

Sports

St. Peter Herald



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Thursday, March 26, 2020

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

Senior Saints talk about possibility of no spring sports season

By PAT BECK
pbeck@stpeterherald.com

It's the spring of your senior year, your final chance to play high school sports.

You're among the best players on the team.

And you can't practice or play games with your friends and teammates because the state high school league banned high school activities until March 30 after a worldwide pandemic started impacting communities locally. It's really not something 17- and 18-year-old kids could have ever predicted.

But St. Peter and other area spring sports athletes are facing this reality. Delayed teams include boys and girls golf, baseball, softball, boys and girls track and boys tennis.

sume the season or cancel it, the *Herald* talked to some Saints athletes about how they're feeling and what they expect.

Heidi Mayo, 17, has been playing golf since age 5, and she said the idea of possibly not being able to finish off her senior year is difficult.

"I love to golf, and to have my last year of high school golf probably done is a hard thing," she said. "It's hard, because I couldn't play sections last year, because I hurt my wrist. This year, I wanted to do good, and then to find out the news that we probably won't be able to have a season, that was hard, because I worked so hard."

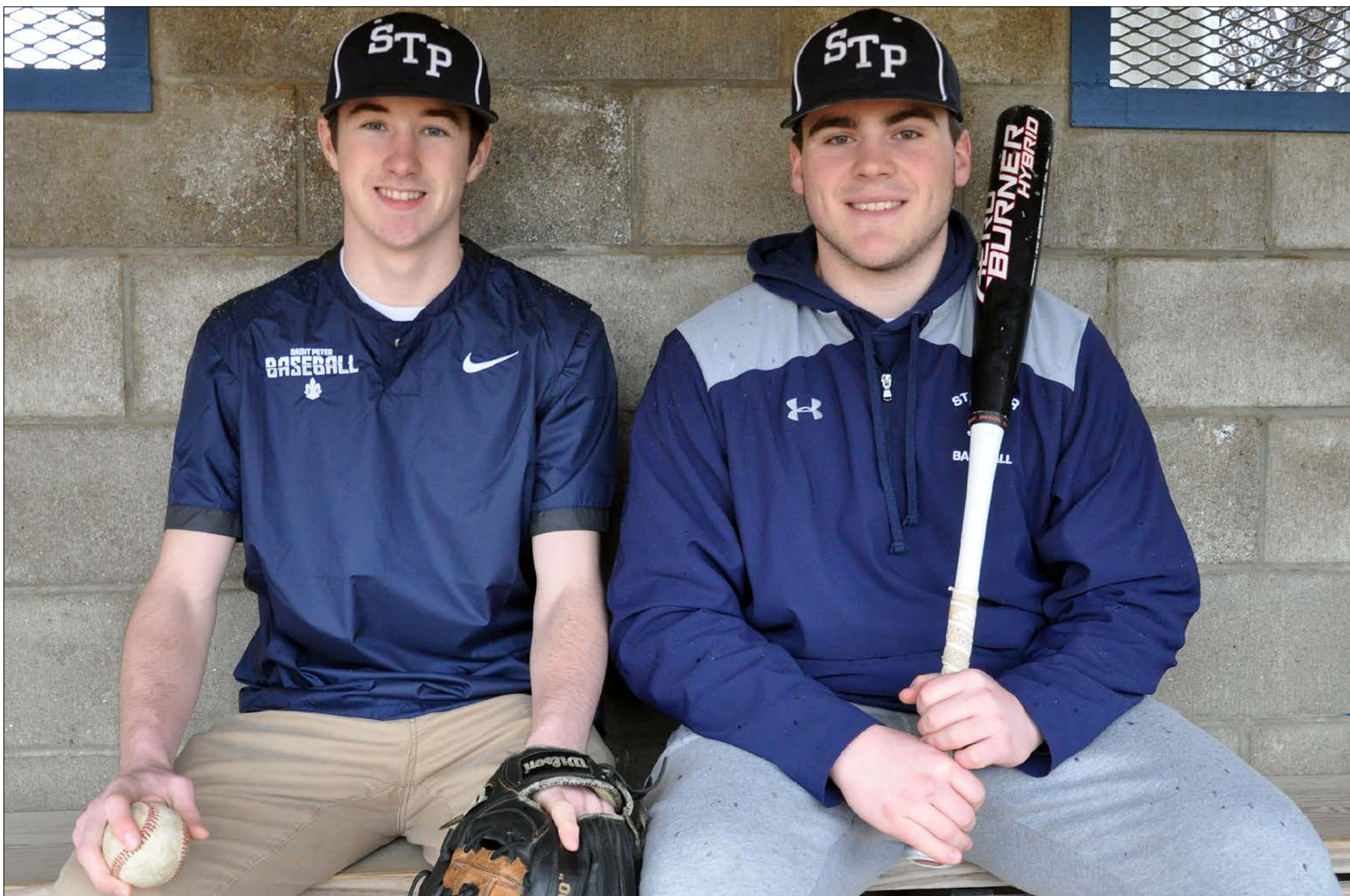
Rae Smit, 18, joined the team as a seventh grader after her friend, Mayo, invited her. Smit also said it hurts to have the season in limbo.



