

Winter Sports²⁰¹⁹⁻²⁰²⁰

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Billi Connell and the Luverne High School girls' hockey team are setting their sights on advancing to the Section 3A championship game after falling in the semifinals last winter.

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H-BC girls regrouping after three 20-win seasons

By John Rittenhouse

A season of a change is at hand for the followers of the Hills-Beaver Creek girls' basketball program.

After being treated to three consecutive 20-plus win campaigns, the H-BC faithful is bracing for life without a number of the key players who made winning the norm over the past three winters.

"Last year we were a pretty consistent team," said Patriot coach Kale Wiertzema.

"We knew what we had going into the season, and we played that way from Game 1 through the end of year. It will be a process this year. Our focus will be on building to become a better team by the end of this season."

The 2018-19 season was a special one for H-BC.

The Patriots reeled off 16 consecutive Red Rock Conference wins to highlight a perfect (23-0) regular season.

H-BC's unblemished mark in the regular season gave the Patriots the No. 1 seed for the South Section 3A Tournament, and they displayed their dominance by routing Westbrook-Walnut Grove (73-13) and Murray County Central (86-46) to reach the championship game for the second straight year.

Southwest Christian, a team H-BC defeated twice during the regular season, was waiting for the Patriots in the title tilt.

For the second consecutive year, the E-Gals denied the Patriots a championship by handing them a 58-46 setback in the finals.

It was a stunning end to a remarkable 25-1 campaign, and it marked the end of the high school careers for five H-BC seniors.

Ana Hagen and Alexia Boltjes received little playing time during their senior seasons, but Sidney Fick, Grace Bundesen and Madison Spath played key roles in H-BC's success for multiple seasons.

Spath, a two-year starter as a point guard, ran the H-BC offense well enough to draw honorable mention from the RRC coaches at season's end.

Fick and Bundesen were four-year starters who made the All-

Hills Girls' Basketball		
Nov. 22	Luverne	A
Nov. 26	RTR	A
Dec. 3	MLA-C	A
Dec. 6	SW MN Christian	H
Dec. 7	West Lyon	H
Dec. 12	Adrian	H
Dec. 17	HLOF	A
Dec. 20	Edgerton	H
Jan. 3	MCC	A
Jan. 9	Red Rock Central	H
Jan. 11	DSU Tourney	A
Jan. 14	Canton	A
Jan. 16	WWG	H
Jan. 18	Adrian	A
Jan. 21	SW MN Christian	A
Jan. 24	Edgerton	A
Jan. 28	MLA-C	H
Jan. 31	HLOF	H
Feb. 3	Red Rock Central	A
Feb. 6	Central Lyon	A
Feb. 7	MCC	H
Feb. 13	WWG	A



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RRC squad at season's end.

Fick ended her career as H-BC's all-time leading scorer, netting 1,000-plus points during her career, and she was a top-notch rebounder for the Patriots.

"We will miss the leadership those girls gave us," Wiertzema stated.

"They were quality young ladies with outstanding leadership qualities and their talent. They were the type of players who could control a basketball game."

The process of replacing last year's key seniors is underway.

Wiertzema released a 12-player preseason roster consisting of two seniors, five juniors and five sophomores.

The list included two returning starters and two key reserves from the 2018-19 team.

"We did lose some good players, but we do have some quality kids coming back this year," Wiertzema said.

"The girls we have moving up to



Two seniors are members of the 2019-20 Hills-Beaver Creek High School girls' basketball team. They are Whitney Elbers (left) and Joslyn Birger.

the varsity level are comfortable with what we do both offensively and defensively in our program.

Now we just need to decide which girls will step up and help fill some spots for us."

Wiertzema will be relying on

Girls/continued on page 4

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John Rittenhouse photo/1127 hbc bb

Five seniors are the leaders of the 2019-20 Hills-Beaver Creek High School boys' basketball team. They are (from left) Parker Gehrke, Jax Wysong, Kyle Kueter and Easton Harnack. Missing is Jaxon Steensma. The Patriots are coming off a winning 2018-19 campaign.

Patriots working toward title contention

By John Rittenhouse

With athleticism and balance on their side, the 2019-20 boys' basketball season is shaping up to a promising one for the Hills-Beaver Creek Patriots.

The Patriots are coming off a winning 2018-19 campaign, but they do have some holes to fill in their roster.

Veteran H-BC coach Steve Wiertzema will acknowledge that, but he believes the Patriots can overcome that obstacle and be a competitive team this winter.

"These kids seem to be playing really well together," he said.

"They are working hard and sharing the ball in practice. We have some good shooters on the outside and some good size on the inside. We seem to be well balanced in all the positions on the floor."

Considering H-BC lost some talented players from the 2018-

19 team, Wiertzema's optimism should be a soothing sign for Patriot fans.

Five seniors were program members last winter, and four of them played significant roles for a successful squad.

The Patriots placed fifth in the Red Rock Conference with a 10-6 record during a 13-10 regular season.

H-BC bowed out of the South Section 3A Tournament with a 72-44 loss to Russell-Tyler-Ruthton during the quarterfinal round, ending a 13-11 campaign.

The loss to the Knights marked the end of the high school careers for seniors Preston Wilhelmi, Wyatt Westrum, Luke LaRock, Bailey Susie and Hunter Bork.

An injury limited Bork's playing time to the final six games of the season, but his classmates were key contributors to the team.

Wilhelmi led the Patriots in

scoring and assists during a sensational senior season that included him being selected to the All-RRC team.

Westrum and LaRock joined Wilhelmi in the starting lineup last winter, and Susie came off the bench to make key contributions for the 2018-19 team.

"They were some of our leading statistical players," said Wiertzema, when summing up the contributions made by the last season's seniors.

"They played a lot of minutes for us. They definitely will be missed."

H-BC opens the 2019-20 season with a 13-player roster consisting of five seniors, six juniors and two sophomores.

The list features two returning starters and four other athletes that logged playing time last year.

"We have some experience," Wiertzema said.

"We have six guys who played

for us last season, so experience should not be a problem for us."

Seniors Jax Wysong and Easton Harnack return to the team as starters.

Wysong, the team's second-leading scorer and leading rebounder last winter, made the All-RRC squad at season's end.

The 6-3 Wysong is a forward Wiertzema will be counting on a lot this winter.

Harnack is a 5-8 guard known for his defensive ability more so than being a scoring threat.

Other players bringing past varsity experience to the court this winter include senior Kyle Kueter, junior Zander Wysong and sophomores Cole Baker and Oliver Deelstra.

Kueter, a 6-7 post, gives H-BC an intimidating presence in the paint.

Title/continued on page 4

Hills Boys' Basketball		
Dec. 2	RTR	A
Dec. 5	Edgerton	A
Dec. 17	Luverne	H
Dec. 19	SW MN Christian	H
Dec. 27	SMSU	A
Jan. 3	A-E	H
Jan. 9	MCC	A
Jan. 10	A-E	A
Jan. 14	MLA-C	H
Jan. 16	Canton	A
Jan. 17	WWG	H
Jan. 23	HLOF	H
Jan. 25	MCC	H
Jan. 28	Luverne	A
Jan. 30	Red Rock Central	A
Feb. 1	DSU Tourney	A
Feb. 3	MLA-C	A
Feb. 6	Central Lyon	A
Feb. 11	SW MN Christian	A
Feb. 13	WWG	A
Feb. 18	Edgerton	H
Feb. 20	Red Rock Central	H
Feb. 21	HLOF	A

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Title/continued from page 3

Wysong is a 6-1 wing with scoring and rebounding ability.

Baker is a 6-0 wing that received a lot of playing time as a reserve last season.

Deelstra, a 6-1 wing, received most of his court time late last season.

The six players returning to the fold give H-BC a solid nucleus for what will be a fast-paced team in 2019-20.

“We will be a team that will go up and down the court quickly,” Wiertzema said.

“We have some good athletes with good quickness. We should be able to pressure teams defensively and be good at taking the ball to the basket offensively.”

To play the game at a rapid pace means H-BC will need some other players to make on-court contributions this winter.

The coach is unsure which players will fit into the rotation at this point, but he will be seeking help from the remaining members of the team.

Seniors Jaxon Steensma and Parker Gehrke are potential contributors.

Steensma is a 6-0 post, while Gehrke a 6-1 guard.

Juniors Calvin Erickson, Tryce Bennett, Dewell Rauk, Brandon Taubert and Gavin Wysong are prospects as well.

Erickson (5-8), Bennett (6-0), Rauk (5-9) and Taubert (6-0) are wings.

Wysong is a 5-8 guard.

“Right now these guys are learning how to play together, and I think they are doing a pretty good job of that,” Wiertzema said.

“We do need to work on our



Senior Jax Wysong brings three years of starting experience to the 2019-20 Hills-Beaver Creek High School boys’ basketball team.

rebounding a little bit. I think we could be more aggressive in that respect. We also need to tighten up our defensive game.”

The coach lists Southwest Christian to be the favorite in the RRC this year, with Mountain

Lake Area and Westbrook-Walnut Grove being contenders.

Wiertzema also thinks the new sharing agreement between Adrian and Ellsworth could produce a competitive team, and the same could be said about Heron

Lake-Okabena joining forces with Fulda.

“I think the RRC will be an improved conference this year. We should be getting good ball games night in and night out,” Wiertzema said.

“With the players we have, I think we should be able to compete for the conference and South Section titles. I don’t see any reason why we can’t compete for those titles.”

