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River Falls junior Jenna Lawrence battles with Menasha senior Brianna Derouin in the first round of the 107-pound consolation bracket at the state championships in Madison on Saturday, Feb. 25. With her appearance in Madison, Lawrence became the first girl in River Falls history to qualify for state. Photo courtesy of GX3 Media



Sophomore Lincoln McCarty of the River Falls High School wrestling team pins Waukesha South senior CJ Johnson in the first round of the 285-pound Division 1 consolation bracket at the state tournament. Photo courtesy of GX3 Media

RF sees podium finish, history made at state wrestling

By Reagan Hoverman

Four student-athletes from the River Falls High School wrestling team had an emotional 72 hours at the WIAA State Individual Wrestling Tournament in Madison.

Whether it was senior Travis Moelter overcoming adversity to secure a third-place finish in the 126-pound Division 1 bracket or junior Jenna Lawrence becoming the first female in River Falls history to qualify for and compete in the state tournament, special moments happened at the Kohl Center.

By winning the 107-pound Division 1 sectional championship in Eau Claire two weeks ago, Lawrence punched her ticket to the state

tournament in Madison last weekend. Lawrence advanced out of the first round at state with a first-period pinfall victory over Grafton freshman Ellie Federl.

Although Lawrence lost in the quarterfinals and then again in the first round of the consolation bracket, her efforts throughout the 2022-23 season made her a trailblazer in the Wildcats' wrestling program. River Falls head coach Kevin Black spoke about the history she made in her debut match at the Kohl Center on Thursday, Feb. 23.

"She will always be the first girls qualifier in school history," Black said. "She's still relatively new to wrestling. This was a big event with a lot of big things surrounding

wrestling. She had a great experience and also gained valuable insight into how much she needs to improve in the offseason."

While Lawrence was making history, River Falls' three boys who qualified were getting ready to make a run through their respective brackets. The aforementioned Moelter was the lone Wildcat who made the podium, as he finished third in the 126-pound bracket.

Moelter's state tournament began with a first-period pinfall victory over Mukwonago sophomore Adam Whittier. Moelter ran into the eventual state runner-up in the quarterfinals, Neenah sophomore Jacob Herb, who bested the River Falls senior in an 8-5 decision. Coach Black spoke about Moelter's

heartbreaking defeat against Herb.

"That was a difficult loss for Travis," Black said. "We had a game plan in place and worked on things leading up to the tournament for that matchup. It just wasn't his time, which was hard for him to accept. However, we had a really important conversation that night about value, purpose, and significance and he came back on Friday and Saturday and wrestled the best he's ever wrestled in his life."

Throughout the next two days, Moelter won three consecutive matches in the consolation bracket including a tight 1-0 decision

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Ellsworth senior Louis Jahnke works for position against Freedom senior Jack Van Rossum during the 170-pound quarterfinal match at the state wrestling tournament in Madison. Jahnke defeated Rossum in a 7-6 decision en route to his fourth-place finish. Photo courtesy of GX3 Media



Ellsworth senior Anthony Madsen squares off against Amery junior Wyatt Ingham. While Madsen battled valiantly, Ingham defeated Madsen 7-0 and went on to win the state title. Madsen worked through the consolation bracket and earned a fifth-place finish. Photo courtesy of GX3 Media

Three wrestlers etch names into Panthers history

By Reagan Hoverman

All three of Ellsworth's qualifiers for the 2023 WIAA State Individual Wrestling Tournament in Madison earned a top-six spot on the podium, which meant they will have their names etched into Panthers history upon their return to Ellsworth.

The Ellsworth High School wrestling team has a longstanding tradition of putting the names of every state place winner on the wrestling wall forever. It gives current wrestlers and younger up-and-coming hopefuls something to strive for that will leave a permanent legacy in a historic program.

Ellsworth seniors Louis Jahnke, Anthony Madsen and junior William Penn will have

their names added to the wall in keeping with tradition, as they all finished top six individually at the state championships in Madison on Saturday, Feb. 25.

Penn and Jahnke both finished fourth at 126 and 170 pounds respectively, while Madsen took home fifth place in the 182-pound bracket at the Kohl Center. Ellsworth head coach Mark Matzek spoke about their performance and the incentive of being a part of Panthers' history.

