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SPORTS & CLASSIFIEDS



LeRoy-Ostrander's Tanner Olson finds a seam against Wheaton/Herman-Norcross in the Minnesota State Football Tournament quarterfinals last Thursday at Macalester College. Eric Johnson/photodesk@austindailyherald.com

Earning a new culture

Cardinals have risen to great heights in six years

By Rocky Hulne
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LEROY — The streets of LeRoy have been flooded with Cardinal logos and encouraging messages for the state semi-final-bound football team, but there is one sign that tells the story better than any of them.

In front of LeRoy-Ostrander High School sits a small white sign with the words 'Always Earned, Never Given.' These Cardinals were nobody's favorites when they chose not to field a varsity team six years ago, but they've put in all of the time and effort needed to put together L-O's best season in more than 15 years.

Now, they are hoping to rally together to win the first state championship in school history.

L-O senior Gavin Sweeney doesn't have a lot of memories of the Cardinal team that only played JV football in 2015, but he does recall watching standout running back Lucas Roe compete for the Cardinals in 2013. Sweeney was just an elementary student then and now he's preparing to play in one of the biggest games in Cardinal history.

"When we were in fifth and sixth grade, we won all of our games but one in the regular season and we won the championship," Sweeney said. "It wasn't anything really special then, but we knew once we got older that we could be something special. Now we're here in the semifinals."

L-O head coach Trevor Carrier was an assistant coach in 2015 and he's seen the program grow every year since he has taken over.

"Right now is a very good time to be here. It is rewarding to see the light at the end of the tunnel," Carrier said. "We had to do something (in 2015). We didn't have a lot of guys in those junior and senior classes and we just weren't ready to compete. There were too many young kids on the field and you're not going to have success with that in the best section in nine man. It was a wise decision and since then, things have changed."



"... we knew once we got older that we could be something special. Now we're here in the semifinals"

Gavin Sweeney



SEMIFINAL SHOWDOWN

• LeRoy-Ostrander (10-2 overall) will take on Kittson County Central in the Minnesota State Football Class Nine Man Tournament semifinals at 11:30 a.m. Thursday in US Bank Stadium.

• KCC (10-2 overall) beat Olgilvie 27-20 in the state quarterfinals on Friday. The Cardinals beat Wheaton/Herman-Norcross 57-26 in the quarterfinals.

The Cardinals had an undefeated regular season in 2019 with the help of Carter Johnson, the older brother of senior quarterback Chase Johnson, and Riley Olson, the older brother of running back Tanner Olson. Both Chase and Tanner said that their older brothers are jealous of them being able to play in the

state semifinals, but they both give credit to their older brothers for helping to change the culture in L-O.

"I don't want to diss the older teams, but the mentality is completely different now. It all started when my brother was a senior and they started lifting more," Chase said. "I think everyone's

excited, even the teachers are talking to us about it. The parents are obviously excited and we haven't had to pay for anything in the community. They're donating a ton of money."

On the field, the Cardinals are a no-nonsense team that hits hard and plays with fire. They are unapologetic, feisty and driven. But they are also very humble; getting any L-O player to talk about themselves is like putting them through a root canal.

They'd rather celebrate the team, the town or the coaching staff than brag about stats or accomplishments. The players have stayed focused throughout this state tournament run and the lights haven't been too bright as of yet, but Tanner admits that the nerves are starting to creep in with the prospect of playing in US Bank Stadium.

"It's going to be a completely different atmosphere and it's a little nerve racking," he said.

L-O assistant coach Aaron Hungerholt was the head coach in 2015, and he said the team needed some consistency with the coaching staff to get back on track. The players bought in as they got in the weight room and stuck with it over the last six years.

"We had real good kids who bought into what we were trying to do," Hungerholt said. "We knew we had a six year window of good athletes that we could do things with. I think the support that we have now, especially with the administration has allowed coaches to do what they needed to do. It's been a great atmosphere, not just in sports but also in the school."

Few administrators in the state are as excited for the state football tournament as L-O superintendent Jennifer Backer-Johnson, who has a son that plays for the Chatfield football team. Chatfield is scheduled to play Barnesville in the Class AA semifinals right after L-O's semifinal game on Thursday.

"It's a lot of excitement," Hungerholt said. "We have a lot of good kids who are easy to get behind."

Walsh qualifies for state swim meet

Austin Daily Herald
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The Packers had one state qualifier at the Section 1A Meet swimming finals in Rochester Friday.

Online

Look for an online feature on Olivia Walsh at: www.austindailyherald.com



Austin's Olivia Walsh swims the breaststroke of the 200 yard medley relay earlier this season at Bud Higgins Pool. Walsh qualified for state in the 50-yard and 100-yard freestyle. Herald file photo

for the Packer girls basketball team in the Minnesota Class AAA State last winter.