Girls/continued from page 2

the returning players with experience to play key roles for the H-BC 2019-20 team.

Senior Whitney Elbers, juniors Abby Knobloch and Taryn Rauk and sophomore Kenadie Fick are expected to form the nucleus of the squad.

Elbers, a 6-4 post, is a returning starter who made the All-RRC squad as a junior.

Her presence in the paint both offensively and defensively gives H-BC something a lot of opponents simply do not have.

Knobloch, a 5-10 forward, thrived late in the 2018-19 season as a member of H-BC’s starting lineup.

Knobloch drew honorable mention from the RRC coaches at season’s end.

Rauk and Fick were key players who filled reserve roles for last year’s team.

Rauk, a 5-8 guard, has two years of varsity experience.

Fick, a 5-7 guard, logged a lot of playing time as a freshman.

Wiertzema is uncertain which

players on the roster will form the rest of H-BC’s rotation in 2019-20.

“That’s the big unknown at this point,” he said.

“We will need to have some girls step up and help us, but we’re not sure who they will be yet. All I know is we have plenty of opportunity for some other girls to step up and help us out.”

The coach believes senior guard Joslyn Birger (5-7) will help the team this year, and juniors Annie Bos and Allie LaRock are potential contributors as well.

Bos is a 5-7 guard and LaRock is a 5-8 forward.

Junior Lauren Tatge (5-5) is a potential guard as well.

Sophomores Taylor Durst (5-8 guard), Sam Moser (5-10 forward), Mackenzie Voss (6-0 post) and Tess Van Maanen (5-4 guard) are other varsity prospects.

Wiertzema will need help from a number of athletes to play the style of basketball he wants this winter.

“We definitely don’t want to slow things down this year be-

cause that would work against the strengths most of our players have,” he said.

“At the same time, we want to utilize that 6-4 girl we have in the paint. We definitely don’t want to forget about her. We want to play at a quick pace and pressure teams, and that will all start at the defensive end of the court.”

Wiertzema lists SWC as the team to beat in the conference and South Section 3A this year.

Red Rock Central and MCC are other potential contenders.

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Girls poised to make run at berth in title game

By John Rittenhouse

Four seasons have passed since the Luverne girls' hockey team last played in a Section 3A championship game.

With a little bit of good fortune, that could change next February.

Nothing will be given to the Cardinals in terms of advancing to section finals, but what has been a consistent team that has won 16 games the last two winters could make it happen with hard work and determination at the end of the 2019-20 campaign.

To his credit, veteran coach Tony Sandbulte is not looking past the first two months of Luverne's schedule.

The LHS mentor is living in the present, but he likes what he sees in practice from a team that basically returns all the key members from the 2018-19 campaign.

"We are bringing back a lot of our key players," Sandbulte admitted.

"We are a veteran team in some ways, but we have a young team at the same time. We have some strong leaders on this team, and the kids have a lot of energy at practice. They are excited for the season and that makes it enjoyable for me as the coach."

Based on the way the team played last winter, the Cardinal should be excited about the 2019-20 campaign.

Luverne placed third in the Big South Conference last winter with a 10-3-1 record, which was a part of a 15-6-3 regular season.

LHS opened the Section 3A playoffs with a 3-1 win before its 16-7-3 campaign came to an end with a 4-3 loss to Mankato East in overtime.

Mankato East went on to capture the section title, which means LHS was one key play away from knocking off the eventual champions.

Since all of the top point-producers from the 2018-19 squad are returning to the ice, the Cards should be a factor in the chase for a section title again.

Rylee Olson (two goals), Lilli Donohue (one assist), McCall Stegenga and Julia Ferguson were senior members of last

Luverne Girls' Hockey		
Nov. 8	Morris/Benson Area	A
Nov. 9	Prairie Center	A
Nov. 14	Worthington	H
Nov. 15	Litchfield	A
Nov. 19	New Ulm	H
Nov. 21	Widom	A
Nov. 23	Minnesota River	H
Nov. 26	Fairmont	H
Dec. 3	Marshall	A
Dec. 7	Waseca	H
Dec. 10	Albert Lea	H
Dec. 14	Mankato East	A
Dec. 17	Widom	H
Dec. 20	Waseca	A
Dec. 30-Jan. 1	Schwan's Cup	A
Jan. 4	Prairie Center	H
Jan. 7	Fairmont	A
Jan. 9	Morris/Benson Area	H
Jan. 16	Mankato West	H
Jan. 20	Minnesota River	A
Jan. 23	New Ulm	A
Jan. 28	Worthington	A
Jan. 31	Marshall	H



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year's team, but they produced a combined three points as a group.

With a number of proven players and some untapped talent moving up to the varsity squad, LHS is in good shape heading into the new campaign.

"I think we have more depth than we've had in recent years," Sandbulte said.

"That's a good thing because it gives me the flexibility to move kids around and possibly play three lines this season. I like having the flexibility to switch things up."

Luverne opens the new season with an 18-player roster consisting of two seniors, six juniors, four sophomores, four freshmen and two eighth-graders.

The list features two All-BSC performers and one honorable mention selection from last year.

Sophomore Reghan Bork and freshman Kamryn Van Batavia



Two seniors are members of the 2019-20 Luverne High School girls' hockey team. They are Isabel Smeins (left) and Claire Baustian. LHS is coming off a 16-win campaign.

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Star Herald file photo

Luverne sophomore Cheyenne Schutz is one of two experienced goalies playing with the 2019-20 girls' hockey team.

Run/continued from page 5

return to the mix as all-league selections and as Luverne's top two point-producers from 2018-19.

Van Batavia, a forward, led the Cards with 30 goals and 45 points during an eighth-grade season that included her charting 15 assists.

Bork is an offensive threat as a defenseman. She led the Cards with 19 assists and scored 19 goals during a 38-point freshman season.

Senior Claire Baustian is center coming off a productive 2018-19 campaign as well.

Baustian netted 13 goals and registered 16 assists during a 29-point season that included her drawing honorable mention from the BSC coaches.

Van Batavia, Bork and Baustian led the Cardinals in points last

winter, but LHS returns four more key point-producers this year.

Juniors Rozilyn Oye, Rylee Gee, Shelby Kracht and Brynn Thier, as well as sophomore Billi Connell, all registered 10 or more points for the 2018-19 team.

Oye, a center, and Gee, a forward, ranked fourth and fifth on the team with 23 and 21 points respectively.

Oye netted nine goals and charted 14 assists, while Gee scored nine goals and registered 13 assists.

Connell, a forward, overcame an injury to turn in a 17-point season (seven goals and 10 assists) as an eighth-grader.

Kracht recorded 14 points (six goals and eight assists) as a sophomore forward. Sandbulte says she will play both the for-

ward and defenseman positions this year.

Thier has been one of Luverne's top defensemen the past three seasons, and she recorded 10 points (five goals and five assists) as a sophomore.

Junior Regan Feit and freshman Mallory Nelson are battle-tested players as well.

Feit is another one of Luverne's top defensemen returning to the team.

She recorded two goals and two assists as a junior.

Nelson netted three goals and charted one assist as an eighth-grader.

Like Kracht, Nelson may see playing time as a defenseman during the 2019-20 campaign.

Senior Isabel Smeins, junior Sophie Holmberg and sopho-

more Brenn Siebenahler are potential forwards as upperclassmen.

Freshman Krystyn Skindeliien and eighth-graders Morgan Ahrendt and Anika Boll are forwards as well.

Another strength LHS has entering the season is having two goalies with experience.

Sophomore Cheyenne Schutz and freshman Mallory Von Tersch both found success as varsity net-minders in 2018-19.

"We have a healthy competition going on between our goalies," Sandbulte said.

"Both girls are good goalies and they push each other, which will only make them better goalies. We trust them both in net."

Schutz compiled a 9-5-1 record as a freshman, while Von Tersch

went 7-2-2 as an eighth-grader.

"Overall, I'm pleased with the way everyone has looked in practice so far. I think it should be a fun year," Sandbulte said.

The coach lists New Ulm and Marshall as the teams to beat in the BSC this winter, with Mankato East and West being the top contenders for the Section 3A crown entering the season.

"We want to give ourselves a good seed for the section playoffs and to be playing good hockey at the right time late in the season," Sandbulte offered.

"Other than that, we just want to get some good bounces and see where that takes us in the section tournament. We will need timely scoring, hot goal-tending and to be playing our best hockey of the year at tournament time."

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Six seniors are the leaders of the 2019-20 Luverne High School boys' basketball team. They are (from left) Nick Feit, Matthew Sehr, Graham Cunningham, Brody DeBates, Isaiah Bartels and Nicholas Rogers. The Cardinals put together an 11-win season last winter.

