

SPRING SPORTS PREVIEW

2024



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the Steele County Times



MOST

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Steele Sports
JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

As fans prepare for T-shirt and shorts weather, local athletes in Steele County are gearing up for their final season of the school year with baseball, softball, golf, and track and field season entering the fold as the weather warms up. When teams take the diamond, track, and courses, here's who to watch out for in 2024.

2024 Gopher athletes to watch

BASEBALL

Gopher Conference baseball has been a gauntlet the past few years, and it seems nothing will change this season. NRHEG has been the county's winningest program over the past few seasons and brings back a host of talent. The Panthers – led by first-year head coach Shawn Larson – will look to Alden Dobberstein, Carter Martens, Jace Ihrke and Jared Lee for leadership this season. Dobberstein will slot in at both second base and shortstop while also providing a big arm at pitcher.

Ihrke will join Dobberstein as a member of the starting battery at catcher, with Lee rotating between first base and the outfield, and Martens manning the hot corner at third base. Blooming Prairie will look to build off of a middling 2023 season and will benefit from a near-identical roster this spring. Sophomore Carsten Ingvalson was a breakout player for the Awesome Blossoms as a freshman and led the team in almost all major offensive categories en route to being an all-conference selection. Joining him as returning impact players are Alex

Lea, Brady Kittelson, Zach Hein, Gabe Staloch, Lance Lembke and Bo Zwiener. Medford will look to rely on some upperclassmen arms in Logan Maas and Charlie Wendt, with Landon Seiler back to lead the defense at the shortstop position.

SOFTBALL

Steele County softball was a force to be reckoned with in 2023 and should be equally as stacked in 2024. Blooming Prairie benefits from the return of varsity staples Macy Lembke (shortstop), Shawntee Snyder (third base), Rachel Winzenburg (second base), Lily Schammel (first base) and Layla Lembke (catcher.) NRHEG will look to some superb siblings in order to build on their momentum from previous seasons. Leading the way for the Panthers will be twins Faith and Preslie Nielsen and sisters Izzy and Adalyn Stadheim. Faith Nielsen will likely be the team's go-to pitcher, with Adalyn Stadheim behind the plate, meanwhile, Preslie Nielsen will play infield



and Izzy Stadheim will roam the outfield. Jade Laue and outfielder Aleah Vogt. Medford will also be deep with plenty of talent as it returns plenty of multiple-year letter winners. Possibly the team's most vital returner is Mackenzie Velishek, who has proven to be the team's ace from the circle for the past four seasons. Joining Velishek as impact players are infielders Hailey Chambers, Ava Clark and Tessa Underdahl, along with catcher

TRACK & FIELD

All eyes in Blooming Prairie will be on senior high and triple jumper Annaka Forsberg this season as she looks to cap her historic Awesome Blossoms career with a third consecutive state title in the high jump event and possibly her first title in the triple jump. Following closely in See **ATHLETES** on 12 ►





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BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Bloomington baseball hopes to right its course in 2024 after a rough 2023 season that saw the team finish 4-13 overall and take eighth place in the Gopher Conference.

The Awesome Blossoms knew last season was going to be an uphill battle with a lack of varsity experience and a young core; however, the mindset for this spring has already shifted.

“With bringing back the majority of our lineup from last season, I expect us to take another step forward,” said Coach Matt Kittelson. “Our goal is always to be a better team than we were the day before so that we are playing our best baseball at the end of the season.”

Bloomington will benefit from the return of key athletes such as Carsten Ingvallson, Alex Lea, Brady Kittelson, Zach Hein, Gabe Staloch, Lance Lembke, Cale Braaten, Bo Zwiener and Dylan Anderson.

While the Blossoms aren’t a senior-heavy team, with only three on the roster, the team’s young core is sure to make a leap

BP baseball is ready to rebound



this season. Ingvallson is the team’s most decorated athlete from 2023 coming off an all-conference selection and can play myriad positions including catcher, infield, and pitcher. Hein slots in as the team’s preferred ace in his senior season after leading in most pitching categories last season, while Zwiener projects to re-take his role at catcher. Lea and Kittelson will be a one-two punch of steady bats in the lineup and will bring speed to the base paths after shining on the football field in the fall and continuing their athletic dominance in wrestling and basketball in the winter. Underclassmen standouts Lembke and Staloch will be used in the infield and will have roles on the mound as well. According to Coach Kittelson, Bloomington should return more players than many other teams in the conference, which bodes well for the team’s chances to push for a better record this year. Bloomington’s next matchup comes on the road against Maple River on Thursday, April 11, at 5 p.m.

Bloomington Baseball Schedule 2024

April 11	at Maple River	5 p.m.	May 2	vs. United South Central	4:30 p.m.
April 15	at Kingsland	4:30 p.m.	May 6	at Goodhue	4:30 p.m.
April 18	vs. Medford	4:30 p.m.	May 7	at Medford	4:30 p.m.
April 19	vs. Mankato Loyola	4:30 p.m.	May 9	vs. Waseca	5 p.m.
April 22	at NRHEG	4:30 p.m.	May 11	at Austin Marcussen Park	10 a.m.
April 25	vs. Randolph	5 p.m.	May 13 (invitational)		
April 26	vs. Southland	5 p.m.	May 13	vs. WEM	4:30 p.m.
April 29	at Triton	4:30 p.m.	May 14	vs. Hayfield	5 p.m.
April 30	vs. Tri-City United	5 p.m.	May 17	at United South Central	5 p.m.



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Blossoms hope experience pays dividends

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Bloomington softball has competed at the top of the Gopher Conference for the past few seasons, and fans should expect nothing less from their Awesome Blossoms this spring with plenty of talent returning to the team.

The Awesome Blossoms are chock-full of senior leadership and some big bats in the lineup, but one side of the ball, in particular, will make the difference for head coach Cam Rutledge's squad.

"Pitching and consistent defense will be the key to our success this season. We should be a solid offensive team but will need to throw strikes and make plays in the field. We return seven starters from last year's team, so that experience should help us throughout the year," said Rutledge.

Bloomington will be without ace Haven Carlson, who graduated last year. That leaves questions about who will step into the circle as the team's main arm.

Depth charts provided by the team list senior returner and multi-year varsity standout Macy Lembke as both a shortstop and pitcher – foreshadowing a possible new role for the squad's most seasoned player.

Lembke's presence at shortstop and at the top of the Awesome Blossoms' lineup will surely be key to the team's success, while pitching will likely be in relief situations.

Bloomington's lone other athlete listed as a pitcher is junior Mia Johnson.

Johnson's ability to find the strike zone will be pivotal as she gains varsity experience, but thankfully for her, she will have a strong Bloomington.

