

# Cyclones use late goal to down BRF co-op; string together trio of wins

By **LOGAN EVERSON**  
Sports Writer

In one of the most exciting third periods of girl hockey, Coulee Region Cyclones barely eked out a win over the Black River Falls Tigers in the Panther Den on Thursday, January 26. The loss brings the Tigers under .500 at 8-9 on the season and extended their skid after they fell 2-3 to Viroqua on Tuesday, January 24. The Cyclones are on a three game win streak and move up to 11-5 after going on the road and shutting out Hudson 3-0 on Saturday, January 28.

**COULEE REGION 5  
BLACK RIVER FALLS 4**  
The Cyclones' McKenna LaFleur opened up the scoring

with help from Juliana Stier and Alex Meyer almost nine minutes into the first period. Seven minutes later, Cyclones' Jaden Hammes was able to score while shorthanded after a major penalty by LeFleur for head contact.

The second period only saw one scoring drive with another Hammes goal, after a pass from Brooke Borkenhagen. The Cyclones lead 3-0 going into the third period.

At 2:21 into the third, the Tigers made their official debut into the game with a Shelby King goal. It didn't take long for the Cyclones to respond, and 23 seconds later Hammes scores her third goal of the night. Even when they were down 3-1, the Tigers

never gave up. Nearly six minutes into the third period, The Tiger's Zowie Hunter powered through to the net after an assist from Alizah Hayes while the Cyclones were shorthanded. Five minutes later, Hunter struck again, bringing the Tiger closer to even at 3-4. It w  
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**Onalaska's McKenna La Fleur and Black River Falls' Avery Hagen vie for control of the puck near mid-ice in the third period of Thursday's game. Herald photo by Logan Everson.**



**6** Combined goals in a furious third period - BRF had all four scores in the last frame

**3** Wins in a row for Coulee Region after a 4-game losing streak

**1** Home game remaining for the Cyclones - Thurs., Feb. 2 vs St. Croix Valley

# SPORTS

Sports Editor • sports@monroecountyherald.com

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## THROUGH MY LENS

### Head-to-head duals are dead

By **NATE BEIER**  
Sports Editor



It's a bold statement, but I'll stand by it - head-to-head duals are dead for our area's high school wrestling teams.

The days of going to watch 14 quality matches between two squads actually went by the wayside the better part of a decade ago, but certain WIAA rules prevented schools from changing how they do business, therefore, the traditional notion of School A versus School B in a dual remained.

I've watched a number of different wrestling events this year, a straight dual, a couple triangulars, a couple quads, a dual tournament and a number of bracket-type tournaments. Only a few of these events are worth the time for the wrestlers, the event workers, spectators, and possibly most importantly, the growth of the sport.

I attended Tomah's dual against La Crosse a couple weeks ago. Most weight classes were filled, but a the majority of matches didn't make it to the second period.

All told, the varsity event lasted just 45 minutes.

I've watched a couple triangulars in which the opening round wraps up in 20 minutes and then fans are forced to sit through 40 minutes of dead time before the next starts.

I've scoured results from a number of duals throughout the season and count the number of contested matches on one hand. Of those 4-5 matches, most don't even make it out of the first minute of action.

So, the questions I continue to ask are these - if we want people to be excited about wrestling, what sort of event can you put on to actually make it worth showing up for?

How can you grow the sport if your competitions never feature the all-stars people come to see because the opposing team will bump the

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GIRLS BASKETBALL  
**BANGOR 41 HILLSBORO 32**  
**WEST SALEM 52 BANGOR 51**

# TAMED

## Tigers penned by Cardinals in pivotal SBC game

By **ZACH RASTALL**  
Sports Writer

The Bangor girls' basketball program simply isn't used to the kind of lopsided loss they received at the hands of Hillsboro earlier this season.

Back on December 13, the Tigers provided an early twist in the race for the Scenic Bluffs title by crushing the Cardinals 66-44 in a game played in Hillsboro. In the rematch, Bangor got a measure of revenge and gained a key win in its quest for yet another conference championship.

