

WINTER SPORTS PREVIEW 2025-26



Special Supplement of the Steele County Times December 2025

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BP enters rebuild with high hopes

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

After a trip to the section championship game in 2024 and reaching the semifinal round in 2025, Blooming Prairie figures to be in a rebuild year after losing all but two athletes from its 2024 core. The Awesome Blossoms lost Brady Kittelson, Cooper Cooke, Jacob Pauly, Carter Bishop and Jack Bruns to graduation, leaving only junior guard Gabe Staloch and senior guard Bradley Boyd as the last two

members of the section championship team. However, Blooming Prairie Head Coach Cam Rutledge sees no reason why the Awesome Blossoms won't have high standards for this winter given the talent he has returning. "Moving up to Class AA after spending the last two seasons in Class A will be a challenge for us this season, but we think we have a team that can compete with everyone on our schedule and look to make a run at the end of the year. We return

two starters from last year's team along with another very good player who was on junior varsity last year because of the transfer rule. Overall, our expectations are high and we are expecting to have another good season," said Rutledge. Staloch and Boyd figure to make up the team's guard pairing and both bring well-rounded skill-sets to the roster. The former averaged a stellar 16.6 points, 5.3 rebounds, 3.2 assists and 2.0 steals per game last

See **REBUILD** on 19 ►



Blooming Prairie Boys Basketball Schedule 2025-26

Dec. 5	7:15 p.m.	at NRHEG	Jan. 16	7 p.m.	at Medford
Dec. 8	7 p.m.	vs. Schaeffer Academy	Jan. 20	7 p.m.	at Bethlehem Academy
Dec. 11	7:15 p.m.	at Lyle-Pacelli	Jan. 23	7 p.m.	vs. JWP
Dec. 13	4 p.m.	vs. Fillmore Central	Jan. 26	7 p.m.	vs. Randolph
Dec. 16	7 p.m.	vs. Bethlehem Academy	Jan. 29	7:15 p.m.	at USC
Dec. 19	7 p.m.	at Randolph	Feb. 2	7:15 p.m.	at Hayfield
Dec. 22	7:15 p.m.	at Kingsland	Feb. 5	7 p.m.	vs. WEM
Jan. 6	7 p.m.	vs. Hayfield	Feb. 6	7:15 p.m.	at Spring Grove
Jan. 8	7 p.m.	vs. Triton	Feb. 10	7 p.m.	vs. Wabasha/Kellogg
Jan. 10	3 p.m.	vs. St. Clair	Feb. 12	7:15 p.m.	at Triton
Jan. 13	7 p.m.	at Kenyon-Wanamingo	Feb. 17	7 p.m.	vs. Southland
			Feb. 20	7 p.m.	vs. Kenyon-Wanamingo

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Moving kids forward



BP's 'youth movement' ready for next step

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Bloomington girls basketball was a young team that lacked varsity experience in 2024-25 and it showed on the team's record as it finished 7-19 overall.

However, the Awesome Blossoms will feature two key seniors on its varsity lineup with Claire Schwarz

and Ella Salinas returning to lead a team that is ready to take the next step.

"We started the youth movement last year starting two eighth graders. We definitely went through some growing pains, but in the end, we felt our team continued to improve throughout the year. Fast forward to this year and what we expect... Obviously, we feel with the experi-

ence last year, we should be better. With that being said, we have a lot of teams on our schedule returning many key players. We hope to be more competitive this year and chisel out a few more wins," said Bloomington Head Coach John Worke.

Headlining the Awesome Blossoms' 2025-26 roster will be Schwarz
See **MOVEMENT** on 19 ▶



BP Girls Basketball Schedule 2025					
Dec. 4	7 p.m.	vs. NRHEG	Jan. 20	7:15 p.m.	vs. Bethlehem Academy
Dec. 9	6 p.m.	at Grand Meadow	Jan. 22	7:15 p.m.	at Southland
Dec. 11	7 p.m.	vs. Pine Island	Jan. 23	7:15 p.m.	at JWP
Dec. 13	2:30 p.m.	vs. Fillmore Central	Jan. 26	7 p.m.	at Randolph
Dec. 16	7 p.m.	at Bethlehem Academy	Jan. 29	7 p.m.	vs. USC
Dec. 19	7 p.m.	vs. Randolph	Feb. 2	7 p.m.	at Hayfield/Schaeffer Academy
Dec. 23	7:30 p.m.	at Tri-City United	Feb. 6	7:15 p.m.	at WEM
Jan. 8	7:15 p.m.	at Triton	Feb. 10	7 p.m.	at Alden-Conger/Glenville-Emmons
Jan. 10	1:30 p.m.	vs. St. Clair	Feb. 12	7 p.m.	vs. Triton
Jan. 13	7 p.m.	vs. Kenyon-Wanamingo	Feb. 19	7 p.m.	vs. Maple River
Jan. 15	7 p.m.	vs. Kingsland			

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Westfield is young and hungry

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

After a couple of seasons contending for the top of the Gopher Conference pack, Westfield wrestling will have to rely on some younger talent to keep itself afloat.

According to co-head coach David Lassahn, the Razorbacks are full of talented young wrestlers, and will rely heavily on their early-lineup athletes.

“We will be a young team this season, and will rely on our lower weights to get us off to a great start in dual meets. Staying healthy will also be key, as we don’t have a lot of depth in the upper weights.,” said Lassahn.

Westfield will be without some key athletes this season after state runner-up and all-time program wins leader Bo Zwiener and

fellow state entrants Alex Lea and Gage Mullenbach all graduated in 2025.

Injuries have already begun to plague the team as well.

“We will be missing two of our top wrestlers in Cannon Wacek and Wyatt Arndt. They both suffered injuries during football. So, we will be looking for some new guys in the lineup to step up,” said Lassahn.

However, rising in the ranks for the Razorbacks are names such as Derek Miner and Bentley Miller.

Miner returns as a sophomore coming off of a stellar 31-7 freshman season that saw him place third in sections at 114 pounds. He figures to make a difference at a new, heavier weight this season.

Miller also returns as a sophomore and will be looking to make a deep section run after being



forced out of post-season competition due to injury.

Other names to watch out for include eighth-grader Elijah Butteris and seventh-grader Easton Busho.

“Our goal is to improve each day, and give ourselves a chance to be competing for a section title at the end of the year,” said Lassahn.

The Razorbacks finished last season 3-3 in conference action and 18-19 overall.

Westfield’s first dual will be held at Blooming Prairie High School against WEM/JWP on Thursday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m.

