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Vol. 6, Issue 66 • April/May 2015

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### PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Hey Sports Fans! It's another great day at Sports Scene. With spring football wrapping up around the state of Michigan, I have a couple observations to make concerning a few of our former local high school players.

First, now that Tony Lippett and Bennie Fowler have moved on from being favorite targets of Michigan State University quarterback Connor Cook, look for guys like DeAnthony Arnett (Saginaw High), Matt Macksood (Lansing Catholic), and Aaron Burbridge (Farmington Hills Harrison) to take over the roles of go-to receivers when the Spartans hit the field in the fall. With Arnett, Macksood, and Burbridge, MSU has three receivers who can change the outcome of a game with one big play. Let's hope their abilities flourish in the fall.

At the University of Michigan, a pair of local receivers, Heritage grad Brian Cole and Maurice Ways of Detroit Country Day, looked solid in the spring and should excel in coach Jim Harbaugh's pro-style offense. Time will tell.

Meanwhile at Central Michigan University, the Chippewas have gone through a major coaching overhaul, but Lansing Catholic grad Cooper Rush is still the man under center leading the Chips. Let's hopes Rush can continue to grow under the new coaching regime.

Second, at long last, Mother Nature is finally cooperating, but as many of you know, the weather this spring as been Jekyll and Hyde. Our student-athletes have braved the elements, including a recent snow storm in April. I know it's Michigan and the games must go on, but enough already! What is the sense of making kids play softball in 30 degree weather? I know, I know, but what exactly are the limitations of conditions in which we should make athletes play?

Last thing, play hard. Play with fire. Play with desire. Keep the passion burning from the inside out.

We take for granted a lot of things during the daily grind, but coaches, parents, and mentors, we sometimes forget that these athletes are still kids. We sometimes get caught up with the wins and losses, but in the long run, molding young minds into young adults is what's most important.



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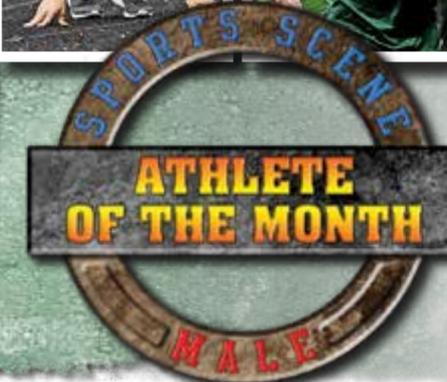


## HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE MALE AND FEMALE WINTER ATHLETES TO WATCH!

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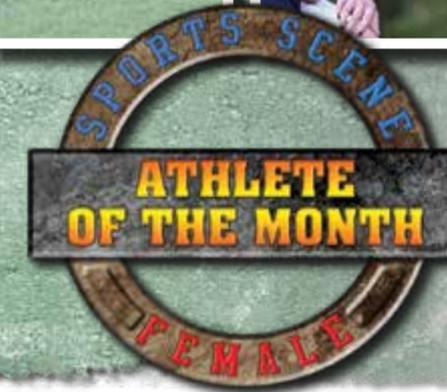
**JAKE JANKOSKA**



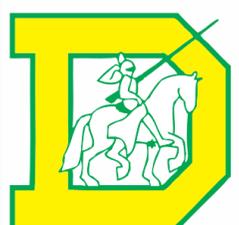
**The Jake Jankoska File**  
Freeland High School  
Class: Senior  
Sport: Track  
**Accomplishments:** Jankoska set the Freeland High School boys' school record in the pole vault with a 13'7" effort a year ago. He has broken that mark numerous times since setting the record last season and will contend for a state championship in the pole vault this season.



**MAYA PIPER**



**The Maya Piper File**  
Midland Dow High School  
Class: Senior  
Sport: Soccer  
**Accomplishments:** Piper helped Midland Dow kick off the season in style by scoring a hat trick in its 3-1 opener against Freeland. She will play soccer at the University of Indiana.



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

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### The Jason Clark File

Bay City Western High School

Class: Junior

Sport: Baseball

**Accomplishments:** Pitcher Clark went 10-2 last season and was the winning pitcher in the state title game. He retired the last six batters he faced in order in that game. Clark has helped Bay City Western get off to another fast start this season, as the Warriors are currently 12-2.



JASON CLARK



SCHOLAR - ATHLETE OF THE MONTH



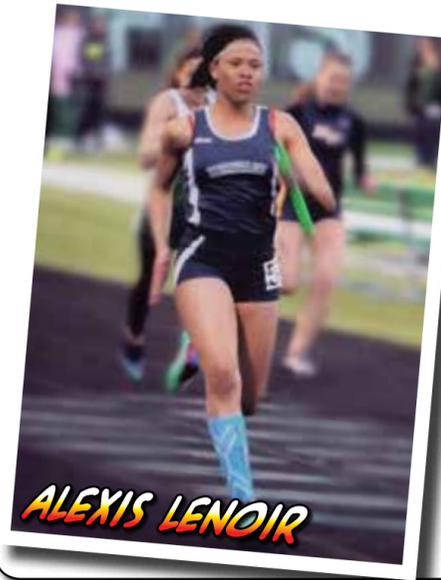
### The Alexis Lenoir File

Heritage High School

Class: Junior

Sport: Track

**Accomplishments:** Lenoir has amassed nearly 40 medals during her three seasons running for the Hawks. She is one of the top sprinters for Heritage this season.



ALEXIS LENOIR



SCHOLAR - ATHLETE OF THE MONTH



## Walled Lake Northern, Northville, Novi All Enjoying Big Seasons On Soccer Pitch

### Dan Stickrad Sports Scene

In distance, not much separates Walled Lake Northern, Northville, and Novi.

The three high schools are part of the mega Kensington Lakes Activities Association and are only about a dozen miles apart on a map. All three are ranked in MHSSCA Division 1 top 10 and are not only capable of contending for KLA A division and overall titles, but also capable of making deep runs in the postseason.

Novi has won five titles in the past decade, and Northville, which is normally in the same district, captured the Division 1 crown last year as part of a 23-0-0 perfect season. Walled Lake Northern, in its 13th school year, is a program on the rise, and the Knights were 9-0-1 at the end of April — their best start in school history.

Novi began the year 5-2-2 against top competition, while Northville, despite losing several offensive weapons to graduation, including two of the state's top three players, was 7-1-2 to start the year — the Mustangs' sole loss coming against Walled Lake Northern in the opener in late March.

Walled Lake Northern is the leader in the KLA A-North Division, while Novi and Northville are the co-favorites in the KLA A-Central Division.

In the KLA A, Brighton, Hartland, and Grand Blanc of the West Division are also having quality seasons, while Plymouth, Plymouth-Canton, and Livonia Churchill are battling for the crown in the South Division. Walled Lake Northern finished 13-4-2 last year and reached the Division 1 regional semifinal. With a loaded lineup that features several returnees plus others who gave up Elite Clubs National League (ECNL) commitments to help make the Knights a title contender.

Junior forward Devyn Brough (Auburn) is a quality goal scorer and Emma Voelker (Oakland) is a returning all-state senior midfielder. Senior midfielders Rachel Rodeheffer (Wisconsin-Milwaukee) and Marisa Pyden (Central Michigan) are quality playmakers, and senior defensemen Libby Cousino (Ohio Northern) and Caitlyn Oliver (Valparaiso) and senior goalkeeper Hayden Cesarz have all been rock solid in the backfield.

Northville put together one of the most memorable campaigns in 2014, running the tables, despite playing top-level competition. While the

Mustangs have come back down to earth and will not score 100-plus goals this season, scoring against them will still be a problem.

Senior Emily Maresh had 18 shutouts last season and has already recorded six clean slates this spring. Classmate Tara Pawloski and freshman Nikki Skinner have been steady in the back.

Sophomore Sydney Schembri has already committed to Xavier and is a reliable finisher at forward, as is senior Kelly McHugh. Seniors Alana Dorfstatter, Jenna Baughman, Sarah Castellano and Morgan Gozdor have stepped up and not only provide leadership but have also seen increased roles on a team still capable of reaching the state finals.

Novi lost a four starters to graduation and two others to ECNL. The Wildcats are still a quality team for new coach Todd Pfeiffer.

Junior midfielder Megan Riley, senior midfielder Christina Macmillan, junior forward Jessica Halmaghi, junior forward Chloe Allen, and senior center back Amanda Minisale (Saginaw Valley State) are all returning starters. They have guided the Wildcats through the terrain in the early season.

Freshmen midfielders Mikayla Lynch and Reily Schultz, freshman

forward Laine Fenchel, sophomore fullback Jaclyn Schubring and sophomore midfielder Gracie Backus have stepped into the lineup and have contributed.

Senior goalkeeper Arsha Dharia has in become solid in goal, as Novi remains one of the state's top programs.

### KLA A FLSHBACK

Novi is 5-0 in state title matches, the first win coming in 2005. Northville is 3-2 all time in Division 1/Class A finals and Walled Lake Northern has never advanced beyond the regional final.

The 24 current schools of the KLA A have combined for an 18-17 record in MHSAA Division 1/Class A/Open Class state title games.

Livonia Stevenson is 5-2 all-time in state championship matches, Plymouth-Canton 3-3, Plymouth Salem 1-1, Livonia Churchill 1-2, Brighton 0-5, Grand Blanc 0-1, and Plymouth 0-1.

In the very first MHSAA Open Class state final in 1983, Livonia Stevenson blanked the now-defunct Saginaw Eisenhower, 8-0, to set the tone for one of the state's best leagues, both by longevity and by current standards.

As of press time, Novi was sitting 5-2-2 heading into the final month of the regular season. Meanwhile, Northville is hoping to continue its hot start, while hoping to defend its Division 1 title from a year ago. (Submitted Photos)



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Mason and Lansing Catholic are two teams in the CAAC that will be hovering atop of the conference as the season progresses this spring. (Alan Holben Photos)

SPORTS SCENE'S **EYE ON BASEBALL**

# Batter-Up

## Area Baseball Teams Heading Home In Quest Of State Title

Butch Harmon  
Sports Scene

**DIVISION 1**  
**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Saline, Grosse Pointe South, Sterling Heights Stevenson.

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

Birmingham Brother Rice, Bay City Western, Howell, Rockford, Brighton.

Brother Rice has a talent-rich team led by one of the premier high school baseball players in America. Senior outfielder Nick Plummer is a multi-tool outfielder who is thought by many to be selected in the first round of this year's Major League Baseball draft. Plummer has already committed to the University of Kentucky. Slick-fielding shortstop Davis Feldman has committed to Eastern Michigan while junior power pitcher Karl Kauffmann has already committed to Michigan.

Defending state champ Bay City Western has a good core of talent back. Senior Carson Eby is a returning all-state player who can play multiple positions. Junior pitcher Jason Clark went 10-2 last season and was the winning pitcher in the state title game. Senior David Fegan returns to the outfield while junior Hunter David is a solid hitter and junior Brandon Wise will pitch and play third.

Howell returns a stockpile of talent. Chris Ackerman is a solid catcher while seniors Riley Bennett (2B) and Joe Corsten (SS) head up the middle infield with senior Austin Palo at first base. Senior Brendan Merians returns in the outfield. Sophomore shortstop Caleb Balgaard is a big-time talent who has already committed to Indiana.

Rockford has its usual roster choke full of talent. Senior pitcher Landon Haney is headed to Butler while shortstop Tyler Pellerito is another college recruit. The Rams also have a pair of dynamic junior arms in lefthander Bryce Kelley who is headed to Michigan State and righthander Jake Weisenburger who is headed to Michigan.

Brighton is led by senior pitchers Justin Steele, Zach Vitkuske and Alex Zielinski. Senior catcher Alex Dixon is another standout as is senior shortstop Collin McClelland.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Lake Orion is led by senior outfielder Miles Hardy along with pitcher Kenneth Guldi Jr. Junior pitcher Cameron Miller is a big-time talent that has committed to Central Michigan.

Clarkston has a strong pitching staff led by seniors D.J. Zezula, Andrew Dalrymple and Max Bain. Senior outfielder Joe Popp hit .440 last season.

Novi has a solid pair of pitchers in seniors Jason Pastoor and Adam Tobias. Senior outfielder Michael Mitchell heads up the offense.

Midland Dow is led by senior shortstop Connor Smith, a big-time talent that is headed to Western Michigan.

Bay City Central is led by senior pitchers Lennon Gwizdala and Tyler Wiecher.

St. Johns has a solid squad led by seniors Jimmy McKane on the mound and Jake Crum in the outfield. Junior Avery Maurer is a standout shortstop while sophomore Adam Proctor is a big-time talent behind the plate.

Holt has a veteran team that also includes some talented youngsters. Sophomore lefthanded pitcher Jesse Heikkinen has already committed to Michigan State.

Grand Ledge was hit hard by graduation but the two veterans it does return are talented. Senior pitcher Tyler Waldrop is an ace on the mound while second baseman Jake Ellis is an outstanding fielder and hitter.

**DIVISION 2**  
**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Milan, East Grand Rapids, Niles.

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

Mt. Pleasant, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep, DeWitt.

The defending D2 state champions, Mt. Pleasant has another talented squad. Junior Hunter Buczkowski is a dominating starter who went 8-2 with a 1.21 ERA last year. Logan Buczkowski is another player as is infielder Noah Ingram. Senior catcher Dan Keller hit .345 last year. Shortstop Obie Ricustrick is another talented infielder while junior third baseman Zach Heeke hit .417 with 34 RBI last year.

Notre Dame Prep has an overpowering pair of pitchers in seniors Will Mullen (6-4, 210) who is headed to Western Michigan and Luke Shilling (6-4, 250) who is headed to Illinois. The duo produces crackling fastballs and are both shutdown aces. Even more talent is found at third base with Jacob DePillo and pitcher Mark Marrone.

DeWitt suffered some heavy graduation losses but returns multi-talented shortstop Keaton Sackett. Senior catcher Connor Grice is a skilled backstop.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Orchard Lake St. Mary is led by senior pitcher Greg Loukinen who went 7-3 with a 1.81 ERA last year. Junior catcher Tyler Robbins has already committed to Michigan.

Fowlerville has a talented young team that returns senior outfielder Josh Bacha.

Williamston is led this season by senior pitcher/first baseman Lane Hodges and senior third baseman Garrett Nolan.

Linden has a solid, veteran-laden team. Seniors Austin Buerkel and Travis Petts head up the outfield. Senior Tim Sines tops the pitching staff with senior Brady Sarkon back behind the plate.

Owosso is building around senior pitchers Gavin Barnes and Jalen Weekley. Senior outfielders Adam Stowe and Grant Drake head up the offense.

Corunna is led by senior shortstop Brandon Michalec who earned all-conference honors last year. Senior outfielder Kyle Forbush and senior second base/pitcher Scottie Feldpausch also returns.

Alma has a strong core of pitchers led by senior Zach Hanson who went 6-2 with a 1.08 ERA last year and junior Justin Doyle. Sophomore Konner Vedrode is another young power arm who will also help out at the plate. Jared Peterman is another veteran returning while Tristan Villalobos is promising sophomore to keep an eye on.

Haslett has a talented team with a pitching staff anchored by senior Zach Berry and senior lefthander Thomas Johnston. Senior second baseman Trace Woodworth is a standout while junior Hunter Ruhstorfer is a talented infielder



The Mt. Pleasant baseball team is back this season to defend its Division 2 title. Over the last decade Mt. Pleasant has been one of the top teams in the state and this year should be no different. (Alan Holben Photo)

**DIVISION 3**  
**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Grosse Pointe University Liggett, Harper Woods Bishop Foley, Monroe Catholic.

