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SPORTS

PREVIEW

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TENNIS, VOLLEYBALL

Timberwolves not satisfied with last year's turnaround

By Patrick Newell
Sun Contributing Writer

Sometimes you have to take one step back in order to move two steps forward.

That was the decision Sherburne-Earlville's football program made heading into the fall, 2023 campaign.

The Marauders, now Timberwolves, program, which found a great deal of success through most of the 2010s decade, had fallen on hard times.

The last season in which it won more than four games was 2017, when it won six games in a row at one point to qualify for the Section III, Class C playoffs.

Since that season, the Marauders not only failed to make the playoffs, but struggled to pick up wins at times.

The 2020 season was played in the spring of 2021 due to COVID-19 cancellations, and the 2021 season was played a few months later. Combined, the Marauders lost all 11 games.

Some progress was made in 2022 – S-E won two games – but competing for Section III championships was not likely in the immediate future.

Fortunately, an option to compete on an equal footing with schools in the same predicament presented itself.

Section III, knowing it had a large complement of Class C and Class D schools, rec-

ognized the competitive gap. It subsequently formed a new C2-D2 division for 11-man programs that had not had much success in recent seasons.

While the sectional playoff format remained, the C2-D2 division members were excluded from playing for a state title.

Still, the concept proved successful as several teams – S-E included – had their best seasons in recent years.

"Most of the teams that we used to play have moved to 8-man football," said S-E head coach Steve Franklin, whose team remains in 11-man competition. "I applaud our section for recognizing that not all schools (that still play 11-man football) are at the same level."

The Marauders finished 7-3 overall losing in the C-2-D2 sectional championship game. Despite winning more games than the previous three seasons combined, Franklin said the remaining players believe there is unfinished business.

"I think our kids still have a bitter taste in their mouths," Franklin said of that season-ending loss to Southern Hills. "(The players) are more focused about getting back and finishing it this year. They aren't satisfied with what happened last year."

If the Timberwolves are to repeat last year's success,



The 2024 Sherburne-Earlville Football team, coached by Steve Franklin. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

they will have to fill a huge void at quarterback.

Darren Miles set nearly every school record for passing in last year's campaign, his fourth as a starting signal-caller for the Marauders.

Overall, Franklin said the roster turnover amounts to 15 of 22 starting positions that will see new faces.

Hayden Price, a starter at safety last year and a backup to Miles at QB, will look to fill the shoes of Miles. Franklin said Price is one of the hardest working kids on the squad, and he looked good in the team's intrasquad scrimmage.

While the number of returning starters at skill positions is scant, dynamic dual receiving/rushing threat, Nick Hull,

returns for the Timberwolves.

Hull found the end zone nearly a dozen and a half times a season ago, and caught what is believed a school-record 40 passes.

Justin Race also returns in the backfield. Race worked in as a wingback last season, and Franklin figures he will fill that role again.

At receiver and tight end, Garrett Winton, Noah Ackermann, Preston Proskine, Brayden O'Hara, and Cameron Mason will see time.

The receivers will see their share of balls in the air, but that won't be their primary responsibility.

"Most of the receivers are newer to the positions," Franklin said. "We ask our

receivers to block. If you're not willing to block, there is no chance you'll get on the field in our offense."

Where S-E can bank on stalwart play is on the offensive line. Landon Andrade is the most veteran returning player who will start on the interior on both sides of the ball.

"It all starts (the line) with Landon," Franklin said. "He's a stud, and is willing to do whatever we ask of him."

Aidan Kiehn, Aiden Schroer, and Charlie Potrzeba are also slated for starting spots. Ashton Copeland and Andrew Menard will also vie for starting time at tackle.

Projected offensive line starter, Dilen Maceda, will miss the season as he is recov-

ering from a knee injury suffered in the summer.

"We're hoping the offensive line is a strength of our team," Franklin said. "We have six seniors playing on the line."

Forecasting this year's outlook, Franklin has the same expectation as last year's result with the only difference a better ending.

"We're not reinventing the wheel this season, and that is a good thing," he said. "We've built the reputation as a physical football program, and we're hoping to keep that reputation intact this year. We can't dwell on last year. We hope to get a different result."

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S-E Girls Soccer: Creating a close team dynamic and being consistent

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

SHERBURNE – The Sherburne-Earlville girls' soccer team returns for its 2024 season as the newly Timberwolves. Head coach Emma Mead also returns and is looking forward to welcoming a new group of girls as well as a few experienced ones. Mead, in her second season as head coach, but had spent time as the assistant coach, did lose a handful of seniors after the 2023 season, but is optimistic that her team this year will continue to contribute to its goal of outrunning opponents.

"Last year, we worked hard all season to build and maintain stamina, which was noticed on the field," Mead said. "We will continue with our goal of being able to outrun our opponents, which was our goal last year as well and definitely contributed to our victories as well as keeping scores close in our defeats."

Last season, S-E saw three wins, which all came in shutout fashion. S-E had



The 2024 Sherburne-Earlville girls' soccer team, coached by Emma Mead. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

an exciting overtime win against Gilbertsville-Mount Upton in two overtimes in the Unadilla Valley NY Pizzeria Tournament. Senior Jalyne McCarthy scored the lone and game-winner for S-E to win the consolation game. Other wins last season came against Utica Academy of Science.

Mead appreciated seeing hard work pay off on the field last season, but hopes to see

more improvement, even as a newer team this year.

"We need more consistency in our game play," Mead said. "Learning a few solid skills and being able to execute them in any situation will be really important for us this year. We have many new players joining the team and I'm looking forward to getting to know everyone and creating a close team dynam-

ic, where everyone supports each other."

While Mead expects a younger team this year, she is counting on her key returners to step up and help the new players. Claire Barth is a senior this season and is one of the captains from last year, who Mead is expecting to take the lead and be a guide for new players. Mead is hopeful that Lydia Dulina,

who was the team's rookie of the year last season, will continue to show growth as she did last year and take more of a leadership role on the field.

Along with the boys' soccer team, the girls will be practicing and playing on the Granville Road Fields as the stadium is being worked on this fall. However, senior nights for both teams will be celebrated at Colgate

University after many driven efforts to raise money to make this happen.

The S-E girls began their season in the annual Sherburne-Earlville kick-off tournament, which was held the first weekend of school, and heads into the regular season the following week with games against Mount Markham and Clinton.

S-E Boys Soccer: "Playing for each other"

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

SHERBURNE – The Sherburne-Earlville boys' soccer team, who has been a young program for the past few seasons, are looking to improve with its leading goal scorers and other key returners coming back for the 2024 season. Coach Michael Rodriguez was proud of his team's improvement last season, where they worked hard defensively at limiting opponents from scoring. Rodriguez hopes this year's team will continue to mature and continue to show the same improvements, but also adjust offensively.

"We are looking to score more than 15 goals this season offensively while looking to get five shutouts defensively," he said. "We still have



The 2024 Sherburne-Earlville boys' soccer team, coached by Michael Rodriguez and Ken Buehner. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

lots of work to do to improve offensively, and individuals on this maturing group need to remember that they are not playing for themselves, but playing for each other."

Rodriguez has worked with at least two-thirds of his team for three years now and is

looking forward to seeing them mature and to be more cohesive than they've been in the past.

Key returners include William Leinbach, Parker Goedel, and Jacob Dean, who were the Timberwolves leading goal scorers last sea-

son. Rodriguez is proud of Goedel's leadership and is looking forward to seeing how he will run and improve the offense along with the belief that Leinbach may score double digit goals in his junior season. Dean, a senior midfielder, who missed half

of his junior year, is expected to help the team achieve its offensive goals with scoring opportunities.

James O'Connor is also a versatile player that returns in hopes to strengthen the team's foundation with Michael Behret and senior Jackson Moore being relied on to continue the defensive improvements and gains from last year.

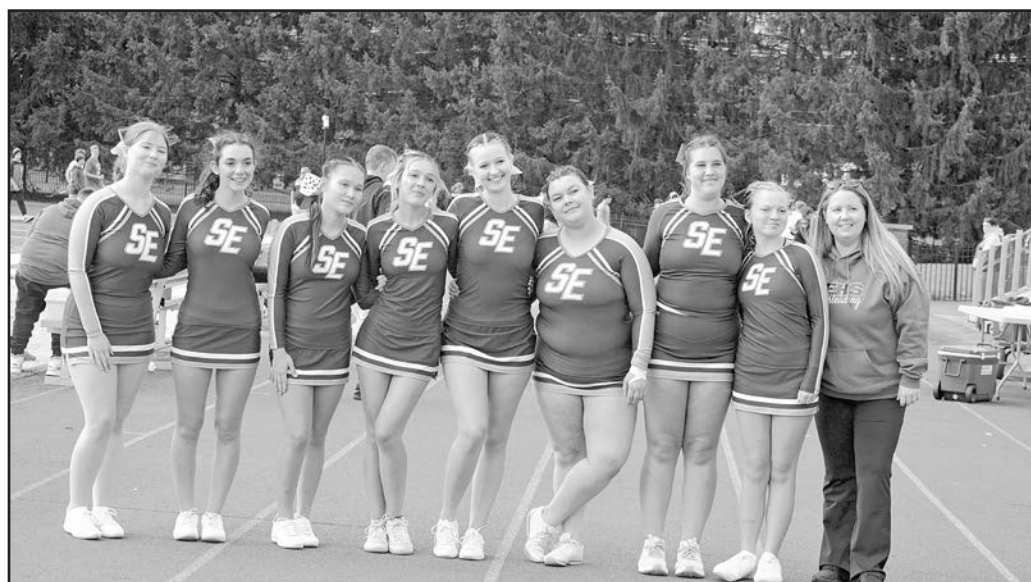
JJ Fischer and Kerrigan Buschor will step up and split time as the team's goalkeepers after the loss of Avery Parsons to graduation. Owen Brown, Jacob Sulton, Chadwick Nower, Kylor Buschor, Aiden Shreve, Aiden Parsons, Robert Schaefer, Tristan Cox, and Lucas Scholl also return for the Timberwolves. New to the varsity program are Braden Zbicki, Gibson Sherwood,

Brooks Lagoe, Raphael Olsen, Collin Maguire, and Jacob Babcock.

The S-E fall teams await the new turf field this season, but until on-going construction is done, the S-E soccer program will play its home games at the Granville Hill Road grass fields. The soccer program also has the honor of having senior nights at Colgate University towards the end of the season. The programs have been actively raising money with bottle drives, a scratch-off fundraiser, and other fundraising opportunities to cover the costs.

After hosting their annual S-E kickoff soccer tournament, the boys will host Canastota on September 11 at 4:30 p.m. before playing on the road against Clinton on the 13th.

Sherburne-Earlville cheer



The 2024 Sherburne-Earlville cheerleaders, coached by Tiffani Thorpe. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

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B-G Volleyball: "Consistency and Determination"

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

BAINBRIDGE – The Bainbridge-Guilford Bobcats volleyball team returns for the 2024 season, looking to continue to play consistently among its returning leaders with some new faces in the mix. The team was proud of making it to sectionals last season, where they came up short of their overall goal, but still showed hard work and determination.

Coach Tracy Kutz was very impressed by the teamwork and team's chemistry on and off the court last year and hopes to see it continue this year and beyond. The team has been consistently working

on improving in the offseason and only lost one senior to graduation from last year.

"Our team has mostly returning players from last year and then a couple of new faces," Kutz said. "I'm expecting my returners to be good leaders and role models for the new faces in our program."

B-G kicked off its 2024 season competing in the VolleyFall Classic at Union-Endicott High School on September 7 and began league play on Tuesday, September 10 against Oxford. B-G continues its season at Untatego on September 16 at 6 p.m.



The 2024 Bainbridge-Guilford Bobcats volleyball team, coached by Tracy Kutz. Front Left to Right: Emily Kingsbury, Shaylyn Fitzgerald, Morgan Prisco, Madisyn Peck, Elanor Sprow, Alessandra Cafasso, Kaylynn Crandall. Back Left to Right: Lillian Beam, Makayla McCloud, Hailey Soules, Stephanie Sanford-Holmes, Kaydence Brimmer, Peyton Umbra, Emma Beames, Coach Kutz, Brooklynn Parsons (manager). (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

B-G Golf: "Growing as a team"

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

BAINBRIDGE – The Bainbridge-Guilford Bobcats golf team tees off a new season under second-year coach Tom Palmatier. Palmatier comes off his first season at B-G, where the team finished sixth at sectionals with an overall record of 6-6. B-G also sent Mike Lipani to individual sectionals in the spring, where he missed the states

cut by two strokes. Lipani, Palmatier and the rest of the team are looking forward to a new season, where they hope to make it back to sectionals this year.

Lipani, who returns for his final season, shot an 89 in the medalist tournament in the spring and only hopes for more success this fall to make it back.

"With it being his first time making the tournament, I think he did very well overcoming the nerves and putting

a good round together. He spends a lot of time on the golf course working on his game and is more prepared now than ever to compete for a spot to make the NYS Section IV team," Palmatier said.

