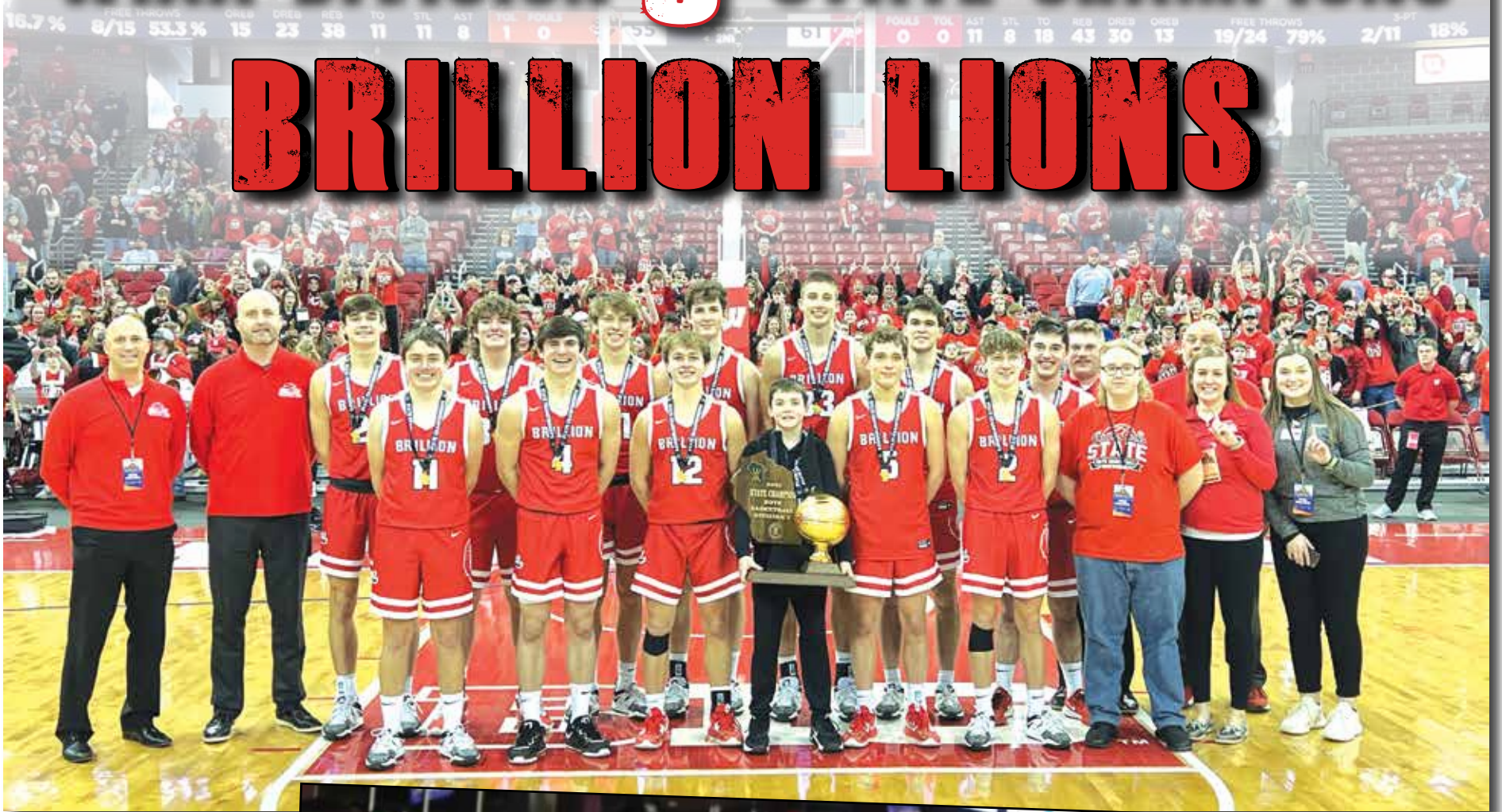


WIAA DIVISION 3 STATE CHAMPIONS

BRILLION LIONS



INSIDE

Title Celebration

Complete coverage of Brillion's state championship.

- Shimek leads as head coach.
- Lorenz puts the cherry on top of career.
- Behnke makes history as player and coach.
- Plus more photos and player quotes.

See pages 6-14



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Bringing the gold home: Lions win state title

By David Nordby
The Brillion News

MADISON – The checklist is complete.

The Brillion boys basketball team set a list of goals at the start of the season that is realistic for few high school sports teams, but was attainable for them.

The Lions checked off the final item on the list with a 61-55 win

against West Salem in the WIAA Division 3 state championship game on Saturday afternoon at the Kohl Center in Madison. With the win came a gold ball back to Brillion.

The showdown between the top two Division 3 teams in the state lived up to the hype. The Lions erased a 5-point halftime deficit and started the second half on a 9-0 run. The game was tied

eight different times and the lead changed 14 times.

Jeremy Lorenz made two free throws with 7:14 remaining to give Brillion a 43-42 lead. The Lions never trailed again. On the team's next possession, Lorenz hit a turnaround jumper over West Salem's best player Peter Lattos.

Brillion fans held their collective breath in the final minutes as their team's defense and free

throws closed the game out. Parker Braun made a basket with 1:28 left to give Brillion a 5-point lead but Lattos scored on the other end.

Following an Owen Krepline free throw, Lattos made another basket with 41 seconds left to make the game 55-53.

