

Spring SPORTS PREVIEW 2026



Special Supplement of the Steele County Times | April 2026



GOOD LUCK TO ALL THE TEAMS!

Rod, Tess, Breana and Reeves

On the point • Hwy 218 • Blooming Prairie • 507-583-2018 • www.kosterscarkorner.com



FOR SALE



Jennifer Walsh
507-438-6676

jennifer@jenniferwalshrealestate.com
jenniferwalshrealestate.com





www.mbtbank.bank | Member FDIC

**PROUD TO BE A
COMMUNITY BANK
& A PROUD SUPPORTER OF THE
BLOOMING PRAIRIE BLOSSOMS**

MBT Bank – Blooming Prairie
245 E Main Street
507-583-6688

Scan to locate an MBT Bank
location near you





WE ARE OFFERING OUTPATIENT THERAPY!

220 3rd St. NW • Blooming Prairie • **507-583-4434**



Prairie Manor
Heather Haus



Your One-Stop Blossom Shop & More!

Embroidery, Screen Print & Promotional Products

623 6th Street SE • Blooming Prairie • 507-583-7001 • becky@sportstitch.net





507-583-2712
Hwy 218 South,
Blooming Prairie, MN
www.minersoutdoor.com

Hours:
Monday-Friday: 8:00am-5:00pm
Saturday: 8:00am-Noon

**Outdoor Power Equipment,
Golf Cart: Sales Service, Parts & Accessories**

Blossoms ready to contend again in 2026

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Bloomington Prairie baseball steps into 2026 with an experienced roster including multiple returning all-conference players.

The Awesome Blossoms lost some key contributors from the 2025 team in Brady

Kittelson (all-section), Alex Lea (all-conference), Bo Zwiener and Carter Bishop, but the team will bring back some serious firepower as well.

“Our expectations don’t change; we expect to be in the mix for the conference and the section. To reach that goal we need focus on getting

See **BLOSSOMS** on 17 ▶



Bloomington Prairie Baseball Schedule 2026					
April 16	vs. Randolph	4:30 p.m.	May 5	at Goodhue	5 p.m.
April 18	at Spring Grove	12 p.m.	May 7	vs. Hayfield	4:30 p.m.
April 20	at Triton	5 p.m.	May 9	at Austin Marcussen (tournament) (vs. Lyle-Pacelli)	10 a.m.
April 23	vs. USC	4:30 p.m.	May 9	at Austin Marcussen (tournament) (vs. Austin)	12 p.m.
April 24	at Waseca	5:30 p.m.	May 12	at JWP	4:30 p.m.
April 27	at Fillmore Central	4 p.m.	May 15	vs. Kenyon-Wanamingo	4:30 p.m.
April 28	vs. NRHEG	4:30 p.m.	May 18	vs. Southland	4:30 p.m.
April 30	vs. WEM	4:30 p.m.			



Steu's Meat Market

Award Winning Smoked & Cured Sausage Products

Good Luck this Season!

210 5th Ave. W., Ellendale, MN

507-684-2331

Find us on Facebook



237 Hwy. Ave. S.
Bloomington Prairie
Daily 8 a.m. - 7 p.m.



Vandal's FAMILY MARKET

507-583-6671
vandalsfamilymarket.com

Go Blossoms!

Locally Owned & Operated



R&R Insurance Agency, LLC

Carl R. Peterson
Jill Lindeman

236 E Main St. • PO Box 66
Bloomington Prairie, MN 55917
Office (507) 583-7971
Fax (507) 583-7147
Cell (507) 383-3988
rrinsllccarl@gmail.com

Good Luck Blossoms!



Good Luck This Season Team!

From the Bloomington Prairie Bus Company

Moving kids forward



BP ready to rely on young battery

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Bloomington Prairie softball will have six returning starters in its lineup for 2026, but its daily battery will include a sophomore pitcher (Raylee Miner) and a freshman catcher (Kenley Bangert) who have big shoes to fill.

With just one senior

and four juniors, Bloomington Prairie will have no choice but to utilize underclassmen athletes to fill some big shoes.

“We bring back six starters and a couple other girls who got varsity experience last season from a team that improved as the season went on. We are still a very young team with only one senior, but we will look to build on

that improvement going into this season and hopefully string together a few more wins,” said Bloomington Prairie Head Coach Cam Rutledge.

The Awesome Blossoms finished last season 5-14 overall, far from the team’s 20-7 season in 2024 that earned a section title and a trip to the state tournament.

See **BP READY** on 17 ►



Bloomington Prairie Softball Schedule 2026					
April 16	at Randolph	4:30 p.m.	May 4	vs. Waseca	4:30 p.m.
April 18	at Fillmore Central/Lanesboro	11 a.m.	May 5	vs. Goodhue	4:30 p.m.
April 20	vs. Triton	4:30 p.m.	May 7	at Hayfield	4:30 p.m.
April 23	at USC	4:30 p.m.	May 9	at Maple River	10 a.m.
April 27	vs. Bethlehem Academy	4:30 p.m.	May 11	at Rochester Lourdes	5 p.m.
April 28	at NRHEG	4:30 p.m.	May 12	vs. JWP	4:30 p.m.
April 30	at WEM	4:30 p.m.	May 15	at Kenyon-Wanamingo	4:30 p.m.

Good Luck This Sports Season Blossoms!



Doerhoefer, Miner, Andrist & Arndt, P.A.
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

We understand small business because we are a small business

314 E Main St, Bloomington Prairie
507-583-7528

Iacovino Law Office

Jason Iacovino, Attorney |

507.583.6663 handilawoffice.com

TS GOOD LUCK BLOSSOMS!



THOMPSON SANITATION INC.

Steele County Drop Site: 1255 Kilworth Drive, NW
Phone: 507-256-4370 Office in Clarks Grove • 507-214-0685
- Recycling in Owatonna



24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE

CALL BROZ ELECTRIC FOR ALL YOUR ELECTRICAL NEEDS!

Residential • Farm • Commercial

Good Luck Blossoms!

507-414-1076 • Claremont

DARRICK'S

PREFERRED AUTO

3 year/36,000 miles Warranty

540 Highway 218 | South Bloomington Prairie



ASE Certified

BP golf sees a surge in numbers

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

After placing first at the section 1A meet last season, Blooming Prairie boys' golf brings back the majority of its starting lineup in what could be another breakout year for the Awesome Blossoms.

The team will benefit greatly from the return of 2025 state individual qualifier Drew Reinke (87th place) and freshman phenom Coen Abel, who has led the team in scoring the past two seasons.

Making matters even sweeter for the boys squad is the fact that the team will have 23 athletes to work with: an increase from 12 last season.

Joining Abel and Reinke in the starting lineup will be the duo of Colby Johnson and Brady Johnson.

Reinke and the Johnsons will lead the team as the three seniors and bring reliable scoring to the table on every course.

While the boys' team preps for what could be a special season, the girls' team will also be optimistic for a stellar 2026.

Last season, Blooming Prairie relied on a two-athlete roster comprised of 2025 senior Caitlyn Stangl and junior Aubrey Alwes.

Alwes will return as the team's only previous letterwinner (with six letters to her name), but she will be joined by six new team-

mates for the 2026 season.

The resurgence in numbers should supply head coach Andrew Hardecopf with enough numbers to field a complete varsity roster that will once again be capable of scoring team points and placements.

Both teams will tee off next for a match against Kenyon-Wanamingo at Blooming Prairie Country Club on Thursday, April 16 at 4:30 p.m.

*The Steele County Times sent a questionnaire to the Blooming Prairie golf program, but received no response, resulting in insufficient information for a complete write up on the Awesome Blossoms 2026 outlook.



SUBMITTED PHOTO



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Blooming Prairie Boys' & Girls' Golf Schedule 2026		
April 16	at Blooming Prairie Country Club (Both)	4:30 p.m.
April 21	at Waseca Lakeside Country Club (Both)	4:30 p.m.
April 23	at The Oaks Golf Course (Both)	4:30 p.m.
April 25	at Blooming Prairie Country Club (Boys)	10 a.m.
April 28 (conference)	at Wedgewood Cove Golf Club (Both)	1 p.m.
May 7 (conference)	at Mankato North Links Golf Course (Both)	10 a.m.
May 8	at Blooming Prairie Country Club (Both)	4:30 p.m.
May 12 (conference)	at Austin Country Club (Both)	10 a.m.
May 21	at Waseca Lakeside Country Club (Both)	1 p.m.



