

# 2023 TIMES NEWS FALL SPORTS PREVIEW BOOKLET

## TIGER REPEAT?

**A year ago, Matt Johnson and the Northwestern boys soccer team captured the first state championship in program history. Johnson returns in 2023 with the hopes of leading the Tigers on another successful postseason run.**

# - NORTHERN LEHIGH -



Chase LoPinto



Ethan Moore

## BOYS SOCCER

**LUCKY NUMBER 13** ... Coach John Murray's rooster numbers 13 and he has high hopes that his 2023 edition will improve upon last year's three wins.

**A PHYSICAL PRESENCE** ... Leading the Bulldogs this season will be two seniors who Murray says will bring a physicality to the field of play. Defender James Strock, who might also see some time goal, is a "vocal leader" who can use his body to stop rushing attackers. "Jackson Hunsicker is our mid line stopper," Murray said. "We look for him to play the ball and clear the zone."

**JUNIORS ON THE RISE** ... Logan Berfield drives the offensive attack. "He has strong technical skills, good

footwork and a good shot. We expect him to be one of our top scorers." Matthew McCarty is "smart, fast, and a good stopper" from his defensive position. Murray will put Michael Wilks on the opposing team's best offensive player. "He's quick and physical. He wins the ball and can distribute into the transition."

**YOUNG GUNS** ... Sophomore strikers Ethan Moore, Chase LoPinto and freshman Kellen Bauer can hit the back of the net. From the defensive side of the field, freshman Tony Hanna is a rock solid wall between him and the pipes.

**DRIVE FOR FIVE** ... The Bulldogs' program qualified for the District 11 playoffs last year for the first time in school history. That said, no

team has ever won more than five games and Murray thinks his current group has a strong chance to surpass that total. "We have to play good defense and control the pace of the game. We haven't settled on a goalie yet and that will be a key to our success. We believe our younger talent will improve our play and if we focus on one game at time, the wins will come."

By Rich Strack

## BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

**ROSTER RECRUITMENT** ... The Bulldogs are facing serious roster issues with only two runners to compete. Third-year coach Mike Lehtonen said, "We will attempt to field a team that requires a minimum

of five members before our first scheduled meet."

**DISTANCE DUO** ... Junior Seth Schaefer comes from the track team where he ran the 400 meters to navigate his first year on the cross country courses. Lehtonen said that Schaefer will work on his stamina for the long distance events. Edward Benedict, a freshman, is the other runner who will concentrate his efforts on faster starts and getting stronger as the race progresses.

**QUESTION MARKS** ... Time will tell to see if active recruiting helps. "On the first day of school, I will be recruiting from my classroom," said Lehtonen, in hopes of getting enough runners to score in meets.

By Rich Strack

# - NORTHERN LEHIGH -



Nicole Zarayko



Victoria Hanna



Natalie Moffitt

## GIRLS SOCCER

**SETTING THE BAR HIGH ...** Coach Jason Reinhard begins his 13th season with high hopes for his Bulldogs after last year's 10-8 record and a semi-final appearance in the District 11 tournament. His team returns just two seniors, but the athletic ability across the roster of 22 players is enormous in his estimation.

**ROAR OF THE TIGER ...** Expect a physical and fast style of play this year beginning with seniors Victoria Hanna and Jordan Fischer. "Victoria is relentless near the goal mouth and will score ugly goals from scrambles in front," Reinhard said. Fischer is a four-year striker who possesses both stamina and strength. Three seasoned juniors will start. Katelyn Barthold, with 41 career goals, is a player "every team has to worry about,"

Reinhold said. Nicole Zarayko and Gabriella Hanna are "exceptionally fast and tough." Goalie Dekotah Barthold is athletic and assertive. She hopes to improve upon her three shutouts from a season ago. Starting sophomores, Natalie Moffitt and Ella Tosh bring physicality and speed to the attack.

**SPEED KILLS ...** The Tigers will run the field with "track stars" to beat opposing defenses to set up high percentage shots on goal. "We can play a ball control game too, especially in close games," Reinhard said.

**HEALTH BRINGS WEALTH ...** Last season, the Bulldogs were hit with injuries to five starters that weakened their chances to win league and district titles. "If we stay injury free and not fall into a depth problem, we can be the most dangerous single A team in our

district," Reinhard said.

By Rich Strack

**GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PROMISING PERFORMERS ...** The roster for head coach Mike Lehtonen roster will list eight girls, some who bring experience to the sport.

**THREE KEYS FOR 2023 ...** A trio of seniors will be counted on to help the Dawgs succeed this season. Haylie Fenstermaker and Kasia Dos Santos are veteran runners and have been consistent in their past course times. Delaney Swzast, who's also a field hockey player, just missed qualifying for the state meet last season.

**SISTERS ON THE FAST TRACK ...** Junior twins, Katelynn and Dekota Barthold have proven athletic abilities. "Katelynn, who also plays soccer, was the anchor on last spring's 4 x 800 relay

team that broke the school record," said Lehtonen, "and Dekota throws the discus and javelin for our track team. They should help us get more points in our team meets."

**UNDER-DAWGS ...** Sophomores and freshmen are expected to contribute this year. "Emma Heil, a member of the record-breaking relay team, is most likely our best runner," Lehtonen said. "She medaled at the DeSales Invitational last year and freshman Emily Gad was the best middle school runner. She will be a nice addition to our team.

**LITTLE GIANTS? ...** Lehtonen will instill a positive attitude in his team and set a lofty goal. "We are a small single A school. We have a better chance in the district post-season meet than finishing near the top of our league."

By Rich Strack

# - NORTHERN LEHIGH -



Daisy Richards (55) and Delaney Szwest

**FIELD HOCKEY VICTORY IS THE GOAL ...** Cassandra Beller begins her second year looking to lead her charges to victory after a winless 2022. The Bulldogs have a roster of 20. Practices have focused on improving teamwork and aggressive play.

**SENIOR STICKS TO SUCCESS ...** Three top of the class girls will lead the troops. Delaney Szwest will be asked to control the opponents' onrushing attack and limit the shots on goal in front of goalie Daisy Richards. "We are working with back line defender, Emily Koch to communicate with Daisy so we can keep the other team's scoring changes down to a reasonable amount," Beller said.

**NET JETS ...** The 'Dawgs will rely on im-



Emily Koch

proved team speed to score more this season. Leading scorer from a year ago, Addison Ciera, has a deadly shot from inside the circle. "Our most skilled and fastest player is Ariana Williams



Madison Thomas

who could be a top scorer," Beller said. Expected to add scoring power is freshman Morgan Smith. Defenders Sarah Hanzarik and Rachel Arnold will help in the transition game from defense to of-

fense.

**SPEAK LOUDLY AND CARRY A BIG STICK ...** "We want more positive interaction and better position play," Beller said. "Then we can use our team speed to get more opportunities in the offensive zone."

**STAY IN THE MOMENT ...** To keep heads high and motivation strong, Beller stresses the key is to reduce the number of goals scored last year by opposing teams. Chemistry is another goal which can be achieved by having practices that are both useful and fun. "We can't worry about what happened in the last game," said Beller. "We have to focus on the next game and the next moment we have an opportunity to get better."

By Rich Strack

# - PANTHER VALLEY -

## VOLLEYBALL HEAD OF THE CLASS

... This program is no slouch and doesn't take a backseat to anyone in the Schuylkill League. It has captured banners, district titles, too, and this season could be a bonus for a team that lost just one player to graduation.

### BAKER IS FIERY ...

Coach Emilie Baker — now entering her fifth-year in charge of the Panthers' program — gets fired up and that rubs off on her team. "I'm excited," she said. "The good thing, we have great volleyball players, we have great leadership, and we have fun."

### HERE THEY ARE ...

The lineup features veterans Riley McArdle (outside hitter), Natalie Vermillion (outside hitter), Emma Dacey (right side hitter), Maddison Maynard (middle blocker), Morgan Orsulak (setter/middle blocker), Abby Benack (setter) and Caroline Berslin (libero).

### COME ON DOWN ...

Three newcomers are in line to make an impact for the Lady Panthers. They include two middle blockers in Lucy Greco and Kyla Pinckey. Outside hitter Jessica Hackash will make her debut, too.

**I LIKE IT ...** Baker is tempered at times, but she knows this club as all



Mikayla Yuricheck (15) and Maddison Maynard (17)

the "right stuff" to have a storied season. "We are looking to return to the Schuylkill League playoffs and advance farther in that than last season. We are also looking to return to the district final with a different outcome than last season."

By Sam Matta

## GOLF

**UPSIDE ...** The program has potential to make some noise this season for second-year coach Greg Surotchak. The Panthers have veterans and athletes who can make waves in Division II of the Schuylkill Golf League. Toss in five girls who have joined the program, giving them a full squad.

### LEAGUE PLAY ...

This is the first season for the program to compete in the Schuylkill League Division II, after playing an independent season in 2022. Surotchak is pumped and anxious because he has four veterans in Drew Kokinda, Carson Surotchak, Hayden Goida and Tyler Black — dual sports performers. The lone graduates were solid, too, in Brad Hood and Cody Orsulak,

### WELCOME ADDITIONS ...

Surotchak is beaming with the addition of five girls to the teams, led by veteran Mikayla Yuricheck. Because they have a full squad, the team

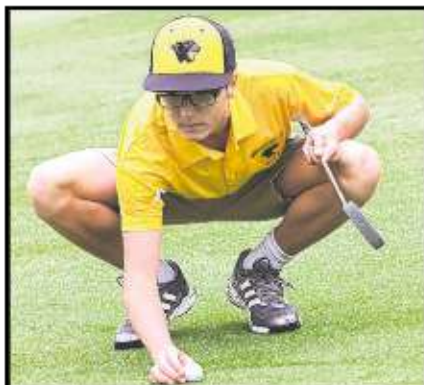
will be able to compete in all matches and tournaments this season.

### FORE FOUR SURE

... Surotchak's squad can make an impact led by Kokinda who was third in the Schuylkill County Junior Golf Tournament this summer. Surotchak knows the strength of the club is with his four seniors. "Our program this year has to take advantage of some senior strength. I think we will be competitive in the Schuylkill League this season with that experience but at the same time, we definitely have to focus on mentoring our younger players for continued success for years to come."

By Sam Matta

Drew Kokinda



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# - NORTHWESTERN -

## BOYS SOCCER WANTED MEN ...

Northwestern went to the state finals in both 2016 and 2017 but came away with silver medals and not the coveted gold ones that every school wants to have. That, combined with their usual success in the Colonial League and districts put a target on them as the team to beat. By winning the state championship in 2022, that target is now big and in bright, flashing neon gold. The fact that the two players who scored goals in the state championship game were sophomores and more than a half-dozen starters are back, the Tigers are poised for another championship run.

**BIG NUMBER ...** Matt Johnson will go down as one of the best soccer players ever at Northwestern High School. With 34 goals and 16 assists last season, he put himself into position for a shot at 100 career goals and more than 200 career points. Should Johnson equal his numbers from 2022, he would have 96 goals and 48 assists for a total of 240 points. Johnson needs just two goals, 10 assists and 12 points to surpass Josh Zellner, who graduated last spring, on the Northwestern scoring charts.

**ANOTHER BIG NUMBER ...** 100 is a pretty big number, especially when it is the margin of goals scored over goals allowed. Last season, the high-powered offense scored 109 goals for Northwestern, while the defense allowed just nine. While goalie Damian Krapf graduated, the job will remain in the family with younger brother Brandon Krapf taking over.



Matt Johnson

**MORE OF MAURO ...** Jack Mauro stepped into the spotlight last season, especially when he scored the winning goal in the PIAA championship to give Northwestern its first state title in boys soccer. After going from five goals as a freshman, Mauro had 12 goals last season. With Josh Zellner graduating, Mauro is in the right spot to give the Tigers a complement to go with Johnson. "Jack showed what he was made of in that moment," said coach Nate Hunsicker. "He's not the biggest kid on the field, but he has no fear of going head-to-head with anybody and everybody."

**CATCHING UP**

**WITH OLD FRIENDS ...** The regular season opens Aug. 25 with a home game against Pennsbury and continues the next night with a game at Whitehall. The Colonial League portion of the schedule starts Aug. 29 against Notre Dame of Green Pond. The Tigers will play back-to-back games against league powers Moravian Academy and Southern Lehigh in mid-September.

By Chuck Hixson

**FIELD HOCKEY AND THEN THERE WERE THREE ...** This year's roster has just three seniors after six graduated last spring. While that might sound like the Tigers will lack

experience, with a group of juniors and even a few sophomores who have good amounts of varsity experience though, Northwestern has no reason to rebuild.

