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# SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022 **7**

## TIME OUT

Joel Alvstad  
*Sports Editor*



### Recognizing the classroom

The Red Rock Conference has announced its Academic All-Conference girls and boys basketball teams for the 2021-22 season, recognizing seniors in the conference who have demonstrated leadership on the court and in the classroom.

Academic All-Red Rock Conference team members are:

• **Adrian-Ellsworth:** *Girls:* Josi Altman, Julia Bullerman, Brooke Custer and Katrina Polzine. *Boys:* Dawson Krahling, Peyton Lewis and Carson Wolford.

• **Edgerton:** *Girls:* Emma Schoolmeester, Reese Wassink and Haley Wieck. *Boys:* Nolan Buckridge.

• **Heron Lake-Oka-bena-Fulda:** *Girls:* Taryn Evers, Chrissy Hermeling, Emily Madison, Claire Reith and Faith White. *Boys:* Carter Drent and Parker Murphy.

• **Hills-Beaver Creek:** *Girls:* Kenadie Fick. *Boys:* Troy Durst and Liam Raymon.

• **Mt. Lake Area-Comfrey:** *Girls:* Haily Green, Kate Janzen and Riley Schroeder. *Boys:* Ian Penner and Kade Wassman.

• **Murray County Central:** *Girls:* Emily Rohrer. *Boys:* Nate Kleven and Ryan Risacher.

• **Red Rock Central:** *Girls:* Haily Amsden, Karli Arkell, Nora Hemmingsen and Lilly Stavnes. *Boys:* Brandon Hensch and Joseph Strock.

• **Southwest Minnesota Christian:** *Girls:* Riley Fey, Morgan Pap and Tyra Snyder. *Boys:* Micah Schaa, Levi Van Dyken, Cody Van't Hof and Owen Vogel.

• **Westbrook-Walnut Grove:** *Girls:* Kelsey DeSmith and Kayla Freeburg. *Boys:* Orion Knakmuhs and Cole VanDeWiele.



JOEL ALVSTAD 3/23 boys basketball 607

**THE MLAC BOYS BASKETBALL team held up the Section 2A runner-up trophy following Friday's section championship game against Sleepy Eye St. Mary's.**

**St. Mary's defeated the Wolverines 62-40 to earn a trip to the Class A state tournament.**

## Stellar season ends short of state

St. Mary's pulls away from MLAC for section title.

By **JOEL ALVSTAD**  
[joela@windomnews.com](mailto:joela@windomnews.com)

A tough night from the field and a surge late in the first half combined to end the season for the Mt. Lake Area-Comfrey boys basketball team Friday.

MLAC shot a paltry 31% from the field and 38% from the free throw line Friday. That put the Wolverines in a hole early.

Sleepy Eye St. Mary's then used an 11-2 run to close the first half to take a lead it wouldn't relinquish on its way to a 62-40 victory in the Section 2A championship game, played at Minnesota State University-Mankato.

MLAC ends its season with a 23-7 overall record.

"Sometimes the shots just don't fall for you," MLAC Coach Shawn Naas said. "The kids played hard but we just didn't make shots. We had good looks at the basket all night and had a lot of shots roll out. I thought the kids played hard and defended well all night. It just wasn't our night on the offensive end."

The Wolverines held a brief 6-2 lead early in the game, but missed oppor-

tunities from close range prevented the Wolverines from building on their early advantage. It proved to be a trend that would plague MLAC much of the night.

"St. Mary's is a tremendous team and we made them earn their baskets," Naas said. "But early on, we had a couple of shots that rolled all the way around and didn't drop. A three-point game turned into an 11-point game quickly."

"We tried to press a little too much, which led to more mistakes and more missed shots. Against a solid team like St. Mary's, you can't let the little things compound. Unfortunately, that's what happened to us."

The Knights took the lead for good on a trio of consecutive three-pointers and a basket to go up 15-7.

The Wolverines were able to cut the deficit to 22-16 on a basket from Kolby Kremmin, but St. Mary's went on an 11-2 run to end the half, taking a 33-16 edge into the locker room.

The Wolverines tried to battle back in the second half, but St. Mary's was able to answer every Wolverine bucket early. Kremmin scored three straight baskets to start the half for the Wolverines, with each answered by a Knight bucket as St. Mary's took a 19-point lead.

"We made a couple of bas-



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**DAMON KHAMVONGSA races upcourt for a lay-up during Friday's Section 2A championship game against Sleepy Eye St. Mary's Friday in Mankato.**

kets in a row, but they were able to answer every shot we made," Naas said. "But it was a great run for our kids, from the JWP game to a big win over Martin County West, to beating Madelia for the sub-section title. We just

couldn't quite complete that run with a section title."

The Knights put the game out of reach with a 6-0 burst, stretching the lead to 22 points.

Kremmin led the Wolverines with 11 points. Damon

Khamvongsa added 10 points in the loss.

