

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.**

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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 team in goals (15), assists (16) and 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

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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



BOYS BASKETBALL



Royall's Ben Crneckiy slips past La Farge's Jordan Franks and puts up a shot in the second half of Monday's non-conference tilt. **HSE photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.**

Royall routs B'wood, La Farge to run streak up to four

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

As a crucial final week of the regular season waits ahead, the Royall boys' basketball team is riding the high of a four-game winning streak.

ROYALL 63 BROOKWOOD 36

To end the previous week, the Panthers (16-5 overall, 8-4 Scenic Bluffs) went on the road and blew past Brookwood (5-15, 2-9) 63-36 in their conference matchup Friday, February 10 in Ontario. Royall won the first meeting 72-30 on January 10 in Elroy.

In Friday's win, Royall junior guard Ty Wildes finished with 15 points and five rebounds, sophomore small forward Carter Uppena scored 14 points in his return from an ankle injury and senior guard Brady Uppena posted a double-double with 10 points and 11 rebounds. Brookwood junior forward/

guard Wyatt Maurhoff led his team with 20 points and eight rebounds, but none of his teammates scored more than five points.

ROYALL 71 LA FARGE 34

The Panthers next rolled over the La Farge Wildcats (3-18) 71-34 in their non-conference clash Monday, February 13 in Elroy.

Brady Uppena led Royall with 27 points, eight steals, six rebounds and four assists and both Carter Uppena and sophomore guard Ben Crneckiy scored 10 points apiece. La Farge junior Aaron Camlek and junior guard Hayden Fowell tallied 14 and 12 points, respectively.

UP NEXT

The Panthers have a trio of tough games to end the regular season: at Bangor (17-3, 11-0) Thursday, February 16 at 7 p.m., at Seneca (13-4) Saturday, February 18 at 7:15 p.m. and home vs. Hillsboro (17-5, 7-5) Monday, February 20 at 7 p.m.

Leading the Panthers were Marah Gruen with 27 points, seven rebounds, six steals and five assists, Simons with 15 points and Martin with 14 points, five rebounds, five assists and four steals. Brookwood senior forward Cora Brandau and freshman guard Reagan Muehlenkamp scored six and five points, respectively, in the loss.

UP NEXT

Royall ends the regular season by facing La Farge/Youth Initiative (12-9) in a non-conference matchup Friday, February 17 at 7:15 p.m. in La Farge. After that is the team's Division 5 playoff opener against Eleva-Strum (5-15) Tuesday, February 21 at 7 p.m. in Elroy.

Marah Gruen posted a double-double with 22 points and 13 rebounds while adding eight steals and six assists, senior guard Makayla Martin tallied 10 points and junior forward Brooklyn Gruen grabbed 10 rebounds. Richland Center senior forward Aliyah Ruhland and sophomore guard Carley Mieden finished with 16 and 13 points, respectively.

ROYALL 67 BROOKWOOD 19

At the end of last week, Royall breezed past Brookwood (7-16, 3-10) for a 67-19 conference victory Thursday, February 9 in Elroy.

Royall's Makayla Martin rises for a jumper before the Richland Center defense can make a stop. Royall outlasted the Hornets 56-50 in overtime Monday. **HSE photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.**

Hillsboro wins final conference contests

Tigers finish third in SBC standings

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

The Hillsboro girls' basketball team are riding a four-game winning streak into the playoffs after picking up a pair of conference wins that allowed them to finish third in the Scenic Bluffs standings.

HILLSBORO 71 NEW LISBON 57

The Tigers (20-4 overall, 11-3 Scenic Bluffs) most recently went on the road and beat the New Lisbon Rockets (6-18, 1-13) 71-57 in an SBC clash to wrap up the regular season Tuesday, February 14 in New Lisbon.

Hillsboro only led 34-30 at halftime before outscoring the Rockets 37-27 over the final 18 minutes to win by double digits.

Leading the way for the Tigers in the win were junior guard Lexie Thorson with 19 points, senior forward Lily von Falkenstein with 16 points, senior guard Camryn Hanson with 12 points and senior center Violet Morren with nine points.

New Lisbon had a trio of double-digit scorers on the night: sophomore center Abby Steele with 17 points, junior point guard Eliza Curtis with 14 points and senior shooting guard/power forward Kelsi Steele with 12 points.

HILLSBORO 59 WONEWOC-CENTER 46

Last week, the Tigers defeated Wonewoc-Center (11-10, 5-8) 59-46 in their conference showdown Wednesday, February 8 in Hillsboro.

