

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE
KEEPING KIDS IN THE NEWS

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

It's a great day here at High School Sports Scene Magazine and what a football season did we have!!

The state football playoffs provided a ton of thrills for area football fans. What about the job the Pewamo-Westphalia football team accomplished this year. After graduating one of the finest running backs, Jared Smith, in high school history last season, Pewamo-Westphalia came back with another impressive offensive machine and marched to a second straight Division 7 state championship. Well done, guys!!!

The Tri-Valley Conference showed up big time this postseason. Led by super-senior quarterback Joey Bentley, the Ithaca Yellowjackets made a return to Ford Field to battle it out with Jackson Lumen Christi for the Division 6 state title. While Ithaca fell just short, the Yellowjackets put on a stirring fourth-quarter rally that will be remembered for years.

Swan Valley, champions of the Central Division, made school history by reaching the Division 5 state finals. The Vikings were denied a state title by Grand Rapids West Catholic but there was no denying the effort and heart shown by the Swan Valley gridgers during the tournament.

Tri-Valley East champions Frankenmuth came just shy of making it an all-Tri-Valley final as it came up just short against West Catholic in the semifinals.

Hats off to West Bloomfield. The Lakers turned in a thrilling post-season run highlighted by a stunning win against perennial Division 1 powerhouse Detroit Cass Tech in the state semifinals. West Bloomfield and Clarkston then put on an amazing display of defense in the title game with Clarkston earning a 3-2 win.

In Division 3, Farmington Hills Harrison put up a gutsy battle against an unreal Muskegon team that featured a roster stocked with Division 1 college talent.

Finally, in Division 8, Saginaw Nouvel made a return trip to Ford Field where it ran into a buzzsaw of a team from Ottawa Lake Whiteford.

It was a memorable season for high school football in Michigan, it only makes you crave for another dose next fall.

Before then, we have a big season of winter sports coming up. Check back next month when Sports Scene gives the lowdown on the winter athletes poised to hit the gym floors, wrestling mats, hockey rinks and pools in the area.



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Lansing Catholic Runners Celebrate Title

John Raffel Sports Scene

Lansing Catholic was dominant in winning the Division 2 girls cross country this season.

The Cougars were led by a dominating performer in Olivia Theis, who won in state record-breaking time for all divisions. But in team scoring, three of the top five finishers were in the top five.

While Theis was first,

Lauren Cleary was third (17:43.7) and Jaden Theis was fifth (18:18). Catholic, with a score of 77, was far ahead of second-place Grand Rapids Christian with 145.

Cleary said she was "very happy" with her time. "I kind of went in not really expecting anything," she said. "I'm very happy with how it worked out."

As for Theis' performance, "I'm kind of used

to it," Cleary smiled. She's always a good one to have a good second half race. I knew she'd come out at a super pace and then kick it in. I'm not super-surprised. She's awesome."

Cleary is returning next year as a senior.

"I was very happy with my season," she said.

The Division 2 race was conducted in the early afternoon before thunderstorms hit the area. "We just missed the bad

weather," Cleary said. "For our race, it was good and the perfect temperature. It was a little windy, but I wouldn't complain."

Also for the Cougars, Grace Frost placed 26th in the team standings (19:15.2) and Rachel Reid was 42nd.

Jaden Theis, a sophomore was sixth in individual standings.

"I was pretty impressed," she said. "With my ankle injury, it started

the end of September. I only ran one race since. Coming out and getting sixth was sweet."

Without the ankle injury, Jaden Theis agreed she may have been able to get an even better time.

Winning the team state final, "is fun, it's so huge," Theis said. "After our first meet, we said, 'this is it, this is our year.'"

But she's hoping, with four of the top runners coming back, Lansing Catholic can make another title run next season.



Lansing Catholic ran away from the field and wins the recent Division 2 girls cross country championship held earlier this month at Michigan International Raceway. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photo)



LCC's Theis Breaks State Record

John Raffel Sports Scene

The question to Lansing Catholic senior Olivia Theis was an obvious one:

Did you ever expect to have a Division 2 state finals cross country race where you break the state record for all divisions?

Olivia Theis became only the second female runner to ever eclipse the 17-minute mark during a state finals cross country meet. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Theis' response was not as obvious.

"I went into it hoping to PR," she said. "I've never PRed here before, but I ended up doing it."

She broke the all divisions record in 16:52.1, while leading her team to the state title. As for breaking the state record,

"it feels really good," Theis said. "I actually had no idea what the state record was."

Theis insisted she never reached a point in the race where she realized she was accomplishing something special.

"I knew there was a space between me and

the next person, so I was hoping that as long as nothing went wrong, I could get the title," she said. "In terms of time, I had no idea it would be my best race."

But with Theis and four of her teammates finishing third, fifth, 26th and 42nd, the Cougars were able to handily win a Division 2 state title.

"It feels amazing," she said. That's been our team goal the last four years. We finally got it where we're happy."

Theis' previous season's best time was a 17:26.8 at the Greater Lansing Cross Country championship. She was second at the 2016 state finals in 17:41.3. She was ninth as a sophomore and 19th as a freshman.

Potterville Boys Cross Country Take Surprising Second Place In D4 Finals

John Raffel Sports Scene

Potterville's boys cross country team came to the Division 4 state cross country finals on Nov. 4 at the Michigan International Speedway as a state qualifier.

The Vikings came home with a trophy. Potterville scored 185

points and took second behind first-place Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart, which had 126.

Zach Wright led the attack as a freshman for Potterville. He was 16th, in the team race standings at 17:03.3. Also for Potterville, Kody Smith was 21st (17:24.6), Luke Tarr 11th (17:51.2). Ross

Schmiedeknecht 46th (17:53.7) and Jordan Reynolds 60th (18:12.1). Beal City was third with 204.

Potterville's coach is Dan Brunk.

"These gentlemen have far surpassed any goals we had at the beginning of the year," Brunk

said. "They just brought it all together on this day that we didn't really expect. It had been a rough season. They pulled it together. It was a very pleasant surprise.

"Everyone did their job," Brunk said. "It was their chemistry and the way they pulled together. Everybody did what they had to do. We're not real deep. We only had five guys score."

Ten years ago, Potterville went back-to-back with state titles, but it was fun to be back on the platform, Brunk said.



Potterville's Zach Wright finished 23rd during the recent Division 4 finals held at Michigan International Speedway. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Shepherd's Gall Settles For Second At Division 3 Meet

John Raffel Sports Scene

Shepherd junior Amber Gall has one more season of cross country and perhaps, within that time frame, can figure out how to shave off at least 27 seconds which was the time difference between herself and first-place runner Adelyn Ackley of Hart.

Gall was second in 18:16.2 in the Division 3 girls state race on Nov. 4 at Michigan International Speedway.

"I think it went really well overall,"

Gall said. "I executed my race plan pretty well, which was to start out conservative and then go as hard as I could the next two miles, and I think I stuck to that pretty well."

As for 18:16.2, "it was harder on this course because the last 1,200 meters, it was really wet," Gall said. "But I'm definitely happy. I really liked the temperature (in the 40s)."

Gall is looking forward to a rematch against Ackley in 2018.

"She's an amazing runner," Gall said.

Gall was overall pleased with her season. "My season has had its ups and downs," she said. "As a team, it's really good. I think we're on the right track."

Shepherd finished eighth as a team. Runners finishing behind Gall for the Bluejays were Haley Hegenauer, 22nd (20:02.2), Made Skeel 33rd (20:02.2), Amelia Guin 66th (20:45.6) and Georgia Kusbel in 118th (21:55.4).

Gall finished first at nine meets during the season including a season record of 18:00.8 at the regionals on her home course. She was first at all of the TVC jamboree and meets. She won the Early Season Warrior Invitational at Chippewa Hills, the Saranac Invitational, the Shepherd Bluejay Invitational and the Alma Scottie Classic.



Shepherd's Amber Gall gets set to cross the finish line during the Division 3 finals. Gall placed second in the race. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Rockford's Johnson Takes Second In D1 Finals

John Raffel Sports Scene

Rockford's Cole Johnson and other runners in the Division 1 meet on Nov. 4 at the Michigan International Speedway had a challenging day, for more reasons

than one.

Because of thunderstorms, the race was delayed for an hour. When it did proceed, runners had to endure rain showers and wet and muddy conditions.

Johnson, a senior, took second

place at 15:18.2 behind medalist Nick Foster of Ann Arbor Pioneer in 15:16.1. He edged the third-place runner, Harrison Grzymkowski of White Lake Lakeland, who had a 15:18.4.

"I put it all on the line out there," Johnson said. "I'm still not fully recovered. It was a battle from start to finish that took a lot out of me, especially with the weather and the course being taxing. I gave it my all. I'm glad I was able to put together a full

race this year."

His season's best time was a 15:16.7 at the regionals the previous week in Allendale. Johnson had problems in 2016 that resulted in a 19:13.2 at the state meet for 255th. He had previously set a personal record of 15:12 at the Portage Invitational. He was third in the 2015 state finals in 15:15.0. He was 16th as a freshman at the state meet.

Rockford's Cole Johnson finished the Division 1 race in second with a time of place at 15:18.2. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photo)



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SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON CROSS COUNTRY



Davis Tebben, Lansing Christian, senior

He was ninth in the Division 4 boys meet in 16:47.3.

He had a PR this season of 16:34 in the Fowler Apples Invitational. Tebben was 10th in the 2016 state finals in 16:48.5. He was sixth in the regionals.

"I wasn't quite as high up as I wanted but it was a good way to end my high school career," he said. "I was pretty muddy, the last two turns."

If he had to run the race again, "I probably would have run smarter the last quarter mile," he said.

It's been a memorable career for Tebben. "It's been pretty good," he said. "It's been a blessing to make it to state the last four years. I've been blessed to have a great coach and a great team."

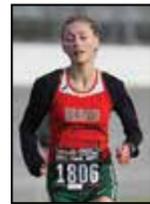


Ransom Allen, Ithaca, junior

He was eighth in the Division 3 state finals in 16:18.3. He was third in the regionals and also was third at the Michigan Class D state championships in which he had a PR of 19:10.5.

"The course was soft, but I ran OK," he said. "I would have like to have run faster. The temperature was perfect, I thought."

As for Ithaca's season overall. "It went pretty good I thought" Allen said. "We won the TVC West. Last year as a sophomore was my first time here." His previous experience helped "because I knew the course," Allen said.



Bailey McConnell, Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart, senior

She was second in Division 4 girls race in 18:44.1. McConnell had a personal record of 18:30.1 at the Michigan Class D state meet. She was second in the regionals. Two weeks after the state finals, she was 31st at the Mideast meet of champs in 20:22.5.

McDonnell finished off her last cross country race for Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart in sparkling fashion.

She was first among all runners with a team competing in 18:44.1. Overall she was second.

"It was pretty good," she said. "I was happy with my time. Each race, I've been working to get a little faster."

The infield "was spongy," she commented.

"I had some goals what I worked for on what I could do," McConnell said. She'll be going to Cornerstone next season to run with her sister, Alexis.

"I just have to keep training and putting in miles," Bailey said.



Cecilia Stalzer, Mason, junior

She was second in the Division 2 race in 17:35.90. She had a personal record of 17:35.9 at a junior while last year it was 18:15 as a sophomore. Her PR was 18:55 as a freshman. "I thought it went really well," she said. "It was really good weather conditions. It was a little windy."

She finished a distant second to Lansing Catholic's Olivia Theis who had a 16:52.1 for an all divisions state record. "It helped us all a lot. She paced us. I'm very happy with my time. Last year, it didn't go so well," Stalzer said.



Scout Nelson, Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart, junior

She was third in the Division 4 race in 18:46.6. She won the regional meet in 18:40.2 Her personal record was 18:37.4 at a league meet.

Nelson took third place overall in 18:46.6 and the Irish junior was second among her team's runners.

"My goal this season was to break 18, and I had never done that," Nelson said. Her fastest time this year was an 18:27. I was happy to run with Bailey for one last time. She really helped me out this season."

Nelson likes the cold weather so the state finals race was to her liking.

"The infield was soft and the ground was hard to get a good stride on," Nelson said.

Nelson, a junior, has been on a state champion all three seasons.

"It's really exciting and we found out our guys won too so that's exciting," Nelson said.



Lauren Cleary, Lansing Catholic, junior

She was third in the Division 2 race in 17:43.7, which was her personal record. It was 18:10.7 as a sophomore.

Cleary said she was "very happy" with her time. "I kind of went in not really expecting anything," she said. "I'm very happy with how it worked out."

As for Theis' performance. "I'm kind of used to it," Cleary smiled. She's always a good one to have a good second half race. I knew she'd come out at a super pace and then kick it in. I'm not super-surprised. She's awesome."

Cleary is returning next year as a senior.

"I was very happy with my season," she said.

The Division 2 race was conducted in the early afternoon before thunderstorms hit the area. "We just missed the bad weather," Cleary said. "For our race, it was good and the perfect temperature. It was a little windy, but I wouldn't complain."



Jaden Theis, Lansing Catholic, sophomore

She was sixth at the Division 2 state finals 18:18.7. Her personal record during the season was 17:19.2. It was 18:32.6 last year.

"I was pretty impressed," she said. "With my ankle injury, it started the end of September. I only ran one race since. Coming out and getting sixth

was sweet."

Without the ankle injury, Jaden Theis agreed she may have been able to get an even better time.

Winning the team state final, "is fun, it's so huge," Theis said. "After our first meet, we said, "this is it, this is our year."

But she's hoping, with four of the top runners coming back, Lansing Catholic can make another title run next season.



Madison Volz, Lansing Christian, freshman

She placed fifth in the Division 4 race in 19:02.5

Her personal record was first at the Fowler Apple Invitational in 18:45.3. She was second at the regionals and first in the GLAC Conference meet.

"It was a nice course, actually," she said. "It's about the time I wanted. It was really close to my PR."



Carter Soloman, Plymouth, senior

He was fifth in the Division I meet in 15:24.2, a personal record. He had finished second in the regionals. He never won a meet this season but took several second places.

Last season, Soloman was 18th at the state meet.



Desiree McConnell, Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart, sophomore

She placed eighth in the Division 4 race, 19:21.

McConnell was third at regionals and had a PR of 19:10. Lat season, she was 25th at state meet.

"It went well, I'm proud of my team," Desiree McConnell said. "One of my sisters is hurt. But we came together."

Cammie never ran during the season because of the injury. Desiree was eighth in 19:21 and second among the McConnell sisters.

(Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photos)

Weather Major Factor For Area Boys In Cross Country Finals

John Raffel Sports Scene

It was a cross country boys state finals where the weather had somewhat of a factor.

Temperatures were in the 40s which was ideal running weather or some. But runners had to deal with softer surfaces and in the mid-afternoon for the Division 1 and 2 boys, thunderstorms delayed the start of the races by more than an hour.

Ann Arbor Pioneer won the Division 1 race. Saginaw Heritage was sixth (Nathan Widman, 43rd, 16:21.2). Rockford ninth (Cole Johnson, second, 15:18.2), Okemos 11th (Paul McKinley fourth, 15:23.7), Rochester Hills Stoney Creek 15th (Harrison Steen, seventh, 15:26.8), Novi 16th (Gabriel Mudel, 15:26.7), Fenton 19th (Adam Jesse, 33rd, 16:14.9), Troy 21st (Jack Falk, 34th, 16:15.5).

DIVISION 2

Chelsea won a tight Division 2 race with 96, ahead of Corunna with 110. Ben Jacobs was first in the team race and second

overall for Corunna (15:35.9). Lansing Catholic was third (James Fedewa 26th, 16:27.1), St. Johns eighth (Dylan Haviland, ninth, 15:52.5), Cedar Springs 10th (Corey Bowers, 25th, 16:26.5), and Mason 26th (Kenny Stalzer, 16:46.3).

DIVISION 3

Hanover-Horton won the Division 3 boys race. Shepherd was seventh, led by Dane Nestle, 37th, 17:06.5). Pewamo-Westphalia was 10th (Hayden Germain 17th, 16:36.4), Clare was 13th (David Good, 55th, 17:18.2), Ithaca was 14th (Ransom Allen 11th, 16:18.3), Rochester Hills Lutheran Northwest 27th (Ethan Rice, 17th, 17:03.3); Auburn Hills Oakland Christian (Riley Gottschalk, 85th, 18:26.3)

DIVISION 4

Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart joined the girls team as Division 4 state champs led by TJ Moore who was 18th (17:03.6). Pottsville was 16th (17:03.3). Beal City was third, led by Alex Taylor, (16:47.6), Dansville 12th (Anthony Mack 11th, 16:54.3; Carson City-Crystal 13th (Coleman Clark, 27th, 17:29.5).

Junior Alex Taylor of Beal City was 12th in the Division 4 boys race in 16:47.6. "After I got done running, I felt I had run faster than 16:47," he said. "At the beginning, it felt I went out a little too fast. Later on, I paced myself. I need to training harder and increase my mileage a little more."

Senior Davis Tebben of Lansing Christian was ninth in 16:45.2 in the Division 4 boys race.

"I wasn't quite as high up as I wanted but it was a good way to end my high school career," he said. "I was pretty muddy, the last two turns."

If he had to run the race again, "I probably would have run smarter the last quarter mile," he said.

It's been a memorable career for Tebben. "It's been pretty good," he said. "It's been a blessing to make it to state the last four years. I've been blessed to have a great coach and a great team."

Junior Ransom Allen of Ithaca was eighth in the Division 3 boys race in 16:18.3.

"The course was soft, but I ran OK," he said. "I would have like to have run faster."



Stormy weather hampered the start of the Division 1 and 2 boys races during the MHSAA finals held earlier this month at Michigan International Speedway. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Area Girl Runners Endure The Elements, Lansing Catholic's Olivia Theis Runs Wild

John Raffel Sports Scene

Four champions were crowned in the girls cross country state finals on Nov. 4 at the Michigan International Speedway, including Troy in Division 1.

It was one of the tightest races of the day. Troy had 127 points to edge Northville with 132.

In team rankings, Megan Worrel led Troy with an 18:07.8 for 10th place. Hannah Palomino was 26th (18:42.5), Paige Anderson 29th (18:44.5), Meghan Monaghan 30th (18:44.8) and Katie Scoles 32nd (18:46.2).

"I went out there and gave it my all," Worrel, who was 14th in individual standings, said. "Since the beginning of the season, this has been in the back of our minds. We've been doing extra training and extra work, preparing for this moment. We're pretty excited. We were confident we

would do it. You never know. We knew we'd have to give it our all."

Girls had to endure cold weather and it started raining in the afternoon for the Division 1 and 2 races.

"We were worried about the rain, but we knew we'd have to be mentally strong and try to use it to our advantage," Worrel said

Anastasia Tucker of Midland Dow was among the area's all-stars, who finished in the top 10. She was 15th in the Division 1 girls race in 18:09.8.

"I was pretty happy," she said. "The weather wasn't ideal and the course was kind of muddy. In the end, I was satisfied because I was only a second off my PR. (Next year), my goal is to improve."

Birmingham Seaholm was seventh with Rachel McCardell taking fifth (17:51.9). Bay City Western was 15th, led by Ashlyn Nagel in 23rd (18:34.4)

Fenton took 20th, led by Alex Keiser in ninth (18:07.5).

Rochester Hills Stoney Creek was 24th with Jacklyn Tede-so leading the way in 72nd at 19:26.4. Bloomfield Hills was 27th with Shelby Jenkins topping the team in 61st at 19:18.1.

Lansing Catholic reigned in Division 2, led by course record-setting runner Olivia Theis. DeWitt was third (Ashley Shpps, 18:40.3)

All four divisions ran under 40-degree temperatures. The Division 1 and 2 girls went first in the afternoon and missed the thunderstorms and rain that delayed the boys races.

Hart won the Division 3 race. Clare was fifth, led by Lainey Veenkant (10th, 19:07.7). Pewamo-Westphalia was sixth led by Bailey Droste (20:01.5). Shepherd was eighth (Amber Gall (second, 18:16.2). Sanford Meridian was 25th (Hannah Or-

diway, 88th, 21:08.2). Mason was 11th (Cecilia Stalzer (second, 17:35.9). Frankemuth was 23rd (Hannah Loucks, 31st, 19:21.4). Alma was 27th (Sydney Hanson, 52nd, 19:49)

Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart won the Division 4 girls race led by Bailey McConnell in first. Lansing Christian was third, led by Madison Volz, fourth (19:02.5). Breckenridge was fifth, led by Chloe Brittain in 10th (19:40.1). Fower was fifth (Leah Wieber 32nd, 20:55), Carson City-Crystal 13th (Allyson Stevens, 48th, 21:30.3), Waterford our Lady 23rd (Olivia Hankey, 19:31.5) and Big Rapids Crossroads (Jaylen Schroeder, 26th, 20:42).