Westfield Wrestling Schedule 2025-26

Dec. 4	7 p.m.	vs. WEM/JWP (BPHS)	Jan. 9	7 p.m.	at Rochester Century
Dec. 11	7 p.m.	at NRHEG	Jan. 13	5 p.m.	at Maple River/USC
Dec. 13	9:30 a.m.	at Byron	Jan. 17	9 a.m.	Home Invitational (HHS)
Dec. 16	7 p.m.	vs. GMLOKS (HHS)	Jan. 22	7 p.m.	vs. Triton
Dec. 20	TBD	at Northwood-Kensett (Iowa)	Jan. 24	9 a.m.	at Rochester Century
Dec. 30	8:30 a.m.	at North High School – St. Paul	Jan. 27	5 p.m.	vs. Fillmore Central & Pine Island (HHS)
Jan. 2	5 p.m.	at NRHEG	Jan. 29	7 p.m.	at Austin
Jan. 8	5 p.m.	at Kenyon-Wanamingo	Feb. 5	7 p.m.	at Medford



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Steele Sports

JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

The snow was late to the season, but winter sports have already been back in full swing.

Gopher Conference athletes to watch

It's time to head inside, avoid the cold, and watch your favorite athletes hit the courts, rinks and mats.

Here's who to look out for this winter:

Boys basketball

Blooming Prairie boys basketball is coming off

of a section semifinal run last season and brings back some standout names to try and make another deep run this year.

Leading the Awesome Blossoms will be senior guard sophomore guard Gabe Staloch, senior guard Bradley Boyd and NRHEG transfer Jared Lee.

Adding some extra height and physicality will be junior forward Connor Cooke.

NRHEG boys basketball has a few returning names to watch out for in junior center Lavon Jewison, junior guard Brendan Schmidt and sophomore guard Calvin Nissen.

The Panthers will have plenty of speed and pure shooting ability, and will have Jewison's height in the post as well.

Medford boys basketball

will be led by the tandem of Landon Seiler, Orion Heintz and John Hora.

The Tigers will look to utilize the athleticism of Seiler and shooting of Heintz, while trying to feed the ball down low to use Hora's size and length.

Girls basketball

NRHEG girls basketball will feature a strong roster of returning talent with Camryn and Quinn VanMaldeghem coming back to the team after helping lead the Panthers to a state tournament berth.

The twins have a rare mixture of size and speed that could make them dangerous to guard anywhere on the court.

Chloe Stork will also return to full-time action and have a pivotal role in the post after the team lost center Kylie Olson to



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

NRHEG guard Camryn VanMaldeghem drives past a Providence Academy defender at the state tournament last season. VanMaldeghem and her twin sister, Quinn, will be the Panthers' senior leaders this season on a team hoping to get back to the state tournament.

injury before the season.

Blooming Prairie will have a younger lineup again with two freshman – Elaine Schwarz and Emmerson Nelson – playing pivotal roles on this year's roster, but the Awesome Blossoms will also be able to bank on familiar faces Claire Schwarz and Ella Salinas for crucial minutes this season.

Claire Schwarz and Nelson will run the point while Elaine Schwarz and Salinas float around the post, offering the Awesome Blossoms a balanced attack.

Wrestling

Westfield wrestling is in rebuild year after losing multiple big names, but some serious talent in the lighter weights comes back with Derek Miner and Bentley Miller on roster.

The former finished last season 31-7 and third at sections, while the latter was on pace for a

shot at a deep section run before injury.

Second-year Medford Head Coach Trevor Erler lost some big names to graduation last spring, but he has a wealth of hungry wrestlers in James Wegner, Connor Wilson, Tanner Milewski and Luther Johannes coming up in the ranks.

Wilson is the team's lone senior and nearly made an appearance at state last season after falling in second overtime in his section semifinal match.

Meanwhile, the junior duo of Milewski and Wegner will be on pace for breakout seasons after having worked with some talented practice partners in years past.

NRHEG wrestling will rely on two state entrants as the team's leaders with Ryan Schlaak and Graham Jacobson returning.



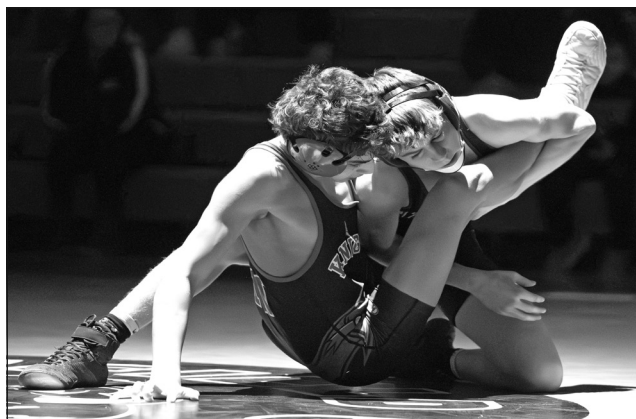
STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

NRHEG standout wrestler Ryan Schlaak manhandles his opponent at the state tournament last year. Schlaak will be the Panthers' leading wrestler this season as a two-time state entrant.



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Blooming Prairie guard Gabe Staloch drives past a Kenyon-Wanamingo defender in last season's section quarterfinal game. Staloch burst onto the scene as Blooming Prairie's starting point guard as a freshman and will be turning heads again as the team's spotlight player in his junior season.



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Westfield's Derek Miner tangles with his Kenyon-Wanamingo opponent. Miller and teammate Derek Miner will be Westfield's top two wrestlers on a roster that is rebuilding after losing a ton of firepower.

Medford ready to take the next step

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

After rejoining the Gopher Conference in 2024-25 following a year hiatus to develop athletes in 2023, the Medford Tigers had a rough go, finishing last season 0-27. The Tigers were short on varsity experience

last season, and although the team lacks big numbers again this season, Medford should be ready to compete for some wins. “Goals and expectations should be to get some conference and some non-conference wins this year. We are returning guys who played

big minutes last year and that have been playing varsity for three years now. Combining that experience with a couple of new players and a few players ready to make the jump to bigger varsity minutes it is time to put it all together and compete in more games this year,” See **NEXT STEP** on 19 ►



Medford Boys Basketball Schedule 2025-26					
Dec. 5	7 p.m.	vs. Bethlehem Academy	Jan. 15	7 p.m.	at Bethlehem Academy
Dec. 8	7 p.m.	at St. Clair	Jan. 16	7 p.m.	vs. Blooming Prairie
Dec. 9	7 p.m.	at Triton	Jan. 20	7 p.m.	at NRHEG
Dec. 12	7 p.m.	vs. Cleveland	Jan. 23	7 p.m.	at Kenyon-Wanamingo
Dec. 15	7 p.m.	vs. Parnassus Preparatory School	Jan. 26	7 p.m.	vs. Le Roy-Ostrander
Dec. 16	7 p.m.	vs. NRHEG	Jan. 27	7 p.m.	vs. USC
Dec. 18	7 p.m.	at USC	Jan. 29	7 p.m.	vs. Hayfield
Dec. 22	7 p.m.	at Alden-Conger	Feb. 2	7 p.m.	at WEM
Dec. 30	6:30 p.m.	at Lyle	Feb. 6	7 p.m.	at Randolph
Jan. 6	7 p.m.	vs. WEM	Feb. 13	7 p.m.	vs. JWP
Jan. 9	7 p.m.	at JWP	Feb. 17	7 p.m.	vs. Schaeffer Academy
Jan. 13	7 p.m.	vs. MN Academy for the Deaf	Feb. 19	7 p.m.	vs. Nicollet
			Feb. 20	7:15 p.m.	at Tri-City United

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Medford aims to get back to winning ways

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Medford Head Coach Trevor Erler steps into his second season on the job with a light roster of just 16 wrestlers, but he is ready to turn his wrestling room into a winning squad.

