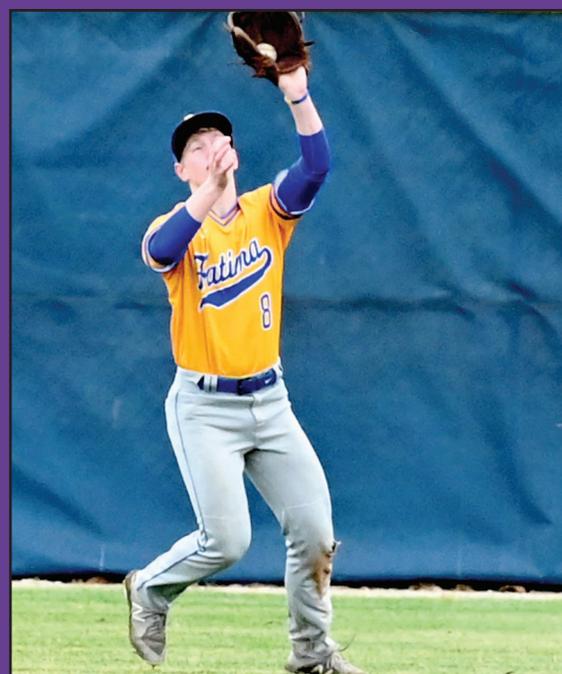


# 2021 UD SPRING SPORTS GUIDE



MARCH 17, 2021



## Perspective: Athletes have a clean slate this spring season

As the spring season nears and athletes look forward to competing on the track, golf course and soccer field and baseball diamond, they do so with a clean slate, in a manner of speaking.

Last year, with COVID-19 wreaking havoc on everything, the spring season was canceled before anyone took the field.

With the cancellation of the spring season, sports went by the wayside for a while, and that was tough on everyone. One of the comments I received most once sports did start up was that it must be nice to have something to cover.

That was nearly true. It was nice to cover something other than COVID-19, though even that was present in sports because that became the way of life. I suspect it will be that way for a long time.

Because I cover a lot of news, my job duties were more focused on the impact of the virus on local businesses, the nature of schooling with remote learning, and how graduations were to be held.

I thought it was really cool that the schools organized graduation parades, which gave the community an opportunity to see their students in an outdoor setting. I particularly enjoyed State Tech's outdoor graduation, and it would be great to see both continue, even when the virus is contained.

Kari and I shipped Richard off to college, and did our best to focus each day on living in this new world. He's doing well, by the way, and when he does come home for the weekend, it's like a pack of hyenas took up residence. There are virtually no leftovers as he scrounges all the time. That's great because he needs to eat more than ramen noodles and canned cheese, and frankly, we're not very good about eating leftovers.

Not having sports to cover last spring created a situation I've never encountered before; actually, I'm not sure if anyone here has dealt with the loss of an entire season.

For the first time since I entered the media in 1997, I was without a sporting event to shoot and write about.

Instead, I focused on feature stories, news events, and the like, and hoped like everyone else that we would get back to it in the fall.

Over the summer, sports picked up again and then we had a mostly successful fall season, though there were some hiccups as teams and individuals were quarantined.

I felt bad for the kids who didn't get to compete at the end of the cross country season, and the Linn softball team, which missed out on the district tournament.

COVID cases in the county continued to climb but the winter season came and saw a lot of good competition. Chamois was hit particularly hard, being quarantined several times. Other schools canceled games and there were plenty of restrictions placed on fan participation, depending on where the game was held.

This pandemic changed the way everything was handled, from mask mandates to limiting the number of people in a gym, to digital ticket sales.

To say it was a mess would be an understatement but I believe everyone did the best they could to get through it.

Congratulations to both Linn basketball teams, which won their respective district titles in the same year for the first time since 1985. The boys came very close to winning their sectional and capped a strong season.

As the winter season drew to a close, and I began thinking about the spring, I was concerned about how I was going to write up stories since there was a gap, like

a tooth missing from an otherwise beautiful smile.

How do you compare or talk about a player's improvements? How do you write about a team's expectations or what the coach is considering when there was no previous season?

In many ways, it reminds me of when a new coach takes over a program. He or she is playing catchup from the start, trying to learn names and assess how each player will perform without the benefit of previous experience.

Only this time, it was a problem across the county, involving every coach and team.

As I began the process, I had to ask each coach how they were planning to move forward based on that gap, and it came down to dealing with what was happening in practice.

In a way that was a nice reminder that focusing too much on the past can be a detriment though in this case, I would prefer to have last year as a base.

One of the issues I faced this spring was the fact that I had no action shots from last spring, which I like to use to showcase returners, particularly seniors.

I have the utmost respect for these coaches who have put in a lot of time and effort in the off-season working with their athletes on conditioning.

Summer baseball helped when games could be played, and conditioning in preparation for the cross country season will undoubtedly help this year's distance runners.

Practice began well but recent rain has been problematic, as teams were forced to do things in the gym. That's something no outdoor coach wants to see.

At Linn last week, the track team started outside and then had to rush to the gym after a downpour. Coach Bower wasn't kidding when she said everyone looked half-drowned.

They had to split gym space with the baseball team, and it was not the best option but what needed to be done.

When you're in the gym for months on end covering basketball and wrestling, there's a longing as spring nears for the

smell of fresh-cut grass and the warmth of the sun on your face. I'm sure I'm not the only person who feels that way.

Hopefully, as the season begins, we'll have more nice days than not, and I am excited to get going.

I want to welcome Fatima baseball coach Tyler VanGerpen, who gave up five years in the field to support his wife's career dream. Read about him and Lindsey (Lehmen) on Page 14B.

He is joined by returning coaches Steve Schnieders, Jeff Adamson, TJ Keilholz, and Tyler Plassmeyer.

There's a new but familiar person among the Fatima track coaching staff, and her return provides experience to the team. Katie (Eichholz) Hilkerbaumer, an All-State athlete at Fatima, went on to compete in college and said she's excited to be back. It was good to see her again, and you can read about her decision to return on Page 22B.

She joins longtime head coach Marc Bridges and veteran Levi Maxwell, along with JH coach Casey Bruce.

Still in his first year at Linn, Coach Briar Hancock is entering the spring season with a fall season under his belt. Though it was basically a practice season, the Wildcats played pretty well and learned a lot, and that knowledge will serve them well in the coming weeks.

I also want to congratulate Briar and Abbie on their nuptials and wish them a long together.

Returning to coach with Briar is Kyle Nolting, while Suann Bower has confirmed she is in her final year as the track coach at

Linn. She is joined by returning coaches Robyn Baker and Cynthia Stegemann, and newcomers Tyler Rush and Adam Maassen, who is serving as a volunteer.

Linn golf coach Ryan Rost returns for his third season, and he's got some real talent to work with this year.

At Fatima, Scott Kilgore took over the golf program last year but didn't get very far in practices before the season was canceled. He's looking forward to a year on the links with his six athletes.

Chamois track coach John Leach and his assistant coach, Ethan Hagenhoff, continue to push their kids to excel despite not having proper facilities. It always inspires me when I see how well the Pirates compete.

Finally, soccer coach Clint Dobry returns for his fourth year with the Lady Comets and is coming off a boys district championship. He has high hopes for the season, noting that his goal is to get the younger players up to speed by midseason for a chance to make a run at a district title.

As Clint told me, everyone is on the same page now, and it's going to be a race to see who can be ready for the end of the short season.

All of these coaches, new and veteran, have approached the season with one thing in common: they're in Osage County, and the athletes here are some of the hardest-working kids you will ever see.

It continues to be a privilege to cover these kids and I look forward to a healthy and successful spring season. Let's hope we're on the right track (*pun intended*) in our battle against COVID.

*See you at the game. NAJ*

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## Chamois HS track team to be led by two seniors

At Chamois this year, Coach John Leach and Asst. Coach Ethan Hagenhoff return to lead the way as the Pirates have two seniors in Kaylee Sieg and MaKenna Wuelling.

"We are in a difficult situation with getting out of districts as a team but I think we have some individuals who have a chance if they continue to work hard and improve in their events," said Leach. "Everyone missing last year's track season really hurt, and it took individual commitment to competing in other events to stay in shape. But I think with hard work, it's possible we can get some kids through districts and into sectionals."

Sieg, the team's thrower, will fire the shot, disc, and javelin, and early practices have shown her ability. "We were able to throw early but the rain has hurt us," said Leach. "She's improving her technique and she's very strong so I think she'll do well for us."

Sieg has been able to practice with the javelin, which wasn't always the case, as the team purchased one last year but wasn't able to use it. Prior to that, the team would borrow a javelin at meets.

"We've been working on it and the kids are starting to get it," said Leach. "Ethan has done a good job with the kids in the throwing events. He's studied a lot on how to properly throw the javelin and it will pay off."

Wuelling suffered a broken hand at the end of the basketball season and has not yet been cleared to compete with the track team, but she has been at practice and will join the team as soon as possible in the long jump, triple jump, and 100m dash.

"MaKenna is a great athlete and has worked hard her entire career at Chamois," said Leach. "She's a wonderful person to

have gotten to know and we're excited to have her as soon as she is ready."

