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Randy Miniard
Publisher

Alma's Maddy Seeley nearly wills her team to victory during a regional semi-finals loss against Freeland. Seeley scored 38 points, including 21 from the free throw line during the Panthers' 68-62 loss to Freeland.
(Scott Keyes Photo)

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PUBLISHER NOTE

It's another great day at Sports Scene!!

It's March. It's Madness. What else can a sports fan ask for?

My team of photographers and writers need to be commended for a great job at Battle Creek and at The Palace these last couple weeks shooting photos for wrestlers statewide to cherish for the rest of their lives!!

Also, thanks to John Johnson for giving Sports Scene the opportunity and thank you Mark Uyl for your dedication to the sport of wrestling over the last 10 years.

We are truly blessed to be able to wake up every morning with the sun shining (snow and ice hopefully melting), the birds chirping, children playing, and a game on somewhere every day during the month of March. It's times like this that I am glad I am a sports fanatic.

The first wave of champions has been crowned at the high school level, with wrestling taking center stage for two straight weekends. There were 56 individual champions crowned and four team champions, including New Lothrop (D4) and Lowell (D2), who knocked off state powers Hudson and St. Johns in the finals. Detroit Catholic Central and Dundee repeated in Division 1 and Division 3, respectively.

I am very happy for Coach Campbell and the New Lothrop faithful, as I wrestled with some of the parents and uncles of this team's wrestlers. I am also happy for the Red Arrows seniors and coach Dean, who worked very hard to finally get that moment on Saturday, February 23rd, when they snatched the trophy away from the St. Johns Redwings. It is a little bittersweet, knowing most of the St. Johns kids and wrestling community, and my old wrestling teammates at Michigan State, Hudson head coach Scott Marry and Davison head coach Roy Hall, but it was great wrestling, full of intensity and down-to-the-wire matches; what more could a fan and fellow wrestler ask for?

We saw Zac Hall cap his career by becoming only the 18th four-time state champion. Next year, he will join University of Michigan teammates Taylor Massa and Adam Coon, who accomplished the feat the previous two seasons. Great job Zac! It was a privilege coaching you during your days at Ithaca and watching you wrestle during the years at St. Johns, and I look forward to watching you wrestle for the Wolverines in the near future.

We also saw another career come to a close, as Alma's Maddy Seeley fought to the bitter end in the final game of her high school career, scoring 39 points in the Panthers' 68-62 regional semifinal loss to Freeland. Maddy put her team on her back and nearly pulled off an epic comeback. It's performances like hers that make the month of March so special.

Another special shout to my dear Yellowjackets Travis, Logan, and Josh, who will be moving on to play football at the next level; I also look forward to following you!

March is a time where dreams are made and hearts are broken, but it's times like this where I am glad I am a coach and a high school sports fan.

Thanks to my three seniors from this year's Alma wrestling team, Alex, Stephen, and Johnny; it was a pleasure and I wish you three the best!! Boyd and Damian, I am proud of you as well!

Good luck to the rest of our area teams that are still fighting the good fight. One and done is what March is all about, so stay focused and mentally aware of your surroundings. This is what dreams are made of.

Molding Young Minds

Davison's Hall Continues To Build Champions

A large photograph of a wrestler in a yellow singlet with a 'D' on it, shouting and hugging another wrestler. Below the main image are two smaller photos: one of a boys' bowling team and one of a girls' cheer team.



So Close!
Ithaca Boys Bowling, Merrill Cheer
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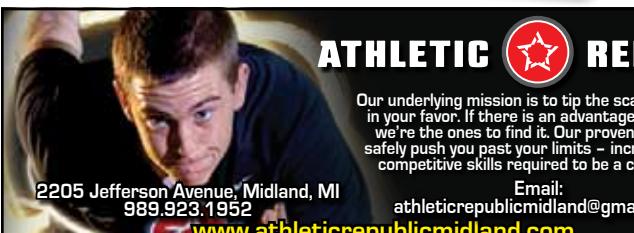
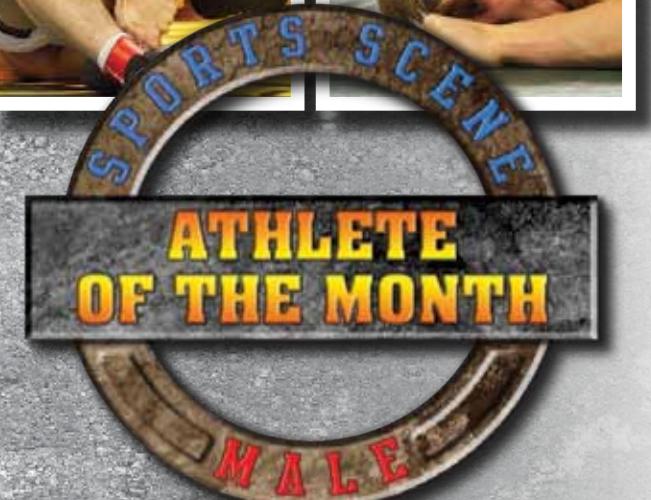
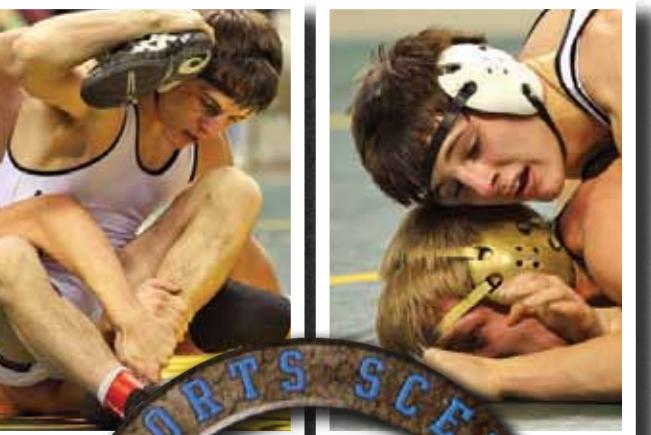
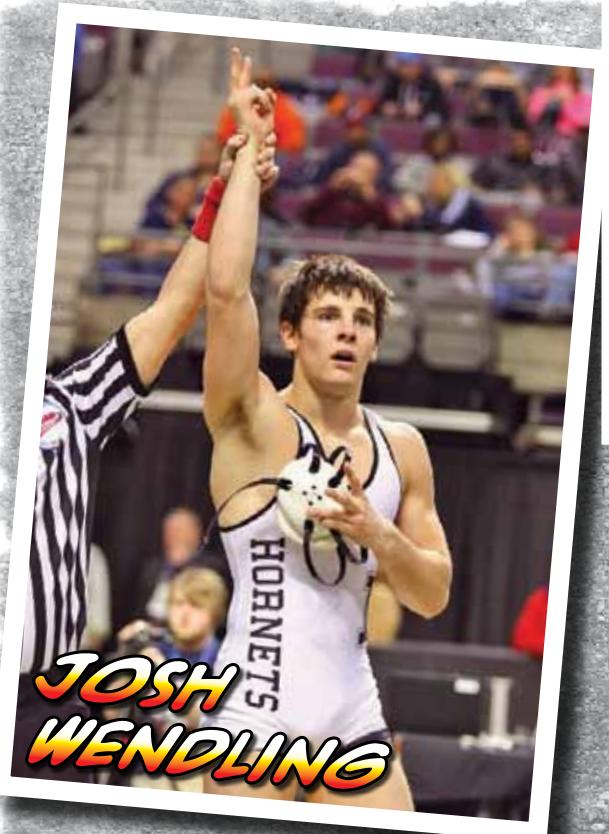
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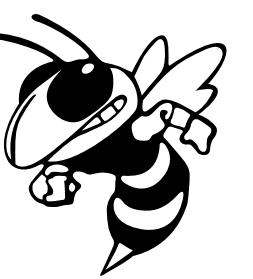


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The Josh Wendling File

New Lothrop High School
Grade: Senior
Sports: Wrestling and football
Season Accolades: Helped lead New Lothrop to the D4 state wrestling championship. Wrapped up his high school career by winning the D4 state championship at 160 pounds. Helped lead the football team to the state semifinals before losing to Muskegon Catholic Central.



The Tania Davis File

Goodrich High School
Grade: Junior
Sport: Basketball
Season Accolades: Guided the Martians to a 20-2 record and a district championship. Goodrich made it into the regional final, where it played Powers Catholic. (No results before press time.)
GPA: 3.7
Accomplishments: Back-to-back Class B state champion. All-state honorable mention. National Honor Society.
Future: Playing college basketball and pursuing a career in medicine.



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Head Coach: Duane Haring

Accomplishments: 100+ consecutive wins, six consecutive Team State titles, and multiple Individual State Champions

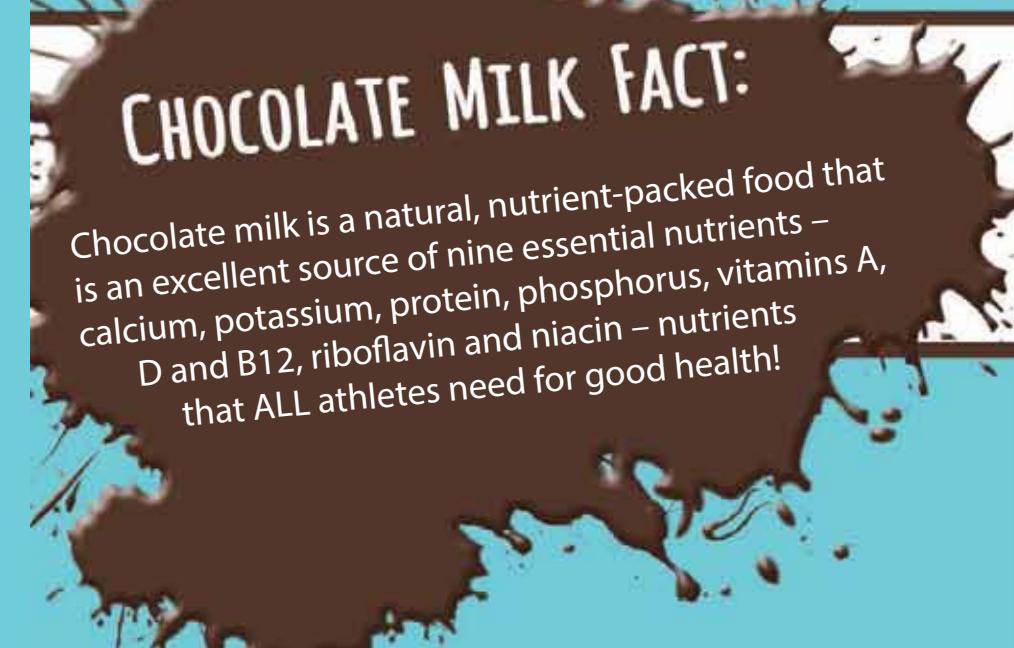
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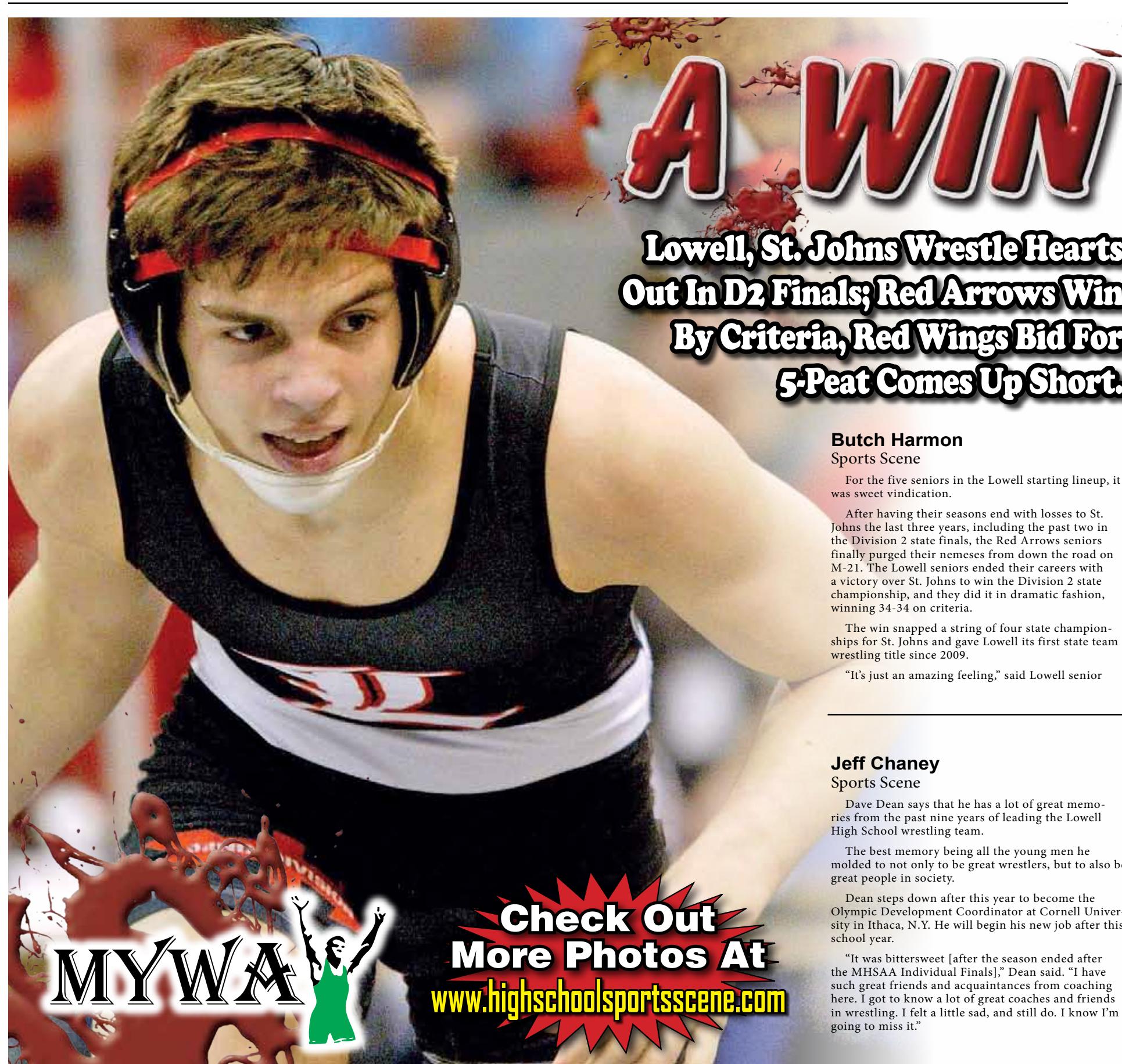


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A WIN 'FÖR THE AGES'

Lowell, St. Johns Wrestle Hearts Out In D2 Finals; Red Arrows Win By Criteria, Red Wings Bid For 5-Peat Comes Up Short.

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

For the five seniors in the Lowell starting lineup, it was sweet vindication.

After having their seasons end with losses to St. Johns the last three years, including the past two in the Division 2 state finals, the Red Arrows seniors finally purged their nemeses from down the road on M-21. The Lowell seniors ended their careers with a victory over St. Johns to win the Division 2 state championship, and they did it in dramatic fashion, winning 34-34 on criteria.

The win snapped a string of four state championships for St. Johns and gave Lowell its first state team wrestling title since 2009.

"It's just an amazing feeling," said Lowell senior

Jeff Chaney
Sports Scene

Dave Dean says that he has a lot of great memories from the past nine years of leading the Lowell High School wrestling team.

The best memory being all the young men he molded to not only be great wrestlers, but to also be great people in society.

Dean steps down after this year to become the Olympic Development Coordinator at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y. He will begin his new job after this school year.

"It was bittersweet [after the season ended after the MHSAA Individual Finals]," Dean said. "I have such great friends and acquaintances from coaching here. I got to know a lot of great coaches and friends in wrestling. I felt a little sad, and still do. I know I'm going to miss it."

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A WIN 'FÖR THE AGES'

Lowell and St. Johns battled to the bitter end and both teams wrestled to a 34-34 tie during the Division 2 state finals held Feb. 22 at Kellogg Arena in Battle Creek. The Red Arrows would go on to win the championship on criteria. The loss ended the Redwings four-year winning streak.

Bailey Jack, who was dancing with his teammates on the mats of Kellogg Arena in Battle Creek minutes after the decision was announced. "It is surreal. It is better than anything I could imagine. Winning individual finals last year was nothing compared to this. I was kind of surprised that it was this close, but it makes it all the more special. They have beaten us the last three years, but we got them today."

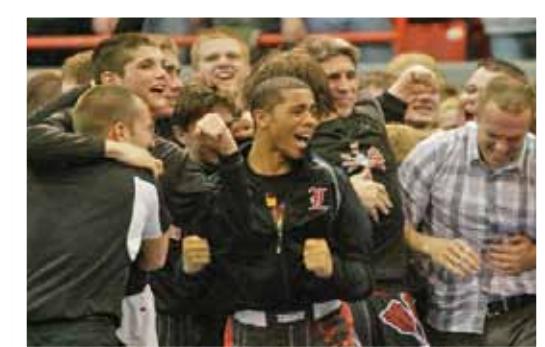
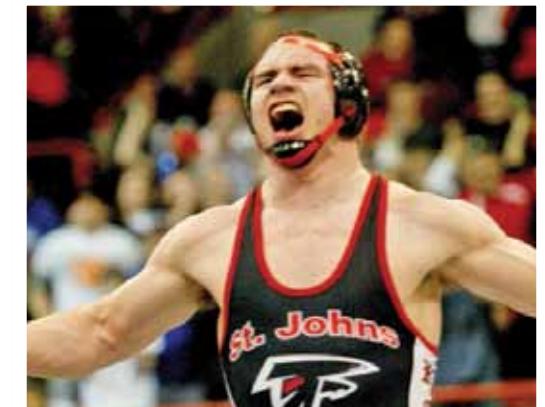
It took a total team effort to get past St. Johns, as every point mattered. The Lowell seniors also needed plenty of contributions from the underclassmen to get the job done. Sophomore Dan Kruse, who came in with a .500 record, came up big against three-time state champion Zac Hall, as he avoided a pin and only gave up five team points with a technical fall. Fellow sophomore Max Dean also came up big, as he went up in weight class and wrestled undefeated returning state champion Angus Arthur and gave up just three team points by dropping a two-point decision. Freshman Eli Boulton, who entered with a sub-.500 mark and went up against defending state champion senior Mark Bozzo, also stayed off his back and gave up a technical fall. All of those matches meant just as much to the Lowell win as did the pins from sophomore Lucas Hall,

junior Jordan Hall, and senior Kanon Dean.

"Every kid went out there and followed the game plan," Lowell coach Dave Dean said. "They all went out there and did the best they could. A point here, a point there, it all added up in the end. I'm just so proud of all these kids."

Senior Garrett Stehley provided the final points needed for the win. With the Red Arrows trailing by six points entering the final match, Stehley needed to come up with enough points to tie the score and send the decision to criteria. He came through for the Red Arrows, as he was awarded a forfeit win and six points after his St. Johns opponent was disqualified for excessive stalling warnings.

"We've been here every year, and it has always come down to us and St. Johns," Stehley said. "We knew what we had to do to win the match. It always seems to come down to the two of us, and we wanted to send the seniors out on top and send Coach Dean out on top. Everyone on the team did what they had to do to save points and to get points. It's just the greatest feeling to beat them in the final."



Butch Harmon and Randy Miniard Photos

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Lowell takes home three individual titles

Butch Harmon / Jeff Chaney
Sports Scene

A week after winning a team state championship, the Lowell Red Arrow wrestlers stormed The Palace of Auburn Hills and flexed their muscles again.

A total of nine Lowell wrestlers placed in the Division 2 individual state tournament, including three state champions.

Lowell's state championship parade was led by a pair of sophomores. Lucas Hall capped a perfect season by pinning Bryan LaVearn of Brandon in 2:19 to win the 112-pound state title.

"To win a state title and a team title is amazing," said Hall. "We have nine that placed and four in the finals; that's awesome."

Hall finished the year with a 37-0 record.

