



FALL 2021

SPORTS PREVIEW

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT
OF THE SENTINEL-ECHO



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PREP FOOTBALL PREVIEWS



FILE PHOTOS
Sophomore Jack Chappell finished last season with 24 catches for 324 receiving yards and one touchdown.

Chris Larkey's Jaguars looking to contend for district title, make deep postseason run

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — Chris Larkey knew last season was going to be a learning experience for his youthful Jaguars but didn't know just how tough it was going to be after losing a teammate along with the COVID-19 pandemic. The North Laurel players persevered, going 3-6 while losing some heart-breaking games. But now with a year of experience under their belts, many believe this fall could be the time the Jaguars restore the roar at The Jungle.



Senior Gavin Hurst led the Jaguars with 30 receptions, 361 receiving yards, and five touchdowns.

"Last season was a total whirlwind," Larkey said. "We didn't get any scrimmages or a lot of practice time. Our young guys got thrown into the

SEE LARKEY, PAGE 10B

NORTH LAUREL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Week One, Friday, Aug. 20 — Bell County, 7:30 p.m.	South Laurel, 7:30 p.m.
Week Two, Friday, Aug. 27 — at Marion County, 7:30 p.m.	Week Seven, Friday, Oct. 1 — at Southwestern, 8 p.m.
Week Three, Friday, Sept. 3 — OPEN	Week Eight, Friday, Oct. 8 — Pulaski County, 7:30 p.m.
Week Four, Friday, Sept. 10 — at Shelby County, 7:30 p.m.	Week Nine, Friday, Oct. 15 — at Whitley County, 7:30 p.m.
Week Five, Friday, Sept. 17 — at Barren County, 7:30 p.m.	Week 10, Saturday, Oct. 23 — Henry Clay, 7:30 p.m.
Week Six, Thursday, Sept. 23 —	Week 11, Friday, Oct. 29 — at Knox Central, 7:30 p.m.



FILE PHOTOS
Jep Irwin returns for his second stint as coach of the South Laurel football team after spending the past two seasons at Whitley County.

Jep Irwin back for his second stint as head coach at South Laurel

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — Jep Irwin returns for his second stint as coach of the South Laurel football team after spending the past two seasons at Whitley County.

Irwin was head coach at South Laurel High School from 2002-2005 and led the Cardinals to a 9-3 mark during his final season as South Laurel's head coach. He secured a 24-20 record during his four years at South Laurel.

He is the last coach to lead the Cardinal football program to a playoff win, a 40-28 victory over Lafayette back on Nov. 4, 2005.

Irwin, who has a career coaching record of 85-77, will be taking over a Cardinal team that posted an 0-8 record this past season.

A lot has changed since Irwin's last year at South Laurel.

In 2005, he had just led the Cardinals to a playoff win, and now, he's taking over a program that was ranked last in the 2020 Class 5A RPI rankings and is riding a 14-game losing



Defensively, South Laurel struggled last season, allowing almost 52 points per game. The lowest point total the Cardinals allowed last season was 42 against Mercer County. Teams scored at least 50 points or more five times last season, including Whitley County's 69-point scoring effort.



The South Laurel Cardinals averaged 25 points per game on offense last season while scoring 30 points on four occasions.

ing skid in the process.

Irwin knows he's got a lot of work ahead of him while admitting it's been a "fantastic homecoming" for him.

"I am very blessed and humbled to be able to return to my alma mater and be allowed to restore our pride and winning tradition," he said. "In some ways, it seems like only yesterday that I was here before but in other ways, it's like I went into hyper-sleep or a time warp. No former players from before have sons on the team."

The Cardinals will be young this season while having goals of winning a district game, and reaching the playoffs

"We want to work every day to improve and develop our identity as a program," Irwin said. "We want to be as successful as possible in year one for our seniors especially. We are young and that youth and also everything new may limit our ceiling some-

SEE IRWIN, PAGE 10B

SOUTH LAUREL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Week One, Friday, Aug. 20 — at Harlan County, 7:30 p.m. (First Priority Bowl)	Week Six, Thursday, Sept. 23 — at North Laurel, 7:30 p.m.
Week Two, Friday, Aug. 27 — Estill County, 7:30 p.m.	Week Seven, Friday, Oct. 1 — at Pulaski County, 7:30 p.m.
Week Three, Friday, Sept. 3 — at Knox Central, 7:30 p.m.	Week Eight, Friday, Oct. 8 — OPEN
Week Four, Friday, Sept. 10 — at Madison Central, 7:30 p.m.	Week Nine, Friday, Oct. 15 — Southwestern, 7:30 p.m.
Week Five, Friday, Sept. 17 — Rockcastle County, 7:30 p.m.	Week 10, Friday, Oct. 22 — Whitley County, 7:30 p.m.
	Week 11, Friday, Oct. 29 — at Grant County, 7:30 p.m.



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NORTH LAUREL SOCCER PREVIEWS

Jaguar soccer returns abundance of talent, experience

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — After garnering only a combined six wins during the past two years, it looks as if the rebuild could be over for coach David Broyles’ North Laurel Jaguars soccer team.

North Laurel returns an abundance of talent with hopes of contending in both the District and region this season.

“I’m excited for the start of the soccer, and hopefully having a normal season this year,” Broyles said. “We are returning all but two starters from last season, and virtually all of our scoring, so I feel that experience and

team chemistry will be a strength for us this year.”

Noah Steely led North Laurel with six goals and eight assists last season while Brayden Cassidy (four goals, and four assists) join sophomores Seth Miller (three goals) and Tanner Broyles (two goals, four assists).

“We will be led in the midfield by seniors Noah Steely and Brayden Cassidy as well as sophomores Seth Miller and Tanner Broyles,” Broyles said. “Our defense will be anchored by senior goalkeeper Henry Chappell and experienced sophomore backs, Noah



FILE PHOTOS

David Broyles’ North Laurel Jaguars soccer team began the 2021 season with a win over Scott County.



North Laurel posted a 2-9-1 last season.

Caldwell and Kristopher Hagan. There are also several other players that we expect to step up and make a larger impact this season.

“Our biggest concern this year is becoming more confident and aggressive as a team and learning to rely on each other more,” he added.

