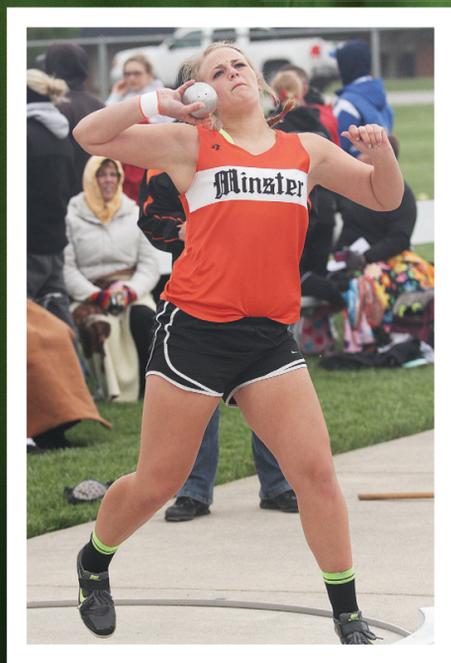
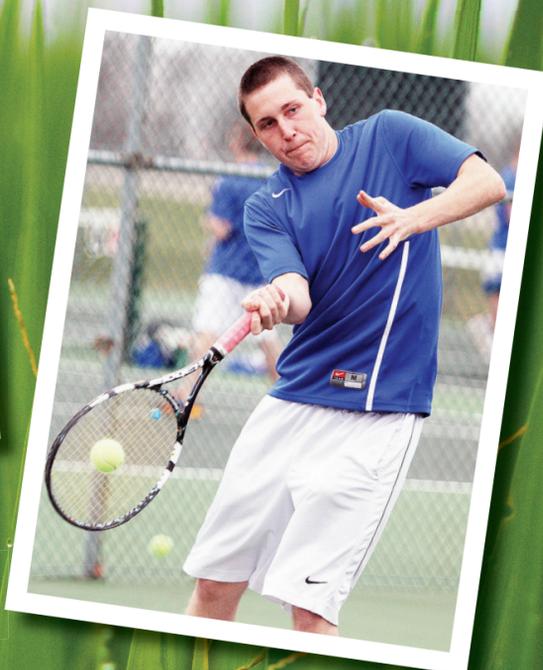


SPRING SPORTS PREVIEW 2016

A supplement of the *Sidney Daily News*



Two new coaches for Sidney this spring

Staff report

Sidney has two new coaches for spring sports this year.

They include Thomas Goffena, an SHS grad, coaching the baseball team, and James Kidd taking over the boys tennis program.

The other two coaches remain the same, Wade New in softball and Ruth Baker in track.

Baseball

Former Sidney High baseball standout Thomas Goffena takes over as the head coach of the Yellow Jackets this season, hoping to improve on last year's 8-18 record.

And heading into his first season, he knows there are going to be a lot of battles for starting spots.

"I know of only two guaranteed spots that are filled," said Goffena. "That means we have a lot of kids fighting for the other seven positions. We also have some kids that I know are going to be in the lineup every day but I just don't know what position they are going to play. We are going to have to rely on our offense this year. The pitching staff will be led by Conor Beer, but we will rely on other kids that have limited or no varsity experience pitching. We just need to worry about throwing strikes and making plays behind the pitcher."

He has six players back that lettered last season in seniors Sam Niswonger, Jacob Cooper and Damien Duff, and juniors Beer, Cole Hoffman and Austin McClain.

Beer finished with a 3.34 ERA last season and will be the ace of the staff. He is joined by Zane Walker and AJ Brussel.

Niswonger hit .299 last season and is back behind the plate. Hoffman also catches and is coming off a season that saw him hit .379.

At shortstop will be McClain, who will look to increase his .243 batting average from a year ago, and at first will be Kaine Fischer.

Beer hit .259 last season and will be at second when he's not on the mound, and the outfield candidates include Cooper, Duff, Dillon King and Beer.

Third base is wide open.

Among the top newcomers, according to Goffena, are seniors Chris Cantrill, Tristen Carlson, Nick Kindle and Austin Freisthler.

Goffena expects a tough road in the GWOC North.

"It's going to be solid again," he said. "Vandalia is a team that's hard to knock off the top spot right now. Then you have a Troy team whose JV team got second in the whole GWOC last year in the tournament, so you know they have some kids to fill their spots. Piqua is always well-coached and Greenville has the kids to fill their spots."

Boys tennis

James Kidd takes over as the head Sidney boys tennis coach.

He had previous coaching experience in Labelle and Fort Myers, Florida.

"I've been pleased with positive attitudes and the excitement coming from our boys team," he said.

"He has four seniors



Summer Inman takes a swing at a pitch last season. She hit .353 last season for the Lady Jackets and returns at shortstop this season. Photos by Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News

in Zach Darden, Dylan Vondenheuel, Derek Brady and Connor Armstrong. All but Brady are returning lettermen from last season, and the three that did letter are the team captains this year.

"They bring experience, game knowledge and school spirit with them," said Kidd. "It's clear that they are proud of their school and the community they represent. They have been working hard on improving their athleticism and it's obvious they have gotten better over the past year. Derek is new to the team but brings a spark with him. He played on the basketball team and had that competitiveness. He's a great role model for the younger players, too."

There is just one junior in Alan Davidson, two sophomores in Michael Ferree and Logan Searcy, and a sophomore in Daichi Urata.

"Those four will get plenty of playing time," said Kidd. "They have a big role in helping us reach our goals. Alan, Michael and Daichi all have experience playing in leagues, camps, schools and lessons. They will definitely have to step up and play hard every match."

"Logan is new to the team but has a lot of potential and works hard," he continued. "He is on the swim team here at Sidney and seems to be in good shape physically so we expect big things from him."

"Overall, we have the senior leadership and the work ethic from the underclassmen to do well in the league this year," he added. "One thing we know for sure is that we will play our hardest and respect the game and the opponent."

Softball

Wade New welcomes back eight letter-winners from last year's 9-17 team, although one of them is out for the season due to an injury.

New is in his 12th year as the head coach and has racked up 139 wins so far in his coaching career. And he's looking for a lot more this season.

"This should be a great



Sidney's Zach Darden runs up on the ball during a No. 2 singles match at Sidney last season. He is one of four seniors back for first-year head coach James Kidd.

spring for the Lady Jackets," he said. "We have a good mixture of veteran players and youth. We return a good core of starters and role players from last season. We have had some very competitive practices and the girls are really looking forward to the season starting. They have been pushing each other from day one."

"Our numbers are up this season, so we expect a lot of girls to help us stay healthy," he added. "Our goal is to win the GWOC North and we're very pleased with the effort the girls have put forth so far."

Returning are seniors McKenzie Lambdin and Hannah Westerbeck, juniors Summer Inman, Hayley Powers and Grace Shell, and sophomores Morgan Carey and Maddie White.

Mackenzie Bates, a junior, is the other returnee, but a hip injury will sideline her for the season.

Shell and White will do the pitching for the Lady Jackets and are both good hitters, at .344 and .375 last season, respectively.

Lambdin hit .318 last season and will do the catching, as will sophomore Kacey Swiger.

At short will be Inman, who hit .353 last season,



Sidney's Tyler Guyett lets the discus fly during the New Bremen Invitational last season. He returns for the Yellow Jackets this spring.

and freshman Hallie Westerbeck, and at first will be Powers, who hit .382 a year ago. Shell and White will also see action there.

Inman, junior Sarah Smith and White will all see action at second, and Lambdin, Swiger and Hayden Spurgeon will see playing time at third.

Outfield candidates include Westerbeck, Carey, junior transfer from Houston Katie Thompston, junior Acacia Freeman, Regan Carey, Spurgeon and White.

"Grace Shell is 100 percent to start the season and that is a huge plus,"

said New. "Mackenzie Bates will be out this season but she will still be an important presence in the dugout."

Track

The boys track team placed fifth in the GWOC North last season, and returns 10 who lettered a year ago.

They include seniors Jonathan Perin, Darryl McNeal, Tyler Guyett and Jamie Wallis, and juniors Ian Bowden, William Burnside, Jay Clark, Raymond Daniel, Xavier Wise and Elliot Wilson.