**THE DEEPER MEANING ...** This season, coach Lissa Opolsky is emphasizing the meaning and importance of each drill in practice. "I want them to really focus on each drill, what it means and why it is important," Opolsky said. "On offense, we want to be able to build plays and not just hit and hope, so it's important that we work on these things now."

**UP NEXT ...** With the graduation of Gabby Gober, Northwestern needs someone to take over in goal. Senior Emma Yanders is the one in the cage this season. Opolsky likes her ability to play the position although she has noticed one big difference between Yanders and her predecessor. "Gabby was very vocal, and Emma is painfully quiet at times. She is getting better though," said Opolsky with a laugh.

**BY THE END OF THE SEASON ...** With the emergence of the program over the past few seasons, Northwestern has reached the point where the Tigers plan on being right in the thick of things. They lost to Southern Lehigh in the Colonial League championship last season before rebounding to win the district championship with a 3-0 win over Wilson. Opolsky sees Northwestern battling Southern Lehigh, Moravian Academy, Palmerton and Wilson for postseason spots this season.

By Chuck Hixson

# - NORTHWESTERN -

## VOLLEYBALL READY TO PONCE

... After putting together their best record in the history of the program last season at 12-5-1, the Tigers want more. After just missing the Colonial League playoffs, Northwestern figures to battle Southern Lehigh and Notre Dame Green Pond for the top of the league standings. Last season, Northwestern sent an early message when they beat the Crusaders in the opening game, winning 3-0. Notre Dame bounced back later in the season to sweep Northwestern.

**STRENGTH IN NUMBERS** ... Every coach wants to have a lot of potential players to choose from for their roster. The good news for coach Mike Maston is that he had 44 potential players try out for the team. Setter Shannon Green is back for her junior season and libero Kylie Nagle is back for her senior year. If Nagle repeats her performance from last season when she recorded 298 digs, she will surpass the 1,000 mark and become just the second Northwestern player to accomplish that feat. Outside hitter Bailey Murray returns to give more experience.

**WAITING IN THE WINGS** ... Maston is excited about the group of young players he has coming through the ranks. Freshman Alexa George is in line to be the starting libero on the JV team and the heir apparent to the position when Nagle graduates next spring. Daisy Stringer is another freshman who is poised for a starting role down the road. Both Nagle and Stringer are likely to see some time on the court playing varsity this season. "I like



Kylie Nagle

to develop from below," Maston said. "It's a nice situation to have younger players coming along that you can figure on being a part of your team down the road."

**SAVE THE DATES** ... As Northwestern looks to chase down Southern Lehigh and Notre Dame, the head-to-head matchups will be key. The first meeting comes on Sept. 7 when the Crusaders visit New Tripoli. Six days later, the Tigers are at Southern Lehigh. The venues are reversed later in the season when Northwestern visits Notre Dame Oct. 2 and the Spartans are at Northwestern a week later for the penultimate game of the season. The Crusaders and Spartans meet on Sept. 11 and Oct. 4.

By Chuck Hixson

at districts in 2022), junior Xander Giandomenico (21st leagues, 30th districts) and sophomore Lucas Heeps. Tyler Lehr, one of just two seniors on the team, will join the line up, along with juniors Bryce Thrash, Luke Thrash and Greyson Wellings, sophomore Jonathan Fornoff and freshman Brady Furman. Stitzel said Kershner is most likely the team's top runner, but Giandomenico and Wellings are also candidates to lead the team in any given meet. "We don't have any studs, but I think they'll run together. Teams might go 1-2 on us, but hopefully we can get the next four or five spots," Stitzel said.

**CHIP ON THEIR SHOULDERS** ... Last season the Tigers went 24-0 in the regular season before winning the Colonial League title. But at districts the team slipped to fourth place despite then-senior Matt Santana winning the race. The Tigers missed out on a trip to states because of the sub-par district performance. While only three runners on this year's team competed that day, others were part of the team and felt the loss just as much. "I think they're upset a little bit about not going to states last year," said Stitzel.

## BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RELOAD OR REBUILD?

... After graduating five of the team's top seven runners from last year's unbeaten Colonial League Championship team, 25-year head coach Chris Stitzel initially thought 2023 might be a rebuilding year for his team. But he's been pleased to see his returning runners improving and some new talent joining the ranks. "We lost some good talent, but I don't think it's going to be a rebuilding year," Stitzel said. "I think we can compete."

**RETURN AND REPLACE** ... The Tigers have three runners back from last year's postseason line up in senior Sean Kershner (19th at leagues, 26th

**WEEKEND WARRIORS** ... In addition to their Colonial League schedule, the Tigers will compete in three invitationals, beginning Friday, Sept. 1 at Moravian Academy's Lion Invitational. Just over a week later they will be at the DeSales Invitational to compete on the same course where leagues and districts are held. They'll also run in the PIAA Foundation Invitational later in September, which is held in Hershey on the same course as the state championship meet.

By Mike Haines

# - NORTHWESTERN -

## GOLF

### OFF TO A GOOD

**START ...** Northwestern golf head coach Tim Miller knew he had some returning talent coming back to this year's team. But after the first three matches he's pleasantly surprised to see that his players are doing better than he expected as they opened the season with three wins. "We've been playing great," said Miller, who is in his 13th season at the helm. "They really surprised me. We've have five players in the 80s (in two of the team's first three matches). I don't remember that ever being the case in all my years here."

### CAPTAIN MADE

**OF STONE ...** Stone Sosnovik, one of the stars on the Tigers' District 11 champion golf team, is one of three seniors on this year's golf team. He's the only four-year varsity player and has been named team captain. He led the Tigers in two of their first three outings, shooting 78 in the season opener against Notre Dame and 82 in a win over Pen Argyl.

**BIG THREE ...** Along with Sosnovik, senior Erik Mather and sophomore Avri Chandler will likely make up the team's top three players in most matches, while senior Ethan Kozlowski and junior Jon Conti were among the team's top five twice in the first three matches, with freshman Cole Dynda and sophomore Gracie Scheffler also figuring in the team scoring once each. Juniors Addison Remaley and Cadem Monohan, along with freshman Liam Earl could also be part of the

team's top five on any given day.

### POSTSEASON POS-

**SIBILITIES ...** Several Tigers competed in last year's postseason events for the first time and will be looking to improve on their finishes this fall. Chandler finished third in the Colonial League girls competition last year and Remaley was a third-place finisher at districts. Mather placed 21st at leagues last year, while Sosnovik (28th) and Kozlowski (36th) also competed in the league tournament.

### GETS LATE EAR-

**LY ...** Miller said most of the players on the team compete in offseason tournament in the Golf Association of the Lehigh Valley junior events, adding that with such a short varsity season, staying "golf-ready" in the offseason is important. The Tigers opened their season on Aug. 10 and will play their last match on Sept. 11. The league tournament is slated for Sept. 18.

### BIG DATES ...

Northwestern's biggest tests will come against Moravian Academy (Aug. 21 at Green Pond; Aug. 29 at Olde Homestead) and Southern Lehigh (Aug. 22 at Olde Homestead.) No matter how his team fares the rest of the season, Miller is already proud of the way his players conduct themselves on and off the course. "They're tremendously good kids," he said. "They're better people than they are golfers. They're like sponges. They're coachable and they're very enthusiastic."

By Mike Haines



Avri Chandler



Ethan Kozlowski



# - NORTHWESTERN -

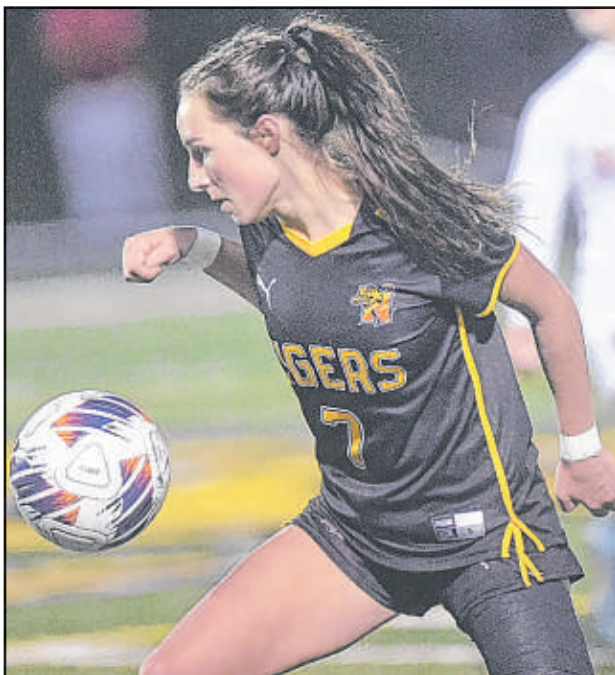
## GIRLS SOCCER

**MAY THE BEST GIRL WIN ...** Entering the season, Northwestern has had more competition for spots in the lineup than they have in years past. While not everyone will wind up as a starter, most of the players will find themselves with quality time on the varsity field. "We have some returning starters and then we have some good freshmen players who can help right away," said coach Jordan Smith. "We have a lot of competition, which is good, and it is also going to give us some depth that we can use as well."

**THE BIG THREE ...** The defense has three of four backs returning in Abby Pomajevich (senior), Syenna Flores (junior) and Olivia Spaatz (junior). Sophomore Olivia Reinhart was the understudy to Naomi Glassberg last season and takes over the starting role in goal.

**FOUR VETERANS ...** Northwestern has just four seniors — Katie Brensinger, Cammy Fitch, Jayden Gillette, and Pomajevich — but they are all four-year varsity players. Balliet and Fitch will team with junior Paige Bissell and sophomore Sophia Czonstka to give Northwestern the makings of a strong offensive attack. "We think we can be a more dynamic offense this season and find ways of scoring more goals and keeping pressure on the other team," Smith said. Fitch comes into the season with 30 career goals and 75 career points, putting her well within reach of 50 goals and 100 points, considering she had 23 goals and 58 points last season.

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY ...** In addition to the usual tough Colonial



Cammy Fitch

League teams — Southern Lehigh, Saucon Valley and even up and coming Moravian Academy — this year's schedule has non-league games against some of the best teams from last season. Class 2A state champion Central Columbia (25-0) will host the Tigers on Aug. 26 and Northwestern will also be on the road against Class 3A state runner-up Upper Perkiomen (23-1-1) on Sept. 30. If that's not enough, the Tigers also travel down Route 309 to play EPC and District 11 4A champion Parkland (23-1) on Sept. 22.

By Chuck Hixson

## GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY

**DEFENDING CHAMPS ...** When we left off last season, the Northwestern girls cross country team ended its season at the state championship meet after a somewhat surprising first-place finish at the District 11 Class

2A Championships. The Tigers had gone 19-5 in the Colonial League and finished third as a team at the league meet before coming up big in the post-season.

**QUALITY OVER QUANTITY ...** This year's team will be without two graduates from last year's team. Times News Female Cross Country Athlete of the Year Angelina Klein has graduated after three seasons as the team's top runner. Maci Fisher also graduated after being part of last year's district lineup. This year's team has only nine runners, but many of them bring talent and experience to the lineup. "We should be good with what we have back," said 25th-year head coach Chris Stitzel. "We don't have a lot of depth, but the runners we have will be good."

**WE'RE BACK ...** Last year's No. 2 runner Sophia Cornell, a junior, returns this season along with classmate Kelcey Pe-

dron. They both finished in the top 10 at last year's district meet. Returning senior Haley Dubois and newcomer Megan Fornwalt, a junior, will likely be the team's top four runners this season. Also returning from last year's district championship lineup is sophomore Ava Smedstad and senior Kathryn Griffith. Junior Devon Heinley, who ran at leagues but not districts, also returns.

**READY TO GO ...** Stitzel said his runners have put in some work in the offseason as he takes the team to different courses around the area for a change of pace during spring and summer workouts. "They want to be here. They want to work hard and they want to compete," he said.

**OUTLOOK ...** While Notre Dame (Green Pond) and Southern Lehigh might be tough to beat in the Colonial League, the Tigers will look to repeat at districts in Class 2A as the Spartans moved up to 3A while the Crusaders dropped down to Class A at districts.

By Mike Haines



Sophia Cornell

# - MARIAN -

## GIRLS SOCCER

### BUILDING THE BLOCKS ...

Robert Campomizzi begins his second season with a program that is in its third year. The Fillies' roster has grown from 10 to 24 with 12 freshmen. This should help the team improve upon last year's two victories.

