

WRESTLING

UPHILLBATTLE

Hillsboro’s Hill doesn’t let size disadvantage slow him down on wrestling mat

By **ZACH RASTALL**
HSE Sports Reporter

Denver Hill stands out when he hits the wrestling mat. Most of the time when the Hillsboro senior links up against an opponent in the heavyweight class, he’s doing so against a wrestler far bigger than himself. It’s a situation Hill has constantly found himself throughout his high school wrestling career, but one that he’s become increasingly comfortable in as time has moved along. “There’s always this moment of fear, this moment of doubt,” Hill said. “But when I step out there and really start to tie up with them, it doesn’t matter anymore. The adrenaline’s pumping, my blood’s rushing and the only thing I can think about is doing anything I can to win or not get pinned.” Hillsboro head wrestling coach Brad Nugent said that Hill wrestled at 182 as a freshman, 195 or 220 as a sophomore depending on where the team needed him and now as a heavyweight the last two years. During this current season, Nugent notes, Hill’s weight has ranged from 198 to 210. That of course means he’s often at a significant weight disadvantage in his matches, but Nugent credits Hill for his commitment to knowing what works for him and what doesn’t to find success. “He understands that he can’t play into their game. He understands that he has to stick to his moves and when the kids are going to try one of those head throws, he has a good understanding and body awareness to get his hips in the right place and get through to get the takedown,” Nugent said. “On top, he understands that he has to break them down and he has to be the aggressor. He can’t stop. With how much weight he’s giving up, he has to keep moving and tire them out. Just keep working them.” Nugent has gotten to see Hill grow in and out of the classroom over the years and is amazed at both his physical progress and the growth of his self-confidence. It’s something his coach says radiates and has caught the attention of plenty of others as well. “Out of all six years I’ve been coaching, and all my years involved with sports — ever since I was in high school and college — I’ve never

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Hillsboro’s Denver Hill puts the squeeze on River Valley’s Brett Bindl during the Richland Center invite late last year. HSE Photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media

Voltz leads Tiger matmen at SRR meet

By **NATE BEIER**
HSE Sports Correspondent

Hillsboro senior Phillip Voltz put the finishing touches on his final conference tournament with style Saturday afternoon in Ithaca by taking third place in the 132 pound bracket. Voltz (17-14) was the highest placing member of the Tiger tribe at Saturday’s annual Scenic Ridge and Rivers meet. The wrestler opened the day with a pin in just 34 seconds, but suffered a 9-3 defeat in the semifinal at the hands of Ithaca/Weston’s Max Koch — the eventual bracket champion - in the semis. Voltz pinned Royall’s Garrett Dragan in the wrestleback, then pinned Brookwood’s Hunter Zimmerman in the third place match. Josiah Thyne (9-18) was fourth at 145. Thyne won two consolation matches, but was felled by Cashton’s Ethan Klinkner in the third place match by pin. Xavier Herritz (12-14) was fourth at 182. Herritz went 2-2

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SCENIC RIDGE AND RIVERS RESULTS	
106	Aiden Gruenenfelder Pecatonica/Argyle
113	Dylan Powell Brookwood
120	Gunnar Wopat Royall
126	Colin McKittrick Royall
132	Max Koch Ithaca/Weston
138	Will Burnley Ithaca/Weston
145	Lincoln Manning Ithaca/Weston
152	Aiden Brosinski De Soto
160	Colin O’Neil Cashton
170	David Fargen Ithaca/Weston
182	Jacob Manning Ithaca/Weston
195	Jed Scallon Ithaca/Weston
220	Marshall Self Ithaca/Weston
285	Caleb Marchwick Ithaca/Weston

BOYS BASKETBALL

Tiger boys win streak broken

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

After eight consecutive victories, the Hillsboro boys' basketball team tasted defeat for the first time in over three weeks with a loss to state-ranked Bangor.

The Cardinals (16-3 overall, 10-0 Scenic Bluffs) held serve on their home court by beating the Tigers (11-8, 6-4) 77-57 when they squared off in conference play Thursday, February 3 in Bangor.

Bangor senior guard Gunner

Ellenburg finished with 15 points and 8 rebounds, junior forward/guard Dustin McDonald had 15 points as well, junior guard Tanner Jones flirted with a triple-double with 13 points, 9 assists and 7 rebounds and senior guard Will Reader added 13 points and 6 rebounds.

Hillsboro sophomore guard Isaiah Stokes complied 20 points and 8 rebounds, senior forward Hayden Stahlke finished with 10 points and 5 rebounds, senior guard Jordan Erickson scored 8 points, senior center Payten Strohmeyer chipped in

7 points, senior guard/forward Kasen Bloor recorded 6 points, 6 rebounds and 5 assists and junior guard Noah Burmaster tacked on 6 points.