One thing Broyles hasn’t shied away from in the past is scheduling his team a tough slate, and it isn’t any different this season.

North Laurel opens things up with a road game against Scott County while also playing teams such as Garrard County, Berea,

Somerset, Southwestern, Wayne County, Pulaski County, Madison Southern, and Somerset Christian School. The Jaguars will also play District foes Oneida Baptist, Corbin, South Laurel, and Whitley County.

“I believe that we have a schedule this year that

will allow us to address my concerns, and grow as a team as the season progresses enabling us to challenge for the district and region,” Broyles said. “Although we play in a tough district, I feel that this team can make some noise in district and region this year.”

NL girls soccer coach Jessica Miller: ‘I think we have the talent, athleticism, and the drive to make it happen again this year.’

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — Jessica Miller’s first year as head coach of the North Laurel Lady Jaguars was a history-making one.

She guided her team to a program-record 15-0 start along with a 49th District championship, 13th Region championship, and an appearance in the state tournament’s Final Four.

It will be hard to match last season’s success with six seniors graduating that accumulated 72 of North Laurel’s 98 goals.

Makayla Mastin (16 goals, four assists) Maddi Mastin (eight goals one assist) along Mia Higgins (two goals, one assist) are the lone players returning that scored at least one goal for Miller’s squad last season.

“We lost six seniors who were an integral part of our success last season, however, we have several returning starters, including defenders: Liza Mills, Mea Anderson (Meg Anderson’s younger sister), Addison Murray, and Taryn Reed — center-mid Maddie Mastin and



FILE PHOTOS

North Laurel had plenty of reasons last season to celebrate. The Lady Jaguars reached the state tournament’s Final Four for the first time in program history.

her little sister Makayla Mastin as center-forward,” Miller said.

“This preseason, we have mostly been working on conditioning and

fundamental skills,” she added. “Many of our players have been on family vacations and attending the Governor’s Scholarship Program. Once we have our entire team in attendance in the next couple of weeks, we will focus more on positioning and set pieces.”

Miller said she has a few returners who will be either stepping up into open starting positions or at least seeing a lot more playing time this year, including Roslyn Valentine, Breeana Edwards, Mia Higgins, and Eva Clark.

Even though the Lady Jaguars graduated six seniors off last season’s roster, team chemistry looks to be one of their main strengths.

“As in years past, one of the strengths is that these girls have been playing together for

several years and thus have a natural chemistry on the field,” she said. “We are a young team this year, but younger players tend to be more eager to learn, which can be an advantage as they learn and grow together and get better and stronger together.”

“My only concern is our lack of numbers this year,” Miller added. “We lost six seniors and only gained a few new players. Our bench isn’t very deep, so the girls have to be prepared to not get a lot of breaks during the games and must take good care of themselves to hopefully prevent injury.”

Miller feels her team’s schedule will once again prepare them for postseason play.

“We will, of course, be playing everyone in our district and region,”

she said. “We will also be taking on Madison southern, West Jessamine, Lincoln County, and Garrard County, and George Rogers Clark.”

The big question entering the season will be if North Laurel can win its fourth 13th Region title in a row. The Lady Jaguars are winners of 25 straight against regional opponents.

“I’m not sure what the other teams in our district and region will look like this year. I can speak of what I know of my players. Based on what I’ve seen of them so far during this preseason, I believe we stand a fair chance of bringing home the district and region titles again this year,” Miller said. “I think we have the talent, athleticism, and the drive to make it happen again this year.”



Maddi Mastin scored eight goals last season for North Laurel.

SOUTH LAUREL SOCCER PREVIEWS

South Laurel boys' soccer team looks to continue success under new coach

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — First-year coach Brooks Cawood takes over as head coach of the South Laurel Cardinal soccer program after former coach Joey Marcum resigned back in January.

Cawood inherits a program that isn't a stranger to winning.

South Laurel posted an impressive 102-51-6 mark under Marcum while winning three regional titles.

Marcum didn't leave the cupboard bare for Cawood with seven seniors returning from last season's regional runner-up squad.

"Returning from last

season, we have a real good group of young men that have stepped up," Cawood said. "We have seven seniors that know what kind of system we want to run and have been great role models for our younger players. This is important because we will be fielding one of our youngest teams in recent years. The transition to head coach has been challenging but a great experience overall. We have great parents that are very supportive and a hard-working group of players that truly work hard in every practice session. One of the main reasons I wanted to coach at South Laurel is

because of the support that the soccer program gets, from our principal, athletic director, and on down. "We will be relying heavily on our senior class to provide great leadership," he added. "Our goalkeeper, Lincoln Webster, has stepped up in a big way to help guide our defense. Ben House, Will McCowan, and Jesus Lopez will be expected to run our midfield and be a big part of scoring and distributing. Eli buckles, a junior, and Zach Rayburn, a sophomore, will also be a big part of controlling our midfield. Both are great technical players and I expect a lot from them."

Cawood's team partici-



FILE PHOTOS

First-year coach Brooks Cawood (right) takes over for former South Laurel coach Joey Marcum.



South Laurel finished with an 8-8 record last season.

pated in the Bluegrass State Games last week while also attending a soccer camp with former Union College, and current UNOH coach Tyler

Brock. "This was a great opportunity to get our system of play identified and give you men a vision of how we want to play as

a team," Cawood said. "Each player listened and are starting to tactically work on executing

SEE COACH, PAGE 10B

Experience, large number of players returning look to be keys to South Laurel's success this fall

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — The 2020 season didn't end the way South Laurel coach Jeremy Howard wanted but a new season is on the horizon and the second-year Lady Cardinal soccer coach is excited to see what his team can accomplish this fall.

After turning in a 2-10-1 mark while losing its final eight games of the season, South Laurel looks primed and ready to improve on last fall's record and compete for both the 49th District and 13th Region championships.