### FOCUS UPON FLEXIBILITY

... Because of injuries and a smaller roster, the Fillies' players were forced to play multiple positions last season. With that experience, returning senior Gracie Gallagher will play midfielder and defender. "Gracie had to play goalie last year due to an injury, but this year, we'd like to feature her ball movement on the attack. She's willing to help out wherever we need her," Campomizzi said. Ashley Zimmerman brings intensity to her game and will also play midfield and primarily be used for defense. Mikayla Tom will also be a defender. "She does a throw in where she completes a full body flip forward using the ball as a push off the ground, something I've only seen once before in all my years around the game." Juniors Lizzie Pikitus and Caitlyn Kovatch bring speed and ball movement to the attack zone. Madison Kattner will be in goal.

### THE OVER UNDER ...

The Fillies will rely on several underclassmen to get them more than two wins. Sophomore Teaghan Biros and freshmen Kendall Van Puttink and Kassandra Hibbler will be counted on. Campomizzi is stressing aggressive play, something he did not see enough of last year. "We can't play timidly. We have to get to the loose balls and on defense, we have to limit the number of shots on goal. Of course, we want to win more than two games and even have a winning season, but more importantly, we need to show we can compete against the best teams in the Schuylkill League."

By Rich Strack

## GOLF

A "GREEN TEAM" ... First-year coach Michael Greek takes a roster of nine players into the Schuylkill League schedule, but only two players were on the team



Teaghan Biros

a year ago.

**SWING KINGS ...** Senior Angelo Greek and sophomore Sam Ferone will lead the team. Greek, in his second year, has shown good skills on the green with his putting game. "Sam is solid ball striker with a very smooth swing," said Coach Greek.

### SOME QUESTION MARKS ...

The Colts' remaining players are mostly unknowns outside of sophomore, Wyatt Laubach who Coach Greek calls "a grinder," one who plays the course with his best effort no matter what score he might achieve. Freshman Patrick Bonner

has been consistent with his shots off the tee. Sophomore Alexander Krapf has potential and freshmen Derek Yurkanin, James Cannon, Tyler Rebachak and Jack Prue will also be looking to contribute.

### TEACH AND LEARN ...

Greek's goal is to install lifelong love for the game of golf in his players. "We will stay positive all season and have fun. I want our team to learn the basics of the game and appreciate the course etiquette which applies to having respect for our opponents when they are concentrating on their shots."

By Rich Strack

# - MARIAN -



Abbey Kluck



Julia Meiss

**VOLLEYBALL TITLE DEFENSE ...** The Fillies are set for another stellar season under Coach Maria Serina following last year's 15-7 record and a District 11 championship.

**IMPACT PLAYERS ...** Serina expects big years from proven players that are on her roster of 19. Senior outside hitter Abbey Kluck, senior strik-

er Alena Lombardo, and senior defensive specialist Megan Reaman along with sophomore middle hitter Alena Lombardo are a formidable quartet who will bring strong play throughout the Fillies' side of the court.

**EXTRA BONUS ...** Six more players return from the title team of a year ago. Seniors Julia Meiss, Sophia Lombardo,

Gianna Griguoli, Mackenna Jacobs and Emily D'Amato are battle tested and big game performers. Add sophomore Isabella Horvat will add depth.

**THE SKY IS THE LIMIT ...** The Fillies have the same goals and look forward to defending their title. "We want to be playing the last day of the season," Serina said. "We want to win a district

and league title. We can achieve our goals if we can progress every time we take the floor."

**POWERBALL NUMBERS ...** "We have an extremely hard-working group of athletes with excellent leadership," Serina said. "There is a lot of experience and athleticism in the gym."

By Rich Strack

# - MARIAN -

## GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY

**FANTASTIC FILLIES ...** Huegel will have eight girls this season after an outstanding 11-3 record from a year ago.

### LEADERS OF THE PACK ...

Senior Emma Ashfield is a returning state qualifier after getting 16th in the district meet last year. "She has great perseverance and she's a strong leader for our team." Three juniors should help get the Fillies atop the victory platform. Ava Fritz is a good late race sprinter. Alyssa Porambo and Lizzy Burkit have improved and "are coming on strong," according to Huegel.

**KIDS ON THE MOVE ...** Huegel likes what he sees in his younger runners. Sophomores Maddie Biros, and Olivia Serfass "come to work" everyday and freshman Leah Grabosky has "a ton of potential" and is a runner on the rise.

**EYES ON THE PRIZE ...** Heugel believes his girls team will be highly competitive just like the boys. "With individual potential, I can see both Emma Ashfield and Ava Fritz running in the state tournament this year."

By Rich Strack



Emma Ashfield

## BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

**READY SET GO ...** The Colts look to improve upon last season's team 9-5 team record as Coach Justin Huegel starts his fifth year with a solid roster of 14.

**RUN LIKE THE WIND ...** Three seniors will lead the pack and figure to put consistently good times on the

board. Alex Porambo is athletic and reliable to finish the course strong. Albin Tetschauer, third in the District 11 meet last year, is a returning state qualifier with a chance to win the districts now that state champion Thomas Smigo of Palisades has graduated and is running at Lehigh. "Alex is an exceptional uphill runner on the courses," Huegel said. "We expect him to be a top five to top 10 runner for us." Lachlan Fegyedy is another consistent finisher and a vocal team leader.

**IN THE MIX ...** Junior Devin Lin is one of the Colts' hardest workers and looks to improve every day. Huegel expects a trio of freshmen to contribute. "Achilles FitzPatrick, Wade Eroh and Chase Greir were middle school Schuylkill League medalists last fall."

**THE 'DARK HORSE' ...** Huegel instituted a middle school program five years ago that has been paying off at the varsity level. "This season we have a shot to win our division and we're a dark horse to contend for a league championship. Individually, we hope to have two to three state qualifiers."

By Rich Strack

## Smoke Alarms at Home

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- Today's smoke alarms will be more technologically advanced to respond to a multitude of fire conditions.
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- People who are hard-of-hearing or deaf can use special alarms. These alarms have strobe lights and bed shakers.
- Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.



### FACTS

- A closed door may slow the spread of smoke, heat, and fire.
- Smoke alarms should be installed inside every sleeping room, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level. Smoke alarms should be connected so when one sounds, they all sound. Most homes do not have this level of protection.
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# - TAMAQUA -



Levi Kunkel



Anthony Marchetti

**BOYS CROSS COUNTRY LEADER OF THE PACK ...** Tom Kanger enters his 20th season as the Blue Raiders head coach. Kanger is assisted by Megan Frantz and Jared Buchman.

**SUCCESSFUL SEASON ...** Tamaqua's boys went 14-4 overall and 10-4 in Division 1 of the Schuylkill League last season.

**SOLID LINEUP ...** Kanger will be counting on Adam Schock (junior), Anthony Marchetti (junior),

Brody Boyce (junior), Jared Hartranft (senior), Jathan Krall (senior), Jesse Gormley (senior), Levi Kunkel (junior), Logan Leatherman (junior), Stephen Kieffer (senior), William Behun (sophomore), Logan Morgans (sophomore), Nassair Nobles (freshman) and Yossaf Garcia (junior) to lead the squad and provide depth this season. Both Kunkel and Marchetti were state qualifiers a year ago. "We lost a few athletes from last season but the team returns the top seven runners with high expectations," Kanger said. "The team has worked together for several seasons and was just short of many accomplishments last sea-

son. The team is led by two state qualifiers from last season and has depth with the expectation to compete at a high level."

**OUTLOOK ...** Time will tell how the team comes together this season, but Kanger is optimistic the squad will be competitive when competition gets underway with the Northampton Invite on Saturday, Sept. 2. "I believe the league returns a strong championship team from last season with Minersville," Kanger said, "but Tamaqua will be close with team depth and Blue Mountain has lost a few runners but also returns two state qualifiers."

By Patrick Matsinko



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# - TAMAQUA -

## BOYS SOCCER

**EXPERIENCE MATTERS ...** The Blue Raiders' roster features over 20 players with a strong mix of both upperclassmen and underclassmen. Seniors are Jack Tharp (D/CM), Jason Walker (M/F), Wyatt Steigerwalt (M), Gus Pereda (M), Jathan Krall (M), Jesse Gormley (M), Timothy Berg (D), Ethan DiBonifazio (D), Stephen Behun (D) and Kevin Bazan (G). "We are looking to build on last year's progress that we gained during the season," said head coach Jim McCabe. "We are a senior heavy team with 10 seniors."

**BUT THAT'S NOT ALL ...** Juniors on this year's team are Cooper Ansbach (F), Nicholas Barron (F) and Mason MacMillan (D). A group of sophomores looking to take another step forward include Chase Behr (CM), William Behun (D), Thomas Graham (M), Larsen Hudak (D), Aiden Schlier (F) and Luis Tejada (M). They will be complemented by freshmen Daunte Krapf (M), Tyler MacMillan (M), Jakin Tamagini (G) and Evan Temarantz (M).

**YOUTH AND EXPERIENCE ...** While the squad features a number of upperclassmen with valuable experience, McCabe knows it won't be able to take anything for granted during the season. "In order to continue to im-



Wyatt Steigerwalt (left) and Jathan Krall (31)

prove, we need to trust the process and learn from our daily mistakes to improve," said McCabe, who is assisted by Steve Ulicny. Justin Lewis, Bob Barron and Jim Gormley are volunteer assistants.

**OUTLOOK ...** "One thing is certain, if the

team trusts the coaches and the process, they will get better," said McCabe.

By Patrick Matsinko

**GOLF LEADING THE CHARGE ...** Matt Stine enters his seventh season at the helm of the Blue Raiders' golf program.

Stine is assisted by Sam Schaefer.

**SHOES TO FILL ...** The Blue Raiders will need to replace Tim Fritzinger, Lucas Milot and Katie Miller from a squad that went 11-5 a year ago.

**TEERING OFF ...** Peter McGinley (senior), Blaise Gigli (senior), Luke Behr (senior) and Mason Yachera (junior) will be expected to lead the charge as key returnees this season. McGinley recently finished second at the Schuylkill County Junior Golf Championships. "We will return eight golfers from last year's team, including five with varsity experience," Stine said.

**NEWCOMERS ...** Look for juniors Max Najarro and Noah Steigerwalt to also be in the mix this season to help the squad compete in the Schuylkill League. "We graduated eight seniors in 2022, so the lineup will look quite different in 2023," Stine said.

**LOOKING AHEAD ...** The Schuylkill League Championships are set for Sept. 18, followed by the district qualifier on Sept. 25 and the district championships on Oct. 3. The regional team tournament will take place Oct. 9-11, while the individual state tournament will be held Oct. 16 and 17. The date for the team state tournament is Oct. 18.

By Patrick Matsinko

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# - TAMAQUA -



Gabby Blasko (3) and Sarah Coccio (19)



Kelsey Lusch (30)

**VOLLEYBALL MOVING ON ...** Tamaqua will need to replace lineup staples Ashlyn Houser and Eileen Lusch, who were key members of the team for the past four seasons.

**COMING BACK ...** Head coach Jen Kromer, who enters her fifth season leading the program, has several veterans returning to the team. "Senior middle blocker Sarah Coccio, who dominates at keeping big hitters from getting kills," said Kromer. "Senior libero

Lacey Beers, who will be in the right spots at the right time." Kromer, who will be assisted by Kevin Smith, is also looking for veteran leadership from seniors Gabby Blasko and Destini Denning.

**KEY CONTRIBUTORS ...** While the Blue Raiders have players with experience returning to the roster, Kromer will also be looking for several players to take on new roles this season. "Outside hitter Leah Black (sophomore) is back in action after injury that

kept her from playing her freshman year," said Kromer. "Freshman setter Madison Schock, who is ready to take on the challenge of showing other teams we come to compete."

**KEEP AN EYE ON ...** Added depth will help Tamaqua take another step forward this season. "Junior Paige Setcavage, who surprises us every day making stops at the net," said Kromer. "Sophomore Isidora Neifert, who has made major improvements in the off-

season since her freshman season was cut short due to ankle injury." Both have still undetermined positions.

**OUTLOOK ...** "All the girls have been mentally preparing by bringing determination onto the court to improve our record from last season," said Kromer. "Don't be surprised when they score some points and challenge other teams in the league to improve their game."

By Patrick Matsinko



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# - TAMAQUA -

## GIRLS

### CROSS COUNTRY

**TWO DECADES THE HELM ...** Tom Kanger is set to begin his 20th season as the Blue Raiders head coach. Kanger will be assisted by Megan Frantz and Jared Buchman.