The girls, who were third in the North last season, have two state

qualifiers returning from last season in Kaitlyn Davis and Mersadi Timmons, who ran in the 400 meter relay in Columbus.

They are joined as letter-winners by fellow seniors Elizabeth Barr, Sarah Lewis and Rachel Leach, and juniors Bailey Wiford, Kennadie Steinke and Kiara Miller.

"We're looking forward to the season," said coach Ruth Baker. "We have some very talented athletes returning to compete for us this season. Many are multi-sport athletes that have been training hard all year, so I look for big things this season."

LHS's King expects to add to 542 career wins

Staff report

There is only one change in coaching this spring at Lehman. Former Lehman player Tim Ungericht is the new boys tennis coach.

Veteran coaches Bill Booth in softball and Dave King in baseball both had a lot of players returning from last season. And Dwane Rowley has a dozen letter-winners combined in boys and girls track.

Baseball

One of the state's all-time winningest coaches returns to guide the baseball fortunes of the Lehman Cavaliers this season.

Dave King begins his 39th year as a head baseball coach. He spent 25 years at Sidney, two at Jackson Center, and is beginning his ninth season at Lehman.

He comes into the season with 542 career victories, and is coming off another outstanding season last spring at Lehman, when the Cavaliers finished 14-0 to win the Northwest Central Conference and were 26-5 overall. They also went on to win sectional and district championships.

He has plenty of reason to be optimistic heading into this season, with six lettermen returning.

However, one of the area's premier pitchers last season, Nate Bosway, underwent "Tommy John" surgery in the offseason and will not be able to pitch for a while. Last season, he was 9-1 with a 0.93 earned run average.

However, he can play defense and hit, which he does very well, judging by his .416 average from a year ago. He will be at first base.

The anchor of the pitching staff in Bosway's absence will likely be Parker Riley, a junior letterman who was 6-1 with a 2.28 ERA last season.

Max Schutt returns behind the plate and he wields a potent bat, hitting .433 last season, tops on the team.

Dylan Arnold, who hit .357 last season, is back at short and is still just a junior, and King has two of his starting outfielders back in seniors Stephen Monnin, who hit .391 last season, and Ian Smith, who hit

.300. Smith will also back up Bosway at first.

Tyler Lachey, a sophomore, will be at second base, and joining Monnin and Smith in the outfield will be players like seniors Avery Pickrel and CJ Trahey, junior Jared Rourke and sophomore Owen Smith.

"There will be plenty of opportunities for young players to step up and perform," King said. "We lost a lot of talent but we are working hard to fill the holes. Our pitching will be a work in progress."

Other candidates for playing time at certain positions include O. Smith behind the plate, junior Brandon Simmons and sophomore Brandon Barhorst at short, I. Smith at first, Pickrel, senior Michael Largent and Rourke at second, and Simmons and freshman Jared Magoteaux at third.

King looks for good contributions from some freshmen newcomers in Magoteaux, Mitchell Sollmann, Bryce Kennedy, Michael Denning and John Cianciolo.

Softball

Bill Booth will add to his 27-year career this season at Lehman. He is looking to improve on last year's two-win season, but will have to do it with an extremely young team — of the 22 players out, 18 are either freshmen or sophomores.

"We're really young this season," said Booth. "The pitchers have been working extremely hard and show improvement, and we have a lot of young talent. I think we will be a much-improved team."

Despite the youth, he has eight girls returning from last season. Two are seniors in Allie Hall and Sidney Chapman. Chapman, the shortstop, had a big year at the plate, hitting .453. And Hall is back at first and hit .299 last season.

The rest of the letter-winners are sophomores in Brogan McIver, Lauren Largent, Hailey Wick, Amanda Titterington, Maddy McFarland and Caitlin Swallow.

Wick will be the top pitcher, and be throwing to both Swallow and Grace Monnin, a freshman.

Titerington hit .312 last season and will play at sec-



Lehman's Max Schutt, 34, takes a cut at a pitch last season. He brings back a hot bat for the Cavs this spring, hitting .433 last season.

ond base, but third base will be a battle among Camille Odle, Grace Brandt and Carly Edwards.

McIver returns in the outfield and brings back a .339 batting average from last season. McFarland will also roam the outfield.

Track

Dwane Rowley starts his seventh season as head boys track coach at Lehman, and he has seven athletes who are returning from last season, when the Cavaliers finished third in the Northwest Central Conference.

The returning letter-winners include juniors Wyatt Long, Isaiah Winhoven and Jacob Schmiesing, and sophomores Alvara Barrera, Aldo Barrera, Joe Schimmel and Kam Lee.

"I look for us to be competitive and get better each week," Rowley said. "We have a young and inexperienced team that will be tested early and often."

• Rowley is also in his seventh year as the girls track coach and has five athletes returning, including some familiar names.

Back are seniors Kassie Lee and Janelle Gravunder, junior Kaitrin O'Leary and sophomores Katie Allenbach and Alanna O'Leary.

O'Leary ran in the state



Kassie Lee heaves the shot put during a meet last spring. She is back for her senior season in track.

Photos by Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News

cross country meet as a freshman in 2014, and also ran in the state track meet last season in the 200 dash.

"I look for these girls to be competitive," said Rowley. "I think they will be better every week. We have to overcome low numbers and any adversity, and stay healthy."

Boys tennis

Former Lehman standout Tim Ungericht begins his first season as the boys tennis coach at the school, and he has his

work cut out this season, with only one returning letterman in sophomore Griffin West.

"We are young but talented," Ungericht said, "Our goals are to have a winning season, finish with a top 10 ranking in the Miami Valley area, and continue our tradition of district qualifiers."

He has two newcomers to the program he thinks will be good additions in senior Malachi Bezy and sophomore Ryan Goettemoeller.

State placer Fogt returns for JC track

Staff report

JACKSON CENTER — Jackson Center had outstanding fall and winter sports season, and the spring coaches are hoping to keep the success going.

Both diamond coaches are returning for their second seasons in Taylor Nehls in baseball and Doug Meyer in softball.

The track teams will be headed by longtime coach Steve Hoover.

Baseball

Taylor Nehls returns for his second season as head coach of the Tiger baseball team, and he's looking to improve on last year's 7-13 mark.

"We only lost three starters from last year and have half a dozen freshmen coming in, so we will be pretty young again," Nehls said. "I believe we will keep improving day by day just like last year, and be competitive in the league."

He has a long list of returning lettermen back, led by three seniors in Drew Sosby, Ethan Zorn and Colin Ganger. Sosby will be in the outfield, Zorn behind the plate and Ganger in the outfield.

Also back are juniors Brady Wildermuth and Chayce Hickman. Wildermuth will pitch and play third, and Hickman will play at first base.

There are also three sophomores who lettered last season in Bryce Sosby, Colton Rose and Troy Yoast. Sosby will pitch and play shortstop, and Rose and Yoast will both pitch and

play in the outfield.

Top top newcomers are all freshmen in Corbin Murphy, Jacob Francis and Trent Platfoot.

Softball

Doug Meyer returns for his second season as head coach of the Lady Tiger softball team, and he has seven players back from a team that finished with a 7-12 record a year ago.

The returnees include senior Abbie Meyer, junior Camryn Hoehne, and sophomores Brianna Davis, Haley Rogers, Connor Pipke, Angel Kittle and Olivia Clark.

Meyer is penciled in at short and brings back a .344 average from last year, and Pipke is back at third after hitting .391 last season.

Rogers, Riley Jackson and Davis make up the pitching prospects, and Madilynn Platfoot and Katie Sosby are the two they will be throwing to.

Hoehne, who hit .233 last season, will be at first, Jayel Frye at second, and two outfield spots will be held down by Cassie Meyer and Lexi Dearwester.

"I'm excited about the program this year," said Meyer. "Starting some years back, coaches Jan Davidson and Isaac Klopfenstein set in motion the leadership needed to make this program successful. We are seeing this flourish in turnout and the commitment in the off-season. This team will be fun to watch this coming season. They are not just great athletes but



Jackson Center shortstop Abby Meyer tries to make a tag during a game last spring. She is back for the Lady Tigers in softball this season.

great students too."