"You know (West Salem's) going to fight to the end," Brillion

(CHAMPIONSHIP/page 7)

Lions beat Lakeside Lutheran to reach state final

By David Nordby
The Brillion News

MADISON – To earn their second game of the weekend in Madison, the Lions first had to overcome another formidable opponent.

Brillion held on 57-55 against Lakeside Lutheran (25-4) on Thursday afternoon in the WIAA state tournament semifinal at the Kohl Center in Madison.

There were 10 lead changes in the game. The final one came with 5:53 left when Jeremy Lorenz made a free throw to put the Lions up 48-47. Brillion never trailed again, despite Lakeside Lutheran coming close on multiple occasions.

The Warriors had a chance to tie or take the lead in the closing seconds. Levi Birkholz stole the ball off a long inbound pass with seven seconds remaining. Birkholz lost control and Bennett Olson picked the ball up for Brillion as time expired. The Warriors never got a shot off.

“It wasn’t exactly necessarily the play we had drawn up. We went to that option the first time and Parker (Braun) threw it. Kind of in our format, the ball was a little chaotic and we needed to make a stop and run some time and our guys were composed enough to make another play in a big moment,” Brillion coach Chad Shimek said.

The final seconds were a microcosm of how close the game was. Brillion’s largest lead was five. Lakeside Lutheran’s largest lead was three.

“I thought it was a typical high school basketball game. Early on both teams got into a defensive battle. Then as the game got on and the adrenaline set in and the emotions settled a little bit, we started hitting shots and probably played more of the game both teams wanted,” Shimek said.

Lorenz finished with 25



points. Seventeen of them came in the second half. Lorenz played well on both sides of the court. He finished with 11 rebounds and six blocks.

“He’s important on both sides of the basketball. We talked about it. He’s the guy that we lean on to get rebounds, to block shots, to change what they do offensively, and then he’s the guy on offense that when we need a basket that we turn to,” Shimek said.

Grady Geiger scored 16 points. Olson and Braun each scored six.

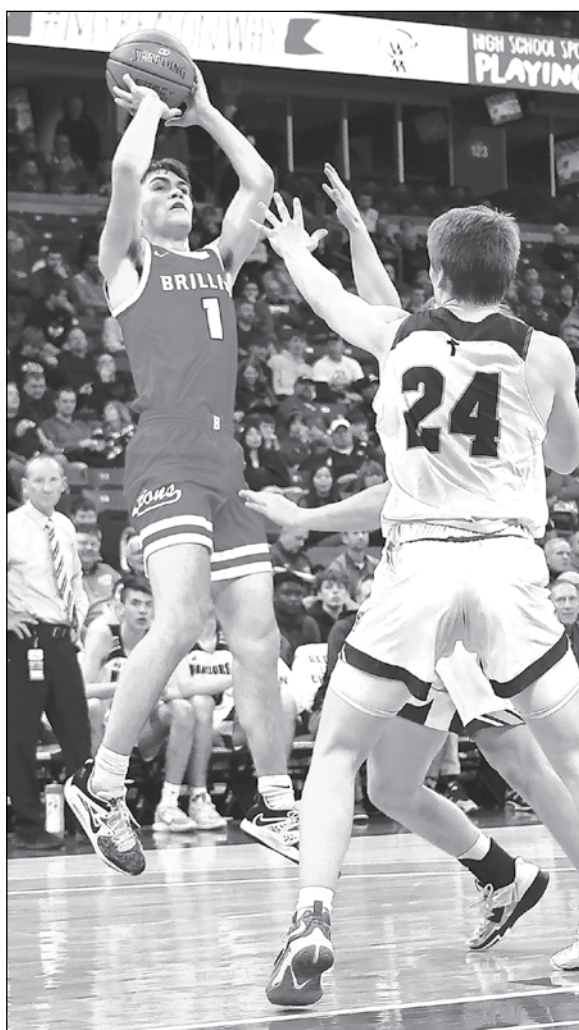
Birkholz, who will play Di-

vision 1 basketball at The Citadel, had averaged 20.6 points per game for the Warriors going into the semifinal. He scored 18 against Brillion. Trey Lauber scored 16 points.

Much of the Warriors’ defensive plan was using their length to slow down Lorenz and wait

(SEMIFINAL/page 8)

(State photos by David Nordby/BN and Tina Galoff)



State Semifinal Box Score

Brillion 24 33 – 57
Lakeside Lutheran 20 35 – 55

| Brillion Player | Min | Points | Reb. | Assists | Steals | Blocks |
|-----------------|-------|--------|------|---------|--------|--------|
| Lorenz | 36:00 | 25 | 11 | 3 | 1 | 6 |
| Braun | 36:00 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 0 |
| Geiger | 32:02 | 13 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Olson | 30:47 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Holly | 30:18 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Krepline | 10:55 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Mathes | 3:58 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Total: 23-44. **3-point:** 4-11 (Olson 2, Holly, Lorenz). **Free throws:** 7-11. **Fouls:** 6. **Fouled out:** none.

| Lakeside Lutheran Player | Min. | Points | Reb. | Assists | Steals | Blocks |
|--------------------------|-------|--------|------|---------|--------|--------|
| Birkholz | 31:13 | 18 | 12 | 4 | 6 | 1 |
| Lauber | 31:06 | 16 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Reinke | 30:48 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Schuetz | 26:42 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Mlsna | 16:44 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Miller | 13:37 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Liermann 1 | 1:55 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Powers | 9:30 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Yahnke | 8:25 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |

Total: 23-55. **3-point:** 3-17 (Lauber 2, Mlsna). **Free throws:** 6-7. **Fouls:** 16. **Fouled out:** Schuetz.

