

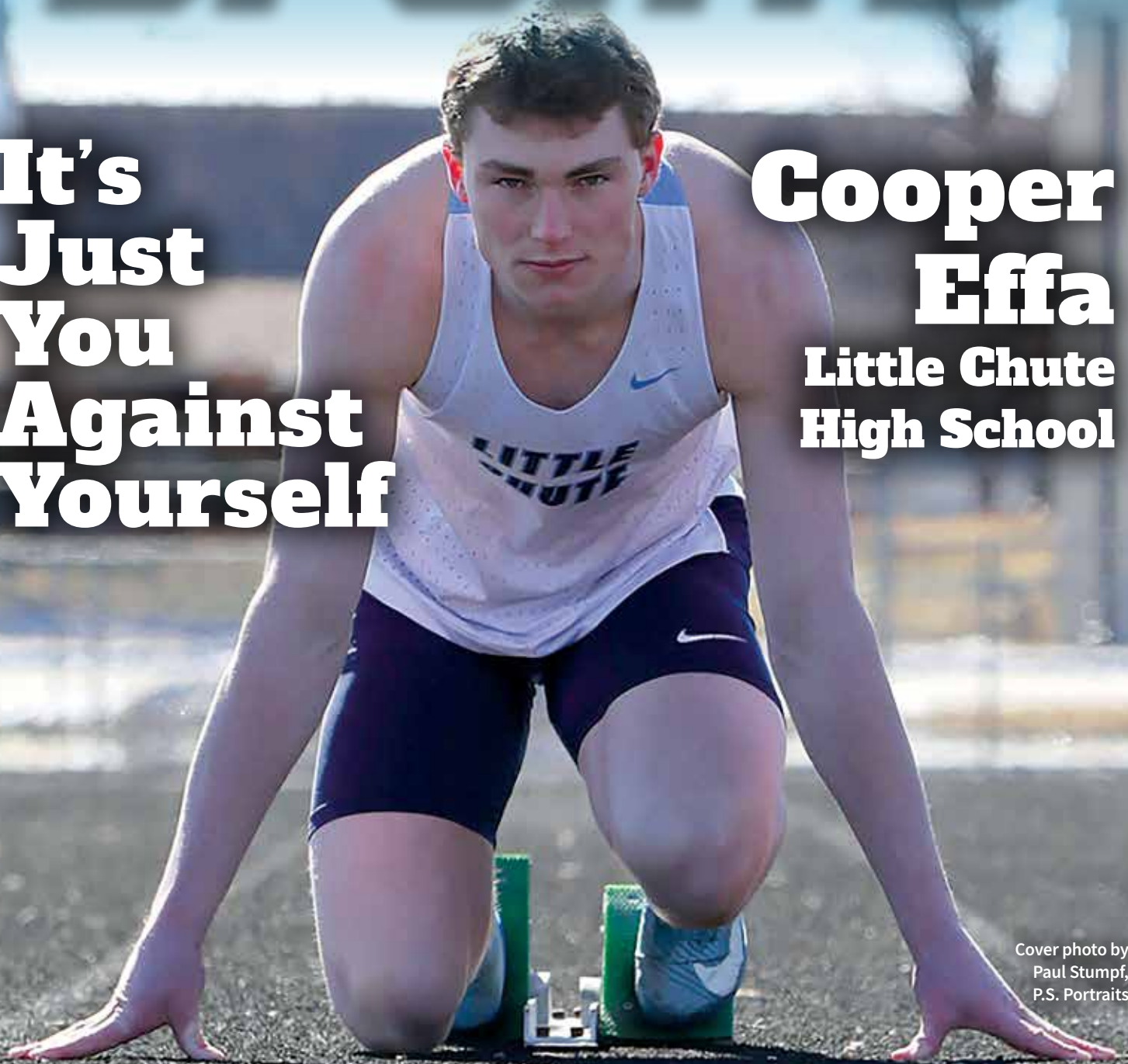
— Fox Cities —

APRIL 26

# SPORTS

**It's  
Just  
You  
Against  
Yourself**

**Cooper  
Effa**  
Little Chute  
High School



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## From the Editor



March Madness had its Final Four ... and here at *Fox Cities Sports*, we have our FIRST FOUR! The first four winners of a *Fox Cities Sports* Future in Sports Scholarship, that is.

We sincerely thank all the student-athletes who submitted applications ... choosing was NOT an easy job for our judges! Congratulations to our four winners:

- Breana Dickrell, Freedom High School
- Blake Eidahl, Hortonville High School
- Sophie Hermus, Kimberly High School
- Trey White, Neenah High School

Learn more about these amazing student-athletes and their sports career plans on pages 16-17.

Our interview with cover athlete Cooper Effa begins on page 12. He walks us through the challenge of a serious shoulder injury—when every day in the weightroom was leg day—and his personal goals for his final year as a high school athlete.

And sticking with the track-and-field theme, we learn about the Fox Valley Throws Club, a local training organization focused on shot put and discus throwers.

Tennis-soccer player Brady Lawatsch answers our 20 Questions, while dad Eric offers a parent's perspective on the lessons he and mom Kris hope their son has learned through his participation in sports. We also shine a spotlight on Adel Schneider, tennis player and powerlifter (!) at St. Mary Catholic School.

We learn about James White's journey into bodybuilding, and also about the brick-by-brick building of Fox Valley Lutheran's cheerleading team. The Appleton Historical Society introduces us to six Appleton football coaches who are in the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame—can you name them?