The Veterans Field baseball dugouts, stands and diamond are empty with the postponement of St. Peter High School sports. (Pat Beck/St. Peter Herald)

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BASEBALL



Infielders Kaden Oeltjenbruns (left) and Carson Kennedy are among the senior leaders on the St. Peter High School baseball team. (Pat Beck/St. Peter Herald)

Baseball seniors hope to lead Saints back to the big dance

By PAT BECK
pbeck@stpeterherald.com

St. Peter baseball team has some big shoes to fill from last season's fourth-place Class AA state team.

But seniors Kaden Oeltjenbruns and Carson Kennedy think the Saints can reload and have a competitive team again.

Eight seniors graduated including seven starters: pitcher/shortstop Andy Regner, pitcher Dylan Graft, second baseman Joey Baron, first baseman/pitcher Issac Peterson, right fielder Hunter Wilmes, center fielder Nick Morgan and catcher Tyson Sowder.

The Saints' returning starters are: Kennedy at pitcher, third and first, Oeltjenbruns at third, short and second, Wyatt Olson at first and pitcher and Ethan Volk in left field and pitcher.

Oeltjenbruns said the Saints still have a veteran team with years of experience.

"We've played baseball all our life," Oeltjenbruns said. "We know the game. All the situations we've been in can help. We know what to do. I feel like our pitching is pretty well. We have a bunch of people coming back, and Theo [Giedd] stepped up last year pitching in the state tournament."

See BASEBALL on 3B

COVID-19 IMPACT

The *St. Peter Herald* is continuing its regular captains stories for the 2020 St. Peter High School springs sports season, despite delays and potential cancellation of the season, due the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Information on the upcoming season will continue to be shared in the newspaper and at www.stpeterherald.com.

CANCELLATIONS

Exercising more challenging with fitness centers closing

By PAT BECK
pbeck@stpeterherald.com

Keith Bense, of St. Peter, hoped to work out March 17 at Live Well Fitness Center at River's Edge Hospital, but it closed its doors that day at noon, after the governor's statewide order closed all health and fitness centers.

"It's too bad it had to close," Bense said. "I like to try to get up here four or five times a week. (I've been doing that) for about six years."

Bense, a teacher's aide at St. Peter High School and retired teacher at Le Sueur-Henderson Schools, started working out to lose weight and rehab his knee after surgery. He had his left knee replaced six years ago and the second three years ago. He also stays active by riding his bike, lifting weights, a lot of walking and playing baseball with the St.

Peter over 50 team. His predicament is familiar for many across the region, as gyms and fitness centers are forced to close.

River's Edge Fitness Center

It was sunny and 44 degrees March 17, which made it a good afternoon for riding a bike. But when it's bad weather, Bense can't safely ride his bike outside, and he likes to work out on the stationary bikes in the fitness center. However, he understood the reason for the closing: to limit groups of people as part of efforts to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic virus.

The fitness center at River's Edge normally is open from 4 a.m. to midnight. In addition, four group exercise classes on arthritis, balance and Parkinson's disease taught by Live Well Fitness Exercise Physiologist Nicole

Boelter have been postponed. Boelter also understands the importance of avoiding the virus, but she emphasized the importance of people staying active for the health benefits.

It's especially important for older people, who makes up the majority of the members at Live Well Fitness.

"We understand the importance of staying active," Boelter said. Of course, it's also especially important for older people who are more at risk of getting sick or dying from the virus to stay safe and healthy at home.

