



HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE
KEEPING KIDS IN THE NEWS

612 East Superior St
Alma, MI 48801
(989) 285-1605

www.highschoolsportsscene.com



PUBLISHER
Randy Miniard
517-202-1808
randy@highschoolsportsscene.com



Sports Editor
Scott Keyes
midmichigansportsscene@yahoo.com

■ **High School Liaison**
Paul Hornak
paul@highschoolsportsscene.com

■ **Sales**
Brent Fuller
989-763-8974
brentfuller411@gmail.com

■ **Photographers**
Chuck Prikasky, Alan Holben,
Nathan Bootz, Bob Campbell,
Gary Williams, Anne Russ,
Jeff McGinthy, Kevin Gregory,
Chip DeGrace, Tom Reynolds,
Zip Widman, Paige Bennett,
Shannon Millard, Dave Knarr

■ **Editorial**
John Raffel, David Cook,
Jeff Chaney, Ben Murphy,
Butch Harmon, Dan Stickrad,
Geoff Mott

■ **Apparel Graphics & Design**
Kelsey Jickling

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PUBLISHER NOTE

Being a former NCAA wrestler myself, to read about what Lowell product and current Cornell University standout Gabe Dean accomplished recently when he defeated Penn State's two-time NCAA champion Ed Ruth is simply remarkable.

When no one gives you a chance to win, it only brings out the best in you, and that's what Gabe brought to the mat that day. Sports Scene has watched Gabe grow into a student-athlete over the past five years, and to see him pull off an upset of this magnitude at such a young age is beyond words. Sports Scene couldn't be happier for the Dean family.

Family is what Sports Scene was built on, and that is what the wrestling community is. It's like a brotherhood. Once you hit that mat, regardless if they are friend or foe, you are always rooting for a positive outcome.

In this month's issue of Sports Scene, 'family' is a common theme. The Juengel family of Bullock Creek has endured so much over the past three years, but a strong family preserves and survives. Mary Juengel is a true inspiration to all. What she has gone through in her fight against leukemia is a reminder that no matter how hard things are, keep smiling and keep your faith.

The Myles/Bell family includes four siblings from East Lansing and Corunna who show their love and support for one another through their love of basketball.

It's these types of families that make Sports Scene proud of what we do on a daily basis. Remember that family is what we are, and continue to show your community support.

Let's hope that this year is as good as the previous four years. Much love and appreciation.

Randy Miniard
Publisher



Alma's Maddy Seeley celebrates with her team after surpassing the 1,000 point mark for her career during a recent game against Swan Valley. Seeley is averaging close to 30 points a game for the Panthers this season.

ATHLETIC REPUBLIC
Physical Therapy & Rehab Specialists

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE MALE AND FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE MONTH PRESENTED BY:




ERIC DAVIS



The Eric Davis File
Saginaw Arthur Hill
Sports: Basketball
Class: Junior
Accomplishments: Guided the Lumberjacks to an 8-2 record at the midpoint of the season and a No. 3 ranking in Class A. Three-year varsity starter. Ranked as the No. 1 recruit in Michigan, the No. 11 shooting guard in the country, and No. 89 player overall in the Class of 2015 by ESPN.
Hobbies: Basketball and lots of it
GPA: 3.2
College: Memphis, Michigan State, Oregon, Iowa State, Iowa, Kansas, North Carolina State, Illinois, Providence, Oklahoma State, Massachusetts and Kent State, but there will be more. Has made two visits so far to Michigan State and N.C. State.



BRI ALSPAUGH



The Bri Alspaugh File
St. Louis High School
Sports: Volleyball, Basketball, Track
Season Accolades: Scored a career high 27 points in the win against Alma, guided the Sharks to a 10-1 record
GPA: 3.5
Accomplishments: Third team all-state volleyball sophomore year, second team all-state volleyball junior and senior years, Most Improved basketball freshman year, MVP sophomore year
Future: Would like to work in a hospital as an ultrasound technician



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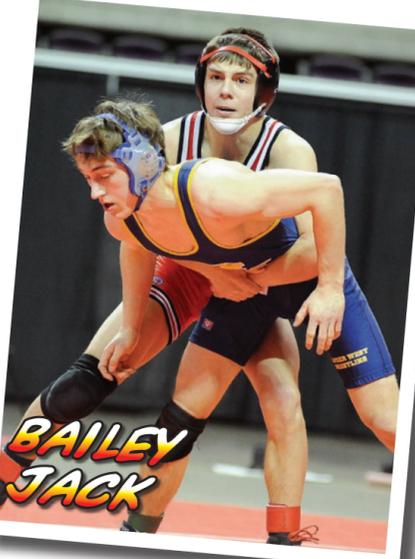


SCHOLAR - ATHLETE OF THE MONTH

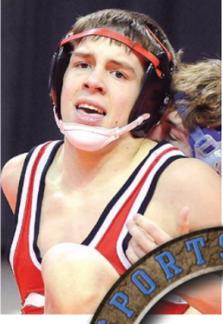
MALE AND FEMALE SCHOLAR-ATHLETE OF THE MONTH PRESENTED BY:



SCHOLAR - ATHLETE OF THE MONTH



BAILEY JACK




SPORTS SCENE

SCHOLAR - ATHLETE OF THE MONTH

MALE

The Bailey Jack File
 Lowell High School
 Sports: Wrestling
Accomplishments: As a junior, Jack won the 119-pound state title at the Division 2 individual state wrestling finals. This season, he is ranked number one in the state in Division 2 at 125 pounds.
 GPA: 4.05
Favorite classes: Calculus and AP Government
College Plans: Bailey has also accepted a scholarship offer to Duke University.
Hobbies: He loves playing video games, his favorite being League of Legends



ALLY HARAN




SPORTS SCENE

SCHOLAR - ATHLETE OF THE MONTH

FEMALE

The Ally Haran File
 Powers Catholic High School
 Class: Basketball and soccer
Season Accolades: Basketball team captain; helped the basketball team jump out to an 11-1 record; averaging 12.5 points, 6 assists, 5 steals, and 5 rebounds per game this season
 GPA: 3.74
Accomplishments: 2011 soccer state champions D3, 2011 soccer all-state second team, 2011 soccer academic all-state, 2011 basketball academic all-league, 2011 basketball second team all-conference, 2011 basketball Big 9 Champions, 2012 soccer state finalist D3, 2012 Soccer Michigan Dream Team, 2012 soccer academic all-state, 2012 basketball academic all-league, 2012 basketball first team all-conference, 2012 basketball Big 9 Co-Champions, 2013 basketball state finalist Class B, 2013 basketball first team all-conference, 2013 basketball all-state honorable mention, 2013 Basketball BCAM Academic All-State
Other: National Honor Society since sophomore year
College: Will pursue Bachelor's degree from Wake Forest University while competing on varsity soccer team

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Hogan coming up "Big" for Oilers

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

Thanks to a strong core of seniors, the Mt. Pleasant boys basketball team is off to a good start this season and has its sights set on some big goals.

Anchored by senior post player Jaleel Hogan, the Oilers have won seven of their first nine games this season. Among the wins was a 69-60 win against Saginaw Arthur Hill. Mt. Pleasant's only losses have come against top-ten ranked team Saginaw (44-38) and against Holland (66-41).

"We've had our ups and downs this year," coach Dan Schell said. "We've had some good wins, and we lost a tough one to Saginaw that we should've won, but overall I think we are doing all right."

Leading the way for Mt. Pleasant has been Hogan, a University of Detroit Mercy recruit, who is putting up impressive numbers in points and rebounds.

"Jaleel has done a nice job, and he's just getting better and better," Schell said. "He's a lot stronger this year. He struggled with a knee injury early in the season, but he's starting to get in a lot better shape now. He is averaging 18 or 19 points per game and 16 or 17 rebounds per game. Once he gets one hundred percent, he is a 20/20 kid."

With his size and strength, Hogan can dominate games. "Jaleel is obviously a great player," Schell continued. "He is very gifted at 6'6" and 250 pounds, and you don't see that very often in high school,



Mt. Pleasant's Jaleel Hogan a University of Detroit commit has given Mt. Pleasant a huge lift in the paint this season for the Oilers averaging close to 20 points and 15 rebounds a game. (Scott Keyes Photo)

especially when you put that together with his tremendous leaping ability. He also has really soft hands and good instincts. You can't teach that ability. He's great on the boards, and he has a good, soft touch to 16-17-18 feet. He has a lot of room for growth in his game, and in college is when you will really see him begin to reach his full potential."

While Hogan can dominate games, the Oilers are far from a one-man team. "We are seven, eight players deep, and we can

run pretty well," Schell said. "We are also pretty athletic. Obviously, we have some outstanding players like Jaleel, but we have some other kids, as well, who are good players."

Senior point guard Anton Cotton gives the Oilers a potent scoring option in the backcourt. "Anton is a pretty exciting guard," Schell said. "He is averaging 13-14 points per game. He shoots the ball very well." The Oilers have also received strong contributions from senior guard/forward T.J.

Johnson, senior guard Tim Wilson, senior Aaron Leasher, and sophomore Kalebb Perry.

"Aaron is one of our best players," Schell said. "He has really been coming on the last two or three games. T.J. is another kid that I can't say enough about. He has improved so much since the off-season. Tim is a senior guard who is our best on-ball defender. Kalebb is only a sophomore, and he is really more of a defensive player right now, but he has really

stepped up for us."

Mt. Pleasant's improvement this year can be traced to hard work put in by the players over the summer.

"The guys never stopped working from the end of last season," Schell said. "They were either in the weight room or putting up shots or playing in the off-season."

Off-season AAU basketball provided other benefits, as well. Last year Hogan, Cotton, and Johnson all transferred into the district from Buena Vista. The transfers came about as a result of the trio playing with Mt. Pleasant players during the spring and summer AAU season.

"Last year, it was a little more difficult because Jaleel, Anton, and T.J. became eligible at midseason," Schell said.

"This year, they've been with us all through the off-season, so things have went very, very smooth. The kids knew each other from AAU ball, and they spent a lot of time with Aaron Leasher at his place. The kids actually knew each other way before I did, so it was a smooth transition."

With one month of the regular season and the tournament remaining, the Oilers are looking for a successful ending.

"I don't think we've played as well as we can play by any stretch," Schell said. "We won't know how good they can be until they show it, and maybe that will not happen. We have a very, very tough district with Midland and Dow. If we make it out of that, we will host regionals with Saginaw or Arthur Hill."

A True Inspiration

Mary Juengel has undergone nearly three years of chemotherapy, but still keeps smiling while remaining Bullock Creek girls basketball teams & sister Elle's biggest fan. Despite everything she has gone through Team Mary has fought hard, while community rallies behind Juengel family.



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FAITH, LOVE AND BASKETBALL

THE JUENGL FAMILY HAS HAD UPS, DOWNS BUT HOOPS IS A CONSTANT DURING TOUGH THREE YEARS AS MARY CONTINUES HER FIGHT AGAINST LEUKEMIA

Despite having nearly 900 days of Chemotherapy pumped through her little veins, 14-year-old Mary Juengel loves the game of basketball. She was there a year ago when Bullock Creek made it all the way to the Class B semis, before losing to Flint Powers. The love of the game runs deep, but her spirit is even deeper. Thanks for the inspiration Mary Juengel.

Scott Keyes
Sports Scene

Persistence Makes You Stronger

If that's the case, Bullock Creek's Mary Juengel is much wiser than a majority of 14-year-old girls.

Juengel had to grow up a lot quicker than most because of a diagnosis in 2011 that left her family searching for answers and asking the always familiar question, "Why?"

Mary was stricken with Acute T-cell leukemia in October, 2011, and although treatable, it is extremely an aggressive cancer that left her facing almost two-and-a-half years of chemotherapy. Even while going through this ordeal, she has kept a positive outlook on life while becoming an inspiration to people and her surroundings.

Always smiling, Juengel doesn't look like a young girl who has endured nearly 900 days of chemo, but the family's strong faith and love of basketball has been a guiding force to help them through this painful ordeal.

Juengel's long road to recovery is almost at an end, with her last major chemo treatment scheduled for February. When the Juengel family sat down with Sports Scene in early January, Mary had a scheduled chemo treatment the following Monday in Ann Arbor, a day before the Bullock Creek girls basketball team tangled with Hemlock. Both teams entered the game unbeaten on the season, while Hemlock was ranked No. 2 in Class B. The game was one of the biggest of the season thus far.

Mary's older sister Elle is a junior point guard on the team, and Mary is her sister's biggest fan.

"I don't care if I was sick or what, I was making the Hemlock game," Mary said. "If I had to run to the bathroom a few times to throw up, I was going to that game. I love to watch my sister play the game along with the rest of the girls. It's like a big extended family."

When the Bullock Creek girls basketball team made it to the Class B semifinals in last year's MHSAA tournament, Mary was at the Breslin Center on the campus of Michigan State University cheering on the team on with the rest of the community.

"I wasn't missing that game," she said. "We were in

the stands rooting them on. It was such a great game." Bullock Creek would lose the game to Powers Catholic in overtime.

Of all her siblings, Elle was hit hardest by Mary's diagnosis. Oldest sister Clara and brother Steven were both in college at the time, and Elle was home seeing the sickness and crying at the pain that her younger sibling was facing.

It was definitely hard on Elle, but the support from her Bullock Creek team and coach Justin Freeland has been tremendous.

"To see what Mary has gone through on a daily basis, but to watch her bounce back the way she has, only brings you closer together. It makes me so happy to hear Mary say that it is a highlight of her day when she says she won't miss our game. I am so thankful for her being my No. 1. I'm just so grateful I still have her," said Elle.

The Diagnosis

Mary started feeling sick in mid-October of 2011.

She had a fever and difficulty breathing — the family first thought it was a sinus infection, but antibiotics did nothing to relieve her symptoms. The family went to the emergency room Oct. 23, and within an hour doctors believed that she had lymphoma. Mary had a mass in her chest covering her heart and lungs. Physicians sent her to Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor, where, within 24 hours, Mary was on three chemotherapy treatments and a steroid to work with the chemo.

After spending six days in the hospital, Mary returned home and continued weekly visits to Ann Arbor. In Nov. 2011, she had surgery to place a port in her chest, a bone marrow aspiration, a spinal tap, and intrathecal chemo at Mott.

Mary knew that she was going to lose her hair during treatments, but she didn't want to wear a wig. "Why fake it," Mary said. "This is me. I have cancer."

It's that attitude that has brought more people together because of her illness.

The one constant through it all has been the family's love of basketball.

"Our family is really close," said Mary's mom Marni

Juengel. "I think basketball is a constant. Mary knows what is going on during Elle's games. She sometimes Facetimes her brother during the game. She knows how many points Elle has or her averages during the season. And if the refs make a bad call during the game, she'll let them know about it."

Mary's father Mark agrees. "When you go through something like this, it really puts life into perspective," said the longtime Midland Fastbreak AAU girls basketball coach. "When Mary got diagnosed, it changed our life instantly. From a basketball standpoint it kind of, in a way, brought us closer together for our family's sake and for Elle. We couldn't stop our lives totally. It kept some normalcy in our lives. To be able to coach basketball and the Fastbreak and really gain a tremendous amount of support from the basketball community because of it."

Team Mary

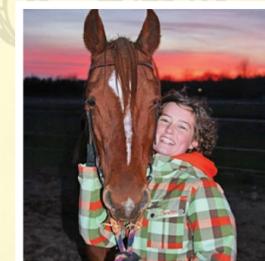
Since Mary was diagnosed, her Team Mary Facebook page has grown to over 8,000 followers. Fastbreak also brought awareness to Mary's fight with Team Mary shooting shirts that had coaches from all over the country inquiring about the cause.

"People just connect with her," Marni Juengel said of her daughter.

The support was tremendous after Mary's diagnosis.

Mary's team wears orange and pink bracelets and T-shirts—pink because it's Mary's favorite color and orange because it's the color for leukemia. Mary's basketball team named itself "Team Mary" and wore pink jerseys. Community members and schoolmates of Mary and Elle snapped up more than 2,000 bracelets, and the family cannot order T-shirts fast enough.

"When cancer hits, it certainly makes you look at life differently," Marni said. "You don't go to bed without realizing what a blessing today was. I think for all of us, this has really put a lot of things into perspective from this. Wins and losses are put into perspective now. Faith is what we ultimately come back to. To watch your child fight through this shows how precious life can be."



Mary has gotten through the hard times with faith and her passion for animals. Mary has a new horse Angel that has helped in her recovery from the dreaded disease.



The Juengel family of Midland Bullock Creek, Mark, Marni, Clara, Steven, Elle and Mary have gone through a lot over the last three years, but hopefully Mary's long road to recovery is nearly complete as she will undergo her last chemo treatment at the end of February. The family is a true inspiration to their community and to everyone that has been affected by Mary's infectious smile over the last three years.



Even with everything Mary has gone through her love of basketball is something that leukemia hasn't taken away from her. She is her sister Elle's biggest fan, while cheering on the Bullock Creek girls basketball team every step of the way.

Scott Keyes and Submitted photos



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Family Bond

Former Miss Basketball, Current Michigan State Spartan Klarissa Bell And Brothers Mikhail, MJ And Westin Are Four Siblings That Are Closer Than Ever Because Of Their Love Of Basketball



East Lansing freshman Westin Myles is a starter this season and can could very well be one of the best players in the Lansing area when he gets ready to graduate in four years. Westin is the youngest of his siblings, but has a tremendous upside on the court. (Scott Keyes photo)

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

Basketball is one of the best team games around, and it can also be one of the best ways that a family can bond and stay close.

That is the case with current Michigan State University star and former East Lansing High School standout Klarissa Bell and her family. Bell, a former Miss Basketball, is very close to her stepbrothers MJ and Mikhail Myles, who are varsity basketball standouts at Corunna High School. Bell's older brother, Devlin Bell, was a basketball standout at East Lansing High School and Lansing Community College, while younger brother Westin Myles is a freshman at East Lansing who is already making a name for himself on the varsity team.