**TOP AREA TEAM:**

Lansing Catholic Central, Reese, Sanford-Meridian.

Lansing Catholic is led by senior pitcher/third baseman Ryan Paul. Junior Riley Creamer is another solid pitcher who will also see time at shortstop.

Reese has a number of talented hitters this season including Ryan Maclin, Ryan Fisher, Jonah Jones, Jacob Hartman and Kyle Gnatkowski.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Sanford-Meridian is another area team capable of a deep post-season run.

Pewamo-Westphalia is led by senior infielder Trey Bauer who is a leading hitter. Junior Austin Lewis is another solid hitter who will see time on the mound. Senior Jay Thelen will pitch and play the outfielder while Simon Rademacher is another solid hitter.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary is led by senior catcher Bragg Eastin.

Montrose returns talented outfielder Mike Ross.

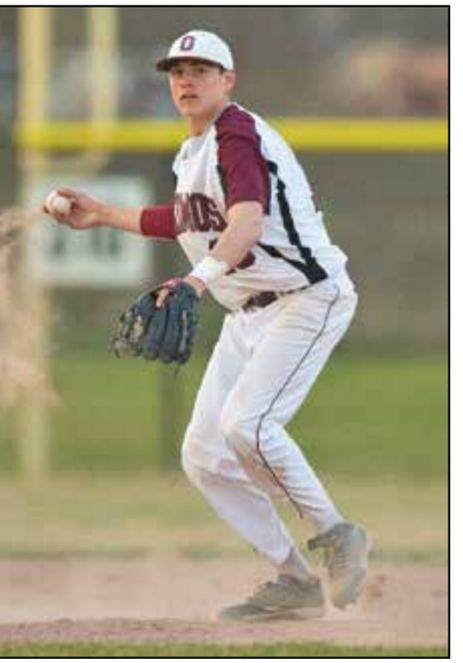
**DIVISION 4**  
**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Muskegon Catholic, Decatur, Hillman.

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

New Lothrop, Beal City, Breckenridge.

New Lothrop captured the state title last season and has a solid group of players returning this season.



Okemos is a team to watch early on in the 2015 baseball season in Division 1. (Alan Holben Photo)

Beal City reached the state finals a year ago and has another solid squad this season. Tucker Gross is a standout on the mound and at the dish. Brett Upton and Chase Rollin are two more experienced players who also do damage at the plate.

Breckenridge brings back one of the top individual talents in Division 4 in senior Wade SanMiguel. As a pitcher SanMiguel went 8-2 with a 1.26 ERA. At the plate he hit .595. Mitch Miller hit .356 last year while Devin Eastman is another returning hitter with pop. Cameron Foster joins SanMiguel as top pitchers.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Portland St. Patrick will be one to watch this season. Senior Joe Mackowiak is a steady shortstop and pitcher. Senior Connor Hengesbach returns behind the plate. Junior Travis Meyer is a pitcher and outfielder while sophomore Brendan Schrauben will pitch and also see time behind the plate.

Morrice is another solid D4 squad. The Orioles return senior pitcher/shortstop Garrett McPherson. Senior Mason Mendyk returns at second base and senior Dakota Ward is in the outfield.

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The Bay City Western baseball and softball teams are chasing another ring this season in Division 1. The baseball team will look to make it three straight championships while the softball team will look to defend its softball title. (Scott Keyes Photos)

# Title Defense

## Bay City Western Baseball, Softball Set To Defend Class A Championships

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

Bay City Western is current Division 1 state champion in both baseball and softball.

While no one is predicting repeat dual state titles for the Warriors, both teams seem to have enough talent to make it interesting in June.

Western baseball has earned back-to-back titles. The 2014 championship was a surprise to some, perhaps even to coach Tim McDonald, whose squad won 1-0 over Brother Rice in the 2013 title game and 6-2 over Grosse Pointe South last year.

But this is a brand-new season, McDonald points out. "We lost three senior starters who were big losses," McDonald said. "I've seen improvement in all of the returners. But they're just high school kids, so there's a fine line between trying to move on and make sure we don't dwell too much on last year. It's a good group. They're focused and they're hard workers and they're hungry."

"It's a new year. We've turned the

page. We're proud of what's happened the last two years. We've got some goals we want to meet this year, as well."

Top returners from last year include junior Jason Clark, who pitched a three-hitter in the state championship game as a sophomore, and No. 2 pitcher Brandon Wise, who also was a sophomore last season and who pitched a shutout in the quarterfinal.

"He's gotten better and made some strides from last year," McDonald said.

Alec Justin is a transfer from Midland Dow who gives Western depth in the pitching rotation.

Carson Eby is a three-year starter who was second-team all-state last season, and who has already signed with Saginaw Valley State University's baseball program.

David Fegan is the team's senior center fielder and lead-off hitter. "He's fast and has gotten off to a great start this year," McDonald said. "He makes our offense go from the lead-off spot."

Clark, a middle infielder when he doesn't pitch, is among his team's top



hitters. Hunter David, the starting right fielder, "will be the best example of someone who has a bigger role in terms of run production," McDonald said. "He's done well at that."

The team's philosophy has stayed the same. "We won't necessarily be the most talented team," McDonald said. "We expect to play close games. Our pitching will keep us in games and make us competitive. We pride ourselves on our defense. We will bunt a lot. That's no secret. We

pride ourselves on maybe doing more things right than the other team and finding ways to win."

While the baseball squad is going for a threepeat state title, the softball team will aim at being repeat champion under new coach Kris Popp, who was an assistant for two seasons.

Four girls graduated from the 2014 team, and two did not come back. The 2015 team has

started out 4-1. "We're doing OK," Popp said. "We won the county tournament."

It's still too early to predict the team's prospects. "By the end of the season, I think we'll be out of the growing pains phase and pretty well set in what they're doing," Popp said. "They need experience at the varsity level."

Top returners include Blair Miller, an outfielder and pitcher and top hitter. Kelsie Popp is

a second baseman and hits with power, Aliyha Vandervort will do most of the catching, and Madison Brewer will be the primary center fielder. Also back is Melissa Wegener at third base and outfield.

Teamwork will be a key this year, Popp indicated. "By the end, I think they'll be solid defensively," she said. "They'll be playing primarily the same positions all year."



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**SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON SOFTBALL**

# Weather Heating Up, Bats Get Going

## Area Teams Gearing Up For Stretch Run In Softball Season

Butch Harmon  
Sports Scene

**DIVISION 1**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Portage Central, Plymouth-Canton, Hudson-ville

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

Mercy, Lake Orion, Clarkston, Bay City Western  
Mercy may have the most devastating one-two hitting combination in the state, in senior Alex Sobczak and junior Abby Krzywiecki. A year ago, Sobczak hit .613 with nine home runs and 62 RBI. Krzywiecki hit .530 last season and is also strong on the mound, as she went 18-1 with a 1.62 ERA.

Lake Orion is strong in the circle, with senior pitcher Sierra Gonzales. Senior infielder Alex Carpenter hit .493 last season, while senior shortstop Rachel Dolland hit .433.

Clarkston, in the same district as Lake Orion, has a bevy of hitters. Senior Rachel Vieira, a Central Michigan University recruit, hit .500 last year, with six home runs and 44 RBI. Junior catcher Abby Skvarce, a University of Michigan recruit, hit .490 last season, while senior Mikayla Blaska hit .509.

Defending state champion Bay City Western was hit hard by graduation but still returns a good nucleus. Senior Blair Miller hit .441 last year with 25 RBI. An outfielder with a strong arm, she has stepped in at pitcher this season.

The Warriors also return veterans Kelsie Popp, Madison Brewer, and Melissa Wegener.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Bay City Central has a talented, veteran team this season. Senior Kelsey Coberley hit .487 with 21 RBI last year and struck out 147 batters as a pitcher. Senior Ally Skrzypczak hit .593 and drove in 36 runs, with senior Lauren Rogers returning to centerfield.

Midland is a strong group of hitters this season, led by Tara and Julia Gross, Maya Kieffmiller, and freshman Allison Gray.

Brandon is led by standout senior Katelyn Hendershott, who hit .527 last year and who had a 1.25 ERA as a pitcher.

Novi looks to be improved this year and is led by junior standout Nicole Ireland, who hit .385 last year with four home runs and 34 RBI.

St. Johns returns plenty of veteran talent. Senior Kayleigh Smith will pitch and play the outfield, while senior Alex Davis returns at first base. Junior Adriann Simison returns behind the plate.

Holt returns junior pitcher Bry Chapman, who earned all-state honors last year. The Rams also have senior Lindsay Reed in the middle infield and senior Ashley Lounds at first base.

**DIVISION 2**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Lakeshore, Wayland, Escanaba

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

Bullock Creek, Swan Valley, Portland

Vestaburg has picked up right where it left off a year ago, stringing together numerous solid outings to start the season. Vestaburg lost in the Division 4 semis to Kalamazoo Christian last year. (Chuck Prikasky Photos)

Bullock Creek suffered some graduation losses, but enough talent returns that it is again one of the top teams in the state. Shelby Bailey and Megan Robinette give the team some talented pitching. The potent offense is led by Sabrina Ferrell, Rylie Kalina, Ellie Juengel, Savannah Lambert, Bailey, and Robinette.

Swan Valley has plenty of new faces this season but plenty of talent, as well. Senior first baseman Paige Churchfield is a proven power hitter. Madison McLeod and Karlee Larson are also strong hitters. Callie Burgess is a solid hitter and one of the top pitchers. Kalynn Gulliver is another strong pitcher.

Portland is another young and highly talented team. Freshmen pitchers Shelby Battley and Abby Grys are a talented pair. Grys is also a solid hitter. Junior second baseman Olivia Roe is a big hitter as is Chloe Adams. Junior Rachel Click is an outstanding catcher and hitter, while Jaylen Barker returns in the outfield.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

John Glenn has a potent offense and is led by sophomore infielder Kennedy Clyde, who hit .486 last year with 10 home runs and 62 RBI.

Essexville-Garber has a potent offense this year, led by Allison Newton, Casey Blundell, and Kaylee Meyers.

Frankenmuth features strong pitching, with senior Amariah Wright. Wright is also part of a potent offense that includes Kayla Brooks, Ivy Holland, and Mackenzie Sipes.

Mt. Pleasant has a solid squad this season, led by pitcher Megan Kramer. Rebecca Curtis, Hannah Carson, and Kameron pace the offense.

Alma's offense is led by Kendall Vedrode, Taylor Kinunin, and Emmi and Evalan Vandemark. Amanda Efav heads up the pitching.

Ionia has a solid one-two pitching combination of Keegan Kelley and Bre Miller. The Bulldogs also have a solid offense, led by Cosby Franks, Rhyleigh Kelley, Ashley White, and Makayla Delo.

Lakewood has a solid one-two pitching combination of sophomores Kennedy Geiger and Miranda Barton. Kennedy Hilley leads the offense, along with Kate Richmond, Aaron Kietzman, and Geiger.

Eaton Rapids was hit hard by graduation but always has a solid squad. Senior shortstop Olivia O'Connor returns, along with outfielder Kay Zimmerman and Miranda Hector.

Owosso has a strong group of returnees, led by seniors Haylee Zyrowski, Brooklyn Jodway, and Sarah Vreibel.

**DIVISION 3**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Gladstone, Clinton, St. Mary Catholic Central

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

Valley Lutheran, Reese, Ithaca  
Valley Lutheran returns power hitter Gabrielle Newman, along with pitching standout Sydney Little.

Reese is led by the pitching of junior Kaylee Roles and Mackenzie Coulter. Senior Mikaela Stricker leads the offense, along with junior Maddie Coulter, Abbey Ackerman, and Carlee Selle.

Ithaca is primed for a big season with the return of junior standout Kylee Chaffin, who is a shortstop and pitcher. Freshman Kayla Belles will also pitch and play shortstop. Senior Kenzie Thompson returns at first base, and Courtney Cooley is at third. Brooklyn Dolloff is a talented junior outfielder.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Shepherd welcomes back junior Haley Buckley, who is a standout pitcher. Senior Charlie Bryant, a Central Michigan University recruit, hit .415 last season with 38 RBI. Rianne McKenna and Bailey Brown also add to the hitting.

Carson City-Crystal is strong in the circle, with pitching ace Whitney LaVictor.

Saranac is one of the premier teams in the Central Michigan Athletic Conference. Junior Maddie Miller and Josie Manion are a pair of pitching aces. The team has plenty of offense, with seniors Kaylee Hardy, Haley Lake, Macaela Perry, and Sydney Gage.

Lansing Catholic has a strong offense, paced by senior Eliese Hornberger, who hit .495 last year.

Perry is led on offense by senior Lauren Aldrich, who hit .457 last season with eight home runs.

**DIVISION 4**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Rogers City, Unionville-Sebawaing, Holton

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

Fowler, Coleman, Sacred Heart Academy

Fowler reached the state semifinal last June, where it fell to Rogers City. The Eagles have the talent to make a return trip this season. Senior shortstop Tori Wirth is a returning all-stater. In the circle is talented pitcher Sydney Feldpausch, who was honorable-mention all-state. Kara Schafer is a returning all-state catcher, while junior Taylor Schmitt is back at second base.

Coleman has an imposing offensive team, led by junior Grace Staley, who hit .505 last year with 24 RBI. Junior third baseman Carley Starnes hit .403 last season. The Comets also return senior outfielder Chelsea Gordon, along with pitchers Laken Berthume and Miranda Coty.

Sacred Heart Academy is paced by senior Riley Terwilliger. Terwilliger hit .430 last year and is helping with the pitching this season. Lauren Fox is the ace of the staff that also includes Lexie Methner, who is a top hitter. Freshman shortstop Hayden Terwilliger is a newcomer to watch.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Morrice has a solid team this spring, led by junior catcher Averi Munro, a returning all-state player. Senior Lauren Barnes returns at first base, and senior Melissa Allen is at second base. Sophomore Julie O'Berry is stepping up at pitcher. Vestaburg reached the state semifinal a year ago. Almost all of the starters off that team graduated, so rebuilding is in the cards this spring.

Beal City is led by standout senior Jordan Schneider.

Breckenridge has a solid pair of pitchers in Sydney Sheldon and Holly Gregory. Sheldon and Gregory are also part of a potent offense that includes Nicole Olander, Kirby Huntoon, and Emily Chapin.

Both the Lansing Catholic and Mason softball teams should have competitive seasons in their respective divisions heading into the last half of the season. (Alan Holben Photos)



Swan Valley and Bullock Creek will be fighting it out all season in their quest to capture the Tri Valley Central Division title. (Scott Keyes Photo)



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# Meet Shiawassee County's **YOUNG OWOSSO** Teams To Watch

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## YOUNG OWOSSO



### The Owosso Boys Track and Field Team File

Led by a talented trio in the shot put, the Owosso boys track and field team placed ninth at the Michigan State University True Team Invitational. Tyler Waterman won the event with a personal-best put of 48'2". Parker Thornton placed fifth with a put of 43'3", while Zach Reed was seventh with a put of 42'1".



