

BASEBALL



Photos by Eric Morken / Alexandria Echo Press

Alexandria senior JD Hennen celebrates with his teammates at home plate after his second-inning solo home run gave the Cardinals a 1-0 lead over Willmar on June 4. It was the start of an 8-1 win for Alexandria that sends the Cardinals into the championship round on Wednesday needing just one win out of a possible two games against Little Falls to secure the 8-3A title.

One win from a title

Cardinals play Little Falls for 8-3A championship Wednesday

By Eric Morken

Alexandria Echo Press

St. Cloud

The Alexandria baseball team is one win away from securing its fifth state tournament entry in program history and first since 2018, and the Cardinals have two chances to get that win.

Alexandria is the lone unbeaten team left in the Section 8-3A playoffs after beating Willmar (15-7) 8-1 at the Municipal Athletic Complex in St. Cloud on Saturday afternoon. Willmar, Sauk Rapids-Rice and Rocori were all eliminated from the playoffs on Saturday.

The Cardinals (18-5) will play sixth-seeded Little Falls (12-11) at 4 p.m. on Wednesday back at the MAC in St. Cloud. Little Falls beat Rocori 2-1 on Saturday and would have to beat Alexandria twice on Wednesday to win the section. Alexandria beat Little Falls 4-0 on May



Alexandria senior Parker Jendro pitches against Willmar in the Section 8-3A playoffs on June 4 at the MAC in St. Cloud. Jendro went all seven innings in the 8-1 win, allowing just five singles and striking out five Willmar batters.

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"We can't overthink it too much with us beating them last time," Alexandria senior infielder Reed Reisdorf said. "They have nothing to lose. We still have to put all our stuff

out there and throw our best game at them."

Alexandria jumped on Willmar with a second-inning, solo home run from senior JD Hennen.

Brock Lerfald and Caleb Runge drove in third-inning runs with

a single and double, respectively, to make it 3-0.

Alexandria blew the game open in the top of the sixth with four runs. Nate Hammerback doubled to lead off that inning with his third hit of the game. Reisdorf drove in a run with a perfectly-placed squeeze bunt, and Lake Hagen then cleared the bases with a three-run double to make it 7-1. Reisdorf singled in the game's final run in the seventh.

"That felt good," Hagen said of his sixth-inning double. "There was an altercation the last inning, and it felt good to put it in their faces a bit."

Willmar scored its only run in the bottom of the fifth on an overturned call at the plate. Mason Madsen, Jason Malmgren and Carter Schow all singled for Willmar to load the bases with one out.

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TRACK AND FIELD

A section finals to remember

A total of 22 Alexandria athletes qualify for state meet

By Sam Stuve

Alexandria Echo Press

ALEXANDRIA - The Alexandria track and field programs built off a solid start in Detroit Lakes from June 1 with a strong showing at home on Saturday to win the Section 8AA titles. The Alexandria girls team scored 165.75 points and won by 30 points over runner-up Rocori, while the boys team scored 169.50 points and won by 27 points over runner-up Willmar.

"Our athletes have been improving all the way through the season," Alexandria boys head coach Mike Emptying said. "We tell the kids from the beginning that it's all about putting you at your best at the end of the season. These kids have done it."

For the girls, this section title win is their 11th straight.

"I'm thrilled for the girls as a team," Alexandria girls head coach Meghan Orge-man said. "Victory is always something that you celebrate and it's always a goal. I just feel like this is the icing on the cake of a really special season and

we've got even more to come."

Both programs also won section true team titles back in May.

After day one of the section meet, five Alexandria girls and two boys had already punched their tickets to the MSHSL Class AA State Tournament at St. Michael-Albertville on June 9-11. On Saturday, nine more boys and six more girls punched their tickets.

The top two individuals and relays from each event automatically qualify for the state meet.

Alexandria's Christian Doumbia earned his way to state by finishing second in the 100m dash (11.03), first in the 200m (22.72) and first in the 400m (49.63).

