

WRESTLING

Royall's Wopat, McKittrick take top spots in Regionals

By NATE BEIER
HSE Sports Editor

The first leg of the WIAA wrestling postseason was completed last weekend as area wrestlers competed in the regional round of the tournament. A quartet of Hillsboro wrestlers and a half dozen Royall ones extended their seasons to the sectional round after

finishing in the top four of Saturday's Division 3 regional at La Crosse Aquinas.

Royall's Gunnar Wopat and Colin McKittrick continued their pursuit of a return trip to the state tournament by winning their respective weight classes.

Wopat (34-6) pinned New Lisbon's Reid Sawyer with two seconds left in the 126 pound final

to win his bracket. Wopat also collected a 34 second pin in the quarterfinals and a 4-3 decision in the semis.

McKittrick (41-4) pinned his way into the finals where he tallied a 6-0 win against Aquinas' Trevor Paulson.

Samson Degner went over the 20-win mark and

LEFT Royall's Gunnar Wopat finishes a takedown against Blair-Taylor's Easton Rogstad in a 126 pound match Saturday. **RIGHT** Royall's Colin McKittrick sets up an arm bar against Cashton's Evan Hanson during a 132 pound quarterfinal match at Saturday's Division 3 regional at Aquinas. **HSE photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.**

WRESTLING
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Royall's Mallory Ruland leaves it all on the ice, then gives a little more on the court. **HSE photos by Nate Beier/GX3 Media. Layout by Logan Everson.**

BY ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

Royall's Ruland splitting time between hockey and basketball

All four years of her high school career, Royall senior Mallory Ruland has played the sport that is her favorite above all others: hockey. Ruland is a member of the Badger Lightning, a co-op team based in Baraboo, Reedsburg, Sauk Prairie and Wisconsin Dells — with Ruland as the lone Elroy representative.

Ruland first gave hockey a try when she was just five years old, and she immediately fell in love with the sport and stuck with it ever since. "I don't know what it is, but the feeling that I get when I'm skating is different than any other sport. Her passion for hockey is made plainly evident by the fact that she's willing to make a roundtrip drive of roughly one hour and 45 minutes from Elroy to Baraboo and back just to be able to attend practices. But thanks to that commitment, she's made a new group of friends and developed into one of the most important players on the Badger Lightning roster. For the first two years of her high school hockey career, Ruland — who Badger Lightning head coach Rick Capener describes as a "quiet, hardworking leader" — was a utility player for the team who bounced around at both forward and defenseman as needed.

In her last two years, however, she's played full-time at forward and was eventually moved up to the team's top line during this current season. That move has paid off in a big way, as Ruland is second on the points (31) as the Badger Lightning have improved their record from 9-13 a year ago to 12-12 this winter. "She's been one of the better hockey players we've had come through our program," said Capener, who has coached with the program for nearly 25 years total. "I'd probably say that in all my time, she's easily a top-10 hockey player that we've had." Playing hockey was already a significant time commitment for Ruland, but she added to it this winter by joining Royall's junior varsity basketball team to become a dual sport athlete. Ruland previously pivoted to hockey full time during this time of the year, but Royall head girls' varsity basketball coach Andrew Dahlen had tried in the past to get her to join the program. With Royall's overall turnout down this season and the program in danger of not being able to field a JV team, Ruland decided to join to help ensure they could have a JV team while also getting the chance to play basketball with some of her friends. "She's an amazing kid. She has a lot of friends on the basketball team and she was doing it to help them out," Dahlen said. "I think she enjoys the sport, and she does a really, really good job

I don't know what it is,

but the feeling that I get when I'm skating is different than any other sport. I have a lot more confidence in hockey than I do in other sports, so that make it a lot more fun and enjoyable for me."

- Mallory Ruland
Royall senior

'POWER PLAY'
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SOFTBALL

Hillsboro endures first loss of season with loss at Bangor

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

It's another season where the Hillsboro softball team boasts a strong collection of talent that has the Tigers set up for success in 2023.

Hillsboro is coming off a 2022 season that saw the team capture the first regional title in program history. The Tigers did lose a trio of regular starters from last year's squad — including 2022 Scenic Bluffs Player of the Year Malia Liska — but still returns a talented core that puts them in excellent position to string together a third straight winning season.