Game start: 3:25 p.m. **Game end:** 4:45 p.m. **Duration:** 1:20.

CHAMPIONSHIP (from page 1)

coach Chad Shimek said. “Defensively, you know they’re coming after you and it’s a physical game. They let us play, and so we just had to continue to be strong and make the simple passes and hit free throws, and you see a lot of basketball games and that’s not always easy things to do, so I think our guys did a really good job stepping up in that moment.”

Lorenz made two free throws with 28 seconds left and Bennett Olson made two free throws with eight seconds left to ice the game. Lorenz made two free throws with less than a second left to put the finishing touches on the program’s second championship in history and first since 2012.

“Just confidence was the key,” Olson said. “I know I was confident going to the line that I’d knock down those free throws. I know Jeremy’s confident. Our team is confident in our abilities and in each other’s abilities, and I think that mentality, we can all lean back on each other, and that helps.”

In a season of great Brillion defense, the Lions put together their best performance. West Salem (28-2) averaged 84 points per game coming into the championship and no one had held them below 60. The Lions held them to almost 30 points below their average and to 34% shooting.

“We knew it would be a challenge. We just tried to keep it one possession at a time, make it as difficult as we could for them, make them make another pass,” Shimek said.

The Lions won the rebound battle 43-38, which Shimek said was another key to the game. They also outscored West Salem in the

paint 32-26.

Lorenz finished with 26 points off 8-for-17 shooting. He made 10-12 free throws. He also tallied 11 rebounds, three assists, three steals and four blocks.

Krepline was a spark off the bench with nine points.

“He was huge for us,” Shimek said, adding the Lions used Krepline’s speed to offset West Salem.

Krepline played 21:21 against West Salem after he played 10:55 in the semifinal.

“I kind of knew Coach trusted in me that I would get enough playing time to help us win, and I was a little surprised by how much I played but it was a great experience and I like how Coach trusted me,” Krepline said.

Krepline attacked the basket without hesitation and finished 4-for-8 shooting.

“I knew that I had Jeremy and Grady (Geiger) that would crash the boards if I do miss a layup. They’re always there,” Krepline said.

Olson chipped in 10 points. Braun scored eight with a team high five assists. Caeden Holly made a key 3-point basket to continue the second half momentum.

Geiger and Braun played the entire game. Lorenz likely would have but he was forced to leave with an ankle injury before he returned after missing a little more than one minute of game time.

“I knew going out there tonight that I wasn’t going to (leave) anything on the floor and so, that’s why when I went down with that ankle injury, I couldn’t walk, but I knew that I was getting back out there,” Lorenz said.

Lorenz finished the game with four fouls, which also limited his aggressiveness in the final minutes.

“I think they both kind of af-

fecting how aggressive I could be,” Lorenz said. “In the moment in a big game like that, it didn’t really bother me too much. It hurt but ... I’m going to run and try to get the ball and make the right play whether my ankle hurts or not.”

The game was a rematch of last year’s state semifinal.

“I don’t think you can really go into any game expecting to win, obviously especially in a state championship game like this,” Lorenz said. “They did a lot of things to us that other teams don’t.”

Like last year’s game, it was clear why both made the state tournament.

“We knew that we were going to have to play a good game offensively, defensively and we were going to have to do the little things ... I think we were able to play some good defense and hit just enough shots,” Lorenz said.

In addition to the state title, the Lions accomplished something no other team had done in program history with back-to-back trips to the state tournament. The two seasons created a lifetime of memories for those involved.

“I’m just so proud of our players, proud of the five seniors that we have. They do everything the right way. They’re gentlemen off the floor, they’re competitors on the floor. They show great sportsmanship. They take care of one another,” Shimek said.

Community was also on their minds after the game.

“It’s a big community thing,” Olson said. “We’re a small school, small town, everybody knows everybody. They see everything we do, so we try to keep that great character up at all times. It’s just a small town, big heart type thing.”

“Yeah, a state championship is awesome, but to be able to do it with good people and people that do things the right way. It’s a fam-

ily and people use that term a lot, but to be able to spend time with these guys, and I’ve got a young son, James, who’s a sixth grader, to be able to have him watch these guys and how they carry themselves, is priceless,” Shimek said.

Coaching notes

West Salem coach Mark Wagner coached against Brillion in the 2012 state championship for Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau. Wagner is in his second season as

coach of West Salem and 22nd season overall as a head coach.

Shimek was an assistant under Peter Kittel when the team won the 2012 state title. Now attached to his name is state championship winning head coach, but immediately after the game he wasn’t thinking that.

“It’s not about one person. I’m thinking about our youth coaches. I’m thinking about

(CHAMPIONSHIP/page 13)

State Championship Box Score

Brillion 24 37 – 61
West Salem 29 26 – 55

| Brillion Player | Min | Points | Reb. | Assists | Steals | B |
|-----------------|-------|--------|------|---------|--------|---|
| Braun | 36:00 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 0 |
| Geiger | 36:00 | 5 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lorenz | 34:58 | 26 | 11 | 3 | 3 | 4 |
| Olson | 29:34 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Holly | 22:08 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Krepline | 21:21 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

Total: 20-53. **3-point:** 2-11 (Holly, Olson). **Free throws:** 19-24.

Fouls: 15. **Fouled out:** Olson.

| West Salem Player | Min. | Points | Reb. | Assists | Steals | B |
|-------------------|-------|--------|------|---------|--------|---|
| Lattos | 36:00 | 20 | 9 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| McConkey | 33:38 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Koepnick | 32:55 | 8 | 11 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Henderson | 30:54 | 12 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Hehli | 25:16 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Sullivan | 16:54 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Kennedy | 4:23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Total: 21-63. **3-point:** 5-30 (Lattos 2, Hehli 2, Koepnick). **Free throws:** 8-15. **Fouls:** 21. **Fouled out:** Hehli.

