

Journal-Press SPORTS & SCHOOL NEWS

VOLLEYBALL PREVIEW

Ready to hit reset button

Experienced team, return of fans bring excitement back to Buffalo gymnasium

GIRLS SWIM/DIVE PREVIEW

Bison look to carry over late season success

By Rob LaPlante
Sports Editor

In a year where everything could have spiraled downward, the Buffalo girls' swim/dive team finished the 2020 season on a high note. The hope is to carry that momentum into 2021.

Buffalo finished 3-5 overall and placed fifth in the Lake Conference with a 2-4 record. They led most of the Section 8AA meet, but finished a half-point behind Moorhead's 368 points for the team title.



Brianna Shroyer

During that meet, they won section titles in the 200 medley relay, 100 free-style, and 100 breaststroke.

Due to high cases of Covid numbers last fall, the girls swim/dive season ended at sections, which cost Buffalo swimmers a shot at four events they would have qualified in for last year's state meet.

Buffalo returns three of four swimmers that would have participated in last year's state meet. Brianna Shroyer, Kolby Schendel, Ellie Carik, and Elle Kaiser were the section champs in the 200 medley relay. Kaiser is the lone member of the relay team that graduated. She is a freshman swimmer this year at St. Cloud State.

The other would-be state qualifiers included Shroyer, as champion in the 100 breast. Schendel was the champion in 100 free and runner-up in the 100 backstroke.

"We have a pretty even lineup," said Kelsea Smith, who makes the jump this season from Assistant Coach to first-year Head Coach with the departure of Rachel Busch to Concordia-St. Paul. "We have our free-styles, strokes and distance crew coming back. We also have a couple good relay teams back as well."

Buffalo's success at sections came after a strong showing in the Lake Conference. The Bison posted a 3-5 record in a season that featured dual meets only. Their 2-4 record against conference opponents was fifth out of seven teams in the Lake.

From a personal standpoint, the four conference losses against Minnetonka, Edina, Wayzata, and Eden Prairie were all opportunities to better themselves against the state's elite programs.

Swim/Dive

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2021 Schedule Volleyball

August	
26 Monticello	7 p.m.
30 Park Center	7 p.m.
September	
2 St. Francis	7 p.m.
7 ROGERS	7 p.m.
11 M-Westonka Invite	9 a.m.
13 ROCORI	7 p.m.
18 Hopkins Invite	8 a.m.
21 Eden Prairie	7 p.m.
23 WACONIA	7 p.m.
28 EDINA	7 p.m.
30 St. Michael-Albertville	7 p.m.
October	
2 Moorhead	12 p.m.
5 Hopkins	7 p.m.
7 WAZYATA	7 p.m.
12 Becker	7 p.m.
14 MINNETONKA	7 p.m.
15 STMA Invite	5 p.m.
16 STMA Invite	8 a.m.
26 Section 5-3A Play-in	TBD
26 Section 5-3A QF	TBD
28 Section 8-3A Semis	TBD
November	
3 Section 8-3A Finals	TBD
11-13 State Tourney	TBD
(Xcel Energy Center)	
2020 records:	
2-10 overall	
2-8 Lake Conference (6th place)	
Section Tournament:	
No tournaments due to Covid	
Head Coach:	
Jenn Peterson	
Assistant Coaches:	
Becky Karna, Jennifer Penney, Aivary Bouman, Lauri Zumach, Taylor Tody	
Captains:	
Not named at time of publication	



Kolleen Ebert (front) swings away during spiking drills at the opening week of practice. Ebert and the Bison will open their season with a road match Thursday, Aug. 26 at Monticello. (Photo by Rob LaPlante)

By Rob LaPlante
Sports Editor

A sense of normalcy has this year's Buffalo volleyball team excited for the upcoming season.

While Covid is still a threat, this year's season will feature a more traditional approach, including a start date that began with a scrimmage on Friday, Aug. 20 at Delano.

Just to have competition in August is something senior Macie Guida is looking forward to. Last year's season start was delayed until October due to Covid. Covid also eliminated last year's section and state tournaments.

"I think we're all really excited that we're starting on time this year and not waiting around for a season," Guida said. "That, and last year we had to wear masks. It really makes an impact not wearing them. Volleyball is a sport of talking, and you have to communicate all the time. When you're wearing a mask, it makes it really hard. You can tell there's a lot more energy and communication, now that we have no mask mandates."