Setting the pace for Hillsboro were Hanson with 22 points and five rebounds, senior guard Kyra Bisarek with 13 points, eight rebounds and four assists, Morren with

nine points, 17 rebounds and five steals, Thorson with eight points and von Falkenstein with nine rebounds.

Wonewoc-Center leaders were sophomore small forward Emma Mildbrand with 12 points and eight rebounds, sophomore guard Olivia Olson with 12 points, seven rebounds and seven assists, junior guard Kelsey Justman with 11 points and 10 rebounds for a double-double and senior guard Stacie Koppenhafer with nine points.

WONEWOC-CENTER 59 RIVERDALE 52

The Wolves followed that by getting back on track with a 59-52 non-conference victory over Riverdale (6-17) Monday, February 13 in Muscodia.

Wonewoc-Center double-digit scorers were Justman with 20 points, sophomore guard Brooklynn Bolton with 17 points and Olson with 10 points. Riverdale

senior Lauren Wiitanen and sophomore Kennedy Couey scored 19 and 10 points, respectively.

CASHTON 49 WONEWOC-CENTER 42

One night later, the Cashton Eagles (14-10, 8-6) held off the Wolves for a 49-42 victory in Scenic Bluffs play Tuesday, February 14 in Cashton.

Senior guard Braylee Hyatt went off for 26 points for the Eagles and junior guard Sydney Helgerson added 12 points in the win. Justman tallied 10 points for the Wolves.

UP NEXT

Wonewoc-Center ends the regular season by hosting Brookwood (7-16, 3-10) Thursday, February 16 at 7 p.m. in Wonewoc.

On the opening night of the playoffs on Tuesday, February 21, Royall hosts Eleva-Strum (5-15) and Wonewoc-Center welcomes in Loyal (11-11) at 7 p.m.

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playing when she's with us. I think it speaks to her character. She's doing it just to help us out and I couldn't be more proud or happy for her."

The hockey practices usually don't get done until 9 or 9:15 p.m., which created a window of opportunity for Ruland to participate in JV practices and games earlier on before zipping off to Baraboo for the late practices.

This obviously makes for a packed schedule that can occasionally border on overwhelming, but Ruland is thankful for what the experience has given her this winter.

"At times, it's been hard," Ruland said. "Especially the first week, I would go from a three-hour long basketball practice and then have to drive right to hockey. So that was a lot. I was tired that first week, but I got in a lot better shape. And I really enjoyed getting to be with my friends on the basketball team. I haven't seen them in that environment before."

Additionally, Ruland hopes she can serve as an example for others who are on the fence about joining a sport later in their high school careers.

"I think it shows to some of the younger underclassmen that it's never too late to join. You don't have to feel embarrassed or feel like you're behind everybody else because you're joining late," Ruland said. "If you want to do something that you think will be fun and you can help out, then you should do that and not have to worry about it being your senior year or your junior year or whatever it might be."

This unique foray into a dual sport winter came full circle in a sense on senior night

for the Badger Lightning. To the surprise of Ruland, her basketball teammates made the drive to support her at her last hockey home game.

It was a touching gesture that meant a lot to Ruland, and one that spoke volumes to Capener in reinforcing what he'd learned about her character over the years.

"I think it shows to some of the younger underclassmen that it's never too late to join. You don't have to feel embarrassed or feel like you're behind everybody else because you're joining late"

- Mallory Ruland
Royall senior

"It's not just noticed here within our group of kids that don't go to school with her on a regular basis, don't hang out with her on a weekly basis — it's everyone else around her as well that sees the same thing," Capener said. "That kinda validates your thoughts on kids when you can see that."



Royall's Mallory Ruland joined basketball in her final high school year to help Royall fill out a JV team. **Photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media. Illustrations by Logan Everson.**

BOYS BASKETBALL

Wonewoc-Center blown out by Bangor

Wolves still winless on the season, 0-21

By ZACH RASTALL
HSE Sports Reporter

The Wonewoc-Center boys basketball team wound up on the wrong end of a lopsided 95-19 loss to the Bangor Cardinals Friday, February 10 in Wonewoc.

The Cardinals were led by senior guard Tanner Jones with 30 points, six rebounds and four steals and senior forward/guard Dustin McDonald with 15 points and four assists. Wonewoc-Center individual stats were unavailable at the time of publication.

UP NEXT

The Wolves next play at Cashton (18-4, 10-2) Thursday, February 16 at 7 p.m. and then cap off the regular season by welcoming in Necedah (9-11, 6-6) Monday, February 20 at 7 p.m. in Wonewoc.



Wonewoc-Center's Danny Roehling taking point for Wonewoc's first possession during last Tuesday's 67-12 loss in Elroy. **HSE photo by Logan Everson.**