With one senior, Erler’s job will be to get his younger guys up to speed as quickly as possible to prepare his inexperienced wrestlers for varsity battle grounds.

“Medford is looking to build off successful moments in 2025 to catapult into 2026 with a stronger, faster and improved team. We expect to lean on lessons learned last season and leverage the experience gained to earn some respect within the conference and section,” said Erler.

The Tigers finished last season 2-14 in duals,

meaning there is plenty of room for improvement.

With holes in the lineup to fill after a big graduating class, Erler already knows who his main athletes are who will have to step up for their team.

“James Wegner was voted as a team captain last season as a sophomore. His dedication to the sport was on full display this summer... He’s more physical, explosive, and more experienced as a wrestler than almost anyone in the room. Tanner Milewski learned exceptional technique from state place-winner, Kaden Harfmann, as his practice partner last year... He is relentless in scoring from anywhere in matches. He has a fierce drive and passion to succeed, which will make him a state entrant before graduation. Luther Johannes is a physical freak. He dedicated the off-

season to participating in jiu-jitsu training and spent his time in the weight room. He put on 15 pounds of muscle, and though young in his career, he has the potential and drive to be a perennial state entrant and place winner. Conor Wilson is the only senior on the team. He was a second overtime period away from making the state tournament last season. His weight class graduated some superior talent and his experience will gain him wins this season with an expected state entrant berth,” said Erler of his guys.

As for the season’s goals, the objective remains simple.

“Double our number of wins from last season,” said Erler.

Medford’s next matchup will be a home duel with NRHEG on Thursday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m.



COURTESY KARI THOLE - VENTURE PORTRAITS

Medford Wrestling Schedule 2025-26

Dec. 4	7 p.m.	vs. NRHEG	Jan. 10	10 a.m.	at Buffalo
Dec. 13	8 a.m.	at Northfield	Jan. 13	5 p.m.	at St. Charles
Dec. 18	7 p.m.	at Triton	Jan. 15	7 p.m.	vs. Kenyon-Wanamingo
Dec. 19	12 p.m.	at Rochester Civic Center	Jan. 22	7 p.m.	at WEM/JWP
Dec. 20	10 a.m.	at Rochester Civic Center	Jan. 24	10 a.m.	at Lake City
Jan. 6	5 p.m.	at Le Sueur-Henderson	Jan. 27	5 p.m.	at St. Clair
Jan. 8	5 p.m.	at Highland Park	Jan. 29	7 p.m.	at Maple River/USC
			Feb. 5	7 p.m.	vs. Westfield

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Owatonna graduates entire starting five

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna Head Coach Josh Williams has seen it all in his 22 years at the helm, but the 2025-26 season will be an entirely different ball game as he has to replace his entire starting five from last season.

The Huskies will be without Nolan Ginskey, Cole Kruschke, Jackson Mottl, Darian Stransky and Zach Haarstad due to graduation in 2025, leaving Williams to find his next standout athletes on a roster that includes four seniors, 11 juniors and a tryout process for 32 sophomores.

“I love our guys. Yes, we are green and inexperienced, but I do feel we have quality senior leadership as well as some depth and talent in our juniors and sophomores.

How we blend those three grades... mature and come together as a group... and how hard we compete will determine a lot with regards to our success. We preach a lot to be at our best in February and March, and we hope and expect that to be the case this season. Our learning curve will be great from the beginning of the year to the end,” said Williams.

Leading the Huskies this season will be returners Will Halverson and Gavin Burmeister.

The latter was the team’s sixth man who came in to supply strong guard play, but will now be asked to be a full-time contributor on both ends of the court.

Meanwhile, Halverson was the team’s primary relief at the post position and will take on the role of the team’s center.

According to Williams, other names to watch out



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

for include junior guard Willie Moore, junior forward Brendan Klecker and sophomore guard Cooper Routh.

Regardless of who steps on the court, expectations for the program remain the same.

“I expect us to compete with unrelenting effort every night... Play with great pace and tempo on the offensive end and share the ball willingly to be as successful as we can. If we do those things, I

hope we can surprise some teams this year and exceed where we are predicted to fall in both the Big Nine Conference and Section 1AAAA.,” said Williams.

Captaining the Huskies in 2025-26 will be the

senior duo of Burmeister and Halverson.

Owatonna finished 10-10 in conference and 14-14 overall last season, and will look to improve on those marks.

Williams will also aim

to earn a piece of Owatonna history as well, as he sits just 19 wins away from 400.

Owatonna’s next game will be on the road against Red Wing on Thursday, Dec. 4 at 7:30 p.m.

Owatonna Boys Varsity Basketball 2025-26

Dec. 4	7:30 p.m.	at Red Wing	Jan. 16	7:30 p.m.	vs. Mankato East
Dec. 9	7:30 p.m.	vs. Century	Jan. 20	7:30 p.m.	at Northfield
Dec. 11	7:30 p.m.	vs. Hastings	Jan. 23	7:30 p.m.	at Albert Lea
Dec. 13	1 p.m.	vs. Winona	Jan. 27	7:30 p.m.	vs. Red Wing
Dec. 16	7:30 p.m.	at Austin	Jan. 30	7:30 p.m.	at Century
Dec. 18	7:30 p.m.	vs. Faribault	Feb. 2	7:30 p.m.	at Winona
Dec. 22	7:30 p.m.	vs. Waconia	Feb. 6	7:30 p.m.	vs. Austin
Dec. 29	6 p.m.	at Owatonna HS	Feb. 10	7:30 p.m.	at Faribault
(Holiday Tournament)			Feb. 13	7:30 p.m.	vs. John Marshall
Dec. 30	3:30 p.m.	at Owatonna HS	Feb. 17	7:30 p.m.	vs. Mankato West
(Holiday Tournament)			Feb. 20	7:30 p.m.	at Mayo
Jan. 8	7:30 p.m.	at John Marshall	Feb. 24	7:30 p.m.	at Mankato East
Jan. 10	1 p.m.	at Mankato West	Feb. 27	7:30 p.m.	vs. Northfield
Jan. 13	7:30 p.m.	vs. Mayo			

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Huskies ready to pick up where they left off

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna girls basketball has all of the pieces in place to be just as competitive as it was in 2024-25 when the team finished 22-6 overall and reached the semifinal round of the Section 1AAAA playoffs.