Cardinal boys potentially could emerge as surprise basketball team this winter

By John Rittenhouse

The Luverne High School boys' basketball team is in a position to make some noise during the upcoming 2019-20 season. With a number of players with experience and an abundance of depth, the Cardinals have the potential to emerge as a surprise team when they take the court this winter. "This will be one of the most athletic teams we've had in quite a while," said Cardinal coach John Sichmeller. "These kids play hard. With their athleticism, I think we're going to run with the ball a little more this year. We also will be a deeper team this year. With added depth, we'll be able to give our players a rest and keep playing at the same pace." Depth wasn't something Lu-

verne had last winter, when the Cardinals relied heavily on their top seven or eight play. Luverne did find some success during the 2018-19 campaign, but the Cardinals were unable to string together bunches of wins. LHS placed sixth in the Big South Conference's Western Division during an 11-11 regular season. The Cardinals ended the year with an 11-12 record after dropping a 55-44 game to Pipestone during the quarterfinal round of the South Section 3AA Tournament. The loss to Pipestone marked the end of the high school basketball playing careers of five seniors, including two starters from the 2018-19 team. Derek Lundgren, a two-year starter who was one of the team's

leading scorers and rebounders last winter, made the All-BSC squad at season's end. Brayden Jacobsma was Luverne's starting point guard last season and played solid basketball on both ends of the court. Other senior members of the 2018-19 squad include Carter Stemper, Jack Golla and Ali Elsabagh. Golla and Elsabagh received limited playing time, but Stemper came off the bench and contributed as a member of Luverne's player rotation on a regular basis. "All of those guys were great kids. They were fun to be around," Sichmeller said, when summing up last year's seniors. "They all worked hard in practice. Among other things, we lost a lot of toughness on the defensive end of the court that Derek and

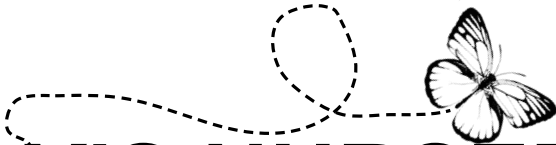
Brayden gave us." Sichmeller believes LHS can make up what is lost from last year's seniors with the depth in 2019-20. Luverne opens the year with 18 varsity prospects including six seniors, eight juniors, three sophomores and one freshman. The list includes three returning starters and three other players who received playing time last winter. "With our depth, we have a lot of guys fighting for playing time," Sichmeller said. "That really helps make our practices competitive." Seniors Isaiah Bartels and Matthew Sehr and junior Bailey Cowell bring past starting experience to the team.

Surprise/continued on page 8

Luverne Boys' Basketball		
Dec. 3	Edgerton	H
Dec. 7	A-E	A
Dec. 10	Jackson County Central	A
Dec. 17	Hills-Beaver Creek	A
Dec. 19	Marshall	H
Dec. 20	Redwood Valley	H
Jan. 3	Worthington	H
Jan. 4	WWG	A
Jan. 7	Marshall	A
Jan. 10	Windom	H
Jan. 14	Pipestone	A
Jan. 17	Jackson County Central	H
Jan. 21	Martin County West	H
Jan. 23	Garretson	A
Jan. 24	SW MN Christian	H
Jan. 28	Hills-Beaver Creek	H
Jan. 31	Redwood Valley	A
Feb. 4	St. James Area	H
Feb. 6	Worthington	A
Feb. 13	Windom	A
Feb. 18	Pipestone	H
Feb. 21	Minneota	H



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Surprise/continued from page 7

Bartels, a 6-6 center, emerged as one of Luverne’s leading scorers and rebounders as a junior.

Bartels drew honorable mention from the BSC coaches at season’s end.

Sehr and Cowell started as guards for the 2018-19 team.

Sehr is 6-4, and Cowell is 6-0.

Other players who logged varsity playing last winter are senior Nick Feit, junior Kaden DeSollar and freshman Gannon Ahrendt.

The 6-2 Feit received playing time as a reserve guard, while the 6-0 DeSollar came off the bench to play the forward position as a sophomore.

Ahrendt moved up to the varsity squad late in the 2018-19 season as an eighth-grader.

The athletic Ahrendt is an outstanding leaper with the ability to dunk the ball on opposing defenders.

Luverne’s talent pool doesn’t end with the players returning to the team with past varsity experience.

Seniors Graham Cunningham (6-0 guard), Brody DeBates (6-1 forward) and Nicholas Rogers (6-2 forward) are battling for playing time.

The senior challengers are attempting to fend off a big group of juniors who are pushing for court time as well.

LaShad Smith (5-9), Ben Jarchow (6-0) and Ethan Beyer (5-9) are junior guards.

Jayson Rops (6-2), Justin Dohlmann (6-3) and Arekel McLaughlin (6-3) are junior forwards.

Sophomores Eli Radtke (6-0 guard), Casey Sehr (6-0 forward) and Nathaniel Cole-Kraty (6-0 forward) could get the chance to play at the varsity level as the season progresses.

“With out athleticism, we want to play up-tempo basketball this year,” Sichmeller said.

“How well that works will be determined by how well we play defense and keep our number of turnovers down.”

Sichmeller lists Marshall as the team to beat in the BSC this year.

Jackson County Central and Fairmont are the teams he lists as favorites to claim the South Section 3AA Tournament title.

Sichmeller seeks weekly im-



Star Herald file photo

Junior Bailey Cowell is one of three returning starters on the roster of the 2019-20 Luverne boys’ basketball team.

provement throughout the season for his team.	with anyone we play,” he said. “If we are playing our best basketball of the season at the end of	the year, there’s no reason why we can’t do well in the section tournament. We want to advance	in the tournament. We have the talent to do that, but we just have to put it all together.”
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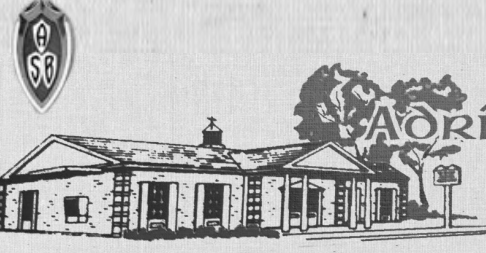
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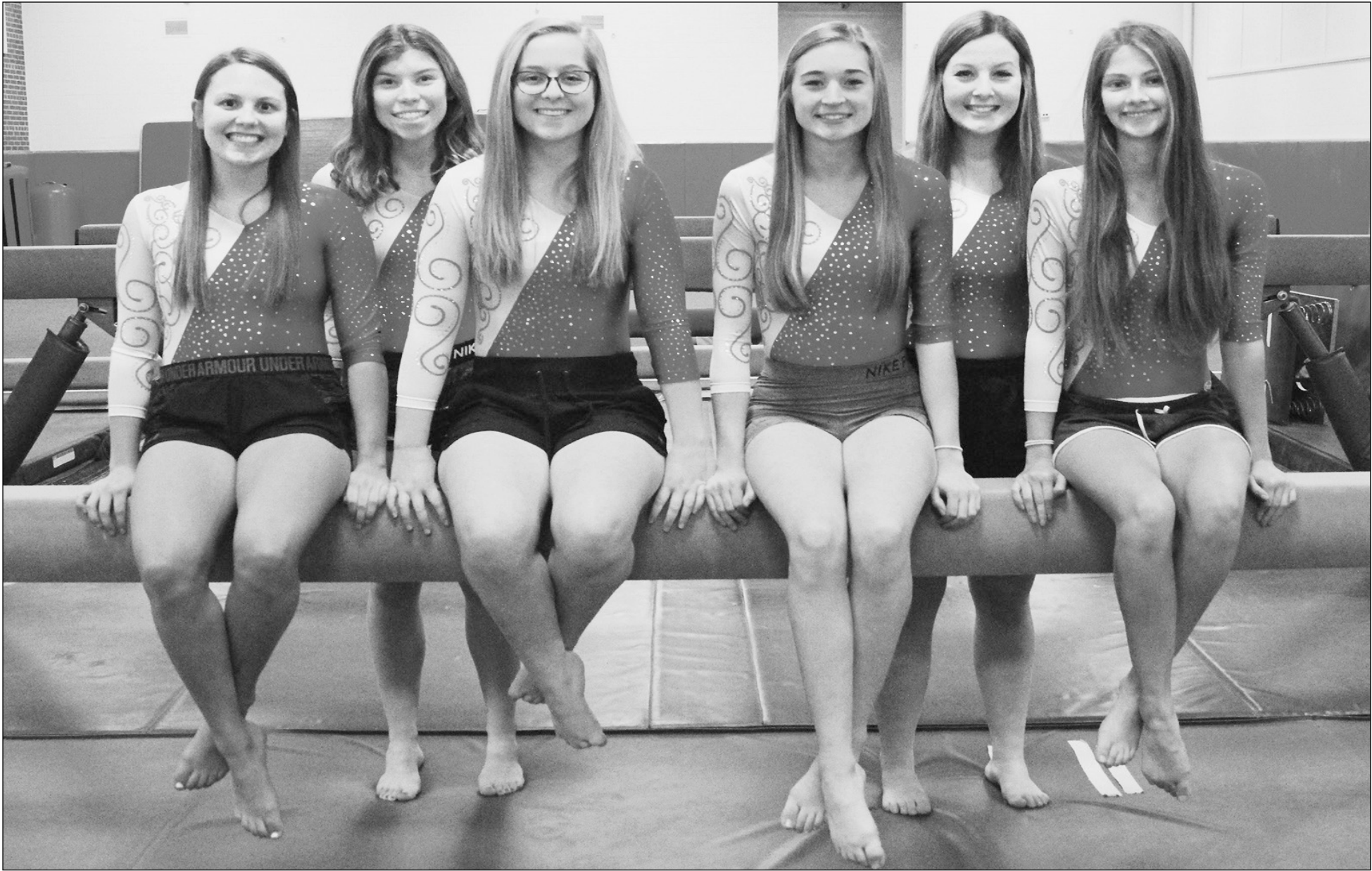
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John Rittenhouse photo/1127 tab lhs gym

Six athletes who helped form last year’s section squad return to the Luverne High School gymnastics team in 2019-20. They are (from left) Meghan Mollberg, Tiana Lais, Anna Huisman, Meghan Witte, Sydney Wicks and Madigan Flom.

