

LEADING OFF

Athlete's mental health matters

By Natalie Dillon
ndillon@themonroetimes.com

By announcing the end of her basketball career, Syd Hilliard took the most courageous step an athlete could ever take — and one that many never do — to put her mental health first. Although I was sad to hear the news, I was proud of her for doing something I'd never have the guts to do.

And this isn't the first time Syd's been so in tune with her body that she's taken a step away. Earlier in 2022, she took a hiatus from basketball. I remember reaching out to her personally to let her know she wasn't alone and that I supported her in her decision.

It wasn't but two months later Badger track and cross

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Natalie Dillon

Hilliard ends basketball career

By Natalie Dillon
ndillon@themonroetimes.com



Times file photo
Sydney Hilliard announced the end of her Badger basketball career on Sunday, Jan. 8.

MADISON — Sydney Hilliard, a 2019 Monroe graduate, announced the end of her Badger basketball career on Sunday, Jan. 8. In February 2022, Hilliard took a personal leave of absence from the program but returned this season. A preseason injury kept her from making her debut until Dec. 1, 2022.

"I have decided that it is time for me to step away from the game of basketball, so I can concentrate on my own well-being," Hilliard said in a University of Wisconsin-Madison press release. "This was not a decision I took lightly and I am looking forward to earning my degree in the coming months and moving toward the next chapter of my life. The love and support of my family, friends, Badger teammates and coaches has meant the world to me and I'll always be grateful to all of them."

She began the 2022-23 season with an injury and ended up playing in seven games, getting the start in two. She averaged 5.9 ppg, 3.0 rpg and

shot 53% from the free-throw line. She dropped a season-best 11 points off the bench against Iowa — one of three Badgers in double figures.

Hilliard exits the Badger program averaging 11.7 ppg, 4.7 rpg, 2.9 assists per game and shooting 66% from the free-throw line. Her sophomore and junior seasons, she started in every game she played, averaging 30.6 minutes per game. Statistically, her best season was 2020-21 where she averaged 15.5 ppg. That year, Hilliard scored a career-high 26 points against Iowa.

Hilliard began her Badger career when she signed her letter of intent on Nov. 14, 2018. As a Cheesemaker, Hilliard was named Point Guard of the Year by the WBCA in 2019, earned All-State honors three years (third-team in 2017 and first team in 2018 and 2019), made the Badger Conference team three times, broke the single season and all-time scoring records and led Monroe to three straight state tournament appearances.

Hilliard plans to graduate with a degree in health equity and health promotion.

WRESTLING

Seniors shine under the spotlight



Times photos: Natalie Dillon
ABOVE LEFT: Austin Fuchs celebrates his first win coming off a knee energy during Monroe's senior night on Thursday, Jan. 5. ABOVE RIGHT: Jack Dubach pins Drew Purifoy to open the Reedsburg-Monroe dual. BELOW: Isaac Bunker ties the match at 24 with a pin of Isaac Henke.

Jack Dubach champion at Sauk Prairie

By Natalie Dillon
ndillon@themonroetimes.com

MONROE — For the sixth time in seven years, Monroe wrestlers performed in the Performing Arts Center (PAC) on senior night, Friday, Jan. 6. Although the Cheesemakers fell to Reedsburg 56-24, all three seniors — Jack Dubach, Austin Fuchs and Isaac Bunker — came away with pins.

"It was a lot louder. One person would clap, and it sounded like 20 people were clapping. It's a neat experience to wrestle up there," Fuchs said.

The match began with Dubach's 145-pound match against Drew Purifoy. Dubach had a 7-2 lead in the second period, before pinning Purifoy at the 3:41 mark. Christian Schuh (152) followed with a first-period pin to give Monroe a 12-0 lead.

The next three matches went to Reedsburg, as Joe Rufenacht (160) fell with just four seconds left in the first period, and Braedyn Nally (170) dropped in the second period.



Trey Schinker (195) of Reedsburg won his match by forfeit.

The 220-pound match was scheduled between No. 3-ranked Jesus Gonzalez and Fuchs, but Fuchs wrestled Brayden Klemp instead.

