



## 2018 Sterling Lady Black Bear softball team

### Seven return to Sterling softball squad

By MIKE COURSON

Dean Mantz has plenty of reason to be optimistic in his eighth season with the Sterling softball program and second year as its head coach. The Lady Black Bears went 18-3 last year and return seven starters.

"As with any program, we look to compete for an HOA League title and a state tournament berth," Mantz said. "The team looks to develop our young, inexperienced players so that we have depth and are prepared for each and every game. If we can do this and improve on each day, we should stand a good chance of accomplishing our goals."

Granted, the two losses to graduation will be huge. Emma Horsch and Lindsay Gilmore were four-time all-league selections and both earned all-state honors at least once. Maddie Thrasher also graduated after earning all-league honors.

"With the loss of Emma and Lindsay, we will have to adjust from being a power-hitting team with a top notch pitching battery to a small-ball, grind-it-out team," Mantz said. "Pitching will focus on hitting spots and creating contact for defense to be involved."

Raegan Mantz leads the returners after earning second-team all-state honors a year ago. The senior has been an all-league selection in each of her first three seasons.

Senior Kelsie Boeken is a two-time all-league pick, and sophomore Elizabeth Horsch earned all-league honors as a freshman in 2017. Senior Camille Schweizer will be a third-year starter for the Lady Black Bears.

Senior Aniston Ramsey returns with varsity experience, and sophomores Mallory Beitz and Abby Riffel picked up starts as freshmen. Mantz gets back junior ace Sydnee Carder, who missed most of her sophomore campaign with mono.

"I look forward to our seniors continuing the competitive, no-quit tradition established by past classes while leading our younger girls to learn what it takes to compete at a high level," said Mantz. "I am also excited to work with my new assistant and pitching Coach Dan Dowell. His understanding

of the game and pitching will be a major asset to this team's success.

"Another aspect I am looking forward to is seeing how (junior) Isabelle Christensen adjusts to high school softball in Kansas after moving in from Colorado, as well as how (freshman) Karlie Boeken handles first base duties. I also see a few other sophomores and freshman pushing returners on a daily basis."

Most of Sterling's 2018 schedule features teams from the HOA. Cheney, the third-place finishers in 3A last year, highlights the non-league portion.

## Sterling softball 2018

March 29	HUTCH TRINITY
April 3	@Ell-Saline
April 6	@Remington
April 13	CHENEY
April 17	BENNINGTON
April 20	MARION
April 24	@Inman
May 1	@Canton-Galva
May 4	SEDGWICK
May 8	MOUNDRIDGE
May 14-15	Regional
May 24-25	State @Manhattan

## Sterling track 2018

April 3	@Hillsboro
April 10	@HOME
April 12-13	@Wichita State
April 17	@Goessel
April 19	STERLING RELAYS
April 24	@Hesston
May 1	@Moundridge
May 4	@Ellinwood
May 11	HOA @ HOME
May 18	Regional TBA
May 25-26	State @Wich. State



## 2018 Sterling Black Bear track teams

### Wilson takes over talented track teams in Sterling

By MIKE COURSON

With two state championships last May, the spring proved to be a successful one for the Lady Black Bear track team in 2017. This spring, three of the five athletes behind those two championships are back. Retired is head coach Keith Patterson, who will be replaced by Dwayne Wilson.

Wilson and family have a wealth of track experience. Though this will be his first year as head coach for Sterling, he enters the season with two decades of coaching experience in the jumps, hurdles, and sprints.

Leading the Lady Black Bears this spring is returning state champion Taya Wilson. Wilson has been a perennial competitor in the 3A ranks in several events. Last May, she entered the state track meet with the No. 20 100m hurdle time in Kansas and pulled the upset in the finals to win by 0.13 seconds in 15.34.

Two of the next three hurdlers behind Wilson have graduated. Sterling senior Lexi Edwards returns as a finalist in the event. She ran the fourth-best 100m hurdle time during the regular season and placed eighth at state.

Wilson should also be a contender in the 300m hurdles. She had the No. 4 time in 3A last spring before state where she collected a bronze medal. Miranda Ortiz, the reigning champion from Cheney, has graduated.

A pair of Lady Black Bears are in the hunt for the gold in the triple jump. Wilson and junior Grace Rowland had top-9 marks in 3A before state. Rowland went on to finish fourth at state, and Wilson finished fifth for a medal. The top-two finishers in 3A have graduated, ensuring a

new champion in 2018.

The 4x100m relay was a big event last year with the Newton girls breaking the all-time state record in that event. Sterling held its own in Class 3A. The team of Rowland, Edwards, Ashlyn Kelley, and Eryn Spangenberg led the classification during the regular season and won the title by nearly half a second in 50.40.

Individually, the junior Kelley and Rowland had top-10 100m dash times in Class 3A last season. Kelley went on to place seventh at state. The top-two sprinters in 3A have graduated. Kelley placed fifth in the 200m dash. Prior to the season, Kelley headed northeast where she is already making top marks in Class 6A for Olathe South.

Elsewhere in the field, Rowland and Kelley had top-12 long jumps in 3A last year. Rowland could be next in line for the gold after a fourth-place finish at state. The top-three jumpers have graduated.

Wilson returns as the team's leading thrower. She topped out at nearly 114 feet in the javelin last spring. With five of the six of the top 15 state finishers gone to graduation, the door for a medal opens a little wider.

Coach Wilson is also excited to see what some newcomers will do in 2018, including Alaina Madden in the pole vault and relays.

"Our freshman girls class looks very promising with a nice blend of sprinters, throwers, jumpers and hurdlers," he said. Kayla Morris, a freshman will be competitive in the high jump and hurdles."

Like last year, the Lady Black Bears will be relatively small in number but very high in quality on the track and in the field.

"Our numbers will probably prevent us from competing for league and regional titles, but I expect that we will have some really quality performances," Wilson said. "We are trying to generate an environment of excitement around track and field. We want to compete not only against others, but also against ourselves."

"We want every athlete to improve and make progress toward their

personal goals, understanding that some will set goals to win a state medal, while others will set goals to improve their best marks and place in our smaller meets. Both goals are important to us as a coaching staff."

#### Boys ramping back up

The Black Bear boys barely registered in the 3A rankings last year. Brett Oden was an exception in the shot put with the No. 7 throw in the classification. This year, Wilson has higher expectations for the squad.

The big returners are seniors Hans Anderson and Blake Richter. Anderson runs the 300m hurdles, and Richter will return on the track and in the field.

"Blake missed the majority of his junior season with an ACL injury," Wilson said. "He was really progressing as a javelin thrower, so we are hopeful that he continues to develop in that area."

Sophomore Brady Myers is the lone returning state qualifier for the boys. He placed 14th in the triple jump as a freshman. That event was senior dominated last year and the top-eight triple jumpers in the class have graduated. Myers will also run in the sprints this spring.

Wilson also has high hopes for junior Max Dutton in the middle-distance races. "We will need to figure out what his best race is and hope that our regional assignment isn't as loaded with middle distance as last year's," Wilson said.

Wilson will have just a few freshmen on the roster this year. Tyus Wilson is expected to lead that group after setting a new Heart of America high jump record at 6-4 last year. That would have been the fourth-best in 3A at the varsity level.

With plenty of track history in his family, the new head coach is ready to see all of his student athletes in action this spring.

"The coach part of me loves watching kids compete," he said. "There is such excitement when a kid learns a new event, and starts having success with improving their marks. I love it when a kid comes off the track and is excited about a personal best."

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