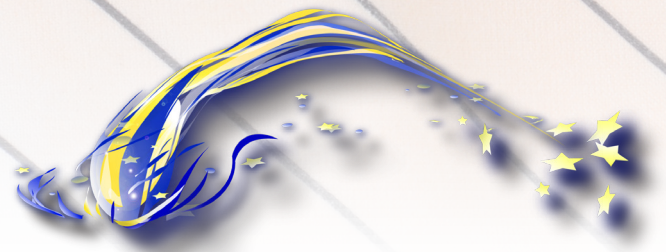




2023 *Spring* Sports Guide



Chamois Pages 3B-5B

Linn Pages 6B-13B

Fatima Pages 14B-23B

WEDNESDAY,
MARCH 22, 2023
PAGES 1B-24B

OSAGE COUNTY
Unterrified Democrat

Leach pleased with track participation, potential

Chamois track coach John Leach welcomes 10 athletes to the boys' high school team.

"We should be able to score points in the smaller meets," he said. "I preach to the kids that they do their best, and they do. They're working hard, and some pieces could fall into place."

Despite the lack of proper facilities, the Pirates do their best to prepare. "The kids love it; they want to do this," said Leach. "They're ready to get out and compete."

Senior Waylon Carter will compete in the shot and discus. "He came so close to getting out of districts the last couple of years, and I think this year, he'll be right there competing for a title," said Leach.

Coach Leach began offering pre-season weight training, and several athletes, including Carter, took advantage of it. "He's already shown better results in practice," said Leach. "Waylon is stronger, and he's been working closely with Coach Ethan Hagenhoff, so I really believe he's got a chance to get out of

districts."

At the district meet last year, Carter was ninth in the discus (27.57m) and 14th in the shot (10.21m).

Fellow senior Russell Frank will compete in the discus and shot and is also improving. "He keeps trying, and he's throwing farther in the disc," said Leach. "He could be in the running to compete for top spots all year."

In 2022, Frank was 19th in the javelin (18.44m) and had a discus toss of 19.31 meters for 25th place.

The team's lone junior, Dawson Brandt, will run sprints and relays and throw the disc. "He could be our number two disc thrower by the time we get to districts," said Leach. "He's a natural at it, and I expect him to keep getting better."

Sophomore Caleb Keilholz came close to qualifying for sectionals last year with a pair of fifth-place finishes in the 1600m run (5:17) and the 3200m run (12:00). He also had a shot put of 10.39m for 12th place. He

See **CHAMOIS BOYS** on Page 5B



CHAMOIS JUNIOR High runners Grayson Gerloff and Louis Slusser work on handoffs during a recent relay practice as Coach John Leach gives advice and encouragement.

Chamois girls' track team has plenty of experience

Despite having only five athletes, the Chamois girls' track team has plenty of experience, and Coach John Leach is eager to see the Lady Pirates flourish.

"We have a small team, but there's a lot of potential for these girls to excel," he said. "I expect this group will do their best, and they're working very hard."

Junior Devin Slusser will compete in sprints, long jump, and triple jump. "She really benefitted from a pre-season weight-training program," said Coach Leach. "Her strength and running style are better, and she has a great attitude. She's soaring with confidence right now."

Slusser had a good day at the Show-Me Conference track meet last year, earning second place in the triple jump with a career-best mark of 9.55m and fourth in the long jump with PR of 4.48m.

At the district meet, Slusser placed eighth in the triple jump (9.13m), 11th in the 200m dash (30.71), 12th in the 100m dash (14.53), and 13th in the long jump (4.13m).

Fellow junior Elsey Wuelling will be a mid-distance runner. "Who knows how far she'll go? She has talent and can be a strong competitor this year," said Leach. "She's recovering from an injury but working hard. We just need to get her healthy and going again."

Junior Eevie Halbert returns to run sprints and throw the javelin. "She's getting better at the javelin, learning how to throw it with better technique," said Leach. "She's strong and healthy, and I think she'll do better in all of her events. I'm glad she's back out there."

Halbert set a PR in the javelin last year and hopes to improve in that event. She also wants to improve her running times. At districts last year, she finished 11th in the 100m hurdles (20.23) and javelin (21.96m) and 20th in the 100m dash (15.39).

Junior Madeline Gerloff has state-level experience in cross country and is ready for the challenges this spring. "She's a great person to be around," said Leach. "She is a leader and wants the team to do well."

Individually, Gerloff will compete in the 300m hurdles, sprints, and long jump, and new this year, the pole vault. "She's been taking classes in St. Louis to learn how to do it, and I know she'll have the same approach as she does to every other event," said Leach. "She's also working with her mom on the hurdles. She does what she needs to do, which will make her successful."

See **CHAMOIS GIRLS** on Page 5B

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CHAMOIS HIGH SCHOOL TRACK AND FIELD

DATE	LEVEL	OPPONENT	TIME
March 23	-	Linn	3:30 PM
March 24	-	New Bloomfield Relays	TBA
March 30	-	Linn	TBA
April 1	-	Russellville	10:00 AM
April 4	-	Fatima Invitational	3:00 PM
April 14	-	South Callaway	TBA
April 17	-	Linn	TBA
April 25	-	Hermann Invitational	TBA
April 27	-	Show Me Conference	TBA

CHAMOIS JUNIOR HIGH TRACK AND FIELD

DATE	LEVEL	OPPONENT	TIME
March 20	-	Linn	3:30 PM
March 28	-	Fatima Junior High Meet	2:30 PM
April 13	-	South Callaway MS Invitational	TBA
April 17	-	Linn	3:30 PM
April 20	-	Linn	3:30 PM
April 24	-	Russellville Invitational	2:00 PM
April 28	-	Sow Me Conference	TBA
May 2	-	New Haven Tri-Meet	TBA

★ - Denotes Home Game

Chamois JH track has talented athletes

Chamois enters this year's track season with a lot of talent on the junior high team.

"We have some good kids in this group," said Coach John Leach. "I'm excited to see them grow."

Eighth-graders are Carley Brandt (sprints, LH, relays), Emma Mehmert (LJ, sprints, relays), Oliver Carter (throws), and Louis Slusser (sprints, LJ, relays).

Brandt earned three Show-Me Conference medals last year, placing second in the 100m dash (15.74) and third in the 200m dash (31.20) and the long jump (4.11m), the latter of which broke a record from 2002. She'll battle in these events again.

"She's going after the junior high record in the 200m dash, and with her work ethic, I'm sure she'll give it a great effort," said Leach.

Mehmert finished seventh in the 400m dash (1:20) and 200m dash (34.20) and eighth in the 100m dash

(16.73) at the SMC meet in 2022. She will once again tackle these events.

"Emma is stronger and faster than last year," said Leach.

Carter will throw the disc and shot. "He's much better with a year of growth and experience," said Leach. "He's also getting a lot of help from his brother (Waylon)."

At conference last year, Carter had a shot put of 5.21m for 15th place.

Slusser is new to track but has raw talent. "He's quick and working through nagging injuries, but he should do well," said Leach.

Seventh-graders are Grayson Gerloff (mids, distance, relays), Brayden Cotton (sprints, relays, disc), and Levi Weed (distance, mids, relays, jumps).

"Grayson is a big kid, and we're integrating skill into

his body," said Leach. "He needs experience, but I think he'll succeed."

Cotton is thriving in the disc and learning how to run sprints. "He will be surprisingly good in the sprints once he gains experience," said Leach.

Weed had a good cross country season and is bigger and stronger this spring. "He'll be a surprise in the mile," said Leach.

At the sixth-grade level are Carly Schollmeyer (mids, relays, LJ) and Dixie Powers (LJ, sprints, relays).

"They're playing volleyball right now, but I expect them to be very competitive in junior high track," said Leach.

Schollmeyer earned All-Conference in cross country last year.

Sports help kids learn the value of teamwork, the importance of building good character and reaching goals.



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JUNIOR EEVIE halbert works on hurdles during a recent practice at Chamois. Above right, senior Waylon Carter focuses on his form in the discus. He has been close to making it out of districts and looks to go farther this year. Junior Devin Slusser takes a long jump leap during practice. Far right, sophomore Caleb Keilholz moves to toss the shot put. He will compete in the shot, and run distance events and relays. He nearly qualified for sectionals last year in both the mile and two-mile, and is looking for a berth this season.

Chamois boys • from page 3B

returns to run the mile, two-mile, 3200m relay and shot put.

“He has a great work ethic and is a great distance runner,” said Leach. “He also did well in cross country last fall, and played basketball over the winter, so

he’s in great shape. Caleb has a great opportunity to excel this spring and get out of districts.”

Sophomore Bill Kirsch will compete in relays, sprints, and mid-distance events. “He’s changed a lot in the last two

years,” said Coach Leach. “Bill is coming into his own, and he wants to do well. He’s a great kid to have on the team because he pushes others around him to be better.”

Freshmen are Jaxon Wuelling (sprints, relays), Jack Schollmeyer (throws), Kaden Wuelling (sprints, hurdles, relays), Evert Mehmert (relays, sprints, mids), and Max McKague (throws, jumps).

J. Wuelling is coming off a great cross country season, and last year set the Chamois JH record in the 400m run. “He wants the high school record,” said Leach. “He’s healthy after a basketball injury and has a lot of potential. Jaxon

will face stiff competition, but anything is possible in Class 1.”