"Austin got the luck of the draw. Their varsity 220 is ranked third in the state, but he didn't wrestle tonight. He had had an injury,

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GIRLS BASKETBALL

Albany zooms past Pec



Times photo: Natalie Dillon
Gracie Freitag shoots over three Viking defenders in Albany's 71-35 win over Pecatonica on Thursday, Jan. 5. Freitag was one of three players in double figures with 10 points.

Albany still not satisfied

By Natalie Dillon
ndillon@themonroetimes.com

ALBANY — With a 71-35 victory over Pecatonica on Thursday, Jan. 5, the Albany Comets moved to 4-0 in conference and 13-0 overall.

Although the team is four games ahead of last year's pace — 9-4 in their first 13 games — head coach Derik Doescher wants his team to keep its eyes on the prize: the post-season.

"Right now, we have something special going. We are a good team, but if we want to be a great team, you have to continue to progress through January and February and prepare for the playoffs," Doescher said. "There's a lot to play for here in the second half of the season — a lot to improve on — but I'm very happy with where we are at."

Albany jumped out to an 8-0 lead with buckets from McKenna Broughton, Avary Briggs, Gracie Freitag and Alana Durtschi, forcing a Viking timeout.

The tactic worked momentarily, as Anna Tisch drained a 3-poiner out of the break. Unfortunately, Chloe Schraepfer was called for a charge and Tisch a regular foul, giving momentum back to the Comets.

Freitag fed Briggs for another two points, then Freitag scored a bucket of her own. Abby Hollis added five points with a basket and her first of five 3-pointers.

Pecatonica got back within 10 points thanks to a pair of baskets from Bri Peterson, but her efforts were quickly erased by a 10-3 Albany run. Hollis and Tisch exchanged threes, followed by buckets from Freitag and Durtschi. Briggs also made a 3-pointer during the run, her only of the game.

With a foul from Schraepfer, Briggs went to the line for two. She missed both, however. While the Comets excelled at every other aspect of the game, they were just 2-for-10 from the free-throw line in the first half. Myah Johnson and Hollis were responsible for the two free throws.

With just over 30 seconds left in the half, Anna Ellinger went to the line for a pair of free throws. She missed both. On the second

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PREP BASKETBALL

Redbirds show strong in DH

By Casey Lindecrantz
sports@myrjonline.com

DARLINGTON — Saturday, Jan. 7 saw a doubleheader home matchup for the Darlington varsity girls (6-6, 3-2) and boys (11-1, 4-0) basketball squads against Highland (girls 4-7, boys 4-6) for the Aaron Lancaster Memorial Games. The Redbirds prevailed in both games — the girls by a score of 54-36, and the boys with a score of 77-46.

The Darlington girls wasted no time asserting their dominance as they opened with a quick 14-1 lead from which they never looked back.

A significant factor in their win was the pressure they put on the Cardinals, forcing a whopping 28 turnovers throughout the matchup.

"The kids played really hard and we had a lot of different kids step up," said Redbird girls head coach Brad Solberg.

The stepping up Solberg referred to came in the form of all but three Darlington players scoring throughout the game, including three separate performances of 10 or more points — Kyle Butler led the squad with 12 points, while



LEFT: Broker Buschor makes a fast-break layup. RIGHT: Kyle Butler drives down the court following a steal.

Cayla Golackson and Aubrey McCarthy totaled 10 points on the day.

Having multiple scoring leaders helped push the Redbirds through the half to a 30-17 lead at the break.

Opening the second half, Darlington



RJ photos: Casey Lindecrantz

was concerned with one thing — a repeat performance.

Heavy pressure was a theme again, as Jaylyn Schwartz kicked off scoring for the Redbirds with a jumper in the paint com-

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HOCKEY

Alt leads Monroe past Viroqua

By Natalie Dillon
ndillon@themonroetimes.com

VIROQUA — After suffering a 6-1 loss to Edgewood on Thursday, Jan. 5, Monroe bounced back with a 5-1 win over Viroqua on Saturday, Jan. 7. Patrick Alt had three points to lead the Cheesemakers.

Brody Goode, who was one of two players with two points, scored the only goal in the first period with an assist from Jace Daughenbaugh.

Early in the second period, Viroqua tied the game at one with a goal from Hudson Nundahl. That was the only goal the Blackhawks scored, though, as the Cheesemakers went on to score four more.