### The Corunna Girls Track and Field Team File

The Corunna girls placed fourth at the Michigan State University True Team Invitational. Rylie Martin led the way, as she won the pole vault with a vault of 9'6". Hannah Caswell placed second in the 60-meter hurdles with a time of 10.30 seconds, while Meredith Norris took second in the high jump with a jump of 4'10". Myah Kelly placed fourth in the pole vault, while Hannah Dean placed fifth in the shot put.



### The Corunna Boys Track and Field Team File

The Corunna boys track and field team turned in a big effort and placed second in the small school division at the Michigan State University True Team Invitational. Blake Watson won the 1600-meter run in 4:33.45, while Noah Jacobs won the 3200-meter run in 9:58.72. Marshall Walters won the 60-meter hurdles in 8.85 seconds. Mike Newman tied for first place in the pole vault with a vault of 11'6". Kyle Mesh took third in the 3200-meter run, and Cameron Welte took third in the 60-meter hurdles.



### The Chesaning Boys Track and Field Team File

The Chesaning boys track and field team turned in a big win when it took first place at the Ithaca Blue and Gold Invitational. Sprinters led the way, as junior Bryan Moore won the 100-meter dash in 11.36 seconds and senior Travis Young took second in 11.31. Moore also placed second in the 200-meter dash. Chesaning also won both the 4x100 and 4x200 relays. Senior Kody Keys won the pole vault with a vault of 12'0", while freshman Brandon Keys won the long jump with a leap of 19'4".



Skip Traynor Photos

# Meet Swan Valley's Paige Churchfield

## Gives Insight On What It's Like To Be Lone Senior On Vikings Team

### Sports Scene

**Q:** Can you discuss what it's like being the lone senior on a Swan Valley team that is normally loaded with upperclassmen?

**A:** It's definitely odd being the only senior this year and having so many young, first-year varsity players on the team. I'm used to being one of the youngest and having so many upperclassmen to look up to, but now that's my job for the rookies coming in.

**Q:** Being the only senior, what kind of advice do you give to some of the younger players on the team?

**A:** Being the only senior, I just want to be a good role model for the younger girls on the team. They're all in a different position than I was when I was the youngest on the team, because I was used to having so many seniors and juniors above me. It was scary but an honor. I know how nervous the rookies on the team were when they first started the year, especially the pitchers, since they're both freshmen. All I have to say is, work your hardest at practice and don't get down when you have a bad play on the field. Pick your head up and make the next play count. Four years goes by fast, so make every moment worth it.

**Q:** Early in the season, you have been clutch at the plate for your team. How cool is it to have a walk-off hit to give your team a victory in its last at bat?

**A:** My walk-off homerun against Mt. Pleasant was probably my favorite part of the season so far. They have always been good competition for us, as we've played them in districts every year since I've been on the team.

**Q:** How strange is it knowing that you are heading into the final month of school and knowing you will be wearing the uniform for the last time?

**A:** It's bittersweet thinking about how this is my last month of high school. I know even though I am really excited right now to start the next chapter, I will be sad when it comes down to the final days of high school. What I will miss most about high school is being a part of the softball team at Swan Valley.

**Q:** What is your biggest fear at the plate or in the field?

**A:** I would say I'm more confident at the plate this year than any year before. I got a lot stronger over the winter and worked a lot on hitting the pitches that I struggled with last year. My biggest fear at the plate is being under pressure when it comes down to being the last batter, with two outs, in a close game.

**Q:** How cool has it been to be able to play for such a legendary coach as Tom Kennelly?

**A:** It's been an honor to be coached by a Hall of Fame coach. TK has taught me a lot and has helped make me a better player. I give him a lot of credit for my accomplishments.

**Q:** What are some common misconceptions about TK that some people might have?

**A:** TK is known to be intense, and some people may say he's "scary." It's how he is, and I'm sure that'll never change, even if he tried to calm down. Some people may get the wrong impression of him that don't know him personally. It's his way of coaching, and there obviously isn't anything wrong with it, seeing how successful him and his teams have been.

**Q:** Being such a sports fan, what are some of your favorite teams and why?

**A:** Some of my favorite sports teams are the Detroit Red Wings and the Detroit Tigers, because how can you not root for your hometown teams? The Los Angeles Angels, because Mike Trout is my man, and any University of Michigan sports team...GO BLUE!!

**Q:** What are some of the things you are going to miss about being a Viking?

**A:** Once a Viking, always a Viking, but I will miss putting on the jersey every spring, that's for sure. It's something special to be able to wear purple and represent Swan Valley. I've been blessed with such amazing teachers, coaches, and classmates, and I will definitely miss it.

**Q:** Finally, what does the future hold for Paige Churchfield?

**A:** In August, I will be starting my journey at Lourdes University, where I will further my softball career and major in biology to get my veterinary medicine degree. It's a perfect fit for me, and I can't wait to start the next chapter of my life as a Gray Wolf.



Paige Churchfield is the lone senior on this year's Swan Valley softball team. Churchfield's coach Tom Kennelly will rely on her quite a bit as the season progresses, but Churchfield said she is up for the challenge. (Scott Keyes Photos)

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# SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON LACROSSE

## Brother Rice Cream Of Crop In Boys Lacrosse

Butch Harmon  
Sports Scene  
DIVISION 1

Brother Rice has won 12 straight state championships, and the Warriors are the premier team in Michigan again this year. Senior John Lockwood leads the offense, while fellow senior Bo Pickens paces the defense. The Warriors also boast talented junior standouts in defenders Brian Cosgrove and James Scane and attacker Morgan Macko.

Detroit Country Day, the Division 2 state champion a year ago, has moved up to Division 1 this season. The Yellowjackets have one of the top players in the state in senior midfielder Nick Martin. Martin, who has committed to Syracuse University, tallied 25 goals last year. Devon Callaghan and Emilio Sosa are two more talented senior attackers. Junior defender Jonathon Boos is a returning all-state pick as is senior long stick Jack Hartje.

Detroit Catholic Central was hit hard by graduation, but, as usual, boasts some talented players. Senior Dan Diederich is back to anchor the defense. Juniors Alex Jarzembowski and Andrew Caris are a pair of returning all-state players who patrol the midfield.

Clarkston has another solid team this season. The Wolves are led by a pair of Michigan State University recruits in senior attacker Andrew Williamson and senior defender Dayne Rogers.

Brighton is paced by senior standout Connor Konas, who has committed to the University of Indianapolis. Junior attackers Dylan Mercier and Jake Desrosiers lead the offense.

Novi has a solid defensive team, paced by returning all-stater Tommy McMaster. Lucas Buck and Brendan Bollinger also return to the defense.

Hartland is led this spring by midfielders Nathan Lipon and Eric Shenck and defender Nolan Mince.

Holt has one of the top defensive players in mid Michigan in senior Logan Monroe, who has committed to Canisius College. Senior Connor Webster and junior Levi Peterson are a pair of all-staters who return in the midfield.

### DIVISION 2

With Detroit Country Day in Division 1 this season, a new champion will be crowned in Division 2. Cranbrook-Kingswood, last year's runner-up and the 2013 state champion, is poised to regain the top spot. The Cranes have one of the premier defenders in the state in University of Notre Dame recruit Michael Langdon. Senior Johnny Wagner, who scored 55 goals a year ago, leads the offense. Junior all-stater Jack Staab also returns.

Forest Hills Central is one of the top teams in the state. The Rangers are led by defenseman J.T. Hudson, who is headed to Michigan State University.

Okemos is the premier team in the Lansing area this spring. The Chieftains have an outstanding defense, led by goalkeeper Cole Jamieson and defenders Sam Horton and Cam Usiak. Blake Turner, a University of Detroit recruit, heads up the offense.

Notre Dame Preparatory is another team with a strong defense. Juniors Joe Kalas and Ian Genord head up the Notre Dame defense.



Rochester and Waverly lacrosse teams tangle during an early season battle in Lansing. Waverly went on to win the game 14-4. (Alan Holben Photos)

## Rockford Girls Back For More

Butch Harmon  
Sports Scene  
DIVISION 1

Rockford has won the past two Division 1 state lacrosse titles, and the Rams are in good position for a three-peat. They are a tremendous defensive team, led by goalkeeper Katie Elwell and defender Kelly Spehar. Both players have committed to the brand-new lacrosse team at Central Michigan University. The Rams also have one of the top midfielders in the state in junior

Alexandra Vander Molen, who has already committed to Ohio State University. Junior midfielder Zoe Neumann is another talented player, who has also committed to Central Michigan.

Marian and Birmingham United will be two challengers for Rockford. Both have deep and talented squads.

Hartland also has an outstanding team. The Eagles are paced by goalkeeper Alyssa Hopkins. Danielle Porath and junior Maddie

Companella return at midfield.

Novi features a strong defensive team this season. Megan Yarberry anchors the defense, while junior attacker Gina Salemi paces the offense.

South Lyon United is led by senior attacker Hannah Burczyk, who is headed to the University of Indianapolis.

Holt has a solid squad. It is led by twins Kate and Laura McKee, who have also committed to Indianapolis.

### DIVISION 2

East Grand Rapids has won three straight state championships, and it will be an upset if it doesn't make it four in a row this year. The Pioneers have already defeated Rockford this season. They have two of the premier players in the state in seniors Liz Elder and Katherine Golladay. Elder has already committed to Big 10 power Northwestern University, while Golladay has committed to the University of Maryland. Senior midfielder Cydney Vanhoven is headed to Central Michigan University.

Okemos placed second in the state last year. It has plenty of talent, led by senior attacker Natalie

Bloniarz, who is headed to Central Michigan. Senior Darby Hopper leads the defense, while junior midfielder Angela Palmer and junior attacker Kendall Luberto are two other talented players.

Cranbrook-Kingswood is among the top teams in the state this year, as are Academy of the Sacred Heart and Detroit Country Day.

Williamston-Haslett is a solid squad led by returning all-state midfielder Kenzie O'Brien. Alex Yates is back in goal, while junior Hannah Alverson is a strong defender. Junior Kaili Gozalka leads the attack on offense.



The Rockford girls lacrosse team will look to defend its D1 title this season. (File Photo)

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# Alma Off To Strong Spring Sports Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

The Alma girls track team has been handling the spring weather just fine.

In mid April, the girls won over Chesaning, 97-30. Sophomores Madison Doolittle and Tayla Guerrero and freshman Morgan Johnson led the way, winning all four of their events. Sophomore Anna Johnston added three wins for the Panthers. On the boys' side, senior Chase Austin sparked the team, as he swept the hurdle events.

On April 25, Alma had a key performance in the Warrior Invitational at Chippewa Hills. Guerrero was fourth in the 100-meter dash at 13.653 seconds. Johnston was fifth in the 200-meter dash with a time of 29.38. Doolittle was third in the 100-meter hurdles in 17:52 and third in the 300-meter hurdles in 51.15.

Elizabeth Gotaas was 10th in the 1,600-meter run in 6:03.48 and was ninth in the 3,200-meter run in 13:14.19. The foursome of Johnston, Doolittle,

Guerrero, and Mariah Castillo was third in the 4x100 relay in 53.92 seconds. The foursome of Alyx Wesley, Castillo, Guerrero, and Doolittle was second in the 4x400 relay in 4:32.09.

Marissa Corneo was eighth in the shot put at 28'1" and seventh in the discus at 84'8". Guerrero was fifth in the long jump at 13'4".

## GOLF

Cody Yates has gotten off to a strong start for Alma coach JT Cleveland's boys' golf team this season. He had a strong performance at the Panther Invitational in mid April. Alma was third in a 15-

team field. Houghton Lake took first and Butternut Homeschool placed second.

Yates, a junior, took fifth place overall with 83. Brock Martin, a sophomore, was Alma's No. 2 golfer with 94.

## TENNIS

Isabella Rivera, a senior, is the No. 1 singles player for Alma. She has started out 2-3, including a victory over Ithaca.

The Alma boys and girls track teams are both off to solid starts in the 2015 season. Despite being young both teams will be in the mix in the Tri-Valley Central this season. (Submitted Photos)



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# SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON TRACK

## Avondale's Hollomon Going For The Tri-Gold

### Dan Stickrad Sports Scene

AUBURN HILLS — When Joshua Hollomon looks at his school's record board, his name is absent.

Despite an incredible prep track and field career, Hollomon, now a senior at Avondale, does not own any individual school records in either open events or relays. Still, he is one fast prep runner.

"I don't really look at the records. It's not why I race," said Hollomon, who is in his fourth season of varsity races. He races to win and help lead his track team to some impressive finishes.

Last season, the 5-foot-11-inch, 185-pound Hollomon was a key cog in the Yellowjackets' runner-up finish at the Division 2 state finals. He blazed a trail to win both the 100-meter-dash (10.75 seconds) and the 200-meter dash (22.21), and he anchored the 800-meter relay to a third-place finish (1:29.67).

As a freshman, Hollomon was part of Avondale's state championship team. He qualified for the state finals in the 200-meter dash but finished last in his heat and did not contribute to Avondale's team scoring.

His sophomore year, Avondale was bumped up to Division 1. The speedy Hollomon turned some heads by winning the 100-meter dash (11.11) at the state finals and helping his team finish 18th overall in the team standings with 13 points.

Avondale was moved back down to Division 2 in 2014, and Hollomon continued to shine. He backed up his stellar sophomore campaign last year at the finals by finishing as the state's fastest with the

two individual titles. His efforts aided the Yellowjackets' team state runner-up finish.

"He's a very talented, fast young man," said Avondale coach Shelby Johnson, who is in his second season with the Yellowjackets. "It's not too often you get to coach a kid of his caliber. He's a competitor. He does not like to lose."

Hollomon has recorded a time of 10.5 seconds in the 100 and 21.8 seconds in the 200 during his career. But it's Hollomon's performance, not necessarily his time, that drives him at every meet.

"I don't care if I ever set a record. What I want to do is train hard and try to repeat in the 100 and 200," said Hollomon, who has gone 4.26 in the 40-yard dash at football combines. "If I don't win a race, it says that I haven't worked hard enough, haven't trained right. My team expects me to win and get us those points. I don't like to lose."

Hollomon will attend the University of Cincinnati, heading to campus at the end of June. He will compete in both football and track and field for the Bearcats.

"You can't teach speed," noted Avondale football coach Steve Deutsch, also a former track and field coach. "He's the fastest kid in the state."

Hollomon hopes to lead Avondale to its fifth top-five finish in six years at the state meet and hopes to defend his 100- and 200-meter dash titles this season.

"The goal is to go out there and win the 100 and 200 and try to get our relays [to qualify and place] at the state meet," said Hollomon, whose older brother and father also starred at Avondale. "It's all about hard work, training hard, getting out of the blocks fast."



Joshua Hollomon is widely considered one of the top sprinters in Michigan. Hollomon will play his college football at the University of Cincinnati. (Submitted Photo)

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# Going For Broke

## Holloman, Grace Among Top Sprinters In State; Duel In Finals Possible

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

**DIVISION 1**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

East Kentwood, Oak Park, Saline, Jackson

**TOP LOCAL TEAMS:**

Walled Lake Central, Clarkston, East Lansing, Grand Blanc, Grand Ledge

Walled Lake Central placed 10th in Division 1 last season and has a ton of talent back this year. Senior Nick Krumm is a standout hurdler, while Parker Krupic is a two-time state qualifier in the pole vault. A host of sprinters also return.

Clarkston has a solid squad full of talented athletes. Nolan Erksen leads a strong group of sprinters, while Merrick Canada is a standout in the high jump and long jump. Grant Henley leads a strong corps of distance runners.

