



SPORTS



Photos by Tim Middagh / The Globe

The Southwest Christian student section cheers after a score against Hills-Beaver Creek Monday night in Edgerton.



Southwest Christian's Maren Nerem (41) drives through a gap against Hills-Beaver Creek defenders Sam Moser (left), Allie LaRock (51) and Kenadie Fick on Monday evening in Edgerton during South Sub-section 3A play.

SWC does it again

Behind strong second half by Morgan Pap, Eagles girls basketball team wins another sub-section title

By Scott Mansch
The Globe
Edgerton

A seemingly safe Southwest Minnesota Christian lead had melted down to six and the team's All-State star was on the bench in foul trouble midway through the second half here Monday night.

So the Eagles turned to Morgan Pap. "We always had the confidence," Pap said. "We needed to keep our intensity up so they didn't take it from us."

Pap scored 15 of her game-high 19 points in the second half as Southwest Christian defeated Hills-Beaver Creek 61-54 to win another 3A Sub-section south championship.

Junior reserve Makenna Moss added five important points down the stretch as the

Eagles held off the Patriots to win sub-section honors for the sixth year in a row.

Southwest Christian advances to take on Minneota in the Section 3A championship game Thursday night in Pipestone.

Senior standout Maren Nerem scored 11 points in the first half and the Eagles used an 18-0 run to build a huge lead. Nerem, daughter of SWC girls coach Denise Nerem, shot 5-for-5 in the opening 18 minutes.

The Eagles' aggressive defense forced 21 H-BC turnovers as Southwest earned a 32-17 halftime bulge.

But in the second half, with Nerem sitting out much of the time in foul trouble, the Patriots battled back behind senior guard Taryn Rauk and junior

sharpshooter Kenadie Fick.

Rauk's 3-pointer with eight minutes left got the Patriots to within seven. But Moss answered with consecutive hoops.

With about five minutes left, Pap — daughter of Southwest boys hoops coach Jamie Pap — connected on a pretty bank shot. The next trip down she nailed a 3-pointer, followed quickly by another basket.

The Eagles, winners of two of three against H-BC this season, were not to be denied. It was the program's 11th sub-section championship and, counting 11 titles in the former District 8, its 22nd overall dating back to 1974.

The Eagles' swarming defense was all over H-BC in the first half, leading to an 18-0 run that featured

five Pats' turnovers.

Southwest Christian received contributions from Cybil Vander Top, Hannah Pap, Rylie Fey and Nerem, especially, during the flurry.

"We want to take every single possession and win every one on defense, because that's going to get our offense going," said Maren Nerem.

The big run was all defense, said coach Nerem.

"We traveled really well when the ball was in the air and arrived at the same time they did," coach Nerem said of the defensive intensity that sparked the run. "We dropped really well on defense and fronted the ball well."

Senior guard Abby Knobloch scored 12 points for Hills-Beaver Creek, which finished at 16-4. Sam Moser added eight for the Pats,

who defeated SCW 57-53 on Jan. 15 and fell to the Eagles 61-53 on March 13.

"They're a very good team," coach Nerem said. "We expected that grind and they gave us a good game, for sure."

The deficit proved too much for the Pats.

"We let them get out to a big lead and it took everything we had to battle back," said H-BC coach Kale Wiertzema. "We had our chances in the second half but couldn't quite get (the deficit) under six."

"But our girls battled and showed a lot of heart after getting down that big."

Wiertzema liked how his team responded to the adversity, but he wished the first half had been different.

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Redwood powers past Windom for 3AA girls sub-section crown

By Doug Wolter
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WINDOM — Senior center Haley Garman scored 24 points and accomplished a career milestone Monday night as the Redwood Valley Cardinals defeated Windom Area 67-47 for the Sub-section 3AA girls basketball championship.

The game, pitting the top-seeded team in the south bracket, Windom Area, against the second-seeded Cards, might have been called a toss-up before the opening tip. The two teams split a pair of games during the regular season.

But on this night at Windom Area High School, Redwood Valley's offense never took a rest, and neither did its defense. The Eagles simply missed too many shots and were unable to handle Garman inside. Despite a strong 21-point effort by Windom Area senior forward Delaney Smith, the WAHS offense

was inconsistent. The team's prolific senior guard, Allison Letcher, was held scoreless until she made a free throw with just 8:57 remaining in the second half. Letcher and dangerous long-range shooter Kait Huska finished with just five points each.

Meanwhile, Garman was a workhorse, scoring six first half points as her team led 27-24 at halftime, then scoring 18 more in the second half as the visitors outscored their Big South Conference rivals 40-23.

Along the way, Garman — who is nearing 2,000 career points — secured her 1,000th career rebound.