Schollmeyer is learning to throw effectively at the high school level. “Jack is working hard, and I know he’ll keep improving,” said Leach.

K. Wuelling is a very talented runner. “I believe he’ll do even better than last year,” said Leach. “The sky’s the limit, and I’m excited to see what develops.”

Mehmert continues to challenge himself. “He will keep trying something until he gets it right,” said Leach. “He could be a dark horse and surprise some people. He’s a tremendous individual.”

Chamois Girls • from page 3B

Freshman Savannah Sieg is working diligently to improve her discus throw. “She’s already throwing it farther, and it’s the same disc she used in junior high,” said Leach. “She’s strong and athletic, and I would love to see her get out of districts.”

Sieg will also throw the shot and javelin.

Coach Leach said that individual success could lead to a team score that could help the Lady Pirates advance. “That’s the beauty of track,” he said. “Each athlete contributes to the whole, and I think these girls have the potential to be a strong team this year.”

Leach praised the efforts of Assistant Coach Ethan Hagenhoff. “He spends a lot of time working with these kids, and it’s helping them realize their full potential,” said Leach. “He does a great job with the throwers, and I am glad he’s here. There’s no way I could do it all by myself.”

FRESHMAN SAVANNAH Sieg warms up for a throw in the discus during practice last week. She will also throw the shot and javelin.





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Linn has six golfers this season

Linn will field six golfers this spring, much fewer than in years past.

“We’re way down in numbers,” said Coach Ryan Rost. “Having said that, we have every chance to do well at districts. We hope to continue to grow and shoot well, and if we do, we can be very competitive in every match. If you have three golfers who can do well, the team has an opportunity to follow suit.”

In this case, the Wildcats have three returners with state-level experience, and Rost said they would provide a solid core for the team.

Junior Jett Maassen placed fourth to earn All-State honors last year with an 84-78-162 at Rivercut Golf Course in Springfield. “He had a great sophomore campaign, and so far, he hasn’t slowed down,” said Rost. “He played in a lot of tournaments last summer and looks more mature and decisive. He proved he could hang with anyone and wants to win every tournament he enters. I think he has the opportunity to do that.”

Junior Britt Winslow finished 20th (90-83-173) at the state tournament last spring and, like Maassen, has worked hard in the off-season. “He was disappointed to miss the cut for All-State, but that has been motivation,” said Rost. “His growth has been phenomenal. He’s smart and loves the game. Britt has a big



SOPHOMORE EDEN Pinkerton hopes to improve on her position in her second year of golf with the Wildcats. Above center is Jett Maassen, who finished fourth to earn All-State last year. Above right, junior Britt Winslow, who was 20th in the state last year, looks for another state berth and higher finish.

drive, and I look forward to seeing how he steps up.”

Senior Rhett Robinson was 66th (104-98-202) last season. “He’s a four-year player and improves every day,” said Rost. “Last season wasn’t what he wanted, but he’s committed to being a driving force for the team. He contributed to our

fourth-place team banner last year, and I know he’s up for the challenge of getting to state again this season.”

Linn won the Class 1, District 1 team title last year at The Golf Club at Deer Chase in Linn Creek.

On the par 68 course, earning All-District were Maassen, who shot a 34-40-74

to finish second, Winslow, who claimed fifth with a 40-39-79, and Robinson, 13th with a 44-43-87.

At the Show-Me Conference meet at Redfield Golf Course at Eugene, Maassen led the team with a third-place score of

See **LINN GOLF** on Page 7

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LINN FRESHMAN Gus Peters squares for a bunt attempt in last week's home jamboree against Higbee. Above center, sophomore Austin Dudenhoeffer fires a pitch. He will be a big part of the pitching rotation for the Wildcats. Above right is senior Cody Leivian, who returns to start at first base.

Linn baseball has a new coach but a lot of returning players

New Wildcats baseball coach Dan Campbell is happy to return to Linn and welcomes the opportunity to improve on last year's 4-12 record with a group of talented players.

"I'm very pleased with the first two weeks of practice," said Campbell. "It's been brutally cold, but the boys have been grinding it out and getting their work done at practice. That helped us in our jamboree."

Campbell grew up in Osage County and graduated from Linn High School in 1985 before completing college and embarking on a stellar career.

"I played here and have a lot of great memories," said Campbell, who, as a senior, made it to the quarterfinals. "I had a great opportunity to come home, and I took it."

Campbell coached softball for 20 years at Helias, two years as an assistant and 18 as the head coach. During that span, the Lady Crusaders made four trips to the state semifinals, winning the state championship in 2003 and 2005, taking second in 2001, and fourth in 2015.

He also spent six years as boys' golf coach and six years as a baseball coach. In 2018, the golf team took second in Class 3, and the baseball team won the state championship in 2001 when he was an assistant coach.

Campbell coached 33 seasons in three sports.

Now, he helms a team with some experience as six seniors lead the Wildcats.

Returning first baseman Cody Leivian has the highest batting average among returners as he hit .306 (11-36) last spring, with three doubles, a triple, a home run, and eight RBI. He was injured late in the season.

"Cody is hitting very well in practice, and he's a great leader," said Coach Campbell. "We will rely on him heavily this year for that leadership."

Trevor Murray was solid in the jamboree, providing a hit to start a rally for a 6-5 win over St. James. "He was instrumental, and I hope he provides good leadership the year," said Campbell.

Murray went 13-44 (.295) with two doubles and five

RBI last spring. Defensively, the outfielder had only one error on the year, finishing with a .909 fielding average.

Eli Baker returns as the starting catcher after hitting .270 (10-37) with an RBI and a fielding rate of .947 with just four errors on the year. "He does a great job with the pitchers and is a very experienced player," said Campbell. "I'm pleased to have him behind the plate."

Landen Bennett and Curtis Deeken will vie for time at second base. "They're working hard in practice, and I am confident we'll have good defense at second," said Campbell.

Bennett played JV last year, and Deeken was in the varsity mix for 15 of the team's 16 games. He finished with a BA of .122 with two doubles and six RBI.

Zach Dodson is branching out and will battle for an outfield position. "He will compete in track, but he wanted to try baseball," said Campbell. "So far, he's been good. He helped spark the rally in the jamboree against St. James, and with his speed, I think he'll be a good fit."

Linn has two juniors, Tanner Hackmann (OF) and Arlyn Martin (IF/P).

"Tanner hits well but is working on better pitch selection," said Campbell. "Arlyn is a solid player, and both are good defenders with varsity experience."

Hackmann was a JV player, and Martin, in his 10 games last spring, hit .167 with a double and three RBI. Martin also pitched in 7.1 innings, allowing 14 earned runs on 24 hits, with three strikeouts and two walks. He will battle for time on the mound as well.

Sophomore Austin Dudenhoeffer returns to the mound this year as one of Linn's top pitchers. Last spring, in 14 innings, he went 2-1 while giving up 10 earned runs on 20 hits with 13 walks and 21 strikeouts. "Austin is throwing well," said Campbell. "He's working on his control, but he has good velocity. We're helping him fine-tune his mechanics."

At the plate last spring, Dudenhoeffer hit .239 (11-46)

with two doubles and seven RBI. He'll play at shortstop, depending on who is pitching.

Freshman Gus Peters is another top pitcher. "He throws strikes and hits his spots," said Campbell. "I'm pleased with our pitchers. We want the ball in play and few walks. We don't want to beat ourselves with walks."

When he's not pitching, Peters will be at shortstop.

Sophomore Tryten Reynolds will play at third. "He did a good job in the jamboree and has good range," said Campbell.

Reynolds will see time at shortstop when he's not pitching. Last spring, he hit .158 with an RBI and three runs scored in 10 games.

Bobby Winkelman has been effective in the first two weeks of practice and will play in left field. "He has pretty good speed," said Campbell.

Winkelman scored a run in the one varsity game he played last year.

Sophomore Trevor Brandt will see time in the outfield and may be a courtesy runner, along with Dodson. "They have great speed," said Campbell. "Having two kids that can run on the bases is a huge weapon."

Remaining players are sophomore outfielders Logan Martin, Arturo Mendez, and Tyler Wolfe, and freshman Joe Brandt (IF), Koen Caldwell (P/IF), Craig Laughlin (IF), and Carson Shaw (OF).

Campbell said he's pleased with the work ethic of the group. "Everyone did a good job in the jamboree and showed me a lot," he said. "We'll have growing pains, but that's to be expected. We'll compete all year, and the younger players are pushing, the older ones. We have a tough schedule, but hopefully, we're playing our best baseball come district time."

Campbell added that he appreciates the use of Linn City Park. "Neil Loethen did a great job getting the field ready," he said. "We've had good practices on the field, but now it's time to see where we're at in live competition. I'm excited to get going."

Linn Golf • from page 6

37-47-84, as Winslow was fourth (42-44-86), and Robinson was ninth (52-49-101).

Senior Landen Bennett rejoins the team. "He didn't play last year because of a knee injury, and this year, he's playing golf and baseball," said Rost. "It's going to be a balancing act, but he has

the opportunity to help with team scores. He can shoot well, and I'm excited to see what he does on the course."

Sophomores Devin Brandt and Eden Pinkerton are second-year players hoping to contribute.

"Devin works hard and asks a lot of

questions to better himself," said Rost. "I'm excited to see kids who do that. He's working for a varsity spot, and his work ethic makes him more than capable."