Blooming Prairie Schools

Blossoming Into Learners and Leaders

blossoms.k12.mn.us



Dr. Deborah I. Lien

DDS, MBS

ORTHODONTIC SPECIALIST

www.drdeborahlienorthodontics.com

583.6613

132 2nd Ave NE
Blooming Prairie

FREE CONSULTATIONS

Blossoms ready to “build on progress”

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Bloomington track and field will once again be reliant on some younger athletes to make big impacts for the team in 2026.

The Awesome Blossoms girls will have junior standout Gloria Hernandez back on the roster, joined by fellow section participants Sophia Esplan, Jasper Doocy, Bella Romeo and Haley McIntosh, but the boys team will be without any section qualifiers from 2025.

“Our goals this season are to continue building on the progress we’ve made as a team, push each other to new personal bests, and stay competitive at every meet. The expectation is that every athlete puts in the work, supports their teammates, and represents our school with pride and determination. It’s all about staying focused, healthy, and giving it everything we’ve got each time we compete,” said Bloomington head coach Kylie Forystek.

The Blossoms’ girls’ team will have plenty of numbers to remain com-



petitive with 25 athletes on roster.

“For the girls squad, Gloria Hernandez will make a significant impact our team. She finished fifth in the 800-meter race and sixth in the 1,600-meter at the section track meet last year. She has also competed twice in the state cross-country meet. Bella Romeo and Haley McIntosh also both made it to the section meet in the 400-meter. Sophia Esplan competed in the 3,200-meter and Jasper Doocy competed in the 300-meter hurdles at sections.

I also expect Emmerson Nelson, Elaine Schwarz, Addison Hjelman, Haley Schlichter, Eva Magnuson, Evie Emanuel and Lanie Osmon to make impacts for us as they had significant varsity time last year,” said Forystek.

The boys team lost some key contributors from the 2025 team to graduation, but there is still reason for optimism in 2026.

“For the boys squad, we are returning no section meet qualifiers... We lost a state champion in the shotput in Owen Krueger, and a state competitor

in the pole vault in Gage Mullenbach. We also lost some other section competitors in Will Sunde and Jacob Pauly... I believe we have a lot of boys with solid experience who will excel this year, including Tyler Anderson, Kingston Lee, Andrew Schwarz,

Joey Schwarz, Isaac Fort, Braxton Lee, Christian Quail, Mason Peterson and Evan Westphal,” said Forystek.

The goals for the teams in 2026 have not changed for the Awesome Blossoms: improvement and successes are both

expected. “We hope for top finishers amongst both the section and the conference,” said Forystek.

Bloomington’s next meet will be held at Hayfield High School on Thursday April 16 at 4:30 p.m.

Bloomington Track & Field Schedule 2026

April 16	at Hayfield	4:30 p.m.
April 21	Home Meet	4:15 p.m.
April 30	at Medford	4:30 p.m.
May 5 (True Team)	at Rushford-Peterson	1 p.m.
May 9 (Conference)	Home Meet	10 a.m.
May 15	at Triton	4:30 p.m.

HAVE AN AMAZING YEAR BLOOMING PRAIRIE STUDENTS!



Tandem Products, Inc. ▶ HRBP@TandemProducts.com ▶ 507.583.7222 ▶ 520 Industrial Drive Bloomington, MN



Steele Sports
JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

The spring season is upon us and as the grass gets greener, we will finally be able to step back outside to enjoy the sunshine, grill up some hot dogs and watch some stellar local sports.



Blooming Prairie softball outfielder Aubrey Klocke makes a diving catch in right field. The Awesome Blossoms finished last year 5-14, and will hope to get back to their winning ways after finishing 20-7 and making it to state in 2024.

STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

2026 Gopher athletes to watch

Below is a list of Steele County Gopher Conference athletes to watch out for in their respective sports.

Track & Field

Steele County track and field has seen state champs and podium winners in previous years, but when it comes to putting athletes on the podium, Blooming Prairie has had the winning formula.

This season, fans should keep an eye on Awesome Blossoms Gloria

Hernandez, Bella Romeo, Haley McIntosh and Jasper Doocy to make potential state runs.

Hernandez will eye her first state meet in track and field after finishing fifth in the 1,600 and sixth in the 800 at last year's section meet.

NRHEG track and field has a trio of returning state participants on its girls' team in Kylie Olson (shot put), Gabby Schlaak (high jump) and Anika Ladlie (high jump).

The Panthers' boys' team will also feature Jacob Karl as he works toward making the state meet in the 800- and 1,600-meter races.

Medford's track and field numbers are lower again in 2026, however, the team brings back some talented throwers in section qualifiers Amelia Fitzgerald, Libby Sutherland and Henry Miller.

All three will look to be competitive at sections again and break through to compete at their first state meet.

Baseball

Local baseball teams figure to have plenty of talent this season and each individual squad has unique characteristics that could bring them success.

Blooming Prairie has an abundance of speed and agility in its ranks with names such as Carsten Ingvalson (catcher/pitcher), Gabe Staloch (shortstop/pitcher), Jared Lee (pitcher),

See **ATHLETES** on 19 ►



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

NRHEG's Annika Ladlie makes her way over the bar in the Class A state high jump event. NRHEG had two high jumpers, Ladlie and Gabby Schlaak, participate at the state meet last season.



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Blooming Prairie's Jasper Doocy leaps over a hurdle during a meet at Triton last season. Doocy and teammates Gloria Hernandez, Bella Romeo and Haley McIntosh are names to watch for on Blooming Prairie's 2026 girls track and field team.

Tigers gain valuable varsity experience

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Medford baseball had a large roster with 19 athletes last season, but with only three upperclassmen, the team still struggled to find its identity. Although the team was young in 2025, the majority of the Tigers' underclassmen athletes were able to play critical minutes last year – giving this season a more positive outlook. Now, in 2026, Medford is primed for a rebound season with six potential

upperclassmen athletes and a solid mixture of six sophomores and four freshmen. A major positive for the Tigers is the fact that multiple of the team's starting nine athletes return to their usual roles this season. Landon Seiler, Justin Limon, James Wegner, Kyle Vatsaas and August Zacharias will all step back into the team's lineup in 2026 in crucial roles. Seiler should serve as the team's top pitcher with Vatsaas playing catcher, Limon captain-
See **TIGERS** on 17 ►

