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SPORTS

SECTION B • THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2020

Voss, Hesebeck named to all-conference team

Jackson County Central seniors Rudy Voss and Andrew Hesebeck have been named to the all-Big South Conference boys' basketball team for the West Division.

Voss earns the honor for the third straight year, joining Jon Harmening as the only JCC boys to be named first-team all-conference three times. Hesebeck is first-team for the first time after being honorable mention last season.

Voss set a school record with 735 points this season and his 191 assists were three short of the single-season school mark. He added 160 rebounds and 72 assists this season.

For his career, Voss set the school record with 2,108 points and 536 as-

sists. He's also second in steals (241) and fourth in rebounds (528).

Hesebeck scored 495 points this season, which is eighth in school history. His 228 rebounds are the sixth in a single season in team history.

Hesebeck caps his career with 1,140 points (fifth in team history) and 531 rebounds (third in team history).

The Huskies were 9-3 in the Big South Conference — tying their best BSC record ever — and 20-7 on the season.

The compete all-conference team is online at jacksoncountypilot.com and lakefieldstandard.com.



Rudy Voss



Andrew Hesebeck

Wolff sets yet another school record with fifth all-conference honor

Sadie Voss named to honorable-mention team

Jackson County Central senior Alaina Wolff has earned all-conference honors for a school-record fifth time.

Wolff has been named to the first-team all-Big South Conference team for the West Division for the third straight season after earning honorable-mention honors twice.

The only other three-time first-team all-conference players in team history are Angie Hummel, Whitney Burmeister and Kaylee Burmeister. Hummel and Kaylee Burmeister were each also an honorable-mention selection once, but no previous Husky had been on five all-conference squads.

The record is yet another for Wolff, who finished her career with a team-record 2,041 points and has the record for most points in a game (44) in school history.

Wolff's 466 points this

season are fifth-most in team history and she broke her own team record with 66 3-pointers this season.

The versatile senior also had 115 rebounds, 72 assists and 72 steals this season.

Wolff was also named to the Class AA honorable-mention all-state team by the Minnesota Girls Basketball Coaches Association and was on the Class AA academic all-state team.

Voss is honorable-mention selection

Sophomore Sadie Voss was named to the honorable-mention all-conference team for the first time in her career. She scored 407 points this season and added 127 rebounds, 60 assists and 55 steals.

Her 59 3-pointers this season ranks third in team history and she twice tied the school record with seven 3-pointers in a game. She had JCC's highest single-game point total this season, scoring a career-high 36 in a win at Pipestone.

The Huskies were 3-9 in the conference and had an overall record of 11-15.

The compete all-conference team is online at jacksoncountypilot.com and lakefieldstandard.com.



Alaina Wolff



Sadie Voss

Wierson: 'Sports are who I am'

(Editor's note: In the absence of actual sports, a Jackson County Central coach will be featured each week with a series of questions and answers. The series starts this week with head baseball coach Mike Wierson.)

Where did you grow up?
Maxwell, Iowa (Collins-Maxwell-Baxter Raiders)

What sports did you play in high school?
Football, basketball, track and field, golf, baseball

What were some of you and your team's accomplishments in high school?

Team:
Football — Tied for District champs two consecutive years in football as junior and senior.

Basketball — Played in District finals once as a sophomore in basketball and twice played in district semifinals.

Track and field — Conference Champions in Track and Field or runner-up all four years.

Golf — Conference runner-up

Baseball — District runner-up freshman year and senior year. Lost in semifinals two years in between.

Individual:
1. Lettered four years in baseball and track and field, three years in football, basketball and golf

2. Football All-District junior and senior year. All-State selection senior year

3. Ran in the Drake Relays in the 4x100 meter relay my junior year. Ran at state track and field in the 4x800 meter relay as a sophomore.

4. All-District team junior and senior years in baseball

5. All-District senior year in basketball

Where did you go to college?

Iowa State University and Southwest Minnesota State University

Did you play sports in college? If so, which ones?

Football — walk-on at ISU then transferred to SMSU to finish career

Position — Receiver and special teams extraordinaire

Crazy story but I was planning to walk on to the ISU baseball team when I applied to ISU and they dropped the baseball team

that summer so I decided to take a chance at football. Great decision! But I was a Cyclone fan from forever so I wanted to see if I could do it. Seeing my name on the door a couple days after my try-outs was one of my greatest achievements!

What were some of you and your team's accomplishments in college?

1. Beating the Hawkeyes in Iowa City is always fun

2. We made it to the Humanitarian Bowl my first year at ISU. It is played in Boise, Idaho, on what is known as the "Smurf Turf." It was an amazing experience.

My greatest personal accomplishment was getting voted a team captain by my teammates my senior year at SMSU. Knowing that the hard work, early mornings, late nights, extra reps, etc. weren't unnoticed.

What is the most memorable game you ever played in and why?

I can't say that I have just one that is my favorite. I remember single games that I had "big games" and my stats were great or I made some great play. Teams I was on played in a lot of big games and lost many of them, unfortunately, but still were games I'll never forget. I had my most success as a team playing for the Jackson Bulls where we played in three state tournaments and in my final season won first round and took one of the best teams (they ended up runner-up) to the end in a 2-0 loss second round as my final game.