See BLOSSOMS on 12 ►



Bloomington Softball Schedule 2024

April 11	vs. Maple River	4:30 p.m.	April 30	vs. Triton	4:30 p.m.
April 12	at NRHEG	4:30 p.m.	May 2	at United South Central	4:30 p.m.
April 15	at GMLOK	4:30 p.m.	May 6	vs. Goodhue	4:30 p.m.
April 18	at Medford	4:30 p.m.	May 7	vs. St. Clair-Loyola	4:30 p.m.
April 22	vs. NRHEG	4:30 p.m.	May 9	vs. Bethlehem Academy	4:30 p.m.
April 25	at Randolph	4:30 p.m.	May 11	at Rose Creek	11 a.m.
April 26	at Caswell Park (Multiple Schools)	5 p.m.	May 13	at WEM	4:30 p.m.
April 27	at Caswell Park (Multiple Schools)	TBD	May 14	at Hayfield	4:30 p.m.
			May 17	vs. Lyle-Pacelli	4:30 p.m.



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Forsberg, Hein highlight BP's top names

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Blooming Prairie has become somewhat of a high-jump hotbed in the state with two-time state champion Annaka Forsberg and new Awesome Blossoms school record

holder Gabe Hein on the roster.
The two seniors will combine to be Blooming Prairie's best chance at individual titles, as Forsberg aims for her third title and Hein hopes to make state after just joining track for
See **FORSBERG** on 12 ►

Blooming Prairie Track & Field Schedule 2024

April 12	at Triton	4:30 p.m.	May 7	at Triton	1 p.m.
April 16	at Medford	4:30 p.m.	(True Team)		
April 18	at Hayfield	4:30 p.m.	May 11	at Maple River	10 a.m.
April 22	Home	4:30 p.m.	(Conference)		
April 25	at Grand Meadow	4:30 p.m.	May 17	at Triton	4:30 p.m.
May 2	at Medford	4:30 p.m.			



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BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Bloomington boys' and girls' golf competed at the top of the Gopher Conference last year but finished fourth and third, respectively, and faced troubles in a loaded Section 2AA tournament.

This season, the Awesome Blossoms will hope to benefit from a strong core of returning athletes

BP aiming high by shooting low

who will make the transition back to Class A.

“Our conference will have some very good boys’ golfers returning from last year, and we should be able to compete even with our team being without many upper-

See BP AIMING on 12 ►

Bloomington Boys' & Girls' Golf Schedule 2024

April 13	at Oaks Golf Club (Both)	9 a.m.
April 18	at Bloomington Country Club (Both)	4:30 p.m.
April 20	at Bloomington Country Club (Boys)	10 a.m.
April 22	at Zumbrota Golf Club (Both)	10 a.m.
April 25	at Dodge Country Club (Both)	4:30 p.m.
May 2	at The Oaks Golf Course (Both)	4:30 p.m.
May 9	at Mankato North Links Golf Course (Both)	10 a.m.
May 13	at Austin Country Club (Both)	10 a.m.
May 20	at Waseca Lakeside Country Club (Both)	12 p.m.
May 23	at Waseca Lakeside Country Club (Conference)	10 a.m.





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Young Tigers ready for a learning curve

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Medford baseball finished last season a frustrating 2-14 overall, and despite returning some key athletes, the Tigers will face similar challenges to win games in 2024.

The most glaring adversity that the Tigers will face is the team's makeup, which consists of one senior (Charlie Wendt) and one junior (Logan Maas), with the rest of the team consisting of six sophomores, nine freshmen, and

seven eighth-graders. "We have an extremely young team, the youngest I've ever had, and our goal is to continue to develop," said Coach Joe Melles. "We have a lot of talented players, but not a lot of varsity experience, and we want to keep them as the building blocks for a very successful team in the near future."

Medford's depth took a major hit after the team lost seven seniors to graduation last year.

Medford will be without long-time catcher Tate Hermes and reliable arm

Casey Chambers to highlight some of the team's biggest losses.

However, the team will still have plenty of athletes in key positions ready to fill holes in the lineup.

"Our pitching staff will be led by two upperclassmen, Logan Maas and Charlie Wendt. They return the bulk of our innings from last year. Also, we are excited to have Landon Seiler back to be our leader at shortstop and hitting near the top of our order. These three are all very athletic and will

be huge contributors for us this year," said Melles.

The Tigers' future with such a young lineup is bright as well.

"We have two new outfielders this year that are

freshmen: James Wegner and Justin Limon. They are very athletic and dynamic at the plate, and they will be on the bases a lot as hitters. We will also have a new catcher Kyle Vatsaas who will be

new to the lineup but we expect great things for him as a leader," said Melles.

Medford's next game will be at home against Cleveland on Thursday, April 11, at 4:30 p.m.

Medford Baseball Schedule 2024

April 11	vs. Cleveland	4:30 p.m.	May 2	at Maple River	4:30 p.m.
April 12	at Randolph	4:30 p.m.	May 3	vs. Randolph	4:30 p.m.
April 15	at Houston	5 p.m.	May 6	vs. United South Central	5 p.m.
April 16	vs. Goodhue	5 p.m.			
April 18	at Blooming Prairie	4:30 p.m.	May 7	vs. Blooming Prairie	5 p.m.
April 23	vs. Hayfield	4:30 p.m.	May 9	at WEM	4:30 p.m.
April 25	at JWP	4:30 p.m.	May 13	vs. NRHEG	4:30 p.m.
April 29	vs. Kenyon-Wanamingo	4:30 p.m.	May 20	vs. Martin Luther-GHEC Truman	5 p.m.

Good Luck on your Sports Seasons!

Medford Teacher's Union

GOOD LUCK TO ALL OUR TIGER TEAMS!

THE MEDFORD SCHOOL IS PROUD OF YOU!

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Medford softball had an up-and-down season in 2023, but the Tigers are back to being an upper-classmen-heavy team with plenty of experience to put up a fight for the Gopher Conference title.

The Tigers will benefit from five returners in the lineup, spearheaded by ace Mackenzie Velishek, who figures to be the team's everyday arm in the circle.

"Goals for this season are to improve on last year's successes and address the slots vacated by 2023 graduates," Coach Jon Velishek said. "Of course, if you ask the captains, there is always the goal of getting to state. But this year is focused on growth and improvement and most importantly having fun as a team. We have some holes to fill in the lineup and on defense, but I think with the experience we have we can be very competitive in the conference. Our section is usually pretty stacked, so our work is definitely cut out for us there."

Other key returners include infielders Jade Laue and Ava Clark, and outfielders Aleah Vogt and Hailey Chambers.

The team will also get back Tessa Underdahl and Kenadie Rodriguez after both athletes were

Tigers gearing up for title push



inactive last season.

Both figure to slot into holes left in the infield.