While bringing back its top medalist, the Bobcats are focused on accomplishing their team's goals and making it back to team sectionals.

"We have spent a lot of time this season talking about the mental side of the game,

after some struggles, and establishing a process and sticking to it," Palmatier said. "We are also trying to get a few matches where our score is less than 220. The team knows it takes all of them to accomplish these goals and knows that each of them has a very big role in making it happen."

Aside from Lipani, fellow seniors Brock Porter and Blake Prisco also bring experience to the team.

"Brock and Blake have

worked extremely hard in the off season to improve," Palmatier said. "We are going to lean on them in matches to shoot consistently low 40s to give our team a good chance to win our matches."

Palmatier worked with a youthful group in his first season with the team, so he has enjoyed seeing the growth of his team in the offseason.

"This year, I look forward to watching the players grow individually," he said. "Last year, I had a large team with

a lot of youth and I'm excited to have them back as well as a few more beginners this year. Seeing them grow and get better is my favorite part of coaching."

B-G started its 2024 season at an even 1-1 with a win over Hancock and a loss to Oxford. B-G will have two road matches before hosting Oxford again on September 20.



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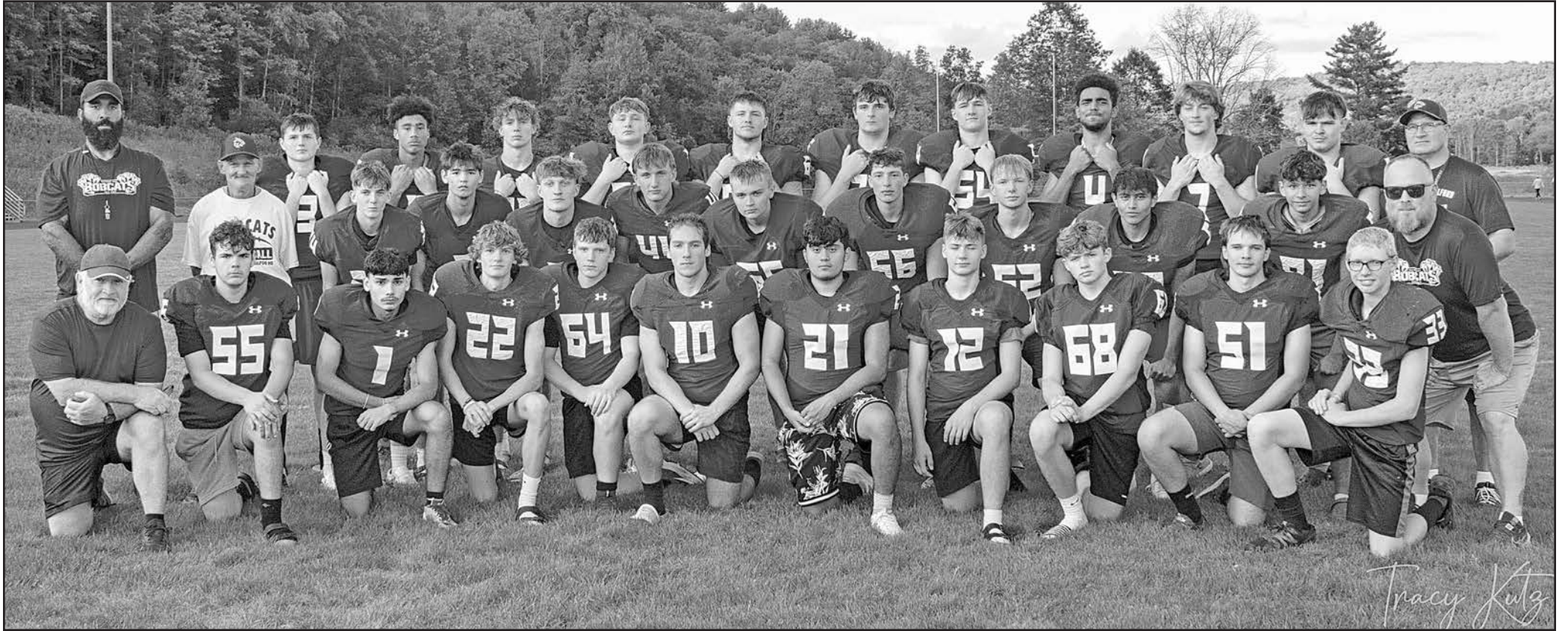
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The 2024 Bainbridge-Guilford Football team, coached by Art Rigas. (Photo by Tracy Kutz)

B-G Football: Excited and optimistic for a new season

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

BAINBRIDGE – The Bainbridge-Guilford Bobcats football team is back for the 2024 season. The team is feeling excited and are optimistic for a fresh slate in their tough Class D division. The team finished 6-5 in 2023 under the direction of Art Rigas, who returns for his second year.

The Bobcats missed the playoffs by one game and had many close wins and losses under their belt while Tioga won their third consecutive state title. There is no doubt Section IV, Class D is one of the toughest leagues in high school football around this area.

“We remain optimistic and hope to stay healthy as well as catch some breaks this year,” Rigas said. “I have a great group of guys that are very coachable and buying into our program and staying positive and up beat.”

While Rigas lost a handful of seniors, there are always guys ready to fill the role and step up to the challenge. Rigas is looking at a well-balanced team this year with a good group of juniors and seniors being great leaders to the underclassmen.

Damon Seymour led the Bobcats in rushing yards (74.6) and in tackles per game (10.1) last year as a senior and will be deeply missed, but Rigas has guys that are capable of filling the spot and making the step up. Among the key returners, quarterback Connor Davy was a big asset all across the boards as a sophomore and now returns for his junior year, ready for more action. He threw for 12 touchdown passes and scored eight rushing touchdowns, tying with Declyn Marshfield for the most on the team, and finished the 2023 season with a quarterback rating of at least a 85.6 percent.

“Connor is good at everything he does and is able to play for almost anybody,” Rigas said about his abilities. “Right now, he has been watching as much film as he can to mentally prepare for the season.”

Marshfield has also been a great asset for the Bobcats on the rush game and should see a lot more carries with the absence of last year’s seniors. He also played a key role as receiver with leading the team with 40.5 receptions a game, ahead of Parker Buttice with 26.3. Marshfield also caught six passing touchdowns and rushed for 43 yards per game. Both should continue to get their hands on the ball with Davy’s trust in them.

“Marshfield is a good athlete with a great attitude,” Rigas said. “We will have Tim Kinter as our center, replacing Gifford (graduated), and it all starts with the center, most important role. Kinter, Elliott

Briggs, and many others will step up this year. I’m also looking forward to seeing Chris Moyer back off injury. Just a great group of kids all working hard.”

The Bobcats will see a shift to their 2024 schedule with having their divisional games at the end rather than in the middle to give them a better outlook towards where they

are at in the final weeks of the season. They will face Tioga as their last home game of the season on November 1 while Newark Valley will be the week before. Rigas and his Bobcats team are feeling good about the work they’ve put in for the preseason and hope to see it pay off.

“The main focus always

comes back to everything that is right in front of you,” he said. “You control your movements and should always be focusing on the next game, not six games ahead or backwards.”

After a week zero game against non-league opponent, Oneida, the Bobcats will host league opponent Walton on Sept 13 at 7 p.m.

★ *Good luck to all our area high school athletes. Wishing you success in the coming year.* ★

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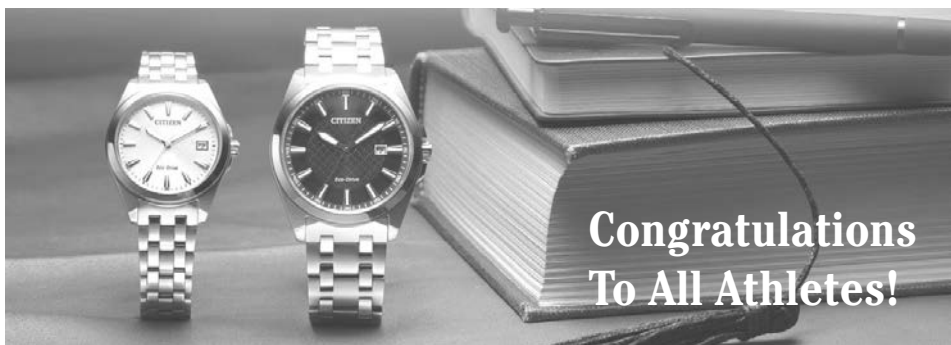
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B-G Girls Soccer: "Building a positive mindset while making another postseason run"

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

BAINBRIDGE – The Bainbridge-Guilford Bobcats girls' soccer team is looking to kick off the 2024 season strong and hopes for good things to come out of a mix of returners and new players. The Bobcats, under head coach Sarah Nezelek, fell in the second round of sectionals last season and are optimistic to make another post season run and grow as a team this year.

While making improvements on the field, the team is also focused on building a positive mindset and promoting good communication.

"As a team, we came up with a list of team goals,



mainly focusing on communication, positivity, and working hard every day," Nezelek said. "By the end of the season, the girls want to compete every single day and become

better soccer players, teammates, and people."

After losing leading scorer, Johnna Henderson to graduation, the Bobcats return with a good group of upperclass-

men who are ready to succeed. Juniors Breanna Casey and Jayslin Henderson are amongst these key returners.

"Breanna is an athlete with outstanding ball control and the confidence to take on her opponents in one on ones. Her ability to become dangerous anywhere on the field will make her a key aspect of this year's team," Nezelek said. "Jayslin is one of the hardest working players on the pitch. Her ability to make the tough plays, smart decisions, and put everything she has into every practice and games makes her an indispensable part of this team."

Junior Brenna George also returns, where Nezelek looks forward to her hard work to

lead the Bobcats defensively.

"Brenna's fearlessness on the field and her speed makes her one of the top defenders in the MAC," she said.

Seniors Chandler Benjamin, Clare Sullivan, and junior Hannah Shackleton have been named captains for this year's team, where Nezelek looks to them for leadership.

"These captains will be the role models on and off the field with their positivity, can-do attitudes, and new motto 'strive today, thrive tomorrow' will be a centerfold for this group," she said.

With the MAC league coming together to form one division this year, B-G will be playing each league opponent

once with some non-league contests thrown into the mix.

The Bobcats look to get revenge on Sidney, after a loss to them in the second round of the Jane Flannery Tournament in Downsville. The rematch is scheduled for September 17 in Bainbridge.

B-G and the rest of the MAC league are also excited to have Afton/Harpursville back this season. B-G travels to Afton on September 24.

The Bobcats will also play in the Greene girls' soccer tournament that will be held on September 19 and 21.

"I firmly believe that we have a special group of girls who, when focused and showcasing our goals, can compete with any team," Nezelek said.

Bainbridge-Guilford Boys Soccer: "One step at a time"

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

BAINBRIDGE – The Bainbridge-Guilford Bobcats boys' soccer team returns for the 2024 season under tenured coach Will Spalholz. Spalholz has been coaching

for the past 30 years or longer and at age 85, almost 86, he said he could very well be the oldest active varsity coach in the United States. The kids always ask him each year if he will coach and he even helped out the U19 Chargers girls team over the summer

when asked. Spalholz is a dedicated coach who keeps himself in shape and loves staying in touch with former players and seeing the community come out for open soccer.

Open soccer was a summer wide program that was

open to everyone of all ages, Spalholz said. He loved watching kids kick the ball around at Greenlawn and knowing how the program makes a difference in the community, watching everyone have a good time and keeping his players in shape as well.

The Bobcats fell short to Afton/Harpursville in the MAC Championship game for second overall in the league. B-G then went on to defeat Unatego/Franklin in the first round of the Section IV, Class C tournament in an exciting 4-3 overtime win. B-G played a tough Trumansburg team in the next round, where they fell 8-2, ending the 2023 season with a 7-7-1 record.

"In soccer, anything can happen," Coach Spalholz said. "We just needed to have that extra energy and extra step. The MAC could've been ours, but we can only be as

good as other teams allow us to be."

Coming up just short last year, B-G is focused on taking things one step at a time with that main goal of winning the MAC, even under one division this year, compared to two in the past. Spalholz said he is a firm believer of the team that is most skilled will fare better and knows if his team puts in the time to concentrate on skills and possession that they will be there.

Spalholz looks to count on his top leaders with Matthew Wombacker taking over goalkeeper responsibilities and Brock Porter leading the charge. Brock led the Bobcats with 14 goals and eight assists last year and will be an asset everywhere on the field since his brother Easton graduated and was second on the team in scoring.

"He has been trying very hard to get where Easton

was," Spalholz said, "I have great hope for him and it doesn't matter what end of the field he will be on, offense or defense, but he will be creating chances."

Spalholz knows that losing last year's seniors, who were some of the strongest powered engines on the team, is tough to replace, but he still has balanced talent among his team.