"We had a very good showing at the state tournament," Matzek said. "Rarely does a team bring three to state and get all of them to place. At the end of our workout

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'Cardinal killer' Saints defeat Prescott in D3 regional title game

By Reagan Hoverman

For the second time in as many years, the Saint Croix Falls Saints have knocked Prescott's girls' basketball team out of the playoffs.

Long after a majority of the crowd had left Prescott's gym following the Cardinals' 56-48 defeat against Saint Croix Falls in the Division 3 regional championship game, first-year head coach Owen Hamilton emerged from the locker room and fought back tears while he spoke about how painful it is to see the seniors have their season end that way.

"You've got a group like those seniors that deserve everything, they deserve the world, man," Hamilton said. "To have it end like that and not really get the awards and plaques, to not get so much that they deserve, it hurts. It just hurts that we couldn't get it done for them and it's going to hurt for a long time."

After Prescott throttled Bloomer 72-44 in the regional semifinal on Friday, Feb. 24, the Cardinals advanced to a home regional championship game the following night. The Cardinals knew they would face Saint Croix Falls, a team that has become Prescott's biggest non-conference rival.

Their strife dates back to last year's sectional semifinal game in Baldwin when Saint Croix Falls defeated Prescott en route to their first state tournament appearance in program history. Additionally, the Saints knocked off Prescott earlier this year with a buzzer-beating layup in a non-conference matchup that further stoked the fire of their rivalry.

Saturday night's regional championship game left nothing to be desired in terms of pure basketball compe-



Prescott senior Izzy Matzek buries a corner three-pointer during the second half of the regional championship game at home against Saint Croix Falls on Saturday, Feb. 25. Matzek finished with a team-high 15 points in the final game of her high school career. Photo by Reagan Hoverman

tion. Both teams played tough, physical defense and regularly dove to the floor while chasing loose balls in the hopes of creating an extra possession for their team.

Prescott and Saint Croix Falls traded buckets throughout the first half and ultimately played to a 27-27 draw going into the break. Senior guard Izzy Matzek led the Cardinals at the half with 12 points – all via three-pointers – while SCF senior guard Brianna McCurdy paced the Saints with a dozen of her own.

While Matzek and McCurdy led their respective squads offensively, the first 18 minutes was a hard-fought, grind-it-out defen-

sive game with incredibly limited scoring runs. Coach Hamilton spoke about both programs putting their defensive prowess on full display.

"We both put so much emphasis on defense, so you just kind of think of it like a chess game," Hamilton said. "We know where they struggle and they know where we struggle, and we both took advantage of it. I'll tip my cap to their coaching staff because they're amazing. It was a real chess match to-night that just didn't go the way we wanted."

Prescott navigated its chess match with Saint Croix Falls no better than the first

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SHOTS from the Hip

BY CRIFE OLSON

Brava to Prescott girls basketball seniors Izzy Matzek, Katrina Budworth, and Maddie Rundquist. The senior trio has been part of three consecutive conference championships and finished with an impressive three-year Middle Border league record of 36-5.

Barring an upset, the Somerset Spartans are the odds-on favorite to face Prescott this Friday in the regional semi-final. Head Coach Mark Wink and his club average just under 70 points a game, second only to Prescott in Middle Border Conference play; four of the five Somerset Spartans are underclassmen. During the regular season Prescott eased by Somerset in game one by a score of 88-68. Game two was a much closer contest with the Cardinals winning by a score of 78-72. In that game, the Spartans led 64-59 with about 10 minutes remaining in the second half.

The Michigan Tech Huskies closed out their regular season with an 80-68 victory over Northern Michigan. Sophomore guard Isabella Lenz scored 19 points to lead the Huskies to victory in the regular season finale. Michigan Tech ends the season with an overall record of 23-5 and will host Wayne State this Wednesday in the opening round of the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference Tournament. The winner of the tournament will receive an automatic bid to the NCAA Division 2 tournament. Lenz is a 2021 Prescott alumnus and leads the Huskies in scoring this season averaging 14.1 points per game. Lenz also leads Michigan Tech in assists and is second on the team in steals.

