

FALL SPORTS PREVIEW



2023

FALL SPORTS INDEX

York	C2 - C4	Exeter-Milligan/Friend ..	D1-D2	Hampton	D7
Nebraska Lutheran	C5	Heartland	D3-D4	High Plains	D8
Centennial	C6 - C7	McCool	D4-D5		
Fillmore Central	C8-D1	Cross County	D6-D7		



CLASS: B MASCOT: DUKES HEAD COACH: GLEN SNODGRASS

YORK

RECORD LAST SEASON: 7-4

FOOTBALL

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 25	at Lexington
Sept. 1	Hastings
Sept. 8	Bennington
Sept. 15	at Scottsbluff
Sept. 22	Waverly
Sept. 29	at Gretna East
Oct. 6	Seward
Oct. 13	at Lincoln Northwest
Oct. 20	at GINW

FOOTBALL STANDOUTS



SETH ERICKSON
SENIOR



CARTER STENGER
SENIOR



LEYTON SNODGRASS
JUNIOR



ELIJAH JENSEN
SENIOR



EMMANUEL JENSEN
SENIOR



KEAGYN LINDEN
????



MORGAN COLLINGHAM
SENIOR



FRANKLIN MUSUNGAY
????



RYAN HUSTON
???



RILEY CLARK
??



BROOKS LOOSVELT
???



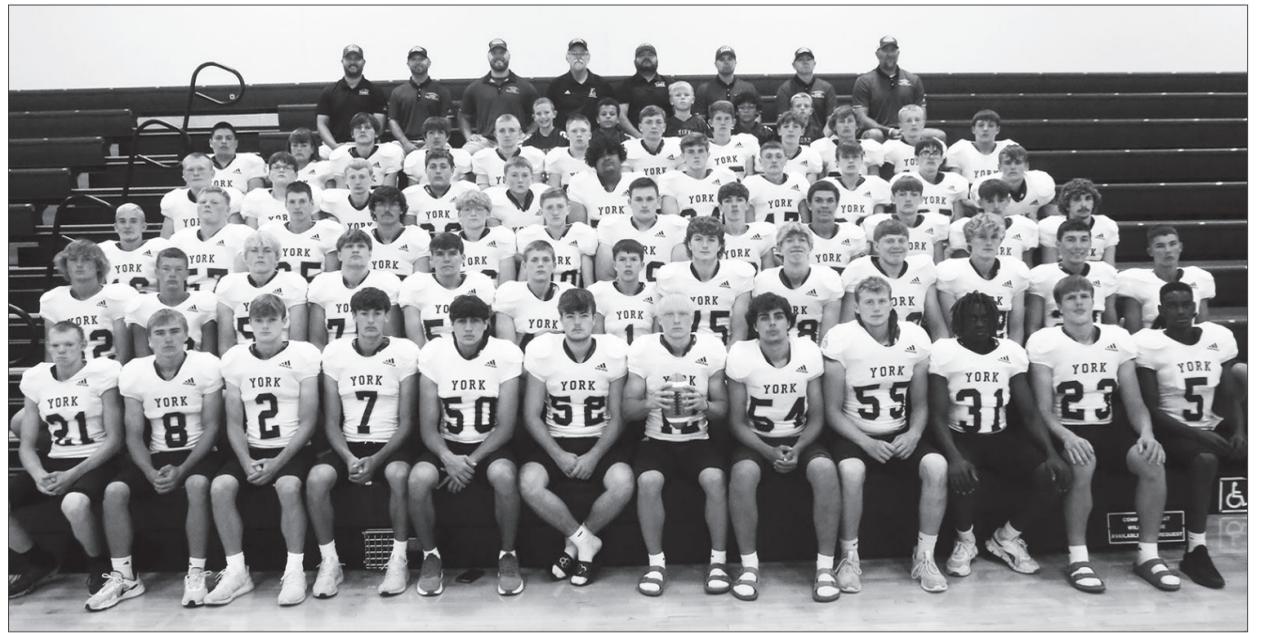
COLE MONTGOMERY
????



DECLAN PETERSON
????



JOSH TURCO
??



Members of the 2023 York Dukes football team include (front from left): Lane Scamehorn, Elijah Jensen, Cole Montgomery, Riley Clark, Josh Turco, Dylan Bower, Carter Stenger, Scott Arndt, Morgan Collingham, Emmanuel Jensen, Set Erickson, Frank Musungay. Second row: Emmett Hoffman, Ben Otoupal, Brooks Loosvelt, Keagyn Linden, Landon Sterns, Thomas Bonde, Ty Erickson, Hayden Brungardt, Leyton Snodgrass, Ryan Huston, Declan Peterson, Joe Burgess, Jackson Holoch. Third row: Colt Eimermann, James Samson, Kain Combs, Brayden Wegrzyn, Zayden Londene, Aidan Kadavy, Christopher Bennett, Gavin Martin, Emmitt Dirks, Chase Hallett, Layton Friesen, Gunner Rumery. Fourth row: Skyler Schall, Devin Rowe, Luke Holthe, Spencer Oxley, Eli Ehlers, Hector Rodriguez, Brody Booth, Rory Huber, Joshua Schall, Shaun Garrett, Josh Hartley. Fifth row: Julio Chavez Rios, Jagger Bower, Dax Peterson, Dietrich Schlegelmilch, Brody Mattox, Greysen Light, Zach Alt, Troy Schmid, Kade Gieck, Ashytn Demuth, Logan Van Ness, Drake Scamehorn. Sixth row: Joel Schneider, Jacoby Hansel, Cortland Peters, Grayson Dirks, Brady Bathen. Back row: assistant coaches Justin Rodrigues, Matt Brackhan, Dylan Olmstead, Randy Howell, Matt Maltzberger, Steven Crane, Choc Bowen, head coach Glen Snodgrass.

Dukes have potential, but filling key positions a question headed into the season

Erickson leads 2022 Class B State Playoff team on both sides of the ball

By Ken Kush
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

YORK — The York Dukes made the 2022 Class B State playoff field in 2022 and with several players from the 7-4 team back for head coach Glen Snodgrass, York has the potential to be in that same position this season.

York will have to replace some key offensive players and they face building a new offensive and defensive line which was their bread-n-butter last year.

York had four offensive linemen who averaged over 293 pounds apiece last year, but they have all moved on due to graduation.

Dukes head coach Glen Snodgrass who has accumulated a career record of 175-

80 and will be coaching for the 13th season at York and he does have some pieces to build with as the team gets ready for their season opener at Lexington on Friday, August 25.

Back is senior running back/linebacker Seth Erickson who just might be one of the best players in all of Class B football.

Erickson at 6-2, 205 pounds led the York ground game last season and will be one of the keys to the Dukes ground attack this year. On defense, coach Snodgrass has tabbed the senior the “next great linebacker” for the York Dukes.

“Seth is a returning all-state player and the next great linebacker for the York Dukes. Seth has the instincts toughness and hitting ability as good or even better than

some of the greats we have had here since I have been around,” Snodgrass said. “Seth is also an outstanding offensive player who is equally good at running the ball, blocking and catching passes. He should be one of the top players in Class B in 2023.”

“Slash” or also known as senior Carter Stenger is another key piece of the Duke’s puzzle. Stenger is listed at safety on defense and will either be under center or in the wide receiver position on offense.

“Carter is very fast, agile and strong,” said Snodgrass. “I’m still not sure if Carter will be at QB or WR, but he has all-state potential for sure.”

Junior Leyton Snodgrass at 6-4, 200 pounds is another player who Snodgrass feels

will play a huge roll this year. “He has unlimited potential. He has size, speed and his explosiveness is off the charts. He is known for his offensive skills, but last year we started using him as an edge rusher and he showed he can be an elite pass rusher,” commented Snodgrass. “His junior year should be a breakout year for Leyton.”

The Dukes will return seven starters on offense and five on defense and a total of one three year letter winners, five two-year letter winners and 11 one year winner. They will have a total of 17 letter winners this year. The Dukes will have 10 seniors on this year’s team.

“We will need to replace a large senior class but we have some nice young players to fill in,” added Snodgrass. “Finding the right

fit at quarterback will be important for us as well as filling a few spots in our offensive line. Linebacker and wide receiver should be one of the strengths for this team this year.”

Following their road opener at Lexington, they will host Hastings and Class B defending state champion Bennington on back-to-back weekends.

York will also take on Waverly in their homecoming game on September 22 and will also host Seward on October 6.

The rest of the road schedule includes Scottsbluff, Gretna East, Lincoln Northwest and GINW.

Matt Brackhan is Snodgrass’ varsity assistant.

CLASS: B MASCOT: DUKES HEAD COACH: KELBY PHILLIPS

YORK

RECORD LAST SEASON: 23-11

VOLLEYBALL

VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 24	Hastings
Aug. 29	at Platteview Tri.
Aug. 31	at Aurora
Sept. 5	at Columbus Lakeview
Sept. 7	Norris
Sept. 9	at Bishop Neumann Invite
Sept. 12	at Holdrege
Sept. 15-16	at Gothenburg Inv.
Sept. 19	at Malcolm Tri.
Sept. 26	Crete
Sept. 28	at Beatrice Tri.
Sept. 30	at Raymond Central Invite
Oct. 3	at Adams Central
Oct. 5	Milford
Oct. 12	at Central Conf.
Oct. 14	at Central Conf.
Oct. 17	Northwest
Oct. 19	at Schuyler
Oct. 24-25	at Subdistricts
Oct. 28	at District Finals
Nov. 1-4	at State

VOLLEYBALL STANDOUTS



CYNLEY WILKINSON
JUNIOR



CHLOE KOCH
JUNIOR



REESE HIRSCHFELD
JUNIOR



SKYLAR HUBER
SENIOR

Behind youth movement, York volleyball ready for new season

Dukes return just three letterwinners from 23-11 campaign

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

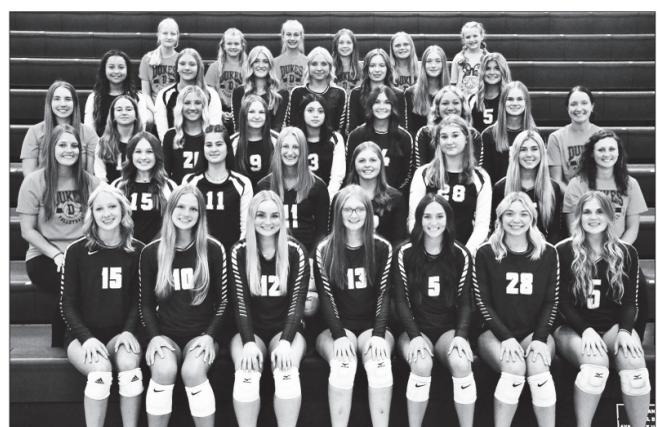
YORK — Last fall, the York volleyball team faced some uncertainty as they navigated a coaching transition prior to the first year of the Kelby Phillips era. This fall, the winds of change continue to swirl around the Dukes — but this time it’s in the form of a youth movement.

After graduating a large senior class, York returns just three letterwinners from last fall’s 23-11 campaign.

“We are a young team. We will have so much growth this year, not just in the game of volleyball, but the intangibles—leadership, resiliency, teamwork, etc.” Phillips said. “We will have some growing pains here and there, but this group has already taken steps to push past those and to just keep getting better. I’m excited to see what the end of the season has in store, and I’m really looking forward to taking on some tough matches this year.”

The good news for Phillips and the Dukes is that each of the three returning letterwinners figure to play key roles in the junior trio of Cynley Wilkinson, Reese Hirschfeld and Chloe Koch.

Wilkinson led all area hitters with 311 kills as a sophomore and also finished with 32 aces, 21 blocks, nine assists and 172 digs. Hirschfeld went down in late September with an ACL in-



Members of the 2023 York Dukes volleyball team include (front from left): Katlyn Krausnick, Chloe Koch, Cynley Wilkinson, Skylar Huber, Lainey Portwine, Reese Hirschfeld, Kaylie Hammer. Second row: assistant coach Brooklyn Gierhan, Miley Boyden, Olaya Alonso, Kali Wardyn, Danika Pohl, Bethany Lingo, Mackenzie DeLay, head coach Kelby Phillips. Third row: assistant coach Reegan Cast, Melah Stodieck, Kinslee Kern, Addie Kitt, Giselle Argueta, Kayley Gregg, Murfee Nickels, Claire Koch, assistant coach Carley Hartman. Fourth row: Makeisha Jimenez Reyes, Peyton Wetter, Molly Kotschwar, Addison Anderson, Kadence McManigal, Abby Real, Karaline Brekke. Back: Aubrey Andersen, Bria Kaliff, Avery Wardyn, Brecklyn Porter, Tayler Pohl, Delaney Huber

jury and missed the final month and a half of the year but had been off to a good start before that with 210 assists, 32 kills, 10 aces and five blocks prior to the injury. Koch’s role grew as the season progressed, and she finished the year with 65 kills, 12 blocks and seven aces.

“We have three juniors that were key role players last year, despite graduating seven starters. This will help grow their leadership as we bring together a relatively young team,” Phillips said. “Cynley was

an all-area kill leader, and Chloe is a scrappy backrow player returning as an outside after playing multiple roles last year. Reese is a returning varsity setter. Coming back from a season-ending ACL injury, she quickly found her connections with our hitters. As a team, the defensive hustle, effort, and relentless pursuit is something we take a lot of pride in as we work to leave it all out there.”

Outside of the junior trio, however, there’s a whole bunch of ques-

tion marks for Phillips and assistant coaches Carley Hartman, Reegan Cast and Brooklyn Gierhan to work through.

Among the fresh faces are senior Skylar Huber and junior Lainey Portwine, who ran cross country last fall but will provide the Dukes with some versatile athleticism after playing a key role coming off the bench for the state-semifinalist girls basketball team last winter.

Sophomore Katlyn Krausnick also figures to work her way into the mix for York, while freshmen Addison Andersen, Claire Koch, Murfee Nickels and Kinslee Kern could each make an immediate impact at the varsity level.

“We’ve had a number of newcomers competing for spots this year. With a sophomore and five freshmen on the varsity roster, we will work hard to utilize the skill sets of our underclassmen,” Phillips said. “There will be some big challenges ahead for us. There are a few other schools that are in a similar position of rebuilding as a number of seniors graduated (Aurora/Northwest/Lakeview) while Crete/Seward/Adams Central will continue to build off their success from last year, replacing only a few positions.”

HEAD COACH: ERIC RASMUSSEN MASCOT: DUKES CLASS: B

YORK



CROSS COUNTRY

NO. OF RETURNING STATE QUALIFIERS: 1

Stuckey ready to lead York girls to Kearney

The three-time state medalist is one of five returning letterwinners

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

YORK – No matter how far the York girls cross country team goes this season, senior Kassidy Stuckey will almost certainly be the Dukes' catalyst.

Stuckey enters her senior season looking to wrap her career with four consecutive medals at the Nebraska State Cross Country Championships at the Kearney Country Club this fall. Stuckey is a three-time Central Conference champion and has finished either as the district champ or district runner-up each year of her high school career.

In 2022, Stuckey placed sixth at state, second at districts and won the conference crown with a time of 18:56.06.

Though Stuckey powers the lineup, the Dukes also return some quality depth behind their lead runner. Senior Emory Conrad was a conference medalist in 2021 and a district medalist last fall after finishing in 15th place, while sophomore Naomi Renner medaled at both the conference and district meets last fall.

Fellow sophomore Ryleigh Wright is also back as a returning letterwinner; at the state meet last October, Renner placed 23rd, Wright finished 40th and Conrad



Members of the 2023 York Dukes girls cross country team include (front from left): Emory Conrad, Kassidy Stuckey, Emma Snider, Gladys Flores Rubalcava. Middle: Addison Pinneo, Annah Perdue, Ryleigh Wright, Naomi Renner. Back: head coach Eric Rasmussen, assistant coach Tyler Jackman, assistant coach Logan Kaliff.

took 46th place. "We have good scoring depth this season. The team is full of hard workers. They also have several girls who are capable of being really good leaders.

Hopefully, the team continues to encourage each other and push each other to improve every day in practice as well as in competitions," head coach Eric Rasmussen said. "Kassidy Stuckey is one

of the top runners in the state. She is a great front-runner and will be a favorite in most of the races we run this season. Naomi Renner had a great freshman season, earning All-Conference and All-District honors. She was our second runner at state last season. Naomi had a great summer and should be much improved this season. Emory Conrad and Ryleigh Wright both had strong seasons last year. Both also had really good track season and should be much improved over last season."

Behind the quartet of returning starters, senior Emma Snider is back as a returning letterwinner; the five Dukes will be joined on the course by sophomore Addison Pinneo and freshmen Annah Perdue and Allie Holmes.

"Emma Snider is a senior who has been a varsity runner for us in the past," Rasmussen said. "Annah Perdue was a really good runner in middle school, qualifying for the state track meet in the 1600 and x4800. I am excited to have her on the team. She has a chance to score for us this season. Allie Holmes is a freshman who had a good summer. She has a chance to compete for a spot on varsity this season. Addison Pinneo also has the talent to compete for a varsity spot this season."

Because district meets will be seeded based on season performance, Rasmussen said he hopes the Dukes will compete well enough to earn a top seed and give them a chance to qualify for state as a team once again.

Norris is the likely favorite to take home the Class B title, but Elkhorn North, Bennington and Omaha Skutt should also land pretty high in the team standings. The Dukes – who placed fifth as a team last fall – also have a chance to work their way into the mix.

"We had a good team last season, but our team should be even stronger this season. Kassidy Stuckey will continue to be one of the best runners in the State this season. Naomi Renner, Emory Conrad, and Ryleigh Wright ended last season strong and are way ahead of where they were last season," Rasmussen said. "I think that the team better understands the level of effort and focus needed each day in practice to continue to improve and help each other get better. I am looking forward to the season. The team finished fifth at state last season and I think they have a chance to be one of the better teams in Class B this season."

York boys eye bounce-back year

Duke cross country returns five letterwinners, two starters

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

YORK – The York boys failed to qualify for state cross country as a team last fall as a relatively young and inexperienced roster worked through some growing pains. In 2023, most of those runners are back with an extra year of experience under their belts – though the Dukes still figure to be fairly young and untested this fall.

"Most of this year's team was running high school cross country for the first time last season. I think that they learned a lot from last season and are motivated to continue to improve," head coach Eric Rasmussen said. "We are a young and inexperienced team this season. I think several runners on the team that will continue to improve throughout the season and compete for all-conference and all-district honors next season.