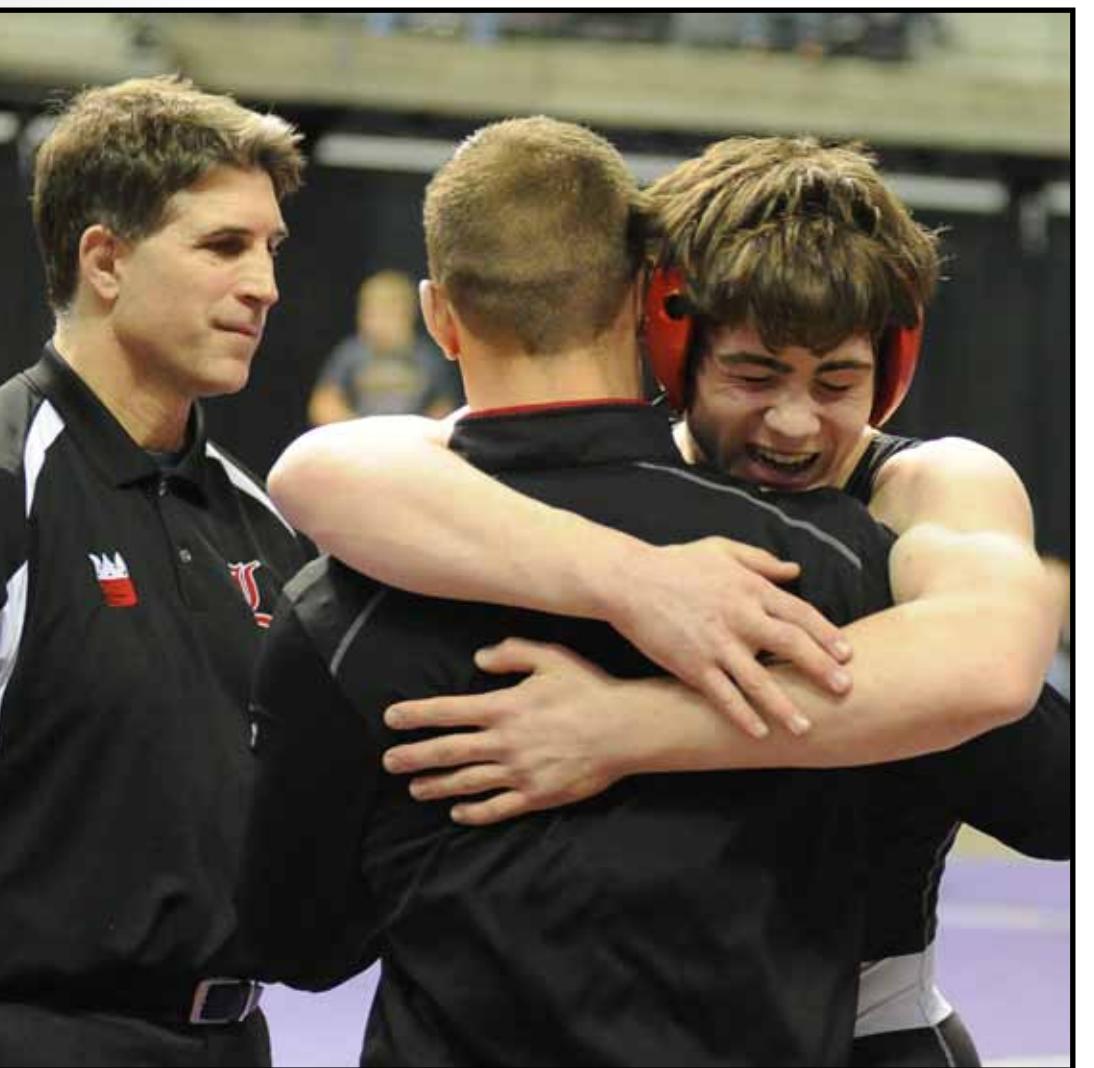
Sophomore Max Dean also came away with a state championship.

He outlasted sophomore Devon Pingel of North Branch 14-8 in a grueling match to win the 171-pound state title. Like Hall, Dean was most pleased with the individual state title going hand in hand with a team state championship. "It can't get any better than this," he said. "To go two for two this year, that's an incredible feeling."

Dean wrapped up his season with a 34-2 record.

Junior Josh Colegrove claimed the third individual state title for the Red Arrows. Colegrove pinned Jacob Alarie of Bay City Western in 1:50 to win the 215-pound title.

"This feels awesome; all my hard work to get back is paying off," he



Lowell's Max Dean celebrates with his dad Dave Dean and coach RJ Boudro during the individual state wrestling finals March 1 at the Palace of Auburn Hills. Dean won a Division 2 wrestling title at 171 pounds. (Jeff McGintry Photo)

said.

Colegrove ended the season with a 35-1 overall record.

With all three champions returning next year, the Red Arrows will again be aiming for a big season.

The Red Arrows had a fourth wrestler

compete in a championship match, as senior Garrett Stehley placed second at 189 pounds.

Stehley dropped a 5-2 decision to St. Johns junior Angus Arthur. Stehley finished the season with a 31-2 record.

A pair of Lowell wrestlers placed

third, senior Bailey Jack at 130 pounds and junior Jordan Hall at 135 pounds.

Senior Derek Krajewski finished fourth at 125 pounds, while sophomore Zeth Dean was fifth at 119 pounds, and senior Kanon Dean was fifth at 160.

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Zac Hall's last hurrah

Becomes MHSAA's 18th 4-time state champ; Named Sports Scene's Wrestler of Year

Jeff Chaney
Sports Scene

It's not easy to become a four-time state champion wrestler.

It takes a lot of hard work, and a lot of sacrifices are made along the way, according to the state of Michigan's newest member to the elite club.

St. Johns senior Zac Hall became just the 18th wrestler to win four titles when he accomplished the feat March 1 at The Palace of Auburn Hills. He accomplished it when he beat Greenville's Alec Ward 12-2 in the 140-pound final in Division 2.

The journey to become a four-time champion began at age five for Hall. But wrestling wasn't the only sport in which he participated as a young athlete, and he wasn't even sure how much time he wanted to dedicate to it. "I didn't know at first," he said "I played football and a little baseball, but I started to have so much success in wrestling, that I decided to quit baseball to concentrate on wrestling.

"I played football through the eighth grade, but then I gave that up, too. Once I got into high school, I realized I could get a college scholarship in wrestling, and I concentrated on wrestling solely."

But giving up football wasn't that easy, especially because he played quarterback. "It was definitely hard to give up football," Hall said. "I look back now and I wonder if I still played football. At that time, I was still at Ithaca High School, and we never lost. Football was so much fun, and I loved to play quarterback."

But size matters in football! "I was good at football, but I was small," Hall said. "I was trying to look at this long-term, and I didn't see myself playing college football, so that was the ultimate decider."

So he made the decision to stay with wrestling and change to St. Johns High School, which rarely loses in wrestling.

It was a good decision, not only because he won three team titles to go along with his four individual titles, but also because of the work he got in the St. Johns practice room and beyond.

Success breeds success, and that's what happened at St. Johns, and that is what Hall loves so much about the sport.

"Best part of wrestling has got to be the winning," Hall said. "The feeling you get when you get your hand raised. And the bigger the match, the bigger the victory, the more rewarding."

It was a thrilling moment for Hall when he won his fourth title, and the large crowd at The Palace gave him a standing ovation for his great accomplishment. "That will be a moment I will never forget."

Hall also pointed to all the relationships he has formed along the way – not only at St. Johns, but across the country. That's because champions in wrestling are made with long car trips to national tournaments across the country.

"All the people you meet along the way, you travel a lot, and you meet so many great people," Hall said. "I have a wrestling family; it's a brotherhood."

Now he leaves this chapter of his life and moves on to the University of Michigan, where he will wrestle for the Wolverines next year.

He leaves St. Johns with a 198-2 record, three team titles, and individual championships in the 103-, 112-, 125-, and 140-pound weight classes.

Did he ever think he could accomplish all of that?

"It was always in the back of my mind [that I could win four]," Hall said. "I heard of it being done before, but never witnessed it [until his teammate Taylor Massa did it two years ago]. I wanted to be a state champ, but it didn't set in that I could win four until I won that first one. And now four years later, here we are."

But even as a four-time champion, he knows he still has to get better before he heads to Ann Arbor.

"I need to keep working hard," he said. "The biggest thing, and it should take a couple of months to settle in, is that I will be wrestling men. But I don't think there is a better place to get ready for that than at Michigan. I will be working with a great coaching staff at Michigan, and I'm ready to get started."



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Beast Mode:

St. Johns' Angus Arthur wins D2 title at 189 pounds; already talking about next season

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Angus Arthur badly wanted to help St. Johns win its fifth straight state title at the Division 2 team finals. He did his part, with an 8-6 decision, but the Redwings came up short in a 34-34 tie, with the match going to Lowell on criteria.

Arthur finished the team final with a 47-0 record as he prepared for the individual finals. It's been quite a career for the junior.

"I think as a team we fought hard," he said. "We didn't pick up the extra bonus points where we needed to. It cost us. I didn't get a major. We didn't get pins at a couple of places. The match could have been decided in numerous matches. It was such a close dual."

At the individual state finals, Angus won another state title by going 4-0 at 189. In the finals, he beat Garrett Stehley of Lowell for the undefeated season.

After his freshman season, Arthur transferred from Lowell, ironically, because since that's the squad St. Johns wrestled in the finals the last three seasons.

"It was pretty fun," he said. "It's a big rivalry. It was more intense on both sides. I don't think they took to me leaving so well."

Arthur wrestled at 189 pounds this season after winning the state title at 171 last season. He lost three matches as a sophomore.

"It's not a huge deal to



St. Johns Angus Arthur finished his junior season by winning the Division 2 state title over Lowell's Garrett Stehley. Arthur, who is also a standout football player for the Redwings, finished 47-0 and will be a contender to defend his title next season. (Jeff McGinty Photo)

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SPORTS SCENE'S **INSIDE WRESTLING**

Koenig becomes Laingsburg's first state champ

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

Although the Laingsburg wrestling program is only four years old, it now has a state champion it can be proud of.

Laingsburg sophomore Kevin Koenig became the first state champion in school history when he won the 215-pound title in Division

3. Koenig turned in a dominating performance as he defeated Patrick Harbin, Jr. of Detroit Loyola 14-3.

"I knew I had him after the first takedown," Koenig said. "He couldn't stop it. I wanted to go for a pin, but he kept stalling on the bottom."

Winning by a pin was important to Koenig, who lost in the final round of last year's

state tournament.

"I would have liked to have pinned him, but it felt pretty good beating him by a bunch of points."

With the win, Koenig finished the season with a 48-3 record.

After losing in the final by technical fall last year, Koenig was on a mission this season, and he didn't let up until he

captured the first MHSAA title in school history.

"I wanted to be the first state champion in school history," Koenig said. "Ever since the eighth grade, I have been working for this." Koenig believes that winning a state title will help the Laingsburg wrestling program continue to grow. "We've only had a wrestling team for four years,"

he said. "I feel that by winning a state title, it will help get a bunch more kids to come out and see what wrestling is all about."



Kevin Koenig

DeWitt's Melton brothers earn All-State honors; Austin wins D2 state title at 135-pounds

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

It was a family affair for the Melton brothers of DeWitt at the Division 2 state individual wrestling finals at The Palace of Auburn Hills.

Brothers Austin and Kameron Melton both competed in the 135-pound weight class and both earned all-state honors.

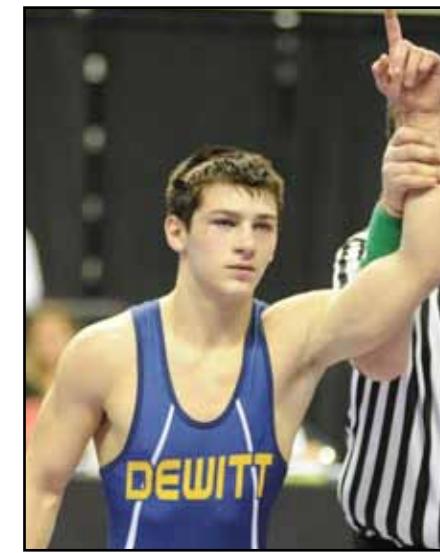
Sophomore Austin Melton not only earned all-state honors but also took home the top prize, as he defeated Collin Lieber of Croswell-Lexington 13-4 in the championship match.

"It's just a great feeling," Austin said. "It's the greatest feeling I've ever felt. I brought pressure in the match, and I just kept it up. My coaches told me to stick to what I've always been doing, to take it to them and score as many points as possible."

Austin finished the season with a 48-3 overall record.

Austin's older brother, Kameron, a senior, finished in seventh place. He finished the season with a 35-9 overall record.

The brothers were on track to meet in the semifinal round before Jordan Hall of Lowell defeated Kameron in the



Dewitt sophomore Austin Melton won the Division 2 state title at 135-pounds after defeating Collin Lieber 13-4 in the championship match. (Jeff McGinty Photo)

quarterfinals.

"I think he [Kameron] was going to let me get the win, because I let him get the win at regionals," said Austin of his potential matchup with his brother.

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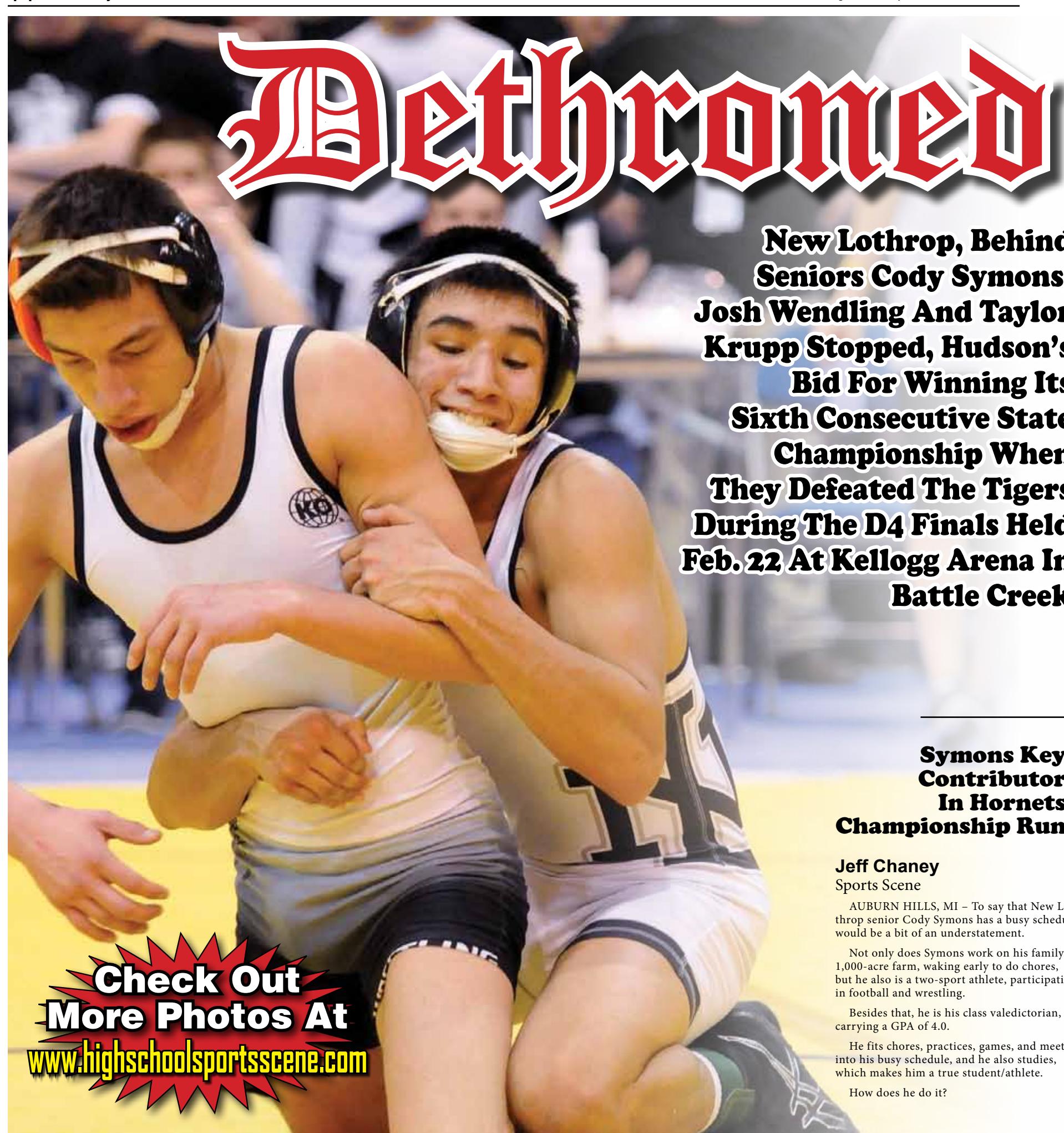
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Dethroned

New Lothrop, Behind Seniors Cody Symons, Josh Wendling And Taylor Krupp Stopped, Hudson's Bid For Winning Its Sixth Consecutive State Championship When They Defeated The Tigers During The D4 Finals Held Feb. 22 At Kellogg Arena In Battle Creek

Symons Key Contributor In Hornets Championship Run

Jeff Chaney
Sports Scene

AUBURN HILLS, MI – To say that New Lothrop senior Cody Symons has a busy schedule would be a bit of an understatement.

Not only does Symons work on his family's 1,000-acre farm, waking early to do chores, but he also is a two-sport athlete, participating in football and wrestling.

Besides that, he is his class valedictorian, carrying a GPA of 4.0.

He fits chores, practices, games, and meets into his busy schedule, and he also studies, which makes him a true student/athlete.

How does he do it?

New Lothrop Knocks Off Hudson To Win D4 Title

John Raffel
Sports Scene

New Lothrop celebrated a Division 4 state title in wrestling this season. But achieving championship success isn't new for the Hornets.

New Lothrop was most recently in a championship match in 2007 when it lost to Addison. However, the Hornets hoisted the trophy in 2003 and 2004. The title this year ends the 10-year drought.

Jeff Campbell was co-coach with Craig Funsch on the 2003 and 2004 teams and took care of the coaching this season.

The Hornets stopped Hudson's bid for a sixth straight state title. "It's a big win; we've been chasing these guys for a long time, trying to get a chance at them in the finals," Campbell said. "What's really special for us, besides the win, is seeing the turnout, seeing all the support we've had, having a little town like we have come together with some high schoolers giving everything they've got."

Campbell believes that getting a shot at Hudson made his wrestlers more focused.

"What Scott Marry and the coaching staff and their kids have done [at Hudson] rewriting the record book of high school wrestling," Campbell said. "If we were going to win it, that's the team we wanted to be able to beat. They're the kind of program other

teams are trying to be like."

Campbell has a 13-year record of 339-63 as New Lothrop's coach.

"I've been there 14 years, but it started a long time before I was there," Campbell said. "They've been winning at wrestling for a long time. It really starts with the youth program. The kids on our team wrestled together when they were in first grade."

"They had fun at the youth level. Junior high starts to be more serious. We try to make a run each year. It's one of the programs in the state that we can start with the goal of wanting to win a state title. We've had some great teams that haven't gotten it done. That just shows how hard it is to do because of programs like Hudson, Hesperia, Addison, and other teams you always see down there."

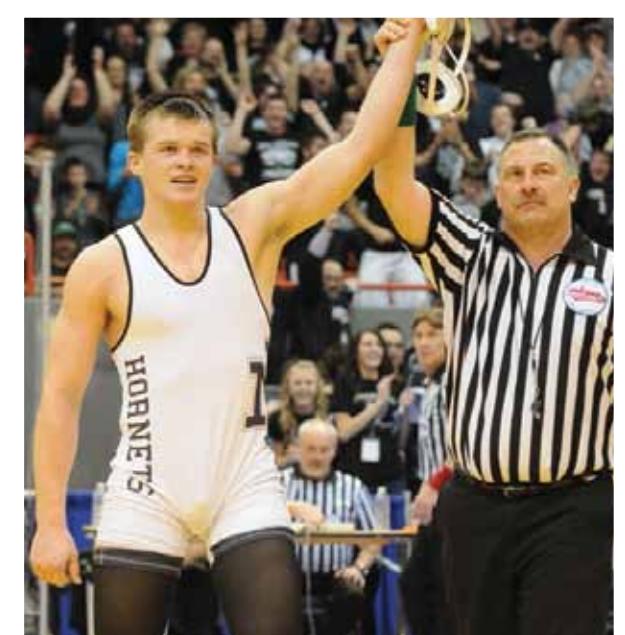
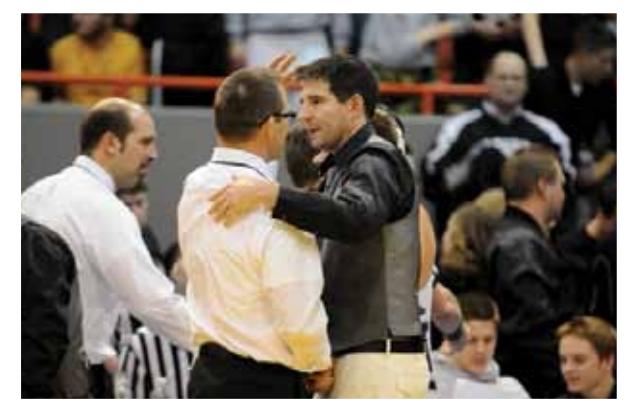
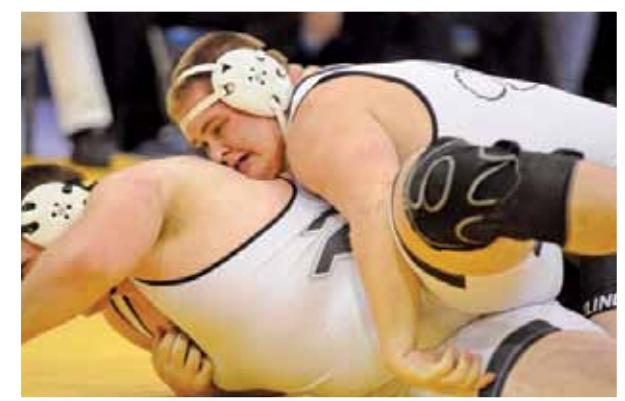
The senior class came through in a major way for New Lothrop, Campbell pointed out. "They all play football and they all play baseball or run track. They're all two- or three-sport athletes. They're top 10 in their class. They're great kids and leaders."