New additions boost hopes for veteran gym team

By John Rittenhouse

An influx of talent has changed the landscape for the Luverne High School gymnastics team heading into the 2019-20 season. With six of the seven athletes who represented LHS at last year’s Section 3A meet returning, it’s no surprise the Cardinals have experience on their side this winter. What LHS coach Phoebe Flom didn’t know was two talented gymnasts would be transferring to Luverne from two top programs located in the surrounding area. “It’s really exciting,” said Flom, who is extremely optimistic about

the upcoming campaign. “It should be a good year for us. We have a lot of experience at the top end of our roster and some very good seventh-graders coming up the ranks. We’re going to have a well-balanced team this year.” Luverne returns about every contributing member from a 2018-19 team that placed fourth in the Big South Conference Western Division during a 19-11 regular season. The Cardinals completed the year with a 10-17 record after a disappointing seventh-place

finish at the section meet after placing sixth at the same event one year earlier. LHS did lose one productive senior from its 2018-19 roster, but the Cardinals should be in a position to improve their showing at the section meet at the end of the upcoming season. Melissa Teal was the lone senior member of the 2018-19 squad. She competed on the bars and vault for LHS at the section level last February, and Flom considered Teal to be a great leader. “Melissa was a great kid,” the coach said.

“She worked hard and she pushed the other kids to work hard. We’re going to miss her.” The new additions on the 2019-20 LHS roster should make the loss of Teal more manageable. Luverne opens the year with a 20-athlete list consisting of five seniors, five freshmen, four eighth-graders and six seventh-graders. The list features nine athletes that produced points at the varsity level in 2019-20. As members of last year’s section squad, seniors Madigan Flom, Anna Huisman, Meghan

Mollberg, Sydney Wicks and Meghan Witte will form the nucleus of the 2019-20 team. “Our seniors have a lot of experience,” Flom said. “A couple of them have been competing at the varsity level since they were in the seventh grade. They are a great group of kids who have always been consistent for us. They are good leaders and good friends.” Witte and Huisman represented LHS in all four events at the section meet last season.

Gym/continued on page 10



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Star Herald file photo

Meghan Witte is one of five senior members of the 2019-20 Luverne High School gymnastics team.

Gym/continued from page 9

Witte, who produced Luverne's top scores on the vault, bars and floor at the event, made the All-BSC Western Division Team for the second consecutive season in 2018-19.

Huisman registered Luverne's top score on the beam during the section meet as well as recording the squad's second-best tallies on the bars and floor.

Madigan Flom (bars, beam and floor) and Mollberg (vault, beam and floor) produced points for LHS in three of the four events at the section meet.

Wicks contributed to the cause on the beam and floor.

Tiana Lais, a freshman, competed for LHS at the section meet last season as well.

Lais made a contribution to the team tally on the vault.

Along with the six members of last year's section team, three other girls return to the program after receiving limited varsity experience in 2018-19.

Freshmen Bonita Tiesler, Myles

Trimble and Cedar Viessman did receive some opportunities to compete at the varsity level last year.

Cracking the varsity roster will be an even tougher task for everyone this winter due to some new members of the team.

"We have some new kids who could challenge our seniors for their spots in varsity events," Flom said.

"It will be interesting to see how it all works out. All I know is that's a good problem to have. There's been a lot of good energy in the room during our practices because we have a lot more talent in the gym than we've had in a long time."

Seventh-graders Ella Reisdorfer, Hailey Como and Corynn Oye are considered to be top varsity contenders as well.

Reisdorfer joins the team as the No. 1 prospect moving up the ranks from the youth program.

Como and Oye are students adjusting to life at LHS after

Luverne Gymnastics		
Dec. 5	Blue Earth Area	H
Dec. 10	Worthington	H
Dec. 13	Redwood Valley	H
Dec. 14	St. James Invitational	A
Dec. 19	Pipestone	A
Jan. 3	Fairmont/MCW	H
Jan. 7	Hendricks	A
Jan. 11	Fairmont/MCW	A
Jan. 14	Windom	A
Jan. 21	Jackson County Central	A
Jan. 28	RTR	H
Jan. 31	Marshall	H
Feb. 6	St. James Area	A



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transferring from Worthington and Jackson respectively.

Amira Cowell, another seventh-grader, is gifted on the vault and could make a push to make the varsity squad as well this year.

The balance of the team's ros-

"It will be interesting to see how it all works out. All I know is that's a good problem to have. There's been a lot of good energy in the room during our practices because we have a lot more talent in the gym than we've had in a long time."

*-Phoebe Flom,
Luverne High gymnastics coach*

ter consists of freshman Grace Ingebretson, eighth-graders Hailey Boll, Sadie Kessler, Ava Loosbrock and Brooklyn Wicks and seventh-graders Hannah Sneller and Kendra Thorson.

While it remains to be seen if the new members of the program can meet their potential, Flom has a feeling this could be a good year for LHS.

Worthington remains as the team to beat in Section 3A and the BSC Western Division, but

the Cardinals could capture the attention of some other area teams this winter.

"Our goal is to beat our school record score (134 points) as a team this year. That's what we shoot for every year," Flom said.

"I also would like to see our win-loss record be much better than it was last year. With all of the new additions we have on this team, I think we will be surprising a lot of our opponents this year."



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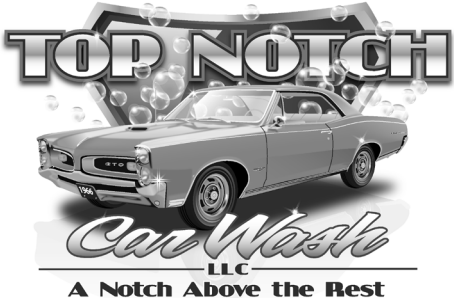
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John Rittenhouse photo/1127 tab lhs bh

Ten seniors are considered to be top varsity prospects for the 2019-20 Luverne High School boys' hockey team. They are (front row, from left) Easton Braun, Austin Watts-Boll, Mason Steensma, Tyler Roberts, Jacob Von Tersch, (back) Colton Schutz, Marshal Dammann, Colby Crabtree, Noah Herman and Nathan Nekali.

Boys seeking their place in balanced section field

By John Rittenhouse

Luverne High School boys' hockey coach Phil Paquette has an interesting perspective on what was a humbling 2018-19 season for his Cardinals.

After having a run of nine consecutive seasons of posting above .500 records snapped last winter, the result didn't seem to concern the coach.

Instead, the LHS mentor placed his focus of what could have been.

"I don't think anyone will be looking at us being favorites to win our section, and that's fair," Paquette stated.

"The way I'm looking at last year is that we were one good game away from being in the section finals, and anything can happen when you get there."

The game Paquette is referring to is the Section 3A quarterfinal showdown between LHS and Hutchinson.

After putting together a 10-13 regular season that included a fourth-place finish in the Big South Conference standings (8-7), LHS accomplished enough to entertain the Tigers for a section game.

Hutchinson ended Luverne's

10-14 campaign by handing the Cards a 6-3 setback, but what happened after that captured Paquette's attention.

The Tigers went on to defeat top-seeded Marshall in the semifinals before falling one goal short (2-1) against New Ulm in the section title tilt.

"That's just the way it is in our section. There is a lot of balance, and we are telling the kids it's anyone's section to win. If our kids keep working hard and keep improving, hopefully we can be in the mix with the top teams in our section at the end of the year."

LHS faces one obstacle it has to clear in order for the Cardinals to work their way into the mix of being one of Section 3A's top teams again.

Luverne lost six seniors from its 2018-19 roster, and three of them were key members of the last three LHS squads.

James Chanthalangsy (one goal), Skylar Dingmann (one point) and Cadyn Wessels (zero points) contributed on a limited basis during their senior seasons, but Ben Serie, Mark Sterrett and Gaige Nath were Luverne's top three point-producers last winter.

Luverne Boys' Hockey		
Nov. 26	Fairmont	H
Nov. 29	Minnesota River	A
Dec. 3	Marshall	H
Dec. 5	Redwood Valley	H
Dec. 7	Waseca	H
Dec. 13	Dodge County	H
Dec. 14	Rochester Lourdes	H
Dec. 17	Windom	H
Dec. 19	Worthington	H
Dec. 20	Morris/Benson Area	A
Dec. 26-28	Schwan's Cup	A
Jan. 2	New Ulm	H
Jan. 3	Minnesota River	A
Jan. 7	Fairmont	A
Jan. 11	Willmar	H
Jan. 16	Redwood Valley	A
Jan. 18	Waseca	A
Jan. 25	Mound Westonka	A
Jan. 28	Worthington	A
Jan. 30	New Ulm	A
Feb. 1	Litchfield	A
Feb. 3	Windom	A
Feb. 7	Marshall	A
Feb. 14	Minnesota River	H



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Serie (26 goals, 26 assists, 52 points) and Sterrett (16 goals, 20 assists, 36 points) made the All-BSC Team for their efforts in 2018-19.

Nath registered 33 points (19 goals and nine assists) as a senior.

"Gaige, Mark and Ben were great hockey players," Paquette offered.

"They were with us when I started coaching three years ago, and they were a part of our run to the state tournament as sophomores. We will miss the experience and skill those guys gave us."

Luverne's potential varsity roster entering the 2019-18 campaign consists of nine seniors, four juniors, two sophomores and two freshmen.