"Ava Clark will be a top contributor to the team. Tessa Underdahl and Kenadie Rodriguez had last year off and will also be key contributors to the overall dynamic of the team. All three return with their experience and leadership. Underclassmen who weren't a part of the varsity team last year will also be key contributors as they fill

holes vacated by the 2023 graduates," said Velishek.

Medford finished last season 6-13 overall but has hopes that 2024 could be the year the Tigers get over the hump and compete for the top spots in the conference.

"If we peak towards the end of the season, we could pull some surprises," said Velishek.

Medford's next game will be on the road against Bethlehem Academy on Thursday, April 11, at 4:30 p.m.

Medford Softball Schedule 2024

April 11	at Bethlehem Academy	4:30 p.m.	May 2	vs. Maple River	4:30 p.m.
April 15	vs. Rochester Lourdes	5 p.m.	May 6	vs. Martin Luther-GHEC	4:30 p.m.
April 18	vs. Blooming Prairie	4:30 p.m.	May 7	vs. Blue Earth Area	5 p.m.
April 20	at Pine Island (triangular)	9 a.m.	May 11	at Triton	12 p.m.
April 23	at Hayfield	4:30 p.m.	May 13	at NRHEG	4:30 p.m.
April 25	vs. JWP	4:30 p.m.	May 14	at United South Central	4:30 p.m.
April 26	vs. WEM	4:30 p.m.	May 16	vs. Randolph	4:30 p.m.
April 29	at Kenyon-Wanamingo	4:30 p.m.			



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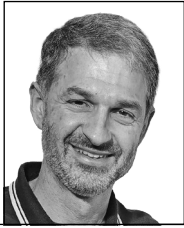
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Owatonna Live SPORTS WRAP

ROY KOENIG

Another set of first-time happenings is blossoming at new Owatonna High School for spring sports. Softball moves to campus and an artificial field. Lacrosse teams will also adjust to the turf on Federated Field.

SOFTBALL

Softball returns many proven players, including college-bound second baseman Izzy Radel and pitcher Kennedy Hodgman. Keep your eye on Taya Selbrade who “will be taking over the primary catcher position,” according to coach Jeremy Moran. Lilly Trager is coming off injury and is “expected to make an impact in the pitching circle and with her bat.”

LACROSSE

Girls lacrosse brings back five of their top six scorers with Madie McGinn (44G-12A), Ellery Black (11G-16A), Hallie Oldefendt (5G-6A), Becca Nielsen (7G-2A), and Lauren Busho (7G-1A). Goalie Nora Marshall (11-4) returns after backstopping the Huskies to a Big Nine Conference title.

For boys lacrosse, head coach Scott Seykora says,

“We return a strong core of players that have a lot of varsity experience.”

Ethan Fitch and Caleb Hullopeter were selected for the pre-season Captain's Cup last month. Fitch recently committed to Division I North Dakota State University. Jack Strom (35G-13A) led the scoring last year.

BOYS TENNIS

Boys tennis returns roughly half of their lineup. Singles players Thomas Herzog, Thomas

Oien, and Joe Zeman, and doubles players Finn Loveless, Leyton Williams and Emmett Krueger take to the new courts at the high school. Lights are available for matches that last through dusk.

BASEBALL

Huskies' baseball will continue to play varsity games at Dartts Park. Team MVP Mitch Seykora is back. An experienced pitching corps sends Carson Olson (28.2 innings pitched in 2023), Michael

Reinardy (17.2), Kam Smith (14.2) and Tanner Smith (11.1) to the mound.

On Owatonna Live's “Beyond the Game”, head coach Tate Cummins said there is a great commitment to the game. “It's cool and special that you find something that you're truly that passionate about. We put a lot of time into it, the coaching staff that I have. I think the kids have done a great job. We have a lot of players that are very engaged and eager to play.”

See **ATHLETES** on 15 ►





Medford looking to build on successful 2023

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

The 2023 season was full of strong performances, school records and even some state placements for the Medford Tigers, a trio of accolades that the Tigers will want to recreate in 2024.

According to Coach Kevin Werk, the Tigers' lineup looks poised for a potential breakout in 2024.

The biggest names returning for the two teams

will be Jackie Cole and Jesse Ortiz.

Cole was a two-event state qualifier in 2023, placing fifth in both the long jump and 200-meter dash on her way to securing Gopher Conference

Female Track Athlete of the Year honors.

Medford's long-time key contributor is signed to compete for the University of St. Thomas next season and will be asked to take on a full

schedule this spring to aid a girls' team that Werk believes could be special.

"Our girls' teams will be more complete than our boys. I am hoping to compete for one of the top

spots in the conference," said Werk.

Joining Cole back in the lineup are Isabel Miller (discus), Lydia Heiderscheidt (pole vault), Amelia Fitzgerald (discus) and Avery Arndt

(3,200-meter race.)

Medford's boys' team will be led by Ortiz, who is coming off a 10th-place finish in the 200-meter dash at state last season.

Ortiz will be joined by standouts Hunter Perdue (shot and discus) and Riley Babcock (mid-distance runner.)

According to Werk, the boys' team will potentially face some adversity depth-wise throughout the course of the season.

"Our varsity numbers

See **MEDFORD** on 12 ►

Medford Boys' & Girls' Track & Field Schedule 2024

April 12	at Triton	4:30 p.m.	May 7	at Triton (true team)	1 p.m.
April 16	Home Meet	4:30 p.m.	May 11	at Maple River (conference meet)	10 a.m.
April 22	at Blooming Prairie	4:30 p.m.			
April 25	at Byron (invitational)	4:30 p.m.	May 14	at Pine Island (invitational)	4 p.m.
May 2	Home Meet	4:30 p.m.			



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2024 Gopher athletes to watch

◀ **ATHLETES** from 3
Forsberg’s footsteps is teammate Gabe Hein, who already owns the school record in the event with a jump of six feet, two inches in the team’s first meet of the season, after only beginning to high jump last year.

On the track, Blooming Prairie head coach Alli Schmidt advises fans to look out for eighth-grader Bella Romeo as a potential standout.

Medford track and field had a stellar 2023 and saw multiple individuals break school records and compete at the state meet.

Jackie Cole and Jesse Ortiz are the local high-flyers and trail-blazers and will look to both shatter their 200-meter dash records along with Cole hoping to earn her first state title in the long jump.

NRHEG will have three state participants back in 2024 as well with Will Tuttle, Evelyn Nydegger and Quinn VanMaldeghem back on the roster.

Tuttle and Nydegger are hurdles specialists, both qualifying in the 100- and 300-meter hurdle events at the state meet.

Meanwhile, Quinn VanMaldeghem will handle the longer distance after qualifying for the 800-meter race last year.

