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SPORTS

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TIME OUT

Joel Alvstad
Sports Editor



The way things are

The high school fall sports season is upon us. Games begin in earnest this week for some of our area teams.

And as the new season gets underway, it's prompted a decision for us here at the Citizen regarding our coverage area.

Beginning this fall, Westbrook-Walnut Grove will not be part of my regular coverage area.

The decision to adjust our coverage area was discussed at great length. For starters, the addition of high school girls and boys soccer at Windom will likely take up a chunk of my time, particularly since home matches are played in St. James.

Butterfield-Odin also exploring fielding its own varsity programs for the first time in over three decades also played a role, as I will need to provide coverage for those teams for the Observer/Advocate.

I've greatly enjoyed covering WWG sports over the years. And I will continue to cover WWG to an extent, in sports it is paired with Red Rock Central. I've also had a very good working relationship with WWG coaches, administrators and other staff and I've gotten to know many of the players quite well.

It's not an easy decision. But it's one that we, as a publication, had to make.

I hopefully will continue to be in contact with different coaches and staff at WWG. I'm sure our paths will cross again at some point.

A LOOK BACK

TEN YEARS AGO

The Eagle volleyball team will open its season hosting Mt. Lake Area. The Eagles will start the season without junior all-conference hitter Kelsey Hanefeld due to injury, but return senior all-conference hitter Hali Tasler, as well as middle hitter Holly Larson and setter Shelby Mattson. Top returners for the Wolverines are outside hitters Janessa Peters and Paige Brown, setter Rachel Dukes and libero Mikayla Falk.

The Eagle football team will travel to Tracy for its annual preseason scrimmage. Other teams in the scrimmage include reigning Class A state champion Dawson-Boyd and 2010 Class A state champion Minneota, as well as Tracy-Milroy-Balaton, Wabasso and Springfield.

The Windom cross country team opens its season in Mt. Lake at the Wolverine Invitational. The boys return senior Ryan Helmoski, juniors Clay Elness and Nick Raverty and sophomore Aaron Axford. The girls return senior Megan Muller and junior Emily Axford.

The Mt. Lake Area football team finally learned its playoff fate, as the team was assigned to Section 2 Nine-Man.

Fantastic finish gives Knutson first title

When it came to the men's club championship at the Windom Country Club, Tyler Knutson had always been close to winning, but not quite close enough.

But on Sunday, Knutson saved his best for last.

Sitting in a tie for the lead going to the final hole, Knutson drove the green on the short par-four Hole 9. He then rolled in his eagle putt, giving him a 36-hole total of 151 and a two-stroke victory.

Anthony Buckentin finished two strokes behind with a 153. Kim Anderson and Brent Anderson tied for third, each with a 154, with Kim Anderson winning a handicap-hole tiebreaker.

"It was kind of a relief for me when that last putt went in," Knutson said. "I've been close before, so it was nice to finally win one."

The top of the leaderboard was tight throughout the tournament. Brent Anderson set the tone early, shooting an opening-round 34 on Saturday. But Knutson and Buckentin each shot a 35 on Saturday's back nine, each finishing the day with an even-par 72 for a one-stroke lead.

"I started out with three straight bogeys, but I was able to regroup on the second nine to finish even par for the day," Knutson said. "Buck and I were both pretty close the entire tournament, and Brent was right there after the first day as well."

Knutson took sole possession

of the lead by firing a 39 in Sunday's opening round before the wheels started to fall off.

"I couldn't get out of the trees and took a double on Hole 2, and unfortunately, I carried that with me to Hole 3," Knutson said. "I ended up taking an 8 on Hole 3."

That allowed Buckentin to take a three-stroke lead.

Knutson pulled even for the lead with a par on Hole 6. Matching pars on holes 7 and 8 set up the dramatic finish.

"I was first on the tee and Hole 9 is a perfect three-wood shot for me to the green," Knutson said. "I wanted to try to put a little bit of pressure on. When I hit it, I had a pretty good feeling I'd have a chance."

"But Brent and Kim were in the group before us and I wasn't certain of how they had finished. All I knew was I was tied with Buck. His tee shot ended up about 10 yards off the front of the green, so I knew there was a good chance he'd get up and down for birdie. That put a lot of pressure on my putt."

But prior to arriving at the green, he wasn't sure just how long his putt would be.

"I thought it landed pretty softly," Knutson said. "So I figured I'd be pretty close. But the pin was in a front-right spot, which is kind of tricky."

