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'Dogs have big expectations this year

BY KRISTI NIXON

The Bulldog girls' basketball team returns all of its starters and virtually the rest of their whole team from an 8-13 overall season, 7-7 in the North Central Conference, good for fourth in the nine-team field.

That lends itself for coach Miranda Valley's team to be better than the previous year.

"We just recently had a scrimmage and it turned out very well," senior guard and four-year starter Courtney Miller said. "Having five seniors back is really awesome and we have two sophomores that are coming back who will help us, too."

Other starters returning for the Bulldogs include twins Maci Arjes and Kaci Arjes, Lauren Meader and Briana Grover.

"We have nine girls right now who will all contribute and the starting lineup could change game-to-game," Valley said. "All five seniors come back with a lot of game experience under their belt. Lauren and Avery have put a lot of time in to put themselves in a situation to start as well. We will go game-by-game and what our match-ups look like."

One notable who is not out this year, due to a desire to stay healthy for track, is Claire Wragge, opting out for her senior year.

Valley will rely on a nine-girl rotation, including newcomer, junior Morgyn Anderson, and an expanded role for junior Alana Johnson.

"We return a lot of experience," Valley said. "Seven of the nine varsity girls played and contributed a great deal last year so that is a major plus. We have a lot of girls capable of scoring so that makes us versatile, also. Everyone in our program works ridiculously hard and takes pride on the defensive end. We will rotate girls in and out and stay as fresh as we can."

Miller added, "Alana Johnson and Morgyn Anderson will probably do a lot for us than they did last year. Morgyn will be big inside if our bigs need a rest and she'll help out there. Alana, a guard that will help us if any one of us needs a break."

While Miller said she expects the Bulldogs to be near the top of the NCC, she says that Clear Lake, last year's conference champion is the favorite to repeat again. The Lions return the league's leading scorer in Sara Faber, who averaged 18.2 points per game. Four starters for Clear Lake



The 2019-20 Bulldog girls' basketball team includes, front row, from left: Courtney Miller, Kaci Arjes, Briana Grover, Calista Polk, Maci Arjes. Back row: Alana Johnson, Morgyn Anderson, Avery Hanson and Lauren Meader. KRISTI NIXON/HAMPTON CHRONICLE

also should be back.

Valley, though, lists her team as one of three that could possibly contend and that her team should be among the top-three in the NCC, also including Clear Lake and Algona. In the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union Class 3A pre-season poll, Clear Lake is ranked fourth, Algona is seventh.

"This year's conference is very senior-loaded, therefore very experienced," Valley said. "Year-in and year-out games are competitive and there is nobody that can be overlooked or taken lightly."

Miller led the Bulldogs in scoring at 8.9 points per game, in addition to assists (56) and steals (79, good for third in the conference). Hanson is the team's leading returning rebounder at 5 per game, which was top-10 in the NCC when she was a freshman.

The biggest concern for Valley is the fact that though she has seven experienced players, she only goes nine deep for a Class 3A school.

"We are not very deep right now with only suiting nine girls," Valley said. "We will have to stay healthy and out of

foul trouble.

"We must move the ball well and create turnovers on defense (to be successful)."

All five returning with starting experience averaged between 7 and 8.9 points for an overall balance.

Miller's goals the upcoming season for herself and her team are simple.

"Personally, I just want to have a good season, stay healthy," Miller said. "Team-wise is to win and have fun doing it."



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The 2019-20 West Fork varsity boys basketball team includes, front row, from left: Kayden Ames, Tyler Nuehring, Ian Latham, Brett Weaver, Brayden Vold, Joe Ingham. Middle row: Colin Martinek, Jakob Washington, Ren Heimer, Cail Weaver and Noah Maske. Back row: Nate Hubka, Jason Meier and Edison Caspers. SUBMITTED PHOTO

West Fork still expected to contend

BY KRISTI NIXON

You simply don't replace a three-time all-state player.

West Fork will be tasked with that as it starts the 2019-20 season with three returning starters and a fourth returning letter winner from an 18-5 season that featured the school's second-leading all-time scorer in Zach Martinek.

The core back for long-time head coach Frank Schnoes will be centered around two-year senior starting guard Ian Latham, who averaged 7.2 points, shooting nearly 50 percent from the field and 45 percent from beyond the three-point line for the Warhawks.

Among other returning starters for Schnoes' crew is senior center Brayden Vold and junior guard Kayden Ames, the latter of whom earned honorable mention in the Top of Iowa Conference after averaging 10.9 points and was a 75 percent free throw shooter.

"We have the experience of three starters returning that all contributed to last year's success," Schnoes said. "We have good depth on the perimeter with players that can run

the floor and shoot well from the perimeter.

"We have good team quickness and ball-handling skills, so we expect to push the ball up the floor and extend our defense to more full-court pressure than in the past. We probably have 9-10 players who could crack the starting lineup."

Among those is a part-time starter last year while Latham was injured, senior Brett Weaver, averaging 2.7 points per game. Schnoes also notes several who played on a strong JV team, including Jakob Washington, Cail Weaver, Ren Heimer, Tyler Nuehring, Noah Maske, Colin Martinek, Joe Ingham and Jason Meier.

All but one of his potential starters among the newcomers stand taller than 6-foot, Maske, who has been a primary ballhandler at the JV level.