Wombacker will be the primary goalkeeper in net, where Spalholz is fortunate to have him leading the charge.

"I'm very happy with Matthew," Spalholz said. "He has been practicing on his own, is a great listener and is good at what he does."

Spalholz hopes Porter, Wombacker, and the rest of the experienced players will help be role models to the younger players and for the team to win as many games as they can.



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OV Boys Soccer: "Keep improving and put the ball in net"

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

SOUTH OTSELIC – The Otselic Valley boys' soccer team is looking to improve this upcoming 2024 season, under head coach Jacob Preston. After losing a core group of seniors last year, Preston knows his team will be young this season, but they have key returners back to lead the way for the new players.

Preston's team was powered by its graduating seniors and Owen Davis, who returns,



along with seniors Riley Palmer and Austin Brown, juniors Lukas Schieferstein, goalie Caleb Loomis, Izzy Ponce, Payne Wood, and sophomore Ryatt Bilodeau.

Davis led the returners with seven goals and one assist last season with Brown contributing with three assists. Loomis made 149 saves in goal last season as well.

With some experience coming back, Preston's goals are to create more scoring opportunities and keep improving. He said that there were so many overtime

games last season, where his team just needed to put the ball in net and came up short. Preston does welcome five to six new players to the program this year, where he hopes to increase the ability in their understanding the varsity level of play and support the team in their goals this year.

As far as his key returners go, Preston is expecting them to really carry the load this year with Davis striving on offense. He is looking for his key seniors Palmer and Brown to pick up what the

previous seniors did and show leadership and be everywhere they're needed. He hopes his team will continue to jell and stick together throughout the year with the younger players starting to buy into the program with the older players pulling everyone along.

OV started the 2024 season in the DeRuyter kickoff tournament on the first weekend of school before diving into the regular season schedule the following week with league games against Cincinnati and Madison.

OV Girls Soccer: "Building the principles"

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

SOUTH OTSELIC – The Otselic Valley girls' soccer team returns for the 2024 season under the direction of new coach Jack Roque. Roque looks to bring value from his 14 year coaching experience to a growing Vikings soccer program.

The program lost many key seniors from last year, who led the team to a 10-4-1 record last season. Under new direction with a mix of returners and new underclassmen, who move up from modified to varsity, the team is optimistic about reaching goals of playing competitively in Section III, Class D.

"Our intent is to build around principles of possession soccer, reinforcing quick and composed decisions on both of the ball, while smiling and enjoying teammates and the game," Roque said.

Among the key returners from last year are goalkeeper Carlie Golden, Katie Kenyon,

Miranda Hackett, Kimi Miron-Blanco, Mackenzie Reandeau, Emma Rooker, Skyler Graham, and Abby White. New to this year's team are freshmen Aubrey Rooker, Baleigh DuBois, Isabella Neal, Isabella Sayles, and Addison Palmer, sophomores Lilian O'Neill and Kassidie Cruikshank.

Carlie Golden led the team with 59 saves as Kimi Miron-Blanco led all returners with 12 points last year with five goals and two assists. Skyler Graham had two goals and two assists in 2023 for six points.

Roque has felt welcomed by his new team and has been impressed by the work

they've put in.

"Beyond expectations, in just a few weeks of preseason practicing, each individual is incrementally better in their individual collection skills and coordinated team play. Naturally, our goal remains Section III, Class D state champions," he said.

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The 2024 Unadilla Valley/GMU Storm boys' JV and varsity soccer teams together for a photo at practice. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

UV/GMU Boys Soccer: Building as a program, looking to strike the net

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

NEW BERLIN – The Unadilla Valley/GMU boys' soccer team is back for the 2024 season under the direction of head coach Josh Burchill and assistant Jordan Smith. The team is optimistic and excited for a new season, where the future is bright as the program now has both a JV and Varsity team for the

first time in four years, which is something to be proud of. Burchill also applauds the increase in numbers for both rosters.

After losing a core senior group that featured starting goalkeeper Tucker Cattanach and leading scorer Devon Hartwell, the team has been working hard in the off-season and preseason to fill in gaps. The team has a nice mix of returners and about seven new players joining the

team this year. Burchill said everyone has been putting in great work so far and the new players are actively learning.

As far as finding a new goalie, Burchill had three guys trying out the role in the first few weeks of practices and it'll be a good competition to see who steps up and leads the team in net.

Burchill is also expecting his team to improve on scoring opportunities this season. The team averaged about one

goal per game, which hurt against fiery league opponents. So, the goal will be to put guys in position and finish.

This year's UV soccer schedule reflects the MAC league changes of now playing league opponents once instead of twice. Burchill said the MAC looks wide open this year with a lot of teams rebuilding, but still going to be competitive.

After losing five seniors

to graduation, UV's key returners this season include Haywood Edwards, Preston York, Steven Johnson, Kyle Keuhn, Braden Golliver, Seth Meagley, Latham Retz, Payton Behnke, and Declan Potter. Wyatt Meade, Jacob Prentice, Levi Brazee, Isaiah Salimbangon, Zac Harris, Noah Pain, Ben Kemnah, Zayne Dibbell, Brody Cattanach, and Denzel Peter all join the team this season.

UV/GMU begins their

2024 season with league opponent Oxford in the annual Sherburne-Earlville tournament, where they look to build off their second place finish last year and will be held the first weekend of school. The Storm will then be on the road against non-league opponent Morris on September 10 before competing in the Greene boys' soccer tournament on September 12 and 14.

UV Girls Soccer: Continued growth and high hopes to defend MAC title

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

NEW BERLIN – After winning the MAC last season, the Unadilla Valley Storm girls' soccer team is back for the 2024 under direction of former assistant and newly head coach Rob Catena. Rob has been with the program for the past few seasons and is grateful to make the transition into the lead role. Rob's wife Jill will also be assisting him throughout this season as well.

Catena is excited to have a great group of girls coming back and has high hopes for the season with the experience. He has about 14 to 15 girls returning, including the eight starters from last year. Shelby Rose, Natalie Crandall, Madison Dix, Natalya Schrag, and a few others look to fill in and play a major role on the team after losing leading scorer Jaiden Schrag to graduation.

The team also lost its two goalies, Kalie Fernandez-Naughton and Brynn Grant,



to graduation as well, so Kora Johnson will be a big asset in net for the Storm.

From working with the girls as an assistant, Catena has seen much growth in the team as the girls know the system already in place and have even been working hard all summer in travel soccer to prepare for the season. Catena credits UV boys' soccer and UV travel soccer coach Josh Burchill for his help as he can see the difference in his team from all their hard work.

As the MAC league shifts to playing each other once

this season compared to twice previously, Catena is fortunate that his team will have some pressure off some of the league games with just one meeting vs each. UV starts off in the Mount Markham (section III) tournament the weekend of school before hosting their annual NY Pizzeria tournament the following weekend of September 13 and 14. UV will also face non-league opponent Tioga twice this year on September 21 and on October 8 to change up this year's schedule.



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UV/GMU Cross Country: Improvement is key

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

NEW BERLIN – The Unadilla Valley/GMU Cross Country team returns under the direction of tenured coach Lee Schaeffer. As a merged team, their primary focus each year is to continue to show improvement throughout the season. Cross Country, like track, also has each athlete focused on individual goals and improvement as well.

Schaeffer's boys cross country team has 2023 MAC All-Star Noah Pain returning for his final season. Pain qualified for the states last season, where he finished 65 among 115 male runners after finishing seventh at sectionals. The UV/GMU boys' team also won the 2023 MAC sportsmanship award.

"Winning the sportsmanship award means that the other coaches in the league recognized team members not only supported their own teammates but also encouraged runners from other schools to do their best as well," Schaeffer said.

Aside from Pain, Schaeffer is looking forward to having Andrea Favinger returning for her junior year. As a Sophomore last year, she was the lone female runner on the team and worked hard with a ninth place finish in the Section IV Class D race.

Schaeffer anticipates Pain and Favinger to duplicate or even improve on their results from last season.

Over the summer, Schaeffer says the runners are given a summer program to do on their own. Since the



Some of the local MAC cross country teams, including Afton/Harpursville/Bainbridge-Guilford and Unadilla Valley, attended cross country camp before the 2024 season. (Submitted Photo)

schools are merged, it can be challenging to get together to do a run. Some athletes also attend cross country camp prior to the school year.

Looking ahead at the 2024 schedule, the UV/GMU cross country team will begin the season on September 17 at their home course against

Schenevus with the race starting at 4:45 p.m.

For Schaeffer, he always looks forward to the sectionals meet in November.

"To me it is like a finals test to see if the runners season long preparation for meets has been successful," Schaeffer said.

UV Golf: Back on the course as a team

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

NEW BERLIN – After being unable to field a team for the last few seasons, the Unadilla Valley Storm golf team is back in action with a great group of committed golfers this season. Coach Kevin Nial knows his program is young this year with only one returner back from the last team, Nolan Lewis. Lewis, who started off playing golf in seventh grade, leads the group as a junior.

While the rest of the team is new to the program, each athlete comes in with golfing experience from golfing with family members and are ready to make their mark for UV. Nial said this group of kids have shown up very enthusiastic and dedicated.

Declan Potter and Denzel Peter join the golf team this year with being prominent to the UV athletic scene from time on other sports teams. Peter was brand new to the sport, Nial said, and had never picked up a club prior to joining the team, but was willing to give it a try. Nial said Peter really likes the sport, is picking up the game quick, and is out everyday ready to go.



The 2024 Unadilla Valley golf team, coached by Kevin Nial and Sam Loeffler. Missing from pic is Denzel Peter and Asher Hackett. (Photo from Coach Nial)

Nial also has senior Trinity Loomis joining as well as Brooklyn Thompson, Nick Church, Uriah Drake, Asher Hackett, Hunter Winton, Emily Vatovec, Sophia Burke, Jadyann Caesar, and Sarina Bell, who are all excited for the season.

Nial hopes his team will gain confidence as the matches begin and further down the road and will want to come back and continue to grow beyond this season.

"After the first week of practices, the kids walked away feeling good, are settling in, and know what to do with the routine we have in place," Nial said. "They are developing and progressing everyday and are enthused and serious."

UV also has the pleasure of using Sherburne's Mountain Top Golf Course this season, where some of the kids who live near by, as part of the Sherburne area is on the edge

of the UV School District, have experienced playing on the course before joining the team. It will be a challenge for the MAC league teams, because they have never

played there before. Nial said the Thompsons, who are the new owners of the course, were very accommodating and it was a win/win situation all around.

UV has one match before the new school year starts on September 3 and will continue league play on Wednesday, September 11 at Hancock and then hosts Greene on Sept 13.

UV/GMU football merges with Unatego

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

NEW BERLIN – The Unadilla Valley/GMU Football team was unable to field a complete team for the

2024 season. With the help of various parents and UV administration, the consensus plan was to allow the interested 10-12 grade players to join with the Unatego varsity football team for this year.

The freshmen will join with the UV modified team this season in hopes of a brighter future for the UV/GMU football program in years to come.

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Greene Boys Soccer: "Dedicated and focused on working as a team"

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

GREENE – Rick Tallman and his Greene Trojans boys' soccer team are ready to kick off the 2024 season after working hard in the offseason to keep in shape and welcoming new players in the process. Greene is also glad to move back into Class C after the bump up to Class B in 2023 due to school enrollment.

Greene finished 9-7-1 in 2023 with the loss to Seton Catholic in the Section IV, Class B tournament after advancing with a win against Port Byron/Union Springs in the first round. Greene also finished second in the MAC Division II standings, behind Afton/Harpursville. Greene lost seven seniors following last season, but have a great group returning this year.

Tallman was appreciative of his captains, Kloden Rapp



The 2024 Greene Trojans boys' soccer team, coached by Rick Tallman. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

and Seth Symons, for leading the summer workouts this season and continues to look to them throughout the season.

"Kloden is a very skilled player who is constantly growing and was also involved in club soccer and is trying to be noticed by college scouts," Tallman said.

"Seth is a strong motivator for our younger players."

Rapp led the team with 14 goals on the season and was big on the assist front as well with some of the senior leaders.

Tallman said while his team is a bit young this year, he still has a lot of dedicated returners and sees his team

sticking to tradition of being competitive.

"Shane Rideout is a junior this year and he can play anywhere. I plan on moving him around as he is very versatile," Tallman said. "I'm excited to see what Jacob Acevedo will do as he gained varsity experience as an eighth grader last year and he has a good skill

set. Kenny Baucas returns and I hope that he takes on more of a leadership role and shows a good skill set as well."

Jackson Roth will also be returning as the team's primary goalkeeper this year with a few younger players serving as backups. With continued interest among underclassmen, Tallman appreciates how the future remains bright for the Trojans' soccer program.

With a strong and dedicated team, Tallman's big picture is getting his team to be more united.

"We are focusing on playing more simple and within ourselves," he said. "We spent too much time worrying and putting so much pressure on ourselves, so I'm hoping we start believing in ourselves and our teammates and express unity and work as a system rather than as individuals. These are dedicated young men who are very seri-

ous about the work that they put in."

