

LEADERSHIP — Seniors for the WHS softball team are, front from left, Emma Williamson and Haylee Sommers. Back: Ella Bartelt, Hannah Thursdale and Riley Ruedy.

Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

Optimism reigns for WHS softball

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

Many more athletes return than were lost to graduation for the Waseca High School girls' softball team and second-year head coach Abby Bloomquist.

It has led to optimism. "Given a year of growth, we expect to come out strong and to have solid offense and defense. We intend to be a much more aggressive team this year, and to capitalize on our opportunities."

The Bluejays, 3-16 last spring, graduated center fielder, cleanup hitter and captain Jady Olsem and second base player Jordan Hofmeister.

Returning are seniors Ella Bartelt, Riley Ruedy, Haylee Sommers, Hannah Thursdale and Emma Williamson, and juniors McKyla Hasselquist and Cameron Stagman. Sommers earned honorable mention all-conference last spring.

Coch Bloomquist likes what she's

seen so far in terms of desire and the ability manufacture some runs through aggressive play.

"Overall, we have a hungry, experienced varsity team," said Bloomquist. "We should be able to execute more on offense this year, and can rely more on our ability to play 'small ball.'"

The one thing the Bluejays don't have is a lot of depth, so Bloomquist hopes they can avoid injuries.

"Though we have solid athletes and have a variety of offensive and defensive combinations, we don't have a deep bench to turn to in the event that a player is struggling."

Consistency, according to Bloomquist, is crucial for the Bluejays.

"We need to be consistent both offensively and defensively," she said. "Last season we were often caught off guard by one bad inning and that caused us to crumble. If we show up the way we can every inning, we're going to shake it up in the conference."

"Overall, we have a hungry, experienced varsity team."

— Coach Abby Bloomquist

Though Bloomquist said the Big South Conference consistently has a number of contenders, New Ulm and St. Peter always tend to lead the pack.

"They have very solid programs and well-rounded, effective teams," said Bloomquist. "When we play our game, we can genuinely play with any team in our conference."

New Ulm, LeSueur-Henderson and LCWM are the favorites in Section 2AA, according to Bloomquist, who's in her eighth year at Waseca. She's assisted by Cassie DeVos.

In the girls opening round game with Blooming Prairie, the girls won 1-0 Tuesday night.

WASECA HIGH SCHOOL 2023 SOFTBALL

April 4	Blooming Prairie	5:30
April 6	Blue Earth Area	5:30
April 11	St. Peter	5:30
April 18	at New Ulm	5:30
April 21	at Medford	4:30
April 22	DH at Worthington	1 a.m.
April 25	at St. Peter	5:30
April 27	DH vs. Fairmont	4:30
May 1	at Rochester Lourdes	4:30
May 2	Maple River	5:30
May 4	New Ulm	5:30
May 6	DH at Marshall	11 a.m.
May 9	St. Clair	4:30
May 11	at Sibley East	4:30
May 16	at WEM, 4:30	
May 18	at Tri-City United	4:30
May 20	at JWP	2 p.m.
May 23, 25, 27	Section tournament	
June 1	Section finals	

WHS baseball squad looks to light up the scoreboard

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

If you're a fan of the Waseca High School baseball team and plan on attending any games this spring, it might be a good idea to pack a lunch. There could be some long evenings.

Hitting, according to second-year head coach Taylor Phelps, is the strength of the 2023 Bluejays.

"Hitting is going to be the way to our success and our strength across the board," said Phelps. "We are hoping to put up big numbers this year."

Last year's crew did just that, compiling a school-record .320 batting average.

"Expectations are to maintain that, or at least get close to that again," explained Phelps. "Fielding-wise, I think we'll be just fine."

The Jays finished 10-11 overall last year, but most of the losses came in Big South Conference play, where they went 1-9.

"Graduates off that squad included Mason Dekruif, Jarret Ahlschlager and Carter McQuery. Dekruif batted .287 and committed just one error in 29 fielding chances. Ahlschlager hit

"Hitting is going to be the way to our success and our strength across the board."

— Coach Taylor Phelps

.367 while McQuery batted .481 and had a 2.82 earned run average as a pitcher.

Senior honorable mention all-conference selections Griffin Krautkremer and Tyson Reger lead the list of returnees, which includes seniors Elijah Biehn, Grant Cox, Payton Garza, Max Neaves, Oliver O'Brien and Kedrick Volkmann, and juniors Armando Baldaras, Nate Engel-Mueller, Shane Engel-Mueller, Logan Heyer, Michele Manghini, Titus Mokoff, Keaton Roeker, Joshua Teachout and Sebastian Teague.

"We have six returning seniors and then two juniors returning that got serious innings last year, so we should be pretty competitive," said Phelps. "And that's the biggest goal for us too here, to compete in every game and make sure that we are do what we're supposed to be doing."

Phelps is looking for leadership from Garza, Reger and the rest of the 12th-graders.

"Every one of the seniors I'm expecting to really lead us and make sure that they're keeping everybody else in check," said Phelps.

Reger, who has signed to play baseball at Bethany Lutheran College, looks to anchor the pitching staff, with help from Garza, Teague and others. Reger threw a no-hitter against WEM last spring.

While Phelps is hopeful the Bluejays' bats will be able to keep them in games, he said adjusting to new positions is key to their overall success, as is continued improvement in all aspects of the game.

"As a team, we need players to step in where they might be comfortable and be able to compete in those positions," said the coach.

Phelps, assisted by Bob Lueken,



FINAL SEASON — Seniors on the WHS baseball team are, from left, Eljan Biehn, Tyson Reger, Kedrick Volkmann, Grant Cox, Griffin Krautkremer, Oliver O'Brien, Payton Garza and Max Neaves.

Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

listed Fairmont as the Big South favorite, with New Ulm, Belle Plaine, Sibley East and NRHEG leading the way in the section.

"We're looking to compete in every game," said Phelps. "There's going to be a lot of moving parts. We got Max Neaves, a stud on the football team, coming out this year. He hasn't played in a few years. We got Max

Wirtz, same kind of thing. He's a sophomore, but he hasn't played in two or three years. We have a solid core group of guys. They know that

we want to have fun, but you've got to get the job done, too."

WASECA HIGH SCHOOL 2023 BASEBALL

April 4	BP at Austin	4:30
April 6	at LCWM	5 p.m.
April 10	Kenyon-Wanamingo	4:30
April 11	Medford	5:30
April 18	at New Ulm	5:30
April 21	at LeSueur-H	4:30
April 22	at Maple River	11 a.m.
April 25	St. Peter	5:30
April 28	DH vs. Fairmont	4:30
May 2	New Ulm	5:30
May 4	TCU	5:30

May 6	DH vs. Worthington	Noon
May 9	at St. Peter	4 p.m.
May 11	at WEM	4:30
May 13	DH at Marshall	11 a.m.
May 16	Sibley East	5:30
May 18	Belle Plaine	5:30
May 20	JWP	6 p.m.
May 25	Section tournament	
June 1	Section tournament	
June 3	Section tournament	
June 6	Section tournament	
June 8	Section tournament	



READY WHEN THE WEATHER IS — Seniors on the 2023 WHS golf teams are, front from left, Hailey Dettmer and Miranda Breck. Back: Zander Honstad, Will King, Ethan Adams. Not pictured: Lindsey Kopetzki, Megan Kanewischer.

Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

New coach takes the reins for Waseca High golf teams

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

New head coach Anthony Scheid doesn't know the exact records for the 2022 Waseca High School golf teams, but it doesn't matter.

He's not looking back. And a whole horde of returning letterwinners leaves the first-year coach feeling optimistic for the 2023 season.