East Lansing placed ninth at state last season. The Trojans have a pair of talented sprinters in junior Josh Smith and sophomore Kentre Patterson. Senior Lawrence Davis is a standout in the 200-meter dash, while junior Heath Williams is a standout in the shot put.

Grand Blanc took fourth at state last season and always has a large and talented team. Josiah Smith is a standout sprinter, while senior Austen Mandermach and sophomore Nathan Peterson lead a deep group of distance runners.

Grand Ledge returns plenty talent from a team that placed seventh at state. Junior Ba Blamo is a standout sprinter who placed fifth at state in the 100-meter dash last season. The Comets also have a large group of distance runners, led by senior Jack Twarozynski, junior Nathan Goschka, and sophomores Christian Hubaker and Tyler McCartney.

**MORE LOCAL TEAMS TO WATCH:**  
Holt has a solid group of athletes, led by sprinter DeShaun Lowery. Senior Tyler Todd is a standout high jumper, while sophomore Nate Wilson is a long jumper to watch.

Lake Orion has won back-to-back regional titles and has a strong crew again this season, led by junior sprinter Sheldon Drake. It is also strong in the distance events, with Andrew Lorant leading the way.

Detroit Catholic Central has plenty of depth. Lance Yassy is a two-time state qualifier in the high jump.

Swartz Creek placed eighth in the state last season. The Dragons are strong in the field events, with junior Brett Pero in the high jump and long jump and junior Kevondre Williams in the throws.

Davison is poised for a big season. The Cardinals are deep in distance runners, led by seniors Joe Renner, Nick Schmidt, and Dillon Welliver. Corran Thornton is solid in the high jump.

Carman-Ainsworth is always strong in the field events, and that is no different this season. Senior Devonte Johnson placed fifth in the pole vault last year. Junior Caron Ruffin is back in the throws, and senior Tyler Minor is a returning

long jumper to watch. The Cavaliers also return distance standout Tyler Pangerl and hurdler Cahliil Brownlee.

Waterford Mott is poised for a big year behind distance runner Ryan Robinson. Bogdan Grymut and Blake Borkowski lead the middle distance crew.

Lakeland has one of the top high jumpers in the state. Cody Stemple took second at state last year with a jump of 6'9".

Novi has a deep team, led by sprinters Nauto Hikawa and Aahmaud Jenkins and middle distance runners Collin Thomas and Nathan Hall.

Midland Dow is paced by senior sprinter Nick Coon, who is one of the top sprinters in the Saginaw Valley League.

**DIVISION 2**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Zeeeland West, Byron Center, Melvindale

**TOP LOCAL TEAMS:**

Avondale, St. Mary's Preparatory, Waverly

Avondale has one of the top sprinters in the state in senior Joshua Holloman, the two-time defending state champion in the 100-meter dash.

St. Mary's Prep placed fourth at state last season and returns its usual talent-laden lineup. Sophomore Kahle Hamler is a top sprinter, while senior Collin Herrmann heads up the distance group.

Waverly has plenty of speed in the sprint corps, led by DaVarie Halliburton and Qadir Muhammad.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**  
Mason placed seventh at state last season and has another strong team this spring. Senior Derek Troxell is one of the top hurdlers in the area. Junior sprinter Joe Grundstrom, junior thrower Justin Scavarda, senior high jumper Nathan Hanis, and junior pole vaulter Jarrett VanHavel also lead the way.

Williamston also placed in the top ten last year. The Hornets have another solid group, led by senior sprinter Brady Bastien and senior middle distance runner Hunter Grischke.

Linden features solid throwers this year, seniors Kyle Korman and Andy Roberts.

DeWitt is also strong in the field, with senior thrower Jadante Brown and junior pole vaulter Matt Meagher.

Owosso has a solid all-around team this spring. The Trojans are led by senior hurdler Dylan Brooks, junior sprinter Nick Delaney, sophomore sprinter Jay Michels, freshman distance runner Andrew Dallas, and a strong group of throwers that includes seniors Tyler Waterman and Zach Roberts.

Corunna has an outstanding group of distance runners that includes senior Dylan Wilbert, juniors Blake Watson and Jacob Trowbridge, and sophomores Noah Jacobs and Kyle Mesh. Senior Marshall Walters is a strong hurdler, junior Spencer Mort heads up the sprints, and seniors Josh Hanifan and Cooper Clapp are strong throwers.

Swan Valley features one of the top sprinters in the area in senior Alex Grace.

Freeland features some solid field athletes, led by senior Jake Jankoska in the long jump and pole vault and junior Ben Whiting in the long jump and high jump. Senior Ryan Schauman is another talented long jumper, and Anthony Cook is a top thrower. Seniors Matt Denby and Gage Armstrong are strong hurdlers.

St. Johns has a solid group of athletes this season. Junior Steven Linton is a talented sprinter and is joined by senior distance runner Codey Cook and junior long jumper Jake Eaton.

Charlotte is paced by senior middle distance runner Tyler Davis, sophomore sprinter Justin Anderson, senior distance runner Miles Garn, and senior long jumper Jared Dewey.

Lakewood has one of the top young hurdlers in the area in sophomore Noah Caudy.

Cedar Springs has a promising team this spring, led by senior sprinter Mavrick Cotton, senior distance runner Austin Sargent, senior thrower Caden Burrows, and junior pole vaulter Reminton Sawade.

Central Montcalm is led by junior sprinter Logan Davis, along with senior distance runner Joe Baldwin and senior high jumper Mason Barmwell.

Chippewa Hills is paced by senior sprinter Eric Russell, junior hurdler John Wixson, and sophomore distance runner Andrew Ashbaugh.

Mt. Pleasant boasts plenty of skill this spring. Juniors Jack Mogg and Jack Kea lead the sprint corps, while sophomores Mac LaBelle and Tyler Funke lead the distance parade. Senior Gavin Thayer and sophomore Sloan Felton are talented hurdlers.

**DIVISION 3**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Mason County Central, Hillsdale, Standish-Sterling

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

Meridian, Lansing Catholic, Clare

Meridian brought home the Division 3 state title last year. While some key athletes graduated, the team has some skilled athletes back. Christian Petre heads up a strong group of sprinters that includes Jonas Leal, Adam Slavik, and Miles Levriere. Travis Webb is a talented hurdler.

Lansing Catholic placed fourth at the state meet a year ago. The Cougars have plenty of talent on hand this year, led by junior Tony Palmer and sophomore Konner Maloney in the sprints and seniors Keenan Rebera and Jeffery Lorencen in the distance runs. Senior Jack Peters is a solid long jumper.

Clare has a deep squad led by senior sprinters Will Boberg and Joe Huston. Senior Kevin Spicer-Torres heads up the middle distance. In the field, it is paced by junior pole vaulter Chase Field and throwers senior Tyler Gillespie and junior Levi Boynton.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**  
Frankenmuth is primed for a strong season, led by senior sprinter Denver Bonkowski, senior thrower Matt McGee, and sophomore high jumper Grant Bronner.

Valley Lutheran is led by senior sprinter Connor LeRoy.

Chesaning is loaded with talent this season. The sprint corps is broken, led by senior Travis Young and junior Bryan Moore. Sophomore Zach McFarlan specializes in the 200-meter

dash, while the 400-meter dash has a pair of blazers in senior Harrison Ervin and freshman Sam Forsyth. Chesaning also looks to score points in the field, with senior pole vaulter Kody Keys and freshman long jumper Brandon Keys.

Ovid-Elsie is paced by junior middle distance runner Dakota Pfeiffer and junior hurdler Isaiah Medina.

Pewamo-Westphalia has another solid team. Senior Matthew Schmitt heads up the sprints, with senior Zach Schafer leading the middle distances, senior Caleb Baker the distance runs, and sophomore Jared Smith the hurdles. In the field events, senior Stanley Fink and Dane Van Ells head up the throwers, while senior pole vaulter Kyle Spitzley is another standout.

Saranac features one of the top distance runners in senior Brendan Klynstra.

Carson City-Crystal is paced by senior thrower Joshua Coston and senior Kolton Kavanagh, who is strong in the high jump and the 400-meter dash.

Lakeview features one of the premier long jumpers in mid Michigan in senior Drake Boomer. Boomer has already jumped 21'11" this spring.

Farwell returns talented senior hurdler Cameron Dishrow and has a strong long jumper in Brandon Buccilli.

**DIVISION 4**  
**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Concord, Saugatuck, Kalamazoo Christian

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

Southfield Christian, Michigan Lutheran Seminary, Coleman, Breckenridge

Southfield Christian placed third at state last year. Senior Blake Washington heads up the sprinters, and the team is also solid in the relays.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary is paced by talented sophomore Casey Williams, who has already long jumped 22'8" this season and is a top sprinter.

Coleman has some outstanding field athletes, with senior Jarid Walton in the high jump and junior Elliot Murray in the pole vault. Senior Levi Veltkamp is a skilled hurdler.

Breckenridge is poised for a big season. Junior Gavi Marr is a speedy middle distance runner, while senior Austin Brittain in an outstanding distance runner. Senior Kyle Smith is talented enough to win both the shot and discus at the state meet after placing in both last year.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**  
Crossroads Academy placed sixth at state last year. Senior Andy Duddles leads the team this year, as he is a standout in both the 400-meter dash and the long jump.

Beal City is paced by senior distance standout Nick Pung, along with junior thrower Nash Reeves.

Montabella features a stand-out in the pole vault in senior Zach Taubitz.

Fulton is led this spring by senior thrower Caleb Feldpaush



The country's top distance runner, Grand Blanc's Grant Fisher, looks to defend his 3,200 meter championship in 2015. (File Photo)

and senior distance runner Bohdan Hartman.

Fowler is led by senior thrower Mitch Mills and freshman sprinter Brand Thelen.

Portland St. Patrick Catholic is led by junior Isaac Brown, who is a standout in the 800-meter and 1600-meter runs.

Lansing Christian is paced by senior Trace Henderson in the 800-meter run.

Morrice is primed for a strong season. The Orioles are led by senior sprinter Logan Palmer, junior middle distance runner Jake Rivers, and junior thrower Joe Wesley.

New Lothrop features senior hurdler Spencer Wendling and junior thrower Don Quaderer.

Saginaw Arts & Sciences has one of the top sprinters in junior Sean Beckom, who has already run the 100-yard dash in 10.94 seconds and the 200-yard dash in 23.05 seconds this spring.



Swan Valley's Alex Grace is considered one of the top sprinters in the state this season. (Scott Keyes Photo)

# On Your Mark

## Can Frankenmuth Repeat? Many Questions Remain For Local Teams

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

**DIVISION 1**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

East Kentwood, Oak Park, Northville

**TOP LOCAL TEAMS:**

Rockford, Birmingham Seaholm, Walled Lake Northern, Davison

Rockford placed fourth in the state last season and has an eye on a lofty finish this season. Senior Sammy Cuneo is one of the premier sprinters in the state. Sophomore Olivia Rademacher is an outstanding hurdler, while senior Maegan McCarthy is an outstanding thrower. The Rams also excel in the relays.

Seaholm has a dynamic pair of distance runners in Audrey Belf and Rachel DaDamio. Madison Merridith is an outstanding sprinter for a team that placed fifth at state a year ago.

Walled Lake Northern has a deep and talented squad. Senior Riley Johnson is a strong thrower.

Davison returns plenty of talent from a squad that placed 12th at state last year. Sophomore Ara Wilson is a talented high jumper. Senior Nicole Martinbianco and junior Clara Robinson are talented sprinters. Senior Amanda George leads the distance crew, while senior Courtney Gifford is a solid hurdler.

**MORE LOCAL TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Novi has plenty of depth and skill. Senior Hannah Lonergan is the leader of a strong distance crew, while senior Logan Flynn is a solid sprinter.

Brighton is a team with plenty of talented youngsters. Junior Erin Dowd is a strong hurdler, and sophomores Sam Fusik and Miranda Reynolds are standouts in the 800-meter run. Freshman Alexa Spaanstra is making a big impression in the 200- and 400- meter dashes.

Milford has a well-balanced and veteran squad. Senior Madison Paquette leads the distance crew. It is strong in the field events, with senior Dana Shove in the discus and senior Whitney Mergens in the jumps.

Farmington Hills Harrison is led by one of the premier sprinters and hurdlers in the state in senior Maya Roberts.

Waterford Mott is paced by sophomore middle distance runner Alexis Munley and freshman Katie Osika, a standout in the 800-meter run.

Clarkston is led by senior hurdler Taylor Mull-ins. The Wolves are strong in the field events, with junior high jumper Megan Nicholson. Junior Nicole Hanson leads the distance crew.

Flushing has one of the top high jumpers in the state in junior Bre Perry. Senior Addie May is a standout in the distance races.

Midland Dow sophomore Emily Wall is strong

in the middle distance events.

Midland looks to make a move in the Saginaw Valley League. Sophomore Jayden Williams is a standout sprinter. Senior Rachel Levy is an outstanding distance runner, while junior Rebekah Walter is a top hurdler.

East Lansing features a strong group of relay teams. Sophomore Taylor Manson is a standout in the 200- and 400-meter dashes, with junior Brianna Wells a solid high jumper.

Grand Ledge has a solid group of field athletes, led by senior long jumper Hailey French. Junior Nicole Novak is a standout in the 200-meter dash, while sophomore Jenna Magness is a top distance runner.

Greenville has one of the most versatile and talented sophomore classes in the state. Landon Kemp is an outstanding hurdler, who also scores points in the long jump and pole vault. Haley Peters is also a solid hurdler.

**DIVISION 2**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Spring Lake, Divine Child Catholic, Forest Hills Eastern

**TOP LOCAL TEAMS:**

Chippewa Hills, Waverly, Williamston, Flint Southwestern

Chippewa Hills captured the state title last season, and the Warriors have the talent to repeat. They are solid in the field, with senior jumper Emonee' Anderson, junior high jumper Jennifer McNeal, and throwers Rachel Baldwin and Michaela Whipple. Freshman Hannah Todd is a speedy sprinter who joins junior Nicole Snyder in the sprint crew. Senior Kylie Schafer heads up the middle distances, junior Joelle Humpula is the top hurdler, and senior Emily Starck leads the distance crew.

Waverly has plenty of youth and speed. Freshman Maya Garrett is making an impact in the 200-meter dash, while sophomore Teaghan Thomas is a standout high jumper.

Williamston is poised for a big season this year, led by a strong senior class that includes Sarah Schultz, a top high jumper and middle distance runner, and Paige Dutcher, a long jumper. Sophomore Grace Lounsberry is a standout hurdler, and senior Jessica Lycos is a strong high jumper. Juniors Laura Nemeth, Julia Henderson, and Taylor Condit lead a strong corps of sprinters.

Flint Southwestern has plenty of talent, led by senior sprinter Mildrenea Young, senior hurdler Danielle Horton, and senior long jumper Miaisha Blair.

**MORE LOCAL TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Detroit Country Day has one of the top sophomore hurdlers in the state in Michaiah Thomas. Jackie Bredenber is a standout distance runner.

Fowlerville is led by junior sprinter standout Emma Roodell.

Powers Catholic is led on the track by junior hurdler Tyra Hunter and in the field by junior thrower Nikole Sargent.

Swan Valley is paced by standout junior Lauren Huebner, who is one of the top hurdlers in the state and who is also a standout long jumper.

