



# Spring SPORTS

Ludington  
Daily News



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DAVID BOSSICK | DAILY NEWS

Members of the Ludington boys track team are, front row, from left, Amari George, Adam Keffer, Luis Salazar, Gabe Gamez, Walt Autrey, Liam Torres, Kolden Stevens, Adrian Salazar, Malachi Spence, Kohlbe Nelson and Jerom Hathaway; second row, Dylan Sniegowski, Conner Chaney, Will Luce, Jasper Sak, Noah Johnson, Dominic VanWyck, Aidan Forrester, Curtis Fuller and Deric Duncil; third row, Arthur LeRoux, Yebe Boerema, Aidan Malbury, Logan Sloan, Ethan Klein, Trey Keson, Jack Jubar, Reinhold Heinrich, Jose Flores, Nevin Slater, Forrest Hissong and Owen Shaw; fourth row, Owen Forrester, Noah Lowman, Jonah Peterson, Nathan Reisterer, Lucas Peterson, Levi Laman, Gavin Smith, Jonah Sweet, Laken Nicewander, Grady Sailor, Miles Clark and Ansol Carroll.

## Ludington boys track

# Orioles look forward to new league

BY DAVID BOSSICK  
MANAGING EDITOR

Ludington's boys track team has the numbers, and they're coming into the season after a very successful one a year ago as the final Lakes 8 Activities Conference champion.

This year, though, the Orioles are in the West Michigan Conference's Lakes Division with the likes of Whitehall and Montague as well as rival Manistee to go with Fremont, Oakridge and Orchard View in what could be a challenging league season.

Ludington should be led by state-qualifier Lucas Peterson, who finished 17th in the high jump. He also ran in the 300-meter hurdles at the Meijer West Michigan All-Star Meet hosted at Reeths-Puffer.

"I think Lucas Peterson is going to be the center stone of the team between the 110 hurdles, the 300 hurdles and the high jump," said Ludington coach Mark Willis. "Just a quality kid. He's everything you'd want in a student athlete."

Adam Keffer won a league title last season in both throws, and he returns for the Orioles, too.

"Adam Keffer is a tremendous, tremendous kid who is a senior. I think there are 14 throwers out. It's pretty neat to see," Willis said.

The Orioles appear to have athletes for all of the races that could make a big impact, Aidan and Nathan Gilchrist in the sprints, Chase Hackert and Trey Keson in the middle distance races and Jose Flores in the distance races. Willis com-

mended Flores for the work he's put in during the off-season.

"He did a lot of indoor meets this year," Willis said. "He's come up from being a small freshman to now. He's a worker. He's put in his work and his effort. He's committed himself."

Ludington's roster:

**SENIORS:** Aidan Gilchrist, Nathan Gilchrist, Ethan Hendricks, Malakai Honyoust, Adam Keffer, Levi Laman, Arthur LeRoux, Nathan Reisterer, James Strahan and Dominic VanWyck.

**JUNIORS:** Yebe Boerema, Deric Duncil, Curtis Fuller, Amari George, Reinhold Heinrich, Jack Jubar, Charles Leonard, Aidan Malburg, Mason Mar- rison, Alexander Mosher, Nevin Slater and Rowen Vaara.

**SOPHOMORES:** Leland Carmona, Ansel Carroll, Miles

Clark, Owen Forrester, Jeron Hathaway, Noah Lowman, Laken Nicewander, Jonah Peterson, Owen Shaw and Kaden Stevens.

**FRESHMEN:** Walton Autrey, Noah Johnson, Grady Sailor, Jasper Sak, Logan Sloan, Dylan Sniegowski, Ethan Tenney, Liam Torrez, Brandon Usual, Owen Von Sprecken and Michael Wilson.

With a team pushing 60 athletes, Willis said there are a few new faces to the program that he's already excited to see. One is senior Trey Forfinski, who is also playing golf this spring for Ludington. He cleared 12 feet in the pole vault at a recent meet in Hart.

"Watching this kid through his middle school years and now, seeing how he attacks things (is great). He attacks whatever he does

in life," Willis said. "He's like another Lucas Peterson."

Another newcomer to the program is freshman Walt Autry.

"That kid is a beast," Willis said. "He's a musician. The kid is smart. And of course, he plays football and runs track."

Jonah Sweet is another runner that Willis is happy with his attitude and excitement to compete. Sweet is a middle distance runner for the Orioles.

Willis heaped praise upon the assistant coaches, from Kirby with the throwers to Maurie Holbrook with the pole vault to Craig Fuller with the distance runners.

"I think the biggest thing is that I'm surrounded by great people with great kids," Willis said. "And these kids are committed to get goals com-

pleted. They're fun kids. We have 10 seniors, and some of our top scorers are seniors this year. They're really bought in."

Ludington will need those points with the new conference the Orioles are in this season. And Whitehall is the clear-cut favorite in the WMC's Lakes Division.

"Our No. 1 goal is to have fun. I see a lot of goals this year that we can attain. To get the conference title (is a goal), but we know Whitehall is the team to beat," Willis said. "They're the front-runner for state in Division 2. I'd love to say we're after a regional title that Whitehall won't be at. Last year, we were fifth. It comes down to putting it all together. Hopefully, the injury bug stays away, and the kids keep working hard."





DAVID BOSSICK | DAILY NEWS

Members of the Ludington girls track team are, front row, from left, Sofia Vivenzi, Summer Brower, Grace Sherwood-Michaelis, Rebecca Weiner, Sophia Grierson, Cora Mahler, Rebecca Szoboszlay, Kaylee Malt, Andrea Blankinship, Kendal Waligorski and Briseis Mendez; second row, Alba Fernandez, Reese Willis, Katie Karboske, Mia Voss, Melena Eaton, Mackenzie Keillor, Christina Theis, Nadia Grierson, Ally Kalchik, Savanna Kirwin, Isabella Acheson and Genevieve Lux; third row, Kylie Sailor, Anna Burton, Olivia Andersen, Lilly Slater, Sophia Janicki, Laura Garcia, Carly Moffitt, Claire Garrow, Elena Otis, Nevaeh Battice and Annabelle Grimes.

## Ludington girls track

# Orioles program doubles in size

BY DAVID BOSSICK  
MANAGING EDITOR

The number of girls competing on Ludington's track team has doubled from a year ago, a good sign for what could come for the Orioles, according to coach Kelsey Britton.

Britton was encouraged by what she's seen in terms of having a true team and not a collection of individuals.

"I know word of mouth is a big one (on why the roster grew)... I tried my best to create a positive atmosphere in the sport of track and field. It is easy to be competitive and form cliques.

"We have fun, but it's challenging. I'm hoping that's why so many chose to come out."

The Orioles bring back

several athletes across a variety of disciplines to help bolster their chances. Kaylee Malt returns for the high jump and possibly the hurdles.

Briseis Mendez is a sprinter that returns, and the throws will be anchored by Isabella Acheson.

Britton also is looking forward to Kylie Sailor, a middle distance to long distance runner, and Reese Willis, too.

The distance runners, though, may prove to be a strength of this team. The groups is composed of the state-qualifying cross country team that included Sophia Grierson, Olivia Andersen, McKenzie Keillor, Summer Brower, Nadia Grierson and Kristina Theis.

Summer Brower was an All-State cross country runner

in the fall.

Two athletes that Britton is looking forward to seeing this spring are Ayla King, who Britton sees as a sprinter and doing the throws. Another is Kendall Waligorski, who moved from Manistee to Ludington, and she will be competing in the pole vault and in the sprints.

Ludington's roster:

**SENIORS:** Alba Fernandez, Sophia Grierson, Savanna Kirwin, Kaylee Malt, Laura Oliveria Garcia, Morgan Simpson, Rebecca Szoboszlay and Sofia Vivenzi.

**JUNIORS:** Olivia Andersen, Anna Burton, Melena Eaton, Mackenzie Keillor, Ayla King, Isabella Lundberg, Genevieve Lux, Ashley McPike, Briseis Mendez, Kylie Sailor, Grace Sherwood-Michaelis, Mia Voss and Kendal Waligorski.

**SOPHOMORES:** Summer Brower, Claire Garrow, Nadia Grierson, Annabelle Grimes, Alexis Kalchik, Cora Mahler, Elena Otis and Rebecca Weiner.

**FRESHMEN:** Navaeh Battice, Jacee Cole, Sophia Janicki, Selena-Thaovy Le, Carly Moffitt, Elizabeth Norman, Lily Slater and Christina Theis

Ludington joins the West Michigan Conference's Lakes Division for this spring after a longtime association with the Lakes 8 Activities Conference. The conference move means competing with the likes of Whitehall, Montague and Oakridge in addition to running against Manistee and Orchard View. Fremont is also in the league. Manistee won the Lakes 8 last season.

"Whitehall is really good. I

think we could beat Manistee. We were so close last year (when) we got second place. We were very close. I think we can beat them," Britton said. "I think they lost some seniors, (but) we gained a lot.

"I have literally doubled the (number I had from last year). I have 46 signed up this year. ... I think we have a really great opportunity. Last year we were hurting for sprinters. We got a big influx of sprinters and just the improvement there, I think we'll have a better shot. We have sprinters, long jump, hurdles and a lot of pole vaulters. Maurie (Holbrook, who coaches pole vault) must be overwhelmed. It might take 10 minutes to get through the first round of vaulters."

Ludington will travel to

Shepherd for the regional next month, and Britton feels there could be some state qualifiers this season.

"I definitely think our (3,200-meter relay) team could go the distance, no pun intended," Britton said. "I think they could do really well. They were really close last year. I think they ended up fourth in the regional. They were close, and they've just gotten even better.

"If there were individuals, Summer Brower is a phenomenal athlete. At the state (cross country) meet she was seeded 70-something place and got 18th overall. And she works hard to the point she passes out. She's such a hard worker. We'll have to see with everyone else."





DAVID BOSSICK | DAILY NEWS

Members of the Ludington girls soccer are Grace Ashley, Grace Shamel, Katie Rangel, Maddison Martin, Ashley Stowe, Annie Kline, Emma McKinley, Selena Le, Annika Sherman, Erika Hatch, Alexandria Bousson, Jaelyn Laird, Isabelle Brower, Sophia Rupp; Luciana Bailey, Maddy Billings, Elianna Jeruzal, Kylee Johnson, Breanna Iteen, Elizabeth Norman, Kylie Hatch, Gillian Moser, Cambria Britton, Sidnie Shimunek, Mya Martin and Maddy Gasaway.

## Ludington girls soccer

# Inexperienced Orioles to find way during season

BY DAVID BOSSICK  
MANAGING EDITOR

Ludington's girls soccer team is undergoing a youth movement, and the Orioles are still finding their way in the early part of the 2023 season.

The Orioles dropped back-to-back matches to open the season, first to Big Rapids and second to Traverse City West, for the final time on natural grass at Oriole Field. The team is coping with the losses of several players from last year's team that finished second to Western Michigan Christian in the final season of the Lakes 8 Activities Conference.

What's more is that Ludington played an abbreviated junior varsity season, making it difficult for the younger players to get game experience.

"Some of these girls that are sophomores this year are getting some varsity time," said Ludington coach Kris Anderson. "They didn't get a lot of game time last year. It's tough sometimes. Some schools aren't scheduling JV

teams. We're very, very inexperienced but we're very young. There will be a lot of freshmen and sophomores who have to pay varsity minutes this year to see where they develop and where they can get to."

That's not to say that Ludington doesn't have a good group of players that have experience in the program. Seniors Annie Kline, Maddison Martin and Erika Hatch lead the way along with sophomores Elianna Jeruzal, Madeline Billings and Madison Gasaway. The trio of sophomores received extensive experience on the field last season.

Ludington's roster:

**SENIORS:** Maddison Martin, Annie Kline, Breanna Iteen and Erika Hatch.

**JUNIORS:** Grace Ashley and Emma McKinley.

**SOPHOMORES:** Katie Rangel, Elianna Jeruzal, Ashley Stowe, Kylee Johnson, Madeline Billings, Madison Gasaway, Mya Martin, Kylie Hatch, Grace Shamel, Sidnie Shimunek and Faith Rice.

**FRESHMEN:** Saviera Moser,

Annika Sherman, Elizabeth Norman, Jaelyn Laird, Cambria Britton, Selena Le, Gillian Moser and Alex Bousson

There are a handful of new players coming in that will be asked to make an impact right away. Junior Emma McKinley — a standout three-sport athlete — moved to soccer from tennis where she was the top singles player a year ago.

"She played when she was younger and on some select teams. She has some experience," Anderson said. "We are trying to figure out where she best fits, and she's been away from the game for a couple of years."

Kylee Johnson, a sophomore, is expected to play up as a striker, and she will help to cap the offense for Ludington.

At outside back will be Ashley Stowe and Katie Rangel will be at defense as each will be relied upon to push out a few more minutes than what they played late in the season last year.

In goal, the duties were shared for one of the two

games already played. Grace Ashley and Cambria Britton are sharing the job

for Ludington. Anderson said Ashley likely will play a bit more, but each will get

experience as the season unfolds.

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## Ludington girls tennis

## Robust numbers out to play tennis

BY DAVID BOSSICK  
MANAGING EDITOR

Ludington's girls tennis team returns eight players from a squad that reached the MHSAA Division 3 state tournament a season ago.

The program is robust with dozens out between varsity and junior varsity, and it's something that coach Larry Brown is encouraged by.

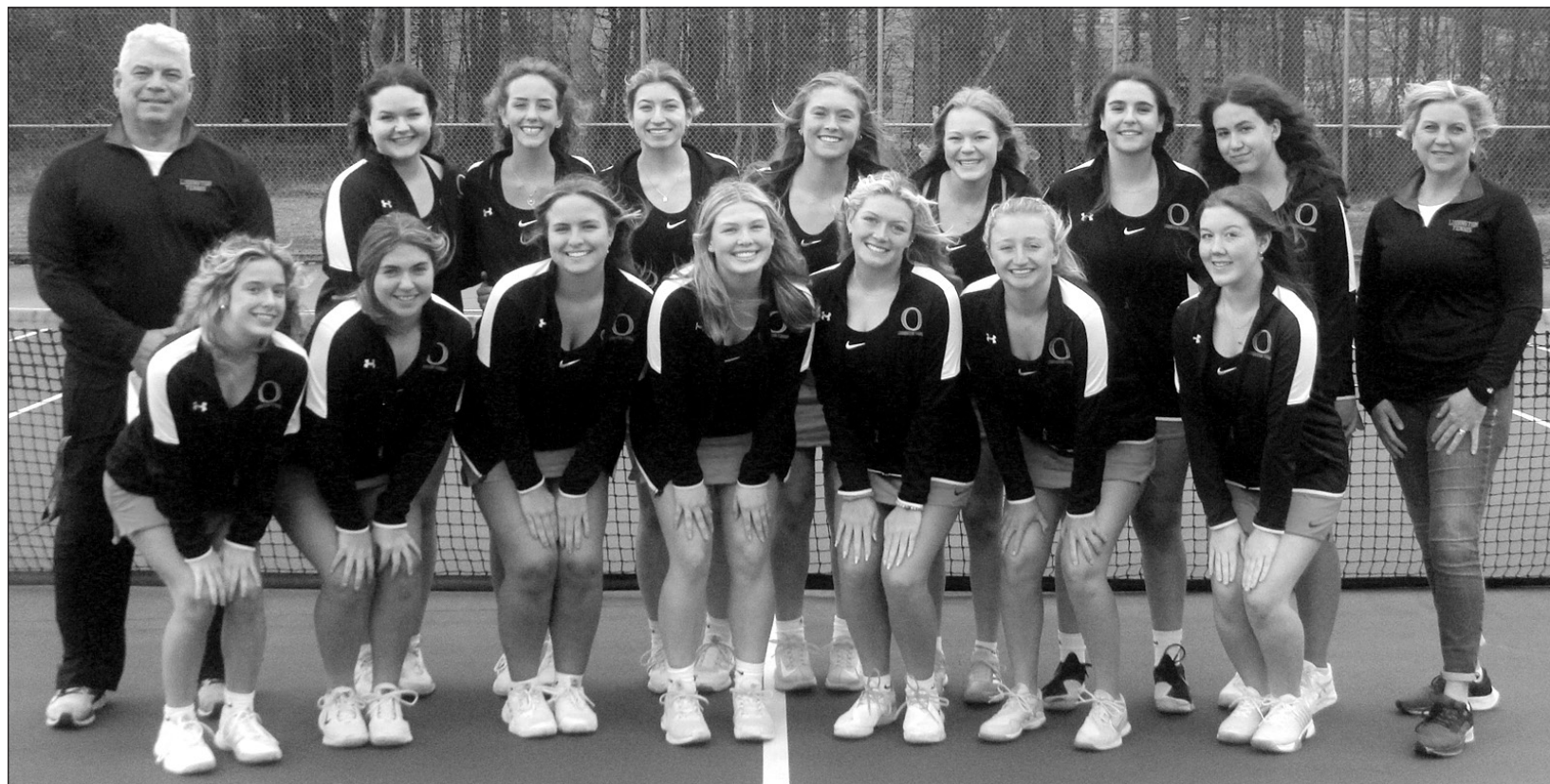
"We've got eight people back. We probably have 14 contending for varsity right now. We have a couple of others, and we have tons of seniors," Brown said. "We don't cut, and I don't cut... We find matches for girls and move them down and play some (junior varsity). We're fortunate that we've had 40 girls sign up for high school tennis. We'll be down to about 34, I think, when it's all said and done."

