine at county meet

The Midland golf team turned in a solid effort as it placed second at the Chemical City Invitational. The Chemics totaled a 325 to place second behind Detroit Catholic Central. Alex Noey led Midland with a 75 while Mason Ripke finished with a 78.

Portland golf team wins county tourney

The Portland golf team earned bragging rights in Ionia County as it took first place at the Ionia County Shootout. Portland totaled a 338 team total to best second-place Lakewood Lake-Odessa by 17 shots. Isaac Honsowitz led the Raiders with a 78 while CJ Miller added an 84.



The Shepherd golf team won its fourth consecutive conference title as it took first place at the Mid Michigan Golf Conference championship.

AREA GOLF STATS

Low rounds of 18

Wyatt Vogel, Williamston 68
Mason Anderson, Belding 71
Ashton DiBlasi, Swan Valley 71
Caleb Bond, Williamston 72
Sam Havey, Williamston 73
Josh Tuley, Haslett, 73
Zach Koerner, Laingsburg 74
Korben Leung, Haslett 74
Craig Stephan, Rockford 74

Daniel Forsythe, Mt. Pleasant 75
Daniel Gladki, Saginaw Heritage 75
Oliver Haerberle, Rockford 75
Alex Noey, Midland 75
Jeffrey Sager, Alma 75
Payton Ried, Mason 76
Michael Zanoni, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart 76
Mitch Benson, Swan Valley 77
Nick Geisler, DeWitt 77
Zach Kelly, Holt 77
Alex Bates, Alma 78

Brandon Fandell, Alma 78
Jacob Havican, Okemos, 78
Isaac Honsowitz, Portland 78
Mason Ripke, Midland 78
Zach Bendele, Shepherd 79
Ethan Bond, Mason 79
Nicholas Fabiano, Midland Dow 79
Ethan Johnson, Holt 79
Zach Johnson, Holt 79
Drew Miller, East Lansing 79

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Alma Golf Team Turning In Low Scores, Set Sights On Qualifying For State Meet

David Cook Sports Scene

With a deep and experienced group of golfers, the Alma golf team has been on a roll this spring and is looking to hit its peak in the post season.

"The season has been going really well," said Alma coach TJ Cleveland. "We've won a bunch of tournaments and are in first place in the conference. The kids have been playing some real nice golf."

The Panthers have won a number of matches and tournaments highlighted by tournament titles at the Ludington Invitational, Chipewa Hills and Ithaca tournament and a third-place finish at the Oiler 36 at the Pohlcac.

Sophomore Jeffrey Sager led the way for Alma at the Ludington tournament as he placed second overall with a 78. Senior Brandon

Fandell placed third individually as he carded an 80.

Alma finished with a team total of 316 to win the Ithaca tournament with Sager shooting a 75 while Fandell and Alex Bates both shot 78.

A returning all-conference golfer who qualified for the state meet as a freshman, Fandell is a team captain who will be attending the United States Army Academy at West Point.

Sager is turning in a big season and gives the Panthers a solid one-two combination with Fandell. Sager has shot 75 twice this season and also carded 78 at two events.

Senior Corben Yates is turning in a strong season. Yates has recorded low rounds of 85 and 88 this season.

Junior Alex Bates has been coming on strong as the season progresses. Bates shot a 78 at



A total-team effort has been key to success for the Alma boys golf team this season.

Ithaca and a 41 for nine holes in a duel at Portland. Fellow junior Jacob Munger is also turning in a strong season. Munger has recorded rounds of 42 and 43 this season. Senior Cade Frillici adds more depth and has shot a 40 this season.

"We have a really athletic team this year," Cleveland said. "I'm

really proud of these guys. We didn't have a season last year but they put a lot of time in during the offseason and have worked really hard."

While the Panthers have turned in some strong performances, they are capable of taking their game to the next level. Alma is looking to put it all together at what is a

rugged regional at the Pohlcac that includes teams like Haslett, Flint Powers, Williamston, Freeland, DeWitt and St. Johns.