The top newcomers includes Cassie Meyer, who's a junior, and Frye, who's a senior, along with freshmen like Platfoot, Jackson, Sosby, Kaylee Murphy and Maddie Yarkosky.

Girls track

The Lady Tiger track team has a state qualifier returning in senior Nicole Fogt.

She not only qualified for the state meet last season, but went on to finish fifth in Columbus.

In addition, the girls that made up the regional qualifying 400 and 800 relay teams is also returning.

"Many of these girls are seniors and are looking to improve on last year's performances," said longtime coach Steve Hoover. "We expect our sprinters, short relays and discus athletes to be very competitive this year, and some of our younger athletes should also perform well in their events."

Returning along with Fogt

for the Lady Tigers are senior Pauline Meyer in the 100, 200 and relays, senior Peyton Esser in the relays and sprints, senior Katrina McGowan in the relays and sprints, senior Erin Metz in the long jump and shot put, and sophomore Kennadie Reese in the 100, 200 and relays.

The top newcomers include senior Courtney Gasson in the shot and discus, sophomore Emme Farley in the sprints, and freshmen Deanna Lowry, Gwen Giesemann and Olivia Welly in the sprints, 400 and high jump, respectively.

Boys track

There are three boys returning in track at Jackson, and all three are sophomores in James Gambrell, Parker Morris and Maissen Akers.

Gambrell will be in the sprints and high jump, Morris in the distances and Akers in the distance and 400.

"We're young and developing," said Hoover. "James Gam-



Dean Stewart | Sidney Daily News
Jackson Center's Nicole Fogt stands on the podium in Columbus last spring after finishing fifth in the discus in the state meet. She returns this season.

brell will lead our sprint squad and Parker Morris will be our top distance runner. Our primary goal will be to improve and develop more depth and experience. Our sophomore athletes are looking to improve their performances at the league meet this year."

Indoor state champ Flora back at Botkins

Staff report

BOTKINS — The coaches are the same for three of the four spring teams, but the softball players will be under new leadership this season in Stephanie Rickert.

In girls track, coach Ryan Gutman has Chloe Flora back, and she recently won an indoor state championship.

Baseball

The Trojans finished the season with a 9-10 record last year and coach Phillip Groves has just four players back as he begins his fifth year at the helm.

The returnees include seniors Erik Greve and Jared Goubeaux, junior Alex Jutte and sophomore Nick Buettner.

“Last season we lost three four-year starters to graduation,” said Groves. “As a result, there will be an abundance of opportunities for returning lettermen, and younger players to fill our roster. Ultimately, I like the competitiveness among our players as they battle for spots in the lineup. We look forward to competing and improving on a daily basis.”

Pitchers will be Jutte, Greve, Chad Bergman, and freshmen Bryce Metz and Jack Liesner.

Buettner, who hit .302 last season, will catch, and freshman Spencer Heuker will play at short.

Jutte and Metz will play at first, Luke Bergman at second, and Greve at third, and the outfield candidates are Goubeaux, Levi Steinke, C. Bergman, Nathan Platfoot and Jacob Will.

Girls track

Coach Ryan Gutman has some talented athletes returning in girls track this season, led by distance standout Chloe Flora, who recently won the state indoor championship in the 1600.

She was also state runner-up in that same event last year in Columbus, and also ran in the 1600 and 3200 relays at the state meet.

Also back are state qualifiers Kayla Heuker and Hannah Bailey. Both ran in the 3200 relay and Heuker was also on the 1600 relay team.

Also back are seniors Amber Buehler and Taylor Doseck and juniors Brook-

lyn Flora and Payton Amstutz.

Two freshman are highly thought of in Grace Homan, who set a junior high record last year in the shot put, and Adriana Jutte.

“We had a very successful season last year,” said Gutman. “Five girls competed in the state track meet and we had two runner-up finishes (also Whitney Bornhorst in the 300 hurdles). Unfortunately, we lost a great group of seniors from last year, but this year’s seniors are also very strong, experienced and successful. We will look to them to lead this team and help continue the success from last season.”

Boys track

The Trojan boys team also had a good year last year, with Josh Miller qualifying for state in the shot put, and Austin Jones in the 800. And coach Gutman thinks it will be another good season, thanks in large part to good numbers.

Jones has since graduated, but Miller returns for his junior season. He is joined as lettermen by

seniors Aaron Fullenkamp, Cameron Flora and Brandon Cotrell, juniors Micah Smock, Garrett Williams and Joe Shuga, and sophomore Austin Fullenkamp.

He has a host of freshmen he thinks will contribute in Tyler Swank, Cole Opperman, Logan Johnson, Evan Aufderhaar, Bryce Metz and Connor Stutsman, along with seniors Ryan Egbert and Nolan Greve.

“The boys team made great strides last year,” said Gutman. “And most of the team is returning. We have a strong group of seniors and juniors that have experienced success and are excited to compete again this season. This will also be one of our largest boys teams in several years.”

Softball

Stephanie Rickert takes over as the girls softball coach and has four girls back from last season.

They include Kassandra Esser, Bailey Johnson, Mikayla Place and Scottlynn Armstrong.

“We are a young team and looking at a building year,” Rickert said. “But we have high hopes.”



Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News
Botkins senior standout Chloe Flora runs the 1600 last year at Versailles. She was state runner-up in the 1600 last year, and recently won a state indoor championship in the same event.

Fairlawn sees big increase in track numbers

Staff report

SIDNEY — No new coaches this spring at Fairlawn as Adam Lessing returns in baseball, Kevin Stapleton in softball, and Tim Cummings in track.

The addition of a track has helped increase the numbers in a big way at Fairlawn, and the Jets will host the County meet later this spring to highlight the season.

Baseball

Adam Lessing returns as the head coach of the Jet baseball squad and welcomes back six players who lettered for him last season.

They include seniors Ross Covault, RJ Morrison, Curtis Koewler and Spencer Hina, junior Jared Hina and sophomore Kyle Noble.

The top newcomers this season are sophomore Luke Hickman and freshmen Hunter Booth and Douglas Wright.

“While we will be young in some spots, we do bring back a lot of experience coming into this season,” said Lessing. “We will be led by a group of seniors who have played a lot of baseball for Fairlawn. This year’s pitching staff will include a good mix of upper and lower classmen this year. They include seniors RJ Morrison and Spencer Hina, sophomores Luke Hickman and Kyle Noble, and freshmen Doug Wright, and Hunter Booth. Kyle Noble will also be behind the plate this year along with Ross Covault.”

Covault, Koewler and Morrison will anchor the infield along with Jared Hina, and sophomores Lane Wells and Hickman. The infield will also include a couple freshmen in Booth and Wright.

Spencer Hina will lead the outfield along with junior Matt Strunk. Some talented underclassmen will also be asked to step in and play the outfield as well, including sophomores Troy Rinehart and James Rayl and freshmen Sheldon VanHorn and Austin Osborne.

Softball

Kevin Stapleton returns for his second season as the head softball coach of the Lady Jets, and is looking to improve on last year’s 4-12 mark.



Fairlawn's Troy Rinehart steals second against Anna last season. He returns for the Jets this spring.

Photos by Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News

Returning are four juniors in Ashlynn Weigandt, Jeanee Branscum, Katie Bodiker and Rebecca Long, and a sophomore, Macey Boeke.

The top newcomers are sophomore Emily Lewis, and nine freshmen. They are Renee Wallace, Skyler Jones, Madison Pierce, Mikayla Pierce, Lauden Dudgeon, Allison Roush, Haley VanHook, Skyler Turnbull and Chloe Sharrock.

“Last year this was a senior-driven team, but we lost eight seniors to graduation. So this will basically be a freshman/sophomore team with five juniors,” said Stapleton. “This will be an inexperienced team with a lot of promise. I’m excited to see what this team can do. It’s an excellent group of young athletes that should help this team prosper, and it could be in a short time. They are fundamentally sound but just need the experience. I’m looking forward to the development.”

Track

Tim Cummings has four girls returning from last year who lettered, and a whole host of boys back who won letters a season ago.

In girls track, the returnees include seniors Mollie Roe and Madison Allison, junior Katie Bensman and sophomore Ciera Driskell.

They will be joined by a strong freshman class.

