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SPORTS



Lane text

w Adriana Zalloni
Sports Editor

Elsewhere in this issue, readers can learn about my day spent at Niles Central High School. One feature I omitted from my article was any mention of the school's bowling team. This inspired me to consider the advantages of Niles West's athletic department's adding its own group of kingpins. In the spirit of Late Night with David Letterman's Top 10 Lists, here are my top 10 reasons for Niles West to add bowling to its list of extracurricular activities:

10. "Sport" requires no athletic ability whatsoever.
9. Cool shoes with the size on the back.
8. Improve math skills by mastering Byzantine scoring system.
7. Loose fitting retro shirts—fashionable and slimming.
6. You can catch up on homework in the half hour between turns.
5. See #7 above: only shirts you can wear with your name on the front and not work at Jiffy Lube.
4. One word: kegger! (Oops, make that "kegler.")
3. Free breakfast at sponsor's restaurant.
2. Only sport that leaves one hand free for texting.

And, the number one reason to add bowling to Niles West's list of extracurricular activities: it looks good on college applications if you are applying to Bowling Green or Ball State.

Gymnastics ends with a perfect 10

w Sarah Espinosa
Staff Writer

The Niles West varsity girls' gymnastics team had yet another great year, according to senior captain Molly Gstalter.

"Our team worked really hard, no matter what level they were on. Freshmen, junior varsity and varsity, all the girls gave it time and effort," Gstalter said.

The team finished second in the Central Suburban League South (CSL) with a record of 4-1.

The Wolves produced two state qualifiers, sophomores Katelynn Johnson and Callie Sher, who competed in the uneven bars event.

Junior teammate Nadia Sarnecki commented on the girls' accomplishments this season.

"[Johnson and Sher] worked really hard to get to that spot. Their entire life is about gymnastics during the season. They are both really dedicated," Sarnecki said.

Gstalter also commented on how hard her fellow teammates worked.

"I couldn't be happier for them. They are so much fun to have up in the gym, and they have worked so hard. Both [Sher] and [Johnson] have been in gymnastics for so long, and they really didn't realize how big of an accomplishment it was to make it to state," Gstalter said.

During regionals, teammate Johnson placed third on uneven bars, tied for fourth on the balance beam, earned second on her floor routine and was an automatic advancer to sectionals. Along with Johnson, Sher placed third in the floor exercise, earning her an automatic spot at sectionals as well. The rest of the varsity team joined Johnson and Sher at sectionals, earning second overall as a team at regionals. Once sectionals hit, Johnson placed on the uneven bars and floor exercise events. She came in second and fourth respectively. Sher was right behind her,

coming in third on the uneven bars. The rest of the team fell short, just missing the qualifications.

At the state meet Sher placed 30th, and Johnson placed 31st on the uneven bars event.

During the regular season, the Wolves placed first at the Star



Katelynn Johnson shows her style on the balance beam. Photo by Rexly Penafiora

Is Born invite, held by West, and the Niles North invite. The team also placed third at the Glenbrook North invite.

The rest of the team includes: senior captain Min Chang, junior Katie Bielawski, sophomore Emily Fung and freshman Jenny Marin.

The Wolves expressed enthusiasm on a successful season.

"Overall, I could not be more happy with our season. We started strong, and our goal was to make conference, regionals and sectionals as a team," Gstalter said.

Sarnecki agrees.

"This year's team was the best because we went to sectionals as a team, and that was a huge accomplishment," Sarnecki said.

Small varsity squad makes big impression at sectionals

w Rexly Penafiora
Managing Editor

Even with declining numbers, the boys' varsity swimming and diving team ended the regular season with a winning record of 5-3 (1-3 in the Central Suburban League South). Varsity head coach Dan Vander Jeudt expressed satisfaction with the team's success and looks forward to tomorrow's state meet.

"At the beginning of the season, I said that my main belief about the team was its quality, not the quantity. That belief has stuck with the team throughout the year. A great example would be the meet against Maine South. We put two swimmers of each level in every event and, in some cases, three swimmers in each event. Despite the shortage of swimmers in each event, we still won the meet," Vander Jeudt said.

Senior captain Andre Chen-Young agreed.

"It is our main weapon. Other teams might underestimate us because of our small number of swimmers, but they become amazed of the fact that most of our swimmers come in first, second and third places in their races."

According to Vander Jeudt, the smaller number of swimmers on the varsity squad was a blessing rather than a curse.

"The varsity has three lanes during practice, and this year, each lane had at least four to five swimmers. During workouts, I could move swimmers around to different lanes based on their strokes. I think this made a huge difference when it came to competing."