Game start: 2:52 p.m. **Game end:** 4:23 p.m. **Duration:** 1:31.

Brillion Public Library

LIBRARY HOURS

Now open until 7pm on Tuesdays!

Monday- Thursday 10-7

Friday 12-6, Saturdays 9-12, Sundays CLOSED

Storytime

Storytime is back! Join us on Monday nights at 6:00 and Tuesday mornings at 10:15.

Lego Club

The library’s hosting Lego Club on Wednesdays at 2:00. Complete the weekly challenge and be entered to win a prize! We will be taking a break after March is done, so stop by soon.

Eastshore Humane Society Program

The Eastshore Humane Society will be visiting the library on Friday, March 31st at 1:00! Stop by to meet some new furry friends and learn more about the Humane Society. They will also be accepting donations of cat litter, Purina Cat Chow or Purina Complete Purina Dog Chow, laundry detergent, and bleach.

Adopt a Pet Book Bundles

April 30th is national adopt a pet day! The library is celebrating by offering special book bundles beginning on April 10th. Stop by and pick up your books and a furry (stuffed) friend to read to.

Afternoon Book Club

This month’s book is *The Star-Crossed Sisters of Tuscany* by Lori Nelson Spielman and we will be meeting on Tuesday, March 28th at 1:30.

The enduring bonds of sisterhood flourish in this heartwarming and dazzling Italian adventure, where a love that spans generations reveals the path to one woman’s destiny, from the New York Times bestselling author of *The Life List*.

When the fiercely independent and mysterious Paulina “Poppy” Fontana invites her great-nieces and fellow second-born daughters, Emilia and Lucy, to visit her birthplace of Italy, she makes a wild declaration. On her eightieth birthday, Poppy claims she’ll meet the love of her life on the steps of the Ravello Cathedral and put an end to the Fontana Family Second-Daughter Curse once and for all.

The Fontana Second-Daughter Curse is probably nothing but a coincidence, a self-fulfilling prophecy, an old-world myth. Even so,

nobody can deny that for centuries, not a single second-born daughter in the Fontana family has married. But twenty-nine year-old Emilia actually appreciates the curse--some may even say she hides behind it. What might happen if the supposed curse is actually broken, and she’s expected to find love? Reluctantly, the trio of second-born daughters embark on a journey to fulfill Poppy’s last wish. Against a backdrop of lush Italian countryside and rich landmarks, Poppy shares family secrets and tales of forbidden love that threaten to upend every belief her young nieces have held to be true.

Book Club After Dark

April’s book is *The Grace Year* by Kim Liggett. We will be meeting on Thursday, April 13th at 6:00.

No one speaks of the grace year. It’s forbidden.

In Garner County, girls are told they have the power to lure grown men from their beds, to drive women mad with jealousy. They believe their very skin emits a powerful aphrodisiac, the potent essence of youth, of a girl on the edge of womanhood. That’s why they’re banished for their sixteenth year, to release their magic into the wild so they can return purified and ready for marriage. But not all of them will make it home alive.

Sixteen-year-old Tierney James dreams of a better life—a society that doesn’t pit friend against friend or woman against woman, but as her own grace year draws near, she quickly realizes that it’s not just the brutal elements they must fear. It’s not even the poachers in the woods, men who are waiting for a chance to grab one of the girls in order to make a fortune on the black market. Their greatest threat may very well be each other.

With sharp prose and gritty realism, *The Grace Year* examines the complex and sometimes twisted relationships between girls, the women they eventually become, and the difficult decisions they make in-between. *Pizza & Pages*

Pizza & Pages

The next *Pizza & Pages* meeting will be on Tuesday, April 4th at 6:00 pm. We will be discussing *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance.

Hillbilly Elegy is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis—that of white working-class Americans. The decline of this group, a demographic of our country that has been slowly disintegrating over forty years, has been reported on with growing frequency and

alarm, but has never before been written about as searingly from the inside. J. D. Vance tells the true story of what a social, regional, and class decline feels like when you were born with it hung around your neck.

The Vance family story begins hopefully in postwar America. J. D.’s grandparents were “dirt poor and in love,” and moved north from Kentucky’s Appalachia region to Ohio in the hopes of escaping the dreadful poverty around them. They raised a middle-class family, and eventually their grandchild (the author) would graduate from Yale Law School, a conventional marker of their success in achieving generational upward mobility.

But as the family saga of *Hillbilly Elegy* plays out, we learn that this is only the short, superficial version. Vance’s grandparents, aunt, uncle, sister, and, most of all, his mother, struggled profoundly with the demands of their new middle-class life, and were never able to fully escape the legacy of abuse, alcoholism, poverty, and trauma so characteristic of their part of America. Vance piercingly shows how he himself still carries around the demons of their chaotic family history. A deeply moving memoir with its share of humor and vividly colorful figures, *Hillbilly Elegy* is the story of how upward mobility really feels. And it is an urgent and troubling meditation on the loss of the American dream for a large segment of this country.

Young Adult Book Club

April’s book is *Vincent and Theo: The Van Gogh Brothers* by Deborah Heiligman.

We will be meeting on Monday, April 24th at 4:30.