Last Thursday's loss was an improvement for the Tigers from their first meeting with the Cardinals, who they lost to 82-40 on December 21 in Hillsboro.

Following a tough Tuesday night matchup at Cashton, the Tigers will be back in action when they face off against the Necedah Cardinals (10-5, 5-4) Friday, February 11 at 7 p.m. in Necedah.

Wonewoc-Center boys snap losing skid with win over Kickapoo

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

For the first time in a month, the Wonewoc-Center boys' basketball team finds itself in the win column.

The Wolves (3-11 overall, 0-9 Scenic Bluffs) snapped a nine-game losing streak with a 59-44 non-conference win over the Kickapoo Panthers (2-13) Monday, February 7 in Wonewoc.

Senior guard Landon Wohlrab led the way for Wonewoc-Center with 17 points, senior center Ashton Spencer was close

behind with 16 points and senior guard Dylan Britzman added 8 points in the win.

The Wolves hadn't picked up a victory since beating Weston at home 72-47 on January 3.

They came very close to ending that losing skid a game earlier against New Lisbon.

The Rockets (6-13, 2-8) denied Wonewoc-Center of its first Scenic Bluffs win of the season by beating the Wolves 52-50 Thursday, February 3 in Wonewoc.

Junior forward Nikita Shankle led New Lisbon with 12 points while junior guard Keagan

Shankle and senior forward/guard Ethan Dvorak added 10 points apiece. For the Wolves, Spencer and Wohlrab had 19 and 12 points, respectively.

A busy week lies ahead for Wonewoc-Center. Following a Tuesday night meeting at Royall, the Wolves have three more games over the next week: at Bangor Friday night, at Riverdale Monday, February 14 and home vs. Necedah next Tuesday.

The Bangor and Necedah games are slated to start at 7 p.m. and the Riverdale game will get underway at 7:15 p.m.



Hillsboro's Phillip Voltz works on a whizzer with Richland Center's Trevyn Thielmann during the Lee Griffin Invite earlier this year. Voltz finished third at last weekend's conference tournament. HSE Photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.

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and lost the third place bout to Cashton's Jack Schlesner by way of pin.

Denver Hill (15-15) was sixth at 285. Hill was 1-3 Saturday.

Ervin Novacheck (8-21) lost two matches at 138. Hunter Osorio (2-2) was 2-2, but did not place at 152. Andrew Osorio (3-11) lost his two matches at 182.

ROYALL DUO WINS SCENIC RIDGE AND RIVERS TITLES

Royall's Gunnar Wopat and Colin McKittrick both captured individual titles at Saturday's Scenic Ridge and Rivers Conference meet in Ithaca.

Wopat (29-3) won the 120 title with a pair of pins. The six-man bracket also included Jackson Bender (17-9) who finished third. Wopat pinned Gavin McDowell in the final.																									
McKittrick (29-6) pinned three opponents en route to his first SRR wall chart. McKittrick pinned Ithaca/Weston's Gavin																									
<table><tr><th colspan="2">TEAM SCORES</th></tr><tr><td>Ithaca/Weston</td><td>256</td></tr><tr><td>De Soto</td><td>131</td></tr><tr><td>Pecatonica/Argyle</td><td>118</td></tr><tr><td>Cashton</td><td>113</td></tr><tr><td>New Lisbon</td><td>109.5</td></tr><tr><td>Brookwood</td><td>91</td></tr><tr><td>Royall</td><td>86</td></tr><tr><td>Kickapoo/La Farge</td><td>57</td></tr><tr><td>Hillsboro</td><td>55</td></tr><tr><td>North Crawford/Seneca</td><td>40.5</td></tr><tr><td>River Ridge</td><td>38</td></tr></table>		TEAM SCORES		Ithaca/Weston	256	De Soto	131	Pecatonica/Argyle	118	Cashton	113	New Lisbon	109.5	Brookwood	91	Royall	86	Kickapoo/La Farge	57	Hillsboro	55	North Crawford/Seneca	40.5	River Ridge	38
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Templen in the title match.

Madden McCluskey (9-16) was second at 195. McCluskey pinned his way into the final and had the tables turned in the championship.

Brendan Rick (20-13) was fifth at 106. Garret Dragan (9-12) was fifth at 132. Samson Degner (14-17) went 2-2, but did not place at 152.

REGIONALS

Cashton will host the Division 3 regional this Saturday as the WIAA tournament series kicks off. Joining the five Scenic Bluffs Conference schools will be Aquinas and Coulee Christian. Wrestling is set to start at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, February 12. The regional championship team will compete at next week's team sectional at New Lisbon.