Anchoring the returners are junior Sergio Rodriguez and sophomore Carter Jacobsen. Rodriguez placed 36th at the Central Conference meet in 2022 and ran in 29th position at districts, while Jacobsen crossed the line in 34th at conference and took 23rd at the district meet.

Senior Weston Piper and sophomores Isaiah Kreifels and Anthony



Members of the 2023 York Dukes boys cross country team include (front from left): Joseph Rodriguez, Weston Piper, Sergio Rodriguez. Middle: Axton Martin, Anthony Staehr, Carter Jacobsen, Isaiah Kreifels. Back: head coach Eric Rasmussen, assistant coach Tyler Jackman, assistant coach Logan Kaliff.

Staehr also return as letterwinners from last fall; this season, they'll be joined by freshman Axton Martin

season. We have strong leadership and a lot of hard workers, and I have been impressed with how much many of them have improved the past few months," Rasmussen said.

"Hopefully, they continue to improve throughout the season and surprise a lot of people at the end of the season."

With only six runners on the roster, the Dukes' lineup is not particularly deep and it will therefore be critical for the York boys to stay healthy throughout the course of the season.

It will also be imperative for each of the six runners to continue to push each other on the course, because they'll all be important to the team's overall success this fall.

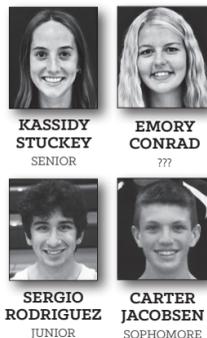
Lexington and Omaha Skutt have controlled the Class B team race at the state level in recent seasons, but Rasmussen also expects schools like Norris and Gering to also work their way into the mix. Though full districts have not yet been released, the York coach said he expects they'll compete mainly against schools from central and western Nebraska.

"We will focus on process, goals and getting better each practice to start the season," Rasmussen said. "We are a young team and have a long ways to go before we are a highly competitive team, but the team has already made a lot of progress in a short amount of time. Hopefully, by the end of the season, the team is strong enough and confident enough to surprise a lot of teams."

CROSS COUNTRY SCHEDULE

Aug. 24	at McCool Jct.
Aug. 31	at Seward Invite
Sept. 1	at Augustana Twilight
Sept. 8	at Aurora Invite
Sept. 15	at Waverly Invite
Sept. 21	at Lincoln North Star Invite
Sept. 25	at UNK Invite
Sept. 28	at York Invite
Oct. 5	at Central Conference in Seward
Oct. 12	at Districts
Oct. 20	at State in Kearney

CROSS COUNTRY STANDOUTS



HEAD COACH: JOSH MILLER MASCOT: DUKES CLASS: B

YORK



GOLF

NO. OF RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: 3

York girls golf aims to maintain success

Dukes return three letterwinners this fall

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

YORK – The York girls golf team has been a fixture at state in recent years, and though this year's team will be a fairly young bunch, the Dukes and head coach Josh Miller do return a trio of letterwinners on the links this fall.

Senior McKinlee Legg and junior Milan Babcock were part of the lineup that finished as district runner-up and qualified for state a year ago, giving York a pair of leaders with some needed postseason experience. Babcock placed sixth at the district tournament and fired a low round of 94 in 2022, while Legg's best round was a 101.

Junior Lael Schwarz is also back as a returning letterwinner; she capped a season low of 119 as a sophomore.

"McKinlee, Milan, and Lael played multiple varsity events and that will give them some confidence this season as we return to some of those same golf courses," Miller said. "We have three girls that have varsity experience and a couple newcomers that could crack the top five. This group might be the biggest we have had in a while and that will give us more depth. Three juniors are joining the team and they will bring some positive



Members of the 2023 York Dukes girls golf team include (front from left): Milan Babcock, Lael Schwarz, McKinlee Legg, Hadley Eckert, Kelsey Arndt, Elle Malleck. Middle: Abigail Hying, Sabryna Boston, Hannah Doremus, Taylor Peters, Maelynn Ericson, Maggie McCarthy, Reyce Krause. Back: assistant coach Matt Stuhr, Rachel Holthe, Ashlyn Walz, Josie Rauert, Devyn Dunham, Teagan Wright, Megan Michels, head coach Josh Miller

energy and good leadership to the group. I am excited to see this group grow and mature as the season progresses. Hopefully their confidence improves as we move through the season and if we can become a consistent team, these kids will have success."

Outside of those three, however, the Dukes face a good amount of uncertainty; Miller said as many as eight or nine golfers could compete for the final spots in the varsity lineup. Among the newcomers are junior Hannah Doremus and sophomores Maelynn Ericson, Maggie McCarthy and Reyce Krause, in addition to

freshmen Josie Rauert and Ashlyn Walz.

"I hope our strength comes in numbers this season as we will have several players competing for varsity spots. Our lineup could change week to week and that will help motivate the girls to put in some extra

work to hold their spot in the top five," Miller said. "This might be a year where we play eight or nine different girls on the varsity squad. It will be interesting to see how the scores fluctuate early in the season as some younger players get comfortable. Some of our freshmen spent a ton of time on the course this summer and that may give them an edge early on as we play qualifying rounds."

The Dukes will be tested in Class B this season, with schools such as Northwest, Hastings, Lakeview, Scottsbluff, Elkhorn North and Omaha Duchesne among the potential contenders. Still, if some of the new faces to the lineup gel and York continues to improve as the season progresses, the Dukes have the ability to make some noise by the time the postseason rolls around.

"This group will improve a ton as the season progresses and I look forward to watching their golf game mature. As I mentioned, several girls will have a chance to play varsity events and that should help us going down the stretch and into 2024," Miller said. "There will definitely be some highs and lows with this young team, but we practice on one of the toughest courses in the state and that will help prepare us for a high level of golf."

GOLF SCHEDULE

Aug. 21	at Tri County Tri.
Aug. 25	at Seward Invite
Aug. 29	at Scottsbluff Inv.
Aug. 31	at York Invite
Sept. 5	at Crete
Sept. 8	at Lexington Inv.
Sept. 11	at Central City Quad
Sept. 12	at Hastings Invite
Sept. 18	at Seward
Sept. 21	at Pius X Invite
Sept. 25	at Aurora Tri.
Sept. 29	at Central Conf.
Oct. 2-3	at Southern Hills
Oct. 9-10	at Districts at State

GOLF STANDOUTS





CLASS: B MASCOT: DUKES HEAD COACH: KENT MEYERS

YORK

RECORD LAST SEASON: 12 - 15

SOFTBALL

SOFTBALL SCHEDULE

- Aug. 17 York Triangular
- Aug. 19 York Quad
- Aug. 22 Seward
- Aug. 26 York Quad.
- Aug. 29 Hastings
- Aug. 31 Aurora
- Sept. 5 at Milford
- Sept. 7 at Adams Central
- Sept. 9 at Columbus
- Sept. 11 Lakeview Invite
- Sept. 12 at Crete
- Sept. 16 Lincoln Northwest
- Sept. 18 at GINW Invite
- Sept. 21 at Northwest
- Sept. 25 York Triangular
- Sept. 26 Lexington
- Sept. 28 at St. Paul
- Oct. 2 at Central Conf. in Crete
- Oct. 2 at Subdistricts
- Oct. 6-7 at District Finals
- Oct. 11-13 at State in Hastings

SOFTBALL STANDOUTS



LAURYN MATTOX
JUNIOR



SAM MCDANIEL
SENIOR



ELLIE PETERSON
SENIOR



MAGGIE RAUERT
SENIOR



KYNLI COMBS
SENIOR



ELLIE GARTNER
SENIOR



SOPHIA LISTON
JUNIOR



MCKENZIE LINDER
JUNIOR



AVERY ALBERS
SOPHOMORE



Members of the 2023 York Dukes softball team include (front from left): Lily Kowalski, Sam McDaniel, Kynli Combs, Kiersten Portwine, Ellie Peterson, Maggie Rauert, Lauren Hills, Megan Wright, Ellie Gartner. Second row: Savannah Warren, Avery Albers, Zoey Cornett, Lauryn Mattox, McKenzie Linder, Sierra Rasmussen, Sophie Liston, Madison Hills, Jaida Scamehorn, Kinsey Methe. Third row: Kelsey Westwood, Kynlee Westwood, Birkley Gray, Blakelyn Munoz-Rowe, Mylie Linder, Taytum Methe, Kelsie Prince, Hayley Mattox, Freya Hills, Kiyah Gray. Back: assistant coach Chad Mattox, assistant coach Kaylen Rodriguez, head coach Kent Meyers, assistant coach Jordyn Stearns.

York softball placing and emphasis on the little things in 2023

Senior-laden Dukes return eight starters, 12 letterwinners

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

YORK – It’s been a little bit of a rough stretch for York softball, as the Dukes haven’t qualified for the state tournament since 2017 and started strong out of the gates last year but faltered down the stretch in a 12-15 campaign.

However, the Dukes won’t be light on experience this season with eight starters and 12 letterwinners back in the fold. York will have to replace Lauryn Haggadone, who set the school’s career record with 26 home runs last season and tied the record for most dingers in a game with two.

While the pop from

Haggadone’s bat will be tough to replace, York is not light on veteran experience with nine seniors on the roster.

Leading the Dukes’ returning experience is junior Lauryn Mattox, who tossed 115 2/3 innings in the circle last year and posted a 4.12 ERA to go with 111 strikeouts. She also batted .451 at the dish and drove in 16 runs a year ago.

Senior Sam McDaniel also spent a little bit of time in the circle and hit .403 as the starting shortstop with 30 RBIs. Mattox and McDaniel were both News-Times all-area selections, while seniors Ellie Peterson (.275, 15 RBIs, four steals), Maggie Rauert (.353, 17 RBIs)

and Kynli Combs (.241, 14 RBIs) each earned all-area honorable mention.

Senior first baseman Ellie Gartner (.339, six RBIs) was an all-Central Conference honorable mention, and juniors Sophia Liston and McKenzie Linder and sophomore Avery Albers are also back this fall with a year of starting experience under their belts.

Other returning letterwinners are seniors Lauren Hills and Megan Wright, and classmate Lily Kowalski and juniors Zoey Cornett and Sierra Rasmussen could also work themselves into the mix in the varsity lineup.

With so much experience back, York has the

talent across the roster to be a pretty solid team on the diamond this fall. To reach that potential, however, the Dukes simply must cut down on the defensive miscues after finishing with more than 80 errors in 27 games last fall.

“We have a good mix of all ages. The incoming freshmen will help push the starters to hold their jobs,” head coach Kent Meyers said. “We have learned that you can’t play with mistakes. Make the plays and eliminate the errors and we are a 20-win team. We have a 3-year starting pitcher, our starting catcher is back and we only lost one starter from last year.”

York will also be test-

ed thanks to the quality of competition in the Central Conference. Grand Island Northwest took home the Class B team title a year ago, and Seward enters the year ranked inside the top 10 and is a strong contender to be in this year’s state field in Hastings.

Even with the formidable opponents on the conference slate, York returns the experience and talent to be a tough out this fall.

“I am expecting to be in the top tier of our conference,” Meyers said. “We are also striving to make it to the district championship this year.”



CLASS: B MASCOT: DUKES HEAD COACH: MATT FIKE

YORK

NO. OF RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: 2

TENNIS

TENNIS SCHEDULE

- Aug. 24 Waverly
- Aug. 25 at Lincoln High/Northeast Invite
- Aug. 29 Beatrice
- Aug. 31 York Triangular
- Sept. 5 at Adams Central
- Sept. 8 York Invite
- Sept. 11 at Lincoln East Invite
- Sept. 14 at Ralston
- Sept. 18 Lincoln Christian
- Sept. 21 at Waverly Invite
- Sept. 22 at GICC Invite
- Sept. 26 York Triangular
- Sept. 29 York Invite
- Oct. 3 at Hastings
- Oct. 5 at Crete
- Oct. 12-13 at State in Lincoln

TENNIS STANDOUTS



KADEN HEIDEN
SENIOR



COLLIN KOTSCHWAR
JUNIOR



PARKER MUNDT
SENIOR



WYATT GARTNER
JUNIOR



JOHN HARTLEY
JUNIOR



ELI NETHING
JUNIOR

York tennis enters new era under head coach Matt Fike

Dukes only return two letterwinners from 2022

By Ken Kush
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

YORK – The winds of change are blowing in the air around the York boys tennis program this fall. Longtime head coach Dan Malleck retired at the end of the 2022-23 school year and Matt Fike is in as the Dukes’ new head coach, but York also loses a lot of production on the court.

Just two letterwinners from last fall remain on roster – senior Kaden Heiden and junior Collin Kotschwar, the latter of whom got state experience in doubles action as a sophomore.

Senior Parker Mundt, junior trio Wyatt Gartner, John Hartley and Eli Nething and freshman Peter Dallman are also options to slide into the varsity lineup this fall, but it’ll still be a fairly inexperienced crew for the York boys in 2023.

“Gaining experience early and getting the right combination of players in certain positions are going to be big keys for us. It’s going to be exciting to see the growth and improvement as we work through the season,” Fike said. “Our depth is something we are working on building. We have underclassmen who are going to contend for varsity spots and will see these opportunities take place as they continue to grow and develop.”



Members of the 2023 York Dukes boys tennis team include (front from left): Caleb Harwick, John Hartley, Parker Mundt, Kaden Heiden, Collin Kotschwar, Eli Nething, Wyatt Gartner. Middle: head coach Matt Fike, Crue Collingham, Ethan Nething, Tanner Wagner, Daniel Burgess, Kadin Tesar, Ike Colburn, assistant coach Ryan Johnson. Back: Will Liston, Gavin Folling, Peter Dallmann, Xavier Paris, Jack Chavenu, Gage Stahr, Connor Krausnick.

Despite the relative lack of returning varsity experience, most of the guys aren’t new to the program and saw the success the team had on the court the past couple years. It’s more of a changing of the guard, with the untested group ready to step up and take on new roles for the program this fall.

“The main strength of this team is we have several guys who are motivated to step into bigger roles and

compete at high level,” Fike said. “Being a part of a team that had players see success and was very well coached has these guys embracing the challenge as they prepare for their new roles.”

The new-look Dukes will be put to the challenge early, with Omaha Gross, Crete, Lexington and Lincoln Christian all experiencing a run of recent success. Fike also said he expects Omaha Skutt, Mount Michael, GICC

and the Elkhorn schools to be among the top contenders in Class B this fall.

Despite the questions facing Fike and assistant coach Ryan Johnson entering the season, there’s still the potential for York to do some big things if the new pieces can gel quickly enough.

“We are a team with some unknowns at this point. We know that players like Parker Mundt, Kaden Heiden, Collin Kotschwar,

John Hartley, and Eli Nething are going to be asked to carry the load,” Fike said. “The key is going to be developing the consistency and chemistry to see how our line up comes together. We are really emphasizing the need to have a good approach to everything we do, to always compete, and to focus on the process each day.”

HEAD COACH: ANDREW FREY MASCOT: KNIGHTS CLASS: D-2

FOOTBALL

NEBRASKA LUTHERAN

RECORD LAST SEASON: 5 - 4



Nebraska Lutheran tasted success in 2022, wants more this season

Seven seniors give the Knights a great leadership core

By Ken Kush
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

WACO – For the first time in five years the Nebraska Lutheran Knights made the post-season playoff field in 2022.

That success has them hungry for more as the fall season approaches.

Head coach Andrew Frey points to the team's experience and plenty of talent in the team's skilled positions and in the line as team strengths as the opener approaches.

"Our strength this year is going to be in our number of seniors—we will have seven of them on the team this year, many of them with multiple years of starting experience," commented Frey. "All three of our starting linemen will be seniors, two of which will be starting for their third straight year. We still have plenty of talent in our skills positions and plan on spreading teams out and throwing the ball."

The Knights have five starters returning on offense and six on defense and a total of nine returning letter winners.

Offensively, senior Isaac Beiermann put up 178 yards in the ground game, 296 yards passing and another 547 yards receiving, but is listed as the



Members of the 2023 Nebraska Lutheran Knights football team include (front from left): Gio Martin, Tavenn Lamonde, Noah Frey, Gavin Chesnut, Dylan Hoehler; Middle: Gio Martin, Tavenn Lamonde, Noah Frey, Gavin Chesnut, Dylan Hoehler; Back: Isaac Beiermann, Bryce Malchow, Eli Vogt, Nick Cross, Caleb Eldridge and Silas Vogel. Not Pictured: Yuseff Beasley.

team's quarterback this season.

Another senior Lucas Corwin picked up 570 yards receiving and he led the team on defense with 76 tackles. Corwin is penciled in at wide receiver and at defensive back.

The rest of the returning letter winners include; Eli Vogt, SR., OL/DL; Caleb Eldridge, SR., OL/DL; Silas Vogel, SR., OL/

DL; Nick Cross, SR., WR/LB; Bryce Malchow, SR., WR/LB; Lukas Worster, JR., WR/DB and Luke Otte, SO., RB/LB.

Corwin was an all-district first team selection and YNT honorable mention while Eldridge and Beiermann were second team and Beiermann also a YNT mention. Vogt, Malchow and Worster all earned honorable mention

all-district.

Last year's success has the team even more confident this year.

"We also tasted some success last year, making playoffs for the first time in five years. This has given us some confidence going into the season as we look to build on the last year's foundation," Frey stated.

The Knights will open

the season on Friday, August 25th at East Butler.

Their home season opener will be the following week when they host Silver Lake.

The September 15 game against Fullerton will be a 3 p.m. kickoff.

Assistant coaches include; Chris Beagle, Nate Guhl and Kyle Richert.

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 25	at East Butler
Sept. 1	Silver Lake
Sept. 8	at Falls City
	Sacred Heart
Sept. 15	Fullerton
Sept. 22	High Plains
Sept. 29	at Giltner
Oct. 6	at Palmer
Oct. 13	Osceola

FOOTBALL STANDOUTS

ISAAC BEIERMANN SENIOR	LUCAS CORWIN SENIOR
ELI VOGT SENIOR	CALEB ELDRIDGE SENIOR
SILAS VOGEL SENIOR	NICK CROSS SENIOR
BRYCE MALCHOW SENIOR	LUKAS WORSTER JUNIOR
LUKE OTTE SOPHOMORE	

HEAD COACH: RICHARD OWEN III MASCOT: KNIGHTS CLASS: D-2

VOLLEYBALL

NEBRASKA LUTHERAN

RECORD LAST SEASON: 6 - 20



Nebraska Lutheran volleyball enters transition under new coach

Richard Owen III inherits a Knights roster featuring eight returning letterwinners

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

WACO – There's a little bit of uncertainty in the air around Nebraska Lutheran volleyball this fall with a new head coach in tow, but easing the transition is the fact the Knights' leader is a familiar face.

