

THROUGH MY LENS

Sparta football looking for new home after DNR study

By NATE BEIER
Sports Reporter

All those excited about the upcoming changes to Sparta's Memorial Field have been dealt a major setback in the project's completion.



The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources did a study recently of Sparta's Memorial Park in preparation for the renovation to the football field area of the park and found that the space is part of the necessary natural habitat for water fowl that live in the Perch Lake area and therefore needs to remain as close to its current state as possible.

That has led to the renovation project, which includes new bleachers, new lights and a turf field for both Sparta football and soccer, to be halted indefinitely.

Furthermore, the study by the DNR has concluded that football games in that area have been detrimental to local animal life and will have to be played elsewhere next year and beyond.

So, essentially, Sparta football will be homeless in 2022 as the team looks for alternative sites for competition. There are several solutions that have been proposed to remedy the situation, however, with ideas ranging from the plausible to the outlandish.

Most reports indicate Sparta will just play its schedule entirely on the road.

One of the more outlandish ideas was to suspend the season altogether and push current football athletes to play soccer or run cross country or to focus on academics.

Another was to combine with Tomah to create a super team of sorts and make playoff qualification easier for both programs.

A third notion was offered to build a floating island of sorts on Perch Lake that would be large enough for a football field. The idea gained some traction when it was suggested that fans would be forced sit on the banks of the lake so coaches and officials wouldn't have to hear dissenting comments from the crowd during game play.

Oh yes, Friday, April 1 is April Fool's Day. If you read this far, good for you and I hope you like jokes.

However, as much fun as this was, there's still the issue of the Memorial Park

(BEIER) cont. pg 12

CASHTON TRACK AND FIELD

Hilden turns heads in TRIUMPHANT RETURN

By NATE BEIER
Sports Writer

When Jack Hilden started his high school track career, he had no idea what a story he'd encounter along the way.

Hilden, who began his high school track and field career at Cashton in 2019, has had a wild and unique ride just to get to competition in 2022. The senior dealt with the loss of a sophomore season due to the COVID-19 pandemic, then was extremely limited last year due to injuries sustained in the basketball season. Still, despite all the setbacks and time away from the sport, Hilden has still managed to do what every high school athlete in his position works for - the chance to come back better than before.

"After dislocating my knee last year, it's been a long journey and it feels good just to be able to compete again, especially at the level I'm competing at," said Hilden after finishing third in the high jump and setting his second personal record of the season at last weekend's indoor meet at UW La Crosse.

"I was a little worried about how it was going to go, worried if my knee would hold up but so far it's going really well. I'm excited to see where I can go from here."

Hilden, along with sophomore teammate Jack Schlesner, have been raising eyebrows with their performances in the vertical jumps. The duo have packed a 1-2 wallop in the event with Schlesner winning the event in both outings and Hilden trailing closely behind, finishing second and third in the first two meets. Both meets, however, yielded personal bests for Hilden.

A year ago, that reality seemed far-fetched.

Hilden's injury - a dislocated knee in

that occurred in the second half of the 2020-21 basketball season - severely limited his opportunities on track and field. As a junior he participated in some running events, but high jump was out of the question.

His road to recovery took 5-6 months to get back in the gym for basketball. As a junior he competed in a couple track meets and recalled trying the 100 meter dash, but said he could tell he wasn't anywhere near being a complete athlete at that time. Hilden said that

(HILDEN) cont. pg 12



Cashton's Jack Hilden has returned from injury better than ever. Hilden has set 2 PRs this season and has helped create one of the area's best high jumping tandems.

MARVEL AT THE

HIGH-FLYING DEATH-DEFTING

ARRAY OF AERIAL ARTISTRY

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
PRESENTED BY CASHTON'S

JUMPING

JACKS

SCHLESNER PICKS UP WHERE STATE BERTH LEFT OFF

By NATE BEIER
Sports Writer

Jack Schlesner has his head in the clouds.

It's not literal, mind you, but the sophomore high jumper has been adding height to his already impressive vertical hop which may seem like his head is in the clouds.

After just two meets this year, however, Schlesner has two wins and is hungry for more.

"It feels pretty good. I hope by the end of the year to be higher," said Schlesner after winning last weekend's invite which was held at UW La Crosse.

Schlesner cleared 6-02, which was a new personal record, and tied New Lisbon's Nikita Shankle for the top spot. Schlesner was granted the top spot due to criteria - the number of missed jumps prior to exiting the event. The sophomore admitted he was a little shaky early on in Saturday's meet and missed 5-06 twice and nearly bowed out of competition shortly after. His third try at 5-06 was good and he didn't miss again until he took an attempt at 6-04.

In the season opener at UW Platteville a week earlier, Schlesner won the

(SCHLESNER) cont. pg 12



Cashton's Jack Schlesner set a new PR of 6-02 and won his second high jump competition of the season last week at the Eagles' indoor meet held at UW-L. Herald photo by Nate Beier

FARMERS TOWN MUTUAL INSURANCE
FARM HOME LIABILITY
LOCAL-INDEPENDENT-TRUSTED

FARMERS TOWN MUTUAL INSURANCE
Serving Monroe, Jackson, Vernon & LaCrosse Counties
www.FARMERSTOWNMUTUAL.com

Darlene Wedemeier
(608)427-6650

Steve Herrman
(608)633-2697

Marlus Schmitz
(608)343-7760



Cashton's Jack Hilden prepares to take a jump during last week's high jump competition at UW La Crosse. Hilden set a PR after clearing 6-00 and finishing third overall. Herald photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.

(HILDEN)

cont. from pg 11

past basketball season went well and was a springboard for early success in track.

This year he returned to the event and surprised himself.

"I kind of wanted to prove to myself that I could still do it, prove to myself that I could come back from injury and do even better," said the senior.

He did.

As a freshman, Hilden he was high jumping and clearing 4-10 or perhaps 5-00 on a good day. In his first meet of 2022, he jumped 5-08 and last week, the senior cleared 6-00.

CHANGE OF FOCUS

Despite a two-year hiatus, it is evident Hilden has done something right to get back on track - both literally and figuratively.

Even though the pandemic prompted the cancellation of the 2020 season and high jump wasn't in the towels for 2021, Hilden didn't throw in the towel. Instead, his focus actually became clearer.

"I did I've put a lot more into track than I did in my first year," said the senior high jumper.

Hilden said he's been looking at changing various parts of his technique and has been open to coaching to best aide him in succeeding. He said the Cashton coaching staff has changed his steps up some and he's been working on his speed in his approach as well as his back bend as he clears the bar.

The attention to detail and drive to succeed this year is a product of his own growth in the sport.

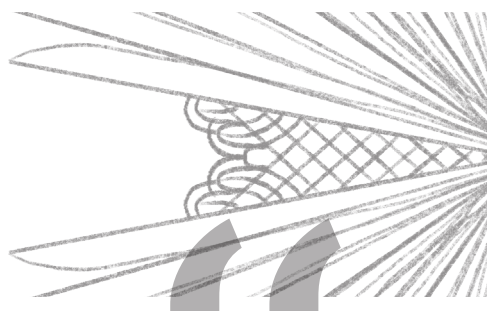
Hilden said he went out as a freshman just because it was sort of expected. After all, Hilden is the third boy from his family to take on track. His oldest sibling, Cody Dahl, was a multiple time state champion hurdler and his next oldest brother, Kristt, was an integral part of the Eagles' track team that captured a share of the Scenic Bluffs Conference title in 2019.