As the weather warms at last, I hope to see you outdoors soon ... but no 30-mile bicycle rides just yet, OK? Marianna Sieracki of ThedaCare Orthopedic Care offers sage advice to us early birds, starting with: easy does it! ■



## — Fox Cities — **SPORTS**

**Publisher:** Dale Ver Voort | **Editor:** Diane Bast



**Contributing Photographer:**  
Paul Stumpf, P.S. Portraits

**Contributing Writers:** Diane Bast, Greg Seubert, Nicole Campuzano, Marianna Sieracki, Matt Ten Haken, Eric Lawatsch, Erin Gordon, Kate Harrell-Jenkins, Appleton Historical Society, Lawrence University, Chris Rugowski

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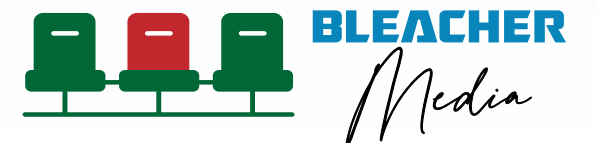
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*Diane*

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# INSIDE EAPR

Photo By Paul Stumpf, P.S. Portraits



◀◀ 12-15

### COOPER EFFA

"The biggest challenge that I faced in my sports career had to be my shoulder injury during the first game of the football season [in Fall 2025]. The shoulder injury was a superior and anterior labrum tear with a bony Bankart fracture."

7 ▶▶▶

### EMBRACE THE CHANGE IN SPORTS

Part of the reason we participate in or attend sporting events is to create life-long memories. It's great to have those fond memories of the "good old days."



◀◀ 28

### JAMES WHITE - ONE MAN'S JOURNEY INTO BODY BUILDING

James jokingly says at first he thought bodybuilding was "just" flexing muscles and getting judged. He didn't know everything that goes into it.

Left to right: Skyler Berk, James White, and Josue Nieves. Photo by Chris Rugowski, Chicken or The Egg Photography.



### 11 A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

"The time commitment is a challenge, especially with multiple kids."

### 16-17 FUTURE IN SPORTS SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Get to know our four scholarship winners!

### 24-25 ONE ON ONE WITH CASEY ALGER-FESER

"Our coaches take the time to know each athlete beyond their sport."

### 30-31 OUTDOORS WITH GREG SEUBERT

Early Opener Not Expected to Affect State Trout Fishery

# Spring Into Movement: Tips to Get Active Outdoors Without Injury

BY MARIANNA SIERACKI, PA-C, THEDACARE ORTHOPEDIC CARE

Here in Wisconsin, spring is long-awaited and hard-earned. With weather warming and days lengthening, getting outside for a workout becomes easier and more appealing.

Exercising outdoors is great for your physical, mental, and emotional health. With a gradual, thoughtful approach, you can ease back into exercising outdoors while reducing your chances of injury.

## Easy Does It

Whenever you make changes to your exercise routine or activity level, it's important to start slowly and listen to your body. It's easy to overdo it amidst excitement about getting back outdoors to exercise. That's true whether you're returning to the links, hitting the pickleball court, or restarting a running routine.

Pay attention to any new aches or pains, and ramp up your activity level gradually. The last thing you want to do is get injured and have to pull back on your exercise plans.

Even if you stayed active with indoor activities in the winter, you may need to adjust. For example, running or walking outdoors versus on a treadmill uses different sets of motions and muscle groups.

Your times and distances may vary as your body acclimates to a different running or walking motion. Recognize that your muscles may react differently while exercising outdoors, and adjust your activity level accordingly.



## Proper Preparation

Warming up your muscles before exercising is always important.

Dynamic stretching before an activity effectively stimulates blood flow to multiple muscle groups. This will reduce the risk of muscle tears and strains. Examples of dynamic stretches include jumping jacks, toe touches, and walking lunges.

After exercising, take time to stretch and cool down. Here, you can do static stretches that you hold for 30-60 seconds.

It's also important to wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Layer clothing and choose lightweight, moisture-wicking apparel that offers you free range of motion. Select well-fitting shoes that are appropriate for the activity you're engaging in. It's worth investing in good footwear.

Protect your skin and eyes as well. Wear sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat.

## Fuel Your Body

Hydration before, during, and after exercise is crucial, regardless of whether the temperature is warm or cool. Water is best. Skip the sugary sports drink.

Eating a balanced diet is equally important. Proper nourishment is vital for good health. It's not about counting calories but more so being aware of what nutrients your body needs to be healthy.

Aim to eat more fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains to keep your muscles and bones strong. Whole foods are best. Avoid processed foods and those high in saturated fats.

## Additional Tips for Success

Physical activity is essential, but so is getting adequate rest and letting your muscles recover. Give yourself one or two rest days each week. Also, vary your exercise activity so you're working different muscle groups.

Finally, if you're trying to establish a new routine, consider finding an exercise buddy to help keep you accountable. Having someone to share in that time can be good motivation to stick to a routine.

As you're getting started, don't be hard on yourself if you skip a day occasionally. You've committed to being active, and you're doing something good for you. Applaud yourself for taking this positive step. Enjoy the springtime and this chance to exercise outdoors! ■



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**Marianna Sieracki** is a physician assistant with ThedaCare Orthopedic Walk-in Care. She enjoys working in an orthopedic walk-in clinic setting because it is a fast-paced and dynamic environment where she treats a wide range of musculoskeletal injuries and conditions. Sieracki also has 10 years of experience working in the emergency department, providing high-quality care under pressure. Born in Russia, Sieracki moved to America with her mother at 9 years old. This transition gave her a unique perspective that has shaped her approach to patient care.

# Embrace the Change in Sports

BY MATT TEN HAKEN, DIRECTOR OF SPORTS MARKETING, FOX CITIES CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU



I recently read through the article, "Hooray, Appleton, U.S.A.!" from the August 11, 1986 edition of Sports Illustrated.