GOLF

Blooming Prairie golf will turn to Brady and Colby Johnson as leaders of its boys’ team after strong off-season showings, while Caitlyn Stangl, Ella Farr and Aubry Alwes all return as fourth-year starters.

NRHEG will have a small contingency of returning letter winners in Carter Schlaak, Shan Hansen and Tyler Kress for the boys, and just Meela Budach for the girls’ team.

Forsberg, Hein highlight BP’s top names

◀ **FORSBERG** from 6
the first-time last season.

Blooming Prairie’s dynamic duo will lead boys’ and girls’ squads who are deep in numbers for a Class A school.

In total, the Awesome Blossoms will dress 54 athletes with 27 letter winners, something that excites fifth-year head coach Alli Schmidt.

“We have 13 dedicated and hardworking seniors who are great role models for the younger athletes,” Schmidt said.

“Our goal is to keep bettering ourselves and have those returners continue onto sections and placing even higher,” she added.

Schmidt said, “We would love for Annaka to return to state for her fourth year, and to bring some teammates along to compete there as well. We have a good number of athletes out for the size of Blooming Prairie and will remain competitive. This year, we have a larger number who are new to the sport, and it will take time to find which events work best for everyone. We have some standout events that we hope to keep earning points in to raise our team score.”

The biggest question mark for Blooming Prairie will be its relays.

“We graduated some key athletes on our relays so we are looking for those who are going to be able to fill those roles,” said Schmidt.

According to Schmidt, other names to watch will be senior Kolby Vigeland and eighth-grader Bella Romeo.

“Kolby Vigeland is another returning senior who just jumped his personal best pole vault height from last year at our first, indoor meet. Bella Romeo is an eighth-grader who joined our varsity girls at the end of last year. Our girls’ numbers are a little lower than our boys’ team, and we will be looking for her to fill some spots on our varsity roster. We have some additions, younger and older, who haven’t had an opportunity to compete yet, but we’re excited to see what they can do,” said Schmidt.

Blooming Prairie’s next meet will be held at Triton High School on Friday, April 12 at 4:30 p.m.

BP aiming high by shooting low

◀ **BP AIMING** from 7
classmen,” said Coach Andrew Hardecopf. “We still have a lot of experience and are hoping to compete for the conference title. Another goal for the year is to be a top 2-3 team in the section as we move back into section 1A. For the girls, our conference is very much the same. We should be able to use our experience and returning golfers to compete with the top teams in the conference.”

The Blossoms boys’ team will be led by Colby and Brady Johnson, both of whom enter their sophomore seasons this year and have competed as varsity athletes since seventh grade.

On the girls’ side, Blooming Prairie is low on numbers with just four golfers, but each has the tools necessary to be a key contributor.

Junior Caitlyn Stangl is the lone upperclassman and enters her fourth varsity season with some equally experienced underclassmen.

Sophomores Ella Farr and Aubry Alwes also re-enter the lineup the earn their fourth varsity letter, further pushing the narrative that the future of Blooming Prairie golf is bright.

Rounding out the girls’ team is sophomore Ambriella Miller, who is entering her third year as a varsity athlete.

The Blossoms’ first action of the season happens on Saturday, April 13, when the team heads to Oaks Golf Club in Hayfield for a tournament beginning at 9 a.m.

Blossoms hope experience pays dividends

◀ **BLOSSOMS** from 5
ing Prairie defense behind her.

Third base will be watched over by veteran slugger Shawntee Snyder, while Rachel Winzenburg, Lily Schammel and Lembke figure to make up the rest of the infield.

Snyder, Winzenburg and Schammel all bring powerful bats back to the Awesome Blossoms’ lineup and will likely make up the second, third, and fourth spots in the lineup again this season.

Behind the plate, Layla Lembke will return to action as the team’s everyday catcher.

Outfield duties will be handled by returners Anna Haberman and Ella Smith, with Shanna Halverson, Jossie Munoz, Brianna Deplitch and Madelyn Harvey all vying for the final starting spot.

Blooming Prairie finished last season 13-10 overall with a 7-4 conference record; however, the Awesome Blossoms made a run to a third-place finish in sub-section play.

Next up for Blooming Prairie is a home game against Maple River on Thursday, April 11 at 4:30 p.m.

Medford looking to build on successful 2023

◀ **MEDFORD** from 11
are a little lower than normal. We will have a hard time filling a complete lineup. The good thing with track is it isn’t all about the team. It is an individual sport as well. I am excited to see how our individuals do this year,” said Werk.

Medford’s two teams both finished fourth in the Gopher Conference last season and third in sub-section competition.

The Tigers’ next meet will be on the road at Triton High School on Friday, April 12 at 4:30 p.m.



Huskies headed for Big Nine gauntlet

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

The Big Nine Conference is going to have no shortage of competition this season, and on top of that, Owatonna baseball has added some top-flight non-conference match-

ups to its already loaded schedule. That being said, Owatonna head coach Tate Cummins feels the extra competition will make for an even stronger season in 2024. “Our goal as a team is to compete for a Big

Nine championship. The conference looks to be strong this year with Northfield, Rochester Mayo and Mankato East leading the way. There’s definitely more pitching within the conference this year, and it will be difficult competition throughout

the conference schedule. To win it, we will have to play well and really focus on one game at a time. We are also playing a great non-conference schedule this year with Bloomington Jefferson, Marshall, New Prague and Cottage Grove traveling to Dartts

Park. The ultimate goal is to make it back to the state tournament,” said Cummins. Making up the lineup will be 12 seniors and 11 juniors with the potential for some underclassmen call-ups throughout the season.

Owatonna’s offense will run through the bats of Mitch Seykora, Tayte Berg, Owen Beyer, Nathan Theis and Noah Truelson. Seykora will take up his usual spot at third base, with Truelson lining up at second or first, and Theis
See **HUSKIES** on 15 ►

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Huskies softball expects to be “in the mix”

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna softball finished last season with a stellar 15-7 record but finished just fourth in a Big Nine Conference that was stacked with talented teams.

However, the Huskies return the majority of last season's lineup and know that 2024 could have even greater heights in store.

“The conference and the section will be extremely competitive again this season, but we expect to be in the mix for both. With the talent and experience we have returning this season, we expect to be in contention for the conference and section titles,” said Owatonna head coach Jeremy Moran.

Seven players from last season's nine-athlete lineup will take the diamond for the first time at Owatonna High School's brand-new softball stadium, hopefully bringing an even better show to local fans on home turf this season.

Leading the way from the circle is long-time ace and recent University of Wisconsin-Stout commit Kennedy Hodgman.

Hodgman will once again serve as the squad's everyday pitcher and will be joined in the starting battery by catcher Taya Selbrade.