"We have a lot of speed this year and will be a very strong baserunning team. We also have several strong hitters returning from last year's lineup as well as some young players who can hit the ball well," said Hillsboro head coach Lindsay Stanek. "Right now, our biggest weakness is inexperience in the outfield. It'll take some time to get these girls who were more

accommodated to infield positions to judge the ball well and make plays while on the run."

The spring got off to a strong start for Hillsboro with three straight wins, but that came to a halt with a loss to another top contender in the Scenic Bluffs Conference.

The Bangor Cardinals (2-1 overall, 2-1 Scenic Bluffs) got the better of the Tigers (3-1, 2-1) for a 6-3 win in their crucial early-season conference clash Monday, April 10 in Bangor.

After each team scored a run in the first inning, the Cardinals put together the pivotal rally of the evening with four runs in the bottom of the third. The two teams once again traded runs in the fourth inning to leave the Bangor lead at 6-2. The Tigers scored once more in the top of the seventh, but that's all the further their comeback bid went.

Hillsboro senior shortstop Lily von Falkenstein led her team by going 2 for 3 with a triple, a double, a walk and

two runs scored. Freshman left fielder Elizabeth Cairns, sophomore third baseman Michelyn Hansen, sophomore catcher Kiana Liska and senior center fielder Toni Mitchell all also recorded a hit in the loss.

UP NEXT

The Tigers end the week with a pair of home games against Wonewoc-Center (0-3, 0-3) Thursday, April 13 and Weston (0-2) Friday, April 14. After the weekend, they're on the road at Necedah (1-2, 1-2) Monday, April 17. All games are slated to start at 5 p.m.

Hillsboro's Lily Von Falkenstein connects with a pitch in the sweet spot of the bat for a double in the third inning of Monday's conference game at Bangor. HSE photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.



SPRING PREVIEW

HILLSBORO SOFTBALL / 2022 RECORD: 14-6 (10-4)

KEY DEPARTURES: The Tigers lost three regular starters from the 2022 team: catcher Malia Liska, pitcher/first baseman Chelsea Marty and right fielder Sierra Siefert. Liska was a two-time all-conference first-team selection and the 2022 Scenic Bluffs Player of the Year. Marty landed on both the All-SBC first and second teams during her career. Though she hasn't left the program, Hillsboro will be without junior left fielder Peyton Sullivan this spring as she rehabs from a volleyball injury.

KEY RETURNEES: Returning starters for Hillsboro in 2023 are senior Lily von Falkenstein, senior Toni Mitchell, junior Jaelyn Bloor and sophomore Michelyn Hansen. Coming back at shortstop, von Falkenstein is leading off for the Tigers as one of the team's top hitters and baserunners. Hansen, who starts at third base and is the team's No. 2 pitcher, slots into the cleanup spot thanks to her formidable slugging prowess. Mitchell is back starting in center to headline the Hillsboro outfield. After primarily playing at first and second base a year ago, Bloor is moving into the role of top starting pitcher.

NEWCOMERS TO WATCH: There are several newcomers to both the starting lineup and the varsity level in general for the Tigers, including sophomores Madisyn Herritz and Carmen Erickson and freshmen Hayden Bohn and Elizabeth Cairns. Bohn is starting at first base and gives Hillsboro a lefthanded bat in its lineup. Cairns will primarily see action in the outfield while batting No. 2 in the lineup. Herritz and Erickson will also play outfield roles.



LINDSAY STANEK (5th ssn)



HAYDEN BOHN PUTS THE BALL IN PLAY

1

MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2023
HILLSBORO 11 ROYALL 1 (6)

The Tigers got their 2023 season underway with a blowout win in conference play, as they defeated rival Royall (1-4 overall, 1-2 Scenic Bluffs) 11-1 in six innings Monday, April 3 in Hillsboro.

On three different occasions during the game, Hillsboro scored exactly three runs in an inning: the first, the third and the fourth. The Panthers got on the board with a run in the top of the sixth, but the Tigers added two final runs in the bottom half of the inning to bring the mercy rule into effect.

In the win, Hillsboro freshman first baseman Hayden Bohn finished 2 for 4 with three RBIs and sophomore third baseman Michelyn Hansen went 1 for 1 with a double, two walks, two RBIs and three runs. Junior pitcher Jaelyn Bloor worked all six innings in the circle, surrendering only one run on five hits and two walks while striking out eight.