Chloe Brittain, a Breckenridge senior earned All-State honors after finishing in the top 30 of the Division 4 finals earlier this month at Michigan International Speedway. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photo)



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DIVISION 1 BOYS

2-Cole Johnson, Rockford, 15:18.2; 3-Harrison Grzymkowski, White Lake Lakeland, 15:18.4; 6-Gabriel Mudel, Novi, 15:26.7; 7-Harrison Steen, Rochester Hills Stony Creek, 15:26.8; 8-Drew Wenger, White Lakeland, 15:27.0; 12-Austin Remick, Rochester, 15:40.3; 14-Andrew Nolan, Lake Orion, 15:41.8; 17-Nick Trivison, Farmington, 15:43.2; 21-Dayton Brown, Rockford, 15:48.3.

DIVISION 2 BOYS

3-Ben Jacobs, Corunna, 15:35.9; 12-Dillan Haviland, St. Johns, 15:52.7; 24-Dakota Hundley, Corunna, 16:10.6; 27-John Pieper, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep, 16:07.9; 29-Brennan Mudd, Midland Bullock Creek, 16:19.5.

DIVISION 3 BOYS

7-Aiden McLaughlin, Morley Stanwood 16:13.6; 8-Ransom Allen, Ithaca, 16:18.3; 16-Kevin McNeil, Morley Stanwood, 16:13.6; 21-Grayson Rasmus, Saranac, 16:36.1; 23-Hayden Germain, Pewamo-Westphalia, 16:36.4.

DIVISION 4 BOYS

9-Davis Tebben, Lansing Christian, 16:45.2; 12-Alex Taylor, Beal City, 16:47.6; 23-Zach Wright, Potterville, 17:03.3; 24-Ethan Rice, Rochester Hills Lutheran Northwest, 17:03.3; 25-TJ Moore, 17:03.6; 30-Jordan Mawhirter, Montabella, 17:08.4

DIVISION 1 GIRLS

1-Ericka VanderLende, Rockford, 17:16.8; 3-Kylee Robinson, Waterford Mott, 17:34.8; 6-Rachel McCardell, Birmingham Seaholm, 17:51.9; 7-Kyla Christopher-Moody, West Bloomfield, 17:53.5; 10-Madeline Rehm, White Lake Lakeland, 18:01.1; 13-Alexa Keiser, Fenton, 18:07.5; 14-Megan Worrel, 18:07.8; 15-Anastasia Tucker, Midland Dow, 18:08.9; 21-Camryn Gabriel, Rockford, 18:14.2; 28-Sophie Novak, Lake Orion, 18:25.3; 30-Emily Rooney, Birmingham Seaholm, 18:26.2.

DIVISION 2 GIRLS

1-Olivia Theis, Lansing Catholic, 16:52.1; 2-Cecilia Stalze, Mason, 17:35.9; 3-Lauren Cleary, Lansing Catholic, 17:43.7; 6-Jaden Theis, Lansing Catholic, 18:18.7; 10-Megan Langworthy, Big Rapids, 18:32.7; 11-Taryn

Chapko, St. Johns, 18:34.2; 13-Ashley Shipp, DeWitt, 18:40.3; 15-Katie Vitou, DeWitt, 18:43.8; 20-Lucy Petee, Mason, 18:53.3; 27-Alexandra Case, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep, 19:03.9.

DIVISION 3 GIRLS

2-Amber Gall, Shepherd, 18:16.2; 12-Lainey Veenkant, 19:07.7; 14-Courtney Krupp, New Lothrop, 19:10.4

DIVISION 4 GIRLS

2-Bailey McConnell, MP Sacred Heart, 18:44.1; 3-Scout Nelson, 18:46.6; 5-Madison Volz, Lansing Christian 19:02.5; 8-Desiree McConnell, MP Sacred Heart, 19:21.0; 10-Olivia Hankey, Waterford Lady Lakes, 19:31.5; 11-Chloe Brittain, Breckenridge, 19:40.1; 13-Lexi Kinnas, Lansing Christian, 19:41.8; 19-Lauren MacDonald, MP Sacred Heart, 19:56.3; 23-Rowan Fitzpatrick 21:01.8; 30-Helena Snyder, Montalla 20:13.3.

Okemos's Paul McKinley finishes fourth during the Division 1 finals earlier this month. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photo)



Corunna Nearly Repeats As D2 CC Champions; Another Jacobs On Prowl

John Raffel Sports Scene

Ben Jacobs wasn't perfectly happy with his performance at the state finals this season.

But the good news for Jacobs is he will have one season back with his cross country team in 2018.

As a junior this season, Jacobs saved his best for last by clocking a 15:35 at the Division 2 state finals for third place overall. He had won the regional at 15:49.4 the previous week. His other sub-16 minute time was a 15:53.4 at the Michigan State University Spartan Invitational.

For the team race, Jacobs took first place. Corunna was

defending state champs but had to settle for second.

"My state finals performance I was pretty proud of," Jacobs said. "My ultimate goal was to try to bring home another team state final. I wasn't as concerned as winning the individual one. I wouldn't have been concerned if that had happened."

"I was concerned to go into it and score my team one point. The last mile, I passed three or four kids and scored one point for my team. I did what I wanted to do. I gave it a good effort."

Chelsea won the Division 2 race with 96, while Corunna was second at 110. While Jacobs was first in the team race, teammates Dakota Hundley was 16th (16:60), Miles Persons

20th (16:29.9), Charle Bruckman 21st (16:22.9) and Evan Roka 52nd (16:52.9)

Jacobs was eighth as a sophomore at the 2016 in 16:01.8 and took second took second at the Foot Locker Midwest Regionals in 16:11.6.

His season as a whole "was pretty good," Jacobs said. "It wasn't awesome. We struggled with injuries and some illnesses. There were some meets when I dropped out of the race because I was so tired. I didn't want to push it and go too far so I couldn't recover. For the most part, it was a pretty good season."

"The beginning and middle of it weren't that awesome. But we train so that we peak at the

end of the season, unlike some teams that run fast out of the gate and then by the end of the season, they can't run that fast any more."

Jacobs said he will run every day during the winter and have some type of indoor track season.

"Next year, my ultimate goal would be to try to lead my team to a fifth straight regional title. I think our school record is in sight and I can win an individual title."

The school record is 14:59.5. He's 36 seconds away from it. "I think it's doable," Jacobs said.

Corunna junior Ben Jacobs helped the Cavaliers to a third-place finish during the recent Division 2 finals. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photo)



Sparrow Carson Hospital Presents Cross Country Athletes Of The Year

Presenting The

Cross Country Male Athlete Of The Year



COLE JOHNSON

The Cole Johnson File

Rockford High School

Sport: Cross Country

Accomplishments: Rockford senior runner Cole Johnson was leading with the finish line in sight, during the Division 1 Cross Country finals held at Michigan International Speedway, but Ann Arbor Pioneer junior Nick Foster came from behind to take the lead with about 20 yards remaining. Foster crossed the line in 15:16.1, and Johnson was second in 15:18.2. Johnson is considered one of the top distance runners in the state.



Presenting The

Cross Country Female Athlete Of The Year



OLIVIA THEIS

The Olivia Theis File

Lansing Catholic High School

Grade: Senior

Sport: Cross Country

Accomplishments: Theis became only the second runner ever to eclipse the 17-minute threshold during the MHSAA Cross Country Finals at MIS.

Rochester's Megan Goethals ran a 16:54.8 in 2009, but Theis etched her name in the record books taking down Goethals' record by blistering a muddy MIS course in 16:52.1 to win the Division 2 title. Her performance also led the Cougars to the team championship.



(Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photos)

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GROSS COUNTRY ALL-STATATER SCENE STEALERS!

Alex Taylor, Beal City, junior

He was 12th in the Division 4 race in 16:47.6. He had a personal record of 16:39 during the season at the Alma College Scottie Classic. He was 11th at the 2016 state finals with a season record of 16:48.7.

Zach Wright, Potterville, freshman

He was 23rd in the Division 4 race in 17:03.3.



Alex Taylor, Beal City

He had a personal record of 16:28.98 at the Greater Lansing Cross Country Championships and finished second at the last CMAC jamboree. He was third at the regional meet.

Ethan Rice, Rochester Hills Lutheran Northwest, freshman

He was 24th in Division 4 state finals in 17:03.3. He sent a personal record of 16:29.8 at the Greater Lansing Cross Country Championships. He was third in the Division 4 regionals. He was under 17 minutes three times this season.

TJ Moore, Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart, junior

He was 25th in 17:03.6 in Division 4 state finals. He had a personal record of 16:47.4 at the Michigan Class D state championship. He was second in two MSAC jamborees. He was 101st at the state finals last season.

Jordan Mawhirter, Montabella, junior

He was 30th in Division 4 state finals in 17:08.4. He had a personal record of 17:05.3 at the Division 4 regional meet. He was in the top three of all MSAC meets. He was 42nd at the state finals last season.

Austin Remick, Rochester, senior

He was 12th in Division 1 state finals in 15:40. He was third in the regionals with a personal record of 15:33. He was 33rd in 16:59 at the Mid-East Meet of Champions on Nov. 18. He was 27th at the Division 4 state meet in 2016.

Dayton Brown, Rockford, senior

He was 21st in Division 1 state finals in 15:48.3. He had his personal record during the season at the Allendale Falcon Invitational in 15:24.5. He was third at the regional meet and was 15th in 16:32 at the Mid-East meet of champions. He was 39th at the state finals last season.

Dillan Haviland, St. Johns, senior

He was 12th in the Division 2 state finals in 15:52.5. He won the Division 2 regional title in Ovid-Elsie in 16:30.9. His personal record was 15:59.5 in the Fowler Apples 2 Invitational.

Dakota Hundley, Corunna, senior

He was 24th in 16:10.6 in the Division 2 state finals. His time at the state meet was a personal record. He was 25th at last season's state title meet.

Brennan Mudd, Midland Bullock Creek, senior

He was 29th in 15:19.5 in the Division 2 state meet. He was fourth in the regional meet at Saginaw Heritage in 16:06.4. He was 16th last season at the state meet.

Kevin McNeil, Morley Stanwood, senior

He was 16th in the Division 3 meet 16:32.0, a personal record. His best place finish was a second at the Saranac Invitational. He was 96th at last season's state finals.



Josiah Morse, Essexville Garber

Grayson Rasmus, Saranac, freshman

He was 21st in 16:35.2 at the Division I state meet. He had a personal record of 16:26.9 the previous week at the Allendale regionals. He won a CMAC jamboree.

Hayden Germain, Pewamo-Westphalia, sophomore

He was 23rd in 16:34 at Division 3 state meet. He took third at the regional meet in 16:48.1. His personal record was 16:32.0. He won a CMAC jamboree. It was the first high school meet he won.

Megan Worrel, Troy, senior

She was 14th in the Division 1 state finals in 18:07.8. She won the regional meet with a personal record of 17:57.0. She was 35th at the 2016 in 19:05.2.

Anastasia Tucker, Midland Dow, junior

She was 15th in 18:09.8 at Division I state finals with a personal record. She won three meets including the Heritage Invitational and the Freeland Invitational.

Camryn Gabriel, Rockford, senior

She was 21st in 18:14.2 at Division I state finals. She had a personal record of 18:10.4 at the Allendale Falcon Invitational. She was fourth in the Division 4 regionals. She was 34th in the 2016 state finals.

Lainey Veenkant, Clare, junior

She was 12th in 19:07.7 at the Division 3 state finals. She took second in the regionals with a personal record of 18:12.3. She took several first places including in Jack Pine jamborees and the Sparta Invitational.



Courtney Krupp, New Lothrop

Courtney Krupp, New Lothrop, senior

She was 14th at the Division 3 state finals in 19:10.4. She had a personal record of 18:42.4 at a GAC jamboree. She was 15th in the 2016 state Division 3 finals. She won the Genesee and Shiawassee County Invitationals.

Chloe Brittain, Breckenridge, senior

She was 11th in the Division 4 race in 19:40.1. She was second in the Division 4 regionals in 19:26. Her personal record came in 2015 with a 19:09.5 at the TVC West jamboree. She was 12th at the 2016 state finals.

Lexi Kinnas, Lansing Christian, freshman

She was 13th in 19:41.8 in the Division 4 state finals. She was fourth at the regional meet. Her personal record of 19:39.7 came in a second place at the Fowler Apples 2 Invitational. She was second in the GLAC meet.

Lauren MacDonald, MP Sacred Heart, junior

She was 19th in 19:56.3 in the Division 4 state finals. She was fourth at regionals. Her personal record came in 2016 with a 19:18.5 in the coaches state cross country meet. She was 11th at the state finals last season.

Rowan Fitzpatrick, MP Sacred Heart, senior

She was 23rd in 20:01.8 at the Division 4 state finals. She was fifth at regionals. Last season, she was 31st at the state meet. Her personal record was a 19:32.6 at the 2015 regionals.

Helena Snyder, Montabella, freshman

She was 30th in 20:13.3 at the Division 4 state finals with a personal record. She took eighth at regionals. She also had a seventh place at her home Mustang Invitational.



Megan Worrel, Troy

Taryn Chapko, St. Johns, sophomore

She was 11th in 18:34.2 in the Division 2 state finals. She was fourth at regionals. She was 10th at the 2016 state finals. Her personal record of 18:23.0 came at a state meet this season.

Ashley Shipp, DeWitt, junior

She was 13th in 18:40.3 in the Division 2 state finals. Her personal record of 18:28.9 came in the first meet of the year, the Laingsburg Invitational. She took sixth at regionals. She was 12th at the state meet last season.

Katie Vitou, DeWitt, senior

She was 15th in 18:43.8 in the Division 2 state finals. She was fifth in the regionals with a personal best of 18:42.7. She finished 21st in 20:02 at the Mid-East Meet of champions.

Hannah Adler, DeWitt, senior

She was 19th in 18:51.3 in the Division 2 state meet, a personal record. She was eighth at regionals. Last season, she was fourth at regionals and 100th at the state finals.

Lucy Petee, Mason, sophomore

She was 20th in 18:53.3 in the Division 2 state meet with a personal record. She was seventh at the regional meet. She took third place at the Perry Invitational early in the season.



Big Rapids Langworthy reaches her goal

Big Rapids junior Meghan Langworthy reached her goal of gaining all-state status this season.

Langworthy was 10th in 18:32.7 to earn all-state honors in the Division 2 state cross country finals on Nov. 4 at the Michigan International Speedway.

The temperature for the race was around 40. The

Division 1 and 2 girl races ran first in the afternoon and missed the rain. But the Division 1 and 2 boys races in mid-afternoon were delayed by rain and lightning storms.

"I thought it was pretty good," Langworthy said. "It was pretty muddy. (Her time) was good for the conditions." The competition Langworthy went up against was stiff considering the first-place runner, Olivia Theis of Lansing Catholic, set a record for girls in all divisions at 16:52.1. "I did (well) the entire race," Langworthy said. "I liked that it was cold. This is the first muddy course I ran this year."

Langworthy, a junior, will have a shot to raise her No. 10 ranking next season.



Morley's McLaughlin finishes 7th in Division 3

Morley Stanwood's Aiden McLaughlin and Kevin McNeil both had fun after getting all-state medals on

Nov. 4 in the Division 3 cross country state finals at Michigan International Speedway. McLaughlin was seventh (16:13.6) "I did well," McLaughlin said. "I was hoping to get top 10 and I got seventh. I was in

eighth for most of the race. I was where I wanted to be the whole race pretty much. I just had to keep my pace. It was a very good race."

He's only a sophomore and McLaughlin will have two shots at topping his No. 7 spot. "I wanted to get all-state and top 20," he said. "I PRed about 40 seconds throughout the season." The winner was Yami Albrecht of Caro in 15:44.7, and McNeil was 16th (16:32) for the Mohawks to finish in the top 30 which is the all-state mark.

"I PRed by about 10 seconds," McNeil said. "I went out fast the first two miles and pretty much tried to hang on the last mile."

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Sacred Heart Girls Make In 3 Straight Cross Country Titles

John Raffel
Sports Scene

It's three straight girls state cross country Division 4 titles for Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart, with no end immediately in sight. The Irish had a 39 at the Division 4 meet on Nov. 4 at Michigan International Speedway. Bailey McDonnell finished off her last cross country race for Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart in sparkling fashion.

She was first among all runners with a team competing in 18:44.1. Overall she was second.

"It was pretty good," she said. "I was happy with my time. Each race, I've been working to get a little faster."

The infield "was spongy," she commented.

"I had some goals what I worked for on what I could do," McConnell said. She'll be going to Cornerstone next season to run with her sister,

Alexis. "I just have to keep training and putting in miles," Bailey said.

Scout Nelson took third place overall in 18:46.6 and the Irish junior was second among her team's runners.

"My goal this season was to break 18, and I had never done that," Nelson said. "I was happy to run with Bailey for one last time. She really helped me out this season." Her fastest time this year was an 18:27.

Nelson likes the cold weather so the state finals race was to her liking.

"The infield was soft and the ground was hard to get a good stride on," Nelson said.

Nelson, a junior, has been on a state championship team all three seasons.

"It's really exciting and we found out our guys won too so that's exciting," Nelson said.

"It went well,

I'm proud of my team," Sacred Heart junior Desiree McConnell said. "One of my sisters is hurt. But we came together."

Cammie McConnell never ran during the season because of the injury. Desiree was eighth in 19:21 and second among the McConnell sisters.

"Our team is great, I was proud of them," Desiree said. "(Her) time wasn't great. I'm not going to make any excuses. It was a little cold."

Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart's Lauren MacDonald was all-state in 19th in 19:56.3.

"I thought the weather was kind of cold but we all pushed through it," she said.

As for winning another title, "I wouldn't necessarily say we expect it. We work hard for it, and we won" MacDonald said. "I'm more experienced and I think I handled myself better this year."

Sacred Heart's Rowan Fitzpatrick was 23rd in 20:01.8.

"We ran hard, stuck to our pace and we won," Fitzpatrick said. "This year was a lot less stressful for us. We've all been working this summer really hard. We all stuck together and shortened our time. I would have liked to have been under 20, but 20:01 is fine. It was a little soggy



getting into the infield."

The girls have been solid for three years now," coach Mark Zitzelsberger said. "The whole group of girls came up through junior high cross country. They work hard. (Cammie McConnell) was the fifth-place finisher at the finals. Usually, a school of our size, when you lose somebody like that, it's a kiss of death. We were fortunate we had depth and the girls really stepped up."

The Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart girls cross country rolled to its second straight Division 4 championship earlier this month at Michigan International Speedway. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photos)

Sacred Heart Boys Cross Country Joins Girls Team As Champions

John Raffel
Sports Scene

The Sacred Heart boys decided to join the girls as Division 4 cross country champions this year.

Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart's boys doubled the school's pleasure in cross country state titles by making it 2-for-2. The girls were expected to take first place, and they did. The boys were thought to have a chance in Division 4 and got the job done with a 124, 59 points ahead of second-place Pottersville.

Sacred Heart was led by TJ Moore who was 25th overall in 17:03.6 for the school's only

individual top 30 all-state finish.

"It's amazing. It's a feeling I can't describe," Moore said. "I thought in July and August we could do this with the solid core of people we had. We just had to keep them healthy. We thought we had a good chance to win something. We all ran solid. We held our own and moved up as a pack. We like to work hard and win races."

For the team race, Moore was 18th (17:03.6), Nelson 20th (17:09.8), Josh Lynch 26th (17:29.1), Matthew Nowak 29th (17:33.3) and Noah Schafer 33rd (17:43.9). "I thought my time was slow," Moore said. "It was muddy and everyone pushed through."

Only Schafer is a senior. Six of the top seven return next year and Sacred anticipates bringing in an exceptional middle school runner. Coach Mark Zitzelsberger pointed out the combined scores of his two boys and girls team, with 126 for boys and 39 for the girls, was 165, the second lowest such combined point total in state history. Rockford had 90 points.

