



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Good things happen when Hopkins senior guard Paige Bueckers has control of the basketball. Above, she leads the fast break in a 66-40 State Class AAAA Tournament win over Stillwater. Running with Bueckers are teammates Maya Nnaji (34) and Taylor Woodson. Defending for Stillwater are Gianna Carr (20) and Grace Cote (31).

Stars OF THE WEEK

Emma Dasovich

The Minnetonka High girls basketball team's eighth-grade forward is the youngest player on the All-Lake Conference team for 2019-20. She started every game for the Skippers, leading them to a 17-11 overall record. Also on the All-Lake team from Minnetonka are junior forward Sophie Haydon and sophomore guard Desiree Ware.

Benjamin Hallett

The North Shore Club's 7-year-old gymnast from Minnetrista took fourth place on the pommel horse during Level 5 competition in the Great Northern Invitational at St. Thomas Academy's Vince Flynn Hall.

Joey Hurth

The Hopkins High baseball player won the 2020 Apollo Award as the most outstanding senior athlete at his school. He will play baseball for Indiana State University next season.

Natalie Mazuerk

Eden Prairie High's 6-4 senior girls basketball center set a career record for blocked shots in the Eagle program with a total of 92. In addition, Mazuerk finished third in EP career rebounding and fifth in career scoring. This winter, she led the Eagles to a State Class AAAA Tournament berth.

Nneka Obiazor

The Eden Prairie girls basketball team's 5-11 senior forward finished third in Eagle career scoring with a total of 1,375 points. She also finished fifth all-time in rebounds as a four-year varsity player. Eden Prairie finished 18-13 this season and qualified for the State Class AAAA Tournament.

Ciboney Reglos

The Hopkins High senior gymnasts had a pair of top-ten finishes during the State Class AA Meet at St. Paul's Roy Wilkins Auditorium. Reglos placed eight on balance beam with a score of 9.475 and seventh on uneven bars with a 9.4875 total.

Another perfect season for Bueckers, Royals

Star guard is leaving with 62 straight wins

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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Was there one moment this season when Hopkins High girls basketball coach Brian Cosgriff realized the magnitude of his star guard, 6-foot senior Paige Bueckers?

"She took off when she made the cover of Slam Magazine," Cosgriff

said last week. "Ever since then we began playing in front of packed houses, and Paige went on to become a McDonalds All-American and National Gatorade Player of the Year. She is one of a kind."

The stands were not only packed at Hopkins Lindbergh Center, which holds 3,000 fans for basketball, but also on the road. What happened after the games was perhaps more enlightening. Young girls lined up outside the Hopkins locker room, hoping to get an autograph from Bueckers or have their photo taken with her.

Bueckers was accommodating, smiling for the cameras and signing for every fan in the line.

"I was a kid once, and I know how I looked up to older girls," Bueckers said.

As for signing the autographs, she said, "I'll do it every time."

To the delight of her young fans, Bueckers never hurried to leave the gym.

"The first time I saw all the kids waiting for autographs, it blew me out of the water," Cosgriff said. "I had never seen anything like it, and we have had a lot of good players in the Hopkins program, including Nia Coffey, who won three state championships, set the all-time scoring and rebounding records at Northwestern and was a first-round draft choice in the WNBA."

Before Coffey arrived, Cosgriff coached 2,000-point scorer Leslie Knight.

"Paige is the most intuitive basketball player I have seen," Cosgriff said. "The closest I saw was probably when Lindsay Whalen played for the Gophers. And Paige is a team-first player."

Cosgriff added that one of Bueckers' goals is "to raise the level of her teammates." Yet there are times when she realizes she has to take over.

"The Wayzata game in the section finals was an example," Cosgriff said. "The way Paige played, it was like she was saying, 'Get on my back, we're moving on.'"

Hopkins broke a close game open late in the second half to beat Wayzata 86-76. Bueckers scored 31 points.

Bueckers talked about the friendship among Hopkins' players after a State Tournament win over Cambridge-Isanti: "We're a family. Everybody, 1-18, is a sister and we play for each other."

The next level for Bueckers takes her to Bristol, Connecticut, where she will play for legendary UConn head coach Gene Auriemma.

Auriemma's coaching record 1,085-142 in 35 seasons. He has won 11 NCAA championships and had six perfect seasons.

It is easy to see why that kind of success appealed to Bueckers when she announced her college choice.



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Paige Bueckers, Hopkins High's McDonalds All-American guard, finds room to elevate between Stillwater defenders during a 66-40 Royal victory in the State Class AAAA Tournament semifinals March 12 at Williams Arena.