Greene's 2024 schedule is much different than in years past because the MAC league has switched from two divisions to just one for this season and possibly for the future. Tallman expressed the hardships of having to hunt down games, because the MAC only plays each other once, which is a total of six games out of a possibility of 16 total. Greene has added non-league opponents Homer, Athens, and Groton to the schedule. Tallman said it'll be good for his team to see and play against different and good competition within these IAC schools.

Greene will also host its annual boys' soccer tournament on September 12 and 14, welcoming UV/GMU, Chenango Forks, and Windsor.

Greene Girls Swimming: Working on technique while continuing to progress

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

GREENE – The Greene Trojans girls' swim team returns to the pool for the 2024 season under head coach

MK Kelly. Coach Kelly has been very pleased at how well her team has progressed and is happy to welcome back key returners, after losing just one senior, Mallory Jeffrey to graduation.

Coach Kelly's team comes back after good swims from last year's sectionals, where the girls made it back to the finals or consolation finals in their individual events. The team relays also dropped great

times as well in the finals/consolations.

"The girls progressed really well throughout the season and improved their times by the end of season," Coach Kelly said. "I really liked how the team came together and bonded. They were able to be much more confident last year and I hope to work on that this year as well."

As a team, the goals remain the same with the girls striving to improve times while also making technique more efficient. This year's team is all returners, and the experience will help them achieve such goals. These returners include Savannah Nowalk, Alexis Clark, Corrine Diczno, Keeli Roe, and Louise Mendolia.

Nowalk, Clark, Diczno, and Mendolia return as sprint freestylers. Clark has also helped in the backstroke with Nowalk in the breaststroke and Roe as the lone distance freestyler. Louise and Corrine, who were new to the sport last



The 2024 Greene Trojans girls' swim team, coached by MK Kelly. L to R: Savannah Nowalk, Louise Mendolia, and Keeli Roe. Missing from photo are Alexis Clark and Corrine Diczno. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

year, have been working on backstroke, breaststroke, and sprint freestyle.

With losing the team's Individual medley and butterfly swimmer, Kelly would like to see one of the members fill in both spots on occasion. But, all in all, the team has been working on getting faster in the preseason.

"Working with the same

group of girls will be fun," Kelly said. "I'm lucky to work with a good group of girls. We can build upon what we worked on last year right from the start. Our meets against Sus Valley are always fun, along with local meets against Norwich."

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Greene Girls Soccer: Seeking improvement while staying competitive

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

GREENE – The Greene girls' soccer team returns for the 2024 season under new direction. Matt Butler and assistants Sierra Badger and Nick Specht, are ready to work with a great group of experienced and new players. Butler, who has been coaching different levels of soccer and basketball for Greene for 15 seasons, is excited to step up as the head coach for the varsity team this year.

"After spending time coaching the Mod A group and the JV basketball team, I'm excited to be coaching varsity, which will come as a new challenge for me," Butler said. "At Greene, we have good athletes and kids. I know this team had a tough season last year, so we are rebuilding, but look to still be competitive in our league."

Butler already has 18 girls



The 2024 Greene Trojans girls' soccer team, coached by Matt Butler. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

excited for the season, even with the challenge of recruiting due to Greene also having field hockey in the fall. While working hard and being competitive, Butler wants the girls to also focus on having fun playing the sport.

"I just want them to focus on one game at a time and keep things simple while slowly gaining experience and confi-

dence in themselves," Butler said. "Good sportsmanship is also key. We have already begun workouts this summer and laying out the groundwork, so we will see what happens."

Butler is appreciative to have Sierra Badger as his assistant this season with her experience as a former soccer player and she will be

helpful among the lines as a skills coach. Nick Specht, like Butler, brings his experience with the youth program into play, where most of the players played on the mod A and other club soccer teams.

With experienced and new players attending the summer workouts, Butler already has expectations for positions and knows who will be ready to

fulfill big roles.

Among the key returners are seniors Audra Doll and Cali Knapp on offense, who are both confident up front as well as junior Johanna Trepas. Joining them on offense is eighth grader Hailey Butler, who has experience at the lower levels.

At the mid-fielder position, junior Lyndsay Specht returns with sophomores Alexis Cloyd and Caitlin Walls. Freshman LeeAnn Seidof joins the team with Melanie Specht, who alternates between offense and mid.

On defense, Greene will have junior Makenzie Soto leading the pack with senior Caden Gregware and sister Melana Gregware, who is a sophomore. Seniors Liesl Ludolph and Zabelle Straniero both return and junior Brooke Relyea, who was a part of Butler's Mod A group at one time, will help out as goal-

ie, along with Khloe Waltz. Freshman Macie Dunlap will also get some playing time on defense as well.

It was a big loss to Greene with its starting goalie Molly Cornell graduating, but Butler is confident in Waltz and Relyea on building confidence in net with already seeing what they're capable of from Mod A.

Following the first day of school, Greene kicks off its 2024 season on September 7 before back-to-back games on Sept 9 and 10 against non-league opponents. Greene heads to Afton/Harpursville for the start of MAC play on September 13. The Trojans will host a girls' soccer tournament starting Thursday, September 19 and concluding on Saturday, September 21, which features Bainbridge-Guilford, Sidney, and Newark Valley.

Greene Volleyball: "Continuing to show great sportsmanship and spreading positivity"

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

GREENE – While matches have not come easy for the Greene Trojans volleyball team, the team returns optimistic and shows a positive attitude going into a new season. Coach Deb Krupp has 18 girls ready to work hard and have fun this year.

Krupp's team is proud of winning the MAC sportsmanship award for the past two seasons and is always showing great morale and working together as a "family." Krupp also learned a lot in her first two seasons with the varsity team as well, where she's had passionate players try to be involved in every play,

but learned that the back row players are not allowed to block the net.

While there has been many learning moments, Krupp appreciates how coachable her team is and loves that they want to work hard and are able to work hard at correcting and making tweaks to get better.

Krupp's team also got together for team bonding prior to the start of the season that has only led to a stronger connection between everyone and creates a positive team chemistry that looks great on the court as well.

Krupp is counting on her seniors to continue to provide strong leadership skills. Krupp has worked with some

of these girls since the seventh grade and knows what they're capable of. She hopes Bella Begley, Serenity Douglas, Madison Gianetto, Shanna Krupp, Holly Pierce, Sidra Root and Morgan Quarella will have the best season of their high school careers and enjoy themselves.

Other returners include juniors Marissa Kenyon and Allyssa Lynch and sophomore Kayla Swift. Nali Besa, Ella Donnelly, Aliveya Hannon, Molly Harris, Kaitlynn Ives, Madelyn LaFave, Skylar Thurston, and Tatum Utter join the Trojans this year and look to make their mark on the team. Krupp said some of the new kids have been playing since the seventh grade



The 2024 Greene Trojans volleyball team, coached by Deb Krupp. (Photo from Coach Krupp)

as well.

Greene starts its 2024

season at Unadilla Valley on Tuesday, September 10

before heading to Delhi on Monday, September 16.

Greene Golf: Looking to defend MAC title

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

GREENE – The Greene Trojans golf team returns for the 2024 season, eager to defend its 2023 MAC league title. The 2023 season showed a lot of promise and strength from the team in the final matches and the 2024 season could continue to bring Greene success in one of the toughest sports known to mankind.

"It was nice to finally break out against Sidney," Coach Pete Flanagan said. "The year prior we came up just short, so it was exciting to win last year, where it came down to the last few matches."

Flanagan's team was also fortunate to have Parker Flanagan, who returns for his final season, attend individual sectionals, where he finished third and advanced to his first ever state championship. Parker finished 77th out of 99



The 2024 Greene Trojans golf team, coached by Pete Flanagan. From right to left: Lincoln Youngs, Keegan Evans, Trent Drew, Keaton Browning, Parker Flanagan, Alex Berry, Carter Williamson, Levi Parks, Nick Holt, Kiefer Evans, Liam Clark, Logan Roth, Orion Lamien, Max Drazen, Cooper Flanagan, and Tim Conpropst. (Photo by Coach Flanagan).

total golfers at states and was one of nine of the best Section IV golfers.

"It was exciting to be able to watch him and gain super experience," Coach Flanagan

said. "Qualifying for states and making the states team was a huge accomplishment for him and I know he's proud of that."

Parker, along with Lincoln

Youngs, will lead the team as seniors this year. Youngs had just missing qualifying for sectionals, so Flanagan hopes that both Parker and Lincoln will be in after this

season. Flanagan said that both Parker and Lincoln have been playing all summer and hopes that they both continue to have success for their final season. Flanagan also hopes to have other golfers look up to them and duplicate their efforts.

"Success breeds success," Flanagan said. "Other kids see what Parker was able to do and they want to push themselves to do the same and that's exciting to see as a coach."

Flanagan said almost everyone is returning after losing a couple of seniors last year. He expects his team to be balanced with a few upperclassmen to fill the gaps and newer players joining in. Flanagan, like many other coaches, knows how tough the sport of golf is, so his big focus for the team is to go out there and play your own game.

"I tell them to focus on one

hole at a time and think about the little things because you control your own narrative," Flanagan said. "It is also important to be mindful of what's going on, like how far you are and where your shot is. Stay focused on your own game and what your potential is other than how your opponent may be doing."

Flanagan looks forward to his team continuing their hard work and staying consistent in the early matches ahead. It may come down to Greene and Sidney battling it out for the league title again this year and Flanagan always appreciates the challenge.

"We could be both going back-and-forth in wins and I'm sure it'll be a shootout," Flanagan said on playing Sidney. "It's fun to be challenged. It just means that we have to be prepared and bring our 'A' game to these tougher matches."

Youthful Trojans look to continue playoff streak

By Patrick Newell
Sun Contributing Writer

While the ultimate team success - sectional and state titles - has eluded Greene's football program. The Trojans have consistently put themselves in position to reach those goals.

And for longtime head coach Dave Gorton, having that opportunity year after year has made the job that much more gratifying.

"We've been on a nice run of success," Gorton said, who is in his 12th season as head coach. "We've been to the playoffs a lot, and we've won the division a lot. This year, though, will be much more challenging."

The small Chenango County school that resides just off Route 12 - about equidistant from Norwich and the Binghamton area - has found a way to remain not only competitive, but among the most successful schools in Section IV.

To wit, the Trojans have been, clearly, the most consistently good Chenango County grid outfit over the last decade.

Aside from the 2020 season in which the playoffs were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trojans have made the Section IV playoffs every season since 2015.

To meet that standard, many players will need to elevate their play from last season, and newcomers to varsity will be cast in signif-

icant roles without proof of concept.

"We only have two seniors (with football experience) on the roster among 25 kids," Gorton said. "We will have to rely heavily on a lot of guys who will be in new positions, and they will be seeing important and significant minutes for the first time."

With varsity starting experience at a premium, the first player Gorton mentioned was Isaiah Sexton. Sexton was a two-way starter last year, and an important cog in the Trojans' playoff run in 2023.

"He is an excellent player, and someone we will count on so much this year on the line with his experience," Gorton said of Sexton.

Despite the relative inexperience on the offensive side of the ball - including the line - Gorton is optimistic about the offensive line's potential.

"We have depth on the offensive line for the first time in years," Gorton said. "We have some good players; they are just inexperienced. They'll get better and better as the season goes on."

Severin Lodge, Luca Root, and Taylor Taggart are among starting and depth pieces Gorton is projecting on the line. Taggart is one of the two seniors expected to see big minutes this season.

Gorton also noted freshman Donte Wrench, who is a promising newcomer that will rotate in on the defense and offensive lines.

"Taggart is coming off two years of learning the system,"



The 2024 Greene Trojans football team, coached by Dave Gorton. Front row, L to R: Trent Hamilton, Luca Root, Lazarus Ludolph, Alex Renfer, Micah Lafave, Michael Slater, Donte Wrench, Troy Braman, Collin Morlando. Second row: Wyatt Dunlap, Justin Arboit, Peyton Hitt, Tucker Driscoll, Jacob Eroshevich, Aden Sperry, Aiden Carter, Jasen Ledford, Isaiah Sexton, Severin Lodge, Taylor Taggart, Eli Sepulveda-Kiefer, Dallyn Camp, Keegan Waltz. Absent: Drake Malmquist and Aiden Marcin. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

Gorton said. "Now he is a leader for the program."

Gorton said "competition" for playing time is the operative word when it comes to the skill position players.

At quarterback, junior Michael Slater is tabbed to take starting snaps. Slater is a dual-threat player, but with the offensive line tracking as a strength of the team, Gorton is counting on Slater to make good decisions with the zone read running game.

"We've been more pass-happy in recent years," Gorton said. "We'll probably look to run it more than we have traditionally done."

At running back, Laz

Ludolph, Troy Braman, and newcomer Keegan Waltz are in line to see the most carries. Drake Malmquist, a lanky two-way player at tight end and defensive end is slated to start at tight end.