2

TUESDAY, APRIL 4, 2023
HILLSBORO 16 MAUSTON 1 (3)

In their first non-conference test of the spring, the Tigers handily thumped the Mauston Golden Eagles (1-1) 16-1 in three innings Tuesday, April 4 in Hillsboro.

The Tigers erupted for nine runs in the bottom of the first, plated six more in the second and, after Mauston scored once in the top of the third, they got a final run in the bottom of the third to bring the mercy rule into effect.

Hillsboro senior shortstop Lily von Falkenstein went 3 for 3 with a home run, three RBIs and three runs, junior pitcher Jaelyn Bloor was 2 for 2 with a walk and a run scored, sophomore Carmen Erickson finished 2 for 2 with an RBI and a run and sophomore third baseman Michelyn Hansen went 1 for 2 with a home run, a walk, two RBIs and two runs.

In the circle, Bloor gave up one unearned run on four hits and one walk while striking out seven in three innings of work.

3

THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 2023
HILLSBORO 26 NEW LISBON 1 (4)

The Tigers picked up their third straight win to start the 2023 campaign in their most dominating fashion yet, pulverizing the New Lisbon Rockets (0-4 overall, 0-3 Scenic Bluffs) 26-1 in four innings Thursday, April 6 in New Lisbon.

Hillsboro scored four runs in the top of the first, the Rockets got one back in the bottom half of the inning and the Tigers proceeded to get six runs in the second, three in the third and 13 more in the fourth to complete the rout.

Hillsboro sophomore third baseman/pitcher Michelyn Hansen went 2 for 3 with a home run, a double, two walks, three RBIs and four runs, Elizabeth Cairns finished 2 for 3 with two walks, two RBIs and four runs and Jaelyn Bloor was 2 for 4 with two RBIs and three runs scored.

Bloor got the win in the circle by allowing one run on three hits and a walk while striking out six in three innings.

2023 SCHEDULE

APR		
3	@ Royall	11-1 W
4	MAUSTON	16-1 W
6	@ New Lisbon	26-1 W
10	@ Bangor	3-6 L
13	WONEWOC-CENTER	
14	WESTON	
17	@ Necedah	
20	BROOKWOOD	
21	@ Viroqua	
24	@ Cashton	
28	ROYALL	
29	Quad @ Cobb City	
MAY		
1	NEW LISBON	
2	BANGOR	
4	@ Wonewoc-Center	
8	NECEDAH	
11	@ Brookwood	
13	Tourney @ Ithaca	
15	CASHTON	
16	@ La Farge	



Scan QR code for Hillsboro softball schedule

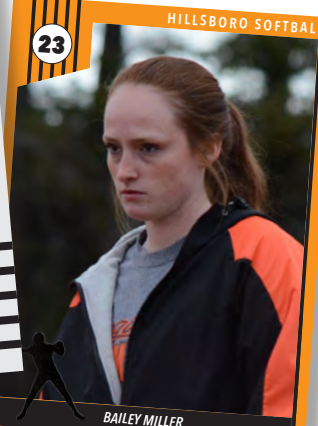


Scan QR code for up-to-date Scenic Bluffs Schedule

HILLSBORO ROSTER

0	Carmen Erickson	SO
1	Kiana Liska	SO
2	Jaelyn Bloor	JR
4	Toni Mitchell	JR
5	Lily von Falkenstein	SR
6	Danae Gardner	SR
7	Michelyn Hansen	SO
8	Ella Burch	SR
9	Peyton Sullivan	JR
12	Elizabeth Cairns	FR
14	Alaina Clark	FR
15	Hayden Bohn	FR
18	Sydney Hemmersbach	FR
21	Lauryn Hook	FR
22	Maddie Herritz	SO
23	Kyleigh Anderson	FR
27	Kianna Griffiths	FR

Head Coach: Lindsay Stanek
Asst Coach: Bailey Miller



BAILEY MILLER

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HILLSBORO SOFTBALL



TONI MITCHELL TRACKS DOWN A FLY BALL

Royall's Gruen places 10th in 3,200-meter run at state



Royall's Marah Gruen closes in on the 800 meter mark during the 3200 meter run at the WIAA State Track & Field Championships in La Crosse on Saturday, June 3. Gruen placed 10th in her third-straight year qualifying for the event. **HSE photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.**

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

LA CROSSE — Though she wasn't able to find her way back onto the medalist podium, Royall junior Marah Gruen continued to build on her strong track career with another appearance at the state meet officially in the books.