Benjamin Erdley gave Monroe the lead back with a power play goal in the sixth minute. Alt then found the back of the net, unassisted. Wyatt Janecke scored three minutes later, with Alt and Carson Kurschner assisting.

Alt's second goal was the lone score of the third period, as Monroe skated off the ice victorious.

Alt tallied three points from two goals and one assist, while Daughenbaugh and Goode had two points each. In net, Kyle Theorin recorded 12 saves on 13 shots for a .923 save percentage.

Monroe gave Viroqua six power play opportunities, but

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ALEX ERICKSON REPORT



Alex Erickson

Darlington graduate Alex Erickson is a former wide receiver for the Wisconsin Badgers and just wrapped up his seventh year as WR and returner in the NFL. This season, he played for the Washington Commanders.

Season Stats

2 games, 4 PR, 25 yds, 6.3 ave

Career Stats

99 games, 96 Rec, 1,114 yds, 1 TD; 18 rush, 78 yds; 2x1 passing, 26 yds; 110 KR, 2,729 yds (24.8 ave); 162 PR, 1,303 yds (8 ave); 9 tackles

Local Sports Schedule

THURSDAY, JAN. 12

Wrestling: Sugar River at Waterloo for Conference Multi, 6 p.m.
Boys Basketball: Albany at Black Hawk, 6 p.m.; Argyle at Barneveld, 7:30 p.m.; Big Foot at Brodhead, 7 p.m.; Mineral Point at Darlington, 7:30 p.m.; Pecatonica at Juda, 7:30 p.m.; New Glarus at Belleville, 7:30 p.m.; Monticello at Abundant Life Christian, 7:15 p.m.
Girls Basketball: Evansville at Monroe, 7:15 p.m.; Albany at Black Hawk, 7:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, JAN. 13

Boys Hockey: Brookfield East at Monroe, 7 p.m.
Wrestling: Monroe at Oregon, 7 p.m.; Brodhead-Juda at Evansville, 3:15 p.m.
Boys Basketball: DeForest at Monroe, 7:15 p.m.

Girls Basketball: Monroe at Badger Challenge, TBD; Argyle at Pecatonica, 7:30 p.m.; Black Hawk at Juda, 7 p.m.; Brodhead at Turner, 7 p.m.; Darlington at Riverdale, 7:30 p.m.; Barneveld at Monticello, 7 p.m.; New Glarus at Wisconsin Heights, 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, JAN. 14

Boys Hockey: Badger Challenge at Monroe, 7 p.m.
Wrestling: Monroe at DeForest, 9:30 a.m.; Brodhead-Juda, Darlington-Black Hawk, Pecatonica-Argyle at River Valley, 9:15 a.m.
Boys Basketball: Belmont at Black Hawk, 2:30 p.m.
Girls Basketball: Monroe at Badger Challenge, TBD

MONDAY, JAN. 16

Boys Basketball: Monticello at Black Hawk, 7:30 p.m.
Girls Basketball: Argyle at Potosi-Cassville, 7:30 p.m.; Black Hawk at Darlington, 7:30 p.m.

Local Bowling

KOFFEE KLATCHERS As of Jan. 4, 2023 Standings

1. Mitzi's Gals	11-11
2. Leisure Ladies	8-4
3. Plumbers	8-4
4. Good Girls	5-7
5. Alley Cats	5-7
6. Country Girls	4-8
7. Woodford Bank	4-8
8. Spare Time	3-9
High Series	
1. Vicki Share	536
2. Marcia Bue	457
3. Sandie Goebli	456
High Game	
1. Vicki Share	237
2. Connie Robieson	180
T3. Holly Faulkner	162
T3. Chris Bartelt	162

BOYS BASKETBALL

NG enters road trip with win; Monroe, Albany split

By Natalie Dillon

ndillon@themonroetimes.com

Seagreaves.

ALBANY 45, JUDA 36

ALBANY — After a 2-2 tie, the Comets took the lead for good in a Six Rivers Conference game on Friday, Jan. 6.

Drew Sertle scored 14 points to lead Albany, six of which came from beyond the arc. Kaden Zurfluh also sank a pair of threes toward his nine-point total. Sertle and Nate Stokstad grabbed five rebounds each for the Comets.

On the other end, Erik Woodward and Braydon Steinmann both scored in double figures with 16 and 12 points, respectively. On the boards, Micheal Hosch led with nine followed by Blake Adkins with eight.