"We'll graduate eight seniors from our team this year," Naas said. "A couple

SEE **BB** • PAGE 9

## A LOOK BACK

### TEN YEARS AGO

The MLBO boys basketball team, in its final year as a paired program, punched the pairing's first ticket to the Class A state tournament with a 72-56 win over Sleepy Eye St. Mary's in the Section 2A championship. The Wolverines used a 13-3 run to take a 25-7 lead and never looked back. Carter Kirk led the Wolverines with 21 points and 10 rebounds. Cody Penner had 16 points, Beau Herrig had 14 points and 12 boards and Andrew Hempeck finished with 11 points and six assists. MLBO will face Browerville at state.

Windom Country Club saw one of its earliest starts to the golf season ever. Record warmth and dry weather allowed the course to reach "playable" condition, according to new grounds superintendent Dan Hinton. The clubhouse opened nearly two weeks early.

Adam Eisenmenger was named to the All-Southwest Conference boys hockey team, with Travis Janssen and Mitch Baumhoeffner honorable mention. Kylie Willard received honorable mention on the SWC girls hockey team.

## Eagles will try to fill the holes

■ Windom returns a veteran boys team but has big shoes to fill for the girls.

By **JOEL ALVSTAD**

The 2022 high school track season will be one of change for the Windom Eagles.

Head Coach Les Knutson noted that the Eagle team enters the season with good numbers and the boys team has plenty of seasoned veterans. But the girls team will need to replace its two leading scorers and state qualifiers from last year.

Making things even more challenging for the Eagles will be a major transition in the postseason. For the first time in decades, Windom gets shipped east for sections, leaving the familiarity of Section 3A for the uncertainty of Section 2A in the new three-class track format.

"We have really good numbers and most of the kids who should be back are back," Knutson said. "That's a positive for us. Our boys have a good core of runners in the middle and longer distances and our girls have a bunch of talented younger runners who should be able to contribute."

"But moving into a new section, nobody really knows what to expect. Fortunately, we'll get a chance to see some of those teams a couple of times this year."

The Eagles bring back one state qualifier from a year



CITIZEN FILE

**DYLAN SERREYN splashes into the pit during the triple jump at last year's BSC Meet. Serreyn qualified for state last year in the high jump and looks to add more state events this year.**

ago. Senior Dylan Serreyn advanced to state in the high jump in his first year competing in the sport.

"Dylan had a great year in the high jump, but he's also very strong in the long jump, and triple jump might actually be his best event," Knutson said. "He also has the ability to run either the 200 or 400 or anchor a relay for us. He's really focused on doing well in those jumps."

"We have quite a bit of talent in the jumps, with freshmen Teigen Wormstadt and Job Okega with a lot of potential. Sophomore Charlie Smith returns in the pole vault. We're really poised to do some damage in the high

jump and the horizontal jumps."

The Eagles also return a lot of experience in the throws, led by two-event section medalist senior Alex Altman.

"Alex works incredibly hard and really sets the tone for our throwers," Knutson said. "Juniors Jose Rodas, Vaughn Vo-Verhage and Nick Bottelberghe all return to give us a lot of depth and potential to score big points."

On the track, the Eagles return senior Carter Vancura, junior Bryan Macario

SEE **TRACK** • PAGE 9

## High school soccer inches closer to reality

The Windom Area School Board hasn't made it official yet, but it appears the addition of high school boys and girls soccer programs for the fall of 2022 is happening.

It was announced last week that the St. James School Board officially approved offering cooperatively-sponsored boys and girls soccer programs with Windom, beginning this fall.

Windom Activities Director Jeremy O'Donnell said it's an exciting prospect.

"There are still a lot of details to go through, but it's very exciting for our students," O'Donnell said. "It's something our students need and it's something I'm going to advocate for. The whole intent is offering a sport for students who might not be participating in other sports."

"As the AD, soccer gets more kids involved, but I feel it actually will carry over into other sports. It promotes more people being involved in more activities. Kids who are involved do better in the classroom as well, so it's really a win-win all around."

At last month's board work session, Supt. Wayne Wormstadt indicated that preliminary survey numbers between Windom and St. James showed interest

levels high enough to have both varsity and JV-level teams for both boys and girls, as well as possibly a C-squad program for boys.

O'Donnell added that, at least as far as Windom is concerned, the movement to pursue high school soccer was student-driven.

"We had a couple of students look at researching soccer for their Eagle Achievement project," O'Donnell said. "Windom has had a high number of kids take part in the club program that has been offered in Mt. Lake. We also have quite a few students who participate in a club league in Spirit Lake. And, almost every weekend, you can drive up to the Rec Area and see a big group of people playing soccer there, and the skill level is pretty impressive."

O'Donnell added that some of the logistics for a program, such as what the program will be called, still need to be worked out. Other logistical things have already been determined but simply need to be finalized.

"We know that the program will be practicing behind the high school in St. James, where they have practice facilities," O'Donnell said. "And the

SEE **SOCCER** • PAGE 9

# Elness made mark as assistant on state teams

■ Rich Elness oversaw a pitching staff that led Windom baseball to five straight state tournaments in the 1980s.

By **JOEL ALVSTAD**

During his high school days, 1963 Windom graduate Rich Elness was one of the top athletes in his class.

Elness was a multi-sport standout in his prep days, earning All-Southwest Conference honors in both basketball and baseball as a senior.

