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# > PREPS INSIDER

## > PROFILE

**Andrew Hendrian**  
Meridian, senior, baseball

### What is your finest sports memory?

Beating Merion in extra innings for the regional championship my freshman year. It was pretty intense. We had quite a bit of seniors on that team, and it was fun to watch them go out on top.

### Which team do you love to beat?

There's a lot of those. I really enjoy playing against Warrensburg. I know a couple kids from there. And Clinton. I want to beat them because they beat us earlier in the year. And St. T, that's a big one.

### Which sport have you always wanted to try?

Hockey. I think it'd be fun to attempt to check someone and interesting to see how the slap shot relates to a swing.

### What area athlete would you make it a point to watch?

Tyler Frenche from Sullivan. He's a pretty good all-around athlete, almost under the radar.

### What are your plans after high school?

I'm going to Southeast Missouri State to play baseball, and get a bachelor's degree in management.

### Which is your favorite Web site?

I'm going to go with prepsbaseballreport.com. Mainly it's for the bigger schools, but I've got some friends who play in the Bloomington area and Chicago area. I can keep up with them.

### What would be your dream job?

Major League baseball scout... just anything to do with the game.

### Do you have a favorite non-sports activity?

I like playing pingpong and cards.

### Who is your favorite collegiate athlete?

I was a big fan of Barry Bonds until his whole steroid incident. I really like watching (Mets shortstop) Jose Reyes play. I like the way he plays the game.



## Mount Zion honors coach

The Mount Zion softball team has held a weekend tournament for 13 seasons now. When the latest rendition starts on Saturday, it will be renamed the Dick Jones Memorial Tournament, in honor of the longtime assistant coach who died in September.

Jones' wife, children and grandchildren, 10 family members in all, will be on hand to throw out the ceremonial first pitch.

"Dick's done so much for our program, and I thought it'd be a nice way to honor this family and keep them involved a little bit," Mount Zion coach Greg Blakey said.

Stanford Olympia, Johnston City and Crete Mowee will join the Braves in the four-team tournament, which starts at 10 a.m. Saturday.

## > NOTES

### Zunkel finds new gig

Three weeks after stepping down as Mattoon's head football coach for "personal reasons," Nat Zunkel has been named head coach at Mercer County — the consolidation of Aledo and Joy Westmore.

Zunkel coached Mattoon for one season, going 2-7, and has experience as an assistant at Elmhurst, York, Homewood-Pleasanton and Kankakee.

Zunkel replaces Cullen Weiler, who led Aledo to three state titles and two state runner-up finishes. Weiler left Aledo to take the Monticello head coaching position.

### Putting the 'man' in freshman

Flora freshman Paul Knapp was the Wolves' best player during basketball season, averaging 18.7 points per game and earning third-team all-area honors. He's been even better so far in baseball.

Knapp had a recent stretch of nine hits in 11 at-bats and is batting near .500. On the mound, he's 2-1 with a 2.13 ERA.

"He's our best hitter and our best pitcher," Flora coach Brian Tackett said. "He's dominated at every level he's been at."

"I was a little concerned he wouldn't have the same success at the varsity level as a freshman and how he would handle that, but he's been phenomenal. There was a little bit of a learning curve in the beginning, but he got through it. He's young in age, but that's it. Even our upperclassmen look up to him."

### Brothers add impromptu duel

A spate of rainouts left Effingham baseball coach Chris Fleener scrambling to find a quick game last week.

After some quick calls, Tautopolis, coached by Chris' brother, Justin, was the first to get in touch.

The brothers have met once a year since settling into their current roles. Chris' Flaming Hearts took Thursday's matchup 7-5, but Justin's Wooden Shoes can exact their revenge during the regularly scheduled meeting in May.

"Whenever you play one game a year, for him and I, it's bragging rights," Chris Fleener said. "It's been five years since I had those. We'll definitely be more relaxed going into the next game."

—H&R staff reports

## > WHO'S HOT

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| <p><b>Baseball</b></p> <p><b>1. Warrensburg-Latham (12-2)</b> — The Cardinals have been consistently excellent behind the combination of Mitchell Bonds and Phil Wheeler.</p> <p><b>2. Olney East Moline (13-2)</b> — What the Tigers lack in a top-notch starting pitcher behind Brandon Bailey, they make up for with devastating offensive firepower.</p> <p><b>3. Meridian (13-3)</b> — As good as Warrensburg has been, Meridian may be the conference's most pleasant surprise.</p> <p><b>4. Maroa-Forsyth (7-4)</b> — The Tigrans' tough early schedule has paid off with three straight wins to start the Okaw season.</p> <p><b>5. Mingo (13-4)</b> — Apollo Conference-leading Effingham was no match for the Indians, who have one of the area's best players in Jared Massengill.</p> | <p><b>Softball</b></p> <p><b>1. Cumberland (13-1)</b> — Jamie Robinson, Macy Shupe and Alison Kimble were good last year. This year, they're powering one of the best small-school teams in the state.</p> <p><b>2. Maroa-Forsyth (12-0)</b> — The Kayls (Lundin) and Kati (O'Reilly) show has the Trojans contending for an Okaw Valley title.</p> <p><b>3. Mattoon (9-2)</b> — Reynae Hutchinson has been nearly untouchable in establishing herself as the frontrunner for the area player of the year.</p> <p><b>4. Mendocino (15-3)</b> — The Segues had a close call against Central A&amp;M, but they escaped with a win.</p> <p><b>5. Tuscola (11-4)</b> — Uh-oh, the Warriors are back. Even without Keli Hoy, Tuscola is winning behind Molly Romine, Rebecca Swainey and Liz Anderson.</p> |
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## > DON'T MISS