Not only has Klarissa Bell spent many an hours playing basketball with her younger brothers, but her basketball career was also spurred on by her stepfather, Monty Myles.

"My stepdad is really big

into coaching, and he got me into basketball," Klarissa said. "I started playing soccer when I was young, but my stepdad convinced me to go out for the Ballers, a local AAU team."

Once she started playing basketball, she had no shortage of teammates or opponents for games of one-on-one or two-on-two.

"When we were younger, we had a full outdoor basketball court next to our house," Bell said. "Now we play whenever we get the chance. Sometimes we go to the Breslin Center to play against each other."

Bell was one of the finest high school basketball players to ever come out of the Lansing area and is in the middle of her senior year with the Spartans.

Brothers MJ and Mikhail are currently enjoying big seasons of their own in Corunna.

MJ is a senior who recently scored his 1,000th career point in a game against Lake Fenton. The game was

Basketball Brings East Lansing, Corunna Siblings Closer Than Ever

stopped after MJ reached the milestone, and there was a ceremony to acknowledge his achievement. "That was real cool," MJ said. "It [1,000 points] was always something I wanted to do. I was able to do it in front of my friends and family, and I was given a basketball signed by all of my teammates."

The brothers have been playing together for three years on the varsity at Corunna, something that has been special for MJ. "It has been a lot of fun," he said. "My brother is also a very good player. We really have a lot of fun with it. We played on different teams here and there growing up, and that was fun, but it's much different now. It's much bigger hype playing varsity basketball."

Playing basketball and going to class at Michigan State, Klarissa does not have much of an opportunity to see her younger brothers play. The brothers, however, do check out their sister's games as much as they can. "I go to almost all of her home games that I can make it to," MJ said. "Today I didn't go, but it was on ESPN."

While their schedules keep the family members apart, basketball has a way of bringing them together.

"We are definitely an athletic family," Mikhail said. "It's something that we all have in common that we can talk about. It's kind of hard with us being here in Corunna, but every once in a while we play a family game at the Breslin."

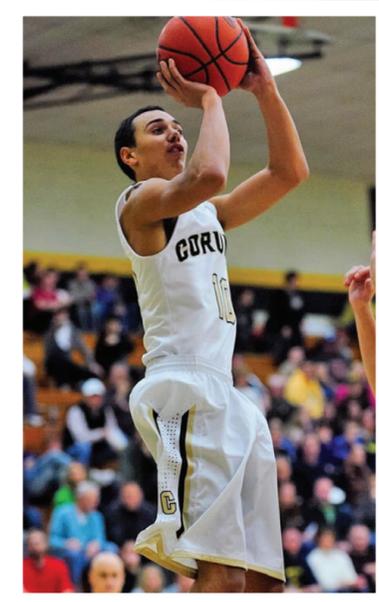
Making the schedule even more hectic is that Westin Myles is playing on the varsity at East Lansing High School.

"He [Westin] is very good," MJ said. "He's very big for his age. He's about six foot two and he's a point guard."

"I see Westin at East Lansing more just because it's closer," Klarissa said. "Westin is tall, and he has great ball-handling skills."

While it is harder to see each other during the basketball season, the sport has kept and always will keep them close.

"When we were younger especially, we played in a lot of the same tournaments," Klarissa said. "Basketball brings us all together, and we have something in common to talk about. We have always enjoyed going to each other's sports events no matter if it was football. It's a commonality that we all have."



MJ Myles (No. 20) and Mikhail Myles (No. 10) have guided the Corunna boys basketball team to another solid season, and both eclipsed the 1,000-point mark in their careers this season. (Submitted Photos)



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Owosso community mourning loss of Tom Harkema

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

The Owosso community lost long-time coach and teacher Tom Harkema on Jan. 6 when he passed away from cancer at the age of 56.

Harkema, a native of Owosso, had been a fixture in Owosso from his playing days to being a coach and teacher at Owosso High School. The loss was compounded, because Tom's older brother, William "Bill" Harkema, passed away the same day after battling multiple sclerosis for several years.

Coach Harkema was a 1975 graduate of Owosso High School, where he played football and was a member of the track team. Following high school, he attended Grand Valley State University where he played football. Harkema was named the Scout Team Player of the Year during his career with the Lakers.

After graduating from Grand Valley in 1979, Harkema served as a graduate assistant coach at Grand Valley under his older brother Jim Harkema. He was the head coach at Dexter High School, and he also coached in Texas for six years.

Harkema served two stints as head coach at Owosso. He coached the Trojans from 1988 through 1998, and he returned to the sideline in 2010 and coached the Trojans since.

Along with coaching football, Harkema served as the Owosso boys' track coach for the last 17 years. Harkema led the team to Capital Area Athletic Conference (CAAC) titles the last two springs.

"I have known Tom since we were 13 years old, and I have worked with Tom for 25 years," said Owosso softball coach and administrative assistant JoEllen Smith. "It is not going to be the same without Tom, but it could be better because of Tom if the community comes together as a team the way he taught it will be better."

Along with coaching, Harkema was a math and physical education teacher at Owosso High School and also served as the public address announcer at Owosso basketball games.

"Tom was definitely an Owosso person," Smith said. "If he was cut, he would bleed blue and gold."

In 2012, Harkema led Owosso to its second-ever playoff appearance. Owosso defeated Cadillac 27-14 in the first round of the playoffs for the first playoff win in school history.

"Coach Harkema was very excited, and everybody was very excited," said Brody Eddington, a running back on that team. "We made history. I just remember the look on his face. Everything was amazing."

"Coach Harkema was very passionate," continued Eddington, who was also a sprinter on the track team for Harkema. "He always pushed every player to be the best they could be."

Coach Harkema compiled a record of 50-49 during his first stint as head coach of the Trojan football team and was 16-22 the past four seasons for a career record of 66-71.

Harkema impacted many lives as a coach, and even helped some of his former players enter the coaching



Longtime Owosso coach, teacher, friend, mentor Tom Harkema celebrates with his team after they defeated Cadillac in the first round of the 2012 playoffs. Harkema, a 1975 graduate of Owosso passed away Jan. 6 from cancer. (Mike Schutt Photo)

profession. Former Charlotte High School and current Forest Hills Eastern High School head coach Eddie Ostipow is one such coach who was helped by Harkema. Ostipow graduated from Owosso in 1992 and played on Coach Harkema's team.

"I was fortunate enough to play for Coach Harkema and to also coach on his staff," Ostipow said. "He was also pretty instrumental in helping me get my first head coaching job. We have stayed in contact and talked to this day. I would usually talk with him at least once a week. He was a very good guy; they don't come any better."

Ostipow served for four years on Harkema's coaching staff. Ostipow and Harkema also worked at each other's football camps during the summer. When Ostipow's Charlotte teams qualified for the playoffs, Harkema would make the one-hour drive to Charlotte two or three times a week to help at practice or to scout from the press box during the game.

"Tom loved Owosso and loved the high school and loved the kids," Ostipow said. "He was in his element around kids, and it didn't have to be football. If a student happened to be a cross country or track runner, he was the kind of guy who would do anything to help him. Tom was one of those guys that any time you needed something, you could count on him."

Harkema also was known for never forgetting his former players. "Even when you graduated and left the program, you did not end the relationship with Tom," Ostipow said. "If it was a little thing or a big thing,

Tom was willing to do it. If 10 years later he heard a player needed a job, Tom would make the phone call."

Owosso athletic director Dallas Lintner is now faced with the task of replacing his football and track coach, and he knows what a challenge that will be.

"Tom has been a mentor and a friend of mine for many years," Lintner said. "My job now is to replace the irreplaceable. Tom was such a fair and loving man that it is quite a tall order. What I have to do is find a coach that will carry our program forward in a way that honors Coach Harkema's legacy and what he put into the program."

Harkema cared about all the sports in the Owosso school system, not just the sports that he coached. "Tom helped organize competitive cheer years ago when no one was willing to step up," Lintner said. "He also started our middle school swim program. He talked to swim coaches from other areas and started a program for middle school kids so they could swim. He was always there to support anything."

Harkema's legacy in Owosso spilled over into all aspects of life.

"There was standing room only and 2,000 people in our gym for the memorial service," Lintner said. "There were players from his first team, students who never played a sport, parents, community members, members from his church; there were just so many different types of people that he impacted. That was real indicative of the man he was."

Maddy's Ballin'

Alma senior tickling net in bunches

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

When it comes to combining athletic achievement with excellence in the classroom, few high school athletes do it as well as Alma senior guard Maddy Seeley.

A four-year varsity player for the Panthers, Maddy has been enjoying a memorable senior season.

She kicked off the season in a big way when she scored her 1,000th career point in a 69-44 win over Swan Valley on Dec. 12. After she recorded her 1,000th point, the officials stopped the game and presented her with the game ball.

"It was real exciting," Maddy said. "I didn't know that they would stop the game and announce it. It was real cool to have my family and friends there with me, and it was real cool for the officials to do that for me."

Scoring her 1,000th point was an accomplishment that meant a lot, not only to Maddy, but also to her coach and to the program.

"Maddy scored her thousandth point more than a month ago in front of a home crowd," said coach Jenny Intveld. "Based on what I have been told from long-time residents and our administration in Alma, this milestone has not been reached by many of our girls' basketball players in the past. We honored her by pausing the game and giving her the game ball. You could tell that she was overwhelmed

by the support that our fans and community members gave that evening. It means a lot to the program to see someone work incredibly hard, and it also means that she is really supported by selfless teammates who set great screens, make great passes, and haul in rebounds that give us those opportunities on offense."

Seeley finished the game with 28 points, and on Jan. 8, she set another milestone when she scored a career-high 38 points in a 52-48 win against Shepherd.

While she is averaging just shy of 30 points per game, scoring is only one of the facets of her game. "Maddy is a solid guard that has developed into an explosive scorer," Intveld said. "She is the type of player that can shoot the lights out from the perimeter but can also penetrate and create shots in paint. As a defender, she is athletic enough to hang with the best players on the opposing teams, and her knowledge of the game allows her to see things defensively that others may not. Maddy leads very easily by example and is always the first one in the gym and the last one out. She never tires when it comes to working on her game and improving her skill set. This year, she has focused on becoming more of a vocal leader both on and off the court."

A point guard in the past, Maddy has settled in at shooting guard this year thanks to a familiar face joining her in the backcourt. "I've been more of a shooting

[Mackenzie] is a freshman, and she has taken over at point guard. Having my sister play point guard allows me to do more things off the ball."

Being able to share her senior season with her sister is special. "It's real fun and I am really enjoying it," Maddy said. "It's really cool having her as a teammate. We push each other and help each other out. It's been really great."

As good a player as Maddy is, her personality and character are just as outstanding. "As an individual, Maddy is an absolute gem," Intveld said. "She has a big heart for others, and I know that kind of caring demeanor comes from her solid family structure and influence."

Maddy is the daughter of former Alma athlete and graduate Paul Seeley, and her mom Tracey was a standout athlete at Parkway High School in Rockford, Ohio. Maddy's decision to commit to play college basketball at Northwood University was made easier knowing that she would still be close to her family.

"I am real close to my family, and Northwood is close to home," Maddy said. "It also has a very good business school, and that is what I wanted to go into. I'm real excited about playing at Northwood. I committed over the summer, and it was nice being able to concentrate on my senior year knowing I had my college figured out. I've always been interested in Northwood, and I really like the coaches there."

Seeley plans to major in business, and excelling in the classroom has gone hand-in-hand with being a standout athlete.

"Outside the gym, Maddy's focus has been on family and academics," Intveld said. "She has maintained a 4.0 GPA through almost four years of high school and sets a high bar for herself when it comes to success in the classroom, which comes as no surprise



Alma senior Maddy Seeley is averaging nearly 30 points a game for the Panthers this season. Seeley will play her college basketball at Northwood University next season.

when you look at the work ethic she displays on the court."

Seeley has steadily improved as a basketball player during her four years at Alma, and her high school coach sees plenty of room for growth as she becomes a college player.

"I've seen very few athletes, at all levels of play, make such growth each year after being moved up to varsity as a freshman," Intveld said. "Naturally, you would think this would happen, but for some it doesn't. Maddy hasn't plateaued yet, and I'm just not sure where the ceiling is for her. Each year she gets better and better. That is a testament to her and her work habits/competitive nature. I don't think she will allow herself to ever be satisfied with where she is at as a player, and because of this, I'm confident that she will continue to develop new aspects of her game and be a great contributor to the Northwood team next season. Her impact on the high school game in our area and to our school is only the start for this kid."

Before she begins her college career, Maddy still has some unfinished business with the

Alma girls' team.

"Right now, I think we are just getting better and better as a team," Seeley said.

"League play is starting over, and I think we are going to show some teams that we've improved. I'm real excited to see how we do against everyone the second time around the league."

With Seeley leading the way, the Panthers will be a dangerous team down the stretch.

"To our team, Maddy means the world, but not solely based on her incredible production on offense," Intveld said.

"She means the world to this team because of the examples she sets on and off the floor. You won't find a kid who works harder than she does every time she steps on the floor, and you will have a hard time finding someone who wants to pass their knowledge along to those on the team and those coming up through the ranks within our program. It is her heart, her ability to lead by example and through the choices she makes, as well as her hard-working nature that will make her difficult to replace."

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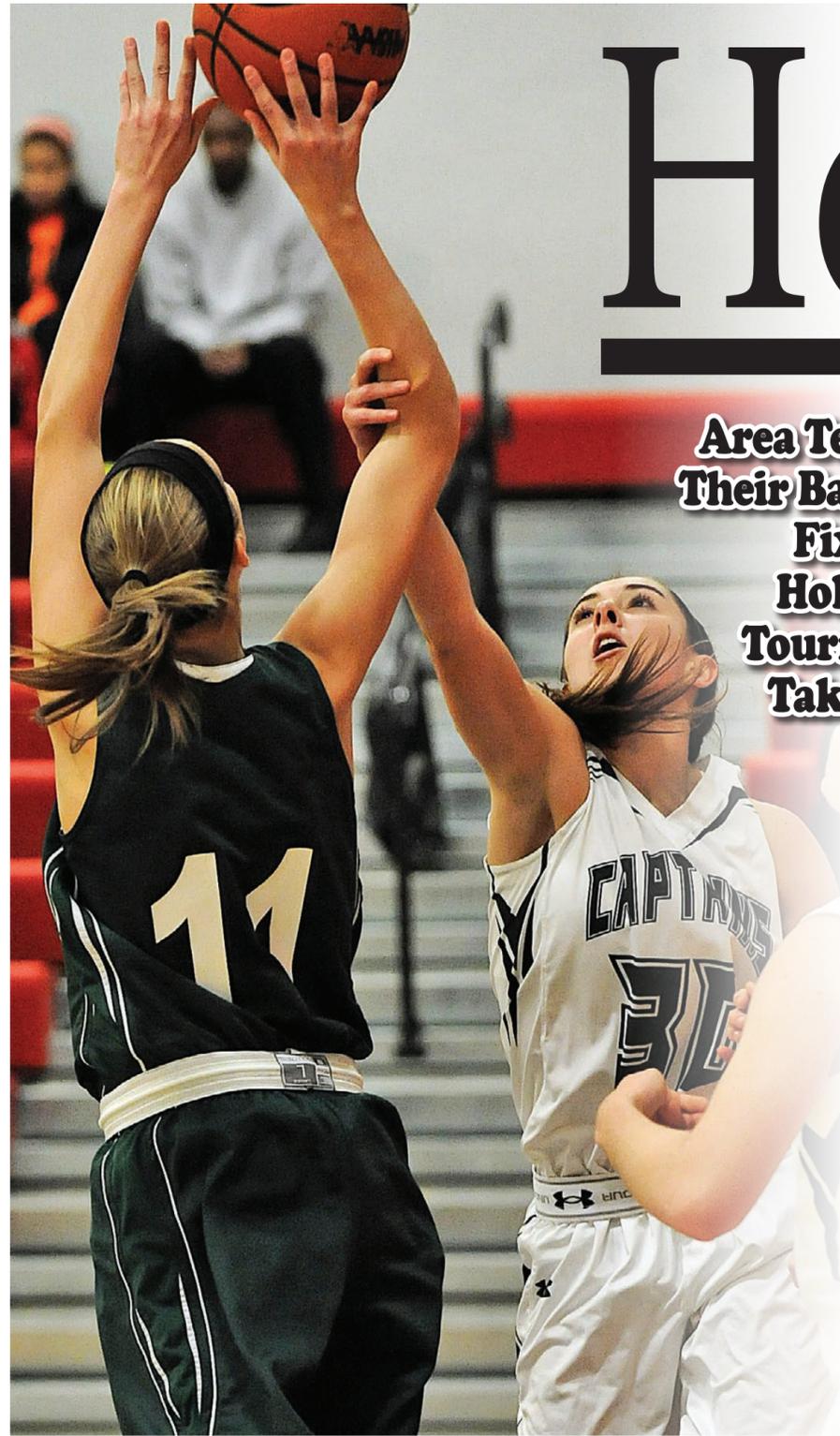
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Hoops Galore

Area Teams Get Their Basketball Fix During Holidays As Tournaments Take Center Stage

While some teams used the holiday break for rest and relaxation, other teams, like the Saginaw boys and the Freeland girls, headed south to take part in the six-day basketball extravaganza that is the Motor City Roundball Classic.

The tournament is played at two venues, the boys at Harper Woods High School and the girls at Detroit Edison. In all, nearly 100 games were played, with schools from Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio vying for basketball supremacy.