The fans enjoyed every minute of this season.

"It's exciting, but it's nerve-wracking, too," one of the New Lothrop wrestling mothers said, adding that "half the town" follows the wrestlers. "They take it very seriously. These boys put in a lot of hours and a lot of time."

"We have the whole community following," another wrestling mother said. "It's been such a long four years, and finally, it paid off and we are here. Every year was a hope that this would be the year, and we left disappointed. But not this year."

"It's a very big sport. These kids start when they're six or seven years old and keep wrestling right on through. They become a family and they're tight brothers. This year, we have a big group, which makes it even better. I'll keep following them. I have a younger son coming up."



Julius Widman Photos

very important in New Lothrop."

All of the hard work is paying off for Symons.

Last fall, playing offensive tackle and defensive end, he helped his football team to the state semifinals.

In wrestling, he helped lead the Hornets to the Division 4 state championship, knocking off five-time champion Hudson in the process. He also finished his individual career with his third medal and all-state performance, taking third for the second straight year.

"After last week I was pretty proud," Symons said. "My senior year has been awesome. In football we made it to the semifinals there. And then going to wrestling and winning a team title there. It's been a great senior year."

But now, he is thinking of his future and deciding where to continue his studies.

"Right now I am thinking about the University of Michigan," Symons said. "I just got accepted a couple of weeks ago, and I'm really proud of that. Right now I'm thinking I want to study engineering, but I'm not 100 percent sure."

Another successful Hornet in the making. "The kid has his priorities in order," Campbell said. "Sports are a privilege, and he has the right to do them if he does it the right way and can manage his time and keep his grades high. And he's done that."

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Family Tradition

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

This year's Division 4 individual state finals had an extra-special meaning for the Krupp family of New Lothrop.

After experiencing disappointments in the past at the finals, this year's led to sweet celebration.

Last year, as a junior, Taylor Krupp lost in overtime in the 160-pound championship match.

Taylor's older brother Justin was there to experience that disappointment with Taylor. Like Taylor, Justin knew the disappointment of coming up just short in the finals. During his high school career, Justin twice reached the state finals and twice came up short.

This year, the disappointments of coming up short were swept away in one moment, as Taylor scored a takedown in the final 10 seconds of his match with Shane Rodenburg of Kent City. The takedown provided the deciding points, giving Krupp a 6-5 decision over Rodenburg. Making the moment even more special was having Justin, a New Lothrop assistant, right there on

the mat.

"Justin is my coach, and he was the first one who hugged me after the match," Taylor said. "It was sweet having Justin there when I finally won it. It was a great brother-bonding moment. It was great to share it with him. He was there to see me lose last year, and now he was here to see me win this year."

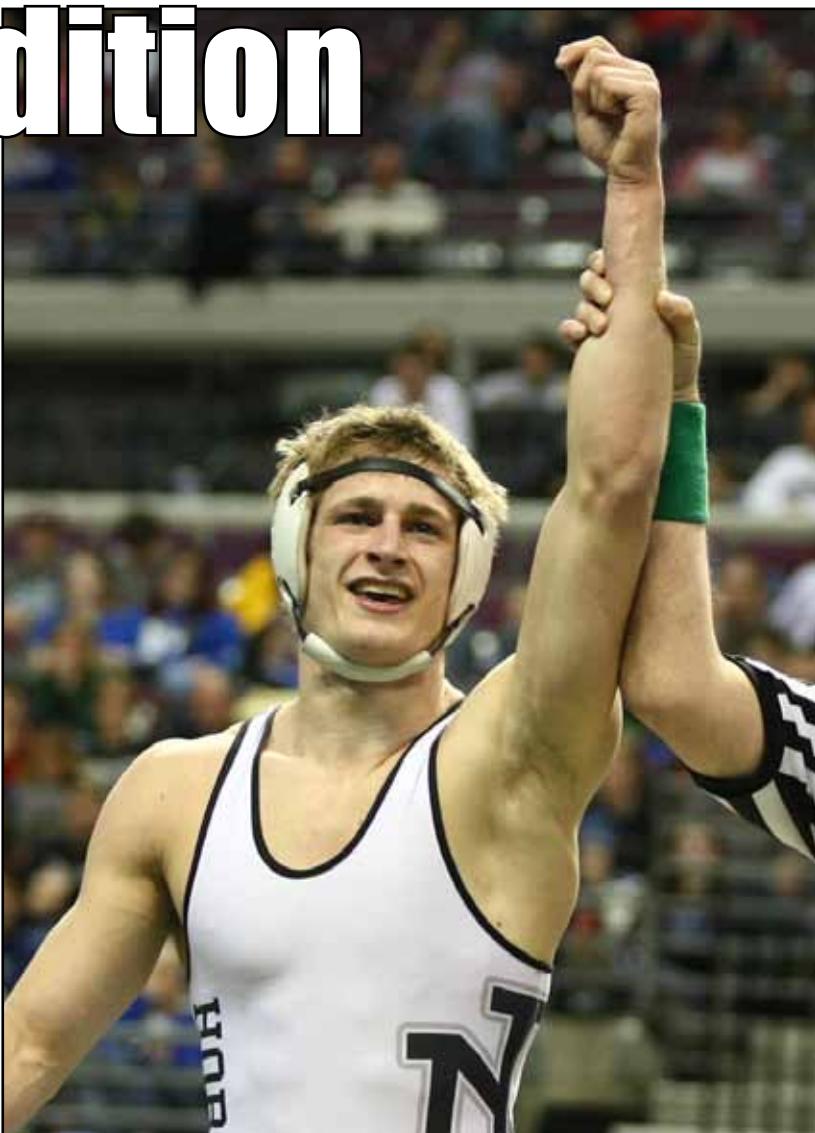
With the win, Krupp ended the season with a 56-0 record.

Krupp's opponent Rodenburg ended his season with a 52-2 record. Krupp had defeated Rodenburg 5-3 in overtime two weeks prior in the regional finals.

"I felt like we were going to overtime again," Krupp said. "I didn't want to be in that position again, so I saw an opportunity and took it."

Making the day even sweeter for the Krupp family was that younger brother Connor, a freshman, placed fifth at 103 pounds.

"This was not only a great day for me but for my family, also," Taylor said. "Having Justin there when I finally won it was special. He's my coach, and he knows all the work that I put in. That was huge having him here."



New Lothrop's Taylor Krupp finished the season 56-0 after winning the Division 4 state title at 171 pounds. A week earlier Krupp helped New Lothrop win the D4 team title over Hudson. (Paige Bennett Photo)

Sweet repeat for New Lothrop's Josh Wendling

New Lothrop's Josh Wendling repeated as state champion with his win at 160 pounds. (Paige Bennett Photo)



Butch Harmon Sports Scene

For those who think that winning a state championship is easy, a conversation with New Lothrop senior Josh Wendling may change their minds.

As a returning state champion, many people around New Lothrop and in wrestling circles thought that a repeat state title for Wendling was a given.

Not so fast, according to Wendling. "A lot of people thought that I would win the state title automatically," he said. "Everyone thought I would win easy. It's not that easy. I felt a lot of pressure. Winning another one is sweet. It was just a blast."

Wendling needed to grind to win his title, as he defeated Mark Workman of Hesperia 13-7 to win

the 160-pound title in Division 4.

Wendling finished his career at New Lothrop with a 202-24 overall record. This year, he turned in a 56-4 record.

Along with the expectation of winning a second state title, Wendling had another distraction that made winning the second title more difficult. The week leading up to the individual state title came on the heels of New Lothrop's dramatic win over Hudson to take the Division 4 team state title. After helping New Lothrop win the team title, he had to deal with the post-championship celebrations around New Lothrop.

"I had to keep my mind right," Wendling said. "Everyone was talking about the team state all week, and it was tough keeping my mind on the task at hand. I thought I was able to do that and keep myself at the top of my game."

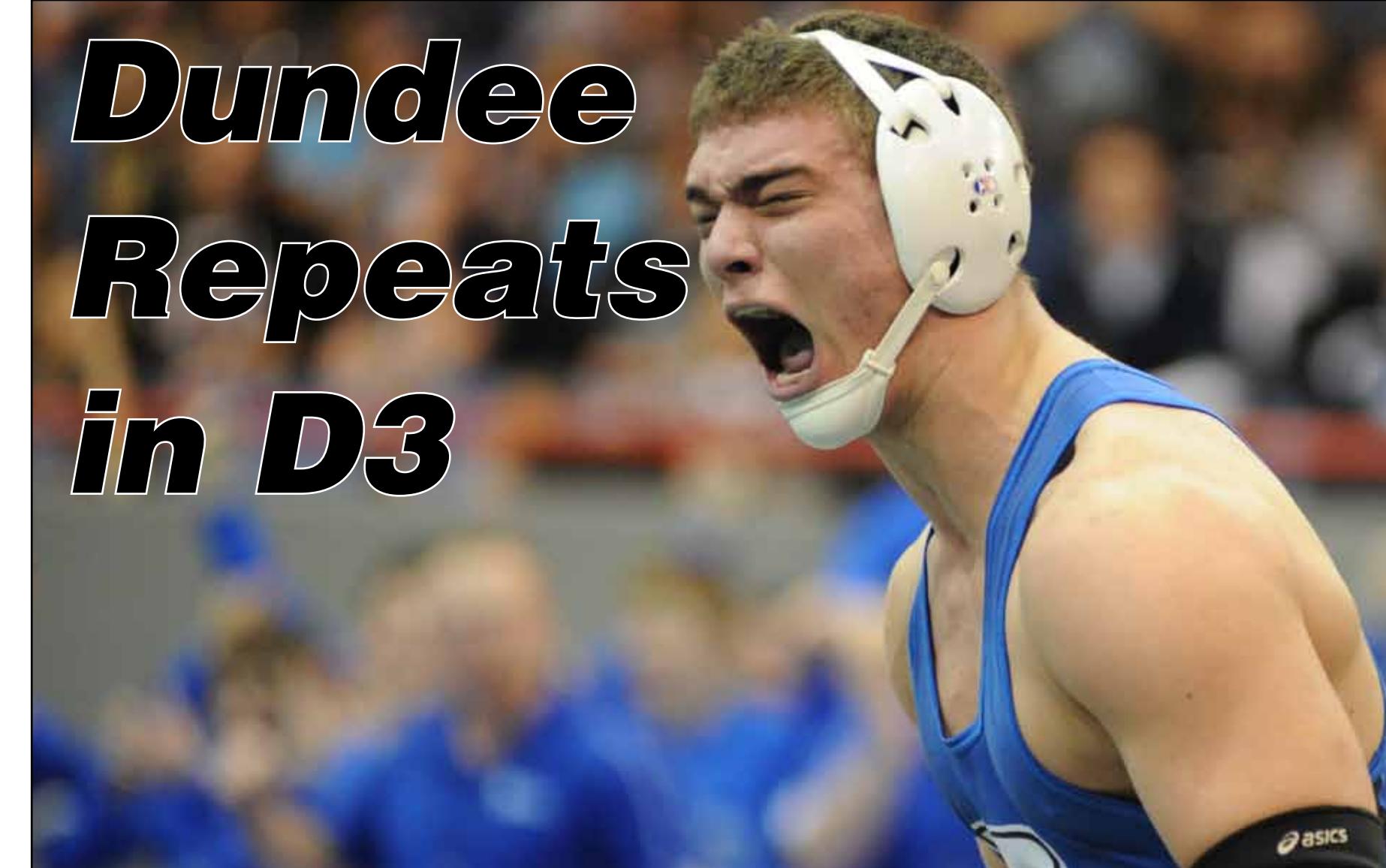
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SPORTS SCENE'S INSIDE WRESTLING



Dundee Repeats in D3

John Raffel Sports Scene

Dundee vs. Richmond.

It just seems like a natural match-up in the Division 3 wrestling state finals.

That was the case again this year, with the two teams going at it on Feb. 22 at Battle Creek's Kellogg Arena. Dundee prevailed 35-26. Last year when the two teams met, Richmond prevailed 34-23. Richmond also won in 2011 over Lake Fenton 33-22 and in 2010 over Dundee 24-23.

Dundee finished runner-up to Goodrich in 2008 and 2009, also, but won it in 2007 over Richmond 29-26. Richmond faced other teams in the finals in 2000, 2002, and 2004, winning it in 2000 and 2002.

"How many times have we wrestled in the finals?"

asked Dundee coach Tim Roberts, who has a 15-year record of 414-55-1. "It's a bunch. I have a ton of respect for them. They're such a well-coached team and a class community and program. They do such a good job."

"It's a great rivalry. I respect them so much. It's tough to be with them in the finals."

Why are the two teams almost always in the finals?

"I don't know," Roberts replied. "I guess we're both doing good jobs."

He's hoping it will continue in the future, but "[w]e're losing a lot of seniors," he said. "This is one of my heavier senior groups. We'll have to do a lot of work to get back here next year."

Blue Devils coach Brandon Day would like to see his team return to the finals again, but with better results.

"I'm proud of the kids," he said. "We have awesome kids, awesome parents. The best fans here. It is what it is. You can't win every time. But we'll do whatever it takes to come back and give it another shot."

Day gives credit to both programs. "You win all the time when you do things right all the time," Day said. "We have two programs that do things right. You win some times when you cut corners and you cheat."

We're here every year because other teams in our division cut corners and it gets exposed out here in the semifinals. They [Dundee] don't cut corners, and we don't cut corners."

"We're similar programs. Their kids are tough, our kids are tough."

Will it continue?

"It'd better," Day smiled. "We're not going anywhere."

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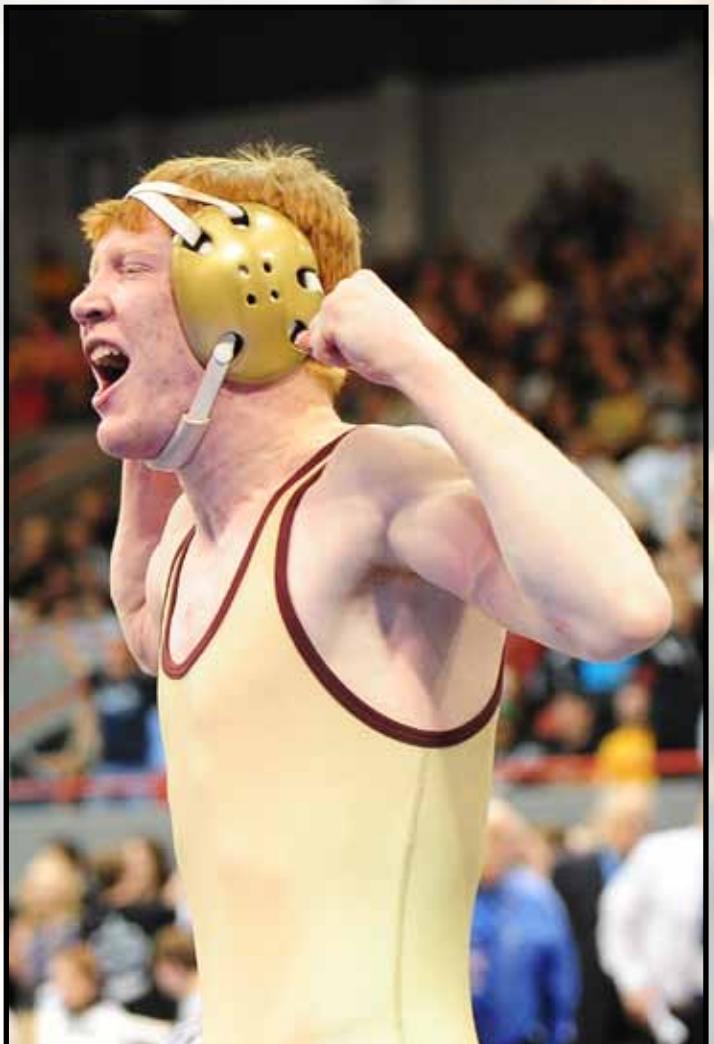
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SPORTS SCENE'S **INSIDE WRESTLING**

DCC 3-peats



The much-anticipated rematch between Detroit Catholic Central and Davison was what the fans wanted to see during the Division 1 final at Kellogg Arena in Battle Creek on February 22. And that is exactly what they got, as the wrestling powers squared off for the second year in a row to determine the top D1 team in the state.

Earlier in the year, Davison defeated Catholic Central by three points, but this time around, the Shamrocks claimed 34-19 victory over the Cardinals. They finished the match by scoring the final 21 points to claim the victory.

Davison, top-ranked all season and top-seeded coming into the MHSAA finals, couldn't hang on to a 19-13 lead through eight matches, and the match was decided when two of the premier wrestlers in the state squared off. Catholic Central's Drew Garcia outlasted Davison's Jordan Cooks 3-1 in overtime to help clinch the Shamrocks' third straight D1 title. Both Garcia and Cooks were reigning two-time individual champions.

Garcia would go on to win this third title a week later, while Cooks was ousted on his way to another state championship.

"This was what the fans wanted to see, and hopefully we didn't disappoint," said Catholic Central coach Mitch Hancock. "This is what the kids dream about. Getting here is one thing, but taking it to that next level and winning a state championship is so rewarding. When DCC and Davison gets together, it's always going to be a grudge match, and that's exactly what the fans got."



Defeats Davison for second year in row in D1 finals

The win marked Catholic Central's 11th team title, which ties the MHSAA record for most in Class A/Division 1 history.

"This ties Temperance-Bedford for the most in Division 1 history. That shows how hard the kids work in this wrestling program," said Hancock, who has guided the Shamrocks to a 149-32 record over seven seasons as head coach. "That's something we take a lot of pride in. But I told the entire team, coaches, and parents at the beginning of the season that we were not to mention the [word] three-peat. Every year is different, and our goal was to go out and try to win a state championship."

Davison coach Roy Hall is no stranger to the big stage of the state tournament. From 2000-2006, he guided the Cardinals to six state titles, and during the last 14 years, Davison has made the final match 14 times.

Although Davison lost, Hall credited Garcia and Cooks for putting on a great show for the fans. "Garcia is tough," he said. "Those are two of the better kids in the country. Cooks is legit."

Davison led 19-13 with Justin Oliver's pin at 140 pounds. Then Myles Amine (145) and older brother Malik Amine (152) earned consecutive decisions to pull the Shamrocks even before Nick Bennett's pin at 160 opened up a 23-19 lead for Catholic Central.

Catholic Central freshman Tyler Morland faced senior Thomas Garty at 171, coming back from a 5-4 deficit to win 9-5 and set the scene for Garcia's heroics.

Catholic Central's Nick Geise (215) ended the match with a 4-1 triumph. "This is all about Catholic Central High school, representing Catholic Central, the administration, the parents, and giving glory to God," added Hancock.

"We would not be able to do this without any of them."



Vikings enjoy solid season

Swan Valley wrestling coach Darrell Burchfield said, "Don't let the score fool you," after his team lost a 58-9 Division 3 semifinal match to eventual state champion Dundee.

"When someone sees that score, they will think that we were blown off the mat," he continued. "Do I like to see that score? Heck no, I don't, but Dundee is a better team than we are, but not by much. I guess if you have to lose, it doesn't hurt to lose to a defending state champion."

Santos' victory against Dundee got Swan Valley started on the right foot, but Dundee won the next nine matches, a string that included five consecutive pins, to take a 46-3 lead.