"I feel like now, I've matured into a role of being excited to be here and to compete."

COG IN THE MACHINE

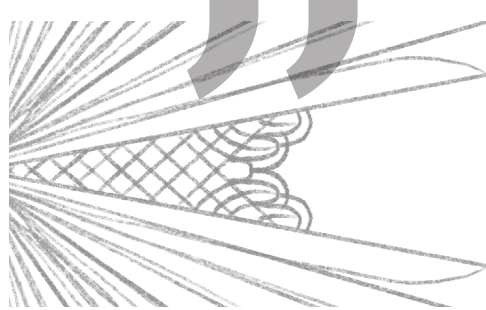
Cashton's jumping Jacks have proven they're a reliable scoring source for an Eagles team that has plenty of options this spring. The team will need more reliable point sources if they hope to knock off defending conference champion, New Lisbon this spring.

The sprint corps are well-stocked with the



I feel like now, I've matured into a role of being excited to be here and to compete.

JACK HILDEN
CASHTON TRACK AND FIELD
HIGH JUMPER



likes of Colin O'Neil and Onesimo Tirado and a number of role players who will fill out competitive relays. There are also several mid-level performers in the field that will produce crucial points. However, the Eagles' throwers are perhaps the strongest in the Scenic Bluffs Conference. Michael Sueppel, Riley Verken and Logan Perry may put a stranglehold on the top spots in both shot put and discus the SBC when the conference meet rolls around.

No matter what role they may play, Hilden understands how important he and high jumping partner Schlesner are to the team's goals.

"Obviously we want to win conference. We didn't quite get there last year," said Hilden. "Scoring high points in the jumping events is really going to help us and hopefully we can compete well in all aspects and see where it can take us from there."

HIGH SCHOOL TRACK AND FIELD

Brookwood boys second at Cashton indoor meet

By ZACH RASTALL

Sports Writer

Late March is the time of year where indoor track and field meets mark the beginning stages of the spring sports season.

Bangor, Brookwood and Cashton all kicked off their track schedules in La Crosse at an event hosted by Cashton.

All three Scenic Bluffs schools were among those competing at the Cashton Invitational held Saturday, March 26 at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse's Mitchell Hall.

The Falcons found the most success with a trio of first-place finishes at the event.

Dan Peterson won the boys' 400-meter run with a time of 55.20 seconds and Cora Brandau took first in the girls' shot put with a winning throw of 29 feet, 0.75 inches.

Peterson was also part of the winning team in the boys' 4x400-meter relay, where he, Marshall Doll, Franklin Wildes and Brady Hansen posted a time of 3 minutes, 53.99 seconds.

Wildes (57.35) was just behind Peterson in second in the 400-meter run. They had a similar showing in the boys' 200-meter dash, where Peterson (24.77) and Wildes (25.14) placed second and third, respectively.

In the girls' 4x400-meter relay, Mackenzie Woods, Lainey Teynor, Katie Gruen and Amelia Muellenberg finished in second with a time of 4 minutes, 36.03 seconds. Bangor's Bliss Knox, Anna Fronk, Marissa Eckland and Molly Bachmann came in fourth in that same race.

In the girls' 4x800-meter relay, Alexis Lacy,

Tyana Kaufmann, Yareni Cruz and Alice Wiedmeyer posted a time of 12 minutes, 54 seconds to place third. Cashton's Julia Boisen, Lily Gronemus, Lana Gretebeck and Katie Gronemus were behind them in fourth.

Brookwood had third-place showings in both the boys' and girls' 1,600-meter runs courtesy of Dylan Powell (4:50.00) and Kimberlee Downing (5:56.27).

The Falcons had a trio of individual fourth-place finishes: Amelia Muellenberg in the girls' 400-meter run, Brady Hansen in the boys' 800-meter run and Lainey Teynor girls' 800-meter run.

CASHTON

Host Cashton had a couple of first-place finishes in individual events on the day: Braylee Hyatt (7.75) in the girls' 55-meter dash and Jack Schlesner (6-2.00) in the boys' high jump.

Hyatt also placed third in the girls' 200-meter dash with a time of 28.67 seconds.

Makayla Gooselaw came in second in the girls' 55-meter hurdles for the Eagles with a time of 10.07 seconds and Jack Hilden (6-0.00) came in third in the boys' high jump.

BANGOR

Bangor's day was headlined by a first-place finish in the girls' 4x200-meter relay, where Megan Marr, Bliss Knox, Joeryn Freit and Katie Larkin posted a winning time of 1 minute, 58.84 seconds.

Freit had third-place finishes in the girls' 55-meter hurdles (10.19) and triple jump (31-8.50). Madisyn Herman was right behind Freit in the 55-meter hurdles in fourth while Gavin Benzing took fourth in the boys' long jump.



Cashton's Jack Schlesner waits for his turn to jump during the 2021 WIAA state track and field meet. Schlesner cleared 5-10 and finished 13th overall. Herald photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.

(SCHLESNER)

cont. from pg 11

event with a height of 5-10.

Schlesner said the coaching provided by first year head coach Beth Lee has been instrumental in his growth in high jump this season.

As a freshman, WIAA qualified for the WIAA state meet where he cleared 5-10 and finished 13th overall in the last meet of the year. Wauzeka-Stauben's Gavin Ralph won the event with a height of 6-03, but had to win on criteria as three others also matched that height. Of the 12 competitors that finished ahead of Schlesner at state, seven graduated last year. That would mean the sophomore standout could be in line for a podium finish if things continue to trend in the right direction.

What may seem like a big 'if' isn't that far from the truth, however, and Schlesner has yet to jump in a true outdoor

environment yet this year either.

JACK AND JACK

Schlesner emerged as one of the area's leading high jumpers last year and his state berth was further evidence of his prowess in the pouncing pit.

However, Schlesner isn't alone in turning heads this year. His vertical vault teammate, Jack Hilden, has made a recovery from a knee injury and has helped to not only bolster the team's point total by ruling the high jump, but has given the sophomore someone to jump with and learn from.

"It feels great to see what he can do and what he can accomplish at such a young age still," said Hilden about his younger counterpart. He went on to acknowledge the state berth Schlesner had last year and said that success is something both can piggy back off of this year as they try to reach their zenith in the event.

(BEIER)

cont. from pg 11

renovations that have been planned for this summer. Is it an issue? I guess it depends on who you are or where you sit on the issue.

I'll preface this by saying this is my opinion; you know, because I just got you to read an April Fool's story.

The renovations at Memorial Park are definitely warranted. In fact, several of the cosmetic changes are at least a decade or two overdue.