“We have a good freshman class,” said Cummings. “They’re going to be competitive and be a large benefit to the team. Our girls are young this year so we are working hard to build that team as we go down the road. With only two seniors, we are looking to our underclassmen to step up and put in the work.”

• The boys track team is a veteran unit, with 11 returning that lettered last year.

The list includes two seniors in Aaron Hammond and Troy Fletcher, six juniors in Nick and Ben Brautigam, Andrew Bockrath, Tanner Smedley, Austin Maddy and Brendan McKnight, and sophomores Drew Brautigam, Dakota Graves and Stephen Blanford.

“We also have a large group of freshmen boys that are going to make a difference in the team,” said Cummings. “Two throwers are returning after sitting out last season. The boys are very deep this year, with multiple kids for multiple events. Looking back about five years ago we had combined junior high/high school boys and girls numbers around 20. Today we have over 70. That’s a huge improvement for our program. We’ve made improvements to our track, and we’re putting in new bleachers and a scoreboard. And we’re looking forward to hosting the County meet this year.”



Senior Mollie Roe is one of four returning in girls track this spring at Fairlawn.

Another good spring in store at Loramie

Staff report

FORT LORAMIE — Spring is always full of success at Fort Loramie, and this season should be no different.

Baseball and softball teams have longtime coaches returning and plenty of experience back, and there are state qualifiers back in both boys and girls track.

Baseball

The Redskin baseball team was 22-6 last year, another outstanding season under longtime head coach Bill Sturwold.

He has been at Fort Loramie for 17 years and has piled up 354 wins. That's an average of 21 wins per season.

Overall, counting his six years at Russia, he has 433 wins and a winning percentage of .739.

Expect a lot more wins this season, too, since Sturwold welcomes back eight lettermen from the team that was second in the County last season. Seven of them are seniors in Blake Gaier, Connor Rose, Tanner Rosengarten, Drew Wehrman, Travis Hilgefert, Jacob Kitzmiller and Brad Pleiman.

Sophomore Dillon Braun is the other letterwinner.

"We have a very good group of underclassmen that will push the upperclassmen for playing time," Sturwold said. "We expect to contend for league and district titles."

The pitching staff will include Rose, Wehrman, Hilgefert, Braun, Kitzmiller and Carter Siegel. None of them logged a lot of innings last season, but Hilgefert finished 3-0 with a 1.56 ERA, Siegel had a 1.40 ERA, Wehrman 1.34 and Rose 1.00.

Kitzmiller returns behind the plate and hit .296 last season, and Rosengarten will be at third and brings back a .346 average.

At short, Wehrman is penciled in, backed up by Rose and Braun, and at first will be either Gaier or Daniel Berning. Second is Travis Hilgefert's, backed up by Siegel. Hilgefert hit .289 last season.

Pleiman heads the outfield group. He hit .355 last year. Gaier, Braun and Berning are also in the mix.

Softball

Coach Brad Turner led his team to a 19-9 record last season, extending his career mark in eight years to 152-83.

And with seven letterwinners returning from last season, he's expecting to add to that mark this season.

"I'm entering my ninth season as a head softball coach and one thing I've really come to realize in doing this for a while now is just how much your program changes from year to year based on personnel," said Turner. "We do have the talent to win games this season, but we're going to have to do it in different ways than we have

in the past. This year as much as any we will be figuring some things out on the fly and we really can't do that until we start playing some ball games and seeing how the girls perform. The combination of losing six seniors to graduation and another long tournament run in basketball is making it difficult for us to try to get all of the pieces put into place during the preseason, so we'll have to work through that a bit as the season starts."

The returnees include seniors Holly Frey, Kristin Raterman, Kara Magoteaux, Hillary Benazer and Kierstin Benazer, and juniors Regan Middendorf and Megan Koppin.

Raterman and Koppin will handle the pitching duties. Raterman was 9-6 with a 4.90 earned run average and 99 strikeouts. She also hit .297. Koppin was 10-3 last year with a 2.68 ERA and 44 strikeouts.

"Kristin and Megan made up a nice 1-2 combination for us last year and we will use both of them again this season," Turner said. "They have two different styles so it's a great luxury to have both of them to go with depending on the situation. They each will get the chance to start some games but we will always know that we've got the other one to go to if we need to make a change."

Middendorf will catch and also play some first and second. She hit .522 last season in just 23 at-bats. "Hopefully that will serve as a springboard to her having a bigger and more regular role in the lineup this year. Her offensive abilities will keep her in the lineup and she can play a couple different positions in the field," Turner said.

Holly Frey is back at third base and will earn her fourth varsity letter this season. She hit .364 last season with nine doubles, two homers and 21 RBIs. "She has a rare combination of power and speed which will bode well for her as she bats from the left side of the plate," Turner said.

Magoteau will play short and centerfield. "Kara is a very good centerfielder who made some outstanding plays last year with her glove and her arm," said Turner. "She hit .293 with 24 runs scored."

Kierstin Benazer is also a candidate at short and in the outfield. She hit .254 last season. And Hillary Benazer lettered as a role player last year and will get a chance to be an everyday player this year.

"Kierstin will be a key player, and Hillary worked hard in the off-season. With this being her senior season, we just might see it all come together for her."

Julie May and Renee Seger are both seniors who have been with the program all four years. May is a good hitter and could see action as DH, and Seger is known for her baserunning and defense.



Fort Loramie's Kristen Raterman slides safely into third base against Bradford last season. She returns this season and will be counted on to pitch.

Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News



Olivia Quinter was a state qualifier in three different events last year, and returns for the Lady Redskins this spring.

Dean Stewart | Sidney Daily News

Abby Holthaus, Morgan Hoelscher, Grace Ruhenkamp and Heather Eilerman are all sophomores and Aleah Frilling is a freshman. They are all in the mix as well.

Boys track

Coach Kevin Wrasman has a state qualifier returning for the boys and seven lettermen in all as he heads into the season.

Tom Ballas, still just a junior, ran in the state 1600 last season and is back again. He is joined by senior three-year lettermen Logan Brackman and Riley Hausfeld, and senior two-year lettermen Riley Holland, Aaron Schwartz and Josh Siegel. Also back is junior Alan Holdheide.

Brackman was the team's high-point man last season, but injured his knee during football. So Wrasman isn't sure of his events this spring. Holdheide was second in points scored and Ballas third.

The top newcomers will be juniors Jake Ward and Alec Holthaus, exchange student Jens Kjetil Suter, and freshmen Joe Ballas, Jake Rethman and Carson Moore.

"I am happy to see much new talent coming to our boys team," Wrasman said. "We have three new juniors, Jake Ward, Alec Holthaus, and exchange student Jens

Kjetil Suter, that will be a great asset to the sprinting events, along with freshman Carson Moore. In the distance events freshmen Jake Rethman and Joe Ballas will be a great asset to the team as well. Our boys team has already had some success during the indoor season. Tom Ballas, Alan Holdheide, Jake Rethman, and Joe Ballas qualified for the 2016 indoor state championships in the 4X800 relay, and Alan also qualified in the pole vault.

"We will be led by our seniors," he added. "I'm looking forward to seeing their talent and leadership bring success to our team. And I see a lot of talent among the underclassmen."

Girls track

There are two returning state qualifiers in girls track in Andrea Meyer in the pole vault and Olivia Quinter in the hurdles and long jump. They were the top two point-producers for last year's team.

They are both seniors and are joined as returnees by classmates Makenna Geise, Melanie Kremer, Rachel Schmitmeyer and Jesse Stephens, and juniors Taylor Boerger and Kaitlyn Luebke.

Top newcomers are four freshmen in Erin Chaney, Grace Wehrman, Chloe Stang and Madi-



Tom Ballas runs in the state 1600 meters last spring. He returns for the Redskins this season.

Dean Stewart | Sidney Daily News

son Rose.

"We have a great group of senior girls this year," Wrasman said. "Samantha Bensman, Ashley Frilling, Makenna Geise, Emily Holdheide, Melanie Kramer, Andrea Meyer, Olivia Quinter, Rachel Schmitmeyer, and Jesse Stephens. These senior athletes will help lead our team in an array of events. Andrea with the vaulters, Jesse with high jumpers, Olivia with hurdlers and sprinters, Rachel with the distance

runners, along with junior Taylor Boerger showing great leadership in the preseason and I foresee that leadership continuing especially in the mid-distance events.