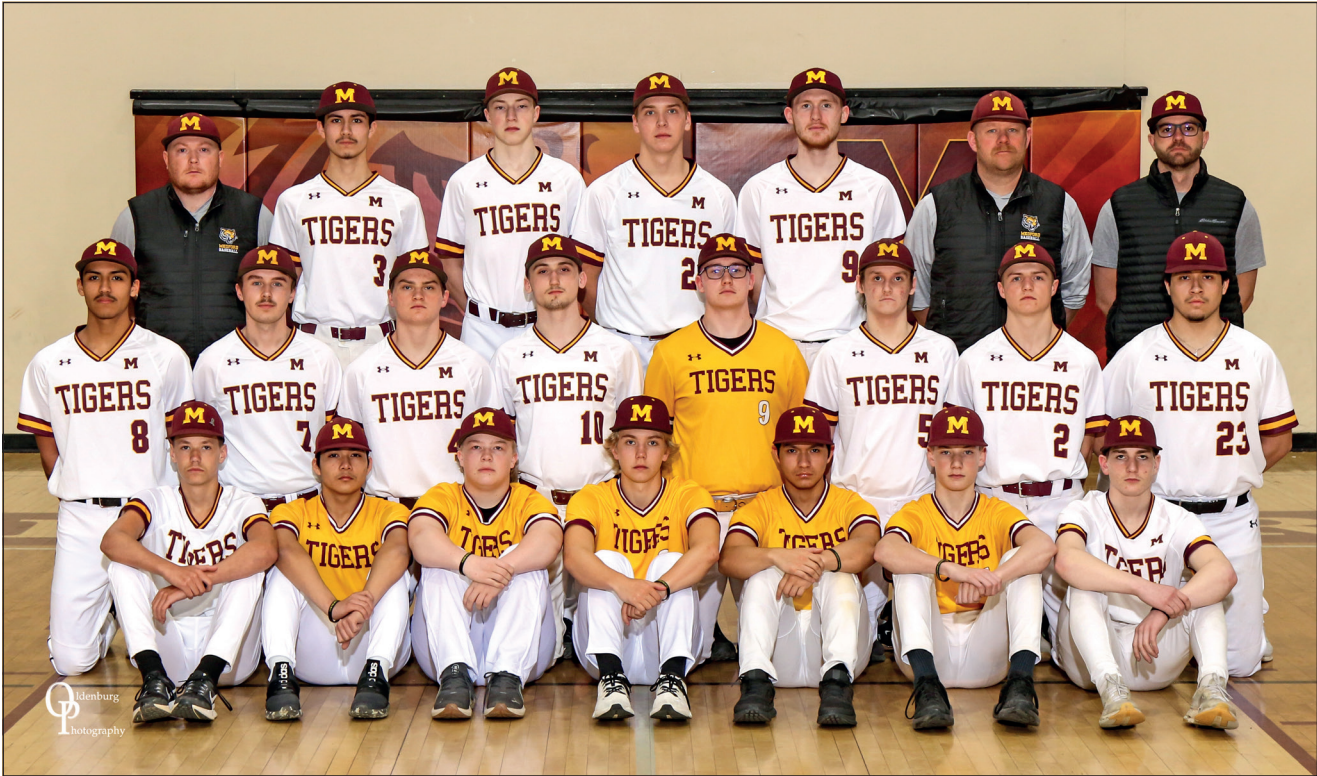


PHOTO CREDIT MIKE OLDENBURG - OLDENBURG PHOTOGRAPHY

Good Luck on your Sports Seasons!

Medford Teacher's Union

507-451-1387

Residential • Farm • Industrial • Commercial

Free Estimates
24-Hour Emergency Service

7596 NW 40th St. Owatonna • www.ColesElectric.com

Medford Baseball Schedule 2025					
April 16	at JWP	4:30 p.m.	April 30	vs. NRHEG	4:30 p.m.
April 17	at Good Shephard Lutheran		May 1	vs. Nicollet	5 p.m.
		4:30 p.m.	May 7	at Randolph	4:30 p.m.
April 21	vs. GMLOK	4:30 p.m.	May 8	at Mabel-Canton	4:30 p.m.
April 23	vs. Kenyon-Wanamingo		May 11	vs. Triton	4:30 p.m.
		4:30 p.m.	May 14	at USC	4:30 p.m.
April 24	at St. Clair	4:30 p.m.	May 16	at ISG Field Mankato	11 a.m.
April 27	at WEM	4:30 p.m.		(doubleheader)	

GOOD LUCK TIGERS!

Steele County Drop Site: 1255 Kilworth Drive, NW • Phone: 507-256-4370
Office in Clarks Grove • 507-214-0685 • Recycling in Owatonna

We love
OWATONNA

ONE COMMUNITY, ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES **FEDERATED INSURANCE**

Tigers hoping to see ‘who steps up’

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Medford softball finished the 2025 season 2-15 overall, largely due to having a younger, inexperienced roster.

Despite bringing back multiple starters, the team will still be on the younger end again in 2026, but head coach Jon Velishek is still holding out hope for a successful season.

“We will be a very young team again for the second year in a row. Watch out for the underclassmen. This is a talented group looking to make their mark. It will be exciting to see who steps up as the season progresses,” said Velishek.

Thankfully for the Tigers, the team will not have to go through another pitcher change with returner Melia Schema

ready to continue her role as the team’s ace.

Schema was the team’s top arm all last season and should pitch the bulk of innings again in 2026.

According to Velishek, some key returning athletes are Jade Laue (catcher), Aleah Vogt (outfield), Lanie Chambers (infield) and Schema.

Both Laue and Vogt are five-year starters for the Tigers, with Laue leading the team in batting last season.

Chambers should see significant innings as the team’s captain of the infield at shortstop.

According to Velishek, the team’s goals for the season are simple: “learn, grow and compete.”

With just 16 athletes on the roster, Medford will have the depth to withstand any potential injuries while also allowing



PHOTO CREDIT MIKE OLDENBURG - OLDENBURG PHOTOGRAPHY

younger athletes valuable opportunities to play key innings at the varsity level.

The team will host JWP for its next game on April 16 at 4:30 p.m.

Medford Softball Schedule 2026

April 16	vs. JWP	4:30 p.m.	April 28	vs. Randolph	4:30 p.m.
April 17	vs. Rochester Lourdes	4:30 p.m.	April 30	at NRHEG	4:30 p.m.
April 20	at Minnesota Valley Lutheran	4:30 p.m.	May 4	at Alden-Conger	4:30 p.m.
			May 5	at Gentry Academy	5 p.m.
April 23	at Kenyon-Wanamingo	4:30 p.m.	May 7	vs. Sibley East	4:30 p.m.
			May 11	at Triton	4:30 p.m.
April 24	vs. Truman/Martin Luther/GHEC	4:30 p.m.	May 12	at Waseca	5:30 p.m.
			May 14	vs. USC	4:30 p.m.
April 27	vs. WEM	4:30 p.m.			



**GOOD LUCK
TIGERS!**

**Moving Kids
Forward**

MEDFORD BUS COMPANY
MOVING KIDS FORWARD





GOOD LUCK TO ALL OUR TIGER TEAMS!
**THE MEDFORD SCHOOL
IS PROUD OF YOU!**

FIRST STATE BANK OF RED WING



WHERE FAMILY AND FINANCE COME
TOGETHER TO MEET YOUR NEEDS!!

RED WING • MAZEPPA • MEDFORD

Good Luck Medford Tigers!

www.firststatebankredwing.com

Member FDIC



Only way is up for Medford track and field

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Medford boys and girls track and field had a tough 2025 trying to remain competitive in the Gopher Conference with low numbers, but roster size should not be too much of an issue for the team in 2026.

The boys team will still have a small roster with just 19 athletes, but the girls team will have 34 athletes to fit into its lineup.

“Our varsity numbers [for the boys team] are a little lower than normal. We will have a hard time filling a complete line-up. 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. Our numbers are a little better on the girls’ side, especially in our junior high. I am hoping for a better year than last,” said Medford head coach Kevin Werk.

According to Werk, names to look out for in 2026 will be Amelia Fitzgerald (section qualifier – discus), Libby Sutherland (section qualifier – shot put), Olivia Ward (sprints), Henry Miller (section



PHOTO CREDIT MIKE OLDENBURG - OLDENBURG PHOTOGRAPHY

qualifier – shot put and discus), Joseph Hora (distance) and the boys’ 4x800 relay team of Alex Thurnau, Drake Stursa,

Jacob Hora and Joseph Hora (section qualifier). Other potential difference makers include: Conor Wilson (shot put

and discus), Will Grayson (shot put and discus), Tanner Milewski (long jump and triple jump), Johnny Cole (long jump and triple

jump), Cortney Borwege (hurdles), Julia Anhorn (pole vault and 800-meter race) and Rowyn Norton (sprints).

Both the boys and girls teams will compete next at Blooming Prairie High School on Tuesday, April 21 at 4:15 p.m.

PROUDLY SERVING STEELE COUNTY

Brick-Meger Funeral Home & Medford Funeral Home

megercares.com | 507.451.1457



24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE

CALL BROZ ELECTRIC FOR ALL YOUR ELECTRICAL NEEDS!

Residential • Farm • Commercial

Good Luck Tigers! 

507-414-1076 • Claremont

Huskies loaded with talent and depth

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna baseball had one of the deepest rosters in the Big Nine Conference in 2025 with 11 seniors and nine juniors on roster.

Despite losing some key athletes in Connor Wiese, Tanner Smith and Hunter Theis to graduation, the Huskies will bring back some core athletes that should make the team a tough matchup for any opponent.

“We are hoping to be a competitive team to face this season. We have a group of players that enjoy and care about the game of baseball. They work hard daily and continue to push one another. We want to play hard and give it our best every time we step on the field of play,” said Owatonna Head Coach Tate Cummins.

Without Theis, Wiese and Smith, Owatonna will have to turn to some new faces to make up its usual starting battery combinations.

Nolan Rolloff and Jace Ulrich return as the team’s top options on the mound with left-hander Jaxson Gauthier prepped for a bigger role as well.

Rolloff found himself pitching some important innings during the Huskies’ post-season run, but will also be heavily relied upon as the team’s starting shortstop.

“He’s one of the top players in the Big Nine Conference. He’s coming off a monster sophomore season, hitting over .400 and collecting over 30 hits. He was also a key piece for us last spring on the mound. He had 30 strikeouts in 30 innings pitched,” said Cummins.