Richard Owen III and Moriah Hackbarth are both still on the coaching staff; it's just been a role swap as Owen III assumes head coaching duties and Hackbarth steps back to fill an assistant role.

The fact that both coaches are already very familiar with the program and players makes Lutheran's transition different from most coaching changes, but it also helps the Knights return eight letterwinners from last fall.

"We are very solid from the top to the bottom of our roster, anyone could play," Owen III said. "However, we are looking for some underclassmen to step up and give us some additional depth."

Lutheran must replace a pair of key departed seniors in Lily Otte and Jasmine Malchow, but there's a lot of talent and athleticism still around in Waco. Leading the way is senior Marissa Endorf, who racked up 157 kills, 205 digs, 74 blocks and 14 aces last fall.



Members of the 2023 Nebraska Lutheran Knights volleyball team include (front from left): Autumn Malchow, Sam Hueske, Kaylee Schoen, Bailey Schwab, Marissa Endorf, Karynn Bretschneider, Rebecca Hueske, Tenley Williamson, Ann Prigge; Middle: Rose Jamison, Sienna Orth, Bailey Krueger, Adilyn Sachwitz, Kaiah Colson, Lillian Schoell, Aubrey Schleusener; Back: Grace Wellman, Ashley Schoen, Lylah Krueger, Mallory Schwab, Natali Lauber, Madelyn Clayton, Hallie Spreeman and Elaina Endorf.

Classmates Bailey Schwab, Karynn Bretschneider and Kaylee Schoen also return to provide a solid nucleus of veteran leadership, as does the presence of junior trio Rebecca Hueske, Tenley Williamson and Ann Prigge.

Hueske racked up 286 digs, 65 assists, 64 kills, 21 aces and 15 blocks, while Williamson tallied 105 digs and Prigge added 26 digs and five aces coming off the bench.

Sophomore Samantha

Hueske is also back after logging some key varsity minutes in her freshman season; she capped the year with 142 digs, 19 blocks, 17 assists, 16 kills and five aces. Also in the fold is fellow sophomore Autumn Malchow.

"Last season was a little rough when only looking at the wins and losses. However, through those wins and losses, this team learned how to play together and play tough in close sets," Owen III said. "The greatest strength

our team has is our team chemistry. The players truly enjoy playing with each other. We also have extremely strong upperclassman leadership."

Competition will be fierce in the always-challenging Crossroads Conference, a league that's had at least one team in the state tournament field every season since 2006; last fall, Cross County, BDS and Meridian continued that tradition.

Lutheran must also replace a pair of very talent-

ed seniors while navigating a coaching transition, but there's still enough talent in place to make the Knights a tough out despite the 2022 record.

"It has been a long time since Nebraska Lutheran had a winning season in volleyball (2017)," Owen III said. "We hope that this year might be the year we get over that hurdle, but there are no 'gimme' games on our schedule. Ultimately, we are just looking to grow and improve as a program."

VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 28	at High Plains
Aug. 29	at Wilber-Clatonia
Aug. 31	Nebraska Lutheran Triangular
Sept. 5	at Nebraska Christian
Sept. 12	Nebraska Lutheran Triangular
Sept. 14	College View
Sept. 16	at Cross County Inv.
Sept. 19	at BDS Triangular
Sept. 21	at Osceola Tri.
Sept. 23	Nebraska Lutheran Tournament
Sept. 26	at Meridian
Sept. 28	East Butler
Sept. 29	at Giltner
Oct. 5	Harvard
Oct. 12	Hampton
Oct. 14	at CRC Tourn.
Oct. 16-17	at CRC Tourn.
Oct. 20	Twin River
Oct. 23-24	at Subdistricts
Oct. 28	at Districts Finals
Nov. 1-4	at State Volleyball

VOLLEYBALL STANDOUTS

MARISSA ENDORF SENIOR	BAILEY SCHWAB SENIOR
KARYNN BRETSCHEIDER SENIOR	KAYLEE SCHOEN SENIOR
REBECCA HUESKE JUNIOR	TENLEY WILLIAMSON JUNIOR
ANN PRIGGE JUNIOR	SAMANTHA HUESKE SOPHOMORE



CLASS: C MASCOT: BRONCOS HEAD COACH: TORI HOMOLKA

CENTENNIAL

RECORD LAST SEASON: 7-22

SOFTBALL

SOFTBALL SCHEDULE

- Aug. 19 Centennial Tri.
- Aug. 21 Centennial Tri.
- Aug. 24 at Columbus Lakeview
- Aug. 26 at Seward Invite
- Aug. 29 at Aurora
- Aug. 31 Syracuse
- Sept. 2 at Fairbury Invite
- Sept. 5 Centennial Tri.
- Sept. 7 at St. Paul
- Sept. 12 at Milford
- Sept. 14 Blue River
- Sept. 16 at Cass County Invite
- Sept. 18 at Twin River Tri.
- Sept. 19 Polk County
- Sept. 21 at Kearney Catholic Triangular
- Sept. 23 at SNC Tournament in Geneva
- Sept. 26 Centennial Tri.
- Sept. 28 Freeman
- Sept. 30 at Yutan Invite
- Oct. 2 at Subdistricts
- Oct. 6-7 at District Finals
- Oct. 11-13 at State in Hastings

SOFTBALL STANDOUTS



SAVANNAH HORNE
SENIOR



CORA HOFFSCHNEIDER
SENIOR



AVA FISCHER
SENIOR



RYLEE MENZE
SENIOR



LILLIAN BUTZKE
SENIOR



LIBBIE KUBICEK
SENIOR



MALLORY ROZENDAL
SENIOR



SAIGE SCHEELE
JUNIOR



KOBIE KOSEK
SOPHOMORE



RYLEY ZIEGLER
SOPHOMORE



Members of the 2023 Centennial Broncos softball team include (front from left): Savannah Horne, Cora Hoffschneider, Lillian Butzke, Ava Fischer, Rylee Menze, Libbie Kubicek, Mallory Rozendal; Middle: Shelby Fehlhafer, Saige Scheele, Andrea Gumaer, Kobie Kosek, Riley Ziegler, Sarah Payne, Maddie Kitzing; Back: Anna Warm, Cissanie Krohe, Dakota Boyer, Meg Hoffschneider, Nya Fischer, Madisyn Shufeldt and Danika Smith.

Bronco softball eyes breakthrough in year two under Homolka

Centennial returns seven starters, 10 letterwinners from 7-23 campaign

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

UTICA – The Centennial Broncos went 7-22 on the softball diamond during Tori Homolka’s first year as head coach, but there is reason to think a turnaround could be in the cards this fall.

Centennial will be very experienced in 2023, with seven starters back in the fold. In all, the Broncos return 10 letterwinners from a year ago.

“We have a load of seniors who have had a lot of experience on the diamond and are all returning starters. We held some open fields where we had a great turnout and got a lot accomplished,” Homolka said. “Another strength is the determination the girls have to compete when they step out on the field. There are some underclassmen who are stepping up and competing for a starting spot in the lineup.”

At the top, seniors Savannah Horne and Cora Hoffschneider anchor Centennial’s lengthy list of returners, as both girls were York News-Times all-area picks and earned second-team all-Southern Nebraska Conference honors last fall.

Horne fanned 70 batters across 84 innings of work in the circle as junior, but she was also a key cog in the Broncos’ lineup as she hit .361 with six doubles and a triple and drove in 10 runs. Horne was also a major threat on the base paths; the defending Class C champ in both the 100 and 200-meter dashes swiped 25 bases during her junior year, the top mark in the area by 10 steals.

Hoffschneider batted .333 for the year and finished with 10 RBIs; the power hitter also cranked six doubles, a triple and a home run as she posted a .500 slugging

percentage.

Among the other returning starters, senior Ava Fischer netted 19 strikeouts in 37 innings pitched while hitting .306 with a team-high 20 RBIs and one home run. Rylee Menze batted .370 with five runs batted in and five steals as a junior and classmate Lillian Butzke knocked in 10 runs as all three girls earned News-Times all-area honorable mention.

Senior Libbie Kubicek is also back as the team’s seventh returning starter, while senior Mallory Rozendal, junior Saige Scheele and sophomores Kobie Kosek and Riley Ziegler return as letterwinners from 2022.

“We have great depth this year as our underclassman will play a huge role for us. We bring in a great group of freshman that add to our sophomore class. The upperclassmen have done a great job leading by example and

competing hard,” Homolka said. “We should have depth at almost each position on the field which is a great feeling going into a fast and furious season. Our underclassmen are softball smart, quick, and have showed up blending right in with the other girls. It makes me excited.”

Outside of the returning letterwinners, juniors Danika Smith and Madilyn Kitzing and sophomores Anna Warm, Sarah Payne and Shelby Fehlhafer round out the depth on the Centennial roster. New faces to the program this year include sophomores Andrea Gumaer, Cissanie Krohe and Dakota Boyer, as well as freshmen Nya Fischer, Meg Hoffschneider and Madisyn Shufeldt.

After what Homolka termed a “building year” during her first season, the head coach said she felt more equipped to help the program take a leap this fall. The SNC field will be difficult with

teams like Milford, Fillmore Central/Exeter-Milligan/Friend and Fairbury headlining the list of contenders.

Still, the Broncos return enough experience that Homolka and assistant coaches Billy Baugh, Calyn Mowinkle and Joe Dey could see the Broncos take a step forward and build upon a 2-3 finish to last year’s seven-win campaign.

“I ask them to compete, never give up, and show up each day looking for a way to get better. We set milestones that we strive to reach each week to help us reach our team goals,” Homolka said. “I expect this team to compete in every game this year and work together as one unit. We have had a great start to the season and played good ball at the team camps we attended. I can’t wait to see what these girls can do and watch them compete this season.”



CLASS: C MASCOT: BRONCOS HEAD COACH: ALEX ANSTINE

CENTENNIAL

RECORD LAST SEASON: 19-14

VOLLEYBALL

VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

- Aug. 27 Hastings St. Cecilia
- Aug. 27 Centennial Invite
- Aug. 29 at Central City
- Sept. 5 Sandy Creek
- Sept. 7-9 at Malcolm Invite
- Sept. 12 at Fairbury
- Sept. 14 Sutton
- Sept. 16 at Central City Invite
- Sept. 19 at Wilber-Clatonia
- Sept. 21 at Centura Tri.
- Sept. 26 Milford
- Sept. 28 at Thayer Central
- Oct. 3 Centennial Tri.
- Oct. 10 at Fillmore Central Triangular
- Oct. 12 Centennial Tri.
- Oct. 16-17 at SNC Tournament
- Oct. 23-24 at Subdistricts
- Oct. 28 at Districts Finals
- Nov. 1-4 at State

VOLLEYBALL STANDOUTS



KARLEY NABER
SENIOR



CORA PAYNE
SENIOR



ELLA WAMBOLD
JUNIOR



CATELYNN BARGEN
JUNIOR



AVERIE STUHR
JUNIOR



KATE LUEBBE
SENIOR

Seasoned, experienced Centennial volleyball eyes breakthrough

Broncos return six starters, nine letterwinners

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

UTICA – After graduating a large senior class from 2020’s run to the state tournament, the Centennial volleyball team endured growing pains in 2021 before making the leap to a 19-14 mark last fall.

This season, backed by nine returning letterwinners – including six starters – the seasoned Broncos figure to have the firepower to make some noise on the court.

“Last season gave us a lot of close games which pushed us mentally and physically. We learned how to be mentally tough,” head coach Alex Anstine said. “We were able to make it to the conference championship which built confidence for the team. I think last season showed us how much potential we have.”

At the top, seniors Karley Naber and Cora Payne anchor the Centennial lineup. Both were York News-Times all-area selections and garnered all-Southern Nebraska Conference honors, with Naber earning a spot on the first team and Payne being a second-team pick.

Naber hammered a team-high 226 kills and racked up 317 digs to pair with 51 aces and 15 blocks; behind her, Payne ranked third on the Broncos with 178 kills and blocked a team-best 57 attacks at the net. She also collected 20 aces and 66 digs.

Centennial should also benefit from another year of development from the junior trio of Ella Wambold, Catelynn Barga and Averie Stuhr.

As the team’s primary setter, Wambold racked up a whopping 775 assists and 276 digs. She also tallied 39 aces and 22 kills. Barga was the Broncos’ second-leading attacker with 211 kills and finished with 23 blocks. Stuhr capped her



Members of the 2023 Centennial Broncos volleyball team include (front from left): Ella Wambold, Karley Naber, Brylie Streit, Molly Prochaska, Kate Luebbe, Cora Payne, Caylie Clouse; Middle: Ella Baack, Catelynn Barga, Lauryn Breikreutz, Averie Stuhr, Natalie Sams, Hope Heidtbrink, Royal Dean, Addison Petzoldt; Back: Tyler Opfer, Hurley Harroun, Lexi Kraus, Hannah Luebbe, Cheyenne Tonniges, Bree Nisly, Calley Abell, Sophia Benedict and Jackie Prigge.

sophomore year with 156 kills and 38 blocks as all three earned News-Times all-area honorable mention. Wambold also garnered all-SNC honorable mention.

Senior defensive specialist Kate Luebbe is the Broncos’ final returning starter after collecting 118 digs and 184 serve receives to pair with 24 aces.

Behind them, senior Molly Prochaska and juniors Lauryn Breikreutz and Natalie Sams round out Centennial’s returning letterwinners.

“We have a lot of depth in many positions this year which helps at practice. It means more competition for that starting spot. We also have a lot of players who can play multiple positions which helps,” Anstine said. “We bring back a lot of experience and leadership as most of our starters

are returning this year. Our defense is definitely our team’s strength. This team has put in a lot of hours and effort this summer in wanting to get better. They are a close-knit group that pushes each other to be better. This team is very coachable and wants to win.”

Newcomers to the roster include junior Caylie Clouse, sophomores Hannah Luebbe and Cheyenne Tonniges and freshman Tyler Opfer. In particular, Anstine said Opfer and Tonniges have the potential to make an immediate impact this season at the varsity level.

“We have about 12 girls who have the chance to see the varsity court this year,” she said. “Our practices should be very competitive as we could have multiple girls fighting to see the court. We could have some

freshmen and sophomores see varsity action this season.”

The Broncos finished as the runner-up at the SNC tournament, but the conference should be as competitive as usual, with Sutton, Thayer Central, Milford and David City among the likely contenders. It’ll be a new experience at the district level with Centennial moving up to Class C-1 this season.

“I have high hopes and expectations for this team. They have a ton of potential to do great things this year,” Anstine said. “I would like us to finish in the top of our conference and make a district final this year. I would also just like to see this team make improvements all year and play their best volleyball at the end of the season.”

HEAD COACH: EVAN KLANECKY MASCOT: BRONCOS CLASS: C-2

CENTENNIAL



RECORD LAST SEASON: 5 - 4

FOOTBALL



Members of the 2023 Centennial Broncos football team include (front from left): Alex Hirschfeld, Bryson Hornbacher, Trevor Fehlhafer, Jack Wellman, Ben Sams; Second row: Daxton Bloebaum, Parker Dishman, Jayden Butzke, Jordan Wagner, Paul Fehlhafer, Ryan Richters, Sam Ehlers, Grant Cast; Third row: Landon O'Donnel, Owen Naber, Caleb Clouse, Trenton Waegli, Zayden Murphy, Cooper Stelling, Kyle Keith; Back: Van Choma, Ryan Fehlhafer, Chase Robinson, Ruger Webb, Ayden Konken. Not pictured: Cael Payne, Brayden Songster.

Centennial football hungry, but untested

Broncos replacing a lot of players with very little varsity experience

By Ken Kush
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

UTICA – After a 2022 season that ended with a 5-4 record, many of the players from that team are no longer at Centennial High School.

Broncos head coach Evan Klanecky who has put together a record at Centennial of 83-43 which included a Class C-2 State Championship in 2017, will have a young team to work with as he gets the team ready for the upcoming season.

“We are replacing key players at every position group this year. We will start a large number of players this year that have no varsity experience.

Our strength will be that we should be able to mold to our strengths and have some hungry players that are getting a shot to play,” said Klanecky. “We will have to have a breakout summer for a lot of these players to get physically stronger. We don’t have a lot of experience and we will have to press to learn a varsity scheme.”

Centennial will return four starters on both sides of the ball and that will also be the number of letter winners the Broncos will return.

Senior Jarrett Dodson, 6-0, 170 pounds, was second on the team in rushing last year with 225 yards and two touchdowns. He also hauled in two recep-

tions for 25 yards. On the defensive side of the ball from his free safety position he had 36 tackles.

Another senior Alex Hirschfeld, 6-4, 190, had 18 receptions at wide receiver for 160 yards and he also added 17 tackles on defense.

Junior Paul Fehlhafer at 6-4, 275 had 17 stops and will be a key part of the Broncos offensive line.

The rest of the returning letter winners, their year and position include; Bryson Hornbacher, SR., 6-3, 215 pounds, O/D line; Cyrus Songster, SR., 5-10, 175 pounds, RB/LB; Ryan Richters, JR., 6-0, 180 pounds, OLB; Sam Ehlers, JR., 5-10,

175 pounds, QB and Jordan Wagner, 6-2, 180 pounds, WR/DB.

“Last season like always depends on experience. We got them as much of that as we could. However, we were in many close games. This team will not have much varsity experience,” said Klanecky. “Depth is always a concern at the C2 level. We will have players that need to know up to three positions because of lack of depth. Underclassman will play a major role in this team for preparation and significant time on Friday night as well.”

Klanecky’s varsity assistant this year will be Craig Barjenbruch.

The Broncos travel to North Bend on Friday, August 25, before opening the home part of their four game home slate the following week hosting Tekamah-Herman.

The rest of the home schedule includes; Milford, Lincoln Lutheran and Tri-County.

“The outlook for this team is that we are going to have to grind for everything we get. We have to get guys ready faster than we ever have before,” stated Klanecky. “Depth and experience are very limited. My expectation for this group is that we will be eager to learn improve as the season goes along.”