Pinkerton is also showing improvement. "She hits the ball hard, and her irons and wedges are better," said Rost. "It can't be easy for her as the only girl on the squad, but she doesn't back down

from a challenge."

Overall, Rost said he's confident this team will succeed. "We will have to step up as a team," he added. "We can do it, but everyone will have to improve by more than a few strokes in each round they play. I think our maturity and mentality are good, which will greatly help."

Linn girls' track team will be competitive

In her first year as head coach of the Linn track program, Robyn Baker is eager to see how well the 14 girls on the roster will do this spring.

"I'm excited to see this many kids out for track," she said. "We will be competitive in several events, and I think the team will do well. We have enough kids to fill all the events, and I believe the program is heading in the right direction."

She is joined by assistants Adam Maassen, Braden Ham, and Shaun Brandt (provisional). "These guys know their stuff, and I'm glad to have them with me this year," said Baker.

Five of the 14 Lady Wildcats are seniors: Marissa Gehlert (pole vault, distance), Annaliese Bowser (javelin, disc), Olivia Helmig (pole vault, mids, relays), Erika Platt (mids, relays), and Autumn Baker (jumps, sprints).

Gehlert is a consistent distance runner who has been working on jumps during the off-season. "She is a good cross country runner taking on eight laps," said Baker. "It's different than cross country, but she's willing to expand, and I think she'll do great."

At districts last year, Gehlert finished eighth in the pole vault (1.85m), ran a time of 35.20 for 13th place in the 200m dash, and was 15th in the 100m dash (16.60).

Bowser worked hard in cross country and the off-season to improve her running. "I'm excited she's stepping out of her comfort zone," said Baker. "She's a nice addition to the running group."

Helmig, meanwhile, will focus on the pole vault but will step into mid-distance events. "She may also run

See **LINN GIRLS** on Page 9B



JUNIOR RAMSIE Tschappler brings a lot of state-level experience to the Lady Wildcats this spring. She will compete in the mids and distance events and will return to the triple jump, an event she has not done since her freshman year.

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SENIOR ANNALIESE Bowser will again throw the javelin and disc for the Lady Wild-cats. Above right are seniors Erika Platt and Marissa Gehlert, who return to battle in the relays as well as other individual events.

Linn girls • from page 8B

sprints,” said Baker. “Erika is a versatile athlete with experience in the relays, so I’m excited to see what she can do.”

Platt was part of the 3200m relay team last year that finished second at districts (11:45), and ran with the third-place 1600m relay team (5:00). She also had a throw of 7.47m for 11th place in the shot put.

A. Baker returns to track for the first time since junior high. “She has speed and is doing well so far,” said Coach Baker. “She has a great work ethic and will be competitive.”

Junior Ramsie Tschappler brings a lot of experience to the track in the mids and distance events. This year, she’s adding the triple jump, an event she’s not done since her freshman year. “Ramsie is focused,” said Baker. “It’s all coming back to her. She just missed a trip to state last year, and that is motivating her to improve.”

Tschappler had her best time of the season (6:04) in the 1600m last year and was fourth in the 800m (2:42) at districts. At the sectional meet, Tschappler came close in the 1600m run, her time of 6:14 good for fifth place. She also ran a time of 2:56 in the 800m event for seventh place.

Platt, Helmig, and Tschappler were three parts of last year’s relays and hope to be part of a successful run to the state meet.

Juniors Grace Wagner (jumps, sprints) and Hope Wolfe (sprints, mids) are new

to track this year. “They are putting in a lot of time and effort to improve,” said Baker. “I’m excited they’re part of the team, and I am sure they will continue to get better as the year unfolds.”

Sophomore Courtney Wood is an experienced thrower with an eighth-place finish in the discus (21.41m) at districts last year. “She has a lot of power, and I hope this is a breakout year for her,” said Baker.

Vidella Loughridge returns to throw the javelin. She had a toss of 14.83m for 15th place at the district meet last year. “She’s working hard and focusing on the javelin, but she’s versatile and can fill in if we need her in other events,” said Baker of the sophomore.

Fellow sophomore Natasha Jewell returns to the throwing events and sprints. “She’s dedicated to self-improvement,” said Baker. “I’d like to see her succeed.”

Sophomores Vivien Baker (HJ, sprints, relays) and Kiana Hostetler (mids, relays) are new to the track team.

“I’m happy to welcome both of them to the team,” said Baker. “Vivien will be a nice combo, running relays with her sister (Autumn), and Kiana is a very competitive person, so I’m sure she’ll be in the mix to score points.”

Anna Plume (LJ, mids, relays) is the lone freshman on the team. “She’s new to track but had cross country experience in junior high,” said Baker. “I’m excited to have her on the team as well.”



LINN GOLF

DATE	LEVEL	OPPONENT	TIME
★ March 23	-	Linn Tri	4:00 PM
March 29	-	Russellville Tournament	TBA
April 5	-	Versailles Invitational	TBA
April 10	-	Russellville Tournament	TBA
April 12	-	Southern Boone Tournament	TBA
April 13	-	Osage Quad	TBA
April 17	-	Helias Invitational	TBA
April 21	-	Sullivan Invitational	TBA
★ April 25	-	Linn Quad	TBA
April 26	-	Harrisburg Tournament	TBA

LINN BASEBALL

DATE	LEVEL	OPPONENT	TIME
March 21	Var./JV	Calvary Lutheran	5:00 PM
★ March 23	Var./JV	Montgomery County	5:00 PM
★ March 27	Var./JV	New Haven	5:00 PM
★ March 28	Var./JV	South Callaway	5:00 PM
★ March 30	Var./JV	Blair Oaks	5:00 PM
★ March 31	Var./JV	Southern Boone	5:00 PM
April 4	Var./JV	New Bloomfield	5:00 PM
April 5	Var./JV	Boonville	5:00 PM
★ April 6	Var./JV	Vienna	5:00 PM
April 11	Var./JV	Hermann	4:30 PM
★ April 13	Var./JV	Iberia	5:00 PM
★ April 14-15	Varsity	Linn Baseball Tournament	TBA
April 17	Var./JV	Dixon	5:00 PM
★ April 18	Var./JV	Russellville	5:00 PM
April 19	Var./JV	California	5:00 PM
★ April 21	JV	Helias Catholic	5:00 PM
April 24	Var./JV	Tuscumbia	5:00 PM
April 25	Var./JV	St. Elizabeth	5:00 PM
April 28	Var./JV	Fatima	5:00 PM
May 2	Var./JV	Father Tolton Catholic	5:00 PM
★ May 4	Var./JV	St. James	5:00 PM
May 5	Var./JV	Owensville	5:00 PM
★ May 6	Varsity	Hermann	10:00 AM
★ May 6	Varsity	Wright City	3:00 PM
★ May 8	Var./JV	Eugene	5:00 PM
★ May 9	Var./JV	Belle	5:00 PM

LINN TRACK AND FIELD

DATE	LEVEL	OPPONENT	TIME
March 21	-	Russellville Open	3:00 PM
★ March 23	-	Linn Quad	3:00 PM
★ March 30	-	Linn Invitational	1:00 PM
April 1	-	Russellville Invitational	10:00 AM
April 6	-	MSD Relays	1:00 PM
April 14	-	South Callaway Invitational	3:00 PM
★ April 17	-	Maries/Osage Challenge	3:00 PM
April 21	-	Tomahawk Relays	12:00 PM
April 25	-	Hermann Invitational	3:00 PM
April 27	-	HS Conference Meet	3:00 PM
April 21	-	Tomahawk Relays	12:00 PM

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Linn boys' track team a mix of experience and talent

Linn track coach Robyn Baker is pleased to take the helm of the program and noted that the boys' team has some experience and talent to allow the Wildcats to be competitive.

"I'm excited to see this many kids out for track," she said. "We will be competitive in several events, and I think the team will do well. We have enough kids to fill all the events, and I believe the program is heading in the right direction."

She is joined by assistants Adam Maassen, Braden Ham, and Shaun Brandt (provisional). "These guys know their stuff, and I'm glad to have them with me this year," said Baker.

Senior Zach Dodson returns to compete in the pole vault and high jump.

Last year, Dodson had been working to move up to a bigger pole and had some confidence going into the state pole vault competition. He set a new PR by nearly a foot, but two untimely scratches cost him a state medal. He tied with the seventh and eighth-place finishers, and when it came down to tiebreakers, Dodson's scratch at the last made height and one at the previous height knocked him down to ninth, with a final leap of 11-10.75.

"Zach is eager to get back to state and earn a medal this year," said Baker. "He's very athletic and determined."

Dodson will also compete in the mids and relays.

Senior Jason Powers will run sprints and mids, and a new passion this year is the javelin. "He's got some experience in the running events and will help others," said Baker. "I'm sure he'll be competitive in the javelin as well. He really loves it."

Last year, Powers was part of the seventh-place 1600m relay team that finished in 3:46 at districts and the 800m relay team that earned seventh in 1:48. He also had a throw of 30.07m for 16th place in the javelin.

Fellow senior Trenton Burnett is focused on the shot put and sprints instead of mids this year. "He spent the off-season conditioning and is in great shape," said Baker. "I expect him to have a good year."

Angel Mendez is the only junior Wildcat. "He got started last year, and I'm glad he's back," said Baker.