She has designed home exercise ideas as the weeks progress, and she is putting ideas to stay active on the fitness center's Facebook Page. Boelter also is helping people in her classes to keep moving by emailing videos and written explanations of exercises.

See FITNESS on 3B



Keith Bense, of St. Peter rode his bike up to Live Well Fitness Center at River's Edge Hospital hoping to work out Tuesday, but it was closed because of the governor's order. Fitness centers and their clients are trying to make due with the closures across the region. (Pat Beck/St. Peter Herald)

GIRLS AND BOYS GOLF

St. Peter girls' golf captains lead experienced team

By PAT BECK
pbeck@stpeterherald.com

Senior co-captains Heidi Mayo and Rae Smit lead an experienced St. Peter girls golf team this season.

The Saints have eight letter winners: Mayo, Smit, juniors Mia Hansen, Emily Salfer, Maddie Doose and Anna LoFaro, sophomore Kate Salzwedel and freshman Adrianna Bixby.

No one has her position locked up, but Mayo, Smit, Hansen, Salfer and Doose took like the top five, head coach Pat Klubben said.

Mayo, a three-time varsity letter winner, will try to bounce back from a late season wrist injury last year and try to secure that No. 1 spot on the team, Klubben said.

Mayo said her "strength is driving. I'm able to get it really far, averaging 180 yards. And occasionally they do go straight."

She said she needs work on putting and chipping.

Smit, also a three-time varsity letter winner, also be fighting for the top spot this year.

"I can shoot straight, just not very far," Smit said. "As long as a stay in the fairway, I can get up there pretty easy. I



St. Peter girls golf captains Rae Smit (left) and Heidi Mayo are the senior leaders for the Saints. (Pat Beck/St. Peter Herald)

definitely need to work on getting more distance. But also my short game, putting and chipping. I need to work on my putting. That always helps."

Smith, Mayo and other girls practiced on the golf simulator at Gustavus Adolphus College.

"We use that one a lot," Smit said. "I've done it a few times a few weeks ago. It got cut off when the college closed this week."

Both agree that the entire team needs to work on the short game.

They also agree that the Saints work

CAPTAINS' LOGS

Heidi Mayo
Parents: Brian and Maegan Mayo
Grade: Senior
Position: 1-2
Honors: 3-time letter winner, team Gold Standard for academics, conference team champ as 9th-graders
Career bests: 18 (90 at Shoreland); 9 (41 at Shoreland)
Other sports: none
College plans: South Central for business management and possible transfer after 2 years

Rae Smit
Parents: Nicole Crosby and Paul Smit
Grade: Senior
Position: 1-3
Honors: 3-time letter winner, team Gold Standard for academics, conference team champ as 9th-graders
Career bests: 18 (92 at Waseca), 9 (45 at Waseca)
Other sports: Swimming
College plans: University of Wisconsin-River Falls to become an athletic trainer

well together as a team encouraging each other.

"We blend together personalitywise," Smit said. "We're always there for each other on the course. We cheer each other on and kind of get out of that hole. If we're having a bad day, we can always work ourselves out of it."

The team goals are to have fun and work as a team to make the team better, Mayo said.

Individually Smit said, "I want to be on the top 10 [leader] board at the end."

Mayo hopes to play on an even keel. "If I have a bad round, just to move on and try my best."

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St. Peter boys golf captains enter 6th year playing together

By PAT BECK
pbeck@stpeterherald.com

St. Peter senior tri-captains Cade Horner, Alex Wenner and Cole McCarthy started playing golf together as seventh-graders. But then they went different directions in spring sports.

Horner actually began playing golf at age 10 and stuck with it until joining the team as an eighth-grader. Wenner, as a sophomore, and McCarthy, as a junior, switched to golf after playing baseball.

The threesome agree that the team goal is to make the state tournament. They know that it may be tougher this season with defending state Class AA champion Holy Family and other teams moving to Section 2AA with St. Peter. But the captains still think the have a shot to get to the tourney.

Horner and Wenner also are shooting for state individually. McCarthy just wants to cut strokes off his score "to become better for my team and just to help us do better in our conference play and make to the state tournament."

Teamwork could be a key to the Saints' success.

"We're closely bonded," Horner said. "We play well together."



St. Peter boys golf captains (from left) Alex Wenner, Cade Horner and Cole McCarthy enter their senior year with higher hopes for this season. (Pat Beck/St. Peter Herald)

Wenner agreed: "One of our strengths would be we're all really close together. We all know each other pretty well. We all kind of get along."