I've complained about the lights for years and have basically blackballed SHS football when it comes to covering them at home in normal nighttime game conditions. I don't know of anyone that could photograph in that cave of a space, therefore, it's not worth my time to try to struggle through it when I can visit other places and shoot...with great ease. Tomah's sort of in the same boat. They, too, have one of the poorest lit fields of the 40-50 fields I deal with.

My point of contention, and I understand I'm months behind in making any statement, is that even though these renovations are needed, it shouldn't be done. At least, not at the current site.

I would argue that the renovations proposed would serve a much greater number of people if it were all done at the high school.

Yes, I know I'm breaking away from the tradition of playing football in the park down by the lake, but I feel as though more could be done if the football field were moved to the high school.

The money involved would serve more of the population it was intended for - students of the Sparta school district.

Hear me out with an open mind before you throw stones.

Sparta football should be played at the high school. It makes more sense for visiting teams and fans. It keeps the football team more connected to the school community because it's 50 yards away from the building. It helps create a more central campus for everything.

Turf. Absolutely. That's the right idea in this day and age.

Turf the inside of the track. Play soccer there. Play football on it. Practice on it. However, you get your money's worth if you use it for gym classes. Let the band march on it. Have it available for spring sports practices as the soggy ground dries out. Baseball, softball and track would all benefit. It's an all-season surface that would be used by more than just a sports team.

Lights would go in at the school field, meaning football and soccer would still have home games. That's great.

Add up the number of home games you'd actually use lights for, though. Football may get 5 home games a year and soccer - if you combine boys and girls - would maybe have 15 home dates. That's a total of 20 game day uses. Wait, let's check soccer again. Of those 15 dates, the early games for boys soccer in the fall and the second half of the season for the girls has enough daylight to play at least half a game with natural light, so does it truly warrant playing under the lights? Anyways, you've got 20 home games in a calendar year with 365 days that you're actually using lights.

Let's add another group to the mix - track and field. What could change if the Sparta track had lights? The could host different meets, including a regional or sectional competition. Again, we're meeting the needs for more student athletes this way.

I've heard some complain about parking at the school currently. I'd argue that it's still more convenient than clogging up all the side streets around Memorial Park, or walking a mile from the parking lots in the park for any current football game.

However, here's another solution that could work. The current soccer field could become a parking lot to serve the purposes of the new athletic facility.

The middle tier of land, the space that the current varsity baseball field occupies, could be converted in to green space so football and soccer would have a practice field when they're not using the turf space inside the track. Varsity baseball then moves to Memorial Park to be played

The early-season success has been good to both Hilden and Schlesner. The pair have pushed each other early on this season and have created what some may call a dominating jumping force as they play off of each other's success in the high jump.

Cashton's Jumping Jacks have accrued 34 of the team's 80 total team points this year. The pair scored 18 of the 28 points at UW Platteville and tallied 16 of the team's 42 at UW La Crosse last weekend.

In both meets, Schlesner may have been the final jumper standing, but he had his newfound event teammate and mentor, Hilden, along for the ride the entire time. That's something new, and yet very welcomed for the 2021 state qualifier.

"It makes it feel way more comfortable," said Schlesner. "It's like I'm not out there by myself. I've got a teammate with me. It feels good to have a teammate out there jumping with me."

50 yards from where varsity softball is played to create better synergy between both programs in the spring, again making it easier for both home and away parents who may have an interest (or kid) playing in both sports.

The current land space at the school could be reorganized and used better to help serve the needs of more students within the school. Sure, the community could still use the track for walking/running and maybe it's better if they do it at the school site to keep them connected to the school in some way, shape or form.

Again, with the space in Memorial Park, the school is out of sight, out of mind. There may not be a connection from certain community members to the school that way.

I see too often how tradition tends to blind some communities from doing the right thing. Sure, it's nice to have the football field where it's always been. However, what tradition truly exists there? Sparta football has only made the playoffs eight times in its 125 year history. The program hasn't won a conference title since 1982 when it was in the South Central and before that it won back-to-back titles in 1967 and 68. Maybe that tradition is okay to break.

No, this isn't an indictment of the current Sparta football program or its coaching staff. They're working to change the culture of the program.

However, you can't deny the facts that the program hasn't been a beacon of success. It's had a few recent brushes with greatness, but unfortunately, the team struggles to win.

I know it's too late to change what will happen in Memorial Park. Those changes are needed and I'm curious to see what it's like when it's done. I'm a fan of a high school venue nestled in the middle of a community - that's why I love Whitehall's baseball field, it's in the middle of town. I just can't help but think Sparta missed the boat on serving as many of its students and student-athletes as it could have had everything been done to create a unique, unified complex at the school for absolutely all to enjoy.

THROUGH MY LENS

Return to the Resch, a mix of emotions

By NATE BEIER
Sports Reporter

This coming weekend will always be tied with the COVID-19 outbreak for me.



I, like many, recall hearing about this COVID-19 thing that was happening overseas in the weeks leading to that fateful March weekend in 2020.

However, those problems were overseas and there was no way the government would allow that to spill over and spread onto this continent, let alone this country, right?

Well, that wasn't right. The COVID-19 outbreak spread and caused plenty of chaos.

I was at the WIAA girls state basketball tournament, in the middle of all the chaos and it was the best.

The WIAA limited attendance to the event the morning of the first day of state. Each school was only allowed 80 people to attend, which meant players had to get picky about who got to watch them play.

I had some media colleagues who decided not to go because they didn't think they'd be allowed entry with limited attendance. They would have been fine. Instead, they stayed home and missed out on being at ground zero of one of the biggest sports stories we'll see in this lifetime.

We know how it all played out in the following weeks. The high school girls state tourney was stopped mid-tournament. The boys would never make it that far. Spring sports were cancelled and it took us months to feel like trying sports again.

I was thinking about the opportunities lost because of the premature ending to the girls tournament.