He was confident the boys had a chance in 2017 "after they finished 10th last year," Zitzelsberger said. "They had a lot of injuries. Only four of the guys that started varsity ended up running here last year, due to injuries. We understood Harbor Springs and Pewamo Westpha-

lia moved up to Division 3. The boys knew every other team ahead of us graduated at least two guys. We knew it would be wide open.

"I told the boys, you'd better put the work in over the summer to put yourself in the position. They did. Our boys ran as a pack at regionals. The spread was 27 seconds between one and five. That's the way they've been running all season. We got three guys under 17 this year. At that point, I knew we had a good chance."

The Irish's boys squad scored 59 points to win the Division 4 championship. Pottersville finished second. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photos)



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Laingsburg Gives Top-Ranked Bronson A Scare, Falls In State Title Match

Dan Stickrad
Sports Scene

Bronson found itself in an unfamiliar situation in the Class C state finals at Battle Creek's Kellogg Arena.

The Vikings trailed 1-0 against Laingsburg and a third straight title was in jeopardy.

Top-ranked Bronson escaped the danger zone of a potential giant killer in honorable mention Laingsburg, rallying for a 3-1 triumph in the Class C state finals.

After falling behind with a 25-20 setback in Game 1, Bronson persevered to win the final three sets, 25-19, 25-20, 25-19 to earn its third straight Class C title.

"I don't think we made any adjustments, I think we just tried to focus on what we needed to," admitted Bronson coach Jean LaClair of her team's 1-0 deficit. "I thought it was a pretty gutsy performance. We had Keona (Salesman) hurt her thumb and I asked 'do you want to play?' But all of the girls stepped up after that point."

"We decided to play," noted setter Kiana Mayer of the eye-opening deficit. "At the point, we knew we had to step up."

Salesman slammed 19 kills and recorded 11 digs for the Vikings. Jolie Smoker added 12 kills, Kiera Lasky had 21 digs, Kiana Mayer followed with 37 assists and Ashton Wronikowski added 11 kills for Bronson, which won its fourth title in the past decade.

"It's hard being the No. 1 in the state. People are always wanting to play their best. I think we were No. 1 the whole season. That's tough," said LaClair.

Alex Randall had 16 kills and 10 digs to lead Laingsburg. Sophie Strife added 14 kills and 14 digs, Maya Ferland chipped in 14 kills, 11 digs and two aces and Grace Gregg contributed 40 assists for the Wolfpack (40-17-3), who were making their first-ever state finals appearance.

Laingsburg lost in the state quarterfinals the past two years, but took two more steps to reach the season's final day.

"We did a great job coming out and playing our best. That's what we preached all season long," said Laingsburg coach Tennifer Whitmore. "I thought Bronson's ball control was very good and we fell behind in the last three sets. We were competitive, but not enough in the end against a great program."

"I'll be honest. We didn't just come here to play, we came here with the hopes of winning it," added Whitmore. "We had a great run and played on the season's final day for the first time. Only two schools (in each class) can say that. We came up short against a great team. But I couldn't be prouder of our efforts. We had an amazing run."

In the semifinals, Laingsburg defeated first-time state semifinalist Wixom St. Catherine of Siena, 3-1. Ferland slammed 19 kills, Randall added 15 kills, Stiff had 10 kills and Gregg collected 40 assists.

Overall, Laingsburg defeated five teams that were ranked or listed as honorable mention during its state runner-up run.



Laingsburg's Maya Ferland sends the ball over the net during the Class C championship match. Bronson went on to win the match in four games. (Courtesy Photo)

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SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON VOLLEYBALL

Area Volleyball Teams Turn In Strong Performances In State Tournament Action

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Heading into the state volleyball tournament, the Corunna Cavalier were unranked. By the end of the second week of the state tournament, the Cavaliers had more than proven that they deserved to be rated among the top teams in the state in CLASS B

Corunna won both a district and a regional title to advance to the elite eight in Class B. Corunna's tournament run was ended by the best in the state as No. 1-ranked and eventual Class B state champion Pontiac Notre Dame Prep stopped the Cavalier in three sets. For the year, the Cavs finished with a 43-7-1 overall record.

Along the way, Corunna proved it could play with anyone in the state. The Cavalier opened the tournament with a three-set victory against Chesaning to win the Durand district title. At the Goodrich regional, Corunna earned a trip to the state quarterfinals by defeating Swan Valley in four sets in the title match.

Sophomore standout Elizabeth Norris was one of the team leaders this season as she totaled 609 kills along with 471 digs and 85 blocks. Senior hitter Rylee Thayer turned in a big season with 392 kills, 74 blocks and 59 aces. Junior setter Lexi Mort racked up 1,429 assists while junior Maddie Birchmeier totaled 655 digs and senior Myah Kelly added 584 digs.

Swan Valley turned in a solid tournament run. Ranked among the honorable mention in Class B at the end of the season, the Vikings upended rival Freeland, ranked ninth in the state, in five sets to win the district title at Bay City Glenn. Swan Valley defeated Powers Catholic in the regional semifinals before falling to Corunna in the regional finals. Swan Valley capped the year with a 47-13-2 overall record.

Senior hitter Kristen Huebner, who will be continuing her career at Saginaw Valley State next season, was one of the top hitters in the state this season with 664 total kills and a .409 hitting percentage. Junior hitter Hallie McIntyre totaled 256 kills and 82 aces this season with senior Emma Bierlein adding 200 kills. Sophomore setters Bridget Raedy and Claire Bierlein totaled 743 and 625

assists respectively. Junior Mallory Eurich added 490 digs and senior Riley McIntyre totaled 343 digs.

Haslett wrapped up a solid season by falling in four sets to Lakewood-Lake Odessa, ranked third in the state, at the Williamston regional.

Haslett earned a trip to the regional after stopping Lansing Catholic Central in five sets to win the Fowlerville district. Senior Lilly Metcalf turned in a big season for the Vikings as she totaled 296 kills, 107 digs and 53 aces.

Birch Run won a district title this season by stopping Caro in four sets to win the Caro district. The Panthers fell in the semifinals of the Goodrich district in five sets to Corunna.

Flint Powers won the district it hosted by stopping Goodrich in five sets in the finals. Powers fell to Swan Valley in four sets at the Goodrich regional.

CLASS A

Midland turned in a strong post-season run by reaching the Class A quarterfinals where it fell in three sets to eventual Class A runner-up Bloomfield Hills Marian.

Midland reached the quarterfinals by winning the Flushing regional where it defeated Fenton in four sets in the title match. Midland defeated Bay City Western in four sets to win the Midland Dow district. The Chemics finished the season with a 52-10 record.

Senior hitter Grace Rekeeweg led Midland this season with 659 kills along with 84 aces. Senior Peyton Gerstacker added 400 kills and 373 digs while senior Bethany Wilson totaled 283 kills and 79 blocks.

Clarkston reached the finals of the Bloomfield Hills regional before dropping a three-set match to eventual state runner-up Bloomfield Hills Marian. Clarkston reached the final by stopping Troy in three sets in the semifinals.

Clarkston, which ended the season with a 31-113 mark, defeated Ortonville-Brandon to win the Clarkston district title. Senior Abbey Malinowski led the way for Clarkston this season with 531 kills and 329 digs.

It took the eventual state champion to put

an end to South Lyon's season. South Lyon defeated Howell in four sets to win the district title at Howell. At the Dexter regional, South Lyon defeated Ann Arbor Huron in three sets before falling to eventual Class A champion Novi in three sets in the regional final.

Fenton won a district title by defeating Grand Blanc in four sets to win the Flushing district. The Tigers won a five-set match against Davison in the regional semifinals at Mt. Pleasant before falling in four sets to Midland in the regional finale.

Ranked No 1 in the state heading into the tournament, Rockford was upset in five sets by third-ranked Grand Rapids Christian in the regional finals at Jenison.

Walled Lake Central won the district title at Walled Lake Northern by defeating the host team in three sets in the finals. Central went on to the Dexter regional where it fell to Novi in three sets in the semifinals.

Okemos turned in a big effort to win the district it hosted. The Chiefs defeated Mason in five sets to secure the trophy. Okemos went on to the St. Johns regional where it fell in four sets to Gull Lake in the semifinals.

Davison won the district title at Flint Kearsley by stopping Mt. Morris in three sets in the title match. Davison then fell to Fenton in five sets at the regional semifinals.

CLASS C

St. Louis, ranked among the honorable-mention in the state at the end of the season, won the Breckenridge district title with a three-set win against Carson City-Crystal. The Sharks went on to the Pewamo-Westphalia regional where they fell in four sets against Grand Rapids Covenant Christian.

Saranac, an honorable-mention team at the end of the season, defeated Vermontville Maple Valley in three sets to win the Delton-Kellogg district title. Saranac dropped a four-set match to conference rival Laingsburg in the semifinals of the Pewamo-Westphalia regional.

Morley-Stanwood defeated Beal City in three sets to win the Blanchard-Montabel-

la district. The Mohawks advanced to the Pinconning district where they fell to Shelby in three sets.

Montrose defeated Burton Atherton in four sets to win the title at the Burton Bendle district. The Rams went on to the Bad Axe regional where they fell in three sets to Brown City.

CLASS D

Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart reached the Class D state quarterfinals for a fifth season in a row. After falling to Leland in the four previous trips, Sacred Heart fell just two points short of advancing as it dropped a 22-25, 25-27, 25-20, 25-22, 14-16 decision to Rogers City.

Ranked 10th in the state in Class D at the end of the regular season, Sacred Heart won the Big Rapids Crossroads regional with a three-set win over Pentwater in the semifinals and a five-set win over Muskegon Catholic Central in the regional title match. Winners of the Northern Michigan Christian district, Sacred Heart ended the season with a 42-10-5 overall record.

Lansing Christian won the district tournament it hosted with a three-set win against Morrice in the title match. The Pilgrims also hosted the regional where it fell to third-ranked North Adams in the semifinals.



(Nick Rethman, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Novi Wins Third Straight In Sweep Of Birmingham Marian

Dan Stickrad Sports Scene

Dominating. Within its long list of accomplishments the past few years, Novi achieved a feat on the volleyball court that hasn't happened in Class A in more than two decades.

The second-ranked Wildcats captured their third straight state title with a 3-0 sweep of No. 7 Birmingham Marian, topping the Mustangs 25-23, 25-9, 25-23.

Novi became the first three-peat school in Class A since Portage Northern won four straight titles from 1992-95. Northern also won three straight from 1985-87.

Behind Miss Volleyball Erin O'Leary, the No. 1-rated setter in the country, Novi reached the title game for the fourth straight year. The Wildcats lost



Novi's Kathryn Ellison delivers a spike in the Class A championship match against Bloomfield Hills Marian. (Courtesy Photo)

Novi. The second-ranked Wildcats (56-3-0) had too much firepower and state finals experience in the end.

It marked Marian's first title-game appearance since 2013, when the Mustangs lost to East Grand Rapids. This run came under a new coach, Lauren Duquette, and featured numerous wins against other teams ranked in the top 20.

"Here we are playing the defending state champions Novi and I thought we did a fantastic job maintaining our composure and competing with them," said Duquette. "We did a fantastic job in the third set of battling back, dropping the negative body language and energy and stayed with them."

"We came a long way this season. We went through many (changes) and someone should write a documentary about all the changes we made in three-and-a-half months," added Duquette. "We beat some very

good teams to get here." O'Leary, headed for the University-of-Michigan, capped her four-year career with 33 assists against only one error to go along with 11 kills and nine digs. Northwestern-bound Ahyanna Cannon had 18 kills, 15 digs and two blocks, Claire Pinkerton had 16 digs, and Kathryn Ellison followed with 14 digs and three aces for Novi.

"This group have left such a legacy," said Cottrill. "We're going to miss this group and everything they did for our program."

The Mustangs held leads of 14-12 and 16-14 in Game 3 but could not keep Novi at bay.

"We're a young team with only three seniors and Novi has a ton of experience. They are mostly seniors and have been here before," said Duquette. "That might have been the difference. We hope to be back."

Christine Audette had seven kills, Maddie Dow added 18 assists, and Sarah Cavanaugh contributed 13 digs for Marian (45-13-1).

Lakewood Gives Pontiac Notre Dame Prep All It Can Handle In Class B Finals

Dan Stickrad Sports Scene

Pontiac Notre Dame Prep put the finishing touches on its school record-setting season Saturday.

The top-ranked Fighting Irish finished with a 64-2-2 record, a new school mark for wins in a campaign, and capped the season with 53 straight victories following a 3-0 sweep of third-ranked Lake Odessa Lakewood in the Class B state finals at Kellogg Arena.

NDP outlasted Lakewood 25-16, 25-17, 28-26 to cap the

extraordinary season. The Irish have not lost a match since defeats to Class A schools Lake Orion and Farmington Hills Mercy back in August and have not dropped even a set since a 2-1 victory over Troy at the Beast of the East Invitational in early October.

It marked the third state title for the Irish in four trips to the Final Four, with the other championships coming in the fall 2007 season and 2013.

"I stopped telling all the papers of the how many wins we've had in a row because of the pressure. All the (report-

ers) kept reminding us about the streak. It is very impressive. There is some pressure with all of that and being the top-ranked school. Everyone is gunning for you," smiled Notre Dame Prep coach Betty Wroubel. "I couldn't be prouder of this group of girls. They worked so hard at not only playing with the pressure, but playing together with the same goal."

Natalie Risi had 19 kills, Gabbie Shilling was a perfect 19-for-19 attacking with 12 kills, Lauren Burnick had 42 assists and 12 digs, Morgan Verveyen slammed eight kills and Maddie Chinn added seven kills as part of the Irish's arsenal of weapons.

NDP lost in the state semis to North Branch in 2014.

"For myself and Lauren Burnick, we were here as a fresh-

men and we knew how hard it is to get here. We wanted to get back to Battle Creek and we accomplished that," said Shilling. "So anything else like winning a state championship is really just a bonus."

It marked the third time in four seasons that Lakewood lost in the Class B state finals and each time to a different school.

"We're not a team of Division I and Division II, college players. This is who we are. But we go out there and play hard every game and it shows," said Lakewood coach Kellie Rowland. "We battled them tough. They are a great team and no other Class B team has played them this tough all season."

Alivia Benedict had 10 kills and 12 digs, Breanna Wick-erink added 10 kills, Kayla Sauers picked up 32 assists and Patsy Morris had 16 digs for Lakewood (47-6-2).



Zari Kruger (No. 7) attacks the net during Lakewood Odessa's championship match against Pontiac Notre Dame Prep. NDP outlasted Lakewood 25-16, 25-17, 28-26 to win the Class B championship. (Courtesy Photo)

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Erin O'Leary
Novi, Sr.,
Player of the Year

Novi's O'Leary Wins Miss Volleyball

Dan Stickrad
Sports Scene

Five days before leading her school to a third straight Class A state championship, Novi surprised senior setter Erin O'Leary.

A forgone conclusion for the All-American standout to win the Miss Volleyball award, O'Leary was shocked when she walked into a gym to see an award ceremony honoring her as a landslide winner of the 2017 Miss Volleyball honoree, selected each year by the Michigan Interscholastic Volleyball Coaches Association.

Based on a 5-3-1 voting system, O'Leary finished with 212 points to win by more than 100 points. New Baltimore Anchor Bay's Maria Mallon was second with 109 points, followed by Clarkston's Abbey Malinowski (100) and Novi's Abryanna Cannon (88) on the 10-player ballot.

A humble Christian leader within her youth group, YoungLife Ministries, O'Leary is quick to deflect her personal achievements to those around her.

"This has given me the opportunity to look back on all the people that have supported me over the years — my coaches, my teammates, my family," said O'Leary. "I would be nowhere without all of them. Everything that has happened has been incredible."

O'Leary, a four-time Class A All-State First Team played in four state title

matches. The Wildcats finished as the state runner-up to Romeo in 2014, and defeated Romeo in the 2015 state finals with wins over Rockford (2016) and Birmingham Marian (2017) in title-game matches. O'Leary led Novi to not only three straight state titles and four straight league, district and regional crowns and to a stellar 218-12-1 team record over the past four years.

Behind O'Leary's steady hands, Novi became the first Class A school to win three straight state crowns since Portage Northern won four straight from 1992-95.

She finished with over 5,700 career assists, a new MHSAA record, and over 1,600 assists in 2017. Headed for the University of Michigan, she will depart the Michigan prep scene as one of the most accomplished setters in state history.

"There's not much to say about Erin O'Leary that hasn't already been said," smiled an emotional Novi coach Jennifer Cottrill. "She's had an amazing career at Novi. She's a great volleyball player and even a better person."

Her teammates were the ones honored for being able to play alongside O'Leary, who carries a 3.98 GPA and will graduate early at the end of January.

"If there is one player in the state who I could pick to play alongside, it would be Erin O'Leary," offered senior teammate Kathryn Ellison.



Hailey Delacher
Rockford, Sr.,
Setter

HAILEY DELACHER, Rockford 5-8 sr. S: The daughter of Rockford coach Kelly Delacher, this four-year varsity veteran finished seventh in the Miss Volleyball voting. She led her team to three straight OK Conference Red Division and district titles and to the Class A state runner-up trophy. She is a four-time all-league and all-region performer and a three-time All-State selection. She has the MHSAA record for assists in a match (67) and ranks in the top five in career assists. She will play at Division I Bradley University next year.



Desiree Becker
DeWitt, Jr.,
Outside Hitter

DESIREE BECKER, DeWitt 6-2 jr. MH: One of Michigan's top juniors, Becker was instrumental in leading the Panthers to their first Class A Final Four run. Becker earned All-State First Team status after slamming over 400 kills with a .360 kills percentage.



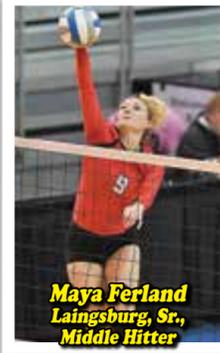
Lauryn Gibbs
Mt. Morris, Sr.,
Libero

LAURYN GIBBS, Mt. Morris sr. 5-8 L: With a career resume stacked with accomplishments, Gibbs will play next season for Michigan State. Named to the Class A All-State Third Team after her school voluntarily moved up to Class A, Ferland garnered All-State First Team status after a fine season that included over 150 wins in a three-year span.



Patsy Morris
Lake Odessa Lakewood,
Sr., Libero

PATSY MORRIS, Lake Odessa Lakewood 5-4 sr. L: A two-time Class B All-State First Team honoree, Morris played on three state runner-up teams and aided her squad to four league and district championships. The defensive spark plug registered over 700 digs on the season for the 47-6-2 Vikings.



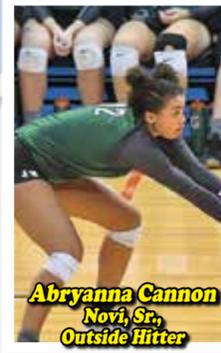
Maya Ferland
Laingsburg, Sr.,
Middle Hitter

MAYA FERLAND, Laingsburg 6-0 sr. MH: Her team's go-to target at the net, Ferland helped Laingsburg reach the quarterfinals in 2015 and 2016 and finish as the Class C state runner-up in 2017. Ferland garnered All-State First Team status after a fine season that included over 530 kills, 50-plus aces and 500 digs.



Madeline Chinn
Pontiac Notre Dame Prep,
Jr., Outside Hitter

MADELINE CHINN, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep 6-3 jr. OH: A lethal jumping jack at the net for the nationally-ranked Fighting Irish, Chinn is a dynamite attacker who will likely wind up on Miss Volleyball ballot in 2018. Chinn had over 650 kills and 415 of her attempts reached the floor this season. She was named All-State First Team for state champion NDP, which finished 64-2-2. She has already committed to Purdue.



Abryanna Cannon
Novi, Sr.,
Outside Hitter

ABRYANNA CANNON, Novi 6-0 sr. OH: After playing for two seasons for Traverse City West, Cannon's family moved south and she enjoyed being a key cog in Novi's state crowns in 2016 and 2017. She finished fourth in the Miss Volleyball voting and earned Class A All-State First Team as a junior and senior. Cannon collected over 500 kills, 330 digs, 50 blocks and over a .400 kills percentage for the Wildcats.