See **SOFTBALL** on 15 ►



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2024 Owatonna athletes to watch

◀ ATHLETES from 10
GOLF

Huskies’ Golfer of the Year for 2023 Quinn Thompson returns. Coach Mark Langlois says he has “put a lot of work in to improve in all areas of his game.” Matthew Larson “is a grinder who is a solid ball striker” with great golf I.Q. Jack Langlois reached the second day of sections two years in

a row. Ben Buytaert “is going to build on his first year of competition and is ready for a breakout year.” The girls bring back Carmen Jirele (two-time state qualifier), Paige Thompson (third-best scoring average last spring), and Danika Kaytor (five-year letter winner).
TRACK AND FIELD
Girls track and field has a record 125 members.

“There’s 40 freshmen alone. They’re just really excited to be a part of something at the high school, the new facility. I think there’s lots of kids excited about trying out a new track, the locker rooms, new weight room,” said girls’ head coach Debby Gleason. Regarding a group of 40 throwers, “Coach Amy Lageson does just a good job creating that culture. Same thing with coach Tashee-

na Cook and the distance group,” said Gleason. Carsyn Brady has her eyes on the school record in the 800-meter race after missing by three-hundreds of a second last spring. She’ll also run the 4x400 relay and the mile. Laken Meier is a sprinter and long jumper. Nyalual Chan throws the shot put and discus. The boys are two-time defending Big Nine Conference and true team section champs. Keanan Larson sprints. Jacob

Ginskey adds the 400-meter and long jump to his 800-meter and triple jump. Torrin Smith throws the shot put and discus. “We’ve got some good leadership that’s helping us along. Guys that are returning on our 4x200. We bring back three of the four guys who finished third at state last year and a couple of guys off our 4x800, plus Jack Sorenson and Jacob Ginskey. We’ve got those guys coming back. We’ve got some good throwers coming back too,” said boys’

head coach Kevin Stelter.
TRAP SHOOTING
Clay target has four senior captains with Bailey Davis, Kayden Glynn, Mack Mogen and Will Wottteng. Mogen (23.2 out of 25 average in 2023) and Glynn were on the state tournament squad. “We normally see quite a bit of individual growth as the season progresses,” said head coach Mike Kingland. The team has 99 athletes, with 20 being new to the club.

Huskies softball expects to be “in the mix”

◀ SOFTBALL from 14
Undeniably the team’s biggest strength in 2024 will be its offense as it brings back some solid bats in Zoie Roush, Izzy Radel, Samantha Bogen, Kendra Bogen, Mehsa Krause and Averie Roush. The Huskies’ strong presence at the plate in 2023 saw Zoie Roush and Samantha and Kendra Bo-

gen all hit over.400, while Radel and Averie Roush both batted over.300. Making up the infield will be Samantha Bogen at first base, Radel at second, Zoie Roush at third and Kendra Bogen at shortstop. The latter Bogen will be making the move to shortstop after primarily playing in the outfield last season.

Monitoring the outfield this season will be Averie Roush and Mehsa Krause, with Preslee Hodgman, Danika Ringhofer and Jennalyn Maloney-Fisher rotating in for the final spot. Owatonna’s first home game at the team’s new stadium will come on Thursday, April 11, against Rochester Mayo at 7 p.m.

Huskies headed for Big Nine gauntlet

◀ HUSKIES from 13
splitting time between the middle infield and outfield. Meanwhile, Beyer will roam centerfield with Berg playing alongside him. On the mound, Owatonna will have no shortage of arms, but possibly the two biggest names to watch will be

VFW summer ball stand-outs Tanner Smith and Connor Wiese. Both pitchers helped the VFW team make a run to the state tournament in St. Cloud and showed dominance on the mound. Wiese also threw a no-hitter before being pulled up to the Legion 77 squad, turning the heads of his now-varsity

coaches. Owatonna will be captained by Seykora, Truelson, and catcher Ethan Armstrong. The Huskies finished last season 10-12 overall and 8-8 in the Big Nine Conference. Owatonna will hit the road to face Rochester Mayo for its next game on Friday, April 12, at 5 p.m.

Owatonna Softball Schedule 2024

April 4	at Red Wing	5:00 p.m.
April 9	at Austin	5:00 p.m.
April 11	vs. Rochester Mayo	7:00 p.m.
April 12	vs. New Prague	7:00 p.m.
April 13 (double header)	vs. Rochester JM	12:00 p.m.
April 16	vs. Mankato East	7:00 p.m.
April 18	at Rochester Century	5:00 p.m.
April 23	vs. Faribault	7:00 p.m.
April 25	vs. Winona	7:00 p.m.
April 30	at Rochester Mayo	5:00 p.m.
May 2	at Mankato East	5:00 p.m.
May 4 (tournament)	at Northview Park Athletic Fields	TBD
May 7	vs. Rochester Century	7:00 p.m.
May 9 (double header)	vs. Mankato West	4:00 p.m.
May 13	at New Ulm	5:00 p.m.
May 14	at Northfield	5:00 p.m.
May 16	vs. Albert Lea	7:00 p.m.

Owatonna Baseball Schedule 2024

April 12	at Rochester Mayo	5:00 p.m.
April 13 (doubleheader)	vs. Rochester John Marshall	12:00 p.m.
April 16	at Mankato East	5:00 p.m.
April 18	vs. Rochester Century	5:00 p.m.
April 20	vs. Red Wing (Target Field)	TBD
April 23	at Faribault	5:00 p.m.
April 25	at Winona	5:00 p.m.
April 26	vs. New Prague	7:00 p.m.
April 29	vs. Bloomington Jefferson	5:00 p.m.
April 30	vs. Rochester Mayo	5:00 p.m.
May 2	vs. Mankato East	5:00 p.m.
May 7	at Rochester Century	5:00 p.m.
May 9 (doubleheader)	at Mankato West	4:00 p.m.
May 14	vs. Northfield	5:00 p.m.
May 16	at Albert Lea	5:00 p.m.
May 17	vs. Marshall	5:30 p.m.
May 23	vs. Park	5:30 p.m.



Owatonna aiming to get back to state

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna’s boys’ and girls’ track and field teams are both expecting big results in 2024 as the two sides are coming off of impressive team and individual seasons.

The Huskies’ boys’ team qualified for the state meet and placed eighth after winning the section true team championship; meanwhile, the girls’ side sent two individuals to state.

“We will have to have some of our younger athletes step up and fill in for graduating seniors from last year’s team, but I feel we have the ability to do just that,” said Owatonna boys head coach Kevin Stelter.

Stelter’s squad is a bit younger this season and graduated some key athletes in three-event state qualifier Justin Gleason and standout thrower Trevor Schirmer.

That being said, one department that Owatonna never lacks in is depth.