But there is something about football...my final high school football game and final college football games are probably my most memorable, not because of the outcomes but because of what happened after the games. Lots of smiles and lots of tears!! My two younger brothers were on the team with me in high school and one I was able to play with at SMSU also. Those bonds were pretty cool.

What did you learn from playing sports?

Passion, hard work, confidence, humility, competitiveness, communication skills, integrity, teamwork, toughness, compassion, desire, intensity, focus and more. Sports are who I am, and why I am who I am. My parents and grandparents always talked about how



PHOTOS BY DAN CONDON

Mike Wierson has been head baseball coach at Jackson County Central since 2014 and lists coaching at US Bank Stadium as one of his many highlights.

I had a ball of some sort in my hands all the time growing up. I was playing or doing something competitively all the time. Our family was super competitive in everything! My grandma would pitch to us all the time in backyard and no matter how many times we hit her with a comebacker she kept pitching! Toughness!

What coach or coaches have had the biggest influence on your life and why?

My dad!! He was my baseball coach from T-ball up through sixth-grade which was Little League just before junior high baseball started. My dad pushed all of us at every level. Preaching the importance of improvement. He always gave everyone a chance and stayed positive with all the kids.

My favorite memory was after games, T-ball through my last high school game, getting home and sitting across from him at the kitchen table talking about the team and the game. Things we did well and things we need to work on.

All of my coaches had a huge impact on my life, though, at every level and in every sport. I have taken

something from each of them that made me a better person!

Who was your favorite athlete growing up?

I have a ton of favorites from different times and sports but my favorite has to be Michael Jordan. His passion, grit, intensity, focus, competitiveness are things that I tried to replicate throughout my career. Kirby Puckett, Jerry Rice, Barry Sanders and Magic Johnson would be right up there too!

Who is your favorite athlete now?

Mike Trout — Incredible athlete but more than anything is how he goes about his business. Adam Thielen would also be one because I love the underdog!!

What sports have you coached and where?

Seventh-grade baseball — Marshall
High school football — Marshall
Eighth-grade basketball — Jackson
Eighth-grade baseball — Jackson
High school football — Jackson
High school basketball — Jackson

See **WIERSON** on B2

Espenson lone Eagle honored by BSC

Windom Area senior Kyle Espenson is the lone Eagle boys' hockey player named to the all-Big South Conference team.

Espenson earns first-team honors for the second straight season.

Espenson led the team with 28 goals, 21 assists and 49 points this season.

The Eagles finished 7-9 in the conference and were 8-15-1 overall.



Mike Wierson (right) played for the Jackson Bulls for several years, but now that his playing days are over has his sights set on a club championship in golf.

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FOUR BASKETBALL PLAYERS HONORED

One year ago, March 28, 2019

Two Jackson County Central boys and two JCC girls have earned all-conference honors for the West Division of the Big South Conference. Junior Rudy Voss earned first-team honors for the boys and junior Andrew Hesebeck is an honorable-mention pick for a team that went 8-4 in the division. Voss earns the honor for the second straight season. For the JCC girls, senior Melissa Brandt and junior Alaina Wolff are both first-team selections. It's the second time Wolff has earned the honor after being honorable-mention twice. The JCC girls were 3-9 in the division.

THREE HUSKIES NAMED TO ALL-CONFERENCE TEAMS

Five years ago, March 26, 2015

Three JCC girls' basketball players were honored by the Big South Conference and four were recognized by the state. Senior Kaylee Burmeister was named all-conference for the West Division and seniors Sydney Eddy and Rachel Johnson were honorable-mention selections. Burmeister, Eddy and seniors Sarah Brandt and Julia Schumann were named to the all-state academic team and the Huskies earned the silver academic award for posting a grade-point average of 3.732.

JUNIORS WIN DONKEY BASKETBALL TOURNEY

10 years ago, April 1, 2010

The JCC juniors beat the seniors in the finals of the donkey basketball tournament at the high school. Evan Tufvesson used an assist from Zach Post to make the only basket of the championship game as the juniors won 2-0. The juniors opened with an 8-6 win over a group of businessmen and businesswomen and the seniors made it to the finals by beating a team of JCC staff members 12-8. The event served as a fundraiser for the post-prom committee, with approximately \$2,200 being raised.

THINCLADS OPEN SEASON INDOORS

25 years ago, March 30, 1995 – Jackson County Pilot

The Jackson Blue Jays track and field team opened the season with an indoor meet in Mankato and both the boys and girls finished third. The girls had six second-place finishes, including four in individual races. Kelley Baker finished second in the 1,600-meter run (5:55) and the 800-meter run (2:44.65). Sharon Soto finished second in the 55-meter dash (8.2) and 160-meter dash (23.81). Individuals finishing second for the Blue Jay boys were Matt Williams (1,600; 5:18), Lance Petrich (400; 56.88), Dan Copley (shot put; 45'.75") and David Rowland (pole vault; 10'6").