Abbey Malinowski
Clarkston, Sr.,
Outside Hitter

ABBEY MALINOWSKI, Clarkston 6-1 sr. OH/MH: A do-everything-type player for the Wolves, Malinowski led her team to share of the OAA Red Division and Class A district titles this season. A four-year varsity veteran who ranks in the top 10 all-time in numerous categories for Clarkston, Malinowski was All-State Second Team as a sophomore and All-State First Team as a junior and senior. She finished third in the Miss Volleyball voting and signed with Division I Oakland University.

CLASS A FIRST TEAM

Madison Dowd
Birmingham Marian, jr. S
Jess Mruzik
Farmington Hills Mercy
soph. OH
Olivia Smith
Bloomfield Hills, sr. MH
Grace Rekeweg
Midland, sr. OH
Jessica Robinson
Troy, jr. OH
Paige Briggs
Lake Orion, jr. OH

CLASS B FIRST TEAM

Rebecca Poljan
Lansing Catholic, sr. OH;
Allyson Severance
North Branch, jr. OH;
Natalie Risi, Pontiac
Notre Dame Prep, jr. OH
Brenna Wickerink
Lake Odessa Lakewood
sr. MH
Gabrielle Shilling, Pontiac
Notre Dame Prep, sr. MH
Olivia Sweeney
North Branch, sr.
Betsy Cook, Freeland, sr.

CLASS C FIRST TEAM

Paige Gallentine
Brighton Charyl Stockwell
Prep, soph. S;
Alex Randall
Laingsburg, sr. MH
Sophie Strife
Laingsburg, sr. OH
Megan Green
St. Louis, jr. S
Emma Schlagheck
Wixom St. Catherine
jr. OH
Alicia Aldrich
Beaverton sr. OH

CLASS D FIRST TEAM

Sophie Ruggles
Mt. Pleasant
Sacred Heart, sr. MH
Sidney Horak
Fowler, sr. OH
Kaelin Ray, Southfield
Christian, sr. OH
Brooklyn Within
Fowler, jr. MH
Emily VanDyke, Southfield
Christian, soph. OH
Tiffany Senerius,
Waterford Our Lady
of the Lakes, sr.

(Staff and Submitted Photos, High School Sports Scene Photos)

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Panther Pride...



Alma Volleyball Team Turns In Winning Season Highlighted By District Title

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

With dedicated senior class leading the way, the Alma volleyball team put itself back on the volleyball map this season.

Building momentum as the season progressed, the Alma volleyball team was playing at its best when it meant the most. Alma was hitting on all cylinders in the state tournament as it claimed its first district title since 2008. The Panthers then won their regional semifinal match before falling to Cadillac in the regional finals.

"I feel that we peaked at the right time," said second-year Alma coach Kristi Lippert. "We had some growing pains early and the beginning of the season was a little bit of a roller coaster ride. As the season went on we gained confidence and grew as a team. We started to come together and with about three weeks left they were really starting to come together and peak at the right time."

Alma finished conference play in

third place in the Tri-Valley with a 5-2 record.

The Panthers competed in the Clare district and opened district play with a four set win against Big Rapids. Alma defeated Clare 25-19, 25-21 and 25-22 in the district semifinals. Alma then clinched the district title with a 25-17, 25-17, 25-21 win against Shepherd in the finals.

With the district title in hand, Alma traveled to Gaylord for the regional. Alma won its semifinal match in four sets against Gladwin. The tournament trail ended for the Panthers with a three-set loss against Cadillac.

"Winning the district title was really exciting," Lippert said. "It was the first one I've won as a coach and Alma's first since 2008. The girls were very excited and our community really came together to support us. We had a fan bus travel with us to the regional final and we had a police escort out of town. The elementary schools also made signs for the team. It was really nice to see all

the support from the community."

Along with reaching the sweet 16 in the state, the Alma volleyball team ended the season with a 28-16-3 overall record.

A total team effort was key to Alma's success this season. Alma featured a balanced attack on offense and played solid defense.

"Offensively, we were very aggressive," Lippert said. "We were not a team that had one big hitter to rely on. Some teams have that one big hitter everyone knows but that was not us. We had offensive weapons all along the net. We spread the ball around. We had a lot of people attacking from a lot of places."

Leading the attack for the Panthers was outside hitter Hailey Leister. A junior, Leister is a two-year starter for the Panthers. Hailey's younger sister, freshman Alyssa Leister, also stepped up as one of the team's top hitters this season. Danielle Bastian, a junior middle hitter in her second varsity season, was also a main offensive

threat as was senior outside hitter Kimmie Shunk. Junior right-side hitter Jasmine Everitt was another key hitter for the Panthers.

Seniors Olivia Apple and Tia Everdeen were also key starters. Apple was the team's libero and defensive leader while Everdeen was Alma's setter who put the offense in motion.

In all, Alma had a group of six seniors leading the team this year. Aubrie Dunlap, Abigail Mellinger, Maryssa Smoker, Apple, Everdeen and Shunk provided valuable senior leadership.

"These seniors have been with me for two year," Lippert said. "They have put Alma volleyball back and have helped build a winning culture."

While the six seniors will be missed, Alma will have seven players due back next year as the volleyball team continues to evolve.

"One of the things I will remember about this team is sharing with them how proud I am of them," Lippert said. "It's only my second year



Alma claimed its first district title since 2008 this season. (Skip Traynor, High School Sports Scene Photos)

at Alma and we won a district and reached the regional final. I'm really proud of these girls and especially the seniors for starting to build that winning culture."

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL STATE FINALS NOTEBOOK

Dan Stickrad Sports Scene

DeWitt had to move up to Class A to make a run to the Final Four for the first time in 17 years.

The Panthers advance to the state semifinals for the first time in school history, only to come up short. DeWitt fell prey to eventual state champion Novi in the semifinals, 3-0 (25-13, 25-11, 25-17).

The fourth-ranked Panthers had never been past the regional finals before this season and competed in Class A for only the second straight school year. Previously, DeWitt was a Class B school for decades.

DeWitt, the Capital Area Activities Association Red Division

champs, finished its longest journey with a stellar 45-5-0 record for 10th-year coach Christy Thelen. The Panthers defeated eight top-20 teams this season.

But after defeating No. 3-ranked Grand Rapids Christian in the state quarterfinals, the Panthers came up short against Novi, which captured its third straight state title.

In its semifinals loss, Desiree Becker, one of the state's top juniors, finished with 11 kills. Brooke Binkley had 18 assists and 10 digs and Stephanie Starr added 11 digs for the Panthers.

MERCY STALLED IN SEMIFINALS

Farmington Hills Mercy's stellar campaign ended in the Class A state semifinals.

After defeating CHSL Central Division rival Birmingham Marian twice in the regular season, Marian turned the tables with a 3-1 triumph over Mercy in the state semifinals at Kellogg Arena.

Mercy won the first game 25-13, only to see Marian fight back with sets of 25-20, 25-20, 25-21.

Jess Mruzik, one of Michigan's top sophomores — finished with 26 kills — the highest total of all games at Final Four in all classes — to go along with 13 digs. Lauren Hunter added nine kills and 10 digs, Julia Bishop supplied 46 assists and seven kills and Logan Beyer also had seven kills for the Marlins (49-8-1).

Previously, Mercy had reached

the state finals in 2010, falling to — ironically — Marian in straight sets, 3-0.

ST. CATHERINE REACHES FINAL FOUR FOR FIRST TIME

Wixom St. Catherine of Siena only opened its doors in 2008-09 and has seen the all-girls catholic school has slowly seen its enrollment climb up to become a Class C school.

The Stars reached the Class C Final Four for not only the first time in volleyball, but in any sport. St. Catherine eventually fell to Laingsburg 3-1 (24-26, 25-23, 25-13, 25-23).

Payton Porter had 14 kills and 14 digs and Emma Schlagheck had 13 kills to pace St. Catherine (40-6-2). Maddie Kara added 12 kills and 11 digs and Katie Goose chipped in with 38 assists.



Pontiac Notre Dame won the Class B championship after sweeping Lakewood Lake Odessa in the finals. (Courtesy Photo)



DeWitt Volleyball Team Reaches Final Four In Class A Volleyball Tournament

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The DeWitt volleyball team fell just shy of its goal this season, but the Panthers provided their fans plenty of thrills along the way.

With its sights set on a state title, DeWitt reached the semifinals of the Class A tournament before falling in three sets to eventual state Novi.

While the Panthers fell just short of the ultimate goal, they

accomplished plenty during the season. DeWitt, which entered the state tournament ranked fourth in the state, capped the season with a 43-5 record.

DeWitt turned in one of its biggest efforts of the season in the state quarterfinal match against a Grand Rapids Christian team that entered the tournament ranked third in the state. Christian came into the match with plenty of momentum as it defeated No.

1-ranked Rockford in five sets in the regional finals. DeWitt, however, turned in a huge effort as it defeated Christian in three sets.

DeWitt won its first Class A regional title in school history when it defeated Gull Lake in three sets to win the St. Johns regional. The Panthers defeated Mattawan in four sets in the regional semifinal match. DeWitt also won the Waverly district title by defeating St. Johns in three sets.

DeWitt's Desiree Becker gets set to serve the ball during the Panthers Class A semi finals match against Novi. (Courtesy Photo)

Fowler's Magical Run Ends In Finals To Defending Champ Plymouth Christian

Dan Stickrad Sports Scene

Fowler's magical ride through the Class D tournament came to an end on the season's last day.

The Eagles came up short to top-ranked and defending state champion Plymouth Christian, 3-0, in the Class D state finals Nov. 18 at Kellogg Arena.

Plymouth Christian, which also finished as the state runner-up in 2010, took down first-time finalist Fowler, 25-18, 25-23, 25-21.

"It was kind of fun this year. As I said (earlier in the week) that I didn't know what to expect this year after losing eight players to graduation from last year," said Plymouth Christian coach DJ Kellogg. "This was a new team to play with this year. But after tryouts I thought we had a good chance to do great things again. It was just a matter of them responding."

Despite advancing to the finals for the first time as an underdog, Fowler did not have plans of settling for the state runner-up

seven kills and Madison Raymond added 13 digs for the Eagles.

Grace Kellogg's tip-kill to end Game 2 provided a huge spark for Plymouth Christian, as Fowler had put together a large rally to trim the score to 24-23.

Fowler (38-12-5) had recorded only 12 wins last season and registered several victories over state-ranked Class C and Class D schools this season, including No. 3 North Adams-Jerome in the regional finals and honorable mentions Southfield Christian (quarterfinals) and Munising (state semifinals). The Eagles could dig up no such luck against top-ranked Plymouth Christian.

Kennedy Koenigsnecht finished with 25 assists, Marissa Snyder added 11 kills and 11 digs, Sidney Horak had 23 digs and seven kills and Maddie Veale followed with 16 digs for Fowler.

"We had an amazing turnaround and it began with our seniors," said Feldpausch. "They stepped it up all season and led us to this point. I'm proud of them for helping us have our best season in school history

Fowler's Makenna Miller delivers a serve during the Class D finals match against Plymouth Christian. (Courtesy Photo)



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Clarkston's Defense Stifles West Bloomfield's High-Powered Engine To Win Third D-1 State Crown

Dan Stickrad
Sports Scene

All football coaches need to make adjustments in games or even at various points of a given season.

Such is the case at Clarkston.

Through Week 6 of the regular season, the unrated Wolves sat 4-2 following losses to West Bloomfield (37-15) and Rochester Adams (21-14) and out of the title chase for the OAA Red Division championship.

Clarkston, honorable mention in the Division 1 polls, made some much-needed adjustments after that point and posted eight straight wins to cap the season, including Saturday's defensive showcase which ended in a 3-2 upset of No. 10 West Bloomfield in the Division 1 state finals at Ford Field.

Even though Clarkston was the favorite in 2013 and 2014 — when they captured its first two state titles in wins over Novi Detroit Catholic Central and Saline, respectively — the Wolves were underdogs this season. They found a way to make a surprise run to the D-1 state title to win the school's third crown in five years.

contest.

The Wolves outscored the opposition in the state tournament 124-38, good for 24.8 points a game on offense while holding opponents to a paltry 7.6 points per outing.

Overall, Clarkston outscored its 14 opponents 379-165, which averages 27.1 points a game on offense and 11.8 points on defense.

A first down and a roughing the passer penalty gave the Wolves a first down at the West Bloomfield 13 with six seconds left in the first half. Jermaine Roemer booted the ensuing 30-yard field goal through the uprights for what proved to be the game-winning three points.

"That was obviously huge. Who knew that those would be the difference," said Richardson. "We knew we had to keep them off the field, force turnover, make things happen on defense. West Bloomfield is too talented to have (their offense on the field) for too long."

The two interceptions — one late in the second half by Clarkston's Zach Scott in the end zone — and one fumble recovery stymied West Bloomfield's lethal threats.

West Bloomfield had never advanced past the district finals before this season. The Lakers averaged 33.5



Clarkston won a defensive battle 3-2 over West Bloomfield in the Division 1 finals held Nov. 25 at Ford Field. The win was Clarkston's third in five years. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photos)

Tieler Houston's interception shut the door on the Lakers' final drive at the Clarkston 43.

"I dove to my (left) and came down with it," said Scott of his interception. I knew I had to step up and make the play."

"I thought the interception in the end zone was huge," smiled Richardson. "Obviously that was one of the key spots in the game — you could see it. It gave us some momentum. Our defense made the plays at the right time."

The game featured 14 total punts and set a MHSAA record for fewest points scored when both teams put points up on the scoreboard (five total points). The all-time lowest score was Ann Arbor Pioneer's 3-0 shutout of Detroit Catholic Central back in the 1987 Class A title game.

West Bloomfield had never advanced past the district finals before this season. The Lakers averaged 33.5

points an outing (468 total points scored) and gave up only 18.3 points a game (255 points allowed).

Self-inflicted wounds led to the setback. An array of penalties — 11 flags for 105 yards — dropped passes, three turnovers and missed opportunities spelled doom for West Bloomfield.

The Lakers held a 285-117 edge on total-yards-offense only to be held to a season-low of points and no touchdowns for the first time.

"We also played great defense, holding them to a field goal," sighed West Bloomfield coach Ron Bellamy. "We left a lot of points out on the field. Whether it be the turnovers, penalties, missed opportunities. We had our chances."

"Clarkston is a very good defensive football team, very well-coached and we knew that they would make adjustments," continued Bellamy. "Every time we threatened, they made the big plays and we didn't."



West Bloomfield's Quest For a D1 Title Falls Short In Loss To Clarkston

Nate Schneider
Sports Scene

This is was the year all the stars were supposed to align for West Bloomfield.

Under eighth-year head coach Ron Bellamy, the Lakers were stacked with future Division 1 talent including a quarterback headed to Bowling Green and two wide receivers going to Wisconsin.

Instead, Bellamy and West Bloomfield will have to wait another year as the Division 1 state championship game saw Clarkston best the Lakers by a count of 3-2 in the second-lowest scoring state final

the most part, we moved the ball well. But the two interceptions and the fumble killed us. You can't lose the turnover battle and expect to win. That's the number one reason we lost."

Bellamy, a former wide receiver at the University of Michigan, has watched the Lakers grow the last many years. After posting two nine-win seasons the last three years and falling in districts, West Bloomfield took a major step forward this fall.

It helped having talent such as senior quarterback Bryce Veasley (Bowling Green) plus Wisconsin wide receiver commits Taj Mustapha and AJ Abbott at their disposal, but the D1 state title game was just not their day.

"We had too many penalties and long fields," Bellamy added. "We couldn't overcome that adversity

today."

The Wolves did exactly what they set out to do with star running back Joshua Cantu out with injury.

"We wanted to shorten the football game and we managed to do that," Clarkston head coach Kurt Richardson said. "The fewer possessions we gave their offense, the better chance we had."

It was the second-lowest scoring game in MHSAA state finals history. Roemer punted eight times for a state finals record, while the 14 punts in the game tied the state finals record.

Richardson, the long-time Wolves coach, kept it succinct when asked about the tight-knit community.

"Clarkston is a special place and I'll leave it at that," Richardson added.

Nouvel Finishes Season 13-1 After Loss In D8 Final

Ben Murphy,
Scott Keyes
Sports Scene

Saginaw Nouvel couldn't recover a game-opening outside kick attempted by Ottawa Lake Whiteford. The Bobcats used the early extra possession to take an early 6-0 lead and largely rolled from there, handing the Panthers a 42-21 loss in the division eight state championship game.

"That play was huge for us," said Nouvel coach Mike Boyd. "That play gave Ottawa a huge momentum boost and unfortunately for us we couldn't cover."

Nouvel fell behind as much as 28-0 midway through the third quarter, but did get on the board

late in the half on a 28-yard touchdown pass from Tate Hausbeck to Ken Kujawa. A Jacob Burr extra point made it 28-7.

Ottawa Lake scored before the half ended to make it 34-7 at the break and pulled ahead 42-7 before Nouvel closed out the scoring with two touchdowns in the fourth. The Panthers scored on a 16-yard pass from Hausbeck to Kujawa and a Joshua Kuligowski 34-yard touchdown run.

"This one will sting a little for our seniors, but this group I couldn't be prouder," Boyd said.

Hausbeck finished 11-of-26 passing for 175 yards and two touchdowns and he also led the ground game with 86 yards.

Despite the loss, the season

overall was a return to form for the Nouvel program. The Panthers, under longtime head coach Mike Boyd were annual contenders for the state title, including a dominant run to the 2011 division seven state championship.

Since that time however the Panthers' hadn't been able to escape the regional round; until this fall of course.

After a perfect 9-0 regular season, Nouvel opened the postseason with a 29-7 rout of Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart. The Panthers trailed their district championship game against Harbor Beach by two touchdowns in the fourth quarter but came storming back for a dramatic 27-26 victory.

In regional play Hausbeck threw and ran wild over Alcona to the tune of a 54-34 victory. In the semi-finals, Nouvel made the trip to the Superior Dome, where they had to rely on a second half field goal by Burr for the 17-14 edge.

Ottawa Lake Whiteford was too much for Saginaw Nouvel winning the Division 8 championship 42-21 Nov. 24 at Ford Field. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photos)



Standing Pat Saginaw Nouvel Not Moving Down To 8-Man Football Anytime Soon

Nate Schneider
Sports Scene

Saginaw Nouvel head coach Mike Boyd is not thinking at all about the possibility of the Panthers' varsity program dropping down to 8-man football in the future.

Despite the difficulty of having enough numbers for a varsity roster and also sustaining a junior varsity program, Nouvel is going to stand pat in 11-man football for the immediate future.

"That's years down the road if it ever happens," Boyd said after Nouvel lost 42-21 to Ottawa Lake Whiteford in the Division 8 state championship game on Nov. 24.

The Panthers had 23 varsity players this year, while they brought 42 total players to Ford Field for the state title game with all the JV players also making the trip.

Two late touchdowns by Nouvel made the final score closer, but the blowout loss did have one benefit.

"We ended up playing some younger kids out there today especially up front," Boyd continued. "A couple of our juniors had big

games for us. Our numbers are at the point where you do start to wonder, but for us we have another possible solution."

Nouvel has discussed with the MHSAA the possibility of dropping down to 8-man football for its JV program, which would allow those kids to continue their development on the field during games rather than drop a junior varsity team altogether.

"If we went that route, I don't see why it would be at any detriment to those kids' development," Boyd said. "Football is football. As long as they are playing games in any capacity, they'll have the chance to become better players."

Boyd joked that he is like New England Patriots head coach Bill Belichick in only paying attention to his own team and not the world of 8-man football, but did add that he caught some of Central Lake rallying for a

32-20 victory over Deckerville in the Division 1 8-man state championship game.

"We were up at the Superior Dome in Marquette for our semifinals game and I watched that game," Boyd added. "It's a fun product and we'll embrace it for our JV kids if it comes to that."

Saginaw Nouvel gets set to hit the field during the Division 8 finals game against Ottawa Lake Whiteford. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photos)



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P-W Leaves No Doubt; Repeats As D7 Champs

John Raffel
Sports Scene

It's twice as nice to be Division 7 state football champs.

The second and third times have definitely been the charm for the Pewamo-Westphalia Pirates, who were making their third straight appearance in the Division 7 state final. They made it two titles in a row with a 21-0 blanking over Saugatuck on Nov. 25 at Ford Field.

Quarterback Jimmy Lehman passed and ran for a touchdown while Bryce Thelen ran for another for P-W, which ended its season at 13-1. Saugatuck calls it a season at 10-4.