The boys return no less than 12 athletes: seniors Alexander Honstad and Ethan Adams, juniors Cody Vagtz, Charlie Cariveau, Preston Miller and Seath Eaton, and sophomores Hunter Anderson, Owen Wilder, Reed Anderson, Max Bodenweiser, Collin Dettmer and Alex Adams.

Ten girls return as letterwinners: seniors Miranda Breck, Megan Kanewischer, Lindsay Kopetzki and Hailey Dettmer, juniors Tricia Cox, Emma Keith and Trista Steinhart, and sophomores Mia Kanewischer, Lexi Kanewischer and Avery Gaul. Scheid is excited for the season.

"We want to help everyone im-

"I'm excited to help these young athletes become better people and golfers."

— Coach Anthony Scheid

prove their scoring average," said Scheid. "We want to compete, with a chance to make it to state as a team and individuals."

He likes what he's seen so far. "I think all our golfers are great student-athletes willing to learn and get better at the game of golf," said Scheid. "Our weakness right now is the weather. When will the snow leave us?"

The key to success for the 2023 Bluejays, according to Scheid, is having fun on the course with the ability to move on and focus on the next shot.

"I'm excited to help these young athletes become better people and golfers while instilling a fun atmosphere," said Scheid, an 8th-year Waseca teacher who's assisted by Maren Peterson.

WASECA HIGH SCHOOL 2023 GOLF

April 11	Home invite	4 p.m.
April 13	Belle Plaine	4 p.m.
April 18	Boys vs. BPR	4 p.m.
April 20	Girls at Faribault	2:30
April 21	Girls at Mankato East	2:30
April 24	Girls at Waseca	4 p.m.
April 24	Boys' at Fairmont	4 p.m.
May 1	Girls at Jackson	4 p.m.
May 1	Boys at New Ulm	4 p.m.
May 2	Girls at Waseca	4 p.m.
May 2	Boys at Shoreland CC	2 p.m.
May 8	Girls at Riverside	3 p.m.
May 8	Boys at Shoreland	3 p.m.
May 11	St. Clair	4 p.m.
May 15	Boys at Dacotah Ridge	9 a.m.
May 15	Girls at Dacotah Ridge	1:30
May 16	at Tri-City United	2 p.m.
May 23	at LeSueur-Henderson	1 p.m.
May 30	Girls sect. at N. Prague	5 p.m.
May 31	Boys sect. at N. Prague	Noon
June 6	Sect. finals at New Prague	

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Ready for a run at a title

High hopes for WHS girls' track

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

After finishing second in the conference and second at the section level last year and a strong group of seniors this spring, the prospects are bright for the Waseca High School girls' track and field team.

The Bluejays graduated a slew of talent last year in nine seniors, including state entrants Samara Johnson and Maddie Thompson, but they return five talented seniors among nine returning letterwinners.

The returnees are seniors Sam Azure (sprints, throws, jumps), Ella Dufault (distance), Thyme Lang (hurdles, jumps), Camille Ring (hurdles, jumps) and Kyra Hoof (distance), juniors Sarah Haley (sprints) and Evelyn O'Brien (distance), and sophomores Callie Dufault (distance) and Gabby Lopez (sprints).

The rest of the roster includes seniors Olivia Frye, Inez Sanchez and Charlie Steglich, juniors Haydn Lynch, Evelyn O'Brien and Olivia Osterich, sophomores Brooklyn Flatau, Sierra Krause, Melanie Krueger-Einke, Kennedy Lynch, Lucia Mansfield, Camila Marquez, Neveah Sampson, Ashley Sanchez and Kalea Sartori, 9th-graders Ava Bruhn, Kelsey Draeger, Layla Keith and Vivian Mader, 8th-grader Stella Omtvedt and 7th-grader Maren Schimming.

"We've got some great leaders,"

**"Our seniors will set the tone."
— Waseca coach Dave Abel**

said head coach Dave Abel. "I expect those guys to be pretty vocal."

Abel, who spent nine seasons as an assistant coach, enters his 18th year as head coach of the Bluejays, assisted by Brad Wendland (17th year, throws), Grant Popp (5th year, distance), Robb Winterfeld (2nd year, hurdles) and Kira Fosburgh (1st year, sprints, jumps).

"We have good numbers in our sophomore group and some 'new-to-track' athletes that we will need to step up and fill some roles for us," said Abel. "Sierra Krause, Camila Marquez, Kalea Sartori, Haydn Lynch, and Brooklyn Flatau come to mind as athletes who can make an impact this season."

As for goals and expectations, they remain high.

"Our season goals are pretty consistent year in and year out," said Abel. "We expect to compete for the conference championship, qualify for True Team state and move as many athletes on to state as we can."

And this year offers more opportu-



VARSITY GIRLS— The 2023 Waseca High School girls' track and field team. Front from left: Ava Bruhn, Kennedy Lynch, Lucia Mansfield, Maren Schimming, Ashley Sanchez and Vivian Mader. Row two: Charlie Steglich, Sarah Haley, Haydn Lynch, Inez Sanchez, Cami Marquez, Thyme Lang and Kelsey Draeger. Back: Kalea Sartori, Kya Hoof, Camille Ring and Sam Azure. Not Pictured: Callie Dufault, Ella Dufault, Evie O'Brien, Stella Omtvedt, Sierra Krause, Gaby Lopez, Layla Keith, Melanie Krueger, Brooklyn Flatau, Neveah Sampson, Olivia Osterich.

nities to compete at state.

"Track has been reclassified from two classes to three," said Abel. "We are in the new AA class and are competing in a new section as well. There are still a few unknowns and uncertainties about how things will play out. We think we can compete very well in this new setup. We stack up pretty well against this new group of teams. Last year's experience has helped us understand where to focus and told us we can really make

an impact at the section meet."

With 12 letterwinners anchoring the team and 29 total girls out for track, Abel believes the Bluejays will be strong in the distance, hurdles, long jump and throws.

"We will need some girls to step up and create the depth we need to really score well as a team," said Abel.

Avoiding injury is also key. "Staying healthy is a must," said Abel. "Athletes stepping up will be

important to our success. Our seniors will set the tone and we will do as well as a team as they do. If we do what we are capable of doing, we can score well as a team."

The Big South favorites are the "usual suspects," according to Abel, and include Fairmont and Marshall. Byron, Winona and Stewartville are expected to be strong in the section.

**WASECA HIGH SCHOOL
2023 TRACK AND FIELD**

April 4	Indoor at MSU	5:30
April 11	at Faribault	4:30
April 21	Home invite	4 p.m.
April 28	at Plainview	4 p.m.
May 2	at St. Charles	4:30
May 4	at Mankato East	4 p.m.
May 9	True Team at Faribault	3 p.m.
May 18	Home invite	4 p.m.
May 20	True Team State at Stillwater	3 p.m.
May 23	Conference at Marshall	3 p.m.
June 1	Section at Lakeville	
June 3	Section at Lakeville	
June 9-10	State at St. Michael-Alb.	

Goals remain the same for WHS boys' track team

Bluejays have high aspirations

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

The goals remain the same for the Waseca High School boys' track and field team.

The Bluejays aim to do more than just contend.

"Our season goals are pretty consistent year in and year out," said head coach Dave Abel. "We expect to compete for the conference championship, qualify for True Team state and move as many athletes on to state as we can."

In those terms, last season was a success as Waseca finished second in the Big South Conference and fourth in Section 1AA. Six athletes graduated from that squad, including state finalist Max Gaytko.

The 2023 Bluejays are a senior-laden crew that includes returning lettermen Kyle Ahlschlager (sprints, jumps), Joe Feldkamp (distance), Eddie Herman (throws), Christian Rodriguez (sprints), Addison Sampson (hurdles, pole vault), Cole Schultz (hurdles), Cade Kalbow (distance) and Israel Nelson (sprints).