The Huskies bring back nearly their entire starting lineup from a year ago and will be made up of big-minute players that will feature a variety of size, speed and athleticism.

“Expectations remain the same. We feel like we can compete in the Big Nine Conference, as well as our section. We had a great summer and showed well in our scrimmage. We believe we can be a great defensive team again this

year and could ramp our pressure a little more from a year ago. Offensively, we believe we can take a step forward from last year, as we believe we can be an improved shooting team,” said Owatonna Head Coach Pat Webb.

Key players returning to the Huskies’ lineup are Jersey Coleman, Jessica Fisher, Addi Langlois, Sophia Schlauderaff and Leah Leckner.

Webb described Coleman as a “versatile player who can score at all three levels” while also being a “great rebounder.”

He also had high praise for Fisher, saying she “is a game changer on defense that can guard the 1-5 positions.” He also showed mentioned that Langlois while bring an offensive spark as an

“elite shooter.” Leckner will also enter the lineup as a “great competitor” and a “steady presence at the point guard spot.” Meanwhile, Schlauderaff – now a senior – will be able to play for the first time since her sophomore season. Webb described her as a “high-motor player.”

The lineup will include Langlois, Leckner and Schlauderaff at the guard spots with Coleman floating around the court as a forward, and Fisher taking up primary residence in the post.

Captaining the Huskies in 2024-25 will be the quartet of seniors: Coleman, Fisher, Langlois and Schlauderaff.

Owatonna’s next game will be at home against Stewartville on Friday, Dec. 5 at 7:30 p.m.



COURTESY MIKE OLDENBURG - OLDENBURG PHOTOGRAPHY

Owatonna Girls Varsity Basketball 2025-26

Dec. 5	7:30 p.m.	vs. Stewartville	Jan. 16	7:30 p.m.	at Mankato East
Dec. 9	7:30 p.m.	at Century	Jan. 20	7:30 p.m.	vs. Northfield
Dec. 12	7:30 p.m.	at Winona	Jan. 23	7:30 p.m.	vs. Albert Lea
Dec. 16	7:30 p.m.	vs. Austin	Jan. 27	7:30 p.m.	at Red Wing
Dec. 19	7:30 p.m.	at Faribault	Jan. 30	7:30 p.m.	vs. Century
Dec. 29	TBD	at White Bear Lake	Jan. 31	2 p.m.	at New Prague
(Holiday Tournament)			Feb. 2	7:30 p.m.	vs. Winona
Dec. 30	1:15 p.m.	at White Bear Lake	Feb. 6	7:30 p.m.	at Austin
(Holiday Tournament)			Feb. 10	7:30 p.m.	vs. Faribault
Jan. 8	7:30 p.m.	vs. John Marshall	Feb. 13	7:30 p.m.	at John Marshall
Jan. 10	7:30 p.m.	vs. Mankato West	Feb. 17	7:30 p.m.	at Mankato West
Jan. 13	7:30 p.m.	at Mayo	Feb. 20	7:30 p.m.	vs. Mayo



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Owatonna's numbers take a hit

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Editor's Note: The Steele County Times sent a questionnaire to the Owatonna wrestling program, but received no response, resulting in insufficient information for a complete write up on the Huskies' 2025-26 outlook.

Owatonna wrestling had an extremely successful 2024-25 individual season with nine state entrants, but the team will be without many key weapons in 2025-26.

The Huskies watched five of their nine state competitors graduate last spring, but the team will benefit from the return of some boys and girls team staples.

Owatonna's senior leadership on the boys side will be handled by Trey Hiatt, Jacob Wilson, Jayden Jirele, Carter Flatland and Kaden Keller.

Hiatt figures to be the team's most decorated wrestler on roster having reached 100 wins and qualifying as a state entrant in 2023.

He was on pace to make a return trip to the big meet last season, but injuries kept him sidelined during the section tournament.

Wilson returns to the team after a shortened trip to state that saw him lose in the first round.

He will be joined by teammate Gabe Robb as the lone two boys competitors that managed to reach the bright lights of the now Grand Casino Arena.

On the girls' side, Owatonna will be led by perennial contender Aliah Fischer as she battles back from a hip injury sustained in an off-season match.

Fischer has been Owatonna's most consistent wrestler in recent years placing fourth at state in



COURTESY MIKE OLDENBURG - OLDENBURG PHOTOGRAPHY

2024 and fifth in 2023.

The sophomore will be a name to watch in the state championship hunt if she can remain healthy.

Joining Fischer on the girls squad is returning senior Mckayla Selle.

Selle qualified for state last season after a near-perfect 5-1 run in sections to earn her place amongst Minnesota's best.

Owatonna's first meet is an invitational at Woodbury High School on Saturday, Dec. 6 at 9 a.m.

Owatonna Varsity Wrestling 2025-26

Dec. 6	9 a.m.	at Woodbury	Jan. 8	7 p.m.	at Stewartville
Dec. 11	5 p.m.	at Century	Jan. 9	2:30 p.m.	at Bemidji (Girls)
Dec. 13	8 a.m.	at Prior Lake (Boys)	Jan. 10	9 a.m.	at Zumbrota-Mazeppa
Dec. 13	8 a.m.	at Hopkins (Girls)	Jan. 15	5 p.m.	Home Tri
Dec. 19	12 p.m.	at Rochester Civic Center (Boys)	Jan. 17	9 a.m.	at Hayfield (Boys)
Dec. 19	4:30 p.m.	Home Invite (Girls)	Jan. 17	10 a.m.	at Pine Island (Girls)
Dec. 20	10 a.m.	at Rochester Civic Center (Boys)	Jan. 22	5 p.m.	at Faribault
Jan. 2	TBD	at La Crosse Center (Boys)	Jan. 23	5 p.m.	at Simley (Girls)
Jan. 2	TBD	at La Crosse Center (Boys)	Jan. 24	8 a.m.	at Osseo (Girls)
Jan. 2	TBD	at La Crosse Center (Boys)	Jan. 24	12 p.m.	at New Ulm (Boys)
Jan. 3	9 a.m.	at SJA HS Event Center (Girls Invite)	Jan. 29	7 p.m.	vs. Albert Lea
			Jan. 31	10 a.m.	at Maple River
			Feb. 5	5 p.m.	at Mankato West

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Huskies ready to build on strong finish

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna boys hockey lost 13 seniors in 2024-25 but did not allow the massive roster hit to stop the team from stepping up in big games.