"It's a challenging regional and you have to play well to get out of it," Cleveland said. "I know that if we have all of our guys play their best golf, we can make it out of the regional."



Swan Valley Golfer Making An Impressive Debut In His First Season Of High School Golf

David Cook Sports Scene

In his first season of high school golf, Swan Valley sophomore Ashton DiBlasi is quickly making a name for himself.

Thanks to a tireless work ethic, DiBlasi has been posting some impressive numbers this spring. One of DiBlasi's most impressive performances came at the two-day Mt. Pleasant Oiler 36 tournament at the Pohlcac where he won the tournament by three strokes. DiBlasi was the only player at the event with a par or better round each day including a one-under par on day two of the event. The highlight of the tournament came when he chipped in for an eagle.

Swan Valley sophomore Ashton DiBlasi is making an impressive debut on the high school golf scene this spring.

"The key to Ashton's success is the hours of practice he's put in," said Swan Valley coach Brian Allen. "He has put in a lot of time improving his fitness and making healthy choices. He spends countless hours at the range and working out."

All that work is showing up in the rounds that DiBlasi is shooting this spring. Along with the effort at the Pohlcac, DiBlasi tied for first place at the St. Louis Invitational. He also placed second at the Pinconning Invitational and tied for fourth at the Forstress Invitational at Frankenmuth.

DiBlasi has also been the top golfer in the conference this season.

With DiBlasi leading the way, Swan Valley

has been challenging Alma for the top spot in the conference this season. As a team Swan Valley has turned in some strong efforts. The Vikings won the Pinconning Invitational. Swan Valley also placed second by two shots to Lapeer at the Frankenmuth invitational and took second to Freeland by just one shot at the St. Louis Invitational.

With the state tournament approaching, Allen is looking for his team and DiBlasi to finish strong.

"Ashton is an awesome, all-around kid who is mature beyond his year," Allen said. "I look for him to try his hardest mentally and physically and to continue his success the rest of the season."

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Freeland Soccer Team Expects To Be State Contender

John Raffel Sports Scene

Freeland's soccer team has been a state contender in girls soccer for several seasons, and it looks like coach Ciaran Byrne has another outstanding team on her hands. "Not having a season in 2020 was very difficult for several reasons," Byrne said. "However, I think the biggest impact I have seen is on individual girls. There were so many girls that needed a season on JV before moving up to varsity, and without that season, they are now playing JV this season. It is apparent that many girls really lost a year of development.

"We have a lot of girls playing travel and playing in the winter, but I always feel like players see more personal growth and development during a high school season due to the fact that they play almost every day of the week either in training or matches. Last year we had several seniors who would have been impact players for us."

Three girls that really stand out, and all had the option of playing at the next level are Tori Pilon, Ashley Schmidt, and Morgan

Lloyd, Byrne said. "Tori is currently playing at Delta College and doing well. The other two chose not to continue playing. All three of the girls were committed to the team and were leaders on the team. Each one of them brought a level of intensity that would have been a driving force in our success last season. I know each one of them wanted to be able to play their senior season and unfortunately they missed out.

"This season we have an excellent group of seniors who will be expected to play significant minutes for us and lead a group of young players. This group has always been a very competitive group who are fiercely determined when they compete. To put it simply, they have grit. Sydney Herring is a central midfielder who brings high level technical skills to our team. Lydia Back partners Sydney in midfield and has tremendous leadership skills."

Byrne said Hope Kloha is one of the most versatile players on the team and plays in a variety of positions.

"Simply put, Hope does everything well," Byrne said. "Larkin Wegner is a defender and is a physical presence for us who also

possesses the ability to bring the ball out of the back. Hannah Niederquell is another defender, who communicates and leads from the back, and brings a range of passing to the field. Eva Markey is a wide player who brings incredible energy to the field, and has the ability to play both sides of the field.