The Saints have prepared for the regular season by golfing in the off season. They had been practicing on the golf simulator in which they shoot into a net in a building at Gustavus Adolphus College, before the college closed due to the

ongoing pandemic.

Open to the public year round Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday for \$10 a hour, the golf simulator has been a popular place for the Saints to practice.

"We were using that a lot," McCarthy said. "That's helpful to get our swing back. I work at Shoreland [Country Club], so I always like to play golf just

for enjoyment."

McCarthy said his strengths in golf "would probably be chipping and putting, more short range. My irons are my biggest weakness, but I'm working on it going to the simulator every Tuesday, Wednesday, but now that GAC closed, it's hard to do that."

Wenner said his strengths are his driver and mid-irons. "My weakness

would be close range from maybe 50 yards in. Putting a little bit, more so chipping around the greens."

Horner said his strength is iron game, all of them, but he said he needs work chipping around the green, 20 yards in.

All three agreed that they need to work on their mental game.

"It's more of a mental game," Horner said. "Don't blow up after a bad shot."

CAPTAINS' LOGS

Alex Wenner
Parents: Jill and Chuck Wenner
Grade: Senior
Position: 3-4
Honors: Two-time letter winner
Career bests: 18 (82 at Shoreland); 9 (38 at Shoreland)
Other sports: Football, hockey, trap
College plans: University of Wisconsin-River Falls, agricultural engineering
Cade Horner
Parents: Kim and Corey
Grade: Senior
Position: 2
Honors: Four-time letter winner

Career bests: 18 (74 in Mesquite, Nevada), 9 (1-over 36 on Shoreland back 9)
Other sports: Football
College plans: South Central in Mankato, undecided major
Cole McCarthy
Parents: Mike and Crista
Grade: Senior
Position: 5 or 6
Honors: One-time letter winner
Career bests: 18 (80 at Rose Lake); 9 (40 at Rose Lake)
Other sports: none
College plans: South Central for 2 years and transfer to MSU-Mankato for finance

BOYS HOCKEY

Lehtinen, Weick win Bulldogs boys hockey awards

By PAT BECK
pbeck@stpeterherald.com

Minnesota River Bulldogs senior wings Shawn Lehtinen and Charlie Weick are among an elite group of 13 players named to the Big South Conference Boys Hockey All-Conference Team.

Playing on the same forward line together, Lehtinen and Weick finished as the Bulldogs' top two point getters.

Lehtinen collected 19 goals and 21 assists for 40 points in 25 games.

Weick netted 15 goals and 21 assists for 36 points.

Brady Sowder, who centered the top line, finished third in scoring with 14 goals and 16 assists for 30 points.

The Bulldogs finished with a 14-11 overall record, including 12-4 and tied for second in the Big South Conference. Eventual Section 1A champion Mankato East defeated the Bulldogs 4-2 in the section quarterfinals.

2019-'20 Bulldogs Stats

Goals-Assists-Points5-4-9
Shawn Lehtinen 19-21-40

Charlie Weick 15-21-36
Brady Sowder 14-16-30
Brock Olson 6-13-19
Logan Throldahl 10-8-18
Jake Rimstad 2-11-13
Seth Reicks 5-4-9
Tristen O'Brien 3-5-8
Matt Fink 5-2-7
Aiden Blaschko 2=4-6
Breandan O'Keefe 4-1-5
Tyce Shook 2-1-3
Reece Weydert 2-0-2
Blake McVenes 0-1-1
Reece Narum 0-1-1
Zack Wendorff 0-0-0
Mike Zurr 0-0-0
Lukas Dietz 0-0-0
Tyler Erickson 0-0-0
Hunter Reasor 0-0-0
Michael Moline 0-0-0
Brandon McLean 0-0-0
Mason Reinhardt 0-0-0

Dyland Hunt 0-0-0
Finn Gibson 0-0-0

Goalies

GAA-SOG-SV-SV%-SO
Mitch Kotek 3.16-365-327-.896-1
Logan Moe 3.67-341-297-.871-1

Big South Conference Boys Hockey

Place Team Conf. All
1 New Ulm 15-1-0 19-7-1
2 Marshall 12-4-0 17-10-0
3 Minnesota River 12-4-0 14-11-0
4 Luverne 10-6-0 15-10-0
5 Waseca 9-7-0 17-9-0
6 Windom Area 7-9-0 8-15-1
7 Worthington 3-13-0 4-21
8 Fairmont 2-14-0 5-20
9 Redwood Valley 2-14-0 3-22



Bulldogs left wing Charlie Weick sets up a play in the New Ulm zone with right wing Shawn Lehtinen (14) and center Brady Sowder. The first line ended up the top three scorers for the Bulldogs this season. (Pat Beck/St. Peter Herald)

Cleveland seniors treat Monday as last day of school

By RICHARD ROHLFING
Correspondent

Past cheering underclassman and school staff, a procession through school halls is a tradition for Cleveland seniors on their last day of school.