When the Trojans do look to air the ball out, Micah LaFave, Jacob Eroshevich, and Dallyn Camp are the primary options for QB Slater.

Among that trio, Eroshevich has the most experience with several catches a season ago, along with TD receptions.

Given the Trojans' sustained success, the youthful roster with limited varsity experience should not act as a deterrent. The goals remain the same as every previous season.

"We've talked about the

success we've had. Some of juniors that were on the team last year were part of our success," Gorton said. "We would be very pleased if we made the playoffs. The top four teams (in 8-man football) make the playoffs. If we keep that playoff streak going, that would be a fantastic accomplishment. It would lay the foundation for future teams."



The 2024 Greene Trojans Field Hockey team, coached by Heather Rapp and Kelly Erickson. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

Greene Field Hockey: Continuing to grow as a program while spreading positivity

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

GREENE - The Greene Trojans Field Hockey team returns for a new season, looking to build from last year with its experienced and well-lead team, coached by Heather Rapp and Kelly Erickson. The team that won the Section IV, Class A championship just two seasons ago, strives to be the same competitive team and can certainly do so with many returners coming back this season.

While leading the pack, Rapp and Erickson cannot be the only ones credited in making Greene a successful field hockey program year after year with every level reflecting a great group of girls as Jessica Becker and Matt Carlin have helped develop girls and get them to that next step. The Greene Field Hockey program continues to grow strong with all helping hands involved.

As a new season gets underway, Rapp and Erickson are looking to build from last season and continue to show great sportsmanship all around with building great team chemistry and staying positive.

Rapp knows she has key roles to fill after losing starting goalkeeper Tatianna Wells to graduation, but puts a lot of trust in Braelyn Blakeslee and Mya Leggett-Carlin on filling that gap. Blakeslee had her share of time in the cage last year and recorded 15 saves in the loss to Windsor last October and is ready to shine this season in more of a primary role.

Rapp is also counting on the all-stars from the 2023 season to continue to stay strong this year, including Josie Dutcher, Claire Flanagan, Nadia Brown, Ahraya Whitt, Brooke Williams, and Abilene Yahner. Flanagan, Brown, Yahner, Ella Gaylord, and Kenley Jenks are the team's leading seniors this

year and are looking for a successful final season.

The 2024 schedule reflects the MAC league change of playing each opponent once instead of twice in previous seasons. Greene will get to see two teams out of the section with Holland Patent and Rome this year. Greene did play Holland Patent last year, where they won 5-1, but have not faced Rome.

Some games to look out for this season include senior night on September 17, where the Trojans will honor their five seniors against Spencer-Van Etten. Greene will play their traditional Nancy B Barrows/ Nancy Barrows game on September 23 against league opponent Afton/Harpurville.

"We will strive to be the best that we can be," Rapp said. "We will grow with every game and adjust. I'm optimistic about this season and the girls have already shown great stuff."



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Norwich Football: "Next man up"

By Patrick Newell
Sun Contributing Writer

Football programs at all levels abide by the well-known philosophy following injuries to their players: Next man up.

The expectation of that next-man-up mantra is that the backup will fill in for the injured starter, and do so at a level of competency where there isn't much drop-off in the level of play.

That expectation sounds good in theory, but the reality is that even at the highest level of sports, starters are starters for good reason.

So, when you operate a small high school football program with little room for hiccups of any kind, injuries to starting players can prove especially brutal.

Norwich coach, Mike Chrystie, had the play the ultimate juggling act a season ago as key starter after key starter when down with an injury.

"The injury bug, in one sense, completely devastated us," Chrystie said, who lost his starting running back, quarterback, and various linemen for some if not all the games. "I'm hoping last year was an anomaly. We had to piece together a team last year, and it's a testament to the kids that we have. We never gave up...that may have been the most satisfying team that I coached with all the adversity that we faced."

With the odds stacked against them, the Purple Tornado managed to earn a postseason spot finishing the regular season with a .500 record before dropping its sectional playoff game opener to eventual state finalist, Maine-Endwell.

"We did a lot of good things last year, but it obviously works better when everyone is healthy," Chrystie



The 2024 Norwich Purple Tornado football team, coached by Mike Chrystie. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

said. "We were still able to put up a lot of points with a lot of players who were not originally starters."

Since Chrystie took the helm at Norwich, the execution at the quarterback position has proven critical, and every winning Purple Tornado team under Chrystie's tutelage has seen efficiency and excellence at quarterback.

Fortunately, Chrystie has been blessed with excellent play in recent seasons as senior Steven Dowdall picked up the reins from Torin Lawrence in the fall of 2022, and has led Norwich to back-to-back playoff appearances.

"I'm going to enjoy this last year with (Steven)," Chrystie said. "He's a dual-threat athlete (at quarterback), and any quarterback that has played for me, you have to do both. There is a lot of pressure being a quarterback in our system. Everything runs through the quarterback. To have a player like Steven, who is in his third year as a starter...he's an extension of me on the field."

Aside from quarterback, having one or two solid running backs has often prov-

en fruitful to the Norwich offense, in addition to the voluminous contributions from quarterback.

Chrystie isn't short on experience at running back this season, either.

Kaden Downey, a bruising fullback, and fleet-footed Braden Hagenbuch were thrust into more significant roles a season ago following the season-ending injury of Holden Ryan,

"It's nice that (Kaden and Braden) were able to pick up a lot of experience last year after Holden went down," Chrystie said.

While Norwich prefers a preponderance of running plays to passing plays, Dowdall will have familiar faces at tight end and receiver.

Mitchell Collins enters his third season with the Tornado. Collins was off to a strong start a year ago before breaking his hand. Collins was eventually able to suit up on defense, but missed out on adding to that promising start on offense.

Kassen Stubb also saw time last season, but more so on the defensive side of the

ball. Chrystie tabbed Stubb as an athletic player with "the ability to go up and get balls."

Also figuring in the receiving mix is Zack Parker. Parker was also promoted to key varsity minutes a season ago, out of necessity. While a bit undersized, Chrystie said Parker has great hands, and is not afraid to stick his nose into the mix.

Zach Turner is yet another depth piece at tight end or

receiver, who will rotate into the starting offense depending on the team's offensive sets.

Anchoring the offensive line will be returning senior starting center, Jack Barnes.

Chrystie had lofty praise for Barnes.

"He's one of the top three character kids that I've ever coached," Chrystie said. "He does everything the right way, and has great leadership skills."

At guard are Connor White and Jaxson Francis. White saw time last year as a fill-in for injured players, and Francis was a call-up depth piece from junior varsity due to various injuries. "Both guys have put in a lot of work to get stronger," Chrystie said of the duo.

The tackle position also features players with varsity experience from a season ago.

Drew Westervelt and Zakkery Myers are tabbed at left and right tackle respectively. Chrystie expects a lot of Westervelt on both sides of the ball. Myers, Chrystie said, is healing up from a shoulder injury suffered in the summer. Chrystie said he expects Myers will be "ready to rock" when the season starts.

Most of the aforementioned players on the offensive side of the ball will also pull double duty on the defensive side of the ball in some capacity.

Among those cast as primarily defensive starters are Tiernan Lindsay at linebacker, Ryan Evans on the defensive line, and Turner at defensive end.

Roster depth is a bit better than a season ago, and it is Chrystie's hope that he will not need to drill too deep on that depth in the event of injuries.

And, if Norwich remains relatively healthy, reaching the postseason is a realistic goal.

"You're not going to find a more competitive person than me - except my wife," Chrystie said. "Our goal every year is to become that perennial playoff team. We have to get over that hump. That's the goal every year. With the group that we have this year, those goals aren't going away. It's our job, as coaches, to put the kids in position to succeed, and let the chips fall where they may."

Norwich Purple Tornado cheer



The 2024 Norwich Purple Tornado cheer team, coached by Nancy Swertfager. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

Norwich Girls Soccer: Getting Norwich back in the playoffs under new direction

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

NORWICH - The Norwich girls' soccer team kicks off its 2024 season under a new coach this year. Riley Lougee steps up into the varsity head coach role after a move to the Norwich School District and some coaching experience at the lower level.

Lougee spent some time coaching soccer at Keystone College in Pennsylvania and also helping out the youth programs before coaching the Norwich JV team.

Lougee is very excited to be teaching and coaching at Norwich, where he sees himself being a good fit and has experience with the varsity team already with attending games and being present at other events. He is also famil-

iar with most of the girls he started with on JV making the move to varsity.

"I know there is a lot of weight on my shoulders and a lot of pressure as I make this transition to coaching varsity," Lougee said. "But, once everything gets going, it should be much more smoother with knowing most of the girls and already having some workouts this summer."

The team has met for the past few weeks over the summer a few times a week, where Lougee said the roster numbers look good for both JV and varsity. Lougee knows there is always improvement to be made every year and wants the team to continue to push forward. The main goal is to always be competitive and have a good chance at winning the division, which

Lougee said would propel Norwich to be in a good spot at reaching the playoffs, which had been a struggle in the past.

Lougee is confident in his experienced returners leading the team this year. Among those returners are Josey Ryan, Bella Dilorio, Maya Adoff, and goalie Daphney Frank. Josey Ryan will be counted on again in the forward position and already shows attributes to being a hard-working athlete, who Lougee said will certainly make an impact up top. Dilorio returns for her final season as captain and forward with Ryan and is notable for her speed and also for being a hard-worker. Adoff, who was named captain last year, will lead the mid-fielders, but will provide support on



The 2024 Norwich Purple Tornado girls' soccer team, coached by Riley Lougee. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

both offense and defense and shows strength on both ends of the ball. With Dilorio and Adoff, Norwich has a total of

nine seniors altogether; Briley Beckwith, KaLeigh Collins, Caroline Richardson, Caylee McCarthy, Lara Tefft, Taylor

Searfoss, and Mya Barnes, all looking to have a successful final soccer season.



The 2024 Norwich Purple Tornado girls' tennis team, coached by Nikki Brooks. From left to right; Mariana Chetronie, Gwen Breese, Mara Lanfair, Paulina He, Selina Lian, Riley Wolford, Skylr Newman, Rori Gates, Maci Boughton, Erin Presnell, Addison Jackson, Isabelle Voss, and Coach Nikki Brooks. Not pictured : Finley Farrow, Maria Cruz and Mia Tang. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

Norwich girls tennis: Learning and gaining confidence as a young team

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

NORWICH – The Norwich Purple Tornado girls' tennis team returns to the courts this fall under direction of coach Nikki Brooks. After losing a core group of seniors for the past

few seasons, this year's team is a mixture of experienced and new players, which makes the program still young, but determined.

Coach Nikki Brooks has 14 dedicated girls this season who have already shown great attitudes and are heavily

focused on what they want to accomplish while building and fine-tuning skills. While the girls are getting down to the basics and learning how to keep score, they are ready to get on the court for the upcoming matches that start following the first few days

of school.

By teaching the girls footwork, technique, and other notable skills, Brooks hopes that they will build and gain confidence on the court with every match that will help boost their competition against STAC opponents.

This year's team is led by returning seniors Isabelle Voss and Addison Jackson. Other returners with some varsity experience under their belt is Finley Farrow, who showed strength in the singles matches as a freshman last year,

Rori Gates, Erin Presnell, Skylr Newman, and Maci Boughton. Norwich welcomes Marianna Chetronie, Gwen Breese, Mara Lanfair, Paulina He, Selina Lian, Riley Wolford, Maria Cruz, and Mia Tang to the team this season.

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Norwich Golf: Staying consistent with a balanced group

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

NORWICH – The Norwich Purple Tornado golf team is excited to tee off another great season ahead. The team is also looking to defend its two-time STAC East title along with winning the 2023 Section IV, Class B championship. The pressure is always on, but Coach Dave Branham still has a great group, which consists of so much potential and strength at the upper and lower level of golfers.

Staying consistent will certainly help Branham's team continue its success, even with a few new golfers in the mix. Leading the charge will be Julien Smith and Jacob Dowdall, who are veteran golfers and seniors looking to have a great final season.

With the loss of five seniors last year, including top golfer Jacob Morris, the team knows that they have a few gaps to fill, but



The 2024 Norwich Purple Tornado golf team, coached by David Branham. Missing from photo is Charlie Smith. (Photo taken by CV Booster Club)

Branham knows the talent is there amongst his returning and new golfers to the program. He expects Smith and Dowdall to guide the underclassmen and stay consistent with their scores throughout the season.

There is much depth on this year's Norwich golf team with other senior Michael Brunick's great attitude and continuing to be a great contributor to the team along with sophomores Ethan Willis, who is picking up the game of golf and has improved greatly in the last year, and Brayden Adoff, who has shown growth and is getting bigger and stronger everyday. Freshman Matthew Brunick is expected to be solid this year with being an avid golfer and is always on the course. Charlie Smith has also shown much growth since last year and even switched clubs to be ready for this season.