Although Motor City Roundball is the premier Michigan tournament during the holiday break, the

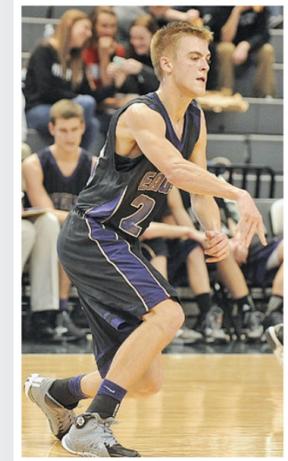
Lansing area featured Meijer Holiday hoops, hosted by East Lansing High School at the Breslin Center on the campus of Michigan State University. Lansing Christian, Lansing Catholic, Holt, and East Lansing played in the all-day tournament that featured six games and high-flying action on the court by the No. 2 sophomore recruit in the country, Consortium College Prep's Josh Jackson, and Grand Rapids Christian's DeShaun Scott.

Meanwhile, Saginaw High played played two tough teams during Roundball against Thea Bowman Leadership Academy and Consortium College Prep. Although the Trojans lost the two games they played, playing in the tournament allowed the team to stay fresh during the long grind of a tough season.

Girls teams that played during the break included Freeland, Williamston, Frankenmuth, Powers Catholic, and Goodrich.

Even with all of the snow and cold weather experienced during the break, the action was definitely heating up on the court, and it remain heated until champions are crowned in March at the Breslin.

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Sweet Return

Nine Former Area Athletes Hit Hardwood At Breslin Center During MSU, Oakland University Contest

In December, High School Sports Scene took in the Michigan State University vs. Oakland University contest at the Breslin Center on the campus of Michigan State University.

In the game were nine players who have graced the pages of Sports Scene over the last four and a half years. Those players included three former Miss Basketball winners in Spartans' Klarissa Bell (East Lansing), Jasmine Hines (Central Lake) and Tori Jankoska (Freeland). Other MSU players included former Saginaw Nouvel product Taylor Hengesbach and Midland Dow standout Becca Mills.

For Oakland, Peyton Apsey (Hemlock), Victoria Libscomb (East Lansing), Zakiya Minifee (East Lansing) and freshman Jessica Ashby (Goodrich) all participated in the game.

VICTORIA LIPSCOMB
No. 30 - Oakland University (East Lansing)

TORI JANKOSKA
No. 1 - Michigan State University (Freeland High School)

Scott Keyes photos

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KLARISSA BELL
No. 21
Michigan State University (East Lansing)



PEYTON APSEY
No. 22 - Oakland University (Hemlock High School)



JASMINE HINES
No. 4 - Michigan State University (Central Lake High School)



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Chase confident



Hannah Chase (middle) is one of three seniors on the Alma bowling team that has the Panthers contending for another TVC crown. Chase is averaging 190 this season for Alma. (Scott Keyes Photo)

John Raffel Sports Scene

Hannah Chase has had quite a season so far for the Alma girls bowling team, and she's confident of having an even better ending.

It's her senior year and her third varsity season. The past two seasons, she made it to the state finals, finishing in the top eight last season.

"I've done a lot better" this season, Chase said. "This whole summer, I was out practicing a lot more and focusing on that. I plan on going to college and bowling. I got accepted at Pikeville University [in Kentucky]. That's where my sister [Rebecca Chase] went on a bowling scholarship. They want me to come down and bowl with the team. I have to get a hold of them and see what they have to offer."

This season, Chase's team has already won a tournament.

"I think some people underestimate our team," she said. "We only have five girls. And a couple of them, it's only their first or second year coming out. We have come together as a team. We can do anything."

Alma went to the state finals as a team Chase's sophomore season. "We have a good chance [this

season]," she said. "We just have to focus and keep our heads up. That's something we have to work on. Once we get down, it's hard to get back up."

Chase's top game has been a 255, and her average has been around 190.

"I really went and worked on spares," she said. "Strikes are good, but at the end of the game...once I've been practicing my spares, my game has gotten better. I'm used to strikes a lot. As long as I work on my spares and keep that up, everything else is good."

It's natural for Hannah to compare herself to Rebecca. "People have told me that if I go to Pikeville, I might do a little better because she's more laid back and doesn't like pressure, while I like pressure," Hannah said. "When she was in high school, her average was a little lower than what mine is now."

"I'm really working on trying to keep my average and game up. The last couple of weeks haven't been my best games."

She'll focus on bowling during the off-season. She also plays golf in the fall.

"It's going to be close in conference this year," she said, adding that St. Louis and Ithaca will be tough opponents. "I like to be under pressure."

St. Louis bowlers putting together another solid season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Al Post has reason to be excited about the St. Louis boys bowling team this season. It's started strong, 2-0 in the conference and 6-0 overall, and it has a chance to do very well in the state tournament.

The team average is 994.

"That's pretty good for Division 4," Post said. "We're an experienced team. We took second at the Battle of the Bakers at Battle Creek. That's like a Division 1 and 2 tournament for Bakers. We took second in the Owosso tournament, and we were the only Division 4 team in that, too. Not trying to brag, but this is an exceptional group, probably the best I've had in the nine years I've been coaching."

Post has three seniors in Chris Adams, Bobby Church, and Connor Pilmore.

"Connor has really come along," Post said. "He's been a bowler since he was a sophomore. His game

has grown immensely. He can break the lanes down mentally, where he really couldn't before. It truly comes from a lot of hard work. The starting five made it to the semifinals last year, and they all return this year. From the time we got back last year until now, they've worked on their game. They've been out here at the bowling alley [300 Bowl] bowling all summer, working on their game.

"Conner has been huge. He's been the driving force behind it. He's got the guys together. If I'm out there and they're bowling, he helps out. He's gone beyond expectations for a high school bowler."

Adams is averaging 204 and Church 198.

"They've come along and made it so far last year and saw what it was and have been determined to get back there," Post said.



Connor Pilmore

Also back are juniors Jeff Fisher and Zack Fenby. "They've been on the varsity since they were sophomores," Post said. "They've come along great. The big thing with our team is they've learned spares are a central part of our game. Once they get rolling, they're hard to stop. We cover our spares."

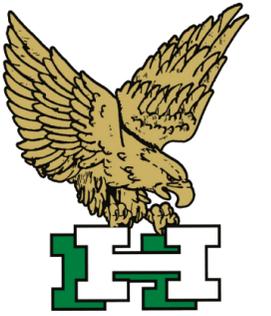
"They drive through the tough spots, cover their spares, and keep pushing and pushing. They take off and accelerate. When they do that, they explode. They really learn how to break down the lanes. That's because of their dedication, basically. They're the most dedicated team I've had. I've had some good ones. In 2011, we went to the finals and got beat in the finals."

Winning it all is a definite goal.

"You do want to take it one match at a time,"

Post said. "But for us, to not make a serious run with this team would be a big letdown. We have all the experience in the world. Their first year there, they went to the final eight and got beat. It's our year to make a run. For a Division 4 team, they're phenomenal. Other coaches have said that, too."

Bowling's Eddy Family



Raymond Eddy IV is following footsteps of his father, grandfather and great-grandfather on the lanes, while helping lead the Heritage bowling team



John Raffel Sports Scene

If your name is Raymond Eddy, you must be a bowler.

The Eddy family continues to make a name for itself when it comes to bowling. The youngest bowler is Heritage High School team member Raymond IV.

Raymond IV's great-grandfather and grandfather, Ray Eddy, Sr. and Ray Eddy, Jr., are in the Saginaw Bowling Hall of Fame. Ray Eddy III was recently inducted into the Michigan Majors Hall of Fame.

Ray Sr. "was the bowler, then I started bowling, then my brother, then my kids, and now my grandkids," Ray Jr. said. He has won some "700" titles in Saginaw and various city tournament championships.

"My kids bowled at a young age, the same thing with my grandsons," said Ray Jr., who started bowling at age 10 or 11. He's 60 years old now and continues to bowl. While Raymond IV is a high school bowler, high school teams did not exist when Ray Jr. and Ray III were young. They did have the opportunity to bowl in youth leagues, though.

"The bowling alleys were so busy back then, I don't think they could have done it," Ray Jr. said.

Ray III said the Michigan bowling sportswriters vote for the Michigan Majors Hall of Fame honorees. "You have to bowl for 15 years or have won over four titles," he said. "I've won four [Michigan major] titles, three majors with end of the year championship tournament twice and the tournament of champions once."

Ray III has bowled for over 30 years, having started a little younger than when his dad began. He's had 76 perfect games in his career. "It was a very big surprise," Ray III smiled while talking about his Hall induction.

The youngest Eddy goes by Raymond, while the others call themselves Ray.

Raymond IV is a sophomore on the varsity bowling team at Heritage this year, his first on the team. Overall, he's been bowling about 12 years.

"When I was little, I remember we'd go for a weekend to a tournament, whether it be Michigan Majors or some other tournament," he said.

Raymond IV has been working on his game for his Heritage team. "We're looking good for the year," he said.



Raymond Eddy IV, (Left), Raymond Eddy III (Center) and Raymond Jr. (Right) are three generations of bowlers that have carried on Raymond Eddy's legacy on the lanes over the past 40-plus years. Raymond IV is a sophomore on the Heritage bowling team.

He bowls in the Thursday Afternoon Scholarship league at Stardust Lanes in Saginaw. "But you're not allowed to bowl on leagues during high school bowling," Raymond IV said. "Once high school's done, I'll go back to that league. I definitely like that league a lot."

The youngest Eddy says he tries to work on his game whenever time allows in addition to regular high school practices.

Like his great-grandfather, grandfather, and father, Raymond IV definitely plans on bowling his entire life. "It's something my great-grandpa started. I don't know if anyone bowled before him. I never got a chance to meet him. He died when my dad was one."

Raymond IV, also a third baseman and pitcher, plans on playing with the Heritage baseball team this spring.

Another top bowler for Heritage is Tyler Scott, a

junior who has been bowling three seasons for the varsity team. Other top players for coach Todd Hare's team are Shane Carlson, Adam Clauss, Robert Henne, Ben Kastros, Derrick Norman, Morris Pruitt, Brandon Southworth, and Travis Taylor.

"It's going good, we're in the rebuilding stage because we've lost people the last two years," Hare said. "It's going decent."

Scott and Eddy IV were among the key players on the Heritage team that won the 2014 Flint Metro Invitational Tournament Jan. 19 at Richfield Lanes in Flint.

"I've improved a little bit," Scott said. "My spares have gotten a lot better. Mentally, I've gotten better. [The others] have improved a lot. We've all gotten a lot better from year to year."



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Stanglewicz retires

Longtime St. Louis volleyball coach leaves bench after 30 years on job, nearly 1,300 wins, two state titles

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Gary Stanglewicz has called it a career at St. Louis. And what a career it's been. He has retired after 30 years as volleyball coach, only the second one in the history of the program. His predecessor and first St. Louis volleyball coach was Kathy Hutfilz.

"It was my second year in teaching and I had wanted to get into coaching," he said. "I applied at other places. Kathy asked me if I wanted to coach JV's here. I said I'd give it a shot. I had played some volleyball in high school and college. I enjoyed it and thought maybe I could learn the game." So Stanglewicz became the junior varsity coach, a position he held for two seasons.

Prior to that, Stanglewicz attended high school at Warren Cousino, then graduated from Central Michigan University. After graduation, both he and his wife were hired at St. Louis, he as a special education teacher. He had not coached prior to arriving at St. Louis.

His win total is 1,254. Included in that total are two state titles, (Division 3 in 2001 and Class C in 1999) and a Division 3 state runner-up honor (2010).

When he took over the program, Stanglewicz said he had a "solid, steady" program, although he was able to take it to higher levels, which included winning conference and postseason titles.

"Three out of my first four seasons were losing seasons," he said. "Then we won our first league and our first district. In my fourth season we were last in the league. The next season we were first and won a district. Then we had a string of 19 straight districts."

St. Louis won 21 league championships in the CSAA and TVC and 23 district titles. The Sharks also claimed 10 regional titles and made it to the state semifinal 10 times.

This season, St. Louis had 54 wins and won the conference.

"We had some younger players that were in the system for a couple of years," Stanglewicz said. "Then they turned it around in the senior year. The key was



the next year when we graduated five players and still came back and won a district. We won a district and championship the following year.

"That was the big key, that it wasn't just a group of athletes but our program was finally on the right footing."

Players today seem to be more athletic than when he first started coaching, Stanglewicz indicated. "When I started, the first time they started volleyball was when they're in the ninth grade. Now, a lot of them start in the fourth grade. They're so much more experienced, and the game comes easier to them."

Even after 30 years, "I feel there's a lot more I can learn," Stanglewicz said. "The more you know, the more you realize you don't know that much about it and how many quality coaches there are out there."

He had seven college players from his 2003 team, including two in Division 1, two in Division 2, and

three in Division 3. "For a Class C school, that's pretty good," Stanglewicz said.

Monyka Paul, a 1996 St. Louis graduate, was a captain at Western Michigan University when it won the Mid American Conference her senior year.

Brishia Stroben, who graduated in 2005, was third in Miss Volleyball voting as a senior. She came the closest of Stanglewicz's players to winning the title of Miss Volleyball. She had a record for kills in her career at one time and played at Lake Superior State University.

As a coach, "we spent a lot of time with technique," Stanglewicz said. "We play discipline style. Our kids learn about respect for their opponents and officials. Sportsmanship is important to us. I'm a teacher by trade. It's more than just about volleyball."

Stanglewicz said he and his wife, an elementary school teacher, both retired last year, but St. Louis hired him back to continue teaching for this year. "We sold our house in St. Louis and moved to Gladwin County," he said. "In order to run the program, I need to be at the school quite a bit. We're going through a lot of changes at home with remodeling and rebuilding. Being an hour away, we'll do it for this year, but it's not something I can continue. This group of seniors I've been with four years. It was a group I spent a lot of time with. I figured this would be a group I'd be out with."

A replacement volleyball coach has yet to be named. "We have lot of good talent at the younger levels," Stanglewicz said. "This is a good time for a new coach to come in and set their expectations. "There's so many challenges involved. Every part of it is a challenge you face every day. I'd like to continue coaching at some point if there's something closer to me. I feel I still have something I can give and be successful."



Battle tested

After jumping out to a fast start, Ithaca is trying to regain its winning ways

Geoff Mott
Sports Scene



Ithaca's Josh Hafner goes up for a shot during a recent game against Valley Lutheran this season. (Scott Keyes Photo)

Boys basketball players from Ithaca suffered their first athletic competition loss since the baseball district finals last spring when they lost a 66-51 decision to Carrollton after starting the season 4-0.

While losing is entirely new to this group – four starting seniors in the lineup and nine team members overall played for the four-time state champion football team that hasn't lost in 56 games – they fell into a small rut in January and lost three of four Tri-Valley - West games.

Coach Jim Thompson isn't worried about this being a new trend. "I've got four seniors who are always ready and always prepared," he said. "They know there is a sense of urgency, and they want to compete."

"[These losses] just fuel their fire. They have great leadership they've learned in football, and they are ready to step forward."

Ithaca won its first four games by an average of 30 points. After the Carrollton loss, the Yellowjackets dropped a 65-64 decision to unbeaten Valley Lutheran before blasting Montabella 74-36. Michigan Lutheran Seminary then beat Ithaca 62-55 on the Yellowjackets' home court before Ithaca responded with a 76-47 win over Breckenridge.

"We were well-conditioned from football, so there is no excuse there," senior forward Logan

Hessbrook said. "We've transitioned pretty well from football to basketball, and we have some great coaching to do it."

Part of the success from football manifests itself in how the players approach basketball, Hessbrook said. "It's a long season, so you have to keep your focus," he said. "You take it a game at a time and keep working to get better."

Hessbrook is relying on fellow seniors Travis Smith, Eli Villalobos, and Josh Hafner – along with talented sophomores Jake Smith and Spence DeMull – to make the necessary improvements to win that elusive district title this year.

"The regular season is here to get us ready, and with four seniors, we put that development on all of us," Hessbrook said. "We don't like to lose. This is fuel to our fire."

The tough losses – especially to league opponents – are helping to season Thompson's team for tough games that will come in March.

"The last four years with Valley Lutheran, Carrollton, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, and us ... it's a very difficult league," Thompson said. "Anybody can win it, and your players learn how to fight for the wins."

Thompson knows that every team will give Ithaca its best effort because of the success of Ithaca's athletic program. "We always have a bullseye on our backs," Thompson said. "But we've got a veteran group of guys who know what to do. They've been here. It's easier as a coach when you have this much leadership."

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Fastbreak = High Basketball IQ

AAU Teammates Herrington, Winter, Walter, Gussert All Know What It Takes To Excel On Hardwood; Wouldn't Be Much Of A Stretch To See Any One Of These Four Players Take Home The Title Of Miss Basketball.

Scott Keyes Sports Scene

Through his 27 years of coaching at the AAU and high school levels, Midland's Mark Juengel has coached his fair share of talented players.

However, this year's senior class might just be his best.

There is the potential of sending seven, and possibly eight, alumnae of Juengel's Midland Fastbreak AAU girls basketball team on to the next level, with at least four of them signing with Division I schools.

Jess Walters, Midland High (University of Indiana); Karli Herrington, Hemlock (Central Michigan University); Lexi Gussert, Forest Park (Michigan State University); Grace Coughlin, Benilde-St. Margaret's School (University of Minnesota); and Lindsay Winter, Clare (Michigan Technological University) have all played for Juengel and Fastbreak in recent seasons.

Coughlin played for Juengel until the seventh grade before moving from Midland to Minnesota, but Walter, Herrington, Winter, and Gussert continued the amazing AAU ride until it ended last summer. However, the next phase of their careers is about to begin.

It wouldn't be much of a stretch to say that the 2014 Miss Basketball winner will be a former member of Fastbreak. Alma's Maddy Seeley could also garner consideration for the honor.

"To watch either Jess, Karli, Lindsay, or Lexi win Miss Basketball would be a tremendous honor for either one of them," Juengel said. "Those girls have worked so hard to become the best players they can be. I couldn't be prouder of a great bunch of kids."

Gussert has only played for Juengel the past four seasons, but she believes it is safe to say that she wouldn't have garnered the attention on the court that she has gotten if it wasn't for Juengel and Fastbreak.