After graduating from Windom, Elness got his teaching certificate from Mankato State Teacher's College in industrial technology, but after teaching three years in Montevideo, went to work as a mechanic at an auto dealership in the Twin Cities. He also enlisted in the Navy Reserve.

Eventually, his career as an auto mechanic brought Elness back to Windom. And that eventually brought him back into teaching.

But a return to teaching also brought about a chance to serve as an assistant baseball coach.

During his time as an assistant baseball coach, the Eagles had one of the best stretches in state history, with five straight trips to state, including back-to-back championships in 1984 and 1985.

The Eagles also recorded the only perfect game ever pitched in the state tournament in 1985.

For his role as the pitching coach of those Eagle teams, Elness was selected for the Windom Area High School Athletic Hall of Fame, which had its induction last month.

"It's a pretty humbling honor, because there have been a lot of great athletes and coaches in Windom," Elness said.

During his playing days, Elness was a standout.

In football, an injury to the Eagles' starting quarterback prompted Elness to switch from wingback to quarterback as a senior. The team went on to post a 7-1 record.

His senior year of basketball, the team finished with a 18-2 record, dropping the District 7 finals to Jackson.

"We had beaten Jackson both times during the regular season, but they beat

us by one in overtime in the district finals," Elness said. "That was a stunner. At that time, we were ranked as high as third in the state at one point."

And in baseball, Elness earned all-conference honors.

After teaching automotive classes for three years in Montevideo, Elness took a position as a service department manager at a Volvo dealership in the Twin Cities.

"My father was a mechanic and had a garage where the laundromat currently is," Elness said. "He died when I was 15. But from the time I was five years old until he died, I was always in the shop with him. I decided after the first year I was at Mankato that maybe I wanted to be an auto mechanic."

"I went to Dunwoody Institute for a year for auto mechanics, but then I went back to Mankato State to get my teaching license. While I was there, I worked at a Chevy garage in Mankato to get me through college. And being in the Navy Reserve program allowed me to go to school and graduate before taking the job in Montevideo."

He later took a service manager position at Higley Ford in Windom.

But when Supt. Henry Bartelt discovered someone with a teaching license was working at the dealership, he made a move.

"Three weeks before school started, the previous automotive instructor resigned for a foreman job at Toro," Elness said. "The school hired me to teach automotive in 1979, just a couple of weeks before school started."

Shortly after beginning to teach in Windom, Elness connected with then-head baseball coach Dean Jaacks about serving as an assistant coach.

Jaacks was a former high school standout at Jasper and was well-known in amateur baseball circles as a standout pitcher.

"Jack Kelly came up to me right away and connected me with Dean," Elness said. "They basically wanted me to start with the program right away. I ended up serving as an assistant until 1999."

"I was a pitcher in high



JOEL ALVSTAD 2/16 hall of fame 5  
**WAHS ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME committee member Rick Borsgard (left) presents Rich Elness with his Hall of Fame plaque during the induction ceremony last month.**

school and Dean kind of delegated that duty to me because he was overseeing everything else."

But beginning in the early 1980s, the Eagles had a string of athletes who proved to be outstanding pitchers.

"Those guys could really throw the ball," Elness said. "Whether it was Mike Jackson, Timm Gronseth, Chad Lindaman, Mitch Kaiser or Lance Jackson, we were blessed with some outstanding pitchers who really were coachable and took the things we taught them and applied them."

"We had so many good kids come through that program, and the fact we went to state five straight years is really a testament to how hard those kids worked."

So what made those Eagle teams so special?

"All of those guys could throw it hard, but they also had good off-speed and breaking pitches," Elness said. "And they had tremendous command of their pitches. But it's no secret that if you have a guy who

can throw it 80 miles an hour in high school, opposing hitters are going to have a hard time catching up to that."

"They also played as a unit and had tremendous heart."

Elness noted the 1983 team wound up setting the tone for the future success.

That team lost the state championship game in St. Cloud.

"The other team got five runs in the first inning and never got the ball out of the infield," Elness said. "I think we ended up losing that game 5-3. But that game showed us we had a good program and had good players coming through."

"Those kids wanted to play as a team and checked their egos at the door. They sensed they were good enough to go back up there and win it, and they did. And when you do that, it carries over to the next year and the years after that."

After winning the state title in 1984, the Eagles returned to state in 1985, when

## RICH ELNESS 2022 WAHS Athletic Hall of Fame

**EDUCATION:** Windom Area High School, 1963; Mankato State College, 1 year; Dunwoody Institute for auto mechanics degree, then back to Mankato State. Enlisted in Navy Reserve, 1967-73.

**FAMILY:** Wife, Debbie; Sons Nick (45) and Nate (42)

**CURRENT HOMETOWN:** Windom.

**OCCUPATION:** Retired teacher.

**HALL OF FAME RESUME:**

- Football**
  - Letterwinner: 1961, 1962, 1963
- Basketball**
  - Letterwinner: 1962, 1963
  - All-Southwest Conference: 1963
- Baseball**
  - Letterwinner: 1960, 1961, 1962, 1963
  - All-Southwest Conference: 1963
  - Team MVP: 1963
- Coaching**
  - Varsity assistant baseball coach/pitching coach for 20 seasons.
  - Coached five straight state tournament teams, including runner-up in 1983, state champions in 1984 and 1985, third-place in 1986 and fourth place in 1987.
  - Team had only perfect game in state tournament history in 1985.



