

LUMBERJACK FLASHBACK



Submitted photo

The Bemidji High School girls golf team celebrates with the 2004 Class AA state championship trophy after completing an unlikely run to the title. Pictured, from left, are Amanda (Johnson) Lukes, Amanda (Welle) Nelson, assistant coach Liz Neff, Brittany (Williamson) Carlson, Alyssa (Williamson) Hobbs, Tara (Israelson) Delaney, Kelli (Dahle) Jensen and head coach Jeff Nelson.

# TIGHTROPE TITLE

## The death-defying run to a girls golf state championship

**Editor's note:** This is the latest installment in a series titled Lumberjack Flashback, highlighting some of the greatest spring sports teams, athletes and moments in Bemidji High School history. Stories on each of Bemidji's seven spring sports programs will be released in line with this year's originally scheduled state tournament dates.

By Micah Friez  
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To foreshadow the greatest run in Bemidji High School girls golf history, Jeff Nelson only needed three words.

"We'll be back."

After placing fourth at the 2003 state tournament, the longtime BHS head coach told the Pioneer that his youthful team, which didn't graduate any seniors, would return the following season with more experience and more talent.

He called it.

The Lumberjacks raced to the Class AA state championship in 2004, defying all odds for a Bemidji team that hardly escaped the section field, let alone won state. But — somehow,



Submitted photo

The 2004 BHS girls golfers make their way through town during a Fourth of July parade in Bemidji.

someway — the stars aligned just right for BHS to dance with destiny.

"We were such a tight-knit team, and having Nelly as our coach, we

were all so close to each other that we were like a family essentially," said Alyssa (Williamson) Hobbs, a sophomore on the 2004 team. "All the hard work you put in for that finally paid off, so that was a surreal moment being able to have that with everyone."

Bemidji High School's most recent state championship may also be the unlikely of them all. But nothing — come hell, high water, thunderstorms or Burnsville — could stop the Jacks that spring.

"Statistically, it wasn't very (likely)," said Brittany (Williamson) Carlson, a 2004 senior and Alyssa's sister. "But I don't know that our team ever doubted for a second that we would do it."

### Clearing hurdle after hurdle

If 2004 had been like any other year, Bemidji's season would have ended after day one of the Section 8AA Tournament.

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LUMBERJACK FLASHBACK

WOMEN'S HOCKEY

# The boys golfer with championship DNA

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By Micah Friez  
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In perhaps the most storied boys golf program in Minnesota, one name appears on championship rosters more than any other. But even Andy Brink had to earn his spot.

As a seventh-grader in 1987, Brink casually waltzed up to a six-inch putt during a tournament and one-handed it. Not only did he miss, but Bemidji High School head coach Larry Perkins watched the episode from start to finish.

"He was really upset with me because he felt like I hadn't given my best effort," Brink said. "He didn't play me at the next meet. And in order for me to play varsity again, I had to requalify."

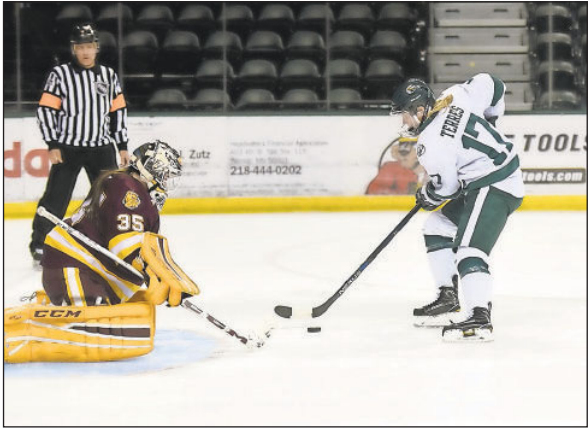
"But it was great. It was tough love. He wasn't going to hand me anything, and he wanted to let me know that it doesn't matter what you're shooting, you approach every shot the same. And you never give up on a round. I learned my lesson the hard way."

From then on, Brink was groomed into a five-time state champion.



Submitted photo

Andy Brink won the Class AA individual state championship as a senior in 1992, carding a 149 (73-76). Brink also won four team titles with the Lumberjacks from 1988-91.



Bemidji State's Emma Terres (17) scores for the Beavers during a shootout win against Minnesota Duluth on Jan. 21, 2017, at the Sanford Center.

