



2017 Sterling Lady Black Bear volleyball team Six seniors back for Lady Black Bears

By MIKE COURSON
 The Lady Black Bear volleyball team won just 10 matches last year, but the good news is six returning starters and eight varsity players are back for second-year head coach Jennifer Mantz.

"We have a great group of six senior leaders that will provide solid leadership for our team," Mantz said. "We finished in the middle of our new league last year, so I know we are wanting to improve upon that."

Leading the returners is senior Raegan Mantz, a second-team all-league selection at libero last fall. Senior Camille Schweizer earned an all-league honorable mention as middle hitter.

Other seniors on the team include Taya Wilson, Lexi Edwards, Kelsey Boeken, and Aniston Ramsey. Wilson

and Edwards gained state champion experience last spring at the state track meet.

Junior Grace Rowland returns to the squad, also with varsity basketball and state championship track experience.

Mantz has a large group of players looking to make their mark on the program. "I'm looking forward to watching all the players grow in this sport," she said. "I'm excited to watch these seniors in their final year at SHS."

Sterling volleyball 2017

Aug. 31	@Ellsworth
Sept. 5	HOME QUAD
Sept. 12	@Bennington
Sept. 19	HOME QUAD
Sept. 23	@Lyons Tourn.
Sept. 26	@Moundridge Tri.
Sept. 30	@Burrton Tourn.
Oct. 3	@Ell-Saline Tri.
Oct. 10	HOME TRI
Oct. 14	HOA @Bennington
Oct. 17	@Hutch Trinity Tri.
Oct. 21	Sub-state
Oct. 27-28	State

New stuff

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unpaid writing job at an independent newspaper at FHSU, and that led to a paid gig at the Great Bend Tribune. Since then, I've written for a host of publications: Catch it Kansas, Kansas Hardwood Magazine, and newspapers in Ellsworth and Hays among others.

I'm nearing my sixth year as sports editor of the Lyons News, and the change is what keeps the job interesting. That and some really good athletes and teams in our area.

New coaches, I look forward to covering your teams. As you may have already found out, I like to email. There's one of my and lots of teams in Barton and Rice Counties. I can't be at every event, but if you get me the information, I can probably get you in the newspaper.

My email is mcourson@star.kscoxmail.com, and our fax number at the Lyons News office is (620) 257-2369.

Part of the sports preview is highlighting the things to watch this season. There should be plenty of good news out there. Here are just a few:

- The Central Plains football team is hard to overlook given their success over the past four seasons, including a perfect 2014 season, but the Oilers run into Spearville every year in the playoffs and that's been a bummer for back-to-back falls. Watch out this year. Coach Steiner already had a tremendous group back and picked up a couple of players from Ellinwood that will only help.
- The Lady Oiler volleyball team is al-

ways fun to watch. Obviously they've done great things in the past, that's why they're on the cover. For a second-straight season, CPHS loses a top player in Class 2A. Can they rebound again? I expect a lot of wins, but as editor in Ellinwood and Hoisington, I naturally want the Lady Eagles and Cardinals to do well. May you go three sets in every meeting!

- Is a state championship coming to Great Bend? This is the first time in my nearly six years at the papers to include GBHS teams, but we do sell Great Bend ads, and I did have space to fill. GBHS senior Kerby Depenbusch has established himself as one of the top distance runners in the state. He was the final leg of the 4x800 team that lost a state title in a true heart-breaker last spring.

The Panthers have Lyles Lashley at the helm, and in just his second season, he could challenge the likes of St. Thomas Aquinas and Bishop Carroll - two teams that have combined for the last 5A cross country titles. I'm a big advocate of public schools and that's one battle I'm looking forward to seeing.

- Ryan is gone and Ryan is back in Claffin. Actually, Devin Ryan returns to the football field and Emily Ryan returns to the tennis court. Gone is two-time tennis champ and four-time basketball champion Janae Ryan. It will be strange to not see Janae and doubles teammate Keeley Hipp (and Sterling's Maddie Thrasher), but Emily can carry the torch this spring as one of the top Class 3-2-1A players on the tennis court.



2017 Lady Black Bear tennis team, front row from left: Jasmine Bates, Sarah Walker, McKiah San Miguel, and Katie Comley. Back row: Lydia Miller, Kiah Zambo, Morgan Simpson, Natalie Schweizer, and Christina Voth.

(photo courtesy of Coach Thompson)

Sterling looks to replace state medalists

By MIKE COURSON
 Some big changes are coming to the Lady Black Bear tennis team in 2017. Nope, not Curtis Thompson. The head coach returns for a 32nd season overall as coach, and the first after claiming a state championship for the Sterling boys last fall.

The changes come with the graduation of two Lady Black Bear mainstays. Maddie Thrasher was a four-time state medalist for Sterling. She finished fourth at state last October. Lindsay Gilmore was a two-time state medalist who placed eighth at state last fall. Together, the duo helped Sterling to a sixth-place team finish in Class 3-2-1A.

Those losses will hurt, but Thompson will have three of his starters back this season. Leading that charge will be juniors Jasmine Bates and Lydia Miller. As sophomores last year, the duo finished fourth at a tough Hesston regional to advance to state. The girls picked up a win in the doubles bracket before bowing out with back-to-back losses to two top-seven finishers.

Senior Katie Comley also returns with varsity experience for the squad. She is likely to be joined by juniors McKiah San Miguel and Sarah Wheeler, and freshman Natalie Schweizer on the varsity squad.

The Lady Black Bears will continue to see tough competition in 2017. The girls opened at home on Aug. 31,

then play against larger schools in Great Bend and Pratt to open the season. The regular-

season ends with a run through the perennially-tough Central Plains League on Oct. 2.

Sterling tennis 2017

Aug. 31	HOME
Sept. 5	@ Great Bend
Sept. 9	@Pratt
Sept. 14	@Ellsworth
Sept. 16	@Lindsborg
Sept. 21	@Hillsboro
Sept. 28	HOME @GB
Oct. 2	CPL @ Wichita
Oct. 6-7	Regionals
Oct. 13-14	State @KC

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