The Perfect Season

Hopkins 77, Becker 39
Hopkins 101, Waconia 57
Hopkins 80, Rosemount 45
Hopkins 98, Apple Valley 38
Hopkins 87, Cooper 45
Hopkins 77, Farmington 52
Hopkins 93, DeLaSalle 48
Hopkins 85, St. Louis Park 48
Hopkins 96, Tartan 24
Hopkins 89, Chaska 70
Hopkins 97, Park Center 79
Hopkins 78, LaCrosse Aquinas 57

Hopkins 82, Edina 27
Hopkins 88, Buffalo 46
Hopkins 77, Eden Prairie 59
Hopkins 87, Wayzata 77
Hopkins 88, STMA 80

Hopkins 81, Minnetonka 53
Hopkins 81, Edina 39
Hopkins 69, Buffalo 34
Hopkins 88, Eden Prairie 64
Hopkins 91, Wayzata 64
Hopkins 84, Grand Rapids 25
Hopkins 93, STMA 81
Hopkins 77, Minnetonka 49

Section 6AAAA

Hopkins 92, Washburn 19
Hopkins 89, Cooper 47
Hopkins 86, Wayzata 76

State Tournament

Hopkins 85, Cambridge-Isanti 55
Hopkins 66, Stillwater 40
Championship Game vs. Farmington Canceled

Melz makes history in Tonka High's girls athletic program

Fourteen letters, 10 appearances in state meets and tournaments

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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When the history of Minnetonka High girls athletics is written, the text will no doubt have numerous listings for Kylie Melz.

During her six-year varsity career, Melz has won 14 letters in four sports and qualified to compete in a total of 10 state tournaments and state meets.

When many high school athletes are cutting back to one of two varsity sports, the Minnetonka senior wishes she could have competed in even more than four. "I probably would have played another sport if I had time," she said last week.

Melz's most recent high school sports success came with an appearance in the State Class AA Girls Hockey Tournament as Minnetonka took third place. In a very suspenseful state semifinal game, the Skippers lost to the eventual state champion, Andover, 4-3, in overtime.

"Oh, my goodness, I still think about that," Melz said. "It was super tough being that close to our dream [winning the state championship]." Still this was among the most successful seasons in the history with an overall record of 23-7-1.

Tracy Cassano, Minnetonka's head girls hockey coach, had the opportunity to work with Melz for only one season after taking the reins from Eric Johnson. She was impressed with Melz from the start.

"Kylie is a great all-around athlete," Cassano said. "As a hockey player, she



Minnetonka girls hockey forward Kylie Melz high-fives a fan on her way to the locker room after the Skippers defeated Eden Prairie for the Section 2AA championship at Edina's Braemar Arena.

(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

is so steady, so consistent. She was one of our top-line players, logging a lot of ice time, five-on-five and on special teams. Kylie works extremely hard and has a team-first attitude. Her stamina and endurance, which come from being a runner, helped her take long shifts. She will do whatever it takes to help the team win."

An example of that was the work that Melz did in order to win move face-offs. "Kylie makes everyone around her better," Cassano said.

Melz had a passion for working with the younger players on the team, includ-

ing the extremely talented ninth-grade forward, Grace Sadura. Looking back to when she broke into Tonka athletics as a 12-year-old seventh-grader on the cross country team, Melz said she appreciated how she was treated by the juniors and seniors.

"The older girls made it so much better for me, like I was one of them right away," she said. "I have always tried to pay that back to my younger teammates."

With five letters each in cross country and track, three in hockey and one in soccer, Melz has more than likely had more teammates than anyone else in

Minnetonka girls athletics. She makes friends easily and brings a positive attitude to practice, fostering inclusion, camaraderie and efficient work habits. Melz is a captain for the cross country and track teams.

"My favorite sport depends on the season," she said. "I like all of them. It is definitely a larger role when you're a captain. To be a leader, you have to think about your teammates more than yourself."

In addition to being an athlete for all seasons, Melz is an accomplished student with a 3.9 GPA. The coronavirus pandemic has prevented her from practicing with her track teammates this spring and also limits her chances to visit college campuses.

"I am currently undecided on a college, and undecided on sports, too," she said.

Asked what she will remember most about competing in sports for Minnetonka, Melz mentioned all the friends she has made along with "the Tonka tradition."

In regard to that she said, "The tradition here carries on."

Melz has had many great achievements in her athletic career, but puts one of them above the others.

"The No. 1 highlight was being part of our winning 4x800-meter relay team in the State Track Meet last year," she said. Melz's teammates from that winning relay are Annalise Johnson, Anna Wander and Kate LeBlanc. All four girls are still on the team this year.

