



SPORTS

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Things I'd like to see in 2022

I got most everything I wanted for Christmas this year. I'm not very fussy, at least not since I was a little kid and received my wood-stock 700-shot repeater BB gun when I was 9

or 10. I haven't gotten a better Christmas present since (that expensive guitar I received as an adult comes in a close second), and I apologize for that robin I shot with that ol' gun.

I swear that was the last robin I ever took a pot-shot at. I promise.

Anyway, 2022 is here now and it's time to compile another wish list. Here's what I want to see in this new year:

- ▶ More high school basketball doubleheaders. Nothing against B squad games, but varsity doubleheaders are special and there ought to be more of them. Seems weird that we have, for instance, the Worthington Trojan girls basketball team traveling to Marshall and the Marshall boys basketball team traveling to Worthington on the same night. Varsity doubleheaders are a treat, worth circling in red on the sports calendar.

- ▶ A move to mandate eight teams in the college football playoff instead of the



Tim Middagh / The Globe

Worthington Trojans freshman Newyouman Gora (30) leaps over Windom Area defender Shelby Erickson for two points during a Tuesday girls basketball game. A sports columnist's call has gone out for more varsity doubleheaders on the schedule for 2022.

usual four. There are problems, of course, but if college teams dropped just one game on their regular season schedule, you couldn't say they'd be playing too many games in their season. Practically everybody plays a bowl game anyway, so few teams could say they

don't get on the field enough. Going from four to eight won't ensure that some teams won't carp about the selection process, but we'll get a better handle on who's really the best. And besides, a tournament of four teams isn't much of a tournament, after all.

- ▶ Another state tournament for the Worthington Trojan boys soccer team, and a better result. The guys were justifiably heartbroken after their undefeated season was shattered in 2020 by a sudden-death overtime

WOLTER: Page 13

Dragons trying to light a fire in boys basketball

By Doug Wolter
dwolter@dglobe.com

ADRIAN — The Red Rock Conference is always competitive in boys basketball, and the Adrian/Ellsworth Dragons are still trying to figure out where they stand in it.

The Dragons were 1-3 prior to Monday's scheduled northwest Iowa road game at Sibley-Ocheyedan. They go on the road again on Friday to contend with Hills-Beaver Creek.

A/E head coach Blake Miller describes his team as undersized, and several of his players didn't have much varsity experience before the 2021-22 season began. For the Dragons to become more competitive, Miller said they'll need to improve their rebounding. They are already improving on the defensive side.

"Jump shooting is getting better in practice, so hopefully that will improve in the games. We do pass well," said the coach, adding, "We're definitely moving forward."

When asked to assess the Red Rock Conference this year, Miller immediately points to Southwest Minnesota Christian as one of the teams to target. He also likes a young Westbrook-Walnut Grove squad and a tough Mountain Lake Area/Comfrey team, which beat his unit already this season. He expects an athletic Heron Lake-Okabena/Fulda team to get going soon. And Hills-Beaver Creek, with senior Oliver

"The undersized thing, it doesn't worry me about that. It's the size of the fight in the dog."

BLAKE MILLER,
A/E HEAD COACH

Deelstra returning from injury, requires a good look.

How will A/E figure in the RRC mix? "I'm hoping we can make a run and finish in the middle of the pack," Miller said.

With just two starters returning from last year's 1-17 team, the Dragons are hoping to find their way back to winning more consistently. There are freshmen in the starting lineup, and the bench consists of all juniors with no prior varsity experience.

There are three solid seniors providing leadership, however. It begins with 6-6 guard-forward Peyton Lewis, who averages 24.5 points and 8.3 rebounds per game. Dawson Kraehling and Carson Wolford also lead.

"The undersized thing, it doesn't worry me about that," Miller said. "It's the size of the fight in the dog."

The dog — in this case the Dragon — continues, in Miller's words, to work hard to get better. There is legitimate cause for optimism on the defensive side, there the team most employs man-to-man.

"If we can play team defense, everything else is going to be that much better," said the coach.

Trojans gymnast Nystrom unafraid to reach for the heights

By Doug Wolter
dwolter@dglobe.com

Worthington

Gymnastics has brought out the best in Mekyla Nystrom, and not just at the gym.

Nystrom, a senior and an outstanding gymnast on the Worthington High School team, has used the sport to come out of her shell a bit. It's quite a contrast to see the bright, buoyant and sometimes-sassy dynamo today and compare her to her quiet demeanor of many years ago.

"I have been a gymnast for 10 years," Mekyla recalls. "I started when I was 7 years old. I used to be really super shy, and I didn't talk much. But now I've learned to express myself a lot more, and be more outgoing and confident in myself and in my gymnastics."

Mekyla Nystrom Drill There's something naturally fresh and exuberant about the way



Nystrom approaches her sport. It is often said that gymnastics is a sport where risk-taking is essential, and the best gymnasts throw their bodies around gymnasiums with sheer abandon. Nystrom is a risk-taker for sure, and her repeated attempts to add new wrinkles in her routines bring that point home.

In a recent meet this season, she did a double-back on the uneven parallel bars. Everybody at Worthington's gymnastics facility that night erupted in spirited cheers when she stuck the landing, especially her teammates.

And why not? Nystrom had been working on the maneuver for a long time.

"That's one skill I've been working on for quite a few years — at

least three, four years," she said recently. "And the moment that I stuck it off the bars and I did it in a competition, I think that moment will stick with me. Because that was the one skill I have wanted for years."

It is well known that the Trojan gymnasts have enjoyed uncommon success in southwest Minnesota, having now represented their section in seven consecutive Minnesota state team tournaments. Nystrom, herself, is a veteran state qualifier in the individual portion of the big tourney as well.

The dynamic senior is certainly doing her part to keep the Trojans on top. Always capable on bars, vault, balance beam and floor exercise, the once-shy girl is a team leader who handles the pressure of expectations well.

"I just try to take it day by day and do as good as I can each time," she explains.

This week's Globe

Drill subject, Mekyla Nystrom chatted with our sports department about gymnastics and more. You can go online at www.dglobe.com to see a video. Here's a sample of the interview:

QUESTION: What's your favorite gymnastics event?

ANSWER: "My favorite event would be bars. I just like being able to hold myself up on the bars, and I'd say that's my best event. On bars you have to be very, very tough on there to hold yourself on the bars, and to be able to swing and be graceful while you swing on it. It takes a lot of strength and determination to get there."

QUESTION: What do you think is the most important quality a gymnast must have to be successful?

ANSWER: "A personal quality that every gymnast should possess should probably be

NYSTROM: Page 13



Tim Middagh / The Globe

Worthington High School gymnast Mekyla Nystrom is a highly productive performer who continually works to add new moves.



Mekyla Nystrom
Worthington High School
Senior
Gymnastics



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