Ulrich returns as a key utility player for Owatonna’s 2026 team.

“Jace is one our most versatile players on the roster. He is a returning top end pitcher for us, coming off a great 2025 out of the bullpen. He did have a number of starts as well. He’ll be asked to catch and play third base this season as well,” said Cummins.

The starting catcher position vacated by Theis will be up for grabs with Aedan Tackmann and Ulrich listed on the roster as possible options.

Other names to look out for include Will Radel (second base, shortstop), Bentley Arvig (outfield), and Isaiah Farwell (outfield).



The Huskies finished last season with an 18-6 record (12-4 in the Big Nine), and will hope to improve on the mark despite a loaded conference.

“We should compete well if we can stay strong mentally. Our ability to rebound from mistakes will be a key for us this season. We’ve matured since last summer – we are hoping that they can remember that mindset. We have to stay positive and focus on one game at a time. The conference is once again very competitive, in my opinion,” Cummins said.

According to him, there are some games against

tough foes for fans to circle on their calendars.

“Mankato East has a great core of players that should contend for a state title in Class AAA. Mankato West will be right there with them. Century will be improved

from last spring. Mayo continually plays tough baseball. Northfield lost two high end players, but they will still be highly competitive with a great pitching staff. Austin has one of the best left-handed pitchers in the conference,

so it all depends on when he’s on the mound – they can beat anyone. It should be a very exciting season,” said Cummins.

Owatonna’s next game is on the road against Rochester Mayo on April 16 at 5 p.m.

Owatonna Baseball Schedule 2026

April 16	at Rochester Mayo	5 p.m.	May 7	at Rochester Century	5 p.m.
April 18	vs. Mankato East	12 p.m.	May 8	vs. Apple Valley	4:30 p.m.
(doubleheader)			(doubleheader)		
April 21	vs. Rochester Century	5 p.m.	May 12	vs. Albert Lea	5 p.m.
April 23	at Faribault	5 p.m.	May 14	at Red Wing	5 p.m.
April 24	vs. New Prague	5 p.m.	May 16	vs. Park	1 p.m.
April 27	vs. St. Paul Central	5:30 p.m.	May 18	vs. Bloomington Jefferson	5 p.m.
April 28	vs. Winona	5 p.m.	May 21	at Minneapolis Washburn	4:30 p.m.
April 30	vs. Rochester John Marshall	5 p.m.			
May 4	vs. Rochester Mayo	5 p.m.			



Be Pest-Free With Lemke!
Get rid of rodents, insects, spiders and more.

507-259-8123
Lemke Pest Control, LLC.

Proudly Serving Rochester, Byron, Chatfield, Dexter, Dodge Center, Dover, Eyota, Oronoco, Owatonna, St. Charles, Stewartville and surrounding areas





CALL BROZ ELECTRIC FOR ALL YOUR ELECTRICAL NEEDS!
Residential • Farm • Commercial

Good Luck Huskies!

507-414-1076 • Claremont

24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE



Huskies hope young players adjust quickly

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna softball will hope to find its chemistry quickly after losing six seniors – five of them, starters – to graduation last spring on a team that finished third in the Big Nine Conference.

The Huskies have a wealth of key returning players, but the holes left in the starting nine will need to be patched early in the season if the team is going to contend for a conference title.

“The key will be how quickly our younger players adjust to the varsity level of competition. We have talent and I am excited to watch this team grow throughout the season,” said Owatonna Head Coach Jeremy Moran.

Some key names for fans to keep their eyes on will be Kendra Bogen, Jessalynn Smith, Leighton

Nelson and Ava Fisher. Bogen brings a mixture of power, consistency and speed to the plate that will set the tone for the Huskies’ lineup in 2026. She will also slot in as the team’s starting shortstop and the leader of the defense.

The grouping of Smith (pitcher/infield), Nelson (catcher/infield), and Fisher (utility) will provide valuable experience on defense.

Pitching duties will be handled by Smith – the team’s most experienced arm – as well as junior Malia Schroht and freshman Hanley Rosenau.

According to Moran, Rosenau and eighth-grader Jasmine Thiele will be key contributors as underclassmen.

“[Hanley] is a freshman that has tremendous power at the plate and is also expected to be a major contributor as one

of our pitchers this season. [Jasmine] is a talented eighth-grader that can play multiple positions for us with her tremendous arm strength, and will also improve our offense with her speed and her ability to put the ball in play,” said Moran.

The team may be young, but it has plenty of weapons to make some noise in the Big Nine Conference.

“Our pitching has been looking really strong in practices and scrimmages, and I expect that to be one of our strengths. Offensively, I see a lot of talent and potential. We need to figure out who will step up in some spots defensively,” Moran said. “Despite being young, I think our team has the talent to be in the mix for one of the top teams in the conference.”

Owatonna’s next game will be at home against Rochester Mayo on April 16 at 5 p.m.



PHOTO CREDIT MIKE OLDENBURG - OLDENBURG PHOTOGRAPHY

Owatonna Softball Schedule 2026

April 16	vs. Rochester Mayo	5 p.m.	May 4	at New Ulm	5:30 p.m.
April 18	at Mankato East	11 a.m.	May 5	at Rochester Mayo	5 p.m.
April 20	at Byron	5 p.m.	May 7	vs. Rochester Century	5 p.m.
April 21	at Rochester Century	5 p.m.	May 9 (tournament)	at St. Anthony Village	TBD
April 23	vs. Faribault	7 p.m.			
April 28	at Winona	5 p.m.	May 11	vs. New Prague	5 p.m.
April 30	at Rochester John Marshall	5 p.m.	May 12	vs. Albert Lea	5 p.m.
May 2 (doubleheader)	vs. Mankato West	12 p.m.	May 14	vs. Red Wing	7 p.m.

Good Luck This Sports Season Huskies!



Doerhoefer, Miner, Andrist & Arndt, P.A.
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

We understand small business because we are a small business

314 E. Main St., Blooming Prairie | 507-583-7258
685 W. Bridge St., Suite 6, Owatonna | 507-451-9136
133 N. Broadway, New Richland | 507-465-8100

HAVE A GREAT SEASON HUSKIES!



507-225-0865 • www.culliganwaterminnesota.com



We love OWATONNA

ONE COMMUNITY, ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES **FEDERATED INSURANCE**



Huskies golf full of talented returners

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna boys and girls golf teams both return their top athletes from the 2025 season to lead the Huskies into spring with plenty of momentum.

Huskies’ girls golf will have 2024 Class AAA state champion Carmen Jirele back atop the team’s roster for her senior campaign, with fellow talented teammates Paige Thompson (senior), Brynn Andrix (senior), Ella Schuster (junior)

and Danica Hager (eighth grade) all in the lineup as well. Jirele finished last season 12th in the Class AAA individual tournament in 2025 and was able to scoop up her state title in 2024 as a sophomore by shooting See **HUSKIES GOLF** on 17 ▶

Owatonna Boys’ & Girls’ Golf Schedule 2026

April 16	at Oneota Golf & Country Club (Boys)	1 p.m.
April 20	at Northern Hills Golf Course (Girls)	2:30 p.m.
April 20 at	Mankato Golf Club (Boys)	2:30 p.m.
April 21 at	Austin Country Club (G. Team Conference)	10 a.m.
April 22 at	Mankato Golf Club (B. Team Conference)	9 a.m.
April 23 at	Hastings Golf Club (Boys & Girls)	9 a.m.
April 28 at	Owatonna Country Club (Girls)	2:30 p.m.
April 28 at	Austin Country Club (Boys)	2:30 p.m.
May 4 at	Somerby Golf Course (Girls)	11 a.m.
May 5 at	Owatonna Country Club (Boys)	2:30 p.m.
May 5 at	Faribault Golf & Country Club (Girls)	2:30 p.m.
May 6 at	Willingers Golf Club (Girls)	10 a.m.
May 8	at Eastwood Golf Course (Boys)	11 a.m.
May 11	at Lake City Jewel Golf Club (Boys)	1 p.m.
May 11	at Red Wing Mississippi (Girls)	11:30 a.m.
May 12	at Owatonna Country Club (Boys)	1 p.m.
May 14	at Owatonna Country Club (Boys)	1 p.m.
May 19	at Albert Lea Wedgewood Cove (G. Ind. Conf.)	10 a.m.
May 19	at Eastwood Golf Course (B. Ind. Conf.)	10 a.m.
May 20	at Lake City Jewel Golf Club (Girls)	1 p.m.