The Cardinals (13-5 overall, 9-1) kept pace with Royall in a tie for first atop the Scenic Bluffs standings by beating Hillsboro (15-3, 7-3) 41-32 Thursday, January 26 in Bangor. On the same night, Royall (15-2, 9-1) picked up a 64-46 road win over New Lisbon.

In last Thursday night's battle between Bangor and Hillsboro, the first half was a tight affair where the

(TAMED) cont. pg 8



**Bangor's Gabby Schroeder finishes at the rim while getting fouled by Hillsboro's Violet Morren during the second half of Thursday's Scenic Bluffs Conference game. Herald photo by Logan Everson.**

Gymnastics  
**LA CROSSE INVITE**

## Hemker earns trio of firsts

By **NATE BEIER**  
Sports Writer

Sparta senior Ella Hemker was no stranger to the podium at the conclusion of Saturday's invite hosted by La Crosse at Performance Elite Gymnastics.

Hemker claimed a trio of first place finishes at the event to lead the Spartans to a team score of 118.825.

The senior claimed the top spot on the podium in the all-around, bars and vault and was the runner-up on floor.

Hemker scored a 36.65 in the all-around.

In the individual events, Hemker recorded a personale meet-high of 9.675 on the floor, though it only garnered her a second place finish.

On vault, the defending Division 3 state champion scored a 9.6 and on bars a 9.325 to win both events.

### UP NEXT

The regular season for gymnastics is winding down with just a pair of weeks remaining in the MVC schedule and the WIAA sectional meet less than a month away.

Sparta will host the next round of the Mississippi Valley Conference on Thursday, February 2. The first round is expected to start at 6:00 p.m.

The final round of MVC competition is set for Thursday, February 9 at Holmen.

Sectional weekend is set for February 24 and 25, depending on each sectional site's schedule. Sparta will be at the West Salem sectional which is on Saturday, Feb. 25 starting at 10 a.m.

WRESTLING TOMAH AT WHITETAIL SHOOTOUT (MENOMONIE)

## Finch, Gearing go undefeated, help THS to 3-1 mark

By **ZACH RASTALL**  
Sports Writer

Tomah wrestled its way to a 3-1 mark at the Menomonie tournament on Saturday, January 28.

Gavin Finch and Ethan Gearing both posted marks of 4-0 to help the Timberwolves take fifth as a team at the event.

**BALDWIN-WOODVILLE 60 TOMAH 15**  
The Timberwolves opened

with a 45-point loss to Baldwin-Woodville at the Whitetail Shootout. Carter Habeck joined Finch and Gearing with wins.

**TOMAH 53 RIVER FALLS 30**  
Tomah lost a team point due to an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty, but still won the match.

Finch and Gearing both won via pin, as did Austin Gray, Cameron Finch and Benny Bemis.  
Tomah scored 24 points on

### RESULTS

**BALDWIN-WOODVILLE 60 TOMAH 15**  
**TOMAH 53 RIVER FALLS 30**  
**TOMAH 54 TOMAHAWK 30**  
**TOMAH 50 CHIPPEWA FALLS 30**

forfeited weights.

**TOMAH 54 TOMAHAWK 30**  
Tomah won five of the last six matches to wrest free of Tomahawk.

Jacob Van Hoof started the final stretch with a pin at 120.

Evan Johnson took a forfeit at 126 before Cameron Finch earned a pin at 138. Benny Bemis and Gavin Finch finished with pins.

Tomah scored 12 points on forfeits.

### TOMAH 50

**CHIPPEWA FALLS 30**  
Gearing led off with a 6-1 decision followed by Haakon Garvin taking his third forfeit victory of the day.

Carter Habeck won via pin at 220. Cael Pollock pinned his opponent at 106 and was followed by Austin Gray and Jacob Van Hoof with matching pins in the next two weights.