The success of the season is not only credited to the swim team, but to the diving team as well.

"The season was okay. It is during the post-season that the divers start bringing out their best dives," head diving coach Lou Torres said.

For Torres, some of the divers have improved dramatically throughout the season.

"[Senior captain] Jon Bugara increased his chances of going to the state meet. Also, [junior] Andrew Roberts has improved as well, but out of all the divers, I think that [junior] Brendan Melnick has improved the most. He came out of nowhere and is now doing the same dives as the more experienced divers."

Bugara agreed with Torres.

"The post-season is already here, so our dives are getting more complex. As for the team's progress, I think that there was a lot of improvement in the team, but I would have liked to have that happen at the beginning of the year rather than at the end of the season."



Ben Rees beats the competition in the 100 yard breaststroke during the Central Suburban League South meet. Photo by Rexly Penafiora

"We have a very powerful swim team that can compete with powerful swim teams such as Evanston," Vander Jeudt said.

"It is so much easier for our divers to get into state this year, because many of the good divers graduated already. This increases the odds of the divers succeeding this year," Torres said.

During this year's sectionals, Niles West finished third behind Evanston and New Trier. The swim team secured six events to state including the 200-yard medley relay consisting of Chen-Young, senior Jason Gerdnoi and sophomores Konner Scott and Tim Binkley, and the 100-yard butterfly, which was won by Chen-Young by a mere .012 of a second. As for the diving team, their qualifiers for state are Bugara and junior Dylan Lovering, who beat his varsity counterparts for the fifth place finish at

sectionals.

With sectionals already over, the team now prepares for the state meet.

"We are very excited for this meet," Chen-Young said. "There is a lot of potential to break not only our personal records, but the school records as well. Based on what the team has done at sectionals, I believe that we can be very successful at state."

Senior captain Nate Biser agreed.

"I am very proud of the team because even though there was a declining number of swimmers on varsity, we were still able to qualify in six events for state. This is a great opportunity for the team to become a big contender at state."

The state meet is tomorrow at New Trier at 4 p.m. and on Saturday, Feb. 28, at 1 p.m.

Lady Wolves complete landmark campaign

w Adriana Zalloni
Sports Editor

w Mary Basic
Staff Writer

The girls' varsity basketball team ran into a buzzsaw last Friday night, ending the best season in recent memory with a 45-21 loss to Von Steuben in the Mather regional.

The team, which finished the season 19-6, did extract a measure of satisfaction in the regional with a 49-39 defeat of district rival Niles North on Feb. 18.

Despite the season-ending loss, head coach Tony Konsewicz expressed pride at the hard work the team put forth.

Junior point guard Kelly Kleppin agrees.

"Our whole team pretty much put forth an immense amount of effort during practice and games. Putting forth the effort really does make you as a player and your whole team better," Kleppin said.

Team members include senior point guard Jayne Kim and forwards Mary Cate Curran and Madeline Dinges and centers Dana Kontos and Alex Heidtkte, all seniors; junior guards Allie Guiang, Margaret Kearns, Ivana Gaddam, Jennie DiJohn and Kleppin; forward Jaclyn Gremley and center Michelle Poskrobko and freshman guard Jewell Loyd.

Injuries kept the team from being even more successful. "We [played] without [Heidtkte and Gremley] for significant stretches," Konsewicz said.

Loyd originally planned to enroll at another school and while

her presence enhanced the team's performance, Konsewicz said that her late arrival caused some adjustments.

"Every game we played we were at a disadvantage, even if the team was not as talented as we were," Konsewicz said. "Those team had summer leagues to play together. We did not know that [Loyd] would join us until the beginning of August."

According to Konsewicz, Loyd already has college scholarship offers. She led the team in scoring with an average of 20 points per game.

"She did a great job as a freshman, and she had a great supporting cast," Konsewicz said.

Loyd agrees with the latter.

"I loved to play with [the team]," Loyd said. "They are great."

Konsewicz expressed belief that overcoming the challenges placed before them has made the team stronger.

"This has really shown a lot about our girls," Konsewicz said. "They really persevered through some adversity and showed us their strength. [They are] nicer kids than they are athletes. [That] makes it fun to work with kids like that. They are a great group of kids. They work hard, [are] dedicated, [are] here all the time and come for off-season workouts."

Poskrobko concurs.

"We worked really hard every day to improve," Poskrobko said. "[During] each practice we strove to work on the things that needed improvement, and it is really going to pay off in the long run."

Kleppin expressed enthusiasm at playing with a diverse and well rounded group of girls.



Jayne Kim goes for the free throw.
Photo by Adriana Zalloni

"Everybody gets along on and off the court, and that can sometimes be difficult to find in a diverse group," she said.