The deep and enduring friendship between Vincent and Theo Van Gogh shaped both brothers’ lives. Confident, champion, sympathizer, friend, Theo supported Vincent as he struggled to find his path in life. They shared everything, swapping stories of lovers and friends, successes and disappointments, dreams and ambitions. Meticulously researched, drawing on the 658 letters Vincent wrote to Theo during his lifetime, Deborah Heiligman weaves a tale of two lives intertwined and the love of the Van Gogh brothers.

Upcoming Programs

- March 28th at 1:30 - Afternoon Book Club
- March 31st at 1:00 - Eastshore Humane Association visits the library
- April 10th - Adopt a Pet Book Bundles available

Lorenz puts 'cherry on top' of Brillion career

By David Nordby
The Brillion News

BRILLION – Last weekend's state championship victory and celebration might have felt like déjà vu for 6-foot-8 Brillion senior star Jeremy Lorenz.

The night prior to last Thursday's WIAA Division 3 state semifinal game against Lakeside Lutheran, Lorenz had a dream the team won the state championship.

"Obviously, it was a great dream to have and then I was like, wow, that seemed like a lot of fun. It'd be pretty cool if we were actually able to do it," Lorenz said. "The way after the game turned out was just like my dream, so pretty much like a dream come true, I guess."

State championship dreams ran deep for Lorenz, the one thing he hadn't accomplished in his high school career, and for his teammates, who entered the tournament 27-1. Still, Lorenz did not tell anyone about his dream until the weekend was over.

"I was going to tell someone but then if we lost, I would have been like, oh, maybe I shouldn't have told them," Lorenz said.

He kept quiet and put together two more memorable performances to cap a legendary high school career.

Against Lakeside Lutheran, he scored 25 points with 11 rebounds. He protected the paint and had six blocks. In the state title game against West Salem, he scored 26 points, grabbed 11 rebounds and had four blocks.



A 3-point play 14 seconds into the second half started a 9-0 Brillion run that set the tone for the rest of the game. A turnaround jumper over West Salem star Peter Lattos was one of the highlights of the game. Clutch free throws after returning from an ankle injury helped secure the win.

The state championship avenged last year's 71-61 loss to West Salem. Lorenz said that

game was a learning experience for what the team needed to do to "win just one game" at state.

"Every single one of us were in the weight room trying to get stronger because we got man-handled by West Salem last year on the boards and you could tell they were just the stronger team, so I think it just showed us what we needed to improve on and the level that we needed to be at if we wanted to have success at

state," Lorenz said.

The back-to-back state tournament appearances was a first in Brillion sports history.

"I think it's just the team as a whole. Last year was a really special group and it was a really fun year, but I think this year, 1-12, you could really see that all of us were just playing for each other, and we all had ... one goal in mind," Lorenz said.

The togetherness led to a confidence the team regularly exhibited, including down five at half-time in the state championship.

"Every game we went into, I don't think that any of us felt like we weren't prepared or didn't know what to expect out of (each other)," Lorenz said.

Lorenz's decorated career won't be forgotten in Brillion. Earlier this season, he broke Lowell Reese's all-time scoring record that had stood since 1962. After the state championship, his scoring record sits at 1,992. His season totals of 642 points as a senior and 575 as a junior are the two highest scoring seasons in boys history. He holds career records in rebounds (1,113), assists (313) and blocks (240). He had a Division 3 state tournament game record nine blocks against West Salem in the 2022 semifinal.

He was the unanimous Eastern Wisconsin Conference player of the year last season and this season, an all-state selection last season (and likely will be again this year), and one of six finalists for 2023 Mr. Basketball, the most prestigious basketball award in Wisconsin.

This fall, he'll begin his career at Wofford University in Spartanburg, S.C. Once he takes the court as a Terrier, he'll be the first Brillion boys alum to play Division 1 basketball.

All of the individual accomplishments are spectacular, but Lorenz says his only goal was always a state championship.

"Coming into my career, there was really one thing on my mind. It wasn't how many points I was going to score. It was, I want to get a state championship. There were even people that told me, 'It'll be a disappointment if you guys don't get a state championship,' and it's like, that's quite the expectation but I think that was really just the one thing that I hadn't accomplished yet and that I really wanted to get done," Lorenz said.

Once the state championship was clinched, Lorenz did share the dream with teammates.

"I didn't really believe him at first. I was like, 'OK, I guess,' but you gotta take his word for it. I think it's just cool that it comes full circle like that if he actually had the dream before even our first game and we do actually come home with the gold ball, so I think that's just an awesome thing," fellow senior captain Bennett Olson said.

For Lorenz's Brillion career, the dream is complete.

"There's nothing that I'm going to look back on my career and say, I wish I would have accomplished that or done that, so it's really just the perfect cherry on the top of a real fun and exciting career," Lorenz said.

SEMIFINAL

(from page 6)

until he committed to scoring before they brought a double team, coach Todd Jahns said after the game. They attacked the paint on offense, but Lorenz was ready and finished with the six blocks.

"Jeremy, he's got so much length, so it's always a factor. We were trying to get to his body early, but I mean, the refs were letting him play and it was a physical game, so he really made a big difference in the paint," Birkholz said.

The rest of the team played well on defense too. Parker Braun finished with 3 steals, Olson had two, and Geiger, Lorenz and Owen Krepline each had one.

The semifinal was the Lions' 28th win of the season, and maybe their most impressive win to that point.

"I'm real proud of our guys. We got enough stops, played good enough defense, hit enough shots, and we're playing on Saturday," Shimek said.

That set up a meeting with

West Salem for the second season in a row.

"It's going to be a good matchup and we just gotta make sure to play our best game," Geiger said.