Other Lady Pirates on the squad are junior Julissa Mitchem (shot, disc, javelin), and freshmen Devin Slusser (sprints, triple jump), and Eevie Halbert (sprints, hurdles).

"Julissa is hurt right now but is working through it," said Leach. "She's working hard when she can join us, and I think down the road she may surprise some people, especially at districts, because she's strong, and she's learning the techniques. You never know what might happen."

Slusser ran cross country in the fall and looks to transition to track. "I'm very excited to see her learn how to do the triple jump," said Leach. "She's doing a great job so far. Devin has a ways to go but she's learning how to attack it and not be afraid of it."

Halbert is coming off a solid basketball season. "She's a very athletic person and gives you everything she has," said Leach. "I really think she'll continue to improve, especially in the sprints, and anything is possible as the season unfolds."

Chamois also has two boys on the squad, junior Ethan Halbert (sprints), and sophomore Waylon Carter (throws).

"Ethan is also athletic and has a good work ethic," said Leach. "I feel that this year he can overcome some things and get faster in his sprints. We're working to continue building his confidence."

Carter is enthusiastic about his personal bests. "I think he can become something others should watch out for as he continues to develop," said Leach. "He's a tall, strong kid, and as he learns the finer points of his events, I think he'll be a very solid athlete."



PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

KAYLEE SIEG, left, and Julissa Mitchem, work with the small weights after practice.



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## Chamois counting on eight athletes for JH track season

Chamois has eight athletes out for the JH track season under Coach John Leach and Asst. Coach Ethan Hagenhoff.

Two eighth-graders, Caleb Keilholz, and Bill Kirsch will lead the squad.

Keilholz will compete in sprints, mid-distance, distance, and throw the shot put.

"He's a strong kid," said Leach. "He's already close to the school record and I expect him to destroy it in the shot. Caleb is also a very strong runner with a great work ethic. He doesn't falter on anything, no matter what we ask him to do."

Kirsch will throw shot and disc, and run in some relay events. "Bill tries very hard and works to improve himself in his events," said Leach. "He is doing very well in practice thus far."

Without last spring as a reference, the JH kids have no experience but Leach said every one of them is working hard to catch up.

Seventh-graders are Kaden Wuelling (sprints, relays), Jaxon Wuelling (sprints, relays, distance), Evert Mehmert (sprints, relays), Jack Schollmeyer (sprints, relays), Max McKague (sprints, relays), and Savannah Sieg (shot, discus).

"Kaden had a good cross country season and is getting better at running in

track," said Leach. "Like everyone, he's sore, but I think he's coming along, and he should do okay in the relays."

Wuelling also had a solid XC season. "I really expect him to do well in the 800, 1600, and the relay events," said Leach. "He has the opportunity to develop into a solid athlete down the road."

Mehmert has a chance to make some noise in the distance events. "He'll also do well in the relays," said Leach. "He's a very hard worker and always comes to practice with a smile on his face."

Schollmeyer is injured but will be back soon. "When he returns, we'll look for him to be an important part of the team," said Leach. "He'll be a little bit behind but I know he'll work hard to catch up. He's a joy to be around."

McKague is a grinder. "He doesn't complain much," said Leach. "He just puts his head down and does his thing, and I think he'll become a pretty good sprinter. I'm impressed with how he pushes through everything."

Sieg, a volleyball player, is splitting time with track right now. "It's difficult for her but I think she can develop into a pretty good thrower," said Leach. "She's tall and agile, and I think she'll do well."



PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

BILL KIRSCH and Jaxon Wuelling keep pace at a recent practice.

### Chamois Schedules on Page 5

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PHOTOS BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

**EEVIE HALBERT** and Ethan Halbert near the end of their workout run at a recent practice. At right, above, Asst. Coach Ethan Hagenhoff talks to Waylon Carter during weightlifting. Below right, Max McKague and Evert Mehmert stretch before hitting the weights.



## Chamois HS Track

Date	Sport	Opponent	Level	H/A
03/23/21	Track	Russellville High School	HS	H
03/25/21	Track	Linn R-II High School	HS	H
04/01/21	Track	Linn R-II High School	HS	H
04/03/21	Track	Russellville High School	HS	H
04/06/21	Track	Fatima High School	HS	H
04/08/21	Track	Missouri School For The Deaf	HS	H
04/13/21	Track	Show-Me Conference	HS	H
04/19/21	Track	Linn R-II High School	7-12	H
04/27/21	Track	Hermann High School	HS	H
04/29/21	Track	New Haven High School	9-12	A
05/08/21	Track	Districts	HS	H
05/15/21	Track	Sectionals	HS	H
05/21/21	Track	State	HS	H

## Chamois JH Track

Date	Sport	Opponent	Level	H/A
03/22/21	Jr. High Track	Linn	7th/8th	A
03/30/21	Jr. High Track	Fatima Jr. High Relays	7th/8th	A
04/13/21	Jr. High Track	Jr. High Conference Meet	7th/8th	A
04/19/21	Jr. High Track	Linn R-II High School	JH	A
04/22/21	Jr. High Track	Linn R-II High School	7th/8th	A
04/26/21	Jr. High Track	Russellville High School	7/8	A

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PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

JACOB SPEER throws to third during a recent practice at Linn.

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## Linn will use fall experience to best advantage

While the Linn baseball team did not get to compete last spring due to the coronavirus pandemic, the Wildcats were able to field a team in the fall, and all but two of the players from that squad have returned to play.

"I feel that's a huge advantage over a lot of teams," said Coach Briar Hancock. "We had a solid season in the fall and these guys learned a lot. Having five seniors on the squad this spring that played in the fall will also be huge. We're not taking any steps backward and I'm proud of these seniors. It's like having coaches on the field."

With five of six Wildcats boasting pitching experience coming into the season, Hancock he's looking forward to their performance on the mound. "I think our pitching staff will be huge," he said. "With all that experience, we can go out and throw quality innings."

Offensively, the Wildcats will be solid. "I believe we can go toe-to-toe with anyone, especially since we played in the fall," said Hancock. "Even the younger kids are more advanced than I expected. Having younger kids with skills is great because we can work with them, and help them grow into their roles. I know these kids will bring 100% to the field every time."

Because the fall season was not official, stats were not kept as strictly as they are during the spring. Here's a look at the individual players and their 2019 stats.

Caden Robinson will be the team's lead-off hitter, coming off a 2019 season in which he hit .319, going 22-69 with a triple and three doubles while driving in 10 and scor-

ing 22 runs.

"He showed in the fall that he understands game situations, and he has a high on-base percentage," said Hancock. "He'll also be a big role with communication at second base." He's basically a second catcher for us, and will be key in identifying situations and calling the right defense."

Austin McKim returns as the team's catcher. "He was solid all summer and fall behind the plate, and he has great communication skills as well," said Hancock. "He's very knowledgeable and will really help the coaching staff on the field."

"Austin has some power but he'll also find a way to get on base," said Hancock.

During the 2019 season, McKim went 24-73 (.329), with a double, 11 RBI and seven runs scored.

Andy Hueste is another player that has sound fundamentals at shortstop, but he's also skilled in other positions. "He hardly ever makes mistakes, and I think he'll be a great fit for a lot of colleges," said Hancock. "Offensively, he puts the ball in play and always finds a way to get on base."

Hueste's 2019 campaign ended with a BA of .303 (23-76) with a triple and four doubles, eight RBI, and 18 runs scored.

Hueste will also be a good relief pitcher, while McKim may pitch in certain situations. Hueste went 3-2 in eight games, pitching in 16.1 innings during the 2019 season, allowing 14 earned runs on 12 hits, with seven walks and 16 strikeouts.

Matthew Nenninger is starting to come up through the ranks and will be a utility

player, some infield, and any position in the outfield. "His hitting mechanics are a lot better, and hopefully, we'll get him in the lineup early in the season," said Hancock. "He's not just listening to what I'm saying; he takes that and puts it into practice, and helps make sure the younger players understand it."

Caleb Brandt will pitch and play third base. "He has a rocket for an arm and will be solid for us defensively," said Hancock. "The entire infield is solid. Caleb will be our big hitter, probably in the four- or five-spot. He's starting to come around to a leadership

role."

Last year's seniors played in the summer ball, and the upcoming seniors looking to emulate their leadership on the field.

Over the summer, Brandt pitched a majority of the games and did a pretty good job last fall. "He showed me he can keep his composure and a positive attitude," said Hancock. "He's sound on the mound and will keep the ball in the zone, and will rely

**See Wildcats**  
Page 9B



PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

AUSTIN MCKIM winds up a pitch during a recent practice at Linn.

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## Linn track coaches eager for start of the season

Linn track coaches have been working hard with the athletes in their charge who did not benefit from a season last year to fine-tune mechanics and ensure they are in good shape to start the year off right.

Joining the team this year is Tyler Rush, who has been helping the distance runners in both junior high and high school develop.

"We're off to a great start," said the 2013 Linn graduate who excelled in both cross country and track. "Conditioning went well and for the first two weeks of practice, everyone is responding well. They're great kids and they are very coachable."

