

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE
KEEPING KIDS IN THE NEWS

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PUBLISHER NOTE

Hello Sports Fans. It's another great day at Sports Scene!

I did something last month that I can now scratch off my bucket list. I met my idol. Someone I have always wanted to meet. The one man who changed the complexion of sports in Michigan forever...Magic Johnson.

I grew up watching Magic showcase his skills at Lansing Everett and then at Michigan State University before he become Showtime with the LA Lakers. His smile was infectious. His skills on the court were extraordinary. His words were well spoken. He was more than just a basketball player. He was an icon. Magic was in Saginaw generating buzz for Magic's Promise, a scholarship program he helped establish with Saginaw School District superintendent Carlton Jenkins. In three years, Magic has helped raised nearly \$300,000 to help send inner city youths to college. Even after all of these years, he continues to give back to his home state.

I was impressed by his level of commitment and by his will to continue to give back to our youth. They are our future, and he ensures that they have a plan for tomorrow.

On another note, it's hard to believe that year five for Sports Scene is nearly in the books. Wow! Five years. I can't believe it has been that long. Like the old saying goes, "Time flies when you are having fun."

Good luck to all of the area teams gearing up for the upcoming state tournaments. Best of luck to all of the athletes and coaches on their quest for a winning a possible state championship.

Thanks again for your support.

Randy Miniard
Publisher

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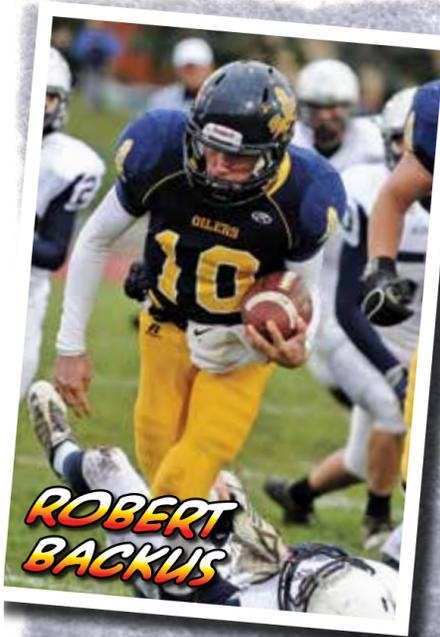
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HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE MALE AND FEMALE ATHLETE OF THE MONTH PRESENTED BY:

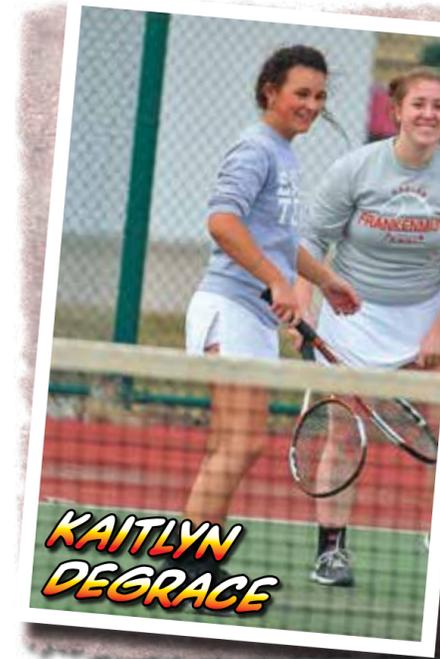
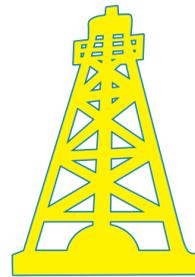
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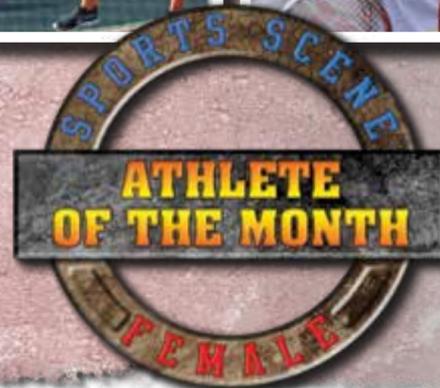
**ROBERT
BACKUS**



The Robert Backus File
Mt. Pleasant High School
Class: Senior
Sports: Football, Hockey, Baseball
Accolades: Quarterbacking the Mount Pleasant football team and serving as a captain for the hockey team.
Future: Backus would like to play baseball in college, but is undecided about where he will play.



**KAITLYN
DEGRACE**



The Kaitlyn DeGrace File
Frankemuth High School
Grade: Senior
Sports: Tennis, Volleyball
Accolades: Helped lead the Frankemuth girls tennis team into the D3 state tournament after the team's runner up finish to Powers Catholic. The Chargers edged the Eagles 26-25. The regional title was decided in the No. 1 doubles flight. Frankemuth and Powers were tied in points before Powers' Mattie Milne and Hannah Rahman beat Frankemuth's DeGrace and Alexa VanHine 6-3, 4-6, 6-2.



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LAKEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL SOFTBALL TEAM

City: Lake Odessa, MI
Head Coaches: Kristin Heinze (Varsity), Steve Spetoskey (JV)

Accomplishments: The varsity team is currently 21-7 overall and 7-1 in the league (CAAC White) and is hoping to clinch the league championship next week with wins in the final league matchup. The JV team is 28-2 and won the JV flight of the Lansing Softball Classic. The teams will be working together this Saturday at the varsity invitational to raise money for the American Cancer Society at their 4th annual "Hit Cancer Out of the Park" event.

How has the chocolate milk helped your team achieve your goals? The players have really enjoyed the milk after games and practices each day this season. It's refreshing to have an ice cold milk after a long practice, double header, or all-day tournament. We play a fairly arduous schedule, and it's definitely helped us sustain physically and mentally throughout the course of the season.

What is your favorite thing about the Chocolate Milk:

Nature's Sports Drink grant? Of course the milk is healthy and delicious, but it has been a good team-builder as well. Besides milk, UDIM has provided T-shirts and other promotional items, as well as team posters to promote our softball program around the community. We had a blast visiting a local dairy farm for the team pictures and getting to know the animals, especially a newborn calf named Chester. The entire experience has been a lot of fun, and now we're being published in a magazine!



We'd like to give a special shout-out to senior Olivia Barker for being our "Bessie," as she fills the cooler for us every day and gets it on the bus or to the field!

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For more information about chocolate milk and the **Chocolate Milk: Nature's Sports Drink** grant, please visit our website at www.MilkMeansMore.org, or call 1-800-241-MILK (6455)



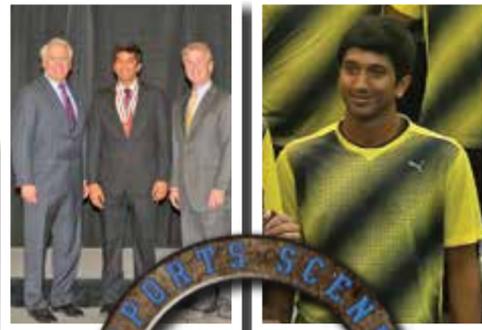


MALE AND FEMALE SCHOLAR-ATHLETE OF THE MONTH PRESENTED BY:

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VIKRAM SHANKER



SCHOLAR - ATHLETE OF THE MONTH

The Vikram Shanker File

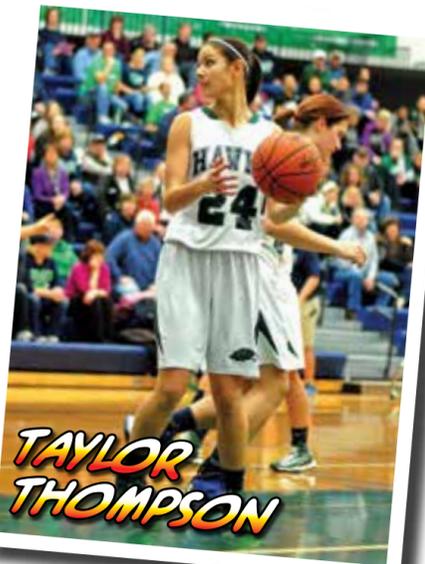
Midland Dow High School

Class: Senior

Accolades: Shanker placed in the top 20 in the DECA International competition. He was a member of four Division 2 state championship tennis teams, earning doubles state titles in 2012 and 2013.

GPA: Shanker has a 4.77 weighted GPA

Future: Shanker will attend Carnegie Mellon University to study computer engineering



TAYLOR THOMPSON



SCHOLAR - ATHLETE OF THE MONTH

The Taylor Thompson File

Heritage High School

Class: Senior

Sports: Volleyball, basketball and soccer

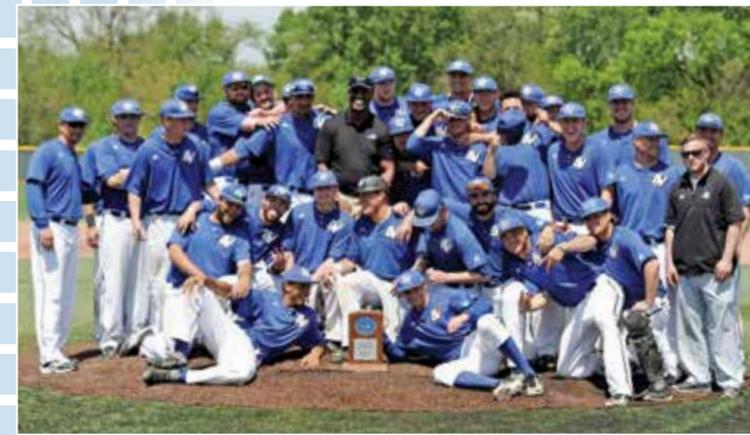
GPA: 4.0

Accolades: A three-sport standout for the Hawks, Thompson earned a 4.0 GPA.

Future: Thompson plans to major in biology and enroll in the pre-pharmacy program at Central Michigan University.



FORMER AREA ATHLETES WIN GLIAC TITLES



Dalton Reust (Grand Ledge), Jordan Drake (Lowell) and Aaron Jensen (Big Rapids) are three former local players that helped contribute to the Grand Valley GLIAC Tournament recently in Zenia Ohio. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Former Midland Dow standout Austin Woody is pictured with his father Mike after he was a part or Northwood's 20th consecutive Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (GLIAC) conference tournament victory at the end of last month at the Midland Tennis Center. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Former Swan Valley standout Mackenzie Boehler accepts her tournament medal as a member of the Wayne State softball team that won the GLIAC tournament with a win over Ohio Dominican University in the finals. The tournament was played in Findlay, Ohio. (Scott Keyes Photo)



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Area Softball Teams Tackle Chesaning Invitational

Durand Finishes Day 4-0; Wins Tourney

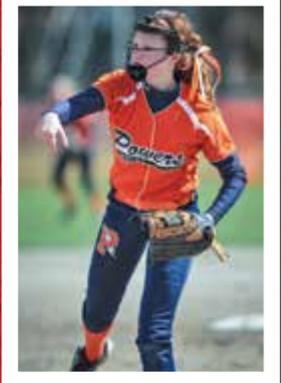
Chesaning Invitational Results

- Ithaca 4, Bad Axe 3
- Ithaca 8, Ovid-Elsie 3
- Bad Axe 13, Ovid-Elsie 7
- Midland Dow 13, Bad Axe 11
- Flint Powers Catholic 15, Ovid-Elsie 2
- Midland Dow 12, Flint Powers Catholic 11
- Durand 7, Midland Dow 4
- Linden 6, Merrill 3
- Pewamo-Westphalia 11, Merrill 10
- Chesaning 13, Bridgeport 5
- Carrollton 10, Bridgeport 0
- Merrill 14, Bridgeport 4
- Durand 11, Powers Catholic 4
- Durand 4, Ithaca 1
- Durand d. Linden (mercy rule)



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Mike Schutt Photos



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Swan Valley's Kennelly Reaches Milestone

Ben Murphy Sports Scene

When Swan Valley softball head coach Tom Kennelly was recently asked to put reaching his 1000th career win in perspective, it took him aback.

"I've been at this quite awhile," he said. "35 years... I've had some awfully good girls that have played for me from the beginning. A lot of the girls, I've coached their mothers. They like softball, and they keep playing for me, so I'm pretty fortunate."