Aside from those returning golfers, Norwich welcomes Brevin Bennett, Gavin

Burrell, and Jacob Lobdell to the varsity program this year. Bennett, as only a seventh grader, has had his share of experience in golf across the board, especially in the Juniors Masters, where he shot a hole-in-one in late June. Branham also applauds Bennett's love for the game of golf and how well-versed he is in the sport. Bennett will be among the stand outs of the STAC division this season.

While Burrell is new to the Norwich golf program, he is not new to the sport with being raised by a family of golfers. Branham already notices that Burrell has a good swing and is curious of how he will contribute to the team this year in his first year on varsity. Branham is also excited to see what Jacob Lobdell will bring to the team as well.

Norwich Volleyball: Rebuilding and growing confidence under new direction

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

NORWICH – The Norwich Purple Tornado volleyball team returns to the court under new direction for 2024. JV coach Kyle Ellis makes the jump up to lead the varsity team, where he is fine-tuning skills and technique with a strong will to rebuild the program. Ellis has been impressed with how quickly the girls are picking up the 5-1 rotation and working on more fluid plays while gaining confidence.

Captains Shaelyn Rice and Temprance Dockray are optimistic about this season and are excited to have Ellis as their coach for this year.

Rice, a junior this year, has played volleyball since the seventh grade and is

looking to be a great leader to her team.

"It is very important to take the lead and be there to lift your teammates when they are down," Rice said about being named captain.

She also loves playing volleyball because it became her escape to stress. She is looking forward to building a strong team bond and having a fun year under the support and dedication of coach Ellis.

For Dockray, she started playing volleyball since seventh grade after her cousin played. She appreciated that volleyball was a sport that didn't interrupt anything else and even made the switch from soccer to play.

"It meant the world to me to be named captain," Dockray said. "It gives me the chance to share my love of the sport while also being a leader. I hope to have a

good year and be a good example to my teammates."

Junior MaKenzie Spade is playing her first year of varsity after playing on modified and JV. She learned to love the sport of volleyball from watching the olympics and the sport has come easy to her.

"I hope we are able to make sectionals and build a strong bond as a supportive team," Spade said.

Junior Emma Urgo makes her return to this year's team as well, where she hopes the success will come also.

"I love that volleyball isn't all about one person's effort. It takes the whole team, making less pressure on yourself," Urgo said. "I hope we can have more success and I'm excited to see if we can make sectionals and hope to have a winning record."

Norwich also has four seniors this year; Talia Bookamer, Breonna Seymour, Emma Lorimer,

and Caitlin Wetterhahn, who hope to have a great final fall season. Rice, Dockray, Urgo, Spade, Tamika Marango,

Brooke Rogers, Lorelee Brown, Ava-Rose Cirigliano round out the junior class.



The 2024 Norwich Purple Tornado Volleyball team, coached by Kyle Ellis. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

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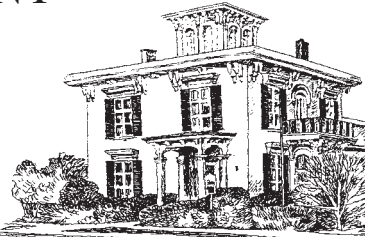
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Norwich Boys Soccer: Excited to return in 2024

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

NORWICH – After not fielding a varsity team for two seasons, the Norwich boys’ soccer team is excited to return to action. Norwich alum Chris Brown is ready to showcase his group of skilled players and rebuild the program to what it once was.

Brown, a 2017 Norwich graduate, spent some time as a player for the Norwich boys’ soccer team and has returned home to take on his passion for soccer in a new capacity as a first time varsity coach. Brown has also helped coached youth programs. Brown understands he is a young coach, but is excited for the opportunity and happy to be working for his alma mater.

“I’m pretty raw as a young coach,” Brown said. “But, I am looking forward to laying down a foundation this year and building the program back up. Also, I want us to work on being a better team everyday.”

In the first year back for



The 2024 Norwich Purple Tornado boys’ soccer team, coached by Chris Brown. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

the varsity program, Brown is figuring around 16-20 players without a JV program for this season. Brown is looking at being a young team with a handful of upper-

classmen to lead the way in the tough STAC league and with the move to class ‘A’.

Brown has held summer sessions throughout early August a few times a week

to get the guys kicking the ball around and feeling ready to go by the first official practice. Brown and his team are also looking forward to playing on the new turf field

that was finished prior to the first week of practices.

With holding a preseason, Brown hopes to see the hard work pay off within the season.

“I hope we jump out to a great start and hit the ground running,” Brown said. “I hope our summer training will pay off, especially with us starting early and knocking the rust off.”

Some of the upperclassmen that Brown will look up to and to help guide the younger players include seniors Jett Terry, Jonah Adams, Sawyer Swingle, and Timmy Miner. Miner will be counted on as the team’s primary goalkeeper this season. Aside from the seniors, junior players include Joey Hall, Liam Ballin as well as underclassmen James Sprague, Wyeth Stafford, who have stayed active with playing travel soccer.

“This team has a lot of promise,” Brown said. “They are eager to grow and up for the challenge of building this program back up.”

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Norwich Girls Swim: "Finish strong and successful"

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

NORWICH – The Norwich Purple Tornado girls' swim team laps around another new season ahead, under the direction of coach Saundra Gantt. Gantt was proud of taking all the girls to the sectional finals last season, where everyone swam their best times by the end. Nina Kman, who returns as a senior, also won her third sectional title in both the 200 and 500 events.

"Norwich really does have a good and strong swim program," Gantt said, even with smaller rosters. "The girls have come a long way since eighth grade and the work ethic gets stronger every year. I hope they will have another great season this year."

Kman leads the mostly young group as one of three upperclassmen and will try to make the most out of her final season. Kman is strong on the mid distance and freestyle events.

"With coming off an ACL injury, she will be limited, so my goal for her is to get her competing healthy and confidently," Gantt said. "She looks great in the water and we are just taking it by the day to get her there. She's also worked on more upper body strength, which is what she really needed."

Meghan Funk also returns to the team as a senior after spending some time abroad.

"We couldn't be happier to have her back this season," Gantt said. "She returned with



The 2024 Norwich Purple Tornado girls' swim team, coached by Saundra Gantt. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

a stronger, more confident mentality, which is exactly what she needed. She can also go anywhere in our line up, but is best with fly, breaststroke, and relays. She has some great goals and is getting back in shape nicely."

Mikayla Sastri is returning as a junior this season, where she has been actively working on getting stronger. Sastri is also strong with mid distance and freestyle.

"She's strong at mid and free distance, but we may change things up a little for her this season," Gantt said. "She'd like to start sprinting some and has some things to work on, but so far so good. She's gotten stronger over the

summer and is buying in."

Eighth grader Alex Shtrauch returns for another year on varsity, following her sister, Aurora's graduation. It was great to have them both in the pool together last year. Alex was the team's individual medley swimmer last season, but as the other experienced swimmers, she can go anywhere needed.

"She comes back a little taller and a little stronger," Gantt said. "She is our most versatile swimmer. I've been watching her a lot this season already to see where she would be the most successful. I know where I'm looking to put her, likely fly and back, but her breaststroke and

mid distance is looking really good too. Her line up will be based solely on where her size won't be a disadvantage, so it'll be a toss up right until the end."

The rest of the team consists of underclassmen, which have made the step up from modified to varsity and Gantt is expecting big things to come from them.

Brynn Meeks is a sopho-

more in her first real season with the team after coming off an ACL injury. Swimming helped a lot with her therapy.

"This season, she is showing up strong," Gantt said. "We are working on her technique and getting her strong. She has the best attitude and has been really improving both in the water and in the gym. She will stick to mostly freestyle and backstroke."

Kaelyn Conant is an eighth grader, who joins the varsity squad after some time on modified.

"She is very coachable and her freestyle transformation from the end of last year to end of practice week was rewarding to watch. She has been soaking up everything like a sponge and doubles up on workout with swimming in the morning and lifting and yoga in the evening, showing improvement every practice. I see her going anywhere in the line up to help, in backstroke, breaststroke, and freestyle."

Raeley Patterson is another swimmer from modified that is entering her freshman year. She is ready for the challenge and the transition from modified to varsity.

"So far, I see her in our breaststroke and freestyle events, but I plan to work

with her and the younger swimmers a lot this season on technique, so she's another swimmer that I look forward to seeing where she ends up this season," Gantt said.

Lastly, Freshman Jillian Petrie made the move back to swimming as she was a modified swimmer in the past and then took a bit of a break. Gantt is excited to have her back to the program.

"So far, I noticed that she has a great feel for the water," Gantt said. "She could be an anywhere, whether it be backstroke, breaststroke, or freestyler for now. I'm excited to get working on her technique and I could also see her going in the relays."

Gantt is looking forward to a new season and seeing what her team can do, even as being a smaller team.

"I would like to see these girls do what they always do," Gantt said. "Finish strong and successful. I would like them rise to the challenge of being a smaller team. We are small, but we have the speed, so the larger teams still like to compete against us. I, of course, always look forward to seeing them end the season with much success, goals reached, many smiles, and great memories."

Norwich XC: Small but competitive

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

NORWICH – The Norwich Purple Tornado cross country team is back for the 2024 season under the direction of Coach Shaun Horan. The team remains on the smaller side of most cross country teams across the area, but Horan has a group of experienced and committed members. Horan, who works at the high school as a PE teacher, hopes to recruit more runners within the first few days to a week of the new school year.

Horan's team has been putting in summer workouts on their own with designed training and mileage to prepare for the regular season. The focus for the season is to continue to make improvement throughout the season and become stronger and faster runners week by week. Horan already

has confidence in his small, but competitive team that continue to put in the hard work everyday.

For the Norwich girls' team, Annie Boland and Kyra Brunick-Davis return as the veterans of the team and as senior leaders. Joining them are Emilia Pepe and Laci Zieno, who are on their second year of cross country and Horan said they're doing really well. Horan hopes his girls' team will continue to work hard and have fun along the way.

The Sutton brothers, Caden and Nic, lead the returners for the Norwich boys' with senior Gabe Decker joining this season to help him get in shape. Connor Marshall is also giving cross country a try this year as well. Horan knows how goal oriented the Sutton brothers are and are great distance runners, who

are prepared for a good season and hopes to keep the motivation going.

The Norwich cross country team will start the season with some STAC invitationals before staying fresh with some MAC Tuesday meets against other area teams like UV/GMU, Afton/Harpurville/Bainbridge-Guilford. Norwich also has the Tornado 5000 meet that they regularly host each year, but with construction ongoing at the high school, where they've held the event for the last three to four years, the location is still to be determined at this time. The cross country state championships will be held in Queensbury this year, where the team went a few years ago with the last runner to make states there was Robert Jeffrey, so Horan hopes to send someone this year.

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A-H, B-G Cross Country: Staying healthy and having fun

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

CHENANGO COUNTY – The merged Afton/Harpursville/Bainbridge-Guilford Cross Country team returns under the direction of Collin Smith, Nick Mayo, and newly acquired coach Erin Taylor-Talcott. The team that lost a handful of seniors last season, including its top runner, Ethne Degan, is seeking a strong season amongst its returning and new members. The girls' team, who was powered by Degan, is looking to defend their sectional title with its remaining experienced runners.

Smith, who has lead this team for the past five years, had a big recruitment session before the end of school, where the team was also given a package of workouts to do over the summer. Some of the workouts were split up between different levels; higher, lower, beginner, and modified. The higher workouts were custom-made and color-coded for the veteran runners. The beginner and modified were more mild and consisted of low mileage run-

ning to make sure everyone wasn't overdoing their workout. Some of the workouts included running every day for at least 30 minutes no-stop at an easy pace.

While the workouts helped prepare the team to get in shape at all levels, Smith's goal is to keep everyone healthy and having fun, especially with the modified runners getting to know and love the sport of cross country.

Smith is appreciative to have three coaches this year with himself on the Afton side, Mayo with B-G, and Erin Taylor-Talcott for Harpursville.

"B-G joined us over the COVID period and it was a juggling act with all three schools," Smith said. "We are thankful to welcome Coach Taylor-Talcott, who was a race walker for Team USA. Her experience and knowledge will come in handy."

Taylor-Talcott does have some experience with the Afton/Harpursville team from the outdoor track season, but this is her first for cross country.

Smith has team goals for both the girls' and boys'



The Afton/Harpursville/Bainbridge-Guilford Cross Country team pose for a picture at cross country camp. (Submitted Photo)

team, which has seen a lot of growth from last year in particular. As mentioned, the girls are looking to defend their sectional title from 2023 without Degan, but still have some experienced runners, such as Maddie Ingham, who returns as a freshman this year, Jalyn Winans, and Lalaenia Baldwin, who have all made their mark on the

team for the past few seasons.

The girls also finished seventh in the state last year. Smith is looking forward to bringing his girls' team to more upper level meets, such as to one in Rochester with over 600 runners, so that they will gain experience and more exposure.