Rich Elness

the Eagles turned a feat that hasn't been replicated in the history of the state tournament.

In the state semifinals against Tracy, pitcher Chad Lindaman threw the only perfect game in the history of the state tournament. It came in a 10-0, five-inning Eagle win.

"Chad is in that record book and has the only perfect game in the history of the state tournament, and it's still there," Elness said. "To be part of that was pretty remarkable."

"And a lot of the guys who pitched for us had successful careers pitching in college. Some played in the minor leagues."

That legacy of pitching

is something that Elness has been happy to see carry through with the Eagle program.

"It's been pretty special to see so many outstanding pitchers come through our baseball program," Elness said. "Even today, the foundation is still pitching. That's still the name of the game. If you don't have an athlete who can throw strikes and handle the position, you're not going to go far."

"You have to have unity, solid defense and good hitting, but without good pitching, you won't see success in baseball. To be part of some of the greatest success in our program's history was pretty special."



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Pastor Dewey Moede*

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# Erickson named to All-Big South Conference team

The Windom Eagle boys basketball team had one player named to the All-Big South Conference boys basketball team, which was announced Monday.

Junior guard Henry Erickson was named to the All-BSC West Division team.

Division champion Mar-

shall had two all-conference picks, while co-runner-up Redwood Valley had three all-conference selections.

East Division champion New Ulm had three all-conference selections, while St. Peter and Fairmont had two each.

2022 BIG SOUTH CONFERENCE BOYS BASKETBALL TEAM					
<b>MARSHALL</b>	<b>Yr.</b>	<b>Pos.</b>	<b>NEW ULM</b>	<b>Yr.</b>	<b>Pos.</b>
Charlie Jacobson .....	Sr.	F	Charlie Osborne .....	Sr.	G
Noah Wilts .....	Sr.	G	Colton Benson .....	So.	F
<b>REDWOOD VALLEY</b>			James Osborne .....	So.	G
Alex Lang .....	Sr.	G	<b>ST. PETER</b>		
Carson Woodford .....	Sr.	C	Bennett Olson .....	Sr.	F
Drew Lundeen .....	Sr.	G	Tate Olson .....	So.	G
<b>PIPESTONE</b>			HM - Alex Bosacker .....	Sr.	F
Kaden Musch .....	Sr.	F	<b>FAIRMONT</b>		
HM - Merrick Heidebrink ...	Jr.	G	Sawyer Tordsen .....	Jr.	C
HM - Kellen Johnson .....	Jr.	F	Zach Jorgensen .....	Sr.	G
HM - Connor Zephier .....	Sr.	G	<b>WASECA</b>		
<b>JACKSON COUNTY CENTRAL</b>			Elijah Breck .....	Sr.	F
Damien Phaly .....	Sr.	G	HM - Shaun Hulscher .....	Sr.	G
<b>WORTHINGTON</b>			<b>BLUE EARTH AREA</b>		
Kaleb Knothe .....	So.	G	Ashton Lloyd .....	Jr.	F
HM - Jake Brandner .....	Sr.	F/C	HM - Gabriel Torres .....	Sr.	G
<b>LUVERNE</b>			<b>ST. JAMES AREA</b>		
Gannon Ahrendt .....	Jr.	F	Hayden Jones .....	Sr.	F
<b>WINDOM</b>			HM - Bennett Flohrs .....	So.	G
Henry Erickson .....	Jr.	G	HM - Alex Stesemann .....	Jr.	G



JOEL ALVSTAD 3/9 boys basketball 201  
**HENRY ERICKSON slashes through the defense for a basket during the Eagles' playoff game at Pipestone. Erickson was named All-Big South Conference for the first time.**



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- Loader / Dozer Operator
- Wash Plant Operator
- Laborer

**BRIDGE:**

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**BB/ MLAC rolls past Madelia**

FROM PAGE 7

of them have been big contributors for us since their sophomore year. The others really grew into their roles throughout the course of the last couple of seasons. They really set the example for our younger guys on how to play the game at a high level. “Fortunately for us, next year we’ll return our leading scorer and our leading rebounder. That’s a great place to start. We’ll have several guys who saw quite a bit of floor time this year and others who saw a lot of success on B-squad. Hopefully, we’re able to pick up right where we left off.”

**Sleepy Eye St. Mary’s**.....33 29—62  
**MLAC**.....18 22—40

**SESM (FG-Ft-TP):** Walter 4-0-10; Zeig 0-0-0; Wait 4-2-13; Petersmann 2-1-6; Anderson 1-0-2; Schmitz 0-0-0; Steffensmeier 4-3-11; Domeier 6-5-18; Weiss 1-0-2; Stevens 0-0-0. **FG:** 22-48 (45%). **FT:** 11-15 (73%). **3Pt:** FG: 7-17 (41%)—Walter 2, Wait 3, Petersmann, Domeier. **Fouls:** 10. **Fouled out:** None. **Rebs:** 38. **TGs:** 15.