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 25	at North Bend
Sept. 1	Tekamah-Herman
Sept. 8	at Fillmore Central
Sept. 15	at Battle Creek
Sept. 22	Milford
Sept. 28	Lincoln Lutheran
Oct. 6	at Wilber-Clatonia
Oct. 13	at Malcolm
Oct. 20	Tri County

FOOTBALL STANDOUTS

JARRETT DODSON SENIOR	ALEX HIRSCHFELD SENIOR
PAUL FEHLHAFER JUNIOR	RYAN RICHTERS JUNIOR
CYRUS SONGSTER SENIOR	BRYSON HORNBACHER SENIOR
SAM EHLERS JUNIOR	JORDAN WAGNER JUNIOR
JACK WELLMAN SENIOR	BEN SAMS SENIOR
PARKER DISHMAN JUNIOR	JAYDEN BUTZKE JUNIOR

HEAD COACH: ROB JOHANSEN MASCOT: BRONCOS CLASS: C

CENTENNIAL



NO. OF RETURNING STATE QUALIFIERS: 5

CROSS COUNTRY

Broncos cross country teams have eyes on Kearney

Centennial returns five runners with previous state experience

By Christian Horn
SPORTS REPORTER

UTICA – This fall, Centennial cross country head coach Rob Johansen believes the Bronco girls have the opportunity to do something that’s only been done twice before in program history: qualify for Nebraska State Cross Country Championships as a team.

The Centennial girls last qualified for the team race in 2005, and their only other team berth came in 1988, but backed by a pair of top-60 finishers at state last season in incoming juniors Josephine Turnbull and Grace Schernikau plus a pair of talented freshmen, the Broncos could have the firepower to do it again in 2023.

They’ll be joined by a trio of boys runners who have state experience from the 2021 season in juniors Matthew Hoops and Camden Winkelman and senior Garrison Schernikau.

“All of my returning runners will be aiming to get back to state,” Johansen said. “They all have the race experience to do well and had role models of Clinton Turnbull and Madison Brandenburgh showing them hard work produces success.”

Grace Schernikau barely missed out on a spot in the podium last fall as she capped her sophomore year with a 16th-place finish, while Turnbull crossed the line in 56th place. Schernikau also finished as the SNC runner-up in 2022 and Turnbull



Members of the 2023 Centennial Broncos cross country team include (front from left): Josie Butzke, Marley Olson, Josephine Turnbull, Grace Schernikau; Back: Matthew Hoops, Torrian Ibarra, Camden Winkelman, Braeden Bloebaum, Garrison Schernikau.

took home sixth place at the conference meet.

The Bronco girls didn’t have enough runners to post a team score last year, but that should change this year with the addition of freshmen Marley Olson and Josie Butzke, both of whom Johansen said ran well at the junior high level.

The boys will have a little more depth, with Hoops, Winkelman and Garrison Schernikau forming an experienced 1-2-3 punch while

freshman Braeden Bloebaum and junior Torrian Ibarra rounding out the back end of the lineup.

Centennial didn’t qualify as a team in the boys race last fall like the Broncos did in 2021, but Winkelman and Hoops crossed the line in 13th and 14th place, respectively, at the SNC meet.

“Both the boys and girls should have team scores in meets for the first time in many years,” Johansen said. “Our freshmen runners did

really well in junior high, so making the transition to the 5k will take some time.”

Johansen enters his 18th season as Centennial’s head coach (and 27th overall) joined on staff by assistant coach Emma Dannehl. Milford figures to factor into an always-tough SNC race, he said, with schools like McCool Junction and Aquinas likely to compete well at the district level.

Still, Centennial has the talent and experience to

make some noise if the Broncos’ crew can stay healthy.

“Both teams can do well this season. The girls have a chance to qualify as a team for first time since 2005, and only one other girls’ team has qualified for state. The boys also have a chance to qualify,” Johansen said. “Staying healthy for them is always a key element of the sport. Sickness and injuries can change the outlook in a hurry.”

CROSS COUNTRY SCHEDULE

Aug. 24	at McCool Invite
Sept. 3	at Schuyler Invite
Sept. 7	at Milford Invite
Sept. 14	at Fillmore Central Invite
Sept. 19	at Malcolm Invite
Sept. 21	at Thayer Central Invite
Sept. 25	at UNK Invite
Sept. 28	at Raymond Central
Oct. 5	at SNC Invite
Oct. 12	in David City at Districts
Oct. 20	at State in Kearney

CROSS COUNTRY STANDOUTS

JOSEPHINE TURNBULL JUNIOR	GRACE SCHERNIKAU JUNIOR
MATTHEW HOOPS JUNIOR	CAMDEN WINKELMAN JUNIOR
GARRISON SCHERNIKAU SENIOR	



CLASS: C-2 MASCOT: PANTHERS HEAD COACH: HALEY HOARTY

FILLMORE CENTRAL

RECORD LAST SEASON: 2-29

VOLLEYBALL

VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

- Aug. 24 at Doniphan-Trumbull
- Aug. 29 Superior
- Aug. 31 David City
- Sept. 5 at Milford
- Sept. 7 at Tri County
- Sept. 9 at Sandy Creek Invite
- Sept. 12 Heartland
- Sept. 14 at Seward
- Sept. 16 Fillmore Central Invite
- Sept. 19 at Thayer Central
- Sept. 26 Triangular
- Sept. 28 at Sutton
- Sept. 30 Fairbury at Johnson County Central Invite
- Oct. 3 at Diller-Odell
- Oct. 5 Fillmore Central Triangular
- Oct. 10 Fillmore Central Triangular
- Oct. 12 at Wilber-Clatonia
- Oct. 16 SNC Tournament
- Oct. 17 SNC Tournament Finals
- Oct. 24-25 Subdistricts
- Oct. 28 at District Finals
- Nov. 1-4 at State in Lincoln

VOLLEYBALL STANDOUTS



ADDISON EKELER
JUNIOR



MAKENNA MCCOY
JUNIOR



HADLEY MCCOY
JUNIOR



JOLEE GEWECKE
SOPHOMORE



JAYDEN STOFER
SOPHOMORE



LILLY SRAJHANS
SENIOR

Panther volleyball looks to build momentum under Hoarty

Fillmore Central returns six letterwinners, five starters

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

GENEVA – The Fillmore Central volleyball team was young and inexperienced last fall, leading to some growing pains amid a 2-29 campaign in Haley Hoarty’s first season as head coach. The Panthers will be more seasoned in 2023, as they return six letterwinners and five starters, most of whom are still underclassmen.

“Facing adversity last fall has given the girls a strong drive to improve,” Hoarty said. “They are hungry to win and it is evident in their focus and hustle during practice. We are already practicing at a higher skill level than we did in the past season.”

Anchoring the returners are a pair of News-Times all-area honorable mention selections in juniors Addison Ekeler and MaKenna McCoy. Ekeler racked up 164 kills and 56 digs to go alongside 29 blocks and 23 aces; McCoy collected 369 assists and 182 digs from her setter position to pair with 31 kills, 19 aces and 11 blocks.

Junior Hadley McCoy is also back as a returning starter after tallying 114 digs, as are sophomores JoLee Gewecke and Jayden Stofer, who logged a few quality minutes on the varsity court in 2022. Behind them, senior Lilly Srajhans rounds out the returning letterwinners.

In all, Fillmore Central will



Members of the 2023 Fillmore Central Panthers volleyball team include (front from left); Katie Jensen, Baden Monroe, Hadley McCoy, MaKenna McCoy, Abi Kimbrough, Kaylie Schlueter. Middle: Ellie Janing, Addison Graham, Ashlynn Childs, Ali Nichols, Addysen Brown, Haley Reinsch, Lilly Srajhans. Back: Jaelynn Gewecke, Harlee Hafer, Jordyn Stassinis, Addison Ekeler, JoLee Gewecke, Jayden Stofer, Eira Braten, Cierra Cruz.

be more experienced but still pretty young with seven sophomores and eight freshmen on roster compared to just three seniors.

“Underclassmen will need to step up big time for us,” Hoarty said. “We have some returners who started as freshmen last year as well as a very athletic incoming freshman class. Practices are very competitive and each position is going to be a tight race.”

The Panthers are shifting up a

class to C-1 this fall, which will add more competition to a schedule that already includes the perennially tough Southern Nebraska Conference. Despite the step up in quality opposition, Hoarty said Fillmore Central’s strong worth ethic could keep them competitive on the court throughout the season.

“The girls are motivated to improve and take advantage of every opportunity. We also looked

really strong defensively all summer,” she said. “They are coachable, driven to get better and have great chemistry. I expect us to be a scrappy group that plays hard and frustrates teams. We play smart volleyball and are working on being more aggressive and confident. We have some depth, so I am looking for a lot of people to contribute.”



CLASS: C-2 MASCOT: PANTHERS HEAD COACH: GABE EBERHARDT

FILLMORE CENTRAL

RECORD LAST SEASON: 7-3

FOOTBALL

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

- Aug. 25 at David City
- Sept. 1 at Milford
- Sept. 8 Centennial
- Sept. 15 Wilber-Clatonia
- Sept. 22 at Fairbury
- Sept. 29 Doniphan-Trumbull
- Oct. 6 at GICC
- Oct. 13 Hastings St. Cecilia
- Oct. 20 at Wood River

FOOTBALL STANDOUTS



MARKEY HINRICHS
SENIOR



LUKE KIMBROUGH
SENIOR



JARIN TWEEDY
JUNIOR



TREVEN STASSINIS
SENIOR



KADE COOPER
SENIOR



DYLAN GEWECKE
SENIOR



HUNTER LUKES
SENIOR



BLAKE NUN
SENIOR



JACKSON TURNER
SENIOR



DAN STONER
JUNIOR



Members of the 2023 Fillmore Central Panthers football team include (front from left); Student Managers - Bret Dunker, Judson Rust, Caleb Nun, Ty Schelkopf, Brooks Hoarty. Second row: Wyatt Hatterman, Degan Treinen, Gabe Burley, Lucious Hook, Michael Anderson, Michael Lockhart, Jaret Potthoff, Cooper Lefever, Bryson Hafer, Chase Myers, Domonic Harding. Third row: Cooper Miller, Blake Nun, Carlos Andujo, Hunter Fintel, Hunter Lukes, Jarin Tweedy, Dylan Gewecke, Jackson Turner, Luke Kimbrough, Joey Stoner, Treven Srajhans. Back: Andrew Whitlow, Zeke Barnhill, Wyatt Vrbka, Markey Hinrichs, Kiffin Theobald, Carson Asche, Kade Cooper, Treven Stassinis, Trevor Roach, Preston Komenda, Dan Stoner, student manager Kody Bracha.

Panthers seasoned for another run at C2 state playoffs

Fillmore Central roster filled with experience and depth

By Ken Kush
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

GENEVA – The 2022 season was the first time since 2014 that the Fillmore Central Panthers played in the post-season.

They are ready and hungry to make it two years in a row.

Fillmore Central which ended up the year with a 7-3 record returns eight starters on offense and seven on defense.

Panthers head coach Gabe Eberhardt acknowledges that his team’s experience and continuity is a huge plus.

“I think one of the biggest strengths this year will be experience. We

have a veteran group and some of them have been playing varsity since they were freshman and sophomores. We have a number of guys back which provided us with some great depth as well,” said Eberhardt. “We also have a number of guys who are able to play multiple positions which will also help us with depth during the season.”

The list of post season honors accumulated includes 10 players from 2022.

Honorable mention in both Omaha World Herald and Lincoln Journal Star were earned by the following: Markey Hinrichs, SR., 6-0, 285 pound

lineman. He had 34 tackles last year with seven for a loss; Luke Kimbrough, SR., 5-11, 185 pound RB/LB. Kimbrough was the team’s leading receiver with 25 catches for 394 yards along with 339 yards rushing and 11 total touchdowns.

Junior Jarin Tweedy, a 6-1 wide receiver/defensive back had 24 tackles and was one of the top defenders in the C2 with five interceptions. Senior Treven Stassinis, at 6-3 175 pounds, had 19 tackles and one INT as well as 284 yards rushing.

Other players Eberhardt acknowledged included; Kade Cooper, SR., 6-3, 200, QB/LB; Dylan

Gewecke, SR., 5-9, 150 WR/DB; Hunter Lukes, SR., 5-10, 225, OL/DL; Blake Nun, SR., 5-10, 200 OL/DL; Jackson Turner, SR., 5-11, 215, OL/LB and Dan Stoner, JR., 6-4, 220, TE/DL.

The Panthers ground game averaged 213.6 yards per game and the passing game netted them 107.8 yards per night. Cooper and Stassinis combined to complete 66 of 114 passes for 1,068 yards and 10 scores. Kimbrough and Stoner, Stassinis will be the main ball carriers for the Panther this year as they had a combined 182 carries in 2022.

“I think the goal of ev-

ery program is to build off what you did the year before. We learned that the only way we are going to improve is through hard work and dedication to getting better as a team,” Eberhardt stated. “To be a top team in the state it takes more and last season was a step in the right direction for us as a program.”

Eberhardt will be assisted by Ryan Komenda and Alex Moses.

The Panthers open with a road game at David City on August 25th and will not see their home turf until Friday, September 8 when they host Centennial.

HEAD COACH: AARON LAUBY MASCOT: PANTHERS CLASS: C

SOFTBALL

FILLMORE CENTRAL

RECORD LAST SEASON: ?? - ??



Members of the 2023 Fillmore Central/Exeter-Milligan/Friend Panthers softball team include (front from left): Peyton Komenda, Taylor Pribyl, Lilly Ellison, Kaili Head, Amy Lauby, Addison Treinen, Calli Gonzales. Middle: Carly Lukes, Jordyn Nesbitt, Malorie Lawver, Kierra Papik, Emma Meyer, Ashley Braun, Hadley Sladek. Back: Faith Harding, Alexis Saatmann, Bailey Hafer, McKenzie Salmon, Evelyn Meyer, Brooklyn Oldehoft

FCEMF softball hopes to build on district finals berth

Panthers return six starters and 10 letterwinners

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

GENEVA – The Fillmore Central/Exeter-Milligan/Friend Panthers turned in a successful year on the diamond last fall, winning their host subdistrict and reaching the district finals before eventually bowing out to Hastings St. Cecilia.

With six starters and 10 letterwinners returning, the 2023 squad looks to build on the momentum from a year ago.

“We have a lot of returning girls with experience. Amy Lauby and Ashley Braun have both been consistent pitchers now for multiple seasons,” head coach Aaron Lauby said. “If we want to make it deep into the post season, they will have to both continue to improve. Kaili Head and Lilly Ellison are both as

capable of offensive players as we have had come through our program and both will need to continue to be very productive. I really like our depth at each position.”

The senior Lauby and junior Braun anchor the FCEMF staff in the circle, as Lauby went 12-7 and tossed 92 innings as a junior, while Braun finished with 45 innings of action as the Panthers’ No. 2 pitcher. Both girls will be joined in the circle this year by sophomore Hadley Sladek.

At the plate, the senior trio of Ellison, Head and Lauby anchored the lineup. Ellison led the area with a .539 batting average with 25 RBIs, five doubles, a home run and 12 stolen bases. Lauby hit .470 with seven two-baggers, a pair of homers and 25 RBIs, while Head smashed six

long balls to go with seven doubles, two triples and 22 RBIs as part of her .396 batting average. She also swiped 10 bases.

Lauby and Head were first-team all-Southern Nebraska Conference selections, while Ellison was a second-team all-SNC pick. All three girls earned News-Times all-area recognition.

Braun hit .310 at the dish with five doubles and one home run, junior Bailey Hafer batted .292 with four doubles, one triple and three dingers and sophomore Addie Treinen rounded out FCEMF’s returning starters with a trio of doubles and eight RBIs.

Other returning letterwinners include juniors Carly Lukes (.231 average) and Emma Meyer (.294), as well as sophomore Calli Gonzalez, who hit .421

with 10 steals, four doubles, a triple, a homer and 16 RBIs.

Among the newcomers are sophomore Alexis Saatmann and freshman Malorie Lawver.

“Every year there is a girl that surprises and plays a key role that I didn’t necessarily see before the year started. I expect we might have more than one this year. I was impressed with a few of our underclassmen this summer and the improvements that they have made,” coach Lauby said. “I think Addie Treinen and Emma Meyer will both have key roles for us this season defensively and hopefully be able to contribute at the plate. I have high hopes for Calli Gonzales and Carly Lukes anchoring down our outfield and being able to use their speed on the bases.

Alexis Saatmann played a lot of games this summer and showed good much improvement from a year ago.”

One of the biggest questions facing FCEMF this fall is its defense following the graduation of key fielders like Shelby Lawver and Faith Engle.

“That will be a big focus for us is to put the best defender possible at each position. I expect there to be a lot of competition for opportunities all over the field,” Lauby said. “It might take us a few weeks to determine who that is, and let the athletes determine that by their performance. We always want more team speed. If you can run and be intelligent on the bases, we will find a way to use that.”

SOFTBALL SCHEDULE

- Aug. 17 at York Triangular
- Aug. 19 at Centennial Triangular
- Aug. 21 at Aurora
- Aug. 22 at Fairbury
- Aug. 26 FCEMF Tournament
- Aug. 29 Southern Valley
- Aug. 31 at Southern
- Sept. 2 at Fairbury Invite
- Sept. 5 at Crete Triangular
- Sept. 7 at FCEMF Tri.
- Sept. 9 at West Point Invite
- Sept. 11 at St. Paul Triangular
- Sept. 12 at Central City
- Sept. 14 FCEMF Triangular
- Sept. 18 at Lincoln Northwest
- Sept. 21 at Cass County Triangular
- Sept. 23 at SNC Tournament in Geneva
- Sept. 26 at Milford
- Oct. 2 at Sub Districts
- Oct. 6-7 at District Finals
- Oct. 11-13 at State in Hastings

SOFTBALL STANDOUTS



HEAD COACH: COLBY SMITH MASCOT: PANTHERS CLASS: C

CROSS COUNTRY

FILLMORE CENTRAL

NO. OF RETURNING STATE QUALIFIERS: 5



Experienced Panthers cross country looks to build on success

Fillmore Central boys return four state qualifiers from 2022

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

GENEVA – The Fillmore Central cross country team saw a lot of success last fall, particularly on the boys side as the Panthers qualified for the state meet at the Kearney Country Club en masse. Four of those runners are back in the fold this season, as is individual state qualifier Hallie Verhage for the Fillmore Central girls.

Verhage placed 68th in the field at Kearney last October and will aim to improve on that finish during her senior campaign. Junior Ashtin Clark finished the highest of the Panther boys’ four returners, crossing the line in 52nd place last fall. Behind him, senior Austin Wurtz finished 90th, sophomore Cameron Knight capped took 101st and junior Waylon Rayburn broke the tape in 107th position.

Incoming freshmen Collin McCoy and Eli Conway provide some depth on the back end of the lineup for the Panther boys, but the girls will have to bank on a lot more immediate production from their underclassmen in order to compete outside of Verhage.