After playing for fast-pitch teams in his early 20s, Kennelly became the second head coach of the Viking softball program in 1980, taking over for Mike Hanley. Since that time, it's been success after success, even winning the class B state championship in 1986.

"We've been to state semifinals and finals eight times, but we've only won it once," Kennelly said. "Plus, one of my best teams I ever had never made it to the state finals... We were 42-0 and lost 1-0 in districts. Another year we lost to Freeland 2-1 in districts by giving up two runs in the seventh, and they went on to win it all. A lot of times it takes a little luck to get down there and win it."

The Vikings have been rolling in recent years, having been state runners up each of the last two campaigns and making it to the semifinals three years ago.

This year's squad is off to a 20-7-1 start, but Kennelly knows as well as anyone that another trip to state is far from certain.

"Maybe we can, but it's a really tough district," he said. "We play Mt. Pleasant in the pre-district, and if we win, we meet Bullock Creek in the first game of the district, and they beat us twice this year; they'll probably win our conference this year. Four of the last five years someone from our district has ended up in the final four."

He may have been at it for more than 30 years, but Kennelly finds it hard to think about stepping away from coaching any time soon. With



The Swan Valley softball team has been home to coach Tom Kennelly for nearly 40 years. Kennelly has sent as many as 10 pitchers on to the next level. (Scott Keyes Photo)

the talent-laden teams he fields year after year, it's hard to blame him.

"There's quite a few good kids coming up in eighth and ninth grade," he said. "There's good fourth and fifth graders, too. I don't know if I will stay around that long, but it seems like there's kids that like softball [in every grade]. We work on pitching quite a bit, we have second and third graders that come in and pitch twice a week. In fast-pitch, the name of the game is pitching."

Pitching may be the name of the game, but a good support group doesn't hurt either.

"I've had good kids and really good assistant coaches," Kennelly said. "You don't have a great class every year, but you have enough of them to remain competitive... I've had 10 pitchers go on to pitch in college... The combination of those things I think has given me pretty good players with pretty good coaches, so I've been pretty fortunate in that regard."



Swan Valley coach Tom Kennelly recently celebrated his 1,000th victory with a doubleheader sweep of Saginaw Heritage. (Scott Keyes Photo)

Strong Mix Of Veterans, Youth Portland Eyes Long Post Season Run

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Led by a talented group of seniors, the Portland softball team is turning in another big season on the diamond.

Last year, the Raiders won the league title and turned in a 27-4 record before falling to Eaton Rapids in the district final. This season, Portland has picked up where it left off last spring. The Raiders have been ranked among the top teams in the state in Division 2 and have faced some of the top teams in the state.

"We've been playing pretty well," Portland coach Jack Anderson said. "We've beaten some pretty good teams this year. We lost a doubleheader in our league, but after that, we've been pretty focused and have been playing pretty well."

So far this season, Portland has racked up some impressive wins. It won

the Portland Invitational to kick off the season and also won the Blue Chip Best of Michigan Showcase in Byron Center. The Raiders beat Bullock Creek, ranked eighth in the state in Division 2, by a score of 1-0 and posted a pair of wins against Springport, ranked ninth in the state in Division 3. They also defeated Reese, ranked fourth in the state in Division 3, 5-0.

"We've played a lot of ranked teams, and that shows the girls that they can play with anyone in the state," Anderson said. "Our schedule and the teams we've played are as good as any in the state that we will be playing in June."

Portland's senior-dominated team combines strong pitching and

hitting. Senior Allie Grys is the ace of the pitching staff. Last year, she went 27-4 with a 0.77 ERA and 265 strikeouts. This year has been more

of the same. "Allie has been throwing extremely well for us," Anderson said. "She moves the ball pretty well and has good movement on her pitches. She can spin it up and spin it down. She has great location and can hit spots."

Grys is also an excellent hitter. She will be playing softball at Lansing Community College next year.

Grys has been getting a break in the circle from fellow senior Mary Brooks, who won three of her first five starts this year. Brooks is also the big bat in the



SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON BASEBALL

Former Davison Friends, Teammates Now Coaching Grand Rapids Christian Baseball

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

As they grew up, they played little league baseball together, played on the same high school team, and then played together collegiately, so it should be no surprise that Cory Maguire and Jared Cowan are now coaching high school baseball together.

Graduates of Davison High School, where they played for legendary coach Timm Rye, Maguire and Cowan played their college baseball at Grand Valley State University. The duo are now coaching at Grand Rapids Christian High School, which has one of the premier high school baseball programs in West Michigan and in the state.

Maguire is the head coach of the Eagles, who won the Division 2 state championship last spring for a second consecutive year, while Cowan is his assistant coach.

The two began playing baseball together before they were teenagers. "I first met Jared when I was 10," Maguire said. "My Elba All-Star team needed another player for a tournament, so we brought up Jared to play with us. We are two years apart. We played two years together at Davison and two years together at Grand Valley."

Cowan remembers his friend even farther back. "I have known Cory back to the early days of 'Coach Pitch,' probably age seven or eight," Cowan said. "My first time playing with him was when I was about nine or 10 maybe. I was brought up to play with his team for a tournament (as he is 2 years older than me) and can still remember being in awe of his ability to hit home runs with ease. After that

occurrence one summer, the next time we began our time playing together was when I was a freshman and him a junior on the Davison varsity team. We played together again the next year, and then before I knew it he was giving me a tour of the GVSU campus as a recruit. After choosing to attend GVSU, we played another two years together, just like at Davison."

Maguire and Cowan have always shared the same goal of eventually being a coach. "I have known ever since I was in high school I would want to get involved in coaching one day," Cowan said. "I grew up with my dad being the driving force in my life as a father and coach. He sacrificed so much for me and a group of guys that I grew up playing football, baseball, or wrestling with. Looking back, two years out of college, full time job, and a coach for only four months out of the year. I cannot believe what a sacrifice he made for me. I also was truly blessed with the high school coaches that helped shape my career, as well. Both on and off the field, they played a big part in all the success I had after high school through baseball, academics, and life in general. Experiencing the benefits of what an impact a great coach can have in my life only fueled the flame for me. I love investing my time and energy into molding kids into better human beings through athletics."

As does his long-time teammate. "For love of the game," Maguire said. "It's such a unique sport with an amazing history. The smell of the fresh cut grass and being outside breathing in fresh air, it's good for the soul. Also, the opportunity to pass on my experiences with the game and help shape young adults lives."

Both Maguire and Cowan draw a lot from Rye,

who coached them during their high school careers. "Coach Rye did play a big part in my roots of baseball," Maguire said. "I attended his 'T-N-T' Summer Camp ever since I can remember. He coached my brother, and I attended those games, and obviously, he also coached me my entire high school career."

"Coach Rye was a wonderful individual to play for," Cowan said. "I learned a lot about the game of baseball from him. I took his positivity and approach to the game with me to GVSU. Coach Rye really cares about all of his players, more than just how many hits they average per game, and I really appreciated that about him. I usually see him a time or two every year when I am back in town. I really try and catch a Davison baseball game every spring."

After being part of two state championships as an assistant coach, Maguire is now forging his head coaching career with his own goals. "With two state championships under my belt as an assistant coach, the obvious answer is to win one as a head coach," Maguire said. "But I put that second behind teaching these young adults valuable life lessons. Winning is great, but baseball is a game of overcoming adversity and making adjustments on the fly. I truly feel that baseball has helped me prepare better for life obstacles, and I hope to instill that in my players."

Cowan also believes in accomplishing more than stacking up wins. "My goals are to first really impact the lives of my players in a very positive way that prepares them for both the opportunities they will have as well as the hardships that will ensue in life," Cowan said. "I strive to push our players to play relaxed and confident, at the same time with a slight

Portland lineup. An all-state player last year who hit .412 with 23 RBI, Brooks is hitting over .500 this year with 24 RBI as of mid-May. She will be playing softball at Alma College next spring.

"Mary is a great hitter," Anderson said. "She is a great power hitter and is our leading hitter."

Senior second baseman Madison Adams is another returning all-state player. Adams, who will be playing at Lansing Community College next year, hit .405 last year. This season she is hitting over .450 and had her average up to .466 at one time.

"Madison is our leadoff hitter and has great quickness," Anderson said. "She is a very, very good hitter."

The Raider offense has also been getting strong production from senior catcher Katie Schrauben and senior first baseman Allison Russell.

Portland is gearing up for another big postseason run. It will again have to face Eaton Rapids in the district tournament. Eaton Rapids opened the season with 24 straight wins and is also ranked in the state in Division 2.



Former little league, Davison High School and Grand Valley State University teammates Cory Maguire and Jared Cowan have known each other for a lot of years and they knew that once they stopped playing baseball they wanted to coach the game that has been so good to them over the years. That's exactly what they are doing as Maguire took over head coachings duties this season at Grand Rapids Christian while bringing Cowan on board as an assistant. (Submitted Photo)

chip on their shoulder. I try and remind them that baseball is only a game, and they need to enjoy their opportunity to play it while they can. To the best of my ability, I try, and will continue to try, to use the sport of baseball to teach student-athletes how to outwork their opponents, battle through adversity, and simply leave it all on the field. These concepts translate very well into life after athletics, and my ultimate goal as a coach is to prepare them for that, and winning baseball games along the way."

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Former Ithaca Coach Rollie Carman Hopes To Bring Winning Ways Back To St. Louis

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Rollie Carman has worn a few different high school baseball caps in his career. But now he's at St. Louis at coach, and Carman's goal is to turn the Sharks into a contender again.

As of mid-May, St. Louis was 5-8.

"It's going all right," Carman said. "We're doing OK."

It's his first year with St. Louis. He was coach at Ithaca the previous eight seasons.

Prior to that, he was at Carson City-Crystal four seasons, and had been at St. Louis one year, Alma three seasons and Montabella three springs, plus Ithaca for two.

"I've been all over the country," Carman smiled. "Never been able to settle down."

He's been handling the coaching duties wherever and whenever he's been able to fit into a particular program, Carman noted.

"My goal is to build this program back to where it was not too long ago," Carman said of St. Louis. "They were really good. There's a lot of support from the community and there's a lot of people working hard to make sure the baseball is good. That's kind of why I went there."

"You get parents on your side and that's nine-tenths of the battle," Carman said.

St. Louis will continue to have an active summer program with Carman on board.

"That's the way it is," he said. "If you're going to have a program, you have to have kids playing baseball from January until September and then they can take the rest of the time off. But they have to be playing January to September. That's pretty much how you generate good ballplayers. You can't just go from March to June."

St. Louis has an 18-and-under and 16-and-under baseball program that was started last season.

"You look at what they're offering St. Louis kids for baseball and it was pretty easy to decide to go there," Carman said. "We'll play Shepherd, we'll play Chip Hills, we'll play Beal City, we'll play Harrison, Gladwin, teams over that way. We play Mount Pleasant teams too."

When high school season ends, Carman and his players will get right into the summer campaign.

At St. Louis, "we're basically teaching kids from the ground up," he said. "It's certainly going to be a process this year. You have a new coach. My program

is pretty extensive and the kids have a lot of learning to do."

Between varsity and junior varsity, Carman has 26 total kids on the teams this spring.

"It's really hard to go with more than that," Carman said. "You can't have 15 kids on your team because the ones that aren't playing won't play. It makes it hard on coaches. If you don't play them, they quit. Our numbers are where they need to be. We just have to get the right group of kids there."

St. Louis plays in the TVC West. Building the program into conference contenders is a high priority for Carman.

"Your whole season is based on league play," Carman said.

A native of the area, he lives in Summer, between Carson City and Ithaca. He's a teacher at the St. Louis correctional facility.

The poor spring weather seems to emphasize Carman's point of having players take advantage of the warm summer months to play baseball.

"I want kids that are going to play baseball when baseball is available and not just in the spring," Carman said. "The youth program in St. Louis is really strong. We can keep kids interested in baseball. It's just a matter of time."

Carman has been impressed with the support he's getting from parents.

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SPORTS SCENE'S **EYE ON GOLF**

Coming of Age Just A Sophomore, Big Rapids' Carter Bechaz Playing Like Seasoned Veteran

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

Big Rapids coach Mark Posey has a younger boys' golf team this year. In the past, the program has produced all-state golfers and state titles, and this year, he has a sophomore prospect who figures on making quite a lot of noise before the 2014 season comes to an end.

