

ATHLETIC SEASONS PUT ON HOLD

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Henning Athletic Director and boys basketball coach Randy Misegades learned that the MSHSL was cancelling the remainder of the winter sports season as he was traveling to the state basketball tournament to watch the Henning girls basketball team on Friday. But even before the Hornets took the court on Thursday night, the athletic director and boys basketball coach had a feeling the section finals game in Moorhead would be the final time the boys team would take the court together.

“Before we left for Moorhead on Thursday, we met in the locker room (which normally does not happen) to discuss the situation. There was no reason trying to ignore it at that point,” he said. “Although I was purely speculating, I felt like there was a very good chance Thursday was our last game, win or lose. Our message was to treat that game like our state championship. If it was going to be the last game, then we wanted to go out with a win.”

Unfortunately, his feeling proved to be all-too-real as the MSHSL cancelled the winter sports season just before noon on Friday the 13th.

Henning girls basketball coach Mike Hepola said he received the news of the cancellation of the season just after the girls basketball team finished their morning shoot around at St. Thomas University and were on the school bus as they headed back to the hotel to get their gear before the game. They were scheduled to take on Cromwell-Wright in the semi-finals of the state basketball tournament in the Twin Cities at 2 p.m.

“We had just finished our morning shoot around at the University of St. Thomas, the girls had a great shoot-around and were so determined and focused to go and win another game against a very good Cromwell-Wright team and then the phone call happened,” said Hepola. “As I hung up the phone I whispered to the other coaches what had happened and then stood up and told the girls, ‘I’m about to cry, I just received a phone call from the high school league and they have cancelled the rest of the state tournament including our game today, I’m so sorry.’ My message was just how proud I am

“ We all hate the way it ended. But, at the same time we have so many memories that no one can ever take away from us. As much as we hated the ending, we need to step back and put things in perspective. We got to experience things through basketball that most other teams only dream about. I hugged each and every one of those kids and told them I loved them. It is amazing how close you become when you spend so much time together. It truly is a family. We have our high and lows, but we’ve got a mutual love and respect for one another at the end of the day.

- Athletic Director and boys basketball coach Randy Misegades about learning the season would be cancelled

of them and what a great group they are on and off the court and what an honor it has been to be their coach.”

It seemed like a cruel end to an otherwise magical season for the girls team. They won their first conference title in 30 years and advanced to their first state tournament in school history. Just the day before, the MSHSL announced the consolation and third place games would be cancelled and all of the remaining games would be played in front of just 90 select fans from each school. The goal was to limit the amount of people and exposure to the Coronavirus at each venue, but as the professional sports teams and NCAA began outright cancelling their winter sports, a similar move for the high school league seemed like a cruel but inevitable outcome.

That didn’t make the sting of having a season end so quickly any less difficult to take.

“I told them how sorry I was that it ended like this and how hurt I was that they were hurting. The tears certainly flowed from us coaches, players and everyone, it was such a crashing ‘thud’ type of ending to such a great winter in Henning basketball for both the girls and the boys, I felt so badly for the kids,” said Hepola. “I went around and first hugged and thanked the seniors for all they’d done and accomplished and then went around to each of the other players. The players of course shared hugs and tears the entire trip back to the hotel. I had the players text or call their parents so they knew in case they wanted to cancel their hotel rooms

for that night, the parents and families then met us at the lobby when we got back and that reception was a nice chance for everyone to help each other get through it.”

Misegades said he feels bad for the seniors on the team with the way the season came to such a quick end. He said he was fortunate to be able to coach them, but was also focusing on the opportunities that the team has been given over the years both on the court and throughout the community.

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In order to help celebrate the seasons for both teams, Thumper Pond Resort in Ottertail opened up the pool area for the boys and girls basketball teams on Friday night. In addition to time for swimming, members of the teams and their families were also invited to stay overnight if they chose to do so. It was just one way to show appreciation for a pair of teams that brought a community together over the past four months.

In addition to the winter sports season, spring sports have essentially been put on hold as well. Teams will not be allowed to practice until March 27 and no games or scrimmages can take place until at least April 6. That deadline could be extended even further depending upon what happens with the Coronavirus outbreak.

“Everything is wait and see at this time,” said Misegades. “I do think a cancellation of the entire spring season is a very real possibility. No one knows how this is going to play out. I just feel bad for so many kids who are involved in many activities.”

County to take part in broadband workshop

OT County receives two tourism awards

By Tom Hintgen
Otter Tail County Correspondent

County commissioners authorized the county deputy administrator to select and apply for up to five broadband task force members to attend the community broadband leadership workshop in Grand Rapids April 30 to May 1.

The workshop will address challenges Otter Tail County is experiencing to provide access to broadband and assist to meet the state’s broadband speed goals.

More than 16 percent of rural Minnesota lacks access to high-speed internet, according to the State Department of Employment and Economic Development.

County receives two tourism awards

County Deputy Administrator Nick Leonard reported to the County Board of Commissioners that Otter Tail County received two out of the ten state-wide awards that were presented at the Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference in February.

The awards received are the Social Media Campaign Award and the Trailblazer Award, which recognizes the county’s rural rebound efforts and utilizing tourism as an opportunity to recruit people to Otter Tail County.

Keep your eyes, ears open in help to sheriff’s office

By Tom Hintgen
Otter Tail County Correspondent

County residents are reminded to immediately call the county sheriff’s office if they notice anything that is important or dangerous. The phone number is 218-998-8555.

“Remember to keep your eyes and ears open,” says County Sheriff Administrative Lt. Keith Van Dyke.

Following is the sheriff’s office mission statement: “We, the men and women of the Otter Tail County Sheriff’s Office, are dedicated to providing excellent service through partnerships that build trust, reduce

crime, create safe environment, and enhance the quality of life in our county.”

Van Dyke said that sheriff’s office personnel do their best to adhere to fairness, integrity, respect and excellence.

Vergas resident avoids loss in scam attempt

A resident of Loon Lake, south of Vergas, almost became the victim of a credit card scam on March 9. Fortunately, the resident was able to receive a refund from a credit card company.

The Vergas resident was advised by sheriff deputies on how to be aware of future potential scams.

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