**MAKING THEIR MARK ...** Tamaqua's girls went 12-6 overall and 8-6 in Division 1 of the Schuylkill League last season. Look for Alexis Jones (senior), Isabella Jones (junior), Ava Jones (sophomore), Samantha Plasha (junior), Lyla Clemson (junior), Cali Frantz (sophomore), Adrianna Geronimo (sophomore), Baily Pliska (freshman), Madelyn Schaefer (freshman), Lila Stegermerten (freshman) and Molly Walker (sophomore) to help the team take another step forward this season.

**MOVING AHEAD ...** A key loss for the team is Mia Jones, who was one of the top league runners last season. "This season the girl's team will be led by All-Star Samantha Plasha," Kanger said. "Although the team is young the additions of freshman Baily Pliska, Madelyn Schaefer and Lila Stegermerten along with newcomers Adrianna Geronimo and Molly Walker will supply a significant impact on the teams results. The team has several returners with Isabella Jones, Ava Jones, Cali Frantz, Lyla Clemson and Captain Alexis Jones that could make the season a very successful surprise."

**OUTLOOK ...** Tamaqua has a strong mix of youth and experience, a combination that could lead to success in the league and beyond this fall. "I would



Samantha Plasha

say Mahanoy Area is the returning favorites, but Minersville was an early season favorite and should be strong again," Kanger said. "Girls league may be a toss up with talent spread throughout the league and many teams' junior high runners from last season having a great varsity season." The Blue Raiders open the season Saturday, Sept. 2 at the Northampton Invite.

By Patrick Matsinko

## GIRLS TENNIS

**LINEUP LOSSES ...** Tamaqua and head coach Rich Gibson will have to replace Helen Florea, Megan Oswald, Brooke Williams and Nataly Ker-

estes, who graduated from last year's squad. "We lost four seniors through graduation, and three of them were starters, two of them in singles and one on the No. 1 doubles team," Gibson said. "So we have a total of five people coming back from last year, and I was able to get six new girls, which is great. And a lot of them are underclassmen, some of them coming into their freshman and sophomore year. It's great to have them, and we're trying to build up their experience as they go along since many of them are new to the sport."

**FAST START ...** It will be a busy stretch to open

the season for Tamaqua. The Blue Raiders play four matches in the first week of competition, beginning with Crestwood on Aug. 21, followed by MMI Prep (Aug. 22) and Notre Dame East Stroudsburg (Aug. 23) before closing out the week against East Stroudsburg North (Aug. 26). Three of the matches are at home, with the only road trip against Notre Dame (ES). "They've been very receptive, and I've been lucky that I have girls that want to learn, so that really helps," said Gibson, who also thanked volunteer assistants Jim Dean and Kathy Odorizzi.

**COMING BACK ...** Gibson will be looking to see how his newcomers and returnees do this season, including No. 1 singles player Emily Antonio. "My No. 1 singles player is back, and she'll be a senior this year," Gibson said. "So I'm anxious to see how she does. She's come a long way, and I'm anxious to see a lot of these girls that are going to be put in new positions, that never were in that position before, develop. I'm looking forward to that and also the new players."

**HOW THE LINEUP LOOKS ...** Jenelee Fernandez is likely to take over at No. 2 singles, while August Stinson appears likely to move into the No. 3 spot. Gabby Eroh and Bradyn Brothers will play at No. 1 doubles, while Jasmine Eberts and Brianna Snyder will play at No. 2 doubles. Gibson is also excited about returnee junior Abigale Genery, who has experience, which will help a young lineup. "To see a nice mix between veteran players and new faces is exciting," Gibson said.

By Patrick Matsinko

# - TAMAQUA -



Sarah Hope



Avery Deitrich

## GIRLS SOCCER STRONG TURNOUT

... Tamaqua took part in summer league action at Schuylkill Haven and head coach Clem McCarroll was encouraged — and impressed — with his squad's numbers and interest. "Most teams struggle to get one team of seven to 10 kids, and we had two teams of 14 each, said McCarroll. "This is the second year in a row we had a good showing. And the one team actually went undefeated. It's a lot of touches on the ball, experience."

**ANOTHER STEP FORWARD** ... McCarroll returns a talented group of players who seem primed to take the program back to the postseason. "We had a really young team last year," said McCarroll. "We missed the playoffs by one game. But I had 12 freshmen and 12 sophomore last year and only four seniors. It was a good core, so we really stayed together and it's nice to get everybody back together and keep the

momentum going."

## MILESTONE SEASON

... The 2023 campaign is the 20th for McCarroll as head coach and the 25th year for the girls' program, which won its 250th game near the end of last season. The 2008 team will also be inducted to the Tamaqua Sports Hall of Fame this fall. That Blue Raiders were the first Schuylkill League girls team to win a state playoff game. "They're going to appreciate seeing that team at the football game Sept. 1," McCarroll said of his current squad watching the induction ceremony. That game will also be against Lehighnton, coached by his nephew, Tom McCarroll.

**COMING BACK** ... Junior Kim Rudy (midfield) and senior Sarah Hope (forward) tied for team lead with 17 goals in 2022. Senior Ava Agosti (defender), juniors Kolbe Robb (midfield, team's third-leading scorer in 2022), Andrea Betz (defender), Avery Deitrich (midfield), sophomore Cecilia Ulicny (goalie, who

was an honorable mention selection as a freshman a year ago), senior Abigail Leinbach (midfield) and sophomore Katelynn Fredericks (forward) all return with starting experience. Hope, Leinbach and Agosti are the team's captains this year. "The core is back. Most of the starters are back," said McCarroll.

**NEWCOMERS** ... The Blue Raiders have another strong freshman class, including Sienna Stellfox (forward), Sophia Stellfox (defender), Hailey York (midfield), Mia Bamford (defender), Evelyn Leinbach (forward), Lauren Ligenza (midfield), Clare Boyce (goalie), Sophia Sittlinger (midfield) and Addyson Muffley (midfield).

**DEPTH** ... It will be hard to match Tamaqua's depth. The Raiders also have senior Alexis Bowman (midfield), junior Jada Thomas (midfield), junior Isabella Fort (forward), junior Emily Searfoss (midfield), sophomore Addison Rummel (midfield), junior Cadi

Fannock (defender), junior Maura Weideman (defender), sophomore Makena Ellington (midfield), junior Keira McGuiness (midfield), sophomore Angelina Reichert (forward), sophomore Ceanna Gormley (goalie), sophomore McKayla Maggs (forward) and junior Veronica Scott (goalie) on the roster. "We told the team that our goal was to get to the playoffs this year and win a couple games. Not just get to the playoffs," said McCarroll. "With this core, we sort of expect that. Of course, you can't get ahead of yourself. I've stressed that in practice. We have to play every game like it's a playoff game. At the end, it will all take care of itself. We just have to go out and play each game like it's our last game and that's pretty much our approach. But we definitely want to have some success this year with this team. And a lot of them are going to be around for another year or two."

By Patrick Matsinko

# - JIM THORPE -

## BOYS SOCCER

**YEOMAN EFFORT ...** Despite some tough injuries last season, the Jim Thorpe boys soccer club was still able to muster a third-place finish in Schuylkill League Division 1, and was also able to qualify for the District 11 tournament.

**STRONG SENIORS ...** Seniors Cael Heaney and Blake Barberio return for Thorpe, and are the lone seniors on the squad. Heaney will anchor the Olympians from the center and midfield positions and Barberio returns at goalie. "We did lose a good number of players to graduation, but we have two seniors returning who are going to make a big impact for us," said Jim Thorpe head coach Michael Dudak. "Cael had a really strong offseason and has developed nicely, and Blake is going to be much stronger in goal for us this season after he was thrown into the fire last year after we lost our starting goalie in the preseason."

**MAKING AN IMPACT ...** The rest of the core of Thorpe's club expected to make an impact are Connor Holland, Aaron Hassler, Noah Geiser, Jackson Sanwiger and Kayden Spence.

**NEW FORMAT ...** This will be Thorpe's last season in the Schuylkill League, as it moves over to the Colonial League next season. But the SL will have a new format this season, taking the top three teams from Division 1 and Division 2 with the top seeds in each division getting a bye into the semis. "I think this new format is great and we are certainly excited for it, as that is our focus, to qualify for the league playoffs and make a splash in our last season in the league," said Dudak. "I think this might be the tightest year since I have been coaching here. I think there are five teams that could contend in Division 1 this season."

By Brad Hurley

## BOYS

### CROSS COUNTRY

**CLIMBING THE RANKS ...** Head coach Marie Rosahac likes the potential of this season's squad, and expects them to compete in the middle of the pack, but she believes they have the abil-



Noah Geiser

ity to be near the top if they stay healthy and improve throughout the season. "I think we can be really solid," Rosahac said. "I think we're mid-pack at the moment, but I could see this team climbing into that third spot in our division if we can stay healthy. This is a group that works hard, so I know they are going to get better."

**SENIOR LEADERSHIP ...** Zack Pompa and Ethan McClure were important runners last season for the Olympians. Pompa was a top five runner, and McClure a top seven runner, and both are expected to

make even more of an impact this season.

**THE BEST OF THE REST ...** Sophomore Gabe Wirth is expected to have a breakout year after he showed flashes of top three runner ability last season when the Olympians lost some runners because of injury. Bowden Chicarelli, Aaron Hassler and Evan Rosenbrook are all expected to contribute. Jim Thorpe also has a stable of young runners and newcomers that will be working hard to crack the starting lineup as well.

By Brad Hurley

# - JIM THORPE -

## GIRLS SOCCER

**GOLDEN ...** The Olympians girls' soccer squad brought home the gold in the Schuylkill League last season, taking home the league championship for the first time in program history. Thorpe defeated Pottsville 1-0 in the title game. However, JT needs to replace several key contributors from that club, including four first team All-League players who have now graduated. Fortunately, the Olympians do return some key pieces from last season's championship club. "The message, so far, has just been to try and instill confidence and for the newer girls to just embrace their new roles," said Jim Thorpe head coach Chris Geiser. "We have a good mix of veteran players and new players, and they have all been committed this summer. We have been going five days a week since the beginning of July, working hard and coming together as a team."

### KEY RETURNEES ...

Goalie Olivia Rosenberger, an All-State selection and first team All-League selection a season ago, heads the list of returning players. Other key returnees include Sarah Hartman, a second team All-League defensive selection, and Kaila O'Connor, a third team All-League selection at forward.

### HELPING OUT ...

Brinn Harwood, Ella Cook and Madison Hill are also players that will be stepping in to starting roles this season and are expected to make an impact.

**SHAKING THINGS UP ...** The Schuylkill League will be moving to a new format this season for its league playoffs,



Ella Cook

By Brad Hurley

## GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY

**THE REPLACEMENTS ...** Jim Thorpe's cross country girls squad will need to replace four seniors who were impact runners for the Olympians last season. Head coach Marie Rosahac does not have a big team to work with as her group will just have seven runners this season. "This is definitely a building year for us this year, but we do have a group that I think can improve and will work, and I think we can be a pretty solid team as the season moves forward," Rosahac said. "The key will be our

young runners and how fast they can improve and develop for us."

### STRONG TANDEM

... Senior Aubrey Bonner and sophomore Lindsay Patton return for Thorpe and were league medalists a season ago. Bonner and Patton are expected to be the anchors for the Olympians this season and are going to be counted on to score consistently. "Bonner and Patton are going to be strong runners for us this season. We're looking for them to be our front runners," said Rosahac.

### DEVELOPMENT ...

As Rosahac noted, the development of her younger runners will be the key to Jim Thorpe's success this season. Gabby Napoletano, Kylee Fischi, Stacey Bos, Sophie Durange and Aubrey Wirth make up the rest of the Olympians' roster. "I'm excited to see how our young runners do this season as they have all come up through our junior high program," said Rosahac. "The jump in mileage is always tough, so that will take time to get used to, but keep an eye on Stacey Bos. She's been a front runner for us at the junior high level, so I think as the season goes on, she will start to gain confidence."

By Brad Hurley



Aubrey Bonner

# - JIM THORPE -

**VOLLEYBALL DEDICATED APPROACH** ... After finishing 21-4 last year with trips to the Schuylkill League semis and District 11 semis, the Olympians went all in this offseason. "This group is ready to go, and they really dedicated themselves," Coach Chris Fallabel said. "We had workouts three days a week and then we competed one night a week against other teams from the Schuylkill League and I think we faired very well. This is a group that certainly put in the work this offseason."

**IMPACT PLAYERS** ... The Olympians have a host of players who are expected to make an impact this season, starting with setter Maggy Hallihan and libero Olivia Calcano. At the net, Thorpe is strong as well with Brooke Mitzen, Brianna Snisky and Kelsey Patton. Cassidy Pachinka, Priscilla Patton, Ali Marciante, Maura Malaska, Aubrey Holland and JaeLynn Browdy will all be significant contributors as well.