Carter Bechaz has been leading the way, not only for Big Rapids, but also for the entire Central State Activities Association. He shot a 74 for medalist honors in the final CSAA jamboree in mid May.

Bechaz's freshman season was an indication to Posey that Bechaz had a chance to be a special golfer. "He was

learning how to play the game," Posey said. "He averaged like a 90. He was still learning how to play golf."

But in the matter of just one season, Bechaz went from the team's No. 4 or 5 golfer to No. 1 in the CSAA.

"He's about eight strokes better than he was last year at this point," Posey said.

The improvement in Bechaz's short game has made him a better golfer, Posey noted. "Last year, he missed a lot of greens, would make a chip, but wouldn't make the putt," Posey said. "He wouldn't get close enough. Last year, he'd get up and down maybe once or twice in a round. This year at one of the tournaments, he was like 80 percent."

"I'm getting it closer to hole," Bechaz said. "I'm definitely a lot

more focused. Last year, I was probably more nervous, too, coming in as a freshman and being on the varsity. I was more comfortable in the environment and playing with better people."

The time that Bechaz put in during the summer has paid off, Posey pointed out. "He was out playing a lot of summer tournaments. He knew from last year when we sat down with his stats at the end of the year and said, 'Hey, this where you're losing your strokes.' He took it from there and worked on his short game. This year, he's a whole lot better."

"One thing I like about Carter is he has a good head on his shoulders. He really does a nice job of keeping his emotions in check. A really good golfer has a good head on his shoulders. Carter has that. He doesn't get down or get really excited. He just goes out and plays with the game he has that day. He goes and grinds it out."

Bechaz, like other golfers, has had to battle the weather to get his game where he wants it to be. "I've been on the range with my varsity players just once this year," Posey said. "That's

how bad it is. So we've spent a lot of time on the putting greens."

Bechaz said he's been focusing on his drives. "I've been slicing them a lot and just need to keep focused at practice, which is tough with all the rain," he said. "I played a lot, three to four times a week, during the summer. I have a membership at Katke (Ferris State's course), and I also play up at Traverse City in a junior golf league."

Posey hopes to see Bechaz stay in the low to mid 70s for the rest of the season. "We have some tough courses coming up, so he'll have to work hard to do that," Posey said. "He's certainly capable of it. That would be a goal for him. Considering what he was averaging last year, it's just phenomenal."

Bechaz has been reaching his expectations. "I can definitely shoot a lot better than I have been," he said. "There's been some silly mistakes in there."

Bechaz also plays football and basketball, but he said that golf is his favorite sport from the individual aspect.



Big Rapids' Carter Bechaz gets set to tee off during a recent match. Bechaz has improved nearly nine strokes a round from a year ago, including firing a 74 earlier this season. (Submitted Photo)

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Lansing Catholic's Brent Marshall finished second in the D3 finals a year ago. Marshall is averaging 77 for 18 holes and would love to finish in the top spot this season as the Cougars enter the home stretch of the season. (File Photo)

LCC Gearing Up For Another D3 Title Run

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

With the bulk of its team back from a squad that won the Division 3 state title last year, expectations were high for the Lansing Catholic boys golf team heading into this season. As the season heads to the home stretch, the Cougars are well on their way to fulfilling those expectations.

"So far, the season has been going very well," coach Charlie Furney said. "We have quite a bit of returning players who have experience from last year's state championship team. We did lose one player, and he (Jacob Johnson) is at Oakland University now. We miss him because he was our number one player last year, but we are actually a deeper team this year."

Johnson was one of the premier

players in the state last year and was named the player of the year in the Lansing area.

Although Johnson moved on, the Cougars have plenty of talent back. Senior Brent Marshall and junior Niko Voutsaras lead the way this year. They were both averaging 77.2 for 18 holes at midseason, and they give the Cougars a strong one-two punch. Marshall finished second in the state as an individual last year, and they give the medalist at the Perry Invitational this year, and was second at the Ranger Invitational at Grand Valley State University. Voutsaras was third at the CAAC Open this season.

Overall, the Cougars have six golfers averaging under 83 for 18. Sophomore Owen Rush averages 79.4, junior Adam Elias 80.2, senior Avery Nelson 81.6, and junior Patrick Gillespie 82.2.

"They are all taking their turns leading us in scoring in tournaments this year," Furney said. "They have finished in quite a few top 10s and have won a lot of ribbons. Three of them were in the top ten at the CAAC Open, and five out of six were in the top 20 at the Perry invite."

The core group of players also has experience at the state meet. "Four of our players have state finals experience, and that will help out down the road," Furney said. "We also have two seniors, three juniors, and one sophomore, so we have a nice mixture of classes."

Lansing Catholic's experience and depth has paid off this season with a number of strong efforts. The Cougars won three of the five tournaments they entered and finished third in the other two tournaments. They opened the season by winning the Dick's Sporting

Goods Classic at Green Briar in Perry. They then won the CAAC Open and the Forest Hills Central Ranger Open against mostly Division 1 and 2 schools.

Playing against some of the strongest golf schools in the state is by design, as the Cougars prepare for another deep tournament run.

"With six players back from last year's team, we have the experience where we think we can compete for another state championship," Furney said. "We are taking it one match at a time and we compete as best we can. We have been competing against good teams in Division 1 and 2 to get us ready for the Division 3 meet. The goal is to ultimately try to repeat. We certainly enjoyed the success we had last year and would like to have that success again this year."

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Moms Know Best

How To Keep Your Head Above Water When You Are A Busy Sports Mom



Tori Jankoska, the 2013 Miss Basketball winner just completed her freshman season at Michigan State University, while her mom Lisa watched from the stands in all but five games this season. That includes a trip to San Juan Puerto Rico, for a holiday tournament.



The Jankoska family is pictured during the holidays. For nearly 20 years, Lisa Jankoska said there hasn't been many times where she has missed one of her kids sporting events. This year Lisa made over 30 games during Tori's freshman season at Michigan State University.

Scott Keyes Sports Scene

Parents and coaches have the greatest impact on the lives of most successful athletes, and mothers fill more than their share of mentoring roles.

Moms are their kids' biggest fans. For years, moms influence their children the most. They sacrifice a great deal so that their children have the opportunity to excel on their respective fields of play. Moms make sure their children are on time for practice. They help with long travel weekends, bouncing around from gym to gym across the country hoping that their children are exposed to the public eye, all the while building confidence and self-awareness.

For Freeland's Lisa Jankoska, raising four kids, (Jessi, Jenni, Tori, and Jake) who are all athletic was a chore, but she admits she wouldn't have had it any other way. Now that her youngest, Jake, is about to conclude his junior year of high school, she can't believe the journey as a Freeland Falcon is almost over.

"You know, I really can't believe that for nearly 16 years I have watched all of my kids grow up to be fine young adults

and excelling in sports," Jankoska said. "I mean, once Jake graduates, I won't have any of my children left at Freeland. I really can't believe that part of my life will be over, but the next part of my life is just beginning."

Even if Jake doesn't move on to the next level, Lisa will still have the opportunity to watch Tori excel at Michigan State University for at least two more seasons. During Tori's freshman season, Lisa traveled to all but five MSU games while juggling Jake's schedule and her own work schedule. And there was a new addition to the family, Lisa's first grandchild, Sophia.

Lisa admits that Sophia brought a sense of calm to her busy life. "When you start to have grandchildren, it really puts things in perspective," she said. "You really sit back and want to enjoy every minute you can with her. I am so lucky I have been given the opportunity to have a flexible job that has allowed me the opportunity to see my kids grow as student-athletes while still keeping an active work environment. My mom (Carol Newbold) has been a huge help (Carol Newbold) has been a huge help to me over the years. She has been tremendous stepping up and allowing me to see my kids' games or keeping up with

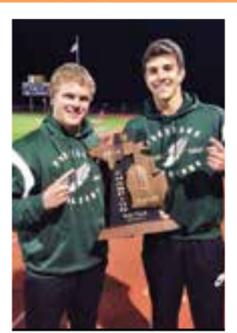
my hectic travel schedule."

Moms know best

A fitting quote comes from Wilma Rudolph, who said, "The triumph can't be had without the struggle. And I know what struggle is."

The quote is about reaching any goal, whether it's to lose weight, get healthy, or fulfill a childhood dream. There are many struggles that everyone must overcome, but it makes the achievement that much better when it's realized. Parents, especially moms, continue to push forward and help their children find their way. Like Wilma, who had a loving family and involved coaches to help her learn to walk and then to run, we do not have to face our struggles alone. We can help each other through encouraging words and support, just as Wilma's brothers and sisters lovingly massaged her legs. We can help each other to fulfill our dreams and to overcome our obstacles!

Belinda and Ken Dey, along with their children Isabella and Jalen, faced a lot of obstacles over the last year or so, but they have managed to overcome them by fighting through like prizefighters. Jalen stood his ground right away. His third day in Harper Creek found him walking onto a football field for practice, not knowing one kid, and establishing his place on their football team. "Jalen and Bella have excelled their first year at HCMS and were recently both nominated by their teachers, making them the only brother/sister Students of the Month team the same year," Belinda said.



The youngest Jankoska, Jake will graduate in 2015. Jake is a standout athlete in football, basketball and just recently set the school record in the Pole vault. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Born 2 Ball is a new AAU basketball organization started and managed by AAU veteran coaches, not to mention singles moms. Tammy Trejo-Woodley, Zetta England, Angela Young and Annette Babers go way beyond the call of duty in order to ensure the success of their young girls. Babers is the aunt of current Golden State Warrior Draymond Green. (Scott Keyes Photo)

Tammy Trejo-Woodley instructs a young player during a recent practice at Ruben Daniels Middle School in Saginaw. Like a lot of coaches Trejo-Woodley uses a lot of her free time to instruct and coach her team on the fundamentals of basketball. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Members of Born 2 Ball ham it for the camera during a timeout during a recent practice. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Keeping up with a hectic schedule is nothing new for the family. Prior to the move Belinda Dey was working 40 hours a week, traveling to sporting events, helping maintain a household, while Ken Dey got settled in Battle Creek. Over a year has past and every day has been a new day, but the transition has been a smooth one.



Former Saginaw Township resident Belinda Dey and her husband Ken faced a major decision recently when they decided to move from the Saginaw area to Battle Creek because of work. The transition wasn't an easy one, but as time has gone life has become normal again for children Jalen and Bella. Belinda has kept her family together every step of the way. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Since transferring to the Harper Creek School District last summer 13-year-old Jalen Dey has been active in athletics. He played football in the fall and this spring he started to play lacrosse. Dey (No. 37) was recently in Lansing taking part Warrior Rumble weekend at Lansing Waverly High School. It's weekends like this that moms love to watch their kids excel on the field of play. (Scott Keyes Photo)

"They are involved in Calhoun County Girls on the Run, Wattles Park Softball, HC Football, and HC LaCrosse. They have now embraced becoming Harper Creek Beavers."

Keeping your head above water

Organized sports not only keep kids healthier physically, but mentally, as well. Research shows that children who play organized sports are frequently healthier and physically stronger than their less athletic peers — and they are smarter as well.

According to sports psychology author Jim Taylor, Ph.D., endurance sports have been found to enhance brain development and to raise IQ. In addition, he says that sports build confidence, develop focus, and teach kids about emotional control. "Kids learn essential life skills, such as hard work, patience, persistence, and how to respond positively to setbacks and failure," Taylor says.

With that in mind, parents have a tendency to go way beyond the call of duty to ensure a child's place on the field of play, and moms have been a constant every step of the way.

Tammy Trejo-Woodley is a busy single mom, who works as a correction officer at the state prison in Freeland, and who keeps up with her daughter, Aliya, a fifth grader at Kempton Elementary.

Aliya is an avid basketball player. Tammy was a standout athlete at Arthur Hill, while her older brother LaMarr Woodley currently plays in the NFL for the Oakland Raiders.

