

Tuscola Warriors boys track and field on the hunt for hardware

By Lenny Sementi

Tuscola's boys track team is taking a full bus load south to Eastern Illinois University for the IHSA's state track meet this coming weekend after a runner-up finish this past Wednesday the 17th at the Tuscola Sectional. Coach Ryan Hornaday's squad rose to the occasion edging a good Maroa team for 2nd place in the team totals in the 19-team event and will be in the hunt for the schools

3rd state team trophy of the year.

Hornaday's horde will head south with 11-athletes in tow, including numerous high seeds and a pair of top seeds. Senior Chris Boyd got the ball rolling at the sectional sweeping the throwing events. The senior shined winning the shot put convincingly denting the sand at 59.71-feet and enters the state meet ranked number 1. He backed that up with a victory in

the discus firing it 172.18-feet and is seeded 2nd overall.

Juniors Jackson Barrett and Josiah Hortin were both all state in cross-country this past fall and are continuing their assault on the distance scene. Barrett, like Boyd, swept his two open events winning the 1600 in 4-minutes and 29-seconds and the 3200 in 9:26. He enters state ranked 3rd in the 1600 and 1st overall in the 3200 in front of his nearest opponent

by 7-seconds. Hortin was just 4-seconds back in the 1600, eclipsing the state qualifying time. He owns the top time in 1A this season and should be a threat to win it. He also will be lining up in the 800 at state as well and like the 1600 owns the best 1A time in the state this spring. Will Foltz, another of Tuscola's cross country guys, will be joining them in Charles-ton qualifying for the 3200 with a time of 9:43.

The Warriors took a trio of bronze medals in relay races placing 3rd in the 4x200, 4x400 and the 4x800 meeting the state qualifying time in the first two. Alan Rebello, Kamden Flenner, Bryce Graves and Ben Hornaday toured the track in the 4x200 in 1:32 and Hortin joined up with Graves, Robello and Hornaday in the 4x400 finishing in 3:31. Calvin Cook, Dylan Graves and Carter Simpson along with Foltz will serve as alternates for the

relays. Blake McLeese, Xander Neamtu, Boyd Brewer and D. Graves were a near miss in the 4x800 taking 3rd and landing just outside of qualification. Hornaday added to the team total and was one spot shy of advancing in the open taking 3rd with an 11.69 while Cook found some team points in the open 400 ending his night in 5th overall with a personal best 54.70.

Tuscola Warriors baseball team finds their way home

By Lenny Sementi

Tuscola hosted the IHSA Baseball Regional this past week but after not being seeded was forced to play their first game on the road. The black and gold found their way home however, beating the Tri-County Titans 3-2 on

Monday the 15th in an extra inning thriller. JJ Reynolds got the start and left with no decision after 6 and 2/3's with the game knotted at 2. The junior gave up 2-runs on 9-hits and 2-walks while reaching the double-digit plateau fanning 10. Freshman Caden Russo

hung all zeros on the board leaning on his defense for the final 4-outs collecting the win.

Coach Caleb Englehardt's lone senior Colton Musgrave was a beast at the plate driving in 2 of the Warriors 3-runs going 2 for 3 with the bat in his hands. The Black-

hawk College commit homered and scored twice in the contest. Aiden Devlin was the other Warrior to cross the dish after battling his way to a walk. Austin Cummings, Jacob Waugh and Reynolds all singled in the game.

The Warriors only al-

lowed Windsor Stewardson-Strasburg to score in two frames but both numbers hung on the board were of the crooked variety as the top seed plated 4 in the 1st and 6 in the 5th ending the black and gold's post season run with a 10-0 loss. Waugh and

Reynolds both recorded baseknocks in the contest while Nate Thomason went 2 for 3 at the plate. Russo took the loss on the bump scattering 12-hits and 2-walks out over 5-innings of work.

Lady Warriors softball team falls in regional championship

By Lenny Sementi

Tuscola's softball team upended a very good 2nd seeded Meridian team in the semi-finals on Tuesday the 16th earning a spot in the Championship game of the Meridian Regional and held a lead midway through four before yielding to the top seeded Leroy Panthers. The Warriors collected win number 21 on the year, downing the host Hawks 4-3 behind a complete game pitching gem by Isa-

belle Wilcox and a well-timed long ball by senior classmate Ella Boyer.

