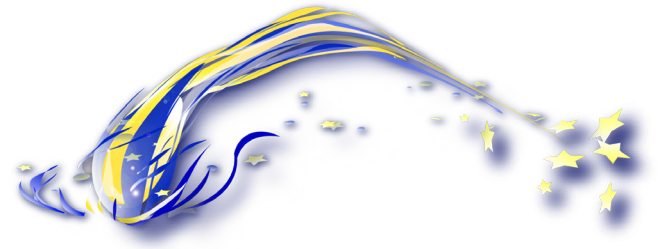




Chamois Pages 3B-5B



Linn Pages 6B-13B



Fatima Pages 14B-23B

2023 Winter Sports Guide



Perspective: *Thanksgiving and Type 2 diabetes*

I hope everyone enjoyed visiting with family and eating on Thanksgiving.

For some of us, namely me, the day was filled with scrumptious baked goods that had no business being in my line of sight. Nor should I have been left unsupervised. Yes, I know I'm old enough to know better, but the kid in me just couldn't resist.

How could I do that to my sister? She worked for hours making several kinds of pies, three types of fudge, a cheese-cake with three toppings, a pumpkin roll, and some things she probably hid from me. Trust me, I looked.

She's always been interested in baking; she owns a cottage business selling her baked goods, and I just can't help myself. I was definitely guilty of gluttony, but I did my part to support her efforts. That's my job as a big brother, right?

It's a challenge getting everyone together in the same place simultaneously. My family members are spread out across Missouri, with St. Louis and Kansas City being the farthest away. There's no good halfway point unless we want to pay for a place in Columbia.

Somehow, I managed to get home, though I was starting to feel it by the time I got to Jefferson City from Eldon. By feeling it, I mean my vision started to cloud, and I was very sleepy.

Those in the know understand that sleep is always challenging for me, and night after night, I get by on whatever comes. It's not much; I've often told my family I want to develop a way to sleep in the hot tub, but deep down, I know it won't happen.

When I got home just after 4 on Thursday, I wished for a billion dollars to hire someone (or several people) to carry me inside. Kari jokes that if I fall, she's going to call the fire department to avoid killing herself. Fortunately, I didn't fall, so there was no need to bother Ron Hoffman and the LFPD.

Not long after I reached my room, I was out. I mean, there was no announcement or warning. I just passed out — though many would just say I fell asleep.

I know the difference. When I was a kid, I ran headfirst into a camping neighbor playing hide-and-seek at dusk. I was in the void for several hours. I've also had general anesthesia a few times, and I know how that feels.

One minute, you're aware; the next thing, you wake up with no memory of the intervening time. That absence of awareness has always bothered me.

I vaguely remember getting up once a few hours later and saying hello to my granddaughters, but then I was out again. I repeated that process a few times but never felt rested.

So, after my body got rid of the excess sugar, I was relatively okay — pretty not bad, as I heard someone say once.

I'm not going to call this a near-death experience; it was just a diabetic episode, but I understand the severity of the situation. I would not recommend overloading on sugar, even if it does help you sleep a bit.

One of the best parts of our Thanksgiving meal (before dessert) was the family tradition of telling everyone what we are most thankful for. This year, my sister, the baker, took it a step further and provided us with materials to write down our thoughts.

Most of my siblings offered thanks for their family, significant other, etc., but I went a different direction.

I wrote a haiku expressing my thankfulness:

*Being alive now
I expected to die young
Grateful I'm living*

When I was young, I did not expect to live past 40. I have no idea why; it was just always there in the back of my mind. I figured I would do something stupid and get shot or maybe die in a car crash.

Most people would agree that 2020 was a difficult year, and the years since have not shown much improvement. However, I would argue this year has been the most challenging.

Kari decided she wanted to become a motorcyclist, but that ended with a crash during the training course, resulting in a broken ankle and torn ligament. From now on, she's operating only vehicles with at least four wheels; I had to put my foot down.

A few weeks later, I almost ripped off a toe. I will spare you the details, but it wasn't pretty.

After passing my 40th birthday, I accepted that I outlived the warranty, and now I'm unsure what to think. However, I'm pretty sure I won't be shot for saying or doing something stupid, primarily because I'm too old to go picking fights. As for a car crash, I've accepted the idea that any of the two dozen trips I make each week in the county to various meetings, events, and games, could end with a deer strike or any number of other things that could end my life.

The point is you just don't know when the lights will go out, so I'm trying to live in the moment more, and moving forward, that won't include the equivalent of about 10 pounds of sugar, butter, cream ... oh, man, I'm drooling. What was I saying?

Oh, live like no one is watching you hunched over the table cramming dessert in your mouth. No, that's not right. Everyone watched and no one tried to

stop me, but I suspect there may be an intervention in my future.

I was happy to take the day with my family but I worked most of the weekend finishing this sports guide.

We initially planned to run the guide last week, but there were complications.

There's a lot of information in this publication, from the Chamois boys under fourth-year coach Robbie Bates gearing up for a healthy season to the Fatima wrestling team returning every athlete with the hope of earning a team trophy at the state tournament.

Bates told me he's excited because his players are working hard and coming into their own. I think they'll be highly competitive. Sadly, there is no Lady Pirates' basketball team this year.

Several Linn girls' basketball players were on the Final Four softball team, and Coach Ryan Rost is hopeful the experience on the diamond will translate to the hardwood. He returns with Assistant Coach Steve Samson, whose JV football team had a great season at 8-2. Boys' coach Braden Ham is in his third year and is continually find-

ing new ways to motivate his players. Think Tony Robbins with a whistle.

Fatima features veteran coaches Ryan Robertson, Matt Baker, and Kurt Strobe. All three are battle-tested and looking for a strong season. Robertson is eyeing a district championship and deep playoff run, while Baker hopes to improve on last year's sectional appearance, and Strobe has several state medalists and qualifiers on the mat.

The Lady Comets welcome Assistant Coach Chris Ellis, who has a breadth of knowledge and coaching experience at every level. Fatima's wrestling team also has a new assistant coach, Dalton Schroeder. An intro story appears in this publication for Coach Ellis. Coach Schroeder will be featured in the regular paper.

Cheer squads at Fatima and Linn are also working hard, and the Fatima dance team is ready to perform.

So, please forgive our tardiness. We hope you will enjoy getting to know Osage County's teams, coaches, and athletes.

See you at the game. NAJ

GOOD LUCK TEAMS!

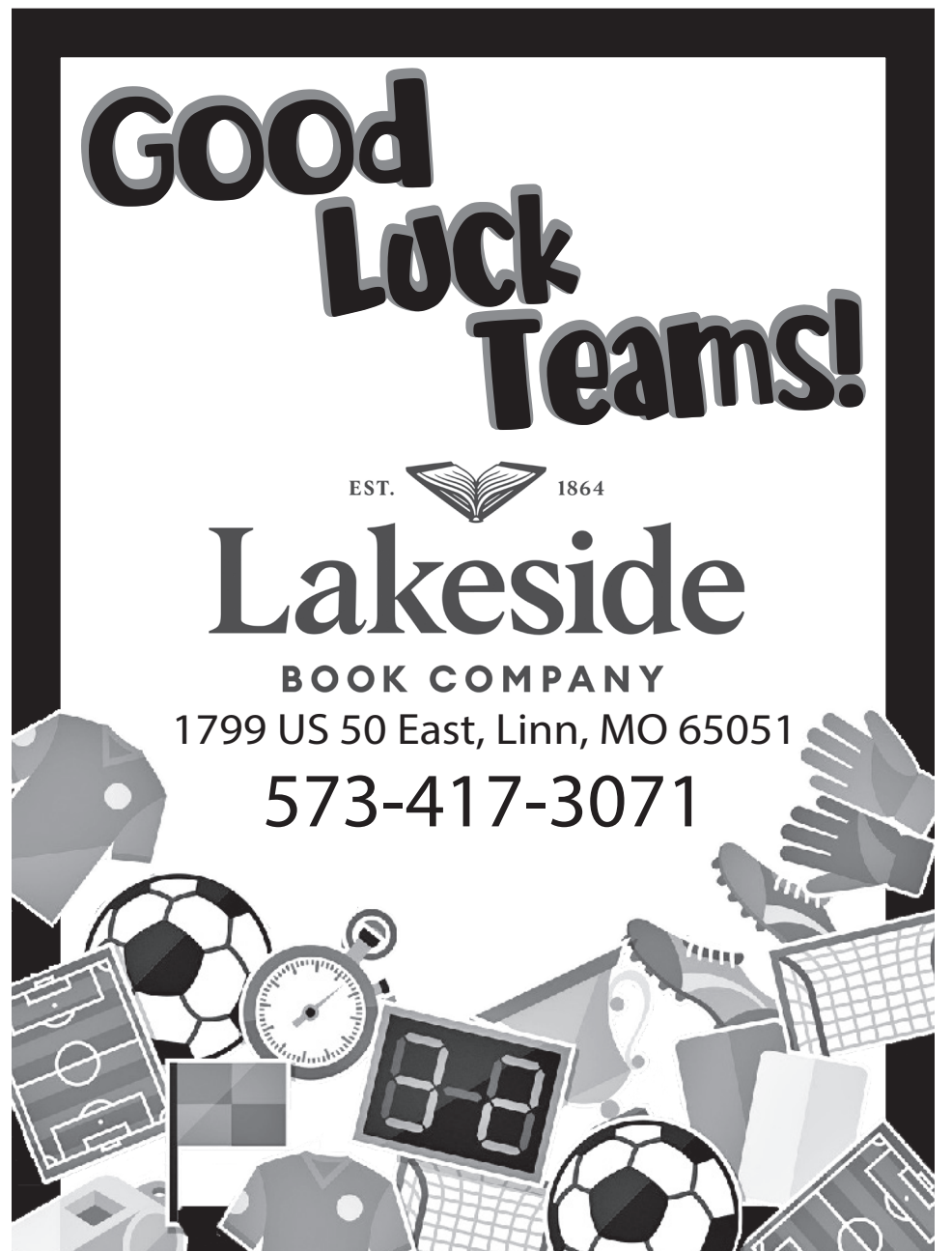
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Bates confident boys will be competitive every night

Chamois boys' basketball coach Robbie Bates believes the Pirates will be competitive every night if the guys continue to put in the hard work and effort.