The list of newcomers for the Fillmore Central girls this fall includes soph-



Members of the 2023 Fillmore Central Panthers cross country team include (front from left): Ryan Schram, Kara Hecke, Elizabeth Lockhart, Avery Schwarz, Malorie Conway. Middle: Zach Coash, Emma Egger, Amity Swartzendruber, Hallie Verhage, Lark Neiman, Hannah Myers. Back: Waylon Rayburn, Wyatt Rayburn, Ashtin Clark, Collin McCoy, Austin Wurtz, Cameron Knight, Eli Conway.

omore Elizabeth Lockhart and freshman trio Emma Egger, Kara Hecke and Lark Nieman.

“The boys return four runners with state experience, but the girls are very young,” Panthers head coach Colby Smith said. “We made it to state and gained experience, though both teams will rely heav-

ily on the younger athletes right away. They have a lot of potential.”

At the conference level, Smith said Milford, Thayer Central, David City and Wilber-Clatonia are among the Panthers’ biggest competition in a talented Southern Nebraska Conference field. At districts, schools like Aurora, Holdrege, Ord

and Minden could compete for the team spots in Kearney.

Though Fillmore Central returns a lot of experience – particularly on the boys’ side – Smith and assistant coach Katherine Smith most hope to see continued improvement from the Panthers’ runners, especially the underclass-

men. Fillmore Central is slated to begin the cross country season in McCool Junction on Thursday, Aug. 24 for the Mustangs’ invite at Camp Kateri.

“I expect a lot of growth,” the head coach said. “The young kids should grow into contributing roles early.”

CROSS COUNTRY SCHEDULE

- Aug. 25 at McCool Invite
- Aug. 29 at Superior Invite
- Sept. 7 at Fairbury Invite
- Sept. 14 Fillmore Central Inv.
- Sept. 21 at Thayer Central Inv.
- Sept. 28 at York Invite
- Oct. 5 at SNC Invite in David City
- Oct. 12 at Districts
- Oct. 20 at State in Kearney

CROSS COUNTRY STANDOUTS





CLASS: D-1 MASCOT: BOBCATS HEAD COACH: KORY KAHLANDT

EXETER-MILLIGAN/FRIEND

FOOTBALL

RECORD LAST SEASON: ?-?

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 25 Clarkson-Leigh at McCool Junction
 Sept. 1 at Sandy Creek
 Sept. 8 Freeman at Palmyra
 Sept. 15 Thayer Central at Johnson County Central
 Sept. 22 at Southern
 Oct. 6
 Oct. 12

FOOTBALL STANDOUTS

 BREKAN SCHLUTER JUNIOR	 AIDAN VAVRA JUNIOR
 SPENCER EBERSPACHER SENIOR	 JACOB WEBER SENIOR
 ANDREW VAVRA SENIOR	 DRAVEN PAYNE SENIOR
 JACOB KLOOZ JUNIOR	 MIKEY BARTU JUNIOR

Senior led Bobcats looking forward to 2023 gridiron year

Backfield solid with workhorse Schluter back for his final year

By Ken Kush
 ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

FRIEND – In 2022 the Exeter-Milligan/Friend Bobcats averaged 287.1 yards on the ground.

As a junior, Brekan Schluter accounted for 1,930 yards, a 214.6 per game average. Schluter averaged 25 carries per game and he scored 32 touchdowns.

The Bobcats return senior leadership, experience as well as getting a few players back who were injured last year.

“This is a good returning experienced senior led team,” said co-head coach Kory Kahlandt. “We had a few players injured last year, and they are now healthy which will provide depth that we have lacked in years past.”

The first game of the year will be a great measuring stick for the Bobcats as they welcome the 2022 Class D1 State Champions Clarkson-Leigh Patriots to Friend on Friday, August 25.

The Patriots defeated the Bobcats last season 56-38 and the battle with Clarkson-Leigh will be the first of two battles with two pre-season ranked teams as they will also take on No.9 Thayer Central later in the season. The Patriots come on at No.4 in the Lincoln Journal Star.



Members of the 2023 Exeter-Milligan/Friend Bobcats football team include (front from left): Brekan Schluter, Andrew Vavra, Draven Payne, Tyler Due, Spencer Eberspacher, Mason Semler, Preston Knollenberg, Jacob Weber. Second row: Zach Spohn, Mikey Bartu, Will Vyhnaek, Chase Paulsen, Jacob Klooz, Mark Milton, Jayden Capek, Carter Milton. Third row: Josiah Ocegueda, Mason Vossler, Dayton Kremer, Aidan Vavra, Hunter Svehla, Zach Vossler, Brett Kallhoff, Logan Krupicka. Fourth row: Rylan Bartels, Jacob Spohn, Adrien Mueller, Zayde Arp, Truman Milton, Cohen Harre, Evan Brahmstedt, Jaxson Brandt. Back row: student managers Tommy Kallhoff, Maddux Milton, Bob Milton, Ty Svehla.

Along with Schluter, junior quarterback Aidan Vavra returns. During his sophomore season he completed 25 of 43 passes for 312 yards and three scores. The Bobcats only put up 34.6 yards per game in the air and attempted just 49 passes all season long.

The team has eight letter winners with senior Spencer Eberspacher who rang

up five sacks and 41 tackles and two fumble recoveries last season. He is penciled in at TE/DE. Senior Jacob Weber with 62 stops and two fumble recoveries; Andrew Vavra, SR., with 18 tackles including a pair of sacks and Draven Payne, SR., RB/LB.

Juniors include, Jacob Klooz, OL/DE and Mikey Bartu who is listed at running back and linebacker.

Along with Kahlandt is co-head coach Jim Pfeifer along with assistants Brian Arp and Jordan Pella. The Bobcats return 11 starters overall with six on offense and five on defense.

“We will need to fill a few spots that we graduated and we are going to need some younger players step up,” Kahlandt said.

Following the season

opener on the 25th, they will suit up at McCool Junction on September 1 in a 2 p.m. kickoff. The only other game on the schedule which is different from a 7 p.m. kickoff is on October at Johnson County Central where the two teams will get going at 3 p.m.



CLASS: D-1 MASCOT: BOBCATS HEAD COACH: MADALYNN FOUSEK

EXETER-MILLIGAN/FRIEND

VOLLEYBALL

RECORD LAST SEASON: 19-12

VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 21 Superior/Deshler Jamboree
 Aug. 24 Pawnee City/Lewiston Tri.
 Aug. 29 at Aquinas Catholic
 Sept. 5 at Lawrence-Nelson
 Sept. 7 at Shelby-Rising City/Parkview Christian
 Sept. 9 EMF Tournament at MUDECAS Tournament
 Sept. 11-14 Sutton
 Sept. 19 Aquinas/East Butler Triangular
 Sept. 21 Tri County
 Sept. 25 Osceola at Johnson County Central Tourn.
 Sept. 26 at Meridian/Deshler
 Oct. 5 Pioneer Conference Tournament at Silver Lake Quad
 Oct. 17 at Diller-Odell
 Oct. 20 at Subdistricts
 Oct. 23-24 District Finals
 Oct. 28

VOLLEYBALL STANDOUTS

 SAVANNA KRUPICKA SENIOR	 KAYDENCE HAASE SOPHOMORE
 MALORIE STASKAL SENIOR	 KILEY OLDEHOEFT SOPHOMORE
 ELLA ARCHER JUNIOR	 REAGAN BARTLEY JUNIOR
 LILY JEFFRIES JUNIOR	 KEILA RICENBAW JUNIOR
 TAYLIN SCHLUTER SOPHOMORE	 SELAH PETERSEN SOPHOMORE



Members of the 2023 Exeter-Milligan/Friend Bobcats volleyball team include (front from left): Regan Bartley, Lily Jeffries, Savanna Krupicka, Malorie Staskal, Keila Ricenbaw, Ella Archer. Middle: Kiahna Bachle, Kiley Oldehoeft, Kaydence Haase, Babe Weber, Taylin Schluter, Selah Petersen. Back: Avery Tuttle, Alexis Paulsen, Aniston Meints, Sydney Engert, Sophia Weber, Gracie Vyhnaek, Cheyenne Krupicka.

Exeter-Milligan/Friend volleyball dreams big in first year of co-op

Bobcats return 11 total starters, 10 letterwinners

By Christian Horn
 SPORTS EDITOR

EXETER – Last fall, the Exeter-Milligan volleyball team entered with some major questions following the departure of a pair of first-team all-state players from the T-Wolves’ 2021 state run and promptly turned in a 19-12 campaign, pushing Diller-Odell to the limit in a five-set loss in the district finals.

Friend, meanwhile, endured some growing pains as a young but inexperienced roster battled through a 1-24 campaign. In 2023, however, the two schools will join forces in the first year of an all-sports co-op in which the two schools will compete as the EMF Bobcats.

That’s good news for head coach Madalynn Fousek and assistant coaches Keeley Kroeck and Taylor Erdkamp, who will have 11 total returning letterwinners between the two schools, including 10 starters.

“Last year we were two separate teams competing against one another so it’s hard to put into words how our last season’s prepared us for this new season, but I believe each season that you have under your belt as an athlete you get stronger and

more confident in what is being asked of you,” Fousek said. “This summer we have been able to start to bond and really get to know one another. One of our strengths will be our ability to lean on one another and learn from each other. We will have the talent to compete with a lot of top tier teams and the relationships being formed on our team will only help us in the long run.”

The Bobcats return some serious firepower, including a trio of players who racked up over 200 kills apiece for Exeter-Milligan and three of Friend’s four kills leaders. Savanna Krupicka ranked second on the final area charts as a junior with 266 kills to pair with 229 digs, 35 aces and eight blocks, while Kaydence Haase burst onto the scene with 260 winners – the third-most among area athletes – in a stellar freshman campaign; she also tallied 215 digs, 45 aces and nine blocks.

Behind them, senior Malorie Staskal compiled 239 kills, 199 blocks, 46 aces and 53 blocks last fall; the three girls were each D-2 all-state honorable mention in the Lincoln Journal Star and Omaha World-Herald for the T-Wolves. Haase was a first-team all-CRC pick with Krupicka and Staskal garnering all-conference honorable

mention. Haase and Krupicka were News-Times all-area picks, while Staskal was an all-area honorable mention – as was Kiley Oldehoeft, who capped her freshman season with 51 kills, 45 aces, 42 digs and nine blocks.

The Bobcats will also have a quartet of seasoned juniors in Ella Archer, Reagan Bartley, Lily Jeffries and Keila Ricenbaw. Jeffries tallied 395 assists and 162 digs from her setter position to pair with 20 aces, 16 kills and 16 blocks.

Ricenbaw racked up a team-high 76 kills for Friend last fall to pair with 182 digs and 16 aces, while Bartley finished with 66 kills and 30 digs and Archer amassed 55 winners, 25 digs, 19 aces and 15 blocks.

Other returning letterwinners include sophomores Taylin Schluter, Babe Weber and Selah Petersen. Additionally, freshman Sophie Weber is a newcomer to look out for as she could contribute right away as a defensive specialist.

“We are going to be able to have a lot more competition this year with having doubled our team from being separate teams last year,” Fousek said. “I am looking forward to seeing the competition once practices begin. We have options on where we can put

people which hasn’t been the case for either E-M or Friend in previous years. I am excited to see what our sophomores and freshman will bring to the table as well. We have talent in those classes, so I am hoping that we have some younger players step up and make a difference.”

Both schools competed at the D-2 level last year; with the co-op comes a bump up a class to D-1. E-M also competed in the CRC, but this fall EMF will compete in the Pioneer Conference alongside perennial winners Diller-Odell and Falls City Sacred Heart.

“Every year I have high expectations. This year is no different. We have a young, but also experienced group,” Fousek said. “We have the capability of being able to put ourselves on the map year 1 of the co-op. We coaches have talked to the team about what to expect and what we expect from them and so far they have been doing a pretty good job of meeting those expectations. We have a lot of work to do in the gym yet, but it will be exciting to see where this group goes.”

HEAD COACH: LISA KANODE MASCOT: BOBCATS CLASS: C

EXETER-MILLIGAN/FRIEND

CROSS COUNTRY

NO. OF RETURNING STATE QUALIFIERS: 0



Exeter-Milligan/Friend to field cross country team for the first time

Bobcats ready for first season during all-sports co-op

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

EXETER — This fall marks the first year of an all-sports co-op between Exeter-Milligan and Friend. In what had previously been limited to just football, the two schools will combine for all sports to compete as the Bobcats.

For sports like volleyball, the move simply provides more depth throughout the roster, but it also affords the opportunity for the inclusion of sports that both schools were previously too small to field teams for.

Such is the case for EMF cross country, which is set to kick off its first season of action under head coach Lisa Kanode. Because it's the program's first year, there are no returning letterwinners with prior experience, but the Bobcats will have four boys and one girl set to lace up their running shoes this fall.

The EMF boys lineup will include senior Troy Kallhoff, sophomore Caleb Black and freshman Keltyn Kirchhoff and Grady Bresson, with junior Kyler Sladek the lone runner scheduled to compete for



Members of the 2023 Exeter-Milligan/Friend Bobcats cross country team include (from left): Keltyn Kirchhoff, Caleb Black, Kyler Sladek, Grady Bresson, Troy Kallhoff.

the Bobcat girls.

"We are new to cross country and a young team; however, we do not lack competitive drive and we are eager to get started. Caleb was third in the mile at districts, running a 5:11, while Keltyn ran a 5:18 as an eighth grader. Troy brings leadership and spunk to the team, while

Grady and Kyler train with a lot of heart and strong work ethic," Kanode said. "Our quote this year is 'Don't bother to only be better than others, try to be better than yourself.' If we haven't figured out already that cross country takes a strong mental toughness, we soon will, and if we are not pushing ourselves

and each other to improve every day then we simply won't get better. Our goal is to give our best each day and see where it takes us."

Because Kanode and assistant coach Allison Meints are attempting to build a strong foundation in the first year of the program, interest and participation at the junior high

level will be crucial. To that end, EMF has four kids on the junior high level with one eighth grader and a trio of seventh graders.

"Going into our first year, I believe having a junior high team this year is going to make all the difference for our future. We currently have four boys on our high school team and four on our junior high boys team," Kanode said. "All of them are very competitive and hardworking. Next year we will lose a senior, but we will gain a freshman and in two years we will gain three freshmen without losing anyone from our boys team. Currently, our girls will only be able to compete individually."

This fall, Kanode said EMF's district is not set in stone yet, but among potential options, she expected schools like McCool Junction, Tri County and Freeman to be competitive.

"Even though we are new and have a lot to learn, I expect us to set realistic goals and have high expectations for ourselves and each other," Kanode said. "We will have to give each other our best every day and work to improve each week."

CROSS COUNTRY SCHEDULE

Aug. 24	at McCool Invite
Aug. 28	at Superior Invite
Sept. 2	at Beatrice
Sept. 7	at Milford Invite
Sept. 14	at Central City Invite
Sept. 21	at Doniphan-Trumbull
Sept. 25	at UNK Invite
Oct. 5	at McCool Invite
Oct. 12	at Districts
Oct. 20	at State in Kearney

CROSS COUNTRY STANDOUTS



TROY KALLHOFF
SENIOR



CALEB BLACK
SOPHOMORE



KELTYN KIRCHHOFF
FRESHMAN



GRADY BRESSON
FRESHMAN



KYLER SLADEK
JUNIOR

HEAD COACH: LORI KLOOZ MASCOT: BOBCATS CLASS: C

EXETER-MILLIGAN/FRIEND

GOLF

NO. OF RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: 2



Five golfers to compete for EMF girls

Bobcats prepare for first year of co-op

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

EXETER — For the first time, Exeter-Milligan and Friend are entering into a co-op for all sports this school year. Previously, the schools only competed together as the Bobcats on the gridiron, but this fall that will extend to volleyball, cross country and girls golf.

The turnout for year one of the co-op is solid for EMF and head coach Lori Klooz, as the Bobcats have five girls ready to pick up the clubs and hit the links. Two of them have prior experience, as junior Kmila Benitez golfed for the E-M girls last fall and fellow junior Abbie Milton teed off for the Friend boys in the spring.

"Abbie is going to take her experience playing with the



Members of the 2023 Exeter-Milligan/Friend Bobcats girls golf team include (from left): Abbie Milton, Abby Klooz, Dylen Collier, Kmila Benitez, Halona Wootton.

boys and excel on the course. She has worked hard all summer to prepare for the season," Klooz said. "Kmila is going to be a leader for our team with her experience."

Together, the two have a combined four years of golf experience. This season, they'll be joined by senior Halona Wootton, sophomore Dylen Collier and freshman Abby Klooz as the Bobcats' five-man roster gives EMF enough to field a team lineup.

"We have five girls out for the team so everyone will need to contribute, but we are excited to have enough to be able to score as a team," Klooz said. "Class C girls golf is tough. We will compete against schools much larger than we are, but I am excited to watch the girls improve this season. We are going to focus on getting better each meet. We are excited to bring these girls together and compete as a team."

GOLF SCHEDULE

Aug. 17	at Central City Invite
Aug. 21	at Osceola
Aug. 29	Heartland
Sept. 7	at Heartland Invite
Sept. 9	at Aurora Invite
Sept. 12	EMF Invite
Sept. 14	at Central City
Sept. 18	at HTRS Invite
Sept. 19	at Fullerton Invite
Sept. 26	at Ravenna Invite
Oct. 23	at Districts
Oct. 7-8	at State

GOLF STANDOUTS



KMILA BENITEZ
JUNIOR



ABBIE MILTON
JUNIOR

HEAD COACH: CHAD BUZEK MASCOT: HUSKIES CLASS: C

HEARTLAND

GOLF

NO. OF RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: 1



Heartland girls golf team, small but mighty

Hiebner leads Huskies as returning Class C state medalist

By Ken Kush
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

HENDERSON — The Heartland Huskies girl's golf team is two players strong. Sophomore Mia Hiebner and freshman Tara Buzek however opened the season last week at the Doniphan-Trumbull scramble at Indianhead Golf course in Grand Island setting a new meet record with a nine-under par 63.

Hiebner placed 13th at state last year at Columbus and should be a threat to improve on that this year.

"Last season gave Mia some great experience and



Members of the 2023 Heartland Huskies girls golf team are Tara Buzek (left) and Mia Hiebner (right).

will help her greatly this season," said head coach Chad Buzek. "We are a very young team with one sophomore and one freshman. Mia Hiebner placed at state in 2022 as a freshman and I expect her to build on that this season."

The Huskies will host their invite on Thursday, September 7 at Galaway Creek Golf Course in Henderson.

The 2023 Nebraska Class C State Meet will be held at Lake Maloney Golf Club in North Platte on Monday October 9 and Tuesday, October 10.