As it turns out, Knutson had about a six-foot putt for eagle. Meanwhile, Buckentin



TYLER KNUTSON (center) carded an eagle on the final hole to win his first Windom Country Club Men's Club Tournament title. Kim Anderson (left) finished third while Anthony Buckentin (right) took second.

wound up missing his birdie putt.

"There was a bit of pressure on that putt, but I was able to knock it in," Knutson said.

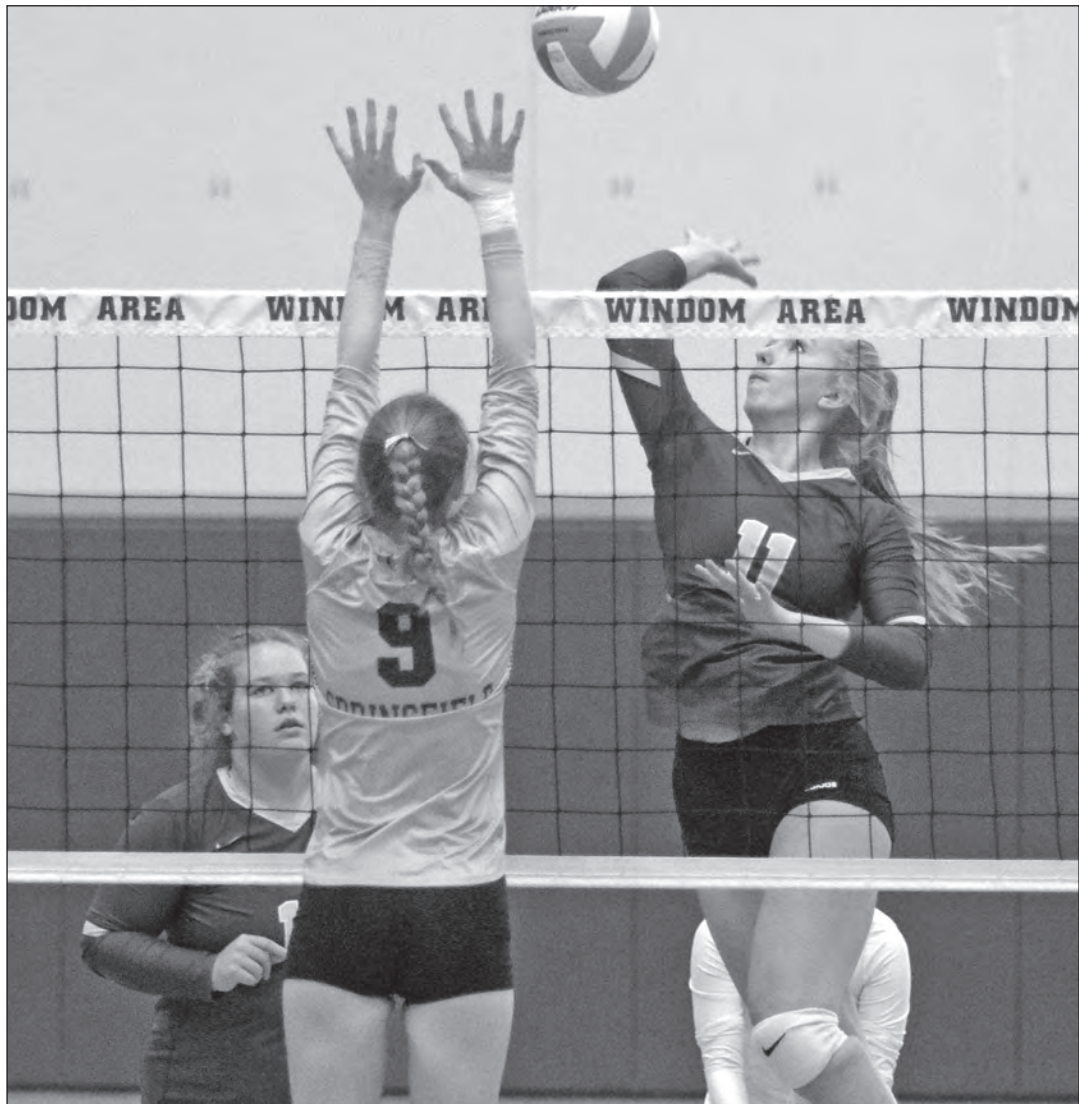
The victory culminates

a strong season of golf for Knutson.

"I've been playing pretty well and the course has been in terrific shape all year," Knutson said. "And the conditions couldn't have

been more ideal this weekend. Saturday turned out to be a great day for golf and Sunday was just as good."

SEE **GOLF** • PAGE 8



KAMERON RUPP blasts a spike during last season's match against Springfield. Rupp is recovering from an ACL tear suffered during basketball, but should be able to return to the Eagle lineup early this season.