"We have the potential to have an exciting year for sure," said Bates, entering his fourth year at the helm. "I really think that the pieces are there to compete with pretty much everybody on our schedule."

One of the most significant improvements has been in communication. "Getting everybody to understand their role execute as a group, and maintaining the improvements we've made since last year will be key to our success," said Bates.

Players hit the weights at least twice a week to augment practice, and weightlifting was an important part of the summer regimen. "We lifted most of the summer, and some of the kids take weight classes at the school," said Bates. "It's about maintaining that strength and keeping fit and ready to play every day. These kids have come a long way in my first three years, and they saw what it was like last year as freshmen and sophomores to have a little bit of success but a lot of struggles. I think they're using that as motivation for this year now that they're a year older."

Despite a lack of seniors, Chamois

has five juniors who have been through the fire with Bates the last three years.

Returning six-foot point guard Caleb Keilholz will be the engine. "He's our rock," said Bates. "You know what you're going to get with Caleb every day. He comes in ready to work and improve every day. He's a very solid defender and a smart player on the floor. We're looking for him to have a little more offensive output this year, but he sets the table for us."

Last year, Keilholz averaged 8.7 points, 4.2 rebounds, and 3.5 assists per game while hitting 71% from the stripe and claiming nearly two steals a game to earn second-team All-District and Show-Me Honorable Mention honors.

Skyler Bottoms, a 6-2 forward, averaged 10 points and 4.5 rebounds a game despite missing the last half of last season due to injury. "He had surgery in the spring and was back doing stuff in June," Bates noted, adding he is healthy and ready to go. "Skyler will provide us the size and the versatility to play inside and step out on the perimeter. His work ethic is getting better every day, and he will be looked upon to score and rebound."

Bill Kirsch (5-11 forward) will provide Chamois energy and effort on the defensive end. "At our jamboree on Tuesday, he made two plays where he literally

chased a kid down from Van Far. Both were fast breaks. He deflected one, and the other was a steal. Those were hustle plays, and he's working on becoming a better offensive player. There will be an opportunity for him to help us succeed this year."

Dawson Brandt (6-4 guard) is a first-year player, a lot like Bottoms in that he

can play inside or out. "Dawson is a solid addition to our program," said Bates. "This is the first year since I've been here that he's played organized basketball. He brings the ability to shoot, and he's still trying to figure out how hard the competitiveness of live basketball is

See **CHAMOIS BB** on Page 4

Chamois High School Basketball

Date	Location	Time	Level
11/14	Jamboree@ Chamois	5:30	VB
11/17	@Community	7:30	VB
11/21	Otterville	6:00	VB
11/28	Vienna	6:00	VB
12/1	Fatima	6:00	VB
12/5	@Wellsville-Middletown	7:00	VB
12/8	Bourbon	5:30	VB
12/9	@Belle	2:00	VB
12/14	New Bloomfield	6:00	VB
12/19	South Callaway	6:00	VB
12/28	@Calvary Lutheran	2:00	VB
1/2	@Linn	6:00	VB
1/5	Eugene	6:00	VB
1/9	@Christian Fellowship	6:00	VB
1/12	Tuscumbia (Homecoming)	6:00	VB
1/15-20	@ Belle Tournament	TBA	VB
1/22	St. Elizabeth	6:00	VB
1/26	@Missouri Military Academy	6:00	VB
1/30	@New Haven	6:00	VB
2/1	@Richland	7:45	VB
2/6	@Jamestown	6:00	VB
2/12	Missouri Military Academy	6:00	VB
2/13	@Columbia Independent	7:30	VB
2/16	@Russellville	6:00	VB
2/19-24	District Tournament	TBA	VB

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Chamois BB • from page 3

at this level.”

The final junior, Landen Northway (6-0 forward), and sophomore, Evert Mehmert (6-0 forward), share the same qualities. “They’re going to provide us depth in the post,” said Bates. “Landen and Evert are working hard every day to improve their skills to help us succeed.”

The duo combined for about 1.5 points a game and hope to build on that this year.

REMAINING SOPHOMORES

Jaxon Wuelling (5-11 guard) missed the last half of the season a year ago due to injury but returned over the summer. “He will provide scoring and an improving defense,” said Bates. “Jackson’s figuring out how to play within the system — when to shoot or not shoot — but he has a lot of potential to be a high-level scorer.”

Wuelling led the team last year with 13 points per game to go with a team-high 6.3 rebounds a game as he posted 2.4 assists and 1.7 steals per contest.

The team’s lone freshman is Oliver Carter, a 6-3 forward expected to be a factor in games. “Oliver is going to give us size around the basket,” said Bates. “He has shot up and grown this past year from an eighth-grader to a freshman. I look back at a video from one of our games in late September or October last year, and I see the many strides he’s made since the summer. Oliver has a soft touch, and he’s working hard to give himself the opportunity to get on the floor.”

Kaden Wuelling (6-1 forward) is very athletic, and his skills continue to improve from last year, when he averaged 5.6 points and 2.8 rebounds a game. “He has a lot of energy and competitiveness we want to see in every player,” said Bates. “Kaden has gotten bigger and stronger. His ball-handling has improved, and like the others, he’s gained a lot of experience.”

Max McKague, a 5-9 guard, has become a solid wing player. “He put in a lot of time working on his shooting and ball-handling over the summer and fall,” said Bates. “He could be an X factor if people underestimate him.”

McKague scored 6.0 points and snagged 2.9 rebounds per contest last year.

Overall, Bates said between experience and physical growth, the Pirates are anxious to get on the hardwood. “We were out-muscled last year by teams because we walked on the floor against South Callaway and Russellville, and those guys started four seniors and a junior. They were all cut and big, huge kids. We’re stronger all the way around this year, and some of the things we couldn’t do last year, I feel like we’re going to be able to do this year. I’m looking forward to a successful season.”

Bates is joined again by Assistant Coach Ethan Hagenhoff.



SKYLER BOTTOMS, left, and Jaxon Wuelling, above, return to help the Pirates in their bid to be competitive this year.

PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

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Wildcats year will include "Good, Bad, and Chaotic," as Linn boys transition to faster pace

Linn boys basketball coach Braden Ham advised this year will include the good, the bad, and the chaotic as the team will push the pace this season with a goal of improving on last year's mark of 12-15.

"When you're pushing the ball quickly up the floor, there will be times when you get ahead of yourself, so I expect we'll have some unintended consequences like more turnovers," he said. "I'm sure we'll have some 'What are you doing?' Moments, but that's part of the growing process. We'll have more action and speed, but the kids will have to figure out when to act and when it's better to wait."

Hard work over the summer and early practice sessions helped the Wildcats prepare for the season, but Ham said there's no better teacher than experience against an opponent. "We need that experience," he added. "A few players will see more scoring opportunities based on better ball movement. Coach Finkemeier and I have stressed the importance of players being in po-

sition and they're doing better. We're headed in the right direction, making good decisions, passes, and taking shots when the opportunity arises. If a player is wide open, I want them taking the shot. However, we are sharing the ball well and making the extra pass. It seems that taking time for an extra pass increases your shooting percentage, so we will do our best to find the right moment to shoot the ball. We're going to learn from every game."

Ham said the four seniors on the roster will be a big part of the team's success.

Noah Hall, the team's returning 5-10 point guard, will have help in that position this year.

"We want to take the stress off all our guards, and with our quick transition plan, the ball will get to whoever is open, which means that player will then take the point," said Ham. "We feel that using a committee will be more effective."

Hall earned media first-team All-District

See **LINN BOYS BB** on Page 6



AUSTIN DUDENHOEFFER returns with high energy, and hopes to be a big part of the offense this year.

PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

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Linn boys BB • from page 5

and second-team All-Conference last year after scoring 14.88 and grabbing 3.5 rebounds a game. He also had nearly two assists per contest, hit 42.2% from three-point range and 85.1% from the stripe.