**CONTENDERS** ... Just as they were a season ago, the Olympians are expected to be contenders in both the Schuylkill League and District 11 playoffs. "I think we can



Brooke Mitzen



Brianna Snisky

be a legit contender, but coming into this season, we certainly aren't under the radar any long. Teams are going to be

gunning for us," Fallabel said. "But I think if we do a good job of controlling the things we can control during the course

of matches, we can once again be playing meaningful games at the end of the year."

By Brad Hurley

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# - JIM THORPE -

## TENNIS

**OVER THE OFFSEASON** ... It has been a good offseason for the girls for the tennis squad. "I'm really excited to see our girls perform this season with how much some of our returners have improved," Jim Thorpe coach Sam Lux said. "I know a bunch of girls were putting in the work and were taking lessons with our former head coach, Norb Lienhard. It has been a great offseason for us."

**GRADUATION LOSSES** ... Lux and the Olympians must fill a couple of big spots in the lineup as Tara McLean and Hailey Trine — Thorpe's No. 1 and No. 2 singles players a year ago — both graduated. McLean was the 2022 Times News Tennis Player of the Year

**SINGLES ACTION** ... Ashlyn Miller, Kira Reese and Chloe Tantara will compete in singles. Miller and Reese are both competing for the No. 1 singles spot. Miller competed at No. 3 singles last season, while Reese moves over from No. 1 doubles to singles play.

**DOUBLES PLAY** ... Ada Finsel, Diamond Alvear, Noeline Sepulveda, and Lila Dejessa will make up the doubles pairings for the Olympians.

**CONTINUE THE STREAK** ... Thorpe finished 9-5 a season ago and has made the District 11 team playoffs for seven consecutive seasons. "Our goal is always to make the postseason and I think our singles play can be strong for us," Lux said. "I think it's going to come down to our doubles teams and how quickly they can get acclimated to the speed of varsity play. I am excited to see how we do out there, I think



Tara McLean — the 2022 Times News Tennis Player of the Year — has graduated

it's going to be a fun season."

By Brad Hurley

## GOLF

**REBUILDING** ... Jim Thorpe's golf program has been rebuilding over the last few seasons, but has a dedicated group that can build a foundation for the program. "We're a young team, but we're headed in the right direction," Jim Thorpe coach Dave Figura said. "I like this group's ded-

ication and I like this group's fight. They are a group that doesn't get discouraged, they keep on working and they don't give up."

**TOP FOUR** ... Jim Thorpe will be depending on Aidan Ramey, Anna Figura, Jaxson Gehris and Mason Domski in its matches. All four golfers have shown improvement, so far, this season. The Olympians also have several newcomers who have put in work as well,

but are new to golf.

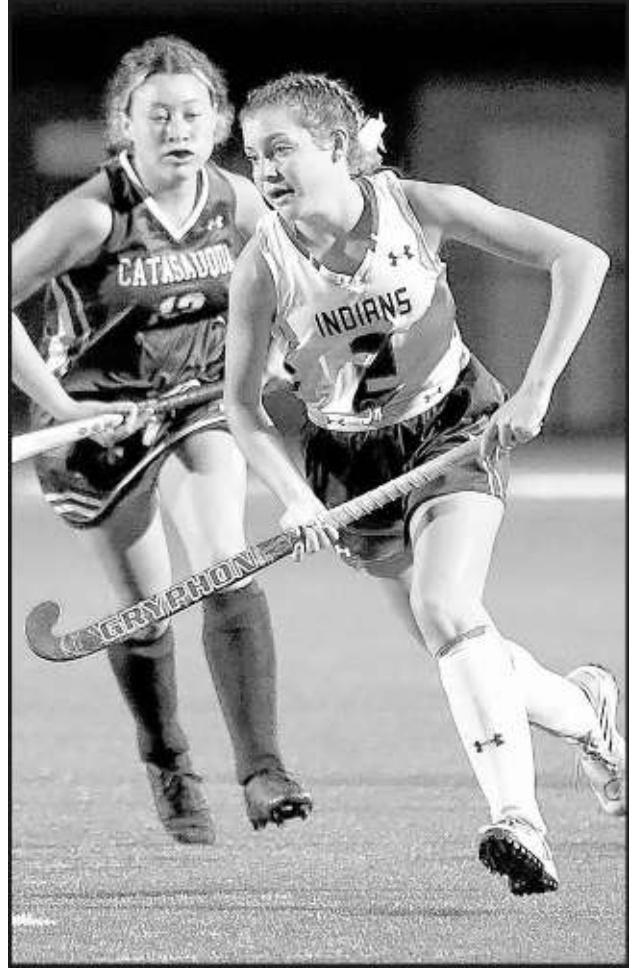
**TOP NOTCH** ... Figura is also appreciative that the Olympians' home course is the heralded Jack Frost National Golf Club. "It's a great opportunity for our team to compete and practice at Jack Frost National," he said. "The staff and course is great, and the program is very grateful that we get to call Jack Frost our home."

By Brad Hurley

# - LEHIGHTON -



Maggie Pagotto



Gabby Brown

## FIELD HOCKEY

### NEW KID IN TOWN ...

After three years as assistant, Emma Sawyer will be in charge, replacing Vanessa Rimbey. Sawyer played field hockey at Lehigh and one year at Ursinus College. She has directed the middle school program and has served as a referee in the sport. At age 25, Sawyer has plenty of enthusiasm for the program, which finished 10-8 and snared the final district playoff spot in the Class A bracket. For her, the timing was right. "This felt good," she said. "It was perfect stepping up after the past couple of years. I am thankful for the work of the previous coach."

**HIGH BAR ...** With a number of players back, Sawyer isn't afraid to set a high bar. "We have made some adjustments and changed a few things from last year," she said. "Yet, we do have high expectations for this year. We want to come out strong and get even stronger. We have been working hard, you can see some of the results. We're pretty confident, and we're ready to get going."

**EXPERIENCE COUNTS ...** Senior starter Garyson Frey is back in the nets for the third consecutive year. Fellow seniors Gabby Brown and Maggie Pagotto along with junior Anna Howland help

form a solid core. Sophomore Payton Hausman has been a pleasant surprise. Howland already has noticed a difference. "I think we have a better situation than we have had in the past two years," Howland said. "We're more united and have a more positive outlook. We play well together and we're able to get things done. We have been working for a while, and we're anxious to play a game. We have high expectations, and we will prove who are."

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE ...** Sawyer said that there are three freshmen and five sophomores on the roster, and she is positive those numbers can

improve. She credited the work of middle school coaches Deb Lynn and Karen Wall for keeping the program on the upswing. "They are both good coaches," Sawyer said. "We're a little down on our numbers, but it is not a dying sport. We feel we can have a good system in place."

**THE GOAL ...** Sawyer intends to bring a higher profile to her team as well as the sport. "Field hockey can flourish," she said. "We all need to try and bring more interest to the sport. We'll keep working hard here, and we believe we can raise the level of this program very soon."

By Jeff Moeller

# - LEHIGHTON -

## BOYS SOCCER

### GO YOUR OWN WAY

... Lehighton's boys soccer team lost nine seniors from last year's squad, but veteran head coach Dave Yob is still confident his team can make its mark. "We are optimistic that we can put together a solid season," Yob said. "We figure to be more of a defensive oriented team. We have our goalie back and two center backs in front of him."

### BRINGING THEM BACK

... Junior Bryce Miller is back in the nets after a 180-save and six-shut-out season. Miller was a second-team, all-league choice. Junior forwards Jacib Anthony and Mason Nailor, who each scored six goals last season, are part of the returning cast. Others who should figure prominently are senior forward Jake Hall, junior midfielders Gabe Reed and Connor Dugan, and junior defender Lucas Nicholas. Junior defender Jaxson Strauss was a first-team all-league choice last season.

### USHERING THEM IN

... Yob also has high hopes for newcomers freshmen defenders Sawyer Hoffman and Nolan Strauss along with forward Cove Schaefer. Sophomore Konnor Nalesink should also get some playing time. Freshman forward Carlin West could also see some time in the nets.

### GOOD FEELING

... Yob said he has a good feeling that his team can be competitive. There were 21 players who made the trip to Messiah University for a team camp in July. "It was a great team bonding experience," he said. "It also allowed us to play against some good teams that aren't in our area. For the first time, we left camp with a winning record in



Jaxson Strauss

games played. Hence, we have optimism for the upcoming season."

By Jeff Moeller

## VOLLEYBALL

### NEW HEAD COACH

... Lauren Nietz takes over the head coaching reins this fall for the Indians and she hopes to follow in the footsteps of her father Jeff, who was a legendary baseball coach at Marian. The younger Nietz was a standout at Marian and also at Penn State Hazleton. She has been an assistant coach the last seven years, filling that position last season at Lehighton. Since her early youth, athletics has been a staple in the family. "I was my dad's baseball scorekeeper,"

she said. "It definitely helped me prepare for my athletic career. Also, I always have been a competitive person. This is just an extension of our family, as my dad and brother got into coaching. I saw how my dad worked with players and how his former players kept in touch with me. It was part of everything else that helped inspire me."

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

... The Indians, who were 7-14 last season, lost six seniors under former head coach Jason Green. Nietz knows it will take time to establish a new presence. "We're a very young team," Nietz said. "I have an opportunity to create a

culture and mold a team, taking things from last year and incorporating some new things. I feel that this timing for me to be a head coach is very good. It will be exciting to see them learn and grow as a team."

### TAKING THE LEAD

... Nietz will look to a handful of returnees to help set the pace. Sophomore libero Lyla Kershner has been impressive and should make an impact. Senior outside hitter Amanda Burns also has looked good, and juniors middle hitter Lorah Thomas and outside hitter Mackenna Snyder are expected to be regular contributors. "These girls are helping us work as a unit," Nietz said. "You can see that we are making progress." Nietz said that her freshmen and sophomores are a small unit, but her freshman class has plenty of potential.

### GYM RATS

... Nietz said that her team didn't participate in a summer league, but they have logged a large amount of gym time since she took over in April. "When I was hired, we were in the gym two days a week," she said. "Over the past few weeks, we have been in the gym four days a week. We came together as a team, and it will definitely help us."

### FINAL STRETCH

... Nietz has realized how short the preseason can be, as her squad will open with Palmerton Aug. 26. With a new system in place, Nietz anticipates that patience will be a virtue. "We really didn't have a lot of time," she said. "I know I can't always look at the wins and losses, but I want to win. We can get there if we stay working together."

By Jeff Moeller



# - LEHIGHTON -

## BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

**HIGH HOPES** ... Veteran head coach Erica Pagotto has high expectations for this year's squad with a veteran core returning. They will have depth and flexibility with 20 boys on the roster. The Indians finished fourth at the Schuylkill League meet last fall and had an overall 8-6 record.

"The boys had great performances last year, and all of our varsity runners are returning," Pagotto said. "They have been working hard all throughout the summer, so we're excited to see how they race this year."

**DYNAMIC DUO** ... Senior Owen Serfass and sophomore Elijah Pagotto — the coach's son — look to pace the field. Serfass finished fourth, and Pagotto was 14th in the Schuylkill League Championships. At the District 11 Class 2A meet, Serfass was 21st and Pagotto was 23rd. Pagotto is confident both runners can set new marks. "Owen ran one year in middle school, and he has been running cross country and track," Pagotto said. "He is looking to break 17 (minutes), and he has been running all summer long. Elijah had a good year last season. He has had a good summer, and you can see the improvements."

**SUPPORTING CAST** ... Pagotto can also look to seniors Bradley Yesner and Jake Hall, juniors Kyle Kuzinicki and Beyto Corlija, and sophomore Bekim Cokrija to round



Owen Serfass

out the top half of the lineup.

"These guys have been doing a great job," Pagotto said. "They have been running on their own, and running in races. It has been great to see them showing up all summer."

**POSTSEASON PARTY** ... Pagotto is setting the bar high and likes the team's chances. However, she remains cautiously optimistic.

"We aim to send athletes to the state championships, but it will be determined by districts," Pagotto said. "We had a good season last year, but we didn't qualify for states. We're

working to earn spots as all-stars and place winners at leagues."

By Jeff Moeller

## GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY

**NEW LOOK** ... The Indians lost a number of runners to graduation last year from their 1-13 season. Katie Wojton and Sara Dishong were consistent performers, but they have graduated.

**THREE'S NOT COMPANY** ... Pagotto said that she lost a number of girls to moving to other schools and playing other sports. As a result, she will field a team of only three girls. Senior Allie Troutman, junior Julia Smith, and freshman Bela Moyer will compose the unit.