"That was definitely my happiest moment," Melz concluded. It was virtually a perfect race as the Skippers finished more than two seconds ahead of second-place White Bear Lake.

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Skipper girls basketball team brings everyone back

Three All-Lake players are set to lead in 20-21

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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When practice opens for the 2020-21 high school girls basketball season in November, Minnetonka coach Leah Dasovich will see a lot of familiar faces.

The Skippers don't graduate a single player from this season's team, which posted a 17-11 record and gave state qualifier Eden Prairie a good game in the Section 2AAAA semifinals.

"As I look back on the season, individually and collectively, a lot of good things came out of it," Dasovich said.

Three Tonka girls - 6-3 junior forward Sophie Haydon, 5-7 sophomore guard Desiree Ware and 6-1 eighth-grade forward Emma Dasovich - were named to the All-Lake Conference team by the league's head coaches. In addition, All-Lake honorable mention for the Skipper girls went to 6-foot junior forward Molly Oehme, 5-9 junior guard Piper Terry and 5-8 junior guard Ellah Durkee.

Coach Dasovich liked the way Hay-

don took on more of a leadership role as a third-year varsity player this season.

"Sophie averaged nearly a double-double," the coach said. "She has evolved as a stretch-four [forward], who likes to face the basket."

Ware is another player who returned as a starter this season. Her quickness benefitted the Skippers, offensively and defensively.

"Desiree scores at a high volume for her summer team," coach Dasovich said. "With the high school team, she distributes the ball and understands everything that's happening on the floor. She makes her teammates look good."

Emma Dasovich, the coach's daughter, earned a starting spot in her first season on the varsity, even though she is still in middle school.

"With Emma playing inside some of the time, Sophie Haydon can play outside more," the coach said. "Emma had some highs and some lows this season. There was some inconsistency, but our ball movement is better when she's on the floor."

Emma was often assigned to guard a taller player - including All-Lake Conference posts like the 6-4 trio of Natalie Mazurek from Eden Prairie,

Maya Nnaji from Hopkins and Annika Stewart from Wayzata. That would be a hard job of a senior, let alone an eighth-grader. "Emma has a good basketball IQ and the mindset to keep working on her game," coach Dasovich said. "She and Sophie read each other well." Often, they would switch positions during a play with one popping out high and the other going low. That led to some one-on-one scoring chances under the hoop.

Besides the All-Lake and All-Lake honorable mention players, Minnetonka will return another eighth-grader who played important varsity minutes, 5-8 guard Tori McKinney. Also due back is Paige Terry, Piper's younger sister.

"I hope we can have a summer season," coach Dasovich said. There is an open period during which high school coaches can work with their players, and Dasovich said it would be a shame to miss out on the opportunity.

She sees one positive in the break that has been necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic. "As hard as this is, a forced break might not be the worst thing for the players [after four months of high school basketball]," Dasovich said.



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Minnetonka's eighth-grade All-Lake forward Emma Dasovich ducks under the tight defense of Wayzata senior forward Annika Stewart. Both girls were named to the All-Lake team for 2019-20.

Eden Prairie girls make big strides during state season

Eagles are awarded four All-Lake positions

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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After posting an 18-13 record that included a trip to the State Class AAAA Tournament, the Eden Prairie High girls basketball team earned four berths on the All-Lake Conference squad.

Seniors Natalie Mazurek and Nneka Obiazor were chosen All-Lake by the league's head coaches along with junior Destinee Bursch and sophomore Nia Holloway.

"In addition to the Lake Conference awards, Natalie and Nneka were named All-State honorable mention," Eagle head coach Ellen Wiese said. "Natalie had her best season ever and was very reliable on both ends of the floor. One of her best games was in the first round of the State Tournament when she held Farmington's 6-4 center Sophie Hart to a season low of six points."

Although the Eagles lost that game 58-54, their performance was outstanding against a team that was seeded second at state.

Obiazor led the Eagles with an average of 14 points per game this season and finished her career as the third leading scorer in program history with 1,375 points. "Nneka came close to averaging a double-double," Wiese said. "We didn't have to rely on her for scoring as much as we did her junior year, and she was



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Eden Prairie forward Nneka Obiazor proved to be a tough matchup for any team the Eagles played. Above, she sets up a drive to the hoop in a state consolation game against Lakeville North.

willing to sacrifice for the team. I thought Nneka had a breakout season, switching from post to guard."

Bursch set a single-season program record for assists with 171.

"Destinee didn't just break the old record of 96, she shattered it," Wiese said. "She made an enormous contribution to our success with 5.5 assists per game. Destinee makes everyone around her better."

The best athlete on the Eagle roster

might be Holloway, a 6-1 forward. With two years left in her high school career, she is already one of the best players in the Lake Conference.