Ham is confident Hall will continue to improve and be a huge part of Linn's success. "He's gradually bringing more personality to the fore," said Ham. "Noah scored a bucket against California last year and got the and-one, and he let out a whoop that gave me goosebumps. It's cool to be excited for yourself and your teammates, and we need him to let more of it out because it energizes the team. Noah is doing a great job engaging and communicating, which will help him and the team as the season progresses."

Senior Ashton Keilholz (5-11 guard) has grown up quite a bit. "He had a tendency to flip his lid when something went wrong, but he's handling that better this year," said Ham. "Ashton and I butted heads when I first got here, but we're family, and that's going to happen. He's on the right path, but we need him to trust himself and act on it. We tell him to shoot because he can. Ashton improved his defense over the summer.

He's not the most athletic kid on the court, but he will be one of our best on-ball defenders by the end of the season."

Last year, Keilholz posted 8.4 PPG, 4.0 RPG, 1.8 APG, 40.0% (3-PT), and 55.6% (FT) to earn second-team All-District honors.

Linn's third senior is 6-1 forward Zach Hatfield, who averaged 8.8 points, three rebounds, 2.2 assists, and 1.1 steals per game, also hitting 70% from the stripe. "Zach trusts what he brings to the table, and that's important," said Ham. "I think the finality of his senior year is setting in, and Zach wants to do well. His wingspan is impressive, and he will be a pest on defense. Offensively, he's playing with more control, and his approach to layups has changed, which makes him more effective. I look forward to a great season from Zach."

Seth Wolfe, a 6-1 forward, hopes to be ready for Linn's game after the Thanksgiving break. "He rolled his ankle, and we're not pushing him," said Ham. "We don't want to rush it and make it worse."

Ham is looking for Wolfe to im-

See **LINN BOYS BB** on Page 7



LINN SENIOR point guard Noah Hall returns from an All-District year in 2022-23, and looks to match or top his 14.4 PPG average.

PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

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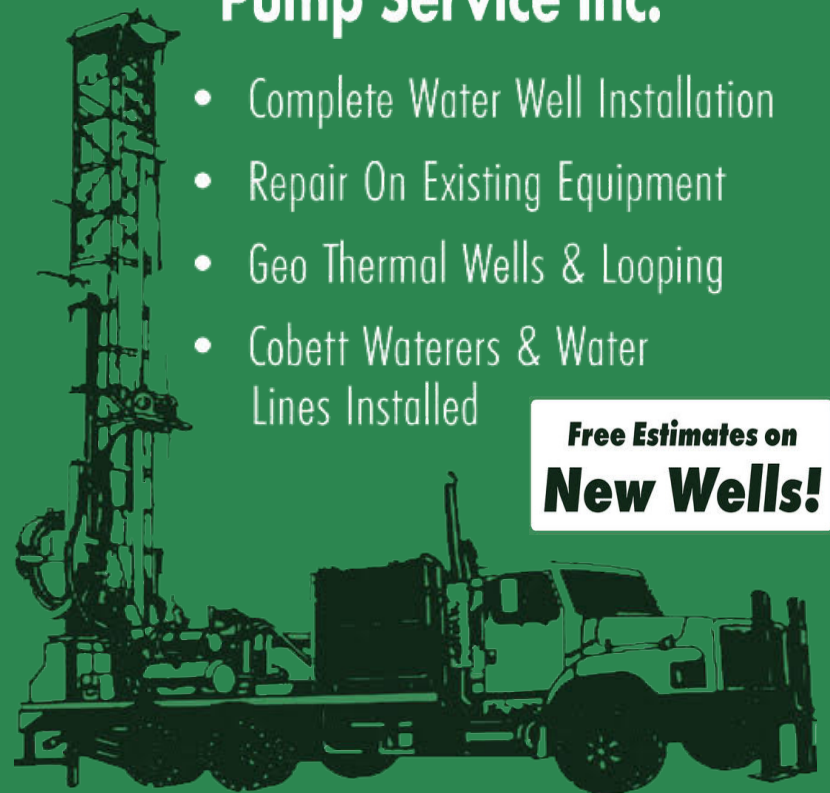
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Linn boys BB • from page 6

prove on last year's 7.1 points, 5.2 rebounds, 2.2 assists, and 1.1 steals per game.

"Seth is more natural and open this year, and he's smiling more," said Ham. "He's been the best communicator, and it's helped others. Seth sets a good example and helps the younger players. That's how you leave a legacy — with good interaction between older and younger players. With a quick first step and more strength, I'm excited to see what he can do when he returns."

Sophomore Gus Peters (5-6 guard), who embodies happiness, rounds out Linn's starting five. "He's always smiling, and Gus is the most genuine person I've come across as a coach," said Ham. "He has a unique trait in that no matter how serious a situation is or how tough it is, he's smiling. Gus plays to win and won't do things half-assed. He loves living life and having fun, and it helps his teammates. I liken Gus to the 'Energizer Bunny,' but he's faster. We just need him to shoot more."

Last year, Peters shot 45.5% from three-point range while averaging 1.9 points, 0.6 assists, 0.7 rebounds, and 0.7 steals per game.

The Wildcats' sixth man is lone

junior 5-11 guard Austin Dudenhoefer, who averaged 4.4 points, 3.2 rebounds, and 1.4 assists per game last year. "Austin has a lot going for him," said Ham. "He has the most guts, he's a competitor, and he's physical. Austin sees the big picture, and he reacts well to whatever's going on. When things go awry, he's handling it better than last year, and I expect him to be very involved in our success."

Hatfield and Dudenhoefer are members of Linn's leadership team.

Also expected to see a varsity role are sophomores Tyler Wagner (6-1 F), Craig Laughlin (6-2 F), and Tony Peters (6-5 F). "These guys have worked very hard and improve every day," said Ham. "I look for them to give us quality minutes off the bench as they vie for time on the floor."

Freshmen playing JV are guards Kahne Brandt (5-4), Hunter Bish (5-10), and Preston Keilholz (5-8), and forwards Lane McKim (5-10), Myles Kammerich (5-8), Cody Heckman (6-2), and Tommy Scheulen (5-11).

"We have a great group of freshmen," said Ham. "They show up committed to every practice. They're asking better questions and executing what we want. I'm excited to see them develop."

Coach Finkemeier returns for his second year with Ham, who couldn't be more pleased. "We are much more in sync this year on both sides of the ball," said Ham. "His Highway Patrol background gives him a different perspective on things, and he's had a lot of great ideas."

One of Ham's themes this year is accountability. "We want to hold each other to account, players, coaches, everyone," he said. "I saw something that resonated with me and what I'm trying to build here at Linn."

Ham explained he saw someone refer to FAMILY as an acronym for "Forget About Me, I Love You."

"That really hit me," he said. "When you put yourself on the back burner and think about your teammates, the dynamic changes. I think

of it like depositing money in the bank. When you have funds on hand, you can withdraw, but you have to make deposits for that to happen. It's the same with how we're treating each other. You're making deposits when you give your teammates high-fives, praise them for a good play, etc.. Later, if you have to call someone out or correct them, you're making a withdrawal. As I said, you have to put things in to get them back, and the kids respond well. My philosophy is you have to build up your players; you can't just yell at them constantly."

The Wildcats lost to Steelville in last year's C3D9 semifinal at Dixon.

Linn opened this season on Friday against Belle. A separate story appears in this week's **Unterrified Democrat**.

Linn High School

2023-2024 Boys Basketball Schedule

Varsity, Junior Varsity, Freshman



Date	Opponent	Location	Levels	Time
11/13	Jamboree (Crocker, MO)	Neutral	V	
11/17	Belle	Home	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
11/27-12/2	37th Annual Eugene Basketball Tournament (Eugene, MO)	Neutral	V	
12/5	Hermann	Home	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
12/8	Owensville	Home	V, JV, Fr	
12/11-16	62nd Annual Legends Bank Holiday Classic (Linn, MO)	Home	V	
12/19	Southern Boone (Ashland, MO)	Away	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
12/22	Tipton (Tipton, MO)	Away	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
1/2	Chamois	Home	V	7:00 PM
1/4	Fatima	Home	JV, Fr	5:00 PM
1/5	Fatima	Home	V	7:00 PM
1/8-13	South Callaway Tournament (Mokane, MO)	Neutral	V	
1/18	California (California, MO)	Away	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
1/19	New Bloomfield (New Bloomfield, MO)	Away	V, JV	5:00 PM
1/22-27	Harrisburg Tournament (Harrisburg, MO)	Neutral	V	
1/30	Eugene	Home	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
2/1	South Callaway (Mokane, MO)	Away	JV, Fr	5:00 PM
2/2	South Callaway	Home	V	7:00 PM
2/5-10	South Callaway JV Boys Basketball Tournament (Mokane, MO)	Neutral	JV	
2/6	Russellville	Home	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
2/9	St. Elizabeth	Home	V, JV	5:00 PM
2/13	Tuscumbia	Home	V, JV	5:00 PM