RADEMACHER MEMBER OF NATIONAL CHAMPS AGAIN

25 years ago, March 30, 1995 – Lakefield Standard

Jenni Rademacher has been a college basketball player for three seasons and she's been a key member of three national championship teams. Rademacher is a starting guard for the North Dakota State University Bison, which won its third straight Division II national title with a 98-85 win over Portland State. NDSU finished with a 32-0 record, becoming the first Division II team in history to finish a season undefeated. Rademacher scored 17 points in the title game and had three rebounds, two assists and one steal. She averaged 11.4 points per game in five tournament games for the Bison and her 18 tournament steals were tied for the most among all Division II players.

WIERSON: Highlights aplenty

Continued from B1

High school baseball – Jackson

Why did you get into coaching?

I love sports and they have helped me to become who I am today. I wanted to be able to use the same platform my coaches had to help the next generations of young people. I love the numbers, the odds, the underdog stories; all of it! It gives me something that I love to do every day!

What are your favorite things about being a coach?

1. Relationships – when you put the time, effort, sweat and tears into something as a group/team there are amazing relationships that form from it.

2. Seeing kids' "Ah-ha" moments. When they have been working so hard for starts to click.

3. Seeing the growth from Day 1 to the end of an athlete's career. The hard work and where it has brought them as an individual.

4. The competitiveness – I'll never lose that.

How would you describe your coaching philosophy?

I try to put the kids first

in every situation. Make their experience as great as it can be for as many of them as possible. But with that said, I struggle with my competitive side at times as they conflict from time to time. I try to teach and talk about how these sports helped build me in more than just the skills of the game. They made me who I am as a person. I hope that gets across to my players. I also try to instill an understanding that as "IMPORTANT" as sports are – and, believe me, I do love sports – that the person they are outside of sports is more important than any accomplishment they will ever receive from sports. I have been really lucky to work with some amazing athletes, but more importantly I have worked with some amazing young men!

What has been the biggest highlight of your coaching career?

All of the players that have come back and become friends! It is the one thing when I got into coaching that I had not really thought about but it has brought me the most joy! Seeing them after they are done with high school and the accomplishments

they had made is just amazing!

What is your favorite memory as a coach?

I've got a LOT, here are few off the top of my head:

1. Brett Larson's dinger against Marshall.

2. Brody Anderson's dinger against Redwood.

3. Getting to play baseball in US Bank Stadium.

4. State tournaments in basketball.

5. Taylor Christopher's 3 in eighth-grade basketball to send it to overtime. Pretty sure we were playing in Brewster that day. And we did win the game too!

6. Keegan Klontz starting a game and coming back in to close a game against Adrian. Also a win!

7. Watching all the kids get to amazing milestones – Easton Bahr's hits record, Ryan Christopher's steals in basketball and ERA for baseball, Bodey Behrends' blocks, Jon Harmenting's rebounds, Andrew Hesebeck and Rudy Voss' points, etc. There are so many. I have really been blessed to coach some amazing athletes!

What is the biggest thing you'd like to accomplish yet in your coaching career?

State tournament as the head baseball coach. A state championship on top of making the tournament would be OK too!

What are your other hobbies outside of coaching?

I love getting together and laughing with family and friends! Many times we're doing something competitive while we're together but the times together are the most important. Time at the lake with family and friends in the summer.

I still love to play anything, but my personal sports goal now is to win a club tournament in golf since my baseball days are behind me. Look out, Brett Benson!

I love watching my kids grow (too fast, by the way). It is my favorite thing to do now-a-days.

I did not sign up for a Texas safari

When I signed up for this monthlong vacation, I expected to be on a golf/pool trip. I planned to spend my afternoons at the golf course and/or the swimming pool. I had not planned to be on a Texas safari.

But yet, last Tuesday night, a hunting safari is exactly what I was on. A Texas hunting safari is just a little different than an African one.

Instead of hunting elephants, giraffes, lions and what not, I was hunting a cockroach. But it was almost as dangerous; I was armed with only a broom.

Just like an African safari, it was a big game; that bug was 1 1/2 to 2 inches long. And, let me tell you, he was game. Too game for my liking. I definitely did not like him scurrying around our living room floor. That was not fair game.

I do know the next time I buy a watch, I am going to buy a cockroach watch. They can take a licking and keep on ticking. I whacked that cockroach with the broom hard enough to crack even the thickest of skulls.

I whacked him so hard and often I felt like a wife teaching her husband a lesson. Just like with a husband, it was to no avail. The only thing that cracked was the broom.

As it was looking pretty dead – actually cockroaches do not look pretty when dead – we snapped and sent the critter's picture to let the homeowner know of our visitor.

Only, as we were taking the picture, we realized the once-thought-dead bug was alive and kicking. At least kicking his legs. I think it was an opossumroach and faked being dead. Or else he thought we wanted it to stand still and pose for its picture. I

wanted it dead.

After a little more bug abuse, a little bug-a-boo-boo, or at least hoping to give the bug a boo-boo, I thought him finally deceased and tossed him into our outdoor trash can.

Ten minutes later, when I threw out another bag of trash, I was surprised to see the deceased was not still deceased but still alive and still trying to kick his broken legs.

PETA might not like it, but I did a bit more whacking until he fell further down into the garbage can, beyond the reach of my whacking stick. My hunt was over.