"Joining that team was the best decision of my

life," Gussert said. "He [Juengel] helped me through everything from my game to contacting all the coaches. Being put on a team with such amazing athletes help me work on other aspects of my game besides scoring, such as rebounding and passing."

Juengel noted that Gussert was a quick study. "Lexi has a very strong basketball IQ," Juengel said. "When she was looking at an AAU team to play for, I was thrilled about having the opportunity to work with her. Her family dedicated themselves, driving 10 hours to come down from the U.P. for days at a time so Lexi could play. She was such a joy to coach."

On the other hand, Herrington, Winter, and Walter practically grew up on the courts with one another since the fourth grade. Each of those girls, along with Gussert, has enjoyed strong seasons thus far, and there is a possibility that Miss Basketball wouldn't be traveling too far from Freeland, the home of

last year's winner Tori Jankoska. That's unless Gussert stakes claim to the honor, then a 10-hour drive north is in its sites.

Needless to say, all four girls are worthy of the an honor. Here is a look at their impressive resumes.

The Lexi Gussert File Forest Park

Early in the season, Gussert eclipsed the 2,000-point mark in her career and became the upper peninsula's all-time leading scorer. As of press time, Gussert had led Forest Park to an 11-0 record and a No. 1-ranking in Class D. She has 2,209 points and is averaging 29 points, 12 rebounds, and seven assists.

Gussert said it would be such an honor if any of her Fastbreak teammates wins Miss Basketball. "I would love to see Miss Basketball in any one of our hands."

"I believe we all have worked just as hard for it. Karli and Jess are amazing girls. Bringing it back to the U.P. would be such an honor, and if that would be the case, good for me, I guess. I know whoever wins it will deserve it, though, and that's all I can say about that."

The Karli Herrington File Hemlock

Herrington is putting up incredible numbers in the post this season for the Huskies. She is averaging close to 23 points and 16 rebounds a game for Class C No. 2-ranked Hemlock. A year ago, Herrington averaged 19 points, 15 rebounds, and 4 blocks a game and was named First Team All-State in Class C. She will be attending Central Michigan University in the fall.

She was a huge contributor in knocking off previously unbeaten Bullock Creek 46-43 earlier this season.

"Coach Juengel instilled in us the attitude of winning and losing, and sometimes your shot might not be falling, but you win and lose as a team," Herrington said. "Winning Miss Basketball would be a tremendous honor, but you wouldn't be in that position if you didn't have a strong team behind you."

The Lindsay Winter File Clare

Lindsay Winter became Clare's all-time leading scorer earlier this year, surpassing the old mark of 1,374 points. Currently Winter is averaging close to 24 points a game while leading the Pioneers to an 11-1 record. Playing through double and triple teams most of the time, Winter uses her speed and quickness to find open shots and secure wins for her team.

Here is what she said Miss Basketball would mean to her: "Seeing Tori win Miss Basketball last year, it's so nice to see smaller schools like Freeland or Clare getting recognition now for what we are doing on the court. I would be so happy if any of us four girls would win the honor. It would be a true testament of the body of work we have all put in over time."

The Jess Walter File Midland

In a recent victory over Bay City Central, Walter scored 22 points and went over the 1,000-point mark for her career. She became the first girl in Midland High School history to reach that mark.

Walter, who burst on the scene as a freshman, has been a driving force for the Midland program ever since. At the halfway point of the year, the Chemics were 10-1, with their only blemish coming against Powers Catholic. Walter, an Indiana University commit, is averaging 22 points a game.

"You know coach Juengel taught us so much about the ins and outs of what it takes to win as a team," Walter said. "Obviously, there is so much more than shooting the basketball. The instinct to win as a team and lose as a team is so true. It's the choices you make on the court - passes, rebounding, hustling, everything that can determine winning and losing."

Crystal Falls Forest Park senior Lexi Gussert, has made the ten hour drive to Midland the last four summers to play for Midland's Fastbreak team and coach Mark Juengel. Gussert, who recently eclipsed the 2,000 point mark for her career will play her college basketball at Michigan State University. (Submitted Photo)



Although Clare lost a lot to graduation from last year's team, Lindsay Winter is picking up where she left off, averaging close to 25 points per game this season while leading her team to a 10-1 record. Winter, who will attend Michigan Tech next year, became the school's all-time leading scorer earlier this season. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Midland's Mark Juengel has coached the majority of these girls since the fourth grade and now they are graduating at the end of the school year. Juengel said it would be bittersweet if one of his former players walked away with Miss Basketball in 2014. (Submitted Photo)



Karli Herrington is averaging close to 20 points and 15 rebounds for the Class B No. 2 ranked Hemlock girls basketball team. Herrington will play her college basketball at Central Michigan University. (Submitted Photo)

Midland High senior Jess Walter has guided the Chemics to a 9-1 mark at the halfway point of the season. Midland's only loss came to Flint Powers. Walter will play her college basketball at the University of Indiana.

(Scott Keyes Photo)

ARCTIC BLAST

Big Rapids hockey team enjoys Winter Festival experience at Comerica Park

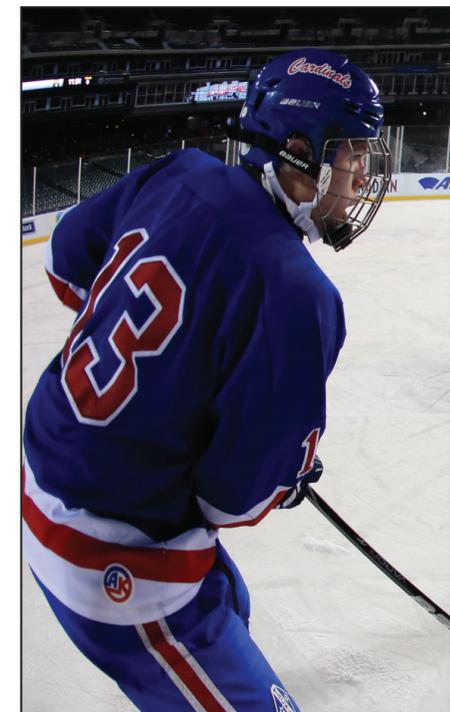


John Raffel
Sports Scene

It was a December night in downtown Detroit that the Big Rapids Cardinals won't forget for a long time. The Cardinals were among the high school teams that played at Comerica Park a week before Christmas as part of the Hockeytown Winter Festival, an event that included an NHL game on New Year's Day between the Toronto Maple Leafs and Detroit Red Wings at Michigan Stadium. The Cardinals were scheduled to play their top rival, Cadillac, at Comerica in the 2012 Festival, but that game was canceled because of the NHL players lockout and was rescheduled for Dec. 2013. Big Rapids coach Tim Blashill said he had heard about the possibility of playing at Comerica from his brother, Jeff Blashill, who was with the Detroit Red Wings as an assistant coach at the time. After Big Rapids inquired about being a participant in the Classic, the

school got the call. Big Rapids vs. Cadillac was among eight high school games played at Comerica. Big Rapids, Cadillac, Traverse City Central, and Traverse City West were the only Northern Michigan schools that played at Comerica. The other 12 teams were from metro Detroit. Big Rapids and Cadillac faced off at 7 p.m. Weather conditions were somewhat pleasant for the game, with a temperature around 18 degrees. "It wasn't snowing but it was cold," Blashill said. "We watched the Traverse City Central-West game. We were cold in the stands. After our game started, it got colder." Ice conditions were basically okay, Blashill indicated. "We had a few chips here and there. It got a little too cold. We were kind of a dry run. They [Comerica officials] were working with the ice." The team made the 3-hour, 15-minute trip from Big Rapids to Detroit on game day, starting early enough that the Cardinals could watch the two Traverse City teams play prior to their game. Cadillac won the game 3-1 on two second-period goals. In November, Cadillac had beaten

Big Rapids 7-1, so Blashill was heartened with the effort, despite the loss. Jeremiah McReynolds scored for the Cardinals in the opening period. Goalkeepers were Joe Templin and Joey Hinds. The team returned to Big Rapids that night. It was a long trip but worth the experience. "Each team had to pay \$2,500," Blashill said, noting the Big Rapids hockey boosters covered the costs. "It was unbelievable, it was real cool experience all the way around," Blashill said. "We wanted to win, play hard, and do those things. But at the same time, we wanted to take in the experience of playing in a once-in-a-lifetime game." Big Rapids took a parent bus to the game with approximately 60 people. Blashill recalls seeing fans other than those from Big Rapids and Cadillac in the stands. Considering the game was canceled in 2012, it was a dream for the Cardinals when it became reality. "We told the kids take it all in and enjoy it," Blashill said.



The Big Rapids hockey team got to experience a once in a lifetime opportunity by taking part in the Winter Festival activities at Comerica Park in Detroit. Big Rapids played Cadillac in the outdoor contest. (Submitted Photos)



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Seniors leading way for Holt in CAAC

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Thanks to a pair of four-year varsity players, the Holt boys basketball team is off to a strong start this season.

After winning the Capital Area Athletic Conference (CAAC) Blue division last year, the Rams have set their sights on defending that title and on making another deep run in the state tournament in March.

The Rams began the season with a seven-game winning streak. Key to Holt's fast start has been solid team defense. "Our defense has been pretty good," said coach Matt Essell. "We have been holding opponents to 54 points per game. We're guarding people pretty well. We also have a pair of four-year varsity players who are playing really well."

The four-year veterans give the Rams a strong inside-outside game. Senior Don 'quall Jackson (5'10") plays the point guard position, while Colin Jones (6'4") is back at power forward.

"Colin is a good inside-outside player," Essell said. "He has made our second-most three-pointers, and he is

also a real good inside player. Don 'quall leads us in assists and scoring. They are both four-year players, and they have started the majority of the games during their careers."

Jackson is one of the Rams' team captains, as is senior Tyrell Williams (6'3"), who plays a wing position.

"Tyrell leads us in three-pointers, and he is averaging nine points per game," Essell said. "He is our third top scorer. Combined, the three seniors average about 45 points per game for us."

While the Rams have a solid core of seniors, they also have some talented young players like freshman post player Jaron Faulds (6'8"). "Jaron just keeps getting better and better," Essell said. "He has just had two double-figure games in a row. Things are starting to slow down for him on the floor and starting to click for him. He has been a big help for us."

The improvement of Faulds and the rest of the team will be key for Holt down the stretch this season and going into the tournament, where it hopes to make another deep run.

"We reached the regional finals last year," Essell said. "We played Grand Rapids

Christian, and Drake Harris scored 38 on us and they beat us by five. We got a tough district and anything can happen. We want to win our district and then try to get to the Breslin. That is the big goal for us this year."

Overall, Essell sees some differences between this year's squad and last year's team.

"We are not as quick on the perimeter as we were last year," he said. "This year we are a little longer. We don't turn teams over as much on defense, but we probably play better team defense. We probably have a little more skill offensively. The guys handle pressure well and can get to the basket."

One of Holt's closest wins this year was a double-overtime win against Hudsonville at the Breslin Center during the Holiday Hoops Invitational. Another was the defeat of East Lansing on a buzzer-beating shot by Williams.

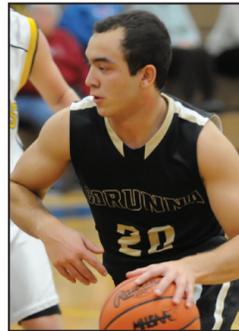
"We are trying to get all the parts working at the same time," Essell said. "Getting that clicking is the biggest challenge. We won some close games this year, and we've gutted some out."



Holt's Colin Jones (No. 25) goes up for a block against Hudsonville's Mason Ople during the Meijer Holiday Hoops Classic at the Breslin Center. (Scott Keyes Photo)

Cavaliers learning how to finish games, compete

Corunna senior MJ Myles has been a key contributor for the Cavaliers this season. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Thanks to strong team work and players who excel at their roles, the Corunna boys basketball team is enjoying its season and has its sights set on a successful second half of the season and state tournament.

Corunna opened the season by winning seven of its first nine games.

"Halfway through the season, we have been learning to compete and complete games," said coach Jason Schemenauer. "I have appreciated the team and their willingness to focus on key areas that we've identified and need improving."

One of the most impressive statistics on this year's team is that the team is averaging 68.4 points per game. While that is impressive, Schemenauer

sees other strong points.

"The noticeable thing is scoring, and everyone will read about how many points are scored and be impressed," Schemenauer said. "The most impressive thing to me is the team's willingness to adapt to different roles. For example, every game MJ Myles defends the other team's best shooter/scorer, Josh Fattal defends the other team's point guard, Mikhail Myles has

improved his rebounding and is leading us in blocked shots per game (1.8). Grant Renwick had seven assists and five steals vs. Lakewood."

The Cavaliers are looking to build on that strong start and to finish just as strong.

"The sky is the limit for this team," Schemenauer said. "If we get better, improve everyday, and remain close teammates, then anything is possible."

Hoops DNA

Having two older brothers and a Dad that is a coach, Natalie Knauf is as tough as they come

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Growing up with a basketball coach for a dad and a pair of athletic older brothers, it should have been no surprise that DeWitt senior guard Natalie Knauf developed into a standout point guard.

A three-year varsity player, Knauf is the floor general for a DeWitt girls' team that has plenty of balance and is off to a strong start this season.

"Natalie is that person who pushes the tempo for us," coach Bill McCullen said. "We try to push the tempo with our full-court press, but when the press is not clicking, Natalie knows how to push the tempo."

Knauf also knows how to get the ball to the open teammate. The Panthers have a balanced offense, led by Hannah Stoll with 11.9 points per game, Abby Nakfoor with nine points, Claudia Reid with 8.1 points, and Lexi Banaszak with eight points.

"We have had different people stepping up and scoring," McCullen said. "We have a very balanced offense, and that is why I enjoy this team. They are happy to make the extra pass, and that is one of our biggest strengths."

The fact that the team members get along is crucial to their success. "I think we are having an awesome season," Knauf said. "Our team chemistry is one of the reasons we are doing real well. This is by far the best team chemistry of any team I've been on."

Having a solid point guard like Knauf also helps develop balanced scoring. "We have several different scoring options, and Natalie does a nice job of running the offense and making us go," McCullen said. "She has also worked on her



Growing up with two older brothers and a father that is a basketball coach, DeWitt's Natalie Knauf developed a toughness on the court at an early age. As a three-year varsity point guard for the Panthers Knauf has guided the Panthers to a solid start during her senior season. Knauf will play college soccer next year at Toledo. (Scott Keyes Photo)

shot, and teams have to play her honest. She is capable of knocking down the open three. That has made her a better passer, because teams have to guard her on the perimeter, and that opens things up. She is a tough kid and a hard-nosed kid who does a nice job for us."

Having older brothers who are athletes helped to develop that toughness. "Her brothers are football players and wrestlers, and they are tough kids," McCullen said. "Growing up in that family, it

helped make her competitive."

Natalie's brother Nick currently plays college lacrosse at Indiana Institute of Technology, while her other brother Nate is a wrestler at Campbellsville University in Kentucky. Natalie's dad Doug Knauf is the head boys' basketball coach at St. Louis High School.

"I loved growing up and playing sports with my brothers," Natalie said. "We would always be playing sports in the backyard and playing

basketball in the front. My dad has also coached football and basketball for 28 years. It helps having a coach for a father. Whenever we would drive back from an AAU game, he would talk to me about my game, and he would tell me whatever he could to help me improve."

While Knauf is a standout point guard, basketball is not the sport that she will be playing in college. Also an excellent soccer player, Knauf accepted a scholarship offer to play college soccer at the

University of Toledo.

"I'm excited about playing soccer in college," Knauf said. "It's something I always wanted to do."

Before the spring soccer season and college soccer, though, Knauf and her teammates have plenty of basketball to play.

"We are just taking it one game at a time," Knauf said. "We want to get through districts and then go as far as we can."

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Midland Cinemas

New coaches settling into new digs at Nouvel

Geoff Mott
Sports Scene

First-year Nouvel Catholic Central boys basketball coach Joe Jacobs learned quickly about the family atmosphere at his new job.

"The people at Nouvel were very welcoming to my family and very supportive," said Jacobs, an athletic standout from Frankenmuth who coached for the Eagles junior varsity basketball team before taking over the Nouvel boys program.

"I lost my mother shortly after I got the job, and there were people from Nouvel at the funeral. It was a nice gesture from people who really didn't know me."

Nouvel girls basketball coach Will Jones, a veteran coach who's also in his first season with the Panthers, has also enjoyed the atmosphere at Nouvel. Jones is familiar with the Catholic community. He is an alumnus of Pontiac Catholic High School, and his last job was at Gabriel Richard Catholic High School in Riverview. Jones has coached basketball for more than 25 years.

"What you find in everything good about youth sports and the community is it's about people," Jones said. "That's consistent wherever you go. The colors and mascot change. But it's been really good here. There's great sports programs and the players are receptive to learning. "And there's a real nice quality of basketball up this way. This has been a lot of fun."

Jacobs took over for Dale Roberts after the Panthers finished 10-11 last season with a loss in the district opener. The Panthers won four state titles in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and Jacobs is looking to lead them back.

"Nouvel is known as a football school for a long time and still is, but basketball is important here too," he said. "They've won four state championships here, and



we want to get back on the map and make it relevant again. Brick-by-brick, build the foundation."

Nouvel finished 6-4 in the first half of the regular season, responding to a three-game losing streak by winning four of its last five games. That included a 70-66 win over regional rival Valley Lutheran, which suffered its first loss of the season with the defeat.

"We've had a tough schedule with some good Class A teams in there," Jacobs said. "There were a couple top-five teams in there, and a lot of these close games have helped us. "[The win over Valley Lutheran] shows that the kids are buying in and having fun. They deserve it. I'm comfortable where we are at because we're getting better, but we also have tough games with Sanford Meridian, Bay City John Glenn, Flint Powers, Midland High, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, and Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart."