Prescott alumnus Haylee Yaeger scored 11 points and grabbed 11 rebounds, but it wasn't enough as the UW-Stout Blue Devils fell to UW-Eau Claire in the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Conference Tournament last week. The Conference Co-Champion Blue Devils now must hope for an at-large bid in the fast-approaching NCAA Division III National Tournament. Pairings will be announced early this week.

The Prairie Farm girls basketball team won the regional championship on Saturday and will enter this Thursday's sectional semi-final as the #2 ranked team in Division 5 boasting an overall record of 26-0. The Panthers have three players who have scored 1,000 career points - Marnie Kahl, Sydney Junkans, and Avery Hansen. Prairie Farm will play private school Chippewa Falls McDonnell, the school that has eliminated the tiny public school in the sectionals in each of the last three seasons.

The Technical Foul. It remains the most embarrassing infraction a high school coach can receive during a game. For some reason, it remains entrenched in the minds of some basketball fans that technical fouls "fire up the team." How dumb. Let's try this scenario. Team A is down 60-55 to Team B with six minutes left in the game. Team A coach begins to rant and rave at an official for a per-

ceived no call. A technical foul is called on the coach for Team A. Team B player makes both free throws. Team B gets the ball at mid court and a player from Team B hits a three pointer. Team A rushes down court, misses a shot, Team B player gets the defensive rebound and is fouled. Now Team B goes to the line shooting the double bonus because of the technical on the Team A coach. Player from Team B makes both free throws. Score is now 67-55 with 5:30 left in the game. Way to fire up your team coach.

From the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources: The DNR encourages the public to provide input on the proposed Wolf Management Plan before the public review and comment period comes to an end on Feb. 28. The proposed plan was developed in consideration of many factors, including public input, consultations with Wisconsin's tribal nations, scientific literature reviews, a study on current public attitudes towards wolves and potential outcomes of various management decisions. The draft plan aims to effectively balance the tradeoffs between three main objectives: Ensuring a healthy and sustainable wolf population to fulfill its ecological role, addressing and reducing wolf-related conflicts, providing multiple benefits associated with the wolf population, including hunting, trapping and sightseeing.

University of St. Mary's senior infielder MacKenzie Carey and her Cardinal teammates are in Winter Haven, Fla. this week for eight games. The Minnesota Interscholastic Athletic Conference School enters the Sunshine State with a record of 3-1 on the season. And speaking of sunshine, Peter Brookshaw and the North Dakota Bison are in San Diego this week playing four games in the Tony Gwynn Classic.

Headshaker of the Week. At the recent Wisconsin Baseball Coaches Association State Clinic in Madison, dozens of coaches around the state expressed concerns about the growing problems regarding baseball at the youth level. Dwindling participation was identified as the primary problem in many Wisconsin communities. Many coaches expressed concerns about youngsters Little Leagues (ages 9-12) opting to leave their hometown and play in other communities because parents believe their hometown programs are not "competitive" or "advanced" enough for their son. One coach called it the "playground version of open enrollment at the high school level." Like so many things that have changed when it comes to athletics, the nostalgia days of communities having Little League programs made up of five, six, or seven different teams are sadly disappearing. The days of in-house Little League games between the Brewers and the Twins, the Pirates and the Yankees, and the Mets and the White Sox are vanishing. And folks, it's a headshaker.



OUTDOOR Tales and Trails

BY DAVE BECK



Hunting channels and game cameras are showing signs that spring turkey hunting is not far away. Photo by Dave Beck

Better days are coming

Last week's snow and cold were a good reminder that it's still winter and that winter is going to be here for a while. Recently a couple of signs that better things are to come have surfaced: the annual arrival of the yellow postcard from the Department of Natural Resources and the change in programming on the outdoor channels.

The yellow card not only confirms a successful application, but it also confirms which turkey season I will be hunting. I say this every year and I will say it again this year: spring turkey hunting is the reward for enduring another long hard winter.

The outdoor channels start playing less deer hunting and similar types of hunting shows and start playing more turkey hunting shows. Actually, there are more fishing shows to watch as well but that's a topic for another day. Seeing the green grass and red headed gobbling tom turkeys on a wide screen is a wonderful break from the winter blues.