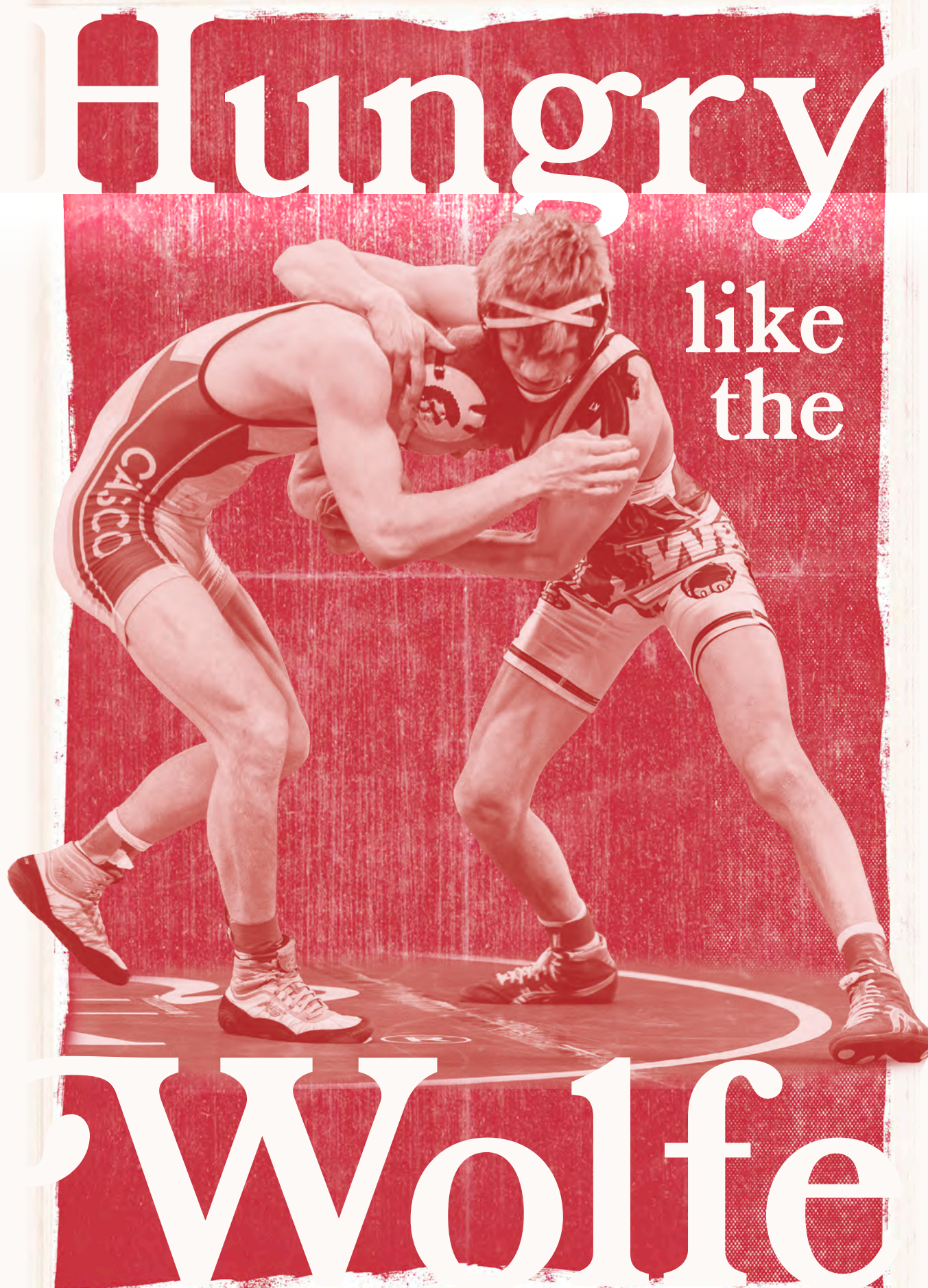
The Coulee Region had perhaps its best representation at the state tourney that year and we didn't get to see how it all played out.

Sure, Arcadia fell in a D3 semifinal, but we were promised third-straight Aquinas/Melrose-Mindoro state title game before the plug was pulled.

Lastly, Bangor didn't get a chance to play on the court, despite qualifying for state. Even though they made it back last year, they played at the La Crosse Center.

For a team like Bangor, which has made four state appearances these last six seasons, they only had 2 chances to play at the true state venue. That's food for thought as we head into this weekend.

WEST SALEM/BANGOR WRESTLING



West Salem/Bangor senior finishes career on wrestling's biggest stage

By ZACH RASTALL
Sports Writer

In the final season of his high school wrestling career, one goal stood above all others for West Salem/Bangor's Evan Wolfe: making a return trip to state.

Wolfe had previously made it to the state tournament as a sophomore back in 2019, where he nabbed a spot in the podium by placing sixth in the Division 2 126-pound bracket. But last winter, a combination of unique factors and happenstance helped deny him a second straight trip to Madison.

As part of temporary COVID rule changes for last season, only the top two wrestlers in each weight class at a sectional advanced to state rather than the usual three. Despite being one of better wrestlers in his weight class in Wisconsin, Wolfe fell short of a state bid by placing third in his sectional.

It just so happened that the eventual Division 2 132-pound state champion (Stanley-Boyd/Owen-Withee's Blaine Brenner) and runner-up (Northwestern's Markus Brown) were both competing in the same sectional as Wolfe.

Despite that setback, Wolfe returned better than ever for the 2021-22 season. After placing second at sectionals in his weight class, the Bangor senior punched his ticket to the Kohl

(WOLFE) cont. pg 8

“Not getting here last year definitely deflated me a little bit, but I was able to get it through my head and bounce back and battle hard this year.”

EVAN WOLFE
WEST SALEM/BANGOR WRESTLING

Herald design by Logan Everson;
photos by Derek Montgomery and Nate Beier.

BANGOR BOYS BASKETBALL



Bangor's Will Reader is ready to face Blair-Taylor and avenge a sectional semifinal loss to the Wildcats in 2020. Herald photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.

RED VS BLUE

Senior leader Reader helps get Bangor boys back to familiar sectional stage to face familiar sectional opponent in Blair-Taylor

By ZACH RASTALL
Sports Writer

The Bangor boys' basketball team is back on a familiar stage, preparing to face a familiar opponent with a familiar name among those leading the way.

The Cardinals are coming off capturing their sixth regional title in the last seven years last weekend, clinching them a spot at sectionals once again. As has become something of a March tradition in western Wisconsin at this point, Bangor will be squaring off against Blair-Taylor in the sectional semifinals.

The top-seeded Cardinals (22-4) will do battle against the second-seeded Wildcats (18-9) in a WIAA Division 5 sectional semifinal matchup Thursday, March 10 at 7 p.m. at Arcadia High School in Arcadia.

Outside of anyone in the Scenic Bluffs, there is no opponent more familiar with Bangor than Blair-Taylor.

These two programs have faced each other in non-conference play during the regular season in each of the last 19 years, with the Wildcats holding an 11-8 edge in those games. They've also met in the playoffs eight times since the start of the century, splitting those matchups with four wins apiece.

Those postseason battles have become more frequent since the back half of the 2010s. Thursday marks their fifth postseason meeting in the last seven years. Bangor beat the Wildcats 87-85 in a 2016 regional final, 88-59 in a 2017 regional semifinal and 68-65 in a 2019 sectional semifinal, where a trio of late Zane Langrehr threes powered the Cardinals to a win.

Blair-Taylor finally got its revenge in the 2020 sectional semifinals, erasing a 14-point deficit with under 10 minutes to play to pull off a 62-61 comeback victory.

That game took place just days before the COVID-19 pandemic brought life in the

(RED) cont. pg 8

FARMERS TOWN MUTUAL INSURANCE
FARM HOME LIABILITY
LOCAL-INDEPENDENT-TRUSTED

FARMERS TOWN MUTUAL INSURANCE
Serving Monroe, Jackson, Vernon & LaCrosse Counties
www.FARMERSTOWNMUTUAL.com

Darlene Wedemeier
(608)427-6650

Steve Herrman
(608)633-2697

Marlus Schmitz
(608)343-7760

VIROQUA GYMNASTICS

Cashton duo ends season with podium visits



By NATE BEIER
Sports Writer

Two members of the Viroqua gymnastics team finished their respective seasons last week at the WIAA Division 2 state gymnastics meet in Wisconsin Rapids.