"Other than Brayden, our interior players have not been tested in varsity competition so improving there is something we will be working on," Schnoes said. "I believe Tyler Nuehring, Joe Ingham and Jason Meier will be expected to help out. We need to continue to improve our rebounding and free throw shooting from last year."

Nevertheless, ask Schnoes and his team will be among the contenders.

"We hope to challenge Osage for the Top of Iowa East along with Rockford and St. Ansgar," Schnoes said. "There were a lot of good players in the conference that graduated last year, so there could be some other conference team that may also contend."

A lot of what has made West Fork successful in the past factors into this season as well: off-season work.

"The players have worked hard in the off-season in the weight room, open gyms, team camps and playing some AAU, so I feel the players have improved their skills," Schnoes said. "They need to play together as a team. Since we are not an overly-tall team, rebounding and team defense will be key to our success."

It has also been more than four years since West Fork has reached the state basketball tournament. Schnoes said that with experience, his team can be poised to make another long post-season run.

"We have a talented junior class that does not have much varsity experience," Schnoes said, "so hopefully the more court time they get, the more they will improve. We definitely want to be playing our best ball at the end of the season."



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Warhawks' post play should be key

BY KRISTI NIXON

A combination of experienced and young post players could play a key role to West Fork's girls' basketball team and its success this season.

Senior first team all-conference 6-foot-1 post Emily Caspers, who only recently signed to continue her basketball career at DMACC, will be joined by freshman forward/center Emma Martinek, who stands 5-8, could cause some teams fits.

"We will be very good in the post," said West Fork head coach Rodney Huber, who returns for his eighth season at the helm of the Warhawks. "The duo of Emily and Emma can be very tough for defenses to defend. I think Emma at the high post will be very formidable."

Caspers averaged 15.2 points per game and 7.8 rebounds per contest, both team-highs for the Warhawks. She also averaged little more than a block each time out as West Fork finished with a 17-6 overall record, 13-3 in the Top of Iowa East, second only to Osage.

"I think she has a shot to be an all-stater," Huber said of Caspers, who, if she has a break-out season, could potentially reach the 1,000-point career mark; and is closing in on 500 career rebounds.

She'll be joined by returning starters Makenzie Fessler, a 5-5 junior guard/forward and sophomore guard Maddie Hubka, who Huber says will likely become the team's primary ballhandler now that Kenna Weaver graduated.

"She (Hubka) was huge for us second half of the season last year," Huber said. "Looking for her to be more consistent nightly."

Other potential starters to replace those who graduated include sophomore guard Mycah Weaver or freshman guard Rylee Akins. Weaver appeared in six games in 2018-19.

"(Mycah) probably has a leg up on some of the underclassmen because of experience," Huber said. "She has a nice shot and is very good at doing what is asked of her. (Akins) will play minutes for us this year (regardless of starting). Needs to get used to taking care of the ball and the speed of the game. Will take some time, but she is a very talented player that will get better."

Huber also mentioned that the Warhawks should be improved from long distance. West Fork averaged 21.5 percent from beyond the arc last year.

"This team, I believe, could be a better three-point shooting team than last year's team," Huber said. "We didn't really start shooting the ball well until the last five games of the season. If we can shoot well outside we can have success because most teams can't match up with Emily 1-on-1."

"By the end of the season, she was getting a ton of at-



The 2019-20 West Fork girls' basketball team includes, front row, from left: Madisyn Bonner, Sadie Latham, Jen Ingham, Emily Caspers, Sydney Nuehring, Makenzie Fessler, Mycah Weaver. Middle row: Ellie Weaver, Emma Martinek, Keelee Sheriff, Maddie Hubka, Rylie Akins and Rose Rother. Back row: Head coach Rodney Huber and assistant coach Abbee Dickman. Not pictured: Raelynn Nash. PHOTO COURTESY OF ERIC BURT

tention – double-teamed and box-and-1 played on her. This group so far looks very coachable and willing to do what they are asked. They are unselfish."

Other promising newcomers Huber listed for his team included sophomore forward Madisyn Bonner, who he described as 'scrappy and very physical'; senior forward Sydney Nuehring, who Huber calls a 'smart player and very unselfish'; Jen Ingham a senior forward, who will bring toughness and hustle to the team as well as freshman Ellie Weaver, who Huber said reminds him of her sister, Cailey. Huber's biggest concern, he said, is experience, since he's listed two freshmen in potential starting roles.

"Biggest area of concern is experience and depth," Huber said. "I feel like I said the same things last year and the season turned out pretty well; so maybe the depth will turn into a strength. I feel very comfortable with our top-seven players with Rylie and Madisyn, but we will need an eighth and ninth to step up."

"We don't have a play-maker like Morgan Meier or McKenna on this team that I see right now, so really will

need to play team ball. We also need to find our leader on the floor – McKenna was so good at directing traffic the last four years, so we really need to identify who that person will be."

Once again, Huber points to Osage as the cream of the TIC East. He also says he thinks his team has the potential to be runner-up or top-three at worst.

"Osage is the clear favorite," Huber said. "St. Ansgar will be tough but I believe beatable. I think we have a shot to finish second or third in the conference with this group; but the flip side is it could take longer than usual to get everyone on the same page and we play worse than I feel talent-wise that we are."

In order to reach that potential, the Warhawks will have to get out of the gates fast.