Mendez will compete in sprints and was part of the 800m relay team with Powers last year. Individually, he finished 18th in the 200m dash (29.52) and 22nd in the 100m dash (14.11).

Joining the high school team are freshmen Reid Baker (300m hurdles, mile, pole vault), Jason Greer (throws), Cameron Hoelscher (LJ, sprints, mids), Carson Kliethermes (LJ, sprints), and Tyler Wagner (hurdles, sprints, relays).

"This is a great group of athletes," said Baker. "I'm excited to see how they transition to this level."

Baker brings cross country and track

experience from junior high to the season. "He's in good shape, and swimming has helped a lot," said Coach Baker.

At last year's JH conference meet, Baker finished fourth in the pole vault (2m), seventh in the 100m hurdles (22.55), and 10th in the 800m run (3:06).

Greer was also solid at the JH level, finishing eighth in the discus (19.61m). "I'm excited to see what he can do at the high school level," said Coach Baker.

Hoelscher is consistently quick, Baker noted. "He's figuring it out, and I'm sure he'll do well," she added.

At conference last year, Hoelscher was eighth in the 200m dash (29.91).

Kliethermes is confident in his approach to the jumps and sprints. "He is working hard to improve his technique," said Baker.

Last year, Kliethermes finished second in the 100m dash (13.00) and third in the long jump (4.66m).

Wagner had a successful track career at St. George and is finding his niche at Linn R-2. "We're helping him find his strengths, and I believe he'll be a great asset to our sprints and relays," said Baker.



LINN SENIOR Zach Dodson is looking for another state berth in the pole vault this year and will also take on the high jump this season.

Good Luck

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FRESHMAN REID Baker, above, joins the high school ranks and will compete in the hurdles along with the pole vault. At right is senior Jason Powers, who will continue to throw the javelin.



LJH track has 18 athletes

Linn's junior high has 18 athletes competing this year.

"We have two returning athletes from last year, so I am excited about the increase in participation and the excitement these kids have for track," said Coach Robyn Baker. "At this point, we as a coaching staff are trying to figure out what athletes should be in which events and where they will be the most successful. The entire group is working really hard and trying everything, which is great to see. I'm looking forward to seeing them compete."

Eighth-graders Kenzy Hackman and Kahne Brandt return to the team and are joined by Preston Keilholz-Scheulen, Zyan Knollmeyer, Tommy Scheulen, Benjamin Stephens, and Zoe Werdehausen.

At the conference meet last year, Hackmann threw the discus 16.56m for a third-place All-Conference medal, finished fourth in the 100m dash (16.29) and sixth in the long jump (3.77m). Brandt suffered some injuries last year, but is healthy and ready to race. "We are glad to have Kahne back this year," said Baker.

Seventh-grade athletes are Titus Black, Ian Laughlin, Aiden Mebruer, Kayden Monroe, Andrew Rotter, Bria Kempker, Alainah Wilson, Madison Wood, Ruby Herndon, Nicole Branson, Shayla Burnett, and Ava Franken.

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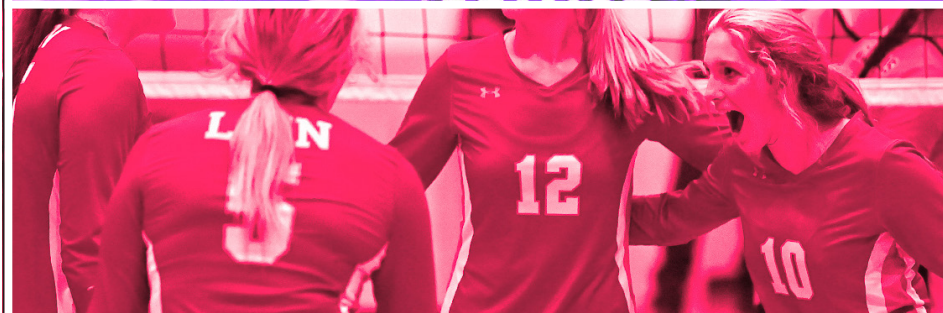
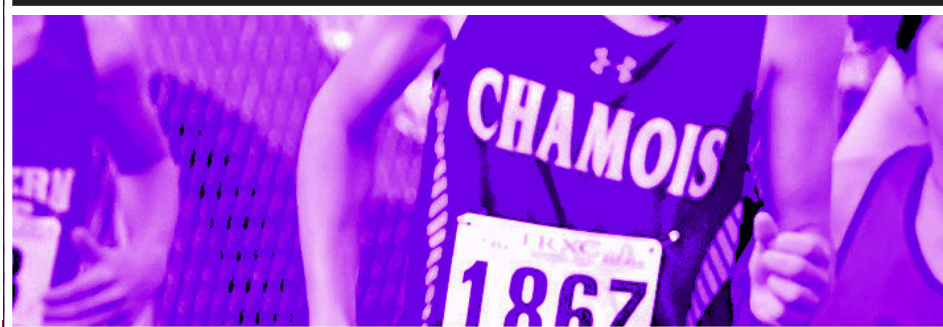
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Fatima girls' soccer program includes 18 players with two new coaches

Fatima's girls' soccer roster grew to 18 players, including six seniors, seven juniors, two sophomores, and three freshmen — under the direction of coaches Sami Jo Freeman and Dustin Cox, who are excited to see the team progress.

"This season may include one of the most experienced defensive units we've had on the field in years," said Freeman. "We have three seniors in the backline that work together well, so we have high expectations and belief in them. Their talent was evident in a near shutout against Helias at the jamboree."

Freeman and Cox wanted to try something new this year. They asked players what they wanted to work on and engineered practices to address those areas specifically. This includes reviewing game footage, teaching footwork and new techniques, building strategies for offensive plays, strengthening defense, and practicing set pieces with a new style. "Together, we've addressed our weaknesses and found new, untapped opportunities on both sides of the ball," said Cox. "It's been great to see the excitement and progress we've made since starting with conditioning in January. We're very proud of every team member for consistently showing up and putting their best foot forward during practice."

Coaches agreed that game footage has been beneficial in improving Fatima's defensive presence as they learn where some of the team's common vulnerabilities were last year and how to shut them down.

Offensively, the coaches said one thing to watch for is a completely rebuilt offense, from new attacking plays to creative set-piece strategies. "Our offense feels more confident in their footwork and ability to move around other teams, so we're excited to see them put some points on the board for Fatima," said Cox. "We saw that hard work pay off for our offense at the jamboree against Osage with two beautiful goals. We'll be focusing on using both sides of the field to attack and implementing new strategies to transition the ball from defense in a way that creates space and scoring opportunities."

One aspect that will stick out the most is Fatima's ability to adapt as a team. "We will be pushing ourselves to try new starting lineups, formations, and plays until we find exactly what works," said Freeman. "We're also building on the characteristics that Fatima has long been known for: hard work, determination, good sportsmanship, and being respectful. If there is one 'best' thing about this team, it has to be that the girls are a tight-knit group that cares about each other and is eager to learn. As coaches, you can't ask for anything better, and we've improved as coaches because of it."

Here's a look at the players by class level.

SENIORS

Cami Wieberg (offense) has advanced her offensive skills tremendously. "She'll be playing up top in various offensive positions," said Freeman. "She's been consistently executing our attacking plays without missing a beat. Cami has a big heart and fights through some of the messiest and most aggressive situations to set her teammates up for success."

Megan Borgmeyer (midfield, offense) is the first player to accept a challenge, and coaches said they haven't seen her wear down yet. "She leverages that never-ending endurance to provide our team power on free kicks and the ability to get up and down the field seamlessly," said Cox. "Her experience, reliability, and positive attitude are incredible assets to the team."

Kendall Gerling (goalkeeper, defense) is a lefty on the field but spends part of her time in the goal. "We'll be matching her strengths throughout the season with the needs of the team, whether that be on the field or in the net," said Freeman. "She's always up for the challenge."

Coach Cox called Maci Kloeppel (defense) the ultimate protector, playing the critical sweeper (back defender) role.

"She is talented and takes her job as our last line of defense seriously," he added. "She will play an important role in shutting down the space and passing lanes to protect our goal and directing the defense as a whole."

Last year, Kloeppel earned Defensive Player of the Year, All-Region, and All-District honors.

Zoe Rehagen (defense) is a vocal leader of this team, specifically as a left fullback. "She has years of experience and knows how an advanced defense operates," said Freeman. "The team is grateful to have her talent on the left side, which typically works to counter the most talented right-footed players from the opposition."

Mary Schwartz (defense) will round out Fatima's three defensive backline players on the right as a fullback. "She is patient and deliberate as she contains plays and waits for attackers to make a mistake that will ultimately allow her to steal the ball for clearance," said Cox. "She and the other two defensive seniors seem to read each other's minds, and that's exactly what you want to see in a defensive unit."

JUNIORS



Jeana Abbott (midfield, offense) is an extremely dedicated player. "We're predicting a breakthrough year for her on the offensive side of the ball," said Freeman. "We've had some one-on-one time with her to develop her skill set, and she's dangerously good at creating opportunities in the box. We love the positive and determined attitude she brings to the team."

Chloe Adamson (Goalkeeper) will continue to be a force to reckon with in

See **FATIMA SOCCER** on Page 15B

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Fatima soccer

•from page 14B

the net. “She’s exactly what coaches look for: commanding and fearless,” said Cox. “She also brings a great sense of humor, down to earth personality, and a supportive presence to all her teammates.”