"We made a few mistakes along

the way, and at this level you can't do that," said Burchfield. "At this point, I couldn't be happier for a great bunch of kids, who have dedicated themselves to getting better. We have to get our numbers up, and we have to get down here again to get that experience. These teams are not that much better than we are."

Steve Becker broke the Dundee string at 285 pounds with a 4-2 win. KJ Suitor gave the Vikings their other win, a 5-2 decision at 112.

Swan Valley made it to the semifinal with a 32-27 win over Grand Rapids Catholic Central. It finished the season with a record of 41-2.

KJ Suitor ousted in D3 finals at 112 pounds

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

Although Swan Valley sophomore KJ Suitor finished second at the Division 3 individual state finals, the future appears bright for him and his teammates.

Suitor finished second in the 112-pound weight class and ended the season with a 54-3 record.

"I was very excited to make the state finals," Suitor said. "A lot of people don't get that chance. I just tried to go out and execute the game plan. It was just disappointing it didn't go like I wanted it to."

Suitor was not the only Swan Valley wrestler to earn all-state honors. Fellow sophomore Matt Santos placed fourth at 125 pounds and ended the season with a 58-2 record. Junior Collin Dole placed third at 135 pounds and ended the year with a 53-6 record, while junior Sam McLean placed seventh at 145 pounds and ended the year with a 60-5 mark.

"We had three other guys make all-state, and I'm very proud of how they wrestled," Suitor said. "All of the guys placed, and every one battled."

With those wrestlers all returning next season, Swan Valley has some high expectations. "We have a bright future ahead of us," Suitor said.

Suitor plans to use this year's second-place finish as motivation to improve next year. "I finished seventh last year, and I used it as motivation this year," he said. "Now I'm going to use second place this year as motivation to win a state championship next year."



Left: Davison battled, but Detroit Catholic Central pulled away late, scoring the final 21 points to defeat the Cardinals 34-19 in the Division 1 finals held at Kellogg Arena in Battle Creek. This page top: Swan Valley's Darrell Burchfield guided his team to a 41-2 record in 2013-14. Bottom: Swan Valley's KJ Suitor finished second in the Division 2 finals. (Staff Photos)

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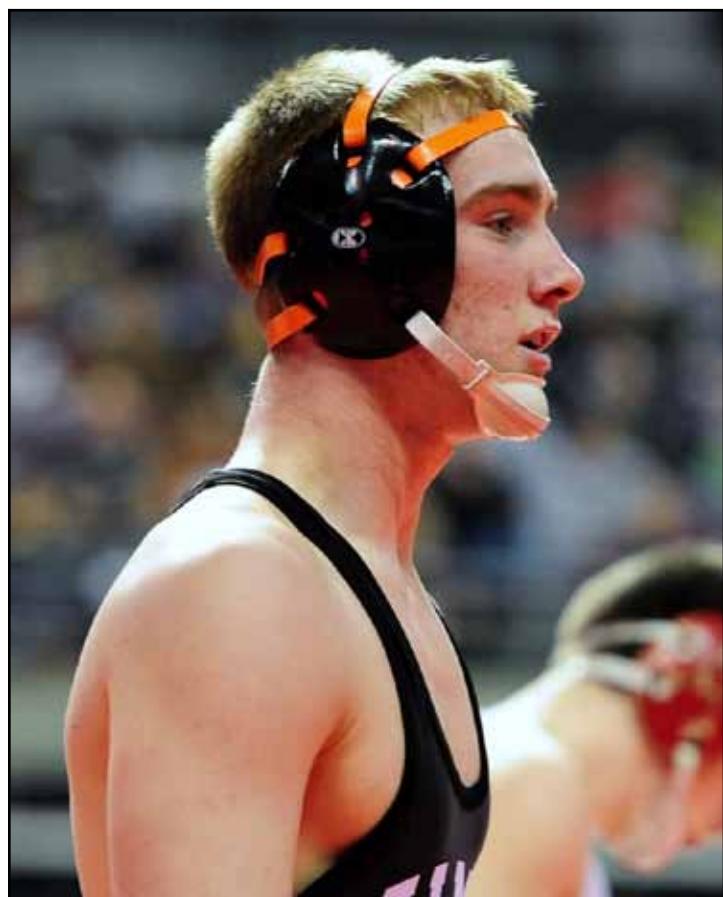
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Alma's Boyd Hubbard had his best high school season to date earning All-State honors after his eighth place finish during the Division 3 state finals held at the Palace of Auburn Hills. (Reyna Widman Photo)

Hubbard leads way for Alma

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Boyd Hubbard comes from an avid wrestling family in Alma, and it's not surprising that he had a strong season on the mat for the Panthers.

Hubbard is a junior who has been wrestling for 13 years, three years in high school. He went to the state finals in 2013 and lost in the blood round.

He won the Sparta and Leslie tournaments this season as well as a District Title beating eventual state champ, Tristin Zienkiewicz and qualified for state after placing second in the regional, losing to Zienkiewicz. He entered the state tournament with a record of 44-6.

At The Palace of Auburn Hills for the state finals, Hubbard was eighth at 160 pounds in Division 3. He lost his first match, won his next two and fell to Brandon Dyke of Allendale in the match for seventh place.

"This is my best season so far," Hubbard said. "It's probably from a lot of mat time, like wrestling over the summer."

On the mat, Hubbard considers himself quick on his feet. "I get in on a lot of shots," he said. "I normally escape from everyone I wrestle."

He's wrestling at 160 pounds this year after being at 145 and 152 his previous seasons. "It was kind of a struggle at first," Hubbard said. "Now, it's just as easy as it was last year, I just need to continue to work harder this summer and come back stronger and quicker than ever!"

Hubbard has three older brothers who wrestled at Alma, Bruce, Brett, and William. Bruce placed eighth at one

state final. Brett and William were both state qualifiers.

"I'm a lot like them," Boyd said. "The reason I'm wrestling is because of them. I had them to wrestle with me. Bruce and Brett were lighter weights. Will was a heavier weight."

Their dad, William, wrestled in a high school briefly, also, Boyd noted.

Boyd has also lettered in football and has run track and played baseball in the spring.

Teammate Damian Castillo, who has also had a strong season, is a junior at 130 pounds. He has wrestled since he was four years old and is in his third high school season. As a freshman at 103, he qualified for state. As a sophomore at 125, he was TVC champ. He didn't qualify for state last season but did this year as a district and regional champ. At the 2014 state finals, he won his first match but lost his next two and didn't place.

"I've been pretty satisfied with my season," he said. "There have been a couple of matches here and there that I should not have lost. It happens."

It was Damian's best high school season.

"I've improved a lot," he said. "I've been working on moving my feet more and getting off from bottom. That's the main thing, keeping my feet moving."

Working on his feet and getting takedowns have been major strengths for Castillo.

Standing as high as he can on the podium at the state finals is a major goal for Castillo.

"A state championship is very reasonable for me, I am ready to continue to work for that and see what happens?" I will continue to get better, "I need to wrestle my best."

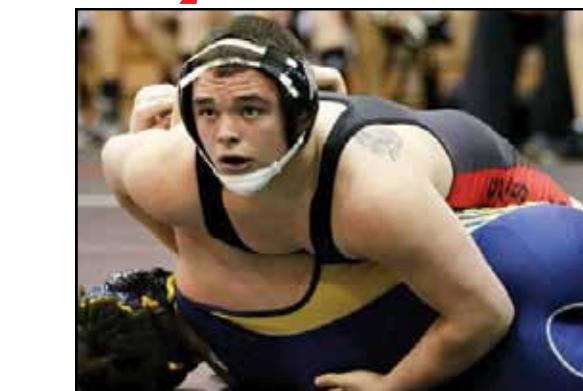
2014 Shark MHSAA state qualifiers



Mykhailo Hetmansky brought his Ukrainian style to St. Louis for a year and earned a trip to the Palace.



Konnor Holton proved to be a dominant force leading the freshmen class in individual achievement.



Clayton Howd not only qualified for state, he also earned the Sharks most-improved wrestler award.

Champs:

TSharks wrestlers made a historic run for an elusive regional title, but came up a point short, 39-38, in a hard-fought battle with Carson City-Crystal in a regional final.

Just to get to that point in their season, St. Louis wrestlers had to top a tough Montabella team in the district, which they did, 43-22. Then they ended Kent City's season in dramatic fashion by winning the regional semi-final match 30-27.

Overall, the 2013-14 Sharks compiled an 18-2 record and finished in either first or second in four weekend tournaments. They also enjoyed breaking the top 10 in Michigangrappler's division 4 team rankings.

The team's first goal of the season was to win the TVC West, which they did with a 5-0 dual meet record. Individual conference honors are as follows:

First team

- 103 Marcus Beeson
- 125 Konnor Holton
- 135 Jed Abbott
- 140 Zack Ross
- 189 Clayton Howd
- 285 Mykhailo Hetmansky

Second team

- 112 Adam Zimmerman
- 119 Martin Lopez
- 130 Logan Seeley

Honors were earned by two wrestlers who surpassed the 100-win mark. Those athletes were Zack Ross and Jed Abbott.

Ross (left) notched his 100th win at the Montabella team duals and finished his career with 124 wins.

Meanwhile, Abbott (left) earned his 100th win at the Bob Threlloff Invitational and ended his career with 124 wins. He also broke the all-time school record for pins, which was 107. The new record by Abbott is 111.

Nine Sharks placed in the top four at the district tournament:

- 103 Marcus Beeson
- 119 Konnor Holton
- 135 Jed Abbott
- 145 Zack Ross
- 152 Joe Eager



The Sharks pose after clinching the TVC West by defeating rival Ithaca 48-26 at home.

we reach our goal of a regional championship. We got beat by a team that put more into off-season preparation. Hopefully, we have some individuals who decide to take their future into their own hands and get better and stronger without me begging them to do so," said Coach Kevin Kuhn.

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SPORTS SCENE'S **INSIDE WRESTLING**

Holt wrestlers have tradition of excellence

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

While a number of Michigan high schools have had periods when they dominated wrestling, few schools can boast the overall winning consistency of Holt.

In the 48 years that wrestling has been a varsity sport at Holt, the Rams have posted a winning season each and every one.

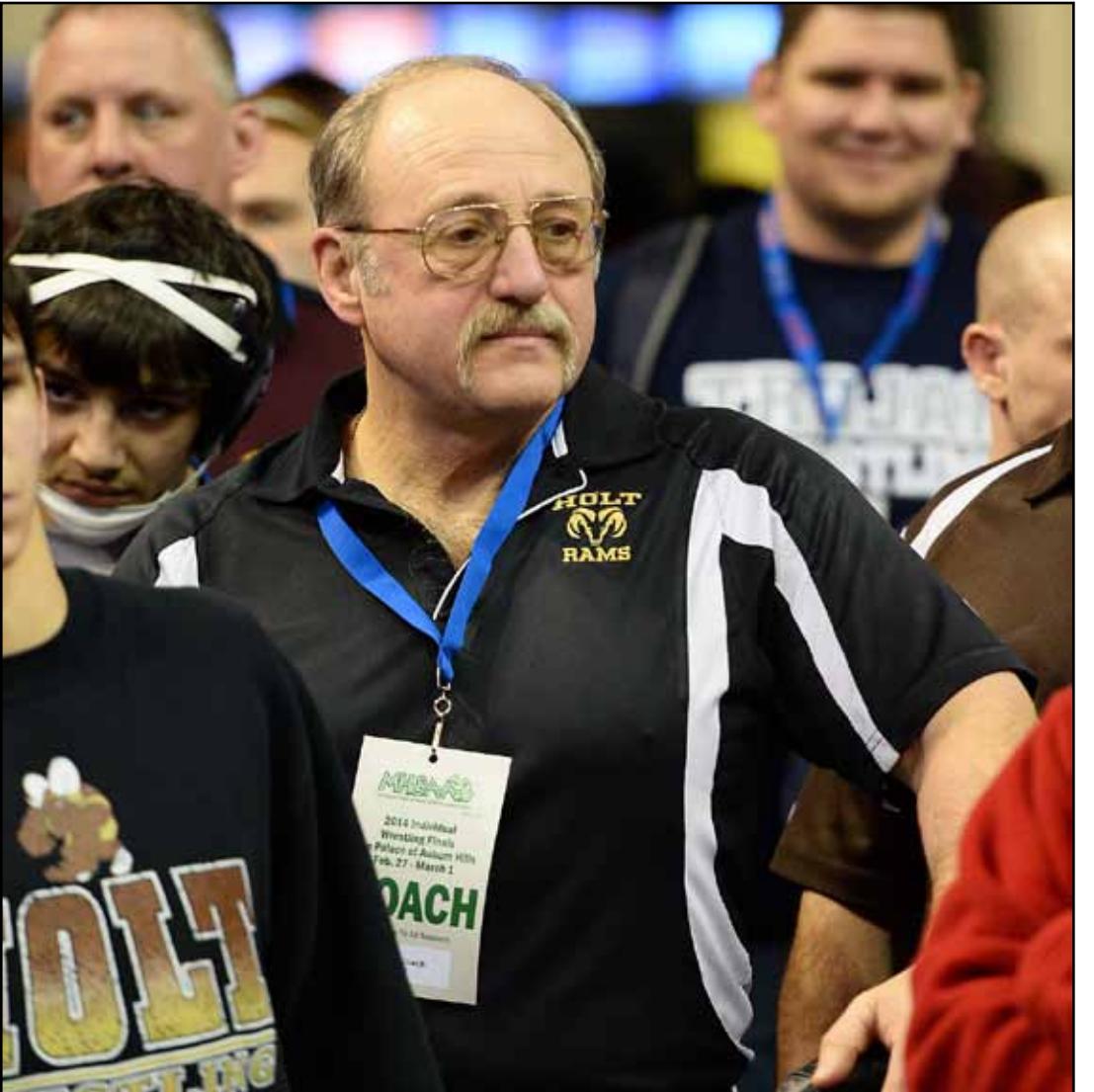
Current head coach Rocky Shaft has been involved in many of those winning seasons. He just completed his 34th season as head coach and, like the previous 33 seasons, it was another success. The Rams turned in a 26-5 record in dual meets. They also won the conference championship and a district title before falling to Hartland in the team regional.

"It was a good year," Shaft said. "We had our ups and downs here and there, but the kids learned from those, and it was a good year. We had a good group of kids."

The Rams had a number of highlights during the season. They began the season by travelling to North Canton, Ohio, to take part in a 33-team tournament, where they finished fourth against some of the top wrestling programs in the state of Ohio.

Holt also won its own tournament in January that included state-ranked teams Davison, Detroit Catholic Central, Bedford, and Princeton City from Cincinnati, Ohio.

The Rams also featured outstanding individual wrestlers like Benny Gomez at 112 pounds. Gomez, a



Holt's Rocky Shaft keeps going strong after 33 years on the bench coaching the Rams. Shaft guided Holt to a 26-5 dual meet record this season. (Alan Holben Photo)

2013 state champion, took a 47-1 record into this year's state individual finals. Martin Rodriguez also had a good year. Wrestling at 125 pounds, Rodriguez took a 41-1 record into the state finals, where he is wrestled in the 119-pound

weight class.

"Benny and Martin have had great years, but we had a lot of good wrestlers this year," Shaft said. "We had a lot of good role players and kids doing fine jobs all through the lineup. We also had a good group of younger

kids step up this year."

Wrestlers stepping up each year has been a key to Holt's success over the years under Shaft. "We've won state three times, and we finished second in the state once," Shaft said.

"We've never had a losing season, and the tradition of winning has been here a long time. No senior class ever wants to be the first class to have a losing season at Holt."

An important factor in Holt's winning seasons is the feeder program. "A big reason for our success is the Holt Wrestling Club," Shaft said. "The kids get on the mat and receive solid instruction. You can't ask for more than that."

Shaft also likes his wrestlers to be involved in more than just one sport.

"I'm old school in that I like the kids to do more than just one sport," Shaft said. "Some of my best wrestlers played multiple sports. Playing different sports just helps kids overall."

Shaft himself was a multiple-sport athlete at Holt High School. While he was an accomplished wrestler who made it to the state meet, he also played football and baseball during his playing days.

Holt wrestlers also take pride in the tradition of the program and do whatever it takes to keep the string of winning seasons going.

"The kids learn in the lower levels what it takes to be successful," Shaft said.

"They know what it takes to win, and it starts when the kids get in the program. Everyone is expected to pull their weight and step up to the plate, even a kid who may not have a winning record. They will not roll over and get pinned. If they lose by one point, they will do what it takes to get a one-point win next time."

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Greenville's Ward loses to Hall in finals

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

Greenville senior Alec Ward may have come up short in his bid to win an individual state championship at the Division 2 wrestling finals, but it took one of the best wrestlers in the history of Michigan high school wrestling to knock him out.

Ward made it to the championship match at 140 pounds before falling 12-2 to four-time state champion Zac Hall of St. Johns.

"I was just happy being in the finals," Ward said.

"I just went out there and tried everything I could."

While Ward was unable to snag a state title, he did accomplish something that few high school wrestlers have done, as he placed at state for the third time.

After placing fifth as a sophomore, Ward took seventh last year and was determined to finish higher this year.

"I was pretty upset last year,"



he said.
"I finished seventh after placing fifth as a sophomore. I worked real hard all summer to improve and finish higher. I was happy to get here."

Ward hopes to wrestle in college and is still deciding where to continue his wrestling career and his academic studies.

Greenville's Alec Ward put up a good fight, but was tasked with facing St. Johns' Zac Hall in the finals. Ward lost to Hall 12-2. (Jeff McGinty Photo)

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Mike Wilcox – Div. 3 NCAAA Champion
Roger Chandler – NCAAA Div. 1 Finalist/MSU
Assoc. Head Coach
Sam Wendland – MSU Assistant Coach
Brandon Brisette – Olivet Head Coach
Mike McClure – MSU
Bebeto Yewah – 2X Div. 3 NCAAA Champion

Dan Osterman – MSU
Jackson Morse – Illinois
Dan Osterman – MSU
Taylor Simaz – Cornell
Gage Peterson – Olivet
Brian Gibbs – MSU
Anthony Jones – MSU
Caleb Grummel – Olivet Assistant Coach
Luke Jones – MSU
John Kargo – Flat River Wrestling
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SPORTS SCENE'S AREA FIRST TEAM

103 Tristan Sirbus	Corunna	soph.	46-1
112 Tristan Sirbus	Davison	soph.	42-2
119 Mason Smith	Clio	jr.	55-0
125 Jerry Fenner	Birch Run	jr.	45-5
130 Jaiden Sklansky	Eaton Rapids	soph.	49-2
135 Austin Melton	Dewitt	soph.	48-3
140 Zebilin Storr	Leslie	sr.	61-0
145 Mark Bozzo	St. Johns	sr.	38-8
152 Austin Hughes	Saginaw Nouvel	sr.	49-3
160 Josh Wending	New Lothrop	sr.	56-4
171 Max Dean	Lowell	soph.	34-2
189 Garrett Stebley	Lansburg	sr.	31-2
215 Kevin Koenig	East Lansing	soph.	48-3
285 Brian Daniels		jr.	40-2

SPORTS SCENE'S SPECIAL MENTION

112 Jordan Altenza	St. Livonia Franklin	High School	160 - Senior
125 Lincoln Olson	Jordan Altenza	High School	160 - Senior
130 Ben Griffin	Drew Garcia	High School	171 - Senior
135 Austin Eicher	Angus Arthur	High School	189 - Junior
140 Cole Weaver	Josh Colegrove	High School	215 - Junior
145 Kyle Simaz	Ryan Prescott	High School	285 - Junior

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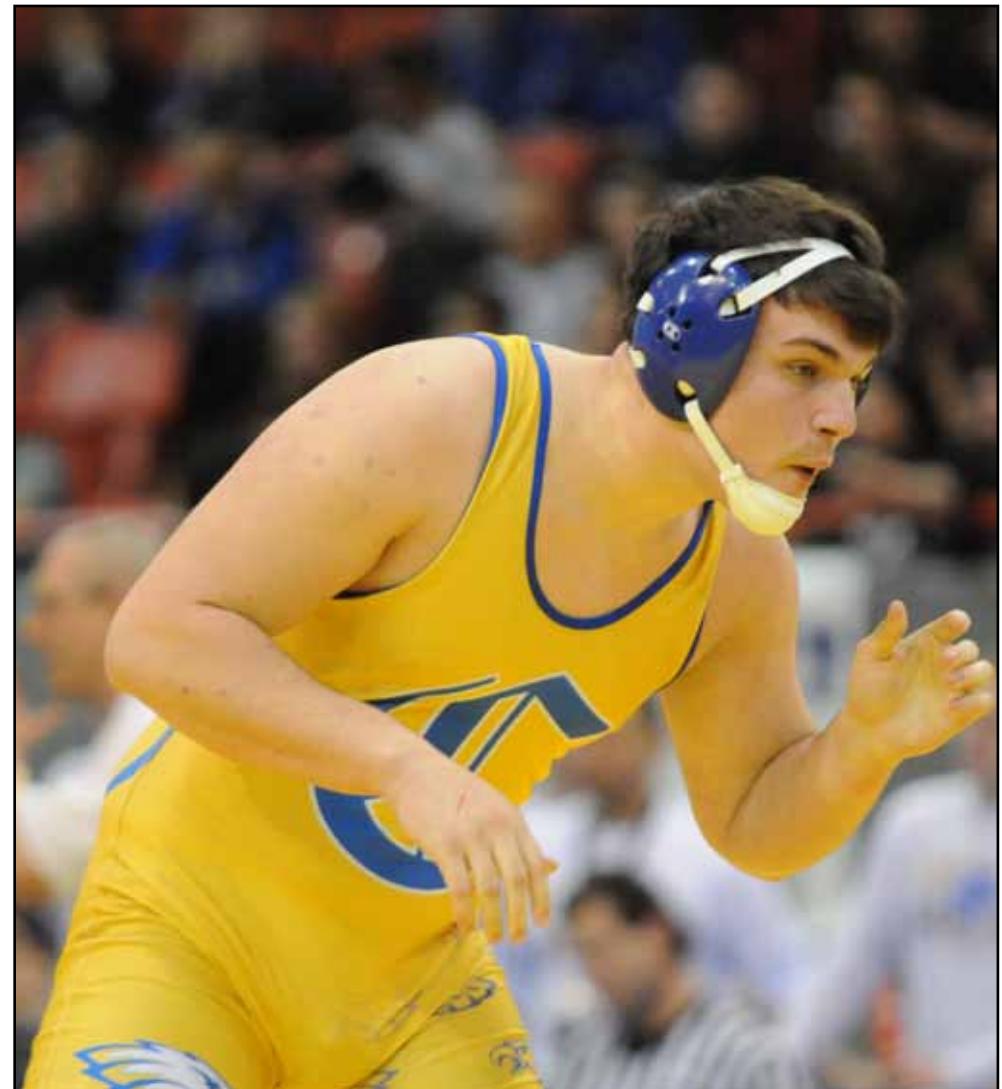
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SPORTS SCENE'S **INSIDE WRESTLING**

CC-C's Osterman follows brother's lead



John Raffel
Sports Scene

Brad Osterman's wrestling career for the Carson City-Crystal Eagle wrestling team ended at the Division 4 team finals on Feb. 21 at Battle Creek.