Sophomore Morgan Siekert and freshman Isabell Korn make up the Cashton contingent of the Viroqua gymnastics co-op and both finished with a trip to the podium in last week's state meet.

Siekert finished fifth on vault with a score of 9.133. The sophomore finished 11th overall in the all-around with a score of 35.649. Siekert scored an 8.833 on floor and was part of a three-way tie for 14th place. On beam, Siekert scored a 9.1 for 12th place and was 15th overall on bars with an 8.583.

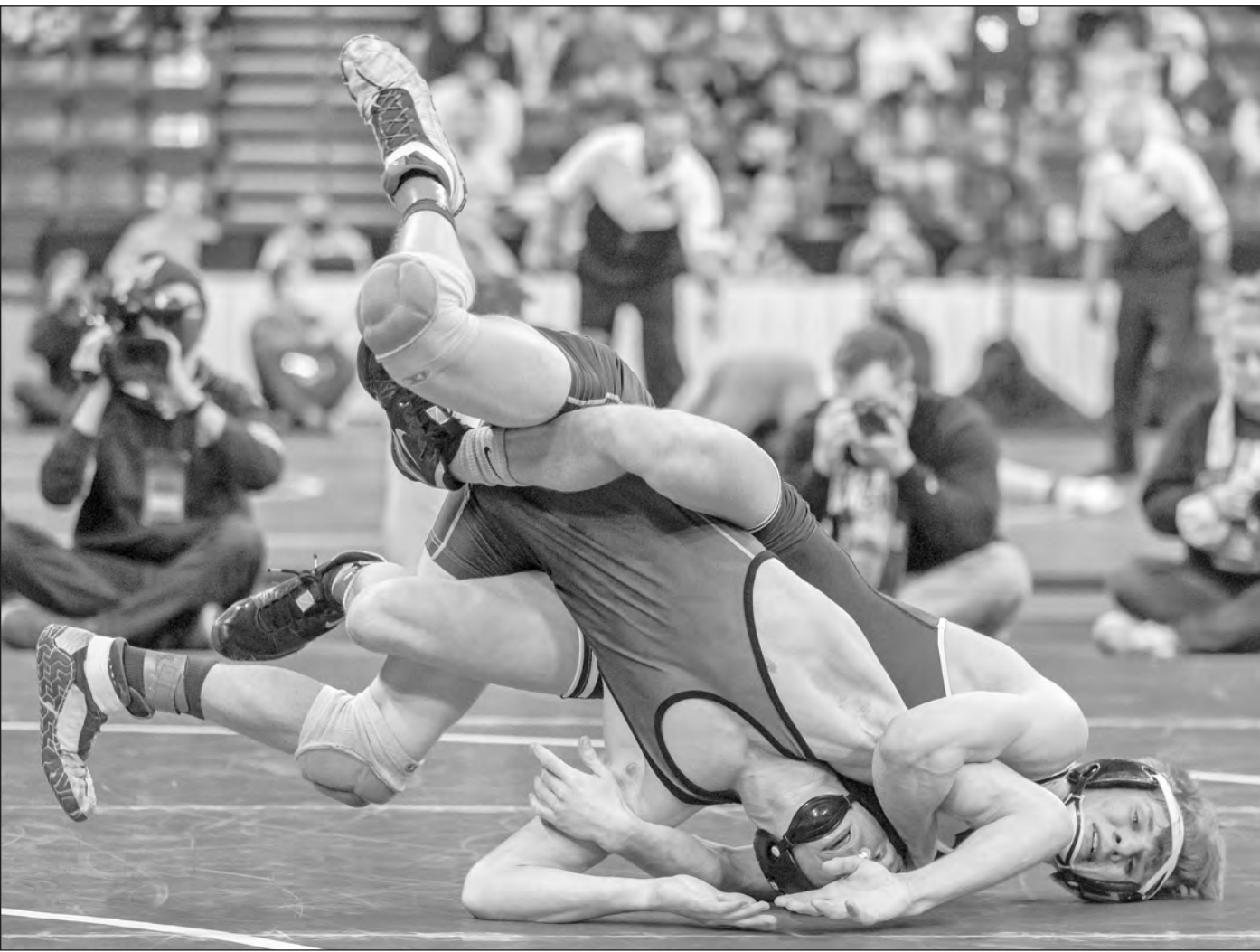
Korn, who was named this year's Coulee Conference gymnast of the year, finished fourth on the bars with a score of 8.983.

The freshman tallied an all-around score of 35.05 for 16th place. Korn narrowly missed the podium in the balance beam after scoring a 9.2 for eighth place and was 17th on floor with an 8.817.

Korn scored an 8.05 on vault, which only counted in her all-around score as she did not qualify for state in that individual event.

TOP Cashton's Isabell Korn releases from the high bar to the lower one during her uneven bars routine. Korn finished fourth in the event with an 8.983.

BOTTOM Cashton's Morgan Siekert performs the splits on the beam. Siekert made the podium in vault with a fifth place finish and score of 9.133. Herald photos by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.



West Salem/Bangor's Evan Wolfe works for nearfall points against Luck co-op's Taedon Nichols in the Division 2 state semifinal match February 25. Wolfe won 1-0 to advance to the state title bout the next night.

Herald photo by Derek Montgomery.

(WOLFE)

cont. from pg 7

Kohl Center and earned a bye into the quarterfinals in the Division 2 138-pound bracket.

"We all knew Evan was one of the best in the state last year. He just ran into a tough sectional. He had the champ and the runner-up both in his section," said West Salem/Bangor head coach Josh Brewer. "It's just rewarding because now he gets to be down here again. He learned from tight matches last year."

Those experiences in tight matches seemed to serve him well, as Wolfe placed second in his weight class at the 2022 WIAA Boys' State Individual Wrestling Tournament. The event was held from Thursday, February 24 to Saturday, February 26 at the Kohl Center in Madison.

"It definitely pushed me to get here. Obviously this is my last year and last run at it all," Wolfe said of last season's sectional disappointment. "Not getting here last year definitely deflated me a little bit, but I was able to get it through my head and bounce back and battle hard this year."

Wolfe opened his second and final state appearance by defeating Prairie du Chien sophomore Drew Hird via a 6-1 decision in Friday morning's quarterfinals. Later that evening, Wolfe eked out a narrow victory via a 1-0 decision in his semifinal match against Webster/Siren/Frederic/Luck/Grantsburg senior Taedon Nichols to book his spot in the championship match.

Wolfe would come up short of an individual state title, however, as he fell

via a 6-3 decision to Luxemburg-Casco sophomore Max Ronsman in Saturday evening's championship.

Though he fell just shy of the ultimate prize, Wolfe still put a fine bow on his decorated wrestling career that's seen him not only garner individual accolades, but also fuel team success in a leadership role.