The Huskies’ boys’ team has 90 athletes on the roster and will return a few state placers in Keanan Larson, Jacob Ginskey, Seth Johnson, Nolan Ginskey, Jack Sorenson and Lucas Webber.

All six competed in state relay events and will be featured heavily in the Huskies’ lineup in 2024.

On the girls’ side, Owatonna is looking to lean on some experienced athletes to bring the program back to the state meet.

Leading the way will be North Dakota State University commit Carsyn Brady, who figures to slot into the 800-meter dash again as well as mixing between relays and other longer-distance events.

According to Owatonna head coach Debby Gleason, senior Laken Meier is the team’s sprint captain and will look to blaze a path in the relays, while also competing in

the long jump event.

Junior Jozie Johnson also returns to the field to compete in the triple jump event, where she set the school record in 2023 with a jump of 36 feet and one inch.

Halle Theis will also be back in the mix after winning the team’s Rookie of the Year award last season and coming off of a strong return to gymnastics this winter.

Owatonna’s field team

will be captained by senior Nyalual Chan, a regular contributor in the discus and shot put events.

“We are really looking to have an outstanding season. We have really developed good depth and balance in all our events, which will help our overall team results this season. I anticipate qualifying for the Minnesota state track meet in multiple events this spring

and anticipate some new school records along the way,” said Gleason.

The Huskies will also be aided by the return of Section 1AAA Assistant Coach of the Year Joey Gleason.

Gleason will help with the girls’ sprinters and jumpers.

Owatonna’s next meet will be held at Faribault Ted Nelson Track at Alexander Park on Thursday, April 11, at 4:30 p.m.

Owatonna Boys’ & Girls’ Track & Field Schedule 2024

April 11	at Faribault (Both)	4:30 p.m.	April 26	at Hamline University (Both)	5 p.m.
April 15	at Austin Wescott Sports Complex (Both)	4:30 p.m.	April 30	at Rochester Century (Both)	4:30 p.m.
			May 2	at White Bear Lake (Boys)	4 p.m.
April 19	at Austin Wescott Sports Complex (Girls)	4:30 p.m.	May 2	at Rochester Mayo (Girls)	4 p.m.
			May 7	at Lakeville South (Both)	1:30 p.m.
April 20	at Stillwater Area (Boys)	11 a.m.	May 16	at Carleton College (Both)	4:30 p.m.
April 23	Home Meet (Both)	4:30 p.m.	May 23	at Rochester Mayo (Conference)	10:30 a.m.
April 25	at Lakeville South (Boys)	4 p.m.			



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Surging Huskies lose star Moran, but remain contenders

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna girls lacrosse lost star player Annika Moran to graduation last year, but the Huskies largely remain the same powerhouse they were last season when they won the Big Nine Conference championship.

Moran led all Huskies with 80 points (67 goals, 13 assists), but the team will return its next three

top scorers in Madison McGinn, Ellery Blacker and Hallie Oldenfendt. The three combined for 94 points and will be the centerpiece of Owatonna's offense on attack.

Also returning to the team is sophomore goaltender Nora Marshall.

Marshall served as the team's lone goaltender on roster last year and was stellar in her freshman debut season with an 11-4 record and a .584 save percentage.

Senior Becca Nielsen will also return as the team's highest scoring defenseman with seven goals and two assists for nine points, while junior Lauren Busho will lead the midfield after posting seven goals and one assist last season.

The Huskies were unbeaten in Big Nine Conference play in 2023 with a perfect 10-0 record, and figure to be the top contenders for the conference title again in 2024

after the next best competitors, Rochester Century, finished 7-7 overall and trailed the Huskies by three games.

Owatonna will hope to keep firing on all cylinders on offense as the team put up a 10.33 goals per game.

The Huskies will open their season at home against Rochester Century on Monday, April 15, at 7:15 p.m.

Owatonna Girls Lacrosse Schedule 2024

April 15	vs. Rochester Century	7:15 p.m.
April 22	at Rochester John Marshall	7:15 p.m.
April 25	vs. Sauk Rapids-Rice	7:15 p.m.
April 29	at Northfield	7:15 p.m.
May 2	vs. Rochester Mayo	7:15 p.m.
May 4	vs. Lakeville North	11:30 a.m.
May 7	at Mankato	5:45 p.m.
May 9	at Rochester Century	7:15 p.m.
May 13	vs. Rochester John Marshall	7:15 p.m.
May 16	vs. Northfield	7:15 p.m.
May 18	vs. Apple Valley	9:30 a.m.
May 20	at Rochester Mayo	7:15 p.m.
May 23	vs. Mankato	7:15 p.m.



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Good Luck Huskies!

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

The 2023 season was a rebuilding year for Owatonna boys' lacrosse and the team's 3-11 overall record reflected that.

Owatonna was a young team with just four seniors on the roster, but 2024 is a different story with the Huskies now having 16 seniors on roster to lead the way.

"We return a strong core of players that have a lot of varsity experience. We always expect that we can compete with any team in the conference," said Owatonna head coach Scott Seykora on his 2024 team.

Of the team's 41 athletes, the 16 seniors make up the majority of the squad's 20 returning letter winners – a sign of major potential for the Huskies.

According to Seykora, highlighting the pack of returners are Jack Strom, Ethan Fitch, Caleb Hullopeter, Henry Hilgendorf, Keagen Tichy, Michael Heitkamp, Nolan Soller, Lane Karsten, Will Wottreng and Noah Gillespie.

Strom and Gillespie will lead the way from up front as the team's premier scoring threats on attack.

Strom was Owatonna's leading scorer a year ago with 35 goals and 13 assists for 48 points.

Only way is up for the Huskies



However, Owatonna's midfield might be where it has the most depth.

Hullopeter and Heitkamp were second and third in scoring on the team with 36 and 28 points and will be hungry for more this season.

The pairing will be aided in the midfield by Hilgendorf, Gillespie, Tichy and Wottreng.

On defense, the Huskies will ask Fitch, Soller and Karsten to keep the back half clean of offensive threats.

Manning the net for Owatonna will be Blake Farris, a sophomore who is looking to make his mark

after a relatively quiet varsity season in 2023. Farris earned just 34 minutes last season allowing 10 goals on 13 shots in relief.

The sophomore is the lone goaltender on roster for the Huskies, potentially showing that Seykora has faith in his young netminder to make a massive leap into an everyday-starter role for the team this season.

Owatonna's first game will be on the road against Rochester at Rochester Mayo High School on Thursday, April 16, at 7:30 p.m.