**MAKING THE MOST OF IT** ... Pagotto is excited about her trio of runners, and believes they can be productive.

"It will be about how they can lower their times," Pagotto said. "They are wonderful to work with, support each other, and show great sportsmanship. The girls are aiming to beat their personal records this year."

**THERE IS A FUTURE** ... Over her 11 years, Pagotto said that this is her lowest total of runners for a season. However, she sees a bright future ahead with an anticipated group of freshmen runners next fall.

"We should have a good number of girls out next year," Pagotto said. "Getting girls won't be a problem."

By Jeff Moeller

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# - LEHIGHTON -

## GIRLS SOCCER

**LONG TIME COMING** ... The Indians qualified for district playoffs last year for the first time since 2013. They lost to Pocono Mountain East, 3-2, in the opening round, but they rallied from a 3-0 deficit to make it interesting. Lehighton finished with a 10-8 record. Head coach Carl Wolter, who enters his fourth year, believed his team took a major step forward with their late surge in the district playoff game. "We played really strong the last 10 minutes of that game," Wolter said. The coach believes that "never give up attitude" was something the team displayed all season. "We were a very small team as far as number of players are concerned — we only had three substitutes for most games. But the girls we had gave an awful lot last year."

**CENTER OF IT ALL** ... Wolter knows he again will have a small squad — although it's slightly bigger this season with 17 players on the roster. The team's fortunes will rest in large part on senior Charli McHugh, junior Karissa Moyer, and sophomore Mylee Lutsko — whom Wolter called the "centerpieces" for the Indians. "They are the hub of the team," he said. "They can dictate how far



Ryleigh Walker



Lilianna Caruso

we can go."

**LAST LINE OF DEFENSE** ... Senior Ciara Berhel will be back in the nets for the Indians, and Wolter sees her role as a major one. "She is an integral part of the team," he said. "She played against some really good teams last year like Blue Mountain, Jim Thorpe, and Pottsville who really tested her. But she gained a lot of confidence as the season went on."

**ALSO IN THE MIX** ... Wolter also will look to senior Ryleigh Walker, who was the team's leading scorer last season, and sophomore Sadie Monk for their experience. In addition, he noted that there are players recovering from injuries from other sports, and their return will dictate the team's depth.

**TAKE A LEAP FORWARD** ... With their success last season, Wolter is confident that the Indians can take the next step forward this year. "Our goal is to win more games and get to the next round of districts," he said. "These girls know now that they can win a tough game. In the past, that might not have been the case. But we have built a lot of confidence and have a much better outlook."

By Jeff Moeller

## GOLF

**AGE IS A NUMBER** ... Head coach Mark Maholick returns six seniors to his lineup, but none of them have experience. "We are a very inexperienced team," said the seventh-year head coach, whose team was 7-6 last season. "We may have older players, but it doesn't translate onto the course. We may spend some time on the struggle bus. We just have to see how everyone competes."

**CH-CH-CH-CHANGES** ... Graduation hit the Indians hard. Trey Spring was a two-time Schuylkill League champion, while fellow senior Lucas Shatz was a four-year starter. The Indians won consecutive league titles in 2020 and 2021 with Spring and Shatz playing key roles

**TOP OF THE LINE-UP** ... Seniors James Griffin-Traylor and Carter Birnbaum should be in the mix for the top two spots, and freshman Mike D'Amico has been a surprise. D'Amico qualified for the regional round of the national Drive, Chip and Putt competition. "James played a lot over the summer, and he's a hard-working kid," said Maholick. "Carter played two years ago, and he has shown some improvement. Mike is still young, but he has shown a lot of promise."

**ALSO BEING COUNTED ON** ... Junior Aiden Albert, and seniors Noah Barndt and Chloe Gustafson could all be major contributors.

**PIPE LINE** ... Maholick has a middle school club that will serve as his pipeline. "We'll be OK, and we'll figure something out," he said. "We have some kids in middle school who can play. We just have to take one week at a time."

By Jeff Moeller

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# - PLEASANT VALLEY -

## BOYS SOCCER GETTING STRON- GER EVERY YEAR ...

Pleasant Valley head coach Isaac Blagoege enters his second year of the program after the Bears made it to the District 11 semifinals last season. Blagoege hopes his team can improve on that this year. "Everybody's goal is to get as far as possible," Blagoege said. "Last year, we made it to the semifinals in districts. I think that's a good goal to have."

## TAKING OVER THE PROGRAM ...

Blagoege enjoyed success in his first season as the head coach that included a win in the opening round of district playoffs against Nazareth. "We had a good season," Blagoege said. Pleasant Valley graduated four seniors in Onious George, Michael Meyers, Nick Westerman and Colden Rother. "I really enjoyed my first year here," Blagoege said. "The boys, the parents, and school put their trust in me. I'm very, very grateful for the opportunity to coach here. I always wanted to be a high school coach and it was a dream come true."

## THE SCHEDULE ...

Pleasant Valley had a 9-8-1 regular season in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference last season. Blagoege didn't point out one school that he felt was the team to beat this season, but instead wants his players to treat every game as the biggest of the season. "Everybody is our main competition," Blagoege said. "You never know what's going to happen so you have to be prepared every time you step on the field."

**GIVING BACK ...** More than 40 boys tried out for this year's soccer team. Blagoege didn't want to



Dominic Balzano



Ryan Denninger

single anybody out during early preseason practices, "They are all a part of the team," Blagoege said. "Whether they are seniors or incoming freshman, we are working to make everyone better."

By Kyle Magda

**GIRLS SOCCER  
GOOD SEASON ...** The Pleasant Valley girls soccer team finished last

to the Hornets at districts is something that can motivate the team heading into this season. "We did pretty well against them," Hyland said. "We created chances and played with confidence. I believe the score was just 1-0 at halftime. To play a top team like Emmaus as tough as we did should give our players confidence heading into this season. The game was a lot tighter than anyone expected."

## EXPERIENCED BEARS ...

Pleasant Valley lost seniors Ella Muir, Madison Fava and Trinita Dalrymple after last season, but the Bears have a lot of experience back this year. The biggest offensive threat will be senior Aryn Stivala. Also returning will be Emma Meyers and Briana Palmieri, along with midfielders Katelyn Honadel and Hailey Klein. Riley Green and Makayla Berry are also back after scoring goals for Pleasant Valley last season. "We only have about 15 players, so we have to keep healthy this year," Hyland said. "Keeping healthy, buying into the formation and playing like a team will be the keys for us. I think we'll have a great season. This is a really good group of girls that love the game and love being together."

## GETTING READY FOR THIS YEAR ...

Hyland said the girls can end up anywhere on the field and that versatility will be important. "The girls got to play together a lot this summer. It was not all varsity players at once, a lot of JV players got in there and got a varsity feel and it was really nice. I think it's going to be a huge advantage for us. They've already been on the field together all summer."

By Kyle Magda

**BUILDING ON POST-  
SEASON SHOWING ...** Hyland is hoping that a strong showing in the loss

# - PLEASANT VALLEY -

## GOLF

**KEEPING THE SWING ...** Pleasant Valley head coach Steve Krechel is entering his 34rd season with the Bears. He's excited about the 2023 season. "The off season went well," he said. "We had intramurals all summer long and some kids have been playing in tournaments in the Lehigh Valley area and practicing hard. We've been doing a lot of range practices and hitting balls."

**MAKING IMPROVEMENTS ...** Krechel isn't worried about wins and losses (the Bears were 8-8 a year ago). Instead he places more importance on helping each individual's game. The Bears return junior Lydon Patascher — a district finalist last year. In addition, seniors Ben Bush and Austin Malanca are also back. PV has several new players on the squad. "We have four or five kids that are new to golf that are just learning the game," Krechel said. "We've been on the range hitting balls, just trying to develop some type of swing and understanding of the game for those kids."

**COURSE IS LOOKING GOOD ...** Krechel had his team practicing at Indian Mountain Golf Course in Kresgeville to prepare for the season. "They're making some really nice improvements," Krechel said about the course. "I have to give them a lot of credit. I don't think they have a lot of help, but they're out there working. The new owner is super-friendly and really willing to work with our kids and the team and school. It's a real pleasure to be there."

## TOUGH SCHEDULE



Lydon Patascher

... Krechel knows the Lehigh Valley teams are going to be the toughest to compete against. "The Valley teams are head and shoulders above all of the northern teams pretty much. It's a difficult schedule because those teams are always really good," he said. "It's not about wins and losses. Most of the time, it's just about improving."

**LIFE LESSONS ...** Krechel was pleased during his coaching time at Pleasant Valley that his golfers learned something from the game that they keep with them the rest of their lives. He has seen golfers come and go during his 34 years at the school and watching his former students still golf gives him plenty of satisfaction. "It's been a great experience," Krechel said. "It's always nice to see young kids that are willing to learn and I'm teaching them a skill that they're going to use the rest of their life. I still run into kids I coached 30 years ago, who are now adults that are still playing golf. It's always great

right time."

**GAINING STRENGTH ...** Maria Altomose and Alyssa Kroeger are the top returnees. "This offseason, I've had a good core of players showing up to everything — indoor and outdoor practices," said Ower Mohle. "The off-season's gone as well as I can hope for. I know I have some girls who are going to step up. We are expecting a large freshman class to come up. I think we'll probably be similar to how we were last year in terms of our strength. It's just a matter of getting them in the right head space for every game."

to see that happening."

By Kyle Magda

## FIELD HOCKEY LOOKING FOR MORE

... The Pleasant Valley field hockey fell short of qualifying for districts a year ago, but head coach Corin Ower Mohle hopes that postseason play can be achieved this season. "One of the goals we always set for themselves is we would like to make districts," Ower Mohle said. "In order to make districts, we need at least nine wins — and that's doable. It was doable last year, but we fell a little short. It's just a matter of getting the right pieces together at the

**COMPETITION ...** Pleasant Valley will again face every team in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference as part of a schedule that was adopted last season. That makes things slightly more difficult than in the past because of the talented programs in the Lehigh Valley.

**PREPARING FOR THE SEASON ...** "We're excited for the season," Ower Mohle said. "Summer practices have been good. Now we have to carry that into the season. We're just going to go out there and make the best of the season."

By Kyle Magda

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# - PLEASANT VALLEY -



Keeley Lawrence



Lily Daniels

**GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN ...** Pleasant Valley head coach Amy Keller enters her second season as the girls cross country head coach and has built a staff around her in a short period of time. “We break down workouts and develop schedules and routines which allows students to engage in meaningful exercises with their peers,” Keller said. “Being a second year head coach with an established assistant in Ali Rundle gives us something to build upon.”

**RUNNING DOWN A DREAM ...** Pleasant Valley loses Jenna Doman and Kaitlyn Guzman from last year’s roster, but the Bears return Keeley Lawrence and Lily Dannels.

**WHAT’S LEFT ...** Keller believes running is a good source for staying healthy and the cross country team is a step in the right direction for that. “Running provides an outlet for stress, anger, frustration, sadness and any other emotion that, if left unchecked, can cause serious mental health struggles,” she said.

**FEELING GOOD ...** At

the end of the day, Keller wants her runners to feel good and accomplished once the run is completed. “You always feel like I accomplished this and I can go out and do it again,” Keller said. “That’s what we strive for consistency and perseverance. The rest will follow.”

By Kyle Magda

**VOLLEYBALL STEPPING DOWN ...** Pleasant Valley volleyball has been a dominate force in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Mountain Division and the former Mountain Valley Conference during head coach John Gesiskie 30 seasons in charge of the program. Gesiskie recently announced that this will be his final season as the Bears’ head coach.

**LOOKING TO DEFEND ...** The Bears won another EPC Mountain Division title last season and will again be among the division favorites. “The girls have been coming in and working in the weight room a few days a week during the offseason,” Gesiskie said. “Hopefully, we’ll come back strong. We lost six seniors — and all six played. But we used a

lot of girls last year so we still have a nice core of five or six girls returning who played varsity. Hopefully they’ll step up in new roles this year.”

**ONE LAST HURRAH ...** Gesiskie will be counting five varsity letter winners from a year ago to lead the way. Heading the list are returning starters Brianna Bruckman (S) and Hannah Akob (OH). Also expected to play key roles are Rylee Ruggiero (OPP), Lexi Womack (OH) and Emily Shupp (DS), who all saw plenty of court time a year ago. Rounding out the starting lineup is libero Amiyah Polisenio. Among those expected to add depth are Kara Miller (MB), Isabelle Hall (MB), Laura Balleck (MB/OPP), Alexis Wilkes (S/OH), Ali Snyder (S), Ava Morgan (DS) and Abby Dominick (MB/OPP). “We want to qualify for districts and advance as far as possible in the playoffs,” Gesiskie said. “I try to push these girls to the best they can be. It’s something that’s constant. Our girls do offseason conditioning and are held accountable for their actions.”