But the "walk through" ritual came more than two months early this year as the COVID-19 epidemic put the rest of the school year in jeopardy.

"It made me really sad because this might be the last day that I see my friends and my close friends whom I've been there for since preschool," said Mya Krenik, one 40 who participated in the senior parade on Monday, the last day of classes in the school before shutdown. "All the teachers were out and all the students from preschool to 11th were clapping for us. We were crying, but mostly the girls because the guys wanted to be tough, but I think they were sad too."

Mitchell Johnstone is one of 19 male students in the Cleveland class of 2020. He said he wouldn't miss classroom time, but as a promising long-distance runner headed to Winona State University next fall, he was anxious about his last season on the Mankato/Loyola Cleveland track team and the encouragement of head coach Dale

Compton that came with it.

"It's just a walk through, but not being able to go to practice and train with my friends and not being able to see my coach...he's my inspiration, a nice guy, a great guy. I'm going to be practicing at college, but that's a lot different."

But Johnstone said he is going to keep on running, despite not having official practices.

"I'm glad that we don't have school because that's just fun, but I'm hopeful that track will be back by at least subsections so I can qualify for sections and state. But I'm going to keep training until then just in case. I don't want to be not training and subsections come back and not being ready. I'm just going to keep training and hope for the best"

While Johnstone would be missing track practice, for Krenik, the only three-sport senior girl athlete, it was softball. Not only is the camaraderie important to her, the Clipper girls, although, retooled from last year, still would be a favorite to win the conference as well as make a deep run into sections.

"I can't even imagine softball," Krenik said. "Kenna (All-Conference and All-Section pitcher McKenna Robb) has been working so hard at

it, and I've been playing with her since second grade."

While Monday was a time for students and teachers prepare for distance learning, Principal Scott Lusk told the students that the most important thing of day was that the school community could come together.

"I know that sounds corny, but I saw firsthand what you mean to one another: kids interacting with one another and enjoying each other's company," said Lusk on the school's Facebook page. "That is what life is about. You will not remember when you learned what two times two is. You will not remember the day you learned the Pythagorean Theorem. You will remember the friendships that you have or the fun things you did in school"

While Krenik is hopeful that Monday's walk through will end up being just a dress rehearsal, she is doubtful she and the rest of the seniors will return to brick and mortar classrooms of CHS. While saddened for the memories she could miss, she understands the necessity of closing the school.

"It's good that we are doing this for the health of everyone. Their health is more important than us."



For Mitchell Johnstone, a promising long-distance runner heading to Winona State next fall, being part of the Mankato Loyola/Cleveland track team is the most important aspect of his final two months at CHS.



Mya Krenik is one of 40 seniors at CHS for whom Monday might have been the last in the Cleveland School building. (Photos by Richard Rohlfing/Le Sueur County News)

BOWLING

Bowling alleys aim to survive, as league seasons end early

By PHILIP WEYHE
pweyhe@stpeterherald.com

of large events and gatherings. The timing of the closure isn't as crucial as it might be for some smaller operations.

For Dan Seys and his alley, Janesville Bowl in Janesville, the league season is the alley's main source of income. His business, a small one run by himself, his wife Judy, daughters Laura and Katie, and granddaughter Kaylee, usually closes for the summer months anyway, except maybe one day a week. So while the timing could be worse, it still stings to lose the last four or five weeks of league.

"I was close to getting done, but I'm still about to lose some important time," he said.

It's a similar circumstance for Heilman in Northfield. He said, prior to the shutdown, the lanes were "extremely busy," recording something close to record profits in February. He said about half his business is from league, so losing late March and early April hurts, and potentially having no business in the summer isn't going to help anything.

"At this point, I think people are going to be reluctant to come back even if they do give the all clear," Heilman said. "It's going to be extremely hard on our business, because there isn't much you can do as far as social distancing."