"Nia averaged nine points a game and guarded the other team's best player," Wiese noted. "She averaged nine points."

In addition to winning four all-conference berths, the Eagles had three honorable mentions - junior guard Allison Miranda, sophomore guard Myra Moorjani and ninth-grade guard Molly

Lenz.

"Allison is a very steady player and a great shooter," Wiese said. "Myra is a high-energy kid who gave us a huge spark, and Molly did a fantastic job as our starting point guard."

As young players, Moorjani and Lenz were able to take on some of the premier guards in the Lake Conference, including Paige Bueckers of Hopkins, Mara Braun of Wayzata and Mackenzie Kramer of St. Michael-Albertville.

All-Lake Team

Hopkins: Senior K.K. Adams and Paige Bueckers, sophomores Maya Nnaji and Amaya Battle and ninth-grader Taylor Woodson

Wayzata: Senior forward Annika Stewart, junior forward Jenna Johnson, senior guard Alivia Arnebeck and sophomore guard Mara Braun.

St. Michael-Albertville: Senior forward Vanessa Alexander, senior guard Mackenzie Kramer, junior forward Kendall Cox and ninth-grade guard Tessa Johnson.

Minnetonka: Junior forward Sophie Haydon, sophomore guard Desiree Ware and eighth-grade forward Emma Dasovich.

Edina: Sophomore guard Ella Campbell.

Eden Prairie: Senior center Natalie Mazurek, senior forward Nneka Obiazor, junior guard Destinee Bursch and sophomore forward Nia Holloway.

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Tonka boys, Wayzata girls head All-Lake Nordic ski teams

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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After winning Lake Conference Nordic skiing championships this winter, the Minnetonka boys and Wayzata girls top the All-Lake selections.

Members of the honor team were determined by performances in Lake meets, including the Lake Conference Championships, which were held at Baker Park Reserve in mid-February.

Minnetonka, coached by Sean Kern, won six of the places on 14-member boys team.

Junior Austin Hunter and senior Thomas Graupmann head the list for the Skippers. The top two individual skiers in conference competition, senior Zach Spears of Eden Prairie and Colin Freed of Wayzata, are all-conference picks, as well.

On the girls side, the top performer throughout the conference races, Wayzata junior Lauren McCollor, is a repeat All-Lake selection. Edina's Mor-

gan Richter had an outstanding senior season as she placed in the top 10 at the State Meet for the second straight year. She is another multiyear All-Lake skier. Edina, Eden Prairie and Wayzata all qualified their girls teams for the State Meet.

Nordic Boys All-Lake Team

Minnetonka: Seniors Justin Calder, Thomas Graupmann and Dylan Green, juniors Austin Hunter and Hari Chidambaram and sophomore Alexander Hemink.

Wayzata: Senior Alexander Pemberton, junior Colin Freed and sophomore Noah Kaster.

Edina: Junior Eli Frenkel and freshman Andrew DeFor.

Eden Prairie: Senior Zach Spears and freshman Benon Brattebo.

Hopkins: Senior Caleb Dunnewind.

Honorable Mention

Minnetonka: A.J. Carroll, Tristan Green and Jack Siegwart.

Wayzata: A.J. Karn, Preston Langland and Daniel McCollor.

Edina: Eric Crosby Lehman, Quentin Loxtercamp and Peter Mans.

Eden Prairie: Anthony Hilligoss, Riley Marble and Nile Timmerman.

Hopkins: Colby Branch, Tim Sandford and John Struyk.

Nordic Girls All-Lake Team

Wayzata: Senior Taya Vokaty and juniors Lauren McCollor, Ingrid Halvorson and Kathryn House.

Eden Prairie: Seniors Rachel Boelke, Liesl Paulsen, Kareena Bovitz and junior Ella Bakken.

Edina: Seniors Morgan Richter and Claire Wagner and sophomore Maggie Wagner.

Hopkins: Sophomores Elsa Bergman and Lauren Munger and seventh-grader Sydney Drevlow.

Honorable Mention

Wayzata: Maria Fahlander, Diane Meyer and Claire Parham.



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Hopkins senior Caleb Dunnewind keeps his balance on an icy hill during the Section 6 Nordic Skiing Meet at Theodore Wirth Park in Minneapolis.

Eden Prairie: Mila Finch, Silje Busklein and Eleanor Thomas.

Edina: Heidi Engman,

Addie Hinkie and Sadie Schreiner.

Hopkins: Ella Firehamer, Ellie Munger and

Laci Provenzano.

Minnetonka: Olivia Graupmann, Elena Hicks and Anna Wander.