Pioneer file photo

## Emma Terres returning to BSU as assistant coach

By Austin Monteith  
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BEMIDJI — Emma Terres is accustomed to leadership roles with the Bemidji State women's hockey program, though she'll now be assuming a new one. The former team captain has been hired as an assistant coach, BSU head coach Jim Scanlan announced Friday.

Terres captained the Beavers as a senior during the 2017-18 season before playing professionally for two years in Germany.

"I'm so excited to start the next chapter in my career," she said. "I love Bemidji State and

everything it has to offer. The community, the staff, the players, and just the kind of feel that you get from the university and being a part of it is so exciting. It's exactly where I want to be and I think it's a perfect opportunity for me to grow. I'm excited for the next steps."

"First and foremost, knowing Emma as a person, she has a good combination of leadership skills and communications skills," Scanlan said in a news release. "She has the unique ability to connect with everyone. That is just her personality."

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# Bemidji Speedway opens for practice sessions

By Dennis Peterson  
Special to the Pioneer

BEMIDJI — Bemidji Speedway opened its gates for the first time in 2020 on Saturday and Sunday, but it was limited to slotted practice times for drivers. Up to three people were allowed in each pit with a total of six cars in each time slot. Beginning Wednesday, June 10, outdoor events can take place in Minnesota with a maximum of 250 people, though that doesn't make it feasible for the speedway to begin holding races.

"It's really difficult to try and open with the limit on fans by the governor," track owner/promoter Tonja Stranger said. Many area tracks in Minnesota are facing the same issues. Tracks in Grand Rapids, Hibbing and Proctor are all holding practice sessions like Bemidji Speedway.

"For now we will continue to run practice sessions on the weekends until we can at least bring 50% of fans in," Stranger added. Many area racers looking for an opportunity to race have traveled to surrounding states that are mostly open for racing, including North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Iowa and Wyoming.

Drivers in attendance on Saturday and Sunday detailed their plans for the 2020 season.

No. 4 Al Sadek returns to racing after six years sitting out in a new pure stock. "I'm retired now and looking to have some fun," he said.

No. 1 Matt Fullerton will race in the Wissota Midwest Modified class once again. "We should be fully open, but I understand why Bemidji Speedway can't be," he said. He plans on racing



Dennis Peterson | Special to the Pioneer

A trio of pure stocks led by Dusty Caspers (No. 5), Kade Leeper (middle) and Jamie Chlebeczek (No. 3c) race down low Aug. 4, 2019, at Bemidji Speedway.

at Bemidji and Brainerd in 2020.

No. 3 Jamie Chlebeczek races in the Pure Stock class and has raced once in Superior, Wis., which is fully open, once already in 2020 and plans on racing at Bemidji, Grand Rapids, Hibbing, Superior and Ashland, Wis. She is in her sixth year of racing.

No. 11 Harley Kroening begins his fourth year of racing in the Wissota Super Stock class and his sixth overall. He has raced twice so far this year and plans on racing at Bemidji, Ashland and Superior in 2020.

No. 36 Tyler Kroening is also in his sixth year of racing but his first in the Wissota Super Stock class after moving up from the pure stocks. He has

raced one night in Ashland this year and plans on racing Bemidji and Ashland tracks in 2020.

No. 28 John Current is in his fifth year of racing and plans on racing in the mini stock class at Bemidji and Greenbush Speedways in 2020. He was track champion in Greenbush in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

No. 14j Haley Jones has raced for 2 1/2 years and will be racing in the Wissota Pure Stock class. Her goal is to "have fun and get better" and she plans on racing only at Bemidji Speedway.

No. 26 Kyle Davis is anxious to get racing in his first year in the Wissota Pure Stock class, his third year overall. He plans on racing at Bemidji, Greenbush,

Devils Lake, N.D., and Grand Rapids.

No. 18x Connor Drewry is in his third year of racing in the mini stock class and hopes to get back to racing soon.

No. 39 Deryk Weleski will be racing in the Wissota Pure Stock class along with his brother, Devyn. He raced in Devils Lake and finished in the top five this year. He is in his fourth year of racing and will race at Bemidji, Greenbush and Hibbing in 2020.

No. 7 Levi Mutch is in his fourth year of racing and will be driving in the Wissota Midwest Modified class. He "hopes we can start soon" and plans on racing at Bemidji, Grand Rapids and Grand Forks, N.D., in 2020.