In the Eagles' quarterfinal match with Hesperia, Osterman, wrestling at 285 pounds, decisioned Josh Erke 3-1 in overtime. With five matches left, Osterman's win cut Hesperia's lead to 23-18. But the Panthers won the next four matches to clinch a 44-21 win and end the Eagles' strong season at 25-3.

Osterman, a senior, ended a two-year career and brought back memories of his brother Dan, who had a stellar three-year stint with the Eagles before wrestling at St. Johns and later at Michigan State University.

Brad, a heavyweight, finished with a 31-11 record this year. He did not advance to the state individual finals.

"He's wrestled well for us this year," said coach Kacy Datema. "He's beaten some real good kids, and he's had some close matches with some ranked kids." He had several second places at tournaments.

Brad wrestled until seventh grade then decided to take a break and focus on football.

"I started back up my sophomore year and got an injury," he said. "So I've only wrestled last year and this year. Last year was sort of a 'getting-back-into-it' year. I forgot some things. I won some matches and lost some matches. It was a matter of getting it all back."

"This year, I've excelled at heavyweight. I have more endurance than most of the guys I've wrestled."

He's definitely improved this season. "My brother comes down and helps us in practices; he brings one of his friends and helps out," Brad said. "He showed me a lot."

Brad said he likes the individual aspect of wrestling but tends to be more team-oriented.

Datema's current assistant, Trent Ward, was coaching when Dan Osterman wrestled for the Eagles.

"I've had Brad the last two years," Ward said. "Danny lived and breathed and ate and slept wrestling. Both are great kids, kids you want around. They're very quiet and do not say a whole lot. Danny, I remember his freshman year winning the state title. He probably wasn't expected to win a state title that year. But he was an extremely hard worker and very goal-oriented. He had his mind set on what he wanted to do, and he did it."

"Brad had to come up in the shoes of Danny, and I think some of that pressure might have gotten to Brad a little bit, trying to fill the shoes of a brother who's a three-time state champion and a state runner-up. Quality-wise, Brad has all the intangibles Danny had. He's a very solid wrestler and a very hard worker. They're totally different, with their body styles."

Dan was with the Eagles three seasons and was at St. Johns as a senior. He was state runner-up as a sophomore and was state champ the other three years. He started at 103 pounds as a freshman and finished his high school career at 135.

Dan wrestled four seasons at MSU and qualified for NCAA tournament action three times.

"We have a great relationship," Dan said. "We're really close. This year, I've really got to be a part of his senior year. My eligibility is up for MSU. During the season, I was coming up a couple of times a week to help with practice. During his matches, I coach him. We're pretty close."

Both Ostermans got into wrestling at a young age.

They're at different weight classes, "but I almost wrestled like a bigger guy," Dan said. "I was good at Greco, so I like to lock up and go upper body. That's something [Brad] does. We both have that type of a style."

"I like to pace myself and see how the guy is moving," Brad said. "I'm normally quicker than my opponent. They have size on me. I use my speed and strength to my advantage. I can normally break them down."

Brad said he likes the individual aspect of wrestling but tends to be more team-oriented.

Datema's current assistant, Trent Ward, was coaching when Dan Osterman wrestled for the Eagles.

Carson City's Brad Osterman played a key role in helping the Eagles to advance to the Division 4 quarterfinals at Kellogg Arena against Hesperia. Hesperia would go on to win the match 44-21. Carson City finished the year 25-3. (Joe Vozar Photo)

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Farwell's Zienkiewicz lives out lifelong dream

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

A takedown with fewer than 10 seconds remaining in the 160-pound championship match proved to be the difference for Farwell senior Tristen Zienkiewicz, who brought home the state title.

The takedown proved to be the deciding points, and Zienkiewicz defeated Jared Elliott of Birch Run

4-3 to win the title in the Division 3 individual finals at The Palace of Auburn Hills.

"I was thinking, 'Oh my God, oh my God,'" Zienkiewicz said. "This was a dream come true. I just went out there and decided to go for it. I just decided to go for it at the end and whatever was there to take it."

He used an inside trip to score the takedown to win the title. Zienkiewicz finished sixth at last year's state finals and trained all off-season to prepare for one final run at a championship.

"This is just awesome," he said. "It has been a dream of mine to win state since I was six years old."

Zienkiewicz finished the season with a 50-2 record and hopes to wrestle in college.

"I want to wrestle Division I in college," he said. "I don't want to settle for anything less."



Farwell's Tristen Zienkiewicz won the Division 3 160-pound state title over Birch Run's Jerry Elliott. (Jamie McNich Photo)

Corunna's Serbus wins state championship

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Corunna sophomore Tristan Serbus did something that has not been done by a Corunna wrestler in a while, and he avenged his only defeat in the process.

He won a state championship.

Serbus defeated Brendan Abrigo of Manchester 10-6 in the Division 3 title match at 103 pounds.

Serbus kept on the pressure from beginning to the end to claim the state title. The win avenged the only that loss Serbus suffered this season, as he finished with a 46-1 record.

"It feels awesome," Serbus said. "I just worked hard and

did what my coaches said: attack, attack, attack. I'm so glad I have my coaches and all my other teammates behind me."

Serbus was the first Corunna wrestler to bring home a state title in over two decades. "I have been told that it's like 23 years since we've had a state champion," he said. "I hope winning this state title makes more kids want to come out for wrestling and makes other Corunna wrestlers want to go to state, also."

Serbus put in plenty of time to make his dream come true. "I worked hard in the off-season," he said. "I just want to work harder and harder this summer to come back and have an even better season."



Corunna sophomore Tristan Serbus defeated Manchester's Brendan Abrigo 10-6 in the Division 3 title match at 103 pounds. (Jaime McNich Photo)

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"Oorah"



Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

Meridian heavyweight wrestler Eric Fader responded with a big "oorah!" when asked to talk about the Division 3 state championship he had just won at The Palace of Auburn Hills.

That's because he was not only stoked about winning a state title in overtime against an undefeated wrestler, but also because he will be leaving to become a United States Marine when school gets out this spring.

Fader, who ended his season with a 48-5 record, defeated Glenn Geurink of Allendale 7-6 in overtime in the 285-pound final. The loss was the first of the season for Geurink, who came in with a 46-0 record.

"I just wanted to go out and do my best," Fader said. "I had to grind it out, do some set ups, and hit my blast double."

Fader

Portland's Young comes up short

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

For Portland junior Alex Young, the 2014 Division 3 individual state finals are a tournament that he will never forget.

Wrestling in the 135-pound weight class, Young reached the championship match before falling to Nate Limmex of Grand Rapids Catholic Central.

"Making it to the championship match was life changing," Young said. "It was unreal. It was like a dream that I didn't want to wake up from."

Young qualified for the state meet last year but did not win any matches there. This year, he not

only qualified, but he also won three matches in a row to make it to the semifinals, including a 3-1 semifinal win against Collin Dole of Swan Valley.

"Making it to the finals makes me want to push forward and keep working hard and see what I can do next year," Young said.

Young was joined at the finals by teammates Paul Savage (112 pounds), Dominic Gardner (112), and Derek Gardner (145).

Young credits former Portland wrestlers for helping him improve. "A lot of Portland kids who graduated come back and work with us in the wrestling room," he said. "They make us push ourselves, and I've improved a lot being able to work with them."

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Portland's Alex Young made it all the way to the Division 3 finals at 135-pounds before losing to Grand Rapids Catholic Central's Nate Limmex. (Jaime McNich Photo)

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SPORTS SCENE'S INSIDE WRESTLING

Sanford Meridian's Eric Fader is a state champion

Alma's Randy Lark retires

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Randy Lark has had a long and illustrious career as a high school educator and as a football coach. That career has given him plenty of memories that he can relish as he settles into retirement from both positions at Alma. The fall season closed the door on 30 years of coaching for Lark. He then recently retired as a physical education instructor.

Lark was born in Gaylord and raised in Wyoming, Michigan. He played football at Michigan State University and was a free agent for the Washington Redskins for a period of time. He was hired as offensive line coach at Ferris State University, a position that he held for three seasons in the 1980s. He later went to Fulton, and then finished his career at Alma. He was assistant coach at Alma the last four years after being head coach there for 15 seasons.

There were plenty of highlights during Lark's coaching tenure. "Taking both programs over, they were kind of both down in the dumps," he recalled. "When I came to Fulton, they were 2-7 and 1-8 before I got there. We got to the playoffs three times in the 1990s when I was here. We were Class C

back then, and you had to be 8-1 or 9-0 to get into the playoffs back then."

At Alma, Lark inherited a program with only 16 players and built it to a playoff contender.

Alma made the playoffs nine times during his tenure. In 2007, Lark led Alma to the state semifinals

Lark recalls what it took to get the programs turned around. "A lot of it was just showing a lot of interest and putting your time into it and stressing a weight program," he said. "The kids bought into it."

Lark recalls having been a disciplinarian as a coach while using enthusiasm at the same time.

A hereditary muscular disease in his leg was



Longtime Alma football coach and educator Randy Lark retired recently after spending 30 years at Gratiot County schools. Lark spent nearly 20 years patrolling the sidelines in the fall at Alma, including 15 years as head coach. In 2007 Lark led Alma to Division 5 semis.

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among the motivating issues in Lark's decision to retire.

"It's not like a wheelchair-bound thing, but I have braces on, and it was kind of hard to stand when I was coaching," he said. "I put in for disability."

Lark will miss coaching, "especially the relationship with the kids, having them come back and tell me their days of football were some of the best days of their life," he said.

"And then the coaches. I've had a lot of them around for a long time. They were a big part of my life. It's time to do a few other things like hunting and fishing, which I didn't have the time to do in the fall."

Lark's son, Kyle, finished the 2013 football season playing linebacker at Western Michigan University. Lark coached both his sons, including Brett, who was a running back at Hillsdale College. His daughter, Sarah, played volleyball at Ferris State.

"It was a neat thing to be able to coach the kids all the way through, watch them, and see them mature as athletes," he said.

"I look back and it was a great time."

He will be inducted into the Michigan High School Football Coaches Hall of Fame later this year.

MP's Zimmer excels on slopes

John Raffel Sports Scene

Brianna Zimmer doesn't mind the heavy snowfall that has blanketed the area this winter.

It's no wonder. Zimmer is a talented junior skiing for the Mount Pleasant athletic program. She has been skiing overall for four seasons and in high school for three.

Zimmer went to the state meet as a sophomore. In her first two seasons, she's had strong performances at various meets.

"This year, I think I've taken another giant step in becoming an all-around skier," she said, adding that her conference meet was a strong performance, while she struggled somewhat in the regional.

This season, she won the slalom event at the Cadillac Invitational. She also took the slalom at the conference championship meet, which qualified her for the Division state finals in that event. In meet at Harbor Springs, Zimmer took 17th place in the giant slalom.

"She's had a stellar season," said coach Charlie Zeiter. "She's one of the best female ski racers I've ever had, and this is my 47th year of doing this. She's the complete package. She knows how to get ready for race day, she knows how to train. She's always working hard."

"She's a scholar-athlete in the truest sense of the word," Zeiter said. "I got a hold of her in about eighth grade and she got hooked on ski racing. She's the kind of athlete that is the coach's dream. She's so coachable. You tell her how to take a certain part of the course, or a combination or whatever, and it's a done deal."

"Coach always tells me I usually

have a pretty good line in GS," Zimmer said. "I've always been good at that. The slalom, it's my competitiveness, I guess."

Two teammates from the boys' team qualified for the slalom event at state finals.

"Skiing isn't really a big sport at my school," Zimmer said. "We don't have a big amount of girls for the team. This year's team had five girls. You usually want six on a team. Our guys' team had a fair amount of boys. It's growing."

Zimmer got interested in the ski team through her brother. "He is three years older than me," she said. "In his junior year, he was on the ski team. The coach asked me to be a manager. So I would go up to Snow Snake with the team. Then I started doing it from then on."

Snow Snake Ski and Golf in Harrison is the team's home course.

Zimmer, like other skiers, benefitted from the onslaught of snow that started falling in late November and continued all season.

"Usually we never get to go to the hill before Christmas break," Zimmer said. "Usually Christmas is the first time we get to go. This year we got to go to Snow Snake a few days before Christmas break. It gave us a better chance to start training."

Zimmer also takes advantage of her chances to ski when the high school season is done. "I've been to Utah a couple of times, and I've been to Canada," she said.

At Mount Pleasant, Zimmer also plays volleyball and soccer. Her favorite sport is a tossup between volleyball and skiing.

"The atmosphere in skiing is laid back, and it's a lot of fun," Zimmer said.

Mt. Pleasant's Brianna Zimmer was 17th at the Division 2 ski finals held at Nub's Nob near Petoskey. (Scott Keyes Photos)



MHSSA crowns skiing champs

John Raffel Sports Scene

Mount Pleasant's Brianna Zimmer had a banner day at the Division 2 state finals on Feb. 24.

Zimmer took 17th in the giant slalom with a time of 52.84 seconds and earned all-state honors.

"Brianna had a great day and made all state," said her coach Charlie Zimmer.

For the Mount Pleasant boys, Julian Latoski was 27th in the slalom and Jack Fleming 40th in the slalom.

"The boys' team finished fourth at regionals, only six points from making state as a team," Zimmer said.

Marian won the Division 2 women's meet at Nub's Nob with 74 points, including 38 in the slalom and 36 in the giant slalom. Houghton-Hancock was second with 82 and Harbor Springs third with 121. Mia Cicoretta of Petoskey was individual champion in the slalom at 1:10.92. Sydney Reynolds of Forest Hills Central was second in 1:12.21, and Breanna Lungyhammer of Marian was third in 1:12.78. In the giant

slalom, Carlee McCardel of Elk Rapids-St. Francis was first in 50.47. Mallory Eliopoulos of West Catholic was second in 50.71.

In the boys' Division 2 meet, Keenan Cooper of Cadillac was first in the giant slalom in 46.38 seconds, followed by Robbie Cort of Brother Rice in 46.62, Andrew Schumacher of Grand Rapids Christian in 46.64, Gunnar Lundteigen of Petoskey in 46.73, Nate Houk of Cadillac in 46.97, and Gregory Aikens of Cranbrook Kingswood in 47.33.

Cooper also won the slalom, becoming the first male skier in Cadillac history to take both individual titles.

Petoskey won the team title, for the fourth straight year, with 41.5 points. It was led by Lundteigen, who notched two medals. Petoskey was followed by Cadillac at 103.5, East Grand Rapids at 135, Elk Rapids-St. Francis at 138, Brother Rice at 163.5, Ironwood at 179.5, Forest Hills Central at 199.5, Harrison Community at 242, and Powers Catholic at 299.5.

Division 1 Skiing

The Division 1 meet was held at Schuss Mountain, with Marquette

finishing first with 498. It was Marquette's second straight state title. Traverse City Central finished second and Clarkston was third.

For the girls, Brighton was first at 92, Traverse City Central second at 101, Traverse City West third at 103, and Marquette fourth at 202.

In the men's giant slalom, Derek Vanitali was first in 46.69, Nick Weber of Marquette second in 47.21, and Ryan Callahan of Clarkston third in 47.25.

In the slalom, Marquette took three of the top four spots, with Luke Johnson first in 1:00.02, Nick Weber third in 1:01.89, and Bradley Seaborg fourth in 1:02.25.

Gabrielle Gencheff of Marquette won the women's giant slalom in 47.52, Lili Lockwood of Traverse City Central was second in 47.92, Morgan Culp of Traverse City West was third in 49.87, and Hanna Johnson of Marquette was fourth in 50.35.

Gencheff was first in the slalom in 1:00.51, while Culp was second in 1:04.51, Lockwood third in 1:05.55, and Johnson fourth in 1:05.76.

Heritage coach David Corcoran noted

that from his team, Ashleigh Bicknell qualified 12th in slalom at regional. "Ashleigh walked out of a ski in chatter run on the first run and was a DNF," Corcoran said. "Tom Yura qualified 15th at regional and finished 33rd at state final."

Heritage girls' team was fourth place all-academic team in D1 based on GPA. Tom Yura was all-conference (Central Alpine Ski Conference) 5th in slalom and all-conference second in GS. Ben Buscarino was all-conference honorable mention in GS. Ashleigh Bicknell was all-conference fourth in slalom and all-conference second in GS."

Greenville coach Jonathan Duley noted that the ski team finished fifth overall in Division 2 for academics. Team member Josh Scott competed at the state meet.

"Josh qualified in GS and did an amazing job throughout the season to get there," Duley said. "He put in a great first run at states, and then went for it all on his second. Unfortunately, the course got the best of Josh, and he fell about one-third of the way through. He had a great season, though."

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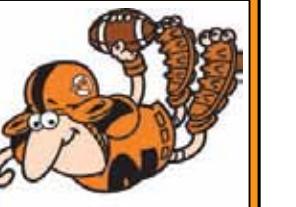
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Crowning Achievements

John Glenn, Nouvel Catholic, and Heritage Pompon Teams All Captured State Titles During the State Finals Held in February at the Breslin Center on the Campus of Michigan State University

John Glenn Wins D3 Title

Ben Murphy
Sports Scene

With a roster of 26 girls, the John Glenn pompon team focused on a simple mentality to win the class B state championship at the Breslin Center on Feb. 8.

"One team, one heart, one love," third-year head coach Shelby Anderson said of her team's success. "I love these 26 as if they were my own daughters. They are all kind, beautiful, and intelligent young women. We truly are a family, as our season runs nine months out of the year... No matter what has happened outside of practice, these 26 enter the floor as one unit."

On top of their on-court success, the Bobcats have also combined for one of the highest team GPAs at the school, are volunteers at the Dow Bay Area Family YMCA, and won numerous other awards at invitational tournaments throughout the year.

"This team has been so successful because of their drive, dedication, and perseverance," Anderson said. "This team wants to be pushed the extra mile. They want to do the work, and they wanted there to be no regrets."