Rush is using the tutelage of Coach Tim Bower and the coaches at Missouri Southern State University in his approach to coaching. "We want to make sure everything is balanced," said Rush. "You have to be there mentally as well as physically, and I tell the kids to back off if they're not feeling it, and give a little bit more if they can. So far it's worked out pretty well."

Coaching is something he's thought about for a while, though Rush said he didn't expect to be at Linn so soon. "I'm glad to be back and part of this program," he said. "It's a great honor to be a graduate of Linn and come back and help these kids who have the drive and determination to be an All-State athlete."

Many of Linn's runners partook in summer conditioning but that was primarily designed to prepare them for the cross country season with Coach Robyn Baker. During the winter, conditioning began for track and provided another opportunity to stay in shape.

Baker, who helps anyone who needs it but she also is focused on the distance runners.

"I've tried to get to all of them but I'm happy to help Tyler," she said. "All of the distance runners also ran cross country, and with our conditioning, we've come farther in a shorter period of time than in the past."

Baker added that the extra conditioning will help make up for the lost season, especially since most of the high school athletes have experience on the track. "It hit the junior high kids the most," said Baker. "They had the rug pulled from under them after going through the conditioning to get ready for the season. The older kids have their seventh-grade season experience but they're jumping right to high school now and it's a lot faster. The seventh-graders didn't get a season last year so this year it's like they're seventh-graders all over again because they didn't have a track meet. They are still learning what they need to do and we're doing our best to get them ready."

Coach Cynthia Stegemann returns to the team to work with sprinters, specifically



PHOTOS BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

**LINN COACHES** are excited about having a spring season after last year was taken away due to COVID. From left are Adam Maassen (assistant), Cynthia Stegemann (assistant), Head Coach Suann Bower, Robyn Baker (assistant), and Tyler Rush (assistant).

## Bower believes Linn girls' track team will be strong in several events

Linn track coach Suann Bower believes the Lady Wildcats will have a pretty strong team once everyone gets back in the groove.

"Without competing last year, we are rusty in some areas, especially the field events," she said. "The girls have been working hard in practice and have a good attitude."

Linn's lone senior is Claire Helmig, who will compete in the hurdles, relays, and sprints.

"Claire is very excited about the hurdles and wants to enjoy her last season on the track," said Bower.

Junior Myra Baker is coming off a great cross country season and is leading the girls in the distance events.

"She has had some great jumps too," Bower added.

Junior Ellie Monnette is set to run in the 3200m relay. "Ellie is very hardworking and can get the job done when she needs to," said Bower, who believes Hannah Otto will gain confidence with each meet in the sprints and jumps.

The last junior on the squad is Morgan Strobe (hurdles, sprints, long jump). "Morgan is new and has a positive attitude," said Bower. "She is trying a few events to see what clicks best."

Sophomore Annaliese Bowser is trying the shot, discus, and javelin this year. "She is a fast learner and very determined," said Bower.

In the sprints, relays, and pole vault, sophomore Marissa Gehlert is much stronger and confident in her events this season, Bower noted.

Sophomore Olivia Helmig will battle in the pole vault, 400m, sprints, and relays. "Olivia is in great shape and has high attainable goals in the pole vault and 400m run," said Bower.

Marly Houston (hurdles, sprints, relays, high jump) and Erika Platt (long jump, sprints, relays), both sophomores, are looking for a solid season. "Marly is a scrappy competitor, which is fun to watch," said Bower. "Erika Platt is a utility athlete. I can practically put her in any event and she would



PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

**MYRA BAKER** just has to laugh after clanging the bar in practice Friday as Ellie Monnette provides a spot.

give 100 percent."

Freshmen are Aileen Blackburn (1600m, 3200m, relays), Reagan Klouzek (distance, high jump, relays), and Ramsie Tschappler (distance, relays, triple jump).

"Aileen has put in some good miles at practice and will be ready to help in the distance events," said Bower. "Reagan is preparing for the next level and once she gets her legs back under her she will be contributing in several areas. Ramsie also had

a great cross country season and is ready to perform on the track. She is trying triple jump this year and looks great at it."

Several of these girls have speed but can withstand the endurance it takes in the longer events.

"It will be exciting to see what we can put together for the season," said Bower.

Bower will be joined by assistant coaches Robyn Baker, Cynthia Stegemann, Tyler Rush, and Adam Maassen.

**Wildcats  
From Page 7B**

on his defense.”

Senior Hayden Phillips is a hustler, and mechanically, he's sound. "He can play in a variety of positions, which will help us," said Hancock. "He's going to give his best effort. Defensively, I think he'll make a big impact no matter where I put him."

Three juniors are expected to make an impression at the varsity level.

Keagan Heywood will play mostly in right field. "I think he's got all the qualities needed to be a varsity player," said Hancock. "He and several others have taken on leadership roles, and that's always good to see."

Joining the team this spring are juniors Jacob Starke (OF), and Aidan Kline (OF/P/U). "They've been working hard in practice as we try to find the role they'll play this spring," said Hancock.

Sophomore Cody Leivian also hopes to make an impact.

"Cody has potential to start at first base," said Hancock. "There are just a few things he needs to work on, just because he's young. I think he can play a big role both offensively and defensively."

Sophomore Eli Baker also saw a lot of time during summer play and hopes to provide a spark.

"They've played different positions for

me, and I know these guys can be good role players," said Hancock. "The mental aspect of the game needs to be strengthened, but they have the athletic ability to come in and add a valuable element to our varsity squad."

New to the team is sophomore Delaney Schmidt, who will play catcher and spend time in the outfield.

"She has surprised me," said Hancock. "Delaney worked hard in the off-season on her catching skills, and she has the potential to play at the varsity level."

Freshmen are Curtis Deeken (IF), Seth Wolfe (OF), Tanner Hackmann (OF), Arlyn Martin (Utility), and Anthony King (IF).

"These guys are hardworking and mesh well as a group," said Hancock. "The older players are using their leadership to help me teach, and I think these young men will improve as they get more playing time. I think it's a great foundation for the program in the coming years."

Hancock said he values performance, and underclassmen have the opportunity to earn time on the varsity squad as the season unfolds.

"Everyone knows that if they work hard, there's a chance to play," said Hancock. "I want everyone to understand that their positions are only as secure as they make them with their performance. I want that dedication to their teammates, to me, and this program."

One of the biggest changes has been proper communication. "Even if someone is correct, there's a right way to say things to convey a

message and to ensure that change will take place," said Hancock. "The guys are doing a great job of communicating properly and not just screaming. It's a big step that will take us farther as a team this year."

As the season unfolds, Hancock said he is excited about conference play. "Every team is solid and has a chance to win the championship," he added. "The guys know that and they're up for the challenge. Our goal is to win conference and then focus on winning districts. If we bring our 'A' game, we'll be competitive in every game we play."

The mentality among players this year, led

by Hancock, is "All or Bust."

"They can be as good as they want to be, and I'll do my best to put them in a position to win," said Hancock. "Having said that, I want them to have fun no matter what. They didn't start playing Little League baseball to win championships. They started playing because it was fun, and I want them to always remember that motivation."

Linn is hoping to play a JV schedule this year. Hancock said the team is a little short of younger players but some of the varsity players will step in to help.

## Good Luck this Spring. NAJ

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## Linn Baseball

DAY	DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION	LEVEL
Monday	3/15/2021	5:00	Jamboree (Harrisburg, Pilot Grove)	Linn	V
Saturday	3/20/2021	TBA	Bonus	Eldon	V
Tuesday	3/23/21	5:00	Calvary Lutheran	Calvary Lutheran	JV/V
Saturday	3/27/2021	TBA	Bonus	Linn	V
Monday	3/29/2021	5:00	New Haven	Linn	JV/V
Tuesday	3/30/2021	5:00	South Callaway	Linn	JV/V
Tuesday	4/6/2021	5:00	New Bloomfield	New Bloomfield	JV/V
Fri-Sat	4/9-4/10	TBA	Iberia Tournament	Iberia	V
Tuesday	4/13/2021	5:00	Hermann	Hermann	JV/V
Thursday	4/15/2021	5:00	Russelville	Linn	JV/V
Fri-Sat	4/16-4/17	TBA	Linn Tournament (Hermann, Dixon, Cuba)	Linn	V
Tuesday	4/20/2021	5:00	Southern Boone	Linn	JV/V
Fri-Sat	4/23-4/24	TBA	California Tournament	California	V
Monday	4/26/2021	5:00	Tuscumbia	Tuscumbia	JV/V
Tuesday	4/27/2021	5:00	St. Elizabeth	St. Elizabeth	JV/V
Friday	4/30/2021	5:00	Fatima	Fatima	JV/V
Monday	5/3/21	5:00	Jamestown	Jamestown	JV/V
Tuesday	5/4/21	5:00	Father Tolton	Father Tolton	JV/V
Friday	5/7/2021	4:30	Owensville	Owensville	JV/V
Saturday	5/8/2021	TBA	Bonus	Wright City	V
Monday	5/10/21	5:00	Eugene	Linn	JV/V
Tuesday	5/11/21	5:00	Belle	Linn	JV/V
Fri-Sat	5/14-5/22	TBA	Districts	TBA	V
Monday	5/24	TBA	Sectionals	TBA	V
Wednesday	5/26/21	TBA	Quarterfinals	TBA	V
Mon-Thu	5/31-6/3	TBA	State	TBA	V

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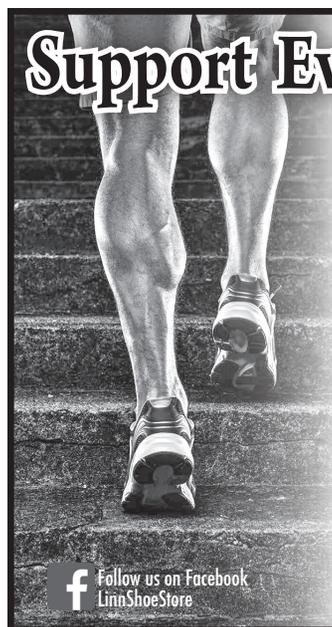
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## Linn boys' team small but full of potential

While the Linn boys' track team has only seven members, Coach Suann Bower believes there's plenty of potential for a solid season.