"This season we return a large senior class," Howard said. "We will have close to 10 or 11 seniors. We also have a large group of experienced girls returning to the team that will be sophomores and juniors. We lost one senior from last year. With the experience that we return we should be

competitive. "Ashlyn Davis and Lindsay Cox will captain our team this year," he added. "Both are amazing young ladies that have great leadership skills. Ella Rison has also stepped up this year as a young leader. For her to be a sophomore and be able to read the game so well, she will be a great asset this year. I think Tess Little and Kyla Heuser will be the backbone of this team defensively. I expect Belle Dotson and Josie Gill to be our front runners in scoring goals. Rachel Martin, Rachel Hicks, and Brooklyn Taylor have made great improvements to their game over the past year as well as Brook and Brandy Clontz. There are two players that I am really excited to see play their freshman year, Morgan Taylor and Kenzi Hubbard. The one player that has really come out of her shell is



FILE PHOTO

Both Lindsay Cox and Ashlyn Davis return for their seniors seasons this fall.

Avery Sauer. Any place that you put her she will be dangerous."

Howard feels his

team's defensive play will be strong again while he continues to search for a consistent

goal scorer. "Defensively, we should be pretty solid and we have two fresh-

men that I believe will excel in their roles," he

SEE KEYS, PAGE 10B



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PREP VOLLEYBALL PREVIEWS

Lady Jaguars looking to make a run at 13th Region crown

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — Since moving into the 49th District in 2017, the North Laurel Lady Jaguars are winners of four straight district championships, including last year despite going 9-16 in 2020. Scott Croucher's squad reached the 13th Region Tournament semifinals last fall and will look good go even deeper into the postseason this season thanks to another talented group of players returning.

"Returning from last season, we have Alivia Parker who has been starting since she was a freshman at setter. She is now a junior and is

one of the most integral parts of our offense," Croucher said. "We lost a couple DS's from last year, but we return Kelsi Howard, a senior now, and we got back Harper Locke, now a senior who did not play last year; both of which are great defensively. We also bring back Maria Yount, who surprised us all with phenomenal play last year as an eighth-grader on the varsity team, she's now a freshman. We return quite a few hitters on offense from last year, just one of which is a senior — Jalynn Vanhook, our right side. We also have Brooke Daniels, Emma Parman, and Jane Locke; all of which have varsity

experience and helped us win the district again last year.

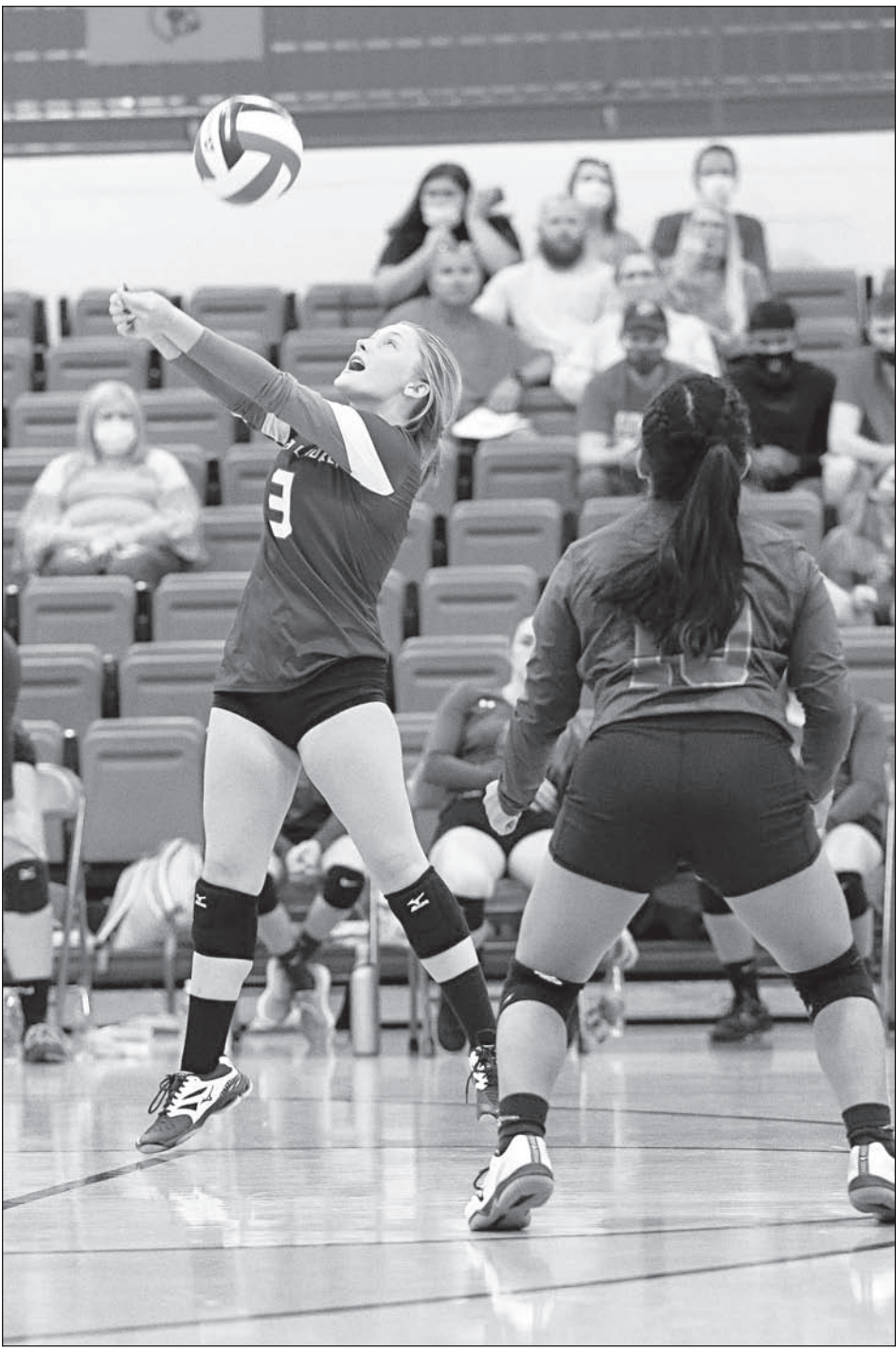
"We also have a very large group of up-and-coming players who either played JV last year or are just now coming up their first year from the middle school," he added. "We have multiple seventh and eighth graders who are playing this year as well, looking bright for the future. Overall, we have a very young team and I think we should be in the picture for the district and region championships both this year and into the future."