To be fair to my adversary, nothing, not even a cockroach, wants to be called a cockroach. It might have just been a palm bug. That is what our landlord thought anyway.

Who knows for sure? According to the google images of both cockroaches and palm bugs, they look exactly alike! Both looked like the photo of our specimen. Except our picture had a bug with broken legs.

I have a nagging suspicion when you want the bug to feel good, you call it a palm bug, but when you want it squished and do not care for its feelings, it is a cockroach. Ours was a cockroach.

Even though I played Lizzie Borden and gave that bug 40 whacks, he got in the last whack. The next morning, I bent over to grab something off the coffee table and my back snapped out of whack.

I even checked the trash can to see if that whacked-out bug was in there grinning at my being whacked in the back. Fair justice, he would have said. More bug whacking is what I would have done, back out of

whack or not.

I suppose the whacked bug and my whacked back are par for the course in a world knocked out of whack by the coronavirus. No matter how bad it gets, we will never know for sure how bad it could have become if we had not taken the safety precautions.

Yes, the precautions are an inconvenience, but I will take that over have to bury a loved one. I am not worried for me, but I have several loved ones who I am not ready to live without.

The kicker for me – the thing that kicked me in the seat of my pants about the seriousness of coronavirus – was the action taken by professional sports. They would not cancel or postpone if it was not serious. They did not act on hype or panic, but by the word of true experts.

Well, maybe they were concerned there would be no toilet paper available for the restrooms. It seems for every epidemic or pandemic, toilet paper is the first thing hoarded. It tells me where our mind is at.

And now, as there is no new school news to report, and I have another possible safari to prepare for, I close for this week. Until next week, hunker down, students do your distance learning and know that eventually life will get back to normal. Go, Huskies!



WIDE WRITE
Stephen A. Condon

Swearingen Field to get new lights

Jackson County Central School Board members Monday night approved spending around \$180,000 on new lights for the varsity football field in Jackson. "We got a great bid," superintendent Barry Schmidt said, "about \$40,000 less than expect-

ed."

The lights will be paid for with long-term maintenance funds.

Board member Jody Thrush Withers said the new lights will replace old ones that have become a serious safety issue.

The lights are another

in a long list of improvements at the football field the last few years. Included among the recent renovations are a new patio area, new ticket booth, a Huskies sign, new sidewalks and a new scoreboard.

SPORTS CALENDAR

Thursday, March 26

No events

Friday, March 27

No events

Saturday, March 28

No events

Sunday, March 29

No events

Monday, March 30

No events

Tuesday, March 31

No events

Wednesday, April 1

No events

twitter

@PilotSports

March 17, 10:58 a.m.

I've got a few things in mind for the next couple weeks, but if you've got sports story ideas, now would be a good time to send me an email or message.

March 16, 3:36 p.m.

Jackson County Central senior Alaina Wolff has been named to the all-Big South Conference girls' basketball team and sophomore Sadie Voss is an honorable-mention pick.

March 16, 3:35 p.m.

Jackson County Central seniors Rudy Voss and Andrew Hesebeck have been named to the all-Big South Conference boys' basketball team.

March 12, 10:13 p.m.

Jack Brinkman took two charges tonight. That gives him 100 charges taken in his career.

Follow for more updates

ATHLETES OF THE WEEK



Name: Seniors Carter Olson, Kobe Foster and Gage Mekosch

The week that was: Olson, Foster and Mekosch worked hard in practice every day to help the JCC boys' basketball team and provided immeasurable support from the bench all season.

Coach's comments: "That's rare, especially because so many people want that instant gratification," Alex Hein said. "They want to be the star of the show. For guys to buy in and understand, even though it doesn't show up in the states, what they did was still important to our team – you don't see that very often."

Athletes of the week sponsored by:

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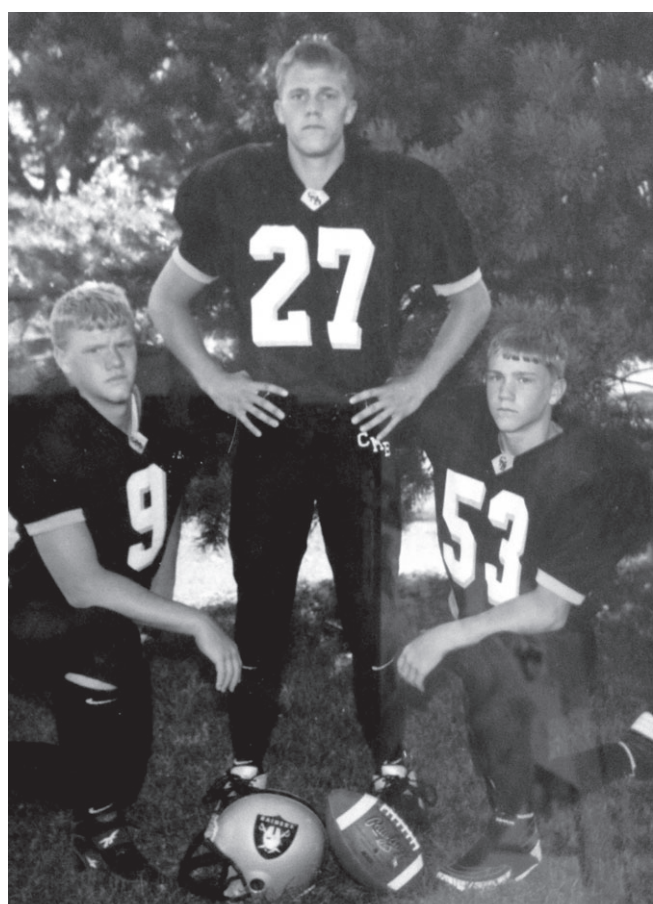


PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE WIERSON
Mike Wierson (center) with younger brothers, Joe (left) and Kent, as members of the Collins-Maxwell-Baxter High School football team.