Corunna has a strong group of seniors, led by Rylie Martin, a standout in the pole vault, along with freshman Myah Kelly. Martin is also a sprinter. Senior Hannah Dean is a standout in the throws, while sophomore Meredith Norris is a talented high jumper. Senior Emily Mesh leads the distance crew, with sophomore Avery Lovejoy a middle distance talent and sophomore Baylee Balcom a strong hurdler.

Owosso has one of the premier middle distance runners in the state in senior Dillon McClintock. Senior Anna Schultabers and junior Erin Konopacke are strong hurdlers, while Alyssa Lopez is a standout in the throws.

Haslett has a pair of solid sprinters in seniors Kikel Sekoni and Kezie DeCook.

St. Johns is led by one of the premier distance runners in the state in senior Karrigan Smith. Smith set a new state final record enroute to winning the 1600-meter run last spring.

DeWitt is in a bit of a rebuilding phase after taking third at state last spring. The Panthers do return standout senior hurdler Amber Koenigsnecht and senior Madsion Slater in the middle distances.

Eaton Rapids features senior Mary Hecksel, who is a standout in the discus.

Charlotte has a solid squad led by senior high jumper Emily Helfrich and junior Ally Goeman in the sprints.

Ionia is paced by senior high jumper Anna VanSyckle.

Belding has a strong team, led by senior middle distance runner Monica Baylis and junior thrower Greta Wilker.

Cedar Springs is paced by senior distance standout Kenzie Weiler, a premier miler and two-miler in the state. Junior Allyson Marvel is a standout in the pole vault.

Mt. Pleasant is led by talented senior sprinter Lindsey DeFrain. Sophomore Whitney Taylor is a standout in the middle distances.

**DIVISION 3**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Napoleon, Manistee, Charlevoix

Frankenmuth, Pewamo-Westphalia, Ithaca

Frankenmuth won the Division 3 state title last spring and is primed to repeat this season. Senior Sarah Beulla is the premier sprinter in the state in the division. Senior Sydney Bronner is the top hurdler in the state and also a standout in the jumps.

Senior Stephanie Lambeth is a premier pole vaulter, while junior Keri Frabm leads in the throws.

Pewamo-Westphalia took second at state last year and will be among the leaders again this season. Sophomore Brenna Wirth is a standout sprinter. The field events are strong again, led by junior Emma Schafer in the throws and senior pole vaulter Abby Wirth.

Ithaca is loaded with talent this season and on track for a lofty finish at state.

The Yellowjackets have an abundance of sprinters, led by junior Erica Sheahan, who is also a strong long jumper. They also have plenty of distance runners, led by senior Hannah Thayer and sophomore Courtney Allen. Blaire Showers and Kurstin Kallisek are standouts in the middle distances. Sophomore Emily Foster is a strong hurdler.

**MORE LOCAL TEAMS TO WATCH:**  
Farwell is poised for a strong season. Sophomore Kasey Staley is one of the top pole vaulters in the area. Freshman Lillian Albaugh is one to watch in the throws, with junior Contessa Hammond a top distance runner.

Clare has a solid group of athletes, led by sophomore distance runner Jasmine Harper and junior hurdler Paige Gould.

Shepherd has a strong squad this season, paced by sophomore Rachel Mathers in the 400-meter dash. The Blue Jays are strong in field events, with senior thrower Sarah Roethlisberger and junior pole vaulter Sarah Bellinger.

St. Louis is paced by senior Mallory Munderloh in the middle distances.

Carson City-Crystal has a strong group of distance runners in senior Kaitlin Beyer and Laerke Roos and Taylor Ward.

Laingsburg is led by senior hurdler Erica Halick and senior thrower Nicky McAvoy.

Bath is led by senior distance runner Annie Fanta and sophomore middle distance runner Tessa Hosford.

**DIVISION 4**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Reading, Traverse City St. Francis, Pittsford

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

Fowler, Beal City

Fowler placed third at the state meet last season and has another deep and athletic team. Junior Madison Koenigsnecht is a solid middle distance runner, while junior Julie Thelen is an outstanding long jumper. Freshman Sidney Horak is making a big impact in the sprints and in the long jump.

Beal City took fifth at state last year and is poised for another strong season. Senior Emily Steffke is a standout distance runner. Senior Jaclyn Woodbury leads the way in the throws, and freshman Ashley Reihl is making an impact in the hurdles.

**MORE LOCAL TEAMS TO WATCH:**  
Defending Mid-State Athletic Conference champion Montabella has another strong team. Brynn Lobert heads up the sprint crew, while junior Kensington Garvey is a strong middle distance runner. Junior Katrina Buskirk is a solid thrower.

Breckenridge freshman Chloe Brittain is off to a solid start in the distance events.

Sacred Heart Academy is led by sophomore



The Frankenmuth girls track team returns two of the most versatile athletes in the state in seniors Sydney Bronner and Sarah Beulla. Both runners are looking to help Frankenmuth repeat as Division 3 champions this season. (Chip DeGrace Photos)

distance standout Alexis McConnell and by senior thrower Baily Scully.

Fulton is paced by talented freshman Megan Struble in the hurdles and long jump.

Vestaburg senior Micki Drumm is a standout in the discus. Morrice is led by sophomore sprinter Taylor Hewitt.

New Lothrop features sophomore thrower Claudia Freed.

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# Loaded Oak Park Aiming To Join Elite Programs

Dan Stickrad  
Sports Scene

At the large-school level, a select few girls' track and field programs have put together impressive contingents that are still talked about years later.

Ann Arbor Pioneer and Detroit Cass Tech fielded some memorable teams back in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Recently, Grosse Pointe South won three straight (2011-2013) and Rochester captured a crown with multiple all-Americans (2010).

Detroit Mumford, Rockford, and Flint Northern have all won multiple titles.

In fact, Pioneer leads the way with 15 state titles in Class A/Division 1 to go along with six runner-up trophies. Cass Tech has six crowns and 10 second-place finishes. Flint Northern has four titles and two runner-up finishes, Rockford two titles and five second-place finishes, and Mumford counters with two titles and a pair of runner-up showings.

With this year's seasoned lineup, the bar is set high for Oak Park, the defending Division 1 state champion. Potentially, the Knights could score at the state level in every event except the 1600-meter run, 3200-meter run, and pole vault. Oak Park could have one of the most talented assemblies of talent in state history and should join some of the all-time great large-school teams.

"We have a lot of girls that could finish in the top 3-4 at the state meet," said Brandon Jiles, who came to the school three years ago after serving on the staff at Detroit Mumford. "But right now, we have to take it one day at a time. We are talking about teenage girls. We have to remain focused."

Oak Park had just one senior score points last season, but an injury held her out of the lineup at the regional, the Oakland County meet, and the state meet. The rest of the squad is back, including winners of all 90 state-meet points last year.

While Pioneer, Saline, East Kentwood, Rockford and a host of others will field very competitive teams this year, no one has the collection of top-tier athletes that Oak Park has.

Ersula Farrow, a transfer from Grosse Pointe South and the defending state champion in the 800-meter run, joins a talented bunch, as does Saline transfer Janelle Green, who will help a deep sprint corps. Then there's freshman Dorianne Coleman, one of the top ninth-graders not only in the state, but also in the Midwest.

Then there are the returnees. Junior Anna Jefferson is the team leader and an all-American, who capable of running a multitude of events, a common thread in this band of talent.

Junior Brianna Holloway (100, 200, 400); seniors Jaya Fleming (400, 800), Kailsi Latta-Thompson (hurdles, sprints), and Janice Powell (200, 400, 800); and sophomores Anita Taylor (100, 200, 400) and Drew Coleman (400, 800, 1600) will all run multiple events. The Knights will rotate their deep arsenal of talent to form four formidable relays.

Senior Courtney Taylor is a quality thrower.

"We have to remain healthy and focused," said Jiles. "We have a great group of girls that work hard. We have a chance to be really good. We would like to have one of the best state meets ever in terms of performance and points. We have a chance to join some elite programs."

That would be something to talk about.



Oak Park is loaded once again this season and is hoping to capture another state championship. (Submitted Photo)



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# Going the Distance! Congratulations On Our Spring Sports Fast Starts



## Ithaca Track Teams Off To Solid Starts

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

The Ithaca girls track team could be a state contender this season, in large part because of its distance runners.

Gene Lebron, coach of the girls' track team, also skipped the girls' cross country team to a Division 3 state crown last fall, and many of those same girls will be expected to produce a lot of points for the track team this spring.

Ithaca won its first three league dual meets. "We beat the two teams we thought would give us the biggest challenge (Valley Lutheran and St. Louis)," Lebron said. "So that's good moving forward. We were second at the St. Louis Relays and finished third at our home invite, which had some pretty good teams, like Mount Pleasant and Manistee. Some of our kids have put up good performances."

Top events for the team include the 4x800, in which it has the fastest time in its division so far this year. "We have the fourth fastest 4x400 time," Lebron said. "Erica Sheehan, who is the best athlete on our team, is in the top six in 100, 200, 400, and long jump."

The cross country girls will score some points in track. Sheehan was the seventh finisher in the state meet for Ithaca, and the top six, in order, were

Courtney Allen, Amelia Free-stone, Hannah Thayer, Blaire Showers, Alyssa Mankey, and Kurstin Kalisek.

"We have a girl hurdling or throwing the discus, until they find their niche," Lebron said. "We have a lot of solid athletes. The trick now is finding out where they can go and score points in an event that suits them and their skill set."

Jason Marcy is coaching a boys' team for Ithaca that is trying to build some experience. "About 95 percent of my team are freshmen or out for the first time," he said. "It's a very, very young crew this year. We're working on getting kids comfortable with their running and figure out what they'll be running and trying to build them up right now."

Top team members include Koby Lee, a sprinter and pole vaulter, and Jacob Allen, a hurdler and long jumper. Lee is up to 11'0" in the pole vault and is on both sprint relay teams. "He has a good 100 and good 200 times," Marcy said. "He hasn't been in the open yet. Jacob's a freshman and ran a 46.1 in the 300 hurdles and a 17-foot long jumper so far."

Junior Richard Moubray is among the team's best sprinters and is in the sprint relays. John Lambrecht is a distance runner who should score points in the 800- and 1,600- meter runs.



Skip Traynor Photos

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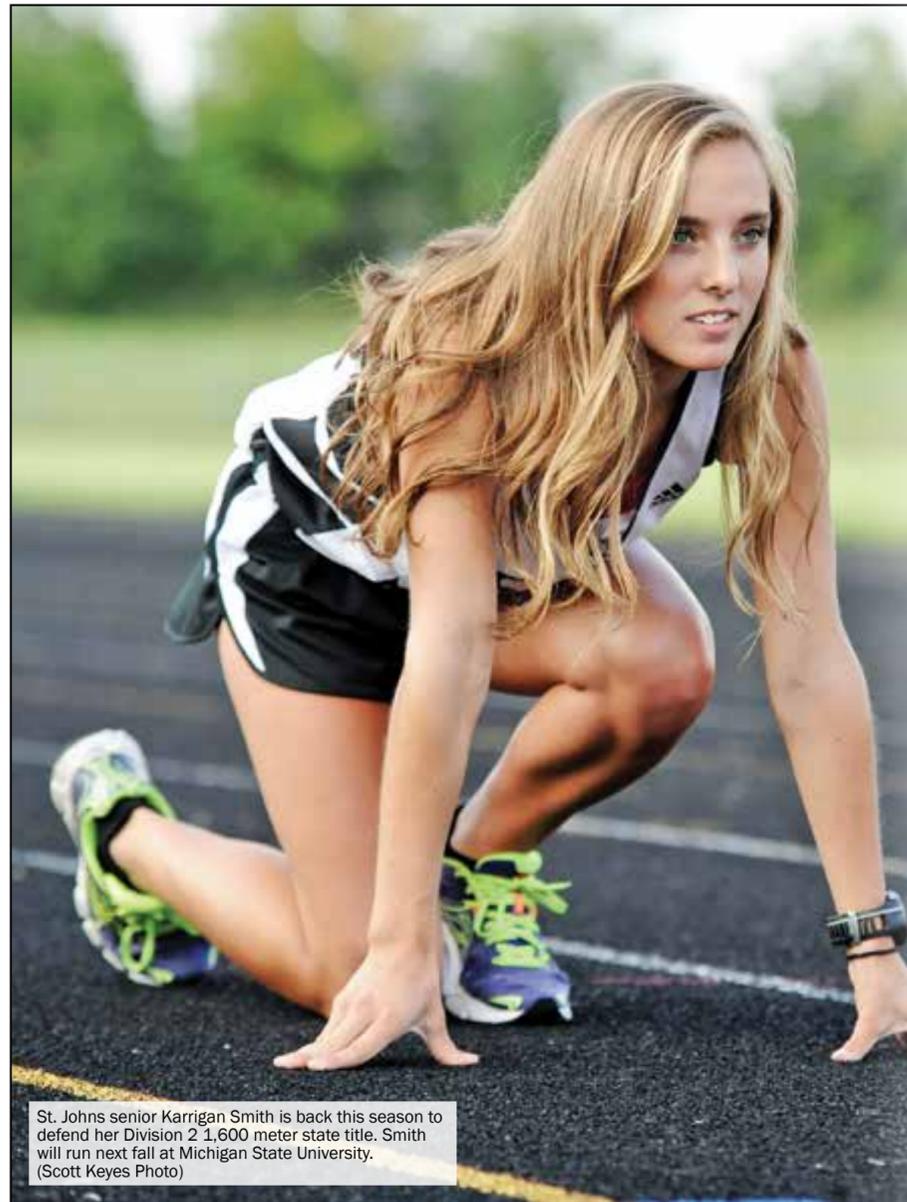
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# Going The Distance Karrigan Smith Looks To Cap Career With Another State Title

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

Karrigan Smith has already experienced memorable moments in her high school running career at St. Johns, and the senior is ready for even more such moments in track and field this spring.

Last fall, Smith finished the Division 2 cross country race in 18:13.5 to take first place.

At last spring's Division 2 state track and field finals, she won the 1,600-meter run in 4:51.53 for a new state record. She was seventh in the 800-meter dash in 2:18.89.

She's out to end her high school career on a similar high note. She'll be going for another 1,600-meter title and likes her chances for back-to-back success. "I think there's been improvement all the way around," she said. "I look forward to seeing what I can do this year."



St. Johns senior Karrigan Smith is back this season to defend her Division 2 1,600 meter state title. Smith will run next fall at Michigan State University. (Scott Keyes Photo)

Smith is looking forward to the challenges that defending her state title will present.

She could not choose whether a 1,600-meter state title or a cross country state championship was more enjoyable. "I think both races have their own mindset," Smith said, noting that in cross country, she's with her entire team at racetime.

She indicated that a strength of hers has been pacing herself, knowing how the race is going and how to react to the circumstances. She indicated she continues to work on improving all aspects of her race.

Her plans right now are to race in the 3,200-meter and the 800-meter runs, also. "I enjoy running the 800," she said.

The disappointment at not winning the 2013 state cross country final, which she finished in third place in 18:04.0, seemed to stimulate Smith for the 2014 track challenges. "What stands out for me is last spring, my state championship in the 1,600 meters," she said when she won the cross country championship in 2014. "Ever since then, I wanted to reach out for that moment and rekindle that fire every single day in the off-season to go after that state championship again."