With seven underclasswomen returning, Konsewicz expressed optimism for the team's future.

Boys hope to salvage season with regional hoops wins

w Daniel Blazek
Staff Writer

The boys' varsity basketball team's regular season has come to a close, with the team posting an 8-16 record (1-9 in the Central Suburban League South), a five-game improvement over the previous season.

"There is definite improvement in comparison to the last couple of years," varsity head coach Fritz Wulfram said. "We started off this year really strong at 5-2, but of late, we have just struggled containing some tough teams in our conference. The big thing is that these guys have really competed all year long, but things just did not turn out our way."

The Wolves victories this season include wins over Palatine

(51-39), Chicago Corliss (69-55), Niles North (59-42), New Trier (57-55), Loyola (60-52), Bloomington (65-64), Gordon Tech (62-50) and Grant (58-54).

The most notable of these victories came against New Trier on Tuesday, Dec. 9. Wins versus the Trevians have been few and far between, and the victory gave the Wolves momentum to start the season with a 4-1 (1-0 in conference) record.

Despite the losing record, the Wolves were competitive. For example, the team trailed by only one point in the beginning of the second half of the game against Warren and led top 10-ranked Waukegan 36-35 at halftime of the return match after being drubbed in their first outing against the Bulldogs.

The Wolves will compete in their opening round playoff game on Monday, March 2, against the Niles North Vikings in the Prospect High School regional at 8 p.m. All teams automatically qualify for the regional playoffs, giving every team an equal shot at winning their way to a regional championship. According to Wulfram, the Wolves landed a favorable number 12 seed, giving

the team high hopes and a much better chance to surprise some teams on its way to the championship game.

"We are excited for playoffs to start, and it is even better that our first game is against North," junior guard Lorenzo Fiol said. "It makes it that much more exciting."

Junior forward Jeremy Clayton agrees.

"I feel really good about the playoffs," Clayton added. "Now all we have to do is keep our concentration and keep working as hard as we can to reach our goal of that championship."

Wulfram likes the team's chances as well.

"We are in a fairly good position to make it to the championship game," Wulfram said. "The thing is that none of these games will be easy, so we need to work even harder now that it really counts. If we play the way that we are capable of playing, I believe we have a good chance to defeat Niles North and Loyola to get ourselves to the championship match."

For those considering attending the first round game, Prospect High School is located at 801 W. Kensington Rd., Mt. Prospect

Wrestlers fail to pin down a winning record for the season

w Adriana Zalloni
Sports Editor

w Sarah Espinosa
Staff Writer

Despite a final losing record, varsity head coach Bryan Wittersheim said that he believed the boys' wrestling team's season ended on a good note.

"The season was a great success," Wittersheim said. "Our win-loss record may not have been where I thought it could be before the season started, but I saw a large amount of improvement throughout the year, and that is what is important."

According to Wittersheim and senior Ken Sanchez (215), this year's loss of key wrestlers Steven Robertson and David Gould affected the final record of the team. Despite this, Sanchez expressed optimism on entering the season without Robertson and Gould.

"Even without them, we thought we could beat our previous record or at least come close to it," Sanchez said. "We thought that if we worked hard, we could pull it together and go out big. We figured that if we fought hard enough at every level, we could do it. The thing was, sometimes we lost to teams that we easily could have beaten."

Junior Mike Bahrmassel (135) agreed.

"It was a tough season. We were not spread out in weight classes, making some gaps in the lineup. We had to work hard to overcome that obstacle," Bahrmassel said. "It was a bit of a disappointment to end the season the way we did, but I know we



Dylan Mahoney-Muno takes down Hersey opponent. Photo courtesy of Spectrum

tried our best, which is the most anyone could ask for. We persevered through difficult meets, and I am proud of that."

According to junior Chris Nguyen (171), the team benefitted from the hard work the wrestlers put forth.

"It was through our constant hard work and dedication that we became a better and closer team, even though our record may not show it," Nguyen said.

Seven wrestlers qualified for sectionals, including: seniors Patrick Conrad (140) and Sanchez; juniors Eric Ronning (145) and Anthony Suarez (160) and the regional champions: senior Jamal Johnson (125) and juniors Ben Rosen (112) and Bahrmassel.

Wittersheim expressed excitement at the success of the wrestlers at sectionals.

"We had some great matches from all the sectional qualifiers," Wittersheim said. "[Johnson] stood out and had a great tournament, qualifying for the state meet. He took third place and his only loss was to the current three time state champion. Overall, it was a great season. Many of the kids enjoyed a successful season."