Yes, if you didn't know, Sports Illustrated had a 32-page feature story on sports and life in Appleton and the Fox Cities! If you get the chance, I strongly encourage giving it a read.

It was fun to see how much has changed, but also how much has stayed the same. I will say it was hard not to be nostalgic for the "good old days" after reading through the article.

Life was different 40 years ago. Hundreds of adult softball teams played in local nightly leagues all summer long. Baseball fans attended Appleton Foxes games at the quaint Goodland Field. Youth sports were led by Little League games at local parks and pickup games with all the neighbor kids.

Today, hundreds play pickleball in area parks each morning. Baseball fans get to watch the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers play at Neuroscience Group Field at Fox Cities Stadium while hanging out with Fang and Whiffer and grabbing food and drinks from one of 15 concessions areas. Youth sports are led by club teams traveling to weekend tournaments all season long.

Part of the reason we participate in or attend sporting events is to create life-long memories. It's great to have those fond memories of the "good old days." But we also have to remember that those days and that lifestyle probably aren't coming back. Too often it seems

like we hear the complaint that "things aren't like they used to be" as a purely negative statement, specifically in regard to sports.

How we play, watch, and administer sports today is far different than it was 40 years ago. Not better, or worse, just different. It is perfectly ok to cherish memories from the past ... and at the same time embrace the games, practices, and travel of today.

Life is short. Enjoy every moment and every day and make new "good old days." ■



Photo Credit: Chad Mazur

Looking to plan a tournament? *Let us help!*

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**Matt Ten Haken**  
Director of Sports Marketing  
920.734.3358  
[mtenhaken@foxcities.org](mailto:mtenhaken@foxcities.org)



**Abby McDaniel**  
Sports Marketing Manager  
920.734.3358  
[amcdaniela@foxcities.org](mailto:amcdaniela@foxcities.org)

# Movers and Shakers ... and Strikers

## Creating the Arnie Wolff Sports Complex

BY NICOLE CAMPUZANO

The Arnie Wolff Sports Complex has been many years in the making. Built on what was once a landfill in the city of Green Bay, the complex has become a versatile space used by countless community members for a variety of activities. And, as the construction continues, the complex will prove to be a special asset to many generations for years to come.



Construction of the concession stand: Russ Reynolds, Marty Briggs, Scott Borkowski, Eric Orfield, Steve Daavettila.

The story of the complex begins in August 2006, when a firefighter named Arnie Wolff tragically lost his life fighting a fire in Green Bay. The city wanted to honor the fallen firefighter by dedicating a piece of land in his memory. The chosen site happened to be an old landfill. The Green Bay Strikers Soccer Club was paying attention. The Strikers, according to their website, are a volunteer, non-profit

recreational soccer club for kids ages 4.5–18 with as many as 1,400 participants in the program last year.

The Strikers board members knew that Wolff had a passion for soccer during his life. In fact, he got his start as a coach for the Strikers. He was also a certified master soccer referee official, as well as a founder and manager of the first Green Bay Lightning U-11 girls' select soccer team. With this in mind, the Strikers board thought the location had the potential to become the future home of a soccer complex.

Problematically, there wasn't any money for the project. That's where Marty Briggs and many other dedicated volunteers stepped in to raise funds, organize and plan the project, and keep the momentum moving ever-forward.

Briggs is a man who seems to tap his energy from a bottomless well. He is a community activist who strongly believes in volunteerism and a lobbyist who spends much of his time talking to legislators about various bills at the Capitol in Madison. He is also an aspiring author of both non-fiction and children's books, one of which is about Arnie Wolff. For the past twenty years, he's been a member of the Strikers board, advancing the Arnie Wolff Sports Complex project.

Briggs confided that he originally thought the project would be a two-year deal, but it's proven to be much more involved than that. Since the project's conception, there have been many people along the way who have advocated for progress. Briggs emphasized that there are some key players without which the project could not have advanced. He praises the combined efforts of the Strikers board chairs—Gregg Schultz, Steven Daavettila, and John Kehl—as well as Eric Orfield of Probuild, the Arnie Wolff Sports Complex Action Team, and all its volunteers.

Prior to the construction of the complex, the league had to practice and play games at various parks around the city, which often led to scheduling conflicts. The parents of the Strikers voiced the need for the complex. To get the city council to approve the project, both the Strikers and another large youth soccer club, the Green Bay Kickers, banded together.

Once the project was approved by the city council, city planners worked together with Strikers board members to create a design. As previously mentioned, funding was a major hurdle to overcome. Briggs explains that the first step of the project was to backfill the dirt at the site of the future complex; that required a lot of dirt, and each load of dirt came with a price tag. The city was already dredging up dirt from old drainage ponds around Green Bay, so Briggs proposed that the dirt go straight to the complex site, rather than where they had previously planned to discard it. Briggs says, "On average, it would cost \$50 more per haul if they could get the dirt sent to the complex." To gain support from the city to haul the dirt straight to their location, the Strikers devised a plan.

Briggs knew they had to attract the attention of the city council members who would be at the holiday parade. To do this, the Strikers created an unforgettable parade float in hopes of drumming up support for the upcoming city council vote. Arnie Wolff's wife, Mary, and their children agreed to ride on the float,

along with some of the Strikers soccer kids. The float made quite an impression; not only did they win the Grand Marshall award, they also won the vote! Briggs calls it a "Christmas miracle." He soon received a text that read: "Congratulations, Marty! You got your dirt!"

From there, the ball kept rolling. Through the continued efforts and support of countless volunteers, the project progressed little by little. Briggs explains they often had to become very creative with both funding each project and accomplishing the physical work. For example, Briggs says they were able to forgo the need for an irrigation system because the firefighters use the fields for hose training, which serves to water the grass, provides a space for the firefighters to train, and saves money.