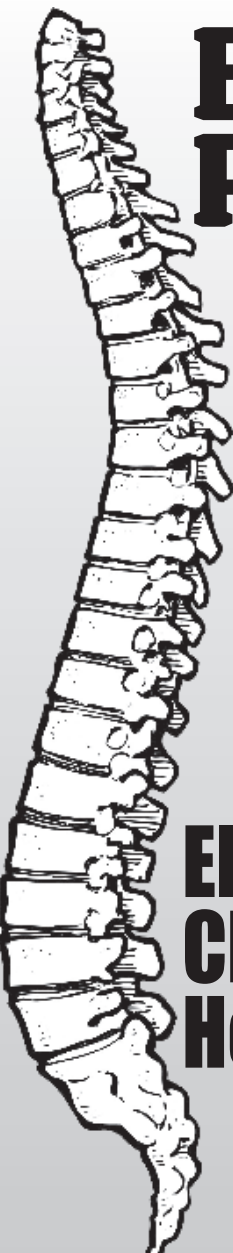
Linn High School

2023-2024 Boys Basketball Schedule

Junior High, 8th Grade, 7th Grade



Date	Opponent	Location	Levels	Time
10/31	Chamois	Home	8th, 7th	5:00 PM
11/2	South Callaway (Mokane, MO)	Away	8th, 7th	5:30 PM
11/7	Cuba	Home	8th, 7th	5:30 PM
11/9	New Bloomfield (New Bloomfield, MO)	Away	8th, 7th	5:00 PM
11/13-17	Harrisburg Tournament (Harrisburg, MO)	Neutral	8th	
11/21	St. James (St James, MO)	Away	8th, 7th	5:30 PM
11/27-12/1	2nd Annual Linn / New Bloomfield Junior High Basketball Tournament (Linn, MO)	Home	JH	
12/5	Russellville	Home	8th, 7th	5:00 PM
12/7	Hermann (Hermann, MO)	Away	8th, 7th	5:30 PM
12/12	New Haven	Home	8th, 7th	5:00 PM
12/14	Owensville (Owensville, MO)	Away	8th, 7th	5:30 PM
12/18	North Callaway MS (Kingdom City, MO)	Away	8th, 7th	5:30 PM
12/19	Smithton (Columbia) (Columbia, MO)	Away	JH	7:00 PM
12/20	Lewis and Clark	Home	8th, 7th	5:30 PM




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Lady Cats' full of youth, but the future looks good

Linn's youth may be a factor, but Lady Wildcats coach Ryan Rost, in his second year at the helm, believes it will help the team.

"This year will be met with challenges and learning curves but this is a very talented group. You have to be a little more patient with certain concepts and give extra time for the chemistry to develop but we will get there. It's good problem to have because not only will we get to build and develop this year but you have a lot returning for next year," said Rost, who has 19 players on the roster.

One of the benefits with this group of players is that several played for Rost on the fourth-place softball team in the fall. "They got a taste for championship-level experience, and that should translate to any sport," said Rost. "They saw how much hard work it took to get as far as we did in softball, and basketball requires the same kind of effort and dedication. Hopefully, they take something from the fall into this season."

Rost has high expectations. "We're going to be very athletic," he said. "We're going to be able to get up and down the floor pretty quick, and I think we'll get after it defensively this year. We got to see a little taste in jamboree. Our defense looked pretty good; we were able to stay in front and guard anybody. I'll have depth this year; that last year, we didn't have a ton of numbers. Those long cross-country-style games kind of wore on us, but we're going to have numbers this year to where we're going to be able to play

with a few different things and different looks defensively."

Losing Aushara Hostetler to graduation hurts a bit as she averaged 17.4 points and 4.9 rebounds a game last year. "She had a big role last year and led us in scoring, so we're going to have to find new identities," said Rost. "Kids are gonna have to step up with more scoring roles, and all five players will have to be aggressive on the floor. From what I've seen in practice, and what I got to see over the summer, all these girls can put the ball in the hole pretty consistently. I think we should be pretty good once we get comfortable and find our rhythm."

Linn is led by five juniors.

Returning point guard Kiana Hostetler (5-10), earned first-team media and MBCA All-District, and second-team Show-Me after averaging 8.7 PPG, 6.8 RPG, 4.5 APG, and 2.1 SPG, and shooting 56.9% from the stripe. "Kiana had a really good summer, and she's been working on different aspects of her game," said Rost. "I think she understands this is going to be a big year for her and she needs to step up and with a new identity and role on our team."

Rost added that Hostetler is by far the best defender he has this year. Offensively, she'll have to adjust a little bit and figure out different ways to contribute to the team. "I think she's ready for that added pressure because she's shown great growth and leadership," said Rost. "I'm excit-

See **LINN GIRLS BB** on Page 10

VIVIEN BAKER is a fierce competitor, especially around the basket when she's battling for rebounds.

PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

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Linn cheerleaders learning new things

Linn cheerleading coach Maddie Stephan said that because the team lost quite a few seniors, she is teaching girls to do skills they've never attempted before, specifically the underclassmen.

"Slowly but surely we are building a program," she added. "Our main goals

are to have fun and be loud. We have a mascot again for basketball season and I think it'll be a hit!"

Cheerleaders are seniors Reece Griffith and Katrina Mueller (mascot), junior Vanessah Bischoff, sophomore Mara Mitchell, and freshmen Hayley Backues and Sydney Skirvin.

Linn High School

2023-2024 Girls Basketball Schedule

Varsity, Junior Varsity, Freshman



Date	Opponent	Location	Levels	Time
11/20	New Haven (New Haven, MO)	Away	V, JV	6:00 PM
11/27-12/2	37th Annual Eugene Basketball Tournament (Eugene, MO)	Neutral	V	
12/4	Iberia	Home	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
12/7	Belle	Home	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
12/11-16	62nd Annual Legends Bank Holiday Classic (Linn, MO)	Home	V	
12/18	Owensville	Home	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
1/2	Chamois	Home	V	6:00 PM
1/4	Fatima	Home	JV, Fr	4:00 PM
1/5	Fatima	Home	V	6:00 PM
1/8-13	South Callaway Tournament (Mokane, MO)	Neutral	V	
1/15	Steelville (Steelville, MO)	Away	V, JV	5:30 PM
1/19	New Bloomfield (New Bloomfield, MO)	Away	V	6:00 PM
1/22-27	Harrisburg Tournament (Harrisburg, MO)	Neutral	V	
1/29	Eugene	Home	V, JV	6:00 PM
2/1	Blair Oaks	Home	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
2/2	South Callaway	Home	V, JV	5:00 PM
2/5	Russellville (Russellville, MO)	Away	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
2/8	Osage (Osage Beach, MO)	Away	V, JV	6:00 PM
2/9	St. Elizabeth	Home	V, JV	4:00 PM
2/13	Tuscumbia	Home	V, JV	4:00 PM



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Linn girls BB • from page 8

ed to see what she's made of this year."

Junior returning starter Vivien Baker (5-9) had a solid 2022-23 campaign. "She was my 'big' last year," Rost noted. "It was a new role for her in the different situations that I put her in, teaching her different ways to score in the post and get other girls open. She took off with it, and ran with it. Vivien sees the floor much better now and understands how to create space. Vivien is one of those warriors that every coach wants on their team, and I'm excited to see how she steps up."

Last year, Baker averaged 7.1 PPG, 6.6 RBP, 1.3 APG, and 1.6 SPG.

Hannah Hackmann, a 5-7 guard, is a returning starter who had a good season last year with 5.4 PPG, 1.2 APG, 2.5 RPG, and 0.6 SPG. "She's gotten much stronger and more aggressive driving to the hoop and creating space for her teammates," said Rost. "Hannah knows she's going to have to step up, whether it's making shots on the perimeter or handling the ball. It's just different aspects than what she had to do last year, and she's starting to grow into that role and be more comfortable. She will have much more opportunities this season with the ball in her hand."

Emma Monnette (5-6 guard) will start this year. "Emma's shown great growth from last year," said Rost. "Her shot looks really good. One thing that I really liked

about her is that she sees the floor very well. She understands what I'm trying to say a lot of times before I even say it, which does me a lot of favors because sometimes I struggle finding ways to express what I'm actually seeing out on the court. Emma will also see more opportunities this year with the ball in her hand. I'm excited to how she steps up this year."

Rounding out the varsity lineup are freshmen guards Elli Dudenhoeffer (5-6), Heslie Higginbotham (5-8) and Kenzy Hackmann (5-3), forwards Paige Senevey (5-10) and Karly Brandt (6-0), and utility player Nicole Grellner (5-8).

Junior guard Natasha Jewell (5-10) will look to take advantage of any opportunities to play. She will primarily be a JV player but may see time in a varsity game. "She's a great kid who works hard and does all I ask," said Rost.

Freshman on the JV roster are Ali Russell (5-3), Anna Peters (5-3), Jorja Kempker (5-7), Olivia Martin (5-4), Lydia Kaullen (5-5), Paige Loethen (5-4), Brynlee Furgeson (5-7), and Elyse Brandt (5-2).

"It's two different speeds, with different physicality than what they're used to coming out of middle school," Rost said. "It'll take a lot of mental toughness to be able to adapt, but this is a very talented group. They've been playing together for a long time, whether with the Warcats team, play-

ing at Linn, or at St. George."