Croucher said he believes at the begin-

SEE CROWN, PAGE 9B



Scott Croucher's North Laurel Lady Jaguar squad reached the 13th Region Tournament semifinals last fall and will look good go even deeper into the postseason this season thanks to another talented group of players returning.



Since moving into the 49th District in 2017, the North Laurel Lady Jaguars are winners of four straight district championships, including last year despite going 9-16 in 2020.

FILE PHOTOS

The talent is in place for South Laurel to compete for regional title

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — Jamie Clark's first season as head coach of the South Laurel Lady Cardinal volleyball program was a successful one.

The Lady Cardinals posted a 9-4 mark despite seeing COVID-19 limit South Laurel to playing only 13 games. Clark's squad picked up some big wins throughout the season before falling to Whitley County during first-round action of the 50th District Tournament.

With most of his starters returning from last fall, Clark is expecting his team to be much improved this season.

"We are looking forward to the possibility of a full, normal season this year," he said. "All of our starters are returning this season except our key setter, Kristen McKeehan. She left some pretty big shoes to fill, but we are going to work hard with our options, stay positive, and allow our younger setters to grow in that spot."

"On the varsity roster we will have returning seniors Caroline Pagan, Mackenzie Rollins, Bella Heuser, Autumn Bales, Kinley Gilmore, Rachel Presley, and Halee Wagner," Clark added. "Our varsity



With most of his starters returning from last fall, South Laurel coach Jamie Clark is expecting his team to be competitive once again this season.

FILE PHOTOS

roster also includes three juniors in Mallorie Perkins, Caroline Curry, and Gracie Hinkle. This is an experienced line-up of players and hopefully, as coaches, we can help them reach their full potential at this level as many of them complete their final season

as high school athletes. Each of these players has the skills needed to contribute at any given moment. Caroline Pagan led the team in kills last season, and she also led the team in digs. Mack Rollins was a major contributor defensively on the net with blocks, and she

recorded the second-highest number of kills. I fully expect those numbers to increase easily this coming season. Mallorie Perkins was a major asset to the team last season as a defensive specialist, and we expect she will be doing her part again this year. Rachel Presley should be able to post a huge season in the middle position. I could go on about all of the players' different strengths and weaknesses, but we'll share more of that as the season progresses."

With a full roster of talent returning, Clark is excited to see what his team can accomplish this season.

"Our team definitely has the experience needed to complete a successful season," he admitted. "The majority of these girls have been playing together for several years now, and they all seem to get along really well with

each other. They play hard, work hard, and encourage each other.

"We will have a new setter at the helm this season and any time there is a major change in the line-up of that magnitude, it takes some work and getting used to," Clark added. "Either of our options will do a fantastic job stepping up and doing their best. It is our job, as coaches, to make that transition as smooth as possible and as successful as possible. Our coaching staff, as a whole, are all fairly new to this level, so we hope to grow with our players over the years and will strive to continue the success of the program."

When scheduling for the upcoming season, Clark tried to include as many of the other regional competitors as possible.

"I feel like it is a fairly well-balanced schedule," he said. "We have

our district matches that are always difficult matches considering the talent level in our district. Unfortunately, I've not had very much experience with most of the teams we have scheduled this year. Last year was my first season, and it was a limited one due to COVID. As a staff, we didn't venture too far out of our district and regional boundaries, with the exceptions of a few games and tournaments, in hopes of preparing our team to compete in each of those areas. If we put our best foot forward, keep our heads on straight, and get these girls to perform at their fullest potential, we have every reason to believe we would be contenders for district and regional wins."

For his team to have a successful year, Clark believes his players

SEE TALENT, PAGE 9B



South Laurel posted a 9-4 record last season.

PREP CROSS COUNTRY PREVIEWS

South Laurel's boys' and girls' cross country teams ready to compete



The South Laurel Lady Cardinal cross country team returns one senior this season in Lindsay Cox.

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — The South Laurel boys' and girls' cross country teams are

ready for their respective seasons, to begin with, hopes of turning in impressive seasons.

Girls' coach Carrie

Kirby took time out to comment on both her team and the South Laurel boys' cross country team (no coach has been

hired as of press time).

Girls

The Lady Cardinals return one senior this season in Lindsay Cox.

"Lyndsay is a dual athlete who plays soccer and runs cross country," Kirby said. "For the past two seasons (2019 and 2020), she has earned a qualifying individual slot for the State Meet. Lindsay's competitive spirit will be the spark that leads this year's girls' team.

Junior Gracie Turner also returns along with sophomores Bailee Pennington and Autumn Whicker, freshman Hannah Tapscott, Eighth grader Gracie Hoskins, and seventh-grader Rose Stanko.

"Gracie's grit changes the dynamic of the team," Kirby said. "Her stature converts into a lengthy stride which covers a lot of ground efficiently.

All of these girls gained racing experience last year which translates into greater confidence at distance racing," she added. "Each of them has gotten stronger, physically and mentally. The key is for these younger runners to realize how they can contribute to the team's overall suc-

cess."

Boys

The boys' team returns one senior in Chris Greer.

"Chris is a four-year cross country veteran who brings experience to the boys' team," Kirby said.

Joining Greer are juniors Will Stanko, Jake Tapscott, and Jeremy Steele.

"All three of these young men were mem-

bers of the 2019 Region 7, 3A Runner-up team," Kirby said. "Last year, they earned individual qualifying spots at the State Meet. They share a cohesive yet competitive camaraderie daily at practice."

Also on the team are sophomores Riley Lewis, Andrew Hurley, and Lukas Johnson along with freshmen Collin Mc-

SEE READY, PAGE 9B



FILE PHOTOS

South Laurel's Will Stanko was one of three Cardinal runners to earn individual qualifying spots at the last year's State Meet.