The Warriors drew first blood, scoring in the top of the 1st in the semifinal victory. Ava Boyer battled her way on with a walk and then scored on a single to center by big sister Ella, who went 2 for 3 on the day with 3-RBI's. That's where it would stay until the Hawks pushed a pair across in the 5th to move in front. A. Boyer set the table again

in the 6th drawing her 2nd walk of the game. Wilcox moved her with a sac bunt and big sis was at it again only this time it was a round tripper pushing the Warriors in front 3-2. Addy Ring followed with a 2-out double but was left, as was Makenna Fiscus who tripled with 2-gone earlier in the contest.

Bayleigh Bales singled in the top of the 7th, gave way to Allyson Pettry on the bases who moved on a double off the fence

by Zoey Thomason and then scored on a sac fly by the younger Boyer. That run would be needed as the Hawks put a pair on with no outs and scored on a fly out to Ring who then found E. Boyer who relayed it to Emily Czerwonka at 3rd who applied the tag erasing the other baserunner. Wilcox then induced a fly ball to A. Boyer at 2nd securing their spot in title game.

Leroy scored first in the championship this past Satur-

day but a 2-run 3rd by the Warriors gave the black and gold a lead they would hold until the bottom of the 4th as the Panthers put up crooked numbers in both the 4th and 6th frame to win the game 6-2. Wilcox singled in the 3rd, stole 2nd before Leroy intentionally walked E. Boyer. The two seniors executed a perfect double steal on a fake but attempt by Czerwonka to set the table and the junior cleared it off with a single to left.

Tuscola threatened in both the 6th and 7th but left runners in both stanzas. Freshman Bayleigh Taylor took the loss going the distance in the circle giving up 6-run, 3-earned on 7-hits and a pair of walks. E. Boyer led the way at the plate going 2 for 2 on the day, including a double and a run scored. Bales and Claire Meyer both singled in the game while Ring added a double to the box score.

Future

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study has been different over the years. "I'm studying one and a half to two hours every night, or at least every other, this year," Bessent stated. "Before senior year, I didn't have as much to do." Zimmerman, on the other hand, says that he has had a relatively smooth senior campaign. Last year, I had a loaded schedule, and I was putting in two hours of study almost every night, but this year it's a bit lighter," he said.

Both young men are planning on heading out of state to continue their education, with Zimmerman headed to

the University of Wyoming and Bessent cruising south to attend Florida Gulf Coast University. The trip to Wyoming represents a significant change for Zimmerman, who had originally indicated his intention to attend Grinnell College in Iowa and play football. The catalyst for the change was his being awarded the very first Paul and Carleen Turner University of Wyoming scholarship, which will pay 100 percent of his tuition and fees for all four years of his bachelor's degree. For Jesse, the trip to FGCU was a bit more circuitous. "I grew up watching a lot of nature documentaries on TV," Bessent, a future Oceanographer stated, and when a vacation

trip to Florida included a stop at the Ft. Myers school, his journey toward becoming an Eagle began. "My mom has a friend whose daughter attends, so when we were in Florida, we visited campus and I fell in love with it." Zimmerman plans on majoring in animal science with a Ag business minor during his time as a Cowboy.

Interestingly, both students have an eye on making working with animals a part of their careers, though through very different means. Bessent wants to work with marine biology in hopes of someday synthesizing a medicine from an aquatic animal, while Zimmerman's goal is to start a meat processing com-

pany with the knowledge, he's gained from a lifetime of cattle raising in addition to his studies.

Both young men feel a strong commitment to helping others, in different ways. Zimmerman, who recently chaperoned a group of seventh grade science students on a canoe trip, is quick to point out all the blessings in his life and feels that he has an obligation to give back. "I've been really blessed with having the ability to do a lot of things, and I feel a passion to spread that to others and make sure that everyone has an opportunity to feel special." For the rather shy and reserved Jesse, however. He gives his time to other spe-

cies. "I love to volunteer, but I'm so shy that when I do, it's usually got something to do with animals."

For Bessent, the key to being able to maintain such a packed schedule while having some semblance of a high school life is through diligent planning. "I like to plan ahead a lot, a lot of scheduling. I have to make sure that 'this and this' are going on before I can agree to something else. That's just how I live, week to week, by planning ahead." Zimmerman, however, freely admits to not being a good planner and just tries to utilize every available minute of every day. "You don't take too many breaks or sit back. You go to practice, you come

home, you do your homework, you eat and go to bed. If you have some time on the weekends to hang with your friends, that's what you do."