The Huskies finished last season 12-14-1, but beat the No. 3 Rochester Century/John Marshall on the road in the Section 1AA playoffs before playing No. 2 Lakeville North and competing hard in a 3-2 loss.

“We’re young with sophomores at all key positions: goaltending, defense and forward. As they acclimate to high school hockey and gain experience, I see this team getting better as the season progresses. We return enough upperclassmen to help with this growth

and transition. Our goals are always to be near the top of the conference and battle for the title. We have been in the section semifinal game the past two years. I would like to see us match that or go beyond,” said Owatonna Head Coach Dennis Will.

Making up the Huskies’ top line and leading from the front will be Grady Roush, Zach Klecker and Zach Roesner.

“They came on real strong at the end of the season and were a threat to score every time they were on the ice. They are a year older and will have more time to develop that chemistry,” said Will.

With eight seniors, eight juniors and a staggering 22 sophomores, Owatonna will have a steep learning curve for a



COURTESY MIKE OLDENBURG - OLDENBURG PHOTOGRAPHY

large portion of its roster.

“I think our sophomores, as they get more experience of playing high school hockey and learn to adapt, they will only get better,” said Will.

A key sophomore to watch will be goaltender Braxton Ringhofer, who steps in to take over primary duties in net during his first year as a varsity athlete.

Owatonna’s next game will be at home against Faribault on Thursday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m.

Owatonna Boys Varsity Ice Hockey 2025-26

Dec. 4	7 p.m.	vs. Faribault	Jan. 13	7 p.m.	vs. Dodge County
Dec. 6	3 p.m.	at Spring Lake Park	Jan. 15	7 p.m.	vs. Albert Lea
Dec. 11	7 p.m.	vs. Mankato East	Jan. 17	2 p.m.	at Marshall
Dec. 13	2 p.m.	at Century/John Marshall	Jan. 20	7:15 p.m.	at Winona
			Jan. 22	7:15 p.m.	at Mankato East
Dec. 18	7 p.m.	vs. Mayo	Jan. 24	7 p.m.	vs. Century/John Marshall
Dec. 29	TBD	at Essentia Duluth Heritage Center	Jan. 27	7 p.m.	vs. Waseca
Dec. 30	TBD	at Essentia Duluth Heritage Center	Jan. 29	7 p.m.	at Mayo
Dec. 31	TBD	at Essentia Duluth Heritage Center	Feb. 5	7:15 p.m.	at Northfield
Jan. 8	7 p.m.	vs. Lourdes	Feb. 7	1 p.m.	at Red Wing
Jan. 10	7 p.m.	vs. Northfield	Feb. 10	7 p.m.	vs. Mankato West
			Feb. 12	7 p.m.	at Hopkins



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Huskies bring back strong numbers

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna girls' hockey will be in position to compete with the Big Nine's top teams after returning multiple top scorers from last season's team that finished 14-9-2.

According to Head Coach Tony Cloud, the team has done some mixing and matching with its lines, trying to build chemistry between athletes who weren't always on the ice together last season.

The Huskies are off to a 1-3 start so far in 2025-26, but only one game has been a Big Nine Conference matchup (4-2 loss to Northfield), meaning not much damage has been done to the team's overall points.

Owatonna's bread and butter this season will be its defense, anchored by senior captains Kendra Bogen and Paige Thompson.

Bogen returns as the second leading point scorer for the team in 2024-25, and will have the luxury of working the puck into the zone with last year's leading



COURTESY MIKE OLDENBURG - OLDENBURG PHOTOGRAPHY

scorer, Grace Mitchell. Mitchell is the team's top forward and comes back for her junior season after notching 37 points (20 goals, 17 assists) in just 25 games.

Owatonna will be without its usual net-minder after Leah Spencer graduated last season, but the future looks bright in the hands of junior Sawyer Born.

The first-year starter is off to a strong start

allowing just 13 goals on 133 shots, good for 3.25 goals against average and a .902 save percentage.

If anything is certain, the Huskies' will be resilient and dangerous on any given night, and should be fine-tuned for a successful year as the season progresses.

Up next for the team is a home game against Austin on Thursday, Dec. 9 at 7 p.m.

Owatonna Girls Varsity Ice Hockey 2025-26

Dec. 9	7 p.m.	vs. Austin	Dec. 31	11 a.m.	at Schmitz-Maki Ice Arena
Dec. 11	7:15 p.m.	at Mankato East	Jan. 6	7 p.m.	vs. Mankato East
Dec. 13	5 p.m.	at South St. Paul	Jan. 9	7 p.m.	vs. Rogers
Dec. 16	7 p.m.	vs. Century/John Marshall	Jan. 10	2 p.m.	vs. Elk River
Dec. 18	7 p.m.	at Mayo	Jan. 13	7:15 p.m.	at Northfield
Dec. 20	1 p.m.	at Brainerd	Jan. 15	7:15 p.m.	at Albert Lea
Dec. 23	6 p.m.	vs. Wayzata	Jan. 20	7 p.m.	vs. Winona
Dec. 29	11 a.m.	at Schmitz-Maki Ice Arena	Jan. 24	3 p.m.	at Century/John Marshall
Dec. 30	11 a.m.	at Schmitz-Maki Ice Arena	Jan. 29	7 p.m.	vs. Albert Lea
			Jan. 31	2 p.m.	at Hastings



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Huskies ready to defend state title

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

Owatonna gymnastics won its first-ever state title last season when the team posted 146.825 points to edge out New Prague for the championship by .375 points.

Now, in 2025-26, Owatonna is set to defend its title – and it finds itself in a strong position to achieve that goal.

“Our goal is to head back to state as a team and defend our state championship title. I have nine out of 12 of my athletes returning from our state championship team last year. I expect all of them to continue to make an impact on our team. We have Delia Neumann, who was the 2025 state champion on beam returning along with Chloe Myer, who placed third in the same event at the 2025 state championships. I also expect Kendra Miller, Johanna Spielman and

Dylann Norrid to stand out, as they all were 2025 individual state qualifiers. I have no doubt that Paige Hullopeter, Ava Maves, Alivia Sturges and McKenna Edel will also have significant contributions. Our team has so much depth, each kid has their unique way of contributing on a varsity level,” said Owatonna first-year Head Coach Kiana Sparks.

The Huskies lost three key competitors to graduation with state entrant, all-arounder Halle Theis, and multiple-time state qualifiers Averie Roush and Jozie Johnsons graduating last spring.

However, the team won’t have to strain much to fill positions as each gymnast trains to master multiple events over the course of their careers with the program.

The most difficult role to fill will be the all-around position, but Sparks will not be with-

out options.