Talking turkey is enough cause for me to go to a happier place and that exact location is turkey memory lane. In no particular order, here

My very first turkey hunt was down in Vernon County, Wis., where the sport first started in the early 1990s. That was ground zero where the birds were first reintroduced in the state of Wisconsin. At that time, the only thing that was more scarce than turkeys were the turkey hunting tags. When I finally drew a tag, I was greeted with an opening day snowstorm that brought deep snow, high winds and no bird action. That brief introduction was enough for me to know that I was going to do it again and hopefully with better results.

I received my first local tag for Pierce County in 1996, and if memory serves me

correctly, hunters received a tag every other year. Nowadays there is a surplus of spring tags available but that's not why the season was memorable. My opening day hunt became an instant classic when a 28-pound turkey gobbled his way into range. There have been many birds after that one but none bigger.

Better days are coming. There have been many birds bagged since that 28-pounder but none bigger. I have been fortunate to be on hunts when green horns turned into veteran turkey hunters. Helping someone else harvest their first bird was almost as good as when I harvested my first bird.

The upcoming spring turkey hunts are a welcome distraction from shoveling out from another reality blast of winter. There is only one thing better than a spring turkey hunting tag in Wisconsin: a bonus turkey hunting tag.

Wisconsin bonus tags go on sale:
Zone 1: Monday, March 20
Zone 2: Tuesday, March 21
Zone 3: Wednesday, March 22
Zone 4: Thursday, March 23
Zone 5: Friday, March 24
Zone 6: No permits
Zone 7: No permits
All remaining bonus authorizations go on sale at 10 a.m. Saturday, March 25.

Didn't get enough Dave this week? Visit "Outdoor Trails and Tales with Dave Beck" on Facebook for photos and video of Dave's adventures. You can share your own photos and video with him there as well, or by emailing him at dave@piercecounytjournal.news Also, check out OTT content on Instagram @thepiercecounytjournal

Prescott GBB

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four minutes of the second half. The Cardinals came out of the break hot offensively, as Prescott scored eight of the first 10 points of the second half while building a six-point advantage, 35-29, its largest of the game.

All the Cardinals' big hitters were involved in the run. Senior guard Katrina Budworth made a pair of layups, junior forward Lila Posthuma used a crafty post move to create space and finish, and freshman Violet Otto snagged an offensive rebound and quickly made the putback bucket.

Saint Croix Falls head coach Angie Maternowsky swiftly called a timeout to slow Prescott's momentum. The Saints responded with a 6-0 run and tied the game 35-35 with under 11 minutes to play. McCurdy tallied two of the six while junior forward Kelsey Cooper had the other four.

The game hung in the balance as both teams played to a 39-39 tie with eight minutes left in regulation. That's when the Saints stepped on the gas, as McCurdy made a pair of free throws while Cooper used her size to create space for a layup and then stepped out and buried a three-pointer from the wing that gave the Saints a 46-39 lead with five minutes to play.

Saint Croix Falls' lead ultimately proved to be too much to overcome, as the Saints claimed the regional championship with a 56-48 victory. McCurdy led all scorers with 21 while Cooper had 15 and junior Lucy Belisle tallied 11.

"I thought we played well



Prescott senior Maddie Rundquist dribbles moments before throwing a swing pass to a teammate. Rundquist is one of five Prescott seniors that played in their final high school game on Saturday night. Photo by Reagan Hoverman

on Brianna (McCurdy), but she's one of the better players that I've seen," Hamilton said. "You can't completely stop a great player like that. When she sees a couple go, the rest start to funnel in and then you have to put so much focus on her that other girls can get going."

As soon as Prescott committed additional attention to McCurdy defensively, Belisle got her jumper going and Cooper became dominant inside the paint, and the Cardinals didn't have an answer. Hamilton spoke about SCF's three-headed monster in McCurdy, Belisle and Cooper.

"I like Lucy's game and obviously Cooper has been a Cardinal killer since I've known her, and props to her. She's a great player," Hamilton said. "When they get those pieces going, stopping a three-headed monster come playoffs is tough, but that's

what you've got to do."

The aforementioned Matzek led Prescott with 15 points, while Posthuma had 13 and Budworth tallied 11. Prescott finished the 2022-23 season 17-9 overall and 11-3 in league play, which earned the Cardinals their fourth consecutive Middle Border Conference championship.