Jacobs opened the doors for competition when the team worked out during the summer. That friendly fire



has fueled some momentum for the team. "Everybody had a clean slate and a clean audition for playing time," Jacobs said. "There was opportunity there, and that was the difference in the practice. "We struggled a little with commitment in the summer, because they've never really done it here with summer camps. It's been all football. But [Nouvel football coach and athletic director] Mike Boyd has helped me, and the kids are buying in."

Senior Garrett Graham leads the Nouvel offensive attack with 14.8 points per game. "Our team lost a lot of leaders, and Garrett sticks out as our most skilled scoring option," Jacobs said. "We need him to do those things, and right now we're getting the effort on the offensive end where we don't have to rely on one person."

Playing his senior season for a new coach was something that interested Graham after Nouvel's ouster in the districts last season. "I was excited just to try something new," he said. "We got

together in the summer and hit some team camps and got some chemistry going."

Graham said Jacobs has fit in well in his first experience as a varsity head coach.

"I think he's doing a great job," the 18-year-old guard said. "I think he pushes us a bit harder in practice and gets a little more involved. And we're starting to feel more comfortable in our offense."

Jacobs praised the play of Nate Garpriel as the Panthers second-highest scorer. An all-stater on the soccer field, Garpriel "is our best defender, and he loves the challenge of guarding the opposing team's best player," Jacobs said. "He gives 100 percent every time on the court, and he can shoot well. Shooting is sometimes half the battle."

James Fabiano gives the Panthers strength inside, as the senior averages six points and six rebounds a game.

"He works hard and has very long arms," Jacobs said. "He needs to box out a little better, but he does get in good position and he gets us steals. We're turning him into a stronger scorer."

For the girls, Rachel McInerney returns as the leading scorer and rebounder for a team that finished runner-up at the Class C state final under former coach Kris Hengesbach, who resigned after two state championships in 12 seasons as head coach.

"It's kind of been a big transition in changing coaches," McInerney said. "Defense is a big difference. Coach Kris always had us up in the passing lane, playing face-up and trying to get the steal and turnovers."

"Coach Jones is more help defense, a little more laid back than the presses we had with Coach Kris."

McInerney has committed to play for Ferris State University next year, and Jones is helping to make the transition to the college level easier.

"He's been really great in helping me with my footwork," McInerney said.



Saginaw Nouvel has two new head varsity coaches this season, and both, including varsity boys' coach Joe Jacobs (left) are fitting in nicely to the Panthers family. (Scott Keyes Photos)

"The Ferris coaches said they want me to play on the wing or power forward. They are more guard-oriented, and I'm able to work on my outside game."

Jones praised McInerney's game and her willingness to learn.

"We are moving her around a bit, but she is long and can bang and grind inside," Jones said. "She's a baseline forward and can play some wing, but now she is going face up and not in the traditional forward way. We're making it harder to game-plan on her because she's in the high post, and on the wing, and even at point."

The Panthers are 8-3 at mid-season, and they sit ranked No. 6 in the Class C Associated Press prep poll.

Nouvel lost by 10 points to Class B No. 5-ranked Bullock Creek before beating honorable mentions Clare, Chandler Park Academy, and West Catholic. The Panthers beat Class A regional rivals Saginaw High and Arthur Hill and claimed wins over Sacred Heart Academy and Valley Lutheran before a 61-41 loss to unbeaten Detroit Country Day, the No. 4-ranked team in Class B.

"Each game we see someone

different, and it's a great learning laboratory every game," Jones said. "We are making adjustments, and the girls are taking advantage of it. They are a fantastic group of kids, and they absorb everything we tell them."

Sophomore Laurel Jacqmain gives Nouvel a quality second scoring option, while 5'11" Nicole Buckingham is the x-factor.

"[Jacqmain] has tremendous upside, and at a long 5'9", she has great instinct and can really position herself," Jones said. "It's cliché, but she has a nose for the ball. She's always around the ball."

"Buckingham's basketball I.Q. is off the charts. She is the proverbial x-player. You can plug and play with her. Her outside shot is fantastic and smooth, and she's a great defender in the post."

With unbeaten Hemlock looming in a district tournament and No. 1-ranked Reese a possibility in the regional tournament, Jones likes his team as a sleeper.

"I like flying under the radar, and the girls know the value behind it," Jones said. "They weren't ranked very high last year and guess what? They snuck up on everybody and made the finals."

Winning attitude

Davis, Bowen bringing attention to Lumberjacks hoops program

Geoff Mott
Sports Scene

Major college basketball coaches and scouts have flocked to Arthur Hills' basketball games to watch the state's top prospect play.

University of Michigan's coach John Beilein and Michigan State University's

coach Tom Izzo have sat in packed gyms around the Saginaw Valley League to watch 6'4" junior guard Eric Davis and the talented Arthur Hill team behind him.

While he gets texts from the top college coaches around the country, letters in the mail, and increased media coverage, it remains business as usual for Davis. "I just want to win," he said. "I play my game no matter who is there, who is watching."

Davis said he watches college basketball all the time when he's at home and doesn't expect to make a decision on where he's headed until after this summer's AAU season. He'll make all his official visits in the summer and make his decision based on them. In the meantime, his

mother and uncle handle the recruiting aspect. "I'm just trying to win and focus on that," Davis said. "It's nice that the coaches are thinking about me. I get those letters every day, and I keep them for the history of it. There are lots of good memories [from the

recruiting process]."

Freshman Brian Bowen, whose first cousin is former Arthur Hill and Michigan State player and current Philadelphia 76er Jason Richardson, is embracing the extra attention that Davis brings to the team.

"I live for this atmosphere. The crowd can really get you going," Bowen said. "And knowing the coaches are there, you want to show them what you can do. It helps to get looked at."

Bowen hopes to learn about the process from Davis and one day to step in his shoes. "Eric helps me a lot," 15-year-old Bowen said. "The recruiting process seems pretty tough. He gets calls every day, and he handles it really good. I want to be in his position when I'm to that point."

Davis has shown it's his work ethic mixed with talent that has gotten him to this point.

"He gets up and here at 7 a.m. every morning to shoot around for 40 minutes, working on free throws and ball handling," Arthur Hill coach Greg McMath said. "He's been a much better vocal leader out there for us. It's nice when your best player is your best leader."

McMath said the biggest benefit his other players get from the recruitment of Davis is the extra exposure.

"[Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski] and coach Izzo are here for Eric, but they have a web of contacts and coaches around the country, and they will let them know when they see other good players," McMath said. "Our guys work hard in practice, and these coaches and scouts see that."

Davis and his teammates just want to enjoy the ride. "I like playing in front of these big crowds," Davis said. "That's the most fun, when these games go down to the wire and the game is on the line."



Eric Davis



Brian Bowen

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Lowell keeps rolling

Red Arrows hand DCC 36-27 loss

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

After falling to St. Johns is the last two Division 2 state championship matches, the Lowell wrestling team is on a mission to send its talented senior class out as winners.

To prepare for what will be a rigorous state tournament, the Red Arrows have wrestled a challenging schedule this season. The schedule included Davison, currently the top-ranked team in Division 1, and Detroit Catholic Central, the Division 1 state champion the last two seasons. Lowell defeated Davison 35-34 in early January, and on Jan. 22 the Red Arrows took down Detroit Catholic Central 36-27 before the entire Lowell student body in an afternoon match at Lowell High School.

"It was a great win," senior Bailey Jack said. "We came back to beat them after being down early. We are definitely on our way to our peak right now. We're working hard and looking to get ready for the tournament."

The afternoon assembly match was a special milestone for the Red Arrows, who are one of only three teams in the state to have participated in such an event. "It was a totally new experience for us," senior Kanon Dean said. "We had an assembly dual, and Detroit Catholic Central had

an assembly dual with Davison, so there are only three teams in the state that have had this experience. I love the fact that our school was able to experience this, and I'm thankful that our coaches and athletic director were able to secure this for us."

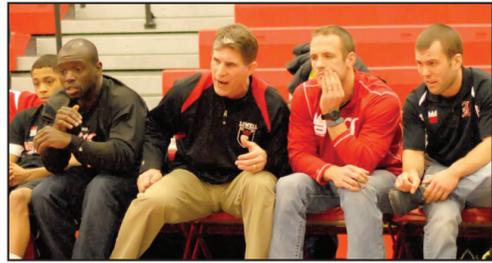
The win added momentum to a Lowell team that has been ranked No. 1 in Division 1 this season.

Coach Dave Dean also believes that his team is gaining momentum as the tournament draws closer. "I don't want to jinx anything, but we are definitely improving," he said. "This team has been great, and they are buying into everything. We have a lot of harmony on this team and great leadership."

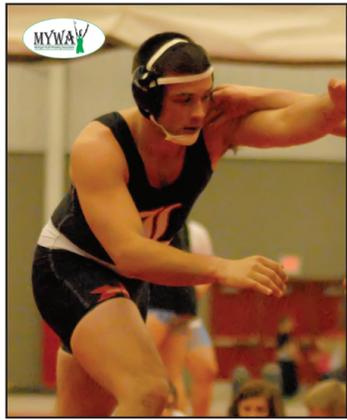
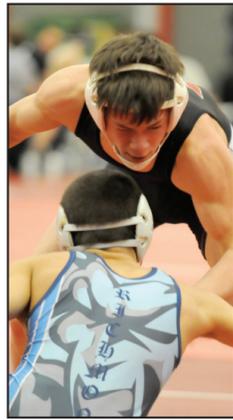
That leadership is not limited to the senior class. "We have a lot of leaders," said senior Derek Krajewski, "especially with our younger kids. Our juniors and sophomores and our freshmen have stepped up."

Those leaders have helped the Red Arrows continue to pile up impressive wins as the season has developed.

"We've been building every week of the year," Kanon Dean said. "This was a big win, and we continue to make measurable improvement. Our goal is to win the state, but we are not hanging our season on it. If we end up winning state that will be great, but if not, the guys on our team have put forth a great effort and have accomplished a lot this season."



The Lowell wrestling team is hot on the heels of St. Johns hoping to get an opportunity to knock off the four-time D2 champs during the state finals. (Randy Miniard and Zip Widman Photos)



Red Arrows, tough on mat, classroom

Jeff Chaney
Sports Scene

LOWELL, MI – Next year there will be seven Lowell High School alumni wrestling at the Division I

level in college.

It's an impressive number, one that some current Red Arrows weren't aware of, because they are concentrating on the task at hand.

"That's impressive, and I follow the guys that are already in college, but it's something we don't think of," senior 160-pounder Kanon Dean said. "I'm just lucky to be part of this program."

Dean will be one of those seven who will be competing in Division I next year.

Dean, who will wrestle at Harvard, will join current teammates Bailey Jack, who be competing at Duke, and Garret Stehley, who will continue his wrestling career at Lehigh. Those three will join Jackson Morse, who is at Illinois; brothers Andrew and Gabe Morse, who wrestle at Northern Illinois; and Kanon's cousin, Gabe Dean, who is at Cornell.

"That's awesome," Stehley said of the number of Red Arrows who will be competing at the NCAA DI level next year. "Wrestling is tough as it is, and then to do it at the Division I level, that is amazing."

Throw in the fact that some of these learning institutions are among the toughest in the country

academically, and it takes amazing to the next level.

"We always look at what's after college," Stehley said. "The most important thing here is academics."

The whole Lowell wrestling team buys into that theory, because last year the team was Academic All State, led by Kanon Dean and his 4.4 GPA.

"Academics are important at Lowell," said Dean, who was also part of Lowell's football team that was Academic All State, as well. "Knowledge gives you what you need to do what you want."

But Lowell also likes to win on the mat, and this year's team just might have what it takes to break through and beat reigning four-time Division 2 state champion St. Johns.

Lowell is currently ranked No. 1 in Division 2 with a 22-1 record. The Red Arrows have beaten some stiff competition along the way, including Davison, the top-ranked team in Division 1; Detroit Catholic Central, the two-time D1 state champions; Hartland; and Richmond.

"I think we have a shot this year if we compete as a team," Stehley said. "We have some good wins, but we still need to keep working and getting better."

St. Johns reloads; continues to flex muscles in D2 with Lowell lurking

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

After suffering heavy graduation losses last spring, some re-tooling was in order for the St. Johns Redwings wrestling team this year. With the state team tournament ready to kick off, the Redwings have done a solid job of re-constructing the lineup and are ranked second in the state in Division 2, as they look to win a fifth straight state championship.

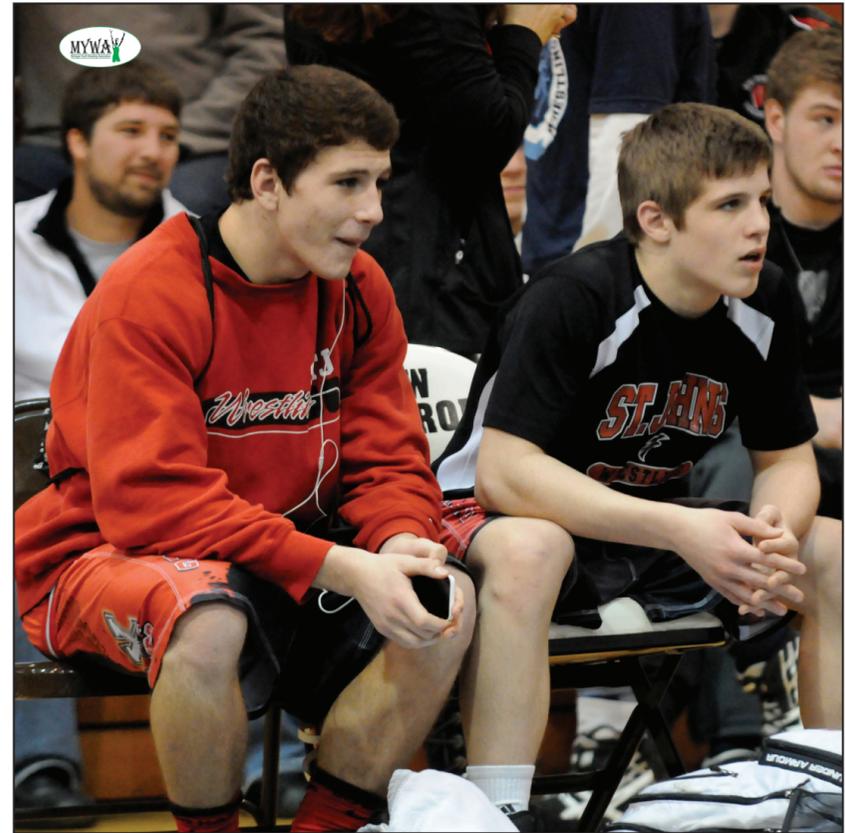
"We have a lot of new faces, but we have been making great progress," said coach Derek Phillips. "We graduated seven seniors from last year. We've been getting better each and every week."

Not only did St. Johns lose seven seniors, but it also lost some of the premier wrestlers in the state, as five state champions graduated.

Even so, the Redwings did return a solid nucleus of wrestlers, including junior Logan Massa (152 pounds), a returning state champion, and senior Zac Hall (140), a three-time state champion. The Redwings also returned Angus Arthur (189), another returning champion; sophomore Ian Parker (112), who is ranked second in the state at his weight class this year; and senior Mark Bozzo (145), who is ranked fourth.

Those wrestlers have helped the Redwings to fashion a solid regular season, which includes a No. 2-ranking in the state in Division 2 and several big wins, including an early-season win against Detroit Catholic Central.

Helping St. Johns reload this year have been several newcomers and returning wrestlers who made significant



St. Johns' seniors Mark Bozzo (left) and Zac Hall (right) look on during the prestigious New Lothrop Hall of Fame tournament earlier this season. The Red Wings went on to win the event. New Lothrop placed second. (Randy Miniard Photo)

improvements during the off-season.

St. Johns has debuted a solid freshman class, led by Emilio Sanchez (103), who is ranked eighth in the state. Lucas McFarland (119) is ranked ninth in the state, while Brett Fedewa (130) is honorable-

mention in his weight class.

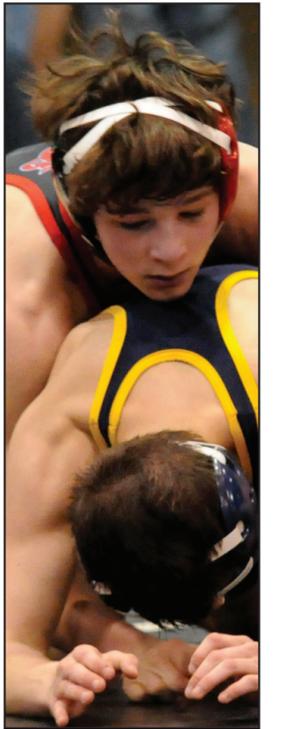
"Emilio has done a great job as a freshman," Phillips said.

"Brett is another freshman who has had some big wins."

Derek Droste (125) and Ty Wildmo (215) have also been key additions to the starting lineup. "Derek has had a breakthrough year," Phillips said. "He has made a lot of

progress since last year. Ty is another newcomer who has had a strong season."

With the re-tooling in place for the state tournament, the Redwings have their sights set on Battle Creek and possibly a third consecutive showdown with Lowell in the Division 2 state championship match.



"That's the way it looks, but you never know, a lot of crazy things can happen in Battle Creek," Phillips said. "Things are progressing well, and we are trying to get to our peak performance level. We're on track right now."

Phillips feels that both the newcomers and the veterans know what it takes to get the job done in Battle Creek. "Everybody is hungry," he said. "The veterans have had the taste of victory, and they want to keep it going. The younger guys have high expectations and have been practicing hard and improving all the time."

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Lowell's Dean shocks NCAA wrestling world

Jeff Chaney
Sports Scene

CHATTANOOGA, TENN. — As Gabe Dean walked off the mat on January 2 after securing one of the biggest upsets in recent NCAA wrestling history, his coach, Damion Hahn, turned to the talented freshman and said "Sure you're not a football player?"