The future is wide open for these two, but both have an idea of where they hope to be in 10 years. "I'm hoping to be on a reef somewhere," Bessent stated, and for Zimmerman, his hope is to have a farm of his own. "I'm hoping to have my company started and have a farm of my own and be working that."

Two bright young men with bright futures. Futures that prove that you can attend a small school and still have big dreams.

HOW THEY'RE DOING

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Villa Grove sports wrap for softball, baseball, and track

By Tony Hooker

Girls' Softball

Take Southern Swing Tie Tigers

Hayden Thomas tripled and drove in two runs as Villa Grove earned a 4-4 tie vs. Breckinridge County, KY, a school with an enrollment of 884, on May 5. Thomas, Piper Kiser, Maci Clodfelder and Alex Brown scored runs for the Blue Devils. Brown pitched a complete game for VG, allowing 4 runs on 7 hits, striking out 1 and walking 2 batters.

Busted by Marshals Alison Pangburn went 2-4 with a double and 2 runs scored, but a pair of Blue Devil errors led to 4 unearned runs, as VGHS dropped an 8-5 decision to Marshall County, KY on May 6. Piper Kiser went 1-2 with a pair of walks, 2 runs scored and an RBI for Villa Grove, and Maci

Clodfelder and Hayden Thomas each drove in a run. Kiser took the loss, giving up 4 earned runs on 11 hits while fanning 3.

Mauled by Bruins The Blue Devil bats were squelched in the final game of their Kentucky road trip, falling 11-1 in 5 innings to Central Hardin, Ky. Alison Pangburn doubled and drove in the only rung for VGHS, scoring Kayln Cordes. Alex Brown took the loss, giving up 3 runs on 5 hits in 2 innings.

Ground Eagles Villa Grove celebrated their return to central Illinois by defeating Rantoul 11-3 on May 11. The top of the order laid waste to RTHS, with leadoff hitter Kayln Cordes going 3-4 with 3 RBI's and 3 runs scored. Alison Pangburn doubled and tripled with 3 RBI's and a run scored for VG. Maci Clodfelder went

2-3 with a double and 3 RBI's from her cleanup spot, Hayden Thomas went 2-3 win a double, 2 runs scored and an RBI, Chloe Reardon went 1-3 with a double and a run scored. Izzy Dodd and Addisyn Wilson each went 1-3 with a run scored. Alex Brown earned the win, allowing 3 runs on 6 hits.

Abandon Maroons Izzy Dodd tripled and drove in a run as Villa Grove defeated Champaign Central 4-2 on May 12. Maci Clodfelder doubled and scored twice for the Blue Devils, and Emma Bratten-Noise doubled and scored for VGHS. Alex Brown picked up the win in relief of Piper Kiser, throwing 3-2 innings of hitless relief while fanning 4 and walking none.

Baseball

Down Bombers Peyton Smith went 2-4 with

a pair of doubles and 3 RBI's as Villa Grove defeated Argenta-Oreana 9-2 on May 8. Brady Clodfelder also doubled twice, scored a pair of runs and drove in 1 for VGHS. Gavin Kiser went 1-3 with a double, 2 RBI's and 2 runs scored for the Blue Devils. Luke Zimmerman went 2-3 with a double, 2 RBI's and 2 runs scored. Sam Bender, who went 2-3 at the plate and scored a pair of runs, was the beneficiary of the offensive outburst, as he earned the win by allowing just 2 runs (1 earned) on 5 hits over

7 innings. Bender struck out 1 without walking a batter.

Girls' Track and Field

Compete at Okaw Valley Sectional

The 4x800m relay quartet of Emma Buesing, Madison Logan, Nadia Collision, and Scarlett Howard finished in 6th place, but could not advance to state at the Okaw Valley Sectional, held on May 11. Howard ran 9th in the 800m, and Buesing placed 10th in the 1600m in her final

meet as a Blue Devil.


Junior High Track and Field at State meet

Evalice Callison soared over the bar at 4'11" to earn a second-place finish at the 8th grade IESA 2A state track meet, held on May 11-12 at East Peoria. Classmate Jacob Golightly cruised to a 3rd place finish in the 110m hurdles for the Blue Devils.

Max Wilson also earned a 9th place finish in the seventh-grade shot put for Villa Grove.



VILLA GROVE SOFTBALL won the IHSA Class 1A regional 2023 championship on May 18. Submitted photo.



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