Smith is preparing for a running

career at Michigan State University. She decided last November to run there, after also considering the University of Michigan.

Regardless of her season, Smith is going to miss St. Johns athletics. "There's a lot of it I'll miss," she said. "Especially the support of my teammates. I've had some good competition."

One of her coaches throughout the school years, Bob Sackrider, has been impressed with Smith. "I feel this year she has taken the greatest stride forward in her four years of high school running," he said.



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# Meet CC-C Joshua Coston

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Carson City-Crystal track coach Marcus LeGrand is going to have his fair share of scorers this season.

That includes senior Joshua Coston, who is currently ranked No. 5 in the shot put and No. 2 in the discus. He was ninth in the discus last season, one place away from all-state honors.

"He'll make both shot and discus this year, barring injury and staying consistent," LeGrand said.

Coston joined the program as a sophomore. "He's improved 20 to 25 feet each year," LeGrand said. "His

sophomore year, he threw like 110 in the discus. Last year, he threw 159 at state. Right now, he's already thrown 156. We have to stay focused on his basics and understanding of what it's going to take for him to get there. He does a good job of showing up and has a no-nonsense attitude. He just performs. He's a very humble kid."

The discus is Coston's beat event. "He's a natural," LeGrand said. "We have a sophomore, Jacob Smith, who pushes him pretty hard in his own event."

Coston ranks No. 1 in the Mid-State Activities Conference among throwers.

He's making no secret of his goals for 2015. "I hope to get to 170 and win a state title," Coston said. "That is my goal, and we're not accepting anything less. It will take a lot of hard work and dedication."

Coston indicated that his strength as a thrower is his "mental capacity to practice a lot more than the average person."

Discus is his best event, but he's much improved in the shot put. "I worked a lot on it last summer and winter," Coston said.

"I got a little bit bigger muscle-wise," he said. "It took me a little while to understand it was more

form than strength. That's the hardest thing about throwing is understanding that."

Coston also wrestled and played football. Track, "basically helps him with his footwork," LeGrand said. "It helps with his flexibility on the football field."

Other potential all-staters for Carson City-Crystal are Kolton Kavanaugh in the high jump and 400-yard dash, Kaitlin Beyer in the 3,200-meter run and relays, Shalien Borton in the high jump, Cody Flinn in the 300-yard hurdles and 800-meter run, and Smith in the th rows.



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# SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON GOLF

## Lansing Catholic Chases Another D3 State Title

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Lansing Catholic is going for a three-peat as Division 3 golf champion. New coach Kim Johnson realizes it won't be easy.

Catholic won the title last season with rounds of 313 and 320 for a 633 total. It had two golfers in the top 10, Patrick Gillespie (152) and Brent Marshall (156).

"Everyone is back," Johnson said. "The only one we graduated was Brent Marshall."

Others shooting for Lansing Catholic last year were Niko Voutsaras (160), Owen Rush (165) and Adam Elias (173).

The boys are truly excited about this year," Johnson said. "We have six seniors, including three that played in the state finals. They are truly excited about the opportunity to compete for a third time. We have people competing for varsity spots. We have a freshman who will also compete for a varsity spot. It's competitive, but they also try to help each other."

Back from last season are Elias, Gillespie, and Voutsaras. All three are seniors. Rush, a junior, also returns.



The Lansing Catholic boys golf team will look to 3-peat when the Division 3 state tournament gets underway in June. (File Photo)

Voutsaras "is very focused," Johnson said.

"He has great ball-striking skills. He's working on his short game. We realize your short game has to get better to compete at the state championship level. He's team-oriented."

Johnson said that Elias is also team-oriented. "He's a hard-working individual. He's focused and has a great capacity to clear his mind and

stay focused when he makes his shots.



"Gillespie is hard-working individual with a great talent and good ball-striking skills," Johnson continued. "He's on the low key side but is extremely supportive of his team. He's helpful in giving support to the team."

Rush is also a hard worker, Johnson added. "He practices extremely hard. He wants to compete at the

next level when he graduates. He tries to perfect the game. And he needs to work on his short game, of course."

Johnson had been an assistant coach for the girls' team and came over to coach the boys. He acknowledged that it's a little different going from coaching golf in the fall to coaching in the spring. "It's a little adjustment to understand their mentality and how they do business."

Elias shot a 156 at the 2013 state finals, while Voutsara also played on that team and fired a 161. Marshall shot a 174 for the 2013 squad in the state finals, and his graduation after 2014 will make it necessary for the Cougars to find someone who can fill the gaps he left.



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# Area Teams Bring Back Talented Groups With Quest Of Winning State Title

Butch Harmon  
Sports Scene

## DIVISION 1

### TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:

Lakeview, Saline, Grandville, Plymouth

### TOP LOCAL TEAMS:

Detroit Catholic Central, Swartz Creek, Rockford, Lakeland, Clarkston

Swartz Creek edged Detroit Catholic Central by a stroke to win last year's Division 1 state title. This year, there may be no stopping Catholic Central. The Shamrocks return a ton of talent, led by senior Glenn Piot, sophomore James Piot, and sophomore Ben Smith.

Rockford finished three strokes out of first at the finals and returns plenty of talent. Senior Joel Pietila tied for medalist honors at state and returns, along with seniors Michael Cooper and Josh Stephan.

Lakeland lost a strong corps of seniors but returns junior Justin LaFrance, who placed fifth at the regional.

Clarkston is primed to make a move this spring. The Wolves return seniors Brendon Graham and Alex Dice, along with talented sophomore Brady Dice.

### MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:

Midland Dow is paced by senior Ben Roeder, who was the Division 1 medalist last spring.

Fenton suffered heavy graduation losses but does return skilled senior John Lloyd. Lloyd placed second at the regional last year.

Grand Ledge is primed for a big season. Senior Josh Arbour placed third at the regional and returns, along with fellow seniors Patrick Powers and Cameron Conley and promising junior Dallas Chester.

Hartland placed fourth at the regional last year and may be even stronger this season. Senior Bryce Messner placed second individually at the regional and returns, along with seniors Beau Breault and Baker Stevenson.

Brighton is paced by senior Andrew

Goble this season.

Holt, led by senior Zach Dowling and talented sophomore Tony Fuentes, is primed to make a move in the CAAC Blue.

Okemos is set for a big year with the return of senior Ross Lazar, who placed fifth at the regional, and juniors Chand Rajendra-Nicolucci and Owen Ruster.

## DIVISION 2

### TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:

Forest Hills Eastern, Divine Child Catholic, Forest Hills Northern

### TOP LOCAL TEAMS:

Cranbrook-Kingswood, DeWitt, East Lansing, Notre Dame Preparatory

Defending state champion Cranbrook-Kingswood returns a ton of talent, led by senior Dylan Deogun, who placed third individually at state last year. Sophomore standout Devin Deogun also returns, along with seniors Todd Fridline and Mason Schultz.

DeWitt is paced by a solid group of seniors. Geoffrey Croley placed ninth at the state finals, while Owen Beyer took third at the regional. Senior Mike Coscarelli is another talented veteran in the lineup.

East Lansing took second at the regional and eighth at state last year and returns all five starters. Senior Joe Croom was seventh individually at state and leads a lineup that includes senior Logan Wilcox and junior Ian Carroll.

Notre Dame Prep finished in the top ten at state but lost four senior starters. Talented senior Jack Dimefsk does return.

### MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:

Mason won a regional title last season and returns all but one starter. Senior Tristan Brunst was regional medalist and returns, along with senior Jason Brandt and junior Kaleb Peterson, who tied for third at the regional.

Mt. Pleasant placed second at its regional last year. The Oilers return junior Jack Pilkington, who was second individually at the regional, and senior Jordan Pearsall.

Big Rapids has some talented veterans, including senior Brad Walling and junior Carter Bechaz.

Owosso is primed for a big season, led by senior Jalen Weekley, who finished in the top ten at the regional. Senior Jordan Waters and junior Todd Mieske also return for the Trojans.

Corunna had a young but talented squad last season. This season, sophomores Brandon Crouse, Cooper Clapp, and Jerod Fattal will lead what could be one of the most improved teams in the area.

St. Johns has a young and talented group of golfers. Sophomore Zach Rosendale placed fifth at regional and ninth at state and returns, along with sophomore Eric Nunn and senior Mason Pieters.

Haslett will be a factor in the CAAC Red, led by senior Jack Claucherty, junior Tony Beeler, and sophomore Pat Narduzzi.

Charlotte returns standout senior Augustus Shewchuck, along with senior Cal Moultime and junior Connor Hosey.

Eaton Rapids has a promising squad of golfers, led by senior Jarret Bird and juniors Sam Cranrdall and Nate Marcus.

Lakewood is paced by junior Wyatt Moll.

## DIVISION 3

### TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:

Lumen Christi Catholic, Almont, Hanover Horton

### TOP AREA TEAMS:

Lansing Catholic, Powers Catholic

Lansing Catholic brought home a second-straight state title last spring. The Cougars are in good position to make it a three-peat, as senior Patrick Gillespie, who finished fourth at state as an individual, returns.

Two more starters return in senior Niko Vautsaras and junior Owen Rush.

Powers Catholic placed second at the regional and eighth in the state last season. The Chargers are led by sophomore Blaise Vanitvelt, who was the regional medalist last season, along with seniors Danny DeLong and Jeffrey Polakowski.

### MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:

St. Charles graduated four senior starters from a team that placed second at the regional. Sophomore Jeffery Wachowicz is the lone returner. He finished in the top 20 at the regional.

Williamston also graduated four starters from a team that placed second at its regional. Junior Seth Costello is the lone starter back for the Hornets.

Portland is led by junior Rhett Schrauben, who placed third individually at last year's state meet.

Lake Fenton placed second at its regional last season. The Blue Devils are led by seniors Wesley Potts and Joshua Mundy, who both placed in the top 10 at the regional.

Ithaca is in a rebuilding mode this season, as it graduated all of its starters. Look for junior Mike Meier to make an impact for the Yellowjackets.

Alma was also hit hard by graduation. Senior Chance Allen and junior Cody Yates lead the way this season.

Durand placed in the top 10 at the regional last year and returns a number of key golfers, led by seniors Chris Neuman and Cody Graham and junior Chase Winiarski.

Laingsburg looks to be improved, with the return of a trio of talented seniors in Jagger Richards, Chandler Wright, and

Claude Copeland.

Frankenmuth finished in the top five at the regional last year and is poised for a big year behind junior Sam Struble and sophomores Daniel Wagner and Chase Singer.

## DIVISION 4

### TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:

White Pigeon, North Muskegon, Traverse City St. Francis

### TOP AREA TEAMS:

Nouvel Catholic Central, Sacred Heart Academy, Oakland Christian, Fowler

Nouvel drops down to Division 4 this season and is a threat to make a deep tournament run. It is led by senior standout Nick Ludka.

Sacred Heart placed 10th at the state finals last season and has a strong group of veterans returning. Juniors Jake Starry and Sam Kindermann both placed in the top 10 individually at the regional and return, along with junior Ayush Mohan.

Oakland Christian is paced by senior Jimmy Kern, who took fourth at regional.

Fowler placed third at regional last year and is led by senior standout Derek Bengal.

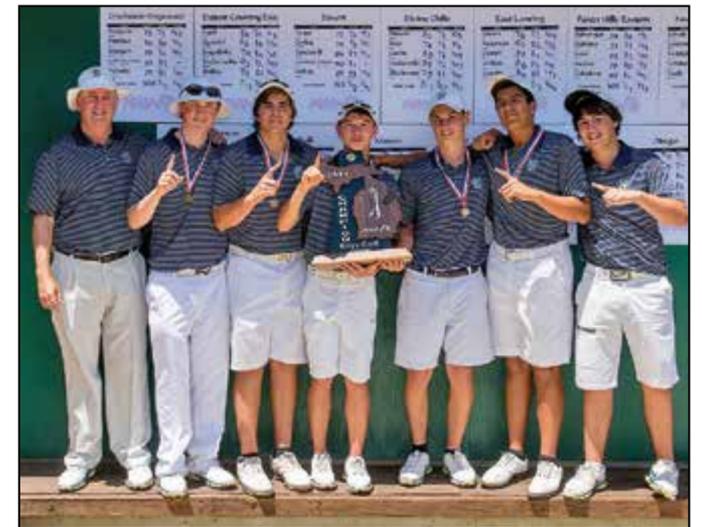
### MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:

Valley Lutheran is poised for a big season, with the return of veterans Nick Howard, Jordan Rajewski, and Bo Hobson.

New Lothrop suffered heavy graduation losses and will build around senior Cody Lennox, who placed in the top 10 at the regional as an individual.

Montabella is paced by junior Joshua Balhorn, who placed second at the regional last year.

Fulton has a solid group of returnees in seniors Gregg Jones, Jarrett Coblentz, and Ross Baltimore.



Swartz Creek and Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook are looking to repeat in their respective divisions this season. (File Photos)

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Midland Dow's Ben Roeder looks to defend his Division 1 title this season for the Chargers. (File Photo)

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Okemos senior Emily Struble is looking to make it three straight singles titles in 2015. (File Photos)

# SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON TENNIS

## Struble, Daavettla Highlight Abundance Of Statewide Talent Returning In 2015

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

**DIVISION 1**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Grosse Pointe South, Bloomfield Hills, Northville, Port Huron Northern

Grosse Pointe South has won two out of the last three Division 1 state titles and will be among the top teams in the state again this season.

Bloomfield Hills is another perennial tennis power and will also be in the thick of the hunt for the title.

**TOP LOCAL TEAMS:**

Clarkston, Midland Dow, Rockford

Clarkston placed second at state last season and has enough talent returning to make a run at this year's title. Isabella Spindler is one of the top players in the state at No. 1 singles, while Sam Webber is another solid singles player. The No. 1 doubles team of Katie Hubregsen and Caitlin McCaghy is one of the top doubles teams in the state.

Midland Dow placed in the top 10 at last year's state meet. It has a strong group of singles players, led by Mckenna Root at No. 1, along with Jessica Brown, Elaina Parrillo, and Hadley Cammp. Dow is also strong in doubles, led by the No. 1 team of Afua Ofori-Darko and Kamryn Matthews and the No. 2 team of Nicole Dobrzelewski and Kelly Livingston.

Rockford won a regional title last year and placed 11th at the state meet. The Rams have one of the top singles players in West Michigan in sophomore Allyson Bowman at No. 1. Senior Alyssa Bowman is a standout at No. 2 singles. The Rams also feature a solid No. 1 doubles team in Maddie VanEck and Jillian Day.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Grand Ledge placed second in the CAAC Blue last season. The Comets are led by junior standout Kitt Sharp at No. 1 singles.

Holt has a senior-laden lineup that is looking to move up in the CAAC Blue. Rose Harris-Makinen tops the lineup at No. 1 singles,

with senior Tracy Edelman at No. 2 singles and junior Abby Daman at No. 3 singles.

**DIVISION 2**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Birmingham Seaholm, Forest Hills Northern, Marian

When it comes to Division 2 girls tennis, Seaholm, Northern, and Marian are the gold standard. One of these three teams has won the state title each of the past 12 years, with Seaholm and Northern sharing it last season. All three teams are loaded again this year, with Seaholm bringing back senior Claire Markley, a three-time state finalist in singles. Northern is led by senior Clair Aleck, who is the premier singles player in West Michigan.