**MLAC (FG-Ft-TP):** Khamvongsa 4-1-10; Kremmin 5-1-11; Oakland 0-0-0; KoWassman 1-0-3; Olson 2-1-5; Toll 1-1-3; Lopez 1-0-2; Moody 0-0-0; KaWassman 1-0-3; Penner 0-0-0; Kieven 1-1-3; Karschnik 0-0-0. **FG:** 16-51 (31%). **FT:** 5-13 (38%). **3Pt:** FG: 3-14 (21%)—Khamvongsa, KoWassman, KaWassman. **Fouls:** 17. **Fouled out:** Kremmin, Toll. **Rebs:** 28. **TGs:** 13.

**Wolverines top Madelia**

A strong start on both ends of the floor propelled Mt. Lake Area-Comfrey to a commanding lead early Tuesday night, as the Wolverines rolled to an 83-59 win over Madelia in the Section 2A South championship game, played at St. Peter. The Wolverines were able to turn defense into offense early, converting four early steals into fast-break buckets. An early 11-0 run allowed the Wolverines to take a 15-2 lead and eventually build the early lead to 23-4. “Our defense set the tone early,” MLAC Coach Shawn Naas said. “I think our quickness may have surprised them a bit. We took a lot of things away from them. We knew, from the previous rounds, that they shot the ball very well when they were open, but we did a nice job helping on Ja’Sean Glover and rotating to their shooters. We made them try to take tough shots. “We’ve been a little sporadic on offense, but our defense has been solid most of the season.” The teams traded buckets most of the rest of the first half, with the Wolverines holding a 37-21 lead at the



JOEL ALVSTAD 3/23 boys basketball 32  
**KADE WASSMAN cuts off the path of Madelia’s Ja’Sean Glover during last Tuesday’s game in St. Peter.**



3/23 boys basketball 325  
**CARTER OLSON races past SESM’s Carson Domeier to set up a basket in Friday’s Section 2A finals.**

break. Early in the second half, the Blackhawks were able to trim the Wolverine lead to 41-29 on a Glover bucket, but a pair of baskets from Kolby Kremmin pushed the lead back to 16. Damon Khamvongsa added a pair of baskets and a five-point burst from Carter Olson pushed the lead to 62-43. “Glover is such a good passer and puts his team-



JOEL ALVSTAD 3/23 boys basketball 354  
**KOLBY KREMMIN pulls up and pops from long range during Friday’s Section 2A championship game.**

mates in perfect position, but we made it so he was going to need to do everything for them and it wore him out,” Naas said. “He was definitely tired by the end of the game. We threw several different guys at him and gave them a lot of different looks, and it took a toll. “Offensively, our backdoor cuts and quickness really made a difference. We passed the ball well and it was a solid team effort.” The Wolverines eventually pushed the lead to over 20 points on a Khamvongsa free throw and an Ashton Toll putback. The Wolverines scored the final points of the night when exchange student Iker Lopez banked home a three-pointer at the horn.

“Damon and Carter got us going with their defense and Kolby picked it up well,” Naas said. “We had great balance and moved the ball very well on offense. When you shoot 55% for a game, you’re going to put yourself in position to win.” MLAC had a balanced scoring night, led by Khamvongsa with 23 points. Kremmin and Olson each scored 16 and Toll finished with 11.

**Madelia**.....21 38—59  
**MLAC**.....37 46—83

**Madelia (FG-Ft-TP):** Zamora 3-0-8; DelaCruz 0-0-0; Dellaris 1-0-3; Glover 12-8-30; Reed 0-0-0; Altenburg 5-0-12; Johnson 0-0-0; Jones 0-0-0; Bergeman 1-0-2; Bruns 1-2-4. **FG:** 23-49 (46%). **FT:** 8-14 (57%). **3Pt:** FG: 5-16 (31%)—Zamora 2, DeMaris, Altenburg 2). **Fouls:** 17. **Fouled out:** None. **Rebs:** 28. **TGs:** 18.  
**MLAC (FG-Ft-TP):** Khamvongsa 8-5-23; Kremmin 5-5-16; Oakland 0-2-2; KoWassman 2-0-4; Olson 6-3-16; Toll 5-1-11; Lopez 1-0-3; Moody 0-0-0; KaWassman 1-1-3; Penner 0-0-0; Kieven 2-1-5. **FG:** 30-54 (55%). **FT:** 18-25 (72%). **3Pt:** FG: 5-9 (56%)—Khamvongsa 2, Kremmin, Olson, Lopez. **Fouls:** 11. **Fouled out:** KaWassman. **Rebs:** 27. **TGs:** 8.