No. 11 Devyn Weleski is "ready to race" and will be driving in the Wissota Pure Stock class in his third year of racing. He's competed in three races already in 2020 in North Dakota and Wisconsin.

No. 292 Kevin Bahr is in his 37th year of racing. He races in the Wissota Late Model class and said he "hopes to race in Bemidji if they host a special" or otherwise he will race in Grand Rapids, Hibbing and Grand Forks.

No. 29 Brandon Bahr is in his 14th year and will be racing in the Wissota Midwest Modified class. "Hopefully the limit on fans ends soon and we can get back to racing," he said.

No. 32 Nic Jacobson is in just his second year of racing and moved up from the mini stock class to the Wissota Super Stocks in 2020. He said he plans on racing "everywhere" this season. He has raced a couple of times already at Deer Creek and Ashland.

No. 7 Bryan Karl is a local ice racer moving into the dirt track ranks. He is in his second year and said he "respects the decisions by the track officials" and plans on racing at both Bemidji and Grand Rapids in 2020. "The racing family is an incredible community of people who support and encourage one another and we need to get back to the track and racing soon," he said.

No. 88 Brandon Puschinsky is 15 years old and just got his driver's permit. Brandon is in his second year of racing in the mini stock class. He plans on racing in Bemidji, Greenbush and Grand Rapids when they host the minis. He wanted to thank "the incredible sponsors who still support them, even with the delay to the season."

## TIGHTROPE

From Page B1

The tournament had always ended after a single round, and that season saw Moorhead leading the Lumberjacks by eight strokes through 18 holes. However, 2004 marked the first time that the tournament expanded to two rounds, giving BHS a shot — albeit a long one — to come back with a second day.

"I just remember thinking at the time that it almost seemed impossible," Hobbs said. "But everything worked in our favor, and we were able to pull it off. I remember being incredibly shocked, but also super excited at the same time."

On day two, all eyes were also on the radar at Thumper Pond. Nearby thunderstorms and lightning flashes threatened to end the tournament, along with Bemidji's rally, right then and there. Moorhead would have been declared the winner had day two been axed, but all the golfers snuck in their rounds.

The Lumberjacks



Submitted photo

Brittany (Williamson) Carlson follows through on a swing during the 2004 state tournament at Bunker Hills in Coon Rapids.

improved by 14 strokes, just enough to draw level with the Spuds. Their matching scores of 702 provided a bit more suspense, and the honor of section champion came down to a fifth-player tiebreaker.

Advantage BHS.

Kelli (Dahle) Jensen fired a 98 for Bemidji, while Rachel Ruche of Moorhead carded a 106. Just like that, the Jacks were heading back to the state tournament.

"We were extremely lucky that that happened to be the year they started doing two-day

tournaments," Carlson said. "We were given that second day and knew all along that we would use it to be successful."

### 'A sneaky underdog'

Burnsville came in as the state tournament favorites and the darlings in the eyes of the local Twin Cities media. BHS, meanwhile, was mighty in its own right but flew under the radar.

"You're not one of the big Cities teams that were expected to come out on top," Hobbs said. "Being a sneaky underdog, as I think Nelly would probably say, allowed us to not mentally get in our (own) heads and just play the game we love. That, in the end, brought us to the top."

Bemidji was in the lead after day one at Bunker Hills Golf Club in Coon Rapids, four strokes ahead of Burnsville with a team score of 335. Red Wing, the two-time defending state champion, lurked behind in fifth at a distant 356.

Carlson stood atop the individual leaderboard with a 3-over-par 76, while Hobbs found herself in a four-way tie for fifth with her

opening 79. Elsewhere, Tara (Israelson) Delaney shot an 87 for the Lumberjacks, while Jensen and Amanda (Johnson) Lukes carded 93s and Amanda (Welle) Nelson a 95.

The course was soaked by day two, turned soggy from a night of rainfall in between rounds. None of the ensuing scores looked as pretty, but BHS was still just 18 holes from its championship.

The penultimate moment came on Carlson's final hole. She had been grouped with Burnsville's Lauren Huhnerkoch, and as they approached their final green, the team scores were unknowingly in a first-place tie.