Most freshmen will play primarily JV, and those on the varsity squad will be thrown in the fire early. "I'm excited to see how they compose themselves and how they step up because they're gonna get a lot of opportunities," said Rost. "I look to find ways to max out their quarters and get as much experience as possible."

Rost is pleased to have Assistant Coach Steve Samson back. "He's done well working with the girls and creating a bond," said Rost. "It's fun getting to watch him coach them. I think he's gonna have a lot of fun this season and do great things with that JV squad. Steve is a great coach and we work really well together. I'm excited to see what we can accomplish this season."

Rost has mixed feelings about the final Show-Me Conference season. "It's weird to think this is the last year we are in this conference. We always find a way to have some of the best schools, from Class 1-4, and have a really good mix of teams," said Rost. "This conference has always been fun and competitive."

Next year, Linn will play in the Great 8 Conference, but closing this year with a high mark in the Show-Me would be a bonus. "I don't feel like there's something to prove," said Rost of going out as the final Show-Me Conference champion. "I don't think about things like that; we try to focus one game at a time. There's a lot of time and games between now and the end of the



KIANA HOSTETLER earned All-District last year.

PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

season. It's still always a goal for us, but we will have to play some very good basketball to have a chance."

The Lady Cats opened with a game at New Haven on Monday, and will compete in the Eugene tournament next week.



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Linn High School

2023-2024 Girls Basketball Schedule

Junior High, 8th Grade, 7th Grade



Date	Opponent	Location	Levels	Time
10/31	Chamois	Home	8th, 7th	4:00 PM
11/2	South Callaway	Home	8th, 7th	5:30 PM
11/7	Cuba (Cuba, MO)	Away	8th, 7th	5:30 PM
11/9	New Bloomfield	Home	8th, 7th	5:00 PM
11/13-17	Harrisburg Tournament (Harrisburg, MO)	Neutral	8th	
11/20	Fulton Middle (Fulton, MO)	Away	8th, 7th	5:30 PM
11/27-12/1	2nd Annual NB/Linn JH Tournament (New Bloomfield, MO)	Neutral	JH	
12/5	Russellville (Russellville, MO)	Away	8th, 7th	5:30 PM
12/7	California	Home	8th, 7th	5:00 PM
12/14	Rolla (Rolla, MO)	Away	8th	5:30 PM
12/18	North Callaway MS	Home	8th, 7th	5:30 PM
12/19	Smithton (Columbia) (Columbia, MO)	Away	JH	6:00 PM
12/20	Lewis and Clark (Jefferson City, MO)	Away	8th, 7th	5:30 PM

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



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Ellis pleased to help coach Fatima girls' basketball

With a stellar career ending with early retirement in 2010, Fatima Assistant Coach Chris Ellis is pleased with the decision to teach and coach at Westphalia. His initial plan to step away didn't last long.

"Retirement's great for about two weeks," said Ellis, a 40-year veteran with 661 wins as a head basketball coach. "Matt (Baker) played for the men's team when I was coaching at Maryville University, and we've remained good coaching friends. When he was hired at Fatima and later became head coach, he would call me a lot, and we would trade ideas. He told me there would be an opening this year and suggested I teach middle school Language Arts and help with the girls' basketball team."

It didn't take long to agree, and a big reason was that his kids were still in school. Zoe, 22, is studying Marine Biology at UMSL, and Drew, 19, is a freshman football player at McKendree University in Lebanon, Ill.

"I thought, why not?" said Ballwin native Ellis. "There really wasn't anything, and St. Louis Whitfield did not have a full-time position. We barely had a team last year; I had five girls. And I thought, why not take advantage of the state's critical shortage of teachers? I gotta tell you, I'm loving it."

Last year, the Whitfield Warriors made state headlines by capturing a Class 5 district championship despite having only five players. Ellis has three other district championships: Webster Groves, 1988, and Parkway South, 1995-96.

During his tenure as a high school coach, Ellis mentored two Parade Magazine All-Americans and eight Missouri All-State athletes. He has been named a high school Coach

of the Year eight times, Collegiate Coach of the Year six times, and the St. Louis Sports Commission named Ellis the St. Louis Area's Most Outstanding Coach in 1997.

Ellis has six NCAA tournament appearances, seven NCAA conference championships (Maryville University 2001-16), and two Missouri State Elite Eight Appearances (Parkway South 1995-1996). His Maryville University teams set an NCAA Women's Basketball Div. III record by winning 92 consecutive conference games from 2003-09, which ended with a win as the Saints joined Div. II in 2010.

After the 2011-12 season, Ellis was named to the Missouri Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame in Springfield.

His home in Ballwin is only 98 miles away, but he admits there's not much pulling him. "Both my parents are deceased, I'm not married, and my kids are grown up and away from home," said Ellis. "It was just a great, right-place, right-time kind of thing. It's not Key West, Whitfield, the inner city, or the West County suburbs. It's a whole different kind of place, and I live for experiences. I tell people that when I pull out of the driveway, the first thing I see are cows, and they laugh because they know me. They're like, there's no way. I tell them they don't understand — I love it. Yeah, I do. I am loving it."

Ellis met the players last summer and began working with the team. "How can you not love these kids? I was excited about the school year," he said. "Teaching is hard, and middle school is really hard. But for the most part, there are very few major problems, and I still get to do the



Coach Chris Ellis

See **FATIMA GIRLS BB** on Page 13

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Fatima girls bb • from page 12

thing I like the most: coaching basketball. Matt has built a great culture here, and I'm happy to help out. It's been good. I think we play off each other pretty well. I like working with the other assistant coach, John Fick, and I really like the kids, so it's been great."

Baker is happy to have Ellis aboard. "He is a phenomenal coach and understands the game very well," he said. "The girls have responded well to him, and I think he's going to be a great help to us this year."

When not in Westphalia, Coach Ellis resides in Ballwin.



Fatima High School 2023-2024 Girls Basketball Schedule Varsity, Junior Varsity, Freshman



Date	Opponent	Location	Levels	Time
11/13	Fatima Jamboree (Westphalia, MO)	Home	V	5:00 pm
11/20	Osage (Osage Beach, MO)	Away	V, JV	6:00 PM
11/21	Fair Grove	Home	V, JV, Fr	3:00 PM
11/27-12/2	Comet Classic (Fatima) (Westphalia, MO)	Home	V	
» 11/27	» Helias Catholic	Neutral	V	
» 11/29	» Blair Oaks	Neutral	V	
» 12/1	» St. James	Neutral	V	
12/4	Eldon	Home	V, JV	6:00 PM
12/7	Owensville	Neutral	V	4:30 PM
12/9-16	St. James JV Tournament (St James, MO)	Neutral	JV	
12/11-16	62nd Annual Linn High School Holiday Basketball Tournament (Linn, MO)	Neutral	V	
12/18	Blair Oaks	Home	JV	6:00 PM
12/19	Blair Oaks	Home	V	6:00 PM
12/27-29	Great 8 Classic @ Capital City (Jefferson City, MO)	Away	V	
1/2	California (California, MO)	Away	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
1/4	Linn (Linn, MO)	Away	JV, Fr	4:00 PM
1/5	Linn (Linn, MO)	Away	V	6:00 PM
1/8-13	South Callaway Tournament (Mokane, MO)	Away	JV	
1/15-20	St. James Invitational (St James, MO)	Neutral	V	
1/23	St. Elizabeth (St. Elizabeth, MO)	Away	V, JV	6:00 PM
1/25	Boonville	Home	V, JV	6:00 PM
1/30	Tuscumbia	Home	JV	6:00 PM
2/6	Eugene	Home	JV	6:30 PM
2/7	Southern Boone (Ashland, MO)	Away	V, JV	5:30 PM
2/8	South Callaway (Mokane, MO)	Away	JV	6:00 PM
2/12	Russellville	Home	V, JV	6:00 PM
2/13	Capital City	Home	Fr	6:00 PM
2/15	Jefferson City (Jefferson City, MO)	Away	V, JV	6:00 PM



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Baker, Lady Comets want to go farther in the postseason

Fatima has a lot of reasons to believe this season will be successful on the hardwood.

Lady Comets' coach Matt Baker said he has high expectations. "We brought back five starters from last year — from a district championship team that was a buzzer-beater away from a quarterfinal game," he added. "So, I think everybody's got high expectations for us. We lost some good seniors, so we'll have to find leadership qualities among our younger kids. I'd say that we're expecting some big things out of this group."

One of the reasons Fatima won the district title a year ago was the switch to man defense. "I think it helped us get out of the district, to be perfectly honest," Baker said. "We didn't feel like we were maximizing our kids, necessarily, playing to their strengths. It worked out for us, and the kids picked up on it well. This summer looked even better; the defense was solid. The offense settled in a bit, and I think, right now, for us, the big thing will be getting the defense where we want it. Offensively, this group can be pretty electric when they want to be. We're not just talking about taking good shots because, with the group we have, there are a lot of really good shooters and scorers. Finding the great shot, not just the good one, and getting our defensive principles cleaned up are the two biggest things we're working on. We'll be in good shape if we can meet our goals."