It was a strange question to pose to the Cornell University wrestler who had just beaten two-time defending national champion Ed Ruth of Penn State University 7-4 in the 184-pound final of the Southern Scuffle at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga, but it's one asked after all the matches so far in Dean's young collegiate wrestling career.

Ruth came into the match riding an 84-match winning streak, but it was a fair question to ask of Dean, considering that he came out of Lowell High School with a much more impressive football resume than a wrestling resume.

After all, Dean was a two-time all state quarterback, who led the Red Arrows to three state finals, one of which culminated with a championship.

He scored over 60 touchdowns in his three years as signal caller for Lowell and was named the AP Player of the Year in Division 1-2 after his junior season.

On the mat, Dean had a good high school career, winning a state title as a junior and finishing runner-up as a senior, but he wasn't considered one of the top recruits in the nation.

So coming out of high school, Dean made a huge decision and chose wrestling at Cornell, a top 10 Division I program, over football. He questioned that decision during his first year in Ithaca, NY, where he wrestled as an unattached wrestler for the Finger Lakes Wrestling Club.

"My first Open last year, I was so nervous because it was my first college tournament, and I went 0-2 at the Buffalo Open, which isn't the biggest tournament, but still a college tournament, and they were tough kids I wrestled, but I went 0-2," Dean said "I remember calling my dad [Lowell wrestling coach Dave Dean] on the ride home and saying, 'Dad, wrestling isn't for me, I'm going to play football here at Cornell.' He said, 'You are just emotional, give it one more week, and if you still hate it, we'll talk.' I just said, 'OK, but I'm just not a wrestler.'"

"My coaches caught on to that story, so every time I come off the mat, Damion Hahn pats me on the back and says, 'Sure you're not a football player?' I'm glad

I stuck with it."

So is Hahn. "I think he was a top 100 recruit in wrestling, but not a highly-recruited wrestler," Hahn said. "We weren't sure of his plans; we thought he would play football. But his dad said he was going to wrestle, and we said, Let's make this happen."

It started happening last year when former national champion Cornell wrestler and fellow state of Michigan athlete Cam Simaz coached Dean after he deferred his first year at Cornell and wrestled for the Finger Lakes Wrestling Club.

It's continued this year with Hahn and the rest of the Cornell coaching staff.

"He has all the intangibles to do great things," Hahn said. "Is he going to win it all? I won't say yet. But he has one of the main things, and that is work ethic -- that never-say-die attitude that is hard to teach. The technique is easy to teach, it's that will to improve and win that is hard to teach, and he has that part taken care of."

But that will wasn't always there in full force. As a freshman at Lowell, Dean was stalled out in a key match against Tyler Fuller of Greenville, one of Lowell's main rivals.

It was a loss that cost the Red Arrows, and one Dean said was a turning point, not only in his wrestling career, but in his athletic career.

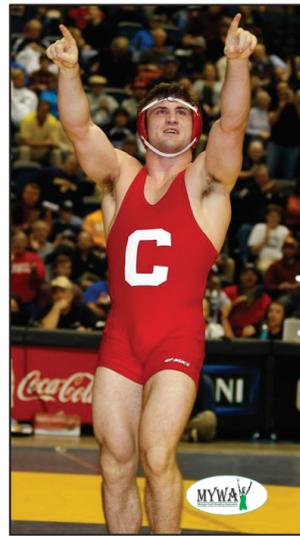
"I think every great competitor needs to get embarrassed in their lives," Dean said. "Then they can either hang their head and don't learn anything from it, or they go, 'All right, I have to fix some things and get better.' And I think that was exactly what that was."

Dean had a similar experience earlier this year when Ruth pinned him at the Binghamton Invitational in early November for one of two losses he has sustained this year.

In an interview the day after Christmas, a week before the Southern Scuffle, Dean, who was ranked sixth at 184 pounds at the time, examined that loss.

"He caught me in that cross-face cradle and pinned me," Dean said. "I learned in that match you can't put your weight forward on bottom, because he has those freakishly long arms. And once that is locked up, it is pretty hard to get out. So I learned a lot from that match, just to get a feel what kind of wrestler he is, which is great for me, because hopefully I will have another opportunity to wrestle him at the Scuffle."

Hahn, Simaz, and many Big Red fans are anxious to see what lies in store for Dean.



Former Lowell product and current Cornell wrestler Gabe Dean celebrates after defeating two-time National champion Ed Ruth of Penn State. (Submitted Photo)

"I'm excited to see what happens the next four years," Hahn said. "Where he is right now is far beyond where a freshman is, as far as control with nerves. That has a lot to do with his background. Two of the most stressful positions in sports are major league closing pitcher and quarterback, and him being a great quarterback in high school, and being the high-stress spots he played in, those have helped him."

"He just went out and beat one of the most dominating wrestlers in years," he added. "He put a great match together and beat arguably the best pound-for-pound wrestler in the country."

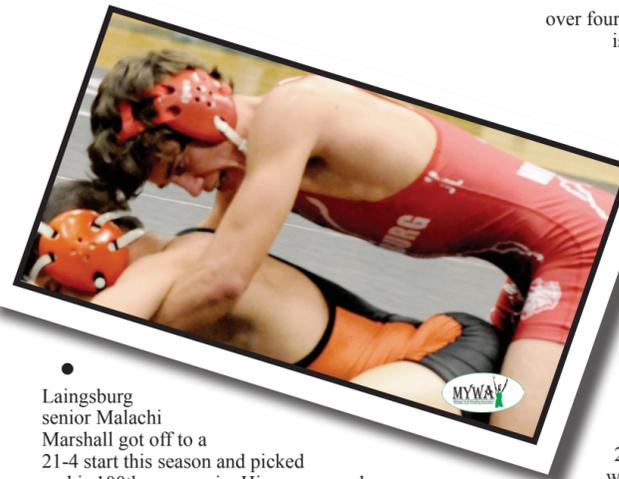
Simaz added, "Gabe is a machine. He outworks everybody. He is only a freshman, and he will get a lot better. I'm very proud of him, but that's only the Southern Scuffle, and he still has work ahead of him."

Dean welcomes the work he gets at Cornell room with the likes of Hahn, Simaz, and four-time champion Kyle Dake.

"My goal is to never stop improving," Dean said. "There are so many things I can do better in a lot of my matches."

For one night in Tennessee, though, there wasn't much that he could have done better.

SPORTS SCENE'S INSIDE WRESTLING

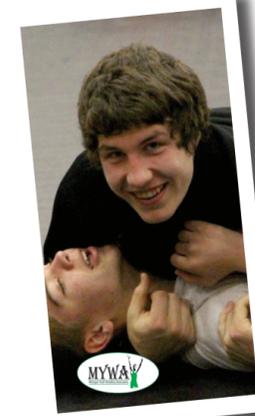


Laingsburg senior Malachi Marshall got off to a 21-4 start this season and picked up his 100th career win. His career mark as of mid-January stood at 102-98. He's not your ordinary wrestler, says coach Nicolas Rowley. "He's a great scrambler with an unorthodox style. He hates to lose. Malachi is a bit of a prankster and is a ton of fun to watch wrestle. His matches are usually exciting."

Rowley has high expectations of Marshall for the rest of the season. ● Neil McCully is a Belding senior wrestling at 189 pounds.

His record is 20-2, which includes a championship at the Lakeview Invitational. He finished runner-up at the New Lothrop Hall of Fame Invitational, losing in the final by a point to Angus Arthur of St. Johns.

"He is a fourth-year varsity wrestler and has grown quite a bit



over four years," said coach Travis Meyer. "He is an incredible student and is a leader in the classroom and through all of his extracurriculars."

He's a great young man to be around and is a positive influence on the youngsters in our program. He works hard in the practice room and never gets out-worked on the mat. It's impressive that, through all of his success, he still is one of the most humble, coachable kids we've had experience working with."

● Waverly senior wrestler Cameron Lee

is 20-2 so far this season at 215 pounds with an overall career record of 136-34.

He has defeated the No. 1-ranked wrestler in Division 4, as well as three other ranked wrestlers in various divisions. He has been a team captain for the past three years.

"Cameron Lee has many strengths as a wrestler, but I think his willingness to listen and continuously learn are his strongest attributes," said head coach Cory



Posey. "He is also physically strong and has a big gas tank. In addition, Cameron is an experienced wrestler who has won a national title as a youth wrestler and is a returning all-state wrestler."

"I strongly believe Cameron is capable of winning the state tournament this season. If he decides to attend the NHSCA senior nationals, there will be the opportunity for him to earn all-American honors. With Cameron's attitude and constant improvement, I believe that is a possibility this season."

● Jeremy Winsor is the varsity wrestling coach at Fulton and has an outstanding wrestler in Trevor Hilgendorf, who will compete at 112 pounds in the postseason. Hilgendorf started this season at 12-1 and has a 109-26 mark in his career.

"He is wrestling well for us currently, [is a] great team leader, [and is] preparing for some tough matches in our conference in the next few weeks," Winsor said, adding that Hilgendorf wrestles well on his feet and is strong with takedowns.

Hilgendorf appealed his alpha test to make him eligible to compete at 112 pounds for the postseason.

"At 112, he looks to be a contender for the title," Winsor said.

Hilgendorf will enter the Marines at the end of his senior year at Fulton.

● Logan Emery and Brandon Ayris are having outstanding seasons for Clare's wrestling team. Emery is 14-6 this season and 107-30 in his career. Ayris is 14-5 this season and 80-33 in his career. Emery won the Chippewa Hills and St. Louis invitationals. Ayris was second at St. Louis and fourth at Chippewa Hills.

"Logan is quick on his feet, [a] tremendous team leader," said coach Kyle McKay. "Brandon has phenomenal quickness [and is] a leader who speaks



T. Hilgendorf

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Taylor Krupp continues wrestling tradition at New Lothrop

Geoff Mott
Sports Scene

The threads of family and friends of Taylor Krupp are interwoven through the New Lothrop wrestling community.

Krupp comes from a family of brothers, uncles, and cousins that has produced 10 wrestlers for the perennial state powerhouse program. His uncle Tim Ebenhoeh served as head coach for four seasons and took the Hornets to the state semifinals all four seasons, including the program's state-record 11th and 12th team state championships in 2003 and 2004.

His cousin Tim Ebenhoeh, Jr. was a three-time state champion, while older brother Justin Krupp was a senior when Taylor Krupp cracked the starting lineup as a freshman. Now Taylor Krupp is a senior and his youngest brother Connor Krupp is a freshman in the varsity's starting lineup.

"It's kind of fun for me to have played with both brothers, and I can help Connor because I've been in his shoes," Taylor said. "Justin comes back for practices and weekend tournaments, and that shows how tight-knit our family is."

"And not just my family but everybody. There are lots of graduates who come back and help out every day. It's pretty special."

Taylor Krupp is among six talented seniors who give New Lothrop quite a powerful punch in the upper weights. The Hornets are ranked No. 2 in Division 4 by michiganrappler.com.

Aaron Baumann (152 pounds), Josh Wendling (160), Krupp (171), Cody Symons (189), Dakota Clark (189), and Owen Wilson (215) are all ranked in the state and most have been competing together since grade school.

"Those guys are definitely as talented as it comes," coach Jeff Campbell said. "All are multi-sport athletes and either valedictorians or at the top of their class academically. There's lots of effort in this program. Those deep family ties have helped a ton over the years."

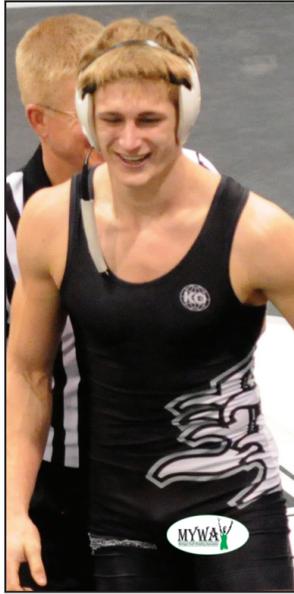
And it's made Campbell's job easier, as the senior classes over the years have motivated and taught the underclassmen. They end up as family members to the coach.

"I'm pretty fortunate, and any coach would love a group like I've got," Campbell said. "They are self-motivated, and you know that by working several years with them since they were little. Whether it's the wrestling mat, the baseball or football fields, jobs and church, these are the types of kids you want your kids to be."

"And it's special for me to spend that time with them. I'll miss them and will stay in contact long after they graduate."

Taylor Krupp couldn't imagine a part of his life where he didn't stay in contact with his teammates. "We've gone through the entire wrestling program together, from club until now," he said. "We've known each other since we were 7 or 8 years old, and we go to all these tournaments together and become real tight-knit. We have no plans of splitting up after this season."

Taylor is looking to qualify for a fourth trip to the individual state finals. After qualifying as a freshman, the 171-pounder finished third as a sophomore and runner-up last season. He's ranked No. 35 overall in his senior class and is the favorite to capture his first



Taylor Krupp comes from a family that has produced 10 wrestlers that have wrestled at New Lothrop High School. Krupp is among six talented seniors that could help the Hornets contend with D4 power Hudson. (Dave Knarr Photo)

individual title.

"He's the favorite, and sometimes that will make it harder," Campbell said. "He's already had an amazing season, beating a No. 1 contender from Wisconsin and a recent win over a top-15 wrestler in the state from Farwell."

"He's a kid we've always depended on for bonus points. His freshman year in a conference match, he took on a kid from Lake Fenton who was ranked second in the state, and the match came down to him and he got the pin as time expired. He's that exciting of a wrestler, where he always comes through in the clutch."

Josh Wendling won the state title last year at 145 pounds and is up to 160 pounds this season. That weight is a far cry from when Wendling finished third in the state as a freshman at 103 pounds. He bulked up and finished fourth in the state at 125 pounds as a sophomore.

"It's pretty unique to see someone go from 103 to 160 pounds by his senior year," Campbell said. "To grow that much with continual success ... you have to have control of your body, coordination, and strength. It's not easy to do."

Baumann is a three-time state qualifier who placed sixth as a sophomore and fourth last season. He's ranked No. 4 at 152 pounds and ranked No. 83 overall among seniors. "Baumann is a kid I really root hard for, because he does everything that's asked of him," Campbell said. "He cuts weight, he adds weight. He developed through hard work to become a great wrestler. He didn't have much success when he was younger, but every year he takes that next step."

Symons is ranked fourth in Division 4 at 189 pounds after finishing sixth as a sophomore and third last season. A three-time state qualifier, Symons is ranked 93rd overall among seniors. "He's a 4.0 student, a valedictorian, and a standout on the football field," Campbell said of Symons. "He has a great

family and a perfect example of why New Lothrop is what it is. He had some tough kids in his way last year, and he didn't shy away from the competition."

Owen Wilson is ranked No. 3 at 215 pounds in Division 4 and didn't compete as long as the others in club wrestling in junior high. He was a backup heavyweight who placed at the state meet as a sophomore and was knocked out in the blood round at 215 pounds last season.

"He started wrestling late in junior high," Campbell said. "He's just a warrior and through effort has really transformed his body. Where Wendling went up in weight, Owen has gone down, converting that fat to muscle. That's huge."

Clark is different from the rest of his senior brethren. A two-time state qualifier, Clark was born in Alaska and lived in Germany with a father in the military. They returned to the family's roots in New Lothrop, where he is ranked No. 10 at 189 pounds – six spots behind Symons in the rankings.

"He's a real nice kid with a 3.8 grade-point average," Campbell said. "On the mat he is physical and tough. He just needs to needs to piece it together, win some big matches, and make it happen. He would start for 90 percent of the teams in the state."

The transition for Clark into the New Lothrop fraternity of wrestlers was a seamless one. "We're a tight group, but we're pretty easy to get along with," Taylor Krupp said. "Dakota came in and was open and friendly. He fit right in."

Senior Pat Carnahan is the gritty member of the group. A part-time starter at 119 pounds, Carnahan has missed a lot of time because of medical reasons. "He was one of the best wrestlers as a kid, but he never was fully able to get on the mat for us," Campbell said. "He's just a great kid. Not a great record but someone who gives us everything he's got."

The Hornets' seniors have reached the Division 4 state semifinals all three years of high school, and each time they were turned away by five points or fewer. Hesperia beat New Lothrop 35-30 in 2011 and 29-26 last season, while Shelby beat the Hornets 29-28 on criteria in the 2012 state semifinal match.

"We just want to keep improving, keep pushing to do better," Taylor Krupp said. "All I want to do is go out on top. An individual state title is a huge goal of mine, and this is the best year to win both [individual and team titles]."

"This is one big family, and we've known each other all of our life, through thick and thin. And anyone on this team would give up an individual state title for that team state title. We've got the talent on this team to do it."

Youth on side of Birch Run

Birch Run has lost six all-state wrestlers to graduation the past two years. Nine seniors that graduated last year qualified for the state finals, and four of them placed at the state meet.

"We're young, so we're having some growing pains right now," coach Bart Bennett said. "And I've never quite had a season where we've had so much sicknesses. So we've been trying to get healthy, and we just deal with."

The Panthers have dealt with the issue by winning. By mid-January they had posted a 17-2 record in dual meets and had already clinched a fourth-straight share of the Tri-Valley Conference - East title.

"Luckily, we're deep enough squad where we've been able to substitute in and move guys around," Bennett said. "TVC - East was our first goal. Now we want the Conference meet, districts, and regionals."

He has a couple talented seniors leading the way. Mitch Franklin finished seventh at 145 pounds at state last year and has wrestled at 152 this season. Jared Elliott dropped a 9-6 decision in the Division 3 152-pound state title match to Comstock Park's Luke Pahl. He couldn't



Birch Run coach Bart Bennett looks on intensely during the opening round match of the MHSAA state team finals against Chippewa Hills a year ago. Although they are young this season, the Panthers look to make noise in upcoming tourney. (Staff Photo)

crack the starting lineup as a freshman and lost in the blood round at regionals as a sophomore.

