



photo by Ryan Carlson

Eight returners make Sterling a softball power in 2016

By MIKE COURSON
With teams like Pratt, Haven, Lyons, Hoisington, and Hillsboro, the Central Kansas League has been perennially tough on the softball diamond the past few seasons. Sterling has been competitive in recent years, going 12-11 last year and advancing to a regional championship game, but this season expectations are unusually high with eight returning starters back.

“With a returning nucleus of upperclass-

men, we have high expectations going into the season,” said Coach Tyson Baurle, back for a seventh season. “Eighty-five percent of last year’s school record-breaking offense returns. We broke six offensive school records last year (batting average, hits, doubles, extra-base hits, home runs, and hit by pitch).

“I feel we have a very good mix of potential speed, potential athleticism, and also potential power in the lineup. What our girls have to under-

stand is that ‘potential’ speed, athleticism, and power won’t do anything for us. We have to work toward making that potential a reality.”

Five Lady Black Bear seniors return to the squad, led by Kylah Comley at shortstop. Always a loaded position, Comley was a second-team all-league shortstop last year, and a second-team all-stater in 2014. Last season she batted .438 with eight doubles, two triples, two home runs, 10 walks and 20 stolen bases.

Catcher Sarah Stallings was an honorable mention all-league player in 2014. She batted .297 last season with three doubles. Other seniors include Shelby Schroeder at third base (.279 average, 15 RBIs); Jody Gunther and Veronica Norez, both with a .235 average, returning to the outfield.

“The group of seniors is a special class,” Baurle said. “The five returning seniors have all played

see Sterling softball page 19



The Central Plains track team is, front row from left: Kylie Lamatsch, Faith Hurley, Lauren Blackwood, Destiny Hurley, Taylor Oeser, Avery Hurley, Keeley Hipp, and Hannah Beran. Middle row: Clark Besthorn, Taylor Rolfs, Kylee Kasselmann, Alisha Crow, Brianna Hickel, Julie Donecker, Cassidy Crites, Janae Ryan, and Anthony Oberle. Back row: Manager Linda Almanza, Alex Barton, James Radenberg, Dalton Beck, Kealy Burris, Jacob McAtee, Trustin Kreft, Trey Schulte, Grant Heldstab, Philip Donecker, Gus Bain, Lee Letourneau, Mason Wimmer, and Mgr. Brady Woodmansee.

(photo by Lisa Crites/CPHS)

CPHS returns three state qualifiers

By MIKE COURSON
Dustin Robison’s track team is a little banged up. Central Plains returns three state qualifiers but both will have more limited roles in 2016. Robison will be looking for some of his other returners to help carry the load this season.

Senior Taylor Rolfs has already collected four state titles and was a key contributor on this year’s state championship basketball and volleyball teams – both had perfect seasons. After a second-place finish in the triple jump at state last May, Rolfs was next in line for a title this year but will likely have to stick to the long jump after suffering an basketball injury. She ranked No. 12 in the long jump last year.

“She had the stress fracture in her foot during basketball season so she’s going to long jump,” Robison said. “We’re playing it by ear if she’s even going to triple jump once or twice before the end of the season, but we’re not planning on it.”

Rolfs also had the No. 7 300m hurdle time in Class 2A last year but

that event will also be out this spring.

On the boys’ side, senior Trustin Kreft finished eighth in the discus at state last year. There is ample room to move up in that event as five of the throwers above him graduated last year. Kreft was also a top triple jumper in the area last year but will be giving up that event this year due to some nagging injuries. He will instead try the shot put.

Junior Cassidy Crites returns as one of the top high jumpers in the area. Her best mark of 5-0 tied for No. 7 in 2A last year. She dropped off to 4-10 to finish sixth at state last May.

Last year, the Lady Oilers posted the No. 7 4x100 time in 2A. Robison expects Rolfs, Crites, junior Keeley Hipp and possibly freshman Avery Hurley to make that a competitive event. Junior Janae Ryan has picked up speed over the course of

the year and will be part of a competitive 4x400m relay.

Elsewhere in the field, Robison will have experience in the javelin with Hipp and junior Kylee Kasselmann throwing. “They’re throwing pretty decent now,” he said. “They keep improving. Javelin is a big technique thing so they’re getting better.”

Sophomore Taylor Oeser had the best long jump in the area last season but did not compete at regionals. Her best mark of 16-6 ranked No. 11 in Class 2A.

On the boys’ side, sophomore Alex Barton returns as one of the area’s top high jumpers. Barton just missed his best mark of 5-10 at regionals last year, but even that would have been four inches shy of state qualification in a brutal field. Barton also had the

see CPHS track page 19

Sterling softball 2016

April 1	LARNED
April 5	@Lyons
April 8	HESSTON
April 12	SMOKY VALLEY
April 15	PRATT
April 19	@Kingman
April 22	HILLSBORO
April 26	@Hoisington
April 29	@Halstead
May 10	HAVEN/NICKERSON
May 16-17	Regional
May 26-27	State


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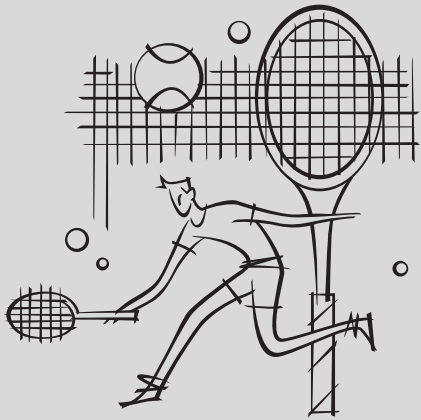
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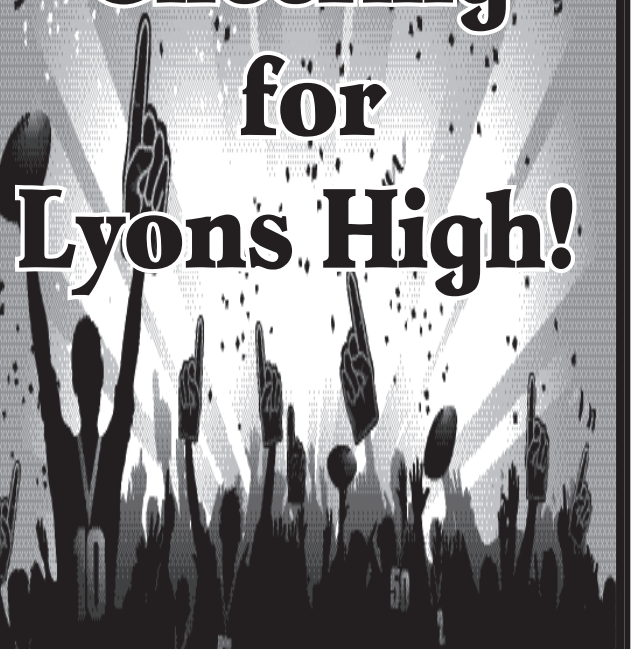
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