Another example of creativity the Strikers' board employed was entering a nationwide contest sponsored by Pepsi-Cola for a chance to win money towards their project. Jim Schmitt, former mayor of Green Bay, was a strong advocate for the Strikers. He rallied for votes in the local news and with city employees. The fire department also helped push for more votes. And despite the fact that the Strikers did not end up winning the contest, they were able to generate enough interest from the public to raise further funds. Briggs says, "We gained enough traction that it helped grease the wheels. People stepped up and donated money."



One of the early meetings: Marty Briggs former Green Bay Mayor Jim Schmitt, Kent Bond, former Parks Director Bill Landvatter.

Once the funds were secured, they were eager to begin constructing the concession stand. Scott Borkowski, who worked for Holtger Brothers Inc. (HBI), helped bring in his employer to donate equipment and labor. Briggs says the ground was very unstable due to it being a former landfill site. They had to dig down three stories for the foundation. That Memorial Day, Briggs remembers that when they started digging, both the vice president of HBI and Borkowski were at the site to help. HBI, a team of firefighters, and a group of Strikers volunteers helped with the installation of the roof. Briggs explains that "the race was on to beat the cold weather, and Striker volunteers worked diligently to close in the building for winter by truck headlights at nights after their real jobs. It was all a labor of love."

Briggs explains that, in addition to HBI, several local companies made huge contributions, such as Jacobs Bros. Foundations, who stepped up and helped with the foundation in honor of the company owner's brother, who had recently passed away.

Soon, however, they would run into some unexpected difficulties. The first major problem they encountered was that the bricklayers

who had been lined up to build the concession stand backed out at the last minute. To solve the bricklayer dilemma, the fire department suggested Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) students and their instructor complete the walls as a school project. In fact, the NWTC students and the fire department volunteered to do the work themselves.

Once that problem was solved, they encountered a new snag. When they were about to start construction of the concession stand, they noticed a Killdeer bird nest on the project site. Of course, they couldn't just remove the home of the unexpected tenants, so the project was put on hold for three or four months to wait for the eggs to hatch and the babies to leave the nest. Eventually, they were able to complete the concession stand. Briggs jokes that "now the concession stand is nicknamed the Killdeer Cafe."

There are currently several more projects that need to be done, but the Parks Director (former Parks Planner), Dan Dischiet, who has also been instrumental to the project over the years, has limited them to choosing only five. The goal is to add a playground, field lights, more shelters, soccer fences, and parking lot lights. Briggs says there are many more items on their wish list, but projects have to be paced out due to funding and city approval. Briggs says that anyone interested in staying informed about upcoming projects or donating to the cause can visit their website: ArnieWolffSC.Weebly.com.

Despite all these challenges, Briggs is adamant that the complex is an excellent asset to the community for soccer players and community members alike, benefiting generations of people far into the future. The complex is already being utilized for the youth soccer clubs, the Adult Hispanic soccer league, an annual Kite Festival, and tourism because it is a historical site dedicated to Wolff, just to name a few ways it is being utilized.

Briggs says, "You can't put a price on giving an opportunity to young people. ... The complex creates a place for them to come. [Originally,] the Green Bay Strikers said they needed something, but now look how things have grown as a result of this vision. It brings in different people from all the different communities. It creates free air space, which is not the heart of a community, but it is a vital organ."

Briggs has a vision for the future of the complex, too. He sees it as a space for events and concerts, as well as a community space for the surrounding neighborhoods. "You're giving people a place to play. I look at parks altogether differently now. ... I see the blood, sweat, and tears that went into the creation of these parks. There are people who stood up and spent a lot of their time on the creation of each park because they felt driven by a mission," Briggs explains.

Though there is much work still to be done, people like Briggs and all the other movers and shakers who contributed an immense amount of time and effort will keep the ball in motion. In a succinct statement of wisdom, Briggs sums it up: "You have a dream, and you have to sell it to other people." What was once merely a landfill and a dream, is now a space for assembly, growth, and enjoyment, thanks to the vision and hard work of community-minded people. ■



**Nicole Campuzano** is an Antigo, Wisconsin native. She earned her bachelor's degree in English Education from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. She taught high school English Language Arts for several years. She and her family recently relocated to the Fox Valley, where they are enjoying the many exciting opportunities the area has to offer.

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# 20 QUESTIONS

PHOTO BY PAUL STUMPF

## BRADY LAWATSCH

SENIOR, NEENAH BOYS TENNIS

**MY TOUGHEST RIVAL:** Kimberly.

**MY IDOL:** My parents.

**MY FAVORITE MUSICAL ARTIST:** Drake.

**MY FAVORITE HOME-COOKED MEAL:** Goulash.

**MY FAVORITE ATHLETE:** Aaron Rodgers.

**MY FAVORITE TEAM:** Green Bay Packers.

**MY FAVORITE TEAM TO ROOT AGAINST:** Chicago Bears.

**MY FAVORITE JUNK FOOD:** Cheeseburger.

**WHO DO YOU WISH WAS WATCHING YOU PERFORM AT EVERY MATCH?** My Grandparents.

**WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SPORTS MOVIE?** The Blindside.

**IF YOU COULD PLAY ANY OTHER SPORT, WHAT WOULD IT BE?** Basketball.

**WHAT AGE WERE YOU WHEN YOU STARTED YOUR SPORT?** 6.

**WHO WAS YOUR ACTRESS CRUSH?** Emilia Clarke.

**WHO WAS YOUR FIRST CONCERT?** Morgan Wallen.

**WHO WAS YOUR FIRST-EVER AUTOGRAPH?** Aaron Jones.

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE HALLOWEEN COSTUME AS A KID?** Harry Potter.