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BOYS BASKETBALL  
CENTRAL 53  
TOMAH 39

Riverhawks finish sweep of T'wolves

By ZACH RASTALL  
Sports Writer

After earning back-to-back wins for the first time this season, the Tomah boys' basketball team were unable to string together a third victory in a row.

La Crosse Central (11-5 overall, 6-1 Mississippi Valley) fought off a solid challenge from the Timberwolves (6-11, 2-4) for a 53-39 win Friday, January 27 in La Crosse.

Senior shooting guard/small forward Bennett Fried and senior guard Nic Williams finished with 20 and 17 points, respectively, in the win for the RiverHawks. Tomah senior forward Bryant Thornton scored 17 points and senior small forward Tom Hesse had 13 points on an evening where junior guard Tyler Kleifgen was sidelined with an illness.

Despite the loss, the Timberwolves improved significantly from their first matchup against Central: a lopsided 70-32 loss back on December 13 in Tomah.

AROUND THE MVC  
Just league-leading Onalaska and second place La Crosse Central have conference records over .500 heading into the second half of the MVC slate.

Aquinas, Holmen and Logan are tied for third with matching marks of 3-4.

UP NEXT

Next for the Timberwolves is a home game against Onalaska (12-3, 6-0) Tuesday, January 31 at 7:15 p.m. in Tomah. The Hilltoppers are currently ranked No. 4 among Division 2 teams in the WisSports.net coaches' poll.

BOYS BASKETBALL  
LOGAN 68 SPARTA 57

Rhead's 21 not enough to stop Logan

By ZACH RASTALL  
Sports Writer

The Sparta boys' basketball team will end January 2023 with an 0-6 record and will be looking to snap an eight-game losing skid when February rolls around.

In their most recent game, the Spartans (3-14 overall, 0-6 Mississippi Valley) suffered a 68-57 loss at the hands of La Crosse Logan (7-10, 3-4) Tuesday, January 24 in Sparta.

The Rangers were led by a trio of double-digit scorers: junior guard Nick Joley with 16 points, senior guard Justis Arellano with 12 points and senior forward Andrew Hackbarth with 10 points. Sparta sophomore forward/center Gavin Rhead tallied a game-high 21 points while sophomore guard Zach Gibson and senior forward Tyler Schendel added nine and eight points, respectively.

UP NEXT

The Spartans return to action when they take on the Onalaska Hilltoppers (12-3, 6-0) — the No. 4 team in Division 2 in the latest WisSports.net coaches' poll — Friday, February 3 at 7:15 p.m. in Onalaska.

BOYS BASKETBALL BANGOR 79 BROOKWOOD 46

Bangor batters Brookwood, falls to #2 West Salem



Bangor's Sam Cropp prepares to take on Brookwood's Marshall Doll after sprinting into the lane on a breakaway in the first half of Friday's game. Herald photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.

By ZACH RASTALL  
Sports Writer

Bangor kept its perfect conference record intact and continued its pursuit of another Scenic Bluffs boys' basketball title with a blowout win over Brookwood.

The Cardinals (12-3 overall, 7-0 Scenic Bluffs) notched themselves a 79-46 win against the Falcons (5-10, 2-4) when the two sides squared off Friday, January 27 in Ontario. Bangor led 41-18 at halftime before outscoring Brookwood 38-28 over the final 18 minutes.

Leaders for the Cardinals included senior forward/guard Dustin McDonald with 26 points, senior guard Tanner Jones with 17 points and six steals, junior forward Chase Horstman with nine rebounds and junior guard Nolan Michek with six assists.

As for the Falcons, junior guard Brady Hansen scored 20 points and junior forward/guard Wyatt Maurhoff finished with 16 points and nine rebounds.

WEST SALEM 83 BANGOR 53

The next day, West Salem (14-1) — the No. 2 team in Division 3 per the WisSports.net coaches' poll — blew past the Cardinals for an 83-53 non-conference win Saturday, January 28 in Bangor.