Covid aside, Buffalo struggled with the condensed schedule. They finished 2-10 overall with both victories

coming in a pair of 3-0 wins over Hopkins. All but one of Buffalo's 10 losses resulted in three-game sweeps. The only match that went beyond three was a four-set loss to North Branch in the final match of the regular season.

For some teams, the final week of the season was a makeshift schedule. With no section tournaments, a lot of the top teams from each section played each other the final week to mimic a

section finals week. Beyond just results and masks, the Bison are hoping to end another negative trend that took place in the majority of last year's matches. Buffalo showed at times they could hang with the Lake schools, but when the opposing team made a run, the Bison would let it snowball.

Bison Head Coach Jenn Peterson is hoping an experience will be able to end some of those issues.

Buffalo returns nine players that saw varsity playing time.

"The difference from last year to this, many of the returning core now has that varsity experience," Peterson said. "We have four senior starters who played at a competitive level a year ago, but most were new to the varsity court."

Experience may be one thing, but having the students back in the gym

— something that wasn't allowed a year ago, will be another factor.

"They are kind of the sixth man for volleyball, even if they don't always know what they are cheering about," said a chuckling Peterson. "It will be good to have that energy back. I think not having them a year ago definitely played

Volleyball

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BOYS SOCCER PREVIEW



Mason Kunesh (above) and the Bison are looking for their first victory in over two years when the 2021 fall season kicks off on Aug. 26 at Monticello. (Photo by Rob LaPlante)

Buffalo searching for goals, wins

Returning players determined to end long winless streak

By Rob LaPlante
Sports Editor

When adding up all the difficulties the first two years as a member of the Lake Conference, offense appears to be the most challenging for the Buffalo boys' soccer team.

The Bison completed a Covid-shortened season a year ago 0-9 in the Lake and 0-10-2 overall. Buffalo's conference record is 0-20-1 against Lake schools and 0-25-4 in two seasons since making the switch from the Mississippi 8 at the start of the 2019 season.

The Bison were shutout in nine of their 10 losses a year ago. The only non-losses on the schedule were a pair of 2-2 ties in two non-conference games against Monticello.

Despite the lack of recent success, returning players remain optimistic. Unlike the previous two seasons, this year's schedule has only

one matchup against each of the conference teams, instead of two. Buffalo will play nine non-conference teams in 2021, including three games against current Mississippi 8 squads.

"We're playing schools more our size, more our skill, so we'll be expecting more wins," said senior Carver Tierney, one of two captains this season, along with senior Camden Reinech.

Tierney will be counted on to add some much needed offensive punch for a team that was outscored 42-5 a season ago. Tierney battled through a frustrating junior season that saw him play through nagging injuries. His one goal and one assist were career lows since joining varsity his freshman season.

A good off-season has Tierney confident he can turn things around in 2021.

"I'm feeling totally fine and in good shape," Tierney said. "I played the whole club season without injury. I want to score a lot more

goals and try to put my team in front, often."

Head Coach Joe Pokorney saw plenty of positives from last season he hopes to carry over into this year. In a windy matchup in last year's Section 8AA quarterfinal, the Bison were tied 0-0 at half-time, before losing 3-0 at No. 1 seed Maple Grove.

Buffalo's two ties last year came against Monticello. The Magic finished 9-1-3 overall and won the Mississippi 8 title at 8-0-1. Buffalo opens this season with a 7 p.m. road game Thursday, Aug. 26 at Monticello.

"Just winning some games is a goal of ours. You can't come into a season without that being a goal," Pokorney said. "That's not how I look at it, though. I'm wanting us to go out and be competitive, especially in the Lake Conference. You have to earn every win and every result in this conference, so we're working towards that. I'm just hoping we can take that next step us this year."

In addition to Tierney,

Buffalo returns junior Tyler Schrepfer, who led the team in goals a year ago with two. Buffalo's only other goal scorers from last season also return in seniors Mason Kunesh and Elijah Dorion.

Sophomore Osdany Penaloza Milian saw extensive playing time as a freshman. The lineup will get a big boost at the attack/winger position with the addition of Phillip Fleischer-Børresen, a foreign-exchange student from Norway.

"Our junior and senior classes are really strong," Pokorney said. "We will have a few younger guys in the mix, but I don't think we'll be inexperienced, just a couple guys in new spots."

One obvious hole in the lineup will be the loss of all-conference goalkeeper Wyatt Hiers, who ranked in the top-10 in the state his senior season in shots against, saves, games played, minutes played, and save percentage.

Boys Soccer

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