Neumann and Maves are front-runners for the gig as both are extremely well-rounded gymnasts.

The former is currently Owatonna’s most decorated gymnast with a state individual title, but Maves does bring a strong resume to the table as she actually took over for Theis in all-around competition during a meet at Lakeville North last season.

However, Sparks also has her eye on a newcomer as a potential dark horse for the spot.

“Ellie Blum is new to our team this year as a freshman. I expect her to be one, if not our only all-around gymnast,” said Sparks on her incoming freshman athlete.

Captaining the team in 2025-26 will be the senior duo of Miller and Norrid.

Owatonna’s first meet will be against the Austin Packers at the Austin YMCA on Friday, Dec. 6 at 6:30 p.m.



COURTESY MIKE OLDENBURG - OLDENBURG PHOTOGRAPHY

Owatonna Gymnastics Schedule 2025-26

Dec. 6	6:30 p.m.	vs. Austin	Jan. 10	12 p.m.	at Lakeville North
Dec. 11	6:30 p.m.	vs. Faribault	Jan. 16	6:30 p.m.	at Rochester
Dec. 13	11:00 a.m.	at Brainerd	Jan. 17	10 a.m.	at Park HS
Dec. 19	6:30 p.m.	vs. Winona	Jan. 22	6:30 p.m.	Home Triangular
Jan. 3	11 a.m.	at Farmington	Feb. 7	11 a.m.	at Northfield
Jan. 8	6:30 p.m.	at Northfield			

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Here's who to watch this winter in Owatonna

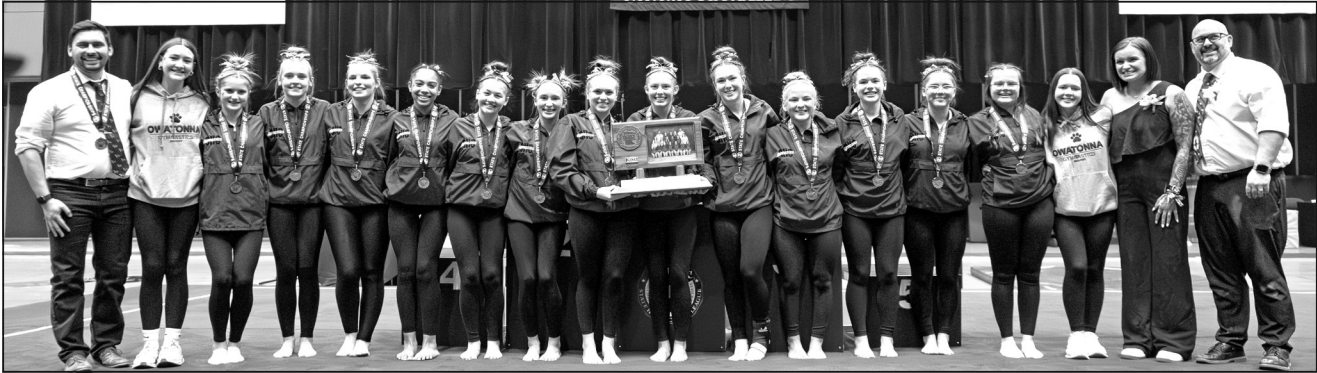
Owatonna's defending state champion gymnastics squad returns most of the lineup that captured the school's first title. Sophomore Delia Neumann won the individual state championship on the balance beam with senior Chloe Myer taking third. Seniors Kendra Miller and Dylann Norrid and junior Johanna Spielman were all state qualifiers. New coach Kiana Starks says, "Our team has so much depth, each kid has their unique way of contributing on a varsity level."

Girls basketball
Huskies girls basketball brings back key components to a team that went 22-6 and won 17 in a row. Junior Jersey Coleman is a great rebounder and "can score at all three levels," says coach



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna's Cooper Routh goes up for a contested layup against Albert Lea last season. Routh and teammates Gavin Burmeister and Will Halverson are names to watch out for on this year's team.



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna gymnastics poses for a team photo after winning the 2024-25 Class AA state title. The win was the program's first-ever team title, and was promptly followed by Delia Neumann winning the state balance beam title as an individual the very next day.

Pat Webb. Senior Jessica Fisher is "as versatile of a defender as you'll find" and has "great basketball IQ." Junior D'Neasha Stevens is a "great competitor on both ends of the floor."
OHS finished second in the Big Nine in 2024-25, behind Mayo, who beat the Huskies in the first round of sections.

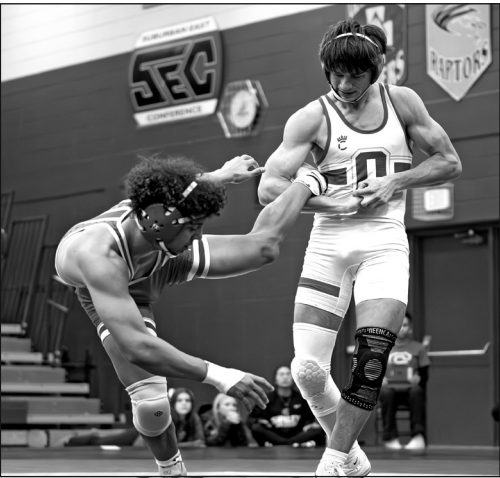
Dance
Owatonna Dance Team's new coach Emma Paquette says, "The varsity team as a whole is something to watch out for. We are doing a new style of dance that is much faster, upbeat and has lots of songs to get the crowd involved."
Seniors are Addy Johnson, Emily McMasters,



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna's Emily McMasters smiles to herself mid-performance as she competes for ODT's varsity kick team. McMasters will be one of six seniors on this year's ODT roster.

Aubrey Groby, Tori Koziolk, Jocelyn Anselmo and Claire Noble. The Huskies were Big Nine runners-up last season.
Boys swim/dive
Huskies boys swim and dive has young and not so young athletes to set the pace. Seniors Logan Flynn, Phoenix Storm, and Connor McBroom are expected to deliver points. Sopho-



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna's Trey Hiatt works to secure a takedown against Simley's Aiden Mincey. Hiatt hit 100 wins last season and will look to get back to state after having qualified in 2023.

mores Jacob Gleason, Levi Johnson, and Greyson Rhodes, and freshman Andrew Jacott look to make their mark too.
Boys hockey
Boys hockey returns five players who had double-digit point totals, several of them in their first year on varsity. Zach Klecker (18 goals, 15 assists, 33 points), Grady Roush



STAFF PHOTO BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS

Owatonna's Jersey Coleman shoots over a Red Wing defender in a game last season. Owatonna finished last year 22-6 and is hoping to have similar success in 2025-26.