Concerns

For some alleys, closing down is a hitch in the step, but for others, it could be seriously detrimental. Plonske isn't sure just how much impact closure will have on The 300 Club, but the longer it lasts, the more intense it will be.

"It all depends on everything," he said. "I have my idea, but it's like with everything, everyone is concerned. The longer (closing) happens, the more people become unemployed. I'm not trying to be doom and gloom, but it's crucial we take care of this situation."

Heilman is in a similar boat.

"We have not done any research as to how much this is costing us on a daily basis," he said. "Obviously, it's costing a lot, but I can't tell you right now what the damage is going to be."

The federal and state governments are working on packages to help small businesses, like bowling alleys, get through the closure and/or lower traffic periods, as the pandemic continues. Whether the best option on offer will be low-interest loans, or if there will be something more direct, like grants, is yet to be seen.

(The damage) depends on if there is going to be any stimulus package from the government or not," Janesville's Seys said. "I'm

definitely going to lose on the deal; I'm not sure how much until I know for sure what's going to happen."

For a larger alley, like SpareTime, even after league season, there are a number of large events, associated with graduation time and summer activities, that would normally bring in revenue. If those events in May and June start getting cancelled, the issue expands.

Getting by

A few of the area alleys are still offering food service, while doors are closed. SpareTime continues to offer its regular menu, plus specials, for to go orders. The 300 Club is doing the same.

"Because it's still allowed," said Plonske at 300 Club. "It's not covering all of our bills, but it's prolonging the end result. It's making us be able to last longer hopefully."

Stenzel said it's not quite as urgent as SpareTime, where the owners are mostly just trying to keep their managers and cooks working.

"We basically just have all of our managers here, our cooks, just to keep them having something to do," he said.

Still, staff cuts are necessary most places. SpareTime has temporarily laid off all of its staff, beyond managers and cooks; that's a couple dozen workers cut. Jesse James in Northfield and The 300 Club also laid off their staffs. Janesville Bowl is run solely by the family, so the only one missing out on her hourly paycheck is granddaughter Kaylee, who also is likely to see the end of her senior year at Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton converted to online.

At SpareTime, Stenzel said the team is trying to be proactive, as it waits to open again.

"We understand it, and we want to take all the precautions we can with this unfortunate scenario," he said. "We're also using it as a time to innovate and come up with new ideas while we are closed. We've looked at changing some things, aesthetics, for when the customers return."

Heilman, meanwhile, who has ran Jesse James Lanes for 43 years, said, only half jokingly, that he might "have to retire." But then again, retirement accounts are likely to take hits this year, too. He just hopes things can go back to normal soon.

"It's both scary and frustrating," he said. "It's definitely frustrating, of course, and it's scary to think what the future might hold for a lot of businesses, whether bowling centers or not."

SENIORS

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"It really hurts because as a team and individually we didn't really end last year on a good note," Smit said. "We all had a really rough meet at sections last year. And not knowing that was our last time, as it potentially was, really hurt."

However, Mayo and Smit remain hopeful.

"We're upset about it, but we're just trying to stay positive," Mayo said. "We hope we have a season, and if we don't, we're going to make the best out of it. We'll always be a team. We'll still go out and have fun. If we can't have meets, we'll go out and play together as a team."

Smit said, "It's not very ideal, obviously, but hopefully the weather seems to be cooperating even though everything else isn't. If Shoreland [Country

Club] could open, since we don't have school all day, we can practice longer there and prepare for when the season does come, because hopefully it will."

Cade Horner, who started golfing at about age 10 and joined the team in eighth-grade, said, "I'm just hoping we'll actually get to play the season. Hopefully it doesn't get canceled. Us three are seniors we'd like to have a go at it one last time."

Alex Wenner, who switched from baseball to golf in 10th grade, said the circumstances are challenging, because the team can no longer practice. They were previously practicing on the golf simulator at Gustavus Adolphus College, which has now closed.

"It's definitely hard because the simulator was our main source of practice," Wenner said. "Now we're going to have to make due in the yard, chipping and keep working until we get the season to start."

Cole McCarthy started golfing with Horner and Wenner in seventh-grade but didn't join the team until he switched from baseball golf last year.

"It's overwhelming knowing that it's our senior year, and we might not be able to play what we've been working for, and it's kind of sad more than anything," McCarthy said. "I'm hoping everybody gets to play every sport."