Thirteen of the team members logged a lot of ice time last winter, so LHS does have experience.

Depth is one of Paquette's biggest concerns right now.

LHS will field a complete junior varsity squad with a number of new players, but he's unsure how many of them will be able to make an impact at the varsity level.

"With 17 players on our potential varsity roster, depth is an issue," Paquette said.

"We would like to run three forward lines, but we can't take many injuries and do that. Right now we have 14 varsity skaters (excluding three goalies), which is a lot less than we had last year. We do have a junior varsity team with a lot of new players, and we've been telling them we do have spots on the varsity roster and they can earn them by proving they can play at the varsity level."

Paquette is counting on the nine seniors on the potential varsity roster to become the leaders of the team.

Their experience should help them in that respect.

"Our seniors have been through it all and have played a lot of minutes for us. They are, as a group, kids that we can rely on day in and day out," Paquette said.

Colby Crabtree, Tyler Roberts, Mason Steensma, Nathan Nekali and Easton Braun are senior forwards.

Crabtree turned in a productive 2018-19 season by compiling 28 points (19 goals and nine assists).

Roberts (10 goals and six assists) and Steensma (three goals

Seek/continued on page 12



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Seek/continued from page 11

and seven assists) reached double figures in scoring with 16 and 10 points respectively last year.

Easton Braun (one goal, four assists, five points) is another experienced senior forward, while Nathan Nekali (zero points) is expected to make the transition from playing defense last year to becoming a forward as a senior.

Senior Marshal Dammann, who recorded four assists during the 2018-19 season, is projected to play as a forward and as a defenseman this winter.

Three other seniors are expected to help the Cardinals on the defensive end of the ice in 2019-10.

Paquette considers Jacob Von Tersch (two goals, seven assists, nine points) and Austin Watts-Boll (one goal, five assists, six points) two of the team's top returning defensemen.

Senior Colton Schutz compiled a 1-3 record as a goalie for the 2018-19 team.

Other goalies include junior Shaid Shearer (7-9 as a junior) and sophomore Gavyn Boll, who is playing at the varsity level for the first time.

"I like that our three goalies push each other in practice," Paquette said.

"Shaid is an athletic kid who played most of the games late last year. We need him to be steady and more confident this year. Colton played some varsity games for us last year and has been looking good in practice. Gavyn will play as a junior varsity goalie early in the year, but I'm hoping he can push the other two guys when it comes to finding our varsity goalie at the end of the year."

Three other juniors bring experience to the 2019-20 squad.

Carlton Oftedahl (two assists) and Cooper Arends (six assists) return to the team as key defensemen.

Cade Wenninger (two goals, two assists, four points) is a forward who received limited ice time due to a broken collarbone early last season.

"Our older kids have the right mind-set," the coach said.

"I don't have to worry about them not showing up or coming



Star Herald file photo

Senior Colby Crabtree is the leading scorer returning to the 2019-20 Luverne High School boys' hockey team.

to practice every day not being ready to work hard. They push each other in practice and they are trying to get better, and that's what we need them to do."

Sophomore Zach Kruse and freshmen Brock Behrend and Ethan Langseth are underclassmen moving up to the varsity level for the first time.

Kruse is a forward with great hands with the potential of becoming a contributor if he improves his skating skills.

Behrend is a forward, while Langseth plays as a defenseman.

"We're trying to get those younger guys up to speed in terms of playing at the varsity level, but we do think they can help us this

year," Paquette said.

The LHS mentor believes New Ulm and Marshall are the teams to beat in the BSC this year.

Those two teams, along with Hutchinson and Litchfield-Dassel-Cokato, are projected to be the top contenders for the section title.

"I think we'll be in better shape

in terms of depth a couple of years down the road, so our future looks bright," Paquette said.

"Record-wise, I think we can be right where we are at last year or be even better. The section championship could belong to anyone, and I'm hoping we can be one of the teams in the mix."

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Girls to pursue third consecutive winning season

By John Rittenhouse

After putting together consecutive winning seasons, the Luverne girls' basketball team will be challenged in terms of extending that run during the 2019-20 campaign.

After losing five seniors (including three starters) from his 2018-19 squad, Cardinal coach T.J. Newgard finds himself entering a new campaign.

Newgard does have two key players and a few more athletes who gained some experience at the varsity level last winter, but LHS will largely be an untested squad in 2019-20.

With that being the case, the LHS mentor expects the upcoming season to be a process of learning for the players with the end goal of developing as a solid team at the end of the year.

"There may be some growing pains at the beginning of the season, but I think we could be a sneaky-good team at the end of the year," Newgard said.

"It's all going to depend on how our younger players adjust to playing the game at a higher level. I just want to see us get better as the year goes along."

Newgard's first task will be to reform a player rotation that took a big hit with the loss of five seniors from last year.

Jadyn Anderson, Mackenzie Petersen and Gabrielle Ferrell were members of Luverne's starting lineup during their senior seasons.

Grace Sweeney came off the bench to play in the post as a senior, as did Tia Hadler.

"Those kids played a lot of basketball and gave us a lot of experience," Newgard offered.

"They were good leaders who took care of a lot of little things for our team, which really helped me out as a coach."

The departed seniors did make a mark on what was a solid season for LHS in 2018-19.

The Cardinals placed fourth in the Big South Conference Western Division as a part of a 14-10 regular season.

Luverne's record in the regular season proved to be good enough to allow the Cardinals to host



Two seniors are members of the 2019-20 Luverne High School girls' basketball team. They are Mallory Thorson (left) and Chandra Javner. The Cards are coming off a 14-win season.

a South Section 3AA Tournament game in February, which wrapped up a 14-11 year after LHS dropped a 51-49 decision to Jackson County Central.

Luverne opens the 2019-20 season with a 16-player roster consisting of two seniors, two juniors, five sophomores and six freshmen.

The roster features two returning starters and three other players who logged varsity playing time last winter, but the list does lack experience overall.

"We do have two girls returning to the team who were our leaders in almost every statistical category last season," Newgard started.

"I also think we have a lot of depth with the younger girls we have coming up. That will help us when we have kids in foul trouble and when we get fatigued in games this year. I also like that these kids put in a lot of work during the offseason."

Senior Mallory Thorson and sophomore Brooklynn Ver Steeg are proven players who emerged as two of Luverne's top players

"There may be some growing pains at the beginning of the season, but I think we could be a sneaky-good team at the end of the year."

-T.J. Newgard,
Luverne girls' basketball coach

last winter.

Thorson, a 5-8 guard, was a fixture in the starting lineup during a junior season that ended with her drawing honorable mention from the BSC coaches.

Ver Steeg, a 5-5 sophomore guard, led the Cardinals in scoring and could well have been Luverne's most valuable player in 2018-19.

Ver Steeg made the All-BSC Team as a freshman.

"I'm glad we have Mallory and Brooke coming back," Newgard said.

"They were our leading scorers last year and are our most experienced players."

Along with the two returning starters, LHS also has two girls who received some varsity playing time last season.

Freshman guard Averill Sehr (5-4) should benefit from the experience she gained from joining the varsity squad last December.

Autumn Nath, a 5-7 junior guard, gained some court time as well during her sophomore season.

"With our depth, I think we'll be able to play up to 10 girls this year. The big question is what our rotation will look like because I think players three through 10 are pretty even in terms of ability," Newgard said.

Upperclassmen competing for playing time include senior Chandra Javner (5-6 guard) and McKenzie VanGrootheest (5-5 guard).

Sophomores Madeleine Schmuck (5-9 post), Kristin Rud (5-10 post), Kayetlin Huiskes (5-9

Luverne Girls' Basketball		
Nov. 22	Hills-Beaver Creek	H
Nov. 26	Edgerton	H
Dec. 5	Pipestone	H
Dec. 7	Fairmont	A
Dec. 10	Jackson County Central	A
Dec. 13	Fulda	A
Dec. 16	SW MN Christian	H
Dec. 17	Tracy/Milroy/Balaton	H
Dec. 19	Fulda	A
Dec. 20	Redwood Valley	H
Dec. 28	Harrisburg	A
Jan. 3	Worthington	A
Jan. 4	WWG	A
Jan. 7	Marshall	A
Jan. 10	Windom	H
Jan. 17	Jackson County Central	H
Jan. 20	Edgerton	A
Jan. 23	Garretson	A
Jan. 24	Marshall	H
Jan. 27	A-E	H
Jan. 30	Pipestone	A
Jan. 31	Redwood Valley	A
Feb. 4	St. James	H
Feb. 6	Worthington	H
Feb. 10	Martin County West	H
Feb. 13	Windom	A



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post) and Elise Ferrell (5-9 guard) are potential contributors as well.

Freshmen Elizabeth Wagner (5-11 guard), Christina Wagner (6-0 post), Emma Beyer (5-5 guard), Lauren Hansen (5-11 post) and Jocelyn Hart (5-7 post) could play their way into the player rotation as well.

"I think our team has more post depth than we've had in a few years," Newgard said.

"With the depth we have overall, I think we should be able to pressure teams on defense and push the ball offensively. We also should be able to press teams more this year."

Newgard believes Marshall will be the top team in the BSC this year, with Redwood Valley, Windom and Pipestone being potential contenders.

RWV, Windom, Pipestone and JCC are the teams to beat when the South Section 3AA Tournament begins in the mind of the LHS coach.