"Molly Hengesberg is a forward who possesses great speed and agility, and a great finishing touch in front of goal. All seven of these girls work very hard, demonstrate great leadership and motivate the rest of the team to achieve at high levels. We are expecting great things this season. The TVC has become a much tougher league and the girls are up for the challenge. We have played several difficult matches and right now it looks like Garber will be the team for us to beat in league play. We are optimistic about our chances to win another district title, and this year we host a very difficult regional that I think should have four teams all capable of winning the state title."

The seniors are special, Byrne said.

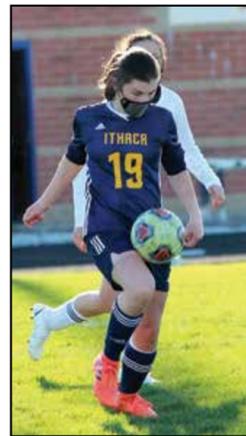
"Since the first day I saw this senior group play as freshmen, I had said that this group's strength is their cohesiveness and willingness to dig deep and fight hard during difficult games," Byrne said. "They play very well together and that chemistry is developing with the younger players as well. We have some



Freeland's soccer girls are enjoying another huge season.

great individual talent, but the strength is certainly in the whole team's ability to come together and work hard together.

"At this point in the season, the most clear area I think we need work is our finishing. We create excellent chances for ourselves, but we have to be more lethal in front of goal. From a defensive standpoint, we need to keep our team shape while defending. Every once and a while we lose our shape and when we regain possession we are not immediately ready to transition to attack."



Ithaca Freshman Having Huge Scoring Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Ithaca's girls soccer team is getting some impressive contributions from various players. Freshman Emily Ahearn is leading in goals with 11 as of mid-May.

Ithaca freshman Emily Ahearn was leading in goals with 11 as of mid-May.

Coach Paige Beracy, like other coaches, is trying to make up for not having a 2020 season, which was set to be a good one for Ithaca.

"We lost a lot of experienced players and had some students change their minds about coming out for the team this season," Beracy

said. "We graduated Maiya Hessbrook, Megan Ahearn, and Kierra Henderson. All three were leaders as captains and top goal scorers/passers. They all received all-conference honors as well.

"Senior midfielder Sydney Marcy and Ahearn are both great all-

around players

that can play anywhere. Our team is composed of a lot of close friends so we are a very tight-knit group.

"Our conference is very diverse in terms of quality. I would consider Valley Lutheran and Saginaw Nouvel as the favorites."

Lansing Catholic Senior Finding The Net With Three Hattricks

John Raffel Sports Scene

Maddie O'Farrell has been a scoring force for a solid Lansing Catholic soccer team this fall.

O'Farrell has signed to play at Eastern Michigan this fall. But she is helping her high school team and

coach Jacob Walsh be a force with an 8-2-2 start.

She's playing attacking mid. This marks her third varsity year. She was all-conference and all-district as a freshman and sophomore.

"She's had three hattricks so far this season," Walsh said. "We only

have 16 players. A lot of games we've been down and have had to come back in order to win. That determination and drive has been a key to our success."

O'Farrell plays off-season club soccer for Cap City which plays in the fall. Soccer is her only sport.

The team "has players willing to

buy in and work hard," Walsh said. "They go out every game willing to play for each other. They're very unselfish."



Lansing Catholic's Maddie O'Farrell.

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Hemlock Four-Year Soccer Senior Having Another Strong Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Hemlock's Kali Jimenez is having another solid season with the girls soccer program and coach Joe Wardlow.

"Kali has been instrumental into not only in her contributions to our offense but also in the example that she sets for our other players," Wardlow said. "She is a multiplier that brings everyone else's game play up a notch."

As of early May, Jimenez had 18 goals and seven assists.

"Her success has been a direct result of three things, hard work, dedication and selflessness," Wardlow said. "Kali plays as a defender on her club teams so playing with an offensive mindset in high school is a change for her.

She was moved to midfield her sophomore year and is learning to have a more offensive minded mentality.