Eagles open season Saturday

The Windom Area volleyball team gets its season underway Saturday, when it travels to Marshall to take part in the Big South Conference Showcase.

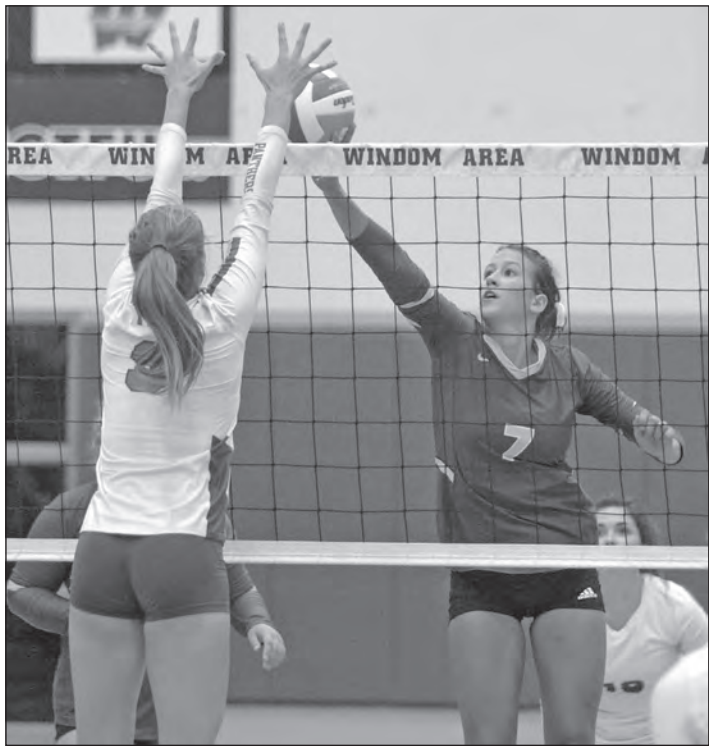
Windom will take on Fairmont, beginning at 2:30 p.m.

The Eagles will look to build on last year's 17-12 overall record. Windom went 1-5 in the west division of the BSC.

The Eagles return honorable mention all-conference junior Tristyn Maras, who is a three-year starter for the team.

Other top returning hitters include senior middle hitters Elliot Espenson and Kameron Rupp, junior outside hitter Leah Hauge and sophomore right side hitter Hannah Dauer.

Senior Makenna McNamara and sophomore Charlee Huska each return as setters for the Eagles, while sophomore Hadley Sam-



ELLIOT ESPENSON played primarily in the middle last year, but could see time at any of the three front-row positions for the Eagles this fall.

Smith claims 12th consecutive title

The more things change regarding the Windom Country Club's Women's Club Tournament, the more they stay the same.

The tournament moved to an 18-hole Saturday event this year and attracted a couple more players than past years. But the end result was the same.

For the 12th straight year, Tara Smith captured the club championship, finishing with a score of 84.

Lisa Hoffman shot an 89 to finish as the runner-up.

Mary Hogan won the second flight of the tournament, shooting a 100.

For Smith, the year has seen her play far less golf than usual, after having a baby last spring and dealing with a knee injury much of the summer.

"I had really only played about three rounds of golf all year prior to the tournament," Smith said. "I really wasn't at peak form and wasn't sure if I'd play. But, if it was someone else, I would have tried to talk them into playing, so I had to follow my own advice. I went out, played 18 holes and had fun."

The rain that had been forecast for Saturday held off, leaving conditions ideal for golf.

"The weather was awesome," Smith said. "It really couldn't have been better for us. But the pin placements on Saturday were pretty tough. It was

tougher than they typically are during the summer, so you had to be aware of where you could miss.

"As a whole, I thought my short game was pretty good. My driver kind of let me down and I was playing out of the rough quite a bit."

Smith had high praise for the course's condition, adding that considering how dry the weather has been, the course has been green all summer.

Now, the hope is to continue to build the women's tournament field. Smith said the tourney was moved to the Saturday of the men's tournament, rather than a Tuesday, to try to attract more players.

"We had a couple who probably would have played but had a couple of conflicts," Smith said. "But it was just fun to be out playing with the ladies, because I haven't had the chance to play much this year. And, right now, the ladies really want the club tournament to be a fun experience."

"We had at least one lady who had never played in the club tournament before. We tried to get a few more women to play and I think we'll get more to play in time. One thing's for sure. There was a lot more laughter with the women's groups than there were with any of the men's groups."