A SEASON TO CELEBRATE



PHOTOS BY DAN CONDON

Members of the Jackson County Central boys' basketball team, including Jack Brinkman (from left), Alex Bretzman, Rudy Voss, Noah Carr and Caleb Soleta, celebrate the team's Section 3AA championship after beating Minnewaska Area 69-60 in the championship game.

Despite not getting to play in the Class AA state tournament because of its cancelation related to the COVID-19 virus, the Jackson County Central boys' basketball team had plenty to celebrate this season, from the Section 3AA championship to

milestone moments to plenty of record-breaking performances. This year's senior class left a remarkable legacy on and off the court, but the cupboard is far from bare for the Huskies as a big class of juniors prepares to step up next season.

Seniors leave a legacy on and off the court

by DAN CONDON
Sports Editor

by for the rest of our lives."

Two big stars

There's no denying the success the Jackson County Central Class of 2020 had on the basketball court.

The Huskies were 52-29 during a three-year stretch, culminating with this year's 20-7 record and Section 3AA championship.

But boys' basketball coach Alex Hein said their character and leadership far exceed anything they've done between the lines.

"They've been tremendous," Hein said. "Obviously their on-court accomplishments are pretty amazing. You can see that by looking at our record book. But I told them over and over, I wanted them to work with the youth and the younger grades because I wanted their influence to spread so the things they did would continue in the future."

That'll leave a mark on the program for years to come.

"I think the impact of these guys will be felt long after they graduate," Hein said. "You'll see their impact and influence on grades coming up. You can't keep any record book or stats on it, but, more than anything, that's the most important thing to our program. That just shows the character of these guys."

Senior Rudy Voss said that's something in which he and his classmates took pride.

"I think the community knows what we mean to each other," he said. "That we're more role models and more leaders than you can ask for from a senior group. That's our motto and that's what we'll stand

Voss and Andrew Hesebeck highlighted this year's senior class. The duo became the first pair of teammates in JCC basketball history to each score at least 1,000 points and find their names scattered all over the record book.

Voss is first in team history in points scored (2,108), assists (536), 3-pointers made (292) and games played (112). He also has the record for points in a season (735) and game (43), as well as points-per-game for a season (28.3) and career (18.8).

Voss also ranks second in career steals (241) and fourth in career rebounds (528).

Hesebeck finishes his career third in rebounding (531) and fifth in scoring (1,140) in team history. He did most of his work in the paint, but also made 86 3-pointers, which ranks 12th in team history. His 13.6 points-per-game is fifth on the career chart and his 495 points scored this season ranks eighth.

Talent all around

Voss and Hesebeck are far from the only players worthy of attention. Jack Brinkman and Dominic Bargfrede tied Hesebeck with 82 career games played, which is seventh in team history. Noah Carr played in 74 games and Parker Benda saw action in 70.

Throw in defensive specialists Nathaniel Post and Colby Ringeisen, the enthusiastic Alex Bretzman and sharpshooter Bradley Buhl and the Huskies had 10 players who saw regular playing time much of the season.

Kobe Foster, Carter Ol-



PHOTO COURTESY OF KATIE STAI

Jackson County Central seniors celebrate after winning the sub-section championship five days prior to winning the Section 3AA title. Head coach Alex Hein said the group of 13 will leave a legacy on and off the court for years to come. Seniors are (front, from left): Kobe Foster and Gage Mekosch. Middle: Andrew Hesebeck, Nathaniel Post, Alex Bretzman, Jack Brinkman and Colby Ringeisen. Back: Bradley Buhl, Carter Olson, Rudy Voss, Noah Carr, Parker Benda and Dominic Bargfrede.

son and Gage Mekosch had an equally important role, even if they didn't get the minutes the others did.

"One through 13, they all knew what their job was, what their role was, whether it was in a game or in practice or film," Hein said. "All 13 of them showed up every day and pushed each other so much. That is why I am so fortunate to coach this group."

Brinkman ranks fifth in career assists (283), 10th in 3-pointers made (103) and 24th in career scoring (529 points).

Buhl, who rejoined the team midway through the season after going out for wrestling, ranks seventh in 3-pointers made (114) and is 26th in career scoring (489 points).

Bargfrede ranks seventh in career blocks (13), 16th in career rebounds (281) and of them scored (395 points). Post scored 70 points and grabbed 93 rebounds this season and also finished second with 31 steals.

Bretzman scored 57 points this season and grabbed 39 rebounds while bringing unmatched energy.