Gruen finished 10th overall in the Division 3 girls' 3,200-meter run with a time of 11 minutes, 59.21 seconds at the 2023 WIAA Track & Field Championships. The conclusion to the Wisconsin high school track and field season was held Friday, June 2 and Saturday, June 3 at Veterans Memorial Stadium on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

Her appearance in the Saturday race marked the

third time in three years that Gruen competed on the state stage.

As a freshman in 2021, Gruen made it to state in the 1,600-meter run, the 3,200-meter run and as part of a team in the 1,600-meter relay. The Royall girls captured the Division 3 team state title on that occasion. Last year, Gruen competed in four events at state: the 1,600-meter run, the 3,200-meter run, the long jump and the triple jump.

During her inaugural state appearance back in 2021, Gruen found her way onto the podium twice by placing third in the 3,200-meter run and fourth in the 1,600-meter run. Though she hasn't been able to pick up a third medal since then, Gruen still has one final season ahead in 2024 where she will attempt to make it a perfect four for four in state meet qualifications.

Scenic Bluffs at state

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

BANGOR
The Cardinals had state qualifiers in five events, with junior Sam Crenshaw serving as the highlight when he cleared the bar at 15 feet and secured a first-place finish in the boys' pole vault.

BROOKWOOD
The Falcons were represented in four events at state, garnering one medal out of it. The team of junior Wyatt Maurhoff, junior Owen Radloff, senior Dylan Powell and sophomore Marshall Doll posted a time of 8 minutes, 14.72 seconds to place third in the boys' 3,200-meter relay.

CASHTON
No Scenic Bluffs school had a stronger state meet than Cashton, who had competitors in nine different events. Senior Braylee Hyatt was the star for the Eagles, placing first in the girls' 200-meter dash (25.44),

second in the 100-meter dash (12.50), sixth in the long jump (17-3.25) and as part of a team with sophomore Makayla Gooselaw, freshman Gabby Hyatt and sophomore Adrianna Biever who were fifth in the 800-meter relay with a time of 1 minute, 46.59 seconds. Cashton's boys' medalists were junior Jack Schlesner in second (6-5.00) in the high jump and senior Riley Verken in sixth (50-4.00) in the shot put.

NECEDAH
The only state qualifier this year for Necedah was junior Jack Herried, who finished 10th in the Division 3 boys' triple jump with a mark of 41 feet.

NEW LISBON
Though he fell agonizingly short of the medalist podium, New Lisbon senior Nikita Shankle still represented the Rockets well at state by clearing the bar at 6 feet, 2 inches and placing seventh in the boys' high jump.

TRACK &



Hillsboro's Russell Jackson wrapped up his hurdling career at the WIAA State Track & Field Championships on Friday, June 2. Jackson finished 14th in the prelims. The senior set a personal record in his race to qualify for state a week before. **HSE photo by Logan Everson.**

ONE FINAL HURDLE

Hillsboro's Jackson caps track career with state appearance

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

LA CROSSE — Hillsboro senior Russell Jackson didn't quite have the performance he was hoping for at state to put on a bow on his high school track career, but that did little to dampen the experience. Ultimately, simply having the chance to compete on that stage was a huge reward in and of itself.

Jackson finished 14th with a time of 16.76 seconds in the preliminary race of the Division 3 boys' 110-meter hurdles at the state meet. The 2023 WIAA Track & Field Championships were held Friday, June 2 and Saturday, June 3 at Veterans Memorial Stadium

on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

Jackson's race came on Friday, with the top-10 finishers in the prelims advancing to Saturday's finals. Jackson previously posted a new career-best time of 16.25 seconds at sectionals to punch his ticket to state to begin with. But against such tough competition, even Jackson's personal best would've left him just shy of qualifying for the finals.

"I feel like I could've ran faster, I could've done better, but it's not like I was expected to get first or anything like that," Jackson said. "It was just being there that was the big deal for me."

Jackson wasn't an athlete who spent his entire four years in high school building to the moment of getting to state. He was on a more condensed timeline after joining the track team for the Tigers during his junior season and yet still made the necessary progress to finish his career at Wisconsin's crown jewel track meet.