GOLF SCHEDULE

Aug. 17	at Central City Invite
Aug. 22	at Doniphan-Trumbull Invite
Aug. 29	at EMF
Aug. 31	at GICC Invite
Sept. 5	at Fullerton
Sept. 7	Heartland Invite
Sept. 11	at Fairbury Invite
Sept. 12	at EMF Invite
Sept. 19	at Fullerton Invite
Sept. 26	at Adams Central Invite
Sept. 28	at Centura Invite
Oct. 23	at Districts
Oct. 7-8	at State in North Platte

GOLF STANDOUTS



MIA HIEBNER
SOPHOMORE



TARA BUZEK
FRESHMAN

CLASS: D-1 MASCOT: HUSKIES HEAD COACH: BEN LINDSAY

HEARTLAND

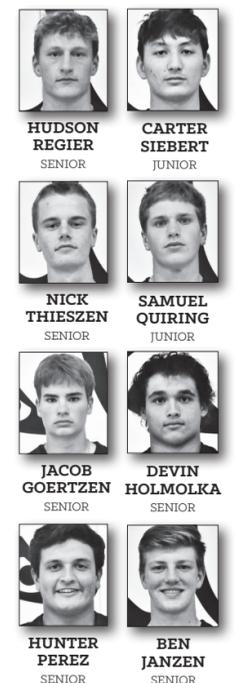
RECORD LAST SEASON: 7-3

FOOTBALL

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 25 at Shelby-Rising City
 Sept. 1 Nebraska Christian
 Sept. 8 at Thayer Central
 Sept. 15 McCool Junction
 Sept. 22 at Sutton
 Sept. 29 at Superior
 Oct. 6 Sandy Creek
 Oct. 13 Pleasanton

FOOTBALL STANDOUTS



HUDSON REGIER SENIOR
CARTER SIEBERT JUNIOR
NICK THIESZEN SENIOR
SAMUEL QUIRING JUNIOR
JACOB GOERTZEN SENIOR
DEVIN HOLMOLKA SENIOR
HUNTER PEREZ SENIOR
BEN JANZEN SENIOR

Heartland searching to fill positions on both sides of the ball

Huskies return a total of just three starters from last season

By Ken Kush
 ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

HENDERSON — The cupboard is not bare, but Heartland head coach Ben Lindsay will face rebuilding the Huskies playoff team from 2022.

Heartland, which went 7-3 last year and lost in the quarterfinals of the Class D1 State playoffs has one starter back on offense and two on defense.

Lindsay feels that one of the team's strengths will be in their skilled position players and team's overall speed. "I feel that our strength is going to be in our skilled positions where we have some quick kids and that we will try to get the ball to," said Lindsay. "We will need to have a lot of underclassmen step up and play key roles on both sides of the ball and special teams."

Heartland had one of the area's top rushing teams last year as they averaged 240 yards per game and another 81 through the air for 321 yards per game. Of their 2400 rushing yards, over 2100 has moved on due



Members of the 2023 Heartland Huskies football team include (front from left): Jacob Goertzen, Devin Holmolka, Hunter Perez, Andrew Franz, Jack McCormick, Nick Thieszen, Hudson Regier, Benjamin Janzen. Second row: Carter Siebert, Luis Alvarez, Blake Goertzen, Samuel Quiring. Third row: Zeck Dennis, Kaleb Ostrander, Braden Janzen, Cash Parrish, Weston Panko, Josh Goertzen, Lane Farrall, Brayden Ogorzoka. Back: Asher Daly, Ayden Sonney, Camden Riggs, Colby Frisbie, Nevada Gloystein, Hayden Powers, Maddox Regier.

to graduation and 745 of the 818 passing yards will also need to be replaced.

Senior Hudson Regier is the most likely candidate to take the reins at quarterback and junior Carter Siebert will likely shoulder a lot of the load at running back. Both players were second team all-district last year.

Regier threw the ball seven times competing five

for 73 yards and one score, while Siebert had nine carries for 83 yards.

On defense Siebert had 66 tackles and Regier 60 and two fumble recoveries. Regier started on both sides of the ball while Siebert started on defense.

"We were fortunate to get a lot of underclassmen playing time in varsity games last year," mentioned

Lindsay. The Huskies district schedule includes games with McCool Junction, Sandy Creek, Superior and Sutton.

"We have a very competitive district this season that I feel we can compete with all the teams in the district," Lindsay said. "We will be young in some positions, but I expect us to show up and

compete every night." The Huskies will open the year with a road game on Friday, August 25th at Shelby-Rising City.

The following week they will entertain Nebraska Christian, Heartland will also play McCool Junction, Sandy Creek and Pleasanton at home this year.

"We lost almost everybody from last year's team so we will look to a lot of new players to fill key positions. The guys that we have stepping in have some playing time, but are relatively inexperienced. We will rely on our skilled positions to make impact in games and our young offensive line to grow and develop throughout the summer," Lindsay added. "Hudson Regier will be taking over at the quarterback spot and we will rely on his experience. Carter Siebert grew a lot last season and we will be looking to him to make an impact on the defensive side of the ball."

Assistant coaches include; Blake Burgess, Tony Rice and Connor Boehr.

CLASS: D-1 MASCOT: HUSKIES HEAD COACH: ASHTON BROWN

HEARTLAND

RECORD LAST SEASON: 14-17

VOLLEYBALL

VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 24 Palmer
 Aug. 26 at Overton Invite
 Aug. 31 at Sandy Creek
 Sept. 5 Sutton
 Sept. 7 at Thayer Central
 Sept. 12 at Fillmore Central
 Sept. 14 at High Plains Tri.
 Sept. 19 Hampton
 Sept. 21 McCool Junction
 Sept. 23 at Southern Invite
 Sept. 26 at Hastings
 Sept. 28 St. Cecilia Invite
 Oct. 3 at Hastings
 Oct. 5 St. Cecilia Invite
 Oct. 10 at Giltner Tri.
 Oct. 16 David City
 Oct. 17 at SNC Tournament
 Oct. 23-24 at SNC Tournament
 Oct. 28 at Subdistricts
 Nov. 1-4 at District Finals
 at State

VOLLEYBALL STANDOUTS



HAYDEN MIERAU SENIOR
ALLIE BOEHR SENIOR

Heartland volleyball has high expectations

Huskies return four starters and several players with experience

By Ken Kush
 ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

HENDERSON — With the return of five starters and five letter winners, the Heartland Huskies and first-year head coach Ashton Brown have high expectations on improving last year's 14-17 record.

All four of the five starters and letter winners return as seniors also providing the Huskies with a solid leadership core.

The success of the team in 2023 will start with the quarterback of the Huskies frontline attack with senior setter Hayden Mierau. Last year Mierau racked up 507 set assists out of the Heartland team's 647 season kills. As a junior she also rang up 302 digs, a team-high 57 aces and she garnered post season honors as a third team Southern Nebraska Conference and York News-Times All-Area.

At outside hitter, senior Allie Boehr had 154 kills, 202 digs and 35 ace serves, while middle hitter Kaylee Goertzen had 99 kills and 35 blocks.

A fourth senior, Ava



Members of the 2023 Heartland Huskies volleyball team include (front from left): Hayden Mierau, Allie Boehr, Reese Regier, Ava Stebbing, Mariah Tessman, Carlotta Bertarione, Kaylee Goertzen. Second row: Emersyn Oswald, Jamisen Klein, Marisol Stamp, KatrinaMarie Epp, Isabel Johnson, Jaelyn Brown, Lydia Jahnke, Siddalee Kliever. Third row: Abby Nolan, Mary Dente, Riley Quiring, Grace Splinter, Kaidence Holbein, Laura Splinter, Alexis Inglsbee. Back: Haley Beck, Andilyn Stebbing, Madalyn Janzen, Meggan Friesen, Emma Ott, Amanda Goertzen, Hallie Tessman. Not pictured: Julie Degbomont

Stebbing had 17 digs and six ace serves.

During her freshman season, Jaelyn Brown powered down 110 kills, served up 20 aces, led the team with

45 blocks and scooped up 82 digs.

The Huskies hammered 178 aces last season, had 1,589 digs to go with 81 blocks.

"We're very strong defensively, and we have strong varsity experience. They're a very unified team of girls who work well together on the court," said Brown.

"Every year, we set high expectations from seniors to freshman. Every day last year, these girls have grown as volleyball players as well as athletes. We have a good group of girls this year, and many are ready to work their way up to the varsity level. Our underclassmen will be very supportive during practice and on the court. They also will push our upperclassmen to continue to better themselves as they reach for higher positions."

Heartland newcomers who could make some noise this year include; senior OH Mariah Tessman and juniors Jamisen Klein (MH), Katrina-Marie Epp (S) and libero Isabel Johnson.

The Huskies open the year with home triangular on Thursday, August 24th.

Assisting with the varsity team will be Kyra Dick.

"We're going into this season with a very unified team. I see a great group of girls who look out for one another. They are a skilled team with a strong will to grow in those skills," Brown added. "I expect to give each and every team we encounter a good battle on the court."

CLASS: D MASCOT: MUSTANGS HEAD COACH: RYAN UNDERWOOD

MCCOOL JUNCTION

NO. OF RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: 1

CROSS COUNTRY

CROSS COUNTRY SCHEDULE

Aug. 24 McCool Quad
 Sept. 7 at Fairbury Invite
 Sept. 14 at Fillmore Central
 Sept. 21 at Thayer Central Inv.
 Sept. 25 at UNK Invite
 Sept. 30 at Chili Pepper in Fayetteville, ARK.
 Oct. 5 McCool Invite
 Oct. 12 at Districts
 Oct. 20 at State in Kearney

CROSS COUNTRY STANDOUTS



SARA WEISHEIT SENIOR
CLAIRE BRUGGER SOPHOMORE

Mustang girls cross country low in numbers

Depth and lack of experience early questions for McCool Junction

By Ken Kush
 ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

MCCOOL JUNCTION- Life without Payton Gerken begins at McCool Junction.

After a 12th place team finish in 2022, the McCool Junction Mustangs come into the 2023 season with a lot of questions, that head coach Ryan Underwood hopes will be answered as the season plays on.

"We do not have a lot of team depth with only five girls on the squad. That number is the same we had last year and we found out the hard way how having a lack of depth can really provide some roadblocks in the competitive season. If a few girls suffer injuries, the lack of depth we have will make it extremely difficult to overcome those injuries from a competitive standpoint," stated head coach Ryan Underwood. "The challenge we



Members of the 2023 McCool Junction Mustangs girls cross country team include (front from left): Natalie Clark, Sara Weisheit, Sydney Huber. Back; head coach Rylan Underwood, Claire Brugger, Leah Dawson, assistant coach Brooklyn Swantek.

have is to train at a high level, while doing everything we can to avoid any potential training setbacks. That means the

girls will need to be diligent in getting adequate sleep, and nutrient replacement, amongst other things, while training."

Senior Sara Weisheit leads the Mustangs as a three-year letter winner and her best place of the year was seventh at Superior and 35th at districts.

"Sara Weisheit was a varsity runner on our state championship team in 2020. She is a very successful young lady. She definitely knows what it takes to compete at a high level no matter what she is doing. She is a top student, a starter on the state qualifying girls' basketball team last year, not to mention a medal winner in the 4x800 at state track," said Underwood. "She is just an outstanding leader for our school and team. Her championship level leadership for our young girls is definitely a team strength."

Sophomore Claire Brugger was third at the Superior invite and 21st at districts, while Sydney Huber, another sophomore was 42nd at districts and 13th at the Superior

invite. Freshmen Leah Dawson and Natalie Clark round out the Mustangs roster.

"Last season's heartbreak at the end of the year also seems to have motivated us in our preparations for this season. While we have a lot of work to do to put ourselves back into position to garner a state berth, the girls are motivated to make that happen," added Underwood. "I want our team to work hard each day, have fun together and to dream big dreams. If we can work really hard and have fun chasing down our dreams, we can have a really successful season."

The Mustangs host the first meet of the season at Camp Kateri on Thursday, August 24th at 7 p.m.

Assisting Underwood in coaching duties will be Brooklyn Swantek and alumni of McCool Junction and a former XC runner.

HEAD COACH: RYAN UNDERWOOD MASCOT: MUSTANGS CLASS: D

MCCOOL JUNCTION



CROSS COUNTRY

NO. OF RETURNING STATE QUALIFIERS: 4

Veterans, newcomers and a wildcard lead Mustang boy's cross country

McCool Junction returns four of five state runners

CROSS COUNTRY SCHEDULE

Aug. 24	McCool Quad
Sept. 7	at Fairbury Invite
Sept. 14	at Fillmore Central
Sept. 21	at Thayer Central Inv.
Sept. 25	at UNK Invite
Sept. 30	at Chili Pepper in Fayetteville, ARK.
Oct. 5	McCool Invite
Oct. 12	at Districts
Oct. 20	at State in Kearney

CROSS COUNTRY STANDOUTS



LUKE BRUGGER
SENIOR



JOEY PEDERSEN
JUNIOR



JAYDEN FUEHRER
JUNIOR



RYAN MCGOWAN
SOPHOMORE



TRENTON ORLANDO
SENIOR



Members of the 2023 McCool Junction Mustangs boys cross country team include (front from left): Tucker Robinson, Justin Fox, Alex Morner, Jayden Fuehrer, Aaron Morner, Brady Meier, Alex Meier. Back: head coach Ryan Underwood, Luke Brugger, Ryan McGowan, Joey Pedersen, Aiden Parker, Trenton Orlando, assistant coach Brooklyn Swantek. Not Pictured: Jaysen Fuehrer, Tanner Neville.

By Ken Kush
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

MCCOOL JUNCTION - A sixth place finish at the 2022 Class D State Cross Country Meet in Kearney has the McCool Junction Mustangs itching to improve in 2023.

With four of their five state runners back, a newcomer and another runner who is testing his skills at the sport, the Mustangs have a lot of potential, along with just as many questions.

"Overall, we have a lot of questions heading into this season, but we have a lot of potential as well. If we can get everyone healthy and things really come together, who knows how high we could climb," commented head coach Ryan Underwood. "A lot of that will be determined by how big our dreams are and what type of a price we are willing to pay to make those dreams come true. It should be a blast to experience this season as it all unfolds."

The team will be anchored by senior Luke Brugger who will be looking to make a return trip to Kearney where he finished 49th last year. He was fifth at Superior and 15th at districts.

Junior Joey Pedersen spent most of his summer playing baseball for the York Junior and Senior Kings, so

Underwood. "If he can make a quick adjustment to 5k and learn the physical and mental toughness it takes to race and train at an elite level for 5k, then it could make our team much stronger."

Underwood hopes the lessons learned in 2022 will be a positive as several kids gained valuable experience.

"Last year provided some challenges for us. Coming off of our second place finish at state in 2021, we had high hopes and expectations. We certainly had a strong year as we finished sixth at state. Yet we did have some bumps in the road along the way," explained Underwood. "Many of those bumps came as a result of inexperience. Thus, last year's journey gave a lot of our young guys some very valuable experience that will certainly play to our advantage this year."

The Mustangs will host the first meet of the year at Camp Kateri on Thursday, August 24 at 7 p.m. Several local teams including York, Centennial, Fillmore Central and first year team Exeter-Milligan/Friend are set to compete.

Underwood will be assisted by former Mustang runner and McCool Junction alumni Brooklyn Swantek.

Underwood does not know how long it will take the junior to get himself in running shape. He was 16th at districts in 2022, seventh at the Palmer Invite and 71st at state.

Another junior Jayden Fuehrer ran 114th at state, 44th at the UNK invite in late September and 28th at districts.

The team's fourth returning runner is sophomore Ryan McGowan who was 92nd at state and 16th at the

Palmer invite. Senior Trenton Orlando has a strong track and field background, and will try his hand at cross country this year. A transfer from Minden, Tucker Robinson will also help out with the team's depth.

"Senior Trenton Orlando is also a bit of a wildcard. He has some strong track credentials, but hasn't been lengthened out to any type of endurance races before this year," said

HEAD COACH: JARROD WEISS MASCOT: MUSTANGS CLASS: D-1

MCCOOL JUNCTION



FOOTBALL

RECORD LAST SEASON: 0 - 8

McCool Junction dedicated their summer to getting better

Mustang's return a lot of potential to turn around 0-8 season

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 25	at Thayer Central
Sept. 1	Exeter-Milligan/Friend
Sept. 8	Cross County
Sept. 15	at Heartland
Sept. 22	at Ravenna
Sept. 29	Sutton
Oct. 6	Superior
Oct. 13	at Sandy Creek

FOOTBALL STANDOUTS



RYLAND GARRETSON
SENIOR



CARSON MCDONALD
SOPHOMORE



MASON STROBE
JUNIOR



BRYSON PLOCK
JUNIOR



MAPIEU KOUCHININ
JUNIOR



JA SOUKUP
SOPHOMORE



Members of the 2023 McCool Junction football team include: Row 1: Managers - Colby Yates, Judson Weiss, Jaxon McDonald, Jameson Weiss; Row 2: Ethyn Schade, Xzavier Graves, Leyton Christian, Wyatt VanEaton, Dylan Gonnerman; Row 3: Marcus Chambers, Casper Mertz, Ja Soukup, Carson McDonald, Tyler Thompson, Justin Harig; Row 4: Isaac Berggren, Cameron Dietz, Bryson Plock, Mapieu Kouchinin, Zarek Graves, Mason Strobe, Ryland Garretson; Row 5: Head Coach Jarrod Weiss, Assistant Coach Nick Wollenburg, Assistant Coach Scott Yates. Not Pictured: Clayton Kahler, Cornelious Grobler and Assistant Brian Soukup.

By Ken Kush
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

MCCOOL JUNCTION - The 2022 high school football season was a tough learning experience for the McCool Junction Mustangs.

Having to move up two classes from the six-man game to Class D1 turned out to be more than the Mustangs were ready for.

Head coach Jarrod Weiss said that the team learned a lot from last year's 0-8 season.

"We definitely learned a lot from last year. Even though we struggled last season, I think it was a learning experience for our guys knowing what they had to do in the offseason to be better for this season. We had a good number of guys that had perfect attendance in the weight room, we have quality leadership with our returners, and of course having the same schedule gives us an idea of what our opponents will bring back," commented Weiss. "We had to adjust to the eight-man style of game a year ago, whereas this season it won't be new for our team."

The Mustangs return all their statistical leaders from a year ago and with a year under their belt at the eight-man game, they won't have to be getting used to the adjustments.

The only senior on the team is Ryland Garretson who has played at the

carries for 528 yards and five TD's. McDonald was honorable mention in the York News-Times and an all-district selection.

The team returns seven letter winners and six starters on both sides of the ball.