"It's also been great to see the indoor success from Andrea," he continued. "She qualified for the state indoor championships in the pole vault for the third year in a row. The girls have some great talent and I'm looking for them to do well in the County meet."

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Raiders will be strong in all sports

Staff report

RUSSIA — It should be another good spring season at Russia this year, with state qualifiers returning in girls track, and a host of letter-winners in the other sports.

Baseball

Kevin Phlipot led the Russia Raiders to a final 23-7 record last year, but if he wants to equal or better that mark this season, he says he will have to fill a lot of holes left by graduation.

Phlipot has just six lettermen back from last season, after eight seniors graduated.

"We have a lot of holes to fill after losing eight seniors," he said. "Jared Goubeaux and Kevin Drees are competing to be our starting catcher, and I expect Bryant McCarty and Jonah Counts to get a lot of innings on the mound. And hopefully Zach Sherman can be a leader on offense like he was last year."

The returnees are seniors Counts, Sherman, McCarty and Connor Monnin, junior Drew Sherman and sophomore Hunter Cohee.

McCarty was 5-0 with a 2.20 earned run average last year, and Counts finished with a 3-2 mark.

Counts hit .259 and will play at short when he's not pitching, and first base will be either senior Clay Borchers or Cohee.

McCarty will play second when he's not pitching and brings back a .267 average, and Sherman pounded the ball at a .487 clip, with 38 runs batted in, and will be back at third base.

Monnin and D. Sherman are back in the outfield. Monnin hit .282 and stole 16 bases, and Sherman hit .338 and stole 14 bases.

Senior Jordan Swartz is in the outfield mix, and juniors Dylan Cordonnier and Clay George will play both infield and outfield.

"Anna is my league favorite," said Phlipot. "And Loramie and us right behind. I look forward to the challenge of facing Alex Brinkman of Anna again this year, to see how our guys are able to adjust to one of the best pitchers in the area."

Softball

The Lady Raiders were 18-10 last season, and coach Michelle Muhlenkamp is back for her third season as the head coach.

She has nine letter-winners back from last year, five of whom played a lot in juniors Maddie Borchers, Maria Herron and Katie Swartz, and sophomores Lexi Monnin and Grace Saunders.

Others who lettered but didn't play as often are sophomores Lauren Monnin, Kylee Sherman, Mishaylee O'Riley and Claudia Counts, who was injured last year.

Herron heads the list of returnees after hitting .538 last season and being voted All-Ohio. She had 12 doubles and six triples. She will again be behind the plate.

Saunders and Borchers will share the pitching duties. Saunders was 10-6 with a 3.50 ERA and Borchers 8-5 with a 4.70 ERA.

Monnin hit .371 and was a terror on the base paths, with 24 stolen bases. She is at short-stop.

Swartz is back in centerfield and hit .308 a year ago.

After that, there will be new faces in the lineup at first, second and third, as well as the other outfield spots.

Among the newcomers this season that are looking for playing time are freshmen Shea Borchers, Kennedie Goubeaux, Savana Albers and Jenna Cordonnier.

"This is a really big year for us," said Muhlenkamp. "Some young athletes are working hard to step into some key positions. There is a tremendous amount of athletic talent on this team and our expectations are very high. We believe we have an extraordinary group of dedicated and hard-working girls."

Girls track

The Russia girls have built a dynasty in County track, and it doesn't show signs of waning any time soon.

Coach Brad Heaton has four girls returning who competed in the state meet last year, led by senior Lauren Heaton, who was in three events, including the 400, the 1600 relay and the 3200 relay. She has qualified for the state meet in her three previous seasons at Russia.

She finished sixth in the 400 last spring, ran on the fifth-place 3200 relay, and also on the ninth-place 1600 relay. She ran on the state 800 relay as a sophomore, along with running in the 200 and 400 dashes. And as a freshman, she ran the 400 and also the 3200 relay.

She was joined on both the relay teams by Grace York and on the 3200 relay team by Shae Goubeaux. They both return along with Molly Kearns, who competed in the 3200 in Columbus and placed 10th.

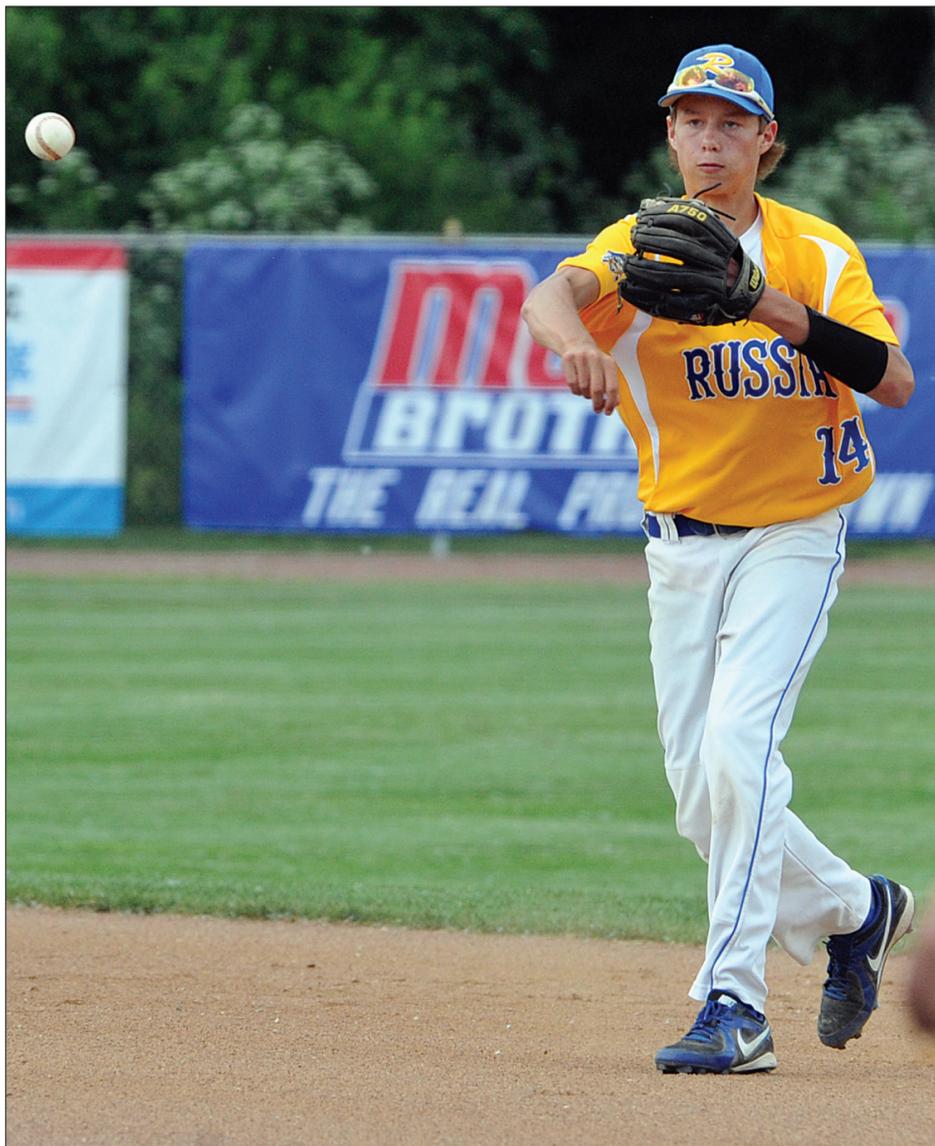
He will build around those four, but also has a good number of freshmen coming in this season, led by Anna Fiessinger and Claire Meyer, who he says will enhance his team's chances in distance races.

"We lost a wealth of talent in Emily Borchers, Leah Francis and Hannah Bornhorst, but the number of athletes going out for high school track is tremendous," Heaton said.

"The depth of our athletes will be a huge bonus. We'll be led by our seniors Lauren Heaton, Molly Kearns, Erin Gaerke and Karissa Voisard. We also have back Megan Frazier and Olivia Quinter, who were both injured last year and not able to compete at the end of the season."