**TOP LOCAL TEAMS:**

Okemos, East Lansing, Mason

Okemos captured the CAAC Blue and placed fifth at the state meet last season. The Chieftains return plenty of talent and have potential for another deep tournament run. They are led by senior Emily Struble, the defending state champion at No. 1 singles. Also returning are Monika Franciscs, who reached the semifinal round at No. 2 singles last year; Catherine Wingrove, who was second at No. 3 singles; and Kylie Wilkinson, who reached the semifinal round at No. 4 singles.

East Lansing placed eighth at the state meet last year. While the Trojans were hit hard by graduation, they always have plenty of talent waiting in the wings. Senior Bree O'Neal is back at No. 1 singles, as is junior Isabella Ndebe, who reached the quarterfinal round in No. 2 singles. Junior Caroline Baidoon returns at No. 3 singles.

Mason tied for 14th at state last year and has a solid group of players this season. Junior Samantha Perkins and sophomore Olivia Hanover top the list of singles players for the Bulldogs.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

St. Johns tied for second in the CAAC Red last season and will be a factor in the title chase this spring. It is led by seniors Allie Marier at No. 1 singles and Meredith Robbins at No. 2

singles.

Owosso is looking to be improved this season. The Trojans have Casadi Smith back at No. 1 singles and fellow senior Grace Rice at No. 2 singles. Junior Hannah Marcotte is a strong player at No. 4 singles.

Mt. Pleasant has a solid group of singles players this season. Senior Mackenzie Vogt tops the lineup at No. 1, with Brittaney Warren at No. 2, Tiana Gilis at No. 3, and Lauren Knight at No. 4.

**DIVISION 3**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Cranbrook-Kingswood, Detroit Country Day, Grand Rapids Christian

Cranbrook-Kingswood captured a fourth straight state title last season, and enough talent returns to make another run this year. Junior Allison Mateo heads up the singles lineup at No. 1. Freshman Kate Cao is an emerging star at No. 3 singles. Cranbrook also has a deep crew of talented doubles players.

Detroit County Day took second in the state last season, and the Yellow-jackets will again be a threat to win it all. Junior Haley Mullins was the state runner-up at No. 2 singles, and senior Sarah Carroll won the state title at No. 4 singles. Country Day also returns plenty of talented doubles players.

**TOP LOCAL TEAMS:**

Notre Dame Preparatory, Williamston, Haslett

Notre Dame Prep placed fifth at state last season and will again be capable of a top-five finish. Senior all-stater Kayla Stencil heads up the singles lineup at No. 1. Senior Hannah Preuss and junior Julie Boniface are a dynamic pair at No. 1 doubles.

Williamston is led by one of the premier singles players in the state. Junior Sara Daavettla won the state title at No. 1 last season. One of the top-ranked singles players in the country, she competed at the Dow Corning Tournament in February. Williamston also has talented players behind Daavettla in sophomore Sydney Ellsworth at No. 2 singles and sophomore Maia Guenther at No. 3 singles.

Haslett placed 12th at state last season and returns plenty of talented players. Junior Hannah Vogelsang reached the quarterfinal round at No. 2 singles at state a year ago. Seniors Allison Grandfield and Brooke Hartsuff return to No. 2 and No. 3 singles this season. Haslett also boasts a strong group of doubles players, led by senior Mary Kate Martell and junior Claire Cowan.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Fowlerville has a veteran group of singles players. Cecillia Bronsberg is at No. 1 singles with Madison Gilbert at No. 2 singles and Rachael Perkenis at No. 3 singles.

Lakewood has a promising young team this season. Sophomore Valory Altoft is at No. 1 singles with sopho-

more Kendra Stoepker at No. 2 singles. At No. 1 doubles, the Vikings return twins Ellie and Issie Haskin.

**DIVISION 4**

**TOP TEAMS STATEWIDE:**

Traverse City St. Francis, Grosse Ile, Kalamazoo Christian

Grosse Ile captured the Division 4 state title last season behind a veteran group of players.

Traverse City St. Francis placed third last year and returns plenty of talent this season. It has already notched some impressive wins and is the early favorite to win state.

**TOP LOCAL TEAMS:**

Portland, Lansing Catholic, Powers Catholic

Portland has been one of the premier tennis programs in the area, and this season will be no exception. Plenty of talent returns from a team that placed fourth at the state meet last season. Sydni Greenhoe was a finalist at No. 4 singles last year and leads the singles group this spring along with Chelsea Geiger. Junior Payton Lowery was part of a No. 1 doubles team that



Williamston junior Sara Daavettla is back this season to defend her No. 1 singles title in Division 3. (File Photos)

reached the quarterfinal at the state meet.

Lansing Catholic also placed in the top 10 last season. The Cougars have plenty of talent returning, including one of the premier singles players in the state. Calla Ramont reached the final at No. 1 singles and heads up a deep group of talented singles players this season. Sabrina Spagnuolo and Grace Mohr return to the singles lineup, as well.

Powers Catholic has displayed plenty of skill in the early days of the season. The Chargers have a solid corps of singles players, led by Alise Haddad at No. 1, Sarah Adams at No. 3, and Neha Iska at No. 4. The Chargers also feature

a solid No. 1 doubles team in Hannah Rahman and Mattie Milne.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Frankenmuth took second at the regional last season and qualified for the state meet. The Eagles have a strong group of players returning, led by sophomore Lindsey Mertz at No. 1 singles. Seniors Megan Kueffner and Haley Goodall return at No. 1 doubles.

Itasca is led by the senior tandem of Courtney Gantz and Hannah Andrews. Gantz is at No. 1 singles and Andrews at No. 2 singles.

Leslie has a player to watch in senior Ashley Medcoff at No. 1 singles.



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# Utica's Davina Nguyen Putting Together One Final Run

Dan Stickrad  
Sports Scene

UTICA — When Davina Nguyen was a freshman, she gained a ton of respect on the tennis courts as a rising star.

Now a senior, Nguyen is in the final stretch of a phenomenal prep career that is one of the most impressive for a player who does not hail from a power school. She does not live in Birmingham or Bloomfield Hills, or Troy or Rochester or even West Bloomfield, Midland, Ann Arbor, or Grosse Pointe.

She lives in Utica, just over the border in Macomb County. She is one of the most successful players ever to hail from Macomb County.

"It's been a lot of fun," admitted Nguyen. "When I came into high school, I just hoped to do well. I never imagined any of this."

Before Nguyen's arrival in 2012, the school had not sent a player to the state finals in years — if ever. "They don't have much history in tennis," said Nguyen. "I think I was their first champion."

The talented Nguyen is making up for lost time. With over 60 career wins in a Chieftains uniform, she has compiled quite a resume. As a freshman in 2012, she entered the Division 1 state finals as the No. 5 seed at No. 1 singles and eventually upset Clarkston's Katie Brozovich, the No. 2 seed, 7-5, 7-5, to claim the state title.

As a sophomore, Nguyen carried the No. 3 seed into the Division 1 tournament and advanced to the semifinal before bowing out to No. 2-seeded Lexi Baylis of Clarkston, 6-3, 7-6.

In her junior year, Nguyen went 4-0 at the finals and avenged Baylis in the No. 1 singles final, 2-6, 6-3, 6-4. Three trips to at least the semifinals and two state titles later, her resume is quite stacked.

The three-time MHSTECA All-State First Team, All-Macomb County First Team, and All-MAC White Division honoree is off to a 10-0 start this season and is a candidate for Miss Tennis, given annually to the state's top senior by the MHSTECA.

She is bound for Michigan State University in the fall, after receiving offers from multiple colleges, including College of William & Mary and Rutgers University. Nguyen has also shined at the United States Tennis Association level, including a 16s national title.



Fighting through some nagging injuries, it was Nguyen's mother, Tam Pham, who talked her into playing as a senior. "I didn't know I would play this year. I had thoughts of not playing," offered Nguyen. "But my mom talked me into it. She said I had a great chance to win it all again and win Miss Tennis. That is such an honor."

Although there have been a handful of three-time state singles champions in various flights, few exist in Division 1 and even fewer exist who have won three times all at No. 1 singles. Nguyen has a chance to join the state's elite before she heads to East Lansing to play for MSU.

"That is my goal, to win it again," said Nguyen, who does not like to talk about tennis too much away from the court. "I am looking forward to the state [tournament], but sad that [high school] tennis is almost over. But I have Michigan State [to look forward to]. The coaches are very personable there, and they made me feel welcome there."

Nguyen is currently ranked in the top 100 nationally for high school students, eighth in the Great Lakes region, and second overall in Michigan for those 18 and under.

Even with those rankings, she still has some unfinished business on the prep courts. "It's coming up fast," said Nguyen. "I still have a shot to win again."

Win - something that Davina Nguyen does best.

Utica senior Davina Nguyen, a Michigan State University commit, is vying for her third straight Division 1 singles title this season. (Scott Keyes Photo)

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## SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON WRESTLING

# Central Michigan Named New Home For Team State Wrestling Finals

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

The wrestling team state finals are leaving the only home they've ever known and relocating to Central Michigan University.

It seems, for the most part, to be a popular move.

Starting next year, the finals will be held at McQuirk Arena at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant. The MHSAA has approved a two-year deal with the arena, formerly Rose Arena, which is part of the CMU Events Center. It reopened in 2010 after undergoing \$22.5 million in renovations.

"We are sad to leave Battle Creek but look forward to starting a new tradition at CMU," Brandon Day, coach of state championship team Richmond, said. "I have been told the venue is extremely nice, and that there are more hotels and places to eat for fans and teams to choose from. I have also been told that there will be more parking available for spectators."

"I think it's exciting, however,

I have always appreciated the hospitality shown by the businesses in the Battle Creek area, especially McCalmly Plaza," Greenville coach Paul Johnson said.

McGuirk can hold 4,867 fans for wrestling competitions, and the building also features adjacent practice areas that will be utilized by teams competing at the MHSAA Finals.

"Although I am very excited for the change, I must admit that I get a little nostalgic when it comes to Battle Creek," Jeff Campbell of New Lothrop said. "Since I was in high school, it has always been the team mantra to make it to BC. Over the years, we have been very fortunate to make the trip, including the last 15 years in a row. Because of this, the town has sort of become a home away from home for the people of New Lothrop during the Team State Championships. From the anthem of Mr. Jeff McGinnis to the memories of battles won and lost, we will miss that arena."

Nate Ethridge, coach of Chipewah Hills, which has made several state finals appearances, has mixed



New Lothrop coach Jeff Campbell reacts to a takedown during the recent D4 finals in Battle Creek. New Lothrop repeated after defeating Hudson in the finals. (File Photo)

reactions. "I love the tradition of Battle Creek," he said. "I wrestled there as an athlete and have coached in that arena. Everything from the anthem to seating, it is familiar. It is part of team wrestling. We talk about 'making it to the Creek.' On a personal level, I will miss it. From a wrestling standpoint, I think it had some huge issues."

The team finals have been hosted by Kellogg Arena in Battle Creek since their inception in 1988.

"We are grateful to the athletic directors, staff, and volunteers whose time and energy factored heavily into creating and growing the Team Wrestling Finals at Kellogg Arena," MHSAA Executive Director John E. "Jack" Roberts said in a statement. "The decision to move from Battle Creek was not an easy one. However, we believe Central Michigan University offers us a fantastic opportunity to continue growing one of our most popular championship events."

Mark Uyl, MHSAA assistant director who works with wrestling, said that the agreement with Battle Creek was year-to-year. "The people in Battle Creek have served wrestling and the MHSAA for many years and did a wonderful job with the event. Battle Creek had some shortcomings with the arena that they were able to overcome for many years. The shortcomings we would hear about from our schools was that there was no place for their kids to warm up, there were no places for team benches and a team dual tournament. A lot of the equipment, from the scorelocks to scoreboard, sometimes didn't work. We had some challenges with the motels. The host group was able to overcome those."

Central Michigan completely renovated their arena and were eager to host and put together an attractive proposal. That's why the representative council moved to do what they did."

After the first year or so, if the deal looks to be a good one, Uyl indicated that it could be extended. "You have to do at least two years, because it shows a commitment to them," he said. "We anticipate it being longer."

CMU's basketball teams still might be playing that time of year, but Uyl said that won't present a

problem. "It's no different than what the Pistons and Palace do for us for the individual wrestling," Uyl said. "They're able to avoid those. The Mid-American Conference would give Central those two dates. There is a mechanism in place where that can be our home for many years the last Friday and Saturday of February."

Kellogg Arena officials expressed disappointment at the move while acknowledging that college campuses can provide more conveniences.

"Certainly, I think the group you need to listen to the closest are our schools," Uyl said. "At the end of the day, what all our championships should do is give our kids the very best possible experience. This was a decision made with what's best for kids at the forefront."

"Kudos to the host team in Battle Creek because, for over 20 years, they were able to overcome some of the shortcomings of the facility, but it got the point where some of those concerns weren't going away. The timing was right for the folks at Central."

There are concerns about the move. "I think the fear is that the new location will lack the mystique and feel of Kellogg Arena, where the fans are right on top of you," Brighton coach Tony Greathouse said. "I have wrestled in every Big Ten venue and can tell you nowhere I have ever been compares to what it was like competing at Kellogg. I just hope that Mount Pleasant can duplicate that feel."

"One of my main issues has to do with weigh-in and warm-up," Ethridge said. "Weigh-in takes far too long, there isn't any 'good' location to do it in the [Kellogg] arena. You literally have about 10-15 minutes to get warm on half a mat with the team you are about to wrestle. That is not adequate. In the past, having the hotel attached was a big draw. Now staying there is a pain. Rooms get overbooked. Sometimes you are unable to check in until after you wrestle. It just seems to be a nightmare. We were off-site this year, and it was without a doubt the easiest trip we have made in years."

Johnson suggests the MHSAA consider a Final 16 rather than a Final 8. But in speaking on behalf of many coaches, Johnson provided the following tribute to Kellogg Arena:



Lowell celebrated its second consecutive D2 championship after defeating Eaton Rapids in the recent MHSAA finals in Battle Creek. (File Photo)

"There will be more things for the families to do during the long weekend, as the area around Kellogg had limited options," Campbell said. "I feel that the central location of Mount Pleasant may help some of the northern teams with travel issues. It seems the last couple of years, especially, our fans have had issues with the hotel connected to the arena having the rooms available that they were promised, so I hope the hotel issues at CMU will be a little better. Finally, from what I am told, we will have designated warm-up areas at Central, which I feel are key to preparing your team to compete at such a high level."

"I am hopeful that there will be some adjustments made to the weigh-in procedure. I would like to see the process sped up, so our athletes have more time to recover prior to competition. It seems trivial, but I think we are ready for some new music to be played during the parades. I like the old song, but maybe only play it during one of the rounds and mix in something new."

"A sincere thank you to Battle Creek for the last 28 years."

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SPORTS SCENE'S **EYE ON SOCCER**



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Haslett and Okemos brave the elements during the Compete for a Cause cancer awareness game earlier this season. Okemos lost a lot to graduation a year ago, but should remain competitive this season. (Alan Holben Photos)

# Kickin' It

## Titles Within Reach For Many Area Soccer Teams

Butch Harmon  
Sports Scene

**DIVISION 1**  
**TOP TEAMS IN THE STATE:**

Grandville, Utica Eisenhower, Northview, East Kentwood

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

Rochester Stoney Creek, Walled Lake Northern, Novi

Stoney Creek has as much talent as any team in the state and is primed for a run at the state title. Senior forward Jamison Midgley is a returning first-team all-stater who is headed to Butler University. Junior forward Taylor Paradoski and senior midfielder Maria Zandi also earned all-state honors last season.