Prior to the state final, the Brillion community was a major motivation for the team.

"I think it means a lot. We have a lot of support from our community and stuff, so we know they live and breathe our basketball just as much as we do. That's what I think really means a lot to us is how much support we have and so we want to go out there and play hard and play a good game and hopefully come away with a win, but we know we have our community's support no matter what so that's really what makes it exciting to play in a championship game," Lorenz said. "We just get to play one more and hopefully we can come home with that gold ball."

2022-23 Brillion Lions game review

| Date | Opponent | Result | Leading scorer |
|----------|------------------------------|---------|-------------------|
| Nov. 29 | vs. Kewaunee | W 65-39 | Geiger 18 |
| Dec. 1 | @ Sheboygan Falls | W 80-34 | Lorenz 32 |
| Dec. 6 | vs. Two Rivers | W 81-55 | Lorenz 24 |
| Dec. 9 | @ Chilton | W 67-25 | Lorenz 14 |
| Dec. 10 | Wrightstown (at Kaukauna) | W 81-51 | Lorenz 27 |
| Dec. 13 | vs. Southern Door | W 79-31 | Lorenz 20 |
| Dec. 15 | @ Valders | W 67-53 | Holly 20 |
| Dec. 20 | vs. Kiel | W 66-46 | Lorenz 26 |
| Dec. 27 | Lux-Casco (at UW-Green Bay) | W 75-34 | Braun 15 |
| Dec. 28 | K.M. Lutheran (at Concordia) | W 73-61 | Lorenz 21 |
| Jan. 6 | @ Roncalli | W 57-29 | Lorenz 15 |
| Jan. 7 | @ Hilbert | W 79-38 | Lorenz 20 |
| Jan. 10 | vs. Shiocton | W 89-71 | Lorenz 37 |
| Jan. 12 | vs. New Holstein | W 84-34 | Lorenz 24 |
| Jan. 20 | vs. Sheboygan Falls | W 76-44 | Lorenz 23 |
| Jan. 24 | @ Two Rivers | W 81-42 | Lorenz 16 |
| Jan. 30 | @ Freedom | W 70-37 | Lorenz 24 |
| Feb. 3 | vs. Valders | W 61-41 | Lorenz 26 |
| Feb. 7 | vs. Weyauwega-Fremont | W 75-47 | Lorenz 20 |
| Feb. 9 | vs. Chilton | W 90-36 | Lorenz 19 |
| Feb. 14 | @ Kiel | W 61-46 | Lorenz 27 |
| Feb. 17 | vs. Roncalli | W 68-25 | Lorenz 17 |
| Feb. 20 | vs. Mosinee | L 53-54 | Lorenz 21 |
| Feb. 24 | @ New Holstein | W 92-36 | Lorenz 17 |
| March 3 | vs. Chilton (Regional) | W 64-43 | Lorenz 23 |
| March 4 | vs. Kiel (Regional) | W 63-45 | Geiger, Lorenz 16 |
| March 9 | Campbellsport (Sectional) | W 74-55 | Lorenz 17 |
| March 11 | Xavier (Sectional) | W 77-73 | Lorenz 24 |
| March 16 | Lakeside Lutheran (State) | W 57-55 | Lorenz 25 |
| March 18 | West Salem (State) | W 61-55 | Lorenz 26 |

CONGRATS!

TO THE

BRILLION LIONS

On behalf of the AriensCo family, congratulations on your Division 3 Boys Basketball Championship.



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Shimek earns first state title as head coach

By David Nordby
The Brillion News

BRILLION - Chad Shimek is a state champion head coach.

Among the things that comes with that title will be more interesting conversation at Shimek family holidays.

Chad joined his sister, Dawn, who won the 2021 WIAA Division 4 softball championship as head coach of Mishicot.

"When they come over for a holiday or something like that, it's interesting for them to sit and talk, which I enjoy listening to," their mom Rita said. "They'll talk about different strategies that they use or different kids or just different situations that they have in the two different schools that they coach at."

The Shimeks are a sports family.

Chad and Dawn were both three-sport athletes. Chad was the quarterback in football, pitched in baseball and played basketball. Dawn played volleyball, basketball and softball.

"That was our life a lot when we were young," their dad Robert said.

"I always said we didn't go on vacations when they were in athletics ... and we didn't care," Rita said. "We shared the love of the game with them."

Robert remembers Chad around the baseball diamond when he was just 2. Chad remembers watching his parents in action, too, playing in softball leagues and coaching. That helped lay the foundation for his coaching and teaching career.

"Times were different back then. You went and watched your parents play. Now it's different. Parents travel to chase their kids around, so I got to watch my parents play and then it just went into education. I knew I liked school, I liked sports and I liked being around this environment," Chad said.

Growing up, Chad had his parents with him each step of the way.

"My parents were a huge influence in that. My mom, when I was in little league, she coached third base and my dad coached first base, so it's just what we did," Shimek said.

In recent years, Robert and Rita get to travel to watch the teams Chad and Dawn are coaching.

"Both of them were involved in sports a lot, so I'm really not surprised that they both ended up in coaching, and we love it because we like to watch. We look forward to that during the



Brillion head coach Chad Shimek celebrates as time expires in last weekend's state championship game. Shimek was an assistant coach for the 2012 state championship team and has been the head coach for nine seasons. (David Nordby/BN)



Shimek embraces his 12-year-old son James near the end of the state championship game. James is one of the team's managers and sits on the bench of every Lions game. (David Nordby/BN)

week, OK, who plays where, and we go," Robert said.