"(We must) gain confidence quickly," Huber said. "Identifying roles will be very big. Like any season, how fast we can come together will be key. (There are) more new faces this year than we have had in the past."



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Full room awaits new head coach

Hansen takes over reins for his alma mater

BY KRISTI NIXON

Patrick Hansen knows what it is like to represent the school he'll now be coaching.

A Bulldog who was a state place winner (seventh) for the Bulldogs in 2010 takes over for Mike Schimp with 10 returning starters from a team that had a resurgent year, finishing 3-4 in the North Central Conference dual season and third at the conference tournament.

"I like it a lot, it's fun being a Bulldog," Hansen said. "All of these kids, they knew me before I was ever coaching, I'm more Patrick than coach Hansen to them. He (coach Schimp) was a volunteer assistant when I was a freshman and sophomore. He was great and did a lot with us when I was little.

"Yeah, I've learned a lot from him last year, not only just to run everything and have everything organized..."

The Bulldogs are also coming off of competing in the Class 2A regional dual tournament where they made some noise.

In addition to those 10 starters, he has 17 more listed as newcomers with more than enough to fill out a varsity lineup and then some.

"We have some kids who may have to bump up a weight class," Hansen said. "I don't know if we have a whole lot of the upper-weight guys, it's hard to replace Dalton Chipp and Wyatt Folkerts and Emilio (Valenzuela) and (Josh) Kew and Trey (Barz), but I think we'll have a full lineup. Having 30 kids out is nice.

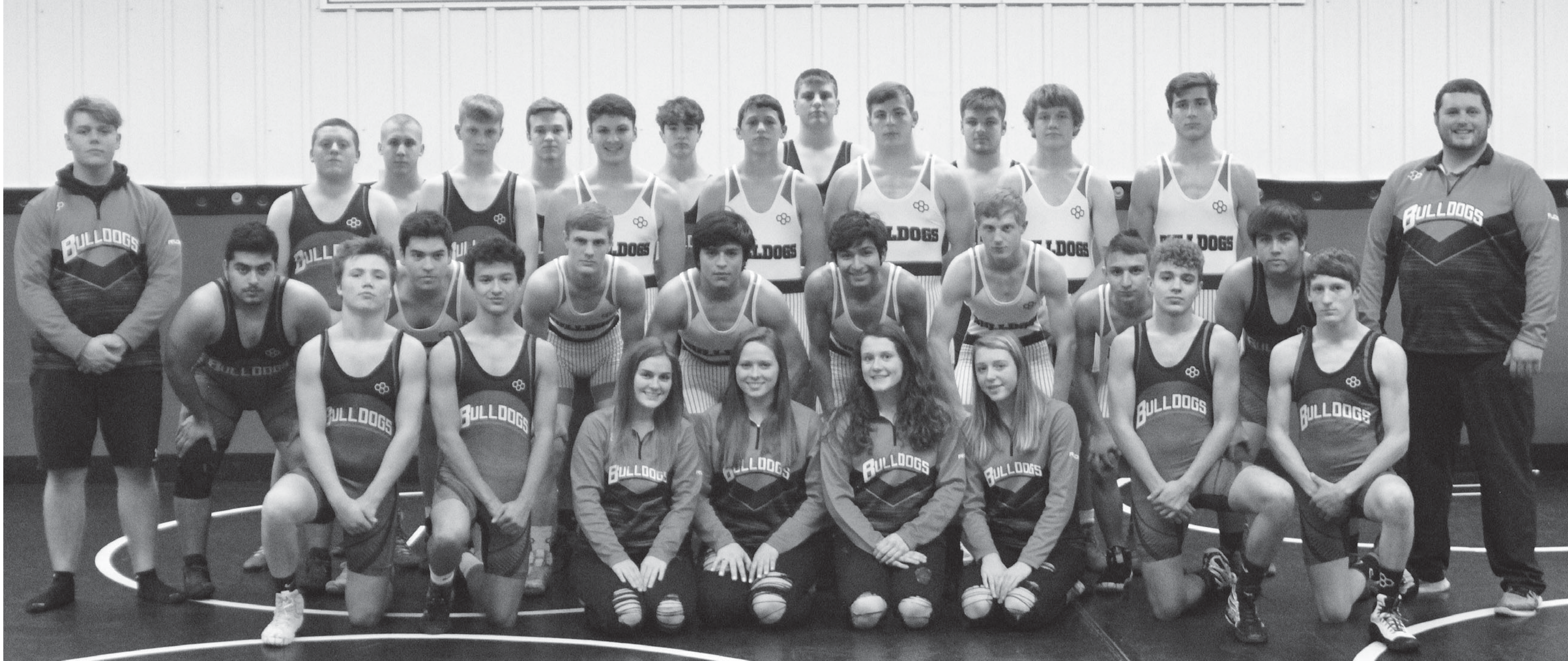
"A lot of kids are interested and only four of them are seniors, too."

His top returnee is sophomore 106-pounder Jakyb Kapp, who was the NCC runner-up and finished third at the district meet, just missing a state meet berth. Kapp opens the season ranked fifth by IAWrestle.com in Class 2A at his weight class.

Most of the lower weights also come back hungry for more after finishing well, including 113-pound sophomore Jack Showalter, who was third at the NCC and sectional meet as a freshman; North Central Conference champion Jaycob Martzahn, a senior 132-pounder, who was third at the sectional meet; and Carl Barkema, who placed fourth at both conference and districts.