**IF YOU WERE AN OLYMPIC ATHLETE, WHAT SPORT WOULD YOU COMPETE IN?** Badminton.

**IF YOU COULD PICK ONE ANIMAL TO HELP YOU WIN A FIGHT, WHAT WOULD IT BE?** Jaguar.

**I WILL NEVER GO:** Hot air ballooning.

**IF YOU HAD TO USE A FAKE NAME, WHAT WOULD IT BE:** Heisenburg.

## A Parent's Perspective

BY ERIC LAWATSCH | PHOTOS BY PAUL STUMPF



Kris and I are so grateful for all of the coaches who have positively impacted Brady and helped to shape him into the individual and athlete he is today.

I hope he's learning that to compete in life you have to be prepared. Success in tennis and soccer required a lot of practice and persistence. The same holds true for success in your occupation and life in general.

I also hope that he's learning how to be a good teammate. I think that being a good teammate is just as important as learning how to be prepared.



In addition to tennis, Brady played soccer for the Neenah Soccer Club and Neenah high school soccer. He was on varsity his junior and senior years. He also plays in the basketball league at the YMCA. And we have three other children who also were in sports! Jordyn (27) played high school tennis and soccer at Neenah. Jared (24) played both high school tennis and soccer at Neenah. Jenna (20) played tennis and soccer until 8th grade and then focused on volleyball. She played varsity volleyball at Neenah.

The time commitment is a challenge, especially with multiple kids. It can be challenging to balance family life and sports with multiple kids in sports at the same time. My wife Kris spends a lot of time making sure Brady has clothes/shoes/food/snacks available for the matches and tournaments each week. We try to take those preparations off his plate so that he can just focus on schoolwork, and practice.

The tennis team travels out of town most weekends during the season, and Brady will often miss a portion of class time. The travel schedule makes it tough at times to keep up with schoolwork. As a result, he has learned some important life skills regarding time management and communication with teachers.

We have always tried to schedule family events around the sports schedule so that is a little easier to control. Family events do take priority. Some things are non-negotiable: He did miss a tennis tournament for his sister's wedding!

Fingers crossed, Brady has not had any major injuries. He had to leave a soccer game once because he was hit in the

head and developed a large laceration that required sutures to close. He missed a couple of games. Otherwise, Brady has been pretty lucky in that regard.

Big wins are obviously much easier to handle than losses. We try not to get too excited after the wins and/or too bummed out after the losses. We tell him he battled well and we enjoyed watching him play. Tennis is a tough sport to stay on top for the whole season. There are a lot of ups and downs throughout the season. We try to stay positive and focus on what was learned from the match and to have fun.

I think watching the child progress to the varsity level and hopefully having some success at that level was the most rewarding. Eventually you kind of realize that this is why we encouraged him to practice and drove him to all of the practices and games. Now he is finally here and it's just fun and rewarding to see them compete at a high level and have some success.

College tennis is a factor in Brady's decision about his higher education, but it's not the main decision point. Once he determines where he wants to go to college, then he'll decide if he wants to play tennis or not. He is considering playing either tennis at the D3 level or club tennis if he goes to a D1 school. ■

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# It's Just You Against Yourself

## Cooper Effa – Little Chute High School Track and Field, Football, and Basketball

BY DIANE BAST | PHOTOS BY PAUL STUMPF

Senior Cooper Effa, who will be participating in his last year of track and field this year for the Little Chute Mustangs, thanked *Fox Cities Sports* and its readers “for the opportunity to share” his personal experiences, lessons learned, and advice to future student-athletes.

And share he did.

### SO MUCH TO LOVE

“What I love about being a part of track,” Cooper begins, “is the

aspect that you are competing against yourself throughout the whole year. I love the idea that it's you against yourself. You are always striving to achieve a personal best or beat your previous record in something. It provides you with a great deal of motivation to work hard and persevere.”

And there's more. “What I also love about track is the number of people who go out for the sport. There is always a big showing of people at our school, and it's always a great opportunity to

**“You may not be able to run the fastest or jump the highest, but one thing that you can always do is give 100%”**



be able to meet new people and get to know others better. I have made many friends through track.”

And one more thing! “What I also love about track is the meets themselves. I love being able to watch others run and get personal records. I just remember watching the state meet last year and being completely amazed. The amount of talent there at the meets is amazing. It just motivates you when you see others compete at such a high level.”

### DRIVEN TO EXCEL

Watching the high-level talent at state meets “drives you to excel and try to reach that type of level yourself,” Cooper says. His personal goal for track this year is simply “to improve as much as I can.”

“This sounds silly,” he says, “but over my high school career, I have seen constant, gradual improvement. I would like to see that improvement continue. If the improvement does continue, it could result in some big achievements.”

“Another big goal that I want to achieve is just to be able to have fun,” Cooper continues. “This is my last high school sport that I will ever play, and I don't want to spend it being so uptight all the time. Being able to enjoy the process and the ride is a key aspect that I would love to be able to have this year.”

### A MATURING MENTAL ATTITUDE

Cooper figures he'll be more likely to “enjoy the ride” this year than he has in the past, because “the mental aspect of track has really grown for me since my freshman year.”

“I was always known for getting discouraged easily,” he admits. “If I were to perform badly or not meet my expectations, I would get into a pouty type of mood, which would affect the rest of my track meet.”

“I have really matured into the mindset of the ‘next play’ mentality that my basketball coach stresses. This just means you have to forget what just happened and focus on the next play. If you spend the whole game or track meet pondering on a mistake that you made in the past, it can greatly hinder your performance. So I am constantly looking on the bright side and looking at the opportunities that I have rather than the ones I lost.”