"It's unbelievable, just an unbelievable feeling. The first one was great. This ranks right up there too," said Pirates coach Jeremy Miller, who now has a five-year coaching record of 60-7.

"Saugatuck is gritty and they fought to the very end," Miller said. "You could see how hard they play the game, and they play the game the right way. We were able to come out and execute in the first half. We went through some adversity with some guys going down and getting injured. But we had some other guys stepping jump. That was obviously the difference of the game that the guys were ready to go."

The Pirates fired out to a 14-0 lead in the first period. The Pirates took the opening kickoff 65 yards on 12 plays and scored on Bryce Thelen's 5-yard run.

"That was huge," Miller said. "We preached all week that we had to come out strong, and we had to establish our run game in the beginning. We were able to do that on that first drive. Anytime you come out of the locker room and execute and score (it's huge) especially with a long drive like that we were able to do on the ground."

The Pirates recovered a Saugatuck fumble at the Indians' 22 and then scored on five plays with Lehman running it in from 12 yards out for a 14-0 lead.

"We pulled our center (Isaiah Schafer), which is something we hadn't done a whole lot," Miller said. "Isaiah is very good at that. We kept that in our back pocket. We wanted to come out and run



Senior Bryce Thelen (No. 15) helped lead Pewamo-Westphalia to its second straight Division 7 championship after the Pirates upended Saugatuck 21-0 Nov. 25 at Ford Field. Pewamo-Westphalia finished the season 13-1. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photos)

a little misdirection and give them a different look. Their linebackers are good. We want to confuse them a little bit."

The Pirates were up 21-0 when Peyton Heckman caught a 12-yard pass from Lehman.

Saugatuck got into P-W territory deep in the third period but Jacob Pung's interception stopped the drive. Going into the fourth quarter, P-W had a 291-87 advantage in yards.

The Indians drove inside the P-W 10 midway in the fourth quarter but couldn't score.

Lehman sustained a left-hand injury late in the first half and missed most of the second.

"We had a great season," Saugatuck coach Bill Dunn said. "Nobody expected us to be here. I'll give credit to Pewamo. It's a great program, well disciplined. We just did the best we could."

The opening drive by Pewamo-Westphalia proved to be a back breaker.

"We deferred (on the coin toss) and wanted our defense to get out there and get a stop," Dunn said. "They're a great football team. We couldn't stop the running game. That was huge to

start off with. We had our moments where we could have come back and unfortunately it didn't happen."

Thelen rushed for 92 yards and Lehman had 91. Hunter Wirth added 69. Lehman had 58 yards passing. Damon Schneider led a strong P-W defense with eight tackles.

Saugatuck's defense asserted itself by holding P-W scoreless in the second half.

"We dug in and took pride in our defense and regrouped," Indians linebacker Reece Schreckengust said. "It's a game where you have to play good defense."

The Pirates had scored 34 points or more in their previous four playoff games.

"They have scored a lot of points, so to hold a team like that to 21 is a good credit," Dunn said. "Our defense was exceptional considering the opponent. They were just a little better today. We had a great senior class. We're losing a lot, but we have a lot of great kids coming back."

But so do the Pirates, who for the third straight season will be forced to replace outstanding players, who have led their team to the state title game.



Defense Carries P-W To State Title

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Defense is the name of the game.

It definitely was for Pewamo-Westphalia on Nov. 25 in the Division 7 state title game with another shutout, this one being 21-0 over Saugatuck for the Pirates second straight title.

"Our defense has been outstanding all year long," P-W coach Jeremy Miller said. "We've leaned on them. If our offense isn't clocking we know our defense will step up. I can't say enough about coach Thelen, our defensive coordinator and those guys on defense. They did a great job all day."

It was the team's sixth shutout of the season. Saugatuck threatened to score twice but P-W prevailed with its bend-don't-break mentality.

"We tend to buckle down when they're inside the red zone," Miller said.

Two-way lineman Isaiah Schafer, an offensive center and defensive tackle had another big game as did his team's defense.

"We had a couple of breakdowns where they ran up the middle," Schafer said. "But we came back and fixed those. It was definitely a great defensive effort."

The key to a fine defensive effort, which allowed 59 points in the 13 games after the season-opening loss was "being physical, disciplined and doing your job, not being a hero, but just making your plays," Schafer said.

The Pirates spent a lot of time, twice a week on film, prior to practice, studying the other team's offense, Schafer said. "Then we focus on that during practice."

3-0 vs. Saugatuck

Pewamo-Westphalia has enjoyed playoff success over Saugatuck in some tight games.

"It's always been a close hard-nosed game with them," linebacker-running back Bryce Thelen said. "It's always close. It comes down to a couple of plays."



P-W's Lehman Wasn't Going To Let A Broken Hand Stop Him

Nate Schneider
Sports Scene

Broken hand or not, Pewamo-Westphalia senior quarterback Jimmy Lehman was going to complete the drive he started.

Lehman threw his final pass of the season on a third-and-11 play with 31 seconds remaining in the half of the Division 7 state title game at Ford Field for a 12-yard touchdown pass to Peyton Heckman which put the Pirates up by three scores on Saugatuck.

While he did not play in the second half with his hand wrapped and a self-diagnosed broken bone, Lehman had done plenty enough damage to help send P-W to its second straight state championship.

"I think I was running up the middle and tried to stiff arm a kid and felt something pop in my hand," Lehman said.

Luckily for him, it was his left

non-throwing hand which allowed him to throw the TD pass before departing for good.

For the half that he played, Lehman demonstrated why he has been so important in helping lead Pewamo-Westphalia to back-to-back state championships.

Lehman rushed 17 times for 91 yards and a touchdown in the first half alone, while also completing 3-of-4 passes for 58 yards and an additional score. For the season, Lehman threw for nearly 2,000 yards and 21 touchdowns. He also rushed for around 800 yards and 17 TDs.

But without him in the lineup, P-W head coach Jeremy Miller knew he could turn to a stable of other players to help pick up the slack.

"We missed [Lehman] a lot," Miller said. "He's a great player. I think he gets a lot of credit being a quarterback and rightful-

Pewamo-Westphalia quarterback Jimmy Lehman carries the ball during the Pirates' 21-0 Division 7 championship victory over Saugatuck Nov. 25 at Ford Field. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photo)

ly so. We missed him. But the guy who stepped up in his absence, Noah Spitzley, did a great job too. It's a next man up mentality. It hurts to not have him out there, but you have the confidence other guys are going to step up when it's their turn."

The game went into halftime at 21-0 with Lehman guiding the way, while the Pirates showed how strong their defense by continuing to pitch a shutout with neither team scoring a point after halftime.

Lehman has been a huge factor defensively all season, being the rare player who is both a quarterback and a defensive lineman. He garnered Division 7-8 All-State First Team recognition as a defensive lineman.

"We had a lot of people this year who really felt like they needed to step up," Lehman added. "They did it. We lost our first game and that was some of the biggest adversity we went through this year. It was about how we were going to respond to that? It was about competing the best we could and we went from there."

And now the Pirates hoist the D7 state title trophy once again.

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Ithaca's Bentley Takes Home Small School Player Of The Year Honors

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Down by 20 points in the fourth quarter of the Division 6 state championship game at Ford Field on Nov. 24, Ithaca senior quarterback Joey Bentley walked over to his head coach on the sideline and had a to-the-point message.

Yellowjackets head coach Terry Hessbrook says Bentley simply stated to him, "I'm about to go off."

Bentley was true to his word as he threw a 29-yard touchdown pass to Colton Campbell on the next drive, while a 17-yard TD toss to Adam Clup at the 2:27 mark brought Ithaca to within a six-point deficit.

Only a failed outside kick attempt and a lack of any timeouts left kept Bentley off the field, where it seems

very likely he would have manufactured the game-winning TD drive as well if given the chance.

In the fourth quarter alone in the 40-34 loss to Jackson Lumen Christi, he was 8-of-14 passing for 180 yards and three touchdowns.

For his efforts in the state title game and the entire body of his work this season, Bentley is the High School Sports Scene Division 5-8 Player of the Year.

"The feeling we have is to always play as hard as you can," Bentley said in the post-game press conference. "I'm very proud of my teammates for doing that. Unfortunately, we didn't finish the way we wanted to but I'm so proud of these guys and everything we've done together."

Bentley's numbers this season were nothing short of phenomenal. He rushed 182 times this season out of the spread for 1,656 yards and 27 touchdowns. Additionally, Bentley completed 137-of-221 passes for 2,144 yards and 31 touchdowns against seven interceptions.

He guided the Yellowjackets to 602 total points this season, which comes out to an average of 43 per game.

"We've had some fantastic quarterbacks here and Joey's one of the best quarterbacks we've had - there's no doubt about that," Hessbrook offered. "I don't want to get into a numbers game and rank the quarterbacks we've had, but I'd put him right up there with any we've had."

It was only a couple days before the state title game that Bentley found out that despite being a Division 5-6 First Team All-State selection, he lost out on AP D5-6 Player of the Year to Essexville-Carbor's Ben VanSunneren.

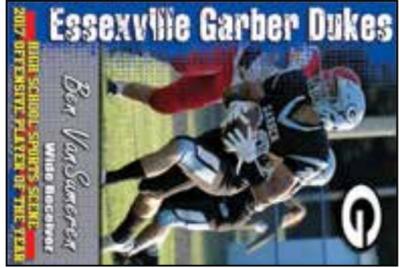
Hessbrook says losing out on the Player of the Year award didn't motivate Bentley any more than he already was.

"Joey is not the kind of kid to be worried about that," Hessbrook said. "He was motivated because he wanted to win the football game and win the state championship in his final high school football game."

"As good of a football player as Joey is, he's an even better person. He's a winner. He was a today, but he will be in life I gave him a big hug and a kiss after the game and told him how proud of him I am."



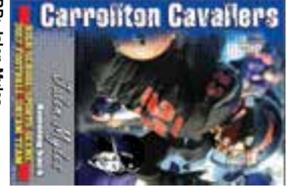
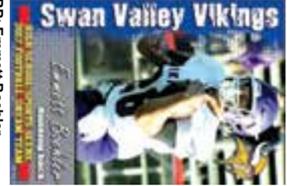
Joey Bentley



OFFENSE

WR: Ben VanSunneren, Essexville Garber

VanSunneren had a season to remember for the Dukes this season, hauling in 85 receptions - the most during regular-season play in MHSAA history - for 1,259 yards and 13 TDs.

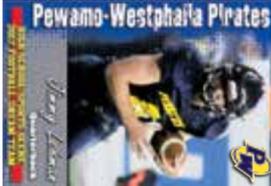
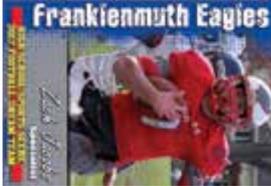
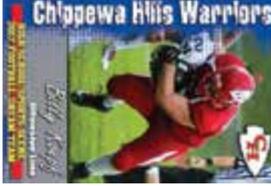
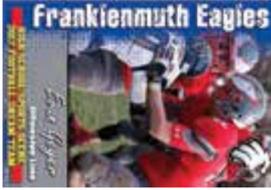


Swan Valley Vikings

Carrollton Cavaliers

Pewamo-Westphalia Pirates

Fulton Pirates



Frankienmuth Eagles

Ithaca Yellowjackets

Chippewa Hills Warriors

Saginaw Nouvei Panthers

Ithaca Yellowjackets

Frankienmuth Eagles

Pewamo-Westphalia Pirates

OL: Evan Geyer, Frankienmuth

OL: Nik Jones, Ithaca

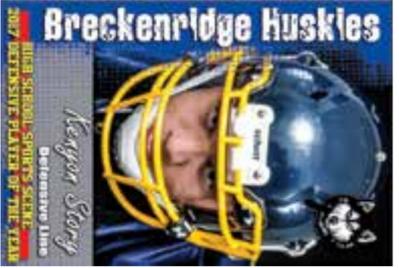
OL: Billy Koopfi, Remus Chippewa Hills

ATH: Tate Hausback, Nouvei

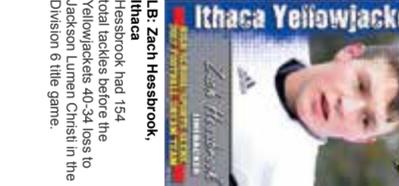
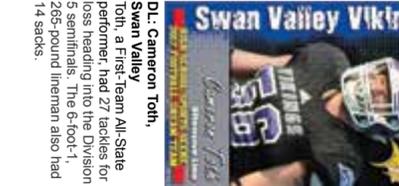
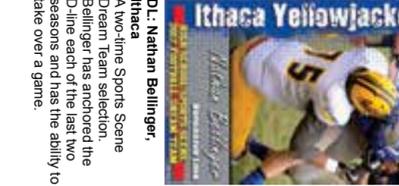
K: Adam Clup, Ithaca

SPECIALIST: Zach Jacobs, Frankienmuth

OB: Jimmy Lehman, Pewamo-Westphalia



DEFENSE



Breckenridge Huskies

Ithaca Yellowjackets

Swan Valley Vikings

Freeland Falcons

Ithaca Yellowjackets

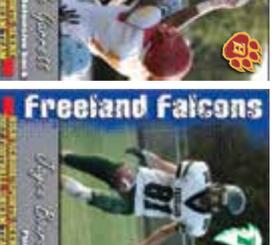
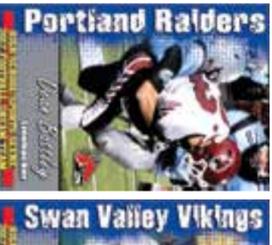
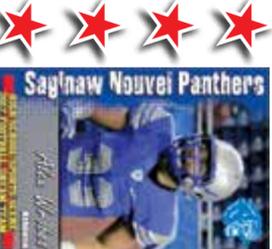
DL: Kenyon Story, Breckenridge

DL: Nathan Bellinger, Ithaca

DL: Cameron Toth, Swan Valley

LB: Gabriel Melva, Freeland

LB: Zach Hessbrook, Ithaca



Saginaw Nouvei Panthers

Portland Raiders

Swan Valley Vikings

Carrollton Cavaliers

Bridgeport Bearcats

Freeland Falcons

LB: Alex Wrobel, Saginaw Nouvei

LB: Dean Bartley, Portland

DB: Terryon Liddell, Swan Valley

DB: Jaleil Warren, Carrollton

DB: Markele Garrett, Bridgeport

P: Jayce Bouchier, Freeland

LB: Zach Hessbrook, Ithaca

LB: Brian Beers, Millington

LB: Devin Miller, Portland



COACH OF THE YEAR

FIRST TEAM

DEFENSE

DEFENSE

DEFENSE

DEFENSE

Ryan Pummell, Clare; Evan Morris, Ovid-Elsie; Jackson Blanchard, Houghton Lake; Bryce Geyer, Millington; Charles Garrett, Bridgeport; Cole Higley, Chesaning; Hugh Brand, Harrison; Bryce Lipovsky, Harrison; Shawn Mackinley, Houghton Lake; Drew Kraatz, Standish; Sterling, Tyler Dard, Morley.

Coach: Kevin Gavenda, Swan Valley

QB: Austin Brown, Madison Heights Madison

DL: Jacob Eckstein, Hemlock

DL: Cody Finney, Coleman

DL: Ben Schuler, Frankennuth

DL: Daniel Smith, Carson City-Crystal

Starwood; Marcel Couvley, Bridgeport; Cole Qualls, Chassan; Logan Dal Bosque, Ovid; Elsie; Gavin Demmay, Portland; Bryce Dolan, Ovid-Elsie; Khloton Shemman, Millington; Johnny Lynch, Shephard; Josh Shaski, Montrose; Chauncey Ernest, Madison Heights Madison; Jayson Tunstall, New Lothrop; Jr. Jerry Delgado, Carrollton;

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Swan Valley's Boehler Lives Dream Of Playing In State Title Game

Dan Stickradtt Sports Scene

Ever since he was in elementary school, Saginaw Swan Valley's Emmett Boehler dreamed about playing in a state championship game.

The dream became a reality when fourth-ranked Saginaw Swan Valley reached the Division 5 state finals for the first time to face No. 2-ranked Grand Rapids West Catholic.

Unfortunately, Boehler and his teammates came up agonizingly short on the other goal of walking off Ford Field with a title. West Catholic rolled up a 34-7 victory to dash those dreams away from Boehler and Co.

"It was our goal ever since we were kids to get here to Ford Field," said Boehler. "I mean walking in here

with the largest crowds that we'll ever see is an amazing accomplishment."

Boehler, who stands a powerful 5-foot-9 and 195 pounds, was part of an electric offense that rolled up 514 points this season over 14 games — a 36.8 points per game average — and also played defensive back for a squad that yielded 263 points in 14 games (18.8 per game) for the 12-2 Vikings, who tied a school record for wins this season.

"We put in the work. We were out on the track, out in the weight room, out on the field doing whatever it took for us to get here," said Boehler, whose team lost in the D-5 pre-district last season to Freeland, 42-14. "Every summer the goal is to try to make it to Ford Field. It is for everyone. Why play if making it to

the state finals isn't the goal. It should be for everyone."

Boehler, who is undecided on his future college destination, finished with 1,617 yards and 16 rushing touchdowns this season, averaging around 6.8 yards per carry to earn All-TVC West Division and Division 5-6 All-State Honorable Mention honors.

Boehler and his talented senior class has paved the way for future Swan Valley teams to excel — and perhaps come home with state championship hardware.

"I feel like we got a taste of it and I believe that for the other guys that will return next season that they will do everything it takes to get back next year," added Boehler.

Swan Valley's Emmett Boehler rushed for over 1,600 yards this season to lead the Vikings running game. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photos)

Swan Valley Stumbles In D5 Finals

Scott Keyes Sports Scene

Swan Valley junior Alex Fries admitted after the 34-7 loss to Grand Rapids West Catholic Nov. 25 that he was less than 100 percent healthy heading into the Division 5 championship game.

But when a team or an individual gets as far as the Vikings did this season you knew he wasn't about to sit out the biggest game of his career thus far. It's those type of things that build a championship contender.

"I think I was maybe 70 percent," Fries said. "I wasn't about to sit out and not play. It's the state championship game. You want to be there for your team."

Fries hurt his AC joint in his shoulder the week before in a driving rainstorm

against Reed City in the second half on the contest.

He wasn't the only Vikings player that was part of the walking wounded as running back Emmett Boehler and Terryon Liddell returned a week earlier having to sit the prior two weeks because of injury.

West Catholic took notice and three-year starting quarterback Gatano Vallone, exploited the injury-riddled Vikings early on often in the first half of the game.

"(Being here before) it helped me a lot," said Vallone, who passed for 197 yards and three touchdowns. "Ford Field is a huge stage. The playoffs are always a big experience. It really calmed me down and calmed others down around me also. My sophomore year I was just going with the flow, trying to do my best, trying to put the team in a position with my abilities.

Swan Valley, conversely, was making its first appearance in the championship game, and the difference in the two teams' demeanors showed early.

West Catholic led 34-0 before Brock Leinberger of Swan Valley scored on a 10-yard run at the end of the third quarter.

"Something we can take from this is they've been here before, they knew what to expect, and we got a little shell-shocked at the beginning," Vikings coach Kevin Gavenda said. "They're a great football team — hats off to them — but we could have competed a little better than we did today."

Terryon Liddell rushes the ball during the Vikings 34-7 Division 5 loss to Grand Rapids West Catholic Nov. 25 at Ford Field. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photo)



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Vallone Leads West Catholic To Another D5 Championship

John Raffel Sports Scene

Teams competing for a Division 5 state title won't have to deal with quarterback Gaetano Vallone anymore.

Vallone ended his Grand Rapids West Catholic career by steering the Falcons to the Division 5 title over Swan Valley 34-7 on Nov 25 at Ford Field. Vallone was 10-of-14 in passing for 197 yards and no interceptions with two touchdowns. He also netted 60 yards on the ground on 17 carries, and a touchdown.

"Seeing him the last three years, he's an unbelievable playmaker, one of the best I've been around," West Catholic coach Joe Hyland said. "Thanks be to God, he's been on our side. You saw today what he could do."

No other Grand Rapids area quarterback has been able to do what Vallone did.

"We've been able to achieve a lot," Vallone said. "We come to practice every day and work hard. To be the only Grand Rapids area quarterback to have won three state titles, it's an honor. Playoffs are always big for us."