The Panthers were led by senior forward Peter Lattos with 19 points and 12 rebounds for a double-double, junior guard Joe Sullivan with 12 points, junior guard Tamarrein Henderson with 11 points, sophomore guard Kyle Hehli with 10 points and senior forward Brett McConkey with nine points and 18 rebounds.

As for Bangor, Jones and McDonald each finished the afternoon with 16 points, with Jones hauling in a team-high seven rebounds.

BROOKWOOD 61  
WONEWOC-CENTER 30

Early last week, Brookwood vanquished the Wonewoc-Center Wolves (0-17, 0-9) 61-30 in their Scenic Bluffs clash Tuesday, January 24 in Wonewoc. The Falcons also tamed the Wolves 70-40 in their first meeting January 9 in Ontario.

Last Tuesday's matchup saw Hansen and Maurhoff tally 24 and 19 points, respectively, for the Falcons in the winning effort. Wonewoc-Center junior

guard Corben Champlin scored 13 points in defeat.

BANGOR 70  
NECEDAH 57

That same night, Bangor staved off Necedah (5-11, 2-6) for a 70-57 victory in their all-Cardinals battle. In the win, McDonald put up 26 points, eight rebounds and eight assists, Jones added 24 points and Horstman posted a double-double with 11 points and 10 rebounds.

Necedah had three double-digit scorers: junior guard Jack Herried with 23 points and both senior forward Isaac Hunkins and junior guard Sam Rattunde with 10 points apiece.

AROUND THE SBC

Cashton (13-2, 7-1) stays just one loss back of Bangor for the league lead after dispatching Royall and Necedah last

week.

The Eagles topped Royall 47-37 at CHS on Tuesday, January 24 to force a season split with the Panthers.

On Friday, January 27, the Eagles bested Necedah while on the road 68-54 behind 19 points from Connor Butzler, 12 from Jacob Huntzicker and 10 from Zack Mlsna.

Cashton will get its first crack at league-leading Bangor on Saturday, February 11 in Bangor.

Hillsboro (15-2, 7-2) is in third place.

UP NEXT

Bangor dips into non-conference play to end the month when it faces Melrose-Mindoro (12-3) Monday, January 30 at 7:15 p.m. in Melrose. Meanwhile, Brookwood hosts Necedah for a conference clash Tuesday, January 31 at 7 p.m. in Ontario.



Brookwood's Wyatt Maurhoff plucks the ball away from Bangor's Tanner Jones to give the Falcons an extra possession in the first half of Friday's SBC contest. Herald photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.

(T/S)  
cont. from pg 8

and entered the third period 4-4. Tomah/Sparta's Boyko, with help from Walker and Holloway scored the first goal of the third. Holloway and Walker sealed up the 6-4 win with the final drive of the night with less than three minutes left.

Berry stopped 29 shots on goal. The T/S offense put 30 total shots on the Warriors' goal.

TOMAH 4  
BALDWIN-WOODVILLE 1

Tomah/Sparta drew first blood in the second period of Saturday's game with Middle Border Conference leader, Baldwin-Woodville.

Over 10 minutes into the second, Tomah/Sparta had first dibs as Walker scooted the first of four goals by the team into the net.

Nearly thirty seconds later, Tomah/Sparta's Jackson Martin drove one in on a power play, with help from Ritter and Venner.



Tomah/Sparta scored another two in the third.

Brennen Otten, with Boyko and Walker, scored while the Hawks were short handed. The Blackhawks scored their one on donly in the third, and Tomah/Sparta's Walker responded 20 seconds later after B-W emptied the net.

WEST SALEM 6  
DE FOREST 3

The West Salem boys

hockey co-op broke a four game losing skid with a 6-3 win in DeForest territory on Tuesday, January 24. Leading the Panthers in goals was Tyler Meyer with three and Aiden Koonce followed with two, and Jacob Helgeson with one.

BALDWIN-WOODVILLE 5  
WEST SALEM 1

The Panthers hosted the Baldwin-Woodville Hawks on Friday, January 27. The

Blackhawks scored three-straight.