"We don't have the numbers to fill every event at the meets but I feel confident that we will have a strong showing in the events in which we will compete," she said.

Seniors Kaleb Brandt (shot, discus, javelin, and sprints) and Garrett Hampton (javelin, shot, discus) will lead the team.

"Kaleb and Garrett have not gotten to compete in track at Linn yet," said Bower. "They both look strong in the throws and will be great to push each other to get better. I have high expectations of them."

Junior Gibson Tschappler is slated to run the 1600m and 3200m events.

"Gibson is working hard to improve his times from his freshman year," said Bower.

Linn has three sophomores: Trenton

Burnett (3200m, 1600m, 800m), Zach Dodson (pole vault, high jump, sprints), and Jason Powers (sprints, long jump).

"Trenton is also new to the Linn track team," Bower said. "He has been running smooth and confident and is working to take down a school record of Coach Tyler Rush. Zach cannot wait to get his feet up in the air at pole vault and high jump. Once the form and rhythm of the jumps return he will contribute a great deal. Jason is trying a few new events and looks good in the sprints."

Freshman Gavin Davis (sprints, long jump) is adjusting to the high school level and is working on finding his events.

"All the athletes have been putting in the hard work necessary to reach their goals by the end of the season," said Bower. "So far, they have been a quiet group to work with but I imagine that will change as the season progresses."

## Linn JH track catching up

Linn's JH track teams enter the season without the benefit of a meet last season as COVID shut everything down but Coach Suann Bower is confident that hard work will make these athletes competitive.

"There is a lot to learn in a short amount of time on the track and they are soaking it up," said Bower. "This group will make great strides throughout the season if they continue to put in the hard work."

Eighth-graders Natasha Jewell and Courtney Wood will throw discus and shot.

"Natasha and Courtney both had put in hours conditioning and getting in shape since January," said Bower. "They are also competing with the junior high volleyball team so they have been working very hard. I'm very proud of their efforts. The upperclassmen have stepped up and helped them with the technical details of the throws. It will be fun to see them make progress throughout the season."

On the boys' side, eighth-graders Cole Franken (jumps, sprints, relays), and Tyler Wolfe (shot, discus) are helping to lead the team but since their season was canceled last year it really is everyone's first time competing on the track.

"I'm proud of the fact that they are willing and excited to try new events," Bower said. "It's been enjoyable to watch them. Many of the field events can be very technical and difficult to master. If they remain positive and determined they will benefit by the end of the season."

They are joined by seventh-graders Craig Laughlin, Tony Platt, and Tyler Wolfe, who are working on the throwing events. "Each practice shows big improvements," said Bower.

Tony and Reid Baker are trying out the pole vault event. "They are having fun while the upperclassmen have shown them some drills," said Bower. "Reid is also following in big sister, Myra's, footsteps by running mid-distance and long-jumping."

Koen Caldwell and Carson Kliethermes are mainly sprinting. "They work well together and have gotten over many 'hurdles' in the first weeks of practice," Bower said.

Rounding out the team is Josiah Harris, who will compete in the shot and discus.

"He is very coachable with a great attitude," said Bower.

Linn Coaches  
From Page 8B

those running the hurdles. "That's where I have most of my experience since my daughter was All-State at Blair Oaks in the hurdles. Alexa may come over to help as well."

Stegemann added that she has had limited time on the track due to weather but the mechanics and form being taught, along with stretching, have been beneficial.

Adam Maassen, a student at Lincoln University and Linn graduate, is volunteering to help out the team to earn credits that will allow him to enter the education program. He would like to return to Linn and teach after graduating in 2022.

He noted that helping out with basketball and track has helped him understand more about what's necessary to get kids in shape.

"The kids are doing well and there's a lot of progress," he said. "All of the kids are improving and listening to instruction. Getting them to focus is my goal, and making sure they're having fun while they do it is important."

Maassen has been working primarily with the throwers.

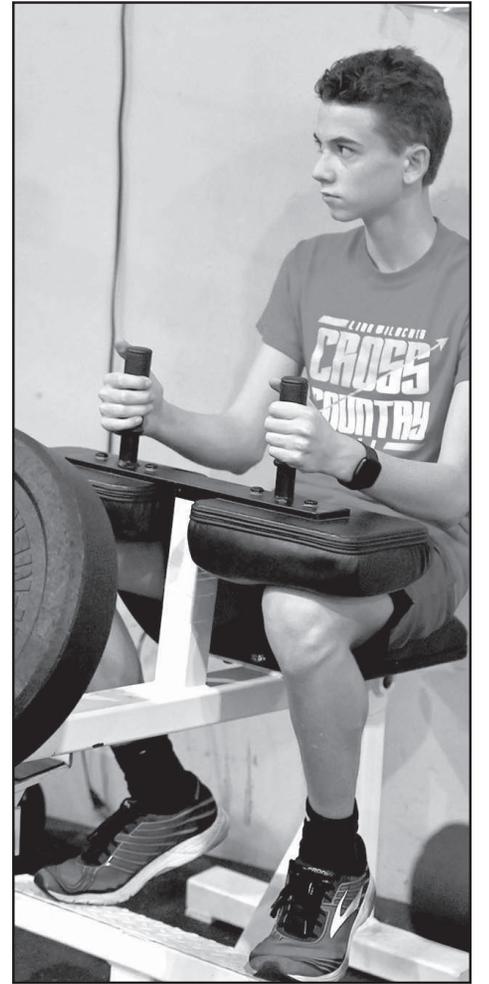


PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

JASON POWERS works on leg-lifts during practice Friday.

Additional photos from spring practice in this week's UD



Linn, Mo.

# GOOD LUCK

## Wildcats, Comets and Pirates

### Linn HS/JH Track

DAY	DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION	LEVEL
Tuesday	3/16/2021	3:30	Red and White Meet	Linn	HS
Monday	3/22/2021	3:30	Linn Quad	Linn	JH
Tuesday	3/23/21	3:00	Russellville Quad	Russellville	HS
Thursday	3/25/21	3:30	Linn Quad	Linn	HS
Tuesday	3/30/2021	3:30	Fatima Inviational	Fatima	JH
Thursday	4/1/2021	1:00	Linn invitational	Linn	HS
Tuesday	4/6/2021	3:00	Eugene Inviational	Eugene	JH
Thursday	4/8/2021	1:00	MSD Relays	Fulton	HS
Saturday	4/10/2021	10:00	Russellville Invitational	Russellville	HS
Tuesday	4/13/2021	1:30	Conference Meet	Fatima	JH/HS
Thursday	4/15/2021	3:00	Eldon Relays	Eldon	HS
Monday	4/19/2021	3:00	Maries/Osage Challenge	Linn	JH/HS
Thursday	4/22/2021	3:00	Linn Invitational	Linn	JH
Tuesday	4/27/2021	3:00	Hermann Inviational	Hermann	HS
Friday	4/30/2021	3:00	South Callaway Inviational	Mokane	HS
Saturday	5/8/2021	TBA	Districts	TBA	HS
Saturday	5/15/2021	TBA	Sectionals	TBA	HS
Fri-Sat	5/21-5/22	TBA	State	TBA	HS

Good Luck this Spring. NAJ

## Wildcats dress 15 for golf the spring season

Linn has 15 players out for the golf team this year under the direction of third-year coach Ryan Rost, who is anxious to hit the links.

"The majority of our players have experience," said Rost. "The seniors were sophomores when I started working with them and I know what to expect."

The biggest challenge has been trying to assess the golfers who didn't get to play last year or are new to the program.

"It's been a bit of a learning curve to figure out what to tweak to help them improve," said Rost. "This year's sophomores didn't have that freshman-year experience and learning how to deal with jitters and things like that. There will be a freshman mindset among our younger golfers just because no one got to play last year."

Seniors Alek Peters, Ben Steinbeck, Caleb Kixmiller, and Austin DeCramer will lead the team.

"Alek has been working his tail off all summer trying to improve," said Rost. "Even with all the work he did in basketball, he kept getting in swings. The improvement I've seen over his career is

amazing. I have no doubt he would have been All-State last year had his junior year not been stolen from him. I have really high expectations from him that I believe he'll surpass."