It's also five straight titles for West Catholic with Vallone in charge the last three.

"As a senior, I've gotten better with more knowledge of the game," he said. "I can use my arm a lot and I can run the ball."

Five in a row titles, "is crazy, unbelievable," Vallone said. "I'm proud of my guys and how far they've come. People say we weren't as good as last year. It's an unbelievable experience"

No more football for Vallone. "It's good to come out with a bang," he said. "Football's a tough sport."

He'll play baseball at Davenport next year.

West Catholic's Gatano Vallone made history by winning his third straight Division 5 championship with his victory over Saginaw Swan Valley. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

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Yellowjackets Come Up Short In D6 Finals; Lumen Christi Prevails 40-34 In Repeat Victory

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Ithaca football coach Terry Hessbrook became emotional in the post-game press conference following last week's loss to Jackson Lumen Christi in the Division 6 state championship game at Ford Field.

Hessbrook watched his team try valiantly, and ultimately unsuccessfully to climb out of a 21-point fourth quarter deficit.

But not before the Yellowjackets put quite a fear in the Titans, making it a 40-34 deficit with 2:27 left. It was not until a failed outside

kick and a Lumen Christi fourth down conversion that it officially tamed the most prestigious program in state history over the last eight years.

"All I can say is that when you coach a team all you can ask for is them to play as hard as they can," Hessbrook said through tears. "My kids do that. They do that for me and for my coaching staff. I told them at halftime that Lumen Christi has seen no team like Ithaca High School because we have no quit in us."

The Titans (12-1), who rushed for 514 yards and held the ball for 36:05 of a possible 48 minutes,

got on the board first via a Nick Thomas 72-yard TD run. Ithaca responded with a Devin Barnes 47-yard TD pass in the second quarter, while a Joey Bentley 51-yard TD run with 3:40 left in the first half gave the Yellowjackets (13-1) a 13-8 advantage going into halftime.

But Lumen Christi racked up the game's next 24 points and flipped it completely to its advantage.

Bentley hit Culp for a 19-yard score early in the fourth quarter before the Titans answered quickly via a Sebastian Toland 82-yard TD run with 6:48 left to make it 40:20. Toland rushed for 244 yards and the TD on 33 carries in the contest.

"Their offensive line was pretty big compared to us," All-State senior linebacker Zach Hessbrook said. "We were stopping them every now and then, but we weren't consistently stopping them."

The Yellowjackets went to work in a rally attempt as Bentley threw TD passes to Colton Campbell and again to Culp, but ultimately the comeback fell a drive short.

For the game, Bentley threw for 240 yards and four TDs while rushing for 89 yards and another score. Culp made five catches for 70 yards and two touchdowns. Seth Davis had three receptions for 86. Barnes caught two passes for 55 yards and a score.

Ethan McCormick paced the Ithaca defense with 15 tackles and half a sack, while Nathan Bellinger



Ithaca's Brayden Shaw celebrates a fourth quarter touchdown during the Yellowjackets' 40-34 loss to Jackson Lumen Christi in the Division 6 championship game Nov. 24 at Ford Field. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photo)

had 11 stops. Zach Hessbrook made 10 tackles. Trey Chapin added nine tackles and 1.5 sacks.

Ithaca was making its seventh D6 state title appearance since 2010 and has won five of them.

Hessbrook has nothing but pride for the merits of his outgoing student-athletes, even if the ultimate goal was not realized the last two years.

"Our seniors are a special group," Hessbrook said. "After we

got beat in the regional finals last year, our kids dedicated themselves to getting back here to Ford Field. I know this isn't the way they wanted it to end, but that's football. We're a 13-1 football team and a lot of teams would trade places with us. There's no doubt about that. In the end, if the worst thing that happens to us is we lose a high school football game then we're going to live a great life."

Ithaca coach Terry Hessbrook consoles quarterback Joey Bentley after the Yellowjackets' loss to Lumen Christi. (Russ Pierce, School Sports Scene Photo)

Brogan, Hessbrook Volume 1 One For The Ages

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Not lost by Ithaca head coach Terry Hessbrook in defeat after the D6 state title game was the opposing coach for Jackson Lumen Christi in Herb Brogan, who is the fifth-winningest coach in MHSAA history with 343 career

victories.

"Herb Brogan is a class act," Hessbrook said before any question about Brogan was prompted by media.

Once he was asked about matching wits with Brogan in the Yellowjackets' 40-34 loss to the Titans at Ford Field, Hessbrook

had plenty more to add.

"We took it as a great challenge," Hessbrook said about his team facing a team coached by an all-time MHSAA great. "Our coaching staff talked about it in our staff meeting about embracing this opportunity. One of the winningest coaches and a true legend. He told me he's been there for 38 years as the head coach and 47 or some odd years total. It's just amazing. So we embraced that opportunity and looked forward to the challenge of going against them. For a

little while we were able to play with them. We just didn't have enough."

Brogan has a career record of 343-82 and this is the eighth state championship he has won at Jackson Lumen Christi since taking over the program in 1980.

Ithaca coach Terry Hessbrook and Jackson Lumen Christi coaching legend Herb Brogan take time to pose for a photograph before the start of the Division 6 championship game. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photo)



Ithaca's Culp Makes History

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Adam Culp had a decent enough season as a wide receiver in 2016 with 19 catches plus a touchdown, but with so many talented ball-catchers on the roster most of his contributions came with his big right leg as a kicker.

This year as a senior, his value

to the Ithaca football skyrocketed.

Culp finished the season with a team-best 40 catches for 567 yards and 12 touchdowns.

He culminated his prep career in the Division 6 state championship game at Ford Field in Detroit by accounting for five catches for 70 yards and a pair of TDs, doing everything in his willpower to help the Yellowjackets rally in what ended as a 40-34 defeat to Jackson Lumen Christi.

Additionally, the Division 5-6 All-State First Team kicker booted

four successful point-after tries to increase his career total to 181 made PAT attempts which is an MHSAA record. He was 8-of-10 on field goal attempts with a long of 42 yards.

Culp also notched 67 touchbacks on 98 kickoffs and punted seven times for an average of 34.7 per.

Clearly, Culp was an integral factor for Ithaca in so many facets. His 6-foot-3 and 175-pound size played well as a big target once the Yellowjackets reached the red zone, which was a lot as they racked up over 600 points in 2017.

Culp has yet to decide where he will attend college, but Ithaca head coach Terry Hessbrook has stated he believes he is a Division I-quality kicker.

"Any Division I football program would be lucky to have him," Hessbrook said earlier this season. "He is a tireless worker and has a very strong and accurate kicking leg."

Ithaca senior Adam Culp sets an MHSAA record for PATs in a career. (Russ Pierce, School Sports Scene Photo)



Ithaca Community Continues To Amaze In Support Of Its Football Football Program

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

My heart was always set on living in southeast Michigan.

It's where all the action is, my wife is from the Detroit area and I felt it was going to be in the best interests of my future.

But with all that said, there are plenty of aspects that are missed when away from mid-Michigan.

One such example is that on any Friday night, you could go to any

small to medium-sized school in mid-Michigan and find a packed house for a prep football game.

No football program took this to the extreme the way Ithaca did, with seemingly the entire town filling the stands no matter the weather situation or opponent.

Fans would attend games knowing the Yellowjackets would score their six, seven or eight touchdowns in the first half and not provide much at all in the way of suspense.

But equipped with a beautiful foot-

ball stadium and an elite football team, the Ithaca faithful are among the most ardent supporters of any program in the entire state.

That has been evident every time the Yellowjackets have made the trek to the Division 6 state championship game at Ford Field, seven times to be exact since 2010.

Although Ithaca could not manufacture a sixth state title as it lost 40-27 to Jackson Lumen Christi, the diehard Yellowjackets fans once again made the two-hour drive to Detroit in droves Friday afternoon.

As is usually the case when Ithaca plays at Ford Field, its fans could be seen a sea of white Ithaca t-shirt behind the Yellowjackets sideline.

They were loud, proud and once again the best fans possible of a small town football powerhouse.



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SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON FOOTBALL



Warren De La Salle vs. Livonia Franklin

Pilots Dominate En Route To Division 2 Championship

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Division 2

The game turned into a rout right from the word go as Warren De La Salle became the first team at the MHSAA state finals since 2005 to score on the first play from scrimmage as Brandon Madigan took a fumble recovery 13 yards for a Crusaders TD only 16 seconds in.

That set the tone for what became a 41-6 rout for De La Salle over Livonia Franklin, holding the Patriots to under 200 yards of total offense in a 41-6 victory.

It is the second state title in program history for Warren De La Salle.

Franklin (11-3) kept it at a 7-0 score going into the second quarter, but the Crusaders (12-2) exploded for 31 points in the second quarter to go into halftime ahead 38-0.

De La Salle senior quarterback Luke Pfromm, who did not play football the last two years, completed 10-of-12 passes for 207 yards and two TDs to help lead his team to victory. He also rushed for a score. Evan Vaillancourt caught three passes for 140 yards and a touchdown. Sergio Gasperoni also caught a TD pass. Cordell Tannyhill rushed eight times for 30 yards and a score. Riley Garrison booted two field goals from 23 and 30 yards out.

The lone TD by the Patriots was scored by Isaac Moore on a 5-yard run with 9:25 remaining. He rushed 23 times for 163 yards plus the touchdown.

Division 3

Farmington Hills Harrison was in the same boat as everyone else - it had no answer in how to stop Muskegon star quarterback La'Darius Jefferson.

Jefferson, the Division 3-4 Player of the Year after a huge season at quarterback for the Big Red, guided Muskegon to a 28-10 victory over the Hawks in the D3 state title game at Ford Field in Detroit.

In what was a regular game for Jefferson rather than anything out of the norm, he carried the ball 32 times for 245 yards and the four scores. He also attempted two passes, both incompletions, but that mattered very little.

The Big Red complete the season with a perfect 14-0 record, while Harrison ends the year at 10-4.

It was actually the Hawks who struck first as Ben Williams returned the game's opening kickoff 91 yards for a touchdown, giving them a 7-0 lead. The score was only the second time in MHSAA state finals history that a kickoff was returned for a TD to open the game.

Jefferson tied the score at 7-7 with an 8-yard TD, while

the Hawks showed their fight by retaking the advantage at 10-7 on the last play of the first quarter on a 26-yard field goal by David Hiser.

Muskegon dominated the action the ensuing three quarters. Jefferson added a TD in each quarter on runs of 14 yards, one yard and three yards.

The Big Red outgained Harrison by a count of 363-114. Davion McCall added three carries for 50 yards for Muskegon, while Clinton Jefferson Jr. had six attempts for 38 yards.

Noah Hendricks was 9-of-14 through the air for the Hawks, throwing for 53 yards. Rapana Filemu made three receptions for 23 yards. Roderick Heard had nine rushes for 48.

Division 4

Edwardsburg made the D4 state title game interesting and worth tuning into for the duration of the contest, but ultimately it could not climb back in against powerful Grand Rapids Catholic Central.

Catholic Central (14-0) struck first on a Nolan Fugate 20-yard TD catch on a pass from Jack Bowen midway through the first quarter, but Edwardsburg (12-2) struck back with two straight touchdowns to take a 13-7 lead through one quarter.

Fugate scored his second TD of the day a few minutes into the second quarter to give the Cougars the lead back at 13-13. By game's end, Fugate had 306 rushing yards to become only the second player in MHSAA history to rush for over 300 yards in a state final.

Grand Rapids CC scored another TD before halftime, while a Fugate 5-yard scoring run with 8:31 left in the third quarter pushed the advantage to 28-13.

The Eddies bounced right back as Caden Goggins tied a state finals record for longest kickoff return for a touchdown as he took it to the house from 99 yards. But a missed 2-point conversion kept GRCC ahead by a 28-19 score.

Fugate raced 54 yards on the next drive to put the Cougars back ahead by 16. A pair of Edwardsburg touchdowns trimmed its deficit back to 35-31, but a 32-yard touchdown run by Fugate iced it with 3:53 left.

Fugate ended with the 306 yards and four TDs on 36 carries, while he also caught four passes for 86 and a score. Bowen was 7-of-10 through the air for 128 yards plus a TD and an INT.

Kyle Shrider paced Edwardsburg with 10 carries for 162 yards and a TD. Nick Bradley recorded six carries for 96 and a TD, while Chase Sager added four rushing attempts for 73 yards and a score.



Grand Rapids West Catholic vs. Saginaw Swan Valley (Scott Keyes and Nick Rethman, High School Sports Scene Photos)

SPORTS SCENE'S EYE ON SWIMMING

Rockford, Midland Dow, Dewitt Place In Top 10 As Swim State Finals

David Cook Sports Scene

Girls' swimming and diving teams from Rockford, Midland Dow and DeWitt finished the season strong by recording top-10 finishes at the MHSAA swimming and diving state championships. Following is a round-up of the action in each class.

DIVISION 1

Farmington Hills Mercy won the Division 1 title that took place at Oakland University. Saline placed second with Farmington Hills Harrison taking third place.

Rockford placed fifth in Division 1 led by strong efforts from its relay teams. Rockford's 200 medley relay team of Erin McDowell, Masy Folcik, Morgan Kraus and Samantha Knepper placed fourth as did the 200 free relay team of Kraus, Rachel Grimm, Knepper and Peyton Rayburn. The Rams' 400 free relay team of McDowell, Grimm, Folcik and Rayburn placed eighth.

Individually, Kraus won the 100 butterfly in a new all-division record



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time of 53.73. Kraus also placed fourth in the 50 free. Folcik took fourth in the 100 breaststroke while Elise Jendritz placed 11th in the diving competition.

Brighton finished in sixth place, two points behind Rockford. Leading the Bulldogs was the 200 free relay team of Chloe Reed, Julianne Libler, Kellie House and Megan Lubinski that placed second. Brighton's 400 free relay team of Lubinski, Lindsay Witte, Kellie House and Reed placed seventh.

Individually, House placed fifth in the 200 free and eighth in the 500 free. Libler took sixth in the 100 breaststroke while Witte finished eighth in the 200 IM.

Grand Ledge placed 13th overall as a team. Sophomore Lola Mull turned in a big effort at the finals as she won the 500 freestyle in a new all-division record time of 4:44.47. Mull also placed second in the 200 free. Grace Weston earned all-state honors by taking eighth in the 100 breaststroke.

The Grand Ledge 400 free relay team of Emma Cornell, Weston, Abby Ford and Mull took 10th while the 200

free relay team of Weston, Cornell, Ford and Mull placed 12th.

Holt finished 28th overall. Holt's 400 free relay team of Avalon Jones, Lindsay Richards, Ingrid Petersen and Maggie Hoerner placed 14th while the same four swimmers placed 15th in the 200 free relay.

Grand Blanc placed 34th overall and was led by junior diver Carolyn Hagler who placed 14th.

DIVISION 2

East Grand Rapids won the Division 2 state title at the Holland Aquatic Center. The title was the 21st for the East girls and the first ever in Division 2.

Midland Dow finished ninth as a team in Division 2. Sophomore sprinter Claire Newman turned in a big effort in the finals as she placed second in both the 50 and 100 freestyle.

Junior Chelsea Fenton took 11th in the 500 free, senior Abby Huffman placed 12th in the 500 free and senior Sarah Saeed placed 13th in the 50 freestyle.

In the relays, Dow's 400 free relay team of Saeed, Sasha Konvalenko, Newman and Emily Schultheis placed third overall. Dow's 200 free relay team of Saeed, Newman, Schultheis and Shelbee Simanskey placed ninth.

Saginaw Heritage finished in 15th place as a team. Leading the way for Heritage was the 200 free relay team of Eliza Gorsline, Ariana Shokoohi, Hannah Fleming and Emilia Shokoohi that placed fourth. The same four Heritage swimmers also placed 14th in the 400 free relay.

Junior Ariana Shokoohi also placed 11th in the 100 freestyle and 12th in the 50 free.

Fenton finished in 18th place overall. Senior diver Taylor Shegos led the way for the Tigers as she took second overall in the diving competition. Junior diver Carly Kozlowski placed 14th in diving.

Fenton's 200 free relay team of



Area swimmers hit the pool during the recent MHSAA swimming and diving championships earlier this month. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photos)

Sabrina Hall, Lillie Kromer, Abigail Dolliver and Caitlyn Dailey placed 13th while the same four swimmers teamed up to place 15th in the 200 medley relay. Fenton's 400 free relay team of Hall, Kromer, Dolliver and Megan Mallard placed 16th.

The Lansing Waverly-Catholic Central co-op team placed 21st. Senior Rita El Jbeily led the way as she placed ninth in both the 50 and 100 freestyle.

East Lansing senior diver Eve Petrie placed 16th in diving.

DIVISION 3

Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Kingswood won the Division 3 title at Eastern Michigan University while Bloomfield Hills Marian placed second.

DeWitt finished seventh overall in Division 3. A pair of DeWitt's relay teams earned all-state honors led by the 200 medley relay team of freshman Jordyn Shipps, junior Lisette Fenneuff, senior Victoria Powe and senior Sydney Shipps who took third in the 200 medley relay. The 400 free relay team of Jordyn Shipps, Karlie Janik, Fenneuff and Sydney Shipps placed seventh.

Both Sydney and Jordyn Shipps also earned all-state honors in a pair of individual events. Sydney Shipps took

fifth in the 500 free and sixth in the 200 free while Jordyn Shipps placed fourth in the 200 IM and sixth in the 100 butterfly.

Fenneuff took third in the 100 breaststroke and freshman diver Elise Snyder placed ninth in diving.

Flint Powers Catholic placed 19th overall as a team. Senior Allie Dasky led the way for Powers as she placed seventh in the 200 free and 10th in the 100 free. Freshman Lara Wujciak placed 12th in the 100 butterfly.

Bay City Glenn finished in 27th place. Sophomore Delaney Wesolek led Glen as she placed seventh in the 100 backstroke and 15th in the 200 freestyle.

Owosso placed 29th overall. Senior Mallory Irelan led Owosso as she took 15th place in both the 50 freestyle and the 100 butterfly. Sophomore diver Katie Clevenger placed 13th in diving.

Alma placed 32nd and was led by junior Lydia Rutkowski who placed 12th in the 100 breaststroke.

St. Johns finished 34th and was led by sophomore Lydia Ely who took 13th in the 200 freestyle to become only the second player in MHSAA history to rush for over 300 yards in a state final.

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Olivia Pumford, Freeland
Pumford capped her junior year by earning all-state honors in Division 3. Pumford placed 10th at the Division 3 state meet with rounds of 89 and 78 for a 167 total. The conference medalist this season, Pumford placed seventh at the regional tournament with an 87.



Zach Hessbrook, Ithaca
Registered a team-best 14 tackles in a 27-0 victory in the Division 6 state semifinals versus Traverse City St. Francis at Mount Pleasant High School. Hessbrook has a team-best 154 tackles on the season and was named Division 5-6 First Team All-State



Claudia Vondra, Mason
Vondra capped her high school golf career in a big way as she tied for fourth individually at the Division 2 state finals at Bedford Valley. Vondra turned in rounds of 75 and 79 to finish with a 154 total. Vondra also placed second overall with an 80 at the regional tournament.



Megan Radaz, Alma
Radaz won medalist honors at the TVC conference meet at Maple Creek with a career-best round of 38. Radaz shot a 93 at the regional meet to qualify for the Division 3 state finals where she carded rounds of 90 and 90 for a 180 total.



Alex Wrobel, Saginaw Nouvel
Alex Wrobel, Saginaw Nouvel Accounted for a team-best 17 tackles as the Panthers defeated Iron River West Iron Country 17-14 in the Division 8 state semifinals at the Superior Dome in Marquette. Wrobel was a Division 7-8 All-State First Team selection



Elizabeth Harding, South Lyon East
A three-time all-stater, Harding capped her career by tying for fourth place at the Division 2 state finals with rounds of 78 and 76 for a 154 total. Harding, who has signed to play her college golf at Michigan State, placed second at the regional tournament with a 77.



Morgan Yates, Shepherd
A junior, Yates helped the Shepherd golf team win a regional tournament as she fired a 96 to placed third individually. Yates turned in rounds of 80 and 84 at the Division 3 state finals to tie for sixth place individually with a 164 total, helping Shepherd finish sixth as a team.