**TRACK/ Distance crew will be solid**

FROM PAGE 7

and freshman Kevin Bleess as the team’s top sprinters. “Carter, Kevin and Bryan all had really good seasons last year,” Knutson said. “Kevin might be our fastest kid and he and Carter really give us a good one-two punch. And Bryan’s three best events might be the 400, the 800 and the 300 hurdles, which are all right in a row. We’re not sure exactly where he’ll fit in. “Teigen Wormstadt returns as our top hurdler, with the 300 being his best event.” The Eagles’ distance corps will be competitive as well. “We have a lot of guys who all kind of ran together in cross country, but we’ll need them to separate themselves in track,” Knutson said. “Between Thomas Green, Jacob Green, Charlie Smith, Eli Bordewyk and Aaden Nauman, they all were really solid in cross country running as a pack. Hopefully, that could give us a pretty competitive 4x800.” For the girls, the holes are great. The Eagles graduated a pair of state qualifiers—state shot put champion and discus runner-up Delaney Smith and 400-meter qualifier Gracie Bucher. “Both Delaney and Gracie were outstanding scorers and leaders for our girls last year,” Knutson said. “We’ll miss those points and we’ll definitely miss that leadership.” Knutson noted the throws could be a question mark coming into the season.

EAGLE TRACK	
Home meets at Windom Area HS Track	
<b>Home meets in bold</b>	
All meets at 4 p.m., unless noted	
3-26 at MSUM (Mankato), 2 p.m.	
3-31.....at Mt. Lake	
4-4.....at Luverne	
4-7.....at Mt. Lake	
<b>4-14.....Home Invite</b>	
4-18.....at St. Peter	
4-26.....at Redwood Falls	
4-29.....at Blue Earth	
5-3.....at New Ulm	
5-5.....at Worthington	
<b>5-10.....Eagle Invite</b>	
<b>5-14.....BSC Meet, 10 a.m.</b>	
5-17.....at Worthington	
5-26.....SS (Mapleton), 3 p.m.	
6-4.....Sec. 2A (Mank. W), 9 a.m.	

“The returner with the most experience is junior Virginia Jensen, but she broke her arm in an accident recently so we don’t know when she’ll be ready,” Knutson said. “The only other girl we have back with experience is freshman Brooklyn Roll, who did mostly shot put last year. We have a couple of girls who are out for the first time, so we’ll see what they’re capable of.” The Eagles do have experience returning on the track. The distance corps looks particularly strong, led by freshman Kaylee Walklin, who was a section medalist in the 3,200 last year and a state cross country qualifier last fall. “Kaylee was a little banged up with her foot late in cross country and she’s kind of nursing a knee issue to start the spring, so we’re going to take it slow with her,” Knutson said. “But if she’s healthy, she’ll be one of the section favorites in the 3,200. “We also have senior Ken-

dyl Sammons and eighth-grader Haielyn Sammons, who both ran at sections a year ago. They’ll work well with Kaylee in either the 1,600 or 3,200 and probably our 4x800 relay.” In the sprints, the Eagles bring back seniors Lucy Stevens and Mikalah Konz and freshmen Hadley Sammons and Hannah Dauer, who all saw significant time a year ago. “All four of those girls did a nice job for us a year ago and give us a lot of versatility,” Knutson said. “We also have senior Erika Lopez, who ran on several relays and middle distance, and eighth-grader Ava Van Norman, who came on strong at the end of last year. “In the hurdles, junior Brooklyn Flaherty and senior Ella Wilde are our top returners and both have potential to be good scorers for us. Sophomore Emma Holtz also ran a few meets for us in the hurdles last year.” The jumps might be the biggest question mark for the Eagles. “We could maybe see Kaylee Walklin, Hadley Sammons or Ava Van Norman trying some jumps,” Knutson said. “Lucy Stevens did some long jumping. Senior Valerie Schutz did some high jump and long jump for us last year. Sophomore Victoria Robillard is back in the pole vault and should be able to take another step forward.” Knutson said that this year’s schedule more resembles a “normal” year, rather than last year, when nearly every meet was against larger conference schools. But the challenge has been to add more Section 2A teams to the schedule. “We’ve tried to add more

of the Section 2A teams, but going to Mapleton and Mankato West is going to be a big change,” Knutson said. “There are always good teams to the east, so I’d say the competition will be pretty similar to what we saw in Section 3A. I don’t know at this point what teams got moved up to Class AA.” The Eagles also get off to an earlier start than past years. Windom heads to Mankato for an indoor meet Saturday, then is scheduled to take part in a meet in Mt. Lake on March 31. “It’s been a few years since we’ve gone to Mankato, and we’ll be missing a few kids because of speech and other things on Saturday,” Knutson said. “But it’s going to be a good chance to see what the kids are capable of.”