Peters led the Wildcats in 2019 with an 84-87/171 on the par 72 Rivercut Golf Course at Springfield to earn 24th. After the first day, he was tied for 15th but finished nine spots down after day two, just missing the All-State cut of 168.

At the sectional level Rivercut Golf Course in Springfield, Peters shot a 17-over 88 for 11th place, and Steinbeck, the only other player on the roster with any varsity experience, stepped up toward the end of 2019 but saw his season end with a 114 for 42nd place. The cut was 92.

"He's hungry to be in the top five and if he continues to work hard, he has a great opportunity to do just that," said Rost.

Steinbeck during his sophomore year picked up state experience. "He stepped up and filled our fifth spot, and he knows how it goes," said Rost. "It sucks for him to have lost the experience last year but he's in good shape and I believe he'll

come in and compete for a varsity spot and help us out."

Kixmiller and DeCramer have been playing since they were freshmen. "They have also improved and are looking for a varsity spot, which will be a tight competition all year," said Rost. "The amount of time they've put in during practice will give them a chance to make the varsity squad, and they'll make our team stronger as a whole."

Juniors include Emma Kucsik, Aubri Atwell, Austin Wolfe, Evan Hock, and Josh McKim.

"Aubri has played for the last couple of years and has some experience," said Rost. "It's fun to coach girls, since I coach softball too, and it's nice to share this experience with them. She and Emma come out and work their tails off every day."

Wolfe, Hock, and McKim are entering their third year and were brand-new as freshmen. "They've fallen in love with the

See Linn Golf  
Page 12B



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**SENIOR ALEK** Peters just missed the cut at state in 2019, and now wants to complete the journey he began as a freshman with an All-State medal.



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**Linn Golf**  
From Page 11B

game and have worked hard enough to where they're playing pretty decent rounds," said Rost. "If they stick with it, they'll have a chance to play varsity-level golf and will compete with the starting five all year."

Sophomores are Landon Bennett, Rhett Robinson, Cole Holtschneider, and John Schmidt.

"They came out last year and had a lot of promise," said Rost. "I was excited to see what they could do and thought they would vie for a varsity spot but then COVID happened. I know they've put in a lot of work over the summer improving their game as a whole, and I'm excited to see how well they do. They'll definitely give the upperclassmen a run for their money. The only problem they have is that they don't have last year's experience to pull from. We'll see how they react to tournament atmospheres and how they handle the mental aspect of the game. I think they'll be a big asset to the team."

Freshmen are Jett Maassen and Britt

Winslow.

"These kids have put in a lot of work coming into the season," said Rost. "I know them from teaching and in the community, and I'm glad to have them on the roster. It's been pretty awesome watching them play and they haven't had a lot of the jitters you would expect from kids who haven't been in this setting before. The older kids need to watch out because they will be really pushing for a varsity spot all year. I look for them to keep improving and become varsity-caliber players if not this year then definitely next year."

Overall, Rost believes the team has an opportunity to excel if everyone continues to improve.

In 2018, the Wildcats won their district for the first time in seven years and only the second time in school history.

"I think we can win our conference and district," said Rost. "The main thing is how we handle it mentally. Only a few of these players have that high-pressure experience. The biggest challenge will be keeping our nerves in check and once we get past that, I think this team is capable of doing some pretty big things."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

BRITT WINSLOW addresses the ball during a recent practice.

## Linn Golf

DAY	DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	LOCATION	LEVEL
Monday	3/29/2021	4:00	Linn Quad (Dixon, Cuba, Fatima)	Linn	JV/V
Wednesday	3/31/2021	9:00	Russellville Invitational	Russellville	V
Wednesday	4/7/21	9:00	Versailles Invitational	Versailles	V
Monday	4/12/2021	4:00	New Bloomfield Quad	New Bloomfield	JV/V
Wednesday	4/14/2021	9:00	Southern Boone Invitational	Southern Boone	V
Thursday	4/15/2021	4:00	Osage Quad	Osage	JV/V
Monday	4/19/2021	9:00	Helias Invitational	Helias	V
Wednesday	4/21/2021	9:00	Conference Tournament	Eugene	V
Tuesday	4/27/2021	4:00	Linn Quad (Owensville, New Bloomfield, Hermann)	Linn	JV/V
Wednesday	4/28/2021	9:00	Harrisburg Invitational	Harrisburg	V
Mon-Tue	5/3-5/4	9:00	Districts	TBA	V
Monday	5/10/2021	9:00	Sectionals	TBA	V
Mon-Tue	5/17-5/18	9:00	State	TBA	V



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Wildcats, Comets and Pirates on a Great Season!

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PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

SHANE "CHUCK" Verslues gets all of this pitch in the batting cage.

Meet Coach VanGerpen - Page 14

An advertisement for Coca-Cola Bottling Company. It features a large, condensation-covered bottle of Powerade Fruit Punch in the foreground. In the background, there are other bottles of Coca-Cola products. The Coca-Cola logo is prominently displayed in red script. Above the logo is a red silhouette of the Jefferson City dome. Below the logo, the text reads "JEFFERSON CITY", "Coca-Cola", "BOTTLING COMPANY", and "573-636-6165".

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# Fatima looks for senior leaders on the diamond

After losing last season to COVID-19, Fatima returns to the diamond this year with high hopes despite the challenges involved with having lost a year of experience. Joining the Fatima baseball program this year is head coach Tyler VanGerpen, who believes the Comets are in a position to succeed despite the hiatus.

"Because all of my assistants are returning coaches and a few of them coached over the summer, I feel like I didn't have to start completely from scratch on finding out what

we do and don't have," said VanGerpen, who was hired last August and began working with the team during conditioning in November. "I think by the start of the season, the majority of the kids knew my personality and how I communicate with the kids. But for me, the transition has been good and I would say the kids would agree with that."

A lot of what VanGerpen determined was learned during the off-season strength/conditioning workouts. "The upperclassman

had a strong showing in those sessions and started to learn how to be upperclassmen and leaders on a team," he added. "Most of the prep work for me was able to be done during these sessions and a big part of where we are starting is because the kids showed up for off-season workouts and pushed themselves. I think any time you have kids miss key developmental reps, there will always be a learning curve. Very few teams have the comfort level to say there isn't a learning curve with their teams. Most of these kids missed JV reps last year so some are making the jump from the freshman/sophomore team to varsity. That is a big jump for some kids but I think with us having a senior-heavy team, it will allow the curve to be not as steep."

All seniors are on the varsity squad.

"We'll be senior-heavy on varsity at the start until these younger guys get going," said VanGerpen.

When cuts were made on Thursday, positions for varsity and JV were announced but it's a fluid process. "I want the guys to come to practice ready to compete for their spots," said VanGerpen. "That competition will make us a better team, and keep the guys hungry. They understand their position is earned and they will have to work hard to keep it."

Younger pitchers will step in as needed, depending on the situation. "We have a lot of pitchers so things will change from one game to the next," said VanGerpen. "There will be times when we hit our pitch-count limit and the younger guys will be very much a part of our success."

Overall, VanGerpen said he believes the entire pitching staff will rely on defense. "I don't want that to come off negative but the coaching staff will be harping on these kids to throw lots of strikes, and attack hitters, to help keep the defense awake and hopefully their pitch count will stay down as well."

The goals of the team will depend on the seniors. "With a senior-heavy team, I would like to think that those goals are reachable, as long as the kids keep showing up to practice and putting in the work," said VanGerpen, who is pushing for a Show-Me title, along with a shot at the district championship.

Here's a look at the senior varsity players with stats from 2019.

Outfielder Dalton Gentges, 15-42 (.357) with a double and 10 RBI.

"He showed up for offseason workouts and will be a solid leader in the outfield," said VanGerpen. "I think he'll give us some solid outfield play no matter what position

we throw at him. Offense: Based on what we've seen so far, he's had good approaches at the plate and making good contact with ground balls and line drives. He's doing everything we're asking of him.

Gage Cunningham will be a top pitcher and play in the OF. As a left-handed batter, he will give Fatima some different opportunities. "He's made a good transition from off-season to the spring," said VanGerpen. "He'll have a lot of weight on his shoulders, carrying the load both in the field and on the mound."

Daniel Kleffner, 13-36 (.361), with five RBI, is another outfielder who will see time on the mound. "He's been very communicative and is doing well in practice," said VanGerpen. "He's going to throw a lot of strikes and we like what we've seen on the mound. He'll also be a reliable outfielder."

Jake Boyce, 4-13 (.308), with two doubles and six RBI, is vying for the catching position. "He's very athletic and brings speed to the bases," said VanGerpen. "He has things to learn behind the plate but he's a quick learner, and I think he'll do fine. As a hitter, I think he'll be a solid line-drive and rely on his speed to put pressure on other teams."

Dawson Woehr, 16-35 (.457), with three doubles and eight RBI, will play middle infielder, floating depending on who is pitching. "He's going to be a solid player and will add a good left-handed bat for us in the lineup," said VanGerpen. "He's going to put the ball in play and if it's on the ground, he'll be able to pressure defenses from the left side of the batter's box."

Dean Hagenhoff is the team's utility infielder. "It wouldn't surprise me to see him play every position at least once this year," said VanGerpen. "I have faith he's going to be a strong player and do what we need him to do. Offensively, he's improved on his strength during the off-season, and I expect to see some pop coming off his bat."