"His growth as a wrestler — and I tell people this all the time — it's not as impressive as his growth as a man," Brewer said. "He led our team to back-to-back conference titles, a regional title

via a 6-3 decision to Luxemburg-Casco sophomore Max Ronsman in Saturday evening's championship.

via a 6-3 decision to Luxemburg-Casco sophomore Max Ronsman in Saturday evening's championship. Even beyond the actual wrestling itself, Wolfe is eternally grateful for the sport and the positive influence it has had on him personally to make a major impact beyond the mat.

"I used to get in trouble a lot in school and wrestling, I feel, has helped me get to where I am," Wolfe said. "I've matured a lot. I thank wrestling for that because I think that's a big part of who I am today and created who I am."



West Salem/Bangor head coach Josh Brewer talks with Evan Wolfe during a pause on the mat during the WIAA state tournament. Herald photo by Derek Montgomery.



Bangor's Will Reader hauls in a rebound during the Cardinals' last home game with Wonewoc-Center in mid-February. Herald photo by Nate Beier.

(RED)

cont. from pg 7

United States to a screeching halt. The pandemic continued to loom large over the 2020-21 season even once basketball resumed.

Due to fewer teams participating in last year's postseason, Bangor got bumped up to Division 4 and ended up losing 67-61 in the regional finals to Onalaska Luther, who wound up making it to state.

With a return to Division 5 this postseason, the Cardinals are back in sectionals to clash with Blair-Taylor yet again.

This is Bangor's third sectional appearance in four years under head coach Jacob Pederson. Each time, the Cardinals have been greeted in the sectional semifinals by the Wildcats and their long-time head coach Randy Storlie, a 2017 inductee into the Wisconsin Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame. Storlie also recorded his 600th win earlier this season, joining the ranks of a very elite class of coaches to do so.

Back on January 9 in Bangor, the Cardinals scored a comprehensive 69-45 victory over the Wildcats. That loss was part of a 5-5 start for an inexperienced Blair-Taylor squad, but they have since won 13 of their last 17.

Coincidentally, the winner of the last two sectional semifinal meetings between these two was the team that lost the regular-season matchup that season.

"It's definitely some different faces this year, but Coach Storlie has them playing really well," Pederson said. "They may not have had a ton of experience before the season started with varsity minutes, besides maybe (senior forward Cain) Fremstad, but I think they've really matured as the season's gone on here."

Since that 2020 playoff meeting, there has naturally been a significant level of roster turnover. Every Blair-Taylor player who scored in that game has since graduated. However, a few Bangor players who were in the rotation then are still with the program now, including senior guard Will Reader.

READER'S RESOLVE

As a sophomore two years ago, Reader was a spark plug for the Cardinals in that matchup with the Wildcats, scoring 11 points on a perfect 5-of-5 shooting from the field.

"I remember it being the beginning of all the COVID stuff starting," Reader said. "We didn't have a full gym because a limited number of people were allowed to come. I remember it still being a loud atmosphere, but our team didn't quite bring it like we usually do."

"I think being in that game is going to help a lot. Seeing what they've done the last couple of years and playing against them."

As the veteran leadership of the program's previous core departed, Reader has taken on an increased role both on the court and more generally as a leader on the team.

"Will is such a great kid. He hustles, a lot of energy, a lot of hustle, a lot of knowledge, loves the game of basketball," Pederson said. "Just a great teammate. The kids all love being around him. Such a

RED VS BLUE

A look at the postseason history between Bangor and Blair-Taylor since the turn of the century



Bangor's Connor Kaiser darts around Blair-Taylor's Hank Kujak during the 2011 sectional semifinal meeting in Mauston. Herald photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.

2020	D5 Sectional Semifinal	Blair-Taylor 62 Bangor 61
2019	D5 Sectional Semifinal	Bangor 68 Blair-Taylor 65
2017	D5 Regional Semifinal	Bangor 88 Blair-Taylor 59
2016	D5 Regional Semifinal	Bangor 87 Blair-Taylor 85
2011	D4 Sectional Semifinal	Blair-Taylor 59 Bangor 48
2005	D4 Regional Semifinal	Blair-Taylor 46 Bangor 29
2003	D4 Sectional Semifinal	Blair-Taylor 73 Bangor 63
2001	D4 Regional Quarterfinal	Bangor 74 Blair-Taylor 61

positive guy. "The guys have really fed off him and he's really grown up a lot in the four years I've had to coach him."

For Reader and the select few who were part of the program then, that agonizing playoff loss to the Wildcats two years ago is a memory that hasn't faded. As Reader and these seniors write the final chapters of their high school basketball careers, they're hopeful they can avenge that defeat as they continue their pursuit of a return to the state tournament for the first time since 2019.

"It makes me very hungry," Reader said of the 2020 sectional loss. "My freshman year too, playing them at sectionals and we got the win against them that time. It makes me hungry to want to get out there and take it from them again."

"I've always had a different type of energy that comes out when we play Blair-Taylor. Hopefully I can tap into that on Thursday too."

WIAA STATE TRACK AND FIELD
D3 AREA QUALIFIERS



Sam Crenshaw, **Bangor**

BANGOR

GIRLS

Track.....

100M: Megan Marr

BOYS

Relays.....

3200M Relay: Gavin Benzing, Traevon Delaney, Isaiah Murphy, Nolan Langrehr

Field.....

Pole Vault: Sam Crenshaw*



Margarita Silva, **Brookwood**

BROOKWOOD

GIRLS

Track.....

100M Hurdles: Mckenzie Woods

Relays.....

3200M Relay: Lainey Teynor, Amelia Muellenberg, Margarita Silva, Kimberlee Downing

BOYS

Track.....

200M: Dan Peterson

400M: Dan Peterson

Relays.....

1600M: Marshall Doll, Josh Zietlow, Wyatt Maurhoff, Dan Peterson

3200M Relay: Wyatt Maurhoff, Dylan Powell, Owen Radloff, Marshall Doll



Braylee Hyatt, **Cashton**

CASHTON

GIRLS

Track.....

100M: Braylee Hyatt

200M: Braylee Hyatt

Field.....

Long Jump: Braylee Hyatt

BOYS

Relays.....

400M: Colin O'Neil, Jake Wall, Ethan Klinkner, Onesimo Triado

1600M: Onesimo Triado, Brady Hemmersbach, Brett Hemmersbach, Michael Sueppel*

Field.....

High Jump: Jack Schlesner*

D1 AREA QUALIFIERS

SPARTA

GIRLS

Wheelchair.....

100M: Araina Roderick

400M: Araina Roderick

Shot Put: Araina Roderick

TOMAH

BOYS

Track.....

100M: Elijah Brown*

200M: Elijah Brown

WIAA TRACK AND FIELD

ELI BROWN JUST MAY BE...

THE FASTEST MAN

IN THE 608



Disappointing freshman campaign leads to an offseason of study and a sophomore season of highs

By ZACH RASTALL
Sports Writer

Elijah Brown wasn't satisfied with his freshman season of track and field.

As a member of the Tomah track team, Brown spent his time as a sprinter while also regularly competing in the long jump and triple jump. But his overall performance, mainly when it came to sprinting, didn't sit right with him.

So, Brown decided to spend the offseason doing something about it.