ABUNDANT LIFE 60, ALBANY 34

MADISON — The Challengers had a 16-point lead at halftime and extended it to 28 points by the end of the game for a non-conference victory on Saturday, Jan. 7.

Abundant Life Christian School capitalized on its speed and Albany turnovers, scoring 22 points in transition and another 30 points off turnovers.

Gage Roth and Sertle had eight points each to lead the Comets. The next highest was Ethan Koss with seven points and Zurfluh with six. Sertle also grabbed a team-best six rebounds.

EDGERTON 87, BRODHEAD 45

EDGERTON — The Cardinals dropped to 2-5 in the Rock Valley Conference with a road loss on Friday, Jan. 6.

Nathan Engen led Brodhead with 13 points. Despite scoring in double figures, he had seven opportunities at the free-throw line and capitalized on just one of them. Cullen Walker was the next highest scorer with nine points. He, along with Sam Searls and Dawson Blum, made one 3-pointer.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Illinois prevails in Battle of Stateline

By Natalie Dillon

ndillon@themonroetimes.com

WARREN — Pecatonica and Black Hawk came up just short in their respective games against River Ridge and Warren in the Battle of Stateline on Saturday, Jan. 7.

The Wildcats jumped out to a 17-6 lead over the Vikings in the first quarter and kept adding on. The final quarter was a wash, as each team scored 15 points. The damage had been done, though, as River Ridge defeated Pecatonica 58-40.

Evan Dochnal was the only Viking in double figures, scoring 10 points. The next highest was Tyler McKeon with nine.

Despite the same result, Black Hawk fared better, falling just 49-47 to Warren. Black Hawk overcame a 18-8 deficit in the first quarter to trail by just three in the third quarter. Black Hawk outscored Warren 14-13 in the fourth quarter but the rally fell just short.

Andrew Figi and Lucas Milz led the Warriors with 17 and 14 points, respectively. Milz made the only three of the game for Black Hawk. At the charity stripe, the Warriors were 4-for-5.

ARGYLE 55, BLACK HAWK 45

ARGYLE — Milz and Figi — Black Hawk's top scorers — couldn't keep pace with Max Godfrey and Willie Helfvogt — Argyle's top scorers — in a conference matchup on Friday, Jan. 6.

The Orioles had a 23-16 lead at half and extended another three points for the victory. Milz led Black Hawk with 19 points, nine

of which came from beyond the arc. Figi followed with 10 points, going 4-for-4 from the free-throw line. Carter Baumgartner was three points shy of double figures, with one three and a pair of free throws.

Godfrey and Helfvogt tallied 23 and 18 points, respectively, each draining a pair of 3-pointers. Collectively, the pair went 13-for-17 from the free-throw line. As a team, Argyle went 19-for-26 from the charity stripe, with the remaining six baskets coming from Mason McNett and Casper Moen.

PECATONICA 59, MONTICELLO 55

BLANCHARDVILLE — After being tied five times in the first half, the Vikings took the lead for good with just over a minute left in the first half en route to a 59-55 conference win on Friday, Jan. 6.

Pecatonica had a 10-point lead in the second half, but Ryer Indergand and Nick Roe brought it back within two points with free throws and 3-pointers. Down by two with three seconds left, the Ponies were forced to foul. At the line, McKeon secured the game with a pair of free throws.

Indergand led Monticello with 22 points and 13 rebounds for a double-double. Nick Roe and Ian Schwartzlow also scored in double figures with 13 and 11 points, respectively.

Pecatonica also had three players in double figures: Coy Ruegsegger (17 points), McKeon (15 points) and Jameson Johnson (10 points). Ruegsegger also led on the boards with five rebounds. Elijah Knutson trailed with four rebounds.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Ponies sweep; NG, Cards win on the road

By Natalie Dillon

ndillon@themonroetimes.com

BRODHEAD 44, JEFFERSON 31

JEFFERSON — With a road conference win on Thursday, Jan. 5, the Cardinals are tied in the Rock Valley Conference with McFarland (7-1). The two teams are half a game behind Edgerton (8-1).

Brodhead had a slim 21-20 lead at half but limited Jefferson to just 11 points in the second for the win.