Avery Brandt (offense) is one of the few naturally left-footed players on the team, and coaches will use those skills heavily along the left wing, which is historically the underused side of the field. “She has a unique ability to place a cross or through ball perfectly over the back line of the defense to set her teammates up for scoring success,” said Freeman.

Hannah Heisler (offense) is incredibly skilled with a soccer ball and has been a leader on the field from day one. “She has a deep understanding of the game and has quickly picked up on the footwork and new strategies this team has developed,” Cox noted. “She’s pushed us as a coaching staff to provide more strategies and set plays, and we’re a better team for it.”

Heisler earned Offensive Player of the Year, All-State, All-Region, and All-District honors last year.

Maya Libbert (defense) joined the team this year, and coaches said they’re thrilled with her defensive performance. “She’s played soccer for years, and that shows on the field,” said Freeman. “She knows how to reliably anticipate what the offense is doing and knows how to effectively shut them down. As such, she’ll be playing defensive roles, including stopper. We love her dry sense of humor, sarcasm, and the pranks she plays on coaches.”

Kaitlyn Plassmeyer, more commonly known as KP (offense), is, without a doubt, one of Fatima’s fastest players, and returning from an All-District year in 2022. “If you blink, you may miss her stretch the entire length of the field,” said Cox. “She’s equally aggressive, scrappy, and fearless when it comes to challenging any defender. She fits like a puzzle piece in our offense, bringing that dynamic speed and talent straight at goal.”

Lydia Rehagen (defense) is full of energy, and coaches count on her for that every day. “She’ll be one of the first lines of defense as our stopper,” said Freeman. “She’ll be playing a critical role in controlling the center of the field, shutting down the attack, and commanding the top of the goal box. We love the supportive role she plays to her fellow teammates.”

SOPHOMORES

Coaches agree that Kristen Robertson is an excellent athlete and, as such, will be counting on her heavily to play both in the midfield and offense. “She works very well with the other offensive players, understanding and running some of our more complex attacking plays,” said Cox. “Even though she’s technically one of our younger players, she is very mature in how she approaches all sports and brings a respectful attitude to the field daily.”



She was last year’s Comet Award winner.

Isabella Schaben (offense) is eager to learn everything coaches can teach her about soccer. “While she is perhaps the most polite girl on the team, her skills have also skyrocketed this year, and she isn’t afraid to get aggressive if it means fighting for her fellow teammates,” said Freeman.

FRESHMEN

Addy Berhorst (defense) is very athletic and can quickly cover a lot of ground on defense. “She’s well-conditioned and will be a reliable part of the defense,” said Cox. “Addy is especially important to this team as we plan for future years on the defensive side.”

Alex Berhorst (All Positions) proved in just two short weeks that she’s one of the best utility players on the team. “We expect that we’ll be using her speed, skills, and endurance all over the field, switching positions between the needs of the team on a game-to-game basis,” Freeman said.

Grace Borgmeyer immediately fit into the team as part of the offense. “She’s quick, athletic, and has been eager to learn from her teammates and coaches,” said Cox. “Because of that curiosity, she’s learned many new skills and strategies. We’re excited to see her as part of this roster for years to come.”

Coach Cox, his wife Lisa (Boes), and their two kids moved back to Osage County almost five years ago. Shortly after, he became a coach in the Westphalia Soccer Club and made several connections within the soccer community and families that support it. Through that experience, he was recommended as a soccer coach for Fatima. Cox was most recently a coach for the Fatima boys’ high school team, still coaches his children’s WSC teams, and now the Fatima girls’ high school team. He currently teaches at Fatima. Dustin graduated high school in southern Indiana and college in Springfield. He played soccer most of his life, but coaching is his true passion.

Freeman played soccer competitively at the local, state, national, and international levels, starting at a young age with Tony Glavin Soccer Club and continuing into high school. While playing, she coached many youth teams alongside her family as an offensive coach and refereed in the St. Louis area. Cox and Freeman became friends through his wife, Lisa.

After a connection was made to soccer, Dustin invited Sami Jo to join this year’s Fatima coaching staff. Sami Jo is originally from rural Lincoln County, where she graduated from Troy Buchanan High School before heading to the University of Missouri. She lives on the outskirts of Columbia and works in communications for the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services.

Together, Cox and Freeman hope to be competitive in every game. “Looking through our schedule, we’ll see our fair share of challenging teams,” they noted. “The thing about soccer is that a single player rarely wins or loses these games. It has to be a team effort. We believe we’ve built a well-rounded team that’s ready and willing to adapt as opponents show

us what they have. We certainly think this team has what it takes to compete and win a district championship.”

They thanked Joyce Brandt and Chuck Schwartz for helping coach last year. “The team is excited to see their support from the stands this spring,” said Freeman. “We also want to thank the Knights of Columbus soccer fields managers, Chris Angerer and Glenn Bock. They spend a lot of time helping us maintain one of the best grass fields in the state — our girls are proud to host home games because of it.”

Cox and Freeman are supported by team managers Chase Kremer and Ray Laughlin and goalie coach Drew Ochiskey.

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Fatima sports schedules

FATIMA GOLF

DATE	LEVEL	OPPONENT	TIME
March 20	Varsity	Tolton Catholic Inv.	TBA
March 21	Var./J.V.	California	4:00 PM
★ March 23	Varsity	Linn Tri.	TBA
March 27	Varsity	Montgomery County	4:00 PM
March 29	Varsity	Russellville Golf Tournament	TBA
April 3	Varsity	Osage Tourney	TBA
April 5	Varsity	Southern Boone Tri.	4:00 PM
April 6	Varsity	Eugene Quad	TBA
April 11	Varsity	NC Quad	TBA
April 12	Varsity	Southern Boone Tournament	TBA
April 13	Var./J.V.	Centralia	4:00 PM
April 19	Varsity	Show Me Conference	TBA
April 24	Varsity	Jeff City Invitational	TBA

April 14-15	Fr	Windsor Tournament	5:00 PM
April 17	Var./JV	Capital City	5:00 PM
★ April 20	Var./JV	Blair Oaks	5:00 PM
April 21-22	Varsity	Lebanon Wood Bat Tourney	TBA
April 21-22	Fr	Blair Oaks Freshmen Tourney	TBA
★ April 25	Var./JV	South Callaway	5:00 PM
April 27	Var./JV	Tuscumbia	5:00 PM
April 27	Fr	Southern Boone	5:00 PM
★ April 28	Var./JV	Linn	TBA
April 29	JV	Blair Oaks JV Tournament	TBA
★ May 1	Fr	Helias Catholic	5:00 PM
★ May 2	Fr	Sullivan	5:00 PM
May 4-6	Varsity	Fulton Varsity Tournament	TBA
May 9	Var./JV	Rock Bridge	5:00 PM
May 12	Var./JV	Hickman	5:00 PM

FATIMA GIRLS SOCCER

DATE	LEVEL	OPPONENT	TIME
★ March 21	Varsity	Mexico	5:00 PM
March 23	Varsity	Belle	5:00 PM
★ March 24	Varsity	Crocker	5:00 PM
March 28	Varsity	Osage	5:00 PM
★ March 30	Varsity	Smithton	5:00 PM
April 3	Varsity	St. James	5:00 PM
★ April 4	Varsity	Dixon	5:00 PM
★ April 6	Varsity	Sullivan	5:00 PM
★ April 11	Varsity	Southern Boone	5:00 PM
★ April 13	Varsity	Boonville	5:00 PM
April 17	Varsity	Fulton	5:00 PM
★ April 18	Varsity	Blair Oaks	5:00 PM
April 20	Varsity	Owensville Tournament	TBA
May 1	Varsity	Stover	5:00 PM
May 2	Varsity	Moberly	5:00 PM
★ May 4	Varsity	Winfield	5:00 PM
May 10	Varsity	Jefferson City	5:00 PM

FATIMA HIGH SCHOOL TRACK AND FIELD

DATE	LEVEL	OPPONENT	TIME
March 21	-	St. James Open	TBA
March 24	-	Blair Oaks Invitational	TBA
March 30	-	Linn	TBA
★ April 4	-	Fatima Invitational	3:00 PM
April 11	-	Centralia Invitational	TBA
April 14	-	Owensville	TBA
April 18	-	Osage Varsity Invitational	TBA
April 22	-	Clinton Invitational	TBA
April 25	-	Guy Rush Memorial Track Meet	TBA
April 27	-	Show Me Conference	TBA
May 3	-	Smith-Cotton Open	TBA

FATIMA JUNIOR HIGH TRACK AND FIELD

DATE	LEVEL	OPPONENT	TIME
March 20	-	Linn	TBA
March 23	-	Blair Oaks Invitational	TBA
★ March 28	-	Fatima Junior High Meet	TBA
April 13	-	South Callaway MS Invitational	TBA
April 20	-	Linn	TBA
April 24	-	Russellville Invitational	TBA
★ April 28	-	Show Me Conference	3:00 PM