How about an example for those of us who don't know (or have long since forgotten) the pressure of competition?

“A good example happened at last year's sectionals in Marinette,” he recalls. “It was my first race of the meet. I was about to run the 110 [meter] hurdles and was seeded to make it to state. This was all ruined in an instant when I false-started right away.”

“The old me would have been so angry the whole meet. However, I was just thinking about the other three opportunities that I had to make it to state. With this mentality, I eventually made it in my other three events. It really showed my mental toughness that I gained throughout the years of experience.”

### A HARD LESSON LEARNED

Cooper is no stranger to the agony of defeat. He recalls a specific meet that stands out as a turning point in his track career.

“It was my freshman year sectionals,” he says. “I was there for the high jump and the 4x4. I was so stoked to be able to make it for the high jump. It made me feel so good.”

“But right when I got there, I crapped the bed. I jumped terribly and lost all chances of making it to state. It really hit me hard. I hated underperforming.”

“However, it really taught me a valuable lesson. It showed me how much work and improvement I had to do to reach a higher level. It was a constant reminder to never underperform again. It was a big growth point for me.”

“So it may not be a happy turning point,” he says, “but it serves as a constant reminder that if you want to perform at a higher level, you have to put in loads of work. Nothing is given, it is earned.”

### GREAT COACHES HELP

Cooper gratefully acknowledges the advice he's received from his track coaches over the years.

“I am very fortunate to have such an experienced coaching staff that cares so much about their athletes. Two coaches stick out to me when I think of giving good advice. That would be my high jump coach, Coach [Greg] Verhagen, and my hurdles coach, Coach [Steve] Bons.”

“The one piece of advice that Coach Verhagen says to me a lot—and it really makes sense—is ‘just jump.’ This may seem stupid

simple, but it really helps me. It just tells me to do my thing. It also goes along with his other quote, which is 'the hay is in the barn.' It means you put in the work and the time, now you just have to show it off and perform.

"These really help me clear my mind and understand that my work will transfer. Now I need to trust myself and do what I am always doing in practice."

"The piece of advice that I received from Coach Bons was 'pedal to the metal.' This is referring to my running in my 300-meter hurdles. It's great when you have someone telling you just to RUN when you are so focused on the hurdles right in front of you. Trust your practice, and it will come naturally."

#### A CHALLENGE FOR MULTI-SPORT ATHLETES

Cooper is a three-sport athlete—basketball, football, and track and field. He's been participating in sports since his middle school years at St. John.

Student-athletes are often encouraged to participate in multiple sports. Doing so can improve over-all athletic performance, enhance teamwork and social connections, and help prevent over-use injuries.

But there are risks as well. Competitive sports can result in injury, as Cooper learned.

"The biggest challenge that I faced in my sports career had to be my shoulder injury during the first game of the football season [in Fall 2025]. The shoulder injury was a superior and anterior labrum tear with a bony Bankart fracture. This forced me to get surgery and miss the entirety of my foot-ball season and about a third of my basketball season.

"It was a really tough experience," Cooper recalls, "because I never really knew what high school was like without being in a sport and being able to practice it. It also felt so degrading having to start from scratch with building my shoulder up. It was really tough mentally."

"Seeing all your friends enjoy the sports that you love and knowing you can't share that with them really was the toughest for me. Football was a struggle. I love being able to feel a part of a team, and when I wasn't playing, that feeling wasn't really there."

Cooper returned from the injury in a few months, getting onto the basketball court in January 2026.

"I overcame the setback through consistency in the weightroom and knowing that I had something to work towards."



"I lived in the weightroom after school. I was always doing rehab and working on the parts of the body that I could. It was pretty much leg day every day. If I am going to be honest, I don't really know what my motivation was. I just knew that if I wanted to return to basketball on time, I would have to do it every day, and do it right. So that's what I did. I was constantly working on the things that I could. And if I wasn't working out, I was resting it and making sure I didn't do anything out of the boundaries."

"The idea of being able to play basketball is what really lit a fire under me," Cooper says. "I just wanted to be able to play a sport again, and I knew what I had to do to obtain it."

#### LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Cooper suspects his teammates "would describe me as a leader by example rather than a vocal leader. I don't really like to shout at people and tell them what to do and what not to do."

How he recovered from the shoulder injury was probably one of those "example" things. "I think actually showing them what to do with your actions is way better than your words. You can tell these people to do something a certain way or demand better, but if you can't do that yourself, I would say you're talking nonsense. I think they see me as a person who gives 100% all the time. Which eventually motivates others to perform at their best as well."

"My motto is, if I am doing something, I might as well do it 100%

"Off the field," Cooper says, "I think they see me as a person who stays in line at all times. I don't really do anything crazy; I just go about my business doing my thing. I think that's what everyone should do. They should go about their business, doing their own thing."

"My overall message as a leader is give it your best, no matter what."

#### DOING WHAT'S REQUIRED

Staying in line applies to his pre-meet work as well. "I don't really have a pregame ritual," he says, "I usually just do the stuff that

is required. I always do the same stretch routine and run the same number of laps. However, that is required and isn't too much of a ritual."

"Before I run or do any of my meet stuff, I usually just talk about random stuff with my friends. It's really chill. It gets my mind off the races and allows me to debrief."

Cooper's only ritual has to do with pre-meet nutrition.

"There is a certain food that I eat before every meet: a Jimmy John's sub. Honestly, I have a Jimmy John's sub before every sporting event I do. It's honestly a staple. My mom always gets it for me."

#### HANGING OUT ... AND MORE SPORTS

Cooper's motor rarely idles. "Outside of my sport," he says, "I like to do more sports with my friends. I like being really active, so doing the sports that I don't usually do for school, outside of school."