The other returnees from last year include juniors Kaeden Johnson (sprints) and Ethjan Stenzel (throws),

and sophomores Isaac Feldkamp (distance), Damarius Russell (sprints) and Micah Allen-Haas (sprints).

The remainder of the roster: juniors Tarun Ewest, Bobby Mortenson, Andrew Robran, Javonn Rodney, Colten Schroeder and Lucas Vasquez, sophomores Andy Baldaras, Tristan Godwin, Jacob Hadley, Tanner Hanson, Elijah Johanneck, Bennett Ludwig, Joe Mixteco, Carson Ohnstad, Cejay Pickett, Tauston Rupe and Cody Weber, and freshmen Wyatt Hager, Jordan Johnson, William Mansfield, Jett Rohl, Deron Russell, Zane Staloch and Brady Tlougan.

"We have good sophomore numbers and some good freshmen as well as some 'new-to-track' athletes that we will need to step up and fill some roles for us," said Abel. "Carson Ohnstad, Bennett Ludwig, Lucas Vasquez come to mind as athletes who can make an impact."

With 38 total athletes, 15 returning lettermen, a strong group of sprinters, long jumpers and throwers, Abel is confident the Bluejays will fill out their lineup nicely.

"We should be able to find some



VARSITY BOYS — The 2023 Waseca High School boys' track and field team. Front from left Tarun Ewest, Tristan Godwin, Cade Kalbow, Addison Sampson, Jett Rohl and Zane Staloch. Row two: Joe Mixteco, Bobby Mortenson, Cody Weber, Ethan Stenzel, Lucas Vasquez, Damarius Russell, Kaeden Johnson, Bennett Ludwig, Carson Ohnstad and Kyle Ahlschlager. Back: Wyatt Hager, Joe Feldkamp, Eddie Herman, Colten Schroeder, Andrew Robran, Isaac Feldkamp, Javonn Rodney, Andy Baldaras, Jacob Hadley, Micah Allen-Haas, Deron Russell and Cole Schultz. Not pictured: Tauston Rupe, Jordan Johnston, Will Mansfield, Brady Tlougan, Israel Nelson and Christian Rodriguez.

gems in the group to fill the needed areas on the team," stated Abel, who added that the Jays still need to find more depth in the middle distance and improve in the triple jump, high jump and hurdles.

"We are going to be able to compete very well in the sprints, and have good top-of-the-line guys in the pole vault, long jump, and discus," said Abel. "We will need to find some guys to fill the other spots to

really score well as a team."

Abel pointed at Fairmont, Marshall and St. Peter as the preseason Big East favorites and believes Faribault and Plainview-Elgin-Millville to be strong in Section 1AA.

The state meet moves from two classes to three this year.

"We are in the new AA class and are competing in a new section as well," said Abel. There are still a few unknowns and uncertainties about

how things will play out. We think we can compete very well in this new setup. We stack up pretty well against this new group of teams.

**WASECA HIGH SCHOOL
2023 TRACK AND FIELD**

April 4	Indoor at MSU	5:30
April 11	at Faribault	4:30
April 21	Home invite	4 p.m.
April 28	at Plainview	4 p.m.
May 2	at St. Charles	4:30

May 4	at Mankato East	4 p.m.
May 9	True Team at Faribault	3 p.m.
May 18	Home invite	4 p.m.
May 20	True Team State at Stillwater	3 p.m.
May 23	Conference at Marshall	3 p.m.
June 1	Section at Lakeville	
June 3	Section at Lakeville	
June 9-10	State at St. Michael-Alb.	

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Lots of spots up for grabs on WHS boys' tennis team

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

A break-even season would be about right for the Waseca High School boys' tennis team, according to 21st-year head coach Kyle Collins. "Realistically, we hope to finish around .500," said Collins. "All seven varsity positions are up for grabs. It might take us awhile to see where everyone fits into the lineup." The Bluejays, 5-11 overall and 1-4 in the Big South Conference East last year, graduated just two players, but they made up the No. 1 doubles duo.

"Hunter Supalla and Victor Feeley were 8-3 together and were a very solid No. 1 doubles team for us last season. They will be tough to re-

place." Leading the 2023 Bluejays are senior co-captains Jacari Jellum and Jenaro Delgado. The other returning letterwinners are juniors Oliver Rohwer, Dominic Grunzke and Ahmet Farooq, sophomore Tyler Jellum and 8th-grader Henry Huttemier. The remainder of the roster includes senior Corbin Connors, juniors Jan Schoen and Eddy Gallegos, sophomores Nick Waldron, Aiden Groskreutz, Liam Hagle, Lucas McQuery an Brayden Hoof, freshmen Allan Kopetzki, Jacob Root, Brythton Rugger and Matt Veroveen, 8th-graders Trey Jenzen, Dawson Goodlander, Otto Schoenrock and Gavin O'Brien, and 7th-graders Ar-

maan Bhatti and Kyler Carlson. "We have a lot of returning letterwinners and our team chemistry should be pretty good with leadership from our seniors." In order to be successful, Collins said the Bluejays need consistency and hard work. St. Peter and New Ulm are the pre-season favorites in the conference, according to Collins, who picks Rochester Lourdes to lead Section 1A. Collins, who has a career record of 182-133, is assisted by Paul Marlin. "Our varsity players do not have a lot of playing experience," said Collins. "Many are playing on the varsity for only the second year."



LEADERSHIP — Upperclassmen for the WHS boys' tennis team are, front from left: Lucas Mcquery, Ahmed Farooq, Corbin Connors, Oliver Rohwer, Armaan Bhatti, Otto Schoenrock, Tyler Jellum. Back: Dominic Grunzke, Allen Kopetzki, Jacari Jellum, J.D. Delgado, Henry Huttemier, Jan Schoen, Trey Jenzen, Nicholas Waldron.

Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

WASECA HIGH SCHOOL 2023 BOYS' TENNIS		April 18	Redwood Valley	4:30	May 6	at Stewartville Inv.	9 a.m.	
April 4	at Lake City	4:30	April 20	Fairmont	4:30	May 9	Lake City	4:30
April 6	at Faribault	4 p.m.	April 24	at New Prague	4:15	May 11	at St. Peter	4:30
April 11	at Blue Earth	4:30	April 25	at Schaeffer Acad.	4:30	May 18	Section tournament	
April 13	St. James	4:30	May 1	Rochester Lourdes	4:30	May 23, 25	Section tournament	
April 17	Red Wing	4:30	May 2	New Ulm	4:30			
			May 4	at Worthington	4:30			



VARSITY VETERANS — Returnees for the NRHEG girls' track and field team, are, in front, Makenzie Mueller. Back: Holly Bartness, Josie Strom, Quinn VanMaldeghem, Malonna Wilson, Sierra Misgen, Anika Ladlie, Evelyn Nydegger, and Lauren Cowell.

Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

NRHEG track & field girls expect exciting season

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

It should be an exciting spring for the NRHEG High School girls' track and field team. The Gopher Conference championship, according to coach Ducey Ferber, does not appear out of reach. "I think the Gopher Conference is wide open this year," said Ferber, whose squad finished second in last year's conference meet. While the Panthers are not blessed with great overall numbers, they hope the quality of their athletes will be enough to bring home a title. A long list of athletes graduated last spring: Brittny Anderson, Cora Harpel, Madison Johannsen, Natalie Johnson, Journey Utpadel, Torri Vaale and manager Brittney Rocha. Decorated returnees include junior Evelyn Nydegger, the MVP of last year's squad, school-record holder and state qualifier Quinn VanMaldeghem, a freshman, and high-jumper Anika Ladlie, who missed state by one place last year as a 7th-grader. Also returning are junior Kyra Spies, a two-time section qualifier, and juniors McKenzie Mueller, Malonna Wilson and Lauren Cowell in

the throwing events. Ferber also expects points from senior Josie Strom and sophomore Sierra Misgen in the sprints, and freshman Holly Bartness in several events. "Holly Bartness is like a jack of all trades," said Ferber. "She does anywhere from distance to sprinting. Quinn VanMaldeghem was our only state participant last year. She's got a good chance of going again. Ladlie has been jumping out of the gym right now. The way she's jumping, I would put money on her to possibly go to state." Strom and Olivia Kofstad are the Panthers' lone seniors. The rest of the roster: juniors Kyra Cain, Keira Lenort and Annabelle Petsinger, sophomores Elise Aronson and Madisyn Langfit, freshmen Janelle Garrido, Molly Johnson, Lexi McGannon, Winter Peterson, Chloe Riewer, Ava Schember, Gabby Schlaak and Emma Yokiel, 8th-graders Clara Buendorf, Orianna Degan, Paige Johnson, Kylie Olson and Madi Schlaak, and 7th-grader Scarlett Chance. Ferber enters his 34th season as head track and field coach in New Richland. Assistants are Larry Nydegger, Marc Kruger, Kim Johnson

and Brian Belcourt. Ferber lists JWP and Maple River as the pre-season conference favorites. He feels the Panthers should be strong in the hurdles and jumps, but he's concerned about their overall depth. "We need to have more than one person score in each event," said the coach, who stated that hard work and grit are the key to success for the 2023 Panthers. "We lost a lot of people that were like on the fence," said Ferber. "Last year, they came out to experience it. And this year, I didn't have as many of those kids come out. Everybody that's out right now is serious about it, and they're here to get better and to win. So, it's exciting."

NRHEG GIRLS' AND BOYS' TRACK & FIELD 2023 SCHEDULE

April 4	at Hayfield	4:30
April 11	at USC	4:30
April 18	at Maple River	4:30
April 25	at Bl. Prairie	4:30
April 28	at Blue Earth	4:30
May 4	NRHEG Inv.	4:30
May 9	True Team at USC	3 p.m.
May 13	Conf. at USC	10 a.m.
May 16 Jr. high conf. at Triton		4:30
May 18	at Waseca	4 p.m.

NRHEG track boys ready when the weather is

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

It looks like all the bases are covered for the 2023 NRHEG High School boys' track and field team. Now if the weather would just cooperate. The Panthers start the season with plenty of depth, but a snow-covered track awaits the melting and the competing. All of which makes the key to success for the Panthers, according to coach Ducey Ferber, keeping his athletes healthy and, hopefully, getting outdoors very soon. "We need to keep everyone healthy and able to compete in all the meets," said Ferber. "We need to

work hard even if we can't get outside until the snow melts. We may lose some of our early outdoor meets due to snow still on the track." The Panthers graduated four athletes off last year's squad: Eric Arvis, Jaxon Beck, Matthew Mueller and Nik Petsinger. Expected to lead this year's Panthers are senior throwers Lucas Hanna and Makota Misgen and senior high jumper Sawyer Prigge, who has cleared 6 feet in practice. Ferber is also high on middle-distance man Conner Nelson, a senior, and quarter-miler Aidan Deyle, another senior. Juniors Parker Bunn, Levin Kitzer and William Tuttle are expected to score points in the hurdle events.

Junior Jaylin Raab is the top returning sprinter. Senior Aden Berg and sophomore Cole Hutchens figure to score in the throws. The rest of the roster includes seniors Evan Beckmann, Sam Christensen and Brady Schlaak, sophomores Owen Bartlett, Harbor Cromwell, Cohen Riewer, Logan Scheil and Gavin Sletten, freshmen Charlie Fuller, Jacob Karl, Devon Nelton, Trevor Selover and Wyatt Tuttle, 8th-graders Jack Bartlett and Brendan Schmidt, and 7th-graders Remi Johnson, Rowan Sletten and Kenny Spies. "We have some good athletes in most areas," said Ferber. "We should be strong in our sprints and sprint re-

lays. Our long distance has some good younger athletes as well as some upper classmen. We have seven boy throwers who have a lot of potential this season. Our jumps have some returners to hopefully score some points. We have most of our bases covered. We have a lot of good hard working kids that love to be out there competing and trying to get better. Our upper classmen do a good job of showing the younger athletes how to work hard to succeed." Ferber, in his 34th season in New Richland, is assisted by Larry Nydegger, Marc Kruger, Kim Johnson and Brian Belcourt.



RETURNEES — Back for the NRHEG boys' track and field team are, front from left: Parker Bunn, Harbor Cromwell, Jacob Karl, Sam Christensen, Aidan Deyle, Sawyer Prigge. Back row: Gavin Sletten, Devon Nelton, Connor Nelson, Lucas Hanna, William Tuttle and Jaylin Raab.

Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

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Can the Panthers top 2022 season?

Division I signee, six returning letter winners offer good start

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

Last spring was an exciting time for the NRHEG High School baseball team, which finished 12-5 overall, 8-3 for third in the Gopher Conference and fourth in Section 2AA.

So how can the 2023 Panthers top it?

"The best thing is we have a lot of guys returning," said fourth-year head coach Mark Lee.

As usual, they had some quality players graduate in Alex Dobberstein, Clay Stenzel, Ben Schoenrock and Tyrone Wilson, all two-year starters who would have been three-year starters if not for the COVID epidemic.

"That's a lot of experience we lost," said Lee.

It has left the coach wondering who's going to play where, but he has a pretty good idea.

"We don't really know what's happening with our infield and catching positions yet, but we've got an idea," said Lee. "We're going to be able to mix and match pretty well with some returning guys and some younger guys that are coming up with some good experience."

The Panthers return some out-

standing talent in Andrew Phillips, Ethan Thompson, Daxter Lee, Jackson Chrz., Sam Olson and Alden Dobberstein.

Phillips, a senior, is a two-time all-conference player, two-time team Gold Glove Award winner and MVP of the squad last spring. He's committed to play Division I baseball at South Dakota State.

Thompson, the team's Best Bat Award winner last season, was third team all-conference. Three-year letterman Daxter Lee has been the Panthers' Best Pitcher Award winner two years in a row, being named first team all-conference last year.

Olson, Chrz and Dobberstein figure to lead the pitching staff.

"Andrew Phillips will throw for as well," said Coach Lee. "We also got Jared Lee, a freshman, along with Aiden Schlaak and Aden Hanna, to go with it. At times, we're going to need as many arms as we can as the season goes on. But we've got three really solid starters, and we've got two to three really solid relievers. So



Mark Lee



CAN THEY TOP IT? — Hoping to better last season for the NRHEG baseball team are, front from left: Dakota Malakowski, Jared Lee, Ethan Thompson, Andrew Phillips, Daxter Lee, Jace Ihrke. Back: Sam Olson, Jackson Chrz, Alden Dobberstein, Aiden Schlaak, Brian Possin and Aden Hanna. Not pictured: Seth Staloch.
Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

I think we're gonna be really solid on the mound."

The Panthers look to be led by Phillips and Daxter Lee.

"Andrew is a quiet leader, but yet he's getting more vocal this year, which is good to see. Daxter, he's always a leader. He's not afraid to, you know, help the younger guys. He's helping Andrew do things. Those two work together off each other real well. So they're feeding off each other again this year."

Phillips and Thompson are the lone seniors.

Coach Lee looks forward to watching Phillips.

"There's just a lot of little things

that he does," said Lee. "Not everybody's going to see it, but us coaches, some of us coaches, could see it. His swing is a man's swing. And his speed is unbelievable. His technique at the plate is what sets him apart. It comes down to his work ethic. He's got the 'it' factor."

Coach Lee hopes the Panthers, sparked by experience, leadership and speed, can contend for the conference crown. Unfortunately, he lists the squad's biggest weakness as depth, meaning they'll probably need to stay healthy to enjoy success.