"To be honest, I didn't know I had it right away. I was notified last week I was closing in," she said.

Garman was not a one-girl show. AJ Guggisberg converted five 3-point shots for 15 points, and Aubree Hicks

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Luverne skater Kamryn Van Batavia still racking up points

By Doug Wolter
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LUVERNE — There are lots of things tantalizingly unique about Luverne High School girls hockey player Kamryn Van Batavia. Besides the fact that she hates to wear socks, she has been atop the leaderboard in Minnesota prep hockey for most of the season.

At last glance, the super sophomore is tops in scoring and points, and third in assists (right behind teammate Reghan Bork). You'd think by now that Van Batavia is almost a pro at fielding inquiries from the media.

Well, not exactly. The shy Cardinal was asked by a Sioux Falls television station during the regular season if she would agree to going on camera. That was too much, said head coach Tony Sandbulte, who said his 10th-grade star was in tears at the prospect.

Bravely, The Globe asked Kamryn if she would do a



Tim Middagh / The Globe

Luverne girls hockey player Kamryn Van Batavia doesn't like to wear socks, but she doesn't need them to score a load of hockey goals.

Drill episode. Happily, she agreed, and she got over her shyness quickly and smiled easily throughout the process.

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Kamryn Van Batavia
Luverne
Sophomore
Hockey



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All in with training

The weight room is mandatory for WHS athletes, and progress is impressive

By Doug Wolter
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WORTHINGTON — The weight room at Worthington High School is busy every day. Strength and Conditioning Coordinator Brad Grimmus takes attendance after school and informs coaches who is showing up and who isn't. If you're a student who misses your training session — even if it's because of illness — don't worry. You'll make it up later.

In the past, weight training was an option. Not any more. It's mandatory for student-athletes in every sport. And Grimmus, the former head football coach at WHS, says results have been remarkable.

"For a high percentage of them, they love it. If they see the results physically or in the mirror, they are totally all in. That's how you get them hooked on it," he said.

In years past, football players and wrestlers seemed to be more interested in weight training than practitioners in other sports. But since August of 2019, Worthington High athletic director Josh Dale has insisted that all athletes learn

the weight room's benefits. Now, Coach Joni Reitmeier's girl gymnasts swear by the program. Tennis players do, too.

Prior to the mandate, Grimmus said, athletes tended to lift in the offseason and back off in-season. But the new plan, he explained, is to "bridge the gap" to help lifters retain what they'd accomplished outside of the season schedule.

Every team gets its in-season weight training time twice weekly. Many of them come in more than twice a week. Even some kids who haven't lifted before are getting into the habit.

No, it's not just for football players. The training regimen is comprehensive, a unified system that benefits the whole body and the psyche, too.

"Do you want to hit the ball harder in tennis? Do you want to kick the ball farther in soccer? It provides better balance and better coordination. Every sport, you need balance, you need strength, and you need confidence," Grimmus said.

In the Metro area, high schools have mandated weight training regimens for years, some of them for 20 years

or more. Other schools had devised specific programs for specific sports, but it wasn't for everyone. The Worthington program is designed to benefit every athlete, regardless of sport.

Grimmus calls it a "unified" program.

It's the same system across all sports. It teaches fundamental movement patterns. It builds a fundamental training base. It improves sports performance in the areas of strength, coordination, balance and confidence. It involves injury reduction and enhances recovery time.

It also brings all the Worthington High School coaches, along with the athletic director, into a more cohesive unit of leadership.

Prior to the program, Grimmus taught a total fitness class at the high school.

"The big thing was, they were seeing results with the data I showed them," he recalled.

Dale questioned Grimmus about the program. Head football coach Geno Lais saw the results with his players and promoted the idea of making it available to a wider range of athletes.



Tim Middagh / The Globe

Strength and conditioning coordinator Brad Grimmus spots for Worthington High School wrestler Kevin Galvez during after-school weight training.

Now, every athlete enrolled has his or her own program with personal documentation. For an athlete to know the training is working they don't have to just look in the mirror; their improvements are authenticated on paper and constantly monitored.

Grimmus gives the AD his due.

Without Josh Dale's support, this goes nowhere," Grimmus said. "To have all programs to be required to do it, it takes leadership."

The program is popular enough now that the ath-

letes, themselves, hold each other accountable. Grimmus tells the story of one hockey player who was dogging it in the weight room but was challenged by a teammate. The harder-working player ordered the slacker to work harder, saying he wants to win more games and it takes a whole team to do it.

But don't worry, kids: Grimmus will keep an eye on you, too.

"They know for a fact," he said, "that I'm going to push them socially, mentally and physically."