**CHANGES ...** Pleasant Valley volleyball has

grown over the years since Gesiskie started the program in 1993. Things have changed during his 30-year coaching career, but one thing that has remained constant — Pleasant Valley has remained successful. “We were the first Monroe County high school volleyball program in the area,” Gesiskie said. “The sport has gone through a lot of changes through years. Different rules, different leagues ... a lot has changed, but I’m proud of the fact that our program has consistently developed outstanding players over the years and that we’ve been a perennial contender for league and division championships.”

**TOUGH ROAD ...** Gesiskie knows that the EPC competition will once again be fierce as the conference regularly produces state championship contenders. “We have always prided ourselves on being the best program in the Mountain Division and also being competitive with all the outstanding teams in the Lehigh Valley,” he said. “That won’t change this year. We have high expectations as we always do.”

By Kyle Magda

# - PLEASANT VALLEY -

## BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

**BUILDING UP THE PROGRAM ...** Pleasant Valley second-year head coach Amy Keller used last season as a building year for the program and looks to add on to what was established in her first season of coaching. Keller learned a lot working with the kids and gained valuable knowledge running the team. "We had some seasoned runners return but we also had quite a few young runners who were just learning what it meant to be a competitive runner," Keller said. "The program did what we hoped it would do; grow young athletes into responsible, accountable and enthusiastic runners. This year we hope to build upon the individual success of each runner and mold into some more team successes."

**RETURNING WITH EXPERIENCE ...** The Pleasant Valley boys will have Marty Green, Jake Smith, Anthony Oliver, Jacob Chechel and Ben Keppel returning. PV lost Frankie Morales, Eddie Lauritsen and Josh Goselin, but the returners will provide running experience for the boys team. Keller's second year as head coach will show how far the boys have come in just a short period of time. "The offseason was beneficial for our athletes in that they were able to set their own running schedules and met at the high school to run on certain days," Keller said. "They were able to rest and recover after spring sports ended and had the opportunity to enjoy running for running's sake."

**RUNNING FOR LIFE ...** Keller also talked about the positive impacts of



Jacob Chechel

running for her athletes and not only the benefits of running cross-country, but also how it can shape their lives after. "Running is not only good for staying in shape, it's so incredibly vital and beneficial for mental and emotional health," Keller said. "It's not just about winning races, it's competing against yourself and changing your mindset to one of growth and positivity." The camaraderie of being on a team can also help, especially when it comes to running.

**WHAT'S NEXT ...** Pleasant Valley has been building up its program once Keller took over and has a strong foundation with the feeder program at the middle school for future varsity runners. Keller is optimistic about the upcoming season and

her runners will not only learn from running, but also apply everything they learn to their lives. The combination of running and different workouts will also help the team get stronger.

By Kyle Magda

## GIRLS TENNIS

**NEW COACH ...** Laura Ammermann takes over the girls tennis program for the 2023 fall season and has a lot of experience with the girls as an assistant head coach to Mark Allison over the years. "We've always been very competitive with our area schools," Ammermann said. "I just want to maintain that competition. I want to make sure that we can continue our success against schools that we've been always very successful against and do our best when it comes to the Le-

high Valley schools."

**GOALS FOR THE SEASON ...** Ammermann has nine seniors on the team and returns six players who started a year ago. Heading the list of returnees Ryan Rosenberg, who played No. 3 singles a year ago. In addition, Cecilia Cordova, Carly Rehrig, Molly Schaffner, Brianna Pridham and Mariana Barragan all saw action in the Bears' doubles lineup. "I've had these girls since they were freshman," said Ammermann. "For me, I'm pretty connected with the players. I've had them since they were young. It's going to be great to see them progress throughout the year."

## ALWAYS BUILDING

... Pleasant Valley lost its No. 1 and No. 2 singles players from last year's lineup. "We still have a lot of key players returning," Ammermann said. "The girls participate in an intramural program that I run and all have experience on the court. We're going to see how we progress." In addition to the returning starters, the Bears have several other experienced players on the rosters, including, Suhayla Doman, Megan Jackson, Madeline Sheard, Arianna Moscoso and Shannon Price.

**INDIVIDUAL APPROACH ...** Ammermann wants to put an emphasis on working with each player individually to bring out their strengths. "I think I'm going to hone in on some skills a little bit more this year. I know the players so well, so I'm going to do some individual coaching on some players and rotate them in and work on what they need. It's difficult to do, but I'd like to get that established."

By Kyle Magda

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# - PALMERTON -

## GIRLS SOCCER

**NEW COACH ...** Jonathan Perloni, who is in his second year in the program, takes over as the team's head coach. He will be assisted by Connor Russo.

## BANNER SEASON

... The Blue Bombers put together a 16-2 regular season and won the Colonial League overall and in the final against Northwestern. "It felt amazing to win in the final as it was Palmerton's first ever time winning the girls Colonial League so that was a huge accomplishment for everyone involved," said Perloni. "I believe it helped the program grow as a whole and also give the returning girls motivation for this year. So coming into the season, we have to set a standard, that we are the defending champions of the colonial league, and not to take that lightly."

## HARD TO REPLACE

... Sam Perloni (senior, defender), Beth Morgan (senior, midfielder) and (Emma Martinez, senior, forward) have all moved on from last year's team. "Having these three in the program last year helped the team thrive in many ways," said Coach Perloni. "The three of them were the team captains last year, so losing their leadership during the season will be noticed. They helped keep the morale at practice up so the returning players this year will have that to keep in mind. As well, if something wasn't going as expected during a game they were the players to look to and listen to."

## BACK FOR MORE ...

Ella Baumgardt (junior, midfielder), Nataly Walters (junior, forward) and Chase Montanari (senior, defender) all return and will be counted on as leaders this year. "They were



Ella Baumgardt

all key players in our success from last season," said Perloni. "Ella is a very versatile player in our team and will always get up and fight for the team as well as having a great mentality towards the sport. Nataly was our top goal scorer and scored in the final versus Northwestern and she will be one to watch. Chase played a very important part in the defense by keeping everyone together and was a huge reason we gave up so few goals. I believe that their competitive nature and their will to win will help the team strive towards success that we could have this year."

## KEEP AN EYE ON

... Riley Gerhard (senior, midfielder), Emma Snyder (senior, goalkeeper) and Aubrey Frable (freshman, forward) will also be in key roles this season. "Riley and Emma are returning as seniors this coming year and have been very important players for us in the past and I fully expect them to take on a leadership role within the team," said Perloni. "Aubrey is an upcom-

ing freshman and having had a preseason during the summer she has fit into the team very well, and will provide a lot of goals this year."

## STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ...

The Blue Bombers have many pieces in place for another big season this fall. "We have a strong core. The team returning this year brings back a lot of positives from the previous title winning season," said Perloni. "As a team we will continue to train the way we have been and look to build on the success of the program. We did lose some key players from last year. I think it could take a few games to figure out what works best for this core group of girls. We have the quality to be a very competitive and strong team. Now it's about implementing what we do at practice into games to show our ability."

**OUTLOOK ...** "Going into the season having won the Colonial League last year that has to be the goal this year," said Perloni. "We lost players but brin-

ing back a strong part of the team can help the younger players fill right into the system. We had also made semis in districts last year so if we can push to make the district final this year that's a goal/standard we have to set."

By Patrick Matsinko

## GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY ONLY UP FROM HERE ...

In head coach Mike Horvath's first season at the helm, the Bombers were 4-20 overall. However, the Bombers enter his second go-around with the intent of collecting a few more wins.

## LEADER OF THE PACK ...

Once again, it's an upperclassman and a single underclassman returning with the majority of experience this fall. Cora Wentz, 18th in the district meet last year, enters her final varsity season with the program, while Emma Rex, ninth in districts, returns as a seasoned sophomore. "Cora is the perfect example of a multi-sport state qualifying student athlete looking to be a captain and mentor for the expanding Palmerton varsity girls' team," head coach Mike Horvath said. "Emma Rex is a talented young state qualifying athlete competing to be Palmerton's new top varsity girl runner and gain even more success than she did last season."

## GOAL TO REACH ...

"Team goal is to have at least five varsity girl runners so the team can score and obviously get Cora and Emma back to Hershey again," Horvath said. "Quality not quantity will be a team motto again this year, while also looking for growth and a chance to earn not only individual success, but team success with some wins."

By TJ Engle

# - PALMERTON -



Skylar Kohler

## FIELD HOCKEY READY TO COMPETE

... A year after posting a 12-7 overall record, the Bombers made some noise in both the Colonial League and District playoffs only to fall short of glory each time. But, back with intent to shine in their final season are a trio of seniors – midfielder Sydney Frantz, forward Celeste Hoffman and Skylar Kohler. Also ready to lend a helping hand to the attack are junior Mackenzie Long (midfielder/defender) and sophomore Alisyn Green (midfielder), who return with varsity time on their side.



Celeste Hoffman

**BOMBER YOUTH** ... The Bombers have a bright future ahead of them with some young talent. Bella Catania (junior, defender), Sarah Sabo (sophomore, goalie), Cate Morgan (sophomore, midfielder and forward) and Tessa Sander (sophomore, forward) are

ready to chip in on the Bomber attack.

**MISSING LINKS** ... Junior Mikayla Pengelly (forward) and sophomore Ruby Walters (defender/midfielder) are forced to sit the sidelines because of off-season surgeries. However, Leadbetter believes

others will step in to take their spots. The coaching is hoping they can return near the end of the season. “Whenever a starter is unable to play it forces those holes on the field to be filled in,” Leadbetter said. “Though not our exact roster as expected, we are

confident in those younger players stepping in to hold their own.”

**FIRE IN THEIR EYES** ... Last November, the Bombers dropped a heart-breaking 2-1 setback to Wilson in the District 11 semifinals. It may have ended the careers of some fine stickers — Kelsey Balliet and Kira Hauser — but it set the standard for the future of Palmerton field hockey. And, entering her second year, Leadbetter said the Bombers are ready to make another run at a title. “We are looking for revenge in the district tournament to recapture the crown,” Leadbetter said. “We fell short last season and we have a chip on our shoulders to make up for it. We have a very strong mid-field line and multiple girls on the field that are very versatile — looking forward to seeing how they all blend together.”

By TJ Engle

# - PALMERTON -

## BOYS SOCCER ANOTHER STEP FORWARD ...

Head coach Antonio Orlando is eager for the program to continue the progress it has made in recent years. "Our off-season was pretty good. The kids were interested and they showed up. Noah Sell, Trevor Anthony and Dillon Lombardi. One is a senior and two are juniors," Orlando said. "My goal this year is to try to win at least a third of our games and I'd be happy. We have made a lot of progress from when I took over three years ago. Last year we did a lot better, we were competitive and we kept scores very low. This year we're looking to accomplish even more, and with new freshmen coming in I think we should have a decent season. Last year we did better and we're looking to build on that and try to make playoffs. We should be in good shape this year." Sell is the team captain, and the only senior on the roster.

**FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT ...** Orlando has been pleased with the enthusiasm and dedication of the program's newcomers. "We had a lot of interest with the freshmen that are coming in this year," he said. "I'm very excited because they show a lot of positive attitude and skill, and they seem to be focused and they really want to play."

"I want to thank Kyle (Poremba, Palmerton Athletic Director) because he was able to get my gym time and we were able to practice over the winter, and we had a good turnout. We had some new players and I think that really helped them because now they know what to expect."

The team has eight freshmen on the roster. Wyatt Spalding, Hunter Sell, Logan Stroup, Ty Eckhart, Blake Potoczak,



Connor Hibell

Devlin Moyzan, Levi Getz and Brody Wells will all look to gain experience and contribute this season.

**LAYING THE FOUNDATION ...** Orlando has seen the Blue Bombers make strides and come from a place where it was anything but easy. But he knows the players who were there in the early days and have moved on, such as Riley Fallon and Trey Sterling, were vital to helping move the program forward. "I'd like to thank them for their time that they dedicated to the team," Orlando said. "They stuck with us when times were bad and they helped us turn the program around." In addition to Sell, Anthony and Lombardi, Palmerton will also be counting on juniors Peyton Waibel, Kellen Trotter, AJ Borger and Wyatt Taschler, along with sophomores Gavin Young, Garrett Warner, Benjamin Andrews, Anderson Garcia and Colton Ruzicka.