"We need our pitchers to throw lots of strikes and get early outs," said Lee. "Along with being active

on the bases."

Lee, assisted by Aaron Phillips and Shawn Larson, lists the conference favorites as Randolph, Hayfield, NRHEG and USC. Belle Plaine, New Ulm and Sibley East look to be the class of Section 2AA.

"I believe that they need to be reminded that we're a good team," said Lee. "I keep telling them that we're a good team. We feel that we can win our conference if a couple of things go our way. We've got a good conference, but I think that we're going to be right up there. We've got a mix of good athletes. We got a lot of good ball players."

NRHEG BASEBALL

2023 SCHEDULE

April 4	USC	4:30
April 6	WEM	4:30
April 11	Blue Earth Area	5 p.m.
April 13	Triton	5 p.m.
April 15	ML-GHEC	Noon
April 17	at Randolph	4:30
April 18	at TCU	5 p.m.
April 20	at USC	4:30
April 27	BP at Austin	5 p.m.
May 1	Hayfield	4:30
May 4	at JWP	4:30
May 5	Pine Island	7 p.m.
May 9	Triton	4:30
May 11	vs. Kenyon-W	4:30
May 15	at Maple River	4:30
May 16	at Albert Lea	5 p.m.
May 18	Medford	4:30

Softball Panthers primed for Schultz's 25th and final season

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

No matter what happens on the field, this will be an historic season for the NRHEG High School softball team.

It's the 25th, and final, year for Wendy Schultz as the Panthers' head coach.

"I'm just always excited before every season," said Schultz. "It's my 25th one. It's amazing, you know, how every year I'm still just equally as excited to get going for it."

The Panthers enjoyed another successful campaign last spring, finishing 15-7 overall and 9-2 in the Gopher Conference, tying Randolph for the conference championship.

Longtime starting pitcher Sophie Stork, shortstop Ava Kylo, Brenlee Knudson and Haley VanWinkle were the most notable graduates off last year's squad.

Stork was last year's NRHEG co-MVP and was named the Player of the Year in the Gopher Conference. Kylo won the team's Golden Glove and Golden Arm awards.

That's the biggest question for the 2023 Panthers. Who's going to handle the pitching duties? The top candidates are senior Sidney Schultz - Coach Schultz's daughter - junior Faith Nielsen, junior Erin Peterson and freshman Chloe Stork.

Returning starters include Sidney Schultz, last year's co-MVP and Golden Bat Award winner (with Kylo and Faith Nielsen), senior Bree Ihrke, Faith Nielsen, Preslie Nielsen

"I'm excited before every season."
— NRHEG coach Wendy Schultz

and Hallie Schultz, who returns after missing the entire 2022 season with an injury.

Other varsity prospects include senior Trinity Smith Vulcan, juniors Isabel Stadheim, Elsie Schultz, Tayler Schmidt and Payton Bunn, sophomore Aryanna Howe and freshmen Camryn VanMaldeghem and Adalyn Stadheim.

The captains are Sidney Schultz, Hallie Schultz and Ihrke.

"Obviously it's going to be different not having a Sophie Stork," said Schultz. "She was a five-year starter for us, and obviously just a phenomenal athlete. We'll find out when the first pitch is thrown. I guess we'll probably use a combination of our pitchers, maybe go with the hot hand sort of thing. We'll see."

The Panthers figure to be led primarily by their seniors, Sidney Schultz, Ihrke and Smith Vulcan.

"We also have some other girls on the team that have been on for quite a while," said Schultz. "We have Hallie. It's nice to have her back, because last year, with her shoulder injury, she wasn't able to play with us. But, you know, I think it's just going to be a group effort with the practices we've had so far. It's almost two weeks now of being inside. Of course, they've all jelled really well."

Does knowing this is her last season coaching before retirement make this year anymore special for Coach Schultz?

"Yeah, I mean, it is," said Schultz. "It's weird. It was weird going into the first day of practice thinking that it would be the last one. But I'm just kind of trying not to think about that and just going about business like I normally would."

Sidney Schultz is entering her sixth varsity softball season.

"It's special, obviously, to coach one of your one of your kids," said Coach Schultz. "It's been fun seeing her development to a decent player. Every year, she's actually played a different position for us. We kind of just throw her in wherever we need her. She's just been so fortunate to have so many girls around her that are great athletes and just overall good people."

Schultz expects the Panthers to show continual improvement throughout the season and be playing their best ball at playoff time. She said the team has hard workers, speed and great attitudes. The biggest concern is players moving to positions they haven't played much.

State tournament qualifier Randolph returns almost its entire team and is the preseason Gopher Confer-



PANTHER POWER — The 2023 NRHEG High School softball team. Front from left: Sidney Schultz, Isabel Stadheim. Second row from front: Addy Stadheim, Faith Nielsen, Aryanna Howe, Preslie Nielsen. Back: Camryn VanMaldeghem, Hallie Schultz, Payton Bunn, Bree Ihrke, Erin Peterson, Tayler Schmidt, coach Wendy Schultz, and Trinity Smith Vulcan.
Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

ence favorite. Bethlehem Academy and Blooming Prairie, who tied for third last year, should also be strong while Hayfield, WEM and USC figure to be a factor.

NRHEG SOFTBALL 2023 SCHEDULE

April 4	Blue Earth Area	4:30
April 6	at WEM	4:30
April 10	Randolph	4:30
April 14	at Triton	4:30
April 17	ML-GHEC	4:30
April 20	USC	4:30
April 21	at TCU	4 p.m.
April 24	at Faribault BA	4:30
April 27	Bl. Prairie	4:30
May 1	at Hayfield	4:30
May 4	JWP	4:30
May 5	Tourney at Caswell Park	
May 6	Tourney at Caswell Park	
May 9	BP at U of M	6 p.m.
May 11	Kenyon-W	4:30
May 12	Austin	4:30
May 15	Maple River	4:30
May 18	at Medford	4:30
May 19	Southland	4:30

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Leadership is key for JWP baseball

By MICHAEL ROY
Staff Writer

Just like the batters of the Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton baseball team, the spring sports season is in full swing.

This year brings a lot of optimism for the Bulldogs' baseball team. Head coach Cory Jewison will be returning for his third year of coaching the varsity team with assistant coach Tyler Fellows at his side.

2022 Season

It was a bit of a tougher campaign for the Bulldog sluggers in 2022. After a 2-0 start, they went 5-14. They did put on a respectable performance at Rushford-Peterson — who were 10-6 — in the first round of Section 1A playoffs, but lost 5-4.

Key Returnees and Losses

The Bulldogs return seniors Kelton Erler, Ian Barnes, and Ryan Hanson; juniors Gavin Krause, Nolan Morsching, Ty Melchior, Josh Bengston, Cole Blomstrom, Cole Gartner, Austin Carda, and Austin Quast; and sophomores Ethan Born and Lucas Morsching.

Erler, the team's catcher, earned

third team all-conference last season and was named team MVP and Silver Slugger Award winner. Hanson was named the Most Improved Player. Krause, along with Erler and Hanson, is a three-year letterwinner.

Barnes, Morsching, Melchior, Bengston, and Blomstrom are two-year letter winners. Jewison called Melchior the team's "Cy Young."

Key player losses for the team are Blake Cowdin and Jonny Daschner. Cowdin was a starting pitcher who pitched 24 full innings for the team and was a three-year letterwinner. "He had great on-the-field leadership at shortstop," Jewison said.

Daschner was the team's utility player in the infield. A three-year letter winner, he also pitched 10 innings for the team. "He had a great on-base percentage and was a great base runner," Jewison added.