REDWOOD

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made three of them in the first half and finished with 12. And Sydney Sommers, who played outstanding defense against Letcher, scored 10 points. All the Cardinals played well defensively.

"We just executed well on the little things. Every play on the court we do all the little things," Garman said. "We also walk in with a chip on our shoulder. We're used to being the underdogs. The last four years when I started on varsity, we didn't look for a game. We earned respect for our game."

The first half on Monday was a half of spurts. Redwood Valley led 6-0, Windom Area tied it 10-10 on Smith's eighth point, then took a 13-10 lead on a Smith shot and free throw. It became 15-10 on a Huska driving

layup, but the Cardinals rallied after a short time-out, outscoring WAHS 17-9 on the way to intermission.

Quickly in the second half, the Cardinals took over. With less than 12 minutes to play the score was 43-26 in the Cards' favor. As Windom Area continued to miss far too many shots to forge a comeback, the Cardinals stretched their lead further.

"They executed a great game plan, and they took away a lot of the things we had all season," said Windom Area head coach Jacob Johnson. "They played a real good defensive game. And for us, it was like there was a lid on the basket."

Redwood Valley advances to play the Sub-section 3AA north champion on Thursday against New London-Spicer in Montevideo.

Redwood Valley 27 67
Windom Area 24 47
REDWOOD VALLEY (3FG-2FG-FT-TP) — Guggisberg 5-0-0-15, Hicks 3-1-1-12, Sommers 1-2-3-10, Garman 0-12-2-24, Schjenken 0-2-0-4. Totals 9-17-6-67.
WINDOM AREA (3FG-2FG-FT-TP) — Sammons 1-0-0-3, Bucher 0-2-0-4, Letcher 0-2-1-5, Wormstadt 1-3-0-9, Huska 1-1-0-5, Smith 0-9-3-21. Totals 3-17-4-47.

SWC

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"I expected a knockout, drag-out fight, a back-and-forth game, and I liked our chances in a game like that," Wiertzema said. "But they punched us in the mouth right away and we had to give it everything we had to get back in it."

The Eagles (18-3) advance to meet defending Section 3A champion and top-ranked Minneota, which won the North Sub-Section title with a 68-49 trouncing of Lac qui Parle Valley.

The Eagles know Minneota's fine program very well. Last year SWC lost to the Vikings 78-50 in the section championship game. Last month in Edgerton, Minneota clipped the Eagles by nine in a non-conference game.

"We're going to be working hard for Minneota this week," Maren Nerem said. "And we're going to come hungry."

Hills-Beaver Creek 17 54
Southwest Christian 32 61
HILLS-BEAVER CREEK (3FG-2FG-FT-TP) — Kenadie Fick 2-2-5-15, Taryn Rauk 1-4-1-12, Abby Knobloch 2-2-2-12, Lanae Tate 0-0-2-2, Sam Moser 0-4-0-8, Allie LaRock 0-2-1-5. Totals: 5-14-11-54.
SOUTHWEST CHRISTIAN (3FG-2FG-FT-TP) — Cybil Vander Top 1-1-2-7, Hannah Pap 0-3-2-8, Makenzie Snyder 0-1-0-2, Ella Veldkamp 0-1-0-2, Rylie Fey 0-3-0-6, Morgan Pap 2-4-5-19, Brooklynn Moss 0-0-1-1, Maren Nerem 0-5-1-11, Makenna Moss 0-2-1-5. Totals: 3-20-12-61.

THE DRILL

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It's important, probably, that Kamryn gets used to the idea of being in the media spotlight. Even as a sophomore, she's the top skater on a 16-4 Luverne squad that will participate in the quarterfinals of the state tournament Thursday against Proctor-Hermantown (18-0) at Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

Clearly, Kamryn's not slowing down. In a 7-2 victory over Mankato East in the Section 3A finals, she scored five goals.

The hockey forward also plays volleyball at LHS. But it's hockey that really tells her story. She's a hard worker in the offseason, and she believes that is what helped her become successful.

It includes a lot of skating and shooting practice, and camps.

"I think it really pays off because I can take it back on the ice and play well with my teammates. We have good team chemistry, which helps us go far in our dreams, and what we want to do," she said.

Van Batavia first set foot on the ice when she was 2 years old, not that she remembers.

You can go online to see a video of Kamryn Van Batavia at www.dglobe.com. Here's a sample of our interview:

QUESTION: OK, what about that story of being a skater when you were 2?

ANSWER: "From the stories that I heard, I was 2, and my dad took me out, and I've seen a few pictures. And I probably didn't get the hang of it right away, but I feel like I just kept going out and loving the sport. And my dad played a big role in just encouraging me to keep going."