(16G, 5A, 21 points) and Caleb Ringhofer (7G, 9A, 16 points) are juniors. Zach Roesner (6G, 8A, 14 points) is a sophomore. Seniors Wyatt Macy and Landen Sturges bring a veteran boost to the blue line.
Coach Dennis Will says, "This is a team that with experience will get better...We're young (8 seniors/8 juniors/22 sophomores) but with time and experience I see them only getting stronger as the season progresses." The Huskies upset Century in the playoffs last winter before falling to Lakeville North.
Girls hockey
Huskies girls hockey has a trio of seniors that have played varsity since their middle school days. Kendra Bogen eclipsed the 100-point mark of her career last season, Owatonna. See WINTER on 19 ►

Panthers 'expect some bumps along the way'

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

NRHEG basketball will continue to rebuild its program after again losing some key varsity starters to graduation in 2025.

With just one senior on the team, the Panthers will rely heavily on their six juniors and three sophomores, who account for all four of the team's returning letter winners.

"Because we are a young team, there will be some bumps and bruises. However, this group has played together for many years. We'll look to constantly be improving and hitting our stride at the right time of year. We don't have the size we've had in the past, but we have a lot of athleticism and speed that we'll try to take advantage of," said NRHEG Head Coach Dan Schmidt.

Returning this season and stepping into larger roles will be Brendan

Schmidt, Calvin Nissen and Lavon Jewison.

All three athletes rotated in and out of the Panthers' starting lineup last season, making them the most experienced veterans on a relatively young team.

Also expected to turn heads this year are Brooks Gilliland and A.J. Deen.

Both missed all of last season due to injuries but will rejoin the squad to play key roles in the post.

According to Schmidt, the team has enough pieces in place to be a real contender in their Gopher Conference West Division.

"If we play to our potential, we can get in the top 2-3 in the Gopher Conference West Division. JWP will be the favorite in the west, with Triton leading the east. Both teams return a lot of talent from last year's conference championship teams. As for our section, we moved to Class A this year, so



COURTESY DEBRA BENTLY - NRHEG STAR EAGLE

we're going down a class. We remain in Section Two, but with a number of new teams that we don't have a lot of familiarity with. JWP and Springfield look to be the favorites in the section, with Mankato Loyola being a dark horse," said Schmidt.

NRHEG is coming off a 4-22 season, meaning the Panthers have plenty of room to improve on last year's record.

Up next for the team is a home matchup against Le Sueur-Henderson scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 4 at 7:15 p.m.

NRHEG Boys Varsity Basketball 2025-26

Dec. 4	7:15 p.m.	vs. Le Sueur-Henderson	Jan. 20	7 p.m.	vs. Medford
Dec. 5	7:15 p.m.	vs. Blooming Prairie	Jan. 22	7 p.m.	at Randolph
Dec. 9	7:15 p.m.	vs. Maple River	Jan. 26	7:15 p.m.	at JWP
Dec. 12	7 p.m.	at Bethlehem Academy	Jan. 29	7:15 p.m.	vs. Kenyon-Wanamingo
Dec. 16	7 p.m.	at Medford	Feb. 2	7:15 p.m.	at USC
Dec. 18	7:15 p.m.	vs. JWP	Feb. 3	7:15 p.m.	vs. Nicollet
Dec. 22	7:15 p.m.	vs. Martin County West	Feb. 6	7:30 p.m.	at Hayfield
Dec. 23	7:30 p.m.	at Waseca	Feb. 7	7 p.m.	at Cleveland
Jan. 3	7 p.m.	at St. Clair	Feb. 10	7 p.m.	at Madelia
Jan. 6	7:15 p.m.	vs. USC	Feb. 12	7:30 p.m.	at Tri-City United
Jan. 9	5:45 p.m.	vs. Triton	Feb. 13	7:15 p.m.	vs. Alden-Conger/Glenville-Emmons
Jan. 13	7:15 p.m.	vs. WEM	Feb. 17	7:15 p.m.	vs. Mankato Loyola
Jan. 15	7 p.m.	at Truman/Martin Luther/GHEC	Feb. 20	7 p.m.	at WEM

NRHEG looking forward to ‘tough battles’

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

NRHEG girls basketball has been an elite-level program for quite some time, and the Panthers aren’t showing any signs of slowing down as the team enters the 2025-26 season.

The Panthers will return some key athletes in Camryn and Quinn VanMaldeghem, as well as names like Chloe Stork, Ezra Boerner and Clara Buendorf.

“I’m excited for this team. They are competitive, athletic and a fun group of girls. We are bringing back a couple of kids who played big minutes for us last year. This is a group that has some speed, rebounds and runs the floor well, and should cause some havoc on defense. We have a few kids who are making the jump from junior varsity last year to big varsity minutes this year. We have a tough schedule this season and are excited to have some tough battles that we can

learn from. We’re hoping to continue to improve all season long so we’re playing our best come playoff time,” said NRHEG Head Coach Onika Peterson.

The VanMaldeghem twins figure to be the team’s biggest scoring threats this season after both led the team alongside center Kylie Olson in the team’s run to state last season.

However, NRHEG has also faced its fair share of difficulties so far, as it will be without Olson this season due to her sustaining a torn ACL in preseason practice.

Key contributor Izley Boerner is also questionable for the season as she continues to deal with complications stemming from a torn ACL that kept her out for much of last year.

A bright spot for 2025-26 is that the team will have Stork from the very start after she was hampered by injuries last season.

With a team that is stacked with athleticism, Peterson sees a clear path



COURTESY ELI LUTGENS - NRHEG STAR EAGLE

for her team to take over games.

“We need to rebound and run the floor every chance we can. Defensively, we need to be smart but aggressive. We have a solid core of returning athletes but are looking to see who will be stepping into some holes that we still need to fill,” said Peterson.

NRHEG’s next game will be on the road at Blooming Prairie on Thursday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m.

NRHEG Girls Varsity Basketball 2025-26

Dec. 4	7 p.m.	at Blooming Prairie	Jan. 22	7 p.m.	vs. Randolph
Dec. 9	7:15 p.m.	at Maple River	Jan. 24	2:30 p.m.	vs. Houston
Dec. 12	7:15 p.m.	vs. Bethlehem Academy	Jan. 26	7:15 p.m.	vs. JWP
			Jan. 30	7:15 p.m.	at Kenyon-Wanamingo
Dec. 13	4 p.m.	vs. Jackson County Central	Feb. 2	7:15 p.m.	vs. USC
Dec. 16	7 p.m.	vs. Lanesboro	Feb. 3	7:15 p.m.	at Southland
Dec. 19	7:15 p.m.	at JWP	Feb. 6	6 p.m.	at Hayfield/Schaeffer Academy
Dec. 23	7:15 p.m.	vs. Waseca			
Jan. 6	7:15 p.m.	at USC	Feb. 10	7 p.m.	at St. Clair
Jan. 9	7:15 p.m.	at Triton	Feb. 13	7:15 p.m.	at Alden-Conger/Glenville-Emmons
Jan. 12	7 p.m.	vs. St. Peter			
Jan. 13	7:15 p.m.	at WEM			



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NRHEG to lean on senior leadership

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

NRHEG lost some serious firepower from last year's roster with five seniors graduating, but the Panthers have plenty of talent returning to keep the team competitive.