Tammy, along with other single moms Zetta England, Angela Young, and Annette Babers, helped

launched Born 2 Ball, a new AAU basketball organization started and managed by AAU veteran basketball coaches and staff. Born 2 Ball was established to create a safe and nurturing environment, filled with fun and learning activities, in the city of Saginaw.

"We established these teams, not only to develop the skills at various levels of basketball, but also the roles of leadership, respect, and integrity," Trejo-Woodley said. "These values help create a good environment of growth for our young ladies and the community they live in."

No Regrets

For busy moms, family time sometimes seems nonexistent, but Jankoska said lately it has become a priority.

"With all my kids' busy lives and the constant running around, it's hard to get everyone together at the same time, but we try to ensure everyone is together on Sundays," she said. "As your kids get older, you need that family time."

Dey said she has experienced the trials and tribulations of being a sports mom firsthand. "As a sports mom, the biggest obstacle during a busy season is catching both games on a same day schedule," she said. "We've had to separate, so that one parent is at each game, many times. We are sure to update scores and plays by text. Almost every night is a game or practice, and schedules cover our refrigerator. I've been snowed on, rained on, wind burned, and sun burned. I've had to skip birthdays, showers, and weddings. I'm a sports mom, and I wouldn't trade it for the world."

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SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON SOCCER



Flint Powers Girls Soccer On Pace For Another Title Run

The Flint Powers girls soccer team is 12-0-2 heading into the stretch run of the season. Powers opens up district play traveling to Lake Fenton. Powers is considered one of the favorites heading into the Division 3 tournament.

(Scott Keyes Photos)

Check Out More Photos At www.highschoolsportsscene.com

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Thanks to the return of a trio of players who were part of one of the strongest travel teams in the nation last spring, the Powers Catholic girls soccer team is poised to return to the top of the mountain in Division 3 soccer this season.

As freshmen at Powers, Ally Haran, Morgan McKerchie, and Heather Rolls were part of a Powers team that won the state championship. As sophomores, they were all-state soccer players who helped the Chargers reach the Division 3 state title match. Last year, the trio chose to play for the Hawks, a Michigan-based travel team that was one of the top teams in the nation. Michigan High School Athletic Association rules do not allow players to participate in travel team sports during the same high school season, so the girls were not part of the Powers varsity team that eventually reached the state semifinals. This season, the trio decided to play their final year of high school soccer together at Powers, and the results have been impressive.

"We have been doing well," coach Art Moody said. "We started the season with a 12-0-1 record. Our only tie was 2-2 against Fenton. We have been scoring a lot of goals this year. We have scored over 70 goals in our first 13 games. We have also allowed only five goals this year."

The Chargers have been putting up those numbers against some strong opponents. "We played some very good teams early on this year," Moody said. "The big difference is this year, when we get opportunities on

offense, we have been capitalizing on them. We have been putting teams down early, and that has been boosting our confidence."

Having a trio of elite players return to the lineup has also been a big boost for the Chargers. The three players have all signed to play college soccer with Division 1 programs. Rolls, the starting goalkeeper, has signed with Georgetown University. McKerchie, a forward, has signed with Michigan State University, and Haran, a defender, has signed with Wake Forest University of the Atlantic Coast Conference.

"All three girls played for the Michigan Hawks, and all three decided to come back this year," Moody said. "They won a state title their freshman year, and in their sophomore year, they made it back to the state finals. They were all also all-state as sophomores. Last year, they competed on the national level for one of the best select teams in the country. This year, they all decided to come back and finish their high school careers at Powers. They also hope to make it back to the finals."

The trio has helped make this a special year for Moody, who won the 100th game of his coaching career earlier this season.

The Powers team is not just about the returning trio, however. The three join a squad that has plenty of talent returning from a team that reached the state semifinals last spring.

"Gabriela Gerra is a senior who has been playing for us since she was a freshman," Moody said. "She is a midfielder, and she has been at the core of the team. She is a captain and

is a big part of our team and is one of the better players on the team."

The Chargers have also been getting solid play from senior Kristin Syrowik. "Kristin is a four-year player for us at forward," Moody said. "She has been scoring a lot of goals for us."

The five seniors have been leading the way for the Chargers, but plenty of talented young players are following behind. "We have been building a strong girls' soccer program here at Powers," Moody said. "We have some real solid seniors this year, but we also have a very nice freshman class this year. Our junior varsity program has also been very strong. The freshman class will allow us to continue to play at a high level."

With the state tournament around the corner, the Chargers are keeping their focus. "Our philosophy is to play one game at a time," Moody said. "It is the next game that we focus on. That has helped us as a program. As a team, we stay focused on the goal at hand."

The ultimate goal, however, is to bring another girls' soccer championship back to Genesee County. "When these seniors were freshmen, they were the first girls' soccer team to win a state soccer championship for Genesee County," Moody said. "As sophomores, their goal was to become the first team to win back-to-back state titles in Genesee County. We hope this year to bring another state title back to Genesee County."



Flint Powers senior Morgan McKerchie has led the offensive charge for the Chargers this season. Through May 16 Powers has scored a whopping 70 goals. McKerchie will attend Michigan State University in the fall. (Scott Keyes Photo)



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Kickin' It

Okemos' Miller Breathes Talent; Chieftains Strong

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Led by one of the premier soccer players in the state, the Okemos girls soccer team is setting the stage for another deep state tournament run.

In senior Ashton Miller, the Chieftains have a nationally-ranked player. One of the most highly recruited players in the country, she eventually signed with Duke University.

"Ashton is as mature a player as I have ever been fortunate to coach," said Okemos coach Brian Guggemos. "She loves to train, and she trains at a high level. We have a young team this year, and she is great with young players. She does a good job of bringing them along. Ashton is a captain for us this year, and she has done a great job."

Miller is a midfielder who is also a member of the prestigious Michigan Hawks travel team and the Under 17 United States Women's National Team.

"Ashton is an incredibly talented player," Guggemos said. "She is a top-20 national recruit and is going to Duke, which is a top 10 national soccer team. She is doing great this year and is a great teammate."

Miller is not the only Division 1 player on this year's team. Senior Kristelle Yewah has committed to playing soccer at Michigan State University next year.

"Kristelle is also a captain and is great at involving the younger players," Guggemos said. "She is a great player to have on any team. She can score a goal on her own out of nothing. She has done a lot of heavy lifting for the team, and that is always a challenge, as opposing teams focus on her and always mark her. She still has been able to score 15 goals for us this year."

The Chieftains also have a talented junior, Erin Doster, who has the attention of college recruiters. "Erin is a junior who is going to be a Division 1 player," Guggemos said. "She is a sparkplug for our team. Her work rate is very high, and she has a knack for scoring goals. She scored 10 goals as a freshman and has been in double-digits in goals every year. It is great for a coach knowing you have a player that talented that is always giving great effort, and I look forward to coaching her for the next year and a half."

Okemos has also been receiving solid play from

Vanessa Nigg, who fills a variety of roles for the team. "Vanessa plays pretty much every minute of every game," Guggemos said. "She plays goalkeeper for us and also forward. She could be a full-time goaltender and a full-time field player, but we need her for both. She is outstanding in both settings."

The veteran core of Okemos has been having another solid season. The Chieftains tied for the CAAC Blue championship with Grand Ledge and Holt. "We've had a little bit of a hit and miss this season due to the weather," Guggemos said. "I think the weather has hurt us as much as anyone, because we have a lot of new players to the varsity. It has been difficult to get some consistency due to the weather."

While the weather has posed problems, the team has come together as a unit. "I really like the personality of this year's team," Guggemos said. "The girls really enjoy being around each other. There are no cliques, and everyone gets along great with each other."

The team has also improved as the season has progressed. "Obviously, getting a share of the league championship has been a highlight," Guggemos said. "We were very fortunate, and the girls are happy with it. We've also had some good wins. We beat Williamston and played well in some other games, as well. We played Grand Blanc to a 2-2 tie. They are a great team, and we were a little short-handed. We were also a little short-handed against East Lansing, and we earned a 2-0 win."

With the season winding down, Okemos has its sights set on a strong tournament showing. Two years ago, Okemos won the Division 1 state title.

Last season, the Chieftains traveled to the Grand Rapids district, a district heavily loaded with talented teams. "We beat Forest Hills Central that was ranked one or two in the state in the first round," Guggemos said. "In our next game, we lost 1-0 to Caledonia, and they were also ranked in the top ten. That was one of the most difficult districts in the state, with four of five teams ranked in the top ten in Division 1."

This year the Chieftains play closer to home in the Holt district. "We open with Battle Creek Lakeview, and then we play the winner of the Jackson/Lansing Everett game," Guggemos said. "I think we have a chance to win a couple of games and make some noise in the tournament. We just have to keep improving. We didn't get as far as we hoped last year, and this year we are hoping to change that."

Ashton Miller is one of the top soccer players in the country and is hoping to lead Okemos to its second state championship in three years. Miller is headed to Duke University to continue her soccer career in the fall. (Alan Holben Photo)

**Check Out More Photos At
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Okemos, led by Michigan State bound Kristelle Yewah and Ashton Miller (Duke), give the Chieftains all the tools to make a long run in the Division 1 playoffs that get underway at the end of May. Katie Dudley (Center) is heading to Stanford University to play water polo for the Cardinals. (Alan Holben Photo)

Learning Is Fundamental

Saginaw High Coach Omar Dasuqi Has Trojans Headed Into Positive Direction

Ben Murphy
Sports Scene

Some teams measure success in wins and losses. The Saginaw girls soccer team doesn't quite see things that way.

"If you leave everything on the field, there should be no bad feeling after the game, because you did everything you could to help the team be successful," head coach Omar Dasuqi said. "Our record doesn't display or measure our success; there is so much more to life and the game than winning."

The Trojans went 1-10 last year and have started 0-7 this season. Dasuqi, in his third year coaching the team, knew it would be a long process, but he didn't hesitate to take the coaching job when it opened.

"I took this job for a few different reasons," he said. "One, to be a male role model and provide a positive influence for the girls. Two, to give the ladies an opportunity to be a part of something positive at Saginaw High. Three, to teach the girls good morals and ethics through sport. Four, to be able to build a soccer program from the bottom up. Five, a way to give back to my community. Six, to provide the ladies with something to be proud of and be a part of the Trojan family. I am truly blessed to have this opportunity to have an impact on this great group of young ladies."

That being said, coaching soccer at a school and in a community much better known for its basketball prowess has had its difficulties.

"Due to the fact that soccer isn't a big sport in this community or culture, the skills and experience are slightly limited," Dasuqi said. "For a lot of the girls, they have never played an organized or a pick up game of soccer. For most, this is their first time playing soccer, but they are willing to learn and dedicate the time and patience. One thing I can say is the heart and passion they play with is outstanding; they bring it every game."

Though wins are hard to come by for the program, it was last year's 4-3 victory that

shows just what the team's winning attitude can bring them.

"We were down 3-0 and finished a four-goal run to win," Dasuqi said. "This win displays our heart and determination to never give up and leave everything on the field. We are 0-7 this year, but we are continuing to develop skill and awareness, so in my eyes, as long as I can see progression for the better, we are undefeated."

Even as games get out of hand, Dasuqi knows that focusing on the little things is still important, as his team must keep growing.

"The teaching of fundamentals is the key to success at this level," he said. "I

teach and preach fundamentals, so it can become second nature to the ladies. They respect my coaching style, because they can sense that I am coaching from the heart and learning is my main concern for the ladies. I always stress the importance of education and tell them they are a student first and an athlete second... My goal is to develop a great citizen, not a great soccer player. If I develop a great soccer player in the process, great!"

The coach adds that he has a great group of seniors that helps keep the team headed in the right direction.

"A lot of success has to go out to the ladies that help build this program," Dasuqi said. "They displayed hard work, dedication,

leadership, and a high level of class. These seniors need recognition. Karrie Bell, Karen Bell, Amber Perez, Anquinn Fason, Juannina Wilkins, Kim Nisha Nelson, and Carlisha McCary. I have two great co-captains (Shamarira Torrance and Acashia Wade). If it wasn't for them, we wouldn't have had the great success we have been developing over the years."

The Trojans haven't won a game yet this year. Maybe they will, maybe they won't. Dasuqi is OK with it either way. "There is more to soccer than scoring goals and winning games," he said. "Our goal is simple year in and year out - have fun. If you aren't having fun, there's no point in doing it."