"Our section is pretty balanced. It will be interesting to see who wins it," Newgard concluded.



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John Rittenhouse photo/1127 tab lhs wrestling

Five athletes who represented Luverne at the Section 3AA Individual Tournament last winter return to the Cardinal' wrestling program in 2019-20. They are (from left) Noah Mehlhaff, Braydon Ripka, Camden Janiszeski and Riley Cowell. Missing is Zach Bradley.

Young athletes dominate LHS wrestling roster

By John Rittenhouse

Youth will dominate the scene for the 2019-20 Luverne High School wrestling team.

LHS coach Jordan Kopp says a total of 17 athletes began preparing for the upcoming season at the beginning of the season.

With one junior and five sophomores being the oldest members of the squad, the Cardinals will field a young squad this winter.

"We have a very young team," Kopp indicated.

"We have one junior and some sophomores to build our team around, but most of the guys we have are young kids. They are a good group of kids and they are working very hard."

Kopp was aware of the situation he would be facing in the 2019-20 season when five seniors served as the leaders of the 2018-19 team.

LHS went 2-14 during the regular season one year ago, and the Cardinals went winless (0-6)

against Big South Conference competition.

The Cardinals did secure a 48-6 victory over Fulda-Murray County Central during the opening round of the Section 3AA Team Tournament, but they bowed out of the event after taking a 79-0 setback from Fairmont-Martin County West in the quarterfinals to cap a 3-15 campaign.

Four of last year's seniors represented LHS in the postseason.

Tom Brown and Jed Dooyema competed well enough to place at the Section 3AA Individual Tournament.

Brown finished a 14-13 season by placing fifth at 182 pounds at the section event.

Dooyema went 13-15 as a senior and placed fifth at 170 pounds during the section tourney.

Dalton DeSollar (7-21) and Justyce Ripka (3-19) wrestled without placing at the section meet to cap their high school

Luverne Wrestling

Dec. 5	Windom Triangular	A
Dec. 7	Flandreau Invitational	A
Dec. 13	Wabasso Triangular	A
Dec. 14	JCC Invitational	A
Dec. 20 & 21	RWV Invitational	A
Jan. 4	Brandon Valley Tournament	A
Jan. 9	Luverne Triangular	H
Jan. 11	Worthington	A
Jan. 16	Rock Valley Quad	A
Jan. 21	F-MCW Triangular	A
Jan. 23	Fulda-MCC	A
Jan. 28	St. James Area Quad	A
Jan. 31	Luverne Triangular	H
Feb. 6	A-E	H
Feb. 8	Morris Area Invitational	A

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Abraham Hernandez competed at the varsity level early last season, but he was not a member of the postseason proceedings.

"All five of the seniors last year had unique qualities that helped them lead our team," Kopp offered.

"They had their own characteristics and they used them to their advantage. They were five good individuals and we will miss them."

Along with the one junior and five sophomores, the balance of Luverne's 2019-20 roster consists of three freshmen, three eighth-graders and five seventh-graders.

The list features six returning letterwinners, two section place-winners and three other athletes who competed at the section level last winter.

After securing places at last year's section tournament, sophomores Braydon Ripka and Noah Mehlhaff have to be considered key returnees.

Ripka went 17-21 as a freshman and placed fifth at 132 pounds during the section event.

Mehlhaff compiled an 11-17

record during a freshman season that ended with him placing sixth at 106 pounds during the section tournament.

Ripka is projected to wrestle at 138 pounds to start the 2019-20 season, while Mehlhaff is projected to start the year at 126.

Junior Riley Cowell, sophomore Zach Bradley and freshman Camden Janiszeski bring more section experience to the 2019-20 team.

Cowell didn't place at the section tournament, but he led the Cardinals in total wins (19-13 overall) last winter.

Cowell is projected to compete at 120 this season.

Bradley (3-5) and Janiszeski (5-20) gained section experience as well.

Janiszeski is expected to wrestle at 132 this season, while Bradley will compete in the 160-pound slot.

LHS/continued on page 15

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LHS/continued from page 14

Freshman Carsen Tofteland, who is projected to compete at 106, rounds out the returning letter winners.

Along with the wrestlers who gained section experience last winter, Kopp is counting on sophomores Joseph Schoneman and Chris Rosin to make an impact at the varsity level in 2019-20.

Schoneman, who is projected to compete as a heavyweight, and Rosin, Luverne's 170-pound representative, received some varsity matches without lettering last season.

"I look at Riley and our sophomores as being the core members of our team, and we plan to build around those guys," Kopp said.

"We also have a lot of young kids moving up the ranks, and we will need them to fill in some spots in our lineup at some point this year."

One of the possible contributors is freshman Tavian Lange, who is expected to open the year at 113 pounds.

Seventh-graders Jaden Reisch and Masyn Akkerman are considered to be potential varsity contributors as well.

Reisch may compete at 145, and Akkerman is a prospect at 195.

Eighth-grader Jacob Stroh is the leading candidate to wrestle at 152 this year, while classmate Tyler Rolfs gives LHS depth between the 132- and 145-pound weight classes.

Uriel Hernandez, another eighth-grader, is a prospect at 106 along with seventh-graders Owen Janiszeski and Leif Ingebretson.

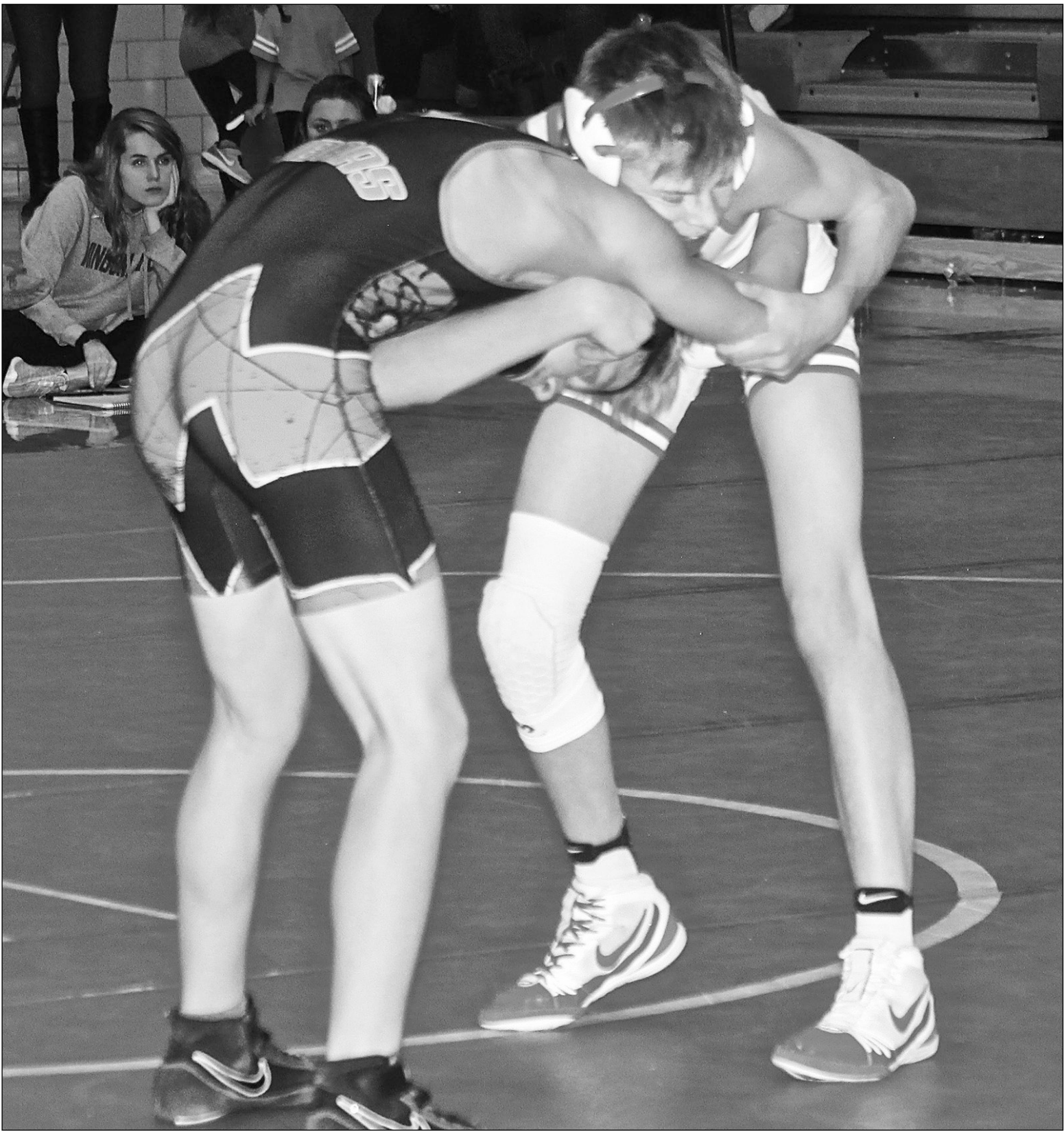
Seventh-grader Adam Ask is a prospect to compete between the 120- and 132-pound weight classes.

"Most of the younger kids have been part of our youth wrestling program, so they all have some experience," Kopp said.

"Overall, we have a bunch of hard-working kids with great work ethics."

Kopp lists Marshall as the team to beat in the BSC and in Section 3AA, while F-MCW could be another section contender.