"That hole is really the only thing I remember from that round," Carlson said. "That was one of those rounds where I just sank into a hole and could not get out of it, and it was mostly a mental thing. I got to the end and, all of a sudden, that was obviously a very defining

moment."

Carlson sunk a 10-foot putt for birdie — her final high school stroke — while Huhnerkoch missed a three-footer for par and settled for bogey. Carlson, who had seven three-putts during the round, had made up for it in a big way.

"It's never too late to make a birdie," she said.

The team scores were added. Hobbs carded an 82 on day two for a two-day total of 161, tied for fourth overall. Carlson finished tied for seventh at 163 (76-87) and Jensen was 31st at 180 (93-87). Delaney also finished with a 186 (87-99), Lukes a 191 (93-98) and Nelson a 203 (95-108). As a team, the Jacks recorded a 689.

By a humble two strokes, Bemidji was crowned state champion.

"Gosh, it still gives me the chills," Hobbs said. "The build-up of that was surreal. When the final scores were posted, it was just unbelievable.

... To be able to have that moment with everyone,

to be those underdogs who did come out on top and prove to those who didn't think it was possible, that was just a pretty cool moment."

Nelson's emotions poured out through his tears and through his words to the Pioneer in 2004: "A lot of people work very hard at their jobs and never get a chance to experience something like this. I can't tell you how very fortunate, and proud, I feel right now."

Lumberjack supporters made a strong showing in the gallery, and all witnessed the culmination of a death-defying run to history. No team at Bemidji High School has earned the distinction of state champion ever since.

"The camaraderie that we had, it just really felt like a team," Carlson said. "Golf is such an individual sport, and we made it into a team sport."

Micah Friez is a sports reporter for the Pioneer. Readers can reach him at (218) 333-9789.

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SPORTS BRIEFS

One-class boys basketball state reunion set for 2021

A reunion of all players and coaches who participated in the Minnesota one-class boys basketball state tournament from 1913-1970 will be held March 18-20, 2021, in Minneapolis.

The reunion is being coordinated by former players and will be held in conjunction with the Minnesota boys basketball high school state tournament.

The main event of the reunion will be a luncheon and social at the Marriott Hotel in downtown Minneapolis on Friday, March 19.

A total of 26 Bemidji High School teams qualified for state in the one-class system: 1915, 1931, 1935, 1936, 1940, 1941,

1943, 1944, 1945, 1947, 1948, 1949, 1950, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1961, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1967, 1969. The 1936 and 1948 teams won the state championship.

So far, 177 players and coaches from 30 teams have been contacted.

All players and coaches who participated in the one-class state tournament between 1913-1970 are encouraged to write to Jeff McCarron, publisher of Minnesota Basketball News, at jeff@pacesetter-net.com for more details.

–Pioneer Staff Report

Sanford POWER to host program for high school athletes

BEMIDJI – Sanford POWER will host its annual summer strength and conditioning program June 15 through Aug. 6

with enhanced COVID-19 guidelines to ensure athlete and trainer safety, Sanford Health announced in a news release Friday.

The summer program will be held outdoors at Bemidji High School’s track and football field. No more than nine students per hour-long session will be allowed per training coach. Temperatures of all staff and students participating will be checked daily.

High school athletes (entering grades 9-12 this fall) in Bemidji will have the opportunity to participate in the strength and conditioning program. The Sanford POWER program offers ground-based training techniques to improve overall athletic enhancement.

Area professionals and Sanford Health’s training staff will lead the program.

The training implements the latest in strength, speed, agility, plyometric, flexibility, explosive power development, along with conditioning training and injury prevention.

Sessions will be held on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays starting June 15 through Aug. 6 with hourly sessions scheduled in half-hour increments from 6:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

For more information, contact Aryn Deshane at (218) 368-3468. To register before the registration deadline on Thursday, June 11, visit sanford-health.org/classes-and-events/power-bemidji-summer-program.

–Pioneer Staff Report

Youth sports COVID-19 restrictions begin easing

The Minnesota Department of Health on Mon-

day, June 8, announced new guidance on COVID-19 mitigation related to youth sports, changes set to begin Wednesday, June 10.

An easing of restrictions on that day will allow games and competitions for low-risk sports — athletic activities that have no close contact — and expands the allowable number of participants from 10 to 25 in medium-risk sports that have moderate contact.