Braden Juergensmeyer, 11-36 (.306), with three doubles and nine RBI, will fight for a catching position. "He's working hard in practice and he wants to learn and improve," said VanGerpen.

Shane Verslues, 12-35 (.343), hit three doubles and posted 11 RBI. "He'll be one of the guys we rely on for big hits," said VanGerpen. "He will likely start in a DH or pinch-hitting role, depending on the situation, but he's improving on his fielding, and



COACH TYLER VanGerpen visits with catchers Jake Boyce and Braden Juergensmeyer at last week's practice. PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

## VanGerpen reboots career with Fatima baseball

Tyler VanGerpen has taken the head coach position for Fatima baseball and is looking forward to a strong restart to his coaching career after a five-year break.

Originally from Overland Park, Kan., VanGerpen graduated from Blue Valley High School, where he played football, basketball, and baseball all four years. After graduation, he went on to Iowa Western Community College for baseball, and then earned his Associates of Arts degree from Johnson County Community College, where he also played baseball.

While attending Drury University, he played baseball and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree with a major in mathematics. It was there that he met Fatima graduate Lindsay Lehmen in 2014. He followed her to Richmond, Va., so she could pursue her law degree at the University of Richmond in August of 2015. They stayed in Richmond for a total of five years before moving back home to be closer to their families last August.

VanGerpen spent several years as a personal baseball skills coach and served as the varsity pitching coach at Springfield Catholic High School before moving to Richmond. He also was the JV baseball coach at Springfield the previous year. While in Iowa, VanGerpen was the assistant varsity and JV coach at Denver Senior High School, a year after working as the eighth-grade softball coach.

When Tyler and Lindsay returned to Missouri, she saw a posting for the coaching position on Facebook. "After discussing it, we decided that it would be a good opportunity for me to get back into coaching and start the process of getting involved in the community since I was not raised in the area," Tyler said.

VanGerpen noted his approach to the game is more aggressive than conservative. "I like the pace of the game to be more up-tempo," he added.

Being a new coach, VanGerpen is throwing a lot at the team right now. "Each day there is something new they have to learn and right now, it is showing," he said. "Their minds are doing a lot of thinking and it's affecting how they perform each day but I am seeing things start to click. It is slowly becoming second-nature and allowing them to focus on their game. If we were to play this weekend, I don't think we'd perform too great. But, by next weekend, when we have our first games, we will be ready. The kids are getting excited to get the season started."

See Fatima Baseball  
Page 16B

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## Fatima JV, freshman teams working hard

Fatima coach Steve Schnieders said that despite losing a season to COVID, the JV Comets are working hard to improve and he believes they will push for time on the varsity squad.

"We have depth, with a lot of pitching, and everyone wants to take it to the next level," said Schnieders. "We will push varsity players with all this talent."

Juniors on the JV team include Evan Kliethermes (P, 1B, 3B), Carson Schulte (P), Joe Hoerschgen (OF, IF), Chase Plassmeyer (C, IF), John Dickneite (P), Nathan Lehmen (P, 1B), and Warren Wilde (OF), and sophomores are Jack Robertson (C, P, IF), Noah Jaegers (IF, P), Max Buscher (IF, P), Blake Gentges (IF, OF, P), Jacob Schulte (C, P, IF, OF), Grayson Juergensmeyer (1B, OF), Ethan Luebbering (OF), Dawson Rademan (OF), Aiden Williams (IF, OF), and Ryan Kesel (1B, OF).

Freshman coach Jeff Adamson said he is confident the Comets will be competitive in every game.

"They're working very hard in practice," he said. "I've been impressed with their commitment to this team and their individual improvements."

One challenge every year is gathering players who until they reach Fatima have played on different traveling teams, each of which has its own style.

"It's the little things," said Adamson. "The way we use signs or the verbiage we use with guys on the bases are things we just work on until they get it. I expect them to come out ready every game and do their best. That's all you can ask from them as a coach."

Team members are Chase Buddemeyer (3B, P), David Stephan (1B, P), Easton Stuckenschneider (C), Kyser Luebbert (1B), Graham Boeckmann (OF), Gavin McDonald (OF), Wyatt Reinkemeyer (3B, P), Nolan Jaegers (3B, OF), Conner Bax (MI, OF, P), Noah Luebbering (2B, P), and Eric Stegeman (3B, OF).



PHOTOS BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

BLAKE GENTGES, above, and Jack Robertson, below, practice pitching during a recent practice.



## Fatima Varsity/JV Baseball

DATE	OPPONENT	LEVEL	HOME/AWAY	TIME(S)
03/12/21	Jamboree		Away	TBA
03/20/21	Capital City High School	Varsity	Away	12:00 pm
03/20/21	Boonville High School	Varsity	Away	2:00 pm
03/22/21	Heliass High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
03/25/21	Fulton High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
03/29/21	Southern Boone High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
03/30/21	New Bloomfield High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
04/05/21	St. Elizabeth High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
04/06/21	Battle High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:30 pm
04/08/21	Russellville High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
04/13/21	Hickman High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
04/15/21	Hallsville High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
04/16/21	Eugene High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
04/19/21	Capital City High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
04/22/21	Blair Oaks High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
04/23/21--04/24/21	Wood Bat Tournament	Varsity	Away	TBA
04/27/21	South Callaway High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
04/29/21	Tuscumbia High School	Varsity	Home	5:00 pm
04/30/21	Linn High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
05/01/21--05/01/21	Blair Oaks JV Tournament	Jr. Varsity	Away	TBA
05/03/21--05/07/21	Fulton Tournament	Varsity	Away	TBA
05/11/21	Rock Bridge High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
05/13/21	Vienna High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
05/15/21--05/22/21	Districts	Varsity	Away	TBA

## Fatima Freshman Baseball

DATE	OPPONENT	LEVEL	HOME/AWAY	TIME(S)
03/26/21	Fulton High School	9th Grade	Home	5:00 pm
03/29/21	Capital City High School	9th Grade	Home (DH)	5:00 pm
04/01/21	Jefferson City High School	9th Grade	Away	5:30 pm
04/13/21	Rock Bridge High School	9th/10th	Home	5:00 pm
04/15/21	Blair Oaks High School	9th/10th	Home	5:00 pm
04/16/21	Fulton High School	9th Grade	Away	5:00 pm
04/23/21--04/24/21	Blair Oaks Freshman Tournament	9th/10th	Away	TBA
04/29/21	Southern Boone High School	9th/10th	Away	5:00 pm
05/03/21	Heliass High School	9th/10th	Home	5:00 pm
05/06/21	Battle High School	9th Grade	Home	5:00 pm

## Jamboree photos in the UD this week

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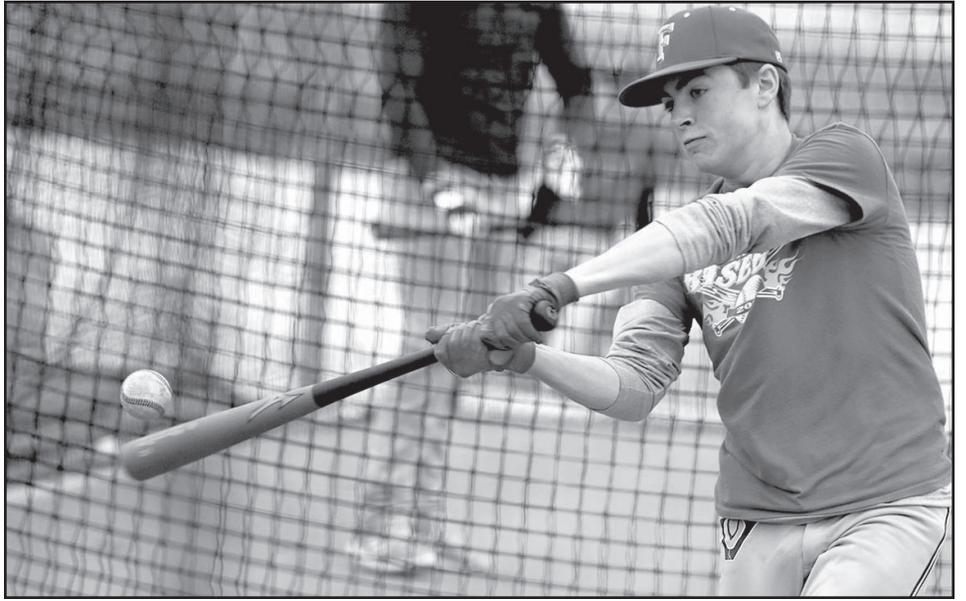
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**COACHES TJ** Keilholz and Tyler Plassmeyer work with outfielders at last week's practice. Below left, Dalton Gentges scoops up a grounder in an outfield drill. Below right, Connor Bax extends to pick off this pitch. **PHOTOS BY NEAL A. JOHNSON**



### Fatima Baseball From Page 14B

his bat is looking pretty good so far."

Junior John Dickneite will enter the game as a pitcher in the top of the rotation for varsity. "We'll rely on him quite a bit to get things going," said VanGerpen. "He has good control of the fastball and change-up. We just need to make sure he keeps the ball down and attacks hitters."