Kaden Oeltjenbruns and Carson Kennedy also are feeling down that they may miss their final year of high school baseball.

"This virus is putting a hold on everything," Oeltjenbruns said. "It kind of sucks, because it's our senior year. The thing I'll miss is the team, hanging out in the dugout, hanging out in practices."

Kennedy said, "Obviously health is way more important than the game. But everyone wants to play in our senior year.

We've been playing it our whole life."

In-person classes have been canceled indefinitely, so students are studying at home online.

"When I went back to the high school to pick up my stuff, it was kind of sad, because I realized that it's probably going to be the last time I'm at school," Oeltjenbruns said.

They may play on the St. Peter town team or continue playing ball by forming a slow-pitch softball team.

Slow pitch softball always looked fun, Kennedy said: "We've always wanted to put a team together when we're old enough." They just didn't realize that time might come so soon.

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FITNESS

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She suggests people use any home exercise equipment they have and get up and walk every 30 minutes.

Live Well Fitness could reopen March 27, but that's the earliest possible, and it will be closed until further notice, depending on the governor's directive.

Snap Fitness, Waseca

Snap Fitness center in Waseca had to shut its doors, too.

"Members are disappointed that we closed," Manager Jarius Volkman said. "It's for the best to have it in check for the next couple of weeks. More than half of our members are 65 and over. It's better to be safe than sorry. One person can ruin it for everybody."

Volmann said they already were having problems with people not following the rules of keeping a safe their distance from each other.

The club also cancelled eight classes including a senior fitness class taught by Volkman, running six days a week with 20 to 30 people. In the meantime, Snap Fitness is offering members an app for free, which includes workout videos on Facebook so they can continue to

work out. And, with the weather getting warmer, Volkman said people can exercise outside more by going for a walk or run to stay active and healthy.

Volkman said Snap Fitness is considering reimbursing members for each day they lose in their membership fees.

However, he noted, "For each day it's closed, we're losing income."

It has been a busy time for Volkman, because his wife, Courtney, just had a baby Thursday. They were concerned about possibly getting infected, so they induced their child's birth. Courtney is a nurse at Mankato Clinic.

"The baby is healthy and my wife has three months off paternity leave, so we're doing well," Volkman said.

Cannon Strength, Northfield

Cannon Strength fitness center in Northfield is adapting to the closure. The club allowed members to take home small exercises equipment, such as barbells, weights, medicine balls and exercise bands.

"We opened up the gym Tuesday for members to take equipment home," owner Donovan Bellcourt said, noting that 10 people took advantage of the opportunity.

The club also is going virtual, offering home workout programs, plus workout videos on Facebook.

"We closed all operations and went to an online presence. In the end, it will be for the better to shut down for a couple of weeks," Belcourt said.

Belcourt said they have gotten a good response from people in the Northfield community to the online workouts.

"It's a way to reach the people; we reached more people than before."

Cannon Strength also offered 10 organized group fitness classes which were cancelled.

"It's obviously necessary to close," Belcourt said. "If it doesn't reopen soon, businesses will have to come up with more creative ways to serve our members. We hope people will come back to the gym and potentially have a surge in business. Fitness centers have to adapt and change up how to serve customers virtually one-on-one and at home. Most people adapt and make do."

Belcourt said his business will see a drop in income with the current state of the economy, but he added that, "We're in the middle of a large expansion in a new building with four times the amount of space by April 1," so the center is looking to the future, regardless.

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MBA

MBA requests amateur baseball teams to not schedule games before May 1

By NICK GERHARDT
ngerhardt@wasecacountynews.com

The Minnesota Baseball Association announced Wednesday that it is requesting teams not to schedule any games prior to May 1 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

MBA President John Richter wrote in a letter that the league's objective is not to cancel the amateur baseball season but instead postpone it to a date in accordance with governmental and regulatory agencies.

"We support the recent guidelines issued by the Center for Disease Control and our federal and state governments, recognizing that one of the best ways to reduce the spread of this virus is social distancing and limiting the number of people assembled in close quarters," Richter wrote.

The Le Sueur Braves' opener is scheduled at home versus the Gaylor Islanders at 3 p.m. Sunday, May 3.

The Montgomery Mallards were scheduled to open the season on Sunday, April 26 at the New Prague Orioles.