Hillsboro's Violet Morren goes up for a jumper against Cashton's Teagan Hundt. HSE Photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

HHS girls rebound

Tiger girls recover from Bangor loss with pair of wins over Cashton, Viroqua

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

Following a loss to Scenic Bluffs champion Bangor, the Hillsboro girls' basketball team has rebounded with a pair of wins.

The Tigers (15-6 overall, 9-3 Scenic Bluffs) very nearly toppled the state-ranked Cardinals (20-2, 12-0) but came up just short in a 50-45 loss Tuesday, February 1 in Hillsboro. Bangor had also beaten Hillsboro 74-58 when they met back on December 14 in Bangor.

Junior guard Nora Tucker led the Cardinals, who would clinch an outright conference title later in the week, with 14 points, senior forward Madeline Janisch had 13 points and senior guard Aliyah Langrehr added 11 points.

For the Tigers, junior center Violet Morren posted a dominant double-double with 19 points and 15 rebounds while senior point guard Malia Liska finished with 9 points.

Hillsboro would bounce right

back with a stellar defensive effort to beat the Cashton Eagles (9-13, 6-6) Friday, February 4 in Cashton. The Tigers would build up a 28-8 halftime lead on their way to the win.

Morren asserted her dominance down low by recording a triple-double with 18 points, 11 rebounds, sophomore guard Lexie Thorson chipped in 9 points and junior guard/small forward Toni Mitchell corralled 10 rebounds for Hillsboro.

Junior guard Braylee Hyatt set the pace for Cashton with a game-high 19 points and senior guard Teagan Hundt added 6 points.

The Tigers followed that up with a 73-36 blowout victory over the Viroqua Blackhawks (2-18) in a non-conference contest held Monday, February 7 in Hillsboro.

There will be a pair of home games for the Tigers over the next week. They host Necedah Thursday, February 10 and then close out the regular season against Wonewoc-Center Tuesday, February 15. Both games are set to tip at 7 p.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Wonewoc-Center girls hold off Royall for signature victory



Stacie Kopenhafer keeps the ball away from an aggressive defensive attack by Royall's Marah Gruen late in the second half as the teams tie 47-47 with just seconds left.
Photo by Tasha Mueller.



Makayla Martin tries to stop a foul attack on Wonewoc-Center's Shelby Justman as the Wolves kept a steady 9-point lead going into Friday's second half conference clash. Justman led with 17 points for the 49-47 significant conference win.
Photo by Tasha Mueller.

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

They had to sweat it out in the final seconds, but the Wonewoc-Center girls' basketball team have perhaps their best win of the 2021-22 season.

A pair of free throws from junior guard Stacie Kopenhafer with 3.4 seconds left gave the Wolves (9-7 overall, 7-5 Scenic Bluffs) the lead for good as they went out on the road and toppled the Royall Panthers (14-6, 9-3) 49-47 Friday, February 4 in Elroy.

Royall picked up a 55-46 win when the two teams first squared off December 17 in Wonewoc. But the Wolves were able to flip the script the second time around.

Wonewoc-Center led 27-18 at halftime and were up 14 early in the second half, but the Panthers were able to claw their way back into it. They eventually knotted things up at 47-47 when senior forward Deyona Jones split a pair of free throws with 41 seconds left.

Jones had a look at a go-ahead layup in the final seconds, only to miss and then be called for a foul on Kopenhafer on the ensuing rebound. Kopenhafer sank the following free throws and Royall turned it over on the ensuing inbounds pass to secure the victory for the Wolves.

"We've been close a few times this year, but this game I think a lightbulb finally clicked. They made their free throws at the end and worked hard on defense," said Wonewoc-Center head coach Rick Field. "It was nice to finally come out on the other end of a close game."

Wonewoc-Center senior guard Shelby Justman scored 17 points and sophomore guard Kelsey Justman posted a double-double with 14 points and 13 rebounds. For the Panthers, sophomore guard Marah Gruen had a double-double of her own with 20 points and 16 rebounds and Jones added 11 points and 9 rebounds.

A few days prior to that loss, Royall defeated New Lisbon (8-13, 3-9) 78-40 Tuesday, February 1 in New Lisbon. The Panthers would go on to lose 62-50 to Blair-Taylor (19-1) Saturday, February 5 at Just-A-Game Fieldhouse in Wisconsin Dells and then beat Necedah (1-16, 1-11) 56-22 Tuesday, February 8 in Necedah.

They will next host Bangor Thursday, February 10 at 7 p.m. in Elroy and hit the road to take on Brookwood Tuesday, February 15 at 7 p.m. in Ontario.