Owatonna Boys' Lacrosse Schedule 2024

April 16	at Rochester Mayo	7:30 p.m.
April 18	at Rosemount	7:00 p.m.
April 22	vs. New Prague	7:30 p.m.
April 25	at Farmington	6:30 p.m.
April 29	vs. Northfield	7:30 p.m.
May 4	vs. Andover	2:00 p.m.
May 7	vs. Mankato	7:30 p.m.
May 9	vs. Rochester	7:30 p.m.
May 14	at Academy of Holy Angels	7:00 p.m.
May 16	at Northfield	7:30 p.m.
May 18	vs. Simley	3:00 p.m.
May 20	at Sartell	6:00 p.m.
May 23	at Mankato	6:00 p.m.



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Huskies golf primed for big 2024

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna boys' and girls' golf are set for a big 2024 season after both teams lost just seven total athletes from their 2023 rosters.

The boys' team will be without Blake Burmeister and is coming off a ninth-place finish in the Big Nine Conference but should have more experience and depth.

Meanwhile, the girls' team lost Brooke Kunkel, Makayla Mahlman, Josaphine Nguyen, Kora Rocha, Emily Schmidt and Amelia Shives to graduation, but returns the core of their lineup with two-time state qualifier Carmen Jire-

le, varsity staple Paige Thompson and five-year starter Danika Kaytor all on roster.

The girls' team is coming off a stellar 2023 season, when the Huskies finished third in the Big Nine Conference, made it to day two of sections, and qualified Jirele for the state meet as an individual.

"Our goals again would be to finish in the top three of the conference and qualify for the second day of sections," said Owatonna girls' head coach Jason Kaytor.

On the boys' side, there will be more work to do.

The team is fresh off a 10-20 overall season but will have Matthew Larson, Quinn Thomp-

son, Jack Langlois, Mason Pelinka and Ben Buytaert all returning as letter winners.

"I feel with our varsity returners and new additions to our team we can get in the top three of the Big Nine Conference. We have a lot of experience, amazing leadership and the competition for spots will make us better," said Owatonna boys' head coach Mark Langlois.

The Huskies' boys' team will compete next at Oneota Golf and Country Club on Thursday, April 11 at 1 p.m.

Owatonna's girls' team will tee off for its next match at Rochester Northern Hills Golf Course on Monday, April 15, at 2:30 p.m.



Owatonna Boys' & Girls' Golf Schedule 2024

April 11	at Oneota Golf & Country Club (Boys)	1 p.m.
April 15	at Northern Hills Golf Course (Girls)	2:30 p.m.
April 15	at Waseca Lakeside Golf Course (Boys)	4:30 p.m.
April 16	at Owatonna Country Club (Boys)	2:30 p.m.
April 22	at Winona The Bridges Golf Course (Girls)	2:30 p.m.
April 23	at Owatonna Country Club (Boys)	2:30 p.m.
April 24	at Mankato Golf Club (Boys Team Conference)	10 a.m.
April 25	at Eastwood Golf Course (Girls Team Conference)	10 a.m.
April 29	at Brackett's Crossing Country Club (Girls)	12 p.m.
May 2	at Northfield Golf Club (Boys)	2 p.m.
May 2	at Eastwood Golf Course (Girls)	2:30 p.m.
May 6	at Somerby Golf Club (Girls)	11 a.m.
May 6	at Austin Country Club (Boys)	2:30 p.m.
May 7	at Owatonna Country Club (Girls)	2 p.m.
May 8	at Eastwood Golf Course (Boys)	11 a.m.
May 9	at Northfield Golf Club (Boys)	2:30 p.m.
May 14	at Eastwood Golf Course (Boys)	2:30 p.m.
May 14	at Owatonna Country Club (Girls)	2:30 p.m.
May 15	at Lake City Jewel Golf Club (Girls)	2 p.m.
May 16	at Owatonna Country Club (Boys)	1 p.m.
May 20	at Northfield Golf Club (Girls Ind. Conference)	10 a.m.
May 21	at Eastwood Golf Course (Boys Ind. Conference)	10 a.m.
May 23	at Lake City Jewel Golf Club (Boys)	2 p.m.



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Larson steps up to plate for NRHEG baseball

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

NRHEG baseball will have a new head coach this spring as Shawn Larson takes over for Mark Lee in 2024.

The Panthers have been Steele County's most successful team over the past two seasons, making consecutive section tournament runs and taking second in the Gopher Conference with a 10-2 record last season.

Larson will have his work cut out for him to repeat this same success in 2024 as the Panthers have zero seniors on the roster and will rely mainly on juniors and sophomores.

NRHEG will be without Dexter Lee this season as the senior has chosen to pursue college basketball and will leave the Panthers program with his father, Mark.

However, despite having a young team, Larson is confident his guys are ready to pick up where they left off in 2023.

"We have the potential to be competing for both the section and conference title. Our section has several teams that will be



PHOTO COURTESY ELI LUTGENS - NRHEG STAR EAGLE

contenders for the title," said Larson.

According to Larson, players expected to lead the way for the Panthers in 2024 will be Alden Dobberstein, Carter Martens, Jace Ihrke and Jared Lee.

Dobberstein is a utility player capable of playing shortstop and second base, while Martens figures to slot in at third, Ihrke handles catching duties, and Lee moves between first base and the outfield.

All four athletes are also expected to contribute on the mound.

NRHEG's next game will be at home against USC on Thursday, April 11, at 4:30 p.m.

NRHEG Baseball Schedule 2024

April 11	vs. United South Central	April 29	vs. JWP	4:30 p.m.
	4:30 p.m.	May 2	at Kenyon-Wanamingo	
April 12	at GHEC/Martin Luther			4:30 p.m.
	5 p.m.	May 6	vs. Madelia	4:30 p.m.
April 18	at Waseca	May 7	vs. Tri-City United	5 p.m.
April 22	vs. Blooming Prairie	May 9	vs. Maple River	4:30 p.m.
	4:30 p.m.	May 10	at LCWM	5 p.m.
April 25	at Hayfield	May 13	at Medford	4:30 p.m.
April 26	vs. Pine Island	May 16	at WEM	4:30 p.m.
	7 p.m.			

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GO PANTHERS!

Camerer steps in for Panthers legend Schultz

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

NRHEG softball has a new skipper in 2024 as first-year head coach Kayley Camerer steps in for legendary Panthers' coach Wendy Schultz.

Schultz retired as NRHEG's all-time winningest coach in the sport with a 304-181 record; meanwhile, Camerer will be in the hunt for her first win to start her coaching journey.

Wins will obviously be on the minds of Camerer and her Panthers squad, but the first-year head coach is more focused on simpler goals.

"We hope to keep improving and getting better throughout the entire season and be playing our best softball around playoff time. Our team strengths include being hard workers with great team chemistry, great attitudes and speed. One thing we need to work on is getting experience and growing confidence levels for players who are stepping into starting varsity spots," said Camerer.