Brown is trying to get each of the players some time on the court.

Coming back from that state-qualifying team are Sarah Gibson and Emilie Phillips who played in doubles and Hannah Glanville from singles play. Mia Pung played at No. 1 doubles, but lost her partner in Lillian Kolb. Grace Higley was another doubles player returning, and she, too, lost her partner to graduation in Morgan Sanocki. Sophia Sarto is a third doubles player returning but without her partner as Meg Ruba graduated.

"We've got Hannah back again," Brown said. "We've got Jennah Skiba, who played (junior varsity). She did spend the summer with me down at Lincoln (Hills) and got better."

Brown said Claire Shoup is also expected to make an impact.



Members of the Ludington girls tennis team, front row, from left, Sarah Gibson, Mia Pung, Avery Reed, Makennah Malkowski, Sophia Sarto, Grace Higley and Annika Taranko; back row, coach Larry Brown, Gabby Hockenberger, Claire Shoup, Emilie Phillips, Jennah Skiba, Hannah Glanville, Cristina Shpak, Kate Shank and assistant Heather Wickham.

Ludington's roster:

**SENIORS:** Olivia Cole, Sarah Gibson, Gabrielle Hockenberger, Rhea Maconochie, Emilie Phillips, Avery Reed, Sophia Sarto, Claire Shoup, Cristina Shpak and Annika Taranko

**JUNIORS:** Abby Fay, Hannah Glanville, Margaret Hackert, Grace Higley, Grace Johnston, Mia Pung, Julia Reed and Katherine Shank.

**SOPHOMORES:** Magdelyn Autrey, Lily Burden, Ann Garcia, Eleanore LeRay and Jennah Skiba.

**FRESHMEN:** Jordan Adamczyk, Chloe Barz, Mya Hindman, Kristi Killips, Lydia Kwietniewski, Cecilia LeRay, Vivian Morse, Kira Ranum-Kaminski, Amaya Sytek-Baczewski and Elizabeth

Thibault.

Brown said the increase in the number of girls playing is from a variety of things. One factor is that he's been coach of the program for five seasons, reaching the state tournament a year ago, the parents' support of the program and simply the number of kids participating in tennis at a young age all play a role.

"I think a combination of all those things," he said.

"There's a certain group of the kids want to get out there and have fun. They want to get out there and play and connect. There's some socialization factors on that," he said. "The numbers as far as competitiveness, I think the number is going to breed

more talent."

Beyond the graduations, the Orioles lost their No. 1 player in Emma McKinley, too, as she chose to play soccer. Brown said the team took the news fairly tough early, but the girls are resilient and are focusing on this season.

Pung is going to move back to singles play this season after playing singles at the JV level before last season, Brown said. For doubles play, Sarto and Higley will team up.

"They've improved immensely," Brown said.

Gibson and Phillips are likely to team up, too. He said during the spring break the No. 3 and No. 4 doubles teams were still undecided.



DAILY NEWS FILE PHOTO

Ludington's Hannah Glanville returns a ball during a dual against Western Michigan Christian last season at Schoenherr Tennis Center in Ludington.





DAVID BOSSICK | DAILY NEWS

Members of the Ludington softball team are, front row, from left, Samantha Zwick, Sabrina Ramirez, Ayiana Rangel, Brynn Fortner, Rylee Hardenburgh, Anna Genia and Jody Meisenheimer; back row, coach Sierra Holmes, assistant Alexis Bray, assistant Joe Holmes, Julia Gilchrist, Keely Bowman, Savannah Hanson, Samantha Smeltzer, Taesyah Hendricks, Keeley Curtis, Mya Bryant, manager Danielle Bray, manager Jessie Barison and manager Jacee Cole.

## Ludington softball

# Orioles relying on quartet of players

BY CHRISTY CHRISTMAS  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

Ludington's softball team graduated four seniors a year ago and two of them were the main pitcher/catcher battery.

"All four girls (Brynn Cole, Lilli Goodrich, Kasey Wallace and Kendra Gilchrist) were players the younger girls looked up to; their leadership and personalities will be missed," said Orioles coach Sierra Holmes.

Cole was a Lakes 8 all-conference selection, and Goodrich was all-conference and all-district.

Holmes is in her ninth season coaching Ludington and is excited about the season. She admits the coaching staff is still trying to figure out who will be doing the majority of the pitching and catching, but she knows her two seniors this year, Brynn Fortner and

Anna Genia, are "both leaders in their own right."

Fortner was an all-conference selection in 2022 as a utility player and is expected to make a big contribution this season.

Ayiana Rangel, Jody Meisenheimer and Keeley Curtis return and have experience, having been on varsity since they were freshmen. Savannah Hanson and Mya Bryant have some varsity experience and then there is a good group of juniors who got experience on the junior varsity squad last year.

Two sophomores on the varsity are Taesyah Hendricks, excellent on the fly ball, according to her coach, and with a little experience catching, and Samantha Zwick, an all-around athlete, Holmes is hoping to get her some experience.

The Orioles are headed into a new conference, the

West Michigan Conference's Lakes Division.

"I think it's going to be a tough conference," Holmes said. "There are some teams we haven't played in a long time so I don't know a lot about them, yet. It is going to come down to pitching."

When discussing the post-season, Holmes said there are a lot of unknowns. The diamond at Oriole Field has been undergoing some improvements, and Holmes indicated stayed off the field, allowing some of the improvements to heal and be ready for the season, early on.

"We have a lot of good athletes," Holmes said. We have a lot of girls who have some experience. We have girls coming up off the junior varsity who are good athletes and have the ability to contribute."

All of those factors could

spell success for the Orioles, who are still figuring out the pitching rotation, but Savannah Hanson and Meisenheimer will likely play roles as pitchers.

Assisting Holmes this year are Joe Holmes, Alexis Bray and Brynn Cole. Bray and Cole are former Orioles who, according to Holmes, are respected by the younger play-

ers. Coaching junior varsity again this year is Maggie Bates with Niki Petzak-Davis assisting.

"This group of players are high energy," said Holmes. "They are a lot of fun to coach."

Orioles roster:

**SENIORS:** Brynn Fortner, Annabella Genia

**JUNIORS:** Jamie Barron, Keely Bowman, Mya Bryant, Keeley Curtis, Julia Gilchrist, Savannah Hanson, Rylee Hardenburgh, Jody Meisenheimer, Ayiana Pansang-Rangel, Sabrina Ramirez, Samantha Smeltzer, manager Jessie Barison and manager Danielle Bray.

**SOPHOMORES:** Taesyah Hendricks, Samantha Zwick  
**FRESHMAN:** Manager Jacee Cole

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## Ludington baseball

# Orioles in pursuit of three titles

BY CHRISTY CHRISTMAS  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

The Ludington baseball team has three main goals this year, win the county tournament, a conference championship and a district title. Pretty lofty goals, but third-year varsity coach Evan Kroeze believes he has the team with the work ethic and talent to pull it off.

After dropping a heartbreaker, 3-2, in the Division 2 MHSAA district finals to Clare a year ago, Ludington's coach said, "Our guys want to be the group to get the monkey off their back and win a district."

This year Ludington will travel to Kingsley for the district, due to a new alignment of district playoffs.

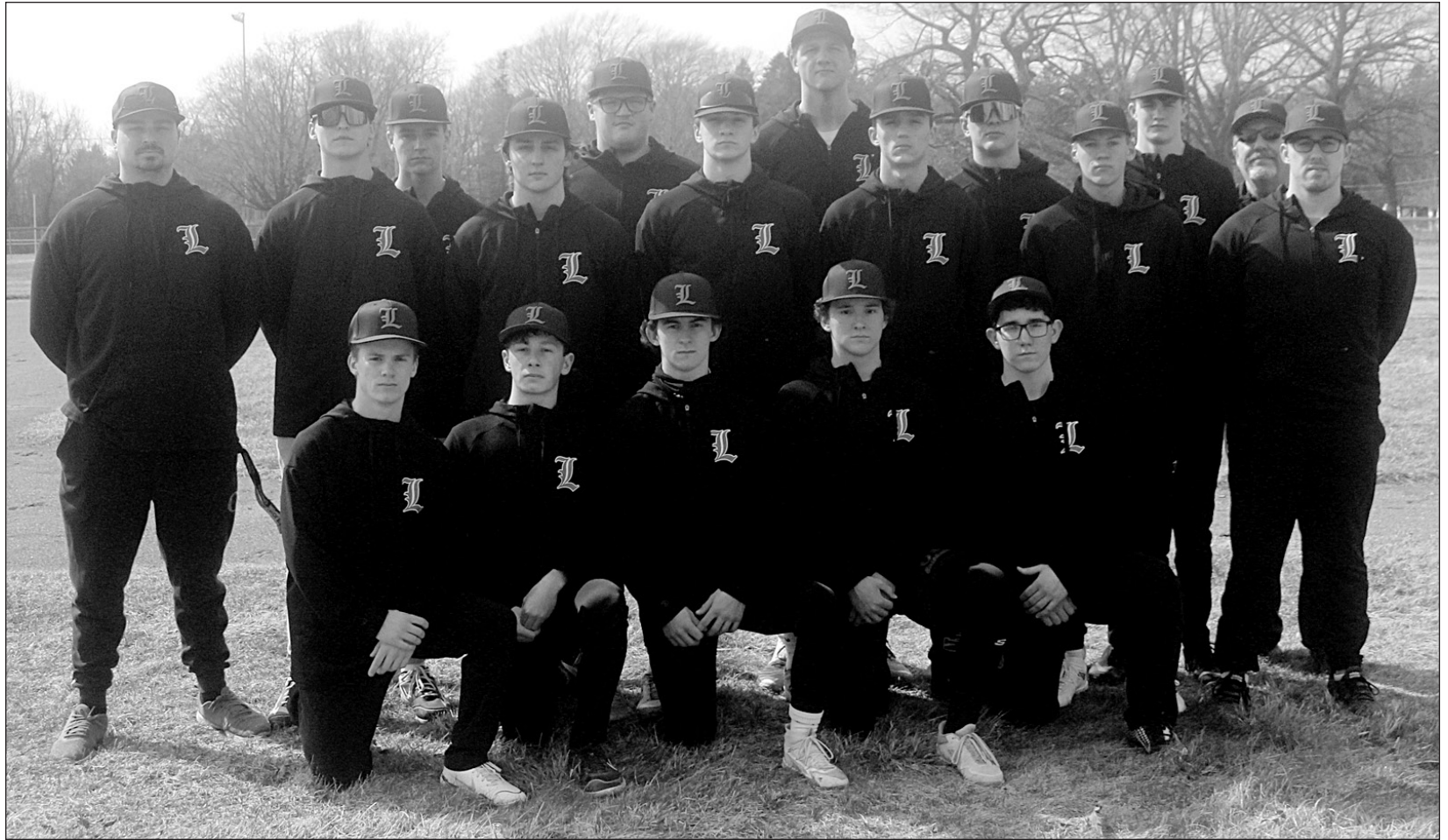
"Last year we had a very disappointing showing at the county tournament, held in Scottville, and our goal is to get a chance at redemption this year," added Kroeze.

Ludington will compete for the first time in the West Michigan Conference's Lakes Division and Kroeze believes this is an excellent baseball league.

"One of the best north of Grand Rapids," he said. "We like our odds to compete in this league. You could probably draw a name out of the hat, between Fremont, Oakridge, Montague, Whitehall and Ludington, and any one of us has as good a chance as the other at winning the conference."

"Our guys are excited for the challenge," Kroeze said. "We like our chances to win a championship. We are as good as any of the other teams. We know we have to work hard to earn it."

The baseball team graduated six seniors last year and have six seniors on the



DAVID BOSSICK | DAILY NEWS

Members of the Ludington baseball team are, front row, from left, Kol Anthes, Ryan Kandalec, Evan McCarthy, Jonathan Weiner and Mason Conger; middle row, coach Evan Kroeze, Christian Serna, Nathan Dillehay, Gage Jones, Joseph Benz, Spencer Holmes and assistant Nick Follrath; back row, Robby Killips, Ethan Harvey, Matthew Westhouse, Cole Johnson, Jack Stidham and assistant Todd Hansen.

squad this year. Stephen Weinert graduated in 2022 and is now playing baseball at Lake Michigan College.

"He is a great all-around player," said Kroeze.

"One of our best bats in the middle of the line up last year was Gabe Hogenon, and he will be missed," added Kroeze. "Wilson Gunsell played first base for us last year and had a great senior year."

Top returners this year are the No. 1 and 2 pitchers, Nathan Dillehay and Jonny Weinert. Both are captains

this year, both are third-year varsity players and both are leaders on and off the field according to Kroeze.

Dillehay earned all-conference first team honors in 2022, and Weinert was all-conference second team in the Lakes 8 Conference.

Evan McCarthy, a junior, will likely be the lead-off on this year's team. He is in his third year on the varsity and will play shortstop.

Matthew Westhouse, another senior, will bring his power to the designated hitter position.

"His biggest contribution will be his power bat," said Kroeze.

Gage Jones was the No. 2 catcher behind Stephen Weinert a year ago, but, according to Kroeze, Jones has taken his play to the next step and will help to fill the void.

Kroeze is also excited about three players who are returning to baseball after not having played since before high school. Kol Anthes, Jack Stidham and Spencer Holmes are out for the team, and Kroeze expects their

athleticism and drive to be contributing factors.

The Orioles were 19-11 overall last year, a good record they hope to improve upon. "We should be a completely different team in May than in April," said Kroeze. "There will be a lot of growth."

In talking about Kroeze's expectations for the team, he says Ludington can sneak up on some teams because Ludington is not known to be a baseball powerhouse, but, "we have a lot of talent and a lot of driven guys."

Kroeze will be assisted at the varsity level by Todd Hansen, Nick Follrath and Eric Friese. Coaching the junior varsity squad is Wade Knoll.

Ludington's roster:

**SENIORS:** Jonny Weinert, Nathan Dillehay, Cole Johnson, Ethan Harvey, Matthew Westhouse and Kol Anthes.

**JUNIORS:** Gage Jones, Evan McCarthy, Joe Benz, Jack Stidham, Tyan Kandelac, Spencer Holmes, Robby Killips, Christian Serna and Mason Conger.



## Ludington boys golf

## Young Orioles ready to make mark

BY DAVID BOSSICK  
MANAGING EDITOR

Ludington's golf team is short on varsity experience this spring, but second-year coach Sebastian Alvarado is encouraged by the work his young team put in to get ready for the 2023 season.