Not only did they want to be better than the competition, but the Bobcats also wanted to be better than themselves.

"Our team motto is 'Beat John Glenn,'" Anderson said. "Many heard this and thought it was a dare or an arrogant statement, but it was actually about being our personal best each time. We decided that worrying about everyone else would not help us win. We needed to respect our competitors and their strengths and work on our own weaknesses and focus if we wanted to show the world what these 26 athletes were made of and capable of."

Seniors on the championship team were Kelly Carmien, Miranda Johnson, Kelsey Kukla, Emily Landry, Bailey Lowell, and Nicole Reich.

"Carmien is an amazing leader, listener, and peacekeeper in our family," Anderson said. "Johnson has as much dedication and heart as the day is long. Kukla has great jumps and a kind heart. Landry has sharp form and the ability to relate to anyone. Lowell has the motivational speaking skills of a pro, and Reich is creative and always thinking outside the box."

Juniors on the team are Caitlyn Doran, Samantha Gerken, Stacie Kussro, Lexi Rau, Courtney Rezmer, and Allison Vlk.

"Doran is willing to help anyone and always has a random fact of the day to keep the team smiling," Anderson said. "Gerken is a sweetheart and is like a big sister to all members."

Kussro has strong athletic ability and has extreme dedication and leadership. Rau is a perfectionist and also our class clown; she can break any tense moment with her wit. Rezmer has great showmanship and the ability to cut any tension with a quick random story and a giggle, and Vlk can learn extremely fast and has great form and a huge heart."

Sophomores on the team are Katelynn Barber, Molly Carrien, Brittnay Frost, Briana Krayscir, Sydney Kukla, Alisha Lodewyk, Miranda Powell, Haleigh Reed, and Alex Steff.

"Barber has been out due to an injury but has supported her team and is always there to listen and console," Anderson said. "Carmien has a huge smile and a whole lot of power. Frost is a friend to all and always puts the team first. Krayscir has battled injuries but has stayed positive and supported the team the whole way."

"Kukla has great skills and a kind heart; she is very polite and a hard worker," Anderson added. "Lodewyk captivates the audience with her spirit and her performance skills. Powell has a lot of flair and personality on the floor, with great showmanship and skill. Reed has kicks that are out of this world; her height makes her easy to spot, but her skill is what makes her stand out, and Steff is one of the hardest workers; she does not quit until it is right and is always listening."

Freshmen on the team are Kimmie Cnudde, Brooke Gillespie, Carlie McCarthy, Lauren Rivet, and Alexis Zimmerman.

"Cnudde always had words of wisdom for the team, she takes every critique to heart and dedicates herself to be the best she can be for her team," Anderson said. "Gillespie has a spitfire personality and drive. McCarthy has dedication and poise; she is always ready to go and is prepared. Rivet may be tiny, but she has a lot of heart, she is always working when she has a moment to spare to ensure she has everything right. Zimmerman is shy and sweet; that being said, it all falls away when she hits the floor and she performs with no qualms."

The Bobcats hope that this year's success continues into the future, and with a roster that will boast plenty of familiar faces next season, the coach doesn't see any reason why it can't.

"The Glenn pompon program has been around for decades, and it stays strong because of the dedication and love these young women have for each other and the respect they have for this sport," Anderson said. "The team knows what is expected of them, and they work hard to keep the proud tradition alive. With the support from their families, friends, and mine as well, we have kept alive the spirit that has fueled the Bobcat athletics for years."

"We told them the night before the competition that we wanted them to go out there and show the audience how much they loved this sport by having fun while performing," Gorney said.

On this year's championship team were seniors Liberty Solek, Julie Feinauer, Maria Buko, and Justine Schultz.

Three Area Teams Win State Pom Pon Titles

Heritage Wins Pom Title For First Time In Nine Years In Class A

Ben Murphy
Sports Scene

Heritage capped off what first-year head coach Kaleigh Sepulveda called a perfect season at the class A state pompon finals on Feb. 8 at the Breslin Center in East Lansing.

The Hawks beat out 25 other teams that day to cap off a season that saw many invitational wins.

"I think this team is so successful because it consists of 21 brilliant, classy girls that all strive for one goal only, and that is to be the best they possibly can," Sepulveda said. "They don't go out to beat anyone else, we simply go there to best ourselves. We have come in fourth the last couple years, so the girls just really strived to get better... No matter if they were sick or hurt, they gave 100 percent."

Filling out the Hawk's championship roster are seniors Marissa Alfano, Haylee Bucholz, Shania Con-

ley, Emma Sizelove, Kasey Kalandyk, Tabitha Frakes, Maddy Rodriguez, and Alyssa Marsh.

"Alfano is a very well-organized girl and a great performer; she was voted MVP (most valuable pomponer)," Sepulveda said. "Bucholz is our squad butterfly that gets along with everyone. Conley is hilarious, but not only is she funny, she is quite the powerhouse, never gives up. Sizelove is very creative and artistic, loves pompon a lot, and is always dancing at practice. Kalandyk is one of my captains and is the epitome of this, this girl lives and breathes pompon 24-7."

"Frakes is one of my captains, this girl is unstoppable, she has been injured most of the season due to her knee, but she never lets that stop her," Sepulveda added. "Rodriguez is a great leader, loves pompon so much, and is a great worker. Marsh is such a sweetheart, and if she is told a comment, she tries to fix it immediately; she is very dedicated."

Juniors on the team are Olivia Chapa, Alyson Feldorf, Maite Hardaway, Sydney Kubia, Megan Lee, Allyson Leipert, Alyssa Martin, and Santana Romero.

"Chapa has a great smile and really pushes herself," Sepulveda said. "Feldorf has a great head on her shoulders and has good leadership skills. Hardaway is a very

quick learner, always strives to get better. Kubia is a very sweet girl, works very hard, and has great showmanship.

"Lee is quite the squad clown but works hard," Sepulveda added. "Leipert has battled a leg injury but always pushes herself through it and doesn't let the pain get in her way. Martin truly loves pompon, has a great attitude, and works her butt off. Romero has some of the best head reflections, along with some great muscle."

Sophomores on the team are Emma Dittmar, Paige Hammis, Jensen Kalandyk, Anna Newman, and Katarina Romero.

"Dittmar is the quietest girl I have ever met [and] was voted most improved," Sepulveda said. "Hammis is definitely a hard-working girl, doesn't let anything phase her, and just pushes herself 100 percent. Kalandyk, for only being a sophomore, has quite the muscle and has great power in all her jumps. Newman has to have one of the best smiles I have ever seen; she just makes you happy when you look at her performing

and you can tell she loves what she does. Romero has beautiful kicks and great posture."

Winning the state title isn't a rare occurrence for the Hawk pompon team. It was the sixth time the squad has done so in school history, joining teams from 1989, 1997, 2002, 2003, and 2005 as state champions. If the coach has anything to say about it, Heritage will add another title sooner rather than later.

"I think we have a great pompon team because of Traci Hammis who, as my coach growing up, taught me on the foundation of working hard and staying classy while doing it," Sepulveda said. "It also helps that we get extremely hard-working girls that are mentally and physically strong. They are taught tremendous amounts of time management to handle all the activities. Overall, it has been a joy to coach these 21 hardworking girls; they are the dream team."



overcome her fear of performing in front of thousands of people. Jurgens has worked hard to fix all her bad pom habits. The smile on her face when she performs comes from how much she loves this sport."

The coach hopes that with a strong group coming back next year, Nouvel pom can stay high amongst the state ranks.

"We [coaches] love this sport and genuinely care about these girls, not just how they perform during a pom competition, but we care if they are good people," Gorney said. "These girls also genuinely care about working together as a team to accomplish a team goal... These girls want to leave a good impression for their school, their peers, their families, and the future pom girls of Nouvel."

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Ithaca bowlers find success on lanes

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Dan Macha has been excited about his Ithaca girls varsity bowling team this season and for good reason.

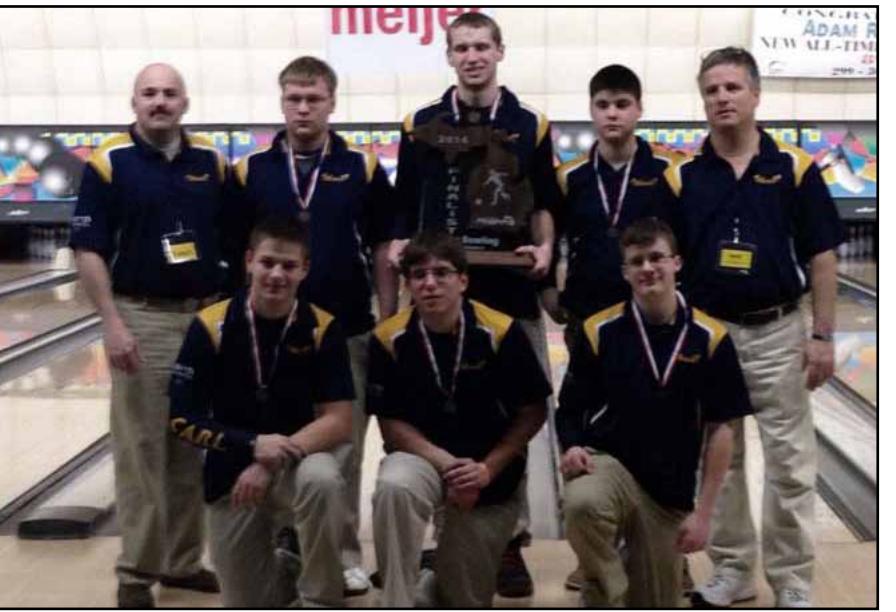
The Yellow Jackets were state qualifiers and had an excellent experience at the state tournament Feb. 28-March 1.

"The girls struggled after being in sixth place after the bakers," Macha said of the state finals. "We started getting some momentum back and our lane broke down for 20 minutes in first Peterson. Not an excuse (but it) just did not help the cause. Especially when you had some momentum going. They were starting to make a move and this hurt as they came back after breakdown and struggled to get it going again...too many missed spares."

The Jackets, Macha said, bowled better in the third game but weren't able to stay in the top 8 and finished 10th about 70 pins off the cut.

"This is a young team, no seniors, and they just could not get a break after bakers," Macha said. "I am happy with their efforts even though we came up short. We are a better team than the team that struggled this weekend."

The Jackets bowled at M66 Lanes in



The Ithaca boys bowling team finished second at the recent Division 4 finals held in Battle Creek. The girls' team also qualified for the state tournament. (Submitted Photo)

Battle Creek.

"The middle of the road pattern is not a real friendly pattern," Macha said. "The tournament committee really needs to look at another pattern. I takes

just the right speed and hitting your mark together. If you are too fast it does not come back and too slow it takes off. Speed is very hard aspect for girls to be consistent. I just think it is time for a

different pattern."

But Macha likes the experience his team received.

"In singles, both my girls were freshman and they had first time jitters," he said. "I am happy that they got better as the day progressed. That indicated they will be back and relaxed next time. Good season. This is a very good group of young ladies that will make some noise next year. I cannot wait."

Experience has not been an issue for what Macha calls a "youth mature team."

The squad has no seniors, but going into the postseason, they had a 16-2 overall record and 8-2 mark in the TVC West Conference.

"I have a unique group of very talented young ladies," Macha said.

"They have all bowled in YABA since they were five or six and are always striving to make improvements on the lanes."

The girls lost the conference championship to an 18-12 loss to a more experienced St Louis team the second weekend of February.

"We were down them up and then the Sharks KO'd us in the last Peterson Game with their season high 933 after we bowled our season high 891 the game prior," said Macha. "It was a

Ithaca boys finish 2nd in D4 bowling finals; St. Louis concludes another successful season

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Wally Schneider has coached a boys' bowling team this season at Ithaca that has pulled off some impressive accomplishments. The top one occurred at the Division 4 state finals on Feb. 28 at M-66 Lanes in Battle Creek.

Ithaca advanced to the finals against Jonesville and fell 1,153-1,094. But the Jackets still brought home a runner-up trophy. Contributing for Ithaca in the finals were Blake Gulick at 151, Jared Baublitz at 156, Kaeden Greer at 167, donal Carl at 137 and Joe Whittaker at 172.

February was quite a month for Ithaca.

On Saturday, Feb. 1, at Riverwood Lanes in Mount Pleasant, the Yellowjackets had an outstanding performance. "In our first Peterson game against Alma, the boys shot a 1,292 game, which is the highest game ever shot by a Division 4 school and the third highest game ever shot in MHSAA history," Schneider said. "Joe Whittaker shot 300 during the game, and Kaeden Greer carried a possible 300 into the 10th frame before settling for a 277. Donald Carl shot 247 and Jared Baublitz 236 and Blake Gulick 232.

"Everything went right. All five guys were hitting so



The St. Louis boys' bowling team advanced all the way to the Division 4 quarterfinals before losing to Sandusky by one pin. (Submitted Photo)

well. They were all throwing a lot of strikes. It was a great day, a really fun day. It was an amazing thing to be a part of."

Carl, Greer, and Whitaker are seniors, while Baublitz and Gulick are sophomores. Baublitz started out with the junior varsity and was moved up to the varsity during the season.

The Yellowjackets finished second in the Tri-Valley West with an 8-2 record. Both losses came to St. Louis. Overall, Ithaca was 15-2.

"The boys bowled really well," Schneider said. "It's not always the same person. It's important that our big guys are hitting. But we've had times when those guys aren't necessarily right on. Someone else comes up to fill that void. It's been an amazing season."

The intensive rivalry between Ithaca and St. Louis has continued onto the bowling lanes.

"It's always been a great rivalry," Schneider said. "I've been doing this for 11 years. St. Louis coach has been Al Post or his brother basically that period of time. It's always been tough between the two of us. We've always battled, it seems like every year."

"We get along well with each other. It's been a lot of fun. It's always back and forth between those two teams. We and St. Louis have always been tight. I'm sure there's been a year or two where one of the teams has been up or down. It's not very often. We're both

usually there."

Ithaca has been in the top six of the final Division 4 state standings a couple of times. In February, Ithaca competed in the entire Tri-Valley Conference meet and took second in that tournament behind Caro. Several Class B schools participated.

"It's pretty competitive," said nine-year bowling coach Al Post of St. Louis, referring to the rivalry with Ithaca. "Ithaca and us always seem to butt heads."

St. Louis advanced to the state quarterfinals but lost to Sandusky 1,209-1,208.

The previous week at regionals, Ithaca was first, Hemlock second and St. Louis third.

It's the type of rivalry that seems to bring out the best between the two teams.

"Their only loss was to us," Post said. "They wanted to win. We had a good match, and we happened to win it."

Geographically, the two schools are close, and they are competitive in the conference and in the postseason.

"The kids all know each other pretty well," Post said. "It's a very respected rivalry, I will say that. It might not have been a few years back. But now, it's a very respectable rivalry. Both programs are so strong now. We both want to beat each other bad. Wally has a great program, so do we."

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Continue from page 34

typical Ithaca-St Louis barn burner."

The two juniors on the team, Chelsea MacLennan and Kristy Godley, have been pleasing Macha with their efforts at the fourth and fifth position in the lineup.

"Chelsea has come through time after time this year at anchor when games were teetering one way or the other," he said. "Kristy is our never-give-up ambassador."

Macha praised the efforts of freshmen Heidi Seeley

and Haylee Sigafoose.

They both bowled in the individual state finals event.

"Ithaca had the tools they needed to be a strong team this year, with returning sophomores Channing Gulick and Arianna Woodrow, but these two freshman are very talented young bowlers," Macha said.

"I had Channing and Arianna with a years experience making the middle of my lineup strong and then these two freshman stepped in and wowed me as

they bowl like they have no fear."

Junior Kathryne Beck has also been in the top seven for Ithaca.

"I brought Kat up in January to give us an extra sub and she just fit right in," said Macha.

This was a team with potential that excited Macha.

"The 2010 state runner-up team was composed of more overall talented bowlers but this group of girls truly emphasize the team element of bowling and work together so well," said Macha.

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Bowling center stage; Vikings impress

John Raffel Sports Scene

The Swan Valley girls bowling team finished another impressive regular season. The state tournament, however, was somewhat frustrating again.

Over the past four years, the team has won 40 straight regular-season matches and has won the Tri-Village Central Division all four of those years.

Tony Bremer, head coach for the boys' and girls' teams, said, "We've been real lucky over the years where we've had girls that graduate and other girls step in and know what to do."

This season, Bremer has two girls on the team who have been there for four years, Tammy Crawford and Hannah McClean. They're two of his top bowlers along with senior Kiersten Mead, who is on the team for her third season. Crawford and McClean average in the 170s, while Mead is in the 190s. Mead broke her arm midway through the season during a cheerleading routine and would have been a sure bet to qualify for state if it wasn't for the injury.

"Our top bowlers all average 140 or better," Bremer said.

Other top bowlers are Nikki Hayes, Halli Clark, and Tia Owens. Owens bowled in the individual state finals.

"We've had a couple of close calls early on in the season," Bremer said. "We had a close one the last week of the season. With any sport, the good teams or bad teams can have a good day or bad day. Just because we've been ranked in the top 10 for most of the last four years doesn't mean we can't struggle."

Swan Valley is in Division 3. The girls' team was

the defending two-time regional champion in 2012 and 2013, but it was knocked out both years in the qualifying round at state finals. In 2014, Swan Valley was second to Ovid-Elsie in the regionals.

"We've missed the cut by about 15 pins both years," Bremer said going into the postseason. "I know we'll make the cut and finish top three in team event regionals. I expect them to make the state finals again. This team has learned the last two years the disappointment at state. I think we could go a little further this year."

Oh well, it happened again to Swan Valley in the 2014 Division 3 state finals at Airport Lanes in Jackson Feb. 28-March 1.

The team tied with Armada for the final qualifying spot and had a baker set playoff, which Armada won.

Bremer calls winning 40 regular-season matches in a row "a great accomplishment. But falling short at the state finals kind of downplays it a little bit. You can have a great regular season. But if you can't put the exclamation point on the season at the end and win a championship, it kind of leaves you a little disappointed."

"I know in the last couple of years, we've been disappointed by missing the cut by so little."

This season's team, compared to the previous three, "is just as strong," Bremer said. "What makes



The Swan Valley girls bowling team's conference winning streak reached 40 matches this season. (Submitted Photo)

this year and last year a little more special is our top two bowlers last year were hurt most of the year and only bowled a combined 14 games during the regular season. But they were still able to go undefeated. This year, we lost our top bowler [three] weeks ago, Kiersten Mead. She broke her arm. But they won their final four matches without her. This team is coming together as one."

It won't surprise Bremer to see Swan Valley's success continue in future years. "There's some girls coming up through middle school that can still carry the torch and continue the success of this program," Bremer said. "It seems like every year the number of high schools getting into bowling have gone up."

John Raffel Sports Scene

Bay City Western girls and Ithaca boys earned runner-up finishes in the state bowling tournament Feb. 28-March 1 to highlight a successful weekend for area bowlers.

In addition, Alex Ouellette of John Glenn was state singles champion in Division 2, and Kyle Tuttle of St. Charles was champion in Division 4.

Western lost 1,267-1,120 to Kearsley in the final.

Final individual game scores for Western were Anna Kuehne 190, Claudia Giedla 173, Haley Delestowicz 137, Megan Rabideau/Taryn Butler 132, and Storm Butler/Kaylee Radwick 147.

Western defeated Tecumseh in the semifinals and Mason in the quarterfinals. Ionia and

John Glenn were also in the quarterfinals.

Last season, Western finished third.

At the state tournament, Western qualified in the fourth position. "We bowled pretty good that day," coach Rick Dodick said.

Delestowicz and Storm Butler were among the top bowlers for Western this season along with Kuehne and Giedla.

In the Division 4 boys' final, Ithaca lost to Jonesville 1,153-1,094.

"It was great, obviously one step short of our goal," said Ithaca coach Wally Schneider. "We bowled well all day, up until the finals. We were dominant all day. We won the qualifying round by 186 pins. We beat the No. 1-ranked team in the state and the defending state champions, all on our way

to the finals. It was a great day overall."

Final individual game scores for Ithaca were Blake Gulick 151, Jared Baublitz 156, Kaeden Greer 167, Donald Carl 137, and Joe Whittaker 172.

The Yellowjackets beat defending state champion Gabriel Richard Catholic in the semifinal and No. 1-ranked Bendale in the quarterfinal.

Alex Ouellette beat Alec Nunn of Warren Fitzgerald 479-410 in the final. He had bowled a 300 game in the morning qualifying blocks. Cody Vincent of Owosso was a semifinalist. Destiny Kennedy of John Glenn was a quarterfinalist.