Saginaw Omar Dasuqi knows that his girls soccer team has yet to win a game this season, but he doesn't measure the success of the team by wins and losses. Learning the fundamentals and leaving everything you have on the field is all a coach can ask for. Dasuqi knows the job was going to be a work in progress, but he sees tremendous growth from his team. (Scott Keyes Photo)

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Record Breaker

Lake Fenton's Jordan Newman Becomes All-Time MHSAA Career Leader In Goals Scored

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

Lake Fenton senior forward Jordan Newman's job is to score goals, and no one in the history of Michigan high school girls' soccer has done that job better.

Earlier this year, Newman set the record for career goals scored when she recorded her 168th goal. By the middle of May, she had totaled 29 goals on the year and had moved her career total to 183.

"Jordan is just an all-around great soccer player," said her coach Lenny Glasstetter. "Her job is to score goals, and she is very good at it. She is fast, has great timing, knows how to set up her opponents, and finishes with a lot of power. She gets a lot of her goals on headers and volleys. She also has great accuracy. She is probably shooting at about 50 percent."

Newman has been a big goal scorer since the day she stepped into the Blue Devils' starting lineup as a freshman. She finished her freshman year with 40 goals, scored 56 as a sophomore, and tallied 58 goals last year as a junior.

She is a little off last year's scoring pace, but that is no surprise to her coach. "Everybody is putting three or four players on her in every game," Glasstetter said. "She is still going to score a lot of goals. I'm sure she will end up with over 40."

While her goals may be down a little this year, her overall production is still high. "She has always been good at setting her teammates up, but this year even more so," Glasstetter said. "She is not a player who shoots the ball every time she touches it. Defenders don't know if she is going to shoot the ball or pass it when she gets the ball."

Setting the career scoring record was very special for Newman. "It was an awesome feeling," she said. "It was a great accomplishment. Everything I worked so hard for, all the goals that I scored, it means something even more now."

The record-setting goal was one that Newman will never forget. "Going into that game, I needed three goals, and I thought

about what it would be like to score that goal," she said. "I wondered who would assist me on that play, and I was hoping it would be someone I played with all four years. It ended up being our center back, Brenna Meicher, who I grew up playing soccer with. She kicked the ball over the back line, and I ended up with it and shot it in."

Setting the all-time scoring record was not something that Newman planned for. "When I started playing high school soccer, I scored a lot of goals, but I never thought about a record until I broke our high school's record for goals," she said. "It was the beginning of my junior year when I broke the school record that I thought about the state record, but it was not something I tried to do. I just go out and try to score goals, and the records come with it."

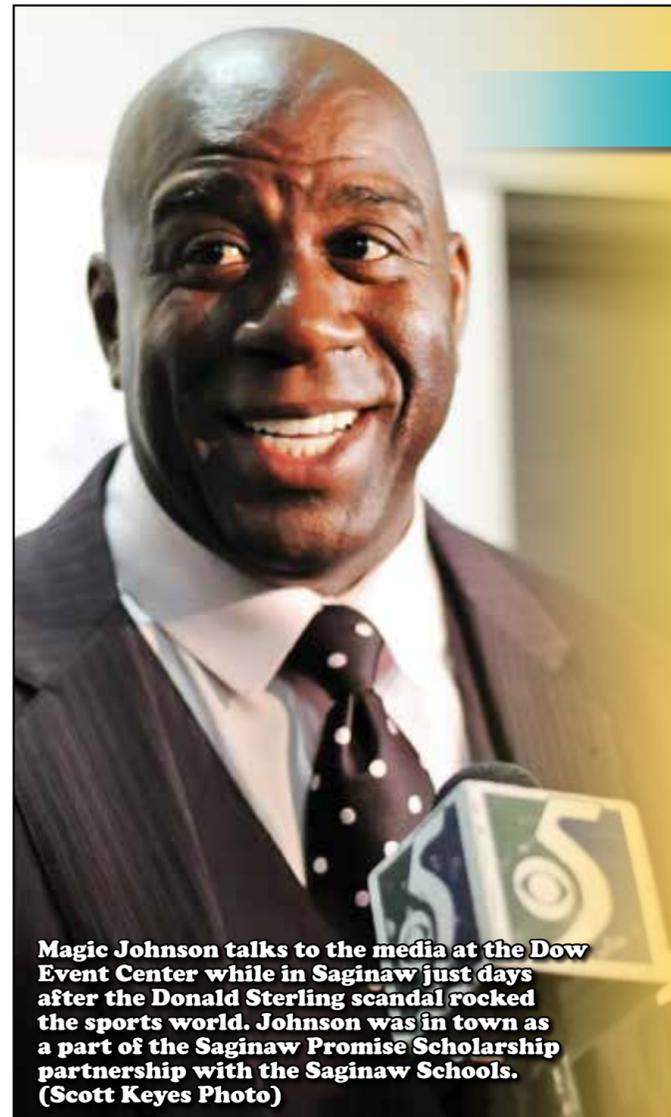
Newman is focused on helping her team advance as far as it can in the upcoming state tournament. "I feel like this is the best year we've had since I've been in high school," she said. "I feel that we have a shot to go a long way in the state tournament, and this is our best year for that."

After high school, Newman will continue her soccer career at Charleston Southern University in South Carolina. Newman chose that college over Oakland University, Butler University, and Florida Gulf Coast University.



Lake Fenton's Jordan Newman recently became the state's all-time leading goal scorer for a career breaking the old mark of 168 goals. Newman will play her college soccer at Charleston Southern University. (Scott Keyes Photos)

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Magic's Promise

Fundraiser Raises Nearly \$200,000 For Third Year In Row

Scott Keyes Sports Scene

Now that the dust has cleared, the totals are in. Earvin "Magic" Johnson appeared in Saginaw for the third annual 'Magic of a Promise' on April 29, and once again, the event was a huge success. Johnson helped raise \$155,000 for the Saginaw Promise Scholarship through the event's auction, ticket sales, sponsors, and pledges.

"This is always a highlight for me," said the

Lansing native and NBA hall of famer. "We owe it to these young people to encourage them to be better and do better and also to get an education."

Some of the night's big contributors included the Saginaw Spirit Charitable Foundation and Dow Chemical Co., each of which donated \$20,000. Walmart and Dow Corning Corp. each donated \$10,000.

Johnson promised to visit companies in return for their donations or to fly employees to Los Angeles to see a Dodgers baseball game or

a Lakers basketball game with him.

He has helped raise about \$500,000 in the past two years, including donating \$120,000 of his own money last year. "It's all about the kids," Johnson said. "Dr. Jenkins and the rest of the community comes out and supports such a worthy cause. I couldn't be happier to be a part of this."

In 2010, the state selected Saginaw as one of 10 school districts in Michigan to become a Promise Zone district. The designation requires communities to raise money to provide qualifying students with up to \$2,500 per year for those attending two-year institutions and \$8,000 per year for those attending four-year institutions.

The Promise Zone has provided \$312,000 in scholarships for students who live in the city of Saginaw or in the Saginaw School District boundaries.

"Saginaw's businesses really step up," said former Saginaw High boys' basketball coach Marshall Thomas. "It's all about the kids, and

the city really puts an emphasis on that. The kids are our future, and there are so many kids that are deserving of this honor. I am really glad to be a part of this great cause."

Saginaw School District superintendent Carlton Jenkins said that 78 percent of students who received scholarships last year are returning to college, and 70 percent are attending four-year universities.

Saginaw and Arthur Hill high school graduation rates have improved in the past three years from 55 percent and 70 percent to 80 percent, he said. "We are moving forward."

Johnson said that he always wants to affect change and to inspire students. Kids can see that he came from a poor household and became a businessman, and they can do the same.

"I grew up just like they did," Johnson said of young people in Saginaw. "Their path in life is through education."

Aside from the tremendous response from the area businesses, another sidebar to the night was Johnson agreeing to mentor Saginaw High senior Keyon Addison.

During the question-and-answer portion of the event, Addison asked Johnson what it took to succeed in business. Johnson told Addison to keep asking questions, to go to class every day, to work hard and, above all else, to get a mentor.

So Addison asked Johnson to become his mentor. Johnson didn't hesitate. "You have a mentor," Johnson said. "I'm going to fly you to L.A., walk you around my businesses ... Dodger Stadium, Staples Center ... all the developments we have. You can see how we do it."

Addison was left in awe after the experience. "I'm almost speechless," Addison said. "This is pretty cool."

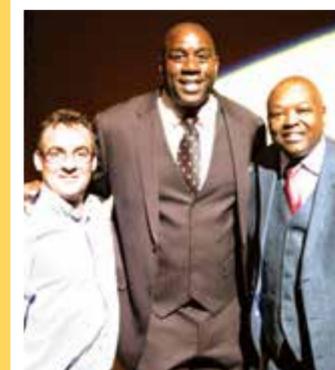


Saginaw High senior Keyon Addison and his mom are photographed with Magic Johnson after Johnson told him he would fly Addison to Los Angeles in the summer and mentor him for a weekend prior to him leaving to Ferris State University in August. (Scott Keyes Photo)

Magic Johnson talks to the media at the Dow Event Center while in Saginaw just days after the Donald Sterling scandal rocked the sports world. Johnson was in town as a part of the Saginaw Promise Scholarship partnership with the Saginaw Schools. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Delta College President Jean Goodnow (right) and Sports Scene Publisher Randy Miniard are all smiles during Magic Johnson's recent visit to Saginaw. Johnson met with various civic leaders and talked to students during his annual Saginaw Promise extravaganza. (Scott Keyes Photo)



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ITHACA HONORS 4X D6 STATE CHAMPIONS

Capital City Stealth Win 35 - 6 On "Jackets" Home Field

On a day where the four-time Ithaca football team were honored at halftime, the Capital City Stealth, a semi-pro team from the Lansing area played rival Traverse City on the Yellowjackets field. The game was decided early, with the Stealth winning the contest 35-6.

Instant replays and video clips were played on Ithaca's huge jumbotron during the pre-game and in the game.

All proceeds of the game went to the Ithaca High School football team.



Ithaca coach Terry Hessbrook and members of the four-time Division 6 football team were honored during halftime of the Capital City Stealth's 35-6 victory over Traverse City May 17 in a game played at Ithaca High School. All proceeds from the game went to the Ithaca football team. Ithaca's quest for its fifth straight title gets underway in August as they open the 2014 season traveling to Clare High School.



One of the main attractions to the new revamped Ithaca football field is the huge jumbotron that sits directly across from the home field stands. The jumbotron is one of the largest in Michigan.



The Capital Area Stealth, a semi-pro team from Lansing traveled to Ithaca High School May 17 and defeated Traverse City 35-6. With the victory the Stealth improved to 2-0.

Alan Holben Photos

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SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON TRACK Yellowjackets Hitting Their Stride

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Fourth-year coach Gene Lebron has enjoyed coaching a very talented Ithaca girls track team this spring.

"We've broken quite a few records," said Lebron.

As of mid-May, the Yellowjackets had broken four records. Records have fallen in the 3200-meter relay, the 800-meter relay, and the 400-meter relay. The 400-meter relay record had stood since 1988. Brianna Draper has broken the school record in the 100-meter dash.

The 3200-meter relay features two freshmen and two sophomores, Courtney Allen, Kurstin Kalisek, Amelia Freestone, and Blaire Showers.

"It's a deep middle distance field that I have," Lebron said.

The 800-meter relay team includes Draper, Mikala Fairchild, Emily Foster, and Erica Sheehan, and the 400-meter relay has Fairchild, Draper, Sheehan, and Vanessa Waldron.

"Mid-Michigan is so tough in track," Lebron said. "We have a really good team. But St. Louis is in our league. We've gone undefeated this year in dual meets, except against them. So we were 8-1. Our only loss was to St. Louis. For invitationals, we've been in the top two or three basically every invitation we've gone to. There are times once again that we've been second and St. Louis has been first."

"There's just so many good track and field teams in this area. It's tough to get into a meet in this area and bring home a championship."

But before the season ends, the Yellowjackets have some lofty goals to achieve, one of which is to do well in the conference championship meet against St. Louis.