The Orioles graduated leaders Ben Zwick, Justin Plamondon and Ed Gamble from last season, wiping out three-fifths of the consistent play from a year ago. Ludington, though, brings back senior Trey Forfinski and junior Reece Ward that saw extensive play at the varsity level, including the regional hosted by Ludington at Lincoln Hills. Luke Hackert was another golfer that played quite a bit between both varsity and junior varsity.

They weren't the only ones, though, to get some competitive play, Alvarado said.

"We lost to graduation all of our experience. The positive thing though is that assistant coach (Jason) Burns scrambled week in and week out to get our (junior varsity) kids a bunch of matches. Down the home stretch in May, they played a ton of competitive golf. The difference between most of those underclassmen from a year ago and now, it's like night and day.

"You could tell most of them or all of them dug in with the game and kept playing (in the summer) and kept sharp."

Alvarado said Ward played well late in the season, and he appears to have the mettle to handle the pressure of the moment.

Ludington's roster:

**SENIORS:** Trey Forfinski, Ryan Millspaugh, Cian O'Brien, Nathan Wagner



DAVID BOSSICK | DAILY NEWS

Members of the Ludington boys golf team are, front row, from left, Lucas Miller, Maks Flanery, Flynn Powers, Alex Rodenbeck and Brayden Feyers; middle row, coach Sebastian Alvarado, Jacob Micka, Benjamin Gronstal, Jack Johnson, Will James, J.T. Szoboszlay and David Reisterer; back row, Luke Hackert, Ryan Millspaugh, Reece Ward, Nate Wagner, Cian O'Brien, assistant Parker Rey and assistant Jeff Endteman. Not pictured: Charlie Gamble, Trey Forfinski, Jonah Bluestein and Matthew Adams.

**JUNIORS:** Brayden Feyers, Charles Gamble, Luke Hackert, Will James, Jack Johnson, Reece Ward

**SOPHOMORES:** Matthew Adams, Jonah Bluestein, Maksim Flanery, Benjamin Gronstal, Lucas Miller, David Reisterer, Jason Szoboszlay

**FRESHMEN:** Jacob Micka, Flynn Powers, Alec Rodenbeck

freshman that could stand out early in Alec Rodenbeck. Alvarado said Rodenbeck comes from a family that loves the game, and he plays competitively throughout the summer.

"If he could drive, he would be the first one there every day," Alvarado said. "He sticks around until after everyone leaves, and he works on it some more."

"I'm excited to see what he can do. He brings competitive experience. He comes from a golfing family, and he's been playing on events. He's played in tournaments that have really good players in them."

Going into the first week of April, Alvarado said all six positions within the varsity team were up for grabs, and challenge play was set to begin.

Alvarado was unsure how the Orioles would fare in the West Michigan Conference's Lakes Division this spring. Ludington, Manistee, Fremont and Orchard View join with Whitehall, Montague and Oakridge to compose the conference. He was thrilled, though, that Fremont and Oakridge are in the league.

"We're going back to a conference like the one I played in," Alvarado said. "I'm excited Fremont is in it, I love that golf course. I'm excited for Oakridge because I love their course. Whitehall, I have a love-hate relationship with Whitehall. They're really good at tennis, and they're really good at golf. Knowing a school like Whitehall, you play against a good team. When I was in high school, you had to be extra sharp

against Fremont."

The Orioles will play in a Division 2 regional at Katke Golf Course on the campus of Ferris State University in Big Rapids. Alvarado said the very tough course is one that challenges each player's every shot, and it could prove to be an equalizer for the dozen or so schools that will compete there.

Ludington's  
Trey Forfinski plays in  
a regional  
tournament  
at Lincoln  
Hills last  
season.

DAVID BOSSICK |  
DAILY NEWS





## Mason County Central girls track

## MCC led by juniors, numbers improve

BY CHRISTY CHRISTMAS  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

A year ago the Mason County Central girls track team worked hard, but with only eight girls on the team, it was hard to be rewarded with great success as they could not generate enough points in a meet to be amongst the top teams.

This year the girls team has 15 girls out and second year head coach Maria Holbrook could not be more excited.

Holbrook is in her 32nd year of coaching overall and has assisted with the Spartans in a support role for 21 years.

Returning are juniors Jayden Baker, Ava Brooks and Reagan Brooks, as well as a trio of sophomores in Mallory Miller, Peyton Welch and Nyvaeh Wendt. Welch had to miss most of last year and so Holbrook is excited about her contributions in the field events this season.

"Our three juniors are awesome leaders and will bring a lot of leadership to the team," said Holbrook.

Miller qualified for the Meijer West Michigan All-

Star Meet at Reeths-Puffer in discuss a year ago and is expected to contribute again this year.

Newcomers Holbrook knows will make contributions are Jaycee Myer who was successful in middle school hurdles; Adison Thorne, the Spartans' No. 1 runner in cross country this past fall; and Katie Henne who will fill the distance positions for Central.

Holbrook expects to be in the top three in the West Michigan Conference's Rivers Division this year.

"The girls worked so hard last year, but we tied for sixth," Holbrook commented. "You sacrifice a lot when you don't have the numbers for the relay teams."

Holbrook believes the team will be able to cover all events this year, even the relay teams.

"That is huge in our conference," she said. "I don't know if anyone (in the WMC) can beat Hart, but hopefully we can take second with the new divisions."

"It is fun to coach them," Holbrook said of her team.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Members of the Mason County Central girls track team are, from left, Heidi Hofmann, Nevaeh Wendt, Alexis Stepka, Adison Thorne, Katie Henne, Holly Bowen, Mallory Miller, Peyton Welch, Jaycee Myer, Cassidy Lorensen, Ava Brooks, Jayden Baker and Reagan Brooks. Not pictured: Camilla Rinaldi and Hannah Thurow.

"It's going to be an exciting year."

Looking at regionals and beyond, Holbrook sees Miller

and Reagan Brooks as having a chance to place in discuss; Baker and Ava Brooks could place in the 400 me-

ter; and Central may be able to put a team together in the 1,600 relay that may be able to compete. And then there

is the group of freshmen who could surprise folks.

SEE GIRLS TRACK, PAGE 11

## Mason County Central boys golf

## Spartans return four golfers from last season

BY CHRISTY CHRISTMAS  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

Sophomores Bryce Thurow and Chase Wood, along with juniors Wyatt Green and Ryan Budzynski, are expected to lead Mason County Central's golf team on the course this spring.

All four are returners from a young and inexperienced team a year ago, but with more experi-

ence, coach Tim Genson is anticipating some leadership from the group.

Genson is in his 15th season of coaching golf at Mason County Central and knows full well that spring sports are very dependent on the weather. April can start off so slow and then May hits and the season seems to speed by for coaches and players.

"It depends on mother nature

as to how much practice we can get in," said Genson. "Lakeside Links (where the Spartans practice opened) on April 4, and we hope to be there."

The Spartans have a couple newcomers to the roster. Nolan Langkamp is a senior golfing for the first year, Dakota Sterley is a junior, Eva Hradel is a sophomore and Gavin Cory is the lone freshman on the squad. Hradel will join

one other girl on the team, returner Jenna Draper, a senior.

Genson is expecting to be competitive in the Rivers Division of the West Michigan Conference.

"North Muskegon should be pretty solid, but I hope we have an opportunity to be reasonably competitive," Genson said.

"The biggest thing about this golf season is the kids learning and hopefully those who learn and put

in the effort will see success and help the team be successful."

Central's roster

**SENIORS:** Jack VanderHaag, Jenna Draper, Nolan Langkamp.

**JUNIORS:** Wyatt Green, Ryan Budzynski, Joey Lund, Carson Wilcox, Dakota Sterley.

**SOPHOMORES:** Bryce Thurow, Chase Wood, Eva Hradel.

**FRESHMAN:** Gavin Cory.



## Mason County Central boys track

## Spartans return 17 from last season

BY CHRISTY CHRISTMAS  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

Mason County Central's boys track team is young and with only eight upperclassmen on a squad of 25 runners, the team will depend on experience as 17 are returners off last year's squad, even if they are young.

Andrew Quinn, Jeremiah Patterson and Ethan Wood all scored at the state meet in 2022, but they all graduated. Quinn was a state champion in shot put and is now competing in track and field at Saginaw Valley State University. Wood was fourth in the pole vault and Patterson was fifth in the long jump.

As a team, the Spartans tied for sixth place with Sanford Meridian in the MH-SAA Division 3 state meet in 2022, collecting 28 points, just one shy of Hart's 29 points and fifth place.

"We are young," said fourth year varsity coach Patrick Nelson. "The middle distances will be a problem for us this year, but everyone is working hard."

Nelson is encouraged by a group of returners who have shown some talent. As a freshman, Quentin Lange placed third in the high jump at the state meet with a jump of 6 feet, 4 inches and recently won the state indoor title with a jump of 6-6. Along with high jump, Lange will be running some hurdles and sprints this year.

Central's school record in



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Members of the Mason County Central boys track team are, from left, Jaxson Munoz, Collin Caufmann, Carter Armstrong, Ethan Horacek, Quentin Lange, Aiden Hilliker, Gavin Shirey, Keenen Kelley, Kenton Spyker, Hunter Sanford and Zach Groth; back row, Eli Gonzalez, Peyton Heckman, Jared Petersen, Grady Wilson, Colter Kirchner, Zane McCabe, Lukas Schade, Cullen Kraus-McCarty, Parker Overmyer and manager Evan Staggs. Not pictured: Max Nichols, Gus McLouth, Riley McLouth, Kaiden Cole and Trey Johnson.

high jump is 6-7, set in 2017 by Ryan Mount, a record Lange will no doubt be aiming to beat this spring.

Max Nichols was injured for most of last season, but was third in the 300-meter hurdles at regionals the year before. Nelson expects Nichols to contribute in hurdles and some sprint distances as well.

Gavin Shirey and Cullen Kraus-McCarty, both seniors, are expected to cover the distance events. Shirey is one of the leaders on the team, and Nelson is looking

for a few others to step up.

Returning will be sophomore Hunter Sanford to pole vault, senior Kaiden Cole to long jump and the sprints and Kenton Spyker, a sophomore, who was eighth in the 200 in regionals last year.

New to the track team are Jaxson Munoz, who will have lots of options in the sprints, high jump and hurdles; Zane McCabe, expected to compete in pole vault and possibly in middle distance; and Grady Wilson in shot and discus. Nelson is excited about the possible contribu-

tions these newcomers can bring to the team.

Nelson has six or seven throwing this year, and the depth will help the team.

"We are going to be much better in sprints, hurdles and all field events," said Nelson.

Looking at the West Michigan Conference's Rivers Division, Nelson says, "Hart is an excellent team. They stand out amongst all the teams. We will hopefully be fighting for second or third place."

The MHSAA regional meet

will be in Manton

"It is probably one of the tougher ones in the state. We have Hart, Benzie Central and Traverse City St. Francis in the regional," he said.

Nelson says the goal for the season will be to be at the best times/distances at the regional meet in order to qualify on time or distance for the state meet.

Central only hosts two meets at home this year, their first meet, when Hart and Shelby come to town for an early season test and the Optimist Invitational.

"We are trying to teach the boys that they have to work hard in practice every day to get better as the season goes on," Nelson said.

Matching up against Hart in the first meet will be an excellent test and will help set goals for growth as the season progresses.

Assisting Nelson this year will be Scott Briggs, Maria Holbrook (with high jump, long jump and hurdles), Katie Cooper (throwers coach), Maurie Holbrook, Jim Sanford (pole vault) and Ben Nelson.

## GIRLS TRACK: Mason County Central sees numbers improve for girls track program

FROM PAGE 10

Holbrook is assisted this year by Katie Cooper, who

also serves as the throws coach. Boys coaches Patrick Nelson and Scott Briggs and volunteer pole vault coach

Maurie Holbrook will all be involved with working with the Central's teams.

Spartan roster:

**SENIOR:** Camilla Rinaldi.

**JUNIORS:** Jayden Baker, Holly Bowen, Ava Brooks, Reagan

Brooks, Kathryn Henne.

**SOPHOMORES:** Heidi Hofmann, Mallory Miller, Hannah Thurow, Peyton Welch, Nyvaeh Wendt.

**FRESHMEN:** Cassidy Lorenson, Jaycee Myer, Alexis Stepka and Adison Thorne.





SUBMITTED PHOTO

Members of the Mason County Central baseball team are, from left, Landon Smith, Peyton Merz, Colten Sanders, Braylin Thurow, Will Chye, Brady Anes, Jayden Shirey and Brayden Overmyer. Not pictured: Simon Shimel, Owen Shimel, Tyler Thurow, coach Chris Carr, assistant Kyle Weiler and assistant Pat Chye.

## Mason County Central baseball

# Spartans look forward to WMC Rivers

BY CHRISTY CHRISTMAS  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

Mason County Central baseball coach Chris Carr is in his sixth season as the varsity coach, and he likes his team's chances in the West Michigan Conference and in the MHSAA district tournament this season.

"Numbers are small, but I am happy with what I've got," said Carr. "Anybody in the line up could come through with a big hit in the seventh inning."

Replacing a few graduates off last year's 19-12 team will be crucial to the Spartans. Gone are Jacob Johnson, Gage Ruiz, Raiden Keefer and Jacob Mortensen. Johnson was the No. 2 pitcher and Carr said, "he knew the game well and was a solid pitcher."

Returners include Will Chye, one of this year's captains and an All-State player last year; Simon Shimel, another captain and an all-region selection; Owen Shimel, another captain and one of

two left-handed pitchers the Spartans have this year; Peyton Merz, a sophomore who will likely round out the top four in the batting order; and Braylin Thurow, another left-handed pitcher and contact hitter.

"Owen (Shimel) is throwing hard and his ball has lots of movement. His brother, Simon (Shimel) always works hard in the off-season and has always been a leader, and Braylin has gained about 10 mph on his fastball," Carr commented about some of

his returners.

New to the team this year is Colten Sanders, a junior. Carr indicates Sanders is an athletic kid and should help the team out.

Along with sophomore returners Brady Anes and Peyton Merz, Carr will have three sophomores who will move up and down from the junior varsity team for Saturday tournaments.

Carr sees the Spartans in the top three or four of the West Michigan Conference's Rivers Division and sees

North Muskegon and Ravenna as the teams to beat in the Rivers.

The district is in Hart this year with Mason County Central, Hart, Shelby, Morley-Stanwood and White Cloud. Carr also believes his team will compete for the district title.

Central's JV team is coached by Shawn Reed and Pat Chye and Kyle Weiler will be assisting Carr on the varsity.

Carr believes, if his players can stay focused in the

few short months that are spring high school sports, they will be able to compete for the conference and beyond, and make their own exciting championship reality this season.