★ - Denotes Home Game

FATIMA BASEBALL

DATE	LEVEL	OPPONENT	TIME
★ March 20	Varsity	Capital City	4:30 PM
★ March 21	Fr	Jefferson City	5:00 PM
March 23	Var./JV	Fulton	5:00 PM
★ March 24	Fr	Fulton	5:00 PM
March 25	Varsity	Logan-Rogersville	11:00 AM
March 25	Varsity	Father Tolton Catholic	1:30 PM
March 27	Var./JV	Southern Boone	TBA
★ March 27	Fr	Capital City	5:00 PM
★ March 28	Var./JV	New Bloomfield	5:00 PM
March 29	Fr	Mexico	5:00 PM
★ March 31	Var./JV	Helias Catholic	5:00 PM
★ April 3	Var./JV	St. Elizabeth	5:00 PM
April 3	Fr	Father Tolton Catholic	5:00 PM
★ April 4	Var./JV	Battle	5:00 PM
April 6-8	Varsity	Jays Baseball Classic	TBA
April 6	Var./JV	Russellville	5:00 PM
★ April 6	Fr	Smith-Cotton	5:00 PM
April 11	Var./JV	Eugene	5:00 PM
April 13	Var./JV	Hallsville	5:00 PM
★ April 13	Fr	Blair Oaks	5:00 PM
April 14	Var./JV	Eldon	5:00 PM

**Photos in this edition by Neal A. Johnson,
Will Johnson and Jacob Warden**

**Good Luck to all the
Osage County Sports Teams!**



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Fatima's depth will be a key to girls' track and field success

Fatima has 28 girls on the high school track team this season. "With many veteran athletes and a few new faces, I think we will be a well-balanced team this year, able to score in all aspects of track and field," said Coach Marc Bridges.

This year's team features seven seniors.

Samantha Bax will compete in the high jump and javelin. She set the school record in the javelin last season and hopes to improve upon it.

Vanessa Block will run the 100m and 300m hurdles, with personal bests in both events last season at districts. "We are hoping to build on that," said Bridges.

Emma Bower and Sarah Groene will run long sprints and mid-distance. "They have a ton of state-level experience in track and cross country that will help us



FATIMA SENIOR Emma Bower returns to compete in long sprint and mid-distance events for the Lady Comets. She was part of the 3200m relay team that earned a state berth last year.

this year," said Bridges.

Caleigh Huot returns as Fatima's top sprinter from last year when she earned Show-Me Conference MVP honors.

Corinn Karst will battle in the high jump and sprints. She is the school record-holder in the HJ and has a lot of state-level experience in track and cross country.

Rachel Woehr will throw the javelin and run sprints. "She adds a lot of depth to our sprints and will likely be vital to

relays," said Bridges.

Fatima also has seven juniors.

Lauren "LOLO" Berhorst (distance) returns as Fatima's top 1600m and 3200m runner from last season and has state-level experience.

Lucy Crede is set for the triple jump and sprints. "Lucy's strength lies in the triple jump, but she also adds speed that will be vital in sprint relays," Bridges noted.

Cheyenne Hicks will compete in the

triple jump and hurdles. "She is an experienced triple-jumper and is showing promise in the hurdles this season," said Bridges.

Kate Kampeter (throws) is Fatima's most veteran girls' thrower and provides leadership and guidance to the younger girls, Bridges noted.

Ella Massman (throws) is new to the track team. "Her strength is her greatest

See **GIRLS TRACK** on Page 18B

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Girls track • from page 17

asset, and when she masters the technique, she will make a presence,” said Bridges.

Breanna Rademan will run mid-distance and distance. “She is one of our hardest-working runners and should see big improvements this season,” said Bridges.

Addyson Wilburs will also run mid-distance and distance. “She’s coming off of a very good cross country season, and we look for Addyson to take some steps forward on the track this season,” said Bridges.

Also on the roster are eight sophomores.

Vivian Bax will run sprints and mid-distance. “She was an invaluable part of all of our relays last year, and I look for her to fill that role again this season, as well as a few open events,” Bridges noted.

Reagan Bock will be a distance runner. “She has worked very hard this winter, and I look forward to seeing her improvement this year,” said Bridges.

Megan Gabelsberger will be a thrower. “Megan’s strength is the shot put, and we look to see some improvement this season with the addition of some new technique,” said Bridges.

Lily Gregory will compete in triple jump, high jump, and sprints. “Lily is looking really good in the triple jump so far and will challenge for a top spot,” said Bridges.

Leni Hemmel returns as Fatima’s only individual state qualifier from 2022 (pole vault). “We look to build on that experience this season,” Bridges said.

Last year, Hemmel entered the pole



vault with a lot of confidence and faced the challenge of having an opening height of 8-3.25. She just missed clearing 8-3, and ended the competition with no height. Bridges said that experience will help her in her pursuit of another state berth.

Anna Rakestraw will compete in jumps and long sprints. “She’s a first year-track team member and has already impressed us with her hard work,” said Bridges.

Mya Sankey (throws) comes into this year as the top discus thrower. “She’s looking better than ever so far and may dabble with pole vault this year,” said Bridges.

Payton Wieberg will likely handle

some of Fatima’s 400m and 800m duty this season and may try some field events.

Rounding out the Lady Comets’ team are six freshmen.

Ava Buhr is coming into HS with JH experience and is competing for a top throwing spot.

Reese Dawson (sprints, jumps) is new to track and field and is still finding her place. “I’m impressed with her overall athleticism so far,” said Bridges.

Alex Gier (long sprints, mid-distance) is a talented distance runner; she is finding her niche right now.

Lily Kempker is new to track and field and is looking good in the discus early and may do some jumping.

Sydney Scheppers (throws) is coming

up from Fatima’s JH program and, so far, is making a good transition. “We look forward to watching her progress this season,” said Bridges.

Heidi Struempfler will run long sprints and mid-distance. “She is also coming up from the junior high program where she was one of the best 800m runners around,” said Bridges. “We look to build on her past success as she will be vital to a couple of our relays.”

Assistant Coaches Levi Maxwell and Katie Hilkerbaumer return this season, along with new Assistant Coach Cassidy Roling.



SOPHOMORE VIVIAN Bax, top photo, will again be tasked with sprints, mid-distance and relay events. At left is senior Corinn Karst, who returns to compete in the high jump, which she holds the school record, as well as sprinting events. Above is sophomore Leni Hemmel, who earned a berth at state last year and hopes to reach the medal stands this season.

Comets baseball is loaded with seniors

Fatima takes the diamond this season with six seniors and confidence in a great season. Hoping to improve on a 14-13 season in 2022, returning coach Tyler VanGerpen said the Comets know what's on the line.

"We have a very tough district," said VanGerpen. "The boys know it, but we have the players and confidence to give it a good run. They know the baseball environment is different now. We have a very tight-knit group. They all want to win, and the excitement is contagious. We're going to make this a fun season for the boys and the fans."

VanGerpen added that as third-year coaches, he, TJ Keilholz, Tyler Plassmeyer, and Steve Schnieders have developed a great relationship with the team, especially the seniors, who have worked alongside them the entire time.

"We've reached the point where we're not having to go over basics because they are seasoned varsity players," said VanGerpen. "We're not starting at square one, and the seniors know what we want to do."

He added that the varsity squad did well last summer. "They worked hard on what we need to do to be successful," said VanGerpen. "They understand what it will take to be a top team."

Returning senior shortstop Blake Gentges will lead off again, a position he's played well. Last year, he hit .346 (27-78) with three doubles, two triples, and 11 RBI. He also posted eight walks and scored 26 runs. "Blake is one of our most experienced players, and we'll rely on him for leadership," said VanGerpen.

Last year, Gentges was named Class 4, District 8 All-District and first-team All-Conference.

Max Buscher, also a third-year varsity player, will

be the team's top pitcher. He earned Honorable Mention All-State honors as a pitcher after throwing 60.2 innings in 12 games with a record of 6-3. He allowed nine earned runs on 46 hits (1.038 ERA), with 60 strikeouts and five walks. Offensively, Buscher hit .257 (19-74) with three doubles and nine RBI. Buscher also earned Class 4, District 8 All-District and first-team conference honors.

"He's a dominant pitcher, and we expect him to have a solid year," said VanGerpen. "He'll excel on the mound, and I hope his bat continues to improve."

Noah Jaegers is another senior with experience as he hit .250 (22-88) last year, with four doubles, a triple, three home runs, and 23 RBI. He'll play on the infield and pitch for the Comets. In 2022, Jaegers was 1-1 with a save in 22 innings, during which he allowed eight earned runs on 15 hits, with 26 strikeouts and six walks.

"Noah will have a bigger role on the mound this season and will bring a key bat to the lineup," said VanGerpen.

Jaegers earned second-team All-Conference honors, along with senior Jacob Schulte, who will return to first base, where he was very effective last season, with just four errors and a .972 fielding average. "He's a vocal leader, and we'll need his bat in the middle of the lineup," said VanGerpen.

Schulte finished with a BA of .309 (25-81) with five doubles, two home runs, and 18 RBI. He earned Class 4, District 8 All-District honors, along with Fatima's fifth senior, Jack Robertson, a versatile infield utility player that also earned second-team All-Conference.

"Jack will play two or three positions and may pitch," said VanGerpen. "His experience will help, and we need him to be a more vocal leader."



SENIOR NOAH Jaegers fires a pitch at this year's jamboree at Vivion Field. He will see a bigger role on the mound this season. Last year, he went 1-1 with a save.