Jimmy Lehman, Pewamo-Westphalia
The senior quarterback threw for 139 yards and a touchdown, while rushing for an additional 41 yards and two TDs as the Pirates defeated Lake City 51-7 in the Division 7 state semifinals hosted by Clare. Lehman was Division 7-8 All-State First Team as a defensive lineman.



Ericka VanderLende, Rockford
Won the Division 1 girls race at the MHSAA state finals with a time of 17:16.8, winning the race by almost 14 seconds. It was an improvement on a 66th-place finish the year before. The junior helped the Rams to a third-place finish.



Annie Pietila, Brighton
Pietila fired a 72 to win the medalist honors at the regional and help the Bulldogs to the regional team championship. Pietila continued her strong play at the Division 1 state finals as she carded rounds of 75 and 80 to place eighth individually with a 153 total.



Natalie Risi, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep
Risi, a Ball State volleyball commit, tallied a team-best 17 kills and 12 digs plus six blocks as the Fighting Irish won the Division 2 state championship with a 25-16, 25-17, 28-26 victory over Lake Odesa-Lakewood.



Bailey McConnell, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart
McConnell finished second at the Division 4 state finals to play a major part in helping the Irish secure a third consecutive state championship. McConnell ran a time of 18:44.1, while teammate Scout Nelson was just behind at 18:46.6.

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Tennis Male Athlete Of The Year



The Andrew Xhang File
Bloomfield Hills High School
Sport: Tennis
Accomplishments: After sharing the Division 1 championship with Novi two years ago, and finishing runner-up a year Bloomfield Hills, finally broke through this season winning the elusive team title.
Along for the ride has been senior Andrew Xhang, who has played a huge role in the team's past success. This year was no different making it all the way to the finals at No. 1 singles, before losing 6-1, 6-1 to Troy's Steve Foreman in the championship match.



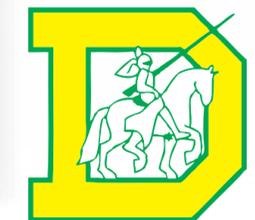
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HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE
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Golf Female Athlete Of The Year



The Alexis Carras File
Midland Dow High School
Sport: Golf
Accomplishments: For the second consecutive year the Midland Dow girls golf team advanced to the Division 2 finals. The Chargers won the title a year ago, but came up short this season coming in fourth with a two-day total of 671. Grand Rapids Forest Hills Northern won the championship with a 656. Carras finished second in the tournament with a 149, three strokes behind Shannon Kennedy, who won the title with a 146.
Earlier in the season Carras shot a school-record, 4-under par 68, recording four birdies and no bogeys at the Fortress during the Saginaw Valley League Championships.



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Volleyball Dream Team



Michael Melaragni Rochester Stoney Creek, Forward, Sr. Player of the Year

MICHAEL MELARAGNI, Rochester Stoney Creek sr. F: The third straight Mr. Soccer winner to commit to Western Michigan, Melaragni was the preseason favorite to win Mr. Soccer and captured the award in November after a stellar four-year tenure. At 6-foot-4, the two-sport star was a man among boys on the soccer pitch, notching 32 goals for a young team this year and 73 for his career. He was also Division 1 All-State Third Team as a sophomore and First Team as a junior and senior.

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2017 Soccer Dream Team

Stoney Creek's Melaragni Wins Prestigious Michigan Mr. Soccer Award

Dan Stickrad
Sports Scene

Michael Melaragni kept in the back of his mind that he could be a Mr. Soccer finalist this season.

Ranked either first or second in a couple of preseason magazines back in August, the forward had built quite a reputation of being both a physical specimen on the soccer pitch and one of the state's pure goal scorers.

The Rochester Stoney Creek senior received a phone call Tuesday night from his coach Doug Steinard that he was voted the state's top high school player — the winner of the prestigious 41st annual award, selected by the Michigan High School Soccer Coaches Association.

"It's really quite an honor, really, when you consider some of the other players that have won the award," said Melaragni. "I knew I'd have a chance to win it. But we never won a district in my four years here. Sometimes that honor goes to a player that leads his team on a deep run in the (State) tournament."

Melaragni still gained enough votes to edge Novi Detroit Catholic Central's Ryan Pierson and Grand Rapids Forest Hills Central's Eric Conerty.

"I guess when it boils down to it, nobody meant more to his team than Mike. He had an incredible four-year career at Stoney Creek," beamed Steinard, who coached Melaragni just one season but against him when he was head coach at nearby Auburn Hills Avondale. "(The past two years) every team double- and triple-teamed him and he still scored 32 goals this year and 29 last year. He was unstoppable in some games. Every team we played had a gameplan to stop him. He's so fast, big — and he's even a better kid."

Melaragni came off the bench as a freshman, but became a three-year starter at forward. He scored 11 goals as a sophomore, 29 as a junior and 32 as a senior and ranks inside the school's top five in multitude of offensive categories. He was Division 1 All-State Third Team as a sophomore and also All-State First Team as both a junior and senior.

The gifted 6-foot-4, 205-pound speedster recently committed to Western Michigan University last month — a program ranked No. 10 in the NCAA Division I coaches poll — and over a host of other suitors, including Oakland University, Michigan State, Temple and Florida-Gulf Coast, amongst others. He is the third straight Mr. Soccer to commit to Western Michigan, following Traverse City West's Dalton Michael (2016) and Forest Hills Central's Anthony Bowie (2015).

He carries a stellar 4.07 GPA and ranks in the top 10 in his class at Stoney Creek.

Melaragni is not one dimensional athlete either. He will be a third-year starter on the Cougars boys basketball team and averaged 12 points and 10 rebounds a game last winter in leading his school to the OAA Blue Division and Class A district championships. Stoney Creek reached the Sweet 16 (regional finals) before bowing out to eventual state champion Clarkston.

Melaragni recently joined the U-19 Vardar Academy after the 13-5-4 and 16th-ranked Cougars bowed out in the district semifinals. He will be on the reserve list once basketball season begins but become active again in March.

"I was thrilled to win the award, humbled actually," said Melaragni. "We always played a really tough schedule. I had great coaches and teammates. No player can win any award without them."



Brady Walker
Hartland, Sr.,
Forward

BRADY WALKER, Hartland sr. F: One of the all-time leading scorers for Hartland, Walker notched 54 goals over the past two seasons. The gifted sniper had 33 goals as a junior and 21 as a senior despite being injured for a stretch of games. Named to the Division 1 All-State First Team, he is being courted by D-I and D-II college programs.



Darius Feier
Troy, Sr.,
Defense

DARIUS FEIER, Troy sr. DF: Put him in the backfield and he's one of the state's top defenders. Metzmaker helped East Lansing turn a rebuilding campaign into the Division 2 state runner-up trophy. The three-year starter earned D-2 All-State First Team honors and collected 12 goals and three assists for the 17-10-1 Trojans.



Ryan Pierson
Novi Detroit Catholic
Central, Sr.,
Forward

RYAN PIERSON, Novi Detroit Catholic Central sr. F: After only earning All-CHSL and All-District honors as a junior, Pierson exploded as a senior to score 32 goals, including a tally in the state finals, in leading the 21-2-4 Shamrocks to their first Division 1 state title. He has committed to Saginaw Valley State



Mason Smith
Flint Powers Catholic,
Sr., Midfield

MASON SMITH, Flint Powers Catholic sr. M: After helping the Chargers finish as the Division 3 state runner-up as a junior, Smith was instrumental in helping Powers claim the state championship this season. Smith was the catalyst of the Chargers' high-powered offense, scoring 17 goals with 27 assists. He was named the top player in Division 3 and finished sixth in the Mr. Soccer voting. He was named Co-MVP of the Saginaw Valley League.



Luciano Errecalde
Rochester, Sr.,
Midfield

LUCIANO ERRECALDE, Rochester sr. M/F: After missing his junior season with an injury, Errecalde came back to score 23 goals, second most in school history, to go along with 10 assists. He was named to the All-State Dream Team and Division 1 All-State First Team. Being recruited by Oakland and Saginaw Valley State, amongst others.



Casey Larue
Midland Dow, Sr.,
Midfield

CASEY LARUE, Midland Dow sr. M: A three-year starter, LaRue led Dow with 24 goals and 15 assists this season. Recruited by D-I, D-II and D-III schools, LaRue was instrumental in helping Dow win a Division 1 district this season and post a 40-5-5 record the past two years. He was named the co-MVP of the Saginaw Valley League and All-State Third Team



Alex Dalou
Walled Lake Central, Sr.,
Midfield

ALEX DALOU, Walled Lake Central sr. M: The engine that makes the Vikings offense go, Dalou was the center piece in leading Walled Lake Central to their first regional trophy and Division 1 state runner-up finish. Headed for NCAA nationally-ranked Western Michigan, Dalou finished with 10 goals and 14 assists and garnered All-State Second Team status.



Alex Kim
Rochester Adams, Sr.,
Defense

ALEX KIM, Rochester Adams sr. D: Voted the state's top defenseman with a spot on the Dream Team, Kim was a four-time All-State selection for the Highlanders, earning Honorable Mention as a freshman. Third Team as a sophomore and First Team as both a junior and senior. The Division I college recruit is considering Columbia, Yale and Michigan. Adams won three OAA Red Division titles and reached the D-1 Final Four twice in his career.

DIVISION 1 ALL-AREA FIRST TEAM

Forwards: Cole Valentine, Troy Athens sr.; Keegan Gormley, Brighton sr.; Troy Bormann, Berkley sr. Midfielders: Chase Clark, Grand Blanc sr.; Tony Rizzo, Hartland sr.; Michael Jecman, Novi sr.; Ryan Alda, Rochester Adams sr. Defense: Ben Champline, Rochester Adams sr.; Henry Koehling, Novi Detroit Catholic Central sr.; Collin Neal, Northville sr. Goalkeeper: Kevin Blossfeld, Novi Detroit Catholic Central sr.

DIVISION 2-3-4 FIRST TEAM

Forwards: Ryan Wisniewski, Gladwin sr.; Mason Gifford, Big Rapids sr.; Nick Hitchens, St. Johns sr.; Johnny Draigh, Lowell sr. Midfielders: Andy Vahng, Haslett sr.; Matthew Pleahn, Lansing Catholic sr.; Mitchell Morrisette, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep sr.; Bryan Lendzion, Flint Powers Catholic sr. Defense: Michael O'Brien, Birmingham Detroit Country Day sr.; Matt Jahnke, Saginaw Valley Lutheran sr.; Clark Doman, Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook Kingswood sr. Goalkeeper: Brendan Tilden, Flint Powers Catholic sr.

SPORTS SCENE'S HONORABLE MENTION

DIVISION 1 - Berkley: Max Rebori, Jackson Lovechuk, Jake Senva, Ben Rosenblatt; Birmingham Brother Rice: Dylan Daye; Birmingham Groves: Isaac Thompson, Spencer Tredwell; Brighton: Charlie Sharp, Ian Sosenko, Riley Radwanski-Gallas; Clarkston: Ethan Wise, Noah Bridgeman, Brady Dickens; Davison: Zach Simpson, Mickey Clifford; Grand Blanc: Muaz Asberger, Jacob Tall, Mohamed Abdalla-Ali; Grand Leage: Eric Phinney, Holt; Kody Avers; Lake Orion: Colten Farley, Lansing Everett: Antonio Lopez, Lapeer: Gabe Curell, Brian Morris; Midland: Cesar Nakasono; Midland Dow: Andrew Hofius, Kyle Hop, Jordan Plewa; North Farmington: Zach Shuk, Matthew George, Andrew George, Easton Cummins; Northville: Owen Marshall; Novi: Dominic Gatson, Jason Mo; Novi Detroit Catholic Central: Drake Midgley; Okemos: Patrick Rustum, Alejandro Arana; Oxford: Mitchell Morawski, Tristan Bennett; Rochester: Marco Gomez, Gabe Baylon, Grant Elison, Luke Kasarin, John Agobui; Rochester Adams: Logan James, Parker Raymond, Arman Tazobard; Rochester Stoney Creek: Bobby Harris, Will Knish, Nathan Brubaker, Nick Glazier; Rockford: Eric Carey, Royal Oak: Carson Kollins; Saginaw Heritage: Connor Copus, John Hoff, Spencer Schwellenbach; Swartz Creek: Micah Taylor; Troy: Joey Mason, Connor Bloomingdale, Jack Diadato; Troy Athens: Will Harrison, Andrew Nord; Walled Lake Central: Nik Palafiox, Brian Ostapenko, Karl Tavada, Tiae Hjorth; Walled Lake Northem: Alex Stulberg, Carson Rogers; Walled Lake Western: Noah Palizzi; West Bloomfield: Grant Jones, Nixon Kalbaj; White Lake Lakeland: Kyle Scott
DIVISION 2 - Auburn Hills Avondale: Nick Kubert; Bay City John Glenn: Michael Johnson; Clio: Toni Aleman; Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook-Kingswood: Colin Canning, Zach Buvalic; Charlotte: John Hossi; DeWitt: Zachary Rollis, Christian Reisig; East Lansing: Mohamed Babale, Ansumana Letbbie, Petrus Martens, Paul Carney, Almir Celovic; Eaton Rapids: Deion Rogers; Farmington: Callum Ashmore, Luke Morrisette; Farmington Hills Harrison: Jacob Honer, Zach Harless, Hesham Moez; Fenton: Chase Poulson, Alex Flannery; Fowlerville: Andrew Goodwin; Goodrich: Hunter Halfter, Nolan Robb, Trevor Taylor; Haslett: Joe Sporkia, Nathan Westerlund, AJ Salazar, Nick Sloan; Holly: Evan Potama; Linden: Carson Birchmeier, Julian Shier, Nick Koan, David Fowler; Lowell: Elijah Dixon, Jay Stadl; Gabe Bendal; Connor Carter; Mason: Evan Joneson, Alan Pawlowski; North Branch: Riley Schlaud, Joe Kovel; Orchard Lake St. Mary's: Ryan Gray, Eamon Salk; Orionville Brandon: Javier Lozano, Aaron Shelton, Connor Burke; Owosso: Sam Rose; Pontiac Notre Dame Prep: Will Baldwin, Brian Blakeslee, Nicholas Evans
DIVISION 3 - Alma: Liam Maslovich, Malco Delgado; Big Rapids: Jackson Lund; Birch Run: Justin Szagosh; Birmingham Detroit Country Day: Dylan Prime, Jonathan Daugherty, Kevin Huang, Justin Harris, Elbert Yr; Chesaning: Brandon Greenfielder; Clare: Aidan Boyd; Clawson: Francisco Alvarez-Calderton, Travis Newman; Essenville-Garber: Riley Day; Flint Powers Catholic: Kyle Genard; Garret; DelAnnelleure; Frankenmuth: Adam Bern; Carson Bell, Adam Diduch, Blaise Haynes; Freeland: Ryan Szyrnio, JT Burnett, Derek Miner; Gladwin: Max Wentworth; Ithaca: Zach Barntik; Laingsburg: Ben Ransom; Lansing Catholic: Matthew Benvegnia; Midland Bullock Creek: Brady Linton; Ovid-Elsie: Chris Zruna, Brandon Swender, Mason Pultison; Portland: Tate Dzewickowski; Saginaw Swan Valley: Grant Nelson, Cameron Schroeder; Williamson: Eli Richardson, Alex Scott, Luciano Stornant, Zachary Jewison
DIVISION 4 - Auburn Hills Oakland Christian: David Ardevoil, Phil Curd, Austin Carter; Burton Genesee Christian: Avery Morgan, Noah Derderian; Clarkston Everest Collegiate: Nick Cross; Dansville: Andrew Witchell, Cody Luce; Davison Faith Baptist: Victor Hobson; Lake Orion Baptist: Bradley Gangel; Madison Heights Bishop Foley Catholic: Quinlan Grobbel, Matt Koleba; Midland Calvary Baptist: Josh Hiptmiller, Christian Court, Mark Dickerson; Rochester Hills Christian: Patrick Puscas; Rochester Hills Lutheran Northwest: Jeremy Morrison; Royal Oak Shrine Catholic: Jordan Norfolk, Christian Atabong, Owen Groh; Saginaw Nouvel Catholic: Colton Schmidt; Saginaw Valley Lutheran: Andrew Gunn, Ben Menapace; Troy Bethany Christian: Nico Thomas; Waterford Oakdale Christian: Andrew Benninger

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Flint Powers Catholic Not Denied State Title This Time Around

Dan Stickrad Sports Scene

Members of Flint Powers Catholic's boys soccer team more than remembered last season's Division 3 title game disappointment.

The Chargers fell to Grand Rapids Catholic Central, 1-0, in a game where head coach Tony Rowe felt his team left too much on the field.

Flint Powers captured titles in 1996 and 2013 and returned to the gold medal podium in Division 3 this season, as the second-ranked Chargers downed 16th-ranked Ludington, 4-2, at Comstock Park High School.

"There's no doubt that it was in their minds. They did not like that ride home last season because we had chances to win last season but couldn't finish," said Rowe. "This time we never stopped attacking and scored those three goals in the first half. But hats off to Ludington. They never gave up and battled us."

Powers more than made up for last year's shortcomings behind its powerful offense. The Chargers outscored their 24 oppo-

nents by an eye-popping 104-12 margin, including 37-2 in the state tournament, and had seven consecutive shutouts leading into the championship match.

Powers Catholic (21-2-1) never trailed and built a 3-1 halftime lead. After Ludington cut the deficit down to 3-2, the Chargers added an insurance tally to put the icing on the cake.

"This was the goal all season long," noted Rowe, who returned nine starters and 16 total players from last season's state runner-up squad. "We knew we had the talent to win it all this year. We all felt that we left something on the field last season."

Ludington came into the contest winning 12 of their final 13 contests before falling short. The Orioles won a D-3 title in 2001 and lost in the 1997 (D-3) and 1994 (Class B) finals.

Garret Delamielleure scored the Chargers' first two goals, one in the 15th minute and another in the 28th minute, the later which gave Powers Catholic the lead for good.

Dominic Ruth netted the Chargers' third goal in the 30th minute, while Connor Boerman

scored the final tally in the 64th minute for Powers.

Noah Peterson tied the game in the 21st minute and Lucien Chasse cut the deficit down to 3-2 in the 63rd minute for Ludington (18-5-2).

The Orioles not only scored the only two goals the Chargers yielded during the whole tournament, but Ludington became just the second team to score two goals in a game on Powers all year — the other being Saginaw Heritage in a 2-2 tie in the third game of the season.

Brendan Tilden made one save in earning the win for Powers Catholic, which received fine defensive play from Kyle Genord, Alan Hill, Boerman and Trevor Purman all season.

Tilden finished with a sterling 0.50 goals-against-average with 14 shutouts.

"Our defense was solid all season long," said Rowe. "To only give up (12) goals this season and win a state championship is remarkable. We had to beat a worthy opponent in Ludington, but we finished our chances and achieved our goal."

Flint Powers rolled to the Division 3 championship with its 4-2 victory over Ludington in the championship game. The Chargers outscored their 24 opponents by an eye-popping 104-12 margin, including 37-2 in the state tournament, and had seven consecutive shutouts leading into the championship match. (Courtesy Photo)

Boys Soccer State Tournament Provided Soccer Fans With Plenty Of Thrills

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The boys soccer season offered up plenty of excitement this season. Capping off the year was a thrilling state tournament that saw plenty of close matches.

Following is a look at some of the post-season highlights for area teams.

DIVISION 1

Detroit Catholic Central captured the Division 1 title by defeating Walled Lake Central 1-0 in a defensive struggle in the Division 1 state championship match.

Catholic Central made it a habit of winning close games during its state tournament run. The Shamrocks edged East Kentwood 2-1 in the state semifinal. Catholic Central outlasted Plymouth 4-3 to win the Novi regional and in the district title game Catholic Central defeated Novi 1-0 in overtime.

Senior forward Ryan Pierson led the way for the Shamrocks this season and was named first-team, all-state

in Division 1. Defense was a strong point for the team this season. Senior goalkeeper Kevin Blossfeld anchored the defense and earned second-team, all-state honors while senior defender Henry Koelling was named third-team, all-state. Junior midfielder Drake Midgely earned honorable-mention, all-state honors.

Walled Lake Central turned in a memorable season. Central defeated Troy 1-0 in the Division 1 state semifinals to earn a trip to the finals where it fell to Detroit Catholic Central.

Walled Lake Central earned a berth in the Division 1 final four by winning the regional at Flint. Central stopped Grand Blanc 2-1 in the regional title match after defeating Rochester 2-1 in the semifinals.