DIVISION 3

The event was at Sunnybrook Lanes in Sterling Heights.

Davison was girls' champion,

led in the title match by Kaley Johnson with 212, Taylor Brown with 201, Sydney Brown at 224, Taylor Davis at 247, and Brooklyn Green/Myranda Livingston at 223.

Josh Kukla of Grandville won the boys' title. Chase Badalamenti of Garber was a quarterfinalist. For the girls, Hannah Chase of Alma was

Merrill nearly wins cheer title

Merrill's Cheer team finished second during the recent MHSAA state finals held at the Deltaplex in Grand Rapids. Right: DeWitt finished 5th in Division 1. (John Raffel Photos)



John Raffel Sports Scene

Merrill had its best performance at a state meet on March 1 at the Deltaplex in Grand Rapids, and the reward for the Vandals was the Division 4 state runner-up trophy.

For the fourth straight season, Michigan Center won the meet. But for the first time in three seasons, Pewamo-Westphalia was not runner up. P-W did not qualify for the state meet, and Merrill took advantage.

Michigan Center scored 745.12 to win the championship, while Merrill was a close second with 743.12. Hudson was third at 734.52, Vandercook Lake fourth at 730.928, Breckenridge fifth at 725.96, Houghton Lake sixth, Manistique seventh, and Munising eighth.

Cheerleaders for coach Courtney Schiller's team were Samantha Brand, Alex Cappens, Paige Glazier, Karli Good, Hannah Harkrader, Vyki Lamblin, Alanna Peake, Megan Playford, and Ashly Rich. Cappens, Glazier, and Peake are seniors.

"I'm super excited," Peake said. "We just told ourselves we needed to do our best, and if we did our best, we could win. We did our best."

"I knew they could do this well," Schiller said. "They haven't done all three of the rounds this well yet. But this was the day for them to pull it out."

This marks the best finish for Merrill at the state meet.

"Our third round is always strong consistently," Schiller said. "We struggled in rounds one and two this year. Sometimes they're on, and sometimes they're not. This was the right time to do it. We feel we nailed it in the second round today," she said.

Merrill was second after round 2 and had the best score in round 3.

"It all came together," Schiller said. "We've had three seniors leading our program, and they've been a real strength

with their leadership and ability. We also have girls who will be juniors next year stepping up and one senior and some talented freshmen coming in. I'm hoping they'll keep it going."

Coppens has been a high school cheerleader four seasons and was optimistic about her team's prospects entering the meet. "We recently competed against Michigan Center and took second against them," she said. "We knew if we pushed ourselves to our fullest, we would come out on top. We had confidence in all three rounds. We were ready for all of them."

"It was helpful we've been here four years," Peake said. "Then you're not nervous when you go out."

"Everyone is super close, and we try our best for everyone else," she said.

Overall, Glazier has cheered for seven years. "We were hoping for first, but second feels just as good at this point," she said. "We worked hard, and we earned it."

In November, when practices started, Glazier recalls "hoping" that this would be a special team with a special season.

"It gives the middle schoolers a goal so they can be state champions, hopefully," she said. "We have a pretty good middle school team."

"I love that we were a family and we pushed ourselves and we pushed each other," Glazier continued.

Breckenridge won the title in 2007 under coach Deb Gaines. Gaines coached again this year, along with Jenna Graham, and had the following team members:

Harley Conklin, Lena Crowell, Alexandria Gillis, Miranda Smith, Justine Brabaw, Dakota Colthorp, Kaitlyn Corson, Melony Federspiel, Paige Guthrie, Alicia Gutierrez, Katie Mortensen, and Lindsey Reichard.

"They did great today," Gaines said. "This is our first year back in seven years, and we wanted to come in with three strong rounds, make our mark, and let everyone know we're back. We did that today."



John Raffel Sports Scene

Besides Breckenridge and Merrill, DeWitt and Tri County also qualified for the state finals in competitive cheer at the Grand Rapids Deltaplex. Teams qualified based on their finishes at regionals the week prior to the finals. Eight teams competed in each of the four divisions.

DIVISION 3

Tri County made its first appearance in the state finals. The Vikings were actually fifth after Round 1 but fell to seventh after Round 2 and to eighth after Round 3.

The team was coached by Jennifer Laskey and consisted of McKenna Clark, Alyssa Gardner, Alexis Herschberger, Michaela Lytle, Taylor Merchant, Jordyn Rubingh, Opal Tafe, Baylee Zemla, Morgan DeVault, Nicole Minard, Emily Rienks, Leici VanRooyen, Kayla Fifield, Sylvia Smith, Adrianna Straub, Taylor Stressman, Jamie VanSetters, Belle Caudill, and Mariah Dunigan.

"I think they did a fantastic job for our first time at the state finals," Laskey said. "We hit Round 1 and did a nice Round 2. Unfortunately in Round 3, things didn't go as we had hoped. But overall, it's an awesome job. I'm very proud of them."

Notre Dame Preparatory School finished first with 764.04, while Comstock Park was second at 759.68, Grosse Ile third at 749.68, Richmond fourth at 735.46, Armada fifth at 728.02, Otsego sixth at 718.62, and Paw Paw seventh at 717.90.

DIVISION 2

DeWitt settled for fifth place in the Division 2 meet. Cheerleaders for coach Candace Heskett's team were Haley Baade, Kelsey Black, Sarah Bland, Grace Colarossi, Lauren Crooks, Payton Dagg, Caroline Deak, Alexis Emb, Lexi Garza, Brittney Gordon, Marissa Gordon, Kailin Greenhoe, Allison Gyurich, Melissa Harvey, Lauren Hasse, Hannah Heinritz, Jennylan Jubeck, Meghan Lidgard, MacKenzie Lovellette, Hannah Rokosz, Threse Simon, Nicole Stump, Kaitlyn Sweeney, Brittany Vilella, Abigail Wassom, Ashley Wilkinson, Nicole Yabs, and Elizabeth Zunker.

DeWitt faltered somewhat in Round 3 after being less than a point out of second place at the end of Round 2.

Gibraltar Carlson was first at 780.10, followed by Divine Child with 772.24, Allen Park with 769.06, St. Joseph with 766.88, and DeWitt with 764.16.

DIVISION 1

Southgate Anderson took honors in Division 1 competitive cheer with 785.96, followed by Grandville at 783.54, Dakota at 778.54, Lake Orion at 777.79, East Kentwood at 777.24, Hartland at 776.82, Troy Athens at 775.38, and Rochester Stoney Creek at 774.20.

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All-Star football rosters announced; Ithaca's Smith, Alma's Doyle lead way for area players

John Raffel Sports Scene

It's the inaugural Ohio-Michigan Border Classic, and it will feature Michigan's best vs. Ohio's best on Saturday, June 14, at Donnell Stadium at the University of Findlay in Findlay, Ohio.

The Michigan High School Football Coaches Association announced its first Border Classic team that will be playing an Ohio all-star squad. All players will be members of the Class of 2014.

Local players who have been selected to the team include quarterback Travis Smith of Ithaca, wide receiver Amari Cleman of New Lothrop, offensive guard Curtis Doyle of Alma, and wide receiver Malik Taylor of Montrose.

"We're pretty excited," said Larry Merx, executive director of the MHSFCA. "We'll have a chance to build a lot of bridges between the two states."

Head coach is Mike Zdebski and offensive line coach is Mike Weiskopf, both from Walled Lake Western. Zdebski is also coaching quarterbacks, tailbacks, and kickers. Other coaches are Ed Greenman of Harper Creek with the wide receivers, Tim Szegda and Brian Lemons of Father Gabriel Richard with the defensive line and linebackers, and Scott Merchant of Chippewa Valley with the defensive backs.

The game will replace the annual Michigan East-West all-star game, a summer

fixture since 1981.

"This will take the place of our East-West game, because there are only two weekends in June you can have an all-star game and get players to come," Merx said.

"More and more of them report to their college [teams] in late June or early July. The only two

weekends this year would be June 14, which we're doing, and June 21.

We can't man two back-to-back all-star games. There's not enough

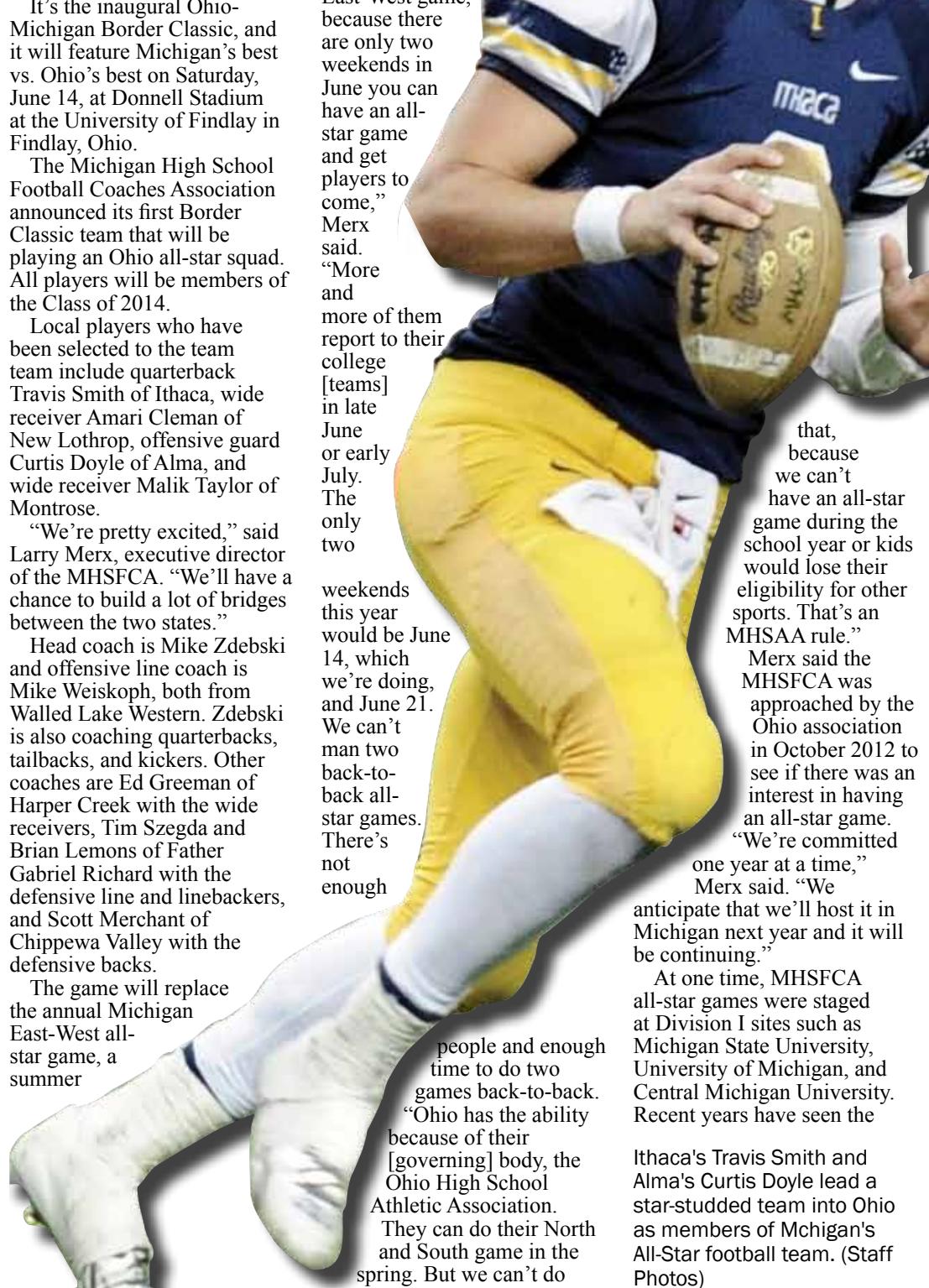
that, because we can't have an all-star game during the school year or kids would lose their eligibility for other sports. That's an MHSAA rule."

Merx said the MHSFCA was approached by the Ohio association in October 2012 to see if there was an interest in having an all-star game.

"We're committed one year at a time," Merx said. "We anticipate that we'll host it in Michigan next year and it will be continuing."

At one time, MHSFCA all-star games were staged at Division I sites such as Michigan State University, University of Michigan, and Central Michigan University. Recent years have seen the

people and enough time to do two games back-to-back. "Ohio has the ability because of their [governing] body, the Ohio High School Athletic Association. They can do their North and South game in the spring. But we can't do



game at Division II Grand Valley State University and Division III Alma College.

"The NCAA has a rule that prohibits Division I schools from hosting any high school-related event that's not associated with a specific high school, non-scholastic," Merx said. "So we have to go to DII. We're trying to get that rule changed."

Profits from the game will go to the scholarship funds of the respective organizations.

The Michigan East-West all-star game format involved twice as many players and coaches, and Merx said there was plenty of discussion about the change.

"We hope to be able to get back to that," he explained. "But

there's also a lot more regional games. There's a Muskegon area all-star game. There's an Upper Peninsula all-star game. There's one in Monroe County. Kids still get that all-star experience. We'd like to have that statewide experience. At this time, we can't do both."

This will mark the first time Michigan football all-stars have played all-stars from another state. "Ohio is the first to approach us," Merx said.

The MHSFCA selected the six all-star coaches, who then recruited the players, he noted. "There was a lot of research done to do it," Merx said.

Smith, who led Ithaca to its fourth straight 14-0 season and state title, will have one last high school game prior to going to Wake Forest University. The thought of playing in the game excites him. "It's a great feeling," he said. "It's top competition in the Midwest. It's a good feeling to know they picked me to compete in one of the most competitive football games in the Midwest. It's going to be a lot of fun."

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Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Lovers of big-time high school basketball in the state of Michigan dodged a bullet in the elimination of powerhouse basketball schools when Saginaw High School was spared closure.

Talks were held this year regarding closing Saginaw High and merging it with Saginaw Arthur Hill. While the merger would have created a Saginaw 'super power' basketball school, it would have eliminated one of the most storied and successful high school basketball programs in the state.

Because of Michigan's population losses over the last two decades, high school basketball has sustained the loss of some of the most storied programs in the state, especially in Classes A and B.

The list of teams that have fallen by the wayside in the past ten years is staggering. A prime example of the loss of great basketball programs is in Flint. Once considered the greatest high school basketball city in the nation on a per-person basis, Flint saw the loss of flagship program Flint Central in 2009 and Flint Northern just this past year. Over the years, those programs provided the state with legendary stars like Mateen Cleaves, Eric Turner, Mark Harris, Marty Embury, Terrance Greene, Robaire Smith, and many others. Together, Central and Northern combined to win 52 district titles, 20 regional titles, and seven state titles. District basketball time in Flint was the greatest time of the year for a high school basketball junkie, and showcase games played in front of standing-room only crowds were the norm five or six days a week during districts.

Saginaw, too, has been hit by the closure of a school. The closure of long-time Class B and C powerhouse Buena Vista brought to an end one of the greatest Flint-Saginaw rivalries, as Beecher and Buena Vista will play no more. Buena Vista had a basketball tradition second to none, with the likes of Mark Macon, Terrance Roberson, Anthony 'Peep' Roberson, and Torey Jackson. Buena Vista closed its doors with a trophy case that held 31 district titles, 17 regional titles, and six state titles.

Nowhere has the decimation of great basketball schools been as prolific as in the Motor City. At one time, Detroit was the premier hotbed in the nation for big time high school basketball. The elimination of Detroit high schools has hit both public and private schools. It began in earnest in 2005, when both Detroit East Catholic and Detroit DePorres closed. Those two Catholic schools

had combined for 48 district, 34 regional, and 16 state championships. The Detroit Public School League (PSL) has also been ravaged. Gone are legendary programs like Southwestern, Northern, Cooley, Redford, Mackenzie, Murray-Wright, and Chadsey. Few schools had a tradition like Southwestern. The Prospectors produced superstars like Jalen Rose and Antoine 'the Judge' Joubert and legendary coach Perry Watson. Southwestern won 28 district, 15 regional, and three state titles. Northern, led by the great Derrick Coleman, won 19 district, 11 regional, and two state titles. The Cooley Cardinals, home to Larry Fogle and Michael Talley, won 14 district titles, nine regional, and three state titles.

Other areas of the state have been hit as well. Pontiac is without Pontiac Central High School, Willow Run High School, winner of 33 district, nine regional, and two state titles has closed its doors, as has Albion High School in southern Michigan.

School closings and mergers have gone on for years. Ask people in small towns across mid Michigan who have seen the Barryton Bulldogs, Blanchard Trojans, Crystal Hawks, Dimondale Bearcats, Edmore Panthers, Howard City Bulldogs, Lyons-Muir Lions, Ovid Romans, Stanton Rams, Sheridan Redskins, and Weidman Wildcats pass on into the dusty record books of time.

Time marches on, but the memories last forever, however faded and old they get. And now, new schools have a chance to come to the forefront and establish their own winning histories.



Arthur Hill coach Greg McMath (left) and Saginaw High coach Julian Taylor (right) have to be commended for their efforts to keep their teams intact as rumors swirled about the possible closing of Saginaw High School.

Despite What School Board Proposed, Saginaw High Will Be Around For Many Years To Come If Community Has Its Way; Trojans Upend Lumberjacks In First Round Of District Action



Scott Keyes Sports Scene

Saginaw Public Schools Board of Education Superintendent Carlton Jenkins had a tough decision to make, one that was not going to be popular with the community, but it was one that needed to be made.

Either close Saginaw High School to cut money from the school district's budget deficit or come up with a different plan that would save the beloved school from the wrath of the financial stranglehold.

When Jenkins announced his initial decision to close The High, the community came out in droves in support keeping the school open. The plan called for Saginaw High to combine with Arthur Hill and The High would close its doors forever.

The community wasn't having it.

"I know if I was a senior next year and The High was closing, I would be going to Bridgeport," said Saginaw High point guard Keyon Addison after the Trojans 70-64 victory over the Lumberjacks earlier this month.

"In my opinion, it's silly to even be considering something like that."

Arthur Hill boys' basketball coach Greg McMath agrees with Addison's assessment of the situation. "For someone that went to Saginaw High and now coaches at Arthur Hill, it's hard to ever imagine having both schools combine," he said. "Mr. Jenkins was put in rough spot, but I am extremely proud of how the community came out and supported the cause, and the board listened to their concerns."

February was a headache for the board of education, students, administrators, and teachers.

The board met nine days during the month, as the district leaders dealt with a financial crisis.

The Michigan Department of Education required the Saginaw Public School District to turn in a deficit-elimination plan for the next two school years.

From 2011 to 2016, the district is projected to fall \$32 million short. It has an \$81 million annual budget. In 2011, when it first went into deficit, the state began financial oversight of the district.

Although it has not been easy, the district has submitted a plan that includes cutting \$4.9

million from the 2014-2015 budget and \$5.3 million from the 2015-2016 budget and keeps The High open.

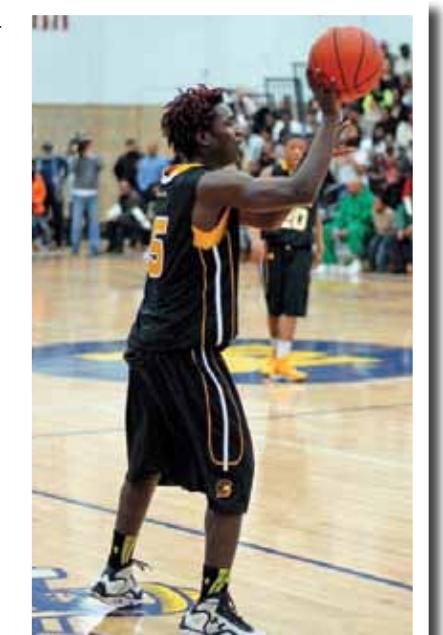
Since 2005, Saginaw Public School District has lost more than 3,600 students and has cut 45 percent of its teachers and 57 percent of its administrative staff. Officials have closed 13 school buildings in the past decade.

Despite all the uncertainty about the possible closing of Saginaw High, there was still a game to be played Feb. 14, one that potentially could have been the final regular-season game between Saginaw and Arthur Hill. The High prevailed behind a triple-double from Algevon Eichelberger and 20-plus points from Addison.

The two teams hooked up again during the first round of districts March 3. The raw emotion of a Saginaw High vs. Arthur Hill game is intense, but it's what drives the student-athlete.

And now, with a new district plan that does not include closing Saginaw High, the rivalry between the two crosstown schools lives to see another day.

"Regardless if this year was the last year for Saginaw High or not, I'm a Trojan for life," Addison said. "Now that we know Saginaw High will stay open, it's exciting what the future holds for the next graduating class that comes through those doors of The High."