The boys' team has seen progression and growth from

a year ago, going from five athletes to about eight or nine this year. Smith said he could have up to 30 to 35 kids for the team's total, but he won't know the final number until the first week of school in case of any last minute recruits. Smith hopes to see his boys' team within the top five MAC teams this season.

Smith is looking forward

to this year's schedule, which features the home meet with senior recognition prior on the first Tuesday in October at the Regatta. Smith also anticipates the meet in Queensbury as well as sectionals held at Chenango Valley State Park on November 7 this year. Cross country states will also be held at Queensbury high school on November 16.

Afton/Harpursville Boys Soccer: Building team chemistry while attacking on the field

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

AFTON – The 2023 MAC Champions Afton/Harpursville boys' soccer team returns for a new season under the direction of a new coach for 2024. Scott Lord, Afton Athletic Coordinator and PE teacher, is looking forward to a good but tough season this year as he steps into the head coaching position.

After the 2023 season, the Crimson Knights lost a strong group of seniors, so Coach Lord knows his team will be slightly younger and a bit

smaller than usual this year. However, Lord is excited to see what his younger players will do as they fill in important roles. Lord's team put in some steady work over the preseason, meeting at least once a week to get their feet on the ball before the season and to build team chemistry amongst the upper and underclassmen.

Lord coached modified last year, and he has a good group of kids making the step up to varsity as freshman and sophomores this season. He is excited to have them with him as he begins his first year on varsity and already

knows what these players are capable of from their soccer playing experience. Lord also has a few seniors and a good amount of juniors to guide the younger players.

With the MAC league moving from two divisions into just one this year, Lord knows the season will be tough, but his team will be focused on attacking and creating a battle plan to do well on the field to be competitive. Lord also wants his defense to be top notch this season and the team will working out any kinks that come their way and trying to switch up strategies when reasonable.

Lord also understands that while Afton/Harpursville was much older than the rest of the league last year, it now seems the complete opposite this time around. Other teams will have experienced players coming back with at least a year of varsity under their belt while Lord's team will be younger. The change in dynamics will make it harder, but Lord anticipates what his team will do.

Amongst his returning players, Xander Quick will be counted on as the primary goalkeeper with time served backing up starter Carter Burns last year. Lord

is expecting big things from Quick as he has shown many strengths. Lord said there are other younger players that could be backups when necessary.

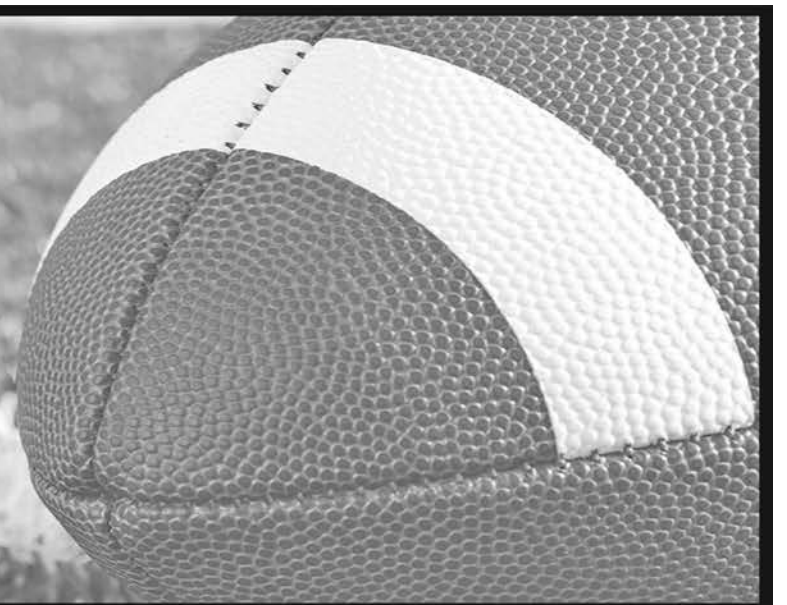
Leading the few seniors on the team is Toni Obeada, who was a big contributor to the team last year in their championship run. Behind the team's heavy senior squad last year, Obeada was third on the team with scoring 15 goals and had 10 assists. Lord said Obeada shows great tactics and is a great ball distributor at the mid-field position. Senior Ryan Wright, who has made impressions on the bas-

ketball court and the baseball field for Afton, is new to the varsity squad and hopes to make his final year the best yet. Lord said Wright will be good for the team up top.

The Crimson Knights will have non-league games following the first day of school and begin league play at home against Oxford on September 16. Lord said the beginning of the season is spaced out a bit, but by the end of September, games will be played consecutively as the team looks to defend their MAC league title.

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Afton/Harpursville Field Hockey: Being more technical while improving team chemistry

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

AFTON – The Afton/Harpursville Field Hockey team is ready for the 2024 season after finishing as Section IV, Class B runner up in 2023. The team strived to have a balanced attack with multiple goal scorers and is optimistic for a new season ahead. They are also filling in the gaps after losing four key seniors to graduation.

Coaches Josh and Casey Conover are looking forward to a new year, where they're looking to improve on being more technical with the ball, especially in the backfield. While making those improvements in the preseason, they are looking forward to competing at the highest level they possibly can while also improving on their team chemistry.

Afton/Harpursville returns its top seniors Paige Jennings and Lilly Bagg, along with a heavy junior class presence featuring Gracie Bagg,



The 2024 Afton/Harpursville Field Hockey team, coached by Josh and Casey Conover. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

Adrianna Hartman, Miranda Jessalyn Powell, and Emilie Schultz, Abby Hoyt, Rylan Hopkins. Hopkins will serve as the team's primary goalkeeper, after losing starter Vanessa Card,

Gracie Bomboy to graduation.

Abbey Paoletti is the team's lone sophomore,

with freshmen McKenna Ross and Alaysia Thomas rounding out the balanced team. Paoletti and Ross

return with varsity experience under their belt as Thomas is new to the team.

With the MAC league becoming more condensed this year for every team, Afton/Harpursville is looking forward to playing all the schools one time, which allows them to play a much more diverse schedule versus teams they haven't faced before. Some of those opponents include Candor, Newark Valley, Moravia, and Vestal and Maine-Endwell, who they haven't played since the 2022 season. The team is also wants to remain competitive against league opponents Whitney Point, Greene, and Windsor.

Greene and Afton/Harpursville always have a great matchup. Last season, the two teams went into overtime in both meetings. Greene won both games, so the Crimson Knights are looking to change the outcome with an experienced team.

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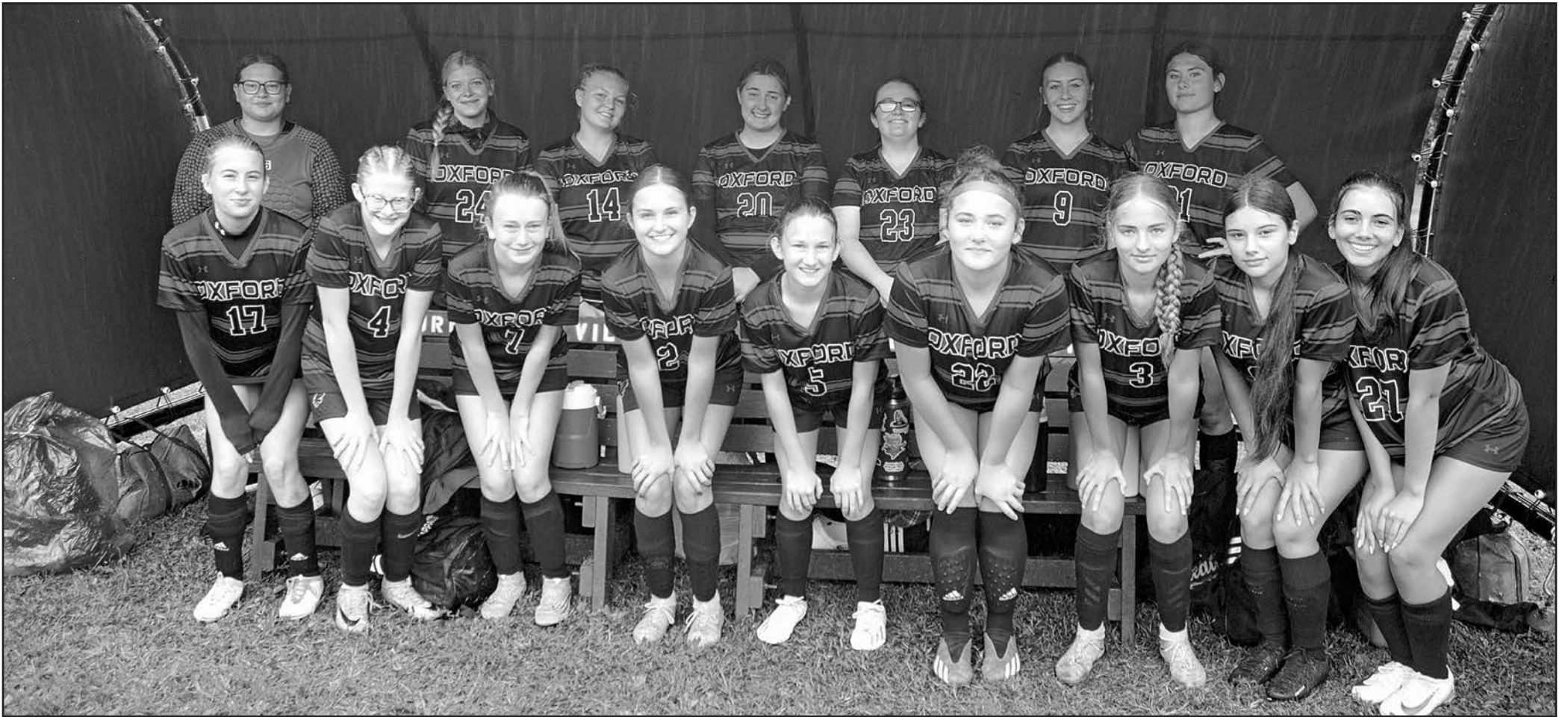
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The 2024 Oxford Blackhawks girls' soccer team, coached by Rachel Seiler. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

Oxford Girls soccer: "Capitalizing for each other"

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

OXFORD – The Oxford Blackhawks girls' soccer team returns to the field, coming off a sectionals run under Rachel Seiler, who returns for her second year as head varsity coach. Oxford made

sectionals in 2023, but fell to Marathon 3-2 in the first round of the Section IV, Class C tournament, and are looking to return to the postseason with many experienced players. Seiler was excited at the end of last season of what the future held for her team going

forward, where she only lost one senior, Jocie Finch after the 2023 season.

Seiler is appreciative of having a well-balanced team of 16 players with upper-classmen and a core group of sophomores, including Jayne Fleury, Kayla Knapp, Paige

Rickard, and Jenna Denz. Paige's twin sister Aubrey Rickard also joins the team this year.

Knapp led the team as a freshman last season with 13 goals. Senior Taegan Manwarren also returns for her final season, where she led the team in assists with 10.

Raya Warner returns as the team's leading goalkeeper with Manwarren leading up front with Emily Holbert, Nora Thorne, and Christine Seiler being senior leaders on the defense, aside from the

core group of sophomores.

Seiler is focused on capitalizing and scoring more this season after finding themselves staying in games last year, but not being able to score when only being down 1-0 at times.

"I'm excited to have mostly all returners this year, who've shown great effort and are starting to act like a team," Seiler said. "They understand that they are doing this for each other."

Seiler is looking forward to the season ahead, where the MAC league is now con-

densed into one division rather than two, meaning each league team will be playing each other once. With some non-league games added on the schedule, including October 4 matchup against Gilbertsville-Mount Upton, Seiler anticipates seeing what her team will be at skill-wise against unknown opponents.

After participating in the Sherburne-Earlville soccer tournament, Oxford heads into a league contest at Bainbridge-Guilford on Friday, September 13 at 4:30 p.m.



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Oxford Boys Soccer: “Making steady improvements with a new season ahead”

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

OXFORD – The Oxford Blackhawks boys’ soccer team returns for the 2024 season, looking to make steady improvements with a fresh year. The team that only lost two seniors following the 2023 season comes back as an experienced team that once was very youthful just a few seasons ago in its return as a program.

Head Coach Corey Endress is proud of his team, where his big focus is making good people out of the program and staying connected to former players as well. He is excited to see what his team can do this season after there was good participation during summer workouts, even with just meeting once a week to keep the guys in shape.

Endress’ team is constantly making improvements and Endress looks at each season as a way to start over and move forward. He is looking forward to seeing his team go out and compete with a wide open MAC division this year.

The MAC went from two divisions to just one, which Endress said was beneficial for only having seven teams in the league. With this change, all league teams will play each other once instead of twice this year, which made it a bit of a challenge to find non-league opponents for some teams. Endress appreciates having connections and good relationships with other coaches, so the non-league matchups were simple to add to the schedule. The team will face non-league opponent Morris, whom they faced two seasons ago with a possibility of other added games towards the end of the season.