Returning with a .319 batting average (23-72), Robertson posted five doubles and 18 RBI. He also drew 14 walks and scored 18 runs.

In limited plate appearances last year, Robertson allowed six earned runs on 13 hits, with six strikeouts and three walks in six innings.

Grayson Juergensmeyer rounds out the senior class and will see time in the outfield or as a designated hitter. "We're still developing him in his first year on varsity," said VanGerpen. "His role is not as defined yet; he'll get

See **COMETS BASEBALL** on Page 20B

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Comets Baseball

• from page 19B

time but not as a starter at the beginning of the year.”

JUNIORS

Returning catcher Easton Stuckenschneider will be expected to handle the flow of the game and work with pitchers. “He’s already shown improvement and has great game awareness,” said VanGerpen, noting he will be a back-end hitter.

Stuckenschneider hit .244 (20-82) in 2022, with five doubles, three home runs, and 25 RBI.

Conner Bax did not play much at the varsity level, but in eight plate appearances, he was 1-6 with two runs scored. He will play in the outfield and pitch. “He’ll have time on the mound, and in the outfield, he’ll cover positions for pitchers,” said VanGerpen.

Graham Boeckmann has a similar story, with one hit and an RBI in nine at-bats last year. “He’s not a starter, but he’ll be the first guy off the bench as a defensive specialist or to cover for pitchers,” said VanGerpen.

Chase Willis is in his first year with the varsity team, and VanGerpen said coaches are still defining his role.

SOPHOMORES

Matthew Robertson (LF), Cody Schwartze (O), and Brody Kleffner (OF/P) will play whatever position needs to be covered. “That’s the theme this year,” VanGerpen said with a laugh. “No one plays the same position from one game to the next.”

Several players in the sophomore class are pitchers, giving Fatima a lot of depth. “All of them throw strikes, so we should be effective,” said VanGerpen. “There are a lot of moving pieces.”

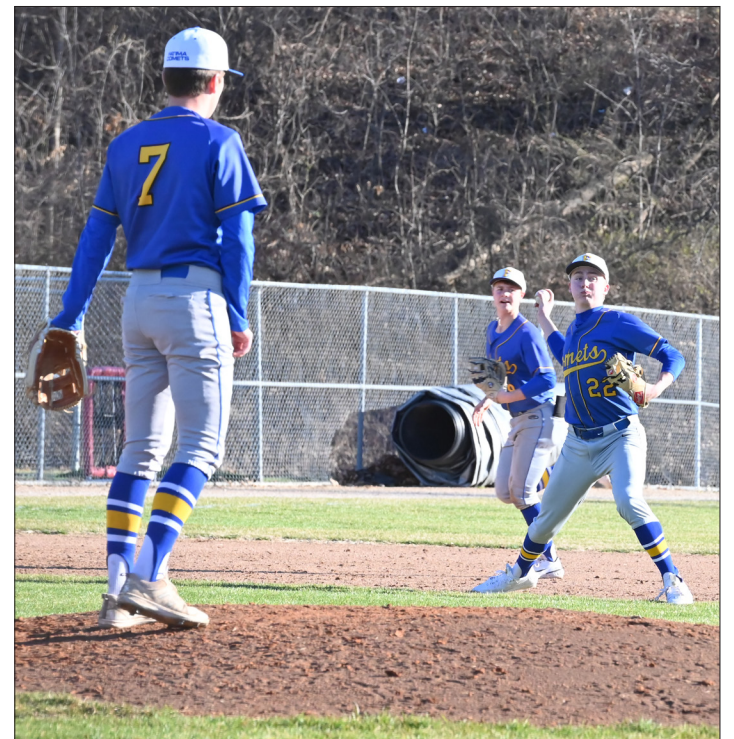
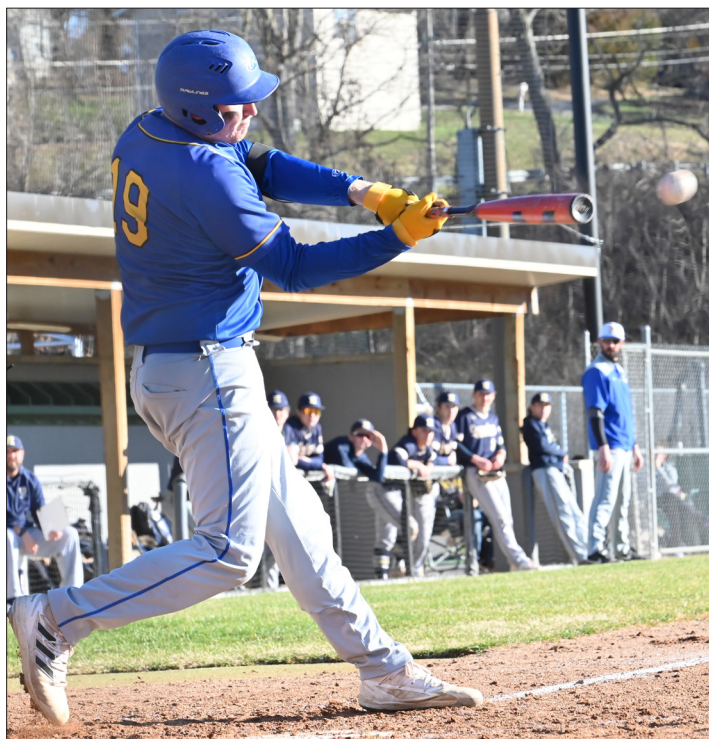
Covering the infield will be Max Stuecken and Logan Kliethermes. “They’ll have their fair share of hitting,” said VanGerpen. “They’re doing well in practice so far, and I’m confident they will hold their own.”

Other sophomores are Landon Bassett, Glenn Berhorst, Brayden Bexten, Trevor Schulte, and Sam Struempf. Freshmen are Tyler Bexten, Cole Jaegers, Nate Jaegers, Blake Kliethermes, Dillon McDonnell, Andrew Muenks, Dalton Rademan, Jase Rehagen, and Colton Scheulen.

Coach VanGerpen said positions are still being determined, but he is pleased with every player’s work ethic.

His big question is how to bridge the gap between youth and experience. “We’re excited to see how this team will develop,” said VanGerpen. “The future looks exciting.”

Fatima’s district is stacked with Blair Oaks, Fr. Tolton, Fulton, and Southern Boone. Last year, the Comets were knocked out in the semifinals, and VanGerpen is looking for a deeper run. “It’s going to be very tough, no doubt,” he said. “It’s entirely possible that the loser of the 4-5 match-up could end the year with 18 or 20 wins. We’re going to take it a game at a time and do our best to be ready.”



SENIOR BLAKE Gentges (top photo) slides safely into third base ahead of the ball during last week’s jamboree. Senior Max Buscher, above left, delivers a hit in last week’s jamboree. Above right, senior Jack Robertson fires to first for an out. Below, junior catcher Easton Stuckenschneider tags out a Helias runner.





JUNIOR CONNER Bax makes a throw to first base in a pick-off attempt at last week's jamboree. He will make the move from JV to varsity in a support role covering on the mound as needed to gain experience.

Fatima golf squad swells to 15

Fatima golf coach Scott Kilgore is pleased to see the program jump from six last spring to 15 this year.

"There's more interest in golf, and the program is growing," he said. "That's a good thing."

Last year's first-year golfers comprise the core group, with four seniors and a junior returning.

"They only have one year of experience with Fatima golf, but these guys have already shown improvement and worked hard over the off-season," said Kilgore.

Seniors Nate Brandt, Cooper Kleffner, Dawson Rademan, and Ty Fortson, and junior Simon Stuecken return to the course and will be the varsity team from the start.

"They want to do better than we did last year," said Kilgore. "The kids have a goal to finish in the top two at conference as a team."

Fatima finished third as a team last year at the Show-Me Conference meet held at Redfield Golf Course at Eugene.

Rademan earned All-Conference for his seventh-place mark of 49-47-106, and Brandt took 10th (49-52-101) for AC honors. Next was Kleffner, who missed the cut by a slight

margin with his 53-48-101, followed by Fortson (43-49-102) and Stuecken (52-53-105).

At the district tournament, the Comets finished 12th as a team, something Kilgore and the boys want to improve.

Brandt led the team with a 54-51-105 on the par 72 course at the Norwoods Golf Course in Hannibal. Fortson shot a 48-59-107, followed by Kleffner (56-53-109), Rademan (56-53-109), and Stuecken (50-67-117).

"We want to get as many individuals through to state as we can," said Kilgore, noting that golfers who qualify in districts go to the state tournament instead of facing a sectional round.

Kilgore is joined this year by Assistant Coach Eric Saak. "Eric has good experience that will help us get better," said Kilgore. "He brings a nice vibe to the team."

Saak played golf at Montgomery High School and graduated from William Woods University. He did his student teaching at Fulton and now teaches Social Studies at Fatima.

Sophomores Jonathan Block,

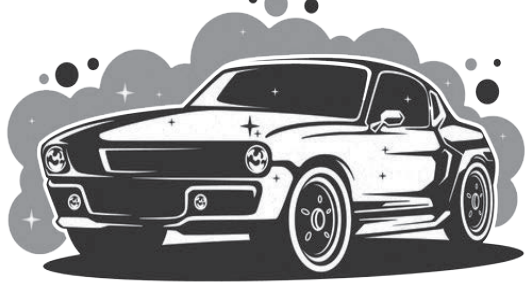
Josh Plassmeyer, and Austin Schenewerk are in their second year with the program and will vie for a varsity spot as the season progresses.