Voisard ran at state in the 800 relay as a sophomore.

"We expect Emily Bohman to do well in the pole vault and Christina Gaerke in the shot put. And Audrey Voisard is another talented junior who will compete in the long jump," he said. "And we hope to see our state qualifiers from last



Mike Ullery | Sidney Daily News
Jonah Counts makes a throw to first in action last season. He is one of six returning in baseball this spring.

year return to the state meet again."

Boys track

Coach Dan Schafer doesn't have any state qualifiers back, but he has a long list of lettermen returning this season.

The list includes seniors Trevor Monnin, Westin Lavy, Caleb Ball and Andrew Ball, and juniors Ethan Monnier, Trent Monnin, Jack Moorman, Drew Poling, Alex Seger and Cole Tebbe.

"The kids have been working hard on conditioning and we'll just have to see if it pays off on the track," said Schafer. "We look to be very competitive this year with a strong core of runners returning from last season. We should be strong in the pole vault and high jump and we're looking for some underclassmen to help in the throwing events."

"The relays and middle distance should be the strength of our team and we have the foursome that set a new school record in the 1600 relay back, along with our 400 and 800 runners Trevor Monnin and Caleb Ball, who just missed making it to state," he added. "This year should be very exciting as we move some kids into additional events to improve the team. We're hoping for a great season, and as long as the kids stay healthy, it's going to be an exciting year."



Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News
Russia's Lauren Heaton runs the 400 meter dash at Minster last spring. She qualified in three events at state last spring and is one of four state qualifiers returning in girls track.

RETURNING STATE TRACK QUALIFIERS

State track qualifiers returning from last season (With events)

Girls

SIDNEY

Kaitlyn Davis, 400 relay
Mersadi Timmons, 400 relay

LEHMAN

Alanna O'Leary, 200 dash

ANNA

400 relay — Rylie Edwards, Krista Gehret, Kennedey Glover, Rachel Shoemaker

BOTKINS

Hannah Bailey, 3200 relay
Chloe Flora, 1600 run, 1600

relay, 3200 relay
Kayla Heuker, 1600 relay, 3200 relay

FORT LORAMIE

Andrea Meyer, pole vault
Olivia Quinter, long jump, 100 hurdles, 300 hurdles

RUSSIA

Shae Goubeaux 3200 relay
Lauren Heaton 400 dash, 1600 relay, 3200 relay
Molly Kearns, 3200 run
Grace York, 1600 relay, 3200 relay

MINSTER

Kaci Bornhorst, 3200 relay
Cassie Francis, 800 run, 1600 relay, 3200 relay
Mya Francis, 400 relay

LeAnn Huelsman, pole vault
Savanah Luthman, shot put
Maggie Meiring, 300 hurdles, 1600 relay
Morgan Pohl, 3200 run
Julia Slonkosky, 800 run, 1600 relay, 3200 relay
Paige Thobe, 400 relay
Katie Wuebker, 400 relay, 800 relay

NEW BREMEN

Makenna Brackman, 800 relay, 1600 relay, 3200 relay
Aly Elking, 3200 relay
Lilly Hirschfeld, 1600 relay, 3200 relay
Paige Jones, 800 relay, 1600 relay, 3200 relay
Celeste Kuck, pole vault
Paige Kuck, discus

VERSAILLES

Jenna Frantz, pole vault
Madison Grilliot, 3200 relay
Emily Langenkamp, 3200 relay
Cassie Peters, 400 relay, 800 relay
Kayley Ruschau, 1600 relay
Camille Watren, 400 dash, 800 relay, 1600 relay
Haley Winner, 400 relay, 800 relay, 1600 relay

Boys

ANNA

Logan Konst, pole vault, 400 relay
Camron Layman, 400 relay
Connor Rioch, 800 relay
Blake Stephens, high jump

BOTKINS

Josh Miller, shot put

FORT LORAMIE

Tom Ballas, 1600 run

MINSTER

Ben Butler, 3200 relay
Jacob Dues, long jump, 800 relay
Jack Poepelman, 800 relay, 1600 relay
Jacob Stechschulte, 800 relay
Conner Tumbusch, 3200 relay

VERSAILLES

Trevor Noggle, 3200 relay
Michell Paulus, 3200 relay
Noah Pleiman, 3200 relay
Josh Steinbrunner, 110 hurdles

Anna boys track moves up to Division 2

Staff report

ANNA — Anna expects to have a good spring sports season, with the return of a lot of experienced players and athletes.

Longtime coach Dean Stewart is back in boys track, but the girls track team will have a new coach for the first time in 35 years — Amber Warbington takes over for the retired Randy Locker.

Baseball coach Kristian Althaus and softball coach Mike Place are both returning for their second seasons.

Baseball

Last year was a memorable one for Anna baseball, the Rockets winning the County championship and going on to win a district title before falling in the Division 3 Regional. And the final record was 24-7.

The County Player of the Year is back again, too, in Luke Albers, and he's joined by a long list of returning lettermen that should make for another big year on the diamond for the Rockets and coach Kristian Althaus, if he can find a way to replace some strong pitching lost to graduation.

"We have a lot to replace from last year," he said. "We lost 100 innings of pitching, the majority of that in the loss of Wes Showalter and Ryan Counts, who had been varsity pitchers for us for four and three years, respectively. We lost a defensive specialist in Evan Romie who played short, first and catcher in key games for us. And we lost a pitcher in Mike Omlor who was ready in any situation, and first baseman Devan Wuebker, who played a major role last year."

He has seven senior lettermen back from a year ago in Alex Brinkman, Albers, Kain Luthman, Nathan Stiefel, Kyle Wuebker, Drew Boyd and Austin Creager.

Brinkman was outstanding on the mound last season, with a 6-2 record, a 0.90 earned run average, and 73 strikeouts in 462/3 innings. A three-year letterman, he has already signed to play Division 1 college baseball next year at Bowling Green.

Albers was a tough out all season long, finishing with a .410 batting average, with four homers, three triples, 43 runs batted in and 30 runs scored.

Luthman hit .379 and drove in 239 runs, Wuebker hit .273, Stiefel .263 and Creager was slowed by an injury last sea-



Photos by Dean Stewart | Sidney Daily News
Anna's Colin Wuebker blocks a throw to third base in the regional tournament last season. Wuebker is one of seven players returning from a team that won 24 games last year.



Anna's Logan Konst captured the Division 3 state championship in the pole vault, and will see if he can do the same in D-2 this spring for the Rockets.

son, but hit .365 as a sophomore.

"Luke is back in the outfield and he will play left or right depending on who is pitching," said Althaus. "Kain has been a mainstay in centerfield for us and will be there again this season. Kyle was a role player last year and is competing for an everyday spot this season at DH or in the outfield. Nathan was the DH last year and is competing for that spot again as well as time at first, and Austin looks to compete at first and DH."

Boyd will be a pitcher only, said Althaus. He was 4-1 last year with a 0.83 ERA.

There is one junior returning in Colin Wuebker, who played third last year and hit .274 with 26 runs scored.

Three sophomores are back after lettering as freshmen. They include Aiden Endsley, Derek Coverstone and Zach White.

Endsley hit .387 last season, with 22 RBIs and 22 runs scored. And although he played outfield last year,

he may be asked to play infield and pitch this season.

Coverstone hit .321 with 29 runs scored. He played second and will return at that position this season.

White, meanwhile, was behind the plate in 75 percent of the Rockets' games last year and threw out more runners than the previous two years combined. He also hit .278.

"We have a lot of good baseball players right now throughout our JV and varsity rosters," said Althaus. "With the young guys coming in, we have to be open to movement from positions that we may have been at last year because it helps the team more. We have to have a team-first mentality."

"If our seniors have their best year and we stay healthy, there is no reason we shouldn't win 20 games, compete for a league title and for a district title again," he added. "It all comes down to how our leadership develops, are we willing to put team above all else, and can we execute for seven

innings every night?"

Softball

Mike Place is back for his second year as head softball coach at Anna, and has nine letter-winners back to help improve on last season's 10-12 mark.

Returnees include seniors Paige Richard, Ashley Dentinger and Alex Phillips, juniors Baylee Sommer, Tiffany Ferguson, Chloe Spence and Lauren Boshers, and sophomores Macey Richard and Riley Osborn.