Austin's Alayna Kennedy finished sixth in Section 1A diving in Mankato Thursday night.

AUSTIN RESULTS

Team standings: 1. Mankato West 402; 2. Saint Peter 334; 3. New Prague 291; 4. Red Wing 270; 5. Winona 234; 6. Mankato East 232; 7. Austin

157; 8. TCU 84; 9. Faribault 71; 10. Albert Lea 51

200-medley relay: Madelynn Murley, Kaylee Butts, Ingrid Dolan Peterson, Mackenzie Carter (seventh, 2:03.70)

200-freestyle: Madelynn Murley (seventh, 2:05.61)

200-individual medley: Sydney Tobak (15th, 2:32.07)

50-freestyle: Olivia Walsh (second, 24.73); Alivia Hemry (14th, 27.01)

Diving: Alayna Kennedy (sixth, 292.10); Reese

Norton (seventh, 284.75); Rachel Engelstad (10th, 271.70)

100-butterfly: Sydney Tobak (16th, 1:10.50)

100-freestyle: Olivia Walsh (third, 53.99)

500-freestyle: Gracie Greenman (12th, 5:54.45)

200-freestyle relay: Olivia Walsh, Alivia Hemry, Abbie Boyson, Mackenzie Carter (sixth, 1:45.59)

100-backstroke: Madelynn Murley (seventh, 1:05.39)

100-breaststroke: Addison Walsh (12th, 1:17.33); Kaylee Butts (15th, 1:18.64)

SCHEDULE

Wednesday

No events scheduled

Thursday

Minnesota Class Nine Man State Football Semifinal: LeRoy-Ostrander vs. Kittson County Central in US Bank Stadium, 11:30 a.m.

Friday

NAHL hockey: Minot at Austin Bruins, 7 p.m.

Girls swimming and diving: Class A swimming preliminaries at noon at University Minnesota Aquatic Center, noon

Saturday

NAHL hockey: Minot at Austin Bruins, 7 p.m.

Girls swimming and diving: Class A swimming finals at noon at University Minnesota Aquatic Center, noon

BRIEFS

Austin girls hockey opens season with win

The Austin girls hockey team opened its season with a 2-1 win over Rochester Century/Rochester John Marshall in Rochester Saturday.

Kate Holtz scored a goal in the first period and added another goal in the second for the Packers (1-0 overall, 1-0 Big Nine).

"The team played really well," Austin head coach Troy Holtz said. "We pressured the puck most of the game which caused many turnovers. We did not give them much space to shoot. Until the last three minutes when they pulled their goalie we had only allowed 12 shots for the game. This was a great team effort."

Megan Schultz, Peyton Squier and Sarah Wangen all had one assist for Austin. Kyia Redford-Garcia had 17 saves for Austin.



NBA fines Timberwolves \$250K for illegal offseason workouts

MINNEAPOLIS — The NBA fined the Minnesota Timberwolves \$250,000 on Monday for violating league rules that prohibit teams from arranging or paying for off-season practice or group workout sessions for their players outside their home market.

The punishment was connected to team activities that took place in the Miami area in early September, the league announced.

AP source: Blue Jays, Berrios reach deal for 7 years, \$131M

TORONTO — The Toronto Blue Jays have reached an agreement with pitcher Jose Berríos on a seven-year, \$131 million deal, pending a physical, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The Blue Jays acquired the 27-year-old right-hander at the July trade deadline from the Minnesota Twins. The two-time All-Star was due to become an unrestricted free agent after the 2022 season.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because there was no official announcement from the Blue Jays about the deal and the person was not authorized to speak about it.

Berríos went 5-4 with a 3.58 ERA in 12 starts with Toronto down the stretch. He finished 12-9 last season with a 3.52 ERA overall. Berríos, who is from Puerto Rico, was taken 32nd overall by the Twins in the 2012 amateur draft and has been a durable and reliable starter.

The contract will become only the third \$100 million-plus deal in Blue Jays history. Toronto signed outfielder George Springer to a \$150 million, six-year contract last offseason. Vernon Wells and the Blue Jays agreed to a \$126 million, seven-year contract in 2006.

Minnesota State High School Football Tournament Nine Man

Nine Man Quarterfinal Thursday, Nov. 11
LeRoy-Ostrander 57, Wheaton/Herman-Norcross 26
Fertile-Beltrami 44, Mountain Iron-Buhl 22

Friday, Nov. 12
Kittson County Central 27, Olgilvie 20
Hills-Beaver Creek 30, Renville County West 7

Semifinal At U.S. Bank Stadium Thursday
Kittson County Central (9-2) vs. **LeRoy-Ostrander (10-2), 11:30 a.m.**

Friday
Fertile-Beltrami (12-0) vs. Hills-Beaver Creek (10-2), 9 a.m.

Championship Saturday, Nov. 27 At U.S. Bank Stadium
Semifinal winners, 10 a.m.