QUESTION: Have you got a special story to tell that you'll always remember?

ANSWER: "A special story, as a team story, is probably going to the state tournament, and one of my teammates, number 4, Rylee Gee, between each game we would go down into the little fun area and we'd play ping-pong. And we would compete so hard at ping-pong. And we almost had to

sneak back up because my coach would get sick of it, and he'd be like, 'Stop going down to play ping-pong!' And we just kept going down there."

QUESTION: What's the most unusual thing about you that some people don't know?

ANSWER: "The most unusual thing about me is I hate wearing socks. I don't wear socks when I skate, or in tennis shoes, or any shoes — ever. I hate it. In my skates when I wear socks I feel like my feet are suffocated. And like, it just carries on to my tennis shoes. And you DO NOT want to smell my skates. It is so bad. ... I don't even have socks in my drawers, in my room. If I ever need socks, I go to my sister's room and borrow them."

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Trojan gymnasts capture seventh straight section championship



Tim Middagh / The Globe

Without a trophy yet to hold, the Worthington High School gymnastics team poses on a balance beam after winning the Section 3A championship in Jackson on Saturday afternoon. Before leaving the JCC high school, the Trojans learned they qualified for the school's seventh straight state team tournament.

until someone handed her the championship plaque while the Jackson High School gym emptied out.

"Did you win?" a reporter asked.

"I think we did!" exclaimed the smiling coach with plaque in hand. "They gave it to me, anyway, so I'm not giving it back!"

Eventually, the Trojan girls were able to learn that two of them — Hali Bullerman (first, 36.4) and Gracia Elias (third, 35.875) — qualified for state as all-arounders. Also qualifying in events were teammates Abby Bristow (2nd, 9.225 on beam; and 3rd, 9.225 on floor) and Mekyla Nystrom (1st, 9.4 on

vault; and 6th, 9.15 on floor).

In qualifying in the all-around, Bullerman placed first on the bars (8.975), second on vault (9.275) and fourth on beam (8.975). Elias was first on beam (9.275) and fourth on vault and floor, both with 9.175 scores.

Redwood Valley's Riley Franklin advanced on floor while teammate Avery Wilson advanced on vault and bars. Windom/Mountain Lake's Brooklyn Paulson qualified on vault, Jackson County Central's Payton Benda made it on beam, Luverne's Ella Reisdorfer advanced on beam, and Pipestone Area's Kindra Douty advanced on bars.

Worthington's team title was no surprise to anyone. At one point during the 2021 regular season the Trojans, who achieved its best-ever fifth place finish in the state tournament last year, were the highest-ranked Class A team in the state.

This year's team score of 143.050 was nearly 10 points better than second-place Martin County Area, with 133.150. Third went to Jackson County Central with 132.6, followed by Redwood Valley 131.250, Luverne 129.550, Windom/Mountain Lake 124.525, Pipestone Area 120.4 and Marshall 117.075.

For Elias, Saturday's result means that

she will participate in the state tournament for all six years she's been a varsity member. Though she didn't have official confirmation of her team's seventh straight title when she was approached for a comment, she'd already assumed she was a six-timer.

"It feels great," said the only senior on the Trojans' squad. "I'm really excited for our team. I think all along, we were very strong. We had some oopsies, but we had each other's back."

Bullerman, too, was happy.

"Just to know that your whole team went out there and competed to their best ability."

The third-year varsity performer, now a freshman, added, "I'm really happy with the way we went out there with a bunch of confidence, and we were just like, 'Let's do this.'"

Bristow missed the beginning of the 2019-20 season for ankle surgery, but she bounced back strong this winter season.

"I feel like we had a great meet," she said of Saturday's sectional. "Overall I think we kept our spirits high and we all leaned on each other for support. The team energy is just amazing. It's a very good thing.

We help keep our attitudes high and keep us confident."

There's no bigger fan of the Trojans' hard-working, winning and supportive attitudes than Coach Reitmeier, who has been at the helm of the team's program for all seven of the state qualifications.

"We always preach that this is a team sport. And even though you go out by yourself, your team is right there. We've just got amazing leadership. They really have each other's back," she said.

If there was any disappointment about Saturday's meet, Reitmeier said, it might be due to the absence of a post-event ceremony.

"I feel sad in some respects that all the girls who are state qualifiers — not just my girls, but all of them — are not getting recognition in a proper ceremony. And that feels different. I wish I could see them recognized. It just gives me pride to see all those girls, and I know how hard it is to get to that point," she explained, adding, "But as different as it is, we're still grateful to see (the state tournament) happen."

The Class A tournament will be at Champlin Park High School next Friday.

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