"My favorite one is golf. I love golfing so much. It's always so fun chasing your best score. In a way, it reminds me a lot of track: that aspect of you against yourself. It's always super fun to be able to play with your friends and not have a care in the world. I also love playing pickleball. It sometimes gets really competitive, which I love."

"I also love just hanging out with friends," he says. "It's always fun to be able to spend your time with the people you enjoy rather than spending it by yourself. I love getting food with them or playing board games."

"One other thing that I love to do outside of sports is go to my cottage in the summer. I love swimming, fishing, playing cards with the family, and just hanging out in the sun. It always feels good to get away during the busy summer when you are balancing a job, workouts in the morning, and playing two sports on top of that."



#### A SENIOR'S ADVICE

We asked Cooper what he would want the younger athletes to take away from seeing him in on the cover of *Fox Cities Sports*. His advice was straightforward and thoughtful.

"What I hope they understand is to just try your best," he says. "You may not be able to run the fastest or jump the highest, but one thing that you can always do is give 100%. And another thing I hope they understand is not to be discouraged when things get tough. There are always going to be setbacks in sports, maybe it's an injury or a bad performance, but you need to be able to look past that and understand how lucky you are to be able to play the sport that you love."

Finally, Cooper offered, "I hope they also take away the fact that high school sports may be serious at times, but they can be enjoyed deeply, too. It's always amazing to have fun, but you also need to know when to have fun and when to focus. The overall takeaway is, enjoy it and have fun." ■



Photo by Riley Scott Photography



# Congratulations to the *Fox Cities Sports Magazine* Scholarship Winners

BY NICOLE CAMPUZANO | PHOTOS BY PAUL STUMPF

**F**ox Cities Sports Magazine thanks all of the applicants who entered its recent essay contest for a chance to win a \$1,000 scholarship. This was the first year the magazine has offered a scholarship, thanks to the generosity of Dale Ver Voort, owner/publisher of *Fox Cities Sports Magazine*, Diane Bast, editor of *Fox Cities Sports Magazine*, and Mary Beth Nienhaus, local philanthropist, who all donated funds to create the four sports scholarships. In all, 31 entrants answered the essay prompt: *Describe your future career goals in sports and how your experience as a student-athlete has shaped that path. What impact do you hope to make in the sports world?*

A panel of judges was tasked with choosing the top four winners of the scholarship contest, and the competition was fierce! *Fox Cities Sports Magazine* would like to recognize the contest finalists: Turner Behm of Kimberly High School, Claire Brockert of Kimberly High School, Allysen Buss of Appleton West High School, Paige Clausen of Hortonville High School, Jacob Coopman of Menasha High School, Jack Olszewski of Menasha High School, Ava Van Hammond of Kimberly High School, and Cole Van De Loo of Kaukauna High School. Thank you all for participating!

**Fox Cities Sports Magazine is thrilled to announce the four winners of the scholarship contest: Breanna Dickrell of Freedom High School, Blake Eidahl of Hortonville High School, Sophie Hermus of Kimberly High School, and Trey White of Neenah High School!** ■



Mary Beth Nienhaus presents a check to Breanna Dickrell of Freedom High School.

## Breanna Dickrell Freedom High School

**Breanna Dickrell** says she plans to “pursue a Doctorate in Physical Therapy, with the goal of helping athletes recover from injuries, not only physically, but emotionally, as well.” In her essay, Dickrell emphasized that she understands “an injury can be a life-altering experience, affecting confidence, independence, and mental health.” She hopes to “be a source of encouragement and trust for athletes as they work to regain strength and belief in themselves.” Dickrell’s chosen career path has been influenced by her own experience with an ACL injury, and her rehabilitation journey. This basketball player is also an outstanding student with a 4.0 GPA. She works as a Youth Apprentice at a local rehabilitation and sports medicine clinic, where she is known for her maturity, initiative, and strong work ethic.



Fox Cities Sports magazine editor Diane Bast presents a check to Blake Eidahl of Hortonville High School.

## Blake Eidahl Hortonville High School

**Blake Eidahl** plans to attend UW- LaCrosse to major in Physical Education, and eventually earn a Master’s Degree in Education Leadership. He hopes to teach elementary physical education and coach high school sports. He’s not waiting around to gain experience in these areas, either. Eidahl spends two mornings each week volunteering at a local elementary school, where he helps in second and third grade physical education classes. He’s also a licensed official in baseball and basketball. Eidahl puts in the extra effort as a student by taking advanced placement, CAPP, and honors classes. Eidahl, who plays football, baseball, and tennis, experienced several sports-related injuries and underwent many hours of physical therapy. He explains that these experiences helped him learn to stay positive and be a great teammate. He’s known for being a great vocal leader, a hard worker, and a person of strong integrity and character.



Fox Cities Sports magazine writer Nicole Campuzano presents a check to Trey White of Neenah High School.

## Trey White Neenah High School

**Trey White** is looking forward to joining the Men’s Soccer Program in college as he pursues a degree in Physical Education and a minor in Coaching. White plays both soccer and basketball, and he explains that “being able to represent a school and, even greater, a community, is an honor and a privilege as a student-athlete.” White excels academically, which is evidenced by his 4.0 GPA. He is also known for his volunteerism. He regularly volunteers at youth soccer camps and the STEM Day of Outreach at local elementary schools. He is especially excited to become a high school coach, at which time he will be able to focus on building “great culture” and encouraging athletes to become “winners, hard workers, and overall great people.” White says winning this scholarship fills him with a sense of pride. He explains that it “prepares [him] to achieve higher standards in [his] future in sports.”