"They're a tough team, but they make us better," Lebron said.

The regionals came before the conference meet, and the Jackets were confident of sending a good number of athletes to the state finals. Pewamo-Westphalia, the defending Division 3 state

champion, was slated to be at Ithaca's regional, with many of its athletes returning from a year ago.

"This year, I'm hoping to get all of our relays there and several individuals," Lebron said. "Draper, and whatever sprinting event we put her in, should make it. Erica Sheehan, and whatever event we put her in, should make it. My distance runners should advance in individual events."

Lebron has enjoyed depth in Ithaca's attack this season. "In the last few years, we've been strong in the distances," he said. "We've had all-staters. We have a strong contingent of sprinters. We picked up a sprinter from Beal City, Erica Sheehan. Brianna is a battle-tested veteran. We've put together solid sprint relays."

"Where we've struggled is in field events. We've getting better there. We do have a pretty good all-around team. If there's a weakness, it would be the field events."

But when all is said and done, Lebron is confident this could be his best team at Ithaca.



More Photos Available At highschoolsportsscene.com

The Ithaca girls track team has had a solid season and has broken many school records this year. Coach Gene Lebron feels this year's team could be one of the best in school history. (Zip and Reyna Widman Photo)

Streak Continues For Chippewa Hills Track Team

John Raffel
Sports Scene

It seems to be a tradition that the Chippewa Hills Warriors girls track team will not lose a meet and will take its conference title.

That's been the case again this year, as the Warriors sealed another CSAA title on May 13 by winning the league meet.

Chippewa Hills boasted several CSAA champions, including all four relay teams. Erin Drouillard won the pole vault and the discus, Jennifer McNeal the high jump and the 400-meter run, Amanda Koepf the shot put, Arielle Esch the 100-meter hurdles, Megan O'Neil the 800- and the 3,200-meter runs, and Nicole Snyder the 200-meter dash.

The Warriors ended their dual season with a 7-0 record and now have 84 straight victories, going back to the 2002 campaign, and have won 12 straight league titles. The Warriors were third at the MITCA team meet last season and sixth at the MHSAA state finals.

Sally Schafer has been the Warrior coach since 2000. "What's really helped is the consistency of the coaching staff," she said. "We've all been together for quite a few years. They know who their coaches are going to be. We have a great middle school program, too. They start off young in the program, and we build off of that. The younger kids have the older kids to learn

from."

Bob O'Neil has been Chippewa Hills girls' middle school coach since 2001. He has averaged between 30 and 50 seventh- and eighth-grade girls on his teams. "This year, we have a bigger team," he said. "We started with 60 and are down to 56 now."

It's O'Neil's opinion that Chippewa Hills' middle school success has something to do with the Warrior girls' stunning success. "I think it helps a lot," he said. "It gives them exposure. They see what the high school girls do."

O'Neil, whose daughter Megan is an all-state distance runner for the Warriors, noted that not many of his athletes have much pre-middle school-level track and field experience. "Middle school track helps get them started," he said.

"These kids want to do what the older kids are doing," Schafer said. "So they work towards it."

"We have really good coaches and dedicated athletes," said Drouillard, a senior. "There's a lot of kids starting off at a young age. In seventh grade, the middle school coach would want us to have fun. It's like a big family."

Many female athletes from Chippewa Hills have gone on to run college track. Drouillard is going to Aquinas College and O'Neil to the University of Wisconsin.

In spite of all the success, though, not all of the 84 straight wins have been easy,

according to Schafer. "We had to go against Fruitport and Ludington, and we beat Ludington, when it came down to the mile relay. Spring Lake was in that conference that year. It was tough. Every team was beating out every other team. There's been close calls for sure."

"One of my fondest memories is actually when we took second in the conference in one of my first years as coach. As head coach, we hadn't been doing well and were trying to build up and were with Fremont, which has always been a powerhouse in track and field. They were pretty dominant. We tied them in the conference meet. They won the duals, so we ended up second in the conference. But that was the highest we had done in years. I remember being so happy for the kids. From that point on, we won."

Schafer usually has up to 50 girls on her team. "The first few years, we were low 30s," she said. "Each year it's built up. The last few years we fall between 42 and 50."

Schafer is obviously hopeful that the streak can continue when new teams Tri County and Grant enter the CSAA next season. "The girls want to keep it going," she said. "Tri County, we were in a league with a few years back, and Grant, I'm kind of familiar with them. I think they're good track schools. Hopefully, it will bring some good competition to the league. I'm looking forward to that."

The Warriors have been deep across the board this season, Schafer noted. "We have speed and our distances are strong, and our



Chippewa Hills Megan O'Neil looks to cap her stellar career with another solid performance in the upcoming Division 2 state finals. The Warriors sealed another CSAA title on May 13 by winning the league meet. (Zip and Reyna Widman Photos)

field events are doing phenomenal. We have four high jumpers that have qualified for regionals. Three pole vaulters have qualified. Our throwers are doing great. We've got young throwers. Across the board, we are three-four deep. Because they're on a quality team, they have to work their way in."

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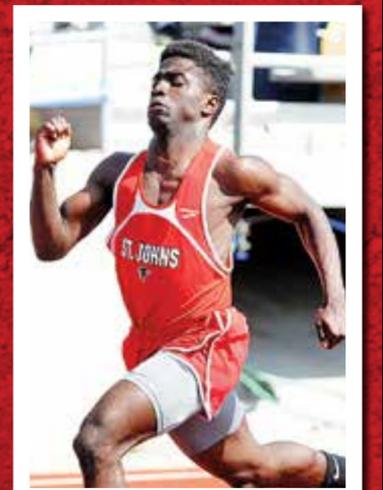
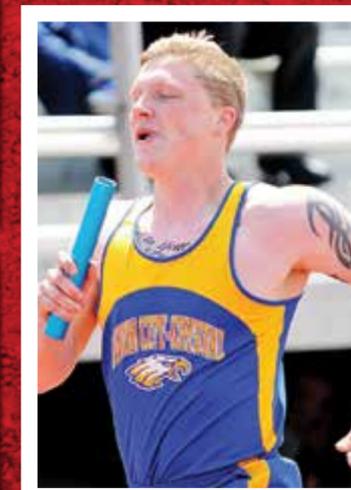
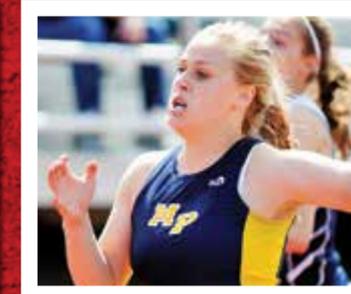
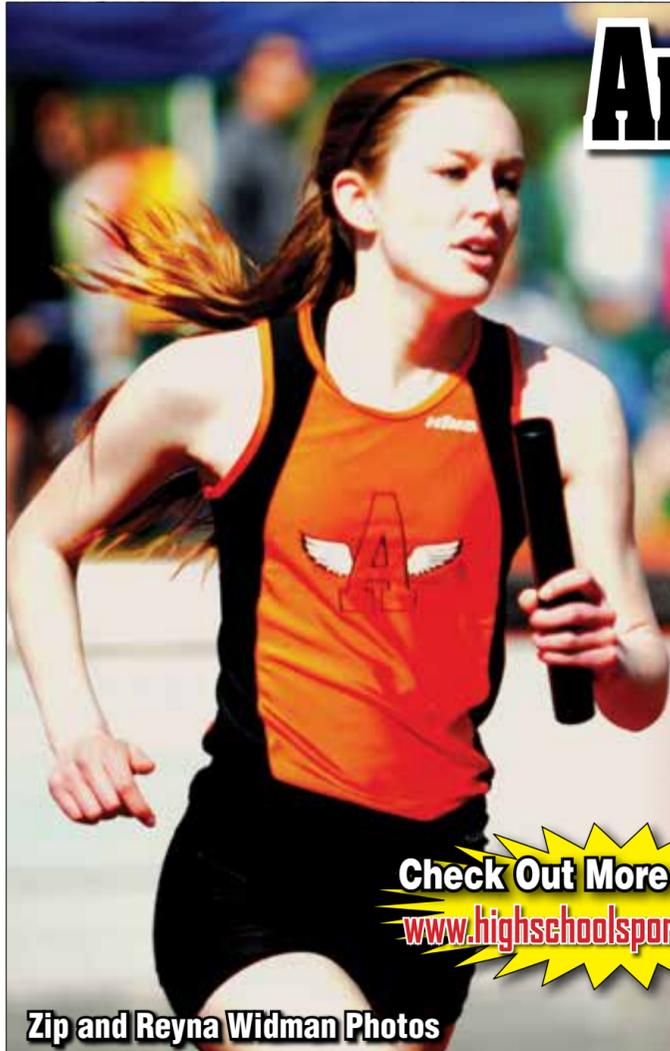
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Depth Key To Dewitt Boys, Girls Track Success

John Raffel
Sports Scene

In Kelly Williams' seventh season as head coach, she has been having fun with her DeWitt girls track and field team.

"We have several returning athletes from last year's state meet, including our relays and our 100 state champ," Williams said. "We've been doing pretty well. We're in a little bit of a rebuilding year. As the weather gets better,

we're going to see some times drop." Josie Yesmunt is back as a senior after winning the 100-meter dash in 12.18 seconds in the state meet last year.

The hurdles also remain a strong event. "We're getting to five or six in the big invites," said Williams, noting that Amber Koenigsnecht has been leading the way.

Distance runners

performing well for DeWitt include Shelby Watterson and Emily Murdoch. Middle distance aces are Madison Slater and Lee.

Strong regional and state performances are a goal for the Panthers. "We certainly do well in the relays, all four of our relays," Williams said. "We do well in our sprints, our 800. We have a good hurdler, a good high jumper, throwers. Our distances have been doing well.

"We're not as deep [as last year's team]. We have each event covered, but not as deep. I don't think we're quite as strong. It took us longer to get going this year. We're where I expected us to be.

"We picked up a couple of seniors that have helped us a lot. In the high jump, we picked up Hannah Stoll, who is a basketball player and will be at the next level. Audra Kimble in the distances, she came out and she's a senior. She's definitely helped us."

The Panthers girls' team jumped out to a 3-1 start on the year.

Bob Acre is the boys coach.

Senior Blake Smith, headed for Cornell University next year, has been leading the way in the 100- and the 200-meter dashes. "We were at indoor meets at Grand Valley and Michigan State, and he won the 100 at both indoor meets," Acre said. "He's been running very well. He does not have the tall, lanky sprinter body. He's shorter, compact, and has decided to get in the weight room the last couple of years and has improved his strength. In the winter, he's done a lot of off-season running."

Acre also likes what he's seen from senior Ben Seeger and from freshman sprinter Austin Smith. Senior Alex Lantz, a sprinter who has been out with a leg injury, has returned to help in the relays and in the 400-meter dash.

"We have a pretty good group of seniors," said Acre, who singled out senior John Lippert's work on the sprint relay teams and in the hurdles.

Matt Meagher, a sophomore, has done well in the hurdles, the 400-yard dash, and the pole vault. Senior Nate Trevino has led the way in the long jump and hurdles.

Junior Mitchell Kolito has shown promise in the distances and is a college prospect, Acre added.



Dewitt's Josie Yesmunt is back this season to defend her state championship title in the 100 meters for the Panthers. (File Photo)



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Alma Track Enjoys Another Strong Season

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Alma's boys' and girls' track and field teams have enjoyed strong seasons.

Chris Brown is coaching the boys' team, which started the



season with a record of 6-1.

Jake Morey has been the team's top distance runner. "He ran a pretty heavy load for us to be able to win at some of our dual meets," Brown said. "He's ran the 4x8, the mile, the 800, and the two mile in three consecutive meets now. That's racing four miles in a meet. There's not a lot of recovery time. But we have to rely on him.

"We're hoping as we get to [the postseason] that he'll get a big drop in his times. He's a strong distance kid. He's got a shot at our two-mile school record."

Malcolm Davis has been strong in the 100-, 200-, and 400-meter dashes. "He's a kid that I've really relied on," Brown said. "We have a couple of [400 and 800] distance kids, Damian Castillo

and Brevan Bender, and I've relied pretty heavily on those kids throughout the season."