The pitchers will be P. Richard, Olivia Place and Boshers, with Sommer behind the plate.

P. Richard will also play short, as will Bailey Luthman, and first will find Spence and Dentinger seeing action.

Phillips and Ferguson will hold down second base, and Osborn is penciled in at third.

Outfield candidates are Dentinger, M. Richard, Place, Ferguson and Paige Richard.

"We have three good seniors who will be asked to be our leaders," said Place. "All three have been letter-winners the past three years. All the girls played a lot of softball last summer and fall, so that should help us this spring. But the league is getting stronger and I think each team will have some real good players this season."

Boys track

Coach Dean Stewart's 2015 team won the County championship, the district championship, was runner-up in the regional meet, and placed fourth in the Division 3 state meet.

And with four state qualifiers returning — including a state champion — along with seven other lettermen, count on it being another good year for the longtime coach, with one big challenge, a move up to Division 2.

"We should again be strong this season," Stewart said. "We return eleven lettermen and will have good athletes in all events. We have two returning that placed at the state meet last year in Logan Konst, who was state champion in the pole vault, and Blake Stephens, who finished third in the high jump. We also return Lucas Huber, who was all-Ohio in cross country. He will lead a group of distance runners who finished fifth in the state cross country meet."

"Our biggest challenge this year will be that we are moving up to Division 2. It will be a big jump in the level of compe-

tion we face when we go to the postseason," he said.

Senior Connor Rioch ran on the state 800 relay team, and junior Camron Layman on the state 400 relay team.

Also back are senior Ian Douglas, and juniors Bradley Axe, Matthew Burden, Joel Gaier and Nathan Osborne.

Stewart is also high on freshman Colin Nanik, who was one of the top hurdlers and short sprinters in the area in 8th grade last year. "I look for him to make an impact as a freshman," Stewart said. "We also have some upperclassmen who have come out and could help us. They are very good athletes, but have not run track before."

Anna has won 10 of the last 12 County championships in boys track and will no doubt compete for another title this season.

Girls track

Amber Warbington steps in as the girls track coach, replacing longtime coach Randy Locker, who retired after last season.

"Randy had a positive influence on all of his athletes," said Warbington. "I know these girls want a chance to get to Columbus so I challenge them to work hard and push each other daily at practice. I'm looking for leaders and these girls know how hard it is to meet their goals. With the returning athletes and the incoming freshman girls, it should be a very successful season. I really look forward to the challenge of filling the shoes of coach Locker."

She has three state qualifiers returning from the 400 relay team in sophomore Rachel Shoemaker, sophomore Rylie Edwards and junior Krista Gehret.

Also back are three seniors in Jenna Harshbarger, Sara Kettler and Jennifer Robinson, and sophomores Beka Emerson, Paige Harvey and Gracen Rogers.

"We had 13 freshmen sign up," Warbington said. "They finished second last year in the league meet. Taylor Kauffman and Claire Bensman will give us speed in the short sprints, and Hannah Shoemaker, Olivia Pulfer and Shana Roe will give us strength in the hurdles. It will be great to see these younger athletes grow and step up for the team."

The girls track team will continue to compete in Division 3 this spring.

8 return for Knoxville baseball

Staff report

NEW KNOXVILLE — The New Knoxville Rangers were 7-17 last season in baseball and there are eight lettermen returning off that squad for new head coach John Sailor.

They include seniors Hunter McMurray and Logan Lefel, juniors Branden Puckett, Nick Topp, Ben Menke and Corey Kuck, and sophomores Jonah Lageman and Nathan Tinnerman.

Pickett had a 3.91

earned run average last season for the Rangers and will be back on the mound this season, joined by Lefel and Menke.

Topp hit .295 last season and returns behind the plate. Nathan Merges will also see action back there.

McMurray brings back a .297 average and will play at short, Tinnerman will be at first, Lefel at second and Topp with also play some third base. Lefel hit .288 last

season.

Outfielders will be Lageman, Puckett and Menke.

"We are looking forward to adding on to the last three years of the program Nick Schroer started," said Sailor. "We feel that the foundation and expectations have been established and now it's time to take the next step in the process. We have nine players who played extensive innings last year, and three players who got quite a few

innings. We feel we have the talent and depth to compete with any team we play this year."

He thinks his team will be better than is projected in the Midwest Athletic Conference.

"Obviously playing in the MAC is a tough row to hoe, but we feel we have the experience and drive to compete with every team this year," he said. "Most preseason predictors will have us projected in the bottom tier of the league, but we

see ourselves in a different light. There are legitimately five or six teams who have their sights set on both the league and state titles this year, so

it's going to be a true test to compete. Our hope is that by the end of the year, we are one of those teams vying for some hardware."

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Houston's New one win away from No. 300

Staff report

HOUSTON — There will be something noteworthy happening very early this spring at Houston. Softball coach Brent New, in his 19th season, needs just one victory to reach the 300-win milestone in his career.

Elsewhere, the coaches remain the same, with Brad Allen back in baseball, Ron Boeke in boys track and Jacob Benanzer in girls track.

Baseball

Head coach Brad Allen is looking for improvement over last year's three-win season, and has a lot of experienced players returning this season.

"One of our strengths will be the varsity experience returning from last year, with a nice balance of four seniors, four juniors and one sophomore," he said. "Another strength will be our depth within our varsity roster competing for starting positions in the infield, outfield and the pitching staff. I'm excited about what this season can bring for our veteran players as well as the baseball talent and athleticism that our incoming freshmen are bringing. We are now in good position number-wise to have some good competition for starting spots on varsity and put us in good position to compete this season. We play in one of the toughest leagues in the state. Our goal is to compete and finish in the top half."

Returning are seniors Zach Jolly, Andrew Miller, Aaron Heckman and Jacob Gates, juniors Isaiah Beaver, Dylan Hensley, Kaleib Freistuhler and Sage Bryant, and sophomore Noah Shoemaker.

Jolly, Beaver, Hensley and Freistuhler will all see mound duty this season, and they will throw to Andrew Miller behind

the plate.

Freistuhler will play at short, with Beaver and Jolly sharing first base. Arron Heckman will be at second, and Hensley at third. Hensley hit .375 last season.

Shoemaker will be in the outfield and Gates in the outfield and DH.

He says the top newcomers will be freshman infielder and pitcher Howie Ludwig, sophomore infielder/outfielder Hunter Herrick, sophomore infielder/pitcher Brad Hicker, sophomore infielder/outfielder Cameron Via and sophomore infielder John Dilullo.

Softball

Head coach Brent New is about to begin his 19th season with the Lady Wildcats, and he enters this season needing just one win to reach 300 for his career.

Last season, his team was 17-10 overall and 10-2 in the County, earning a co-championship.

He has eight letter-winners returning this season, including his top two pitchers, which is always a plus. They are Kayla New, who was 13-7 with a 2.85 earned run average last season, and Macey Stang, 3-3 and a 2.86 ERA.

Also back is sophomore Sarah Monnier behind the plate, and she hit at a .440 clip last season.

Stang hit .383 and will be at shortstop, and letter-winner Jenna Jarrett, a junior, will play at first and bring back a .329 batting average.

Rebekah New is another sophomore letter-winner who will play at second, and senior returnee Grace Riffell will play at third.

Micalah Hensley, a senior who hit .360 last season, will be in the outfield, as will Kaytlyn



Photos by Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News
Houston's Sarah Monnier prepares to put the tag on a runner sliding into home last spring. Monnier is back behind the plate and brings with her a .444 batting average from last season.

Riffell, who hit 257.

He said senior Jenna Mounts, junior Brittany Timmerman, sophomore Brooklyn Felver and freshman Emilee Foster will also see playing time. Felver and Foster both pitch.

"We have a very good incoming freshman class," said New. "They will blend very well with our returning players and push them for playing time. I'm looking forward to a good year. We have another very tough schedule to play, so hopefully the girls will be up to that challenge. And if we play to our potential, we have a chance to challenge for the league championship."

Boys track

Ron Boeke returns for another year as the head coach in boys track, and is coming off a season that saw his team finish 54-32 overall and place third in the County meet.

