

SPORTS

Submit Sports story ideas, team photos, scores and tips for all ages to sports@austindailyherald.com and 507-434-2234

Austin's Molly Sheehan swims the breaststroke of the 200 meter relay against Owatonna last fall at Bud Higgins Pool. Herald file photo

Sports teach never giving up

GET TO KNOW

Molly Sheehan

Austin Packer swimming



Molly Sheehan

Molly Sheehan is a senior on the Austin girls swimming and diving team.

The Packers will open their season when they compete against Mankato East in a virtual meet at Bud Higgins Pool at 6 p.m. Thursday.

Q: What sports do you compete in?

A: I compete in swimming.

Q: What's your favorite sports memory?

A: My favorite sports memory would be when I dropped 10 seconds at sections in the 100 breaststroke in eighth grade and all of the older girls hugged me.

Q: What have you learned from sports?

A: Sports has taught me that you cannot give up on something, if you really want it, you have to work for it.

Q: Who is your biggest sports role model and why?

A: my biggest sports role model is (USA Olympic swimmer) Missy Franklin because she has always had a positive attitude and has always shown that hard work pays off.

Q: If you could have a conversation with anyone, who would it be?

A: I think I would like to have a conversation with (USA Olympic swimmer) Caeleb Dressel.

Q: What is the biggest obstacle you've had to overcome?

A: My biggest obstacle that I've had to overcome is my hip injury last year and recovery from hip surgery.

Q: What is your dream job?

A: My dream job is to work with animals or

run my own business.

Q: What is your favorite food?

A: My favorite food is spaghetti.

Q: What are your plans after high school?

A: Go to a four year college for sure, still looking at options.

Q: How do you feel about living through a pandemic?

A: I feel fortunate that my family has been safe during this time. It can get frustrating to have restrictions on social aspects, but in the grand scheme of things we just have to see the positive in this.

Q: Did you pick up any new hobbies or skills during the shutdown?

A: I started painting a little more.

The trial and errors of a reluctant runner

The Friday night lights will be dim and the volleyball courts will be empty this fall, but there are some athletes who are refusing to remain stagnant.

As I've been working on area previews, it sounds like a plethora of fall athletes in Southland, Blooming Prairie, Hayfield Grand Meadow and LeRoy-Ostrander are taking on the challenge of running cross country, giving them the opportunity to be four-sport athletes if the MSHSL is able to produce a winter, spring and summer season as it plans to.

As a former basketball scrub turned mediocre jogger, I can tell all of these athletes that cross country will be a lot tougher than they may assume it is.

When I was active in basketball and even backyard football in my younger days, I never had to run for more than three minutes straight, and this was no accident. While my father went out and

Rocky Hulne
Sports Editor

would run for the fun of it as he trained for Grandma's Marathon in Duluth in my teenage years, I was very content to go out and shoot hoops or play catch for two hours. I built up a sweat, I had fun and I felt no need to hear my feet pound against the pavement for hours on end with my dad.

But as I grew older and I couldn't find anyone to play basketball with, I stubbornly decided to take up running. I have never had dreams of competing or chasing after a marathon, but it has served as a way to keep me in generally decent health while getting out and seeing nature.

Over the last five years or so, my relationship with running has evolved into one of tolerance. It is



With football and volleyball being pushed back, many athletes are opting to take up cross country. Herald file photo

something that pumps me up, but I always feel better after I finish a run, whether it be a half-mile or four miles.

I can tell you when I began running regularly, my relationship with that activity was one of pure distaste. My feet would burn, my legs would sting and my heart would pound, and that was after advancing two blocks.

While I could have quit, I pushed myself a little bit

harder each day. It took about three months before I could actually run a mile straight without walking and it took another few months before I could finish a run without being completely exhausted, but eventually I felt a strong sense of accomplishment.

While the football and volleyball players who are trying for cross country this fall won't have months to adjust to distance running, they will probably

go through a similar trial of pushing themselves against tiring bodies.