Instead, the Mallards' season opener is against the Elko Express at 2 p.m. Sunday, May 3 at Montgomery.

"We have a Board meeting scheduled on Saturday, April 18, and we anticipate that we will have additional information and direction by then," Richter wrote. "Our objective is to NOT cancel our season but worse case scenario postpone it to a date that would be permissible in accordance with our governmental and regulatory agencies."

"We support the recent guidelines issued by the Center for Disease Control and our federal and state governments, recognizing that one of the best ways to reduce the spread of this virus is social distancing and limiting the number of people assembled in close quarters."

"We realize this is frustrating and disruptive to your planning and desire to play baseball this summer. Our hopes are that we will be able to play all or at least part of our season in 2020."

"We will continue to monitor the situation and keep you posted as things change and evolve."

BASEBALL

From Page 1B

Kennedy agreed: "We have a lot of leadership guys in our senior class (nine), so I think that will help out a lot with communication and everything. You can already see some junior leaders. Leadership will help us a lot."

The Saints have a number of options for pitching including returners Kennedy, Volk, Olson and junior Jake Rimstad.

But the Saints lost their longtime ace pitcher, Andy Regner, an all-state player who has gone on to play for Minnesota State University, Mankato.

"He was the ace last year," Kennedy said of Regner. "It will be tough without him, but with the juniors coming up and our experience in the senior class, we'll be just fine."

Oeltjenbruns said, "replacing the seniors is tough. They're all good. They were the core of our team last year, but we should be able to build back with the juniors coming up this year."

But the Saints have work to do.

"The junior class has always been committed to baseball, so I think chemistry is what we need to work on, because we've never played with them," Oeltjenbruns said. "Since we haven't had much practice, clicking together with all the juniors and making sure we have every position filled and know what we're doing."

"It was nice to see that Shaun [Lehtinen] came out this year. He's a catcher. He didn't come out last year. He was out all the years before. Him and Brady Sowder, Tyson's younger brother, are the catchers."

Kennedy said he agreed that chemistry and communication need to be improved. "We haven't really played much with the junior class. Getting to know them good and seeing what they like to do that will help us a lot. It will be tough to do but with our senior class and the junior class, we'll be just fine."

The Saints are shooting for a return trip to state, although it could be tougher because they're moving up a class to AAA.

"I feel like we can make it to the section finals," Oeltjenbruns said. "We're going up a class, and it's going to be tough, just like in basketball. We have enough guys who came back and know what to do."

Kennedy said it's always a dream to make state. "I definitely feel like we can do it. Even though we're moving up a class, obviously competition will be tougher, but I feel like we have the guys to get it done."

Individually, Oeltjenbruns

SENIOR LOGS

Carson Kennedy
Parents: Josh and Becca

Positions: Pitcher/
third base/first base
Grade: Senior

Honors: One-time
letter winner, one-time
all-conference, one-time
all-section

2019 stats: Pitching:
5-3, one save, 2.88 ERA,
34.1 innings pitched,
10 walks, 27 strikeouts;

hitting: .353, 1 home
run, 9 doubles, 30 hits,
29 RBIs, 20 runs

Other sports:
Football, basketball

College plans:
Gustavus Adolphus
College to play football
and thinking about
studying nursing

Kaden Oeltjenbruns

Parents: Keith and Kim

Positions: Second
base/shortstop/third
base

Grade: Senior
Honors: One-time
letter winner

2019 stats: Hitting:
.167, 2 hits, 1 RBI, 3 runs

Other sports:
Basketball, cross
country

College plans:
University of
Minnesota, biomedical
engineering

said his strength is fielding. "I've always played the game since I was young, so I know what to do. I remember doing stuff with my dad when I was younger, and I started in T-ball in third grade."

Oeltjenbruns mostly just played in the field during games last season, and a designated hitter batted for him.

"Hitting is not my strong suit, but I'm getting better," he said. "I hit in the state tournament, but most of the time I was Dh'd for. My goal is to hit better than last year."

The Saints' returning pitcher and hitter, Kennedy said those are his strengths.

However, he said he needs to work on "communication, especially with the younger guys coming up. We haven't really played with them that much. So I need to just be a leader and communicate with them and let them do their thing."

Reach Sports Editor Pat Beck at 931-8566 or follow him on Twitter.com @SPHSportsPat. ©Copyright 2020 APG Media of Southern Minnesota. All rights reserved.