

BASEBALL

Leaning on experience

Alexandria returns plenty of talent from 14-win team

By Sam Stuve
Alexandria Echo Press

The Alexandria baseball team didn't have the end to the 2021 season that it wanted to when Alexandria fell 8-7 to Rocori in the Section 8-3A elimination game.

The Cardinals are looking to put that result in the past and use it as fuel to get back to that point.

"Our section is hands down the best outstate section in the state of Minnesota," Alexandria head coach Jake Munsch said. "Each year, there are multiple teams from the CLC that are entering the state tournament. So any night, if you don't play well, you're going to lose. And we love the fact that we're playing against some of the best competition."

Alexandria is looking to its upperclassmen for leadership to get through the tough competition in the regular season.

"Senior leadership this year is phenomenal," Munsch said. "We've been taking pride in having meetings with the captains

"These guys have been working hard in the offseason, and so I'm excited to see what we can do this season."

**BROCK LERFALD,
ALEXANDRIA SENIOR**

and our seniors during the offseason. Especially with our captains about this, the vision of our program and kind of how we want things to run. At this point, I am 100% satisfied with the way that's going and think it's going to pay dividends."

Alexandria finished the 2021 season with a 14-10 record and fell one game shy of the Section 8-3A Championship game. Munsch believes they can go further this year if they correctly do the "small things."

"The vision of this program is just making sure we do all the small things correctly and understand that in a baseball game, we need to rely on everybody, not just one person," Munsch said. "And I think if we buy into that process and everyone takes care of their jobs, we're going to be successful."

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Sam Stuve / Alexandria Echo Press

Alexandria's Nate Hammerback throws during practice on Tuesday. Hammerback is one of the players back from a year ago who has plenty of experience to help lead the Cardinals into the 2022 spring season.

GOLF



Eric Morken / Alexandria Echo Press

Alexandria's Braeden Sladek hits out of the sand at the Alexandria Golf Club during his run to a Men's Division title at the 2021 Resorters Tournament at just 16-years-old last summer. That was part of a big 2021 summer season for Sladek on the course as he continued to make a name for himself with college coaches around the country. Sladek made his college decision on March 14 when he verbally committed to the University of Kansas in the Big 12 Conference.

Braeden Sladek commits to Kansas

Alexandria standout to play in the Big 12

By Eric Morken
Alexandria Echo Press

Anyone following Alexandria's Braeden Sladek from a young age could have seen a commitment to a golf program in a major Division I conference coming.

That came to fruition a week before the start of his junior season with the Cardinals. On March 14, Sladek made his verbal commitment to the Kansas Jayhawks out of the Big 12 Conference.

Sladek talked to multiple different

programs around the country. Notre Dame, Auburn, Iowa State and Kansas State are some of the coaching staffs that had reached out. In the end, it came down to a decision between staying home at the University of Minnesota or heading a little bit further south to Kansas. That warmer climate and the opportunity to play through a longer golf season was a big factor in why Sladek chose the Jayhawks.

"I wanted to go somewhere I could play year round," Sladek said. "I can in Kansas. It's definitely not 80 degrees and sunny every day. There's ups and downs and some snow here and there, but you can basically play year

round. That was a lot of my decision. I didn't want to go somewhere (as far away as) like Florida or California. But Kansas is still kind of that Midwestern area, but yet it's year round."

Sladek has played in Alexandria's varsity lineup since his 7th-grade season. He won the Section 8-3A individual championship as a 7th-grader and has been All-Central Lakes Conference every year in the program.

Sladek is coming off of a 2021 summer record at the Geneva Golf Club in Alexandria with an 11-under par 60 in June. He traveled the country competing against other top juniors, qualifying for the U.S.

Junior Amateur, and then became what tournament organizers believe is the youngest Men's Division champion at the 100th playing of the Resorters Tournament at the Alexandria Golf Club this past August.

The 2021 Resorters Tournament, a match-play event, drew a talented field that included many current and former Division I players. Winning against those types of golfers was a good confidence boost for the then 16-year-old. Kansas, led by head coach Jamie Bermel, first reached out to Sladek around that same time frame last August.

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Alexandria natives shining in their college athletics



Contributed

Alexandria natives Kaisa Bosek, left, and Emma Reineke both recently got to compete with their college programs at the U.S. Collegiate Ski and Snowboard National Championships in Lake Placid, New York.

By Eric Morken
Alexandria Echo Press

ALEXANDRIA — This is a look at how some area athletes are doing at their respective colleges or in their athletic careers. Similar pieces will run periodically through the fall, winter and spring seasons.

Email emorken@echopress.com with any more detailed information on the athletes listed or the names of other athletes who are playing college sports that you would like to see included in future publications.

► Alexandria natives **Emma Reineke** and **Kaisa Bosek** are both former standouts for the Cardinals Nordic ski team, and the duo recently got an opportunity to race at a national level in Lake Placid, New York.

Reineke, with the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, and Bosek, with Paul Smith's

College in Paul Smiths, New York, each raced in multiple events at the U.S. Collegiate Ski and Snowboard National Championships. The National Championships feature events in Nordic, alpine, freeski and snowboard competition for both men's and women's programs in early March.

Reineke had finishes of 28th place (30:57.80) in the 7.5-K freestyle interval start, 10th place in the classic sprint, and 25th place (1:09:01.70) in the 15-K classic mass start.

Bosek was 23rd (29:26.40) in the 7.5-K freestyle interval start, 19th in the classic sprint, and 23rd (1:08:05.70) in the 15-K classic mass start race.

► Alexandria sisters **Megan** and **Bethany Hasz** continue to cement themselves as two of the best distance runners ever



B. Hasz



M. Hasz

for the University of Minnesota after big finishes at the 2022 Big Ten Indoor Championships in late February.

The Gophers won their second straight women's track and field indoor team championship at the event, and Bethany Hasz scored a team-high 18 points in that title run. She won the 3000-meter individual championship (9:06.93) for a second straight season, and also took second in the 5000-meter run with a time of 16:22.37.

ATHLETES: Page B2

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