**2022 RED ROCK CONFERENCE BOYS BASKETBALL TEAM**

SOUTHWEST MN CHRISTIAN Yr.	Pos.	WESTBROOK-WG	Yr.	Pos.
Carter Van Hulzen.....Sr.	F	Cole VanDeWiele.....Sr.	G	
Micah Schaap.....Sr.	G	Kole Curry.....Jr.	G	
Dawson Rieck.....Jr.	G	<b>HM</b> - Austin Parker.....Sr.	F	
<b>HM</b> - Cody Van’t Hof.....Sr.	F	<b>HILLS-BEAVER CREEK</b>		
<b>HM</b> - Cole Walhof.....Sr.	G	Cole Baker.....Sr.	G	
<b>MT. LAKE AREA-COMFREY</b>		Oliver Deelstra.....Sr.	G	
Damon Khamvongsa.....Sr.	G	<b>HERON LAKE-OKABENA-FULDA</b>		
Kolby Kremmin.....Sr.	G	Carter Drent.....Sr.	F	
Carter Olson.....So.	G	Sawyer Drent.....Jr.	G	
<b>HM</b> - Ashton Toll.....So.	F	<b>HM</b> - Parker Murphy.....Sr.	G	
<b>MURRAY COUNTY CENTRAL</b>		<b>ADRIAN-ELLSWORTH</b>		
Tanner Graphenteen.....Jr.	G	Peyton Lewis.....Sr.	F	
Christian Tentinger.....Jr.	G	<b>HM</b> - Brock Henning.....Jr.	G	
<b>HM</b> - Chant Mitchell.....Sr.	F	<b>RED ROCK CENTRAL</b>		
		<b>HM</b> - Joseph Strock.....Sr.	F	
		<b>EDGERTON</b>		
		<b>HM</b> - Jacob Fischer.....Sr.	F	

**Five from area named to All-Red Rock team**

Five area boys basketball players were named to the All-Red Rock Conference team, which was released Monday. League runner-up Mt. Lake Area-Comfrey had three all-conference selections, while Westbrook-Walnut Grove had two first-team picks. Named All-Conference for MLAC are senior guards Damon Khamvongsa and Kolby Kremmin and sophomore guard Carter Olson. Sophomore forward Ashton Toll received honorable mention.



**Damon Khamvongsa**



**Kolby Kremmin**



**Carter Olson**



**Cole VanDeWiele**



**Kole Curry**

**SOCCER/ Teams would start this fall**

FROM PAGE 7

plan is to play home matches at the St. James football field. That means that we’ll be transporting our kids to and from practice each day. St. James also would be the host school, kind of like how we’re the host school for a multi-school hockey program. Other transportation things and other logistics still need to be worked out.” O’Donnell added that he isn’t especially concerned about the prospect of other fall sports losing participants to soccer. “From what I’ve seen, the impact on our current fall sports programs would be fairly small,” O’Donnell said. “But even though I’m the football coach, I think having a soccer program and another option for a fall sport is good for our

students, and good for the students at St. James. I think our cross country and volleyball coaches feel the same way. We want our kids as involved as possible. “The sports all lend themselves to different people, and if a kid can find their niche in a particular sport or activity, whatever that sport or activity may be, that’s a good thing for our school.” Soccer practices typically start on the same day as other fall sports. This year, that will be Aug. 15. “Soccer playoffs usually start a couple of weeks before football and their state finals are the weekend before the football state semifinals,” O’Donnell said. O’Donnell added that the program will be part of the Big South Conference for soccer and will likely play in Class A for the playoffs. “I’m excited for our school to be able to offer this to our students and our community,” O’Donnell said.

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# MLAC fastpitch opens season Monday

Mt. Lake Area-Comfrey fastpitch softball coach Shawn Naas won't have much time to prepare for the 2022 season.

After an extended boys basketball run, Naas moved right to softball practice Monday, after the Wolverine team practiced the first week of the season with assistants leading practices.

The Wolverines are scheduled to open the season Monday, hosting Sleepy Eye at Munson Field. And if the recent warm weather holds up, it seems likely that game will take place.

"The girls were inside the first week of practice with the assistant coaches leading practice," Naas said. "But we've planned on getting out there this week to prepare for Monday."

And the Wolverines will jump right into the fire, with challenging matchups against four highly-regarded section rivals and the returning third-place state finisher to start the season.

But despite having just one senior on this year's roster, the Wolverines figure to be highly competitive. MLAC also graduated just one senior a year ago and brings back three all-conference players and an honorable mention selection.

"We have basically our whole team back from a year ago," Naas said. "A year ago, we had to juggle some things around because we lost our pitcher early in the year, but she's back and appears to be healthy, so the goal is to have everyone in the positions we want to keep them at."

Consistency in the pitching circle was MLAC's primary struggle a season ago when the team lost Kennadie Simon to illness. Simon, a junior, is back and looks to anchor the rotation.

"Last year, we had to pitch Brooke Naas and Alana Morey, and they both did a nice job," Coach Naas said. "But Kennadie is more of a power pitcher, and having her out there will improve our defense."

That defense starts with returning all-conference juniors Morey at third base and Naas at shortstop. Sophomore Annika Brinkman returns at second base and junior Meesha Hoek returns at first.

"Last year, we had whoever wasn't pitching between Alana and Brooke at shortstop," Naas said. "This year, we'll be able to play them where they both do best. Annika had a really solid year at second base last year. Meesha is a very solid defensive first baseman. Last year, we used junior Kayleigh Schumann to bat for her, and Kayleigh

## WOLVERINE FASTPITCH

Home games at Mt. Lake  
**Home games in bold**  
All games at 4:30 p.m.,  
unless noted

3-28 .....	Sleepy Eye
3-29 .....	at Sleepy Eye St. Mary's
3-31 .....	at Springfield
4-4 .....	at MCW (Welcome)
4-5 .....	at ESWC (Edgerton)
4-7 .....	Windom
4-12 .....	RRC/WWG
4-14 .....	at AE (Ellsworth)
4-19 .....	HLOF
4-21 .....	at MCC (Slayton)
4-28 .....	ESWC
4-29 .....	at T/ML/GHEC (Truman)
5-2 .....	Cleveland
5-3 .....	at RRC/WWG (Sanborn)
5-5 .....	Adrian-Ellsworth
5-6 .....	at Madelia
5-10 .....	at HLOF (Okabena)
5-12 .....	MCC
5-13 .....	Nicollet, 5 p.m.
5-19 .....	Madelia

ended up honorable mention all-conference, hitting the ball all over the place.