Meanwhile, the Wolves came into the Royall game having just beaten Necedah 54-23 Tuesday, February 1 in Wonewoc.

In that game, Shelby Justman led the way with 20 points, Kelsey Justman had 13 points and 8 rebounds and senior forward Nicole Totzke put up a double-double with 11 points and 10 rebounds.

Wonewoc-Center closes out the regular season by hosting Brookwood Thursday, February 10 and then playing at Hillsboro Tuesday, February 15. Both games will tip at 7 p.m.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Royall boys best Blair-Taylor to highlight week

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

The Royall boys' basketball team tallied a victory against Blair-Taylor over the weekend to highlight their last week of play.

The Panthers (10-9 overall, 4-6 Scenic Bluffs) snuck past the Wildcats (12-7) 48-44 Saturday, February 5 at Just-A-Game Fieldhouse in Wisconsin Dells.

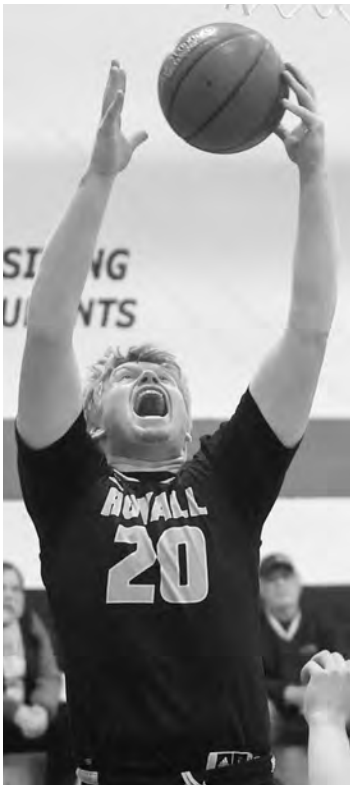
Junior forward Gabe Keenan and freshman small forward Carter Uppena each had 11 points to lead Royall. Blair-Taylor junior forward Evan Nehring and senior forward Cain Fremstad finished with 18 and 10 points, respectively.

Two nights prior, Royall fell to the Necedah Cardinals (10-5, 5-4) 55-47 Thursday, February 3 in Necedah.

Senior guard Landen Murphy scored 20 points for the Cardinals and senior forward Stephen Daley added 15 points. Uppena led Royall with 10 points while Keenan, sophomore forward Tucker Wildes and senior guard Bryce Gruen each tallied 9 points and sophomore guard Savon Wainwright chipped in 8 points.

Royall most recently suffered a 51-45 non-conference loss to Seneca (14-2) Monday, February 7 in Elroy.

In that game, Gruen had 13 points for the Panthers, sophomore guard Jacob Ceizyk and senior forward Nate Vieth each contributed 8 points and



Royall's Nate Vieth goes up for a defensive rebound from a game earlier this year.
HSE Photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.

Keenan added 7 points. After Tuesday night's clash with Wonewoc-Center, Royall will host Brookwood Friday, February 11 at 7 p.m. and hit the road to play La Farge Monday, February 14 at 7:15 p.m.

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“I get this rush. I kinda lose myself in it. I’m happy, I’m euphoric, but I’m also dead focused. It’s hard to explain.”

– Denver Hill

seen somebody so liked,” Nugent said. “Coaches in conference, refs, other coaches from other conferences, other wrestlers, they’re coming up to me all the time saying ‘hey, how’s Denver doing? How’s he doing today? It’s amazing what he’s doing.’ The amount of support he’s had this year has been amazing. Just to see how much he’s worked to get to this point and build himself up, it’s been great.”

For Hill, it’s been particularly rewarding to increase his strength up to the point where he can match the physicality of guys who drastically outsize him in height and weight.

“I grew a lot in my upper body to the point where I was able to physically match or even outmatch some guys who were 50, 60 pounds heavier than me,” Hill said. “I get this rush. I kinda lose myself in it. I’m happy, I’m euphoric, but I’m also dead focused. It’s hard to explain.”

The end of Hill’s high school wrestling career is drawing near, with this weekend’s Division 3 regional meet in Cashton possibly marking its conclusion.

Even though his time on the mat as a Hillsboro Tiger is almost over, Hill is thankful for all he’s gained from the sport over the years. He highly recommends wrestling to anyone considering it as a high school sport, noting that his experience competing against those bigger opponents has helped drive him and yield positive life results well beyond the mat.

“It’s actually really helped me in my high school life. I have really bad anxiety, mild depression,” Hill said. “But I’ve actually been doing really good lately. I’ve been really happy, and a lot of it stems from wrestling. My body looks better, I’m stronger, I’m smarter, I’m faster.”