Central's roster:

**SENIORS:** Will Chye, Simon Shimel, Tyler Thurow, Landon Smith, Jayden Shirey.

**JUNIORS:** Owen Shimel, Brayden Overmyer, Braylin Thurow, Colten Sanders.

**SOPHOMORES:** Brady Anes, Peyton Merz.



**PLAYOFF ASSIGNMENTS**

FOR AREA TEAMS IN MHSAA PLAYOFFS

**Baseball district****DIVISION 2****AT KINGSLEY:** Big Rapids, Cadillac, Gladwin, Kingsley, **Ludington****DIVISION 3****AT HART:** Hart, Hesperia, **Mason County Central**, Morley-Stanwood, Shelby, White Cloud**AT TRAVERSE CITY CHRISTIAN:** Benzie Central, **Manistee**, Manton, Traverse City Christian, Traverse City St. Francis**DIVISION 4****AT BRETHREN:** Bear Lake, Brethren, **Manistee Catholic**, **Mason County Eastern**, Onekama**AT WESTERN MICHIGAN CHRISTIAN:** Baldwin, Blanchard Montabella, Holton, Muskegon Catholic, Western Michigan Christian, **Pentwater****Boys golf regional****DIVISION 2****AT BIG RAPIDS:** Ada Forest Hills Eastern, Allendale, Big Rapids, Cadillac, Cedar Springs, Coopersville, East Grand Rapids, Fremont, Fruitport, Grand Rapids Forest Hills Central,Grand Rapids Kenowa Hills, Grand Rapids Northview, Greenville, Lowell, **Ludington**, Orchard View, Sparta, Spring Lake, Whitehall**DIVISION 3****AT TAWAS:** Benzie Central, Boyne City, Clare, Elk Rapids, Gladwin, Grayling, **Hart**, Houghton Lake, Kalkaska, Kingsley, Lake City, **Manistee**, **Mason County Central**, West Branch Ogemaw Heights, Reed City, Remus Chippewa Hills, Shelby, Standish-Sterling, Tawas, Traverse City St. Francis**DIVISION 4****AT MUSKEGON CATHOLIC:** Bear Lake, Farwell, Frankfort, Fruitport Calvary Christian, Grandville Calvin Christian, Hesperia, Holton, **Manistee Catholic**, Manton, McBain, McBain Northern Michigan Christian, Mesick, Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart, Muskegon Catholic, Western Michigan Christian, Onekama, **Pentwater**, **Gateway to Success**, Wyoming Sri-unity Christian**Girls soccer district****DIVISION 2****AT FRUITPORT:** Coopersville, Fremont,Fruitport, **Ludington**, Muskegon, Reeths-Puffer, Spring Lake**DIVISION 3****AT NEWAYGO:** Grant, **Hart**, Manistee, Montague, Newaygo, Whitehall**Softball district****DIVISION 2****AT BIG RAPIDS:** Big Rapids, Cadillac, Gladwin, **Ludington**, West Branch Ogemaw Heights**DIVISION 3****AT HART:** Hart, **Manistee**, **Mason County Central**, Shelby**DIVISION 4****AT FRANKFORT:** Bear Lake, Brethren, Frankfort, **Manistee Catholic**, Onekama**AT HESPERIA:** Hesperia, Holton, **Mason County Eastern**, Walkerville**Girls tennis regional****DIVISION 3****AT HOLLAND CHRISTIAN:** Coopersville, Fremont, Fruitport, Holland Christian, Hudsonville Unity Christian, **Luding-**

DAILY NEWS FILE PHOTO

Ludington's Brynn Fortner swings through on a pitch last season.

ton, Sparta, Spring Lake, Whitehall

**DIVISION 4****AT TRAVERSE CITY ST. FRANCIS:** Boyne City, Charlevoix, East Jordan, Elk Rapids, Grayling, Harbor Springs, Manistee, Traverse City Christian, Traverse City St. Francis**Track regional****DIVISION 2****AT SHEPHERD:** Alma, Bay City John Glenn, Big Rapids, Cadillac, Cheboygan, Essexville Garber, Freeland, Gaylord, Gladwin, Kingsley, **Ludington**, Midland Bullock Creek, West Branch Ogemaw Heights, Petoskey, Shepherd**DIVISION 3****AT MANTON:** Benzie Central, Evart, Grand Traverse Academy, **Hart**, Lake City, LeRoy Pine River, **Manistee**, Manton, **Mason County Central**, McBain, Reed City, Remus Chippewa Hills, Shelby, Traverse City St. Francis, White Cloud**DIVISION 4****AT BRETHREN:** Baldwin, Brethren, Fruitport Calvary Christian, Hesperia, Holton, Hudsonville Libertas Christian, Manistee Catholic, **Mason County Eastern**, Muskegon Catholic, Muskegon Heights, Western Michigan Christian, Onekama, **Pentwater**, Walkerville, Wyoming Potter's House, Wyoming West Michigan Lutheran

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# Mason County Central softball

## Several return for Spartans in '23

BY DAVID BOSSICK  
MANAGING EDITOR

Mason County Central has several players returning from last season, and the Spartans are aiming to be near the top of the West Michigan Conference's Rivers Division this spring.

Jon Blake, in his fifth season as Spartans coach, has nine players returning this season including outstanding hitter and outfielder Alex Luttrell, the pitching combo of Wren Nelson and Grace Weinert and returning players Jerilyn Soberalski, Sarah Keefer, Maxie Green, Ayla Davila, Emily Adams and Riley Mast.

"We only lost to Jessica Gerbers (to graduation, a catcher)," Blake said.

The program has 34 girls signed up for softball with the lion's share playing at the junior varsity level.

"I am extremely happy that this program has come this far," Blake said. "I'm just really happy to have that kind of response this year. We didn't cut girls. We're trying to keep everybody with the JV and will dress will cer-

tain amount of players.

"It's up to the girls to earn a spot to be dressed."

The Spartans add a pair of sophomores, Elle Bendele and Emily Campbell, and Central has one freshman on the team, Aubrey Chye. Chye could factor into the pitching, Blake said.

"Wren is our No. 1 pitcher and Gracie stepped up (last season when Nelson was hurt)," Blake said. "Aubrey Chye gives us a third arm to throw this year. She is a very athletic player. I have no doubts she is going to be contributing to the varsity. She is a softball phenom. She's just amazing."

"It's hard to pull freshmen up sometimes, but I think most of the girls know around the school what she does. I think she will be a good mix to the varsity."

Central will play in the WMC's Rivers Division this spring. The Spartans will play several schools they've been accustomed to playing such as Shelby, Hart and North Muskegon. The league adds in Hesperia and Holton to the mix, too.

"We had the change in the

conference this year. I think it benefits us a little," Blake said. "(We're) just not playing those big, tough Muskegon schools. I think we can hold our own. I think we can be in the top three, at least in the top three."

With the district in Hart with Manistee and Shelby, Blake expects his team to be there playing for the title.

"I expect us to be in the championship as long as everybody stays healthy," Blake said. "We lost to Shelby, and we were just down to Gracie (pitching). She hadn't played for two years, she ended up pitching that seven-inning game."

"Wren is throwing fire right now. She's put some heat on that ball. She learned a couple of new things."

"I have four assistants helping me, including a pitching coach. He's helping me with the pitchers this year. I think with the staff I have, I'm able to give each position more attention. I think it's going to benefit us this year and hopefully result in some more wins."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Members of the Mason County Central softball team, front row, from left, Aylin Davila, Maxie Green, GERALYN Soberalski, Emily Adams and Alex Luttrell; back row, Lillian Gregory, Ellie Bendele, Riley Mast, Gracie Wienert, Sarah Keefer and Aubrey Chye. Not pictured: Wren Nelson and Emma Reid.

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## Mason County Eastern track

## Cardinals strive for success in '23

BY CHRISTY CHRISTMAS  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

In 30 years of coaching various sports, Ben Knizacky knows how much things change from year to year and he knows, to be successful, you have to be willing to try different things, sometimes different events with kids.

Knizacky started coaching the boys track team in 2007 and two years later took over the girls team as well. He coaches because he loves it.

"Every year you learn something new," said Knizacky. "You have to have a passion for it."

Eastern has some strong athletes back on the boys team, but also graduated Eli Shoup and Trevor Stimes, two very good athletes who contributed greatly last year to the boys team. The girls team graduated Hillary Howe and Corinna Hernandez off the squad, both were state medalists in 2022.

But losing those successful athletes means others have the opportunity to step up and make their mark. Returning on the boys team as a senior is Nathan Wing.

"Nate is quite an athlete," said Knizacky. "He is going to work with the middle distance. He was a member of the 3,200-meter relay team that medaled at state last year and will run that again."

Mason Perski, the other returning senior on the boys team, may take a leg of that 3,200 relay team as Eli Shoup graduated and Knizacky will need to replace him on the relay. Last year's team place seventh at state and ran 8:33.48.

Juniors returning are Jude Mickevich (shot, discus), Dakota Matzen (sprints) and Clayton Shoup (throwing events/relays).

Sophomores are Noah O'Connor (sprint relays/long jump), Henry Malburg (long distances) and Alexander Tyndall (1,600/3,200).

Sophomore Ron Hasenbank will run the hurdles and freshman Darin Fiester will throw. Devon Gauthier is another thrower, out for track for the first time as a freshman.

"We have no pole vaulter or high jump guys," said Knizacky. "It's hard getting started, to get everyone together, to know for sure what you have."

For the girls team, returning as seniors are Miriam Manier (relays/long jump), Deanna Codman (sprints/relays), Adrianna Bosley (thrower) and Janessa Alvesteffer (ankle injury to start season). Senior Ciearah Matlock is out and will throw discus and shot put.

Juniors returning are Kennady Tyler (pole vault) and Olivia Wing (suffered knee injury in basketball).

The sophomore class is Knizacky's largest in number and is very talented. Payton Haynes has been competing in indoor events this winter in the pole vault and hurdles and shows promise early. Mallory Jean Oomen and Keeli Johnson are both throwers, and the team adds Kaden Robinson (sprints/sprint relays) and Isabella Gulembo (400/middle distance relays).

Miley Kessel joins the team as a freshman and will tackle the hurdles, while Alana Hopkins will pole vault.

Knizacky is blessed with a group of foreign exchange students who will contribute to the girls team this spring. Eline Cochereau is from France and will run middle distance and relays, Elena



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Members of the Mason County Eastern boys track team are, front row, from left, Daniel Bothwell, Henry Malburg, Mason Perski and Ron Hasenbank; back row, Darin Feister, Nate Wing, Devon Gauthier, Jude Mickevich, Evan Martin, Dakota Matzen, Noah O'Conner, Alex Tyndall and Clay Shoup.



Members of the Mason County Eastern girls track team are, front row, from left, Miley Kessel, Elena Hopkins, Eline Cochereau, Payton Haynes, Deanna Codman, Keeli Johnson, Kaden Robinson and Malu Viana Montanher; back row, Mallory Oomen, Maria Pancho Gomez, Olivia Wing, Kennady Tyler, Maria Jimenez, Elena Buss, Janessa Alvesteffer, Adriana Bosley, Caterina Tomba, Ciearah (CJ) Matlock and Isabella Gulembo.

SEE TRACK, PAGE 17



## Mason County Eastern softball

# Four sophomores to lead softball team

BY CHRISTY CHRISTMAS  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

After some concern about whether or not Mason County Eastern would have enough players to field a softball team this spring, first year coach Jennifer Whitaker says, "several girls are playing so there are enough to have a team, which is really nice."

"We are an inexperienced team," Whitaker said. "It will be interesting to see how much we are able to improve as we play against teams with more experience."

Eastern has just five returners from last season's squad and four of them are sophomores: McKenzie Boulton, Avery Crawford, Kaden Robinson and Ashlynn Matlock and one junior, Kennady Tyler.

Several of the seniors are foreign exchange students who will be learning the game of softball. But seniors Lillian Morely-Miller and Adriana Bosley are strong girls, and Whitaker believes they will step in to their role nicely.

Freshman Miley Kessel, as well as Boulton, will be counted on to do much of the pitching and Tyler will

be catching. Other than those positions, Whitaker has not had enough practice time with the girls to know specific positions.

Like most of the spring sports, there has been little time to get outside for practice.

"The first couple games will be trial and error, hopefully less error," Whitaker commented. "We have focused a lot on batting in the gym."

Nine of the 12 girls on the team also run track. According to Whitaker, the girls are excited and have been coming to practice excited.

Whitaker indicated there may be a small softball conference this spring as some of the other schools in the Western Michigan D League, from what she hears, are struggling to field teams as well. Depending on how the girls improve throughout the season, they could do well in the conference.

"I've always wanted to coach," Whitaker said. "This is a couple years earlier than I thought it might be, but I am excited."

Whitaker is anxious to make her mark on Eastern softball as a varsity coach.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Members of the Mason County Eastern softball team are, front row, from left, Kennedy Tyler and Miley Kessel; back row, Ashlynn Matlock, Madison MacKenzie, Avery Crawford, Kaden Robinson, Kirsten Bacon, Malu Montanher, Adriana Bosley and Lillian Morley-Miller. Not pictured: McKenzie Boulton.

She has been coaching at the younger levels, since tee-ball, and seven years in the recreation league.

"A couple rebuilding years and then we have some athletes coming and MCE softball should be back to where

it has been," she added. "It is fun and watching them advance is great. I'm very excited about this position and about what we might be able to do."

Skylar Harry will be assisting Whitaker this spring and

husband, Caleb Whitaker will be the scorekeeper.

Cardinal roster:

**SENIORS:** Maria Gomez Jimenez, Lillian Morely-Miller, Adriana Bosley, Maria Pancho Gomez and Malu Viana Mon-

tanher.

**JUNIOR:** Kennady Tyler  
**SOPHOMORES:** Kirsten Bacon, McKenzie Boulton, Avery Crawford, Madison Mackenzie, Ashlynn Matlock and Kaden Robinson.

**FRESHMAN:** Miley Kessel.

## Mason County Eastern baseball

# Cardinals enter with plenty of inexperience

BY CHRISTY CHRISTMAS  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

After graduating seven starters off Mason County Eastern's baseball team over the past two years, the Cardinals are rebuilding and will be small in number and will need to gain experience as the sea-

son moves forward.

"We don't need to be good right off the bat, we need to improve throughout the season," said sixth year varsity coach Ward Stever. "We need to build up a little confidence going into districts."

Mason County Eastern had a strong senior class a year ago and

the team relied heavily on its talent. The few returners on this year's squad will be called on heavily to lead and teach the new players.

Keegan Nelson, a sophomore, was all-conference honorable mention a year ago, getting experience pitching in 2022. Nelson will also

play first and third when he is not on the mound.

James Drake pitched last year, but Drake sustained an injury in basketball and will not play this season. He also played shortstop and was a first team all-conference and an all-district selection.

Zach Howe is a returning junior

and will catch and pitch, along with duties as a utility player. Clay Shoup, another returning junior will play outfield, second base and this year will add shortstop to his position coverage.

Two additional sophomores will

SEE BASEBALL, PAGE 17



## Hart girls track

## Hart looks to continue title pedigree

BY BRENDAN SAMUELS  
OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL

Female runners at Hart have built quite the legacy not only in West Michigan, but across the state. Prior to the girls cross country team's fourth place finish in the 2022 state finals, it won five titles back-to-back. Then last spring, the track team claimed its first in program history.

A state title is always the goal for any team, but for the Pirates it's become an expectation now. Head coach Calvin Ackley is well aware of that and his focus is on adding yet another trophy to the overflowing case inside Hart High School.

"We are excited for the opportunity to win another title back-to-back. We think

SEE PIRATES, PAGE 21



BRENDAN SAMUELS | OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL

Members of the Hart girls track team are, front row, from left, Addison Hain, Rosemary Hernandez, Kenai Kokx, Lexie Nienhuis, Jasmyne Villanueva, Alyson Enns, Abby Pretty and Jenny DeBrot; middle row, assistant Michael Tubbs, girls coach Calvin Ackley, Grace Hallack, Brooklyn Carter, Lillian Hallack, Imogene Brumbaugh, Lauren Pretty, Harriet Kidder, Lilly Hopkins, Lauren Hopkins, Shelby Choponis and assistant Lauren Butkevich; back row, assistant Abe Enns, assistant Austin Enns and boys coach Ken Kimes. Not pictured: Savanna Owens, Aspen Boutell, Rosie Alvesteffer, Jessie Jazwinski, Laura Bitely, Rylee Ruggles and Addi Hovey.

## BASEBALL: Inexperienced Cardinals

FROM PAGE 16

return, Ron Hasenbank (catcher, centerfield, second and pitcher) and Clayton Logsdon (outfield).

New to the team this spring are freshmen Aaron Drake, AJ LaPointe and Daniel Bothwell and sophomore Ty Goble. Aaron Drake will play centerfield, shortstop and pitcher and shows some promising accuracy. Bothwell will be in the outfield, LaPointe will also play outfield as well as third base.

Stever is impressed with Ty Goble, saying, "He has never played (baseball) before, but is a natural."

"All of these kids are going to get some utility work," Stever commented. "There is nothing wrong with learning

to play multiple positions."

Graduating a pitcher like Wyatt Crawford is tough on a team. Crawford is now playing for Alpena Community College. A number of the players will see time on the mound and see what they are capable of for the Cardinals.

"We are going to pitch by committee this year," Stever said.