Rita recalls the feeling she would get when Chad was pitching on a difficult 3-2 count. That was similar to how she felt on Saturday watching the state championship game.

"I just wanted it so much for him and the kids," Rita said.

'Soak in whatever you can'

On the way to the state title, Chad navigated a season with extremely high expectations for Brillion basketball.

"Honestly, I think the biggest

thing is the expectations that we were able to overcome and deal with. From before the season, people were talking about the state tournament and people were telling us to bring home a gold ball, and it's like, do you know how tough it is to just first of all get to the state tournament," Chad said.

Chad has repeatedly credited the players' hard work during the season, and while they knew it would be difficult, there was also a confidence about the team.

"I don't think any of us were going into that tournament thinking, hey, this is our gold

ball to win. We knew if we played well, we could do it," Chad said.

Tanner Behnke was coached by Chad when he was a player when Chad was an assistant under Peter Kittel. As an adult, he's been an assistant for Chad.

"He's genuine with his approach. He is going to be honest with the guys, but he genuinely enjoys coaching this team especially. This is a really neat team with a lot of positive personalities on it and Chad loves these players and he is going to do everything right by the kids," Behnke said.

Behnke added that Chad

wants the players to be successful in life after the court.

"I'm just happy for these guys because obviously they're good players and we'll always be connected. They'll come back five, 10 years from now," Chad said.

Chad became emotional thanking his wife and kids on Sunday. His 12-year-old son, James, became a familiar face on the end of the bench the last two seasons. James was the first person Chad embraced when the team won the state title. Another one of his sons, Robert, a 2020 Brillion graduate, traveled to scout West Salem earlier in the season and told Chad his team could beat them.

That is just one memory from the season.

"I think about the Xavier game and then I think about the Lakeside Lutheran game. Until you can put those 30 games together and I think so much of the year was all about conference. We had to beat Kiel three times. That was a big game, the regional final," Chad said.

The team collected a 29-1 overall record.

"Twenty-nine games we took care of business, so I'm just kind of proud that we basically accomplished what we set out to accomplish," Chad said.

Chad says, "you coach on your personality a little bit."

"I hear a lot of people say that I'm calm on the sideline. I don't know, I think I get after the guys quite a bit. I think our practices are where we get after it and I demand toughness and all the things that we expect," Chad said.

While Chad will not be seen screaming at players, he does have high expectations. He's also instilled belief. Nearly every player on the team interviewed by the paper this season said something about knowing they had Chad's confidence in them.

"We have a lot of things that we expect from our guys, and I think if you're doing it during games, that's not the time to do it. You have to mold your players to be able to do it on their own and to be able to adapt to things," Chad said.

Chad, who joined the program in 1999, has been a part of all of Brillion's state trips in 2010, 2012, 2014, 2022 and 2023. This year, he stood as the leader of the program that won the state title.

"When (I) get a chance to go back and look at it, I'll appreciate it more, but now you're just trying to soak in whatever you can."



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Behnke makes history as state champion player, coach

By David Nordby
The Brillion News

BRILLION – In the history of Brillion sports, just one person has won a state championship as both a player and as a coach.

Tanner Behnke earned that distinction last weekend with Brillion’s state championship. Behnke, who was first a state champion in football in 2010, was a player on the 2012 team that brought home the boys’ first basketball title. He has been an assistant under head coach Chad Shimek since he returned to Brillion after college.

“It’s kind of a neat thing to be able to say that. To be fortunate enough to be a part of the experience two times in different roles is exceptional and is something I’m blessed to have,” Behnke said. “It’s really cool in that regard to see it through two different lenses.”

Behnke watched the players last weekend as someone who had walked in their shoes.

“You just remember glimpses as a player and as a coach you can kind of sit back and you understand what those kids are going through and how much it’s going to mean for them sometime in their life and the memories that they’re making. It was really neat as a coach to just be able to watch those kids enjoy every aspect of the tournament,” Behnke said.

The entire state experience starts way before the team makes it on the court in Madison.

“The time together at the



hotel, the practices leading up to the Kohl Center, and then to watch them get on the Kohl Center court and then before the game on Saturday to sit back and watch the highlights and see how they handled themselves,” Behnke said.

This year’s team soaked in each step of the weekend.

“It was something that I enjoyed as a coach because I understood what they were going through and really how they were soaking in the time was really cool,” Behnke said.

Shimek, an assistant coach under Peter Kittel in 2012, and Behnke have a good rapport with one another. During Sunday’s championship celebration at the high school, Shimek said Behnke

was “his right-hand man” during the playoffs.

“I’m fortunate to be able to come back to Brillion and coach and to coach with a guy like Chad. He was a huge role model in my life as a high school kid and for him to be one of my mentors as a coach, I’m very fortunate for that and he’s done a lot for me,” Behnke said.

There is also good-natured ribbing between the two. Behnke jokes about his days as a player being coached by Shimek. Shimek shares stories, like he did during the celebration, how Behnke picked up the ball at midcourt and ran over an opposing player before he made it to the basket.

“It’s cool. He’s a former play-

er but I look at him as a friend now,” Shimek said. “He’s a great guy. He’s a hard worker.”

About 12 hours after Brillion beat Lakeside Lutheran in the state semifinal, Behnke was back at the school teaching driver’s education at 5:30 a.m. on Friday.

“He does a ton of stuff in teaching and he’s just a good guy,” Shimek said.

For Behnke, seeing Shimek win his first title as a head coach

was part of what made this year’s trip to Madison great.