"This year she has become a captain of the team and fittingly has taken on the leadership role. She has become more vocal on the field and just as impor-

tantly in the huddle. One thing that stands out with Kali is her selflessness. It's very rare to have a talent like her be so given to everyone else. I recall several moments this season where she works to thread the ball through a lane to a teammate when she has a perfectly manageable shot from where she stands. Normally when you have a key player like that you are always asking them to pass the ball more. With Kali, I find myself telling her she needs to be more selfish and take more shots."

Wardlow expects even more from Jimenez.

"I expect Kali to continue to shift her mid from a defensive aspect to the offense," Wardlow said. "She has the natural tendency to drift back into a defensive mid position, but we need her leading our attack. Kali plays club soccer year round. Kali will be playing for Delta College next season.

"As a team we may be slightly behind where we wanted to be but with the number of quarantines and different player combi-

nations we have had to manage we are proud of what we have accomplished so far. No spring sports in 2020 had a massive impact on our team development as well as on the individuals themselves. There was a big deterioration on skills particularly on this year's sophomores due to the fact that the last time they had played was in the fall of 2019."

Wardlow added: "The late end on the winter sports season had massive impacts on our team and we are still unrecovered from that. Our girls basketball team went deep into states and then was shut down due to contact tracing. This took a toll on our team as it put three players in quarantine and forced them to miss the first four weeks of the season and the first five games.

"Now we are seeing the effect of a compressed season where we are playing three games a week and it has taken quite the physical toll on the players. Combine that with the continued carousel of players in and out of quarantine from contact tracing and it is very difficult to get any continuity."



Kali Jimenez is having another solid season with the girls soccer program at Hemlock.

Lansing Christian Scoring Phenom Scores 29 Goals In First 11 Games

John Raffel Sports Scene

Lansing Christian has gotten off to a 7-3-1 start on girls soccer and among the reasons has been the play of Mia Judd, a junior

"Mia has been our offensive catalyst this year, even though her natural position is as a holding midfielder," coach Joel VandeKopple said. "What I like about her the most is her willingness to do whatever the team needs. Her competitiveness doesn't allow her to

relax until the job is done and that has propelled our team forward this season."

In 11 games, Mudd has 29 goals and six assists.

"The key to her success is her competitiveness," VandeKopple said. "She won't allow any of her teammates to take days off and hates losing so much that she'll do what she needs to for the team to get the win. The biggest difference with Mia compared to 2019 is that she has taken the responsibility to be an offensive weapon this

year. When she was a freshmen she could stay as a holding mid and rely on the upperclassmen to score. She had a number of highly skilled girls ahead of her who have graduated.

"While she is still playing with highly skilled girls, a lot of them have missed significant chunks of the season due to injuries or COVID-19. Her willingness to take on the offensive burden has been huge for our team. What makes her a special athlete is that she isn't just a soccer player. She was

an All-State basketball player and has continued that form onto the soccer field. The most memorable moment from Mia so far this year was scoring two goals against Jackson Parma Western, whose goalie is of the highest caliber for girls high school soccer."

VandeKopple expects Judd to finish the season strong.

"I expect Mia to continue her form and find a way to lead us," he said. "Mia plays at a high level of travel soccer, but she decided to join the cross country team at LCS this year to help her get in shape for basketball and soccer. Her season ended on a high as she was part of the squad that won the Division 4 state championship in cross country."



Lansing Christian's Mia Judd in her first 11 games had 29 goals and six assists.

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PROGRESSIVE

Haslett Girls Soccer Team Having Championship Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

It was a remarkable regular season for a Haslett girls soccer team which went 10-1-2

and was 4-0 in the CAAC Red Division to win the first league title.

Haslett also won the Alma Panther Soccer Tournament, plus the CAAC Gold Cup, beating DeWitt in a penalty shootout. Haslett has scored 58 goals on the year and only allowed seven goals all year.