"Their work during the off-season shows," said Kilgore. "These guys are showing improvement all the time, and I expect good things."

Freshmen Cody Bertels, Nicholas Howe, Ryan Jansen, Toren Orscheln, Alexander Reichel, and Xavier Stuecken are doing well in practice. "A few of them have played before, so we have some experience," said Kilgore. "They've been working hard on the course, and you can tell they've put in time on their own. I think there's some potential in the younger group. They're focused and receptive to coaching. I'm excited to see how things unfold."

Fatima has been practicing at the Osage Country Club. "State Tech has done a great job with the course," said Kilgore. "It's a top-notch facility, and we're fortunate to be close enough to take advantage of it. I believe it will help us in the long run."

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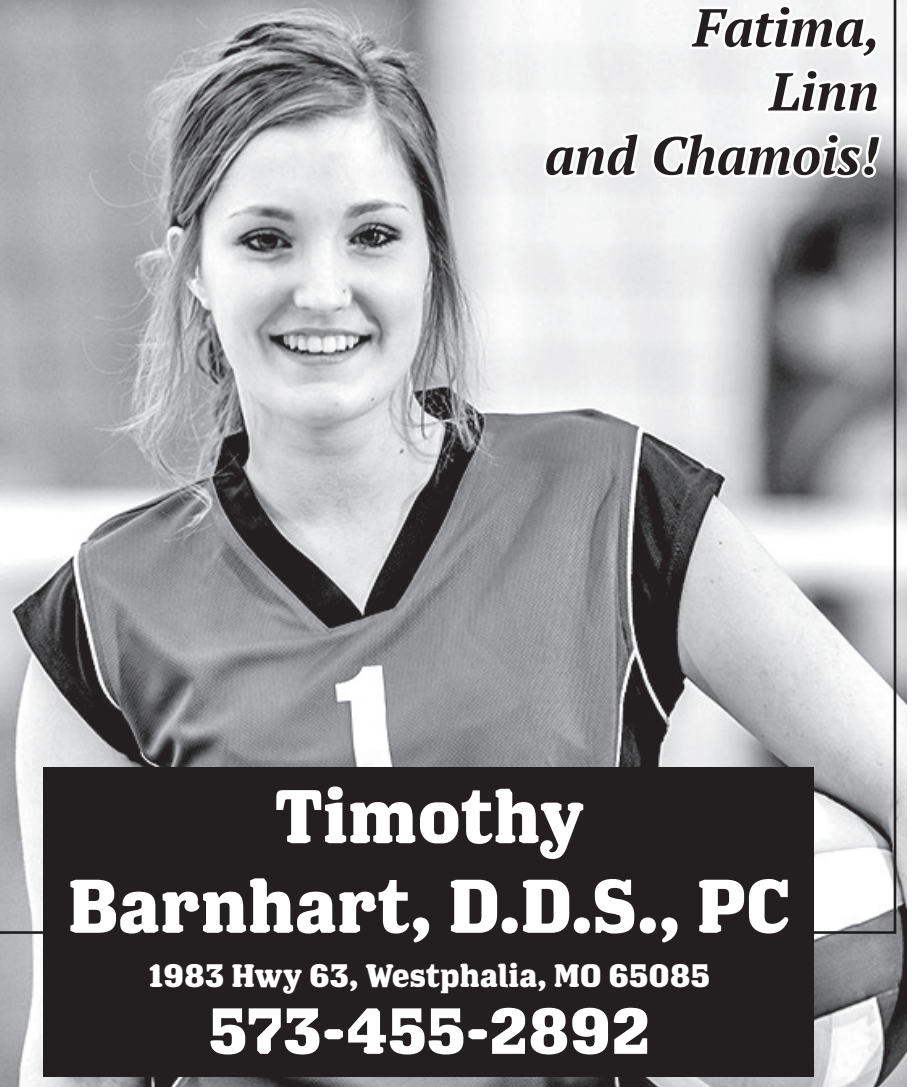
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Fatima boys' track team has fewer members

Fatima has fewer track and field team members, with 16 on the roster. "We have some great athletes in each area of track and field," said Coach Marc Bridges. "With small numbers, we will struggle with sprint relays but hope to make up for it in open events."

The team has four seniors.

Curtis Falter (throws) established himself in the throws last year, with his shot put over 40 feet and discus going more than 130 feet. "A small improvement for Curtis will create huge advancements in his placements this season," said Bridges.

Michael Kloepfel (mid-distance and distance) returns as Fatima's best 1600m runner from last season and is an integral part of the 4x800 relay.

Jonathan "JP" Schulte will run hurdles and sprints. "It is amazing how much Jonathan's hurdle technique has improved since last season, and we look forward to seeing how fast he can go," said Bridges.

New to the team this year is Ryan Kesel, who will compete in sprints and jumps. "Ryan is a dedicated soccer player that has decided to give track a try," said Bridges. "So far, I'm impressed with his speed for a guy over 6-5. We look for him to help in open races and relays."

JUNIORS

Cody Berhorst (distance) has been dealing with nagging injuries since his freshman year and is finally feeling good. "I look for big improvements, particularly in the 3200m run," Bridges said.

Easton Haslag (sprints and javelin) returns as Fatima's top scorer last year. "He appears faster this year, and we expect him to score well in all of his events,"



JUNIOR EASTON Haslag returns as Fatima's top scorer from 2022, and will again compete in the sprints. Coach Marc Bridges said he appears even faster this season. He'll also throw the javelin. Above right, senior sprinter Caleigh Huot, who led the team last year, looks to do the same this season.



said Bridges.

Cody Kampeter is a distance runner coming off of a good cross country season. "His dedication to running will serve him well in the 3200m this year as we are looking for some big drops in time," said Bridges.

Tyler Kloepfel will battle in the mid-distance and sprints. "He's an athletic three-sport athlete that returns as our top 800m runner," said Bridges. "He will be in-

See **FATIMA TRACK** on Page 23

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FATIMA SOPHOMORE Kristen Robertson works on her shot at a recent practice. New girls' coaches Dustin Cox and Sami Jo Freeman are excited to join the program and confident the Lady Comets will be very competitive this spring. Above right, junior goalkeeper Chloe Adamson blocks a shot during practice.

Fatima JH track led by new coach

Fatima's new junior high track coach, James Vignola, is eager to see the team succeed.

"The team is poised for a great run this year," he said. "On the girls' side, we have several returning runners and newcomers who hope to make a splash this

year on a freshly-faced girls' team."

Eighth-graders are Captain Carly Nilges (hurdles, sprints, 4x100), Melanie Troesser (400, sprints, 4x100), Savannah Verslues (long jump, high jump, sprints), Draven Cole (sprints), and Kaleigh Hillen (shot put, discus), and seventh-grade athletes are Rose Backes (distance, 4x800, mile), Kaidence Hillen (shot put, discus), and Jaidyn McCann (400, 4x100).

For the boys, Vignola said, "We have multiple boys with district-level talent that I'm very eager to see run in the coming meets."

Eighth-graders are Captain Michael Gabelsberger (mile, 800, long jump), Captain Zack Eisterhold (400, 800,

4x800, 4x100, long jump), Mason Bock (sprints, pole vault, 4x100), Brody Hoelscher (hurdles, sprints), Paden Luebert (long distance, 4x800), Cameron Woehr (mile, 800, 4x800), Tanner Huhn (sprints, 4x100, long jump), Trace Walters (sprints, 4x100, 800), and Cooper Berhorst (sprints).

Seventh-graders are Tucker Gregory and Grant Kliethermes (sprints) and Mason Huhn (distance).

"Compared to last year, our team is very versatile and can thrive in a variety of events," said Vignola. "We plan to use that to our advantage by switching them out throughout the season as needed. We look forward to the upcoming season!"

Fatima Track • from page 22

valuable in our 4x800 and other relays."

Sophomores number four as well.

Jace Eisterhold (jumps) will compete in most jumping events this season. "He has already shown improvement in the high jump and could see some big improvements this season," Bridges said.

Wyatt Gabelsberger (distance) is capable of upending one of Fatima's top distance runners at any moment, Bridges noted, and he will primarily run the 1600m and 3200m events.

Brady Hager (sprints) has gotten off to a great start this season and looks like a top contender in the 100m, 200m, and 400m.

Tyler Koenigsfeld (sprints, LJ) had a great freshman campaign and is looking to fill one of the team's top two spots this season in the open sprints.

Four freshmen round out the roster.

Michael Groene will run distance and

mid-distance. "I'm anxious to see where Michael is in the mid-distance events as I suspect he could find a lot of success," said Bridges.

Zach Klooppel will compete in the long sprints and mid-distance events. "Zach has a rare attribute for distance runners: speed," said Bridges. "I look forward to watching him progress."

Drew Riegel will battle in the pole vault, hurdles, jumps, and throws. "Drew is very athletic and has the ability to compete in a variety of events," said Bridges. "So far, the hurdles and pole vault look the most promising."

Caden Rosentreter is dedicated to the pole vault and has had some good jumps in practice thus far.

Assistant Coaches Levi Maxwell and Katie Hilkerbaumer return this season, along with new Assistant Coach Cassidy Roling.



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