The health department has categorized sporting activities in low, medium and high-risk categories, depending upon the closeness of play, the duration of closeness and the use of shared equipment like balls.

The result is a sometimes odd grouping in which partner figure skating is considered as risky

as wrestling, football and hockey, with baseball and soccer considered medium risk, and running and cycling considered low risk.

“We have turned the dial to allow for more activity and more people engaging in sporting activity as safely as possible,” said state commissioner of health Jan Malcolm in an afternoon call with reporters. The health department arrived at the risk categories by consulting guidance from U.S. Olympic and Paralympic and other sport organizations.

“We’re very hopeful that if the COVID-19 health measures continue to improve,” Malcolm said, “we expect to be able to resume games and competitions for medium-risk sports by the end of June.”

–Forum News Service

BOY’S GOLF

From Page B1

The first four came as team titles with the Lumberjacks, and he locked up the program’s lone individual state championship as a senior in 1992.

“For me, it was the people involved,” Brink said. “... It was a great time to be a golfer in Bemidji. There were a lot of great players around, and a lot of great people behind the scenes supporting the program.”

‘He expected us to win every year’

To Brink, the program’s success began with two men.

“The leadership always started with the coach,” he said. “With Larry Perkins, we had the best leader in the state. He wanted us to win so bad. He made you prepare the right way so that you were going to win. And Jim Mergens was the same way. Even though he’s got a different personality, he was just as competitive.”

Perkins coached the program from 1980-89, while Mergens succeeded him and coached five seasons from 1990-94. The team four-peated as Class AA state champions from 1988-91, with each coach leading two of the squads.

BHS became just the second boys golf program in Minnesota to claim a still-standing record of four straight state titles. Only Brink and the Jacks have stretched the championship run to five years with an individual crown.

Perkins laid that foundation for Bemidji.

“(Perkins) demanded you practice hard, he demanded you learn the game the right way, he demanded you be mentally strong,” Brink said. “He



Submitted photo

The 1991 Bemidji High School boys golf team. BHS topped Elk River by 12 strokes and won its fourth straight state championship, which still stands as a state record. Andy Brink, third from right, finished fifth individually that year.

expected us to win every year. He really created a mindset that we were the best, and we should win every time. But we prepared the right way, and that started with Larry.”

As an eighth-grader in 1988, Brink carded a two-round score of 157 as BHS captured its third-ever state title. Russ Simenson’s 152 ranked third overall and led the team to a score of 622, 17 strokes ahead of second-place Burnsville.

In 1989, the Lumberjacks needed a fifth-player tiebreaker to take the region crown from Fergus Falls, who matched Bemidji’s score of 308 in the one-day event. Nevertheless, BHS advanced by one stroke.

Things weren’t nearly as tense at state.

Simenson again paced the Jacks with a third-place finish, this time with a 150 showing as Bemidji carded a 621 and ran away from Grand Rapids by 19 strokes. Brink’s 163 was fifth among a team with plenty of depth, which Rick Grand, Matt Howe, Jim Clark and Scott Anderson also anchored.

“My eighth grade year, that’s the year we really felt like we should win state,” Brink said. “We knew that we were the best team. ... Same thing my ninth grade year. At that point, we knew we were the best team. So winning it wasn’t a surprise to us, but we still had to go do it.”

More success under Mergens

Mergens ushered in a

new era when he took over the program in 1990.

“Jim was such a different guy from Larry but equally as competitive and equally as caring about the kids,” Brink said. “He was somebody that everybody loved being around. He was really fun and in your corner and encouraging.”

The transition was seamless, as a state championship score of 647 proved. They broke free from a day-one tie with Minnetonka and won by six strokes. Brink carded a 161.

Not to be outdone, the team made history with its fourth consecutive trophy in 1991. By a 12-stroke margin over Elk River, BHS won with a 631. Brink, who shot a 156, finished fifth on the individual leaderboard.

“My sophomore, junior years, we weren’t as good as we were those first two years. But we still had great teams,” Brink said. “Now it was more guys my age, like Tony Burlingame and Matt Motzko and Jeff Noreen.”

A fifth straight team title evaded the Lumberjacks in 1992, as Apple Valley erased a two-shot deficit after day one and won by three strokes. Brink, however, had his best state showing with a 149 (73-76) and was crowned the individual champ, rallying from a two-shot deficit in the final three holes to win by two.