TARA SMITH (left) shot an 18-hole score of 84 to win her 12th consecutive Windom Country Club Women's Club Tournament title. Mary Hogan (right) was the second flight champion.

SEE **VB** • PAGE 8

Wings make program debut Monday

For the first time, students from Windom Area High School will take part in high school soccer during the fall of 2022.

The St. James-Windom Wings boys soccer team will make its debut Monday, with a match beginning at 6 p.m., at the St. James High School football field.

The Wings will take on another first-year program, a pairing between Sibley East and Norwood-Young America.

Head Coach Jose Galdamez stated that most of the players on the Wings roster have some level of soccer experience, whether it be at a club level or playing pick-

up games. However, trying to gauge that level of skill is the challenge. As a result, few of the Wings players have a designated position on the field as of this time.

Upperclassmen on the Wings roster from Windom include seniors Henry Erickson and Tristen Gastelo

and sophomore Jorge Cerda Juarez.

The Wings girls soccer team was scheduled to take part in a scrimmage Monday at Mankato Loyola. The Wings open their season on Sept. 10, taking on Tri-City United in Montgomery.

Falcons open season Friday at St. Mary's

The Red Rock Central football team is among a handful in the state that will get an early start to the season.

When Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart opted to not field a varsity football team this season, teams that had BLHS on the schedule were forced to find another opponent. Those games against other teams that had BLHS on the original schedule would be played during a Zero Week.

The Zero Week games mean that those teams were able to start practice a week earlier than other teams. But those teams will be required to have a limited-work bye week during the season.

For the Falcons, that bye week will come during the regular Week 2—which is the first week of school.

Friday, the Falcons will travel to Sleepy Eye St. Mary's at 7 p.m.

RRC finished last year with a 5-5 overall record. RRC returns a trio of All-Sub-District players in senior lineman Keaton Skarupa, senior receiver/linebacker Vander Mathiowetz and senior running back/linebacker Jacob Amsden.



JAKE JACKSON (21) evades a WWG tackler on his way to the end zone during last season's game. The Falcons open their season Friday, facing Sleepy Eye St. Mary's in a Zero Week game.

Junior quarterback Isaac Simonson returns as an honorable mention selection.

The Falcons return plenty of experience and will have good depth, particularly up front. RRC also returns eight of its nine defensive starters from last year.

The Falcons take on a Knight team that finished

last year with an 8-2 overall record, with both losses coming to Renville County West—including once in the playoffs.

This also is the final year for the St. Mary's football program, as St. Mary's will pair with Sleepy Eye Public for football, starting with the 2023 season.

Returning All-Sub-District players for the Knights are senior running back/linebacker Brandon Tauer and senior receiver/defensive back Kaleb Wait. St. Mary's also brings back honorable mention senior tight end/linebacker Owen Weiss and junior receiver/defensive back Jon Petermann.

Wolverine runners open season on Friday

For the past couple of seasons, the Mt. Lake Area cross country team has gotten a bit of a jump on the competition with an early-season meet at Fairmont.

The Wolverines again will make the trek south for Friday's Cardinal Early Bird Invite, which starts at 9:30 a.m. The meet will be held around the grounds at Fairmont High School.

The meet will take a bit of a different format than in the past, though. In previous years, varsity runners were timed only against other runners in their grade.

This year, the meet will have a more traditional format, with all the varsity and JV runners competing together and being scored accordingly.

However, similar to past years, the meet will still be a 4,000-meter race to open the season, rather than the typical 5,000-meter race.

The Windom cross country team, which had originally been slated to run in Fairmont on Friday, opted to not attend the meet due to the number of runners on the team participating in the

state fair.

The Eagles will open their season Sept. 2, taking part in the Paul Metcalf Invitational in Mt. Lake at 10 a.m.

Likewise, a new cross country team from the area will be in the mix at the Metcalf Invitational.

For the first time in nearly three decades, Butterfield-Odin will field a varsity sports team of its own, playing under the moniker of Butterfield-Odin United.

United has plans to field a complete boys cross country team and has one girl out for the sport.

•The MLA team enters the season with a little extra motivation. Senior captain Luke Klassen was diagnosed with cancer during the summer. Despite the fact he is undergoing chemotherapy, Klassen joined the Wolverines' 212-mile club during the summer and will try to compete during the season.

The Wolverines also return junior Kody Wassman, who is a past state qualifier, junior Preston Xayachak and sophomores Zach Klassen and Ethan Schroeder.