Accepting change

Carr scored 560 points in his career and is 14th with 289 career rebounds. He lost his starting spot after an illness this season, but didn't let it affect his performance.

"He was a starter and got sick midseason so we decided to bring him off the bench," Hein said. "He never complained. That just says a lot about his character."

Benda had a similar situation, seeing his minutes fluctuate the second half of the season. The same went for Ringeisen.

"Parker, some games he'd play a lot of minutes and some games he didn't play very many," Hein said. "That says a lot about these guys. Game to game their

minutes might change, but they continue to bring their best effort into whatever role they have. I hope the younger kids got to see the things like that."

'Rare' group

While their minutes didn't match that of the rest of the seniors, Foster, Olson and Mekosch were huge assets to the team.

"It was amazing," Hein said. "They were itching to get in, but every game they were like, 'We have to have a lot of energy.' It was cool to see how pumped they were to be on the bench and get their teammates excited. I'm very fortunate to coach guys like that."

Hein said having players stick it out knowing their

JCC Huskies boys' basketball team

0	Noah Carr	12
1	Caleb Soleta	11
2	Rudy Voss	12
3	Carter Ahrens	11
4	Parker Benda	12
5	Alex Bretzman	12
10	Jack Brinkman	12
11	Nathaniel Post	12
12	Colby Ringeisen	12
14	Gavin Jacobsen	11
20	Bradley Buhl	12
21	Gage Mekosch	12
22	Dominic Bargfrede	12
23	Trevin Gaustad	11
24	Carter Olson	12
32	Kobe Foster	12
33	Andrew Hesebeck	12
42	Clay Cranston	11
	Nick Stammer	11
	Jon Hall	11
	Trevon Zeman	11
	Moris Lucht	11

Head coach: Alex Hein
Assistant coaches: Mike Wierson, Blaise Jacobsen, Eric Kruger, Charlie Clarksean
Student managers: Ryne Pauling, Jordan Nichols



Members of the Jackson County Central boys' basketball team celebrate their Section 3AA championship after beating Minnewaska Area. Team members are (front, from left): Caleb Soleta, Jack Brinkman, Bradley Buhl, Nathaniel Post, Alex Bretzman, Colby Ringeisen, Gage Mekosch, Trevin Gaustad and student manager Jordan Nichols. Back: Assistant coach Blaise Jacobsen, head coach Alex Hein, Gavin Jacobsen, Carter Ahrens, Clay Cranston, Andrew Hesebeck, Rudy Voss, Kobe Foster, Parker Benda, Noah Carr, Carter Olson, Dominic Bargfrede and assistant coaches Mike Wierson and Eric Kruger.

PHOTOS BY DAN CONDON

2019-20 results

Opponent	Result	Score
Luverne	W	79-65
Redwood	W	102-94
Waseca	L	78-94
Worthington	L	73-74
Windom	W	76-64
USC	W	95-62
Pipestone	W	63-53
Fairmont	W	68-64
Estherville LC	W	83-62
GHEC/T/ML	W	70-65
Marshall	L	58-95
Luverne	W	86-64
Redwood	W	94-88
Worthington	W	76-65
Windom	W	104-71
St. James	W	88-49
Pipestone	W	82-63
Spirit Lake	W	90-74
Marshall	L	67-93
Caledonia	L	107-119
MCW	W	76-59
BEA	L	62-73
SF Christian	L	103-105
New Ulm	W	101-86
Section 3AA		
Pipestone	W	70-54
Fairmont	W	56-51
Minnewaska	W	69-60

Overall record: 20-7
BSC record: 9-3



SCENES FROM SECTIONS

Above: Rudy Voss celebrates during the final seconds of Jackson County Central's Section 3AA championship. Top right: Members of the JCC boys' basketball team line up for the national anthem prior to the section finals. Right: JCC players and students celebrate the Huskies' section title. Bottom right: JCC players Gavin Jacobsen (from left), Trevin Gaustad, Carter Olson, Gage Mekosch, Kobe Foster, Colby Ringeisen, Carter Ahrens and Parker Benda and JCC fans celebrate a 3-pointer in the section finals. Below: JCC fans cheer during the Huskies' win over Pipestone to open the section tournament. Bottom: Andrew Hesebeck (left) and Alex Bretzman celebrate JCC's sub-section championship. For hundreds more photos from the entire season, go to jacksoncountypilot.com or lakefieldstandard.com.



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PHOTO BY DAN CONDON

Jackson County Central senior Jack Brinkman took charge on offense throughout his career and took charges — 100 of them in his career — on defense.

TAKING CHARGE

Brinkman draws 100 charges in three-year career

by DAN CONDON
Sports Editor

Jackson County Central senior guard Jack Brinkman was a key component of the Huskies' offense the last three years.

He finished fifth in school history with 283 career assists, is 10th in career 3-pointers (103) and ranks 24th in career points (529).

But it's on the other end of the court where Brinkman made his mark.

The diminutive guard — he was the smallest player on the court nearly his entire career — drew two charges in the Section 3AA championship game against Minnewaska Area, giving him exactly 100 for his career.