Proud of our Huskies

Moving Kids Forward | Owatonna Bus Company



GOOD LUCK HUSKIES!



Steele County Drop Site: 1255 Kilworth Drive, NW • Phone: 507-256-4370 Office in Clarks Grove • 507-214-0685 - Recycling in Owatonna

Huskies boys hunting for fifth straight section title

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Much to the dismay of other Big Nine Conference and Section One teams, Owatonna track and field’s reign is nowhere near finished.

The Huskies return multiple state placers on the boys team and bring back a wealth of experienced athletes on the girls team as well.

The stacked rosters once again mean the program’s confidence is at an all-time high.

“Goals would be to win the Big Nine Conference meet and win a fifth-consecutive section championship, as well as send multiple kids to the state meet again this year,” said Owatonna boys head coach Kevin Stelter.

Highlighting Stelter’s squad is state runner-up Jordan Gleason (400-meters), state sixth-place finisher Lucas Ginskey (110-meter high hurdles) and state participants Dawson Levy, Cooper Routh and Bryce Haverkost.

However, despite bringing back a loaded roster, the Huskies will also be without some key athletes from last year’s team.

“We lost many key seniors off of last year’s squad, including: state champion Seth Johnson in hurdles, Nolan Ginskey – who was a state champion in 4x200 and four-event state participant in the 100, 200, long jump and triple jump – state shot and discus
See **HUSKIES BOYS** on 19 ►



PHOTO CREDIT MIKE OLDENBURG - OLDENBURG PHOTOGRAPHY

Owatonna Boys' & Girls' Track & Field Schedule 2026

April 17	at Two Rivers (Girls)	3:45 p.m.	May 5 (true team)	Home Meet (Both)	1:30 p.m.
April 18	at Stillwater Area (Boys)	11 a.m.	May 8	at St. Thomas Academy (Girls)	3 p.m.
April 20	at Rochester John Marshall (Both)	4:30 p.m.	May 12	at Albert Lea (Both)	4:30 p.m.
April 23	at Lakeville South (Boys)	4 p.m.	May 21	at Rochester Century (Both)	10:30 a.m.
April 24	at Hamline University (Both)	5 p.m.	(conference)		
April 27	at Austin (Both)	4:30 p.m.	May 28	at Lakeville South (Both)	1:30 p.m.
April 29	at White Bear Lake (Both)	4 p.m.	May 30	at Lakeville South (Both)	11 a.m.

INSURANCE DESIGNED WITH YOU AND YOUR DREAMS IN MIND.
CALL (507) 455-3501 TODAY TO SEE HOW I CAN HELP PROTECT WHAT MATTERS MOST.

Jessica Gruenwald, Agent
212 S Oak Ave, Owatonna
(507) 455-3501
jmeeks1@amfam.com

PROUDLY SERVING STEELE COUNTY

Brick-Meger Funeral Home & Medford Funeral Home

megercares.com | 507.451.1457

Owatonna eyes return to top of Big Nine

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Despite an up-and-down spring that saw the Huskies' boys lacrosse team win two consecutive games only once last season, the team still managed to finish second in the Big Nine Conference. This season, the team has the opportunity to right its initial wrongs from last year and prove its dominance from the start.

"We're looking to regain the title of conference champions this year and hope to make a deep run into sections. The schedule is very compet-

itive again this year, and we see a few new teams in Moorhead and Shakopee. We will play every team in our section this season except for Lakeville South,

so it will be a good measure during the season how we stack up against section opponents," said Owatonna boys Head Coach Scott Seykora.



Owatonna Boys' Lacrosse Schedule 2026

April 16	at Mankato	7 p.m.	May 2	vs. Shakopee	2 p.m.
April 18	at Lakeville North	1 p.m.	May 9	vs. Mankato	1 p.m.
April 21	vs. Simley	7:30 p.m.	May 11	at Rochester	7:30 p.m.
April 23	vs. Rochester	7:30 p.m.	May 14	vs. Northfield	7:30 p.m.
April 27	at Northfield	6:30 p.m.	May 16	vs. Moorhead	1 p.m.
April 30	at New Prague	6:30 p.m.	May 21	at Southwest Christian	5:30 p.m.

Big returning names can be found all over the lineup, but the returning strength is mainly in the team's attack and mid-field..

The Huskies' attacking unit will revolve around Wyatt Macy (42 points – 41 goals, one assist in 2025), while teammates Trey Hiatt (27 points – 13 goals, 14 assists), Ryan Lewis (19 points – 12 goals, seven as-

sists), Jared Laiho, Cooper

Aul and Brennen Schlie patrol the midfield. The dynamic duo of Macy and Hiatt should provide plenty of scoring for the team in 2025 after accounting for 54 goals in 2025.

However, there are some other names that could surprise fans with breakout seasons in 2026. "Brecken Schwichtenberg, Oliver Wottreng and Gavin Fitch look to break

into the varsity scene as more of a predominant role this year and it will be exciting to see their contributions to the team. There are some good underclassman players and there are some that will possibly earn their way as the season progresses," said Seykora.

The Huskies' next game will be on the road against Mankato on April 16 at 7 p.m.



GOOD LUCK HUSKIES!



761 FOUNDATION
Invest in Young Minds – The Community's Future
761foundation.com

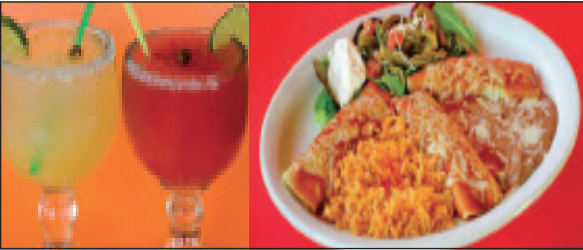
EXPECT MORE FROM AN EMPLOYEE OWNED STORE



1620 S. Cedar Ave, Owatonna
507-451-0138

PROUD SUPPORTERS OF
OWATONNA
ATHLETICS

GO HUSKIES!



160 26th St. NE • Owatonna
507-413-0819 • 507-413-0817
Hours: Monday-Sunday - 11 am - 10 pm
www.plazamorena.com

Same Great Owner,
Same Great Food,
Same Great Service!



Formerly Plaza Morena

Huskies ready to reclaim their throne

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna girls lacrosse finished 2025 with an 11-4 overall record (8-2 in conference) and finished second in the Big Nine Conference, but considering the team’s dominance in recent years, it could still be considered an off year.

The Huskies had won the Big Nine Conference outright or as co-champions in 2023 and 2024, and were hopeful for a threepeat in 2025.

The team graduated just six athletes, including 2025’s second-highest point scorer Ellery Blacker and third-highest scorer Lauren Busho, but seem ready to take the next step with plenty of elite-level scoring still on the team’s depth chart.

Despite losing the duo of Busho and Blacker, the Huskies bring back leading scorer Abby Schroht and two more of the top six total scorers from last season, accounting for 118 of the team’s 247 total points.

Paving the way for the Huskies offensively will be the trio of Addy



Schroht, Amelia Moran and Gabby Padgett.

Schroht accounted for a team-high 71 points (37 goals and 34 assists) in 2025 while Moran’s 36 points (29 goals and seven assists) was good for fourth on the team and Padgett’s 11 points (nine goals and two assists) earned her sixth.

The team will boast nine senior athletes this season, but a strong mixture of juniors and

underclassmen throughout the depth chart also bodes well for future seasons.

In goal for the Huskies will be senior standout Nora Marshall, who backstopped Owatonna to an 11-3 record last season with a 4.93 goal-against average and 64.4% save percentage in the regular season.

Owatonna will have its hands full with yet another tough conference

schedule, but the Huskies seem primed to claim the Big Nine Conference throne once again if they can find their form.

The Huskies’ next

game will be at home against Mankato on April 16 at 7:15 p.m.

*The Steele County Times sent a questionnaire to the Owatonna

girls lacrosse program, but received no response, resulting in insufficient information for a complete write up on the Huskies’ girls 2026 outlook.