"Our lower to middle weights will be tough again," Hansen said, "with a lot of experience."

Others returning are junior 145-pounder David Cornejo, who finished third in the NCC and district meet, and junior 126 or 132-pounder Tomas Cavazos, who was fourth at



The 2019-20 Bulldog wrestling team includes, front row, from left: Chase Spradlin, Jack Drier, statistician girls Taylor Collins, Kirsten Suntken, Addy Showalter, Emma Showalter, Zayden Johnstone, Andyn Showalter. Middle row: Conner Donaldson, Elias Cortez, Aleks Salinas, Jaycob Martzahn, David Cornejo, Tomas Cavazos, Jack Showalter, Jaykb Kapp, Tony Hernandez, Coach Patrick Hansen. Back row: Cole Freerks, Tristan Kurth, Carter Hobson, Elijah Acree, Bryan Flores, Kaden Eilderts, Carl Barkema, Isaac Heilskov, Logan Walker, Alex Koch, Braden Hansen and Tate Schmitt. Not pictured: Jace Snyder, Isaiah Kulow, Isaiah Montalvo, Jair Perez, assistant coach Logan Chipp and assistant coach Carter Barkema. KRISTI NIXON/HAMPTON CHRONICLE

conference; 195-pound senior Logan Walker, third at sectionals, as well as 170-pound junior Bryan Flores, who was third last year at both conference and sectionals.

Flores, however, missed most of the football season with a concussion. He has been cleared to practice, but is still waiting to get clearance for competition this Winter.

"He's going through workouts right now and we're hoping that he can come around," Hansen said. "He's still feeling the effects of it. Concussions aren't things to mess around with. He's hoping for after the first meet, but he was also hoping for after the first football game."

Vying for the 152-pound spot among returnees are soph-

omores Tate Schmitt and Braden Hansen. Coach Hansen had good things to say about both of them.

"(Tate) grew a lot over Summer (and) looked good in football," coach Hansen said. "(Braden) also (has) grown into his frame a lot more; could have a big year."

Listed among newcomers are seniors Aleks Salinas (170/182), Jace Snyder (285), juniors Elias Cortez (182), Tristan Kurth (145), Isaiah Montalvo (125/132), sophomores Alex Koch (220), Isaac Heilskov, Elijah Acree (170/182), Tony Hernandez (182/195), Cole Freerks (182/195), Zayden Johnstone (120) as well as freshmen Chase Spradlin (138/145), Kaden Eilderts (120/126), Isa-

iah Kulow (195/220), Jack Drier (126/132) and Jair Perez (195/220).

Coach Hansen noted that Koch wrestled really well at the team's camp during the Summer and that he could turn some heads this season.

Both Johnstone and Spradlin were AAU state qualifiers in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

The only thing that coach Hansen must do is replace his upper weights, which is easier said than done with both of the Bulldogs' state qualifiers coming from 195 and 220 a season ago lost to graduation.

"We will have to replace or upper weights from last

season," coach Hansen said, "and it will probably have to mean some kids wrestling up a weight class."

Both Martzahn and Kapp were the team leaders in falls a season ago at 21 and 20, respectively. Cornejo finished with a team-high 57 takedowns and earning the most near-fall points among the squad among those coming back are Martzahn (27), Barkema (26) and Flores (22).

Scoring bonus points will be one of the keys for the Bulldogs again this year.

"We were kind of known as a bonus point machine last year," coach Hansen said. "We have some great kids that really want to pin people. If we can stay healthy and rack up

some pins, it should be a successful season for the 'Dogs.'" Coach Hansen said that the conference is Clarion-Goldfield-Dows' to lose.


"The conference is kind of wide open this season," coach Hansen said. "Clarion won it last year, so they obviously are going to be a contender again. But, Iowa Falls, Clear Lake and Humboldt will all have some firepower back.

"I think we're going to be pretty tough...everybody is pretty good. Even our first meet against Algona, they always bring a fight. We hope to win it, we want to, that's the goal; we say that every day, but everybody has got to stay healthy and we'll have a good year."

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Schipper takes over AGWSR boys' basketball program

BY SCOTT BIERLE

For the first time in a long time, a new head coach will roam the coaches' box for the AGWSR boys' basketball team.

Ryley Schipper takes over the Cougars after Russ Banzhaf retired following last season.

Banzhaf coached boys' basketball at Ackley for 33 years – first as Ackley-Geneva and later AGWSR. He compiled a 423-310 record.

Schipper was a point guard on some of Banzhaf's best teams that included a state tournament appearance in 2005. He has been an assistant the past five seasons and a volunteer for three years before that. Along with basketball, Schipper is the head coach for boys' track and a football assistant.

"It is an honor to take over for Russ," said Schipper. "He ran a great program here and always did things the right way. It will be a challenge that I'm looking forward to, to follow in his footsteps."

Banzhaf left Schipper with a team that has high expectations. The Cougars return five letter winners and four of them were starters. The quartet are seniors Luke Starr, Tanner Weichers and Titan Opperman along with junior Jaden Penning. The fifth letter winner is junior Chase Harms.

"This is a good core to build around," said Schipper. "Starr and Weichers are two of our top three scorers from last season, while Penning gives us a true athletic point guard who is looking to get others involved and Opperman is a do-everything role player who will rebound, screen, defend and anything else that is needed to win."