"Jared probably shouldn't have lost [to Pahl]. He got caught on his back and it cost him," Bennett said. "We're working on eliminating those."

Jared is a talented kid, and he's worked hard. Some of his toughest matches have been in practice against guys like three-time all-staters Lake [Bennett] and Damian [Johnson]."

Junior Jerry Fenner is back to defend the 119-pound state title that he won last year by a 3-2

fourth overtime decision over Swan Valley freshman Matt Santos. Fenner has lost four times this year – three times to defending state champions and once to Santos at the Saginaw County Wrestling Meet.

"He can learn from what that," Bennett said. "We'll

move him up a weight class and try to get him the best matches we can as we prepare for districts."

Elliott, Fenner, and Franklin are all near 150 career wins, while junior 215-pounder George Lahar is near 100 career victories.

Essexville Garber wrestling team finding ways to compete

After finishing in second place at an early-season meet in Oscoda, Garber wrestling went home with first-place hardware from the Carrollton

Invitational Jan. 18 after going 4-0 on the day.

The Dukes, who boast a lineup of nine freshmen, won three pool matches, 45-30

over host Carrollton, 42-36 over Fulton, and 72-6 over Birch Run's 'B' team. Garber capped off the day with a 40-36 win over Millington in the

championship.

The Dukes' Andrew Yaworski (119 pounds), Noah Borgouthy (152), Mike Vanseumeran (160), Chris

Vandriessche (189), and Joe Foret (285) all went undefeated on the day, while Ryan Christensen (103) and Carson Kayner (215) lost one match.

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After finishing second the last two year's in the Division 4 state finals, Hughes is hoping this is year he can capture that elusive first state championship. (Randy Miniard Photo)

Saginaw Nouvel's Hughes shoots for elusive state championship

Nouvel Catholic Central senior wrestler Austin Hughes has placed in all three state finals in which he's competed, finishing runner-up the past two seasons and fifth as a freshman.

Hughes is tweaking his form to assist in his quest for that elusive state title medal.

"I really worked on my shooting," said Hughes, who is ranked No. 44 in the state according to michigangrappler.com.

"Last year I didn't shoot well at all. I'm getting better on my takedowns. I have more of an abundance of moves and variety of what I can do to take them down."

Hughes called on his brother Robert for training during the summer. Robert Hughes wrestles at Michigan State University.

"I don't really go to summer camps, but I get a lot of information practicing

against my brother," Austin said.

Austin became the third wrestler in the Freeland Invitational's 50-year history to win four individual titles.

"I had no clue only three people have done it," Hughes said.

"It's a very cool honor, especially in the 50th anniversary of the tournament. I like the tournament. Every year except this year I had someone ranked in the state in my weight class."

The 18-year-old is unsure where he will wrestle collegiately but is looking to major in engineering. He has interest in Michigan State.

In the meantime, he's fine-tuning his skills for another push for a state title.

"I'm looking to stay healthy and be ready for anything once the state tournament comes," he said.

"I'm not too concerned with [opponents at the state meet]. We'll see what happens when it comes up."

SPORTS SCENE'S INSIDE WRESTLING

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with his actions and not his words."

Each has a chance to be a state placer and Jack Pine Conference champion.

"Both of these wrestlers are two-time returning state qualifiers; Brandon is a returning state placer," McKay said. "Coming into their senior season is going to be the big test; they have both been to The Palace [of Auburn Hills] twice; this is their last chance to make it count."

"Brandon is looking to pick up a wrestling scholarship somewhere; his work ethic, attitude, and team mentality are the qualities that any college coach would be delighted to have on their team. They have both been captains on this team for three years now, and their leadership has helped shaped the Clare wrestling program during their time here. They will be greatly missed."

Senior Chase Challendar is having a solid season for Charlotte's wrestling team at 215 pounds.

His career record is 122-33. A major highlight was



defeating the No. 2-ranked wrestler in his weight

class, Cameron Lee of Waverly, 11-3.

"Chase is extremely good on his feet and is very mentally tough," said coach Bill Blair, who acknowledged that Challendar hopes to be a two-time state placer, a four-time regional qualifier, a three-time conference champion, "to finish his career with above an 80 winning percentage, and complete his junior and senior year only losing half a dozen matches over that time."

Rylen Droscha is a senior on coach Brian Martel's Mason wrestling team who wrestles at 160 and 171 pounds. Last season, he was at 44-12 and qualified at 160 pounds for the Division 2 state tournament for the third year in a row. He was 1-2 last year and didn't place and is looking to return to The Palace this year.

This season, he had a match at 189 pounds against Noah Pieh of Northwest, which he won by pin in 1:45.

Montabella coach Shaun Balhorn has three wrestlers who have been having strong seasons so far.

Dan Davidson (285 pounds) is 14-3, Jonny Durham (171) is 22-1, and Dalton Kuklewski (130) is 22-2.

"Dan has placed at all three tournaments this season and has pinned three ranked wrestlers, Jonny has taken first at two tournaments and second at another, and Dalton has placed first at two tournaments and second at another," Balhorn said. "Dan is physically strong for a heavyweight. He has the ability to wear on his opponents. Jonny is technically a gifted wrestler. His tempo and work ethic have made him truly fun to watch. Dalton is physically strong and can score from all positions."

"Dan has a chance to be in the state finals this season. Jonny should be in the state finals this season. Dalton should place in the top six this year."

Central Montcalm senior Cody Veltkamp has been having a productive senior season so far for the Green Hornet wrestling team. He's wrestling at 119 pounds and 125 pounds.

Coach Dan VanderVlucht noted that Veltkamp has won the St. Louis Invitational three straight years.

This year, Veltkamp has a 24-4 record. "He's having an outstanding season right now," VanderVlucht said.

Veltkamp has advanced to the blood round at state finals for a shot at seventh or eighth place but lost by a point in his bid.

"I think he can place top five," VanderVlucht said. "Any given day, he can be the No. 1 kid there. Cody's stronger parts are his shots and when he's on top."

Big Rapids is getting strong wrestling seasons out of seniors Nathan Weckesser and Alim Muhammed.

Weckesser is 32-2 at 130 pounds while Muhammed is 23-1 at 145.

"They're great work partners for each other," said coach Dan Sleeper. "They're looking for the best guy in the room, and they're always looking at each other. They're best guys in the room. They just go at it. Every day is a brawl. It's nonstop action. It's paying off for

See Page 38

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SPORTS SCENE'S INSIDE WRESTLING

From Page 37

them.
 "They're good listeners. They do what the coaches ask."
 Sleeper is confident that his two wrestlers can make a long run at state.
 "You have to stay healthy and keep working hard," Sleeper said. "You have to stay consistent."

Greenville has two outstanding wrestlers in Alec Ward and Jake Hopkins.

Ward is 30-2 with a career record of 166-37. He's a senior at 130 pounds who is focusing on having a successful postseason.

"He's good in all areas of wrestling," said coach Paul Johnson. "He's good on his feet, good at escaping, getting to his feet, and riding his opponent. He has good stamina."

"He aspires to be a state champ. He's never made it to the finals. I'm sure he'd like to make it to the finals."

Hopkins, a senior 152-pounder, is 25-5 this season and 88-26 for his career. He was a district champion last season, but he broke his ankle going into regionals and will look to place at state this year.

"Those are reachable goals for him," Johnson said. "He has real good balance. He's a good athlete and that serves him well on mat."

It's been quite a season for the Lakeview wrestling team and Terry Grieser, who is currently 28-2 this season and has over 100 wins in his career.

"During this season, he has achieved his 100th career win, undefeated status at the Farwell Team Invite and Mount Pleasant Invite," said coach Todd Barton. "He also won the title at his home tournament for the second consecutive year, defeating Spencer Knizacky of Mason County Central in the finals, who had beaten him earlier in the year."

Grieser also tops Lakeview with 74 takedowns and 14 pins.

"Terry prides himself on being relentless on the mat. He has very good conditioning and wrestles every match with the attitude that no one can beat him. His relentless nature helps him to be dominating on his feet," Barton said. "Just as any good wrestler, Grieser has a goal to finish on top of the podium at the [Palace of Auburn Hills] this year. If he didn't have that goal, he would be selling himself short."

Wrestlers like Grieser have helped to make Barton's coaching season enjoyable.

"This is my second year as head coach here at Lakeview, and Terry has been my go-to guy since day one," Barton said. "He was one of two upper classmen my first year. He naturally fulfilled a leadership role and believed in how I was coaching, though it was different from his past coaches."

"My first year as head coach at Lakeview, we had very few kids with any prior experience, which made for a tough season, because I had no idea where to start. I knew I had to try to develop the kids new to the sport and help take the others to the next level, but had no idea how to do it."

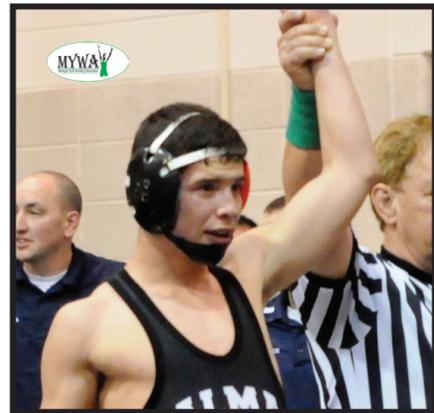
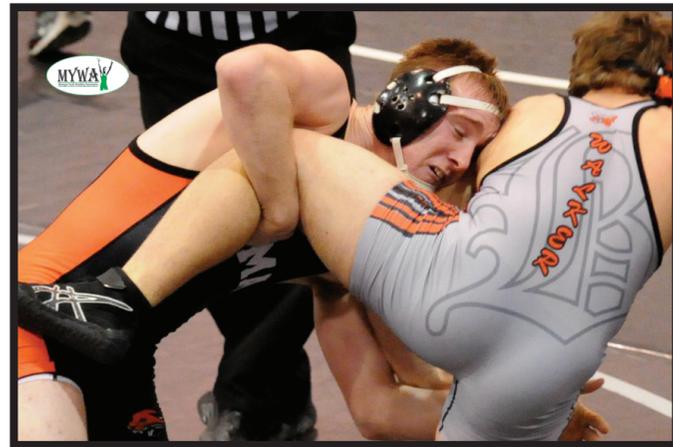
Lakeview was 6-25 last season and had one state qualifier, Grieser.

Zack King and Richie Ostrander have been producing valuable points for the Chippewa Hills wrestling team.

Ostrander, at 103 pounds, is 11-4 and has had his season shortened by illness. But head coach Nate Ethridge still expects Ostrander to come back and do some things during the postseason.

Zach King pinned Abe Angious of Reed City at 119 pounds in Central State Activities Association action Jan. 22, improving his record to 31-2 this season. "He attacks in all his positions," said Ethridge. "He's come a long way. He's a complete wrestler."

Both wrestlers are seniors. At 103 pounds, Ostrander was 0-2 in the state finals last season and went 51-8. At 112 pounds, King placed seventh in the Division 3 state finals last season and ended up with a 52-7 record.



Alma wrestlers Boyd Hubbard (above) and Damian Castillo (left) each recorded their 100th victories earlier this season. Castillo would later go on and win the prestigious New Lothrop Hall of Fame tournament that featured some of the best teams in the state. (Dave Knarr Photos)

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Bay City Western continues to make strides

Ben Murphy
Sports Scene

If there was something good that came from last year's regional semi-final loss to Greenville, it's that the Bay City Western wrestling team was left wanting more.

"Our goal now is, of course, to make states this year and do something once we get there," said Steve Goss, who is in his sixth year coaching the Warrior wrestlers. "We've dominated everybody this year, but the one team that we lost to [John Glenn], and that was by one point. We just beat Mt. Pleasant on Jan. 22, 52-21, and they're a pretty solid team."

Aside from the one-point loss, the 2013-14 season has gone similarly to the way that last year went. A season ago, the Warriors rolled to a 20-3 record, were Saginaw Valley League North Division Champions, and won their Division 2 district title. Chris Schoenherr (130 pounds) took second place in the state finals, and Tom Schoenherr (125) and Jake Alarie (215) both took eighth.

The Warriors, who are ranked sixth in Division 2, recently took third in the power-laden New Lothrop tournament, won both the Grandville and Freeland invitationals, and have already wrapped up the SVL-North title this year with a perfect 10-0 league mark in duals.

"That was the first [goal]; we feel good about that being secured," Goss said of winning the league. "We want to keep focused on securing all our matches and having control as much as possible and not get pinned at all hopefully. [Hopefully] we win districts and continue on from there and individually, we're working on getting as many guys through districts and to regionals. We host regionals this year, so hopefully we can launch as many as we can from here to states."

From the 119 weight class up to 215, the Warriors don't lose many matches. Wrestlers in those classes are Coby Moore (119), Blake Jackson (125), Mike Rojas (130), Jacob Wibirt (135), Tom Schoenherr (140), Chris Schoenherr (145), Zak Davis (145), Cole

Rechsteiner (152/160), Cody Okes (189), and Alarie (215). Noah Schoenherr (112) is an up-and-coming member of the team as well, according to the coach.

"We have a tough row [of wrestlers]," Goss said. "We have three Schoenherr boys in our lineup, and they're all outstanding. Moore is doing really well for us, too; he's just a very skilled wrestler. Jackson is a sophomore, but he's ranked ninth or tenth in the state right now. Okes is a junior, and he is wrestling really well right now."

Rojas and Alarie are two of the team's top seniors, and the coach noted just what they mean to the team. "Alarie is a returning state medalist, and he has really worked hard as well," Goss said. "He's a very physical wrestler, very aggressive and smart, also. Rojas, a good portion of his matches have been pins. He goes out, takes care of business. He doesn't get too nervous, he's just been running through opponents going 21-1. He's very businesslike and tough all-around. He really gets into his wrestling."

Chris Schoenherr narrowly missed out on a state title last year, and his quest for a championship took a heavy hit during football season when he broke his leg. He's come back to pick up a pair of wins, and the coach is hoping to see the junior continue to mend quickly.

"It's been good to have him back," Goss said. "He's really performing well; he's just so mentally into the sport. In his first match back, he pinned his opponent in 30 seconds. In his second match, against Mt. Pleasant, I thought it was going to take him longer, but he pinned him in 35 seconds."

Coach Goss feels that Schoenherr's quick recovery should lead him to another strong postseason run.

"Last year he had a phenomenal run to the state finals," Goss said. "I'm hoping he'll be at full strength by then. We're watching out for that leg, but he hasn't had any problems. We're picking and choosing our sports with him for awhile, and we're really hoping he's ready for individual and team districts. Not only is he a great wrestler, but he is a good leader, and that of course helps the team."

Though the squad may have high expectations and a lofty state ranking, the coach is still stressing basic strategies for success.

"We just need to give 100 percent effort and focus and do the best we can," Goss said. "We need to finish matches strong. The last 30 seconds are really important. They have been good representatives of Western wrestling and the community, and we just need to keep chugging away. We have a bunch of good guys on the team. They're a good group, they're all-state academic, and they're just good representatives of the area."

This and That
In other county wrestling, Bay City Central senior Davon Jackson recently reached 150 career wins. In early January, Jackson also set the Central wrestling record for career pins, with 100. A year ago, he took the Division 1 individual state finals by storm. He lost his opening round match in the 152-pound weight class to Jordan Atienza of Livonia Franklin in a 16-8 major decision. From there, he won five straight matches to finish in third place. This year, he has earned MVP honors at nearly every tournament he's attended and is seen by many as a main contender for a state championship.



Bay City Western coach Steve Goss accepts the third place trophy during the New Lothrop Hall of fame Tournament. (Dave Knarr Photo)

Injuries pop up, but Swan Valley continues to fight on

Geoff Mott
Sports Scene

The Swan Valley wrestling team isn't quite as banged up as it was last season but the Vikings have had to earn every bit of its 21-1 dual meet record through mid-January.

The Vikings ended Birch Run's three-year stranglehold on the Saginaw County Invitational championship with a title in January. The Vikings had won the county title four years in a row before Birch Run's stretch.

"It's a good rivalry with Birch Run," Swan Valley coach Darrell Burchfield said. "We look forward to it every year and the competition is always there. It helps motivate both teams. It's good for our team."

The biggest individual victory at the meet came from sophomore Matt Santos, who avenged his 3-2 overtime loss in the Division 3 119-pound state finals last year to Birch Run senior Jerry Fenner. Santos earned a 3-1 decision over Fenner in the 125-pound

championship match.

Santos is unbeaten and healthy. He suffered a dislocated shoulder during the season last year and missed nearly eight weeks before making a run to a runner-up finish.

"Matt is not someone with a huge head," Burchfield said. "He simply outworks opponents and pushes himself along with his teammates. He's done a great job."

Seniors Steve Decker (heavyweight), captain James Dwenger (171 and 189 pounds), versatile Ty Davidson (135) and Josh Flores (top-ranked at 140 pounds in Division 3) have made strides through injuries and development to give Burchfield experience. Sophomore K.J. Suitor is ranked fifth by michigangrappler.com at 112 pounds in Division 3 after placing seventh at the state meet last year.

"Decker caught fire right at the end of last year and



KJ Suitor

he gets better with every match. (Dwenger) and him are really elevating our upper weights and giving us stability," Burchfield said. "Flores has went through the gambit of injuries, missing all of his sophomore year with a knee injury. He had a letdown at states and just missed all-state honors. He's got an eye to be at the top of that podium."

Burchfield always has the Vikings ready for a run at Battle Creek come February. But looking ahead to possible matchups against perennial powerhouses like Dundee or Richmond doesn't factor into the Vikings plans.

Yet.
"Our first target is one match at a time. We've got to get through districts and a regional that will have a Caro and maybe Freeland and Sanford Meridian from the other districts," Burchfield said. "At the state tournament, if our guys wrestle their way and in their own style - and not sucked into their opponent's style - we are capable. Anything can happen. We've got the firepower. We just have to perform."