"Last year I wasn't very good at all. It kind of frustrated me, so I watched a lot of videos on how to get faster," Brown said. "I did a lot of stuff in the offseason and, once I got on the track this year, it was a lot different."

Those videos included a variety of runners, but he found particular value in watching Baily Hyatt, his former teammate and Tomah's top sprinter who graduated last spring.

"I had videos of us running together. I'd watch his form and I would go outside and run and try to make mine look like his," Brown said of Hyatt. "I would also watch different runners and put the video in slow motion, look where their foot was hitting the ground, how high they'd bring it up — stuff like that. I'd try to replicate it on the street."

That hard work in the offseason has helped him qualify for state as a sophomore — a path that began

(BROWN) cont. pg 11

Tomah's Eli Brown will make his state debut Friday at the WIAA state track and field championships. Brown qualified in both the 100 and 200. The sophomore enters on a hot streak in the 100 after winning MVC, regional and sectional races. Herald photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media

BANGOR BASEBALL



Bangor's Mathieu Oesterle draws contact with a pitch during Wednesday's regional final at De Soto. Herald photo by Nate Beier/

Cardinals win third-straight regional title

By ZACH RASTALL
Sports Writer

For a second straight year, the Bangor baseball team will find itself competing at sectionals. A sensational all-round performance courtesy of Ashton Michek is a massive reason why.

Michek and No. 2 seed Bangor (19-5) rose to the occasion to take down No. 1 seed De Soto (14-8) in shutout fashion. The Cardinals blanked the Pirates 6-0 in their WIAA Division 4 regional final matchup Wednesday, June 1 in De Soto.

Bangor slowly built up its lead by scoring exactly one run in four straight innings: Eli Tucker scoring on an error in the top of the second, Samuel Cropp scoring on a fielder's choice in the third, Will Reader scoring on a Bryce Peterson sacrifice fly in the fourth and Mathieu Oesterle driving in Ashton Michek with an RBI single in the fifth.

The Cardinals tacked on

(BANGOR) cont. pg 11

TOMAH BASEBALL

Brookman's efforts not enough to help Tomah advance

By MAURICE SAVAGE
Sports Writer

The Tomah baseball team lost a low-scoring game to Middleton behind a strong fourth inning where the Cardinals scored a trio of runs and went on to hold defensively to notch a 3-1 victory in the opening round of WIAA regional action on Tuesday, May 31.

The Timberwolves' only score came in the fifth inning. Andrew Brookman singled on a ground ball to the center field. Brookman was able to advance to second on the throw, this allowed Bryant Thornton to score.

Brookman finished the game with the most hits. He finished the game with three hits and one RBI. Shane Prielipp finished with two hits. Thornton finished the night with one hit.

Brookman was on the mound for six innings. He only yielded four hits and three runs on the night. He was able to record two strikeouts.

FARMERS TOWN MUTUAL INSURANCE
FARM HOME LIABILITY
LOCAL-INDEPENDENT-TRUSTED

FARMERS TOWN MUTUAL INSURANCE

Serving Monroe, Jackson, Vernon & LaCrosse Counties

www.FARMERSTOWNMUTUAL.com

Darlene Wedemeier
(608)427-6650

Steve Herrman
(608)633-2697

Marlus Schmitz
(608)343-7760

WIAA SOCCER



Sparta's Kayla Fabry charges into the midfield to break up a pass by **Onalaska's Lydia Hartman** during Tuesday's regional semifinal match. **Herald photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.**

Spartans close gap, but succumb to Onalaska in regional semifinal

By **NICK LEONARDELLI**
Sports Writer

The first round of regionals in the 2022 Girls soccer state tournament began this past Tuesday. The Lady Spartans faced a familiar foe in Onalaska with the hopes of keeping their season alive.

The last time the two teams met was back in late April, with Onalaska's routing Sparta 9-1 at home. Sparta was looking to take the crown in the matchup number two but, Onalaska wasn't ready to go home just yet. The Hilltoppers moved on to round two of regionals after a 6-2 victory over Sparta.

Onalaska's Kiya Bronson scored netted four of the six goals scored by Onalaska. Malory Russ, who was Sparta's leading goal scorer, scored the two goals for her squad.

Head coach Amy Russ said, "It is always sad when a season comes to an end" but, she also mentioned that losing first round of the regionals has become the "norm" for Sparta girls soccer as the team hasn't won a first round regional game since 2016 and haven't played in a sectional since the 2011 season.

Russ also highlighted the effort the girls gave in their final game. "They worked hard from start to finish, celebrated a great season with pictures after the game and enjoyed a fun bus ride home. Their spirits were up as

they should have been!"

Russ also looked back at the whole season and saw it as a success. The team faced every conference opponent twice, which she loved. Russ felt like in every second game, the team improved in some way. For example, Sparta tied Aquinas in game one and handily beat them 9-5 second time around. Either in a losing or winning effort, Russ say those improvements as "victories and showed growth in our team."

The girls ended the season with a 8-11-2 record. An improvement from last season where the team only went 3-14-0.

Central 1 Tomah 0

Tomah's season came to a close Tuesday night as La Crosse Central held them scoreless in a 1-0 shutout.

No information was reported about the game.

Tomah was outscored 4-0 by Central during their regular season meeting.

AROUND THE MVC

Fourth seeded Holmen was upended by #5 New Richmond.

Prairie du Chien won its first ever playoff game at the expense of La Crosse Logan with a 3-0 shutout.

In Division 4, Aquinas will host the Madison Country Day co-op tonight, June 2 at 5.

In D3, MVC champ West Salem hosts Edgerton tonight at 6 p.m.

WIAA GOLF

Tomah finishes seventh, SHS's Connelly, Lietzau tie for 28th

By **NATE BEIER**
Sports Editor

The Tomah boys golf team ended its season Wednesday at the Division 1 sectional held at the La Crosse Country Club.

Tomah's Jake Berry, Trey Torkelson and Ty Schanhofer each scored a 92 and tied for 34th overall. There was a 34th overall tie for 34th.

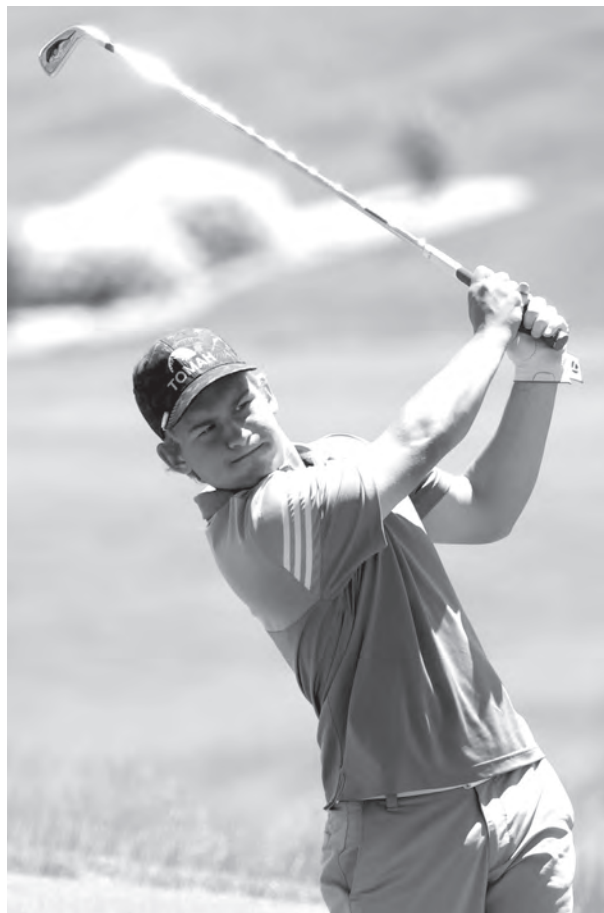
Owen Walker shot a 96 for 43rd place and Carson Brieske finished in a three-way tie for 45th with a 99.