Starr was second in scoring a year ago for the Cougars with 313 points for a 14.9 average and in three-point goals at 30 made while Weichers hit for 203 points for a 9.7 average. The pair were also among the rebound leaders with a



Members of the 2019-20 AGWSR boys' basketball team includes, front row, from left: Beau Ivey, Steven Doring, Brayden Miller, Chase Harms, Jaden Penning, Keaton Penning. Second row: George Van Hove, Tanner Lindamen, Carlson Ivey, Bradly Roder, Ben Macy, David Koop, Darren Veld. Back row: Jose Gonzales, Cade Rose, Dillon Barnes, Garrett Cooper, Luke Starr, Tanner Weichers, Titan Opperman, Riley Sicard and Daniel Stahl. Not pictured: Jefferey Pfaltzgraff. SCOTT BIERLE, MID-AMERICA PUBLISHING

team-high 120 for Starr and 106 for Weichers.

Penning posted team-bests with 68 assists and 37 steals to go with 89 points, Starr had 41 and 25, and Opperman 21-17 along with 89 rebounds.

Candidates battling for minutes are senior Riley Sicard, junior Ben Macy and sophomores David Stahl, David Koop and Darren Veld, according to Schipper.

"Depth could be one of our major concerns," said Schipper. "While we have guys that can fill in spots we don't have a lot of guys who have played a lot at the varsity level."

He also listed rebounding and three-point shooting things to work on.

"Rebounding is something we need to do a better job of this year," Schipper said. "We return our top two rebounders from last year, but we have to do this on a nightly basis and as a team. I also see our ability to shoot the three as a concern. Getting shots up at practice and shooting it with confidence will be something we have to really work on."

The Cougars ended last season 13-8 and tied for second in the NICL West Conference, going 8-3.

Schipper listed West Marshall and South Hardin the leading conference contenders with his Cougars a team to watch.

"If we can play as a team and defend as a team I don't see any reason that we again can't compete for a conference title," said Schipper. "I think the league is more balanced now than it has been in a long time so teams will have to show up each night to get wins."

Starr is a returning first-team all-conference cager, just one of three returnees. Weichers was honorable mention.

Schipper added, "One last thing will be the ability to play through adversity. Everything won't come easy, so if we are able to come together as a team and work through those times, we will have success no matter what's thrown at us."

Schipper's assistant is Jay Janssen, also a former Cougar player.

The Cougars tipped-off the season Tuesday (Dec. 3) at Hampton. AGWSR then opens conference play with BCLUW at Ackley Friday, Dec. 6.

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Cougars have the pieces to be competitive

BY SCOTT BIERLE

The pieces to the puzzle stand on the practice floor. Now it is the job of AGWSR girls' basketball head coach Laurie Gann to fit it all together.

Six of the seven girls in the Cougars' rotation from last season return, but for a second straight year Gann will look to fill the hole of an all-state performer.

"We believe we have the pieces," said Gann, "it is just mix and matching them to be successful.

"Filling that scoring role is the number one question after losing Mandy (Willems) and Aubrie (Fisher) the past two seasons."

Fisher graduated this past season and Willems two years ago. Both were the team's scoring leaders, deep ball threats and court generals.

The list of returnees are seniors Rachel Sicard, Natalie Lippert and Whitanie Nederhoff along with juniors Alyssa Hames and MaKenna Kuper as well as sophomore Gracie Finger. Junior Morgan Bakker is also expected to see time. Hames returns the top totals as the lefty nearly averaged a double-double last season with outputs of 324 points and 203 rebounds for averages of 11.7 points and 9.7 rebounds. Sicard and Kuper added triple-digits in scoring with 195 points and 117 for averages of 9.3 and 5.6, respectively. Sicard collected 175 rebounds for an 8.3 clip. Kuper handed out a team-high 66 assists and picked 55 steals last season while Hames was at 45 and 41 each.

Hames, who had 10 double-doubles a year ago, was a second-team all-conference and all-district cager last winter. Sicard was honorable mention all-conference.

"The offense may look a little different this season," said Gann. "We are looking at running things more through the post and not shooting as many threes. That is not saying we will not take the three when it is there, we are just trying to work to our strengths."

Fisher averaged more than 15 points per game last season and accounted for 71 of the team's 85 three-balls.



Members of the 2019-20 AGWSR girls' basketball team includes, front row, from left: Lara Otteranger, Natalie Lippert, Whitanie Nederhoff, Karina Mele, Rachel Sicard. Second row: Chaylie Lippert, Kate Pfaltzgraff, Gracie Finger, Morgan Bakker, Alyssa Hames, MaKenna Kuper, Taylor Kruger, Lexi Johnson. Back row: Kylie Willems, Sydney Lyman, Kienzle Hoodjer, Brianna Kruger, Avery Lafrenz, Brynn Smith, Chloe Roberts and Kylie Sillman. Not pictured: Jea Seaburg, Jenna Shahan and Shaylee Hofmeister. SCOTT BIERLE, MID-AMERICA PUBLISHING

The Cougars registered records of 13-8 overall and 6-5 in the North Iowa Cedar League West Conference – good for fourth. Gann reached a pair of milestones last season with her 100th career win at AGWSR and overall 400th victory.