Owatonna Girls Lacrosse Schedule 2026

April 16	vs. Mankato	7:15 p.m.	May 7	vs. Rochester John Marshall	7:15 p.m.
April 21	at Rochester John Marshall	7:15 p.m.	May 9	vs. Lakeville North	5:15 p.m.
April 23	at Rochester Mayo	7:15 p.m.	May 11	vs. Rochester Mayo	7:15 p.m.
April 27	vs. Northfield	7:15 p.m.	May 14	at Northfield	6:15 p.m.
April 30	at Rochester Century	7:15 p.m.	May 19	vs. Rochester Century	7:15 p.m.
May 4	at Mankato	6:45 p.m.	May 21	vs. Farmington	7:15 p.m.



Security Systems, Cameras, and More Commercial | Residential | Farm

CONTACT US
Main: 507.414.7800
Cell/Desk: 507.414.7801
info@bakerts.com
bakerts.com

TV • Smart Home • Security • Computers
Wi-Fi • Emails • and More

**STOP IN TO SEE US
NEW LOCATION**
1607 State Avenue
Owatonna MN

**BAKER
TECH
SERVICES**

Huskies golf full of talented returners

◀ **HUSKIES GOLF** from 13 a 142 across two rounds in Coon Rapids.

The Owatonna girls team also finished last season with an eighth-place team showing at state, shooting a final score of 702 over the weekend’s competition.

The program has all five starting athletes returning in 2026 for what could be a standout season for the Huskies, after qualifying for state as a team last season.

According to girls head coach Maddie Meyer, the goals for the Huskies in 2026 are to “improve consistency, play smart golf, and represent Owatonna on and off the course.”

On the boys’ side, Owatonna will be deep in numbers once again with a wealth of returning

letterwinners.

Mason Pelinka and Isaac Mobley will lead from the front as senior captains with Grady Roush (junior), Owen Kubicek (junior) and Jaxn Hacker (eighth grade) all returning as varsity starters from 2025.

Despite being the youngest athlete in the starting lineup, Hacker returns as the team’s 2025 MVP after a stellar seventh-grade season.

“He worked his way up to consistently, being our No. 1 golfer last season as a seventh grader. His lowest round last season was a three-over-par 74 in a triangular with Austin and Albert Lea at Owatonna Country Club. We are expecting Jaxn to continue improving and

push for a state tournament berth this year,” said Owatonna boys head coach Josh Woodrich.

With such strong returning numbers, Woodrich has high hopes for his 2026 squad.

“This season, we are looking to finish in the top half of the Big Nine Conference in both the mid-season and end-of-season conference tournaments,” he said.

The boys team will compete next in a meet at Oneota Golf & Country Club in Decorah, Iowa on April 16 at 1 p.m.

Meanwhile, the girls team will tee off next on April 20 at Rochester Northern Hills Golf Course for a triangular meet with Rochester Century and Mankato East at 2:30 p.m.

BP ready to rely on young battery

◀ **BP READY** from 4

According to Rutledge, some key returners include Madelyn Harvey, Bella Schiller, Neila Nelson, Grace Anderson, Aubrey Klocke, Ellie Stoen and Natalie Winzenburg.

Harvey will captain the

outfield from center field alongside Schiller and Klocke while Nelson, Anderson, Stoen and Winzenburg manage the infield.

Fifth-year head coach Cameron Rutledge will put a lot of trust in Miner and Bangert to lead the team’s

defensive efforts, but he’s hoping the early experience will pay dividends for the team down the line.

Blooming Prairie will have its next game on the road against Randolph on Thursday, April 16 at 4:30 p.m.

Tigers gain valuable varsity experience

◀ **TIGERS** from 8

ing the infield and Wegner roaming the outfield.

The talented group of four should also slot in as the team’s four best options at the plate, also supplying some advantageous speed on the base paths.

Last season was not

kind to the Tigers from a winning perspective, but the program is looking to change that in 2026.

The Tigers finished last season 5-10 overall (2-7 in conference), but will have an opportunity to build and work toward becoming competitive again in the Gopher Conference.

Medford will travel to JWP for its next game on April 16 at 4:30 p.m.

*The Steele County Times sent a questionnaire to the Medford baseball program, but received no response, resulting in insufficient information for a complete write up on the Tigers’ 2026 outlook.

Blossoms ready to contend again in 2026

◀ **BLOSSOMS** from 3

better each and every day so that we are playing our best baseball at the end of the season. We have a very competitive conference and section, which will provide for a very fun season,” said Blooming Prairie Head Coach Matt Kittelson.

Heavy hitters for this year’s team include Carsten Ingvalson (2025 all-section selection), Gabe Staloch, Brayton Ingvalson and newcomer, Jared Lee.

Lee was ruled ineligi-

ble to play for the Awesome Blossoms in 2025 due to transfer rules after leaving NRHEG but will take the field for the team as a 2026 captain alongside Carsten Ingvalson.

Lee figures to serve as a primary arm at pitcher, while Carsten Ingvalson plays catcher and mixes into the bullpen.

Staloch will also earn innings on the mound but will spend most games captaining the infield from the shortstop position.

According to Kittel-

son, the plan for 2025 is simple: fight for the Gopher Conference and section titles.

“We expect to be in the mix in both our conference and the section this season. In the Gopher Conference, Randolph and Hayfield will have strong teams. In Section 1A, Hayfield, Lyle-Pacelli, and Southland will be top contenders,” he said.

Blooming Prairie takes the field next for a home game against Randolph on Thursday, April 16 at 4:30 p.m.

HOME OF THE HONEST MECHANICS!



Mon-Fri 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

1125 S. Oak Ave. • Owatonna
 507-431-1123 • www.Honest1Owatonna.com

2026 Owatonna Athletes to Watch

BY ROY KOENIG
SPORTS ANALYST

Tee it up. On your marks. Batter up. Let the spring sports begin.

Girls Golf

Owatonna High School coach Maddie Meyer states, “We have a great group of girls returning this year, which is very exciting.” Carmen Jirele, state champ in 2024 and an Augustana commit, and Paige Thompson, committed to Colorado Christian, lead the way.

Danica Hager is a “rising young standout.” Brynn Andrix is a “dependable varsity contributor.” Ella Schuster “provides important lineup depth and continues to trend upward.”

Boys Golf

The Huskies return their MVP from 2025, eighth grader Jaxn Hacker, who coach Josh Woodrich expects “to continue improving and push for a state tournament berth



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna's Carmen Jirele reads the green as rain falls on Bunker Hills Golf Course in Coon Rapids during the Class AAA state meet. Jirele finished the 2025 state meet in 12th place out of all golfers with a final scorecard of 156, but won in 2024 with a final score of 142.

this year.” Mason Pelinka had the second-lowest average last season.

Isaac Mobley was the Most Improved Golfer last season and “posted some of the most consistent scores on the team.” Grady Roush should “hone his talent and provide us with consistently low scores this season,” according to Woodrich.

Boys Track and Field

Among the 100 athletes are many with state meet experience: Jordan Gleason, second in the 400; Lucas Ginskey, sixth in the 110 hurdles, and also ran the 300 hurdles; Cooper Routh, high jump; Brice Haverkost, 4x800 relay; Dawson Levy, 3,200 in track, plus state cross-country; Ayoub Farah, top 10 at state cross-country, for a team that also ran at state.

The Huskies have won the section title four straight years.

Girls Track and Field

OHS has athletes back with state meet experience,



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna's Lucas Ginskey beats a competitor over the hurdles in his 110-meter high hurdles race. Ginskey placed sixth behind teammate Seth Johnson (second) in his first-ever state tournament as a freshman.

including Kyleah Miller, a fifth-place finisher in shot put in 2024; Dylann Norrid, pole vault last season; and Kendra Miller and Lilly Kotas, part of the 4-by-100 state relay in 2025.

Distance events are bolstered by members of the OHS girls cross country team that ran at state last fall.

Baseball

A senior-laden class will fill the diamond at Dartt's Park. However, train your eyes on junior Nolan Rolloff. “He’s one of the top players in the Big Nine Conference,” says coach Tate Cummins. “He’s coming off a monster sophomore season, hitting over .400 and collecting over 30 hits.”

Pitcher/catcher/third baseman Jace Ulrich is “one of our most versatile players.” Outfielder Wyatt Frantesl “came up with a number of big hits that allowed the Legion team to

make it to state.” Lead off batter Bentley Arvig is “a threat offensively from the left side of the box.”

Other returning everyday players include middle infielder/pitcher Will Radel, outfielder Isaiah Farwell, and pitcher/third baseman AJ Ulrich.