"During the CAAC Gold Cup Semifinals, we got down 1-0 in the first four minutes of the game and we told our girls not to panic and just play our game, the goals will come," Haslett coach David Littleton said. "We responded with a long 30-yard shot from our outside back Jacqueline Daigneault and then our senior forward Emma Campbell went to work and scored her first of two goals with 35 seconds left in the first half and then scored in the first five minutes of the second half to put the game

out of reach."

Emma Campbell, a senior forward, had 15 goals and seven assists as a four-year varsity player and captain.

"She's a great player, high soccer IQ, very good with taking opposing defenders on, and knows how to find the open gaps to make a forward run, and knows how to find the space to play in a teammate or to get a good look on goal," Campbell said. "She's a pure goal scorer."

Audrey Archambault is a junior attacking mid with 10 goals and seven assists plus a three-year varsity player and a captain.

"Her penalty shot in the Gold Cup, clinched the championship for us," Littleton said. "She's very calm and relaxed on the ball. She has a high soccer IQ and sees the field very well."

Maddie Fant is a sophomore forward with seven goals and five assists and two-year varsity player

"She scored the only goal in game against Williamston to help

us clinch at least a tie for the CAAC Red league title," Littleton said. "She anticipates where the ball is going to be, and is another goal scorer."

Carly Doran is a junior attacking mid with six goals and four assists.

"It's her first year on varsity," Littleton said. "Before playing high school soccer, she played on a U.S. Soccer Development Academy team. She's a high soccer IQ, great foot skills, can take defenders on, sees the game well and can find the open teammate. She has a rocket of a shot."

Taylor Conley is a senior forward/mid with a goal and three assists and is a three-year varsity player.

"She is a very versatile player who plays forward and attacking



Haslett's girls soccer team has had a trophy winning season.

mid for us," Middleton said. "She has a high soccer IQ, can read the game, knows when to come back to help out of defense and gets wide to help draw the defenders to create space for her teammates"

Ally Maloney is a junior goalie with nine shutouts and only give up seven goals all season with an 0.54 goal against average and a three-year varsity player.

"During the penalty shootout

of the Gold Cup, she made a huge save on the third DeWitt shooter," Littleton said. "She reads the game well, is very vocal and helps to direct the back line. She has good hands and gets the right angle to make it difficult for opposing teams to score on the net."

Other three-year varsity players are seniors Hannah Sparkia, Tina Covic and Hope Plaga at center back and senior captain Jacqueline Daigneault is an outside back.

Dow Tennis Girls Are Conference Champs Again

John Raffel Sports Scene

Garrett Turner usually has a strong girls tennis team at Midland Dow.

This year is no exception and has included winning the Saginaw Valley Conference title.

Turner admits the lack of a 2020 season has had an impact.

"We are almost done with the season, but it has had a major impact on all of tennis," Turner said. "I feel like it took awhile to get everyone back into competition. All the teams seem to be a bit

behind where they typically are in a normal year. The lack of play and coaching for a year, plus, seems to have had a negative impact on the sport as a whole."

Coming into the season, Dow said goodbye to some good talent.

"Victoria Leiti was a past state champ in doubles who didn't get to play her senior year," Turner said.

But Dow's single lineup is very strong.

"Zoe Angell at No. 1 is a senior and undefeated," Turner said. "Savannah Matuszewski is a junior who was runner-up at 2s her fresh-

man year. Laura Leiti is a junior who is undefeated and was state champ at 3s as a freshman. Claire Earley is a junior who was runner up at 4s as a freshman.

"We already won the conference and we are hoping to win the regional. We are ranked No. 4 in the state in D1, and I think that is a pretty accurate ranking. We have tied No. 3 Seaholm, and lost 5-3 to No. 2 Bloomfield Hills."

Singles is the strength of the team.

"Our lower doubles need to work on getting more experience and playing the same way in matches that they play in practice," Turner said. "That comes with time and experience. We have been improving over the last few weeks."

The late ending to the winter



Kali Jimenez is having another solid season with the girls soccer program at Hemlock.

season had an impact on his team, Turner said.

"It took awhile to get our team

together," he said. "I didn't have our full team complete until a week and a half ago."

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