The trio of Abbie Dix (11 points), Addie Yates (10 points) and Taetum Hoesly (10 points) led the Cardinals by scoring in double figures. Alecia Dahl trailed close behind with nine points, while Alexis Kammerer and Makenna Schooff each had two.

NEW GLARUS 65, WATERLOO 36

WATERLOO — Lindsay Schadewalt scored 27 points — the same number of points as the Pirate's top four scorers combined — in the Knight's win over Waterloo on Thursday, Jan. 5.

After scoring just 23 points in the first half, New Glarus kicked into gear in the second, scoring 42 points.

Grace Nommensen joined Schadewalt as the second Knight scoring in double figures with 12 points and seven rebounds. Alex Atwell led New Glarus on the boards with nine rebounds, though. At the line, the Knights went 6-for-8.

BARNEVELD 66, ARGYLE 33

BARNEVELD — The Orioles couldn't shake their loss from Monticello the previous day, as they dropped another conference game on Friday, Jan. 6.

Mya McNett was the only player to score in double figures with 10 points, going 5-for-6 from the free-throw line. Hartwig trailed with eight points, while Gierhart tallied seven. The Orioles shot 70% from the charity stripe, going 7-for-10.

In other local basketball games, Juda fell to Barneveld 58-23.

Dillon

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country runner Sarah Shulze took her own life. She was one of at least five NCAA athletes that passed away that spring, including Katie Meyer from Stanford, Jayden Hill from Northern Michigan University, Robert Martin of Binghamton University, and Lauren Bernet of James Madison University.

These tragic events brought athlete mental health into the conversation — a conversation that shouldn't end after the immediate shock and grief resides.

As a former collegiate athlete myself, I am no stranger to the demands of student-athlete life: wake up in the early hours to attend classes, squeeze in a couple hours of a part-time job, race to practice and end the night with homework. The day-to-day tasks become daunting and athletes go about their days running on empty. But, the sports culture that we grew up in teaches us to fight through the pain, to toughen up and get over it.

Where do we draw the line? What is an obstacle we can overcome, and what is truly a problem that needs to be addressed?

In high school, I didn't know that line. I often stayed up late doing homework and awoke early in the morning to finish. I bottled up all my emotions on the field until they spilled over at home, where I would ugly cry in my bedroom alone so no one else could see my weakness. After all, there's no crying in baseball [softball].

It wasn't until college I learned to take my mental health into consideration. This isn't meant to be a rip on coaches I had before college — my father, aunt Noel and Dale Buvid all cared about me deeply, I know this — but mental health wasn't openly talked about at that time.

The staff at UW Oshkosh, head coach Scott Beyer, his wife Laura and her sister — former walk-on for the Badger softball team — Maria VanAbel [Stave], emphasized positive self-talk from the start. They checked in with us regularly to see how we were doing in classes and life in general.

I remember my first panic attack in college, I had no idea what was going on with my body. I skipped my next class and went to the counseling

center. After calming down, I called Coach Beyer to let him know what was going on. He told me — in the nicest way possible — he didn't want to see me at practice that evening. I was to take the rest of the night off.

It was difficult not to be there, but it was what my body and brain needed — a break. Missing one practice in March 2019 would not greatly impact my life 10 years down the road.

Looking back, I can't thank him and the staff enough for prioritizing myself over the sport. Likewise, I applaud the UW coaching staff for supporting Syd in her decision.

Coaches, I ask you to ponder these questions. Do you know, right now, how each and every one of your athletes is doing? I don't mean if they are sick or injured, or if they are in shape enough to run an up-down. I mean, how are they handling the school-sport balance? Do they feel pressure in the role they are playing on your team? Would they benefit from simply one night off to catch up on homework or simply not worry about sports?

Athletes, I ask you to ponder these questions. In 10-20 years, will you remember that one game or practice you missed? Will that one homework assignment really kill your grade if it is late or not done at 110%? When was the last time you took some time for yourself to do something you enjoy?

For both coaches and athletes, it's not weak to ask for help. It's not weak to say you need a break or you can't handle the pressure. It's incredibly brave to do these things and a decision that needs to be taken into more consideration.

— Natalie Dillon is the sports editor for the Times. She can be reached at ndillon@themonroetimes.com.



UW Oshkosh head coach Scott Beyer and the rest of the Titan staff taught me to prioritize my mental health over softball. Photo supplied