Endress is also looking for-



The 2024 Oxford Blackhawks boys’ soccer team, coached by Corey Endress and Danny Woodford. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

ward to welcoming Norwich, Whitney Point, and Sidney to Oxford’s annual soccer tournament on September 13 and 14. It is the first time in a long while that Oxford has hosted a tournament, and Endress and his team are very excited. The tournament will be held at the Oxford Blackhawks Stadium field as the football team will be away and there will be no other conflicts.

Among the returners for this season include a great group of seniors with Donovan Rickard leading the charge with Sam Hendricks, Landen Olinski, Jack Knapp, Jared Sheridan, and Bartalo Bourn all coming back for one final time. Junior and starting goal-

keeper Kayden Renfrow also returns and shares captain roles with Rickard and Jared Sheridan. Eddie Golden, Issac Utter, Ben Sheridan, and Gordon Smith, who was a member of the varsity team as an eighth grader last year, is now a freshman going into this season, also return. Adam Beckwith, Liam Philippone, Dawson Viele, and Paxton LaMonica look forward to making their mark on the team this year as well.

With a good group of 16 returning and new players, Oxford is a strong contender of teams to watch out for in the MAC this year.



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Oxford Golf: Having fun while striving for success

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

OXFORD – The Oxford Blackhawks golf team tees off for its 2024 season after a solid finish last year. The team was proud to come out of the 2023 season with team sectionals and having one member of the team represent them in the individual sectionals last May. The team that did lose three of their starting golfers to graduation knows it'll be tough to fill in the gaps, but coach Lance Thorne is thankful to have a great group of kids that features a handful of returners.

Bennett Paden, who has had two successful golf seasons under his belt, returns as the team's leading golfer for his junior year. Paden represented Oxford at individual sectionals, which Thorne said it was the first time Oxford had a golfer qualify since Corey Seiler did 10 plus years ago.

"Bennett and his dad, Tim, who is our assistant coach, went to Elmira for a practice round the week before the tournament to get a feel for the course," Thorne said. "It was great watching him play with the best players in



The 2024 Oxford Blackhawks golf team, coached by Lance Thorne and Tim Paden. Bottom row L to R: Uri Tracy, Nickos Spyrtos, Ethan Trombly, Nick Richette, Abby Denz, Top L to R: Blake Barrows, Bennett Paden, Degan Endress, Isaac Utter. Missing from picture is senior Kyle Benjamin. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

Section IV. He was nervous as expected, but played well. Mark Twain is a very challenging and long course and the kids play from the blues, which makes it even more of a bear."

Paden qualified for individual sectionals by having an over par average of 5.5 or

better and his was a 5.25.

Paden came in seventh in individual sectionals with a score of a +11.

Thorne expects Paden to be even more consistent this season after achieving so much last year.

"I think his confidence will push him to the next

level and should keep him as one of the top five golfers in the MAC division," he said. "I'm expecting a return trip to Elmira in the spring as well."

Aside from Paden, the team will have senior Kyle Benjamin, sophomore Degan Endress, and junior Blake Barrows, returning with Abby

Denz hoping to make the most of her senior year as she makes the return to the golf team, where she once started as a seventh grader.

"We are returning several starters who will need to elevate their play for us to be successful," Thorne said. "Once Abby knocks the rust

off after some time away from golf, she should be a solid contributor for us as Kyle and Degan will help put up solid scores all season long. Blake, who was in and out of our top six last season and even filled in as a last minute substitution at sectionals in Delhi, will be called upon as a regular starter this season and can also put up solid numbers for us."

With the shorter than usual preseason this summer, Thorne reminded his team in June to get out there and golf to prepare for the season ahead. So, the kids have been working on their game and putting in the work that they need with only three team met practices before their first match.

"I'm looking forward to having fun with a great group of kids," Thorne said. "We always strive for a winning season and I think we can get there with the group that we have. As usual, I'm expecting that Greene and Sidney will be our toughest competition."

Oxford will have four matches within the start of the school year on September 5 before some rest until they play Unadilla Valley/GMU, who returns to the league this year, on Sept 16.

Oxford Volleyball: Putting in the work and growing as a program



The 2024 Oxford Blackhawks volleyball team, coached by Dean Curtis with assistants Kristin Seiler and Renee Johnson. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

OXFORD – The Oxford Blackhawks volleyball team is ready to serve the ball for the 2024 season under a new coaching staff. Head coach Dean Curtis, along with assistants Kristin Seiler and Renee Johnson, are looking forward to a great season.

Curtis is bringing his long-tenured 39 years of volleyball experience with coaching and officiating to this Oxford program, who won the MAC title in 2022 and made a sectionals run in 2023.

While Curtis is new to this Oxford program, the team brings back a handful of key players set to return to the court with Emerson LaMonica, Kassidy Miller, Olivia Oliver, Emmalee Reiss, and Abigail Stone. New to the varsity program are Fianna Caulkins, Breanne Charles, Dixie Gray, Addison Howe, Elizabeth Ingraham, Trinity

Jones, Kelsey Loiselle, Reagan Long, and Margaret Rovente. Trinity Jones is the team's lone senior this season.

Curtis is impressed with the growth of the program and his team has been working hard at fine-tuning the barrel system and focused on making adjustments at each position.

"I'm excited to be a part of the program and the girls have put in the work, with some even playing club volleyball and in our preseason, to show that they want to be here," Curtis said.

Oxford is eager to get on the court against local league opponents Bainbridge-Guilford, Afton/Harpurville, Sidney, Greene, and Unadilla Valley. Check out their schedule on schedulegalaxy.com and searching for Oxford.

Oxford Football: Making the return to 11-man football

By Morgan Golliver
Sun Sports Editor

OXFORD – After making the transition to eight-man football just prior to COVID, the Oxford Blackhawks football team is proud to make its elongated return to 11-man for the 2024 season and beyond.

The team is looking forward to a clean slate of new and exciting things this year under the direction of head coach Trenton Lyons. Lyons, who was the assistant coach last year, has 24 players this season, which does make them a smaller 11-man team than most, but his team is coming in with more depth and skill.

Lyons said the move from eight-man to 11-man was a last minute decision, but said everyone was on board and ready to go. He said the transition from eight to 11-man will give his team a more slowdown pace than the fast pace they were used to the last few seasons. This transition leaves Greene as the lone county team staying as an eight-man while UV joins Unatego this season.

While the Oxford football program hasn't seen 11-man



The 2024 Oxford Blackhawks football team, coached by Trenton Lyons. (Photo by Morgan Golliver)

football since around 2017, Lyons says improvements with recent enrollments at Oxford Academy has help boost the roster. Lyons only hopes this process continues to keep the commodity of and give the Oxford community back the program of what it was before. Lyons also hopes the wins will come as well.

Lyons' big message to his team is to never give up on yourself because that only means that you're giving up on your team as well. He also

praises the players that are committed to the program and are there right to play.

Lyons said the team has been working on learning 11-man football and have been picking up on everything quickly. He said that it's even easier as a coach as the game is slower to learn and even watches various drills online for ideas and inspiration. Lyons has been impressed with how quickly his team is also improving on developing form and in

hitting drills.

There are many familiar faces to this Oxford football team, who have stayed true to the program in the past few seasons. The team was very young only a few years ago and had only lost two seniors at the end of the 2023 season. This year's roster is a 50/50 mix of upper and underclassmen. Dominick Battista, Owen Behr, Dylan Bowers, Tren Bush, Colten Button, Brayden Hamilton, Brent Hamilton, and Aiden

Lamphere lead a senior-heavy class aside from juniors Blake Barrows, who is new to the team this year, Urijah Dibble, who returns as well as starting quarterback Jacob Gallo. Aside from Barrows, Dibble, and Gallo, Richard Hunter returns as a good target for Gallo on the offense, Aiden Ives also returns with Aiden Mellem, who saw reps at center last season. Edward Johnson, Stephen Palatier, Shawn Pixley, Dominic Smith, and second-year play-

er who sparked the league last season, Allison Thomas, round out the junior class. Conner Dunagan, David Dunckel, and CJ Thomas represent the sophomore class.

With the transition back to 11-man football, Oxford's 2024 schedule will reflect its once 2017 season in the Section IV, Class D second division. With being in the second division, Oxford will miss going up against local county opponent Bainbridge-Guilford, who sits among the top teams in the first division with Tioga and Newark Valley. Oxford won three state championships as a member of Class D in 1997, and back-to-back in 1999 and 2000.

Oxford will play Buffalo-area opponent Attica for their week zero game before facing Deposit-Hancock under the lights at Hancock's field on September 13 at 7 p.m. Oxford will also face some teams not in the section throughout the season with taking on Section III's APW the following week on Sept 20 for the Blackhawks home opener.

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Bainbridge-Guilford Varsity Football

DATE	OPPONENTS	START TIME	LOCATION
Fri., Sept 6	@ Oneida	6 p.m.	Stadium Field
Fri., Sept 13	vs. Walton	7 p.m.	B-G Track & Field Complex
Fri., Sept 20	@ Candor	7 p.m.	Spencer Van Etten HS
Fri., Sept 27	vs. Harpursv	7 p.m.	B-G Track & Field Complex
Fri., Oct 4	@ Sidney	7 p.m.	Sidney HS multi-purpose Field
Fri., Oct 11	@ Whit Point	7 p.m.	WPHS Tymeson Turf Field
Fri., Oct 18	vs. Deposit	7 p.m.	B-G Track & Field Complex
Fri., Oct 25	@ Nwk Valley	7 p.m.	Newark Valley HS
Fri, Nov 1	vs. Tioga	7 p.m.	B-G Track & Field Complex

Greene Varsity Football

DATE	OPPONENTS	START TIME	LOCATION
Fri., Sept 13	@ Catskill	6 p.m.	Catskill HS
Fri., Sept 20	@ Groton	7 p.m.	Ross Field Groton
Thur., Sept 26	vs. Newfield	6 p.m.	George G. Raymond Turf Field
Fri., Oct 4	vs. Catskill	7 p.m.	George G. Raymond Turf Field
Fri., Oct 11	vs. Unatego	7 p.m.	George G. Raymond Turf Field
Fri., Oct 18	vs. Trumansburg	7 p.m.	George G. Raymond Turf Field
Sat., Oct 26	@ Elm Hts	1:30 p.m.	Northrop Field
Sat., Nov 2	@ Moravia	7 p.m.	Scarry Athletic Complex

Norwich Varsity Football

DATE	OPPONENTS	START TIME	LOCATION
Sun., Sept 8	vs. Cortland	6 p.m.	Colgate University
Fri., Sept 13	@ Horseheads	7 p.m.	HHS Stadium Field
Fri., Sept 20	@ Owego	7 p.m.	OFA Stadium
Fri., Sept 27	vs. Sus Valley	7 p.m.	NHS Stadium
Fri., Oct 4	vs. U-E	7 p.m.	NHS Stadium
Fri., Oct 11	vs. Oneonta	7 p.m.	NHS Stadium
Fri., Oct 18	@ JC	7 p.m.	JC Wildcat Stadium
Sat., Oct 26	@ M-E	1:30 p.m.	Maine-Endwell HS Turf
Fri., Nov 1	vs. CV	7 p.m.	NHS Stadium

Oxford Varsity Football

DATE	OPPONENTS	START TIME	LOCATION
Sat., Sept 7	@ Attica	TBD	Mynderse Academy
Fri., Sept 13	@ Hancock	7 p.m.	Hancock Football Field
Fri., Sept 20	vs. APW	TBD	Oxford Stadium Field
Fri., Sept 27	@ Odessa-M	7 p.m.	Charles Martin Field
Fri., Oct 4	vs. Walton	7 p.m.	Oxford Stadium Field
Fri., Oct 11	vs. Harpursville	7 p.m.	Oxford Stadium Field
Fri., Oct 18	@ Candor	7 p.m.	Spencer Van Etten HS
Fri., Oct 25	vs. Dryden	TBD	Oxford Stadium Field
Sat., Nov 2	@ Delhi	1:30 p.m.	Dave Kelly Field

Sherburne-Earlville Varsity Football

DATE	OPPONENTS	START TIME	LOCATION
Sun., Sept 8	vs. Sidney	3 p.m.	Colgate University
Fri., Sept 13	@ Canastota	7 p.m.	HS Stadium Field
Fri., Sept 20	@ Port Byron	6:30 p.m.	Port Byron Turf Stadium
Thur., Sept 26	@ Cortland	6:30 p.m.	Cortland JR-SR HS Stadium
Sat., Oct 5	vs. Onondaga	6 p.m.	Waterville Stadium
Fri., Oct 11	@ Phoenix	6:30 p.m.	JCB Turf Stadium
Fri., Oct 18	vs. Jordan-Elbridge	7 p.m.	Waterville Stadium
Fri., Oct 25	vs. APW	6 p.m.	Waterville Stadium

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