There will be days when they want to stay on the couch and call it quits. There will be days where they can't sit still and the path will call them out and force them to run.

However it goes, I hope these athletes make the best of their experience in distance running.

After all, they may just learn to tolerate it.

AP Top 25: Clemson No. 1, followed by Ohio State, Alabama

Associated Press

Clemson is the preseason No. 1 in The Associated Press Top 25, a poll featuring nine Big Ten and Pac-12 teams that gives a glimpse at what has already been taken by the pandemic from an uncertain college

football season.

Ohio State (1,504 points) was a close No. 2 behind Trevor Lawrence and Clemson (1,520), which starts atop the rankings for the second straight season. The Tigers beat the Buckeyes in a thrilling College Football Playoff

semifinal last season.

Alabama is No. 3, Southeastern Conference rival Georgia is No. 4 and defending Big 12 champion Oklahoma is No. 5. Defending national champion LSU is No. 6.

The 85th edition of the AP rankings will be like

none before.

When the season starts — if the season starts — the Buckeyes and 53 other Bowl Subdivision teams will no longer be eligible for inclusion in the Top 25 because they have postponed their seasons to the spring.

The Big Ten, where Ohio

State and No. 7 Penn State play, and the Pac-12, home to No. 9 Oregon, canceled their fall sports seasons because of concerns about the coronavirus. The Mid-American and Mountain West conferences have also said they will try to play spring football.



Vikings will open season at U.S. Bank Stadium without fans

By Rochelle Olson
Star Tribune

U.S. Bank Stadium will be a fan-free zone for at least the first two Minnesota Vikings home games this season because of COVID-19, the team announced Tuesday.

The Vikings open their season at home at noon on Sept. 13 against the Green Bay Packers. Two weeks later, they are scheduled to host the Tennessee Titans.

But statewide restrictions on big indoor gatherings and concern for fans, players and employees compelled the team to preemptively close the stadium to spectators for at least those two games.

"Based on our conversations and the current Minnesota Department of Health guidelines that specify an indoor venue capacity of 250, we have determined it is not the right time to welcome fans back to U.S. Bank Stadium," the team's statement said. "We will continue to work with the appropriate officials on our plans with the hope of bringing fans back in a safe manner later this season."

The Vikings are set to play their fifth season in the stadium that usually sells out more than 66,000 seats for every game. But this year, there will be plenty of visible and vacant purple seats for the duration of the season — however long it may run.

Even before the team announced the decision, fans had backed away from attending in person. About 60% of the team's 60,000 season-ticket holders had taken up the team's offer of skipping the season, according to the team.

The Vikings gave season-ticket holders the option to take the year off and either get refunds for the tickets or apply the payments to the 2021 season. "We will deeply miss your energy and passion on game day that creates a special environment unique across sports," that letter said.

Vikings executives said last week that they're still working to get some fans in the building. The team is in discussions with state officials about eventually re-opening for a fraction of the usual number of fans, possibly 20%. If fans are allowed into games this season, they will likely see new seating configurations, staggered entry times and face-covering requirements, the team told ticket holders.

"We have sought to balance the opportunity to provide fan access with the responsibility to adhere to public health and medical guidance in order to maintain the health and safety of fans, players, staff members and the broader community," the statement said. "Ultimately, public health is our top priority."

For months, Gov. Tim Walz has been clear that packing fans back into giant sports stadiums won't happen until COVID-10 can be contained or cured.

In the NFL, more than 20 of the 32 teams already have announced plans for games without fans.

Meanwhile, Major League Baseball delayed the start of its season until July. Since then, the Minnesota Twins have been playing their games at Target Field and away without fans in the ballparks.

The Vikings' third home game, and sixth overall in the season, is set for Oct. 18 against the Atlanta Falcons.

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SCHEDULE

Wednesday
No events scheduledThursday
Cross country: Austin at Mankato, 5 p.m.
Girls swimming and diving: Mankato East at Austin, 6 p.m.