Sparta's Brock Connelly and Ty Lietzau finished each other's scored as each finished a 90 in a four-way tie for 28th.

Middleton won the sectional with a score of 316 and Madison Memorial was second with a 317. Holmen led area teams with a fourth place finish and score of 328. Onalaska was sixth with a 342 and Tomah scored a 372.

Memorial's Charlie Erlandson defeated Verona's Zack Zimmerman 3-4 in a one hole playoff for medalist honors. The pair finished the 18 hole round with a score of 73.

Holmen's Brennan Dirks earned an individual state berth after finishing third overall with a score of 75.



Tomah's Jake Berry was part of a seven-way tie for 34th place in Wednesday's sectional in La Crosse. **Herald photo by Nate Beier.**

Riverdale (16-12) later in the day at 3:45 p.m. for a spot at the state tournament.

Bangor clobbers North Crawford in regional semifinals

Though the game was scoreless through three innings, No. 2 seed Bangor poured on the runs late to handily beat No. 3 seed North Crawford (5-15) 9-1 in their WIAA Division 4 regional semifinal matchup Tuesday, May 31 in Bangor.

The Cardinals scored two runs in the bottom of the fourth, erupted for a five-run rally in the fifth and tacked on two more runs in the bottom of the sixth after the Trojans scored a run in the top half of the inning.

Samuel Cropp finished the game 3 for 4 with a triple, an RBI and two runs scored, while Chase Horstman, Will Reader and Dawson Daines each had two hits apiece.

On the mound, Horstman threw a complete game, allowing just one run on two hits and two walks while striking out six.



Tomah's Eli Brown will run in the 100 and 200 meter dashes during the Division 1 state track and field meet Friday morning on the campus of UW La Crosse. Brown qualified in both events last week, winning the 100 meter sectional title and finishing second in the 200. **Herald photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.**

(BROWN)

cont. from pg 9

with strong performances right from the start this spring.

His level of dedication certainly wasn't lost on his coaches.

"We can say go on Hudl, watch film, but really it's few kids who will actually do it," said Tomah head boys' track and field coach Jon Heesch. "For him to do it on his own, unprovoked really — it just shows how serious he is at his craft and how good he wants to be."

Collin Eswein, a 2015 graduate of Tomah High School and son of former Tomah head track coach Eric Eswein, came aboard as an assistant coach at his alma mater this year and is the team's lead sprinters coach.

Eswein took on the role after Jared Sasada — who previously coached 2020 Olympic 200-meter silver medalist Kenny Bednarek during his high school days at Rice Lake — was unable to coach for the Timberwolves this spring.

While he says that Brown tends to be a reserved, levelheaded kid, Eswein also notes that he is passionate about constantly improving and will ask plenty of questions in that pursuit.

"He's always very curious of how he can get better. I see that, not just in track, but in lifting — I see he's in the weight room and wants to know why he's doing a certain lift," Eswein said. "I know he's big into football as well and always wanting to improve. When you have that drive to improve, you look for any way."

Brown's state potential became evident throughout the season and even more so after he placed first in the 100-meter dash and second in the 200-meter dash at the tough Mississippi Valley Conference meet.

He repeated that performance at the Division 1 Sauk Prairie regional to put him on the cusp of qualifying for state in both events at the Baraboo sectional meet. For as even keeled as he may usually be, Brown admitted his nerves were high going into Baraboo until he was lined up and ready for his first race.

"I was nervous throughout the entire bus ride and all that, but once I got into my block and the starter told us to get set, I was just flowing with

confidence pretty randomly," Brown said. "I just knew that it was going to be alright. I was going to make it."

Brown won the 100-meter dash and rode that wave of confidence to another second-place finish in the 200-meter dash to punch his ticket to state in both events.

The Baraboo sectional did not use one of the two main timing systems typically used at Wisconsin high school track meets — AccuRace Timing and PrimeTime Timing — and it likely led to some wonky results in the boys' 100-meter dash, where every competitor easily outran their seeding times and set personal bests.

Though even if the times from that sectional race — and thus the state seeded heat sheets — are a bit off, it doesn't change the fact that Brown won a sectional title.

He will move on to compete at the 2022 WIAA State Track & Field Championships, which are set to take place Friday, June 3 and Saturday, June 4 on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

In both of his state events, he will be one of 24 Division 1 competitors split amongst three heats in Friday's prelims. Ten individuals from those prelims in each event will advance on to Saturday's finals, and Brown's coaches are hopeful that he can be around for the weekend.

Eswein is plenty familiar with big stages from his time with the Tomah and the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire track teams. When it comes to advice for Brown handling the environment that comes with the substantial crowd at La Crosse's Veterans Memorial Stadium, Eswein will harken back to advice his dad gave him before his first state track meet.

"When you get to state, you gotta take in the moment," Eswein said. "You need to let yourself be nervous and then, an hour and a half before the race starts, it's time to lock in and you're worried about what you need to do and how you can run your race."

For his part, Brown wants to do his best to keep his expectations in check going in and enjoy the experience to cap off his sophomore season. Of course, he'll want to give it his all, but he also understands this is just another step in that perpetual quest for improvement.

"I don't want to say I'm going to do really well or say I'm going to do really bad. I'm just going to go there and whatever happens, happens," Brown said. "Even if I do bad, I'm still happy to be there for the experience for next year and the year after that."



WHERE HE SITS

Top seed, but...

Tomah's Brown enters the WIAA state meet with the best time in the 100 meter dash after posting what appeared to be a time of 10.68 at sectionals, but the timing system used by Baraboo has led to some incorrect times. Brown posted an 11.28 at regionals and won the MVC in the 100 with an 11.53.

D1

There are 10 sprinters that have times in the sub-eleven second range. Three of those are from the Baraboo sectional. Brown's estimated finish of 11.2 seconds at the sectional puts him on the edge of qualifying for Saturday's final in the 100

LOCALLY

Here's how Brown stacked up against other area 100 meter conference champions

Ridge and Valley Conference

Stephan Munson (North Crawford) 11.14

Scenic Bluffs Conference

Tristan Miller (New Lisbon) 11.25

Coulee Conference

Ryan Sokkup (Arcadia) 11.26

Mississippi Valley Conference

Elijah Brown (Tomah) 11.53

Dairyland Conference

Ben Dickinsen (Augusta) 12.08