Highlighting the team's returners will be a pair of state entrants in Ryan Schlaak and Graham Jacobson.

Neither placed at the state tournament, but both were making their debuts during their underclassmen seasons, with Schlaak qualifying as a sophomore and Jacobson making it as the Panthers' youngest-ever state entrant during his seventh-grade season.

While the Panthers can expect to have plenty of early-dual success with

younger, lighter athletes, the team may struggle to fill holes at the heavier weights.

Last year's graduates included Aidan Schlaak (160 pounds), Harbor Cromwell (172), Cole Hutchens (215) and Jace Ihrke (285).

In order for his team to remain competitive, first-year head coach Krey Cory will have to find a way to fill weights and get his inexperienced wrestlers ready to hit the mats.

NRHEG's first dual of the season will be on the road against Medford on Thursday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m.

*The Steele County Times sent a questionnaire to the NRHEG wrestling program, but received no response, resulting in insufficient information for a complete write up on the Panthers' 2025-26 outlook.



COURTESY DEBRA BENTLY - NRHEG STAR EAGLE



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NRHEG Varsity Wrestling 2025-26					
Dec. 4	7 p.m.	at Medford	Jan. 15	7 p.m.	vs. WEM/JWP
Dec. 6	9:45 a.m.	at St. James	Jan. 17	9 a.m.	at Westfield (Hayfield)
Dec. 11	7 p.m.	vs. Westfield			
Dec. 12	4:30 p.m.	at Lakeville South	Jan. 22	5 p.m.	at Waseca
Dec. 19	4 p.m.	at Redwood Valley	Jan. 24	9 a.m.	at Orono
Dec. 20	9 a.m.	at Redwood Valley	Jan. 29	7 p.m.	at Kenyon-Wanamingo
Jan. 2	5 p.m.	Home Invitational			
Jan. 8	7 p.m.	vs. St. Clair & Triton			

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Medford ready to take the next step

◀ **NEXT STEP** from 7 said Medford Head Coach Steve Boehning.

The Tigers will roll out a varsity roster of 14 athletes, meaning the team will have subs to be able to mix in fresh legs.

Highlighting this year's team are a couple of returning athletes in Landon Seiler, Orion Heintz, Bennett Stinocher and John Hora.

Seiler and Heintz have

proven to be explosive playmakers at the guard positions; meanwhile, Hora gives the Tigers some much-needed height inside the post.

Also returning to the team will be Drake Stursa, Kyle Vatsaas and Simon Karsten-Atkins – all of whom Boehning believes are ready to take on some bigger varsity minutes.

New faces include transfer Collin Perigo and

freshman Nic Taylor.

The only way for the Tigers to go is up in 2025-26, and the team should have the experience now to find ways to win in tight games.

If the Tigers can play strong on defense, they could surprise some teams this year.

Medford's next game is at home against Bethlehem Academy on Friday, Dec. 5 at 7 p.m.

BP enters rebuild with high hopes

◀ **REBUILD** from 3 season, while the latter averaged 7.0 points, 3.8 rebounds and 2.5 assists.

Staloch also enters the season just 283 points shy of his 1,000th at the varsity level – a feat he should accomplish this season.

Another standout that Rutledge hopes will make a difference is NRHEG transfer Jared Lee.

Lee will join the Awesome Blossoms varsity ranks after being forced to play junior varsity last season due to transfer rules. He is also the younger brother of former NRHEG basketball stand-out, Daxter Lee.

Coming off a 21-7 season, Blooming Prairie will have a lot to prove, but Rutledge said he sees his

team as being able to “compete night in and night out in our conference.”

According to him, some conference contenders include Triton and JWP, with section favorites being Waseca, Belle Plaine and Glencoe-Silver Lake.

Blooming Prairie's next game will be on the road against NRHEG on Friday, Dec. 5 at 7:15 p.m.

BP's 'youth movement' ready for next step

◀ **MOVEMENT** from 4 and Salinas as the team's most experienced starters.

Schwarz finished last season averaging 11.8 points, 4.8 rebounds and 2.6 assists per game, while Salinas was a threat in the post snagging rebounds and drawing key fouls.

The two will be joined by freshman standouts Elaine Schwarz and Em-

merson Nelson as the core of the team's starting five.

Much like her sister, Elaine Schwarz is a scoring threat who averaged 8.5 points and 12.5 rebounds per game as an eighth-grader, and will bring excellent height in the post at five feet, 11 inches.

Nelson served as the team's point guard last season in her eighth-grade year as well, and is

a fast-paced athlete who creates turnovers on defense and can distribute the ball well in transition.

Blooming Prairie finished last season 3-12 in conference play and 7-19 overall, meaning there is plenty of room for improvement this year.

Up next for the Awesome Blossoms is a home matchup against NRHEG scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m.

Here's who to watch this winter in Owatonna

◀ **WINTER** from 15 tonna's 17th consecutive with a .500 record or better. Joining her as captains are forward Genna Froman and defenseman Paige Thompson.

They will stabilize a team that graduated eight seniors and has an influx of new players on the roster with the resumption of a junior varsity team.

Boys basketball

Despite graduating their entire starting lineup, Huskies boys basketball brings back several players with experience. Coach Josh Williams says senior Gavin Burmeister “will step into a much different role where we ask a

lot of him.” Senior Will Halverson was “our first post off the bench and someone we are counting on to take a big leap.” Juniors Willie Moore and Brendan Klecker and sophomore Cooper Routh all got varsity seasoning in 2024-25.

“I love our guys,” says Williams. “I do feel we have quality senior leadership as well as some depth and talent in our juniors and sophomores. How we blend those three grades, mature and come together as a group, and how hard we compete will determine a lot.”

OHS upset Lakeville South on a buzzer beater in the playoffs then lost to North.

Wrestling

Owatonna returns five wrestlers who have qualified for state during their careers: seniors Trey Hiatt and McKayla Selle, junior Jacob Wilson, sophomore Aliah Fischer and freshman Gabe Robb. The girls program continues to grow and OHS will host a girls invitational on December 19 as one of four home meets on the season.

Captains are Hiatt, Selle, Carter Flatland, Kaden Keller and Riley Kreeger, all seniors. OHS narrowly lost to Northfield in the section semifinals last season. The Huskies tied for second in the Big Nine.

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