Walled Lake Northern has a veteran team that plays solid defense. Senior midfielder Emma Voelker earned all-state honors last year. Senior Caitlyn Oliver anchors the defense in goal, with seniors Rachel Rodeheffer and Marisa Pyden back in the midfield.

Novi is a perennial soccer power that boasts a solid defense this season. Senior Amanda Minissale leads the defense, while junior Megan Riley anchors the midfield.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Grand Ledge will be able to put points on the scoreboard, thanks to the return of seniors Sophie Guzman and Maddy Edmunds. Guzman is a three-time all-conference player.

Holt returns senior midfielder Tara Liermen, who is a returning all-state player. Seniors Micalah Blohm and Erica Pratt are a pair of returning all-conference players.

Okemos reached the state semifinal last season but suffered heavy graduation losses. The Chieftains do return all-state goalkeeper Vanessa Nigg, along with senior midfielder Erin Doster, who also earned all-state honors. Senior Erin O'Connor is a returning all-con-

ference player.

Grand Blanc reached the regional final last season and looks to be solid again this year. The Bobcats are paced by senior forward Annie Walker, a first-team all-state pick last year. They have a standout keeper in senior Brianna Klaus, while junior midfielder Lexi Trudeau also earned all-state honors.

Midland Dow has a solid squad, paced by senior midfielder Maya Piper, who is a returning all-state player.

**DIVISION 2**

**TOP TEAMS IN THE STATE:**

Lake, Regina, Trenton

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

Marian, Ladywood, DeWitt

Marian reached the state final last year, where it fell to Gull Lake. It returns eight starters, led by a trio of players who earned second-team all-state honors. Senior Megan Bricely is in goal, senior Jaclyn Engel is at midfield, and senior Sarah George anchors the defense. Talented sophomore forward Hannah Redoute also returns.

Ladywood reached the state semifinal last year. Junior defender Connor Huggins earned first-team all-state honors. The offense is paced by senior Sam Riga, who also earned first-team all-state. Senior Kennedy Bullard is another talented forward.

DeWitt has a young, but highly talented, team this season. The Panthers return a pair of all-state players in junior defender Brianna Bishop and junior midfielder Allison Sims. Sophomore Mackenzie Dawes earned all-conference honors last year, as she scored 21 goals. Sophomore Jessah McManus is another returning all-conference player.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

South Lyon East has a solid squad, led by senior goalkeeper Alyssa Sawyer and junior midfielder Sydney O'Donnell, who both

earned all-state honors last season.

Avondale is led by senior midfielder Allison Hartman, a returning all-state player. Sophomore forward Katelyn Mather leads the offense.

Fenton has a solid squad, paced by junior midfielder Bri Costigan, a second-team all-conference player. Senior midfielder Brennan Sullivan is a returning all-stater for the Tigers.

Linden will battle Fenton for league honors this season. The Eagles feature a solid defense, anchored by senior Grace Walterhouse, while junior midfielder Katie Wilkowski is a returning all-state player.

Owosso looks to be improved this season. Senior forward Brittney Crawford is a returning all-conference player who paces the offense. Anna Raffaelli will also help the offense. Senior Courtney Constine is a returning all-conference midfielder and is joined by Abbey Edwards. Senior all-conference player Megan McGill anchors the defense.

Haslett is led by senior defender Shannon Szedlack, who earned second-team all-state honors last year.

Mason returns plenty of talent from a solid team. Senior defender Erica Bartlett earned all-state honors last year. The Bulldogs also return a number of all-conference players, led by seniors Hannah Darmofal, Kelleigh Pier, and Natalia Milashus and junior Marissa Pease.

St. Johns looks to be improved this season. Seniors Maddie Wilsey and Sarah Drury are a pair of returning all-conference players. Seniors Kylie Hollis and Cassie Rapelje earned all-league honors last year.

Mt. Pleasant was hit hard by graduation. The Oilers, who have won back-to-back district titles, will look for junior Hannah Kahn to anchor the squad.

**DIVISION 3**

**TOP TEAMS IN THE STATE:**

Unity Christian, Lumen Christi Catholic, Grosse Ile

**TOP TEAMS IN THE AREA:**

Powers Catholic, Detroit Country Day, Frankenmuth

Detroit Country Day returns a number of standouts from a team that reached the state title game. Sophomore midfielder Dagny Hill earned second-team all-state honors, along with senior defender Jenna Staudt. Sophomore goalkeeper Isabel Nino was a third-team all-state player last year. Senior Libby Ronchetto anchors the Country Day defensive corps, with senior Emily Fisher returning at midfield.

Powers Catholic returns plenty of talent from a team that reached the

regional final, including a trio of honorable-mention all-staters. Senior Kennedy Clouthier anchors the midfield, sophomore Rachel Phillpotts heads up the defense, and senior Andrea Glubzinski spearheads the offense.

Frankenmuth also reached the regional final last season. The Eagles welcome back sophomore midfielder Lillian Schmidt. They have plenty of offensive options, led by Laurin Keyes, Kendra Thompson, and Kennedy Oparka.



Lindsay Kooy returns for her senior season for a very competitive Flint Powers squad. (Scott Keyes Photo)

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Freeland enjoyed a big season last year, as it reached the state semifinal. Senior Taryn Taugher is a returning first-team all-stater forward. Seniors Taylor Herring and Gabrielle Mills and sophomore Michelle Herring earned honorable-mention all-state honors as midfielders, while senior Hannah Foy did the same in goal.

Swan Valley returns junior forward Taylor Farrand, who earned third-team all-conference honors last season.

Ovid-Elsie captured the Tri-Valley West last season and is geared up for another big year. Senior forward Victoria Stutzman scored 27 goals last year enroute to earning second-team all-state honors. Senior defender Logan Trefil anchors the defense and is a returning all-stater. Junior Megan Walter is a returning all-conference goalkeeper, while junior Courtney Loynes also earned all-conference.

Birch Run has a high-powered offense, led by sophomore forward Madison Enderle and sophomore forward Mackenzie Stafford. Senior Cheyenne Enderle returns at midfield with sophomore Kalyn Breckenridge in goal.

Williamston is strong in goal with the return of junior all-stater Grace Kraft. Senior defender Laena Blanchard also earned all-state honors. Senior Grace Canfield and junior Sarah Tuggle are returning all-conference players.

Lansing Catholic has a solid defensive team, led by junior defender Katie Burns, who earned all-state honors. The Cougars also have a number of all-conference players returning, including senior defender Jessie Plaehn, junior forward Shannon Crilley, and sophomore midfielders Abigail Gilmore and Olivia Poupard.

Lakewood returns high-scoring junior forward Mallory Durham. Senior Danielle Kosten and junior Bryeana Littlefield are returning all-conference players.

Big Rapids is led this season by junior midfielder Hannah Davis, who earned all-conference honors.

Tri-County has a solid defense this year, led by senior defender Karly Drouin, a returning all-conference player.

**DIVISION 4**

**TOP TEAMS IN THE STATE:**

Calvin Christian, Charlevoix, Lake Michigan Catholic

**TOP AREA TEAMS:**

Everest Collegiate - Our Lady of the Lakes, Nouvel Catholic Central, Lansing Christian

Everest Collegiate - Our Lady of the Lakes reached the state title match last season, where it fell to three-time state champion Calvin Christian. Another deep tournament run is possible this year behind junior midfielder Alex Troy and senior defender Shelby Mann, who both earned all-state honors.

Nouvel Catholic Central returns a pair of second-team all-state selections in senior goalkeeper Ali Boucier and senior midfielder Gabrielle Helpap.

Lansing Christian is paced by senior forward Emily Voss, who was a third-team all-state selection.

**MORE AREA TEAMS TO WATCH:**

Oakland Christian returns a pair of all-state players in sophomore forward Victoria Lucido and junior midfielder Lilly Gould.

Laingsburg will have a potent offense, thanks to the return of junior Megan Essenburg and senior Jessica Darr. The all-staters combined for 31 goals last year.

Byron is led by senior forward Kathryn Atkinson, who was an all-state selection last year.

Valley Lutheran is led by junior midfielder Natalie Nitschmann, an all-state pick last year.



Ovid-Elsie and Ortonville-Brandon tangle in an early season battle on the Marauders home field. (Chuck Prikasky Photo)



Both the Freeland and Detroit Country Day soccer teams are loaded once again this season and could possibly meet up in early June when the Division 3 playoffs get underway. The two teams met up in last year's semis with DCD coming out on top in the game. (Scott Keyes Photos)

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# Freeland Hoping For Return Trip To D3 Semis

**John Raffel Sports Scene**

Lauren DeRoo is in her sixth season of coaching a Freeland girls soccer team that was a state semifinalist last season. It was the farthest a Freeland team has advanced in the tournament.

"It was all the versatility we had on the team," DeRoo said. "We had good forwards and good defenders. We had a good mesh of offense and defense. It worked well for us."

Plenty of experience from last year has returned. "This year is the most [players] I think I'll ever have back," DeRoo said. We have 10 returning players. Half of my squad is returning."

The Falcons have started the season 6-3.

"We started off slow," DeRoo said. "We had a gauntlet of things to get through first. It kind of showed where our weaknesses were. We're starting to pick it up, and I think we're going to have a strong rest of the season. We played some really good teams the first couple of games. In some we felt short. But we could see where our weaknesses were."

By the time the season ends, "this team will be as good as last year's" DeRoo said. "It's like a big family."

Top players this season are expected to include Taylor Herring and Jessie Piper. "Taylor plays defensive and Jesse plays offensive," DeRoo said. "Those are two major players."

Sophomore Michelle Herring, Tay-

lor's younger sister, is a "phenomenal offensive player," DeRoo continued. "She finishes well, she's a very skilled player. She sees the field well, as well as her sister."

Taryn Taugher is another versatile player for the team.

"I have a pretty good freshman [McKenzie Stroebel] who is a strong player and is good at finishing," DeRoo said. "She's very athletic."

DeRoos indicated that this is a team that does well in connecting passes and movement off the ball, and moving it up the field and switching it



"They definitely want to make it back to where we were last year," DeRoo said, "and make it back to the final four and hopefully to the final round. They're really working hard in practice. They're giving me 100 percent effort. I know they want to make it back

there. That's where their goal is set."

Freeland lost, 3-0, to Detroit Country Day in the semifinal last season. Country Day went on to lose, 3-1, to Unity Christian in the title game.

Whether or not her team is on the right path right now to achieve those goals "depends on the game," DeRoo said. "This past week has been a mess because the weather is so unpredictable. Sometimes, I feel weather can play a part on how their play is, because they can get sloppy. They saw some developmental things they need to work on by the end of the season. Probably within the next couple of weeks, they should be ready to go."

Freeland returns a strong group of seniors this season and is capable of making a long run in Division 3. (Scott Keyes Photos)



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# Veteran DCD Coach Bukari Stepping Down After Nearly Four Decades

**Dan Stickrad Sports Scene**

BEVERLY HILLS — Every time Bob Bukari walks out onto the soccer pitch at Detroit Country Day, he feels quite blessed.

The veteran high school soccer coach has been part of more ups than downs and has been part of one of the state's and the Midwest's most successful programs.

After 36 years as a head or an assistant coach, Bukari will be retiring this June. He will be a volunteer assistant next year to help with the transition, but his being a major figure will end this season.

"I have been so blessed," said Bukari, who first started coaching high school soccer during the late 1970s.

Bukari graduated from Oakland University in 1979, the same year he took over the fledgling girls' program at Birmingham Seaholm. "It was a lot different back then. That was before the MHSAA recognized soccer as a sport. There wasn't very many schools in [Michigan] with programs when I first started."

After eight years at Seaholm, Bukari made the switch over to Detroit Country Day and has served as either an assistant or head coach since 1987 at the prestigious private school.

Bukari has served as the head coach on four state championship girls' teams, five state runners-up girls' teams, and one state championship boys' team. As an assistant, he was on staff for more than a dozen state championship squads between boys' and girls' soccer at Country Day.

"We've had some amazing players and some amazing teams," recalled Bukari, who served under legendary boys' coach Paul Bartoshuk and former girls' head coach Bill Thompson.

This season, the Country Day girls have only three seniors on the roster, but despite being young, they will be a title contender. The Yellowjackets are ranked third in the first MHSAA Division 3 poll and were 6-1-1 near the end of April, again play-

ing a challenging schedule.

Country Day, which is 5-4 all-time in girls' state finals (Class B, Division 3, Division 4) finished as the state runner-up last June, falling to eight-time state champion Unity Christian, 3-1. The Yellowjackets finished the season 21-4-1.

Headed to Georgetown University, senior defender Jenna Stoudt leads Country Day this year, while fellow seniors Emily Fisher and Libby Ronchetto are both four-year starters in the midfield and captains of a young, but talented, band.

Junior Maddie Odom and sophomore Isabel Nino give Bukari two quality goalkeepers at his disposal, as the Yellowjackets hope to make another deep run and challenge for top honors this year in Division 3.

Sophomore Dagny Hill, one of four returning all-state players this season, is back in the midfield, along with juniors Hannah Hansen and Devon Fent-Baker. Junior Sonja Niederhofer and sophomore Lauren Alshab are two of the team's top forwards, while juniors Georgianne Verbeek and Naomi Hill and sophomore Olivia Heppard also return.

"This is one of the youngest teams we've had here in a long time. But they do have potential," said Bukari. "I think, based on the schedule that we play every year, that will help us prepare for the state tournament. I like to think we have a chance. When you have very good goalkeeping, good leaders, and players that work hard, it can often lead to good things. We have those things."

Even if Country Day does not capture another title, the veteran says he has no regrets. "Love every minute of it. Working with kids, coaching them, is what I enjoy," said Bukari, noting that Steve Bossert will take the boys' program and Laura Hamway the girls' program. "It's been a long time. I feel like it's time to hand it over to someone else."

There's just one more order of business to finish, another state title.

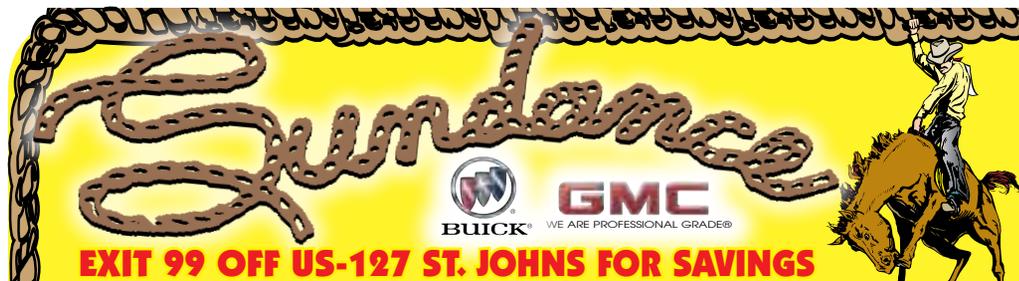


The Detroit Country Day girls soccer team made it all the way to the Division 3 finals last season losing to Hudsonville Unity Christian 3-1 in the finals. Although they are young DCD can make another long run this season. (Scott Keyes Photos)

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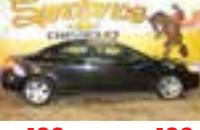
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