Junior Evan Kliethermes will see varsity time as a pitcher as well. "He throws the ball well and keeps it low, so he's going to get a lot of ground balls," said VanGerpen.

Sophomore Max Buscher is the third baseman. "Max will be a key pitcher for us and solid at third base," said VanGerpen. "He's got a little bit of a learning curve but he's got the ability to take the teaching and run with it. He'll probably eat up a lot of innings on the mound. He does a good job of attacking the zones and the hitters, making sure they put the ball in play and minimizing the number of walks we give out."

Sophomore Blake Gentges will be another key infield player. "He's got a reliable glove and has good fundamentals," said VanGerpen. "He'll need to learn the speed of varsity and what comes with that. There's a lot of pressure in the middle but he's showing up every day and taking what we tell him to heart."

VanGerpen is joined by JV coach Steve Schnieders, freshman coach Jeff Adamson, and assistant coaches TJ Keilholz and Tyler Plassmeyer.

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## Fatima girls soccer team eager to get going

Fatima girls soccer coach Clint Dobry said the Lady Comets are eager to get the season underway and believes that while there will be a learning curve, he's hoping the team gets through it faster than his opponents.

"It's weird this year," he said. "When I first joined the team, I had Coach (Kirby) Keth here to give me insight on other teams and what to expect, so when I took over the program, it was easier to assess our strengths relative to others. This year, I don't have anything to compare us to because no one played last spring. How a team played two years ago doesn't really help so we're going to have to do our best and see how it goes."

For the first time in many, many years every starting position is up for grabs. "I know some coaches say this as a motivational tool but this year it is true," said Dobry. "The first half of the season will be a steep learning curve for most of the girls. Playing time for some of them may not be what they want or expect, but the girls know that we are all in this together. They are a valued member of the team no matter what their role is."

As the season unfolds, Dobry expects the team will hit a rough patch. "That's when these young ladies need to dig down deep and find that winning edge, and I'm confident they can do it," he added.

Dobry has high expectations of his three co-captain seniors, Abby Rehagen (MF), Allie Hale (D), and Erika Pope (F).

"I need them to behave like leaders and encourage their teammates," he said.

"They need to stay positive and help the younger players develop."

Rehagen has come a long way, Dobry noted, with improved foot skills. "I have no doubt she will be a spark for us in the middle of the field," he added.

Hale is a threat no matter where she plays, and could score from her defensive position. "She's probably the most mature player on the team," said Dobry. "She's fearless, wants to win, and is the most vocal leader on the team."

Even without last season, Pope is primed to break virtually every girls' scoring record on the books and may give the boys' records a run. "She's a joy to coach and is the most coachable player I've ever had," said Dobry. "Erika has amazing talent but she also works very hard. She wants to shine but she's unselfish, which is a great combination that makes everyone around her a better player."

Fatima's lone junior this year is Emily Brandt, who will play defense. "She's a bruiser," said Dobry. "Emily gets after it and hustles more than anyone else in any position. She plays with a lot of grit, heart, and soul, and I am excited to see how well she does."

Sophomores Maci Kloepfel and Meah Knoll will each have time playing goalkeeper as they compete for the starting job.

"Maci is an outstanding athlete and

**See Lady Comets  
Page 19B**



**ERIKA POPE** returns as the team's offensive powerhouse with an opportunity to break several scoring records. **PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON**



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**FORMER PLAYERS** Grace Schulte and Cierra Flores recently helped Coach Clint Dobry work with the girls on their positions as he is without an assistant this year. Below, Emily Brandt and Abby Rehagen battle for the ball.

PHOTOS BY NEAL A. JOHNSON



Best of Luck to Fatima Comets,  
Linn Wildcats and Chamois Pirates  
in your upcoming sports seasons!

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PHOTOS BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

**MEAH KNOLL** moves to block a shot during a recent practice. Below, Hope Jaegers kicks the ball to clear it as Allie Hale (gray), and Megan Borgmeyer (orange) converge on the play.



## Fatima Girls Soccer

DATE	OPPONENT	LEVEL	HOME/AWAY	TIME(S)
03/16/21	Jamboree @ JC	Varsity	Away	5:00 pm
03/19/21	Owensville High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
03/23/21	Mexico High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
03/25/21	Belle High School	Varsity	Home	5:00 pm
03/26/21	Crocker High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
03/30/21	School of the Osage	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
04/05/21	St. Clair High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
04/06/21	Dixon High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
04/12/21	St. James High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
04/13/21	Southern Boone High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
04/15/21	Boonville High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
04/19/21	Fulton High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
04/20/21	Capital City High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
04/23/21--04/24/21	Fr. Tolton Invitational	Varsity	Away	TBA
04/26/21--05/01/21	Owensville Tournament	Varsity	Away	TBA
05/03/21	Stover High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
05/04/21	Moberly High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
05/06/21	Battle High School	Varsity/JV	Away	5:00 pm
05/11/21	Winfield High School	Varsity/JV	Home	5:00 pm
05/17/21--05/22/21	Districts	Varsity	Away	TBA

### Lady Comets From Page 17B

Meah is one of the most fearless players I've seen in goal," said Dobry. "They're doing well in practice and learning the nuances involved with being a goalie."

Since Dobry has no assistant coach this spring, he has had some help from former goalie Grace Schulte, who has volunteered her time to work with the goalies.

Cierra Flores has also been at a few practices to help out the team's offense.

Rounding out the team are sophomore midfielders Zoe Rehagen, Mary Schwartz, Cami Wieberg, and Megan Borgmeyer, and

freshmen Hannah Heisler (offense), Lydia Rehagen, Faith Jaegers, and Hope Jaegers, all midfielders, and defenders Avery Brandt, Chloe Adamson, and Ella Massman.

Overall, Dobry said this group has some talent and will have a lot of opportunities to play despite not having enough for a JV team.

"We can be competitive against anyone this year," he said. "The question is, can I get my younger players to a higher level of play by mid-season? If we can do that, our talent and leadership will give us a realistic chance to compete for a district title. More important to me though is that these girls learn the game of soccer and have fun along the way. I'm really excited to get the season started."

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PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

**MEMBERS OF** the Fatima golf team are Cheyenne Hicks, Hunter Rademan, Joseph Schwartze, Naden Luebbert, Carter Karst, and Ryan Bexten. The team is coached by Scott Kilgore.

## Fatima golf team has six members with 5 seniors

Fatima golf coach Scott Kilgore began his tenure last year but did not get to compete as the season was canceled due to COVID.

“Last year put a damper on all sports but with golf, some of our players were able to get in and play on their own so we have some experience,” said Kilgore. “We only got in 10 practices last year before they pulled the plug so we’re really eager to get on the course and play. The kids are excited to have a season.”

Fatima has three seniors with experience predating the 2020 season.

Hunter Rademan in 2019 finished 49th with a 111 at that year’s sectional meet. He qualified for this contest with a 53/52-105 at the district meet.

“Hunter is a solid player and has made a lot of improvement,” said Kilgore. “I’m looking for him to bring it this year, with a goal of qualifying for the state tournament. If he keeps playing well, he has a great opportunity to make the cut.”

Carter Karst at the 2019 district tournament was fourth among Comets scorers with a 74/66-140, and Ryan Bexten rounded out the team with a 76/68-144.

“These guys continue to work hard, and they work on the little things every day, be it putting, driving, or which iron to use,” said Kilgore. “They’ve shown a lot of dedication and personal investment in their game, which I believe will pay off for them this spring.”

Seniors Joseph Schwartze and Naden Luebbert are new to the team. “They love playing the game and hope to contribute to a good team score as we move along,” said Kilgore.

Rounding out the squad is freshman Cheyenne Hicks, who is just starting to learn the game.

“She’s very coachable and pays attention to details when we’re working on adjustments,” said Kilgore.

Everyone is doing their best to be better today than they were yesterday, Kilgore added.

“Golf is something you have to start early, and you have to play a lot of rounds to master it,” he said. “You have to constantly be aware of your form, your swing, and the feel of the game. I’m proud of all of these players for committing to that mindset every day.”

### Fatima Golf

DATE	OPPONENT	LEVEL	HOME/AWAY	TIME(S)
03/24/21	Helias - Oak Hills	Varsity	Away	4:00 pm
03/29/21	Linn Quad (Linn CC)	Varsity/JV	Away	4:00 pm
03/30/21	Rolla - Oak Meadow CC	Varsity/JV	Away	4:00 pm
03/31/21-03/31/21	Russellville Blue & White Invitational (Redfield)	Varsity	Away	9:00 am
04/06/21	California High School	Varsity/JV	Away	4:00 pm
04/07/21	Southern Boone HS (Eagle Knoll)	Varsity/JV	Away	4:00 pm
04/08/21	Eugene - Redfield	Varsity/JV	Away	4:00 pm
04/12/21	Fr. Tolton - Columbia CC	Varsity	Away	9:30 am
04/14/21-04/14/21	Southern Boone HS (Eagle Knoll)	Varsity	Away	9:00 am
04/21/21	Show-Me Conference Tourn. (Redfield)	Varsity	Away	9:00 am
04/26/21	Jefferson City Invitational - Meadow Lake	Varsity	Away	9:00 am
05/03/21-05/05/21	Districts	Varsity	Away	TBA
05/10/21	Sectionals	Varsity	Away	TBA

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**Good Luck Fatima Comets, Linn Wildcats and Chamois Pirates on your sports seasons!**



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## 33 turn out for Lady Comets' track season

Fatima will field 33 athletes on the high school girls' track team this spring and everyone is eager to get started.