Strong play in the midfield was a big part of Central's success. Senior midfielder Alex Dalou was named second-team, all-state in Division 1 while senior midfielder Nik Palafox was third team. Junior goalkeepe Brian Ostapenko earned honorable-mention, all-state honors.

Grand Blanc reached the regional finals at Flint where it dropped a 2-1 decision to Walled Lake Central. Grand Blanc reached the title match after stopping Midland Dow 4-2 in the semifinals. Grand Blanc won the district title at Lapeer with a 3-1 win against Swartz Creek.

A trio of Grand Blanc players earned all-state honors in Division 1. Senior midfielders Chase Clark and Jacob Tali along with junior forward Muaz Asperger were all named third-team, all-state. Senior midfielder Mohamed Abdalla-Ali earned honorable-mention, all-state honors.

Brighton won a district title with a 1-0 victory against Ann Arbor Pioneer at the Howell district. The Bulldogs season came to an end at the Portage Northern regional when it dropped a 1-0 overtime decision to Portage Central.

A trio of Brighton players earned all-state honors. Senior forward Keegan Gormley was named second-team, all-state while senior midfielder Ian Sosenko and junior forward Charlie Sharp earned honorable-mention honors.

Midland Dow's season ended in the regional semifinals with a 4-2 loss to Grand Blanc. Dow reached the regional after turning in a strong defensive effort at the district level. The Chargers posted shutouts against Bay City Western, Saginaw Heritage and Traverse City Central to win the regional title.

Senior midfielder Casey Larue and junior forward Andrey Hofus both earned honorable-mention, all-state honors.

DIVISION 2

The Farmington Harrison soccer team turned in a memorable season. The Hawks went on a tournament run that ended in the state semifinals where they dropped a 2-0 decision to East Lansing.

Harrison earned a trip to the final four with a 1-0 win against Gibraltar-Carlson in the regional finals at Fenton. The Hawks won the district title it hosted in dramatic fashion with a 1-0 overtime win against Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook-Kingswood.

Senior midfielder Jacob Honer earned third-team, all-state honors this season. Senior defender Zach Harless and junior defender Hesham Moez both honorable-mention honors.

DIVISION 3

It was a landmark season for the Big Rapids soccer team. The Cardinals set a school record with 19 wins this season and reached the regional finals before falling 2-0 to Ludington.

Champions of the Central States Activities Association, Big Rapids won the district title at Fremont in impressive fashion by outscoring its three opponents by a combined score of 15-2.

Big Rapids also earned academic all-state recognition as a team.

Senior forward Mason Gifford led the way for Big Rapids this season as he scored a team-leading 28 goals on his way to earning first-team, all-state honors. Senior goalkeeper Jackson Lund was named to the third team. Junior midfielder Owen Seay scored 18 goals this year and earned honorable-mention, all-state honors. Gifford, Lund and Seay also earned all-conference honors along with Jake Balliet and Connor McAdams.

Lansing Catholic Central reached the regional finals this season where it fell 3-0 to eventual state champion Flint Powers. Lansing Catholic reached the finals after stopping Freeland 4-1 in the semifinals.

The Cougars won the district title at Williamston in thrilling fashion with a 1-0 overtime win against Williamston.

Junior midfielder Matthew Plaehn earned first-team, all-state honors while junior goalkeeper Matthew Benivegna was named third-team, all-state.

Frankenmuth won a district title at Caro with a 4-0 win against Caro in the finals. Frankenmuth's season came to an end in the regional semifinals when it fell 6-0 to eventual state champion Flint Powers.

Junior midfielder Adam Bonko was named third-team, all-state while senior forward Adam Didluch and junior goalkeeper Carson Bell were



honorable-mention picks. Freeland reached the regional semifinals at Lansing where it fell 4-1 to Lansing Catholic Central. Freeland earned the trip to the regional by defeating Swan Valley 2-1 in the district finals at Alma.

Junior forward Ryan Svorinic led Freeland in scoring this season with 36 goals and was named second-team, all-state. Senior midfielder JT Burnett was an honorable-mention selection. Junior forward Dylan Beekman turned in a big season with 15 goals.

Swan Valley, led by third-team, all-state selection Grant Neilson defeated Alma 5-1 in the opening round of district play and edged Bullock Creek 1-0 in the district semifinals. Swan Valley's season came to an end with a 2-1 loss to Freeland in the district title game.

DIVISION 4

Saginaw Valley Lutheran won the district title at Harbor Beach with a 3-1 win against Bad Axe. Valley Lutheran went on to the regional at Goodrich where it dropped a 4-0 decision to Genesee Christian.

Senior midfielder Matt Jahnke earned first-team, all-state honors. Junior forward Andrew Gunn was named to the third team while senior defender Ben Menapace earned honorable-mention.



Detroit Catholic Central won the Division 1 soccer championship with a 1-0 victory over Walled Lake Central. (Courtesy Photos)

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East Lansing's Unexpected Ride Stalled By Senior-Laden Holland In Title Match

Dan Stickrad
Sports Scene

A senior-laden team looking for its first-ever state title collided with one of the state's all-time top programs in the Division 2 boys soccer state finals.

The first-time championship hunger prevailed.

Eighth-ranked Holland topped East Lansing — winners of five MHSAA state titles — 3-0 in the D-2 finals at Comstock Park to earn a title in its first-ever championship appearance.

Mr. Soccer finalist Daniel Arellano finished with a goal and an assist in leading the Dutch to the crown. Sam Accardo and Jose Penalzo also scored for Holland (19-5-2), which outscored the opposition 29-2 in the postseason.

East Lansing fell to Holland 3-0 in the Division 2 state championship in early November. East Lansing finished the season 17-10-1. (Courtesy Photo)

"I think we had some good possession in the first half, but we could never finish," said East Lansing coach Nick Archer. "Holland is an explosive team and they came out in the second half and really took it to us."

Led by longtime head coach Archer — whose 660-177-75 career record is the best amongst all active coaches in Michigan — East Lansing entered the season with just two returning starters from a Final Four campaign in 2016. The Trojans bounced around the D-2 Top 20 rankings and reached No. 12 in September before falling out three weeks before the start of the state tournament.

East Lansing played like a seasoned state-ranked squad late in the campaign and peaked at the right time, plucking off multiple ranked opponents in both the

Capital Area Athletic Conference Tournament and D-2 state tournament only to fall short in its quest for a sixth title.

East Lansing won state titles in 1987, 2002, 2005, 2013, 2014 and finished as the state runner-up in 1999, 2006 and now 2017. This time the Trojans were outmatched by Holland, which lost in the regional finals last season and boasted 14 seniors this season.

"We had a great run. I think we started the season slow, had some difficulties, but we started to come together late in the season," said Archer. "We started to figure it out some late in the year. We started to play better in the (conference tournament and (elevated) our game in the (state) tournament."

Holland outshot East Lansing 11-9 in the contest, including 6-4 with shots directly on frame, while both teams traded off three cornerbacks apiece.

Peter Keegin notched the clean sheet for Holland, making four saves. Elijah Sheridan and Nekko Criswell-Grinage combined for three saves for East Lansing (17-10-1).

Portland St. Patrick Tamed By Forest Park In Finals

Ben Murphy
Sports Scene

It was an ugly end to what was otherwise a fine season. The Portland St. Patrick 8-man football team, made it all the way to the Division 2 8-man finals on Nov. 18, thought it was dominated in that contest, 54-12 by Crystal Falls Forest Park.

The Trojans ran for an 8-man state finals record 481 yards and had all eight of their touchdowns on the ground as well.

Forest Park scored a touchdown less than two minutes into the game to take an 8-0 lead, though the Shamrocks, who were in their first

state finals game since 1997, swung right back with a touchdown of their own, as Tanner Lawson fired a 19-yard touchdown

pass to Will Simon.

The Trojans cashed in on a six yard touchdown run late in the opening quarter to lead 16-6 after one and added rushing tallies of 23, seven and 59 as they took control of the game with a 36-6 lead at the half.

Forest Park wasn't finished as they romped in for touchdowns of 56 and 46 in the third quarter, giving it an insurmountable 48-6 lead late in the third.

The Shamrocks got back on the board before the end of the frame, as Isaiah Smith scored on a one yard plunge to pull within 48-12 entering the fourth.

The Trojans finished off the game's scoring midway through the final period, making it the final 54-12.

Lawson finished with 125 yards and one touchdown on eight-of-17 passing, Isaiah Smith had 42 yards rushing and Ned Smith rushed for 32. Colin Cook hauled in three passes for 62 yards and Simon grabbed three for 32.

Isaiah Smith also led the defense with 13 tackles, Simon had 11, Paul Cook had 10 and Alex Kissane took down seven.

St. Patrick finishes the season 11-2 in what was their sixth season of 8-man football.

Portland St. Pats dropped a 54-12 decision to Crystal Falls Forest Park in the Division 2 8-man playoff finals held Nov. 18 in Marquette. (Ben Murphy, High School Sports Scene Photo)



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NORTHERN REPORT

Jack Pine Runners Receive All-State Honors

Scott Salowich
Sports Scene

The top cross country runners in the Jack Pine Conference throughout the regular season delivered at the end by earning All-State honors.

Clare junior Lainey Veenkant won all three of the JPC jamborees, placing first at the last one in a time of 18:50 to help the Pioneers make it three wins in a row as a team to sew up the league championship.

At the Division 3 regional, she was second in a time of 18:12 as Clare finished third in the standings with 74 points, trailing only Hart and Benzie Central. Those two teams also went 1-2 at the state meet at Michigan International Speedway, where Clare was fifth with 195.

Veenkant ran 12th in 19:07 to capture All-State honors. Olivia Haring was 52nd in 20:09, Kameron Haag 59th in 20:15, Katherine Haupt 60th in 20:16 and Riley Schroeder 91st in 20:43.

Beaverton senior Parker Hayes won two of the three jamborees on the boys' side of things

and earned All-State honors for running 22nd at the state meet in a time of 16:36. Clare was 13th in the team standings, led by junior David Good,

who was 77th in 17:18. Senior Jimmy Teall, who won the other jamboree gold medal, was 86th at the state meet in 17:23 and sophomore Alan Winter took 89th in 17:24.

Clare was second to Hart at the regional, where Farwell placed 11th.

Teall was seventh in 16:37, Good 16th in 16:51, sophomore Kaleb Schroeder 17th in 16:52, Winter 19th in 16:59 and junior Jayce Miller 25th in 17:08. Sophomore David Gordon was 23rd in 17:04 for Farwell.

Beaverton was fourth and Meridian seventh at Shepherd's regional. Hayes was third in 16:28 and senior Connor Graves 25th in 17:42. Senior Zach Grubaugh was 22nd in 17:21 for Meridian.

Trailing Veenkant for the Pioneers at the girls' regional were Haag, who was 16th in 19:42; Haupt, 17th in 19:48; Haring, 19th in 19:53; and Schroeder, 20th in 19:55.

Meridian was fourth at the Shepherd regional, led by junior Hannah Ordiway, who was 10th in 20:41. Sophomore Alexis North was 14th in

20:57, sophomore Cassidy Forbes 16th in 21:09 and junior Katie Blanchard 18th in 21:15.

Freshman Anna Killian was 23rd in 21:47 and sophomore Abby Brushaber 26th in 21:58 for Beaverton.

Clare packed five runners into the top six to win the final jamboree with 19 points. Gladwin was second with 61, Roscommon third with 81, Meridian fourth with 85, Harrison fifth with 133 and Farwell sixth with 170.

Veenkant was first with Roscommon freshman Alayna Ostling second. Haring, Haupt, Haag and Schroeder was next in line for the Pioneers. Gladwin senior Colette Morris was seventh, followed by Beaverton's Killian, Clare sophomore Nicole Taylor and North for Meridian.

Clare's boys won with 23 points, followed by Beaverton with 66, Meridian with 74, Farwell with 112, Gladwin with 122, Houghton Lake with 133 and Roscommon with 177.

Hayes won in 16:54, followed by Pioneers Teall, Miller, Good and Kaleb Schroeder. Gordon was sixth for Farwell and Meridian took the next two spots with Grubaugh seventh and sophomore Gage White eighth. Winter was ninth to close out the scoring for Clare. Fengjin Cui was 10th for Gladwin.



The Clare girls cross country team finished fifth as a team during the recent Division 3 finals held at Michigan International Speedway. (Gary Williams, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Up And Down Season For Football Teams In Jack Pine

Scott Salowich
Sports Scene

The second week of the playoffs was the final week of the season for the Jack Pine Conference's football teams.

Clare, which lost its opener to state finalist Ithaca, reeled off eight straight wins to close the regular season with an 8-1 record and a Jack Pine Conference championship.

The Pioneers faced Remus Chippewa Hills in the first round of the Division 5 tournament, which provided an opportunity to avenge a meeting in the same situation the previous year which saw Clare cry, "Uncle" to Remus in a 32-27 loss.

The tables turned in the rematch and the league champs advanced with a convincing 47-7 victory.

A trip to Reed City was next and that proved to be the end of the road for the Pioneers, who never got their potent offense going in a surprising 34-7 loss that

sent them home with a final record of 9-2.

Beaverton won its first eight regular season games before losing to Clare in a Week 9 finale for the Jack Pine title. The Beavers hosted St. Louis in the first round of the Division 7 playoffs and fell short on a pair of two-point conversion tries on the way to a tough 13-12 loss that left them with a final record of 8-2.

Harrison and Houghton Lake each qualified in Division 6 after posting identical 6-3 records during the regular season.

The Hornets won 24-22 at Houghton Lake in Week 7, but the Bobcats turned the tables in the rematch with a 20-16 victory, sending Harrison packing for the year with a 6-4 mark.

The fun came to a screeching halt the following week when Houghton Lake fell to Millington 55-28 to bow out at 7-4.

Clare dominated the Jack Pine's All-Conference Team, earning five spots

on offense and four on defense.

Senior Zac Stickler was named First Team at both guard and defensive tackle, while senior Tyler Rodenbo and junior Brenden Sersaw were First Team at both wide receiver and defensive back. Junior tackle Bruin French and junior kicker Aidan Boyd were all-league on offense, while senior linebacker Ryan Pummell was honored on defense.

Beaverton senior Nate Taylor was First Team on offense at end and on defense in the secondary. Senior running back Dan Breault was honored on offense, while linebackers Eric Cassidy and Kyle Cassidy both made the grade on defense.

For Harrison, senior Bryce Lipovsky was the First Team center, while junior Hugh Brand was honored at running back. Senior defensive end Austin Musser was First Team, along with senior linebacker Ryan Carlstrom and senior defensive back Joel Coughlin.

Kyle Stockford was First Team at receiver and defensive back for Meridian. Gladwin senior Kurtis Myers was the top punter.

Aaron Seiser was named Coach of the Year after guiding Beaverton to the playoffs for the second year in a row.

Clare lost in the first round of the Division 5 playoffs to Chippewa Hills 32-27. (Skip Traynor, High School Sports Scene Photo)



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College Signings



Midland High Signing Day Extraganza

The Chemics had 13 athletes sign during the National Letter of Intent Early signing period earlier this month. Those athletes included, Rylie Johnstone, Gymnastics - University of Illinois - Chicago; Abbie Fowler, Soccer - Fairmont State University; Riley Rajewski, Soccer - Northwood University; Carlee Davis, Soccer - Saginaw Valley State University; Gillian Schloop, Softball - Northwood University; Nicole Miller, Softball - Northwood University; Bethany Wilson, Volleyball - Lake Superior State University; Peyton Gerstacker, Volleyball - Saginaw Valley State University; Grace Rekeweg, Volleyball - Northwood University; Hannah Smith, Basketball - Hope College; Maddie Barrie, Basketball - Grand Valley State University; Garrett Willis, Baseball - Saginaw Valley State University and Drew Gandy, Golf - Hillsdale College.



Kristen Huebner, Swan Valley

Huebner will join older sister Lauren at Saginaw Valley State University as she recently announced she will play her college volleyball at SVSU. Lauren currently runs track for the Cardinals. Kristen is a three-time All-Conference and All-Region team member and earned two All-State accolades. Huebner was a part of three district championship teams with Swan Valley and was captain for two of those seasons.



Heritage's Schwellenbach, Bicknell head to D1

Heritage seniors Jessi Bicknell and Spencer Schwellenbach signed with their respective schools earlier this month. Bicknell will continue her basketball career at the University of Detroit, while Schwellenbach, who is considered one of the top baseball prospects for the Class of 2018 will move on to the University of Nebraska.



Addison Bouza, Bay City Western

Bouza emerged on the scene after having a huge junior season for the Warriors. She announced she will continue her college career at Saginaw Valley State University. She has earned Saginaw Valley All-Conference accolades all four years in volleyball, including two first team honors in her junior and senior seasons.



Kendyl Hofmeister, Essexville Garber

The daughter of one Michigan's top bowlers of all-time, Dale Hofmeister, Kendyl Hofmeister is also making a name for herself on the lanes. As a junior she averaged 189 and finished in the top 20 of last year's state meet. She will continue her bowling career at the University of Nebraska.



Katy Ratajczak, Essexville-Garber

Ratajczak served as a rock-solid catcher for the district champion Dukes as a junior, scoring 29 runs, driving in 23 and blasting five home runs. She will join her teammate Alyssa Seagraves at SVSU next year.



Alyssa Seagraves, Essexville-Garber

Seagraves can change the outcome of a game with her legs or her bat. She hit .372 with 28 RBIs and five home a year ago. She will play her college softball at Saginaw Valley State University.



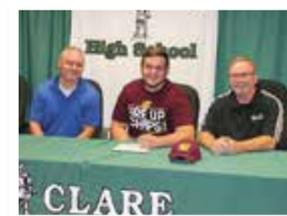
McKenna Walker, Bay City Western

Walker will go down as one of the best in school history. Walker averaged 19.0 points and 8.4 rebounds per game a year ago and begins her senior year with 1,120 career points. She will continue her basketball career at Northwood.



Faith Howe, Beaverton

Howe posted a 34-4 record with an eye-popping 379 strikeouts and a 0.51 ERA. The first-team all-stater takes her skills to Lincoln Memorial University of Tennessee.



Zac Stickler, Clare

Stickler is another CMU-bound athlete, who recently signed with the Chips to run track and field. He finished first or second in 14 meets in the shot put and eight times in the discus.



Mitchell Christensen, Essexville Garber

Christensen became the second state champion in Garber history as a junior, posting a 49-2 record at 112 pounds. He heads into this season with 141 career victories. Christensen will continue his education and wrestling career at Central Michigan University.



Western trio signs with LCC

Tyler David is a left-handed hitting shortstop, who batted .417 with 11 stolen bases a year ago. Seth Gower batted .383 with 32 RBIs and 15 stolen bases while playing third base for the Warriors while Logan LaCourse is a standout pitcher and center fielder, batting .378 with 18 stolen bases with seven wins a year ago. All three will continue their baseball career at Lansing Community College.



Kaylee Argyle, Freeland Girls basketball

Argyle, who helped the Falcons make it all the way to Class B semis a year ago will play her college basketball at Trine University.



Hannah Carson, Mt. Pleasant

Carson, is a three-time all-state first team selection at catcher (2015, '16, '17) for Mount Pleasant High School. She has batted .550 or better in each of her prep seasons and owns 24 career home runs and 133 RBI - without a strikeout in three seasons. She is ranked by FloSoftball as the nation's No. 21 prospect in the 2018 class and will continue her education and career at the University of Michigan.



Kayla Belles, Ithaca

A sure front-runner for the 2018 Miss Basketball award, however that changed for Belles after tearing her ACL this summer. She averaged averaged 19.4 points, 12.2 rebounds and 3.4 blocks a year ago. Belles will play her college basketball at Michigan State University.



Lauryn Gibbs, Mt. Morris

A four-time letterwinner at Mt. Morris High School and was nominated for Michigan Miss Volleyball her senior year. She is a three-time All-Region and two-time First Team All-League selection and was Named third team All-State as a sophomore. She will play her college career at Michigan State University.



Swan Valley duo heads to Northwood

Swan Valley pitchers Callie Burgess and Kaylynn Gulliver will continue their college careers together as they both announced they will play their college softball at Northwood University. The duo has led the Vikings to the Class B quarterfinals each of the last two seasons.

Scott Keyes, Kim McInerney and Submitted Photos

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