Eastern will be faced with stiff competition in the Western Michigan D League. Stever indicated Marion went undefeated in the league in 2022 and said, "nobody graduated." He also sees Mesick and Bear Lake as powerhouses and thinks MCE has a realistic goal of fourth in the league.

As far as post-season is

concerned, Stever said, "In the six years I've coached, we have made the district championship game every year. We only won one, but we have been there every year."

Eastern will face off with Brethren, Manistee Catholic Central and Bear Lake in the district tournament. Stever believes the team's success is in the draw and in the amount of confidence his inexperienced team can develop over the season.

Eastern's roster:

**JUNIORS:** Clayton Shoup and Zachary Howe.

**SOPHOMORES:** Keegan Nelson, Clayton Logsdon, Ron Hasenbank and Ty Goble.

**FRESHMEN:** Aaron Drake, Daniel Bothwell and AJ LaPointe.

## TRACK: Looking for success this season

FROM PAGE 15

Buss comes from Germany and will high jump and run the 300 hurdles. Catarina Tomba hails from Italy and will high jump. Maria Panch Gomez will run the 300 hurdles and Maria Gomez Jimenez will throw.

"I have kids who have confidence," Knizacky stated. "They feel good about the success of the running programs at MCE."

Knizacky indicates it is hard to say who is favored in the Western Michigan D League for the boys, but, "You have to know Marion is going to come with big numbers and it comes down to where do our strengths match up with them."

In the girls league race,

"Brethren had a good group of young girls last year," said Knizacky. "Could be Marion, Brethren and Mason County Eastern."

In regionals, Knizacky is hoping his teams will be competitive.

"Our goal is to be as successful as possible at the upper level, at state. We will be trying different things, to see where the kids will be successful."

Helping Knizacky with the middle school program will be Cayla Boundy and husband Justin Boundy.

Eastern's girls roster:

**SENIORS:** Jenessa Alvesteffer, Adriana Bosley, Elena Buss, Deanna Codman, Maria Gomez Jimenez, Miriam Manier,

Ciearah Matlock, Maria Panch Gomez, Caterina Tomba, Malu Viana Montanher.

**JUNIORS:** Kennady Tyler, Olivia Wing.

**SOPHOMORES:** Eline Cochereau, Isabella Gulembo, Payton Haynes, Keeli Johnson, Mallory Jean Oomen, Kaden Robinson.

**FRESHMEN:** Elena Hopkins, Miley Kessel.

Eastern's boys roster:

**SENIORS:** Mason Perski, Nathan Wing.

**JUNIORS:** Evan Martin, Dakota Matzen, Jude Mickevich, Clayton Shoup.

**SOPHOMORES:** Darin Feister, Ronald Hasenbank, Henry Malburg, Noah O'Conner, Alexander Tyndall.



## Hart baseball

# Pirates relying on youthful roster

BY BRENDAN SAMUELS  
OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL

Coming off a trip to the district final in 2022, Hart baseball is hoping to close the gap that led to a 10-0 mercy rule loss to Reed City in the fifth inning. The biggest piece of that journey will be the return of experienced leaders.

With the losses of both Brandon VanderZanden and the Charron twins, Hart has some pretty big shoes to fill in its lineup.

Stepping into the biggest leadership role this year will be the squad's lone senior Kyan Clark — a captain for the Pirates in 2023.

"Kyan is a key returner for sure. He is our only senior on this year's team and the role of a captain fits him well," Hart head coach David Riley said. "He has a great way of keeping the team focused but loose at the same time. He's a strong hitter for us, and I really think he will be an anchor for us in the middle of the line-up."

Joining Clark as a key returner is junior Blake Weirich. Weirich has played on the varsity team all three years of his high school career so he knows what it takes to succeed. As he did last year, Weirich will be at the forefront of the pitching rotation.

That's not all however, as Riley called Weirich "one of our best defenders, no matter where we put him in the field."

It'll be vital for Weirich to make a jump not only from an athletic standpoint but as a leader. The Pirates figure to roll out a starting lineup that includes five underclassmen.

"They'll have their share of learning moments, but I guarantee they will be better for it," Riley said. "One of the best parts of coaching is



BRENDAN SAMUELS | OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL

Members of Hart's varsity baseball team include, front row, from left, Eian Sawdy, Tyler Vanderzanden, Halen Boos, Noah Smith and coach Dave Riley; back row, assistant John Butler, Carter Ramseyer, Blake Weirich, Ty Schlukibir, Avery Guikema, Brendan Hiddema and Kyan Clark. Not pictured: Mitchell Slade.

the ability to put a younger player right in the thick of it and watch his response. It fits right in with our purpose of athletics which is to prepare our athletes to take lessons learned in sports into the rest of their lives."

The underclassmen in question will include sophomores Ty Schlukibir and Carter Ramseyer. Schlukibir will slot in next to Weirich as a starting pitcher and will man a position in the outfield when he's not on the mound. Ramseyer will also pitch, but his primary position will be on the infield.

Riley was also excited to see juniors Tyler Vanderzanden and Noah Smith.

VanderZanden is another pitcher in the rotation, but — like Ramseyer — will find his home in the infield. Though his defense is important, VanderZanden's on-base percentage is something his coach values more.

Regardless of who is on the field, Riley is looking for improvement within league play. Hart finished with an 11-13 record a season ago and its biggest goal is to im-

prove within the conference standings in 2023.

"After struggling in the league schedule a season ago, we are obviously striv-

ing to find WMC wins," Riley said. "Our top two pitchers will bring lessons learned from some of those tough games to help reach some of

those milestone victories.

"We are praising the process with a belief that results will happen as a consequence of our hard work."

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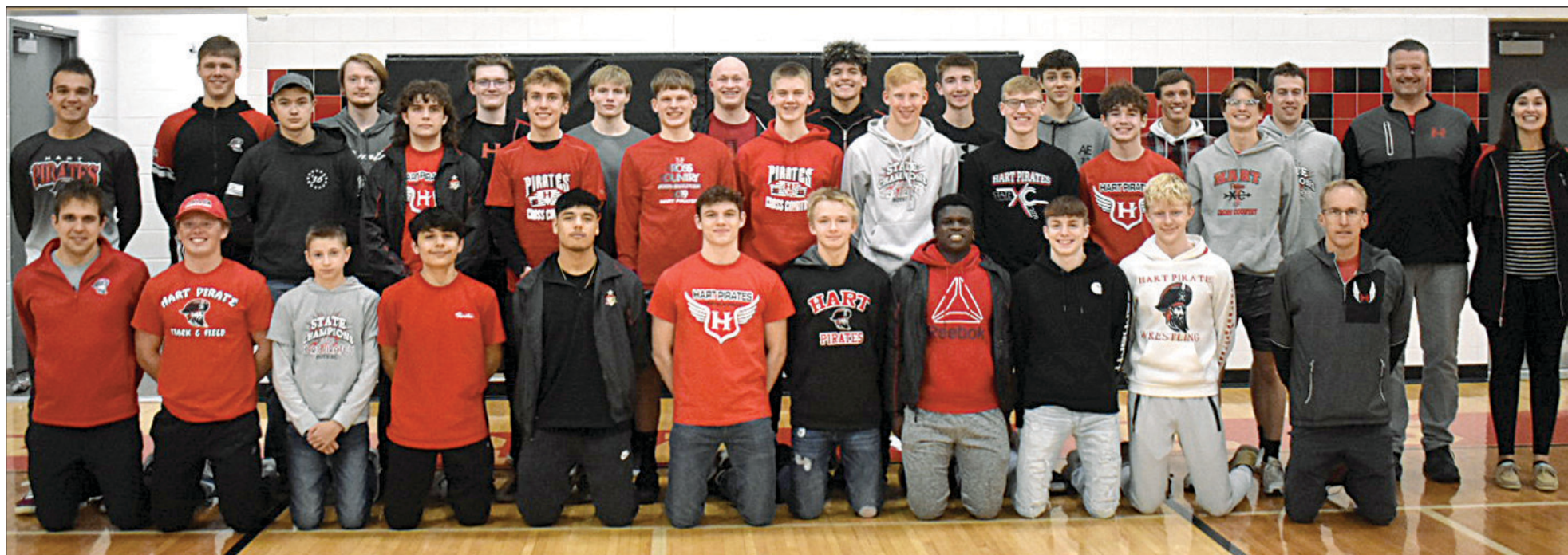
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Members of the Hart boys track team are, front row, from left, assistant Austin Enns, assistant Michael Tubbs, Ethan Schaner, Juan Rodriguez, Joseluis Andaverde, Connor Edwards, Blake Helenhouse, Emanuel Hertzler, Hunter Chaffee, Elon Babbins and girls coach Calvin Ackley; middle row, assistant Abe Enns, Blane Bromley, Matt Frasier, Clayton Ackley, Bryce Vander Kodde, Jack Slotman, Seth Ackley, Wyatt Dean, Kaden Bond and Easton Vander Zwaag; back row, Caleb Ackley, Theodore Stone, Payden Stone, Revin Gale, Kellen Kimes, Guillermo Ortega, Chase Lorenz, Caleb Westerbeek, Max Stitt, Caleb Bitely, boys coach Ken Kimes and assistant Lauren Butkevich. Not pictured: Mason Hoeker, Jose Chavira, Lyric Fielder, Julio Sarabia, Nicolas Ramirez, Josef Bromley, Pablo Ortega-Rubio, Chase Gale, Gregory Escamilla, Tyler Larios-Mendez and Jagger Lennon.

## Hart boys track

# Pirates focused on maximizing potential

BY BRENDAN SAMUELS  
OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL

Ken Kimes knows exactly what kind of talent he has on his roster and the expectations that come with it. With five seniors returning — all of which have committed to competing at the college level — leadership and skill is something of a luxury for the Pirates boys track and field team.

“Every coach wishes to be in the situation we are in now here at Hart,” Kimes said. “We have a bunch of talent returning, some new kids that will be adding talent and a group that has come into the season much stronger than last year. I truly believe we will be the team to beat in 2023.”

Becoming that “team to beat” this year might not be that large of a leap. A year ago,

the Pirates placed fifth at the MHSAA Division 3 state meet — only nine points removed from the eventual state champion Lansing Catholic.

The usual suspects are back at the helm for Hart. Clayton and Seth Ackley along with Wyatt Dean are fresh off attaining Hart’s first state title in boys cross country this past fall. Ken’s son Kellen looks to build on an already impressive resume in the throwing events — a list of accolades that landed him with Division 1 Liberty University come next year.

Clayton and Seth are both valuable distance runners for the Pirates. Clayton took home a fourth place finish in the 3,200-meter event — with a personal record time of 9:33.50 — and his cousin Seth finished in 11th in the same event.

Also back is Revin Gale, one

of Hart’s top sprinters and a key member of the 400 meter relay team that placed 12th at the state meet last year.

“We can’t reach our goals without those young men,” Ken Kimes said of his core group of returners. “Most participated in the indoor track series that Michigan is fortunate to have and did very well this winter. Every teammate is important. This year we have depth in many events.”

That depth is highlighted by the strengthening of the sprinters. Gale has his usual spot, but guys like Hunter Chaffee, Eman Hertzler, Connor Edwards and JoseLuis Anaverde have all looked good in the spring’s early going.

Add to that the new addition of senior Guillermo Ortega who will likely compete in the high jump for Hart, and the boys team is well on its way to

another standout campaign.

That season is already underway with the Pirates having already taken part in the Lake Indoor Challenge at Grand Valley State University. Hart had several top-10 finishes in that meet alone, something that has done nothing to temper the expectations of their coach.

“Since we are starting out so strong, I have really big expectations,” Ken Kimes said. “There is a long way to go, but during spring break we had more athletes show up than in any other year since I’ve been here. This shows the motivation behind the scenes.”

That motivation is set by the only goal Ken says that his team has this year.

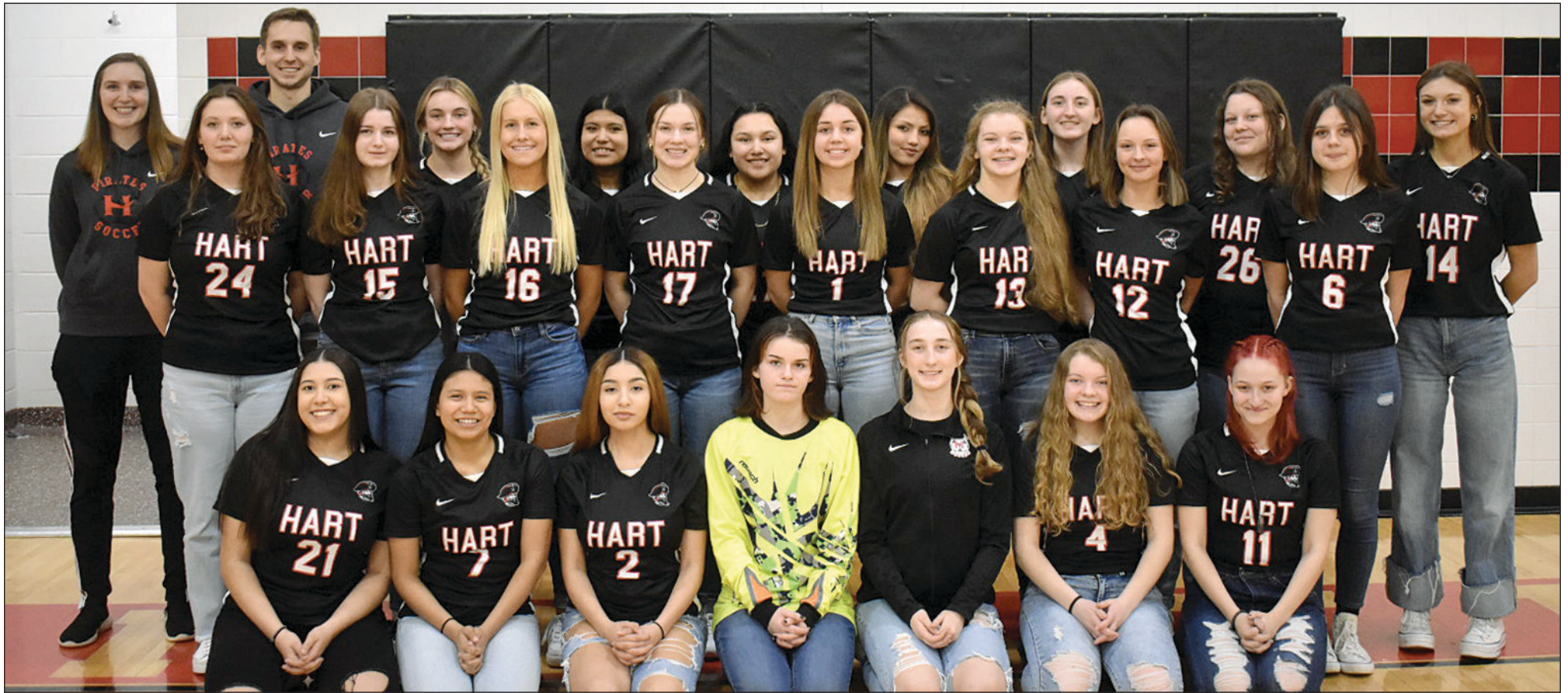
“This is simple enough for our boys team. Our goals are to win our league, our regional and the state championship.”



BRENDAN SAMUELS | OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL

Hart’s Kellen Kimes competes at the Hart & Sole Invitational earlier this season.





BRENDAN SAMUELS | OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL

Members of Hart's varsity girls soccer team include, front row, from left, Lara Soares, Brianna Arjona, Mercedes Torres, Emma Jeffries, Mya Chickering, Sydney Goodrich and April Chaffee; middle row, Payton Lindgren, Pia Huebert, Julia Greiner, Mariana VanAgtsmael, Brooklyn Storms, Marissa Goodrich, Kailey Edenburn, Rocio Catalan and Athena Thocher; back row, assistant Taylor Gilbert, coach Joe Gilbert, Breslin Porter, Melanie Arjona, Cristelia Rangel, Sandy Salgado and Faith Vander Vlucht.