"The first part of the season may be a roller coaster with everyone figuring out their roles," said Gann, "but I feel this team could be playing some very good basketball by the end of the season."

The AGWSR girls opened the season ranked No. 15 in Class 1A.

Gann added, "I do know these girls really enjoy basketball and will compete hard every time they step on the floor."

The AGWSR girls played at Hampton Tuesday (Dec. 3) and open the conference campaign Friday, Dec. 6 against BCLUW in Ackley.

The Cougars played earlier games with Meskwaki (Nov. 25) and West Fork (Dec. 2).

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Transfers to bolster West Fork wrestling

BY KRISTI NIXON

A pair of transfers from both Rockford and Belmont-Klemme will more than certainly help the West Fork wrestling team in 2019-20.

Particularly, the brother duo from Rockford, junior Kaden Petersen and Kale Petersen, a freshman, will give the Warhawks a boost.

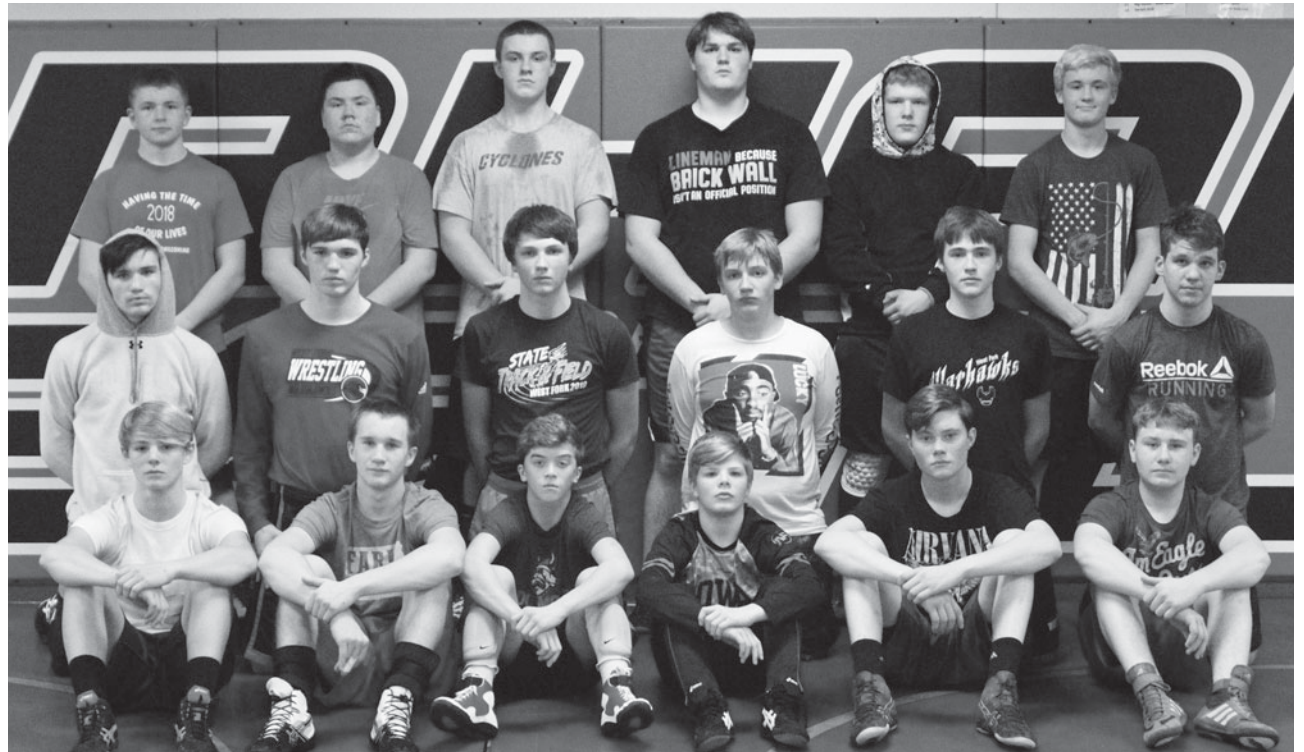
Both won't be available to compete at first because of the high school transfer rule and also the fact that the younger of the two is nursing a knee injury, but after the Christmas break, each will be excellent additions for the Warhawks.

"We've gained a few more from last year," head coach Jared Arbegast said. "We've got a couple of kids from Rockford, transferred in from the district, same with a couple from Belmont, so that helps our numbers and helps our wrestlers, as well. That's kind of nice to have a few more kids to fill out the lineup. Some of them won't be able to wrestle right away because of the transfer rule, that's kind of frustrating, but it's the way it goes.

"It's nice to have numbers, it's nice to have all of the kids I had last year coming back. They've had one year of varsity experience, so we'll be able to get back after it and hopefully make some strides and get better at the sport of wrestling, as well."

According to IAWrestle.com, Kaden Petersen was in the pre-season rankings, ninth at 106. However, the group wasn't aware of the transfer and still had him listed at Rockford. Coach Arbegast said that he more than likely won't be wrestling at 106 pounds, either. Rather, Kale Petersen should fill that spot when he is healthy and eligible.