He's had some consistent senior throwers in Clayton Carr and Curtis Doyle. "That's one event where I know I can count on first or second place from both of those guys," Brown said.

Sophomore Brenden Howard has displayed his talents in the sprints, while junior Jacob Adams has done so in the pole vault and the long jump.

Adams "is a good example for some of our younger kids to stick with it. We've been banged up all year. We're trying to get to the point where we're all getting healthy," said Brown.

"Chase Austin is a major contributor. He is a junior, but only in his second year of track. He hurdles and is currently ranked second in our region in the 300 hurdles. We have high hopes that he will be a state qualifier for us in the hurdles and possibly a

relay. He has been a major scorer for us all year," Brown continued.

Jamie Puffpaff is coaching a very young, but talented, girls' team.

"We have many freshmen that have stepped up," she said. "We have 17 on our team and over half are freshmen. That's encouraging, moving forward as a program."

Tayla Guerrero, a freshman, is the team's top sprinter. Madison Doolittle, also a freshman, has been the top hurdler and also does some sprints. Lexi Morton, a senior, does well in the throws.

"Many of them are freshmen, so the fact they can come up to a varsity sport as freshmen and are making such an impact, I would say we're exceeding expectations," Puffpaff said.

Morton has been enjoying her best season. "She's an outstanding girl who has improved each and every year," Puffpaff said.



More Photos Available At highschoolsportsscene.com
The Alma High School boys and girls track teams are having another solid season for coaches Chris Brown and Jamie Puffpaff. Both Alma teams are looking for solid performances in the upcoming state meet. (Reyna and Zip Widman Photos)

Arthur Hill's Anthony Debardeleben Headed To Eastern

Ben Murphy
Sports Scene

Countless high school track runners are fast. After all, that's the name of the game in track and field. What sets Arthur Hill senior Anthony Debardeleben apart from the rest of the pack is how hard he brings it every day.

"He's a hard worker, a very hard worker," Arthur Hill track and field head coach Leonard Adams said. "He has been undefeated all season [in the 100] and won the indoor 60-meter championship this year. He's dedicated to track and field. He plays football, too, but he knows that track is his opportunity to go to college, so I think he'll be a great competitor at the next level."

Debardeleben's best event, according to Adams, is the 100-meter dash, although

he excels in the 200-meter dash and 400-meter relay as well. He won regionals last year in the 100-meter dash and won the county meet in 10.4 seconds this year. All of this was good enough to earn his way onto a Division I roster, as he has committed to run at Eastern Michigan University.

"It was a family-first decision," Debardeleben said of choosing Eastern. "My sister goes there and is on the track team, too. Also, they won the indoor championship back-to-back years, so I know I'm going into a good situation. Plus, when I went there for a visit, I liked the atmosphere. I felt like I was already on the team."

All Debardeleben's success came after what the runner admits was a less-than-stellar start to his career. "I was one of the worst people on the team my freshman

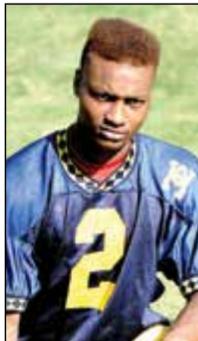
year," he said. "I kept working hard to get better. I quit basketball to focus on track, because I knew that this could be something big for me, so I kept putting more into it." It did become something big, as he's gone from being one of the worst runners on the team to one of the best in the state. Assuming he qualifies for the state finals in the 100-meter dash, Debardeleben hopes to atone for last year's mistake. A year ago, in one of the preliminary rounds, he was called for a false start, disqualifying him before he even got started. He also has a strong chance to make the finals in the 200-meter dash and in the 400-meter relay, according to his coach.

"We have a lot hanging on [regionals]; nothing is promised, we know that," Adams said. "But, we are hoping he can finish in the top five in the state. He's been complaining about leg injuries and his hamstring being a little sore, but he has

been running fast enough times to win all season."

Despite his disqualification last year, Debardeleben isn't rattled at all at the thought of returning to the state finals. "It's the same environment really," he said. "Every meet is the same, regardless of how many people are there. You just have to do what you do." What Debardeleben does is win, and that's something he'd like to do one last time before his high school track days are over.

"I want to go out on top," he said.



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Ben Murphy
Sports Scene

Sitting among friends and family at his National Football League draft party at Wingin' It in East Tawas May 10, Jeff Janis was getting anxious. The seventh and final round was coming to a close, but his name had yet to be called.

"I was starting to get a little worried, because all of the teams calling me wanted me as [an undrafted] free agent," Janis said. "But, still with a lot of picks left in the seventh round, I had some hope."

Then, at the 236th pick, his phone rang again.

"Thankfully, I finally got the call, and it was the Packers," he said. "They just said, 'are you ready to be a Packer?' And of course I said 'yes!'"

The draft selection marks the end of an interesting few months for Janis, who graduated from Tawas Area High School in 2009 and from Saginaw Valley State University this past fall. Since wrapping up a stellar collegiate career, he's attended the

NFL combine and the Senior Bowl and has been fielding endless phone calls from professional scouts. All were wondering if the wide receiver would fit with their teams. Green Bay felt he would.

"It feels great to have such a great organization use one of their draft picks on me," Janis said. "I'm really excited to show them what I can do. This definitely makes my hard work pay off, but it's far from over. The real hard work begins now."

Life as a Cardinal

After being redshirted his freshman year, Janis began making a name for himself by the time he was a junior. That year, he led Division II receivers with 1635 receiving yards. He had 83 catches for 1572 yards and 14 touchdowns his senior year.

"I couldn't be more happy and proud," SVSU head coach Jim Collins said. "What Jeff has accomplished up to this point is awesome. When you consider how many seniors played college football, and the extremely low percentage that get drafted, it really puts things into perspective. I speak for the entire SVSU community when I say how much we appreciated all that Jeff was able to accomplish on the field and in the classroom."

We are extremely proud. It is a great day to be a Cardinal."

Janis' 4305 yards and 46 touchdowns in his SVSU career were proof that SVSU's gamble on signing him paid off. He's just the fourth SVSU graduate to be taken in the NFL draft.

"My time at SVSU means so much to me," Janis said. "It is what happened there that is the reason why I'm here today. It was a great experience with great people, and I am so grateful for it."

Life as a Brave

Prior to his SVSU days, Janis was a standout on the Tawas Area football team. After a late surge his junior year, he dazzled fans with eye-popping moves that led to 375 receiving yards, 731 rushing yards, and 16 touchdowns his senior year. Breaking his hand mid season limited his ability to catch the ball, but Janis never stopped racking up rushing yards.

"Some kids have an outstanding work ethic, but not many," Tawas

Area head football coach Tim Webb said. "Some have natural talent and an NFL body, but not many. He has an extremely rare combination of both. Most importantly, he is the most committed individual to the weight room I've ever seen. He's made himself into one of the best athletes in the country. His level of dedication is so rare, I probably won't see it again as long as I coach."

Even though Janis has gone on to collegiate and now professional ranks, his time in Tawas is far from forgotten. Proof of that was Janis' draft party, where family, friends, and fans crowded Wingin' It to offer their support.

"There was probably over 100 people at my draft party," Janis said. "It was so cool seeing so many friends and family there to show their support. It meant so much to me. I also had many people sending me texts and messages on Facebook; it was a great feeling."

"Tawas is where I grew up and is where my heart is," he added. "It means everything to me. I am going to do whatever I can possibly do to make everyone from there proud. This doesn't happen a lot from Tawas, but that doesn't mean it can't, and I want other kids to realize that as well."

Life in the NFL

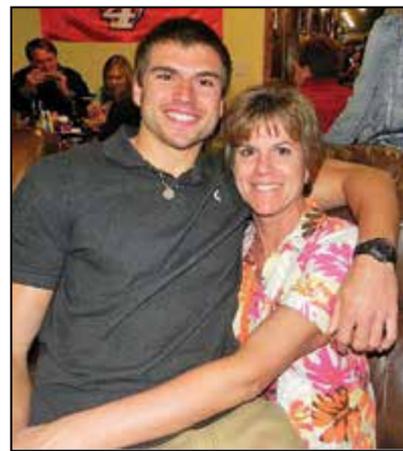
Janis has only known success when it comes to football. Now that he's at the sport's highest level, hopefully that success will continue.

"I have all the confidence in the world that, with Jeff's talent and work ethic, he will be a great NFL player," Collins said.

From catching passes from Jesse Siwek at Tawas Area, from Jonathan Jennings at SVSU, and now from Aaron Rodgers with the Packers, Webb called it almost too good to be true. "It's still hard for me to grasp the fact that Jeff will be playing in the NFL," he said. "Especially since almost every college told him he wasn't good enough for that level... I think his potential is scary. His work ethic combined with the fact that he is going to be able to focus on developing his craft full-time, who knows what he can be? I am just so happy for him and his family; it's a really exciting time for them right now."

The Monday morning following the draft, Janis posted a Facebook picture of his locker in the Green Bay locker room. His last name and new number 83 already were proudly displayed. "Love it here already!" Janis posted along with the photo.

Apparently, he likes the thought of playing at



Former Saginaw Valley State University receiver Jeff Janis celebrates with his mom Debbie after being selected in the seventh round of the NFL draft by the Green Bay Packers. (Submitted Photo)

Lambeau Field already. "I think I will fit in great with the Packers," Janis said. "Scheme-wise and location-wise. It's a lot like Michigan there, so I feel right at home."

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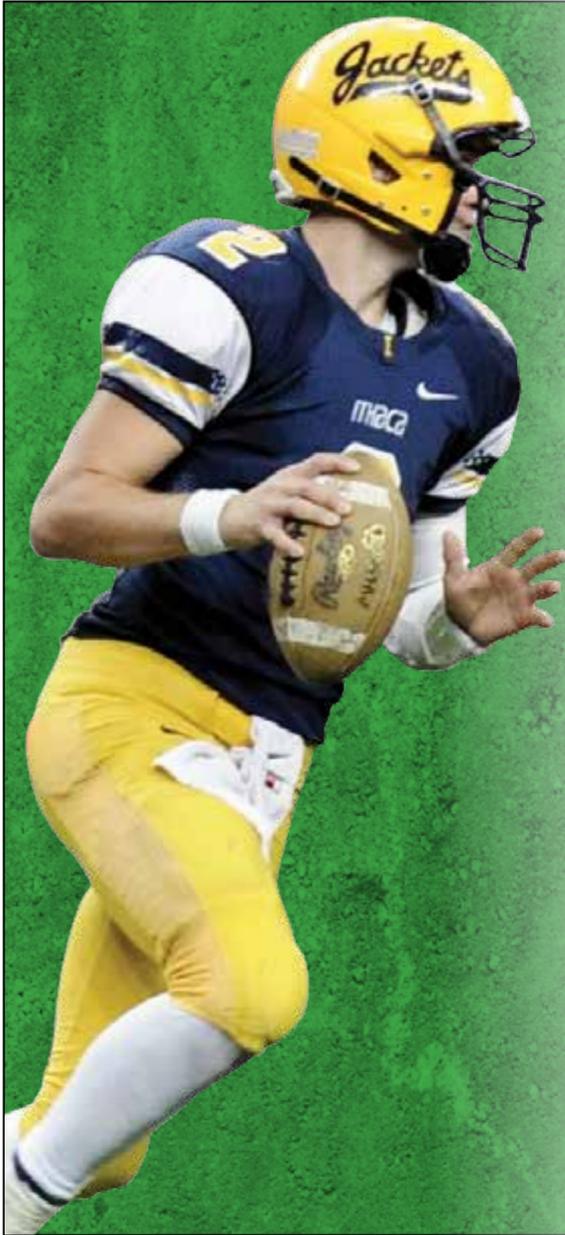
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SPORTS SCENE'S **EYE ON FOOTBALL**



MHSAA Considering Possible Changes To Football Playoff System

John Raffel
Sports Scene

A new proposal for determining the state's 256 football playoff teams was presented to the MHSAA's representative council at its May meeting but was voted down. Geoff Kimmerly, MHSAA media and content coordinator, confirmed on May 19 that the proposal was rejected and that it "didn't have a lot of support from the Michigan Interscholastic Athletic Administrators Association when it surveyed its membership earlier this spring."