## Hart girls soccer

# Daunting WMC schedule awaits Pirates

BY BRENDAN SAMUELS  
OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL

Joe Gilbert made no bones about his thoughts on the realignment of the West Michigan Conference when Hart boys soccer began play in the fall. Long story short, Gilbert wasn't a fan of the new additions without the separation into divisions that other sports teams have enjoyed.

Now taking on that same slate of games with his girls team in the spring, Gilbert wants his team to compete in every game, including winning the tournament they host. The key to that? Being the authors of their own story.

"This year's team is looking to write our own story," Gilbert said. "Hart has been in the media quite a bit lately for the year it is having. We are facing greater difficulty than most of the teams as our conference for soccer has gotten significantly more difficult since the realignment. We are looking to write our own story that is about us, not the rest of the school and not how our team — that has struggled — is now facing an even greater uphill battle."

That uphill battle should be made easier with the crop of returning talent the Pirates have to deal with. Coming

back are names like Sydney and Marissa Goodrich — the latter of which will be sidelined with injury to start the year — Julia Greiner and Cristelia Rangel among others.

Each of those girls provides their own skill set and each will have different expectations from Gilbert. Sydney Goodrich will be leaned upon to create more chances in the final third of the field while also bringing her incisive dribbling to create more scoring opportunities. Greiner will be one to take the top off the defense down the wings, allowing her to cross balls into the box and take shots off the dribble.

Rangel is what Gilbert defines as a metronome due to her control in tempo and ability as a playmaker.

"(Rangel) is great because she can play in a deep lying midfield position due to her great situational awareness," Gilbert said. "She can also play in the trequartista role further up the pitch. We will also be looking forward to her taking advantage of more set piece chances."

Those are just a few of the girls Gilbert listed. Melanie Arjona and Sandy Salgado will be tasked with manning the backline and keeping the defense in order.

There will be some new fac-

es as well, but the biggest one will be Maya Chickering who will take over goalkeeping duties from Maricruz Anaverde. Chickering is known best as an outside hitter for the Pirates' volleyball team, but Gilbert is hoping her athleticism and jumping abilities will translate in front of the net.

Freshman Emma Jeffries will be on standby at that same position, where she'll deputize Chickering.

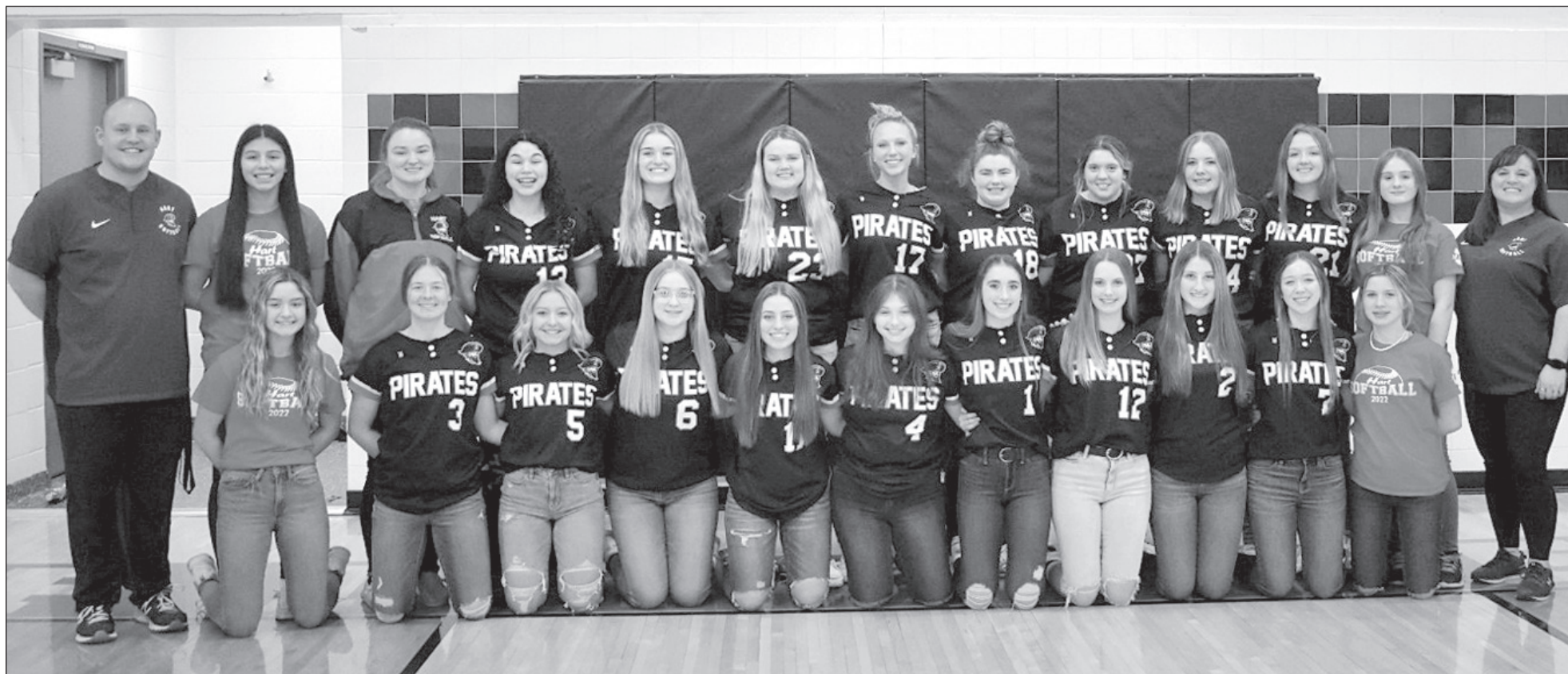
After finishing 4-14-2 with a quick exit in the district tournament to Shelby in 2022, hopes are high that the Pirates could make a significant leap this year. That starts with continuing to compete and

reducing the number of mercy rule losses. After suffering eight of those in 2021, Hart saw only three a year ago.

"Our link up play improved, our defensive numbers were much improved, we scored against more teams and only suffered three mercy defeats," Gilbert said. "We are expecting all of these trends to continue as we rebuild a program from the ground up. We are looking to keep scores closer, continue to improve our competitiveness in conference play and get a few more wins under our belt."

"We are going to look to define our own season."





BRENDAN SAMUELS | OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL

## Hart softball

Members of Hart's varsity softball team include manager Caydence Bateson, Abby Hicks, Mackenna Carrier, Leah Walker, Lauryn Greiner, Jaden Whelpley, Nora Chickering, Trisha Sauser, Presley Ervay, Addison Schiller, manager Cali Eisenlohr, coach Dean DeVries, manager Reese Smith, Rayah Helenhouse, Gabrielle Quijas, Gabby Schmieding, Makayla Rockwell, Kelsey Copenhaver, Julia Bishop, Hailey Bond, Maryn Klotz, Rhyllly Brown, manager Elissa Tanis, assistant Jill Tanis and assistant Jamison Kistler.

## PIRATES: Hart girls track program seeks to remain as one of top teams in region

FROM PAGE 17

we have a good chance," Ackley said. "The girls are confident and focused after winning it last year, but we need to stay healthy. More exciting would be the chance of our boys winning it, too. That's only been done twice in (Division 3) history. It would be amazing and something never imagined to see Hart win 10 titles in six years in cross country and track by the end of spring 2023. We are dreaming big."

As is the case every year, Hart will have to look to replace their graduating seniors from a year ago. This year, that group includes

three standout athletes in Kendall Williamson, Lauren VanderLaan and Audrey Enns. VanderLaan and Williamson alone were two anchors in the 400-meter relay that placed second at the state meet last year.

The Pirates are showing that their underclassmen are shining, too. Sophomores Jessica Jazwinski and Alyson Enns are both fresh off All-State honors in cross country, with the former snagging an individual state championship. Add in senior Aspen Boutell and sophomore Addi Hovey and the Pirates figure to have a strong core to work with.

"It will be very challeng-

ing to replace (Williamson, Enns and VanderLaan) no doubt," Ackley said. "We do have some freshmen that can help fill those roles and return athletes to fill in. Alyson Enns is healthy this year and with the growth of our returners, we are hoping it will be enough. There are some teams in the state that will improve so time will tell. "(Boutell, Alyson Enns, Jazwinski and Hovey) are certainly key to our team if they can stay healthy. What I love, too, is that they are extremely hard workers, and they know what it takes to be great. Their mentality spreads to their teammates."

Ackley has plenty to be ex-

cited about after seeing his team in action at the GVSU Laker Challenge Indoor in March. Jazwinski grabbed a pair of first place finishes

in that competition, claiming top spots in the 800- and 1,600-meter events.

The Pirates' relay teams also showed plenty to be ex-

cited about the 1,600 relay team placed fourth with Laura Bitely, Jazwinski, Savanna Owens and Addison Hain competing.

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Members of the Pentwater baseball team are, front row, from left, Brody Austin, Lauren Davis, Mandi Sayles, Wyatt Roberts, Malichi Bigsby, Gavi Olivarez and Seth Rupright; back row, coach Anthony Davis, Abram Kieda, James Davis, Michael Sprout, Benjamin Merten and assistant Adam Lamb.

## Pentwater baseball

# Falcons looks to rebuild program

BY BRENDAN SAMUELS  
OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL

It's a new era for Pentwater baseball. The Falcons weren't able to field a team last season due to low numbers, but they're back after a year away. The coaching position will look a bit different as well. Ralph Baker has taken a step back allowing for Anthony Davis to grab the reins.

"I am excited to be able to play and so are the kids," Davis said. "It's going to be a learning season considering most of the kids have never played high school ball. I'm hoping to pull off a couple wins

and for the kids to have fun and enjoy the game."

The last time we saw the Pentwater baseball team was in 2021 where it posted a 4-13 overall record before going 1-1 in the district tournament.

On the mound this year, Pentwater will have Malachi Bigsby back and according to Davis, he's throwing pretty consistently. Gavi Olivarez is also back to form a tandem with Bigsby behind the plate. Olivarez is a great hustle player and figures to be solid hitting the ball as well.

Mike Sproul is another returner that Davis is excited to see. Sproul

will be an effective defender for the Falcons as he takes his usual spot in the outfield.

Those three will play key leadership roles for Pentwater, considering the remainder of the roster will be fairly new to the game. Davis is still figuring out positions for everyone else on the team at this point.

Among the new faces to the program will be freshman Brody Austin. Austin has started this year playing shortstop and according to his coach, his bat is extremely active. Abraham Kieda has taken over the first base position as a newcomer.

A quick look over the roster shows two girls in the lineup as well. After a successful 2022 season for Pentwater's softball team, they find themselves short of fielding a team this year. Not wanting to miss a season on the diamond, Mandi Sayles and Lauren Davis have both joined their male counterparts this year.

"There are two softball players on the team," Davis said. "Mandi Sayles is playing second base and is killing it. Lauren Davis wanted to be a manager and keep stats, but she started having fun playing in practice and decided to play as well. I think it's great that

they want to play and I look forward to seeing them contribute."

With such a young and inexperienced group, Pentwater doesn't figure to be making any deep playoff pushes in the near future. That isn't what Davis is trying to do in his first season as coach however. The focus is purely on incremental improvement, learning the game and enjoying the game of baseball.

"My goals for this year are to teach the fundamentals of the game," Davis said. "(I want to) keep kids interested in playing for seasons to come."



## Pentwater track

# Strong core primes Pentwater track

BY BRENDAN SAMUELS  
OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL

Outweighing losses from graduating seniors with a bevy of returning talent is always a key to sustained success. That bodes well for Pentwater track and field after a strong showing at the Division 4 state meet a year ago looks to bleed over into 2023.

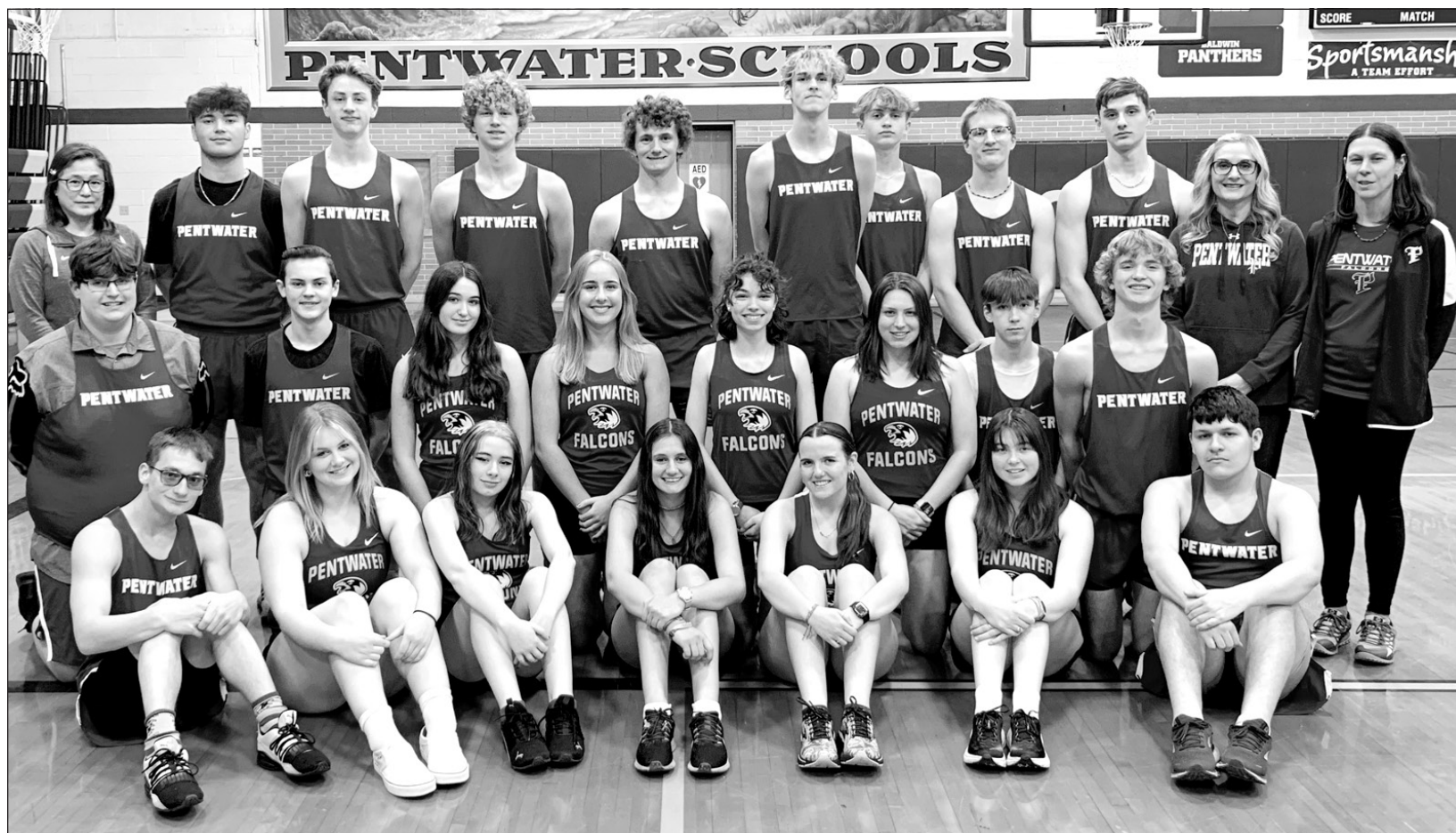
The first step to that continued success will rest on the shoulders of budding stars on both the boys and girls teams.

For the boys, junior Abe VanDuinen has already shown a propensity for greatness in the season's initial action. With a time of 10:19.80 in the 3,200-meter at Manistee's Early Bird Meet on April 5, VanDuinen placed first while simultaneously setting a new school record. According to his coach Erika Fatura, that's the first of what could be many for the Falcons' star.

"Abe already set a school record in his very first meet," Fatura said. "He broke the 3,200-meter record and is looking to break the 1,600-meter record. (Abe) and his sister Anna VanDuinen have been training hard all winter and it really shows. They both have very specific goals for the season."