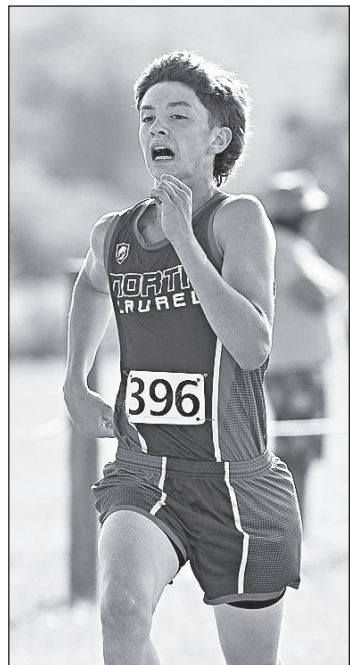
Both North Laurel's boys' and girls' cross country teams will be younger compared to last season

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — Both North Laurel's boys' and girls' cross country teams will be younger compared to last season after graduating a lot of talented runners, according to coach Rachel Gaynor.

"Both of our teams are extremely young with a lot of middle school runners going to be counted on to contribute," she said. "We had several boy runners who we thought would be contributors decide not to run. We will just continue to work hard in practice and hopefully improve each week and then see what happens by the end of October at regional meet time.

"On the girl side, we lost several runners due to graduation and have two returning high school runners and a host of middle school runners," Gaynor added. "We do look to have another successful season and hopefully make it to the state as a team."



FILE PHOTOS

ABOVE: North Laurel coach Rachel Gaynor said her boys' team will continue to work hard in practice and hopefully improve each week and then see what happens by the end of October at regional meet time. LEFT: North Laurel's girls' cross country team has two returning high school runners and a host of middle school runners, on this year's squad.

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NORTH LAUREL GOLF PREVIEWS

Coach Stone excited to see what Jaguar golf team does this fall



North Laurel's Jack McArdle returns as one of the top golfers in the region.

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — The North Laurel Jaguar golf team is anxiously awaiting for its season to begin.

The Jaguars return four of their top five golfers from last season's JV Conference championship team which has coach Chris Stone excit-

ed to see what his team can do this fall.

"Returning are six seniors, led by top North Laurel golfer for the past two seasons, Lucas

Binder," Stone said. "Fellow seniors Jack McArdle, Noah Steely, August Storm, Nathan Edwards, and Cade Robinson return with five of which have regional experience and several rounds of golf under their belt.

"Expectations are high for this bunch of returning seniors coming off a very successful season in 2020," he added. "This group finished second in regular-season conference play and third in the region. I expect to repeat those accomplishments and improve on last season."

With such a strong nucleus returning along with a talented crop of underclassmen, Stone likes what he sees out of his team.

"Lucas Binder has led us the past two seasons. He has worked very hard in the off-season and hopes to make this season his best yet," Stone said. "Jack McArdle, Noah Steely, August Storm, Nathan Edwards, and Cade Robinson are all seniors and are coming off one of the best seasons they have seen personally. Being seniors they know this is their last chance at competing for a conference and regional championship, so they are working hard to making a run at both those titles.

Freshmen Ben Baker, Grant Abner, and middle schoolers Todd Sizemore, Gunnar Jones, and Gavin Doughty are returners from the JV team who have worked on their game and are ready to compete at the

varsity level. Several of them can see opportunities this year to complete," he added. Junior Isaac Brown, sophomore Branstion Hacker, freshmen Ethan Carter, Cole Jervis, Colton Rawlings, Brady Hensley, and middle schoolers Brody Hodges, Brayden Hyde, and Jackson Storm are all newcomers to the golf program. Some come with golf experience and some with no experience. This group shows growth in our program at North Laurel, and with work, the future will be bright. I expect to see a lot of growth from these guys along with a few pushing for spots as the season unfolds."

Stone admitted a few strengths for this year's

team are experience and youthfulness.

"We return several seniors from last year's successful season," he said. "These seniors should not only complete for conference and regional championships this year but they will also help lead the younger guys. They can help mold the future of North Laurel boys golf this year.

"I expect them to do big things this year as golfers and as leaders," Stone added. "Youthfulness is a strength this year because we finally have a young core of good golfers that will compete with each other and will only improve our team."

SEE STONE, PAGE 9B



Nathan Edwards is one of six seniors that return for North Laurel this season.

Lady Jaguar golf team hoping to build on last season's success



North Laurel coach Joel Prichard said Kendall Hacker (pictured) Has worked hard on her game over spring and summer to prepare for the upcoming season.

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — Joel Prichard's North Laurel Lady Jaguars Gaines a lot of experience during last season's success which they are hoping to build on this season.

"We are returning three of our top five players off of last year's team and we will be led by Kinsley Blair, Kendall Hacker, and Hailey Griebel.

"Kinsley really started playing well at the end of the season last year, and also qualified for state. She is very talented, and I am expecting her to shoot some good numbers this year.

"Kendall Hacker has put in countless hours and lessons all winter and spring," he added. "She is really working hard on her game and getting ready for this season. She only missed out on going to state by a couple of shots last year. Hailey Griebel is just a fantastic athlete, has a great swing, and has a heart of gold. Hailey was another one that just missed out on a trip to the state tournament last year."

With the abundance of talent, he has returned, Prichard has high expectations this season.

"I expect big things out of all three of these girls," he said. They all have the ability to shoot in the low 40s consistently. The big thing with all three of them is they want to do so well and they try so hard that if they hit a bad shot it really just tears them up. That is golf, nobody is perfect. They have to learn to let that one go and focus on the next one but that is easier said than done.

SEE GOLF, PAGE 9B



North Laurel's Kinsley Blair qualified for last year's state tournament.

SOUTH LAUREL GOLF PREVIEWS

Cardinal golf team ready to build on last year's success

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — Steve King's South Laurel Cardinal golf team is looking to build on last season's success which saw Brayden Reed turn in an impressive junior season last fall.

Reed looks to be just as strong entering his final season as a Cardinal golfer, and he's joined by many talented golfers as South Laurel will make a push at the region crown while hoping to advance to State Tournament play.

King confirmed he hasn't had his team's qualification rounds yet to determine the top five varsity players but

expects a competitive season out of his team.

"The team is growing each year," he said. "This year we have 12 players and just one senior. With just three juniors, we are looking good to continue to grow and improve in the coming years. We've been blessed with keeping a good stable of young players in the program. Players have to take ownership of their careers. It takes a lot of playing and practicing in the offseason to be a good competitive player. You'll get out of golf what you put in."