"He will do whatever it takes to win," Orge-man said of Doumbia. "I cannot wait to see what he will run at state. The 400 is relatively new to him, so it's fun to see him drop a hammer like he did in the 400."

On the girls side, Aleah Miller won the 1600m run (4:56.16) and Hailie Kent, who had already qualified for the state tournament in the long jump, took first place in the triple jump (37-05.00) on Saturday.

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Sam Stuve / Alexandria Echo Press

Alexandria's Giselle Jahner, Emma Ecker, Jaelyn Miller and Aleah Miller hug after finishing in second in 4x400m relay at the Section 8AA Tournament on June 4 to qualify for the state meet.

BOYS GOLF

Wild two days ends with another title

Brady Swedberg ends up in ER before Cards rally for 8-3A crown

By Eric Morken

Alexandria Echo Press

PARK RAPIDS - The Alexandria boys golf program is no stranger to winning section titles. The Cardinals' win at the Section 8-3A meet in Park Rapids on Friday secured the team's fifth straight trip to the state tournament, but it's safe to say none of the prior 20 section titles in program history went quite like this.

Alexandria head coach Brady Swedberg never got to see a single shot for

his team throughout the two-day event. Swedberg and other families on the team were staying in cabins at a resort near Park Rapids ahead of the tournament that started on Thursday, June 2.

Swedberg went to bed at about 10:30 p.m. on Wednesday. He woke up at midnight with extreme stomach pain and never slept again that night.

"It's 3 a.m. and I had been up for a while," Swedberg said. "It clicked finally in my head that even if I get past this, I

can't coach. I had no idea what was going on, but I was thinking I was contagious. I end up in the (Emergency Room), and Derek coached day one. Then he gets sick. Then I'm in the hospital trying to line things up."

Derek Swedberg is Brady's brother and his assistant varsity coach for the boys golf team. Derek coached the team on Thursday before he got sick that evening and could not be with the team for day two on Friday.

At that point, the Cardinals were trailing Brainerd by four shots heading into the second round. Josh Lang is the junior varsity coach for Alexan-

dria. By rule, the varsity team needed a certified coach with them in order to compete, so Lang made the trip to Park Rapids to be with them.

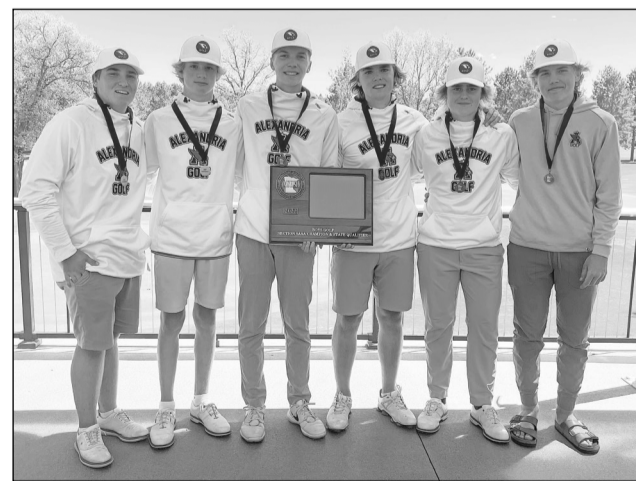
"He changed plans and found a way to make it up to Park Rapids last second," Brady said. "He has a very calming presence about him and I'm sure that helped the boys stay relaxed and focused coming down the stretch."

Brady spent about eight hours in the hospital where it was determined that he had colitis, along with symptoms from a stomach flu that his children had also dealt with in the prior couple weeks.

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Swedberg



Contributed photo

From left to right, Alexandria boys golf team members Ashton Sladek, Carver Larson, Andrew Swedberg, Braeden Sladek, Jack Holtz and Bennett Olsen hold up the Section 8-3A championship trophy after they shot a two-day score of 628 at the Headwater Golf Club in Park Rapids June 2-3. It is the 21st section championship in team history.

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