Abe isn't the only one on the boys' team that's been turning heads however. The Falcons have a new chess piece to maneuver this year as sophomore Will Werkema-Grondsma makes a return to the track for the first time since sixth grade.

Werkema-Grondsma was a star on Pentwater's basketball team and his speed on the court was apparent. He will fill the shoes of graduated runners like Reydyn Hugo and Campbell Miller who were key pieces of the Falcons' relay teams.



Members of the Pentwater track teams are, front row, from left, Lane Rood, Mackenna Hasil, Eliana Mandarano, Lauren Davis, Ireland Breitner, Abby Hughes and Rolando Salgado; second row, Kaiden Carter, Mitchel Daniels, Isabel Lopez, Audrey Kieda, Ana Garcia, Anna VanDuinen, Wyatt Roberts and Benjamin Merten; back row, assistant Yumiko Nyberg, Zachary Schwarz, Abe VanDuinen, William Werkema-Grondsma, James Davis, Elijah Powers, Trey Johnson, Kaleb Brown, Logan Fatura, coach Erika Fatura and assistant Carrie VanDuinen.

DAVID BOSSICK | DAILY NEWS

Add in Lane Rood and Kaleb Brown and the Falcons might just prove the old adage "speed kills." Brown — like VanDuinen — had a dominant showing in Pentwater's first action of 2023, taking first place in every event he competed in including the 40-meter, 400 relay, 1,600 relay and long jump. Rood was a top-five finisher in all four of his events as well.

The girls side may not be quite as strong as the boys, but they do feature some bell ringers that Fatura is excited about. One of those

is senior Anna VanDuinen, making Pentwater track a family affair.

Anna, just like her brother, took first place in the girls 3,200 meter run at Manistee's Early Bird Meet. That was the only event she ran in, but it was enough to show what this season could hold for her.

Then there's junior Emily Schwarz, a talented dancer that has transitioned her skills to the high jump.

"Emily continues to be so talented in dance and there is no doubt her dedication

to it will continue to help her excel in high jump," Fatura said. "Seeing pictures of her on stage, we are always amazed at how high she can leap in the air."

The Falcons also have a slew of new additions on the girls side. Ana Garcia and Isabel Lopez are exchange students that Fatura has enjoyed watching find their niche on the team. Eliana Mandarano is new to organized sports, but her team has rallied around her and helped show her the ropes.

With plenty of high hopes

floating around Fatura's head, there is a big-bad that remains on her mind. Marion, a Western Michigan D League opponent, figures to show up this year with a strong boys team.

"We are hoping to be strong in the WMD conference, especially with the boys team," Fatura said. "Our focus is likely more long term as we look at regionals and states to see where their potential is as far as advancing on. We have strong relays and they are pretty focused on taking

those to state this year. We also have some individuals who are hoping to advance to state and possibly medal there.

"As always we put a big focus on personal records. We love the sport so much, as it is quantitative and easy to measure growth. Having these athletes believe in themselves, set goals, see the results of hard work, support their teammates and strive to do their best is what coaching is all about. We are looking forward to a fantastic 2023 season."



# Manistee Catholic baseball

## Sabers young but experienced

BY GREG GIELCZYK  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — Its youth is a little deceptive. Just about everybody is back from last year for the Manistee Catholic baseball team that lost, 8-5, in the district semifinals.

So, while on paper the Sabers would seem to be beginning a rebuilding season, that's not entirely true. It's more a case of just continued growth.

Coach Dillon Rankin has between 12 and 13 players getting ready for the start of a new season with the energetic enthusiasm of youth, as well as the strength of confidence gained from seeing playing time.

A quick glance would indicate cautious optimism with a roster that includes four or five freshmen, but they all played as eighth graders last year.

Lee Pizana is the lone senior, but he not only brings vast experience to the fold, he has embraced his role as the Sabers' recognized leader.

He'll be expected to help with the growth of the younger players.

Manistee Catholic's roster:

**SENIOR:** Lee Pizana.

**JUNIORS:** Ryker Capling, Matthew Gunia, Nathan Oleniczak.

**SOPHOMORE:** Tyler Hallead.

**FRESHMEN:** Landyn Kequom, Brandon Brindle, Andrew Hybza, Ersie Schmidt, Nathaniel Barnett.

**EIGHTH GRADERS:** Elijah Lohan, Finnegan Nicholson.

Naturally, all need to compete in other sports at a small school like Manistee Catholic, and double up in the spring running for the track team.



GREG GIELCZYK | DAILY NEWS

Members of the Manistee Catholic baseball team are, front row, from left, Landon Kequom, Andrew Hybza, Nathan Oleniczak, Diego Gamarra and Elija Logan; back row, Ersie Schmidt, Brandon Brindle, Ryker Capling, Lee Pizana, Nathaniel Barnett, Tyler Hallead and coach Dillon Rankin.

Pizana will be used at different positions throughout the season, including pitching, and occasionally in the outfield although he's primarily an infielder.

"Our freshmen were eighth graders on the team last year, and they were eighth graders who played," said Rankin. "They understand what we're trying to do, and they'll stick to the fundamentals."

"They have the experience, and they'll play the outfield. I had eighth graders pitch for me last year. They got a year under their belt."

"We're going to be throw-

ing a lot of arms. It's going to be all hands on deck. If somebody's not throwing, they'll be somewhere on the infield or the outfield."

Rankin added that the Sabers are going to pride themselves on defense, with the pitching coaxing ground balls and flyballs to get their outs.

If there are a few strikeouts sprinkled in there, so much the better.

"We're going to rely on our defense, and take pride in having each other's back," Rankin said, "and just know that if we throw strikes, we can win games."

"Nathan Oleniczak is go-

ing to be behind the dish (catching) for the most part, and probably Tyler (Hallead) as well. We're looking for leadership from Nathan. He's got to be the general back there."

Rankin added that Oleniczak must be confident in his decisions, and keep the ball in front. He's been working on blocking the ball and framing pitches.

Around the infield Rankin has a tentative lineup that features Kequom at first base, Hybza at second, Oleniczak at third and Hallead at short.

Matthew Gunia, a first-

year junior, has impressed Rankin with his ability to track down flyballs in the outfield, and Capling will play center with his good speed a major asset.

Offensively, the Sabers just want to put the ball in play.

"We want to find the barrel, and we want to hit line drives," Rankin said. "We want to really stay in our approach at the plate. We understand that strikes are going to be called, and we want to be aggressive, but we want to be under control as well."

"Confidence is key. Good

two-strike hitting, and understand if we're in a two-strike approach, what that means. Are we hunting fastballs, are we hunting curve balls? That's in-game adjustments."

"Taking good cuts is important. We want to bunt the ball well. Bunting is a huge part of the game, and we want to make sure we do that correctly."

As for the West Michigan D League, the Sabers would certainly like to finish on top when the dust settles at the end. But Rankin says it'll be a tough road with so many good teams.



## Manistee Catholic track

# Low numbers for Sabers this spring

BY GREG GIELCZYK  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — After vying for the Western Michigan D League track title the last few years, Manistee Catholic's low numbers this year puts the Sabers in what can only be called a rebuilding mode.

Individually, though, the Sabers boast enough talent to make their presence felt in some events and have the potential to send some athletes to state when all is said and done.

The Sabers have some seniors that coach Gabe Wise expects to do just that in David Kosla, Nick Sturgeon and Lee Pizana on the boys' side.

Pole vault is probably Pizana's ticket to the state meet. Wise said that Pizana's goal is to clear 13 feet. He was only able to make 9 feet at the Manistee Early Bird event to kick off the season, but the weather conditions weren't conducive.

But, in practice Pizana has been getting pretty close to 12 feet so there is reason to believe he can make his goal before the regular season is over.

Kosla is the Sabers' senior thrower, and Wise said that he's been working hard with the Mason County Central and Manistee throwers, trying to get his technique down.

Sturgeon's specialty is the hurdles, and he's been biting into it with gusto. He hasn't set his goals for the season yet, but Wise thinks he should have high expectations.

"Niedzielski (a junior) ... based on what he did at the Catholic schools invite and Aquinas, he might be our 400-meter specialist," Wise said.



Members of the Manistee Catholic track team are, front row, from left, Brenna Johnson, Maddie Gunia, Leah Stickney and Madison Duke; back row, coach Gabe Wise, Luke Niedzielski, Andrew Potter, Diego Gammara, Lee Pizana, David Kosla, Nick Sturgeon and Peter Hybza. Not pictured: Jackson StarChief, Ashley VanAelst and Angie Puebla.

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"You don't really see too many indoor 54s (seconds without) practice, so I think the future is bright there. He's dedicated. He's usually at practice before everybody else, and he usually stays after everybody."

On the girls' side, Ashley VanAelst is the team's senior hurdle specialist and she has designs of going to the state meet in both the 100 and the

300.

Last year at regionals, she ran eight total races — when including preliminaries — and made the finals in all of them, but did not go to state in a single one, and she's re-dedicated herself this year.

"She's really pushing for those hurdles, especially the 300 hurdles," said Wise. "I think that's her bread and

butter, and she wants it. That's great to have."

Meanwhile, senior thrower Leah Stickney has been getting out to 100 feet in the discus already with the Sabers getting outside three times before opening the outdoor season at Manistee's Community Track.

She's still working on her form in the shot put.

"She switched from the

glide to a rotational throw this spring" added Wise. "We're really building the technique for her, and it's state or bust."

"That's her goal. She wants to go in both events, and surpass her brothers that didn't make it so she has those bragging rights. Leah and Ashley carry the team. They're our leaders and our team captains."

Out of the younger athletes, Wise says Brenna Johnson, Maddie Gunia and Maddy Duke turned in some impressive 60-meter times at the all-Catholic schools invitational.

Wise said that all three got their feet wet last year, and this year is their building year. He said they're motivated, and having a good time.



## Manistee baseball

## Chippewas fielding young team in spring

BY GREG GIELCZYK

DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — On the down side, Manistee is fielding only a varsity baseball team this spring. Which means some young players will gain experience in the heat of the fire.

That's the about end of it. But the Chippewas graduated only one senior, Caine Weed, and three foreign exchange students off last year's squad that won 13 games.

Five of those returning players — Adam Workman, Donavyn Kirchinger, Jeffrey Huber, Ethan Edmondson and Jaret Edmondson — are back to bolster a 20-man roster that includes eight freshmen and no juniors.

After falling behind early, the Chippewas struggled to recover and get back in the game before dropping an 11-4 decision to Reed City in the opener of the MHSAA Division 3 district at Mason County Central.

Weed had two of the Chippewas' nine hits in the contest, which was three more than the Coyotes. Coach Dave Edmondson said the game mirrored the Chippewas' season.

"There were a lot of times we'd get down, even in games we were winning, and we just continued to play," he said. "That speaks volumes of the character of the guys that are on this team."

Six of the Chippewas batted over .300, after having only one reach that mark a year ago and Edmondson is hoping they can match that this year.

Manistee's roster:

**SENIORS:** Ethan Edmondson, Adam Workman, Jeff Huber, Tyler Probstiewicz, Donavyn Kirchinger.

**JUNIOR:** Jaret Edmondson.

**SOPHOMORES:** Eli Workman,



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Members of the Manistee baseball team are manager Calvin Edmondson, Jeffrey Schwass, Evan Bauman, Logan Buren, Austin Guenther, Mayan Liston, Trent Beaudrie, Joey Kott, Garrett Nemitz, manager Jaret Edmondson, Jeffrey Huber, Josh Fitzgerald, Raymond Schwass, Andrew Jackoviak, Jayden O'Hagan, Stephen Loreda, Brady Mikula, Titus Lind, Abdiel Nunez, Trevor Johns, Caden Schmutzler and manager Ethan Edmondson.

Mason Robinson, Alex Al-dridge, Leonardo Rios Dearce, Sebastian Rios Dearce.

**FRESHMEN:** Landin Sowa, Miles Joseph, Braylen Zimmerman, Keegan Shannon, Owen Polcyn, Luke Olsen, Elijah Picard, Leahm Vervillo.

"It's tough because you can't make two teams out of 20, and it's too big for one team," said Edmondson. "We're going to have to be creative in how we keep people around, and keep them interactive in the team. We'll figure it out."

"All of the guys who pitched significant innings, or were in critical situations, are all returning. The freshmen really played a lot of

travel ball. It makes for some good, competitive practices. It's exciting to watch."

The pitching rotation is solidified by three returning seniors, two of whom who have been throwing since they were freshmen, and Edmondson expects big things from both.

Manistee's infield is also experienced, with Ethan Edmondson back at shortstop, Jeff Huber returns at third and sophomore Mason Robinson holds down second base.

Each is versatile enough to handle playing any position on the infield, while several freshmen are expected to see a lot of innings there as well.

Catching might well be put in the hands of freshman Owen Polcyn, who saw a lot of innings behind the plate in travel ball and is working hard to understand the game at the high school level.

A pair of seniors, Adam Workman and Tyler Probstiewicz, come back after playing every inning in right and center field, respectively, last year.

Manistee lost left fielder Weed, but freshman Miles Joseph has shown great range as well as speed and could easily fill the void that was left.

Edmondson isn't afraid to put freshmen Landon Sowa, Braylen Zimmerman or Pol-

cyn in the outfield to log some innings.

"This freshman class is going to be good, so I'm excited about them," Edmondson said. "Getting them for four years is going to be fun. They really like to play the game of baseball."

"Our seniors understand that they can't just sit back and (feel their positions are guaranteed). These freshmen want to play, and they want to play right now."

"It's good, healthy competition. At the end of the day, they're all teammates. They compete hard in practice, and make each other better."

Although the Chippewas will be competing against some new teams in the

West Michigan Conference, they're not completely unfamiliar with them having seen Fremont, Montague, Muskegon Oakridge, Ravenna, Mason County Central and North Muskegon in the summer.

"We're really excited to be in this conference," Edmondson added. "It's a conference we feel we belong in. We feel like we can compete in this conference."

"There's some really good teams, and the best part about being in this conference is once we get to district play, we're going to be ready. Every game in this conference is going to be a battle."



## Manistee boys golf

## Four starters return for Chippewas

BY GREG GIELCZYK  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — Not only does longtime Manistee boys golf coach Mike Swanson have four starters and six players overall coming back from last year's Lakes 8 Conference championship team, the Chippewas are loaded with experience overall as they open play in the West Michigan Conference.

The key returner is junior Jacob Scharp, who qualified for the MHSAA Division 3 state championships last year and will serve as a team captain this season with senior Jordan Bladzick.

Also returning is junior Braydon Sorenson, who played the No. 2 position last year and senior Ben Schlaff. Both are expected to be up among the leaders again.

Senior Mitchell Ziehm and sophomore Landon Blank were fifth and sixth, off and on, and have the potential to step up in the lineup.

"I think two or three more who were with us last year, and a freshman coming up in Max Scharp who I know plays a lot of golf," Swanson said. "That's a lot of experience coming back in one year."

