

BREAKOUT PLAYERS

BY ROB HUNT
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Qualls' record year earns honor

In two years for Lapel football, Malachi Qualls had earned a reputation, as well as All-State honors, as one of the best kickers in the area. But, until he transferred to Anderson High School to play for his father, Ron Qualls, he had never caught a pass in a game.



a 78-0 loss to New Palestine, Qualls totaled 23 catches for 189 yards. In the losing effort against the mighty Dragons team, he hauled in 16 passes for 120 yards.

His season also earned Qualls an invitation to the 13th annual Griddy Awards as one of the top 25 juniors in the state of Indiana. He also continued to excel with his foot as well as his hands, averaging 43.9 yards per punt and connecting on 10 of 12 extra-point attempts. Averaging 50.8 yards per kickoff, Qualls tallied two touchbacks for the Indians this season.

Qualls is committed to Indiana State.

In his first season with the Indians, he more than made up for lost time. Qualls finished the season leading the area and the state in receptions while ranking second in the nation, earning Qualls the 2019 Boys Breakout Athlete of the Year.

In his first game at Anderson, Qualls caught an eye-opening 17 passes for 172 yards and a touchdown.

Thriving in his father's pass-happy offense and with Xander Stokes slinging the ball, Qualls never really slowed down. In 11 games

this season, he caught 119 passes for 1,010 yards and five touchdowns and in two sectional games, a 33-12 win over Greenfield-Central and

Ryan makes splash for Arabians

The area was peppered this season with freshmen softball players who made a huge impact for their teams. But none made a bigger splash or impact at the level that Pendleton Heights rookie catcher Kieli Ryan did this year, making her the THB Sports Awards 2019 Girls Breakout Athlete of the Year.

Installed as the starting catcher for a team with high expectations, Ryan not only fit right in, she became one of the top offensive players for the team and in the area.

Ryan hit .493 this season with seven home runs and 32 RBI. She had a total of 37 hits including a team-best 11 doubles, posted an on-base percentage of .552 (second best on the team), a slugging percentage of .920, and an OPS (on-base plus slugging) percentage of 1.472, both team highs. In 87 plate appearances,

Ryan struck out just six times all season while drawing 9 walks.

With Ryan behind the plate defensively, the PH pitching staff, led by Softball-Pitcher Athlete of the Year Jordan Benefiel, posted a team earned run average of 1.30. Rarely did the ball get past Ryan and make it to the backstop as the staff uncorked just 12 wild pitches and Ryan herself committed just one error all year, with a .996 fielding percentage.

During one three-game stretch, all conference wins against Greenfield-Central, Mount Vernon, and Delta, Ryan was 6-for-9 with a double, two home runs and six RBI.

In the sectional championship loss to Mount Vernon, Ryan collected two of the four Arabian hits, including a double that just missed leaving the park for a home run.



HILL

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"I've always had it since I was little," she said. "My father asked me, 'Erikka, I can help you want to become better and push you really hard, or I can sit back and let you do your own thing. Chances are you're not going to want it.' After a couple years of my dad pushing me, I took hold of that drive and made it my own."

"I want to do the best I can in life, I want to do something," she added. "I just don't know what that is yet."

Her track postseason caps an extraordinary year for Hill. She has earned first team all-area honors in volleyball, basketball, and track and field, the latter for a second straight year. She credits her coaches with helping her improve in all areas from last year to this year.

ALLRED

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After winning the state championship at 195 pounds, Allred added a few pounds to wrestle at the FloNationals in April. There, he qualified for the Cadet Pan American Games in Mexico later this month. Unfortunately, due to an injury sustained in early June, he will not be able to compete.

Getting here has not been easy. Allred has had to earn it all, and he did it through determination and hard work, the likes of which he hasn't seen in other sports he has played, including football.

"You can't just go out and wrestle and have it come easy," Allred said. "It takes a lot to understand and get the sport and become elite at it. You have guys who are good and guys who are great, but to become elite and the best of the best, it takes so much hard work and training. It's hard for me to compare it to any other sport."

Allred was also able to combine his athletic accomplishments with success in the classroom. This year he was

"I put in as much work as I did my freshman year, but the way I was going at things was different," she said. "My freshman year, I was trying to hit everything at once ... taking too many things on my plate, and I was still trying to figure things out."

"I enjoyed it and I enjoy it now," she added. "My coaches hold me a lot more accountable than they did last year, and I appreciate that a lot. I probably got a lot more intense in my practices."

While sports are a big part of Erikka's life, they are not her whole life. She hopes sports can help her pay for college and she has fun competing with her friends, but she especially cherishes representing her school and community with pride.

"I do it for pride for my community, my family, people who are close to me, and for myself," she said.

named junior academic all-state, which he said requires having priorities in the right place.

"Do what you've got to when you've got to do it," Allred said. "Don't procrastinate. I still battle with this sometimes, but you get adequate time in school. Honestly, it's not that hard. There's times when you have to stay up till 2 a.m. to get things done, but if you've got your head screwed on straight, you can accomplish it."

Faith is also very important to Allred and is something he credits with guiding him through tough times, including an injury that slowed the start of his campaign last season.

"Faith is just that, faith," he said. "You have to have faith in all scenarios. There is going to be adversity all the time, whether it's stuff in the room, things aren't going right, kids aren't wanting to practice because they're having a bad day, or whether it's battling an injury. I just think having faith, trusting His will, and never doubting the outcome that He wanted gives you a little bit of peace of mind. And that's important."

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