The Panthers made it onto the scoreboard after a goal from Tyler Meyer, who was assisted by AJ Jankowski. That was the only goal of the night for the Panthers, after having 13 shots on goal against B-W.

Panther's goalie Abram Lassen had 61 saves on 66 shots.

UP NEXT

Tomah/Sparta's Owen Walker scuttles across mid-ice with the puck in possession during the third period of last week's game with Mosinee. Herald photo by Nate Beier/GX3 Media.

Tomah/Sparta hosts the Wisconsin Rapids Red Raiders (12-7) on Tuesday, January 31 at 7p.m.

West Salem (3-12) travels to Tomah to take on the Tomah/Sparta co-op (13-7) on Thursday, February 2 at 7pm.

Tomah/Sparta's last home game is scheduled for Tuesday, February 7 against Sauk Prairie.

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competition away from a stud wrestler?

What is the reward for a week's worth of practice and weight watching if you're not actually going to wrestle?

I said there were a couple of formats of events that still hold water when it comes to wrestling. To me, quads and dual tournaments can still work. Individual tournaments are still a good path for many as well.

Quads work well in my book because you have two mats operating at one time. As a spectator, you'll typically always have a match to watch and there's the possibility of less down time. Also, each wrestler could get up to three matches - a really fair reason to bring a young grappler out to watch his favorite high school wrestler compete.

A quad takes the same amount of time as a triangular, but there's just more action to watch and another team bringing fans and spending money at the event.

Dual tournaments are an extension of that.

I went to the Ridge and Valley Conference duals last Thursday at De Soto. That league has 6 teams, meaning that each team has 5 duals that night which determines the conference team champion.

As a fan, why would I travel from a place like Ithaca, drive to even Kickapoo (which is probably just 45 minutes away) to possibly see my kid wrestle, but most likely see that kid do nothing because the other team either doesn't have a wrestler at that weight, or they aren't willing to throw a body at a state-ranked opponent?

The RVC has done the right thing by putting all of its duals on one night. Now, it's one trip to a school to potentially watch five matches for a specific kid.

Not only that, but it becomes a bigger event for the conference as a whole. There's more weight and clout to a one-night championship affair than stretching it out over the course of 10 weeks of mostly meaningless duals.

The Southwest Wisconsin Conference went to this format this season also. Dodgeville hosted the 6-team event last Saturday.

There were 15 duals that day and even in that league, there were an average of 7 forfeits per dual.

The Coulee and Mississippi Valley have both tried triangulars a little this year because of numbers issues. Though I think it was a good move, even those leagues could benefit from doing things even more differently.

The numbers just aren't there - even in most of the larger schools - to fill out a full team of wrestlers.

Programs like Holmen, which gets tons of kids out, are the exception, not the norm.

West Salem/Bangor has good numbers this year. The G-E-T/Melrose-Mindoro co-op has also typically had strong participation, but those, again, are the exception.

Some places have seen an uptick in participation. Sparta is rebuilding well, De Soto is growing as is Arcadia, but for how long?

In the Scenic Bluffs I've seen a steady decline in participation over the past decade, yet they continue to push onward with duals like they've always done.

Last week Cashton faced off with Royall for a conference title and just five weight classes were contested.

Hillsboro won a dual against New Lisbon in which two matches were wrestled - both won by New Lisbon.

Yet, that league continues to do things they did 20 years ago. I've talked to a few coaches in the league and they say they'd like to move to a day of duals but one school doesn't want to. They like having all the home events.

Is having home events in which only two of your kids get to wrestle any fun for anyone? Is that the best way to infuse wrestling with new energy? Is that the best use of our taxpayer monies? Officials, travel, clock/ticket/event workers cost money in most cases.

Having a one-day conference event would do more to promote the sport than people going to a meet to watch upwards of 10 foefits. It's a waste of a weigh in, it's a waste of travel and a misuse of resources. We can do it better and should, otherwise, the sport will continue to fade away into the oblivion it's destined for with the current system.