Baker doesn't name captains; instead, he lets it happen organically. "Senior Alli (Robertson) is our emotional leader," he said. "She's the fire and our enforcer, and everybody's fully aware of that."

Robertson (6-0) averaged 12 PPG, 7.9 RPG, 2.8 APG, 2.2 SPG, and shot 73.8% from the FT line. She earned MBCA All-State and All-District, first-team media and All-District, and was named Show-Me Conference MVP.

"We're hoping for even bigger things from Alli," said Baker. "I've just been proud of how she's shared the ball with this group at the jamboree; she made some strong passes where she saw a double-team or the help defender. She hasn't necessarily put her foot down and forced her way into the action. That, to me, is a sign you've matured as a player and understand there will be hard moments. She will take big shots and be in big moments, so she doesn't have to force her way into that role all the time. She's the motor and will attract the most attention. She's the Batman of the team. Everybody's going to be geared up to stop her, and she will track a lot of attention defensively."

Baker noted he's not sure who else will step into a leadership role, but seniors Lucy Crede (5-8 guard) and Kaitlyn Plassmeyer (5-2 guard) are in a position to share their experience and lead by example. "KP and Lucy are great," he said. "They're here every morning at seven o'clock shooting and doing their free throws, and they're never late. They never have a cross word to say as they practice. That leadership has always been there from them. That little extra can put us over the top, and we're hoping they will show up."

Crede averaged 6.2 PPG, 2.4 RPG, .7

APG, and 1.2 SPG. "Lucy is instant offense, and she's come a long way on the defensive end as well," said Baker. "I'm proud of that from her for sure. We still have work to do, but her growth as a defender has come a long, long way. She's going to be one of those kids that stretches the floor and provides offense, but I think she often gets looked over. Lucy is a great rebounder, offensively and defensively. I think volleyball really helps her because she's one of the few who actually jumps and attacks the boards. That gives us a few extra possessions every game when she commits to that. Lucy did that in our first few weeks of practice; she hasn't had a bad practice. She's always mentally ready to go every single day."

Plassmeyer may be the most pure shooter at Fatima. "For us to click 100 percent on all cylinders, she's going to have to knock down open threes," said Baker. "In her career, KP has been a Jekyll and Hyde, like in districts last year. She was struggling a bit coming in, and then she had a couple of four-point plays against Owensville and really gave us the spark we needed. KP shows up in big moments. A couple of years ago against Carl Junction, she hit six or seven threes and almost brought us all the way back. We were down 24 or 25, and she shot us back within two or three points. She's another great kid; she's meaner than hell, feisty, and she's got

ten a lot tougher the last couple of years."

KP scored 4.9 points, grabbed 2.1 rebounds, and posted 1.8 assists per game last year while collecting 2.0 steals a contest. She earned second-team All-Conference honors last season.

Fatima has four juniors this year, led by returning point guard, 5-5 Vivian Bax, who averaged 8.5 PPG, 2.5 RPG, 2.4 APG, 1.6 SPG, and shot 31.8% (3PT), and (68.6% FT). She earned Show-Me First Team honors as well.

"Vivian is as important as anyone on this roster," said Baker. "She came into her own late last year. Right around the Christmas tournament, she was still finding her place and struggled a bit."

After missing free throws, Baker said Bax wanted to come out of the game. "I wouldn't let her come out and made her shoot," he added. "They kept finding her and made her last six. From there, she settled in and never looked back. I think she's found her footing and confidence, but at the same time, I think her next step is being confident. Viv has a couple of scholarship offers sitting on the table right now, and I think she's starting to realize how talented she really is. She will always have the ball in her hands as a point guard, and we'll go as she goes a lot of nights. We'll be in good shape if she makes good decisions and takes care of the ball.

She's got a nice mid-range game, and she's pretty darn lethal from three-point range, so she's a tough cover for anybody, and she's a heck of a defender."

Junior Kristen Robertson (5-6 guard) returns to the varsity lineup. "Kristen was probably the MVP of our summer without much doubt," said Baker. "We moved her off the perimeter to a forward position. Initially, she wasn't comfortable, but after a few games, she settled in. She does everything right and has got a super high IQ. Kristen guards the other team's best player every night. She's one of those unsung heroes. Kristen will have eight or nine points, eight or nine rebounds, four assists, and a few steals. I don't think she necessarily gets enough credit where it's due, but she will be a big part of our success night in and night out. She's in amazing shape, and I think she could play 32 minutes a night if I let her. Kristen shot the ball well this summer and in the jamboree. She's turned into a very consistent player. She can shoot it, drive it, and she can play in the paint. I can put her in about all five spots if need be."

K. Robertson hopes to improve on her season average of three points a game last year. She also grabbed 2.2 rebounds, had 1.4

See **FATIMA GIRLS** on Page 17

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Comets return every wrestler from last year

Fatima's wrestling team looks to be very competitive this season and returns the entire team from last year. The team will be looking to find its way back into the top 10, if not the podium, at the state tournament. Several individuals hope to take some big steps this year.

"The Comets will field their largest team in many years and come close to if not completely, filling the lineup," said Coach Kurt Strope.

Fatima's three seniors — Cody Strope, Tyler Kloepfel, and Chase Willis — have made state appearances. Strope is a two-time state runner-up and took third. He's eyeing a return to the state championships and winning a title this season.

Kloepfel and Willis went to state as sophomores and are looking to make it back after being one match away from going last season. "Both in their last year of wrestling have their sights set on getting on the podium," said Coach Strope.

The team's lone returning junior is Trevor Herzing. "He had an amazing regular season last year but had an injury-plagued postseason," said Strope. "This year, we hope to build on his regular season success, grow and learn, and

hopefully, keep the injuries away so he can give it his best to get on the podium at the state meet."

Returning sophomores are Caden Rosentreter, Tucker Tune, Nolan Laux, Zachary Kloepfel, Jesse Schroeder, and Conner Willis. This group has a ton of experience and really grew throughout last year, with Tune and Laux making it to the state tournament. "I am looking for those two to make it onto the podium this coming season, and I am looking forward to seeing a couple of these others crack the lineup or get to the state meet this coming season," said Strope.

Freshmen joining the team are Ben Stephens, Thomas Kremer, Ryder Herzing, Samuel Haller, and Masyn Fenton. "I think there is a lot of talent in this group of freshmen," said Strope. "I look forward to seeing what they can do on the mat."

Senior Skyla Schroeder leads a trio of Lady Comets this winter. She is joined by sophomore Heidi Struempf and freshman Elizabeth Meyer. "Skyla and Heidi

See **BOYS WRESTLING** on Page 16

Fatima High School 2023-2024 Boys Wrestling Schedule Varsity, Junior Varsity



Date	Opponent	Location	Levels	Time
11/28	Quad (Boonville, MO)	Away	V	
12/1	Osage Tri (Osage Beach, MO)	Neutral	V	
12/2	JCHS JV Tournament (Jefferson City, MO)	Neutral	JV	
12/5	Hallsville, Capital City, Fatima, Rock Bridge Quad (Hallsville, MO)	Neutral	V	
12/9	Union Tournament (Union, MO)	Away	V	
12/13	Blair Oaks JV (Wardsville, MO)	Away	JV	
12/15-16	Battle on the Katy Trail @ Sedalia (Mathewson Center) -Lathrop Host School (Lathrop, MO)	Neutral	V	
1/3	Fatima Quad with St. James/California/Tipton (Westphalia, MO)	Home	V	
1/6	Capital City Tournament (Jefferson City, MO)	Neutral	V	
1/11	Eldon (Eldon, MO)	Away	V	5:30 PM
1/13	Dutchmen Wrestling Tournament (Owensville, MO)	Away	V	
1/16	Tolton Tri (Columbia, MO)	Away	V	6:00 pm
1/20	St. Clair Tournament (St. Clair, MO)	Away	V	
1/23	Fulton Quad (Fulton, MO)	Away	V	
1/25	Southern Boone/Mexico/Marceline/Fatima (Ashland, MO)	Away	V	
2/1	Fatima Quad with South Callaway, Owensville, Stover (Westphalia, MO)	Home	V	
2/3	Blair Oaks Dual (Jefferson City, MO)	Neutral	V	

Fatima High School 2023-2024 Girls Wrestling Schedule Junior High



Date	Opponent	Location	Time
11/28	Osage Quad (Osage Beach, MO)	Neutral	

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Fatima cheer's 10 members ready to involve the crowd

Fatima's cheerleading team has been working very hard to develop cheers, stunting, and preps under Coach Stephanie Hoffman.

"We have some new cheers this year that we can not wait to show everyone," she said. "Our goal this year is to get the crowd involved."

Fatima's 10-member squad includes seniors, Malayna Anderson, Alyssa Hoeller, and Lauren Otto, junior Clara Meyer, sophomores Ava Buhr and Aubrey Wieberg, and freshmen Jentry Allen, Audrey Bexten, Tristin Cremer, and Makinzy Enke-Poston.

Fatima is preparing to possibly attend a cheer competition next semester in Kansas City and participating in activities sponsored by Fatima's Parents As Teachers program. The Lady Comets will also attend home and away games for the boys' and girls' basketball teams this year.