"With the cancellation of last season it is very difficult to gauge our progress so far this season but we are grateful to have the opportunity to compete this year and won't take that competition for granted," said Coach Marc Bridges.

Fatima's seniors this year are distance runner Rachel Temmen, Bridgette Veit, who will compete in the sprints, thrower

Aubrey Kirsch, and Maria Juergensmeyer, who is slated to run sprints and battle in the jumps.

Junior Emma Kleffner in the discus and junior Victoria Nivens in the shot put will anchor a 10-member throwing squad that also includes juniors Emma Kleffner and Eliana Steinman, sophomores Sophie

**See Lady Comets' Track  
Page 23B**



PHOTOS BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

FATIMA HAS solid numbers out for track this spring, which Coach Marc Bridges, left, hopes will give the Comets opportunities as the season unfolds.

## Fatima fields 20 on the boys' track team

This season the Fatima boys track team has 20 members, all of whom are trying to get back into the groove.

"With the cancelation of last season it is very difficult to gauge our progress so far this season but we are grateful to have the opportunity to compete this year and won't take that competition for granted," said Coach Marc Bridges.

Fatima will be led by lone senior Ethan Flores, who returns to compete in the 110m and 300m hurdles and sprints. He missed being a sectional qualifier in both events as a sophomore by one place and is looking to get back on track after last season was canceled due to COVID.

Other juniors on the team are Jacob Buhr (throws), Austin Kliethermes (sprints, jumps), Jackson Riegel (sprints, throws, jumps), Scott Sankey (sprints, jumps), Gavin Satterfield (distance), Coy Starke (throws), and Isaac Falter, who will lead the seven throwers.

"We are heavy in distance runners this year with eight distance runners which should lighten the load in the very challenging distance events," said Bridges. "Junior Hunter Herzing will lead the way for us in the long and triple jumps while Scott, freshmen Victor Struempfler and Tyler Kloepfel will compete in the pole vault and some running events."

Sophomores are Curtis Falter (throws), Michael Kloepfel (distance), and Jake Stuecken (throws), and remaining freshmen are Cody Berhorst, Easton Haslag, Ty Herzing, and Cody Kampeter, all of whom will compete in distance events, and Toby Bruce, who will run distance, and compete in the jumps.

### Fatima HS Track

DATE	OPPONENT	LEVEL	HOME/AWAY	TIME(S)
03/23/21	St. James	Varsity/JV	Away	3:30 pm
03/26/21	Blair Oaks High School	Varsity	Away	3:45 pm
04/01/21	Linn Invitational	Varsity	Away	1:00 pm
04/06/21	Fatima II Rick Buersmeyer Invitational	Varsity/JV	Home	3:00 pm
04/13/21	Show Me Conference @ Fatima	Varsity	Home	1:00 pm
04/16/21	Owensville Relays	Varsity	Away	4:00 pm
04/27/21	Hermann Invitational	Varsity/JV	Away	4:00 pm
04/30/21	Fulton Invitational	Varsity	Away	4:00 pm
05/05/21	Smith Cotton Open	Varsity/JV	Away	3:00 pm
05/15/21	District Meet	Varsity	Away	TBA
05/22/21	Sectional Meet	Varsity	Away	TBA
05/28/21--05/29/21	MSHSAA Championships	Varsity	Away	TBA

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PHOTOS BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

**KATIE (EICHHOLZ)** Hilkerbaumer returns to Fatima as an assistant coach with the track team. She is working with the sprinters, hurdlers, and long-jumpers.

## Hilkerbaumer (Eichholz) returns to Fatima track

Katie (Eichholz) Hilkerbaumer is excited to return to Fatima as an assistant track coach this spring. She last donned the Blue & Gold in the spring of 2015, the year she earned medals at the Class 3 state meet in the long jump, 400m relay, and 800m relay.

Coming back to coach is something she has considered. "It's always been in the back of my mind as something I wanted to do but I didn't think it was necessarily going to be a reality. In college track, I would sometimes reminisce about high school track but it's a whole different ball game now that I'm here."

Hilkerbaumer's collegiate track days at Truman State University included a variety of events, including the heptathlon, and she graduated in 2018 with a degree in exercise science with a premed concentration as she considered pre-physical therapy.

Now, she's focused on helping Fatima athletes set and achieve their goals. "It's cool to help them understand what needs to

happen and seeing them believe that what I'm telling them is actually possible," said Hilkerbaumer. "It's very satisfying to see them achieve their goals."

Admittedly, this season is like no other in that these athletes did not have a 2020 spring campaign, so there's no benchmark for comparison. Likewise, Hilkerbaumer has not been part of the program as a coach.

"It's hard to get back into the groove and we don't know each other very well, so we're working on building that relationship," said Hilkerbaumer. "The great thing is these kids are good about taking the advice we give them and making the adjustments."

As the season opener nears, Hilkerbaumer is working closely with sprinters, hurdlers, and long-jumpers.

"I'm here to help them see their full potential and I can't wait to get the season started," said Hilkerbaumer. "We'll make sure they are doing it correctly, well-conditioned, and as prepared as possible."

## Fatima JH track team fields 13 athletes

Fatima JH track coach Casey Bruce said she is looking forward to a solid spring season with 13 athletes ready to compete in a variety of events.

"We have so much talent this year that no one is going to be placed into a single category," said Bruce. "My cross country runners coming over to take some distance races will be eighth-graders Reagan Bock, Connor Buhr, and Wyatt Gabelsberger but don't be surprised if you see them in a 400m race."

Fatima's sprinters will be led by eighth-graders Megan Gabelsberger, Leni Hemmel, Jace Eisterhold, and seventh-grader Carly MacLellan.

Mid-distance will be handled by eighth-graders Brady Hager and Lily Gregory, and seventh-graders Heidi Struempf, Kaedyn Rehagen, while throwers will be eighth-graders Mya Sankey and Megan Gabelsberger, and seventh-graders Ava Buhr and Kaedyn Rehagen.

"This will be a great group to watch this year," said Bruce. "They have the work ethic and drive to succeed. They are universal athletes and we will be able to switch up events whenever there is a need. They will compete in every race. My throwers are strong and I can't wait to see what Coach (Levi) Maxwell will be able to do with them but they will also be on the track racing with their teammates. It is going to be a fun season with this amazing group of kids."



**FATIMA ATHLETES** stretch their legs after practice Monday.

### Fatima JH Track

DATE	OPPONENT	LEVEL	HOME/AWAY	TIME(S)
03/22/21	Linn JH Quad	7th & 8th	Away	3:30 pm
03/25/21	Blair Oaks High School	7th/8th	Away	4:00 pm
03/30/21	Fatima JH Blue & Gold Relays	7th & 8th	Home	2:30 pm
04/13/21	Show Me Conference Track Meet	7th & 8th	Home	1:00 pm
04/19/21	Russellville	7th/8th (G&B)	Away	2:00 pm
04/22/21	Linn Middle School Relays	7th & 8th	Away	3:00 pm
04/29/21	South Callaway JH Invitational	7th & 8th	Away	4:00 pm



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PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

**FATIMA TRACK** athletes stretch in the gym after retreating from heavy rain on Monday.

**Lady Comets' Track**  
From Page 21B

Bock, Emma Buscher, Emma Gregory, and Jessica Steinman, and freshmen Katie Kampeter, and Miranda Gabelsberger.

Along with Rachel Temmen, sophomores Emma Bower and Sarah Groene, and freshmen Addyson Wilbers, Emerson Williams, and Lauren Berhorst will compete in the distance events.

In the sprints, jumps, and hurdles Fatima has 18 girls ready to compete with the top returning sprinters being Veit and Juergensmeyer. They will be joined by juniors Sydney Falter, Erin Bock and

Alexandra Kliethermes, and sophomores Corinn Karst, Caliegh Huot, and Rachel Woehr.

"Our freshmen track athletes are looking impressive and I'm hopeful they will find some big ways to contribute," said Bridges.

Kliethermes, Vanessa Block and Emily Robertson will handle the hurdling while Corinn Karst and Samantha Bax are looking good in the jumps.

Remaining freshmen are Emily Robertson (hurdles), Lucy Crede (sprints, jumps), Gracie Deeken (sprints, mid-distance), and Alyssa Hoeller, Kaitlyn Plassmeyer, Joslyn Roark, and Ella Scheulen (sprints).

## Good Luck Fatima Students!



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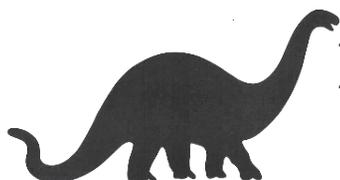
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*Good Luck to all the  
Osage County Sports Teams*



Here's to taking down the competition,  
all the way to the championships!

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