

SPORTS

Sports on deck

Key area events
Jan. 18-24:

Basketball

Spring Lake Park vs. Park Center
Friday, Jan. 18

The Spring Lake Park boys and girls both take on ranked Park Center teams, with the girls game at Spring Lake Park and the boys game at Park Center. The Pirate boys entered the week ranked No. 3 with a 10-1 record, while the Pirate girls were 11-2 and ranked No. 9.

Basketball

Blaine vs. Champlin Park
Friday, Jan. 18

The Blaine boys and girls both take on Champlin Park, with the Bengal boys at home and the girls on the road. The Champlin Park boys began the week 4-0 in conference play with Blaine 4-1, the top two teams in the NWSA North. The Champlin Park girls began the week 5-7 overall. The teams will all square off again Feb. 13.

Wrestling

Blaine at East Ridge Ruckus
Friday-Saturday, Jan. 18-19

Blaine travels to East Ridge for a two-day, 20-team tournament that includes Class AAA's No. 3 Apple Valley, No. 4 St. Michael-Albertville and No. 12 East Ridge, Class AA's No. 7 Waconia and three Wisconsin teams.

Boys swimming and diving

True Team sections
Saturday, Jan. 19

Coon Rapids is the site of the True Team section meet for Andover, Anoka, Blaine, Cambridge-Isanti, Centennial, Coon Rapids, Duluth East and Forest Lake. Spring Lake Park hosts its true team meet versus Champlin Park, Irondale, Osseo, Park Center, Robbinsdale Cooper and Wayzata.

Girls hockey

Blaine at Spring Lake Park
Tuesday, Jan. 22

Rink mates Blaine and Spring Lake Park square off at Fogerty Arena. Both have started 2019 strong, with Blaine going 2-1 with wins over Class AA's No. 2 Edina and Class A's No. 4 Proctor/Hermantown and Spring Lake Park going 2-1-1 with wins over Irondale and Armstrong/Cooper through Jan. 14.

Hockey

Blaine vs. Andover
Thursday, Jan. 24

Blaine and Andover clash in boys and girls hockey for the second time this season, with the girls game in Andover and the boys game in Blaine. The boys game ended in a 1-1 draw Dec. 20. The Blaine girls seek to close the gap after a 6-1 loss to Andover in November.

Outdoors

Rattle baits ideal for under the ice

Steve Carney

Outdoors Columnist

Rattle baits have been around for decades, and they're not my favorite during the open water months, as I believe most game fish are conditioned to avoid them because they encounter them on a regular basis. However, rattle baits through the ice seem to work really well in attracting perch and walleyes to your ice fishing area. Here is a primer on using rattle baits during the winter.

Bring them in

My rattle bait of choice during the winter is the annoying Rattletrap, which is a very large bait full of big BBs that make a very noisy sound that carries for many yards. I recently was fishing in western Minnesota and saw large schools of both perch and walleyes coming screaming into the sound. I drill a separate hole and



Steve Carney with walleye called in via rattle bait.

Photo submitted

drop the rattle bait down ten the fish would come in and shake it vigorously. Of- fast and then stop and stare.

The rattle didn't make them bite, but rather got them into the area, and there always were a few biters within the group.

Quiet areas the key

To be most successful with the rattle bait, you need to be fishing an area that is very quiet and free of human activity such as vehicle noise and noisy gas augers. Rattle baits are not nearly as effective on heavily pressured areas because there are too many unnatural sounds combined with the rattle, which just doesn't work. The more isolated you are the better the rattle will work.

Don't be too aggressive

My best success has been to heavily jig the rattle bait and let it sit without being too aggressive. If there are game fish in the immediate area, the rattle will draw them in. The catching is up to you!

Continuity, perimeter play have Panthers on a roll

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they have throughout their lineup.

"Our style of playing this year is a bit different than last year," Eatherton said. "We are shooting a few more threes this year than last year, looking to space the floor for us. We are averaging 22 three-point shots per game, making seven per game. I would like the percentage a bit higher, but I like what it does for offense."

"Also, we are looking to push the pace a bit when we have the opportunity to, which hopefully gives us some quick points."

Through a dozen games, Spring Lake Park is 8-4, thriving with a variety of scorers. Madi Ngene has led the way with 14.2 points per game, followed by Jocelyn Talso (9.9), Joelle Talso (9.5), Averi Dunbar (8.4), Ashlea Nienow (7.6) and Taryn Richard (5.2).

"Offensively we are playing very well, spacing the floor, making the extra pass



Spring Lake Park's Ashlea Nienow goes up strong to the basket against Tartan.

Photo by Bill Jones

to get a better shot for their teammate," Eatherton said. "Ball movement is key for us, and overall we have a done a good job. The girls

work well together and have played with each other for a number of years, which helps with continuity on the court and off the court."

Spring Lake Park ran its record to 8-4 with a stellar week at home, toppling Irondale 71-53 Jan. 8, Coon Rapids 55-48 Jan. 10 and Tartan 78-61 Jan. 12.

"Last week was good for us," Eatherton said. "Overall in all three games I was happy with how we played. It is always nice to win conference games, so wins against Irondale and Coon Rapids were great, and it gives the girls confidence to build on. But our game against Tartan in particular was a really good win for us. We have lost the past three seasons against them, so the girls were ready to play and played excellent."

Scoring in double figures against Irondale were Dunbar (17), Richard (14), Nienow (13), Joelle Talso (11) and Ngene (11). Nienow scored a team-high 15 against Coon Rapids and Ngene had 23, and Jocelyn Talso had 20 against Tartan.

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