Expectations

This year, Jewison expects the team to massively improve on their 5-14 record from 2022. "We have eight returning letterwinners, seven of them starters," he explained. "Last season was a difficult season for us,



BASEBALL — The 2023 JWP High School baseball team. Front from left: Drake Hershberger, Cole Blomstrom, Jaxon Miller, Ethan Born, Chase Gerdt, Austin Carda, Lucas Morsching, Dylan McWaters, and Nolan Morsching. Back: assistant coach Tyler Fellows, Gavin Krause, Josh Bengston, Ian Barnes, Ryan Hanson, Kelton Erler, Austin Quast, Cole Gartner, Ty Melchior, manager Avery Fall, and head coach Cory Jewison. Pioneer photo by Michael Roy

but it was also a learning season for lots of players."

Strengths and Weaknesses

What will give the team a better chance to prosper this season is having most players on the roster with valuable varsity experience over the years. "The team has a determination to be better," Jewison said.

Their offense, which showed sparks of potential last season, was noted as another strength.

According to Jewison, weaknesses of the team are team defense and pitching. With a regular pitcher from last season out of the lineup, it could present a challenge.

Key to Success
"We'll have to rely on strong leadership from the upperclassmen this season," Jewison said. "Holding each other accountable will also be important. We have a lot of new players stepping into big roles."

Favorites

Coach Jewison said the conference favorites this season will be New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva and Maple River. Maple River was eliminated from the Section 2AA quarterfinal before NRHEG defeated them in the elimination quarterfinal. NRHEG made it to the Section 2AA semifinals before

getting eliminated. Section 1A favorites are Lyle-Pacelli and Southland. Lyle made it to the Section 1A championship bracket finals before getting shut out by Hayfield; Southland then defeated them before getting eliminated by Hayfield in the Section 1A final.

Additional Comments

"I am excited for this season," Jewison said. "Regardless of wins or losses, I have seen so much improvement on the upperclassmen's leadership. They have all taken such pride in being leaders here at JWP. I think good things will happen if they continue this leadership."

JWP HIGH SCHOOL 2003 BASEBALL

April 11	BP at Austin	4:30
April 14	at St. Clair	4:30
April 17	at Kenyon-W	4:30
April 21	Triton	4:30
April 29	Madelia	Noon
May 1	at Medford	5 p.m.
May 2	at Glenville-Emmons	4:30
May 5	Goodhue	5 p.m.
May 9	Hayfield	4:30
May 11	at Randolph	4:30
May 12	at Loyola	4:30
May 18	at USC	5 p.m.
May 19	at NU Cathedral	4:30
May 20	at Waseca	6 p.m.



RETURNEES — Among returning players for JWP High School golf are, front from left: Steven Dimmel, Jeffrey Simonson, Hope Dimmel, Tyler Melson, and Carter Miller. Back: coach Mike Gardner, Alex James, Ryan Kronbach, Logan Thell, and coach Brandon Goebel. Pioneer photo by Michael Roy

Bulldog golf teams hope to challenge in section tourney

By MICHAEL ROY
Staff Writer

Everyone may be filling the stands to watch baseball, softball, or even track and field. But one thing has been consistent with Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton's golfers: Whether it's one person or a thousand people watching them on the course, they've been consistently, historically good.

Last year was head coach Mike Gardner's first season with the Bulldogs. An avid golfer, he took a great program from former coach Sharon Keyes (who under her final few years saw the girls make state twice) and has been able to maintain its winning ways. He hopes to see the boys' team — which played well last season — improve even more.

2021 was a great year for the Bulldogs. The boys had a nice showing, but the girls took the spotlight winning the Gopher Conference title and Section 2A crown. The team did well at the state tournament, too.

With most of the 2021 girls' team leaving in 2022, it was not as big of a year. However, siblings Kirsten and Logan Thell made the state tourna-

ment. Kirsten ended her high school career placing 33rd out of all girls' golfers, while Logan made the top 20 in the boys' portion.

The team returns most of its golfers from last season, four for the boys alone.

Thell, a junior, will be on the team for the third year in a row. Aside from making the top 20 in the state tournament, Thell also was the Gopher Conference Player of the Year.

Also returning to the team are Steven Dimmel, Alex James, Carter Miller, and girls' golfer Hope Dimmel. Hope was an all-conference honorable mention last season.

Key losses for the girls are Kirsten Thell, who graduated last year, and sophomore Ariana Aguilar, who will focus solely on track and field this year. Ethan Moravec, a reliable golfer for the boys, also graduated last season, and James Bless will not return to the team for his senior year.

Coach Gardner knows that this season will be a tough one for the golfers. "We're looking to get a strong conference finish against AA teams," he says. "I also want us to

fight for a state appearance."

Gardner noted that a strength of the Bulldog golfers is having many returning players with experience in tournament play. He feels that this team does not have any notable weaknesses.

Gardner strongly believes that JWP is a section favorite but noted Blooming Prairie as the more favorable conference winner.

"We have a chance to make an impact this season," Gardner says. "We won many events last year and only got better over the season."

JWP HIGH SCHOOL 2023 GOLF

April 14	at Kenyon	4:30
April 20	Home invite	4:30
April 21	Girls vs. MTML	4:30
April 22	Boys at Bl.Prairie	4:30
April 25	at Blooming Prairie	4:30
April 27	Home invitational	1 p.m.
April 28	Boys vs. MTML	1 p.m.
May 4	Home Inv.	4:30
May 11	Girls at Kenyon	4:30
May 12	Boys at Kenyon	4:30
May 16	at NRHEG	TBD
May 18	at Waseca	10 a.m.

JWP softball team returns almost all

By MICHAEL ROY
Staff Writer

The Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton softball team may have an advantage over a few other teams this season; almost everyone is returning to their roster.

"That definitely helps us," head coach Megan Christopher says.

Christopher is returning for her sixth season as head coach for the softball team. Joining her this year to assist is Madison Loken, a JWP graduate who played while Christopher was just starting as a head coach.

The girls may have to wait a little bit to head onto the field this season. Their game against Martin Luther-GHEC-Truman Monday, April 3 was postponed to May due to wet field conditions.

2021, 2022 Seasons

The team has shown potential the past two seasons. However, it hasn't always translated to wins. A 3-10 season in 2021 was followed by a 1-14 record in 2022 despite satisfactory pitching in both seasons. If there was one saving grace for the JWP softball team last season, their one win came against Randolph, who split the Gopher Conference title with NRHEG and eventually took third place in the Class A state tournament.

Expectations

Coach Christopher has always expected her upperclassmen to lead by example, and it will be no different this season.

"We have four seniors returning to the team this season," she said. "We'll be leaning on them to lead the team."