The Wolverine girls return



JULIA BRINKMAN (left) leads a pack up the hill during last year's Paul Metcalf Invite, with Lydia Rete following close behind. The two are among returners for the Wolverine girls cross country team.

three runners from last year's section meet, led by junior Annika Brinkman. Also returning are fresh-

men Jacey Klassen and Julia Brinkman.

VB/ MLAC, RRC open on Thursday

FROM PAGE 7

mons returns with back row experience.

Fairmont finished last year with a 9-15 overall record, going 3-7 in the east half of the BSC.

The Cardinals graduated their only all-conference player, as well as an honorable mention selection.

The Eagles will travel to Tracy Tuesday to face Tracy-Milroy-Balaton.

Other openers

•**MLAC at Sleepy Eye St. Mary's, Thursday:** The Mt. Lake Area-Comfrey volleyball team opens its season Thursday, taking on Sleepy Eye St. Mary's in Sleepy Eye.

The Wolverines finished last year with a 9-15-1 overall record, going 2-6 in the Red Rock Conference.

MLAC returns nearly all of its offensive firepower from last year, including all-conference senior setter Jaci Tollefson.

Also back is honorable mention senior outside hitter Michala Morin, as well as senior outside hitter Brooke Naas, a past all-conference pick.

MLAC returns senior Kearney Wall and junior Kyla Wuertz in the middle and junior Alexis Romsdahl on the right side.

MLAC will play the entire season without senior libero Kaylie Baerg after she suffered a torn ACL during summer hockey. Junior Isabella Vidana figures to step into the libero role.

The Wolverines will play their home opener Monday, hosting Madelia in Comfrey.

•**TMB at RRC, Thursday:** The Red Rock Central volleyball team opens the season Thursday, when it hosts Tracy-Milroy-Balaton in Lambertson.

RRC finished last year with an 18-9 overall record, going 7-1 in the Red Rock Conference.

The Falcons return an all-conference player in senior outside hitter Josie Horning. RRC also brings back senior middle hitter Sondra Rindfleisch, who received conference honorable mention last



BROOKE NAAS punches a shot past a pair of WWG blockers during a match last season in Mt. Lake. All of MLAC's home matches this season will be played in Comfrey due to the project to replace the auditorium floor in Mt. Lake.

year.

Other returners for the Falcons include senior setter Emily DeCock, junior outside hitter Mercedes Myers and sophomore setter Ella Erickson.

TMB finished last year with a 23-9 overall record,

going 8-3 in the Camden Conference.

The Panthers continued a tradition of success, winning the Section 3A South championship before falling 3-0 to eventual state runner-up Minneota in the section finals.

GOLF/ First flight had playoff for champion

FROM PAGE 7

Other flights

•After completion of play in the 12-player championship flight, the bottom six players were assigned to the President's flight. Dave Johnson won the flight title, finishing the tourney with a 161. Luke Gilbertson was second with a 163 and Darin Arndt took third with a 167.

•In the first flight, Chad Merrihew and Jeff Gilbertson shot identical scores of 166, with Merrihew eventually winning a playoff. Derick Hall took third with a 175.

•Todd Sorensen overcame a two-stroke deficit on the final day to win the second flight, shooting a



Dave Johnson



Chad Merrihew



Todd Sorensen



Jay Grandprey

178. Randy Will was second with a 183.

•Jay Grandprey led wire to wire in the third flight, shooting a 176 for the title. Bill Baumann took second with a 186.

2022 WCC Men's Club Tournament

CHAMPIONSHIP FLIGHT

1. Tyler Knutson 72-79 — 151
2. Anthony Buckentin 72-81 — 153
3. Kim Anderson 79-75 — 154
4. Brent Anderson 73-81 — 154
5. Chad Brand 77-78 — 155
6. Ryan Gilbertson 78-81 — 159

PRESIDENT'S FLIGHT

1. Dave Johnson 80-81 — 161
2. Luke Gilbertson 78-85 — 163
3. Darin Arndt 78-89 — 167
4. Brady Lund 90-85 — 175
5. Dave Cory 93-85 — 178
6. Bill Fredin 91-90 — 181

FIRST FLIGHT

1. Chad Merrihew 85-81 — 166
2. Jeff Gilbertson 85-81 — 166
3. Derick Hall 90-85 — 175
4. Justin Hall 85-92 — 177
5. Billy Hochstein 89-94 — 183
6. Clint Jurgens 94-96 — 190

SECOND FLIGHT

1. Todd Sorensen 88-90 — 178
2. Randy Will 86-97 — 183
3. Ian Smith 96-92 — 188


THIRD FLIGHT

1. Jay Grandprey 87-89 — 176
2. Bill Baumann 100-86 — 186
3. Al Peterson 95-95 — 190

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