Posting a bunch of wins will be challenge for a young LHS squad



Star Herald file photo

Luverne junior Riley Cowell led the Cardinal wrestling team in total individual victories during the 2018-19 season.

this winter, but that's never been on Kopp's list of priorities.	define our season," he said. "I hope we can win four matches this year, and I could see us	having as many as six kids place at the section tournament. We just want to build the team around our	core group of wrestlers and see what happens after that."
"Our team record will never			



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John Rittenhouse photo/1127 tab ae wrestling

Twelve athletes who competed at the section level last winter return to the 2019-20 Adrian-Ellsworth wrestling team. They are (kneeling, from left) Cameron Wieneke, Brayan Anaya, Quentin Wolf, Jaren Winselman, Rilee Heidebrink, Breyer Hieronimus, (back) Brody Loosbrock, Isaac Bullerman, Logan Taylor, Scot Edwards, Preston Nelson and Logan Sherer. The Dragons posted 11 wins last winter and are seeking an above .500 record this season.

A-E chasing berth in Section 3A final four

By John Rittenhouse

Having a big group of athletes gives Adrian-Ellsworth wrestling coach Gregg Nelson optimism. It's been a few years since Nelson could report that he has 29 wrestlers in grades seven through 12 participating in the preseason practice sessions. Since that's the case this year, Nelson feels good about his team heading into the 2019-20 season. "I like all of the bodies we have in the practice room," Nelson admitted. "I like having six seniors on this team because we didn't have any last season. Only two of those seniors have had serious mat time in the past, but we are getting

older as a team. We still are on the younger side of things when you look up and down our lineup, but we do have a lot of experience overall. We just need the younger guys to get more mat time." A-E is coming off a solid 2018-19 campaign that included the Dragons finishing the regular season with an 11-14 mark. An 11-15 team season came to an end with a 49-24 loss to Pipestone in the quarterfinal round of the Section 3A Tournament, and that's something the Dragon athletes want to rectify this winter. "The boys have the goal of making it to the final four of the team tournament this year," Nelson said.

"How that turns out remains to be seen, but that's their goal and there's nothing wrong with that." Achieving the goal is a possibility with A-E's 29-athlete roster consisting of six seniors, three juniors, six sophomores, three freshmen, seven eighth-graders and four seventh-graders. The list includes two state qualifiers, five other wrestlers who placed at the section individual tournament, and a total of 13 letterwinners from the 2018-19 campaign. "We should have a full lineup, or close to a full lineup by the end of the year. That's what we want," Nelson said. "We have some good kids who

work hard, learn and get better. Since that's the case, I'm not worried about what happens during the month of December because our lineup will be different early. We want to put the hammer down in January and February and see where that takes us." As returning state qualifiers, senior Scot Edwards and sophomore Brayan Anaya give the Dragons instant credibility entering the new season. Edwards is a two-time state participant who made a bid to capture the Class A championship as a heavyweight before ending his 28-2 junior season

Chase/continued on page 18

Adrian Wrestling		
Dec. 5	Canton	H
Dec. 7	Dell Rapids Tourney	A
Dec. 12	Marshall	A
Dec. 14	JCC Invitational	A
Dec. 17	A-E Quad	H
Dec. 20	RWV Tourney	A
Jan. 4	T-CU Tourney	A
Jan. 7	Pipestone Tourney	A
Jan. 9	A-E Quad	H
Jan. 11	W-RRC Tourney	A
Jan. 14	A-E Triangular	H
Jan. 18	T-M-B Tourney	A
Jan. 21	Worthington	A
Jan. 24	JCC	A
Feb. 6	Luverne	A
Feb. 7	A-E Triangular	H



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John Rittenhouse photo/1127 tab ahs bb

Twelve seniors are members of the first Adrian-Ellsworth boys' basketball team. They are (kneeling, from left) Grant Jansma, Tristan Thier, Johnathon Heidebrink, Tyler Wolford, Nathan Rahe, Rondae Nave, (back) Ian Stamer, Noah Reyne, Lance Luettel, Brady Vortherms, Caleb Hornstein and Brandon Schnoor.

Pairing agreement yields veteran A-E boys' squad

By John Rittenhouse

Blake Miller finds himself in a crowded gym these days. Miller, the head coach of the first Adrian-Ellsworth boys' basketball team, doesn't seem to mind the situation. With 39 players in grades 9-12 preparing for the upcoming season on a daily basis, practices have been somewhat challenging for the Dragons. To his credit, Miller wouldn't have it any other way. "Yes, it has been interesting," Miller stated, when summing up A-E's preseason practices.

"We've had to be a little more creative when it comes to running our drills, but we're getting our work in. We definitely have used our fourth coach, Ethan Van Briesen, who is coming over from Ellsworth. We're glad to have him here because he brings a lot of enthusiasm along with him." On paper, the first edition of the A-E squad is a rousing success. Miller said he's never had more than nine seniors to work with during his tenure at AHS. Not only does he have 12 seniors participating in practice sessions, he also has nine juniors

trying to catch the attention of the coaching staff. Needless to say, A-E will not put a young and inexperienced team on the court. "We've picked up some nice pieces for what we want to do through this (sharing agreement)," Miller said. "It will be interesting to see how it all unfolds for us this year." The Adrian and Ellsworth squads produced a combined 15-33 record as separate teams in 2018-19, which includes a combined 9-22 record against

Red Rock Conference opponents. Both teams had a strong senior presence on their respective rosters, with Ellsworth tapping the talents of five upperclassmen and Adrian having five on its list. Brandon Kramer proved to be a key senior member of Ellsworth's 2018-19 team. Kramer led the Panthers in scoring and rebounding during a campaign that ended with him making the All-RRC squad. Sean and Kade Boltjes, Sam Kramer and Noah Kruse capped their high school careers at EHS as well.

Christian Weidert, a senior member of the 2018-19 AHS squad, made the All-RRC team as well. Braxton Vortherms, Dakota John, Devin Frodermann, Cole Domeyer and Bryce Wilson are the other senior members of Adrian's team last winter. AHS and EHS lost a combined six starters from their squads in 2018-19, but the first A-E squad will not lack experience. "We have nine guys who played varsity ball last year, so we do have

Squad/continued on page 18

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Squad/continued from page 17

Chase/continued from page 16

a lot of experience,” Miller said.

“It’s my hope that will help us when we get into tight games, which we had a lot of last season. With their experience, these kids should be able to handle it.”

The coach hopes to form a nine- or 10-player rotation out of the 12 seniors, nine juniors and one sophomore he considers to be varsity prospects.

The nine players with past varsity experience are expected to be the nucleus of the squad.

As returning starters, seniors Noah Reyne, Ian Stamer, Lance Luettel and Grant Jansma are some of A-E’s top prospects.

Reyne, a 6-2 guard, made the All-RRC squad as an AHS junior.

Stamer (6-2) and Luettel (6-4) started at guard and at post respectively for AHS last winter, while the 6-3 Jansma started as a guard for EHS.

Three other seniors bring more varsity experience to the A-E squad.

Brandon Schnoor, a 6-3 forward, and guards Nathan Rahe (5-8) and Brady Vortherms (6-2) are expected to be contributors this winter as well.

Two other projected contributors are junior Anthony Lenz and sophomore Peyton Lewis.

Lenz is a 6-2 guard, and Lewis a 6-5 guard/forward.

“I think those nine guys will be the nucleus of our team,” Miller said.

“I really like the length of our kids. We can go 6-2 or better at every position. I like how open and accepting the guys have been in terms of trying new things. I also like how they have come to play hard at every practice.”

Other senior members of the 2019-20 team include guards Johnathon Heidebrink (5-8), Tyler Wolford (5-8), Tristan Thier (5-11) and posts Caleb Hornstein (6-4) and Rondae Nave (6-3).

Miller likes the potential the remaining juniors on the roster have displayed, but they might be one year away from being varsity contributors due to A-E’s abundance of experienced players.

Nicholas Hendel (6-5), Nicholas Sjogren (6-0) and Simon Boyenga (6-0) are junior posts.

Tanner Hinrichs (5-8), Edgar Menedez-Gonzalez (5-8), Linkin

Adrian Boys’ Basketball		
Dec. 7	Luverne	H
Dec. 10	MLA-C	A
Dec. 13	WWG	H
Dec. 14	RTR	A
Dec. 16	Windom	H
Dec. 19	RTR Tourney	A
Dec. 21	RTR Tourney	A
Dec. 30	SW MN Christian	H
Jan. 3	Hills-Beaver Creek	A
Jan. 7	HLOF	A
Jan. 10	Hills-Beaver Creek	H
Jan. 14	SW MN Christian	A
Jan. 16	Edgerton	A
Jan. 17	MLA-C	H
Jan. 20	Sibley/Ochedan	H
Jan. 23	Red Rock Central	H
Jan. 25	Edgerton	H
Jan. 27	MCC	H
Jan. 30	MCC	A
Feb. 4	TMB	H
Feb. 6	HLOF	H
Feb. 10	Minneota	A
Feb. 21	Red Rock Central	A
Feb. 24	WWG	A



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Bossert (5-10), Dalton Popkes (5-9) and Micah Onken (5-9) are junior guards.

Miller lists Southwest Christian as being the RRC and South Section 3A favorite this winter, with Mountain Lake Area being a top contender for the conference crown.

Heron Lake-Okabena-Fulda is flying under the radar right now, but Miller believes their sharing agreement could produce a strong team as well.

“Our conference will be balanced and competitive this year,” Miller said.