“It was totally a bittersweet moment,” Brink said. “Winning as a team,

you’re sharing it with everybody. You’re sharing it not just with them, but their families and the community. That’s almost more special, to be honest, because everyone is rejoicing in that. But golf’s an individual game, right? You just add everybody’s score together. I was really proud to win it as an individual.”

‘A great tradition’

With another state championship in 1997, Bemidji became the first program to win the title seven times. Their 25 state appearances, most recently in 2001, are four more than the next closest program.

“There’s been a great tradition,” Brink said. “... It’s a huge source of pride to know that our era of Bemidji golf was probably the most dominant era the state of Minnesota has ever seen.”

Brink went on to play golf and hockey at the University of Minnesota, as well as playing for the U.S. at the 1994 World Junior Hockey Championships. His son, Bobby Brink, plays for the University of Denver and was a second-round draft pick of the Philadelphia Flyers in 2019.

In the 28 years since his high school graduation, nobody has ever matched Brink’s accomplishments on the links. And it’s not too far fetched to think they may never be touched.

“You just want to make a little bit of a mark and uphold a standard that people before you have had,” Brink said. “For us to be able to uphold that standard and then add to it and exceed it, it really did mean a lot.”

Micah Friez is a sports reporter for the Pioneer. Readers can reach him at (218) 333-9789.

TERRES

From Page B1

“She brings a lot of experience playing the game, not only with us, but also playing overseas the last couple years.” Scanlan added, “I think she has a good mind for the game and that she can help our players as far as skill development. She will be a fresh set of eyes and ideas. I am just excited for her to start working with our players.”

A native of New Hope, Minn., Terres played in 146 career games for the Beavers from 2014-18, and skated in 145 straight contests. As a forward, she totaled 48 points (21g-27a) for her collegiate career, including a career-high 22 points in her senior year when she tied for the team lead with 11 goals.

“It’s extremely special. I’m so honored to be back,” Terres said. “Scanlan, (Amber) Fryklund and Shane (Veenker) have created such an amazing cul-

ture here. I’m excited to help grow that culture and be a part of it. They’re just phenomenal people and created a first-class program. I’m excited to be on their team and learn from them.”

Fryklund announced in April that she would step down as associate head coach to become an assistant professor at BSU, leaving an opening on the team’s staff. Terres played four seasons under Fryklund’s tutelage.

“I’ve learned so many things from Amber Fryklund. I’ve also worked with her as a colleague through some summer coaching opportunities as well,” Terres said. “She hired me with the High Performance 15s. She’s always taught me you’ve got to be yourself and work hard.”

Among the coaching positions she’s held, Terres has been involved with the Little Lady Lumberjacks program in Bemidji, as well as a coach and evaluator for the USA Hockey Development Camp in St. Cloud.

“I’ve always wanted to help others, whether that was through education or coaching,” Terres said. “That was always kind of the role I wanted to take on. And I love the game of hockey, every aspect of it. I knew I wanted to coach, and I always wanted to coach at the Division I level and be able to help student-athletes at this high level of play, especially in the WCHA.”

Back to Bemidji from Germany

After her four years as a Beaver, Terres crossed the Atlantic to play in Germany’s top women’s hockey league. She spent 2018-19 with ERC Ingolstadt and this past season with Eisbären Juniors Berlin, compiling 79 points (48g-31a) over 53 games in two seasons.

“It was such a phenomenal experience,” Terres said. “I was able to keep playing the game I loved and I was able to travel. When I was over there, I was able to see like 13 different countries, so it was a phenomenal experience

to keep playing.

“It’s a totally different culture and foreign language, so it’s all new and you kind of adjusted on the fly, but that was the fun of it. Everybody’s so welcoming over there. It’s just fun learning new cultures and new aspects of hockey too.”

After the season ended in Germany, Terres returned to Bemidji, where she’s lived in the offseason ever since college. She completed her minor in human performance and earned a coaching certificate from BSU in 2018 before completing her bachelor’s degree in individualized studies from the university online this past spring.

Terres will officially start her new job in August.

“There’s a lot of prep that I have to do and I’m eager to learn,” she said. “Definitely start networking too, and just kind of start talking to other coaches and learning as much as I can.”

Austin Monteith is the sports editor for the Pioneer. Readers can reach him at (218) 333-9787.

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