The remaining letter winners include: junior Mason Strobe, B/DB; Bryson Plock, JR., E/DB; Mapieu Kouchinin, JR., OL/DL; Ja Soukup, SO., OL/DL and Marcus Chambers, SO., B/LB.

Other players expected to contribute are: Zarek Graves, Cameron Dietz, Isaac Berggren, Justin Harig, Wyatt VanEaton. "I think overall depth is a concern for almost any team in the eight-man game. With only one senior out for football, we will rely heavily on our underclassmen as we have in the past," Weiss stated. "However, last year we dealt with numerous injuries, so our younger guys had to step in and play a lot of minutes, which I think benefits us as we go along this season."

Assisting Weiss with coaching duties will be Scott Yates, Brian Soukup and Nick Wollenburg.

The Mustangs travel to D1 No. 9 Thayer Central for their season opener on Friday, August 25.

Their home opener will be the following week when they host Exeter-Milligan/Friend in a 2 p.m. kickoff.

varsity level for all four years. Garretson had a team high 49 tackles last year and just 76 yards rushing as injuries hampered his playing time.

As a freshman, Carson McDonald completed 41 of 77 passes for 552 yards and seven touchdowns. He was also the team's leading rusher with 138

HEAD COACH: DAVE STAHR MASCOT: MUSTANGS CLASS: D-2

MCCOOL JUNCTION



VOLLEYBALL

RECORD LAST SEASON: 10 - 20

Seasoned Mustang volleyball brings poise, experience to the court

VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 24	at Silver Lake
Aug. 29	McCool Triangular
Aug. 31	at Nebraska Lutheran Triangular
Sept. 5	Deshler
Sept. 7	at Meridian
Sept. 9	at Heartland Lutheran Invite
Sept. 12	at Osceola Tri.
Sept. 14	Harvard
Sept. 21	at Heartland
Sept. 26	at High Plains
Sept. 30	at Blue Hill
Oct. 3	Heartland Lutheran
Oct. 5	at Shelby-Rising City
Oct. 10	at Dorchester Tri.
Oct. 14	at CRC Tournament
Oct. 16-17	at CRC Tournament
Oct. 19	St. Edward
Oct. 23-24	at Districts
Oct. 28	at Subdistricts Finals
Nov. 1-4	at State Volleyball



Members of the 2023 McCool Junction Mustangs volleyball team include (front from left): Anna Vodicka, Allannah Rutten, BriAnn Stutzman, McKenna Yates, Shelby Bandt, Kaeli Meehan, Lana Rea. Middle: Sarah Turner, Shaeli Meehan, Grace Reinsch, Bailey Hall, Josey Vodicka, Morgan Thieman, Dakota Wollenburg. Back: assistant coach Carly Arduser, Lillian Miller, Faith Bandt, Pieper Epp, Milasyann Lopez, Lily Parker, Harley Stutzman, head coach Dave Stahr.

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

MCCOOL JUNCTION - For much of the past two seasons, the McCool Junction volleyball program has been in the midst of a youth movement, leading to a couple years' worth of growing pains as an inexperienced roster tried to find its way in the always-competitive Crossroads Conference.

This fall, however, the inverse is true - the seasoned Mustangs return a whopping 11 letterwinners, and 10 starters from last year's 10-20 campaign are back for another go-around.

"For the last two years I've written about how we're young and inexperienced; that's not the case now. Our varsity squad all has significant experience, which will help them develop the mindset to put themselves into winning situations more frequently than in the past," McCool head coach Dave Stahr said. "We knew going into last season that it was just the first half of a two-year

run with the same players. So, in a way, we're just halfway through our

season. I can tell the ladies really aren't feeling like this year is anything

new. They're comfortable, relaxed, and ready to attack the season."

At the top, an uber-talented senior class provides Stahr and assistant coach Carly Arduser a bevy of savvy veteran leadership, with the likes of setter BriAnn Stutzman, outside hitter Kaeli Meehan, right-side hitter Lana Rea and middles McKenna Yates and Shelby Bandt providing a quintet of options for seniors with a wealth of starting experience.

Setter Anna Vodicka does not have a ton of reps on the varsity court, but she does offer yet another source of senior leadership.

Behind the large senior class, the Mustangs also boast a quartet of juniors with prior starting experience in outside hitters Josey Vodicka, Morgan Thieman and Bailey Hall in addition to middle Dakota Wollenburg.

Shaeli Meehan is also back for her sophomore season after seeing some important varsity minutes as a freshman. Senior Allannah Rutten is also back after taking two years



CLASS: D-1 MASCOT: COUGARS HEAD COACH: MATT CARROLL

CROSS COUNTY

RECORD LAST SEASON: 8-0

FOOTBALL

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 25 **Sutton**
at Brownell-Talbot
Sept. 1 **at McCool**
Sept. 8 **Twin River**
Sept. 15 **Cedar Bluffs**
Sept. 22 **at Madison**
Sept. 29 **at Clarkson-Leigh**
Oct. 6 **Shelby-Rising City**

FOOTBALL STANDOUTS

IZAAC DICKEY
SENIOR

ALEX NOYD
SENIOR

TANNER HOLLINGER
JUNIOR

ASHTON SEIM
SENIOR

TYLER RICHARDSON
SENIOR

TREVEN NIENHUESER
SENIOR

Cross County once again in the Class D1 race discussion

By Ken Kush
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

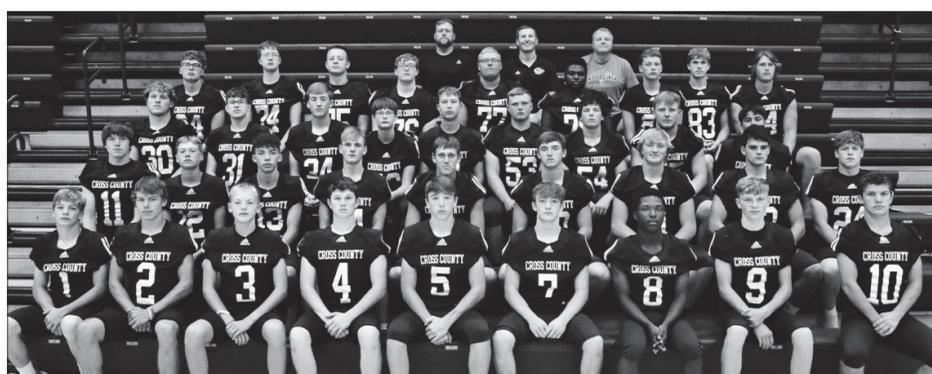
STROMSBURG – In 2022 the Cross County Cougars breezed through the regular season with an 8-0 record and were among the favorites to make a second return trip to Lincoln for the state Class D1 state championships in November.

Other than a 30-28 nail-biter, last second Hail Mary pass over eventual state champion Clarkson-Leigh on a final play of a game in early October at Cross County the Cougars averaged 59 points per game in the regular season and allowed just a little under 13 points per game.

However the season ended in disappointment with a 42-22 home loss to Weeping Water in the first round giving the returning players for 2023 about 10 months to wait to get back on the field and erase that memory.

“We obviously did not finish the season the way we wanted to. Going 8-0 then losing in the first round of the playoffs. We are hungry and ready for the opportunity to make things right,” said head coach Matt Carroll. “With 15 seniors we have a ton of depth. Cross County the past few years has been in an awesome place where our underclassmen come into our program and can learn and grow while playing on Monday nights instead of Fridays.”

The Cougars averaged 316 yards in the ground last season and senior Izaac Dickey is the returning work-



Members of the 2023 Cross County Cougars football team include (front from left): Devin Nuttelman, Lucas Jacobsen, Benson Seim, Jed Berggren, Thatcher Hanson, Tony DeWitt, Tylon Francis, Colter Larson, Dylan Fanning, Second row: Wyatt Hengelfelt, Sawyer Anderson, Tyler Shoup, Cole Redden, Brayden Schmidtberger, Carson Schaefer, Noah Sandell, Dalton Noble, Andrew Dubas, Third row: Izaac Dickey, Gabe Donnelly, Ashton Seim, Paxton Burke, Gabe Nuttelman, Rafe Peterson, Treven Nienhueser, Alex Noyd, Calob Troy, Fourth row: Dane Holtzen, Cannon Mooney, Mason Quilhot, Jacob Smith, Cooper Sundberg, Tyler Richardson, Brock Allen, Langdon Arbuck, Tanner Hollinger, Back; assistant coach Danny Seim, head coach Matt Carroll, assistant coach Mitch Boshart, assistant coach Greg Hansen.

horse as he compiled 846 yards and 21 rushing touchdowns. He also had 68 tackles at his linebacker position. Dickey will be walking on at the University of Nebraska next fall.

Another senior, Alex Noyd at 220 pounds led the team his junior year with 115 tackles, averaging almost 13 per game.

At tight end and defensive end, Tanner Hollinger, 240 pounds, 11 receptions for 185 yards and three scores while he also registered 55 tackles from his defensive end position. He will be taking his talents to

the University of Illinois in the fall of 2025.

Carroll will have 15 seniors on this year’s roster and a ton of letter winners through the sophomore and junior classes.

Cross County will also get the services of junior Langdon Arbuck who transferred from Heartland.

Cross County will host the Sutton Mustangs in their season opener on Friday, August 25th and the rest of their home slate will include; Twin River, Cedar Bluffs and Shelby-Rising City. One of the key games of the

year will be played at Clarkson-Leigh on October 6th.

“We have one of the toughest districts in class D-1 with 3 top ten ranked teams,” Carroll stated. “With our talent level I expect to be playing deep into the playoffs but we also understand how hard it is to win games in the playoffs, the program’s expectations are to be playing our best football late in the fall.”

Assistant coaches will include; Mitch Boshart, Greg Hansen and Danny Seim.



CLASS: D-1 MASCOT: COUGARS HEAD COACH: EMMIE NOYD

CROSS COUNTY

RECORD LAST SEASON: 29-5

VOLLEYBALL

VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 22 **at Nebraska Christian Fullerton**
Aug. 24 **at Shelby-Rising City**
Aug. 31 **BDS**
Sept. 5 **Central City**
Sept. 7 **at Osceola Tri.**
Sept. 12 **at High Plains Tri.**
Sept. 14 **Cross County Invite**
Sept. 16 **David City**
Sept. 19 **at Central Valley**
Sept. 21 **at St. Cecilia Tourn.**
Sept. 26-28 **at Clarkson/Leigh Tournament**
Oct. 3 **North Bend Central**
Oct. 5 **at Dorchester**
Oct. 10 **Cross County Tri.**
Oct. 12 **at Meridian**
Oct. 14 **at CRC Tournament**
Oct. 16-17 **at CRC Tournament**
Oct. 23-24 **at Subdistricts**
Oct. 28 **at Districts**
Nov. 2-4 **at State**

VOLLEYBALL STANDOUTS

SHYANNE ANDERSON
SENIOR

LILLY PETERSON
SENIOR

Cougar volleyball eyes return trip to state

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

STROMSBURG – Last fall was a very successful season on the court for Cross County, which went 29-5 and punched a ticket to Pinnacle Bank Arena for the state volleyball tournament in head coach Emmie Noyd’s first season.

The Cougars will have to replace a few key seniors, but they also return four starters and five letterwinners for their bid at a return trip to Lincoln in 2023.

The senior duo of Shyanne Anderson and Lilly Peterson anchor the Cross County rotation, as both girls were instrumental in the team’s success last fall and earned first-team All-Crossroads Conference honors.

Anderson racked up 256 kills, 268 digs and 38 aces while Peterson amassed 234 winners and collected 71 blocks. Both were News-Times all-area selections for their play on the court a year ago and will be counted on to fill similar roles both on and off the court in terms of providing strong senior leadership.

Fortunately for the Cougars, the duo has that in spades. They both earned all-area recognition on the hardwood as they guided Cross County to a state berth during basketball season, and Peterson’s also a two-time state qualifier in the discus.

For a team that has to replace three key seniors, the stability and leadership provided by the return of Anderson and Peterson is crucial. Better still, they’re not the only returnees with major varsity experi-



Members of the 2023 Cross County Cougars volleyball team include (front from left): Chesney Sundberg, Lucy Berggren, Shyanne Anderson, Lilly Peterson, Bricelynn Larson, Tierney Schoch, Second row: Beretta Webb, Ava Pruter, Eden Peterson, Sydney Hengelfelt, Kylie Moore, Cortina Donnelly, Finley Peterson, Third row: Lyndsey Bolton, Laylah Torczon, Kelsey Brehm, Selah Theis, Saphira Osentowski, Ella Cramer, Olive Peterson. Back row: Harley Hedrick, assistant coach Brittney Pfeuger, head coach Emmie Noyd, assistant coach Macy Samek, Cortlyn Sundberg, Maya Lonsdale.

ence. Junior Bricelynn Larson racked up 76 blocks as a sophomore and provided some depth to the Cougars’ attack with 152 kills, while sophomore Sydney Hengelfelt made an immediate impact as a setter during her freshman campaign, allowing Anderson to move outside and fill more of an attacking role.

Hengelfelt tallied a whopping 829 set assists during her debut season last fall and also factored at the

service line with 33 aces. She and Larson were all-CRC honorable mention, and each of the Cougars’ four returning starters garnered all-state honorable mention last fall.

“Four key starters return and will play key leadership roles,” Noyd said. “Having success in big matches – the CRC championship, subdistrict and district finals and state tournament experience – will help prepare the team for more success this sea-

son.” Behind the four returning starters, junior Chesney Sundberg also lettered last fall. Classmates Tierney Schoch and Lucy Berggren could be in line for increased responsibilities this fall, and sophomore Eden Peterson could also make a jump from year one to year two of high school volleyball.

The Cougars also welcome a massive freshman class into the fold, with eight first-year players on the team this fall. While the youth infusion should serve Cross County well in terms of development for future success, a handful of them could also make an immediate impact on the court.

In particular, Noyd said Ella Cramer, Finley Peterson, Ava Pruter and Kelsey Brehm could work their way into the rotation as freshmen.

“We have great depth to our roster from returners that have developed into the positions we need to fill from seniors leaving,” Noyd said. “We’ve also got a freshman class of eight with great potential to play varsity time.”

The always-competitive CRC will again provide some stiff challenges with a lot of talented teams in the league, and Noyd said schools like Humphrey/Lindsey Holy Family and Clarkson/Leigh are formidable foes at the sub-district level.

Still, Cross County has the firepower returning and the pieces in place to make another run at the state tournament this fall.



CLASS: C MASCOT: SLAMMERS HEAD COACHES: JOHANNA NIELSEN & MACY JONES

CROSS COUNTY

RECORD LAST SEASON: 25-12

SOFTBALL

SOFTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 17 **Highway 91**
Aug. 19 **at Freeman Invite**
Aug. 22 **at Central City**
Aug. 24 **at Boone Central Tri.**
Aug. 26 **at Wisner-Pilger Inv.**
Aug. 29 **at St. Paul**
Sept. 2 **at Boone Central Inv.**
Sept. 5 **Twin River**
Sept. 7 **at Ord**
Sept. 12 **Polk County Tri.**
Sept. 14 **at FCEMF Tri.**
Sept. 16 **at David City Tourn.**
Sept. 19 **at Centennial**
Sept. 21 **at York Tri.**
Sept. 23 **at Adams Central Inv.**
Sept. 26 **at Aquinas**
Oct. 2-3 **at Subdistricts**
Oct. 6-7 **at Districts**
Oct. 11-13 **at State in Hastings**

SOFTBALL STANDOUTS

COURTNEY SUNDAY
SENIOR

EMMA RECKER
SENIOR

Slammers look to keep building on 2022 breakthrough

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

STROMSBURG – Last fall was a banner year for Polk County softball as the Slammers set a school record with 25 wins and secured the program’s first trip to the state tournament in Hastings.

Things will look a little different for the team in 2023 as there’s been a shuffle to the coaching staff with Johanna Nielsen and Macy Jones taking over as co-head coaches, but Polk County returns the bulk of its production from a year ago, which should ease the transition.

Seven starters and nine total letterwinners are back for another go in 2023, starting with senior trio Courtney Sunday, Emma Recker and Kylee Krol. Sunday is the ace of the pitching staff with 131 Ks and a 3.55 ERA in 173 innings pitched, but she also hit .377 with 43 RBIs at the dish.

Recker batted .410 and drove in 28 runs as the starting catcher, while Krol hit .263 with 18 RBIs and 13 stolen bases. Shortstop Lindee Kelley provides a big power bat in the lineup; the junior hit .400 with 24 RBIs and 12 steals as she led the Slammers in home runs with five in 2022.

Juniors Savanna Boden (.321 average, 22 RBIs, 15 steals) and Kaleena Nuttelman (.292, 11 RBIs) also return, as does sophomore Adrienne



Members of the 2023 Polk County Slammers softball team include (front from left): DeAnna Swanson, Espie Lesiak, Emma Recker, Makayla Quilhot, Courtney Sunday, Kylee Krol. Second row: McKinley Warnick, Lindee Kelley, Kaleena Nuttelman, Libby Rutherford, Charisa Boden, Savanna Boden. Third row: Shyanne Krol, Adrian Harlow, Halle Gabel, Brylie Naber, Macy Berggren, Adrienne Waller, Jazlyn Ramirez-Catlan. Back row: co-head coach Johanna Nielsen, co-head coach Macy Jones, assistant coach Carrie Swanson, assistant coach Hayley Kaup. Not pictured: K’cin Confer.

Waller, who hit .414 with 25 RBIs and posted a 2.88 ERA across 24 innings in the circle as a freshman.

“We made a big step earning our first state appearance and setting a program record for wins. Learning to play with consistency helped us in those areas and we are looking to build on that this year,” Nielsen

said. “Experience will be a strength this year. We return seven of our nine starters from last year.”

Juniors Libby Rutherford and Charisa Boden also lettered in 2022, and players like seniors Makayla Quilhot, Espie Lesiak, DeAnna Swanson and sophomore trio Shyanne Krol, Macy Berggren and K’cin

Confer could also be in line for increased roles this season. Polk County will also welcome freshmen Halle Gabel and Brylie Naber into the fold.

“A few of the underclassmen had big summers and have come in with confidence, which could help us this year,” Nielsen said.

Polk County has lofty goals this fall after qualifying for state a year ago and bringing almost everybody back, but there could be some struggles early against a daunting schedule. The Slammers faced a trio of ranked opponents in Seward, Hastings St. Cecilia and Northeast Nebraska at the Freeman invite on the first Saturday of the year, and another top-5 team in Central City waits in the wings during the season’s first full week.

Despite the difficult slate early, if the Slammers can weather the grind and round into form down the stretch, they return the firepower to find themselves in Hastings for the second straight year.