"Our golf team will be much stronger this



FILE PHOTOS

South Laurel's Brayden Reed returns for his senior season as a Cardinal golfer.

year," King added. "We are returning most of last year's team and many of the boys have really been working hard in the off-season."

Reed will look to lead the way for South Laurel and has been playing golf for the Cardinals since sixth grade. He'll also be joined by a lot of talented teammates.

"Last year, Brayden qualified for the State Tournament and I would expect him to be back in Bowling Green in October again. Brayden has been playing and winning Junior tournaments this summer. He won a tournament at

the Somerset Country Club a few weeks ago, posting a very solid 64. Brayden will be off to college next year and of all the players I've had over the past 11 years, he has the most upside for the college game. Brayden has incredible length and a great short game to match. It will be exciting to see what he can accomplish this season. "Jaxon Jervis is a freshman this year and he's played and practiced almost every day since last season," he added. "Jaxon has the perfect demeanor for golf. He is very even-keeled, never too excit-

ed or too down. Jaxon will be a force this year and for years to come. Ashton Garland will be a junior this season. Ashton is an outstanding athlete and will find a way to compete. He has spent most of the summer excelling at baseball. Ashton is a player that will find a way to beat you. Parker Payne joined the team last year and has lived on the course since. He has improved so much so fast. I expect him to be competing for a spot on the varsity team for sure. Joshua Steele as a freshman has been amazing. Last year,

about a week before the season started, was the first time he'd ever hit a golf ball. Since then he has practiced and played a lot and made incredible progress. Joshua will continue to improve and get better."

King will also look to even more players to help his team turn in another successful season.

"Cody Smith is a sophomore that has one of the best swings on the team," he said. "Cody is a great young man and with enough practice and time will continue

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South Laurel's Jaxon Jervis turned in a solid season as an eighth-grader last fall.

Talented roster returning for Lady Cardinal golf team

By Les Dixon
Staff Writer

LONDON — South Laurel girls golf coach Steve King is excited for the season, to begin with, a talented roster returning after garnering experience and success last seasons

"South Laurel girls golf is on the right track," he said. "When I began coaching the girls' team in 2015, I struggled to get any players. For a few years, we only had one or two on the team. In 2018, we only had two payers, and in 2019, we grew to three players. Last season, we had a big leap to nine players, and this year we've grown to 10 players."

"We are returning most of our players from last year and this will be the best girls team I've ever had,"

he added. "We lost one player to graduation and one didn't return but we added three new players."

King confirmed South Laurel hasn't played its qualification rounds to see who is on the varsity team.

"Returning this year in order of grade level is Lily Hoskins. She is our only senior," he said. "This is Lily's second season on the team and she's made lots of progress. She was basically a beginner last year, so it will be exciting to see what she can do this season. Sarah Reece is a junior and returns for her third season with us. Sarah is a hard-working, and determined young lady, that I expect to be a big part of our successes this season. Sarah's experience will be a big

help. Harper McKnight is a junior, and is new to the team this year but has some golf experience. I'm sure she will improve as we go along. Emily Cox is also a junior and returns from last year. Last season was her first season and she was only a few strokes away from qualifying for the State Tournament with her Region Tournament score. Emily is a good athlete and has a ton of potential. But I have to share her with basketball, unfortunately."

"Our sophomore class includes Greenlee Ray, Kaylee Smith, Caydrian Lawson, and Sophey Smith," he added. "Greenlee returns to the team from last year. Greenlee has put in some work in the off-

SEE **ROSTER**, PAGE 9B



FILE PHOTO

Emily Cox returns for his junior season with the South Laurel Lady Cardinals golf team.



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GOLF

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“Also back this year is another senior, Aubrey Monaco, sophomore Mea Anderson, and eighth-grader Lilly Kate Chesnut,” Prichard added. “Aubrey really started playing well in the latter part of the season, especially in the Breathitt County Tournament. Here is a kid that tries very hard and always has a big smile on her face. We started seeing her get in the upper 40s by the end of the season. Mea is another one that is very athletic and can really hit it and put up some good numbers also. Lilly Kate works really hard on her game also, we just have to get her a little more consistent. We have been making some changes to her swing and I believe it is going to pay off for her. These three girls are going to be fighting it out for the final two spots to round out our top five to compete in our matches. We also have three new girls to come out this year — senior Callie Feltner, freshman Avyanna Grigsby, and 7 seventh-grader Eden Begley. All three of these girls are new to the game and show great interest. Eden is a tremendous athlete and is really picking the game up quickly and has a great attitude. If she will continue to work on her game, who knows where she can go.”

Prichard said the key to his team is strong leadership from his seniors.

“They all are fantastic role models and they have a winning attitude,” he said. “They have a lot of experience under their belt and should be able to handle the pressure a lot better.

“We have to get our four, five, and six players to be able to throw some decent numbers in to be able to push us over the top for our team wins. I think this is the biggest thing we have to try and get nailed down. They have the ability, but they have got to put the time in.”

Another tough slate will have North Laurel ready for postseason play.

“This year’s schedule is pretty tough,” Prichard admitted. I have us traveling over to Somerset to play Pulaski several times. We will be going up against Clay County a few different times throughout the season, too. These are two very good programs. We have the ability and team to compete with them this year. For the last couple of years, they have been looking at us in their rearview window. We are hoping to change that this year. We are excited to get the season going on July 30 with the Tri-County Invitational tournament at the London Country Club.



FILE PHOTO
The South Laurel Lady Cardinals have 10 girls (Lily Hoskins pictured) on the 2021 roster this season.

SUCCESS

Continued from page 8B

to improve. Jeremiah Smith will be a freshman this year. He joined the team last year as a basic beginner. He has the build and ability to be a good player. I hope he will continue to work at it for our future. Christian Clary, a freshman, has been taking lessons this summer and improving. It takes a lot of time and thousands of range balls to hone your skills. I believe he will continue to improve.

“New to the team this year is sophomore Lucas Campbell,” King added. “Lucas seems to have a natural talent, and I hope will continue to play and practice. Ryder Godsey also is new this year. He is a seventh-grader. Ryder is an athlete that shows a lot of potential. It just takes a lot of practice and time to learn

this game and he has the ability and time to get there. I’m excited to have him. Colton Cox is another young player that has joined. He has the right attitude to succeed. Colton is a good little athlete that I’m sure has the ability to be a good player. Jeremy Steele has joined the team this year. Jeremy is junior and new to golf. Jeremy is a great athlete and should take to the game quickly.”