Other varsity wrestlers include: seniors Andres Osorio (119) and Jacob Friedland (189) and juniors Jimmy Rosati (135), Tim Aguila (152), Dylan Mahoney-Muno (152) and Kevin Nguyen (285).

Plans to make next year's team better are already formulating.

"Next year, our team will be more spread out in the weight classes, filling up some of the gaps we currently have," Bahrmassel said. "In addition to filling those gaps, we are going to work even harder to make sure next year is the best one yet. I know that if we push ourselves harder than we have been pushing, our team can really come out on top."

SPORTS

Winter Wonders



With every new sports season, new talent emerges. The athletes work hard to leave a mark on the school. They exceed the expectations of their coaches and shine throughout the season. This year, two outstanding individuals shined brighter than the rest: swimmer Andre Chen-Young and gymnast Min Chang. In recognition of their hard work, *West Word* names Chen-Young and Chang the Winter Athletes.



For Chang, injury not a difficult vault to overcome

w Adriana Zalloni
Sports Editor

Gymnastics is a difficult, demanding sport when the gymnast is healthy. It is doubly so when one must perform injured. Such commitment to her sport, combined with her excellence in her events, makes senior Min Chang a deserving choice as *West Word's* female athlete of the winter season.

According to girls' gymnastics head coach Pam Foerch, Chang continued to show dedication and perseverance in her final gymnastics season, despite suffering from two herniated discs in her back.

"Being injured left me devastated and dumbfounded," Chang said. "I found out two days before my season that there was a

chance I would be out for the rest of the season. It wasn't easy to cope with, but I was determined to get back into the gym as soon as I could. The first practices and meets were hard to withstand, but I remembered that gymnastics is about team, and it helped me cope with my injury."

Three years of varsity gymnastics have taken a toll on Chang's back.

"She worked hard to overcome it. She is a strong girl," Foerch said.

Starting her gymnastics career as a freshman, Chang made varsity within the year. This year, she was named captain of the team.

"Being a captain makes me want to try harder for the team," Chang said. "It makes me want to be a good role model for the girls."

Chang competes on the uneven bars and the vault. Her highest score on the uneven bars was an 8.0.

"[Chang tried] a handspring front on the vault for conference this year," Foerch said. "This [was] a challenge because [Chang] has never thrown it before."

Chang expressed gratitude to her fellow teammates. "The team has always been so supportive of one another," Chang said. "They really helped me through all the tough times."

Her teammates look up to her. "[Chang] is fearless. She is never afraid to try something new," junior Katie Bielawski said. "She is full of confidence."

Chang said that if she decides to continue gymnastics in college, she will not compete competitively. She may, however, continue to participate in club gymnastics.

According to Chang, gymnastics is more than a sport. "I love it because it has taught me what my body can and cannot do," Chang said. "It pushes me, and it taught me the determination I needed to reach my goals."

Years of experience keep Chen-Young flying past competitors

w Adriana Zalloni
Sports Editor

With various school and state records broken, senior swimmer Andre Chen-Young credits his success to a mixture of hard work and natural talent.

"I have been swimming since I was six," Chen-Young said. "My dad was a coach in Jamaica, so I joined. I have a lot of natural talent because swimming is in my blood, so it comes easy for me."

Teammates agree. "[Chen-Young] doesn't swim," junior teammate Ben Rees said. "He flies."

Chen-Young currently holds the school record for the 100 fly with a time of 53.16. He also holds the record for the free relay (1:39.00) along with sophomore Konner Scott and alumni Dan Toy and Valeriy Pinskiy.

This year, Chen-Young was named one of the captains of the team.

"[Chen-Young] is a very good leader," head boys' swimming coach Dan Vander Jeugd said. "He keeps the team in high spirits, even when the workouts are killing everyone."

His teammates agree. "[Chen-Young] motivates us so much," junior Mike Zachacki said. "He keeps us going no matter what. He won't let us give up."

According to Vander Jeugd, Chen-Young qualified for several events at the State meet this year: 200-yard medley relay, 400-yard free relay, 100-yard butterfly and the 50-yard freestyle.

"Chen-Young already had the [time] cut [for state] in the fly,

and [swam] enough to get in the top six at state," Vander Jeugd said.

According to both Vander Jeugd and Chen-Young, the workouts are vigorous, but Chen-Young recognizes that they are necessary for success.

Chen-Young expressed the hope of swimming in college next

year. "I plan to try to get a college to pay for me to swim," he said. "I swim year-round in Evanston to practice."

Teammate Konner Scott expresses optimism for Chen-Young next year.

"He will be successful if he swims in college," Scott said. "He will continue to improve if he keeps swimming."

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