"He's the smallest guy in height, but one of the toughest guys you'll ever have," head coach Alex Hein said. "It says a lot that he's willing to get in front of a big guy and take that charge for the team."

And there were some big guys, Brinkman said.

"The hardest one I ever took was on (Mitch) Irlbeck from Redwood Valley my sophomore year," he said. "He was 6 foot, 3 inches, 220 pounds and

muscular. He ran me over." The Cardinals didn't take it easy on Brinkman after that, either.

"The next year another kid from Redwood got me," Brinkman said. "He busted my lip in half."

But the hard contact never deterred Brinkman from taking a little pain for the team.

"I haven't really barreled out of the way," he said. "I normally just take it."

Learning the trade

Brinkman was tasked with guarding the opponent's player most likely to drive to the hoop during his sophomore season. In doing so, he quickly found out how to get in the right spot to take a charge.

"The first few years I normally ended up on the guy who would drive the ball," he said. "I would look to help on the backside. When there was a drive from the opposite guy, I was in the lane to help."

And Brinkman knew he wasn't going to outjump whoever was coming his way.

"I knew I wasn't going to go up and block anybody," he said. "I'd just get my feet set and hope to take a charge."

But Brinkman and Hein say there's a lot more than just being in good position

to take a charge.

It starts in the film room, Hein said.

"Jack's charges are a lot more than getting his feet set," he said. "It's watching film, anticipating what the offense is trying to do and beating them to it."

And sometimes selling it a bit.

"I never would cover up where most people do," Brinkman said. "I would put my hands up because it makes it look more realistic."

'Desire to win'

Hein said Brinkman's willingness to put his body on the line for his team shows just how much winning meant.

"He's willing to lay it all on the line for the team to get the ball back," Hein said. "That says a lot about his desire to win, his desire to make his team better."

It made the Huskies better on defense as others followed Brinkman's lead.

"It was very contagious," Hein said. "Rudy (Voss) had six charges, Andrew (Hesebeck) took a charge or two, Brad (Buhl) took three. Things like that, people saw what Jack was doing and it got other people involved. They saw how big of a momentum swing it was."

And it got everyone fired up.

"Our bench gets into it when that happens," Hein said. "It shows our guys are aware of what the other team's trying to do and they're anticipating. That is cool to see guys willing to step in and take a charge."

GAINING TRUST

by DAN CONDON
Sports Editor

Jackson County Central boys' basketball coach Alex Hein said one of his best coaching moves hasn't been drawing up the perfect play, orchestrating the perfect practice or sending in the right sub.

It's building trust.

Hein borrowed an idea from Clemson football coach Dabo Swinney and started the "Trust Chair" a few games into the 2018-19 season.

One player or coach sits in the chair prior to every home game and some road games and has three standard questions to answer before teammates can fire just about anything his way.

"We did it to build trust, to get guys to know each other a little better, to grow the chemistry," Hein said. "It's done exactly that. It's exceeded my expectations."

To the point where it's one of Hein's proudest moves so far.

"It's been one of the best things I've done in my coaching career," Hein said.

Three base questions, then anything

Each session in the Trust Chair starts with the player or coach answering three base questions: Who's your hero, what's the biggest highlight in your life and what's your biggest hardship?

Hein said the only stipulation is players can't list their parents as their heroes.

"A lot of them talked about their parents, which is great," Hein said. "But we want to know who outside your family has made a big influence."

After those questions are answered, the floor opens up to teammates.

The questions cover a variety of things, but Hein said the most popular revolve around their biggest regret, favorite part of school, what gets them up in the morning and what their future plans are.

"It's been amazing to see some kids open up and talk about personal struggles," he said. "They'll talk about things that challenge them, things they're proud of, things they have overcome."

And it can run the gamut of emotions.

"Sometimes it can get



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALEX HEIN

An old orange chair — the Trust Chair — has proven to be one of the most important parts of the Jackson County Central boys' basketball team the last few seasons.

really emotional," Hein said. "Sometimes it can get really funny. I'm so surprised how willing the kids are to share their stories."

Building relationships, trust with teammates

What is said in the Trust Chair doesn't leave the room. But it can be used for players to help each other on or off the court.

"Some of these kids open up about some of this stuff and their teammates have been willing to help them out with it," Hein said. "It's been cool to see how teammates have been helping each other in different areas."

"We get to know them better," senior Jack Brinkman said. "You get to know some things that you didn't know were happening. We understand what our teammates might be going through outside of basketball."

Brinkman said it's an exercise that has helped everyone form a bond.

"Most of us know the little things, but when you say that thing, it makes you vulnerable to everybody," he said. "It brings everyone together."

It also brings everyone

together on the court. "If they're willing to trust each other and open up in the locker room, that makes them more willing to trust each other on the court," Hein said.

And it builds relationships between just about everybody.

"We're all teammates, but some might not be as close," Brinkman said. "It gives you a different perspective on them. It builds a bond you never thought was possible."

"WE DID IT TO BUILD TRUST, TO GET GUYS TO KNOW EACH OTHER A LITTLE BETTER, TO GROW THE CHEMISTRY. IT'S DONE EXACTLY THAT. IT'S EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS."