“Our schedule provides us with some early challenges that we haven’t had in previous years so we are going to learn a lot about ourselves,” Nielsen said. “The postseason is always tough with most teams playing their best ball and competing for a limited number of spots. We are working hard to put ourselves in a position to compete every game.”

HEAD COACH: JEREME JONES MASCOT: HAWKS CLASS: D-6

HAMPTON



FOOTBALL

RECORD LAST SEASON: 5 - 4

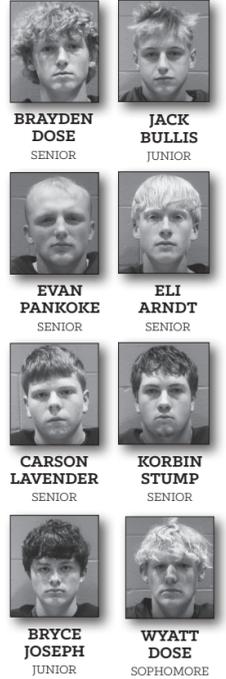


Members of the 2023 Hampton Hawks volleyball team include (front from left): Cason Lavender, Korbin Stump, Brayden Dose, Evan Pankoke, Eli Arndt. Middle row: Blake Brown, Max Mostek, Wyatt Shaw, Kyler Rojewski, Jackson Bullis, Jameson Doyle, Porter Dose. Back row: Kale Mooney, Tyler Mollevik, Kyler Luebke, Wyatt Dose, Bryce Joseph, Aydenn Scherff.

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 18	Franklin
Aug. 25	Lewiston
Sept. 1	at Parkview Christian
Sept. 8	at Sterling
Sept. 29	at Santee
Oct. 6	at Heartland Lutheran
Oct. 13	St. Edward
Oct. 20	Stuart

FOOTBALL STANDOUTS



BRAYDEN DOSE SENIOR	JACK BULLIS JUNIOR
EVAN PANKOKE SENIOR	ELI ARNDT SENIOR
CARSON LAVENDER SENIOR	KORBIN STUMP SENIOR
BRYCE JOSEPH JUNIOR	WYATT DOSE SOPHOMORE

Hampton coming into 2023 flying under the radar

Hawks ready to build on 2022 success with a lot of experience

By Ken Kush
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

HAMPTON – At the end of the 2022 season, which was a loss to the No. 5 Red Cloud Warriors in the first round of the D6 state playoffs, head coach Jereme Jones said that the team has to believe that they deserved to be there. With the return of all their starters and 10 different guys who also started a game last season, the Hawks have a real good chance to not only believe in themselves, but also make believers out of the other eight teams on their schedule.

The Lincoln Journal Star preseason ratings do not recognize the Hawks even as a contender.

“Our biggest strength is our experience. We return all of our starters from last season, which includes 10 different guys who started a game last season. We also bring back 13 letter winners from last season, and another two players who saw varsity time,” explained Jones now in his second year as the Hawks head coach. “Brayden Dose, who started our first three games at quarterback before suffering a season-ending shoulder injury, returns this season and will give us more of a passing threat than we had last season.”

The Hawks will have five seniors on the field giving them a strong leadership core and several

others include; Kash Majerus, JR., G/DE and Wyatt Dose, SO., G/DE.

“Last season was my first year at Hampton and we spent the year developing our S.O.A.R. culture, which stands for Sacrifice, One (aka Unity), Attitude and Response,” said Jones. “I think the guys did a great job of buying into the culture and made huge strides throughout the season. We ended last year by securing our first playoff appearance since 2010.”

Hampton was among a few teams playing week zero games as they took on Franklin on Friday, August 18.

Because of Elba dropping their football program this year, the Hawks

opener had to be moved up which will give them a two week break in September.

“Our goals this season are to break some more droughts, including winning a district title, which hasn’t happened since the 90s, and winning a playoff game, which hasn’t happened since 2009,” added Jones. “With our experience and the leadership of our upperclassmen, we should have an opportunity to reach both goals. It is crucial that we stay healthy and that the team continue to emulate and grow our culture.”

Assistant coaches include; Bo Kingery and Noah Jones.

HEAD COACH: KAYLA GAUGHEN MASCOT: HAWKS CLASS: D-2

HAMPTON



VOLLEYBALL

RECORD LAST SEASON: 8 - 21

Hard work, building depth keys to Hawks volleyball

Hampton returns six letterwinners and four starters

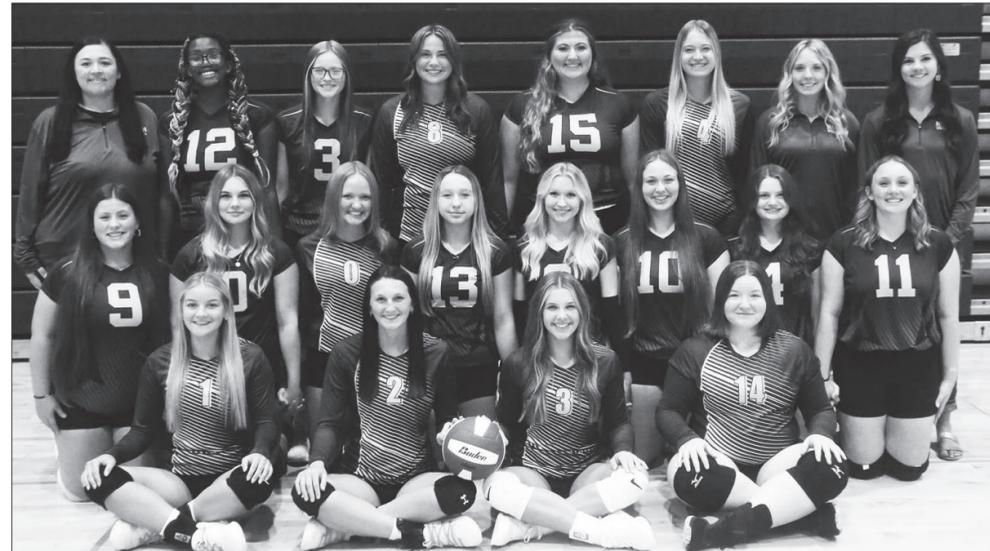
By Ken Kush
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

HAMPTON – The Hampton Hawks volleyball team will feature five seniors this year which should help in the team’s leadership. That will be crucial as Hampton will be building depth with younger players and senior leadership will be a huge key in that success.

In her first season in 2022, first-year head coach Kayla Gaughen saw her team finish the season with a record of 8-21, but they were competitive in most of their games.

“Our depth per position is not very deep, however, I’m confident that we have a few underclassman that will get there and become a good asset for us,” said Gaughen. “I believe our strengths entering the season is our serving and versatility. We are many girls that can play different positions.”

Hampton will return two players who last season earned post-season honors. Senior outside hitter Nevaeh Lukassen was recognized by the York News-Times, Omaha World-Herald and Lincoln Journal Star as honorable mention as was



Members of the 2023 Hampton Hawks volleyball team include (front from left): Maci Bullis, Nevaeh Lukassen, Shae Kingery, Dani Dowling. Middle: Jaylah Gross, Khloe Luebke, Macy Miller, Abbey Adams, Kiersten Joseph, Jill Farris, Kynleigh Joseph, CoralAnn Van Landingham. Back: head coach Kayla Gaughen, Taryn Stettney, Aya Hurt, Gavin Gilmore, Skyler Scheidemann, Sophia Schulze, Raegan Hansen, Tahya Jerabek.

libero and senior Shae Kingery.

Lukassen hammered 120 kills, had 22 ace serves and 17 blocks, while Kingery scooped up an area-high 459 digs and added 18 aces.

Leading the front line returners is junior Gavin Gilmore who collected 146 kills, 30 aces and 200 digs, while sophomore middle hitter Sophia Schulze had 36 kills and 21 blocks.

The rest of the letter winners include; senior defensive specialist Maci Bullis and senior outside hitter Dani Dowling.

Newcomers that Gaughen expects to contribute include; junior right side hitter Skyler Scheidemann and sophomore libero Jaylah Gross.

Gaughen sees the Crossroads Conference race with a lot of comparable teams.

“I really see a lot of

comparable teams this year that could make our conference records quite interesting.” Gaughen stated. “Our conference is always competitive and we will need to show up each night.

Hampton got their season started on Thursday, August 24 as they hosted the Shelby-Rising City Huskies. They will be in Axtell for their first tournament of the year on Saturday, August 26th.

Gaughen will be assisted this year by Tahya Jerabek.

“I’m excited to see where this group of girls can go. They are willing work hard to get better and my expectation is for us to compete and win games,” Gaughen added. “Last year we competed and came close to winning games. We now need to finish games.”

VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 24	Shelby-Rising City
Aug. 26	at Axtell Tournament
Aug. 29	at McCool Tri.
Aug. 31	at BDS
Sept. 5	Palmer
Sept. 7	at Giltner Tri.
Sept. 9	at Loomis Invite
Sept. 14	at Osceola
Sept. 19	at Heartland
Sept. 21	at Kenesaw
Sept. 23	Hampton Invite
Sept. 26	at Fullerton
Sept. 28	Red Cloud
Oct. 3	Hampton Tri.
Oct. 10	at Cross County Tri.
Oct. 12	at Nebraska Lutheran
Oct. 14	at CRC Tournament
Oct. 16-17	at CRC Tournament
Oct. 23-24	at Subdistricts
Oct. 28	at Districts
Nov. 1-4	at State

VOLLEYBALL STANDOUTS



NEVAEH LUKASSEN SENIOR	GAVIN GILMORE JUNIOR
SOPHIA SCHULZE SOPHOMORE	SHAE KINGERY SENIOR
MACI BULLIS SENIOR	DANI DOWLING SENIOR



CLASS: D-2 MASCOT: STORM HEAD COACH: GREG WOOD

HIGH PLAINS

RECORD LAST SEASON: 3-5

FOOTBALL

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

- Aug. 25 **BDS**
- Aug. 31 **at Central Valley**
- Sept. 8 **at East Butler**
- Sept. 15 **Giltner**
- Sept. 22 **at Nebraska Lutheran**
- Sept. 29 **at Palmer**
- Oct. 6 **Osceola**
- Oct. 13 **Fullerton**

FOOTBALL STANDOUTS



WYATT URKOSKI
SENIOR



GAVIN MORRIS
SENIOR



AYDEN HANS
JUNIOR



GAGE FRIESEN
JUNIOR

Storm looking to break four-year playoff drought

High Plains returns plenty of experience on both sides of the ball

By Ken Kush
ASST. SPORTS EDITOR

POLK — The schedule won't be easy for the High Plains Storm, but a strong returning core of players with a lot of experience could earn the High Plains team their first playoff ticket since 2018.

"Our goal is to get back to the playoffs. It has been since 2018 since we last made the playoffs. With our schedule it won't be an easy, but this group is up for the challenge," commented head coach Greg Wood. "They had a great summer in the weight room as well as attending camps."

In 2022 the Storm finished up the year with a record of 3-5 and with five returning starters on both sides of the ball and 12 letter winners overall High Plains has the potential to be a force in Class D2.

The team has two senior leaders with Wyatt Urkoski and Gavin Morris. Urkoski was the team's second leading rusher last year with 76 carries for 369 yards and seven touchdowns and he anchored the defense with 106 tackles. He was a York News-Times and all-district selection.

Morris completed 3 of 8 passes for 66 yards and one touchdown and he ran the ball 19 times for 92 yards.

Junior Ayden Hans hauled in five receptions for



Members of the 2023 High Plains football team include: (front from left): Wyatt Urkoski, Gavin Morris. Second row: Chase Owens, Gage Friesen, Haden Helgoth, Ayden Hans, Raul Marino. Third row: Maddix Fuhrman, Caleb Sharman, Kaden Rieken, Camden Morris, Tyler Hans, Jacob Lesiak, Hudson Urkoski. Back row: Brodey Spurling, Carter Urkoski, Neddy Lesiak, Carson Swendenburg, Aaron Brown, Cameron Reed.

139 yards and all five went for touchdowns. On defense he finished with 43 tackles. He joins Gage Friesen a junior as all district selection from last year. Friesen ran the ball 58 times for 360 yards and had nine receptions for 148 yards and three scores. On defense he recorded 95 stops.

During his sophomore season, Hayden Helgoth completed 23 of 44 passes for 323 yards and six touch-

downs. He also picked up one interception from his defensive back position.

"We will be junior/senior heavy this year. These kids have been playing varsity since they were freshmen," Wood said. "The experience they bring into this season plus the work they put in this summer will definitely be one of our biggest strengths."

Woods feel that with most of the teams losing a key player or two, the district

race could be wide open.

"I think this year our district could be wide open. It seems like every team lost a couple of great players to graduation. However all these teams have great coaches and find a way to always rebuild," said Wood. "Teams in our district this year is Fullerton, Giltner, HPC, Nebraska Lutheran, Osceola and Palmer."

The Storm will open the season at home hosting

BDS who lost in the D2 state quarterfinals last year. Other home games for the Storm include: Giltner, Osceola and Fullerton.

"Our skill players will be another year older and with another year of experience behind them," Wood said. "I am excited about the potential this group has."



CLASS: D-2 MASCOT: STORM HEAD COACH: JENNA MATTOX

HIGH PLAINS

RECORD LAST SEASON: 23-9

VOLLEYBALL

VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

- Aug. 28 **Nebraska Lutheran**
- Aug. 31 **East Butler**
- Sept. 5 **Fullerton**
- Sept. 7 **at Nebraska Christian**
- Sept. 9 **at Heartland Lutheran Tournament**
- Sept. 12 **at Palmer Tri.**
- Sept. 14 **at High Plains Tri.**
- Sept. 19 **at Elba Tri.**
- Sept. 21 **at Shelby-Rising City Triangular**
- Sept. 23 **at Hampton Invite**
- Sept. 26 **McCool Junction**
- Oct. 3 **at Hampton Tri.**
- Oct. 5 **at Fillmore Central Triangular**
- Oct. 7 **at Polk County Quad.**
- Oct. 12 **at Lawrence-Nelson Triangular**
- Oct. 14 **at CRC Tournament**
- Oct. 16-17 **at CRC Tournament**
- Oct. 20 **at Osceola**
- Oct. 23-24 **at Subdistricts**
- Oct. 28 **at Districts**
- Nov. 1-4 **at State**

VOLLEYBALL STANDOUTS



COURTNEY CARLSTROM
JUNIOR



RYLEE ACKERSON
JUNIOR



ALLIE HOWELL
JUNIOR



PEYTON HOFFMANN
SOPHOMORE



RYLEE HOFFMANN
SOPHOMORE



GAHVI LESIAK
SOPHOMORE



Members of the 2023 High Plains volleyball team include: (front from left): Peyton Hoffmann, Allie Howell, Courtney Carlstrom, Rylee Ackerson, Addie Lindburg. Second row: Dakota Gress, Gahvi Lesiak, Madi Zerr, Rylee Hoffmann, Kenslei Carlson. Back row: Jacey Dubas, Hallie Jo Urkoski, Kinley Spurling, Bailey Gress, Ashtyn Quast, Tessa Morris.

Youth look to continue High Plains' volleyball success

By Christian Horn
SPORTS EDITOR

POLK — Over the past four seasons, the High Plains Storm volleyball team has accumulated a record of 77-57 with three consecutive trips to the district finals in both Class D1 and D2.

Last year the team finished up the season with a record of 23-9 and lost to Shelton in the district final.

Despite no seniors on this year's team, the Storm does return a lot of experience and girls who have played at the varsity level providing the Storm with solid depth.

High Plains head coach Jenna Mattox said the success of the past teams has the girls' confidence high as the season opener approaches.

"We faced some great teams last

year and came away with some big wins. That has helped with our confidence going into this season," said Mattox. "We also made it to district finals last year. We have tried to incorporate a lot of different things into our game last year that we are building on this year."

A trio of juniors, all returning starters come in with a lot of varsity playing time and will assume leadership roles. Setter Courtney Carlstrom assisted on 522 winners last year and she ripped 41 aces leading all returning players. She added 18 blocks and 221 digs. Carlstrom earned Omaha World Herald, Lincoln Journal Star and York News-Times honorable mention.

At middle was Rylee Ackerson who hammered 136 kills, put up 57 blocks, totaled 26 aces and chipped in

with 27 assists. She was YNT All-Area and LJS honorable mention.

Another middle hitter Allie Howell had 16 kills and 14 blocks.

Sophomores Peyton Hoffmann, (RS) and sophomore Rylee Hoffmann, (M) round out the rest of the returning starters.

Also lettering last year was sophomore defensive specialist Gahvi Lesiak who recorded 123 digs.

Mattox feels that with so many girls having played at the varsity level, depth will be a strength of this year's team.

"We have great depth coming into the season. We are returning seven girls that had a good amount of playing time last year in varsity matches. We have no seniors this year, so we will rely a lot on our underclassman to step in," Mattox said. "The return-

ing players from last year are really stepping up to help our underclassman learn rotation and different skills that are expected of them."

The Storm will open their quest for a fifth consecutive winning record with a rare Monday night home match with Nebraska Lutheran on August 28th.

Assisting coach Mattox will be Megan Bruce.

"We return a lot of experience so that has helped us this summer with getting our younger players prepared for the fall. I think our experience is going to help us and our depth on the bench will be a benefit to our team," Mattox commented. "We have some players that can play in multiple positions so can be utilized in different roles as needed."

MCCOOL VOLLEYBALL FROM PAGE D5

off, while junior Ava Epp and sophomore Grace Reinsch could also work themselves into the mix.

Sophomore libero Sarah Turner shuffles into the program as a transfer, but McCool also has a strong freshman class with the likes of Faith

Bandt, Harley Stutzman, Lily Parker, Pieper Epp, Lily Miller and Mily Lopez.

"While we may be starting as many as five seniors, we have a very strong JV program, and we work together in practice all the time," Stahr said. "We have four juniors

and a sophomore who all have significant varsity playing time and will certainly be heavily involved again this season."

Additionally, the CRC — while still strong — won't be quite as deep this year following the departure of

Exeter-Milligan, who's now co-opping with Friend in all sports. Still, 2022 state qualifiers BDS and Cross County figure to be the chief contenders for the conference crown this fall.

Add it all up, and the Mustangs have the returning experience to take a big step forward from the retooling of the past couple seasons, especially if the team can find success with a new scheme they're implementing this year.

"We've only run it a few times in practice, but I think it's going to put the ladies into

position to earn a few extra points. With so many games at this level decided by 2-4 points, that might be the difference in outcomes," Stahr said. "I expect the ladies to stay mentally composed, work together, and compete for every point. If they can do that, they