"Kaden Petersen will be at a lighter weight somewhere, don't know where yet, but should be very competitive," coach Arbegast said. "His little brother, Kale, has an injury, is out right now, he'll be competitive when he gets back on the mat, as well. It should be a fun year with all the kids we've got coming back from last year. We can get in the room and not have to start right from the basics. We can get



The 2019-20 West Fork wrestling team includes, front row, from left: Kaden Petersen, Max Heimbuch, Rafe Arbegast, Kale Petersen, Tjaden Dixon, Christian Dixon. Middle row: Devon Geiger, Ki Janssen, Dakota Lau, David Sturges, Derrick Lau, Sam Jestina. Back row: Carson Nuehring, Jair Ramirez, Cannon Craighton, Levi Janssen, Tristan Halfpop and Trent Despenas. Not pictured: Sebastian Martinez. KRISTI NIXON/HAMPTON CHRONICLE

in the bigger, better, more technique stuff and get in shape.

"Devon Geiger and Tristan Halfpop, from Belmont, they played football for us, as well. Those two kids, one moved and the other open enrolled, Tristan, will have to sit out a little bit."

Geiger was 11-5 a year ago as a 132-pounder for B-K and has a career record of 19-17. He is the only senior on the roster.

"I like to think Devon Geiger has a lot of potential, he shows up and finds a weight class that works, he's been wrestling at Belmont I think since he was a freshman, he's got some talent," coach Arbegast said. "All of my sophomores, the other (Ki) Janssen, (Carson) Nuehring, (Max) Heimbuch, all of them from the beginning to the end of last year made big jumps. I don't know if they'll set the world on fire, but who knows? Everybody has potential if they put the work in."

West Fork has its most successful wrestler from a season ago, junior heavyweight Levi Janssen, coming back after a 34-15 record as a sophomore.

"My goal for the year is to be a little bit more competitive," coach Arbegast said. "We've got the big guy, Levi Janssen, he'll be a junior. We've got some high expectations for him and I think he has some for himself, as well."

Janssen will have plenty of competition at his weight class, however, both in the Top of Iowa Conference and the potential sectional and district with quality heavyweights at West Hancock and North Butler, to name a few.

"That one (North Butler's) Chet Buss, ranked fourth) and (West Hancock's) Chandler Redenius came out No. 1," coach Arbegast said. "Our conference will be pretty loaded

at heavyweight. The North Union kid is not bad and Forest City, their heavyweight wasn't too bad last year and came on toward the end of the season. Heavyweight is actually a pretty big class again this year. It's heavyweight. I say he has a shot at some real big things. It's going to be tough, a dogfight, but that's a good thing."

Also, in limited action a year ago, junior Trent Despenas recorded a 5-1 record and is coming off a state cross country appearance.

In addition to the others returning, coach Arbegast has a smattering of other newcomers, including Rafe Arbegast, Christian Dixon and Derrick Lau.

"We've also got my little guy, he'll be a small one, too, Rafe," coach Arbegast said. "He's going to be in with us, Christian Dixon, another Lau (Derrick). We've got a pretty good group of kids coming back. Hoping they'll be a little more competitive than last year and do some good things."

"Hopefully, with more kids it will be a little bit more fun, you can be more competitive. That's the hope for this year because we're still going to be really young."

All told, the Warhawks have 12 freshmen and sophomores among the potential 18 or 19 on the roster.

"One of my biggest things is it's not just about wrestling, it's about life, too," Coach Arbegast said. "If they are accountable and hold themselves responsible for what they want to do, with a work ethic to get better, we have a shot of doing some good things. I don't know if we'll be conference champions or anything like that, but we'll ruffle some feathers and make things shaken up a little bit, so that will be fun."

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State medalists look to lead

BY SCOTT BIERLE

A pair of state medalists headline the AGWSR wrestling team's practice room this winter. Senior Ali Gerbracht and junior Trey Lashbrook own the hardware and will look to lead the up-and-coming Cougars.

Gerbracht is a defending state champion and Lashbrook a two-time state medal winner. Gerbracht captured a gold medal at the inaugural Iowa Girls' Wrestling State Tournament while Lashbrook earned the bronze medal at the Iowa High School Wrestling Tournament after placing seventh as a freshman.

"Trey and Ali are hard workers that have put in the time and been rewarded," said AGWSR head coach Chad Gerbracht. "They both have had success, but still have goals out there."