Key Returnees and Loss

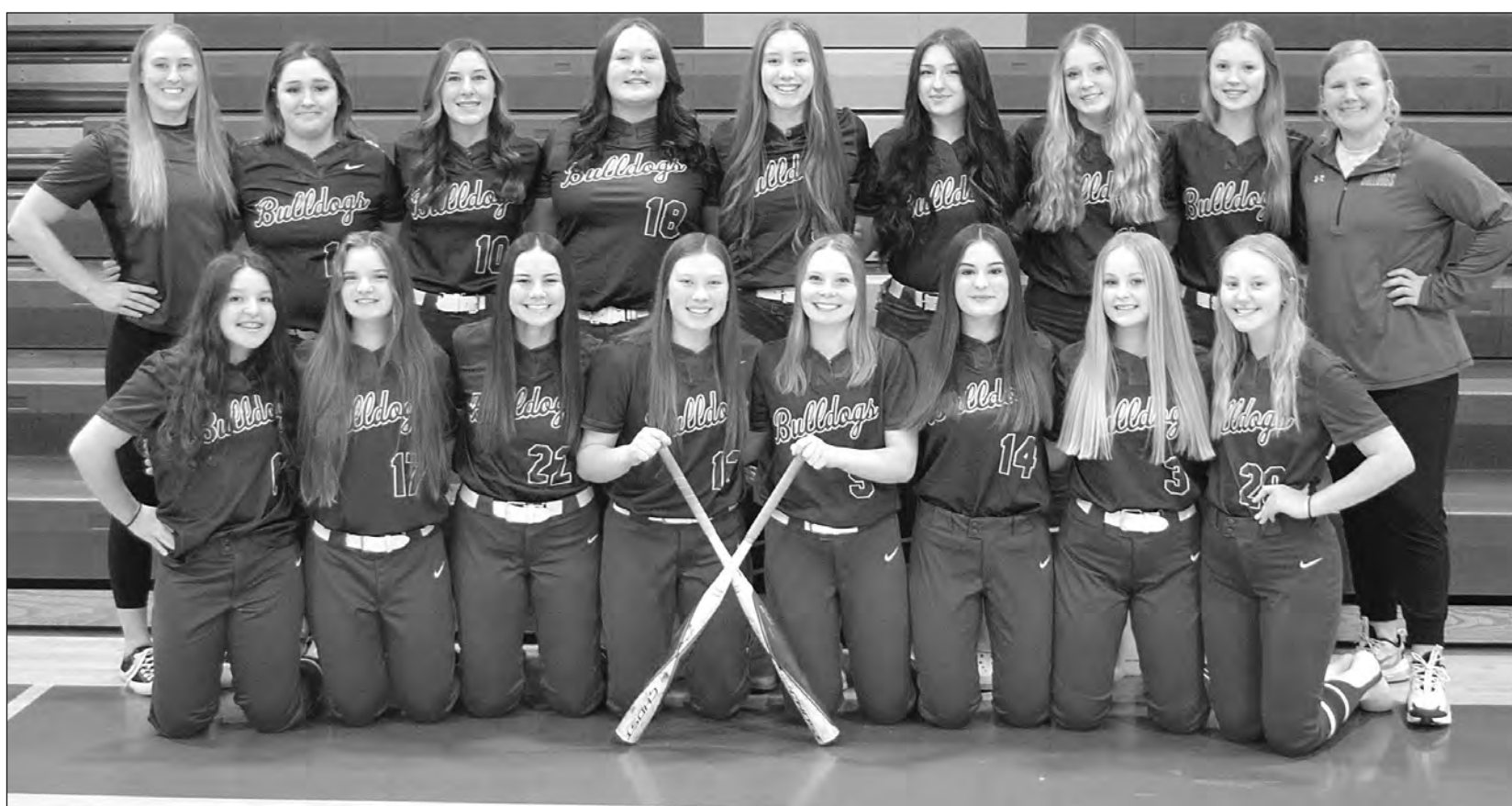
The four seniors Christopher talked about were Jessa Westphal, Isabelle Rider, Vanessa TerBeest, and Molly Snesrud. TerBeest was the starting pitcher for the Bulldogs last season and pitched some in 2021. Westphal provided great leadership (usually at first base) along with Rider at the catcher position.

Also returning to the team are juniors Lexie Dahlberg and sophomores Ellah Oliver and Brielle Dessner. Oliver was the lone all-conference recipient on the team, earning third-team honors. Both Dahlberg and Dessner were also reliable hitters for the team, with Dessner even hitting a couple of home runs.

The two losses to the team are Gracie Bluhm, who provided some great offense to the team, and graduate Lilli Cahill.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths to this team are their depth of players with varsity experience and having a seasoned pitcher



SOFTBALL — The 2023 JWP High School softball team. Front from left: Lily Quast, Kaylie Langford, Brielle Dessner, Lexie Dahlberg, Victoria Blomstrom, Addison Miller, Lily Ewert, and Ellah Oliver. Back: head coach Megan Christopher, Molly Snesrud, Izzy Rider, Autumn Thissen, Jessa Westphal, Vanessa TerBeest, Aubrey Adams, Brielle James, and assistant coach Madison Loken. Pioneer photo by Michael Roy

like TerBeest on the mound.

"Our seniors are also great leaders on the team," Christopher added.

A potential weakness is the lack of consistency on offense, which put them in tough situations last season. Christopher hopes that another year under the belt of most starters on the team will help them win more games.

Key to Success

"We need to play as a team," Christopher summarized. "If we do that, we have a chance to win in every game we play."

Favorites

Randolph and NRHEG are favorites in the Gopher Conference this

year, as both of them split the conference title last year. In Section 1A, Hayfield or Bethlehem Academy may be favored.

JWP HIGH SCHOOL 2023 SOFTBALL

April 11	Blooming Prairie	4:30
April 13	at Hayfield	4:30
April 17	at Kenyon-W	4:30
April 18	at Triton	4:30
April 20	at WEM	4:30
April 22	at MCW Inv.	10 a.m.
April 28	Nicollet	4:30
May 1	Medford	4:30
May 2	AC/GE	4:30
May 5	MTMLGHEC	4:30
May 11	Randolph	4:30
May 13	Home Invite	10 a.m.
May 18	USC	4:30
May 19	Waseca	2 p.m.

JWP track teams hope to push for championships

By MICHAEL ROY
Staff Writer

While the weather to start this spring is predictably indecisive, the JWP track and field teams are already showing promise, both taking first place in two of three meets already taking place this season.

Although the standards set by the track teams of the past are still the same, there are a lot of changes to the coaching staff. With both co-head coaches Jessica Keenan and Mike Dimler stepping down after last year, first-year head coach Sam Schruin will take the reins.

Helping him are coaches John Kaplan, Scott Thompson, Liz Kvebak, Eric Kehoe, and Andrea Kronbach. Also assisting are volunteer coaches Mike and Katie Cahill and Tim Johnson and managers Ali Olson and Kylee Hanks.

2022 Season

Last year, the girls could brag that they were better than the boys. They became Gopher Conference champions, and the 4x400 relay team of Lilly Strauss, Claire Adams, Ashlin Keyes, and Madison Kunst eventually broke a record that was unchanged for over two decades.

However, the representation at the state from both teams was equal. Strauss competed in the long jump while Jack Cahill (who placed 2nd in Section 2A) competed in the pole vault for the second consecutive season.

Key Returnees

This year's team will keep a lot of its athletes from last season. Both state participants — Strauss and Cahill — returning. Both also earned Academic All-State honors.

Many other girls make their return: Ashlin Keyes (who holds the school record in the high jump and the 4x400 relay) and Madison Kunst (a member of the record-holding 4x400 team from last season), Strauss, and Kwynn Krause are just

four of the many returning. Kunst, Krause, and Strauss were All-Conference recipients.

For the boys, senior Michael VanRavenhorst, juniors Memphis James and Ryan Kronbach, sophomores Luke Cahill and Alexander Kleve, and many others will make an impact. Jack Cahill is returning as an All-Conference athlete from last season.

Key Losses

The girls lost a few valuable athletes. Claire Adams, who helped the 4x400 break a record, graduated last season. Other athletes gone to graduation are Sydney Gahlon (a reliable relay and mid-distance runner), Sammi Wehking (a top pole vaulter who previously held a school record), and Elizabeth White (a mid-distance runner).

The boys will be missing three athletes: thrower Deacon Dahlberg, runner Gable Adams, and runner Dylan Sheeran.

Team Expectations

It is very possible that both teams could go far this season. They have shown a lot of promise already at the indoor meets. The girls could very well compete for the conference title again, with the boys also having a shot at it.

"Throughout the season, I want the team to positively develop socially, mentally, and physically," Schruin explained. "While developing resiliency, I also want them to have fun."

Team Strengths

Both the boys and girls look like they will have great relay teams and long-distance runners.

The boys will be strong in the pole vault like they were last season too thanks to the return of Cahill brothers Jack and Luke, and sophomore Isaac Gahlon, who placed first in the season opener. The team is also improving in the long jump, triple jump, and hurdles.