Manistee's roster:

**SENIORS:** Arnaud Anjarry, Mitchell Ziehm, Jordan Bladzick, Will Babcock and Yann Robin.

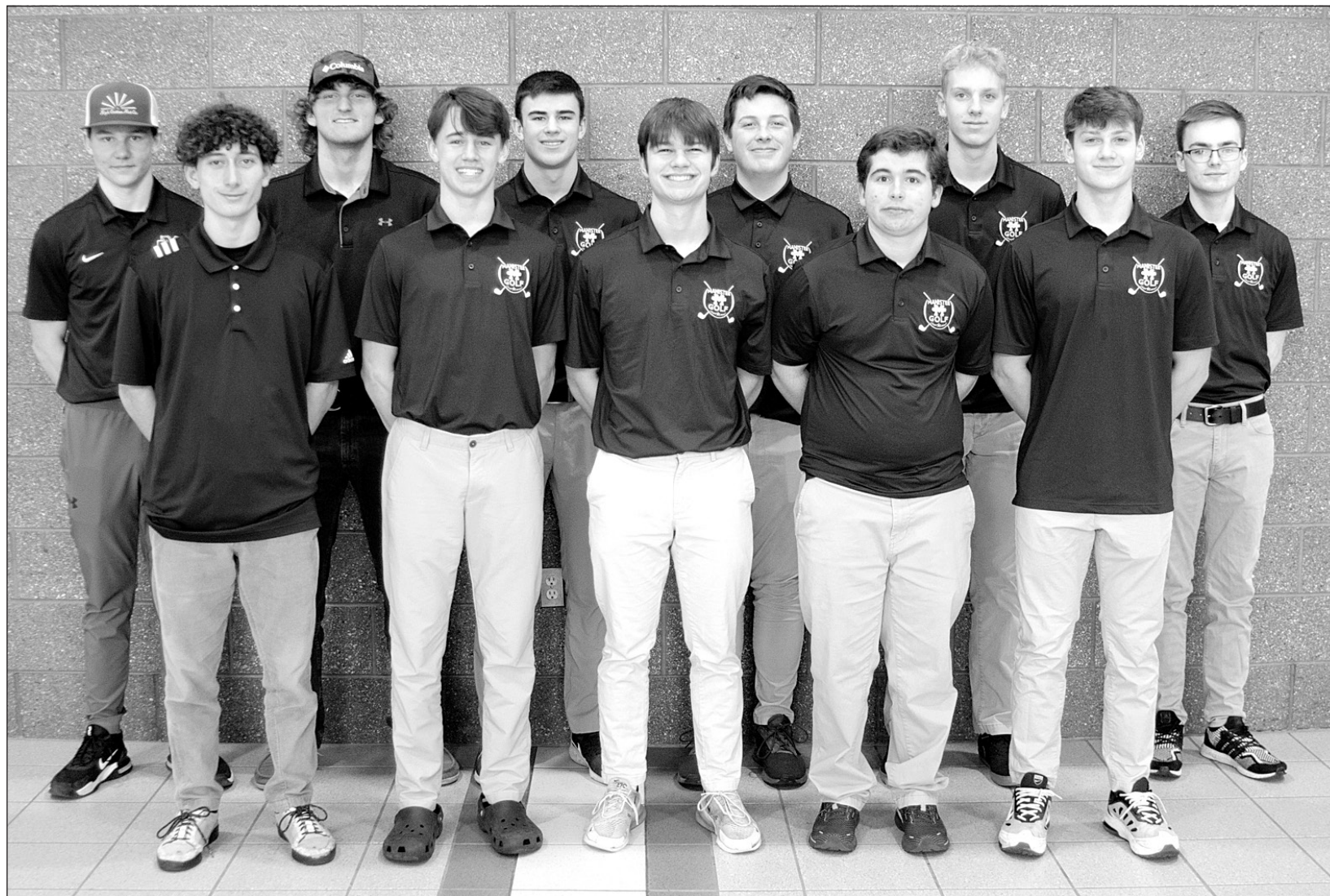
**JUNIORS:** Zane Black, Jacob Scharp, Grayson Prince, Braydon Sorenson.

**SOPHOMORES:** Trevor Haag, Landon Blank.

**FRESHMEN:** Max Scharp, Cam Pomeroy.

The Chippewas are hoping to make a run at the conference title, although they face some longer odds with a couple bigger schools now on the schedule.

Manistee is one of the



Members of the Manistee boys golf team are, front row, from left, Arnaud Anjarry, Max Scharp, Trevor Haag, Landon Blank and Jordan Bladzick; back row, Kane Black, Mitchells Ziehm, Jacob Scharp, Grayson Prince, Ben Schlaff and Will Babcock. Not pictured: Braydon Sorenson, Yann Robin and Cam Pomeroy.

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smaller teams in the conference. Four teams are larger, including Ludington, Fremont, Whitehall and Orchard View.

"We're going to have to play a little bit better this year," Swanson said. "There are some good golf schools in the conference. It'll be a fun challenge. I'm excited."

"I doubt they are as experienced as we are, but we

have yet to see. They practiced hard last summer. With spring golf, the way that it is right now, we wait for the snow to melt while Detroit is out there playing.

"Playing tournament golf during the summer is important, and I'd have to say their dedication and hard work are an advantage for us. It's a good group of kids."

Scharp's experience on the

bigger stage last year is expected to blossom into what Swanson hopes is an even stronger finish this year.

Bladzick has a golf simulator in his garage and uses it almost constantly, which should certainly give him an edge when he gets out on the course.

Earning a trip to state was a goal Scharp set for himself before the season started,

and to attain it was a highly emotional moment for him.

"It was surreal when I made it at regionals," Scharp said. "I think my approach shots on the green last year really improved. My accuracy off the tee improved a lot from my freshman year."

"I still struggle around the putting green quite a bit, but I felt that my game up to the putting part of it was pretty

good. The competition was a lot better (at state), and the amount of people watching just added extra pressure."

Manistee's goal going into this season is to qualify for state as a team. The Chippewas missed out by about 10 strokes last year, which considering their experience they feel they can make up.

Scharp would also like to qualify as an individual again.





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Members of the Manistee boys track team are, front row, from left, Nolan Dalke, Marcos Gil, Lander Belaza Arana, Luke Senters, Jack O'Donnell, Braden Banicki, CJ Outman, Rudy Shearer, Braylen Zimmerman, Kaden Kott, Tuong Bach, Steven Driver Jr. and Christian Schramski; back row, Anton Roesch, Tyler Whitman, Maxx Carlson, Raf Goncalves, Gres Mandelli, Johannes Reuting, Ben Cepolina, Matthew Gardner, Jarod Wright, Nick Hornkohl, Henrique Tonoli, Trevor Adamczak, Ajae Gouker, Allen Mueller, Tug Thuemmel, Jareese Moten and Owen Madsen.

## Manistee boys track

# Chippewas seek title in new league

BY GREG GIELCZYK  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — After finishing second in the last year of the Lakes 8 Activities Conference in 2022, the Manistee boys track team has designs of rising to the top in the Chippewas' first year in the West Michigan Conference.

The Chippewas' high hopes are based on the return of 22 letterwinners from a year ago, and their performance in the Early Bird opener Manistee hosted at the Manistee Community Track.

Although it was warm and mild earlier in the day, the weather swung the other way when the meet started, a light rain fell and temperatures took a plunge, the Chippewas flashed their potential.

One of the Chippewas'

key returning athletes, Luke Senters, who was the Lakes 8 champion in the 800- and 1,600-meter distances, picked up right where he left off last year, winning both events in the opener.

Kaden Kott, also a key cog for the Chippewas' football team, showed his speed in the 100 to take first place and is expected to do big things in the conference as well. Kott also runs on the relays.

Manistee also welcomes back Jack O'Donnell, the Lakes 8 champ in the 3,200; Caius Johns in the shot put and discuss and Damien McEntaffer in the pole vault.

The boys had a breakout season last year, qualifying for the Division 3 MITCA team state for the first time in school history, and with so much returning, the Chippewas are aiming high again.

"We have a lot of num-

bers, so we should be able to fill all of the events," said Manistee's longtime coach Eric Thummel, who is in his 31st year coaching track and cross country, the last 11 as the Chippewas' head coach. "We have a lot of young talent to proved depth.

"I think the boys will be competitive in the conference, we're just lacking superstars, similar to last year. There is no one dominant athlete, just a bunch of talented kids. Over half the team is new this year."

Thuemmel will be doing a lot of experimenting with the lineup, figuring out who will compete in what events. Nolan Dalke is a key newcomer in the hurdles.

But the middle school team won the Lakes 8 title a year ago, and he's eyeing the young talent to fill various spots.



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Manistee's Maxx Carlson competes in the long jump during a meet in Manistee earlier this season.





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Members of the Manistee girls track team are, front row, from left, Audrey Huizinga, Lena Herberger, Georgia Haag, Lorena Dudas, Allison Kelley, Lacey Zimmerman and Ashtyn Janis; back row, Adah Korzeniewski, Danielle Vasquez, Olivia Salmon, Gabby Senters, Verda Korzeniewski, Biana Racito, Gege Hansen, Lindsey Gardner, Libby McCarthy and Alayna Edmondson.

## Manistee girls track Chippewas seek title in new league

BY GREG GIELCZYK  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — A repeat could be problematic for the Manistee girls track and field team after winning two straight Lakes 8 Activities Conference titles with heavy graduation losses leaving some big gaps to fill.

But surprises can always happen, and athletes step up to produce some unexpected performances that put a team over the top, so it would be unwise to count the Chippewas out as they make their debut in their new league.

The Chippewas were run-

ners-up in the MHSAA Division 3 regional last year, finishing second only to the state champion Hart Pirates.

Over half of the Manistee girls team was seniors, though, and head coach Eric Thuemmel admits that the Chippewas are in a major rebuilding phase.

“Naturally, the girls would love to win another conference title (in the West Michigan Conference),” Thuemmel said. “But, with a new league and heavy losses to graduation, it’ll be a challenge.”

“We’ll be very strong in the sprints and sprint relays, and with the addition of

freshman Maddy Wayward, should have the best girls in the throws squad.”

Audrey Huizinga and Lacey Zimmerman are two of the best sprinters in the area, and Libby McCarthy is a talented high jumper and just an exceptional athlete.

Other key returners include Ashtyn Janis in the relays, Ceci Postma in the distance and Brook Jankwietz in the shot put and discus.

Thuemmel is being assisted on the girls team this year by Ashley Lindeman, who is also working with the distance runners. Dana Wayward helps with the throwers.



Manistee’s Allison Kelley soars over the long jump pit in preparation for a landing recently at the Manistee Early Bird track meet.

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DAILY NEWS



## Manistee softball

## Chippewas inexperienced in 2023

BY GREG GIELCZYK

DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — Only three players are coming back from last season, and just one senior returns for the Manistee softball team. The Chippewas are definitely thin on experience this spring.

It's not the best way to start competition in a new conference, to be sure, but it's the hand coach Terri Arendt has been dealt and she's going to play it.

The Chippewas have only 10 players on the varsity roster, which is just three more than they suited up last year, including junior pitcher Annika Arendt.

"We have some big shoes to fill," coach Arendt said. "That was such a great group of kids we lost. It's been sad and bittersweet that they're not here this year.

"But, we have an amazing group of kids. We have the three returners, and the seven we have coming in some of them have never played before.

"So we're young, and we're green. We're definitely going to have to work hard. They are already improving by leaps and bounds the first two weeks."

Manistee's roster:

**SENIORS:** Jaz Madsen.

**JUNIORS:** Annika Arendt, Lily Edgington, Faith Cameron.

**SOPHOMORES:** Bella Cramer, Addi VanSickle, Mya Ziehm, Ali Bjorkquist, Flynn Anderson.

**FRESHMEN:** Finn Casper.

One of those returning senior leaders, Jaz Madsen, played third base and shortstop for the Chippewas last year, but Arendt is considering moving her around to different positions on the infield.



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Members of the Manistee softball team are, front row, from left, Lily Edgington, Finn Casper, Ali Bjorkquist, Faith Cameron and Flynn Anderson; back row, Annika Arendt, Bella Cramer, Jaz Madsen, Addi VanSickle and Mya Ziehm.

Annika Arendt is the recognized top pitcher for the Chippewas, and with a year's experience chucking the ball is expected to step it up a notch.

"She plays travel ball, so she really does a lot of pitching throughout the summer," says her coach. "She sees a lot of tough teams, so she's good about not getting rattled (in the circle) when things are happening.

"Even when the bases are loaded, she really thinks through where she needs to place the pitch. Sometimes it's perfect, sometimes it's

not. It's just the way the game goes."

Bella Cramer started in the outfield last year as a freshman until she broke her hand just a couple games into the season and did not return to the lineup the rest of the way.

All three are workhorses, Arendt says.

It's going to be a work in progress to begin the season filling out the remainder of the starting lineup with so many inexperienced players.

"I've told them, 'Don't be upset if there's a spot you really want, but we move

you around.' We need to see where everybody fits," Arendt said.

"Same thing with pitching. It's a tough position, because you're involved in every play. That's tough. A lot of the girls are excited to try it. We've had a couple that are willing, at least to give our pitcher a break."

As for catching, Arendt is really high on newcomer Faith Cameron, who has taken the position as if she was meant for the job, even though she's never played it before.

It's tough to know what

kind of offensive team Manistee is going to have being unable to get outside for the first couple weeks, and doing all of their hitting in the batting cage.

"I'm worried about the timidity, because some of them have not seen the speed that they're going to see," says Arendt. "That's something they're going to have to really battle through.

"Really, it's mental toughness and just trying your best. It's all you can do, and that's all we ask for. Hopefully, once we get outside the girls will kick it into gear.

"I told them 'We're little, but we're mighty. We will be better at the end than from where we started.' That's what they should expect of themselves.

"All I ask is from them to get in the box, believe in yourself and make great contact. That's the big hurdle. You've got to fight your own demons kind of thing."

Manistee is keeping its goals realistic, especially with a young and inexperienced team that is going to go through a growing and maturing season.





SUBMITTED PHOTO

Members of the Manistee girls tennis team are, front row, from left, Annika Haagm, Georgia Haag, Joanie Banuelos and Kennedy Miles; back row, Kiera Tompkins, Illiana Tompkins, Saraya Caldwell, Lily Mungia, Sarah Huber, Mariana Reid, Tatum Jensen, Maygan Vasquez, Kaylee Loper, Emily Haiss and Lilia Delacourt.

## Manistee girls tennis

# Mack takes on coaching Chippewas

BY GREG GIELCZYK  
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — It's been a number of years since Andrea Mack coached, but the Manistee band director is keen to give the Chippewas' girls tennis team a rewarding and fun experience this spring.

Despite not having had much time to familiarize herself with the schedule and the majority of practices have been indoors, Mack has been able to put together the lineup.

"I think we're ready to go," Mack said as she prepared to lead the Chippewas into their first competition in a tournament in Traverse City.

"We're going to go against teams that play tennis all

'I think we're ready to go. We're going to go against teams that play tennis all year round, and have private coaches and lessons. We had to start the first couple weeks in the gym. But, we will make it work. **The kids are great, and they're working hard and they're excited to play.'**

**Andrea Mack**  
Manistee girls tennis coach

year round, and have private coaches and lessons. We had to start the first couple weeks in the gym.

"But, we will make it work.

The kids are great, and they're working hard and they're excited to play."

Mack has about 18 on the roster, with three or four for-

eign exchange students who are eager to learn and enjoy the team atmosphere.

That leaves the coach with six players in reserve at any one time, helpful in spelling those who need to take a rest from the competition, or offset any illness that might crop up.

Manistee's roster:

**SENIORS:** Joane Banueios, Lillia Deicourt, Tatum Jensen, Pilvi Parantainen, Claire Scott and Maygan Vasquez.

**JUNIORS:** Annika Haag, Kennedy Miles, Marina Reid and Gracie Shively.

**SOPHOMORES:** Emily Haiss, Sarah Huber, Kaylee Loper, Lily Mungia and Illiana Tompkins.

**FRESHMEN:** Saraya Caldwell, Georgia Haag, Keira Tompkins.

"I coached tennis about 30 years ago when I worked in Iowa," Mack said. "Everything has changed. Michigan is different than Iowa.

"But there have been so many people in the community that have been coming out to help. The former coaches, Vicki and Greg Sheffield, have given great assistance.

"Josh Smith, who's the assistant coach, doesn't know much about tennis. We're just trying to make it work. The student leadership has been outstanding."

Vasquez and Annika Haag have stepped up and made things happen, often leading the girls in drills before Mack even issues the command.

Right now, the singles line-

up appears to be set with Georgia Haag, Annika Haag, Huber and Mungia getting the call, perhaps in that order.

The doubles flights are still up in the air, with Vasquez and Miles certain to either be paired up with each other, or filling one of the other spots.

Some shifting around of players is certainly possible as the Chippewas get into their competition and Mack learns what combinations work best.

Mack says the entire team has improved in terms of their confidence and ball striking ability, as well as their knowledge of the game.



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