South Laurel’s season begins July 31 where the Cardinals will play four tournaments in four days.

“One of our tournaments will be at the Bowling Green Country Club where the State Tournament is held each year,” King said. “I want my team to see the course we’re trying to get back to in October. In all, we will play in eight tournaments plus seven matches. These players will have plenty of

ROSTER

Continued from page 8B

season and I’m excited to see how much she’s progressed. Kaylee and Caydrian are both new to the team and new to golf. I’m sure they will both grow into players. Sophey Smith is also a sophomore this season. Sophey started playing on the team in the seventh grade, so this will be her fourth year. In her first year, we only had two players. Sophey has worked so hard over the years. She is a leader on the team and will be a big part of whatever success we have as a team.”

King also has seventh-graders Alyssa Siler and Morgan Jackson on the roster as well.

“Alyssa has had a great summer playing golf,” he said. “She won a couple of junior tournaments and has worked harder in the off-season than any other girl I’ve ever coached. Alyssa is doing something to get better every day. If she isn’t practicing golf, she is going to the gym to work out. I think Alyssa will be going to the State Tournament many times before she graduates, and will be one of the best girl players to ever come through South Laurel.

“Morgan Jackson is a standout softball player and spends a lot of time with that sport,” he added. “But she also has tremendous potential as a golfer. Morgan is blessed with natural club speed and can really move the ball down the fairway. She’ll have to spend a lot of time

working on the short game, and I know she will. The best thing about these girls is that they have started young enough to have the time to get really, really good.”

With 10 talented players on the roster, King believes his team will be more competitive this fall.

“As a team, it will be a long shot for us to make it through the region and to the State Tournament, but I have some players that could make it to the State Tournament as individuals,” he said. “We are returning some athletes, and some experience, but as a whole, we are young and inexperienced.”

A competitive schedule King has put together will have his team ready for the Region Tournament.

“Our competitive schedule begins with a tournament we are co-hosting with North Laurel and Corbin,” he said. “On July 30, we will have the first-ever Tri-County Girls Tournament at London Country Club. It gives our players a chance to begin their season on our home course. After that, we have tournaments at Eagle’s Nest and Estill County. We’ll probably add a couple more along with the tournaments, so we’ll have several nine-hole matches, and the Region Tournament — everything we do prepares us to play well in that tournament.

“I’m really looking forward to this season,” he added. “I believe it’s just the beginning to getting our program to the next level.”

STONE

Continued from page 7B

As with all coaches at the beginning of the season, Stone does have a concern or two. But his team’s overall putting is the main concern that sticks out.

“Like all teams, we will have ups and downs this year,” he admitted. “I expect us to

be mentally tough with our core of seniors and prepared to complete no matter who you play against, but the one thing that haunts all golfers at any age is putting. This year we are emphasizing putting. We need to make sure we don’t lose strokes on the green. Putting has cost us several strokes in the past and we need to improve with any

hope to accomplish this year’s goals.”

When it comes to matches, North Laurel will be prepared.

Stone said his team’s schedule is an aggressive one to prepare all of his golfers for competition and a run at conference and region.

“Along with our conference matches, we are playing against several top teams in the state,

including state champs, at Taylor County,” he said. “We will be playing some of the best in central Kentucky at Old Bridge, Boone’s Trace, General Burnside, Battlefield Country Club, and London Country Club. We will compete against several teams in the top 20 in the state and several individuals that will compete for state champion.

“This year we have a good mix of talent and experience,” Stone added. “I hope for our team to improve on last year’s accomplishments and make a run at both conference and region. Of course, our conference has several good teams, including Clay County that was last year’s conference, and region champs. So we have a big hill to

climb, but the boys are up to it. Other teams to compete against will be, of course, South, along with Pulaski and several other young teams building on their experience from last season. Do we have the talent? Yes, we have the talent as a team, and with each of us improving and playing our best, we can be one of the teams to watch this year.”

READY

Continued from page 6B

Cready, and Riley Spitser, and eighth-grader Lucas Epperson.

“Riley Lewis, Andrew, Lukas, and Collin are all returning cross country runners from last year, and they have gained valuable racing experience as well,” Kirby said.

“Each of them has also improved their strength and endurance. Riley Spitser and Lucas Epperson are new runners on the cross country team.

“This year’s team is

small in numbers which is not a bad thing,” she added. “Small numbers create a tenacious team atmosphere and allow you to focus on very specific goals. When your

team is small, everyone can be viewed under the microscope so to speak. Sometimes close examination is not preferred by athletes because it institutes change. Hope-

fully, we can push this year’s runners beyond their comfort zone where they can flourish individually and contribute to the team’s overall success.”

TALENT

Continued from page 5B

need to realize what a blessing it is to play a sport at this level

a team, we don’t need to lose sight of the reasons we love this sport even when it isn’t that fun, work hard every day, and always be an encouragement to

each other. Obviously, a winning season and a couple of titles would be nice, too.

“Coach Tara Deaton and I are very pleased to welcome Shelley

Nunley to our coaching staff,” Clark added. “Shelley, just like Tara, played for South Laurel High School during her time as a student here. She brings that knowl-

edge of the game, and previous coaching experiences to the table. We look forward to this upcoming season with a full roster, full schedule, and full staff.”

CROWN

Continued from page 5B

ning of the season his team should have some strength in its defensive play.

“We have a lot of experience returning in that

aspect,” he said. “I do think that, once we get into full swing that our offense has a chance to be something special by the time the kinks, timing, and improvement happens.

“My concerns come with our age and our

height,” he added. “We have some senior leadership, but we are very young. We also don’t have a single-player over 5’9” I don’t think, that height might be a reach as well.

With what Croucher has called a “packed

out” schedule, North Laurel should be battle-Yates throughout the season.

“We have a lot of really good teams on it,” he said. “We should be well prepared for what we will see in the post-season.