"We have a very meaningful but busy season ahead of us," said Hoffman. "Let's go Comets!"

Fatima High School

2023-2024 Boys Basketball Schedule

Varsity, Junior Varsity, Freshman

Date	Opponent	Location	Levels	Time
11/17	Father Tolton Regional Catholic	Home	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
11/20	New Bloomfield	Home	V, JV	6:00 PM
12/1	Chamois (Chamois, MO)	Away	V	
12/5	South Callaway	Home	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
12/7	Cuba (Cuba, MO)	Away	V, JV	5:30 PM
12/11-16	62nd Annual Linn High School Holiday Basketball Tournament (Linn, MO)	Neutral	V	
12/18	Blair Oaks	Home	JV	7:30 PM
12/19	Blair Oaks	Home	V	7:30 PM
12/21	California	Home	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
12/27-29	Great 8 Classic @ Jefferson City (Jefferson City, MO)	Away	V	
1/4	Linn (Linn, MO)	Away	JV, Fr	5:00 PM
1/5	Linn (Linn, MO)	Away	V	7:00 PM
1/11	Helias Catholic (Jefferson City, MO)	Away	V, JV	5:30 PM
1/12	Southern Boone (Ashland, MO)	Away	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
1/15-20	St. James Invitational (St. James, MO)	Neutral	V	
1/22-27	93rd Annual Eldon Boys Basketball Tournament (Eldon, MO)	Neutral	V	
1/30	Tuscumbia	Home	JV	7:15 PM
2/2	St. Elizabeth (St. Elizabeth, MO)	Away	V, JV, Fr	5:00 PM
2/5-10	South Callaway JV Boys Basketball Tournament (Mokane, MO)	Neutral	JV	
2/6	Eugene	Home	V, JV	5:00 PM
2/9	Russellville	Home	V, JV	6:00 PM
2/13	Capital City	Home	Fr	6:00 PM

Fatima High School

2023-2024 Boys Wrestling Schedule

Junior High

Date	Opponent	Location	Time
11/20	Lewis and Clark (Jefferson City, MO)	Away	5:00 pm
11/28	Osage Quad (Osage Beach, MO)	Neutral	
11/30	Fulton Scramble	Away	5:00 pm
12/2	CAPITAL CITY MIDDLE SCHOOL WRESTLING TOURNAMENT (Jefferson City, MO)	Away	
12/6	Fatima Quad (Westphalia, MO)	Home	5:00 pm
12/9	Trojan Invitational (Carrollton, MO)	Neutral	
12/11	Blair Oaks	Away	5:30 pm
12/14	Fatima Quad Owensville/Steelville/Pacific (Westphalia, MO)	Home	5:00 pm

Boys Wrestling • from page 15

are looking to improve upon what they did last season," said Strope as Schroeder placed and Struempfler qualified for the state meet. "I am looking forward to seeing Elizabeth learn throughout the season and get better and better."

Fatima's junior high team, coached by Pete Falotico, has six wrestlers com-

peting this season: Journey Markway, Harlan Deardeuff, Logan Laux, Tucker Schroeder, Henry Storm, and Will Berhorst.

"All six look to have a fun-filled season and hope to improve their skill so that they are ready when they reach high school," said Coach Strope.



TREVOR HERZING, above, and **Cody Strope**, below, return to the mats for Fatima this year. They qualified for last year's state tournament, with Herzing going 1-2 and Strope earning third place.

PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON



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

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Fatima girls • from page 14

assists, and a steal per game.

Baker anticipates this group will be dynamic but doesn't know how things will play out. "We keep telling the girls there's only one ball, and five of them can score well. I think it'll be interesting to watch with this group because you'll see a lot of even stats. That's not saying that one night KP doesn't get hot or Vivian doesn't go bonkers. Alli or any of them can go off, but I think a lot of them will be right there, around nine to 12 points a game when things are going well."

Junior forwards Madelyn Backes (5-11) and Payton Wieberg (5-9) are first-year varsity players. "Madelyn is a great athlete," said Baker. "She's tall, long, and strong. I think she can be a real X factor for us when it's all said and done. She can mix it up with anybody and rebounds the crap out of the ball. And she's slowly gaining confidence as well. Madelyn showed some flashes in the last few practices and looked really good in the jamboree. She is 100 percent committed to her role and can give us some big minutes in that forward spot. She gives us some size that we need."

Meanwhile, Wieberg is finding her way. "She's spent a lot of time working on her jump shot, going to camps, and working on her game. She had a pretty good jamboree and shot the ball pretty well. She and Madeline work well in a high-low situation. I'm not sure exactly where she will fit, but we're working that out."

Backes averaged one point, and Wieberg scored 2.9 per game. They collected 1.5 and 1.8 rebounds per contest, respectively, and both had about a steal a night.

Baker noted that the starting five must earn and keep their positions. "With this roster and those first five, it's gonna be tough to steal minutes from them," he said. "It's kind of one of those wait-and-see situations."

Rounding out the squad are sophomores Alex Berhorst (5-8 guard), Natalie Wilbers (5-8 guard), Elise Dickneite (5-8 guard), and Adalyn Berhorst (5-11 forward).

Berhorst started for a stretch last season at point guard, averaging 3.9 points, 1.7 rebounds, 1.1 assists, and 1.5 steals per game. "Alex brings a lot of energy and is, without a doubt, the fastest kid I've ever coached on the basketball floor," said Baker. "She is an athlete with a capital A. And Alex offers so much. She's working on her jump shot, getting that to where it's consistent, and her feet are correct. I think she's starting to feel pretty good about her jump shot. Alex can get to the rim at will when she wants to, but I see her in the same place that Viv was last year when the game still evolved in her mind. Alex is learning a lot; it's baptism by fire. That's hard when you're playing point guard, and every day, she lines up against Vivian. I think that's frustrating, but Viv is one of the best around. Alex is such a competitor, and she's so tough on herself. She almost expects herself to be perfect and doesn't need to be with this group. Alex could be a wild card for us, and she can go into the game and give Vivian or KP a break."

Wilbers was at every fall practice working on her game. "She's fun and has soaked up so much of what we've been teaching,"

said Baker. "She's had a great start to the year. I don't know how many minutes Natalie will get this year, but she's a great shooter. She understands what we're trying to do. And I think it will be a great year for her to be around many of these upperclassmen. As she keeps soaking things up, she will become a huge piece down the road. We're excited for her to be involved."

Dickneite is long, athletic, and shoots the ball pretty well. "She's a lot like Natalie in that she's soaking everything up and asking a lot of questions," said Baker. "Elise gives us 100 percent every single day. The young ones, in general, are going to have to bide their time and do what they can do. She can stretch the floor, and she's a little bit longer and taller-bodied than some of the other girls. That's a plus, and her athleticism brings a little bit more to the table than some of the others, too, so all positives for her."

Berhorst is super skilled around the bucket. "She's a tall, athletic, strong kid with great touch around the rim," said Baker. "Adalyn has great hands, and she'll finish impressive post moves in practice. That's a big positive for her and our future. She's another sophomore who has a lot of growing and learning to do from Ally and Kristen about the physicality of the game and what it takes to be effective when they get in those games. Unfortunately for them



SENIOR ALLI Robertson returns as the Lady Comets' emotional leader. She earned All-District last year after averaging 12 points and 7.9 rebounds a game. She also was named Show-Me Conference MVP.

PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

and all of our young kids, in the last four or five years, there have been no gimmies on our schedule. We don't play many games where you're up 20 or 25 and can give them a ton of minutes."

There's a fine line to consider. "Where do you develop in the program overall? And are you playing people that will make you better come district time? You can line up all the killers you want. And if you don't win and you don't find your young kids time on the floor, it could come back a couple years down the road and hurt you," said Baker. "But our kids have done a great job the last few years of playing that schedule

and being successful and finding ways in practices and games of picking up the young kids and helping them. Hopefully, we can continue that."

Baker looks forward to the final season of the Show-Me Conference. "We're going to approach each game as we always do," he said. "Our goal is to compete for the conference title every year."

Fatima will compete in Class 3, District 9, with Belle, Bourbon, Dixon, Iberia, Linn, and Steelville.

Baker's varsity assistant is Chris Ellis, who is featured in a separate story, and John Fick, who leads the JV team.

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Fatima boys plan to keep running and hope for playoff run

Fatima boys' coach Ryan Robertson said he plans to push the tempo on every play as the Comets return two seniors and a few other starters with the hope of a deep postseason run.

"We will continue to run," he said. "I mean, we like to throw it up the floor, offensively. Scheme-wise, we will be similar. We'll play fast, but if nothing's there, we're going to try to punch it in to Levi (Robinson) a lot more than we probably have in the past. We're going to make opportunities for (Easton) Haslag to get to the rim. That will be a priority. You know, hopefully, Max Stuecken and Sam Struempf can stretch the floor enough to where we can open up driving lanes. Defensively, there are times when we will look different because I can see us playing a little more zone than than we normally do."

Robertson added that he expects the season to be fun for the team and Fatima's fans.

