

Black & Gold

Lady Warriors ready for 2022 season

By Daniel L. Chamness
 When you lose five players to graduation and four of the graduating athletes are playing a college sport, most coaches would be starting with little experience and a clean slate of players.
 But, even though Lenny Sementi, the long-time coach of the Tuscola Lady Warrior softball team, had to wave goodbye to Kaitlyn Reifsteck, Kendyl Ring and Jessie Martin, who are all playing college softball, and Marissa Russo, who is playing college basketball, he returns four all conference players.
 For the record, Reifsteck is playing NCAA Division I softball at Eastern Illinois University, while Ring and Martin chose the junior college route. Ring is at Parkland College, while Martin suits up for Olney Central College. Russo, who

probably could have chosen to play college softball, is a basketball player for Lakeland College in Mattoon. The Warriors also lost Kendal Morgan to graduation, but she has elected not to play college softball.
 But, in addition to those girls, who garnered many honors during their careers, Sementi returns Ella Boyer and Taylor Musgrave, who were both first-team all conference players in the Central Illinois Conference. Kerri Pierce and Isabelle Wilcox also return and they were named to the second team. At the present time, Musgrave is out with an injury.
 "Our pitching depth will be a strength for us," said Sementi. "Two classes of the girls lost an entire season and a big portion of yet another season. Game experience and knowledge is lacking in some areas. The weather/rainouts have al-

lowed us to work on our pitching depth. We like the work ethic and we will strive to get better and better. It is our goal to be playing our best softball in May."
 While Marley Good, a Tuscola golfer in the fall, did not garner all-conference honors, she earned a letter and is one of the athletes currently out with an injury.
 In the first five games, the Warriors have posted a record of 4-1. Their most recent win was a 14-1 thumping of the Shelbyville Rams. Pierce earned the win on the hill as she worked six innings, allowing only three hits. She fanned six. The hurler did not allow a single earned run or issue a walk.
 Offensively, the Warriors had 12 hits as Zoey Thomason and Marissa Boyer each had three hits. Thomason

was 3-for-4 with a double and triple. She drove home a pair and scored twice as well. Boyer was 3-for-4 and drove home three. She doubled and tripled also. Ava Boyer, who doubled and tripled as well, was 2-for-3 with a walk. The freshman crossed the plate three times.
 "In the first five games, Emily Czerwonka, Addyson Ring, Thomason and Marissa Boyer have all donated," said Sementi. "Ava Boyer, although only a freshman, has been a great addition to our lineup."
 Sementi has coached the Lady Warrior softball team for 22 years, but with the COVID cancellation he has 21 years of games. He won his 450th game during the 2021 season. Last year was one of their best years as they rolled to 23-1, losing only their final game of the year.



KERI PIERCE DELIVERS a pitch against Fisher. The senior has helped the Lady Warriors post a 4-1 record thus far. Photo by Daniel L. Chamness.



ISABELLE WILCOX and the Fisher third baseman eye the pitch during the fourth inning. Photo by Daniel L. Chamness.

Girls' track team flexes muscle in indoor meets; prepared for the outdoor season

By Daniel L. Chamness
 Will the 2022 track season be special for the Tuscola Lady Warriors?
 The answer is forthcoming, but the easy answer would be a resounding "yes".
 The Lady Warriors have flexed their preverbal track muscles during a few indoor meets and consider this: many of the meets did not have the traditional number of events. In addition, because of the indoor track and the distances, did not have the traditional outdoor distances. While there are many, many meets to go before turning south on Interstate 57 for the short trip to Eastern Illinois University, the Lady Warriors look formidable as a team.
 That formidable team starts with future Murray State Uni-

versity track athlete Alyssa Williams. The senior won three gold medals at the state finals one year ago and helped the Warriors grab sixth in the 800-meter relay. She proved she was the best in 100-meter dash, the 200-meter dash and the long jump in the Illinois High School Association Class 1A Championships held in June, which is approximately three weeks later than it would have been held.
 While she has yet to earn a letter as a high school track athlete, Lia Patterson, only a freshman, is showing that she has the ability to not only score points in the state finals, but possibly win a number of championships during her career, which has only just begun.
 "Alyssa and Lia are truly once in a lifetime type of ath-

letes," said Drew Sterkel, the girl's head track coach. "The best thing about each of them is not how great they are on the track, but what great people they are. In practice, they compete against each other knowing that it will only help them out in the large meets."
 Those are two large pieces of the puzzle. In the sprint events, where Williams is not a presence, Patterson is. Like the hurdle races. Not to mention, legs of the sprint relays. While Williams returns, and Patterson starts her high school career, the Lady Warriors also have another returnee in Mia Hausmann. The junior was also a member of the 800-meter relay one year ago.
 "Mia is a key part of our relays," said Sterkel. "We could use 100 Mias on our team. She

id one the hardest working track athletes I have ever seen. She leads by example."
 Other than those three, the Warriors have Natalie Hastings, who won the Central Illinois Conference title in both the shot and the discus last year and Addysn Pettry, who returns in the hurdle races and the pole vault.
 Others who will make an impact this year include Kenna Clodfelder, who is also on the 800-meter relay. Braidy Stahler, Lauren Woods and Harley Woodard are also athletes that will score points consistently for the Lady Warriors.
 "One thing I want to point out about the 2021 graduating class is they will never be forgotten here," said Sterkel. "They were so special as a

group. I will highlight their contributions for the rest of my coaching career. Hannah (Hornaday) was our rock and you could count on her. Paige Goad was a valuable member of the relays and made a tremendous impact. Laney (Cummings) and Brynn (Tabeling) were fantastic. Laney could run anything from the 100-meter to the

3,200-meter. Brynn was another one that could do it all."
 Tabeling and Cummings, who also ran cross country and played girl's basketball for the Lady Warriors, were the other two members of the 800-meter relay team. Tabeling is currently suiting up for the Limestone University women's basketball team.

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