“We will play whatever style of basketball we need to play to be successful on any given night against our conference opponents. The goal I would like to see us accomplish is to have a winning record at the end of the season. I also would like to see us make things interesting by playing competitive games every night and pull off some upsets.”

with a loss during the title match.

Edwards has won the Section 3A heavyweight title the last two seasons, and he will compete at the same weight class this winter.

Anaya turned in a sensational freshman season that featured him earning a trip to the state tournament by placing second at 106 pounds at the section event.

Anaya split four matches at the state tournament, where his 35-7 season came to an end.

Nelson believes Anaya could wrestle at 106 late in the 2019-20 season, but he will open the campaign at 120.

Other athletes returning to the team as section place-winners from last season include Logan Taylor, Logan Sherer, Breyer Hieronimus, Brody Loosbrock and Preston Nelson.

Taylor, a senior, qualified for the state tournament two years ago.

He compiled a 33-9 record last season and placed third at 120 pounds in the section field.

Taylor is projected to wrestle at 138 pounds early this winter, where he will be challenged by Loosbrock.

Loosbrock is a junior coming off a 9-24 sophomore season that ended with a sixth-place finish at the section tournament at 138 pounds.

Sherer is a junior coming off an 11-13 season, which included him placing fifth at 145 pounds during the section event.

Sherer is expected to compete at 145 again this year, where he will be challenged by sophomores Isaac Bullerman and Ellias Tonsay.

Bullerman compiled a 21-20 record and competed at the section tournament without placing last winter. Tonsay went 0-5 as a freshman.

Nelson and Hieronimus round out the returning section place-winners.

Nelson, a junior who went 18-16 and placed sixth at 160 pounds at the section meet, is expected to wrestle at 170 this winter.

Hieronimus is a freshman who compiled a 14-20 record last season, when he placed sixth at 113 pounds during the section tournament.

Hieronimus is expected to wrestle at 126 to open the 2019-



Star Herald file photo
Logan Sherer placed fifth at the Section 3A Individual Wrestling Tournament at the end of the 2018-19 season.

20 season.

Four more athletes who participated at the section tournament without placing last year return to the 2019-20 squad.

Rilee Heidebrink, who went 9-15 as a seventh-grader, is projected to compete at 132 this winter.

Heidebrink is being pushed by eighth-grader Reese Morrison, who went 1-2 without lettering in 2018-19.

Coming off a 13-17 season, freshman Quentin Wolf is expected to be A-E’s 160-pound entry to start the year.

Cameron Wienieke is a freshman projected to compete at 182 to start the season.

Wienieke went 11-18 as an eighth-grader.

Eighth-grader Jaren Winselman rounds out the athletes returning to the team with section experience from last winter.

Winselman went 10-18 last season and is expected to wrestle at 220 this winter, where he is being challenged by senior Beau Bullerman.

Bullerman has wrestled in the past, but he did not compete last year.

Senior Max Lehmann was injured late last season, but he went 10-19 during the regular season to earn a varsity letter.

Lehmann is projected to compete at 195, where he is being challenged for mat time by Roberto Hernandez.

Hernandez is one of three Ellsworth athletes joining the program this winter.

Senior Austen Klein and eighth-grader Jacob Timmer are EHS participants in the program as well.

A-E lacks experience at three weight classes entering the 2019-20 season.

Senior Axel Martinez, who went 0-4 as a junior, is tabbed to compete at 152 at the beginning of the season.

Eighth-grader Bruce Farinella (0-1) is projected to open the season at 106 pounds, while eighth-grader David Anaya (4-1) is expected to compete at 113.

A-E’s lineup will change dramatically from the beginning of the year through season’s end.

Once all of the pieces are in place, Nelson believes the Dragons will be competitive on the mat.

“It would be nice to be an above .500 team this year and I would like to see us make the final four at the team tournament,” he said.

“That will depend on us having a full lineup at the end of the year.”



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John Rittenhouse photo/1127 tab ahs gb

Eight seniors are members of the first Adrian-Ellsworth girls' basketball team. They are (from left) Morgan Dreesen, Kasie Tweet, Kallie Chapa, Bailey Lonneman, Moriah Bullerman, Kristina Cauwels, Jennifer Preuss and Ashlyn Meester. Jes Hermeling-Reyne is the head coach of the Dragons.

Added depth elevates prospects for A-E girls

By John Rittenhouse

The first Adrian-Ellsworth girls' basketball team and first-year head coach Jes Hermeling-Reyne are preparing for what appears to be a promising 2019-20 season. AHS and EHS compiled a combined 13-30 record last season, but a recent sports sharing agreement accepted by both schools marked the end of the days when both schools fielded separate teams. The A-E Dragons will play games in Adrian and Ellsworth this winter, and Hermeling-Reyne likes the opportunity she has received to be the head coach of the team. "I'm really excited about this. I think I'm really lucky to be coaching this team," she said. "Adrian and Ellsworth have not had very successful teams in recent years, and these girls deserve to have some success. I think all of the kids see the potential we have playing when we are practicing together in the same gym." To say Hermeling-Reyne is a

first-year head coach might be slightly inaccurate. This will be her first season as being the only mentor, but she did serve as a co-coach with Patrice Peters when longtime AHS leader Randy Strand left the program two years ago. Hermeling-Reyne did not coach last winter, as she was preparing to give birth to her first child, and she was named the first A-E mentor when Peters relinquished the coaching position earlier this year. The first A-E squad will be a veteran team. Ellsworth lost two seniors (Sierra Smith and Lizzie Chapa) and Adrian lost five seniors (Autumn Grussing, Megan Fuerstenberg, McKinley Nelson, Brisa Zebe and Avery Balster, who received honorable mention from the Red Conference coaches at season's end) from their respective rosters last year. Coach Hermeling-Reyne likes the players she has to work with. "I like their willingness to get

better," she said. "They come to practice hungry every day and they are willing to work hard. They are eager to keep improving and keep learning, which is nice to see as a coach." The 2019-20 A-E squad opens the year with a 12-player roster consisting of eight seniors, three juniors and one sophomore. The list features a total of five returning starters and four girls who logged varsity playing time last winter. "We have depth," Hermeling-Reyne stated. "We have 12 good players. I can say we have a lot more than five players who deserve to be starters, and a lot of them would be if they were playing at other schools. It's going to be tough to get all of these kids on the floor in games, but we can use all 12 of these girls." Three seniors gained the reputation of being standout players last winter. Ellsworth's Ashlyn Meester and Adrian's Bailey Lonneman made

the All-RRC squad at the end of the 2018-19 season. Adrian's Moriah Bullerman, a four-year starter, drew honorable mention. Meester (5-7) and Bullerman (5-4) are two of eight guards listed on the roster. The 5-11 Lonneman is one of four posts on the list. Two other starters for EHS last winter are expected to produce as guards this season. Kallie Chapa (5-7) and Morgan Dreesen (5-7) bring more starting experience to the team. Adrian seniors Kristina Cauwels and Jennifer Preuss and juniors Shawna Rogers and Jayden Zebe give the team more experience. Cauwels (5-7) and Zebe (5-8) are battle-tested guards. Preuss (5-6) and Rogers (5-9) are posts with past varsity experience. Rounding out the preseason varsity roster are senior Kasie

Adrian Girls' Basketball

Nov. 22 & 23	Sleepy Eye Tourney	A
Dec. 3	SW MN Christian	H
Dec. 6	Red Rock Central	A
Dec. 12	Hills-Beaver Creek	A
Dec. 14	RTR	A
Dec. 16	Windom	H
Dec. 20	HLOF	H
Dec. 30	Lakeview	A
Jan. 3	WWG	A
Jan. 9	Edgerton	A
Jan. 13	MLA-C	A
Jan. 16	MCC	H
Jan. 18	Hills-Beaver Creek	H
Jan. 20	Sibley-Ochedan	H
Jan. 21	Red Rock Central	H
Jan. 24	HLOF	A
Jan. 27	Luverne	A
Jan. 28	SW MN Christian	A
Feb. 3	Edgerton	H
Feb. 13	MCC	A
Feb. 14	WWG	H
Feb. 17	MLA-C	H



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Depth/continued from page 19

Tweet, junior Marisa Lehnhoff and sophomore Julia Bullerman. More players will be added as the season progresses.

Tweet, a 5-7 guard, didn't play basketball last season.

Lehnhoff and Rogers are 5-11 posts.

"We don't have a lot of height on this team, so our plan is to play a fast-paced game," Hermeling-Reyne stated.

"I could see us substituting five players at a time to play that type of game. That's where the depth comes into our favor. We want to get up and down the court quicker than opposing teams, and we can play that way with the numbers we have."

Hermeling-Reyne lists Southwest Christian as the team to beat in the Red Rock Conference this winter, with Hills-Beaver Creek being another top contender.

She feels SWC and H-BC are the favorites to claim the South Section 3A title as well.

The coach isn't setting goals for her team in terms of wins and losses, but she does believe A-E joining forces will help the Dragons become a more competitive squad on the court.

"I just want the girls to come together the best way they can because I do think the agreement was the best move for both communities," Hermeling-Reyne said.

"I also want the girls to leave the court knowing they gave it their all when they leave the floor. I want them to know the coaches are behind them, and I hope they leave the floor at the end of the year knowing they learned a lot and improved a lot as a team."



Senior Bailey Lonneman is one of two All-Red Rock Conference performers listed on the 2019-20 A-E girls' basketball roster.



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