"I felt like if I had done track my sophomore year, I could've been (at state) last year and this year and maybe be on the podium if I worked harder," Jackson said. "It was very humbling, too, because they're a lot

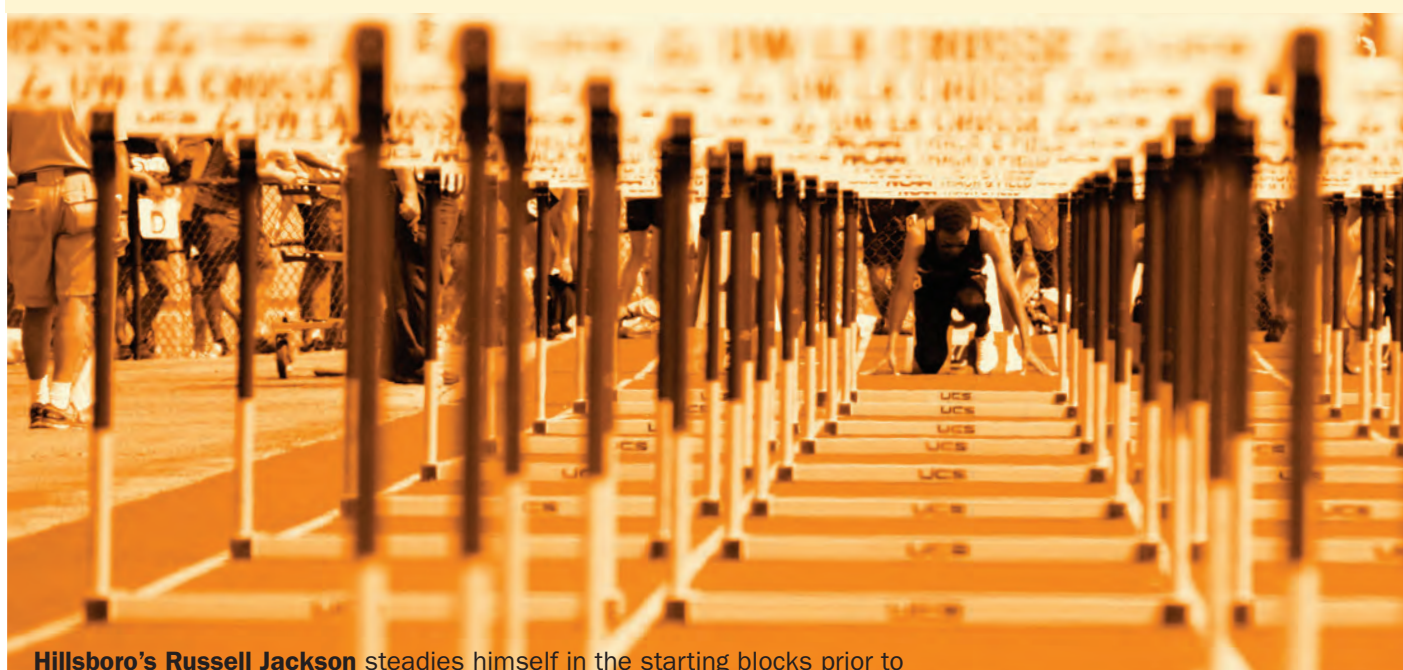
faster than I am."

Even in that abbreviated timeframe, Hillsboro head coach Eric Auel lauded how much Jackson was able to do to improve his performances through his tireless work.

"Russell grew as a leader by example as he has matured. He's never been a vocal guy but works hard during workouts and puts in extra time outside of mandated practice times," Auel said. "He has spent a much greater time in the weight room and that has helped his strength and speed. He improved in both speed and hurdling technique. His trail leg became stronger over the past two years, allowing him to spend less time in the air and more time on the track."

When all was said and done, Jackson made the most of his two years with the Hillsboro track and field program and leaves behind a strong example for other teammates of how to put in the work necessary to earn yourself a trip to La Crosse.

"Obviously we will miss the points from Russell, but he also has a dry sense of humor and a smile that makes your day," Auel said. "Younger athletes can never have too many good examples of hard work to strive to emulate."



Hillsboro's Russell Jackson steadies himself in the starting blocks prior to the 110 hurdle preliminary race at the WIAA State Track & Field Championships in La Crosse on Friday, June 2. **HSE photo by Logan Everson.**