"With a lot of seniors, we should be experienced in a lot of events," he said. "They are hard workers and a fun group

to be around. We need to stay away from injuries, though. We hope to finish in the top three in the league this season but there are a lot of good teams with good individuals that will make them tough to beat."

Returning are eight seniors, including Malachi Wissman in the shot and discus, Cody Meyer in the jumps, Azen Reier in the distance, Derrick Mayse in the hurdles, Troy Riley in the distance events, and Zach McKee, Zach Freytag and Collin Hughes in the sprints. Hughes will also high jump.

Also back are juniors Devon Ostrander in the middle distance, Quinton Cox in the sprints and Tristin Stangel in the pole vault, and sophomore Dakota Francis in the distance events.

He also has five freshmen he thinks will have an impact, including Dominic Beaver in the pole vault and hurdles, Luke Foster in the sprints, and Tristin Freistuhler, Ethan Knouff and Jacob Slater in the distance



Houston's Zach Freytag competes in a sprint event last season. He returns for the Wildcats this spring.

events.

Girls track

Coach Jacob Benanzer has seven girls returning from last season.

They are senior Jenna Mounts, juniors Kaitlyn Ellison, Caitly Falls, and Allie Voisard, and sophomores Allison Langenkamp, Audrey Kittle and Hanna Cassel.

The top newcomers are sophomore Morgan Ely, and freshmen Cassidy Mayse, Becca Selanders, Shelby Ayers and Hollie Voisard.

"I'm looking forward to this year's team," said Benanzer. "There is a whole different attitude on this team and they seem real excited to compete this year. I have a lot of young talent and speed that will mix in well with our upperclassmen."

Key players back for Minster baseball

Staff report

MINSTER — Minster's baseball team is hoping to pick right up where they left off last season, when they got on a roll and finished strong.

The softball team went from a state runner-up to having a losing record, and coach Scott Robinson is looking to return to winning ways.

Meanwhile, both the boys and girls track teams have a host of state qualifiers returning this spring.

Baseball

After starting out last season with 4-6 mark, the Minster Wildcats hit on something that worked, and went on to win 14 of their last 17 games to finish 18-9. They played for a district championship at the end of the campaign.

Veteran coach Mike Wiss, who now has 366 career wins at Minster, returns some outstanding talent this year, including two players who were first-team All-Midwest Athletic Conference.

"Our competitive edge took huge strides last year when Josh Nixon and Peter Falk started getting more innings on the mound," said Wiss. "I hope those experiences pay off this year."

"We're going to need senior leadership," he added. "You're only as good as your senior class. And success at the plate in hitter's counts is important early in the year. We have had times with this group when putting the ball in play hard isn't as consistent as we would like it to be. We have to build some confidence at the plate."

Nixon hit .361 last season with 17 runs batted in and 25 runs scored. Falk hit .362, scored 32 runs and stole 23 bases. They were both first-team all-conference, and both will play infield and pitch.

Senior Brett Hoelscher can play infield and outfield and brings back a .415 batting average, while junior Bryce Schmiesing hit .286 a year ago.

Junior Jon Niemeyer, who hit .283 last season and scored 21 runs, also returns.

Other seniors include first baseman/DH Reid Frick, outfielder Alex Eiting, pitcher Kyle Heitkamp, and outfielder Ryan Brown.

Other juniors looking for playing time include pitcher/infielder Aaron Ernst, pitcher Isaac Dorsten, catcher Ben Stubbs and outfielder Carter Hogenkamp.

There are also five sophomores in the mix in Jared Huelsman, Austin Shinaberry, Isaac Schmiesing, Alex Lehmkuhl and Adam Knapke.

"The league is competitive every night out," said Wiss, who is entering his 22nd season. "The is very good baseball played on a nightly basis by some very good players. It's a special league we play in."

Highlighting the schedule will be a game against neighboring rival New Bremen, to be played at Wright State University's Nischwitz Field on April 21.

Softball

Coach Scott Robinson has compiled 91 wins in his five years as head coach of the Minster softball team, and he's looking to improve on last year's 9-18 record.

He has five returning players, including senior Jessica Berelsman, and sophomores Jenna Nixon, Emma Schmiesing, Alice Schmiesing and Taylor Kogge.

"We will be young once again, but have some hungry players back from a disappointing 2014 campaign," said Robinson, whose team two years ago lost on a two-out single in the bottom of the seventh of the state championship game. "The freshmen coming in are talented, so we're optimistic."

Berelsman hit .341 last season and will return to the outfield, joined by Jordan Berelsman and Kogge.

Jenna Nixon hit .309 a year ago and returns at first base, backed up by E. Schmiesing, who will also catch.

Alice Schmiesing will be at



Cassie Francis runs the 400 meters during a meet last year. She is one of 10 state qualifiers returning for the Lady Wildcats this spring.

second, but the other three infield spots will likely be filled by freshmen. Jenna Poepelman will do the pitching, Taylor Homan will be at short, and Lindsey Albers at third.

A couple other freshmen are in the mix, including Karly Richard behind the plate and Danielle Barhorst at second.

There are five more freshmen, too, that Robinson thinks can help the club, including Kayla Steger, Taylor Hoying, Emma Snyder, Krista McGee and Carlie Watkins.

Track

The Minster girls finished runner-up in Division 3 in the state meet last season after qualifying 13 to the final meet. And of those 13, there are 10 of them returning, meaning optimism is high again this season.

Six of the returnees are seniors, including Kaci Bornhorst and Julia Slonkosky, who ran on the 3200 relay team, LeAnn Huelsman, who competed in the pole vault in Columbus, Katie Wuebker, who ran on the 400 and 800 relays at state, Maggie Meiring, who qualified in the 300 hurdles and the 1600 relay, and Mya Francis, in the 400 relay.

Slonkosky also qualified in the 800 run and the 1600 relay.

Junior Savannah Luthman



Photos by Luke Gronneberg | Sidney Daily News
Minster's catcher Josh Nixon prepares to tag out Versailles' Jared Niekamp at home in action at Minster last season. He hit .361 last season and returns for coach Mike Wiss this spring.

returns after qualifying in the shot put at state, and junior Morgan Pohl ran in the 3200 run.

Sophomore Cassie Francis ran in three events at state last season as a freshman, including the 800 run and the 1600 and 3200 relays, and classmate Paige Thobe ran in the 400 relay.

Three of the four runners return from the 1600 relay that won a state championship last season, and three of the four members of the 3200 relay that finished second last season are also back.

The 400 relay team was fourth at state, and three of those runners also return. Two of the four runners are back from the 800 relay team that placed third.

Francis was second in the 800 run at state last year, and Slonkosky was right behind her in third, less than a second back. Pohl finished eighth in the 3200.

• The Minster boys finished 18th in the final team standings last season at the state meet, and of the nine athletes that qualified, five of them are returning.

They include senior Ben Butler in the 3200 relay, senior Jacob Dues in the long jump and 800 relay, senior Jack Poepelman in the 800 and 1600 relays, senior Jacob Stechschulte in the 800 relay and senior Connor Tumbusch in the 3200 relay.

Dues, Stechschulte and Poep-

elman give Minster three of the four runners back who ran on the seventh-place 800 relay last season.

Poepelman also ran on the 1600 relay team that placed fourth.

"We have a solid core of 20 returning lettermen from last season and 52 on the roster," said coach Larry Topp, in his 29th year as head coach. "And the lettermen are primarily seniors, with 13 returning."

"This team should have a wide range of talents, from distance, sprints, jumps and shot to discus. And we should have good leaders in all areas."

The returnees include seniors Jacob Albers in the 100, Ben Butler in the distance events, Jacob Dues in the sprints, Ethan Monnin in middle distance, Josh Otting in sprints and high jump, Jacob Stechschulte in sprints, Chad Stoner in the field events, Jason Schultz in hurdles, Conner Tumbusch in middle distance, Zach Eiting in distance, and Jack Poepelman and Peter Ranly in the sprints.

Also back are juniors Alex Blance in the sprints, and Tony Winner and Aaron Kitzmiller in the shot and discus, and sophomores Andrew Broering and Carter Pohl in distance, Zach Heuker in hurdles and Jeremy Kauffman in sprints and jumps.