NRHEG will be without one of its top players from

2023 this season as it lost Schultz's daughter, Sidney, who graduated last year as a state honorable mention, a captain and a team co-MVP.

Despite the loss of Schultz, Bree Ihrke, and Trinity Smith-Vulcan, the Panthers will still have plenty of firepower to remain competitive.

According to Camerer, Faith and Preslie Nielsen, and Adalyn and Izzy Stadheim are names the Panthers will rely on to be major contributors this season.

"All four of these girls are returning varsity letter winners who made big contributions to the team's successes last season. They are all anchors on the defensive side of the ball and add speed and power to our lineup while at the plate," said Camerer.

NRHEG's team will feature 17 total athletes with six seniors and two juniors, and just five returning letter winners, meaning there will be room in the lineup for new faces to make a name for themselves.

"Olivia Berg is a freshman coming in and filling a hole on the left side of



PHOTO COURTESY ELI LUTGENS - NRHEG STAR EAGLE

our infield. We are looking forward to seeing her step up on the defensive side of the ball while creating offense for us as well. Erin Peterson is a senior who is willing to step into any varsity role we need and make a positive impact on the team," said Camerer.

Captaining the Panthers in 2024 is a rotation of all six seniors: Faith and Preslie Nielsen, Izzy Stadheim, Peterson, Tayler Schmidt and Payton Bunn.

NRHEG's next game will be on the road against USC on Thursday, April 11, at 4:30 p.m.

NRHEG Softball Schedule 2024

April 11	at United South Central	4:30 p.m.
April 12	vs. Blooming Prairie	4:30 p.m.
April 15	at GHEC (Truman)	4:30 p.m.
April 15	at GHEC/Martin Luther (Truman)	5 p.m.
April 18	vs. Bethlehem Academy	4:30 p.m.
April 19	vs. Waseca	4:30 p.m.
April 22	at Blooming Prairie	4:30 p.m.
April 25	vs. Hayfield	4:30 p.m.
April 26 (Tournament)	at Mankato (Caswell Park)	5 p.m.
April 26 (Tournament)	at Mankato (Caswell Park)	7 p.m.
April 27 (Tournament)	at Mankato (Caswell Park)	10 a.m.
April 29	at JWP	4:30 p.m.
May 2	vs. Kenyon-Wanamingo	4:30 p.m.
May 7	vs. United South Central	4:30 p.m.
May 9	at Maple River	4:30 p.m.
May 10	vs. Tri-City United	4:30 p.m.
May 13	vs. Medford	4:30 p.m.
May 16	vs. WEM	4:30 p.m.



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Panthers golf set for rebuild season

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Last year was a tale of two seasons for NRHEG boys and girls golf with the boys finishing 8-14 overall and the girls going 20-2.

NRHEG brings back plenty athletes on both sides, and head coach Brad Root hopes that experience will continue to pay dividends for his teams.

“We’re looking to have good showing at the conference tournament and sub section. We hope we have some all-conference honors as well as advancement to the section tournament,” Root said. “The girls need to be mentally tough and focused this year. We are counting on continued improvement in all our girls. We will again have small numbers on the boys side, so someone

may emerge as a surprise to help us. We did not have many junior varsity meets last year so the non-varsity players didn’t get much meet experience last year. The varsity boys have pretty good golf skills but need to work on the mental side of the game as well as course management and consistency.”

The Panthers’ girls’ team will consist of Meela Budach, Halle Schultz, Elsie Schultz, Alexis Olson, Olivia Wilkenson and Gabby Nelton.

The girls’ team are fresh off a second-place finish in the Gopher Conference a year ago, also finishing fifth in sub-section competition.

On the boys’ side, NRHEG will have Carter Schlaak, Shan Hansen, Tyler Kress, Jackson Chrz, Hudson Chrz and Jaylin Raab.



PHOTO COURTESY ELI LUTGENS - NRHEG STAR EAGLE

NRHEG boys’ and girls’ golf will have its next match at home on Thursday, April 18, at 4:30 p.m.



PHOTO COURTESY ELI LUTGENS - NRHEG STAR EAGLE

NRHEG Boys’ & Girls’ Golf Schedule 2024

April 18	at Riverview Golf Course (Both)	4:30 p.m.
April 25	at Dodge Country Club (Both)	4:30 p.m.
April 26	at Prairie Ridge Golf Course (Both)	1:30 p.m.
May 2	at Oak View Golf Course (Both)	4:30 p.m.
May 9	at Mankato North Links Golf Course (Both)	10 a.m.
May 13	at Austin Country Club (Both)	4:30 p.m.
May 16	at Riverview Golf Course (Both)	4:30 p.m.
May 20	at Waseca Lakeside Golf Course	12 p.m.
May 23	at Waseca Lakeside Golf Course (Conference)	10 a.m.



PHOTO COURTESY ELI LUTGENS - NRHEG STAR EAGLE



PHOTO COURTESY ELI LUTGENS - NRHEG STAR EAGLE

NRHEG views Gopher as “wide open”

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

After missing out on a Gopher Conference championship by two points last season, NRHEG head track and field coach Duey Ferber views the Gopher Conference to be “wide open” in 2024, especially on the girls’ side.

Both the boys’ and girls’ teams will return

most of their athletes from a season ago with more varsity experience under their belt.

“We have some good athletes in most areas. We should be strong in our hurdle events and sprint relays. Our long distance has some good younger athletes as well as some upperclassmen. Our jumps have some new athletes to hopefully score

some points. We have most of our bases covered,” said Ferber on his 2024 team.

NRHEG has 22 returning letter winners on roster and will see a near-even split with 12 on the girls’ team and 10 on the boys’ side.

Both teams will have at least one state participant on roster as Evelyn Nydegger, Quinn VanMaldeghem and Will Tuttle all return.

Nydegger is fresh off taking 13th in both the 100-meter high hurdles and 300-meter low hurdles at state, while VanMaldeghem also placed 15th in the 800-meter race.

On the boys’ side, Tuttle is the lone state partici-

pant and is coming off a seventh-place finish in the 110-meter high hurdles and 12th in the 300-meter low hurdles.

NRHEG will hope to win its first Gopher Conference title in 2024 since the 2018 and 2019 seasons

when the boys won. The NRHEG girls have come close to a title in the same span, placing second each of the past two years. Up next for NRHEG is a road meet at Maple River on Tuesday, April 16, at 3:15 p.m.

NRHEG Boys’ & Girls’ Track & Field Schedule 2024

April 16	at Maple River	4:30 p.m.
April 22	at Blooming Prairie	4:30 p.m.
April 30	at JWP	4:30 p.m.
May 2	Home Meet	4:30 P.M.
May 11	at Maple River (conference meet)	10 a.m.
May 16	at Waseca	4:30 p.m.



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