**SETTING UP FOR SUCCESS ...** Palmerton's boys soccer team appears primed to make another

jump this fall, one that could be its most significant yet. "I just want to make sure that this year we shine so that this way they can see improvement and keep building the program," Orlando said.

By Patrick Matsinko

## BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

**A SEASON TO REMEMBER ...** Michael Horvath had a first season of coaching that other coaches can only dream about. In his first season with the Bombers, his harriers went 19-5 Colonial League mark. The postseason only got

better for Horvath, as the Bombers won the District 11 Class 2A title, scoring 82 points, with Minersville second at 94.

**FRONT RUNNERS ...** Two runners are looking to lead the Blue Bombers back into title contention. Alex Saas returns as the lone senior from last year's district championship team and sophomore Connor Hibell was a scoring member of the district championship team last year as a freshman, finishing fourth in the district meet. Saas was 58th in the district meet. "Alex looks to take on a leadership role to ensure the same athlete standards that were met last season for Palmerton are met this season," Horvath said. "Connor is looking to be the top varsity boy runner and lead the Palmerton boys' team to another successful season."

**FOLLOWING CLOSELY ...** Junior Sean Jahelka and a large sophomore class will play key factors in the writing the 2023 Palmerton XC story, according to Horvath.

**BOMBER OUTLOOK ...** "Lost seven seniors, working hard, and searching to maintain at least some of the success earned the previous season. Connor Hibell and Alex Saas are two of the top five varsity boy runners returning hoping to consistently contribute again this year."

By TJ Engle

## Good Luck, Blue Bombers and all local teams!



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# - PALMERTON -



Jared Reinhard



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## GOLF

### SOARING HIGH ...

Alex Knoll enters his ninth season (106 wins, 46 losses) with the Bombers, along with co-head coach Joey Trimmel (2nd season), and with that he knows that the program has had a "history of success" over the last five years – three Colonial League titles and four District 11 Class 2A titles.

**GONE TO GRADUATION ...** Fresh off posting a 21-1 record in their final seasons, Tyler Hager, Connor Reinhard, Nathan Steinmetz and Justin Sebelin all have graduated.

**LOOKING TO CONTINUE TRADITION ...** Back again for the Bombers is a group hoping to continue the Bombers' success. Returning are Jared Reinhard (senior who will be vying to be the top golfer in the program), Aiden Leister (senior who will be a full-time starter), Ashton Leshner (junior who will be vying to be the top golfer), Luke Matsko (sophomore who will be stepping up to a full-time role this season), and juniors Eli Christman and Corey Serfass.

**IN SEARCH OF ...** "We

do not have the scoring averages we have had in the past, so everyone needs to try and avoid big numbers and try to find some consistency as we work through the season," said Knoll, of a potential area of concern this season. "Many of the starters have had a few starts in the past, but they will be expected to play 3-4 days a week, which is a new experience."

**BOMBER EXPECTATIONS ...** "We lost our major pillars of the program through graduation last year, but we still have some major players from those past four years on the roster," Knoll said. "We are not as deep as we have been in the past, but as we move forward, it will give other players and newcomers more opportunity to step up and contribute."

By TJ Engle

## VOLLEYBALL

**TAKING OVER ...** Former Palmerton player Savannah Mickel takes over as head coach this season. Mickel also played volleyball at Lehigh Carbon Community College. She will be assisted by Brooke Seiler

and volunteer Brittany Brice. Mickel has a solid group of returning players to work with. "Losing only one senior from last year, the team is in a great position to build on the players and skills from the previous season," she said.

### THE RETURNEES

... Mickel is excited about what this year's squad has to offer. "This season there are many returning players all contributing to the success of the team," said Mickel. "Jessica Hedyt is a four-year player, looking to break the kill record for Palmerton this year and we're all cheering her on. Sadie Gair and Mikayla Maxwell are sophomores who have shown incredible dedication and improvement during the off season. Their commitment is a key model for the whole team."

### KEEP AN EYE ON ...

"Claire Thomas (junior) and Emily Christopher (senior) are powerhouses on the court that will prove to be very beneficial to the team's overall success," said Mickel. "In the back row, Caylee Strohl and Katie Heimbach are seniors that will hold a strong de-

fense this season."

## STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ...

Mickel knows the squad will have things to work on throughout the season, but feels the team is in a good position to achieve its goals. "The drive and excitement building in this team to improve their previous records are pushing these players to give it their all," she said. "As a newer program with less than 10 years history and no feeder program, we get a lot of players that have never played an organized game of volleyball prior to trying out for the high school team. This definitely provides a challenge but we have a great group of players that are dedicated to overcome this setback."

**OUTLOOK ...** "Palmerton volleyball has not yet ended a season with a winning record, this year the goal is to improve the overall number of games won compared to previous seasons," said Mickel. "Building the players skills with every practice and growing the community's support with every game, fundraiser, and season event."

By Patrick Matsinko

# - WEATHERLY -



Chase Veasie



Ian McKeegan

## BOYS SOCCER HEAD OF THE CLASS

... Kevin Kennedy, now in his seventh season as the coach, has a formidable group of returnees, which could bolster the squad as they embark on the 2023 season. Last year's youthful Wreckers' team struggled, finishing the season 1-16-1.

## LOOKING TO RE-GROUP ...

Losing only one player to graduation, Tanner Hinkle, gives the Wreckers a veteran-laden squad.

## THEY'RE BACK! ...

The Wreckers are led by defenders Alex Roselund and Vincent Paisley. Besides that pair, midfielder Trent Higgins returns and looks for seasoned goalkeeper Michael Davies to sturdy things in net. Kennedy welcomes a potential impact player in Jeremiah Donadi to the squad as well.

## KENNEDY'S TAKE ...

Surely numbers come into play with a small school and that isn't lost on Kennedy or is it a crutch for the coach. "We'll be pressed to roster a (sub or two) on the bench. Depth of quality is also an issue. Continued progress in the community (strong youth league and expanding adult leagues) is expected to benefit the players and program — even if just long-term."

By Sam Matta

## BOYS CROSS COUNTRY TRADITION CAN

**RUN ...** Under the tutelage of Ryan Kately, the Wreckers have made noise in the sport, especially the boys. The program has run for success, and two seasons ago the boys team won the Schuylkill League championship. The Wreckers are feared not just by the small schools but the big schools

also know of the program and Kately has turned it into such a solid program.

**WHO'S GONE ...** After another booming season in which the boys defended their Division II title of the Schuylkill Cross Country League, Kately's runners will need to replace two standouts in Jacob Parker and Michael Berger. They were a part of the league championship team two seasons ago, and a year past, the Wreckers were coming up big again at 15-3. Weatherly finished third in last year's District 11 Class A meet. Berger (118th) and Parker (161st) competed in the PIAA Championships last November in Hershey.

## IN SEARCH OF HELP

... The squad lost only two runners, but they were seasoned vets. Now Kately will rely on Raymond Montz, Hayden DiGennaro, Trent Higgins and Sebastian Williams. Toss in Carlos Otero

and Niko Saldukis along with Raymond Montz and Hayden DiGennaro.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

... Hoping for another top-flight season, Kately is expecting the youth to come to the fore, mainly because this is a tradition-rich cross-country program. "The guys got a taste of a division championship last year but graduating our top 2 runners will hurt. We're looking for a young guy or two to step up and become a leader. Sebastian Williams and Carlos Otero have been showing great improvements this summer and look forward to taking the next steps and compete in the top of races. Niko Saldukis, Raymond Montz and Trent Higgins look to be in the scoring. Transfers also hurt our team but these guys love running for each other as they have been running together all summer."

By Sam Matta

# - WEATHERLY -

## VOLLEYBALL

**NEW LOOK ...** Like all teams, the start of a new campaign brings questions. No different for the Wreckers, but they will also usher in a new head coach. Erica Kane-Poweski and assistant Steph Kurtz take over for Michele Hinkle. Besides the departed Hinkle, the Wreckers lost several veterans from a 4-16 team. Graduated are Kelly Michaels, Rebecca Schell, Abby Paisley, Christal Kislán, Huntyr Eichhorst, Jenna Winkler and Angelina Fewins.

**HELP WANTED ...** Kane-Poweski will rely heavily on five veterans to make it work early. There is Taylor Davidovich (setter and defensive specialist), Reina Whalen (hitter), Kelly Reiner (hitter), Abby Weston (hitter and defensive specialist) and Rachel Rosenlund (setter and hitter). "We like their leadership," said the first-year coach. "But we need for a number of new players to get things going."

**FIRST-YEAR PLAYERS ...** The newcomers on this year's team include Mellanie Marshman, who possesses strong passing skills and Hailey Rosado, who is showing promise as a strong defensive specialist. Both came in with some natural raw talent, so the coach is excited to see how they progress.

**THE OUTLOOK ...** It's early, and with a new group trying to gel and getting the veterans just as comfortable, Kane-Poweski and her assistant will be testing the waters, as well. "We have a great group of young ladies who have the potential to go far. Many of our players are well-rounded, which may come in handy for us this season. As the



Taylor Davidovich

new coach, I am bringing some new ideas to the table while maintaining what they have already learned. I know it's a big adjustment not only as new coaches, but for the players as well. While we want the wins, our biggest goal is to communicate

more and continue to play hard as a team."

By Sam Matta

## GOLF

**NEW LOOK WRECKERS ...** One of the more outstanding golfers at the smallest school in District

11, has departed ways. When Maddie VonFrisch, picked up her cap and gown this past spring, she left a huge hole in the program, and basically was the heart of the Wreckers. VonFrisch knocked at the door to gain entrance into the District 11 tournament and to qualify for the state playoffs. Jack Nimshick, Owen Broskoskie and Tanner Hinkle also graduated.

**HOPING FOR A LIFT OFF ...** Head coach Brain Kaminski is now entering his eight season and realizes the numbers crunch is always prevalent. Despite low numbers, Kaminski and assistant coach Mike Nemschck keep churning away. The team did a commendable job last fall. The Wreckers finished 6-4 in the Schuylkill League Division II behind Mahanoy Area which dominated the division for the past three golf seasons. Weatherly finished 6-5 overall. That speaks volumes. And that creates a big challenge for the 2023 edition, too.

**A VET TO BUILD AROUND ...** Kaminski is hopeful that the teams lone returnee Tyler Hinkle can forge ahead and the remainder of the smallish squad catch fire and gain confidence. Kaminski is looking forward to a pair of newcomers in Chance Stauffer and Isabel Hoffman.

**NEW VENUE AND OUTLOOK ...** Weatherly will take the clubs and irons to White Birch for a new home course. Kaminski, an always upbeat coach, calls it an exploratory season. "Overall we are hoping to field a full team for all of the matches and hoping to rebuild this and next year to continue to keep the program growing," he said.

By Sam Matta

# - WEATHERLY -



Kendall Gerhart

## GIRLS SOCCER WILL THE THRILL

... Will Bartel has been a mainstay coaching at Weatherly. He heads up the softball program and has led the girls soccer program for eight years. His ability to stress fundamentals along with second year assistant Paul Eckert gives hope for the 2023 season.

**JUST ONE GONE ...** Weatherly lost one player to graduation in Emma Kane, who played a key role last fall as goalie.

**ROLLING 5'S ...** This squad is very well seasoned; with five seniors back to lead the attack:

Julliette Bartel (defender-midfielder), striker Kendall Gerhart, Bethany Houser (MF), defenders Anna Bloom and Erin Prete. Coming into play are sophomore Jazmine Breznak and two freshmen, Jillian Russel and Cortney Snyder. The coach is hoping to get quality time from a pair of juniors; Molly Kislan (defender), midfielder Kiley Holman, and sophomore midfielder Grace Portell.

**BARTEL'S VIEW ...** "We are again in transition trying to find out where players will be playing. The girls will work hard and battle to

the best of their abilities. The Schuylkill (Soccer) League is very tough but the girls have no choice but to get out there every day answer the challenge."

By Sam Matta

## GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY MORE RUNNERS? ...

A season ago, the squad didn't have enough to roll out a full five-person team. Kately still sees the numbers low but is hoping to compete and get the squad ready for the season.

**WHO WILL LEAD ...** Despite the low numbers,

the squad has a bonafide star in Kendall Gerhart. She enters her final season wearing black and orange as one of the better runners in the SIAL. Gerhart has been impressive throughout her illustrious career and will be the team leader this season.

**JUMPING INTO  
FRAY ...** To be sure, Gerhart is the leader of the pack here, but don't discount senior Rebecca Caldwell. She moves into a varsity role for the Wreckers, and could compete for a top-10 finish in most races according to Kately.

By Sam Matta



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