Alex Hein

Tradition will continue

Hein said all the coaches and seniors sat on the Trust Chair this year, but not all of the juniors. They'll get their chance next season, as will the rest of the team.

"Not everyone got on the chair this year, but everyone got to watch it," Hein said. "Some of the juniors got to experience it. They're excited to get on it next year."

And it's piqued the interest of the younger players.

"Some of the sophomores and freshmen see you carry a chair on the bus and they're asking about it," Hein said. "They're excited, too. That's one of our traditions now and they're looking forward to it."

SENIORS: Leave lasting legacy

Continued from C1

minutes will be limited is far from the norm.

"That's rare, especially because so many people want that instant gratification," he said. "They want to be the star of the show. For guys to buy in and understand, even though it doesn't show up in the stats, what they did was still important to our team — you don't see that very often."

'Brothers for life'

This year's seniors formed a bond that

came with playing together for a decade.

It led to each of them wanting team success over anything else.

"So many pictures you see, even the guys who didn't play knew they had a job to bring energy on the bench and be supportive," Hein said. "For me, that's one of the most amazing things about this group is how each knew they had a role and each fulfilled their role every day."

Buhl said the group of seniors was a big reason why he wanted to get back

on the team this winter.

"It was a big factor in that," he said. "This is a group of guys you can talk to about literally anything on this planet and they'll always have your back. I respect them all. I love them all."

Brinkman said it's a group he'll never forget.

"They mean everything," he said. "They'll be brothers for life. The moments we've made are never ending and I appreciate every single one of them and love them."

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JUNIOR • #3



PARKER BENDA
SENIOR • #4



ALEX BRETZMAN
SENIOR • #5

CUTTING THE NETS

Members of the Jackson County Central boys' basketball team cut down the net after winning the sub-section and Section 3AA championship games.



JACK BRINKMAN
SENIOR • #10



NATHANIEL POST
SENIOR • #11



COLBY RINGEISEN
SENIOR • #12



GAVIN JACOBSEN
JUNIOR • #14



BRADLEY BUHL
SENIOR • #20



GAGE MEKOSCH
SENIOR • #21



DOMINIC BARGFREDE
SENIOR • #22



TREVIN GAUSTAD
JUNIOR • #23



CARTER OLSON
SENIOR • #24



KOBE FOSTER
SENIOR • #32



ANDREW HESEBECK
SENIOR • #33



CLAY CRANSTON
JUNIOR • #42



JORDAN NICHOLS
STUDENT MANAGER



RYNE PAULING
STUDENT MANAGER



ALEX HEIN
HEAD COACH

Juniors ready to step into the spotlight next season

Practice time, JV games have juniors prepared

by DAN CONDON
Sports Editor

During its playoff run that ended with a Section 3AA championship, the Jackson County Central boys' basketball team didn't have a junior play a single minute.

But that doesn't mean head coach Alex Hein isn't

confident in the group the Huskies have returning next season.

The Huskies had 13 seniors on the playoff roster and five juniors. During the season, four other juniors also dressed and got some varsity action.

Hein said those nine juniors all showed him something during varsity, junior-varsity and B-squad games and in practice.

"This junior class, I'm excited about," he said. "We got them a lot of games between JV and B-squad

because they are a talented group."

Carter Ahrens saw the most action this season, coming off the bench during the first half of the year. He made 13 3-pointers and finished the season with 54 points.

Trevin Gaustad saw action in 11 games, scoring seven points, and Gavin Jacobsen scored six points in eight games.

Other juniors on this year's team were Caleb Soleta, Clay Cranston, Nick Stammer, Jon Hall, Trevin Zeman and Moris Lucht.

"There's a lot of talent in this group," Hein said.

Practice makes perfect
While there were limited varsity minutes for this year's junior class, they got to play against a talented

group of seniors every day in practice — and gave them a run for their money.

"They were in practice going against our seniors every day," Hein said. "A lot of drills and a lot of days they were winning. They brought a challenge every day for the seniors."

Hein said he saw big strides from the Class of 2021 all winter.

"You could see it right away at the start of the year, these guys wanted to compete because they saw these seniors com-

pete every day," Hein said. "Just being around the seniors, it brought out skills I hadn't seen yet in these guys. I saw them get better in practice."

I saw a lot of improvement."

They also were quick studies, allowing them to grasp everything thrown their way.

"This junior group is really quick to learn," Hein said. "We threw a lot of different things at them in practice. This team presses; this team plays a matchup zone. They did a good job of picking it up

quick. That gives me confidence that we can add new things next year."

More work still needed
Hein said offseason work will be key to getting this year's crop of juniors ready for the spotlight next season.

Ahrens put up 11,000 shots last season and fellow junior Caleb Thurmer took 10,250 shots last summer.

It's that kind of dedication that is needed again.

"They've got to get in the weight room, put up a lot of shots this summer," Hein said. "If they can buy into playing the roles, I think these juniors can be very successful. We'll also have to bring up some freshman and sophomores. I'm really excited about what we've got."

"A LOT OF DRILLS AND A LOT OF DAYS THEY WERE WINNING. THEY BROUGHT A CHALLENGE EVERY DAY FOR THE SENIORS."

Alex Hein

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