Softball

The Huskies will field a young team, though shortstop Kendra Bogen enters her fifth year of varsity. “She’s seen it all,” said coach Jeremy Moran. “She is that anchor on our defense. She’s one of our top offensive players and she does a lot of good things from that leadership perspective.”

Leighton Nelson returns at catcher, “That’s the position that sees everybody on the defensive side and is an important part in terms of communicating things on the defensive side and working with the pitchers.”



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna baseball's Nolan Rolloff fires a pitch toward home plate against Lakeville North. Rolloff and the Huskies finished last season 18-6 and will be in the hunt for a section run again in 2026.

Boys Lacrosse

The senior captains give Owatonna veteran leadership at multiple levels. Wyatt Macy, at attack, led the team in scoring in 2025. Trey Hiatt at midfield is a “dynamic player and plays a huge role in the transition game,” said coach Scott Seykora.

Midfielder Cooper Aul is a “very physical player and one of the hardest workers on the field.” Logan Risser leads the defense. Eighth-grader Liam Lewis will be the full-time goalie.

Girls Lacrosse

OHS has three players who have committed to play college lacrosse. Goalie Nora Marshall (Benedictine College) went 11-3, giving up fewer than five goals a game in 2025. Addy Schroht (St. Benedict's) led the team in scoring with 37 goals and 34 assists. Ella Marshall (Hamline) had nine goals and one assist.

Boys Tennis

After graduating their top singles and doubles players, Owatonna “will look to our returning letter winners to fill those varsity positions,” said coach Curt Matejcek. That includes seniors Stephen Sennott and Graeme Spinks; juniors Kjel Borkenhagen, Owen Kaytor, Asher Penn and Landon Rahn; sophomores Tristan Gibart and Cooper Spinks; and freshman August Penn.

Clay Target

A roster of about 85 athletes includes a pair of All-State shooters in Jackson Davis and Aiden Anderson, who competed at the state meet. Tori Koziolk was the top female in the conference last spring. Eight others also earned All-Conference.

Coach Mike Kingland said the team “is very senior-class heavy, with most of them having four-plus years of experience.”

2026 Gopher athletes to watch

◀ **ATHLETES** from 7 er) and Brayton Ingvalson (first/third base).

All four athletes are base-stealing threats and showcase the ability to put the ball in play, as both Ingvalsons and Staloch were key players on a team that made a deep section run last season.

NRHEG will benefit from a strong senior leadership core, led by Owen Wayne (shortstop/pitcher) and Wyatt Larson (catcher).

The duo are the longest active members of the Panthers' baseball team and will bring a wealth of experience to a team currently looking to get back into winning form.

Medford's strength will be in its returning numbers and pitching.

The Tigers have multiple returning starters – Landon Seiler, Justin Limon, James Wegner, Kyle Vatsaas and August Zacharias – back this season.

Softball

Nearly every Steele County softball team is going through a rebuilding year after graduating a host of seniors in 2025, but the team least affected is NRHEG.

The Panthers bring back seven, in Addy Stadheim (catcher), Chloe Stork (first base), Kyera Eustice (outfield), Olivia Berg (shortstop),

Izley Boerner (pitcher/infield), Brooklyn Sommer (pitcher/utility) and Ezra Boener (catcher/infield).

Blooming Prairie's roster lost a few key athletes in Catelyn Bartlett, Ella Smith and Mia Johnson, but was left largely intact from 2025.

According to Blooming Prairie head coach Cam Rutledge, some key returners include Madelyn Harvey, Bella Schiller, Neila Nelson, Gracelyn Anderson, Aubrey Klocke, Ellie Stoen and Natalie Winzenburg.

The Tigers have Jade Laue (catcher), Aleah Vogt (outfield), Lanie Chambers (infield) and Melia Schema (pitcher) back and ready to take on their normal roles.

Laue and Vogt bring some key talent to the Tigers' lineup as five-year starters for the program.

Golf

Big names to watch for on the links include Blooming Prairie's Coen Abel, Drew Reinke and Aubry Alwes.

The duo of Reinke and Abel had a nice run in 2025, with Reinke making it to state as an individual and Abel missing out on the state tournament by a narrow margin.

Both seem likely to have repeat success in 2025 as they hunt to not only make state, but thrive on the big stage.



PHOTO CREDIT MIKE OLDENBURG - OLDENBURG PHOTOGRAPHY

Huskies boys hunting for fifth straight section title

◀ **HUSKIES BOYS** from 14 podium-finisher Zach Dahnert, state high jumper Terrell Miller, 4x200-relay champion Luke Webber, and state 1,600-meter and 4x800-relay member Jack Sorenson. While losing these athletes is difficult, we need to move on to our current roster of athletes who need to step

up and fill their shoes," said Stelter.

On the girls' side, Owatonna will look to rebuild after losing two state qualifying seniors in Halle Theis and Jozie Johnson.

Names to watch out for will be seniors and 2025 state qualifier Dylann Norrid (pole vault), as well as state 4x100 relay

competitor Kendra Miller (sprints), and 2024 state fifth-place shot put athlete Kyleah Miller.

Owatonna's girls team will compete next at Two Rivers High School in Mendota Heights on April 17 at 3:45 p.m.

Meanwhile, the boys team will hit the track next at Stillwater Area

High School on April 18 at 11 a.m.

*The Steele County Times sent a questionnaire to the Owatonna girls track and field program, but received no response, resulting in insufficient information for a complete write up on the Huskies' girls 2026 outlook.

NRHEG will rely on senior leaders



PHOTO CREDIT DEBRA BENTLY

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

NRHEG baseball is hoping to get back to its winning ways of recent memory after a tough 5-13 season in 2025.

First-year head coach Marcus Fisher's Panthers have a solid core of seniors, but a conference schedule packed with talented teams will make

it tough sledding for NRHEG this season.

NRHEG's senior leadership includes Owen Wayne, Jordan Brouwers, Ryan Schlaak and Wyatt Larson.

Wayne will be an essential leader by captaining the infield at shortstop and contributing as a starting pitcher.

Schlaak brings a big bat to the lineup and will play outfield.

Larson will hold down his role as starting catcher with Brouwers handling designated hitter duties.

The team will have to

rely on its current senior class to step into their full-time roles fast after losing seven athletes to graduation in 2025.

The sophomore class is also packed with plenty of talent as Calvin Nissen (shortstop/second base), Sean Lassahn (utility)

and Dakota Schlaak (outfield) will also see significant innings as underclassmen.

The trio are not only fast, but provide reliable bats and should see action near the front-end to the middle of the Panthers' lineup.

NRHEG's next game will be on the road at Hayfield on April 16 at 4:30 p.m.

NRHEG Baseball Schedule 2026							
April 16	at Hayfield	4:30 p.m.	April 30	at Medford	4:30 p.m.		
April 20	vs. JWP	4:30 p.m.	May 7	at WEM	4:30 p.m.		
April 24	vs. Mayer Lutheran	4:30 p.m.	May 8	vs. Maple River	5 p.m.		
April 25	vs. International Falls	2:30 p.m.	May 11	vs. Randolph	4:30 p.m.		
April 28	at Blooming Prairie	4:30 p.m.	May 14	at Triton	4:30 p.m.		

Go Panthers!

LERBERG'S FOODS

Steele County's Oldest Grocery Store!

Since 1901 120 5th Ave, Ellendale 507-684-2472

Like us on Facebook Visit our website: lerbergsfoods.com

Mon-Sat
8 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Sunday
10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

*A great place
for a great life!*

**SCHEDULE A TOUR TO VIEW
OUR APARTMENTS & LEARN
ABOUT AMENITIES**

Monday-Friday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm

507-684-3026

Go Panthers! 903 Calverly Ct. • Ellendale, MN 56025

Panthers return majority of starters

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

NRHEG softball will make the move down to Class A from AA this season, marking unfamiliar territory for the Panthers.

“In my 27 years of coaching, we’ve always been in 2AA. This will be the first year of 1A,” said NRHEG head coach Wendy Schultz.

However, despite the move down in class, NRHEG will still be chock full of talent that kept it competitive amongst larger programs.

The Panthers return seven starters in Addy Stadheim (catcher), Chloe Stork (first base), Kyera Eustice (outfield), Olivia Berg (shortstop), Izley Boerner (pitcher/infield), Brooklyn Sommer (pitcher/utility) and Ezra Boener (catcher/infield).

NRHEG will be without one of its standout athletes as Camryn VanMaldeghem (infield) tore her ACL during the Panthers’ section championship basketball game during the winter season.

