



2016 Larned Lady Indian tennis team Numbers down, expectations up for LHS netters

By MIKE GILMORE
Veteran Larned High School girls' tennis coach Mark Lessard has a ritual. With the usual number of newcomers to each squad in the fall, he delivers "the speech" where he holds up a racket, shows how to hold it and how to swing it, and so on.

Some of the veteran players may roll their eyes, but then, they've heard "the speech" before.

Another part of the new season is the hour-long trek to Dodge City, where players get their first taste of competition at the season-opening Dodge City junior varsity tournament. Usually, Lessard is giving last-minute instructions to the group as he is driving. Not a minute wasted, as it were.

This year, Lessard gave "the speech" early this week, and outside commitments means he will be missing the trip to Dodge. Assistant coach Nick Junker will be taking the group. Also, there's not as many newbies to give the speech to.

"Our numbers are down from past years," Lessard noted. "We lost some to graduation, of course; others have busy

class or work schedules and we have a small freshman girl recruiting class.

That doesn't mean that the expectations for 2016 aren't up to Lessard's standard.

"We're going to have a solid team," he said. "The girls are working hard and I believe we will do well this season."

Daughter Amanda Lessard returns as a senior after tours in singles; juniors Abby Kelty and Ali Leiker just missed a state berth at last year's Cimarron regional. In the battle for sixth place, they were edged as sophomores by Victoria's Megan Karst and Emily Schippers.

Sophomores Kristin Anderson, Macy Hass

and Katelyn Sanger are all expected to see varsity action, Lessard said. Rounding out the roster are sophomores Jillian Edgin, Cheyenne Lile and freshmen Corrie Upson and Ruthie Webster.

As usual, Lessard will be mixing and matching through the early season to determine the best lineup for postseason. The Central Kansas League is expected to be tough, as always and Lessard won't know what regional he will be going to until after school "count day" on Sept. 20.

After opening in DC on Aug. 25, the Lady Indians will be back at home Sept. 1. They also have a home meet Sept. 15. CKL is Oct. 1 at Smoky Valley.

Larned tennis 2016

Sept. 1	HOME
Sept. 6	@Great Bend
Sept. 10	@Pratt
Sept. 13	@Ellinwood
Sept. 15	HOME
Sept. 20	@Russell
Sept. 27	@Ellsworth
Oct. 1	CKL @Smoky Valley
Oct. 7-8	Regionals
Oct. 14-15	State

Numbers up for Larned boys' cross country team

By MIKE GILMORE

With four-time state qualifier Delainee Gordon running cross country and track at Fort Hays State University, a sentimental chapter has closed for veteran coach Gary Wagner and the Larned High School harriers.

But another is opening. Brooke Butler, who followed Gordon around the courses as a potential top-10 contender during the regular season, is coming back as Gordon's heirress apparent.

"Brooke is our only returning girls' runner," Wagner noted "We're a little thin on the girls' side, but this season, it's Brooke's turn to lead."

Senior sprinter Jaidiaah Harris and freshmen Cierra Nord and Makayla Leiker join Butler on the girls' side.

For the boys, however, a league title could be in the offing. That's good, because the LHS boys' haven't had the numbers to field a team score in recent years. They are led by Danyon Green and Hunter Fitzpatrick from



Butler

last year's squad. Meanwhile, Thomas Harmon and Justin Giesbrecht return as juniors, with a host of underclassmen.

"The boys should be in the hunt for a league title," Wagner said. "That's the first goal. Regional and state qualifiers could come out of this group."

"We have a lot of newcomers to the team," Wagner noted. "I'm glad to have a large number again. It feels like the 'good old days.'"

The LHS harriers open the season Sept. 3 at 9 a.m. in Hays, hosted by Thomas More Prep. They are at home for the Abby Trapp-Prescott invitational on Sept. 22.

Larned XC 2016

Sept. 3	@TMP
Sept. 8	@Hesston
Sept. 15	@Stafford
Sept. 22	HOME
Sept. 29	@Pratt
Oct. 6	@Sterling
Oct. 13	CKL @Halstead
Oct. 22	Regional
Oct. 29	State @Wamego

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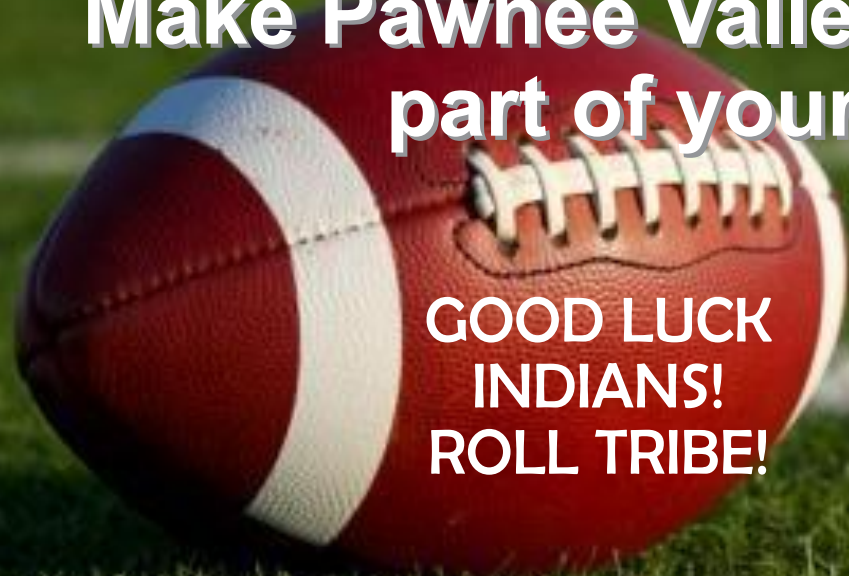
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