“We are coming off winning our district again last year and we have a decent shot at grabbing another one,” Croucher added. “It’s definitely not getting easier each year with teams like Jackson County coming at us every year. The region is a

title that has eluded us for the entirety of the history at North Laurel, and also the entirety of the time I have been there, but like all of the last few years, we should be right there in the thick of it. Winning a region title is the goal every year.”



South Laurel posted a 2-10-1 record last season.

COACH

Continued from page 4B

what we need to achieve. Another strength is our conditioning. We know we will have several of these young men playing big minutes and they have responded by taking physical conditioning seriously. We are running

IRWIN

Continued from page 2B

what this season, but we are looking at getting better every day as a reachable goal. Winning a district game and making the playoffs is certainly realistic.”

South Laurel will basically start from scratch on offense with linemen Logan White and Tate Anderson the only players that were consistent starters.

and practicing hard and every day the boys show up and work harder each day. “One of my biggest concerns is that our roster is quite smaller than normal,” he added. “At this time, our varsity roster has 19 players. Depth will be a concern as we go through the season. One or two injuries could really affect the course of

our season.”

Cawood said his team’s schedule is “no walk in the park”, and will test his team early and often while preparing his players for lies ahead in the district, and postseason play.

“We have to take every game seriously and focus on always improving as the season progresses,” he said. “The

postseason is always a hot topic of discussion but we need to look at each match to really assess what we did right, what we did not do well and find solutions to improve so that we are peaking at the right time so that when the postseason does come, we are as physically

KEYS

Continued from page 4B

said. “The one thing that has haunted us for the past few years is that pure goal scorer. The type of person that demands the ball and can consistently put it in the back of the net. I think this year we have a couple of really good goal scores, but they have to prove they have what it takes. Finishing has been our biggest issue, and I hope that we can make improvements.”

Howard said he’s tried to put together a schedule that can challenge his team.

“We have a couple of good matches planned for the Bruins Cup in Elizabethtown,” he said.

“Plus North Laurel, Corbin, and Whitley will be good matches. I know I have heard some people talking about how North Laurel lost a lot of their players last year, but I can tell you right now, Jessica Miller will have that team in form. I also know that Hannah Goins will have Corbin ready, too.”

“We should be very competitive in every match,” he added. “I know that last year was a tough year for us. The adversity that we faced last year definitely carried over into the beginning of this year, and can tell that these girls are pushing through. I really believe in this team and I believe we can do something special this year.”

and mentally prepared as we can be. “I feel like our district will be very tough, as always,” he added. “Corbin is firing on all cylinders and will be the team to beat. Whitley Co. and North Laurel are both super-athletic teams that work hard, never give up, and are hungry to make a run this year. OBI, unfor-

tunately, did not have a season last year due to the pandemic but will always be a tough match. Our boys will really have to know that our district is made up of good, physical teams that are all hungry for the district title and making it to the region. This will be a fun season to watch for our district.”

LARKEY

Continued from page 2B

fire very quickly. They had to learn on the run and experience a lot of ups and downs. Those young guys are still young but should be better.

“I think our kids will play as hard as they can and be as good as they can be,” he added. “Hopefully, when we get to the district games, we can compete. As far as the playoffs, we just hope to make it, and then, you never know what will happen.”

The pieces are in place for North Laurel to have a good season. The sophomore group of players won a state championship as eighth-graders, and at times, showed what they were capable of doing.

The Jaguars put 46 points up on Perry Central and followed with a 47-point effort against South Laurel. In most of their district games, they hung tough before falling by double digits in the second half to Southwestern, Pulaski County, and Whitley County.



FILE PHOTO

Sophomore Tucker Warren passed for 1,209 yards and 11 touchdowns last season as a freshman and ran for 243 yards and seven touchdowns.

With six starters on offense, North Laurel hopes to be much improved.

“Obviously, it starts with the line,” Larkey said. “We have two kids back and they are in charge of getting our team in the end zone. We have some good skill kids back, great

hands, and decent speed. Our quarterback is back and should be better after starting last year.”

Sophomore Tucker Warren passed for 1,209 yards and 11 touchdowns last season as a freshman and ran for 243 yards and seven touchdowns.

Jacob Bowman ran for 433 yards and four touchdowns while Jayce Hacker and Christian Larkey are expected to see action in the backfield.

Senior Gavin Hurst led the Jaguars with 30 receptions, 361 receiving yards, and five touchdowns while sophomore Jack Chappell finished with 24 catches for 324 receiving yards and one touchdown. Senior Caden Harris had 15 catches for 152 yards and a touchdown last season.

Defensively, North Laurel gave up 28 points per game last season, a number that Larkey hopes improves with six starters returning.

“We are changing up some and with some early injuries having to start three kids that haven’t started before,” Larkey said. “Our goal is to stop

the run and keep everything in front of us and hopefully not give up big plays.”

Freshman Collier Mills is expected to do the kicking duties for the Jaguars while Larkey hasn’t decided who will do the punting duties.

“Special Teams can win or lose a game for you,” Larkey said. “Our kicker will be a freshman in Collier Mills. He has a huge future ahead of him and has the potential to be the best kicker in school history. Our punting is to be determined, people would be shocked at how kids can’t punt a ball.”

Larkey noted overall team speed combined with strength, and his team’s “closeness” will be team strengths this season while depth is a major concern.

“We can’t afford for anyone to get hurt and miss games.”

North Laurel’s schedule will test Larkey’s squad early and often, beginning with Week One’s home date with mountain power Bell County. Marion County, Shelby Valley, Barren County, Henry County, and Wayne County is also

non-district matchups while the Jaguars will host only one district game (Pulaski County) this season while traveling to both Southwestern and Whitley County.

“With the youth we have, any schedule will be a challenge,” Larkey said. “We have one of the toughest districts in the state, and maybe the toughest class in football. If we can stay healthy, we can make a good run.”

“Our district is tough,” he added. “Southwestern almost made it to the state finals last year and Pulaski always has great skill and speed and kids who can play football. Beating both of those teams is going to be hard.”

So does Larkey like his team’s chances of making a deep postseason run?

“We have a great core of kids, with that, said, we have a great small group of kids,” he said. “We don’t have a lot of depth and a small junior and freshmen class which hurts the numbers. Our kids have to be ready to play a lot without breaks.”

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