“To be able to go down to the state tournament and see him win his first gold ball as a head coach, super proud of what he’s done and accomplished with the basketball program and any way that I was able to support him in the journey is minimal repayment for what he’s done for me,” Behnke said.

2022-23 Brillion Lions roster

| # | Name | Position | Height | Grade |
|----|-----------------|----------|--------|-------|
| 1 | Parker Braun | G | 6’3” | 12 |
| 2 | Owen Krepline | G | 5’11” | 10 |
| 4 | Bryce Gantz | G | 5’11” | 11 |
| 5 | Caeden Holly | G | 5’11” | 12 |
| 11 | Grant Leiterman | G | 5’8” | 11 |
| 12 | Bennett Olson | G | 5’9” | 12 |
| 20 | Derek Fischer | F | 6’0” | 12 |
| 21 | Cole Dvorachek | F | 6’4” | 11 |
| 23 | Lucas Mathes | G | 6’3” | 11 |
| 24 | Grady Geiger | F | 6’5” | 11 |
| 30 | Austin Schwartz | F | 6’3” | 11 |
| 33 | Jeremy Lorenz | F | 6’8” | 12 |

Head coach: Chad Shimek

Assistant coaches: Tanner Behnke, Brian Krizenesky, Andy Holly

Athletic trainer: Allison Pahl, Allie Vreeke (Bellin Sports Medicine)

Managers: Jonathan Thorpe, James Shimek

Superintendent: Corey Baumgartner

Principal: Elissa Hoffman

Athletic director: Jeff Capelle

Band director: Bill Hill

CHAMPIONSHIP
(from page 7)

Brian Krizenesky, who’s an assistant who’s been with the program for 38 years. I’m thinking about Tanner Behnke, who’s an assistant who was a player who won the state championship as a player and as a coach. I’m thinking about Andy Holly, who gives his time. It’s about so many people and I think when you get caught up in thinking about individual things, that’s when you kind of lose focus on what it’s really at. I’m just glad I can keep Brillion basketball going,” Shimek said. “I chuckle a little bit. Somebody said it’s a 10-year drought for a state tournament. I guess I hope I’m around for another 10 years, but these guys have been extremely successful. They’ve been to three sectional finals in a row, they qualified for the state tournament two years in a row, and I always say anybody that understands the process, that’s an extremely difficult thing to do.”

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CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION

Finally
After a century-long wait, Brillion basketball has its gold trophy at last.
See page 13.

CHAMPIONS!

Members of the Brillion High School boys' basketball team are all smiles as they hoist the program's first-ever state championship golden basketball on Saturday. The Lions defeated Gale-Ettrick-Trempealeau 40-35 in the WIAA Division 3 title game held in Madison. (Andrew Pantzloff/BN)

Flashback to 2012

The 2023 Brillion Lions earned the second state championship in boys basketball history. The 2012 team was the first to accomplish the feat and was featured in the March 22, 2012 edition of The Brillion News. (Brillion News archive)

Other notes and quotables from Brillion basketball

By David Nordby
The Brillion News

BRILLION – The Brillion boys basketball team earned the second state championship in program history. Here are a few additional notes and quotes from the team.

- Brillion coach Chad Shimek said the team embraced the underdog mentality for the first time in the season against West Salem. West Salem had defeated the Lions in the 2022 state semifinal game and was the top-seed in the tournament based off the WIAA's computer-generated system. Prior to the state final, West Salem had only lost to Park Center, a team from suburban Minneapolis.
- Three-point shooting had low percentages in both tournament games. Brillion shot 4-for-11 in the state semifinal; Lakeside Lutheran shot 3-for-17. In the state final, Brillion shot 2-for-11; West Salem shot 5-for-30. Shimek said he believed some of that had to do with fatigue from the extra 10 feet on the Kohl Center's college-sized court compared to high school courts.
- The team practiced at St. Norbert College in De Pere and at Milwaukee Area Technical College in preparation for the state tournament.
- Parker Braun, who is committed to play for Division III Lakeland University, finished with a single-season record 173 assists and 305 for his career. "It's definitely in my mind just trying to get the best looks for our offense and knowing the strengths that we have and trying to get the ball inside and on the fastbreak, trying to find open people that have the best opportunity to score," he said.
- Defense was a major reason why the team won the state title and Braun's defense shined in the

tournament games. "Most of the time the other team's best player is their go-to guy on offense and me trying to hold them, make sure that they don't get the looks that they want and frustrate their offense," Braun said.

- Lost in the excitement of the weekend was the fact that the team had to go to school on Friday between the tournament games, which helped make their routine feel more normal. "Part of it was going back to school obviously and then preparing for West Salem, watching film, learning who we were going to guard and just trying to figure out how we were going to stop them from the best of our abilities," Grady Geiger said.
- Senior captain Bennett Olson said the end of the season is what he will remember most. "Just the whole playoff journey is so fun. From the first game everybody's so excited for the playoff games at home. The crowd is just packed full, those first two regional games, and it's just really exciting being in your home gym for the last time. Then you move up a level to sectional and you're in another school," Olson said. That culminated at state. "It's just so cool to step onto the floor at the Kohl Center and just be there with your teammates who you've been playing with all year. It's just so fun."
- Owen Krepline and Lucas Mathes were the two non-starters to play in the tournament. Both produced important minutes throughout the playoffs. "Owen played incredible. Him and Lucas, all year ... They don't need to score a lot of points every game but I think they both over the year showed that when we needed them, they'd come up big," Jeremy Lorenz said.
- Geiger and Braun both played the entire game in the semifinal and the final.