- TODAY**
- Girls soccer
  - Essexpower at MacArthur, 5 p.m.
- FRIDAY**
- Base fishing sessions
  - Area teams will be headed to Lake Shelbyville, Clinton Lake and Forbes Lake. Fishing starts at 8 a.m.
- Softball**
- Tuscola at Maroa-Forsyth
  - Tuscola is one of the area's hottest teams. Maroa is still unbeaten.
- TUESDAY**
- Track and field
  - Macoun County Meet is moving to Assumption, 3:30 p.m.



Lauren Doyle had an offer to run track for Eastern Illinois, but instead will play rugby — a sports she's never played — for the Panthers.

# Doyle going into the great unknown

**By JUSTIN COHN**  
Staff Writer

Lauren Doyle decided she wanted to go to Eastern Illinois University when she went to the campus for her first IHSA State Track Meet as a sophomore. Doyle, a four-sport athlete this year at Meridian, also wanted to play a sport and earn a scholarship, and recently she realized that dream by signing a letter of intent. But until a packet arrived in Meridian track coach Dennis Williams' office from Eastern early in her junior year, Doyle had barely heard of — and had never played — the sport she's signed up to play in college: rugby.

"I was excited when my coach got the packet from Eastern," Doyle said. "I wanted to play a sport in college, and I didn't really care which one it was, but I wasn't expecting it to be rugby."

Doyle was discovered as a rugby player during the state meet her sophomore year, but she had no idea. Eastern rugby coach Frank Graziano's job as a recruiter is unique among college coaches.

"There is one intercollegiate rugby team in the entire country, and it's in Florida, so I recruit athletes," said Graziano, in his 10th season as Eastern's coach. "I go to a lot of high school basketball games, track meets and soccer matches. I look for speed or strength."

"And I don't meet the recruits face-to-face, at least not at first. For the most part, our recruits know nothing about the sport, and I don't want them

to be turned off. It's taken me years to perfect it, but what I do now is send a four-page recruiting letter."

To field a team (and Eastern fields a great team — this year's Panthers went 10-0 and outscored their opponents 634-29) Graziano has to send out a ton of those letters. He normally sends out 50, but gets only five or six back.

"A lot of the athletes I send the letters out to are already decided on what they're going to play, and a lot of them are apprehensive about rugby," said Graziano, referring to the sport's brutally physical reputation. "But when we do find someone interested, like Lauren, we get them in here and teach them the sport from the ground up — right from, 'This is how you hold the ball.'"

Doyle knew she was most likely too short to play NCAA Division I volleyball or basketball, so when the letter arrived from Eastern, she figured it was for track. Competing in the sprints and long jump, track has always been Doyle's best sport.

But Doyle had a secret: She hates track. She stuck with the sport only because of the possibility of getting a scholarship. Doyle did receive a scholarship offer in track from Eastern, but turned it down in favor of rugby.

"Ever since seventh or eighth grade, I've had anxiety attacks before my events," Doyle said. "I always had the spotlight on me and the expectations of winning, and I always had the fear that I wasn't going to win."

"That was the main reason I went

out for soccer this year. To get out of some of the track meets. But I didn't quit track because I wanted to make sure I was recognized by a college for something."

That made the rugby offer — Doyle received a partial scholarship — a saving grace.

"When I first got the letter, I didn't even really know what rugby was," Doyle said. "I still don't know what specific players do or the names of the positions, but I'm looking at it as something new and fun. I love powder-puff football, and if they'd offered football for girls in high school, I would have been willing to play. I'm really excited about it."

Doyle will likely play the left wing: "Wings do most of the scoring," Graziano said.

Doyle said she's had plenty of strange looks from friends about her decision, and her grandmother is sure she's going to get hurt. But her parents are in full support.

"This is the first year she's really opened up to us and told us track makes her nervous and upset, so we're happy for her," Lauren's mom, Jenneth Doyle, said. "We want her to try new things, and she can do just about anything she puts her mind to. My biggest worry was the contact, but after seeing the college, looking at game films and finding out she'll be a runner and not be involved in those scrums, it put my mind at ease."

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<p><b>By the numbers</b></p> <p><b>8</b> Newton and Flora combined for eight home runs in an 18-17 win by Newton. Cody Butcher (Flora) and Kyle Bailey (Newton) had two each.</p>	<p><b>16</b> Of the 18 outs he recorded, Luke Butcher got 16 of them by strikeout in throwing a 10-0 no-hitter at Clay City. The Tusopolis ace also went 2-for-3 at the plate.</p>	<p><b>18</b> Despite its unbeaten status through 12 games, the Maroa-Forsyth softball team is ranked just 18th in the Class 2A poll by CascoSoft.com.</p>	<p><b>19</b> Reynae Hutchinson had 19 strikeouts in seven innings during Mattoon's 4-0 win over Casey-Westfield. She also was 3-for-3 at the plate.</p>
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