The proposal to change the current system, which was approved in 1998, had been approved by the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association and by the MHSAA football committee. It emphasized strength of schedule rather than guaranteeing that all teams with six wins in a nine-game schedule and five in an eight-game schedule would get into the five-week playoff system. Its supporters said that it was a way to stop rewarding schools looking for six wins as a guarantee to make the postseason and instead reward those that play tough schedules.

Under the new proposal, there would still have been 32 teams in eight different divisions for the playoffs, but the following changes were proposed:

- Playoff divisions currently are determined on selection Sunday. After the 256 teams have been determined, they are divided into eight divisions depending on school enrollment. The new setup would have divided the approximately 600 schools that play 11-man football into eight divisions prior to the start of the season.
- Six wins in nine games or five wins in eight gets a team in the playoffs currently. Seven wins would have

been the new automatic qualifier.

•Additional qualifiers outside of the automatic ones get in now based on playoff points by adding a Class A team, then a Class B team, then a Class C team, etc. The proposed format would have used playoff points and fill additional spots until each division got to 32 teams.

•Points for wins are now based on the Classes A, B, C, and D, which the MHSFC says is an outdated system and grants the same number of points for defeating a Class B team with almost 1,000 students as it does for defeating one with under 500 students. The new way based points on the eight divisions, with 88 for Division 1, 80 for Division 2, and so on down to 32 points for Division 8.

•Currently, a team gets more points for each win by an opponent it defeats and less for each victory by an opponent the team lost to. The new format would have given a team points for all of its opponents' wins, regardless of whether or not the team beat that opponent.

•The new system would have had a bonus-point multiplier depending on the enrollment size of its opponent.

Area football coaches had differing viewpoints on the proposal.

Ithaca athletic director and football coach Terry Hessbrook, whose team has won four straight state titles and is 56-0 the last four seasons, said "I do feel that the playoff system needs to be revamped to make sure that it is working for everyone. However,

I am not 100 percent sure that this proposal will help everyone. This proposal does allow for more freedom in your scheduling. [However,] I think that we are really just transferring the difficulty of finding games from the 'better' teams to the teams that struggle."

"I proposed a format that allowed 80 percent of



(Scott Keyes Photo)

The MHSAA's new playoff proposal will emphasize strength of schedule rather than guarantee that all teams with six wins in a nine-game schedule or five in an eight-game schedule will get into the five-week playoff system.

schools into the playoffs," said Devin Pringle, coach at Carson City-Crystal.

Pringle's proposal called for an eight-game schedule. In the ninth week, the state would divide schools into five-team districts based on geography and records. No. 1 and No. 4 would play each other for the right to move on, as would No. 2 and No. 3. "The 5-seed plays a 5-seed from another district but does not advance with a win," Pringle said. "All schools play at least nine games. No one is afraid to schedule power teams. It's the same number of weeks as we currently have. Jack Roberts responded to me that he was not in favor of my proposal."

While Pringle said the proposed new system would have encouraged teams to schedule and play foes that are traditional powers, he did see a drawback. "Many schools are locked in a conference where they have little control on 'quality wins,'" he said. "This system would only favor the traditional 'power' teams who people do not want to schedule. This system would cut down on the number of schools who get to experience playoff football for the first time."

Chad Klopff of Coleman High School said there's always a need to tweak and fix the system. "There was a season a few back where under the past proposal Coleman would have made the playoffs with four wins, so I can see how it could help," he said. "However, they say the 6-and-in method was causing schools to drive all over to find games and even breaking up conferences. I see that as an excuse.

"There is more than one sports team at those schools, and making the playoffs in football isn't what is causing conferences to break up. As for searching for games, I would gladly play closer to home, but we are a conference of six teams and have more games to search for. This has nothing to do with finding a sixth win, but everything to do with filling a schedule. If conferences were breaking up because competition was too tough, now smaller conferences like ours will start to break up because they might be too weak.

"No system is perfect. But if a team with four wins gets in front of a team with six wins, regardless of strength of schedule, that's a shame."

Clark Huntey, football coach and athletic director at Morley Stanwood, was not in favor of the proposal. "I don't think it's going to solve the problems," he said. "My guess, this will create a whole new set of problems. I really don't see any positives over the current system.

"Schools that are in a conference with 10 teams will never have the flexibility to schedule to a strength. I just don't see small schools scheduling larger schools to get more playoff points. There's no way I'm going to do that."

"I am in favor of the proposal," said Central Montcalm coach Marty James. "Sad to say, the 'six-win system' has destroyed a lot of leagues and even many rivalries. Teams will be more likely to stay in leagues where the competition is not above their ability to get to six wins."

But he also acknowledged the other side. "Many schools are already locked into leagues where they are not able to increase their strength of schedule," he said. "There may also be geographic restraints."

Coaches Weigh Pros, Cons Of Spring Football In Michigan

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Some states allow their high school football programs to have workouts in the latter part of the school year, similar to a collegiate spring football format. Several southern states currently have such programs. Some states, like Ohio, are considering it.

Spring football basically gives schools options to have practices toward the end of a school year going into the summer.

Currently, there doesn't appear to be a major push toward such a proposal in Michigan. There are some coaches, however, who don't think it's a bad idea.

"I don't know of anyone in our association who views spring football as a remote possibility in Michigan, given the current policies of the MHSAA," said Larry Merx, executive director of the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association.

"That's not something that we've been approached at all for," said Geoff Kimmerly, MHSAA media and content coordinator. "I don't really necessarily know the reason for it. I think a lot of our football coaches are involved in track. I don't know if that's the reason. There hasn't been a push for that."

Carson City-Crystal football coach Devin Pringle opposes spring football. "Kids are pulled in enough directions already," he said. "It would interfere with spring sports. I would rather see a dead month in the summer so families can vacation and kids can recharge. I would be in favor of less 'on time,' not more."

Ithaca football coach and athletic director Terry Hessbrook agrees. "I would be opposed to something like this happening here in Michigan. I feel that the spring sport teams would suffer a great deal. Our players need to have some time off. Most of our players are not college football players. We are a small school, and we need our athletes to participate in other sports."

Chad Klopff of Coleman favors spring football, but he has some mixed thoughts.

"On one hand, I'm a football coach; of course I want as many chances as I can to work with my football players," he said. "On the other hand, I coach at a small school and wouldn't want to jeopardize the chances of any of the spring sports from missing

out on my athlete because he is so focused on spring football, gets hurt during spring football, or just doesn't go out for a team because of the chance for spring football.

"What do I think a small spring football session could do for me? No. 1, it would allow me to see 100 percent who is committed for the fall. Small-school football has so many ups and downs when it comes to putting a roster together. This would make a more mandatory time period that the coaches could see who they have to count on in the fall. Second, it would give the players a good sense of where they stand leading into the summer. Have they put the work in as much as the guy next to them? Do they need to focus more on their off-season conditioning? Is coach right that I'm not ready for varsity yet?"

"Third, for me personally, being a softball coach as well, I don't have a lot of connection to my football team in the spring. So, if I could have a short session with them in the spring, we could benefit greatly."

Clark Huntey, Morley Stanwood coach and athletic director, doesn't like the idea. "There's no way the smaller schools could participate in a spring football camp/practice," he said. "I will not pull kids out of baseball or track to run a spring football camp/practice, and I'm not going to interfere with their spring sport season they are participating in. Kids get pulled in too many directions already - let them play a sport in a season without interference from other sports."

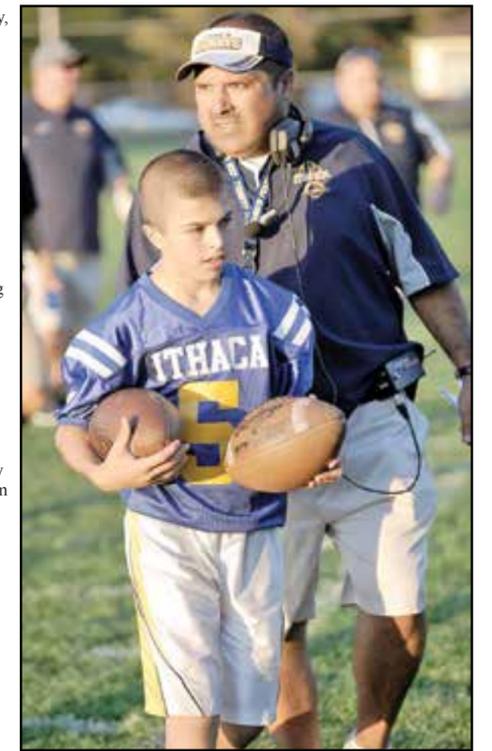
Marty James, Central Montcalm football coach, feels there's merit to spring football. "In my 20-plus years of coaching high school football, I have been told numerous times by coaches at all levels of college football that kids who live in Michigan are not on a level playing field when it comes to gaining

the attention of college coaches," he said. "Coaches do most of their recruiting during the spring and at summer camps, and college coaches have the luxury in the spring of hitting the road to see recruits in action.

"Most lower level colleges do not have the resources to send coaches to watch games in the fall, and they are also wrapped up in their own season. Therefore, a coach can see a recruit 'in-action' in spring ball. . .something they can't even do at summer camps."

But James acknowledged that spring football in Michigan is a long shot right now.

"I guess it is going to take a lawsuit, like the one that it took to get the volleyball season changed, in order for the MHSAA to look at it," he said.



Ithaca coach Terry Hessbrook, who has guided the Yellowjackets to four straight Division 6 state championships is in favor of a possible shakeup in the MHSAA football playoffs. (Scott Keyes Photo)

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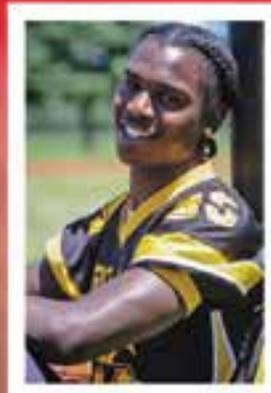
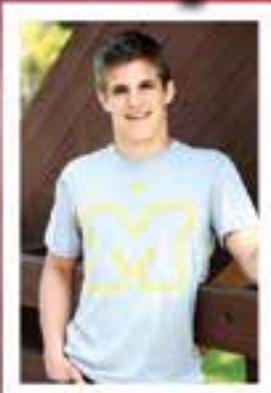
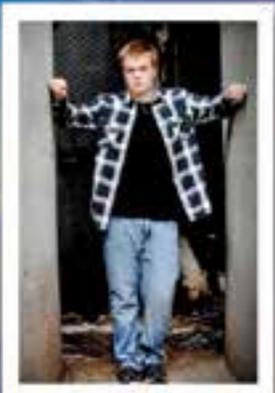
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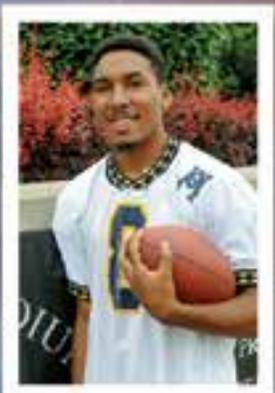
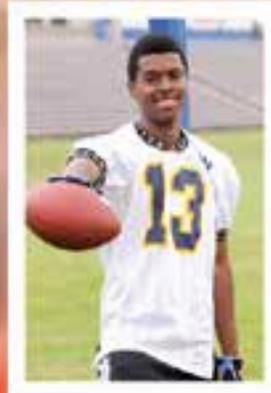
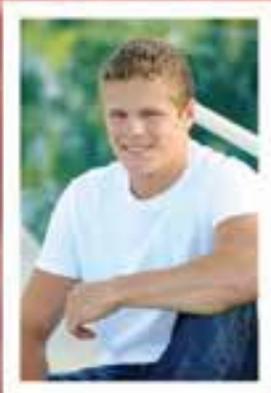
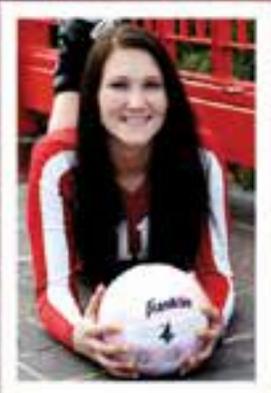


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