The girls look solid in the hurdles thanks to the improvement of athletes like Ava Appel. Ashlin Keyes will also be a reliable athlete to get the team points in the high jump and the occasional relay race, and the team has the triple threat of Raquel Fischer, Aubrey Weedman, and Caitlin Kleve in the throwing events.

"These teams have a willingness to learn, a strong work ethic, and great leadership," Schruin said. "We have a great group of returning athletes with a drive to better themselves."

Team Weaknesses

Both teams have very few weaknesses this season.

The girls will have less reliable depth in the pole vault with the absence of Sammi Wehking. It will be up to athletes like Madeline Hoehn to make up for the loss in that category. The dashes may also be a weak spot.

The boys don't have a lot of weaknesses this season. Lack of depth in the throwing categories and in the longer distance runs may be two areas that are a weaker part of the team.

Keys to Success

It will be down to how the top athletes of the team compete in their respective categories. Both teams are very solid this year.

"It also depends on us keeping a positive attitude and how willing we are to work hard throughout the season," Schruin added. "I always tell the athletes to eat plenty, sleep a lot, and drink plenty of water."

Favorites

The conference favorites this season are Maple River and JWP. The girls will be defending their title after winning it in their debut in the Gopher Conference. In the boys' competition the same schools may be duking it out, while NRHEG could be an upset team.



GIRLS' TRACK AND FIELD — The 2023 JWP High School girls' track and field team. Front from left: Katie Olson, Nevaeh Weimert, Onikia Herme, Lauren White, Brielle Bure, Madison Kunst, and Faith Olson. Second row: Ava Appel, Madeline Hoehn, Lily Strauss, Presley James, Paige Walz, Raquel Fischer, Ashlin Keyes, and Aubrey Weedman. Third row: Ali Olson, Madyn Holland, Kwynn Krause, Claire Walz, Caitlin Kleve, Ariana Aguilar, and Kylee Hanks. Back row: Katie Cahill, John Kaplan, head coach Sam Schruin, Liz Kvebak, Eric Kehoe, Andrea Kronbach, and Mike Cahill. Not Pictured: MaKenzie Westphal, Chloe Kaiser, Sarah Bulman, Ava Krause, Anne Adams, and Kayleigh Donner.
Pioneer photo by Michael Roy



BOYS' TRACK AND FIELD — The 2023 JWP High School boys' track and field team. Front from left: Alex Kleve, Eric Daschner, Noah Brock-Oxner, Charles Adams, Zach Groll, Memphis James, and Nicholas Johnson. Second row: Alex James, Daulton Bauer, Dylan Mcwaters, Derek Gustafson, Shane Witts, Kaden Baker, and Luke Cahill. Row three: Katie Cahill, Ali Olson, Ryan Kronbach, Michael VanRavenhorst, Jack Cahill, Isaac Gahlon, and Kylee Hanks. Back row: head coach Sam Schruin, John Kaplan, Liz Kvebak, Eric Kehoe, Andrea Kronbach, and Mike Cahill. Not pictured: Lucas Bjortomt, Leighlan Harris, Tyson Johnson, Brayden Blasing, and Gavin Weedman.
Pioneer photo by Michael Roy



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT — NRHEG clay target team members Keegan Peterson, Ciara Stenzel, J.P. Lynne, Alex Wyrum and Hunter Woodham prepare for the 2023 spring season.
Submitted photo

Almost everyone back for NRHEG clay target team

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

If there's one program at NRHEG High School that has enjoyed consistent success throughout the years, it's the clay target shooting team.

This spring's crew, led by head coach Dan Sorum and assistants Matt Beauvais, Josh Burgess and Kim Olson, returns 42 of 46 athletes who competed last year. Among them are top shooters Adam Eustice, Alden Dobberstein, Eva Wayne, Keira Lenort, Seah Beauvais, Ned Bell, Brody Mudgett and Reese Routh, all varsity letterwinners a year ago.

High expectations go with the territory.

"It is always our goal to win the conference and qualify for the state tournament," said Sorum.

The 2023 squad includes 10 seniors and 21 junior high athletes.

"Our ability to sustain for the future is bright as well," said Sorum.

Something the Panthers can't control - the weather - is perhaps their key to success.

"Weather played a huge factor last year," said Sorum. "Since each team shoots at their home range on their chosen day each week, it can mean one team has great weather while another team does not. While this was not the only factor we faced, it was a huge obstacle to overcome."

Sorum invites anyone interested to attend the Panthers' events.

"While clay target shooting does not have a stadium or court with seating for fans, we do love it when supporters come and watch the athletes compete. As the weather gets warmer, we certainly encourage folks to come and enjoy this sport with us."

It's about more than wins, losses for NRHEG golfers

By JIM LUTGENS
Sports Editor

The good part about going out for the golf team at NRHEG High School is there's no pressure.

The vast majority of the Panthers are there to learn the game and have fun.

"A lot of these kids are out for fun," said Brad Root, a 13-year head golf coach who's been at New Richland 34 years. "It's not about winning."

The boys' team, 5-13 overall, sixth in the Gopher Conference and 12th in the sub-section tournament last year, returns its entire starting lineup with Maverik Bueltel, Nash Howe, Carter Schlaak, Shane Hanson and Tyler Kress.

"We had a good season last year and the boys got some good experience, so we are pretty well set on five varsity spots," said Root. "We will again have small numbers on the boys' side, so someone may emerge as a surprise to help us. We did not have many JV meets last year, so the non-varsity players didn't get much meet experience last year. The var-

sity boys have pretty good golf skills, but need to work on the mental side of the game, course management and consistency."

Root, assisted by Grant Berg and Kim Olson, sees Hayfield as the pre-season Gopher Conference favorite. He expects Waseca to be the class of the section.

The NRHEG girls, third in the Gopher Conference and ninth in the sub-section while finishing 8-5, graduated just one senior last year, Kaylee Kruger.

Returning are Grace Wilkenson, Laine Krohn, Tayla Sandry and Clara Stenzel who, according to Root, bring outstanding team chemistry and a good work ethic.

What can you expect from the Panthers this spring?

"A positive attitude in poor weather," said Root. "The girls will also take some aggressive shots."

Root said the Panthers are shooting for the top four spots in the conference and sixth in sub-section.

The bottom-line goal for both the boys' and girls' squads is a strong showing at the conference tournament and sub-section.



GOLFERS — The 2023 NRHEG High School golf teams. Front from left: Gabby Nelson and Alexis Olson. Row two: Laine Krohn, Meela Budach, Mallory Schlinger, Ciara Stenzel, Braydon Rollag, Jacob Klaras, Matthew Williams, Tyler Kress and Shane Hansen. Back: Nash Howe, coach Brad Root, Mason Reeder and Carter Schlaak.
Pioneer photo by Eli Lutgens

"The girls need to be mentally tough and focused this year," said Root. "We are counting on continued improvement, making sure they are prepared for whatever weather condition exist, as well as dealing with situations on the course. We want our student-athletes to enjoy the sport and have fun while representing our school well. In order to best enjoy the game, a good grasp of the rules of golf is necessary. We will be working on the rules and golf etiquette so our golfers will be knowledgeable and welcome wherever we travel to

play."

NRHEG GOLF 2023 SCHEDULE

April 6	at JWP	4:30
April 11	at Waseca	4 p.m.
April 13	NRHEG Inv.	4:30
April 20	at JWP	4:30
April 25	at Triton	4:30
April 27	Conference	1 p.m.
May 4	at Hayfield	4:30
May 11	Girls at Kenyon	4:30
May 12	Boys at Kenyon	4:30
May 15	at Waseca	10 a.m.
May 16	NRHEG Inv.	4:30
May 18	Conf. at Waseca	10 a.m.

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