However, the team will benefit from VanMalde-



PHOTO CREDIT DEBRA BENTLY

ghem’s twin sister Quinn joining the program for her first spring season after switching to softball from track and field.

Izley Boerner will also give the team a huge boost by making her return to the lineup after missing the entire 2025 season due to a torn ACL during the 2024-25 winter basketball season.

In terms of strengths

for this year’s team, Schultz recognized her athletes as having four major strengths: a hard-working mentality, great attitudes, speed and strong team chemistry.

“Our goal is to grow and improve all season long, building toward playing our best and most competitive softball at playoff time,” said Schultz.

NRHEG finished last season 4-6 in conference play and 5-13 overall and will look to improve upon

its mark with the majority of its athletes gaining another valuable year of experience.

The Panthers’ next game will be at home against Hayfield on April 16 at 4:30 p.m.

NRHEG Softball Schedule 2026

April 16	vs. Hayfield	4:30 p.m.	May 5	vs. A-C/G-E	4:30 p.m.
April 20	at JWP	4:30 p.m.	May 7	vs. WEM	4:30 p.m.
April 27	at St. James	4:30 p.m.	May 8	vs. Austin	4:30 p.m.
April 28	vs. Blooming Prairie	4:30 p.m.	May 11	at Randolph	4:30 p.m.
April 30	vs. Medford	4:30 p.m.	May 14	vs. Triton	4:30 p.m.
May 1	at Kenyon-Wanamingo	4:30 p.m.			

Good Luck This Sports Season Panthers!

Doerhoefer, Miner,
Andrist & Arndt, P.A.
CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

We understand small business because we are a small business

314 E. Main St., Blooming Prairie | 507-583-7258
685 W. Bridge St., Suite 6, Owatonna | 507-451-9136
133 N. Broadway, New Richland | 507-465-8100

GOOD LUCK PANTHERS!

THOMPSON
SANITATION INC.

Steele County Drop Site: 1255 Kilworth Drive, NW • Phone: 507-256-4370
Office in Clarks Grove • 507-214-0685 - Recycling in Owatonna

Numbers could hamper Panthers



SUBMITTED PHOTO



SUBMITTED PHOTO

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

NRHEG track and field will have plenty of stellar athletes returning in 2026, though the team will be light in numbers, with just 20 athletes on the roster.

Both teams will have 10 athletes, but will struggle to remain competitive without being able to fill every event on the heat sheet.

“Staying healthy is always key to the success of a season. When we can

get multiple point scorers in events, that will give us the best chance at being competitive within the conference,” said NRHEG co-head coach Larry Nydegger. “The younger and new team members will have to discover and excel in their roles to help the team be successful,”

Making matters more difficult for the girls team is the reality that three-time state qualifier Quinn VanMaldeghem elected to join NRHEG’s softball program for her senior

season instead of coming out for track.

However, NRHEG’s girls team will still have three 2025 state qualifiers on roster with Kylie Olson (shot put), Gabby Schlaak (high jump) and Anika Laldie (high jump) returning.

Julieann Wobbrock is another name to watch out for as she looks to earn her first trip to the state meet in the 1,600-meter race after a strong cross-country season.

On the boys’ side, distance specialist Jacob Karl

and field athlete Lavon Jewison are names to watch.

Karl will be a terror for opposing runners in the 1,600- and 3,200-meter races while NRHEG high jump record-holder Jewison will look to improve his mark while also contributing in the long- and

triple-jump events.

“I think our girls and boys can finish in the top half of the conference this year. I believe our high jumping group is among the best in the section,” Nydegger said. “Last year, Anika, Gabby and Lavon all cleared state-qualifying standard

for 2026. Jacob and Julieann are coming off very successful cross-country seasons and should challenge for top conference times and perhaps even greater things.”

Both teams will compete next at Blooming Prairie High School on April 21 at 4:15 p.m.

NRHEG Boys' & Girls' Track & Field Schedule 2026

April 21	at Blooming Prairie	4:15 p.m.	May 9	at Blooming Prairie	10 a.m.
April 28	at JWP	4:30 p.m.	(conference)		
April 30	Home Meet	4:30 P.M.	May 12	at Waseca	4:30 p.m.
May 5 (true team)	at JWP	3 p.m.	May 14	at Waseca (Girls Only)	4:30 p.m.

Lerbergs Fitness, Car Wash & Coin Laundry

Have A Great Year Panthers!

 118 5th Ave • Ellendale, MN 507-684-2471  

**CALL BROZ ELECTRIC FOR ALL YOUR ELECTRICAL NEEDS!**
Residential • Farm • Commercial
Good Luck Panthers! 
24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICE **507-414-1076 • Claremont**

Panther golfers ready for big 2026



PHOTO CREDIT DEBRA BENTLY



PHOTO CREDIT DEBRA BENTLY

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

NRHEG boys golf is coming off a learning year again in 2025 and hoping to capitalize on a more experienced roster heading into this spring. The Panthers will have the most opportunity for improvement with a solid starting six that head coach Brad Root is excited to see compete.

“We had a good season last year and the boys got some good experience, so we are pretty well set on six varsity spots. We will again have small numbers on the boys side, so someone may emerge as a surprise to help us,” Root said. “We did not have many junior varsity meets last year so the non-varsity players didn’t get much meet experience. The varsity

boys have pretty good golf skills, but need to work on the mental side of the game and course mangement this year, along with their consistency.” Returning letter winners looking to lead the way for the Panthers are Shan Hansen, Tyler Kress, Chase Hanson, Reid Sandry, Braxton Arnold and Matthew Williams.

The NRHEG boys will look to build upon their 10-11 record and 12th-place finish in sub-sections. The Panthers girls squad will be light in numbers this year with just five athletes: Alexis Olson, Olivia Wilkenson, Mya Wilson, Addison Bauleke and Hailey Staska. Olson and Wilkenson are the only returning

letter-winners, meaning the rest of the team will have to adapt quickly to the varsity game as the season progresses. “We’re hoping for a good showing at the conference tournament and sub section,” Root said. “We hope we have some all-conference honors, as well as advancement to the section tournament. The girls need to be mentally tough and

focused this year. We are counting on continued improvement in all our girls, making sure they are prepared for whatever weather conditions exist, as well as dealing with situations on the course will be a priority.” NRHEG’s season tees off on April 16 at 4:30 p.m.when the two teams travel to Oak View Golf Course in Alden to face the USC Rebels.

NRHEG Boys' & Girls' Golf Schedule 2026			
April 16	at Oak View Golf Course (Both)	4:30 p.m.	
April 23	at Prairie Ridge Golf Course (Both)	4:30 p.m.	
April 28 (conference)	at Wedgewood Cove Golf Club (Both)	1 p.m.	
May 7 (conference)	at Mankato North Links Golf Course (Both)	10 a.m.	
May 12 (conference)	at Austin Country Club (Both)	10 a.m.	
May 21 (conference)	at Waseca Lakeside Golf Course (Both)	1 p.m.	



GOOD LUCK PANTHERS!

NRHEG IS PROUD OF YOU!

13TH ANNUAL

Power of the Purse

A FUNDRAISER FOR
**Dolly Parton's
IMAGINATION
LIBRARY**
BORN LEARNING TRAILS & LANTERN

Tuesday,
June 9th
5:30 to 8:30 PM

Owatonna Country Club
1991 Lemond Road
Owatonna, MN

Let's
Read!



**WOMEN
UNITED**

Live & Silent Auctions
Wine Pull & Raffle
Dinner & Cocktails



Event Sponsor:



\$60 per person
Funds raised support Early Childhood
Literacy and Development.

www.unitedwaysteelecounty.org/women-united



Main Street Dental Clinics

comfortable dentistry

Blooming Prairie 405 E Main St 507-583-2141	Owatonna 1170 E Frontage Rd 507-455-1000	New Richland 132 North Broadway 507-463-0502
Rochester 3110 Wellner Dr NE 507-536-7700	Mankato 287 St Andrews Dr 507-720-0250	

mainstreetdentalclinics.com

WE'VE GOT BETTER THINGS TO DO



MOST

Blossoms would rather
NOT drink alcohol when
hanging out with friends.



BPAC
BLOOMING POSITIVE ACTION COALITION

GRANT HOSTED BY UWSC. FUNDED BY MN DHS BHA.
SOURCE: 2024PCN SURVEY, N=193 GRADES 9-12, BPPS