"We also return honorable mention all-conference freshman Ella Dockter, who saw a lot of time at third base and outfield last year. She also can step in at first base."

Behind the plate, juniors Presley Dockter and Kaylie Baerg figure to see most of the innings along with junior Kaylee Simon.

"Presley was honorable mention all-conference and saw most of our innings last year and did a nice job," Naas said. "She's solid at the plate and on defense. Kaylie Baerg is a goalie in hockey and is very solid on defense."

In the outfield, junior Jaci Tollefson is a returning all-conference player in center field.

"Jaci had a great year at the plate and really anchors our defense in center field," Naas said. "Kaylie Baerg saw quite a bit of time in right field a year ago. Left field is going to be a little bit of a question mark. A lot of it comes down to who can catch the ball and come up with some hits."

Naas is optimistic that the team's experience will help the Wolverines move forward in both the Red Rock Conference and Section 2A, but the task won't be easy.

Edgerton-Southwest Christian took third at state last year and returns plenty of talent in the conference. And Section 2A was filled with talent and won by a Springfield squad that was led by young pitchers.

"In the section, Springfield won the section with young pitchers last year," Naas said. "Nicollet, Cathedral, St. Mary's, Sleepy Eye and Martin County West are all very good. Section 2A is kind of a hotbed for softball and we hope we can get something good established."

## HERING/ Fall musical helped her open up

FROM PAGE 4

fall and one of the passengers in "Anything Goes" this winter. Her face lights up as she talks about the fun she had with the productions.

"Yeah, sure, we had practice for a long, long time and it got late a lot of times, and it was sometimes stressful, but those moments backstage with friends, talking, it was so much fun," Amanda says. "And after that, we all went to McDonald's and were hanging out. Getting involved with a big group of people and having stuff to do, not feeling lonely, the musical was kind of like a family, too."

She says the fall musical also helped her sharpen her English skills and helped her open up.

"I was really shy about speaking. When I tried to speak, other people couldn't understand me, so I was like, 'I'm just not going to say anything,'" she confirms. "But I got involved in the musical thing because my host sister, Virginia, went to it and it was amazing. And I love to sing and having that was a good feeling."

In addition to experiencing the stage side of high school, this spring she is testing the athletic side. She is competing in track and field. She plans to run long distance and may try the jumps.

Not surprisingly, Amanda has found school activities the most enjoyable part of her exchange student experience.

She also likes American food.

"River City is pretty good," she says with a smile. "In general, the food here is really, really good. It's way better than German food. It tastes better."

### School life

There is one significant difference between American and German life — school days. When conversing with friends in Germany, she's often asked if the school day is really as long as they hear — 8:10 a.m. to 3:15 p.m., or seven hours.

In Germany, it's not uncommon for school to finish for the day at noon.

"I also got a lot of questions about friendships and



SUBMITTED

**THE CALE AND KIA JENSEN family has increased by two with a couple of exchange students spending the school year with them. They are Amanda Hering of Germany (second from front, far right in white coat) and Asad Asadbayli of Turkey (left, in white cap).**

## AT A GLANCE — Amanda Hering

**Age:** 16

**Home:** Benneckenstein, Germany  
**Pop.:** 2,159

**German Family:**  
**Father:** Domenik  
**Mother:** Katherine  
**Sister:** Emma, 3

**Interests:** Watching movies ("having a movie night"), hanging out with friends, traveling, experience new friends.

**Exchange Program:**  
**USA —**Nacel Open Door  
**Germany —** Youth For Understanding (YFU)

**Host Family:** Cale & Kia Jensen; Virginia, 16; Elias, 15; Jonas, 13; Violet, 8; Lucas, 7; Asad Asadbayli, 18, exchange student from Turkey.



relationships," Amanda notes. "Is it actually like they do it in the movies?" And in some points, yes, but in a lot of points, no, because you still have your close friends.

### Comparing COVID

"Another big thing was COVID, could we actually go to school without a mask? They saw me Snap(chat)ing them back without a mask," Amanda says of her friends in Germany.

"The U.S. is way more relaxed. It felt like for me when I came here that CO-

VID doesn't even exist here any more. Sure, it exists and at some points, 'Oh, we need a mask?' but that's at the only point where you realize, oh, it's still present, it's still here and we still have to deal with it."

Amanda was surprised to learn when she began attending school that no masks were required in school. In Germany, they must do nasal tests for COVID at least every other day to be able to attend school. And masks must be worn indoors, everywhere, at all times.

"It's really annoying," she

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