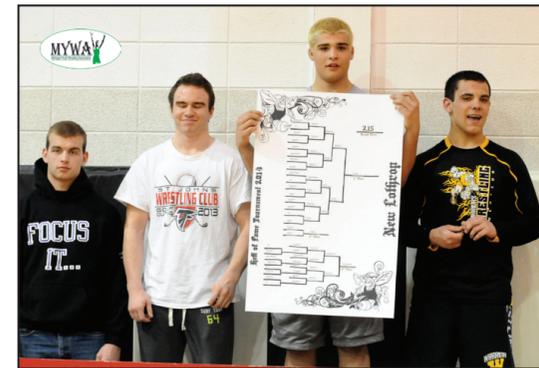
Meridian wrestles through tough schedule

Ben Murphy
Sports Scene

The Meridian wrestling team has lost more matches so far this year than it did all of last year, but third-year head coach Jeremy Sampson is hoping that the losses add to growth in his team.

"It has been an up-and-down season; we have wrestled very well at times and rather flat at times," he said. "We have wrestled a brutal schedule thus far. Our tough scheduling should pay off when the postseason tournament starts. We are in a very tough district and regional and should do very well."

A year ago, the Mustangs went 20-3, won the Gladwin team tournament, took second



in the Jack Pine Conference, and won their second straight district title. Meridian advanced six grapplers to regionals and three to the state finals, which were highlighted

by Joe Shuler taking fifth at 112 pounds. Despite its difficult schedule, Meridian has had plenty of solid showings this year. It was runner-up at the Ogemaw

Heights Invitational, placed fourth out of 19 schools at the Freeland Invitational, and took seventh at the prestigious New Lothrop Invitational. Chase Robinson (130 pounds) and Kaine Sturgeon (285) have both already picked up their 100th career wins, and Eric Fader (215, ranked third in Division 3) has a chance to reach the 150-career win mark. Other standouts so far this season have been Tyler Brinley (103), Shuler (ranked eighth in Division 3), Matt Hoffman (135), Jesse Fellow (140), Paul Streeter (152), and Jess Levier (160).

"I just want us to stay healthy and continue to improve," Sampson said. "We have improved so much already this year, it's only fitting that we continue to work hard and

leave our mark. I think we have a heck of a chance to win our conference and then to win our team districts. Once you get to regionals, strange things can happen, so a trip to team states is one of our goals, as well."

Those are rather lofty goals, considering conference foe Roscommon has won 10 straight league titles. Both squads were 2-0 in league action as of Jan. 22. Their district doesn't get any easier, as they'll be pitted against Freeland, Bullock Creek, and Garber.

"Our wrestlers need to continue to work hard and to stay disciplined," Sampson said. "We have made a good name for ourselves for not giving up in matches, and that is huge to postseason success."

Eaton Rapids rebounds

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

During the 1980s and 1990s, Eaton Rapids was home of one of the premier Division 2/Class B wrestling teams in the state. Under coach Joe Ray Barry, the Greyhounds are working their way back up the ladder.

Barry, a former Mason High School star and wrestler at Central Michigan University, is in his third year as head coach of the Greyhounds and has the program headed in the right direction. Heading down the stretch of the season, Eaton Rapids has a 23-8 record and is gearing up to make a run at the team state finals.

"We've been having a good season," Barry said. "We have been a pretty young team the last couple of years, and we are still pretty young. We just have one senior right now."

The Greyhounds are thin on numbers but have plenty of talent, led by junior Jaedin Sklapsky, who has a 32-1 record and is ranked No. 1 in the state at 130 pounds. Sophomore Lane McVickey started the season with a 17-2 mark and is ranked fifth in the state at 135 pounds. Isaac Coolidge (103 pounds), Austin Eldred (119), Austen Hutchison (125), Blaine Milheim (145), and Triston Warner (215) have all won over 20 matches this season.

"We have beaten some good teams this year," Barry said. "We beat Greenville

37-33, and we lost a couple of real close duals to Holt and Tecumseh. We are basically filling only nine of the 14 weight classes, so we are starting each match about 24 points down."

Despite the low numbers, the Greyhounds have some lofty goals. "We're looking to make a run at the state tournament this year," Barry said. "We have a good junior class and a good sophomore class. We face Charlotte in our district, and we know that is not going to be an easy task by any means, but it's something we are capable of."

Eaton Rapids and Charlotte have picked up the intensity of their rivalry this year, both on the mat and the football field.

"We faced Charlotte in our first football playoff game, and we had to get past them there," Barry said. "Ten of my wrestlers were on the football team, and all ten of them were on the field."

Barry likes the progress being made in the wrestling program as it works to get back to the level it was over 15 years ago. Eaton Rapids won Division 2 state titles in 1999 and 1997 and Class B state titles in 1993, 1991, and three consecutive titles from 1985 through 1987.

"We've had a lot of good coaches, and those are definitely some big shoes to fill," Barry said. "The program was real strong in the late 80s and the 90s, and we can get there again. We got the community behind us, and their support for wrestling is big for our success."



The Freeland wrestling team was 17-6 prior to press time in dual matches. Coach Mike Ritt likes direction team is headed. (Above) Eric Fader (center) of Meridian is ranked No. 3 in D3 at 215 pounds. (Randy Miniard Photos)

Freeland soild on mat

Freeland wrestling coach Mike Ritt likes what he's seen so far from his team this year. The Falcons are 17-6 overall and 3-1 in the TVC Central. They have been successful at tournaments, winning at Hemlock; taking second at Meridian; and taking third at invitationals at Ovid-Elsie and North Branch and at the Saginaw County Wrestling Meet.

"The season has gone well to this point," said Ritt, who is in his 15th year as the head coach. "I think that the rest of the season should go

pretty well; like anyone else it will depend on health. So far so good."

Ritt pointed out that his top three wrestlers this year are Kolten Radaz (sophomore, 125 pounds), Josh Schlak (senior, 135), and Charlie Ferens (senior, 140).

"Each qualified for the state finals last season," Ritt said.

"We are optimistic that each will again qualify. Each of the boys has the tools to place in the top eight, and we have confidence that each will."

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Skiers Pumped

Mother Nature's wrath been great for area teams

John Raffel
Sports Scene

If there's one sport that should enjoy the higher-than-average snowfall the area has seen this winter, it would be skiing.

In past winters, mild weather sometimes made it tough for ski resorts to be open any earlier than January, causing problems with ski teams that wanted to get in preseason work. Most schools' ski programs have official meets that start in January and end with the state tournament in late February.

Jeff David is the coach of the Okemos ski team and notes that the team's time improved for training and regular season meets.

The team skis at Mount Brighton, and "compared to years past, there's no comparison" David said. "We have been blessed with temperature that allows for snow making. [The new owners] have increased their snow production capabilities by five-fold.

"We have had coverage from the first day on with snow...The week after Thanksgiving, we were on the hill. It's been terrific.

"Our approach is to get as much mileage as we can in terms of our pre-skiing and primarily drill work," David said. "We started off getting kids comfortable on the snow and going through our battery of drills. Early season, even though there may be coverage, often time resorts don't want you to plant courses yet for a variety of reasons.

"We have had a chance to get on snow early and train and have drills. It helped our team prepare for our first competition. It gives us a chance to get to be where they need to be sooner. Hopefully, they can continue to build their skills. Provided the weather stays the way it is, we'll have a great opportunity to have our regional and state without any chance for delay. The past couple of years, we've struggled by having to throw chemicals on the hills, especially down here in southeastern lower Michigan where we train."

Terry Avink, Rockford ski coach,

concurred that the snow has made it a good ski season so far. "As a team, we generally train more up north than we have this season," he said. "The large amount of natural snow here at Cannonsburg and Pando has allowed us spend more time on the snow and less time driving to northern resorts. We always have trained in December, however, this season allows us more local training and the option to pretty much do any type of training we choose, whether it's tall poles, stubbies, or brushes."

Avink agrees that meets have been highlighted with good quality snow, and it could make for excellent conditions at the late-season meets.

"Our condition at the 'burg was normally good even in lean snow years due to their snow-making process," Avink said. "However, with the large amount of natural snow, they are able to groom terrain into the hill as opposed to having to focus on making snow.

"Natural snow also makes us as ski racers feel more excited about our sport and also gets friends and families more involved."

Clare, coached by Jann Cleary, usually trains and competes at Snow Snake Ski & Golf in Harrison.

"This year we had dry land training for only two days, and then we were able to hit the slopes to concentrate on the techniques of skiing," Cleary said. "Having this extra time has allowed many of the racers to improve significantly and the more advanced skiers to hone in on their technique. Ski racing is a very precise sport with very little room for error.

"Snow Snake does an excellent job preparing the race hill for all the race teams in the area, so we have always had enough snow on the hill to practice, but not always the excellent conditions we have had this year. The extra fresh snow has made for wonderful skiing conditions. But, we are not the only ski team that has the advantage of great snow; all teams have had this benefit."

Clare started practice Nov. 18 for dry land and took off Thanksgiving week.

"Then we were skiing on the hill Friday after Thanksgiving when Snow



Mother Nature has dumped more than three feet of snow in some of the Sports Scene coverage area, but coaches and athletes love the opportunity the fresh snow brings to the slopes this season. (Alan Holben Photo)

Snake opened to the public," Cleary said.

"The following week we also skied and conditioned by hiking the hill many times.

"Last year, we were not able to ski until just before Christmas. We have our ski camp up at Schuss Mountain every year, and last year, the first time we all skied was at the first day of camp. This year, all of us had been skiing before camp. This made camp much more beneficial."

Heritage coach David Corcoran said his team usually trains in the Saginaw area. The additional snow probably doesn't directly have an impact on his team, he

indicated.

"Our first meet doesn't take place until kids come back from holiday break," he said.

"We can't practice over break. Now that we're in season, it's nice to have great snow to ski on. But overall, there's been no effect on the Heritage team."

In fact, additional snow, which canceled school at Heritage, also canceled ski team practices.

"Our preparation time was lost due to the overabundance of snow," Corcoran said.



The Grand Ledge gymnastics team is pictured here after winning last year's state title. This year, the Comets are gearing up to win their seventh straight championship. With a balanced team, they are primed to make another run this season. (File Photos)

Grand Ledge shoots for 7th straight title

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

When it comes to dominant high school programs, few can match the success of the Grand Ledge gymnastics team.

While some teams have won two or three consecutive state titles, and a few are even aiming for a fifth this year, the Grand Ledge gymnastics team has won six straight state titles and is setting its sights on a seventh this season.

Not only do the Comets win state titles, but they also win almost every time out. Going into the Kenowa Hills Invitational on Jan. 25, Grand Ledge has won 97 straight competitions. This year's squad has its

sights set on extending the state title streak, and with several veterans back, the Comets are on pace to make that a reality. The one fly in the ointment, however, is injuries.

"We have a really, really good team this year," coach Duane Haring said. "We have a team capable of scoring in the high 148s. This is also the first year we've been plagued by injuries. We have been loaded with injuries, and I just had my number three girl go down with a shoulder injury that may be for the rest of the year."

The Comets returned a solid core of veterans this year, led by senior Presley Allison and sophomore Rachel Hogan. Last year, Allison led the way in

Division 2, as she won the all-around competition with a score of 37.875. She finished first in vault, beam, and floor and was third on the bars. Hogan, in her first year of high school gymnastics last year, finished 10th in the all-around competition at the state meet.

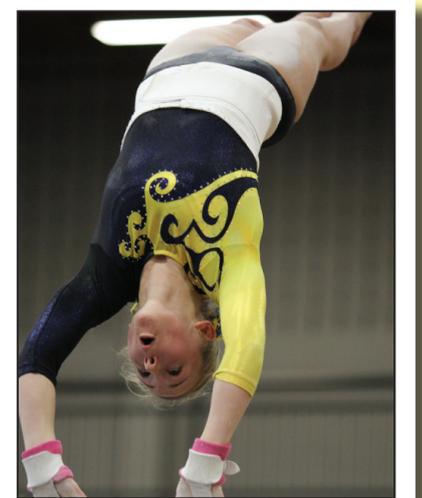
"Presley is just an awesome all-around gymnast," Haring said. "Rachel is a sophomore who was a superstar last year, and she is even better this year."

The Comets also have some talented newcomers, led by sophomore Tiana Seville. Seville, who had worked her way up to the third spot, suffered the shoulder injury in practice Jan. 23 and is in a cast from

her shoulder to her finger.

"This year's team is as good as last year's team, but I've never had the injuries like this," Haring said. "We are just going to have to take things day by day. We are not going to give up, and every other girl on the team is going to have to pick it up. When Tiana went down, the girls just said that each one is going to have to find another tenth of a point, and those tenths will add up to a point. This team does not have any quit in its blood."

Veterans like junior Taylor Stevens and sophomores Lexi Payne and Maddie Loftus are some of the gymnasts Haring is looking at to step up and help overcome the injuries.




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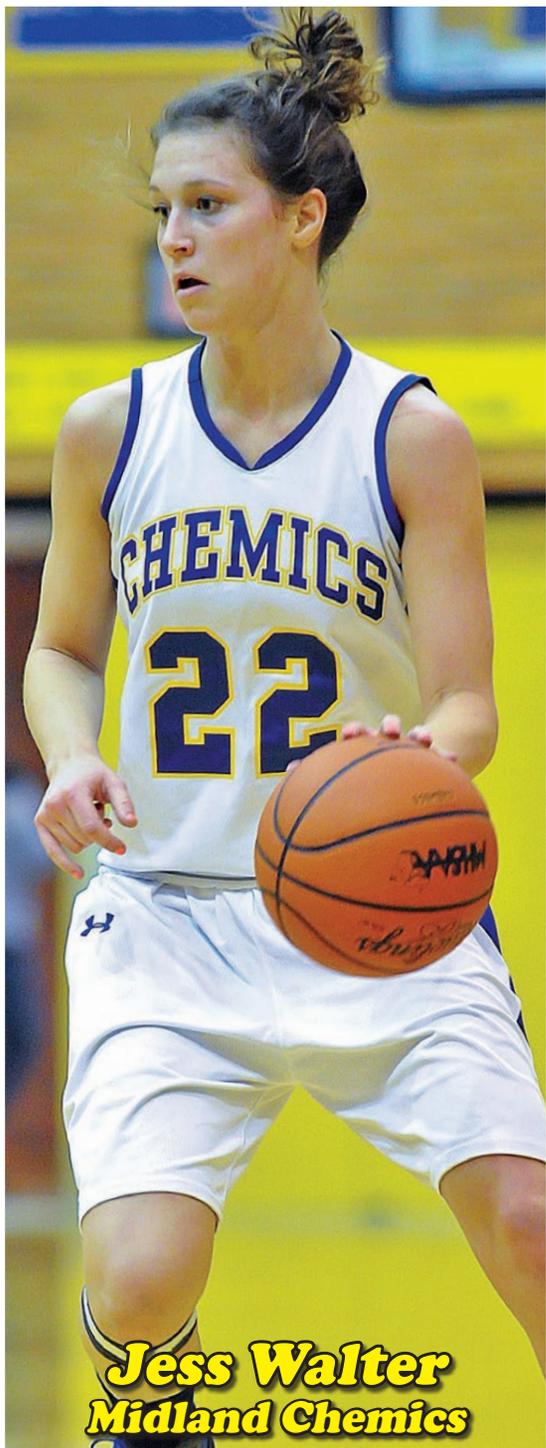


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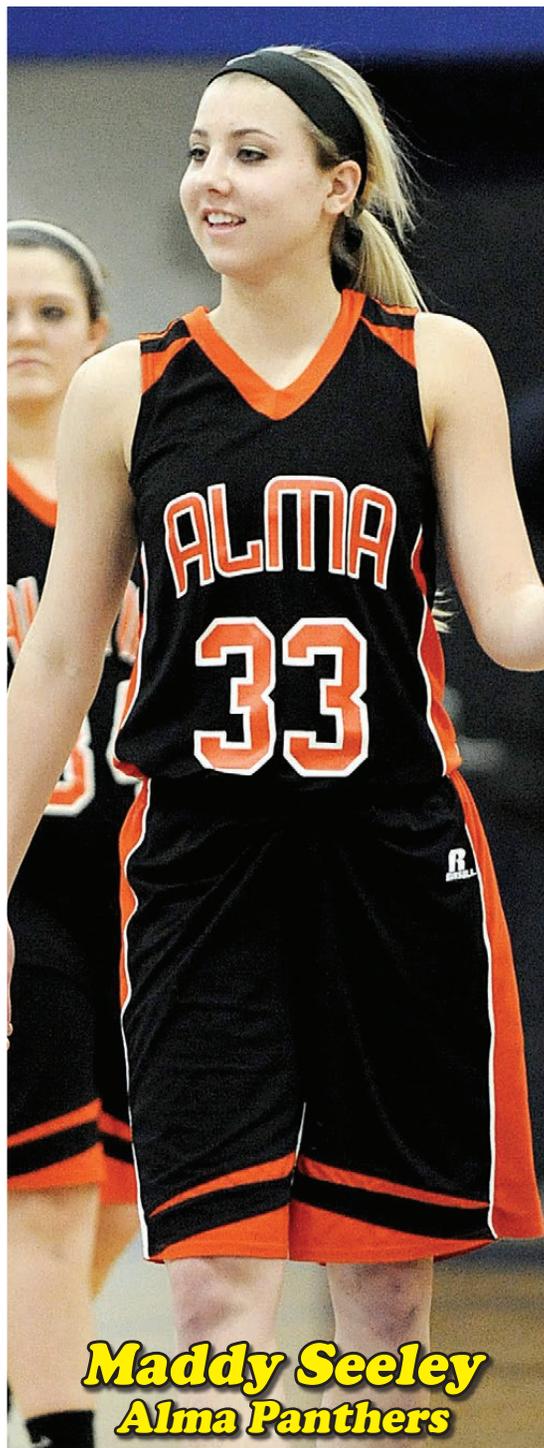
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