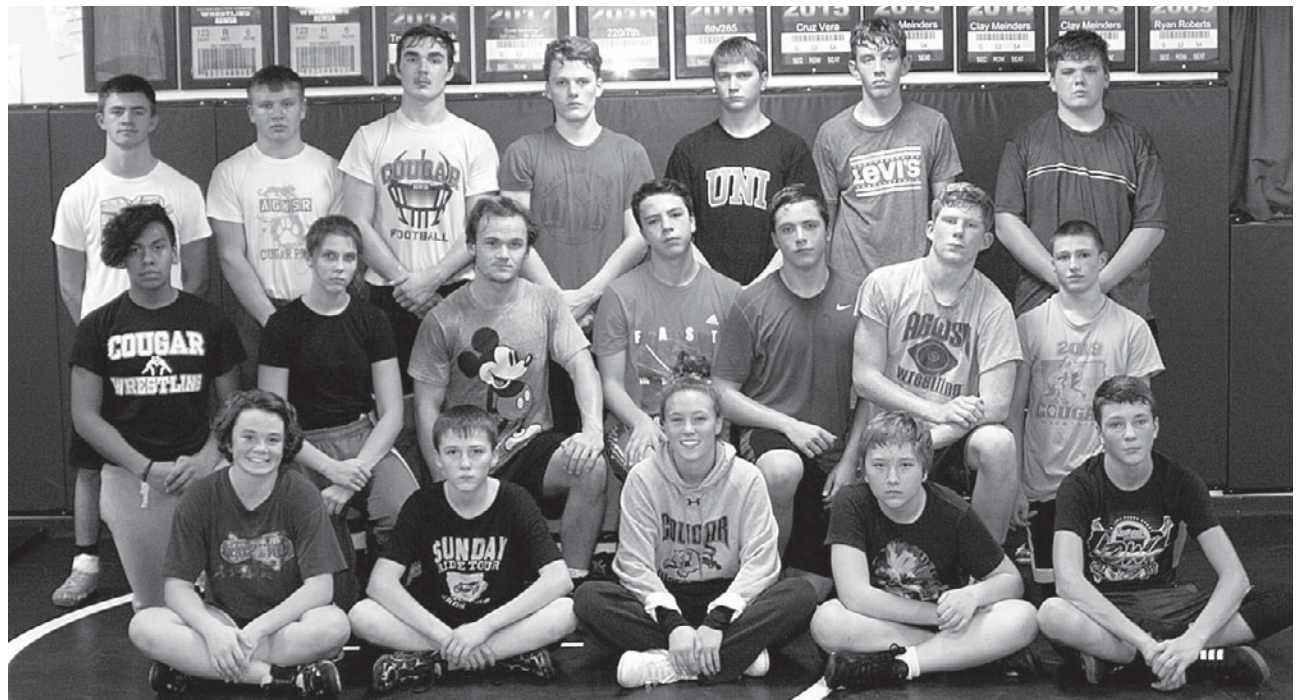
Lashbrook booked an impressive 44-3 win-loss record a year ago and looks to again man the 120-pound weight. Gerbracht registered a 35-16 record and plans to wrestle again at 106. Both are closing in on the 100-win milestone as Lashbrook stands 85-10 and Gerbracht, 83-39.

"Anytime you can put a couple state medalists in the wrestling room it increases the intensity and work ethic," said Gerbracht. "Trey and Ali are showing good leadership."

Both open the season state-ranked with Lashbrook listed No. 3 at 120 in Class 1A and Gerbracht No. 10 at 106.

AGWSR, who only a few years ago struggled to reach double-digits in team numbers, now stands at a little more than 20 thanks in part to a dozen sophomores and freshmen.

"This is great to have a full room," said a smiling Ger-



Members of the 2019-20 AGWSR wrestling team includes, front row, from left: Trinity Rodger, Colton Richtsmeier, Ali Gerbracht, Arden DeLong, Bo Gerbracht. Second row: Alex Villalobos, Taryn Day, Daniel Alahrisson, Ben Puente, Jared Granzow, Eli Brandt, Lane Abbas. Back row: Trey Lashbrook, Brody Roder, Jacob Haley, Robert Meinders, Cale Culver, Griffin Eekhoff and Tate Miller. Not pictured Zach Johnson and Jayden Bowles. SCOTT BIERLE, MID-AMERICA PUBLISHING

bracht. "This brings good competition to the practices and gives us the opportunity to win duals. We should fill the lineup with probably one or two openings. We are a young team so we will be looking for growth throughout the season."

Six letter winners return as Gerbracht and senior Brody Roder are three-timers, Lashbrook and junior Zach Johnson are two-timers along with one letter for junior Jacob Haley and sophomore Cale Culver. Roder posted a 26-17 mark a year ago and Johnson was 22-21.

Lashbrook, Gerbracht, Roder and Johnson are returning district qualifiers. Lashbrook placed first at both sectionals and districts while the other three finished fourth at district. Johnson will look to wrestle 132, Culver 160, Roder 170 and Haley 182.

"Brody continues to get better, now we need to work on being more consistent," said coach Gerbracht. "Johnson is coming off back-to-back 20-win seasons. I am looking for good things from them."

Possible candidates to round out the lineup are sophomore Lane Abbas or freshman Bo Gerbracht at 113-pounds, sophomore Jayden Bowles at 120, Trinity Rodger or Taryn Day at 138, senior Robert Meinders 145, freshmen Ben

Puente or Eli Brandt at 152, senior Daniel Alarihsson or freshman Jared Granzow at 182 and Tate Miller 285. The only weight class that remains open is 220.

The Cougars ended with a 5-15 dual record last season. A. Gerbracht is just one of three girls in the wrestling room, joined by Rodger and Day.

"I don't look at it as a gender thing," said Ali Gerbracht, "we are all teammates out here."

She added, "My first goal is to make 106 (pounds) and then to win again at girls state, but my overall goal to qualify for the (boys') state tournament."

Gerbracht, who started wrestling in pre-K, is still figuring out if college wrestling is in her future. "I have talked to people," she said, "but I'm still deciding on future plans."

The Iowa Girls' State Wrestling Tournament will be a two-day meet Friday and Saturday, Jan 24-25 at Waverly.

The Cougars open the season Thursday (Dec. 5) with a double-dual against West Marshall and West Marshall at LeGrand.

AGWSR's home debut comes Dec. 12 against Waterloo Columbus and North Tama. The Cougar Invitational is set for Saturday, Jan. 21.

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