Saginaw High's Keyon Addison is going to play a key role in the Trojans' tournament run this season



Photos by Chip Degrace

Nouvel, Frankenmuth boys basketball teams partnered with the Special Olympics and hosted a wheelchair basketball game Feb. 16 at Nouvel High School in Saginaw. The game was a benefit for Elizabeth Kischnick in honor of her twin brother Zachary, who passed away in his sleep on Jan 7, 2014 at the age of 18. Zachary and Elizabeth were both born prematurely and are special needs children. Mitchell Kischnick is a current athlete on the Frankenmuth Varsity Basketball team, and his brother Zachary was his biggest fan.



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This Is What Sports Is About

Basketball players from Nouvel Catholic Central and Frankenmuth gave back to their respective communities Feb. 16 by hosting a wheelchair basketball game. They partnered with the Special Olympics to benefit Elizabeth Kischnick in honor of her twin brother Zachary, who passed away in his sleep on Jan. 7, 2014, at the age of 18.

Zachary and Elizabeth were both born prematurely and are special needs children. Mitchell Kischnick is a current athlete on the Frankenmuth varsity basketball team, and his brother Zachary was his biggest fan.

The twins were born Feb. 21, 1995, the first children of Earl and Karolynn Kischnick. Then Mitchell and Madison were born, and Team Kischnick was formed. Madison and Mitchell are

both standout athletes at Frankenmuth High School.

Nouvel coach Joe Jacobs heard of what happened and knew there had to be something he could do to help the Kischnicks and to celebrate Zachary's life. Jacobs was the Frankenmuth junior varsity coach last season, and Mitchell Kischnick was one of his players.

Both teams spent a month before the game looking for sponsors for the wheelchair basketball game, which also included a silent auction and other ways spectators could enjoy the game.

Overall, it was a huge success, and the community came out in droves to support the cause. It was a great game, that supported an even better cause. Zachary Kischnick would have been proud.



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All roads lead to Breslin

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The story lines will be wide-ranging this March as the boys' basketball state tournament tips off. Familiar names dot the list of favorites in Classes A and B along with some new names. Classes C and D also have some old standbys and some squads that have not been heard from in a while. High School Sports Scene takes a look at this year's state tournament and predicts who will make it to the Breslin Center.

CLASS A

Area outlook: Saginaw High started the tournament with a bang by defeating rival Arthur Hill. Mt. Pleasant has enjoyed a successful season, and the Oilers are poised for a deep tournament run. They will have to navigate the Bay City Western district that includes Midland Dow. If the Oilers get through the district, they could run into a tough Marquette team in the regional semifinals before a potential regional showdown with Arthur Hill in the Lake Orion regional. A pair of competitive districts take place in the Lansing area. At the East Lansing district, DeWitt, Lansing Eastern, Waverly, and host East Lansing will be battling. In Mason, Holt and Grand Ledge both have squads that are ranked honorable mention in the state.

HSSS projected FINAL FOUR: Saginaw vs. Muskegon, Detroit Pershing vs. De La Salle Collegiate

HSSS projected STATE CHAMPION: Detroit Pershing over Muskegon

CLASS B

Area outlook: Corunna has turned in a solid season playing against some rugged competition that has prepared it for a postseason run. The Cavaliers host a district where they open with Flint Southwestern and may have to get past Goodrich in the final if they advance. Millington is ranked third in the state and will be the favorite at the Powers Catholic district. If Millington makes it to the regional at North Branch, it could face sixth-ranked Yale or seventh-ranked Imlay City in the semifinals, with a potential final involving the Corunna district winner. At the Pinconning regional, anything can happen. Big Rapids, Clare, and Reed City have solid teams that will battle it out at the Reed City district before moving on to Pinconning. John Glenn is a potential favorite at Pinconning. Alma, Central Montcalm, and Ovid-Elsie will be competing for the Ovid-Elsie district title, with the winner to face the Bridgeport district winner, possibly Carrollton or Swan Valley, in a semifinal at Pinconning.

HSSS projected FINAL FOUR: Otsego vs. Big Rapids, Detroit Douglass Academy vs. Milan

HSSS projected STATE CHAMPION: Detroit Douglass Academy over Otsego

CLASS C



Class D

Area outlook: Plenty of district options exist for area basketball fans. Valley Lutheran turned in a big season and hosts a district where Hemlock will be the major challenger. The Montrose district features a trio of standout teams. Host Montrose will be tough to beat on its own floor, while New Lothrop and Michigan Lutheran Seminary have teams capable of winning the district. Ithaca has been tough to beat at the district level, and that will be the case again when the Yellowjackets, led by Logan Hessbrook and Josh Hafner, travel to the Lakeview district. The Laingsburg district will be one to watch. The Laingsburg/Pewamo-Westphalia rivalry is one of the best in mid Michigan, with Pewamo-Westphalia getting the best of Laingsburg twice during the regular season. Carson City-Crystal is also in the mix at the Laingsburg district. Meridian has been ranked in the top ten in the state for much of the season and heads north to Pine River for district play along with a strong Beal City squad. Pine River is also a top-ten team, so this district will be very tough.

HSSS projected FINAL FOUR: Shelby vs. Muskegon Heights, Detroit Consortium vs. Boyne City

HSSS projected STATE CHAMPION: Detroit Consortium over Shelby

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All roads lead to Breslin

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

A thrilling girls' basketball season comes to an end in March with the state tournament. High School Sports Scene takes a look at this year's tournament and predicts who will make it to the Breslin Center.

CLASS A

Area outlook: Haslett made it three in a row over rival DeWitt to earn the district title at Haslett. Grand Ledge has enjoyed a successful season with only two losses - to DeWitt and to Detroit King. The Comets survived the Gull Lake district and face a potential showdown at the regional at Ann Arbor Huron against Haslett. Midland's Jess Walter's stellar career came to a close in a regional loss to Carman-Ainsworth.

HSSS projected FINAL FOUR: Grand Ledge vs. Carman-Ainsworth Grosse Pointe South vs. Marian

HSSS projected STATE CHAMPION: Grosse Pointe South over Grand Ledge

CLASS B

Area outlook: Powers Catholic and Goodrich were ranked no. 2 and no. 3 in class B and were on a collision course in the Goodrich regional. Powers earned the hard fought victory over the Martians. Ionia survived one of the toughest area districts at Wayland where it defeated sixth-ranked Portland and host Wayland. Eaton Rapids came out of the rugged Olivet

HSSS projected FINAL FOUR: Grand Rapids South Christian vs. Bullock Creek, Flint Powers vs. Ionia

HSSS projected STATE CHAMPION: Bullock Creek over Flint Powers

CLASS C

Area outlook: Nouvel Catholic Central, which advanced to the Class C state title game last year, came out of the rugged Breckenridge district and went to the Sandusky Regional and defeated Reese and host Sandusky en route to the

FOUR: Grand Rapids South Christian vs. Bullock Creek, Flint Powers vs. Ionia

HSSS projected STATE CHAMPION: Bullock Creek over Manchester

CLASS D

Area outlook: Led by standout guard Sara Hansen, who became the school's all-time leading scorer late in the season, Sacred Heart Academy has had a

HSSS projected STATE CHAMPION: Sacred Heart Academy vs. Cardinal Mooney Catholic, Forest Park vs. Lake Michigan Catholic

HSSS projected STATE CHAMPION: Forest Park over Sacred Heart Academy



Bullock Creek, Saginaw Nouvel, St. Louis, Grand Ledge, Mt Pleasant Sacred Heart and Flint Powers all won regional titles in hopes of continuing the dream at the Breslin Center. (Scott Keyes and Randy Miniard Photos)

memorable season. It has a deep and talented team that can score in a variety of ways. The Irish had impressive wins over Gaylord St. Mary Cathedral and Carson City-Crystal this season, while their losses came against the likes of Class B Clare, Class C Nouvel Catholic Central, and Class C Beal City. Fowler came up big with an upset of Portland St. Patrick Catholic at the Fulton district. A regional showdown between Sacred Heart and Fowler is very possible.

HSSS projected FINAL FOUR: Nouvel Catholic Central vs. Gobles, St. Ignace vs. Manchester

HSSS projected STATE CHAMPION: Nouvel Catholic Central over St. Ignace

CLASS D

Area outlook: Led by standout guard Sara Hansen, who became the school's all-time leading scorer late in the season, Sacred Heart Academy has had a

HSSS projected STATE CHAMPION: Sacred Heart Academy vs. Cardinal Mooney Catholic, Forest Park vs. Lake Michigan Catholic

HSSS projected STATE CHAMPION: Forest Park over Sacred Heart Academy

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Smith, Haran heading south to Wake Forest

Ithaca's Hessbrook, Hafner sign with SVSU, Northern Michigan

Ithaca's Travis Smith and Powers Catholic's Allyson Haran are headed south to continue their athletic careers.

Both standout athletes signed their National Letters of Intent Feb. 5 to attend Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC, in front of friends and family at their respective schools.

Smith, who was a member of Ithaca's four straight Division 6 title teams and a key contributor in the Yellowjackets' 56-game winning streak, originally verbally committed to the University of Toledo, but after receiving a Facebook message from the Wake Forest staff right before Christmas, he opened his options once again.

At first, Smith couldn't figure out why he was receiving a recruiting pitch from a coach at Wake Forest. "I was confused at first, because I didn't really realize that the coaching staff at Wake Forest was the Bowling Green coaching staff," he said. "When I learned it was Bowling Green's coaches, I realized what was going on."

Head coach Dave Clawson left Bowling Green University to take over the Wake Forest program in mid-December and took several assistants with him, including offensive coordinator Warren Ruggiero. The new staff was scrambling when it came to the most important position on the field.

Smith had been on Clawson's radar for the previous three years while he was coaching at Bowling Green. In fact, Travis and his dad Brett Smith visited Bowling Green last spring and liked what they saw.

"Travis has always dreamed about playing big-time football, and when this opportunity came about, he jumped at it," Brett Smith said. "To play in the ACC with the likes of defending national champion Florida State University is pretty amazing. I'm looking forward to heading south quite a bit in the coming years."

The Wake Forest coaches offered Smith a scholarship before he visited the school,



which he fell in love with the minute he arrived.

"When I went down there to visit, it just blew me away," said Smith. "The coaches have the program going in the right direction, and all the players are buying in. The academics at Wake Forest are top-five in the country, too."

For his career, Smith finished with 104 touchdown passes and 8,044 yards passing, which ranks second in state history. In 2013, he completed 188 of 264 passes (71 percent) for 42 touchdowns with only seven interceptions. His 42 touchdown passes ranks fourth in the MHSAA single-season record book. Additionally, he also carried the ball 91 times for 640 yards and 10 scores last fall.

Harran, a first-team all-state defender in 2012, verbally committed to the Demon Deacons almost two seasons ago, and now the opportunity to play for an NCAA national soccer power has become reality. It is something that she has dreamed about since she started playing the game she loves nearly a decade ago. "Being able to play in the ACC with a team like Wake Forest is pretty special," she said. "To go up against the top



A pair of area trios are headed for big things in the coming years, as Ithaca football players Josh Hafner (Northern Michigan), Travis Smith (Wake Forest), and Logan Hessbrook (Saginaw Valley) signed their National Letters of Intent Feb. 5 at Ithaca High School. Below: They join Powers Catholic soccer players Ally Haran (Wake Forest), Heather Rolls (Georgetown), and Morgan McKerchie (Michigan State), who also signed in February. (Scott Keyes and Randy Minardi Photos)



Good Luck to All Area Teams !!

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Breckenridge's Kirsten Olling signs her National Letter of Intent to attend Arizona State University in the fall. (Scott Keyes Photo)

Olling signs with ASU

Scott Keyes
Sports Scene

Breckenridge's Kirsten Olling will not have to deal with Mother Nature's winter wrath for at least the next four years. She will trade in her winter boots for sandals, as she officially signed her National Letter of Intent with Arizona State University.

"This is definitely a big step for me, and it's definitely what I want," Olling said. "When you want to race against the best runners in the country, you want to do it at a school and a conference that is considered one of the best. I am proud of the decision that I made."

Olling, a four-time Division 4 state champion in cross country and a three-time state champion in the 3200-meter run in track and field this spring. She also won the 1600-meter run her freshman year.

"I knew five or six years ago when Kirsten started running for us, that she was going to be special," Breckenridge coach

said. "I really like the team and the coach. This [right fit] is something I've been looking for a long time, and I'm glad I found it at Arizona State."

Olling had narrowed down her choices to Arizona State and Michigan State, and a visit to Tempe helped seal her decision.

"It's going to take a little getting used to in the beginning, I think, but overall I think it's perfect for me," she said.

Olling's personal best time in the cross country 5K distance is 17 minutes, 17 seconds, which she achieved at the Division 4 regional in Harbor Beach in 2011.

Olling has the chance to become a four-time Division 4 state champion in cross country and a three-time state champion in the 3200-meter run in track and field, will run for Meridian graduate Ryan Cole.

She helped the Huskies achieve their state runner-up finish in Division 4 last fall.

In track, Adams earned all-state honors as a freshman and as a sophomore and all-conference honors as a senior. She helped the Huskies achieve their state runner-up finish in Division 4 last fall.

In track, Adams earned all-state in the 1600- and 3200-meter runs as a sophomore and in the 3200-meter run and the 3200-meter relay as a junior.

Royce Humm said. "Watching her sign her Letter of Intent is a great day for our program, cause she has worked so hard to get where she is today. It's going to be sad to watch her leave."

Meanwhile, Olling's four-year teammate at Breckenridge, senior Dominique Adams, will also continue her standout cross country and track and field careers in college.

She signed a National Letter of Intent with Saginaw Valley State University last week.

In cross country, Adams earned all-state honors as a freshman and as a sophomore and all-conference honors as a senior.

She helped the Huskies achieve their state runner-up finish in Division 4 last fall.

In track, Adams earned all-state in the 1600- and 3200-meter runs as a sophomore and in the 3200-meter run and the 3200-meter relay as a junior.

Big signing day for Powers Catholic; numerous athletes head to next level

Powers Catholic's Morgan McKerchie is not usually one who's at a loss for words. But on Feb. 7, the day that she and 10 of her classmates signed their National Letters of Intent, the senior was humbled.

"When you sign your name on that dotted line, you realize all of your hard work and dreams have paid off," said McKerchie, who signed to play soccer at Michigan State University. "MSU was somewhere that I knew I wanted to be. It's close to home, but I just loved everything about the program. I couldn't be happier with my decision I made."

McKerchie signed her letter along with two of her soccer teammates, Heather Rolls and Allyson Haran. Signing with them made the day even more special. "You want to celebrate this day with everyone that helped make it possible," she said. "Having Ally and Heather alongside me, as well as our other classmates, is pretty special."

McKerchie, a forward, tallied 41 goals and 38 assists in two seasons. Sitting out last season only made her hungrier heading into her final season. "I want us to have a great year and another run at a state title," she said.

Powers won a state championship in 2011 and was runner-up in 2012 and posted a combined 31 shutouts and an undefeated conference record.

Rolls, a goalkeeper who held opponents to 2.5 goals per game over those two seasons, signed with Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

She is as fearless as they come in goal. "When she leaves, she's dirty, she's wet, and she's tired," Powers assistant coach Jeff Tippett said. "She's very dedicated, and anybody that thinks her job is easy, because she doesn't have to run a lot, I invite you to try and keep a ball from going into a big space."

Rolls expects a big season in the spring for the Chargers. "I love these girls," she said, referring to her teammates McKerchie and Harran. "I would love nothing more than going out on top with another state championship."

Rounding out the three was Haran, a first-team all-state defender in 2012, who signed with perennial NCAA tournament team Wake Forest University.

POWERS CATHOLIC SIGNING DAY

Michela Coury (basketball) – Lake Superior State University

Sara Ruhstorfer (basketball) – Wayne State University

Philip Stair (soccer) – Michigan State University

Madison Sabourin (lacrosse) – Siena Heights University

Trent Grimes (football) – Central Michigan University

Kristen Wolfe (golf) – Central Michigan University

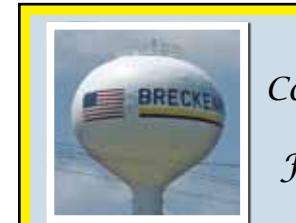
Morgan McKerchie (soccer) – Michigan State University

Allyson Haran (soccer) – Wake Forest University

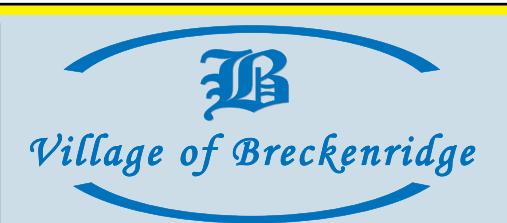
Heather Rolls (soccer) – Georgetown University

Jared Pechette (soccer) – Missouri University of Science & Technology

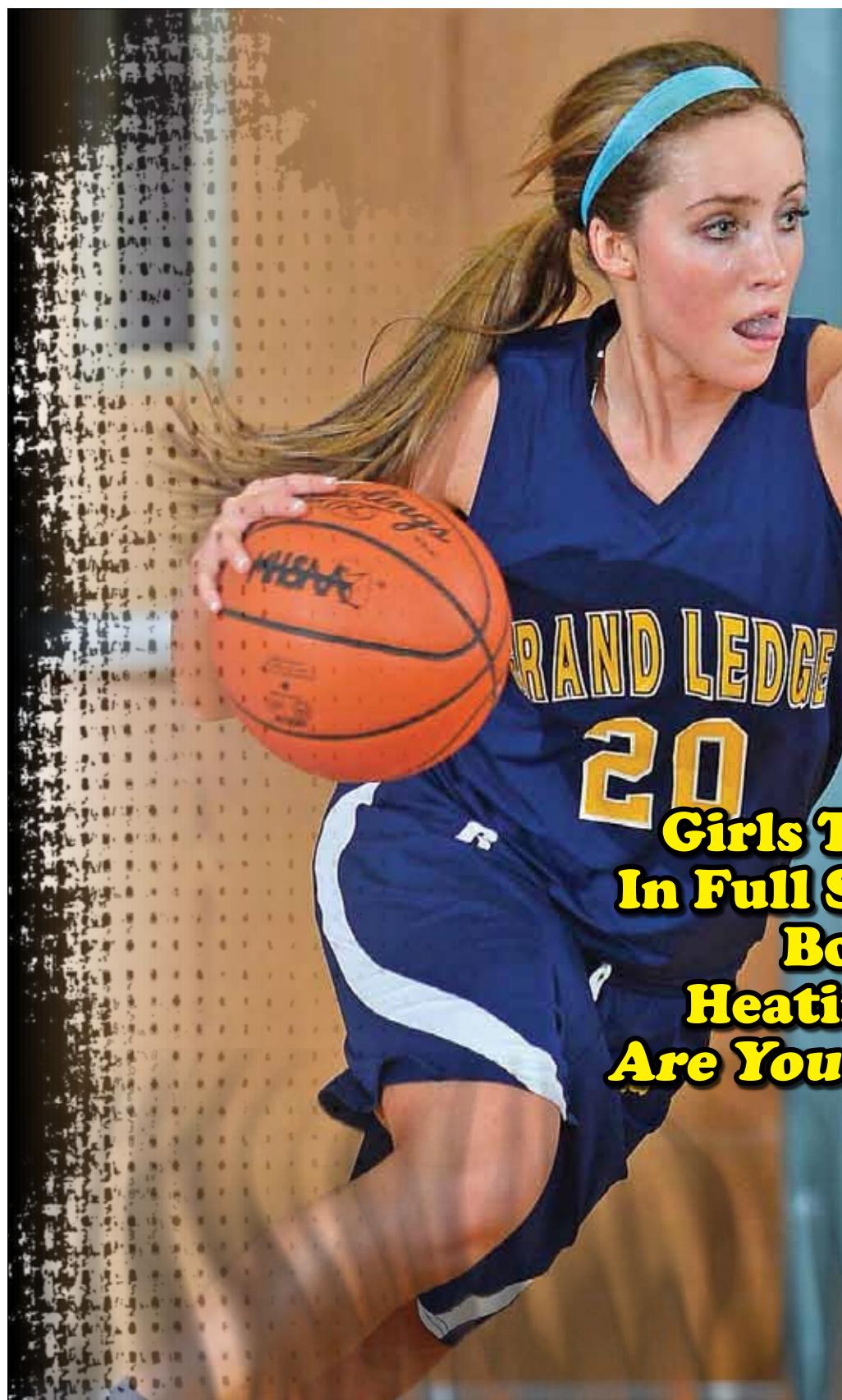
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