"There's no doubt we're excited," said Robertson. "We have some new faces and we may not be the biggest team, but we feel this team plays together really well. When you have that and you do the little things right, we feel like we can compete with whoever we play because if the ball moves you've got a chance against anybody."

Robinson, a 6-5 forward, had a fantastic junior season, averaging 14.1 points, 5.6 rebounds and 1.9 assists per contest. Defensively, he posted 1.4 steals and .5 blocks per game en route to first-team media All-District and first-team Show-Me Conference honors.

"He is our size and strength in the paint, but his versatility makes him pretty tough because he can step out and shoot it," said Robertson. "He'll score in the post. Levi has had a really good fall and will be our leader. He'll be our glue."

Haslag, the team's returning 6-1 guard, is an explosive element. "He's one of the most athletic players in central Missouri and one of the best players in transition that's ever come through Fatima," said Robertson. "His ability to score, drive the ball, and step outside to shoot makes him

a tough matchup. When you throw in the fact that he is our defensive stopper, you know he'll be assigned the best kid every night. We look for him to have a fantastic season."

Last year, Haslag was selected to the Show-Me Conference after scoring 10 points and grabbing 3.2 rebounds a game. He also dished the ball on average 1.3 times a contest to go with 1.6 steals per game.

Fatima has several juniors on the varsity roster.

Matthew "Munch" Robertson (6-1) has excellent strength and speed from the point guard position. "He has a great ability to get to the rim, and we will post him some at the point guard position because he'll be bigger and stronger than most kids that will guard him," said Coach Robertson.

Robertson averaged 5.5 points, 4.0 rebounds, 4.0 assists, and one steal per game; he earned Honorable Mention in the Show-Me Conference last year.

Logan Kliethermes, a 5-10 guard, looks to be an active part of the starting lineup. "This will be the first year he's a starter," said Robertson. "He's super fast and gritty and plays much bigger than he is. He's an excellent ball-handler who can get to the rim and a true pest defensively."

In limited varsity play last year, Kliethermes averaged one point, 1.2 rebounds, and .5 assists per game.

Stuecken (5-11 guard) is a threat from anywhere on the floor. "Max will be the kid that shocks people this season," Robertson noted. "He's an absolute lights-out shooter and has transformed his body in the offseason; he's much stronger and more athletic. Max will definitely be our zone-buster."

Struempf (5-10 guard) is a lot like Stuecken. "We think it might be because they live on the same road," Robertson quipped. "He's another great shooter. Sam is one of those kids that you think it's going in every time he shoots it. He has had one of the best falls in our program. He just seems to do everything right every day. He will see a lot of playing time and come off the bench almost immediately."

Struempf scored 1.5 points and grabbed



MATTHEW "MUNCH" Robertson flies up the court in last year's district game at home against Fr. Tolton.

PHOTO BY NEAL A. JOHNSON

.5 rebounds per game last year.

Brody Troesser is a 5-9 guard who will share point-guard duties. "Troesser is an elite ball-handler and, for his size, has the uncanny ability to get in the lane and break down defenses. There are days when he makes defensive players look slow."

Fatima's final junior is 6-1 guard Jace Eisterhold. "Jace will be in line for one of the most improved kids in our program," said Robertson. "He has excellent size for a guard and has the ability to step out and knock in a three-pointer. We will rely on him to come off the bench and play in three to four different positions."

Sophomores Xavier "Chet" Stuecken (6-4 center) and Blake Kliethermes (5-11 guard) round out the varsity roster.

"Chet will be Levi's relief off the bench," said Robertson. "He's super skilled for his size, very crafty around the rim, and can be a menace defensively as a basket protector."

Scoring comes easily to B. Kliethermes. "Fatima fans will notice he has similarities to former great Nolan Huot," said Robertson. "He can shoot the three and get to the rim. Blake could also be an elite defender."

Robertson is pleased with the team's performance in the season-opener against Father Tolton and plans to use that game as a benchmark later in the season. "Guys are going to have more responsibility than last year," he said. "We have to replace the

seniors we lost. They provided not only a lot of scoring but a lot of grit and strength. They were a mean group. So, that will be the biggest thing, the toughness they brought in; that's what we're working towards."

Fatima has been assigned to a district with Tolton and Blair Oaks for several years, but this year, the Comets are in Class 3, District 9, with Belle, Bourbon, Dixon, Iberia, Linn, and Steelville. Blair Oaks and Tolton are in Class 4. Still, Robertson said the district tournament will be a good test, especially compared to the start of the year.

"Our goal is always to do well at the district tournament and, hopefully, go on a postseason run," said Robertson. "We work toward that every day."

As 2023-24 is the final season in the Show-Me Conference, Robertson said he's excited to see how teams finish. "I feel like the Show-Me Conference this year is the best it's been in a long time," he added. "When you look around the conference, we feel Linn and Eugene are loaded, and Chamois has some great young athletes with more experience. They're going to be a lot tougher. Overall, I think this year's conference race will be tough."

Robertson's assistant coaches are Ethan Williams and Tim Brunnert. A look at the JV and freshmen teams is presented in a separate story.

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Fatima JV, freshmen ready for the season

Fatima JV coach Ethan Williams and freshman coach Tim Brunnert return to helm their respective teams, and they are excited as the boys are ready for success.

“This group has been working hard and learning a lot of new stuff every day,” said Coach Williams. “We are excited to see what we need to improve on as the year progresses.”

Some players will see time on varsity, but this group of freshmen will play primarily JV and some C games to gain as much experience as possible.

Here’s a look at the players.

Devin Luebbert (6-2 forward) is a long, skilled athlete with a natural ability to score the ball, while Bryce Wieberg (5-11 guard) is strong, shoots the ball well, and does well getting to the rim.

“His effort is fantastic,” said Williams.

Jace Crede (5-10 guard) is a knockdown shooter with a quick release, and Trenton Kampeter (5-9 guard) plays longer than he looks and does a good job of running the floor and scoring in transition.

“Wyatt Dake (5-10) is a quick guard with good hands and does a good job of pressuring the ball,” said Coach Brunnert. “Rolan Nevins and Liam Morfeld play physically under the hoop and do a good job rebounding.”

Zack Eisterhold (5-8 guard) is new to basketball but comes fresh off the cross-country course. “He can run for days and never get tired,” said Williams. “Tanner Huhn (5-8 guard) is also new to basketball but has quick feet and plays extremely hard.”

Fatima JV Lady Comets a mix of returners and freshmen

This year’s Fatima’s JV Lady Comets basketball team includes a returning junior and four sophomores, along with a lot of freshmen.

Junior Carly MacLellan (5-3) has improved her shooting from the outside and the free-throw line throughout the summer. “She understands the offense, and I’m hoping she can step up and be the leader and set the tone for the younger ones every practice and game,” said Coach John Fick.

Sophomores Natalie Wilbers (5-8 guard), Elise Dickneite (5-8 guard), and Adalyn Berhorst (5-11 forward) will see time at varsity this year, while Grace Borgmeyer (5-4) will primarily be a JV player.

Natalie is the returning point guard. “From last summer and so far this season in practice, she’s been making great decisions and valuing the basketball,” said Fick.

“Elise is a forward but is more than capable of stepping back and knocking down a three,” Fick noted. “She’s a strong girl and gets after it on the rebounding front.”

Berhorst is the team’s primary post player and has been focusing on her footwork and soft touch around the rim. “She’s a tall girl for JV, so I would like to use her as much as possible,” said Fick.

Grace is another shooting guard that helps spread the floor on offense. “She’s unselfish with the basketball and a hard-working kid, always improving herself.”

Fatima’s JV Lady Comets include a lot of new faces this year. Usually, the Lady Comets have anywhere from 4-6 freshmen; this year the roster has 10.

Kacie Haller (5-1), Anna Struempf (5-6), Holly Bliss(5-0), Mellisa Verslues (5-2), and Brie Massman (5-5) will play guard this year.

“Kacie is quick with the basketball in her hands, and over the first few weeks of practice, her shooting has improved,” said Fick. “Anna is our biggest guard; she takes care of the basketball and isn’t shy about contact. Holly may be undersized compared to most freshmen, but she makes up for it on the defensive end. She plays hard, boxes out, and does all the little things that may go unnoticed in games. Mellisa and Brie, both fresh off cross country, are pretty good spot shooters for us; give them a few more practices to get caught up with the terminology and scheme of what we’re trying to do, and they’ll be ready to go.”

Fatima’s forwards are Anne Boyce (5-5), Addison Bower (5-10), Jane Boyce (5-5), and Lexey Bassett (5-4), and Kacey Brune (6-0) is the lone post player. “Anne and Jane are sisters that love the physicality of the game, whether it be setting screens, offensive rebounds, or diving for loose balls; they bring it,” said Fick. “Addison is tall and lengthy; what could look like an open pass for someone can be a deflection and a turnover for her. She’s always active and gives it her all. Lexey plays the game at the right pace, which is calm to her; she doesn’t panic or get riled up. She makes the right decision every time, and when she’s open, she shoots it. Kacey takes up a lot of area when she gets her hands up. She plays hard and can make other girls alter shots around the rim. She also cleans up many shots around the rim for us.”



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