Coach Hamilton took a few moments and reflected on his first season as head coach and what the girls on this specific iteration of the team currently mean to him and will mean to future Lady Cardinals.

"When I look back on this and tell my future kids about this team, I'll tell them if you want to learn how to play basketball, you watch the 2022-23 Prescott girls," Hamilton said. "That's how you should play basketball, even when it doesn't go well. They have nothing to hang their heads about."

Community CALENDAR

Friday, March 3
Muffins in the Mornin', 10 a.m., Plum City Public Library (611 Main St.) A time for adults to eat, play and socialize. Various breakfast foods will be provided.

Saturday, March 4
The Black Community: Prescott, Point Douglas, Hastings, noon, Great River Road Visitor & Learning Center (200 Monroe St., Prescott). Join Prescott's Building an All Inclusive Community Group for a conversation and listen as Heidi Langenfeld, of Building Remembrance for Reconciliation, takes us back in history to talk about the Black Community from Prescott, Point Douglas and Hastings. A light lunch will be available at noon, with the speaker from 1-2:30pm. Please RSVP at prescottbaic@gmail.com for this free event. Free will donations will be accepted. This is the fourth in our series of Community Conversation & Connection.

Murder Mystery at Tattersall Distilling, 6 p.m., Tattersall (1777 Paulson Road, River Falls). Join us for an event that is different from a traditional murder mystery dinner show. Solve a hilarious mystery while enjoying hors d'oeuvres and cocktails. Tickets available at www.forwardrf.org

Thursday, March 9
History Club, 2 p.m., Plum City Public Library (611 Main St.) Pierce County Historical Association and local libraries are bringing local history lovers together to increase appreciation for local

history. The group will lead and contribute to local projects in their own community. Each meeting will start with a Show & Tell. Bring a family or town photo, heirloom, tell a story or share a memory. Julie Huebel will also bring a local item from the PCHA archives to show.

Thursday, March 9-Sunday, March 12
Four Weddings & An Elvis, The Old Ptacek's Event Center (1449 Orrin Road, Prescott). The Great River Road Theatre will perform at 7 p.m., preceded by a buffet dinner at 6 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Performance begins at 1 p.m. Sunday, preceded by lunch at noon. Reservations are required. Tickets available at www.ptaceksiga.com

Friday, March 10
RF Chamber Coffee, 9 a.m., City Hall Training Room (222 Lewis St., River Falls). Find out what's new and stay updated on Chamber news, local events, assistance programs and guidelines, recovery planning and more. Stay until the end and be entered into a special prize drawing.

RF Area Educators Association, 11 a.m., St. Croix Lanes (1153 St. Croix St., River Falls). We are looking to add members from Baldwin to Prescott, Spring Valley to Hudson. We will discuss our constitution, by-laws, suggestions for future presenters and the benefits of belonging to RFAREA and the Wisconsin Retired Education Association. Anyone that contributes to the Wisconsin retirement system is invited

to attend. All new members will receive free dues until September.

Fish Fry, 4-7 p.m., Plum City American Legion. Serving baked or deep fried fish, baked chicken, salads, baked beans, fries, buns and onion rings. Indoor seating and takeout available. Call or text Susan Sanders at 715-448-0411 for more information.

Sunday, March 12
Euchre Tournament, Elmwood Auditorium (323 W. Winter Ave.) Sponsored by the Elmwood Community Club, a public luncheon (freewill donation) serving sloppy joes, chips, baked beans, desserts and beverages starts at 11:30 a.m. Euchre tourney starts at 1 p.m. (\$20 per person) with 50% payout. All donations go to UFO Days equipment and activities. Call Amy at 715-505-4005 with questions.

Thursday, March 16
Book Club, 5:30 p.m., Elmwood Public Library (111 N. Main St.) We will discuss "The Night She Disappeared" by Lisa Jewell.

Thursday, March 16-Sunday, March 19
Four Weddings & An Elvis, The Old Ptacek's Event Center (1449 Orrin Road, Prescott). The Great River Road Theatre will perform at 7 p.m., preceded by a buffet dinner at 6 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Performance begins at 1 p.m. Sunday, preceded by lunch at noon. Reservations are required. Tickets available at www.ptaceksiga.com