Mary Beth Nienhaus, along with Athletic Director Ryan McGinnis, present a check to Sophie Hermus of Kimberly High School.

## Sophie Hermus Kimberly High School

**Sophie Hermus** wants to pursue a career in Kinesiology with a focus on “overall wellness and development of athletes.” She plans on playing Division 1 softball at UW-Madison. She says working at a local softball and baseball facility has “opened her eyes to the impact sports can have on young athletes, both mentally and physically.” This softball player is a dedicated student with a 4.1 GPA and a member of Key Club, Culture Crew, HOSA, and Leadership Council at her high school. She volunteers at youth events throughout her school district, helping at health fairs, field days, holiday parties, and carnivals. She hopes to “empower the next generation of female athletes to believe in themselves and to find the same love and passion for the game that [she] has.” She says she appreciates the people who “make it possible for high school students like me to pursue our goals. This scholarship motivates me to keep working hard and make the most out of this opportunity.”

**Congratulations to the four scholarship winners, and many thanks to all those who participated in the scholarship contest! There will be another opportunity to participate in a scholarship contest later this year, with information coming out in October 2026, and an application window opening on November 1. Fox Cities Sports Magazine encourages anyone interested in participating to watch for announcements next fall.**

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# Cheerleading's Quiet Powerhouse: The Brick-by-Brick Rise of FVL

ERIN GORDON, OWNER | ERIN & DENNIS PHOTOGRAPHY, LLC

When most people hear the word “cheerleading,” they don’t immediately think of sports. But in the Fox Cities, programs at Appleton North High School, Appleton West High School, Appleton East High School, Fox Valley Lutheran High School, and Menasha High School have quietly built a competitive legacy. In recent years, one program has elevated itself even further: Fox Valley Lutheran under head coach Brittney Braun.



L to R, Caydence Pelch, Head Coach Brittney Braun, Sophie Schloesser pose with their state champion trophies from 2024, 2025 and 2026.

Braun’s coaching journey in cheer began the moment she graduated high school. “Everyone who knew me had a feeling I would end up coaching because of the passion I had for cheer,” she says. Cheerleading became her safe place. “I wasn’t the best student, and when my soul found cheerleading I knew it’s where I belonged.” The sport gave her purpose — one chance, two minutes and thirty seconds on the mat to perform. “The bar is always raised and the skills always get harder. I loved the challenge. I loved the competition.”

When Braun took over the FVL program 11 years ago, her vision was simple: lay down a brick every year. Brick by brick, the program would grow. What started as her philosophy quickly became the team’s culture — a long-term mindset where every senior class understood it wasn’t just about their season, but about building something lasting.

It took eight years to capture a state championship. Along the way, standards rose. Goals became sharper. Accountability deepened.

After winning state in her eighth year, her seniors challenged her to dream even bigger: compete nationally. In 2022, FVL placed 66th in the nation. “We were in shell shock. We realized we were far from what others around the country were doing.” But instead of backing down, the result fueled the climb:

2024 – 12th in the Nation, State Champions

2025 – 9th in the Nation, State Champions

2026 – 4th in the Nation, State Champions

The bricks were stacking.

Today, FVL is known as the most difficult stunting team in Wisconsin and one of the top stunting teams nationally, performing skills that rival collegiate programs. Yet remarkably, there is no feeder program. No JV team. Athletes step directly into varsity — often with little prior experience.

Every year, they start over.

“We don’t get magical kids with years of elite stunting ability,” Braun says. “We start from scratch and we always find a way.” That “way” is culture and discipline.

Traditions anchor that culture. Each time the team hits a full-out — a complete, competition-ready routine performed clean — they hammer a nail into a board in the gym, marking progress. Athletic tape covered in encouraging notes is placed around the edges of the mat — a visible reminder that when they step onto that floor, they are surrounded by the support of their teammates. The team also participates in a “send fears away” ritual, writing down doubts, attaching them to balloons, and releasing them — symbolically letting go of anything holding them back.

The team jokingly calls itself a “unicorn team,” complete with the lighthearted mascot “Lady Glitter Sparkles,” but behind the fun is fierce accountability and deep support. Senior Kieran, who grew up with only brothers, says the program gave her something she didn’t know she needed — a group of “big sisters.” Her advice to younger athletes reflects the program’s heart: “Embrace the journey and the struggle.”

For Braun, that journey mirrors her own. She sees pieces of herself in her athletes — young people looking for confidence, belonging, and purpose. “One of my favorite parts of coaching is getting them to see they have the potential to do great things.”

And now, as the bricks continue stacking higher, one question remains: Will Fox Valley Lutheran bring home a national championship?

If history has shown anything, it’s that this climb is far from finished. ■

Follow their story on Instagram at @foxvalleylutherancheer.



Photo by Erin & Dennis Photography, LLC



## Appleton’s Hall of Fame Football Coaches

APPLETON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



These coaches participated in a panel discussion titled “Reflections on Appleton High School Football,” sponsored by the Appleton Historical Society on March 5. (L-R): Jarius James, Pat Schwanke, Paul Engen, Mike Weyenberg, Chris Heller, Brent Engen, Gene Strusz, Dave Hinkens, Seth Jaeger, Rob Salm, and Dom Thompson.

The Appleton Historical Society is proud to honor Appleton’s football coaches who are in the Wisconsin Football Coaches Association (WFCA) Hall of Fame. They and their families have graciously loaned their plaques to our museum, which is located at 231 W. Franklin Street.

**BERNARD “BERNIE” HESELTON** coached the Lawrence Vikings for 27 years, also serving as athletic director from 1961–1970. His record is 111–78–5, winning six conference championships during his tenure. Bernie was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1981, just weeks after his death.

**RON ROBERTS** took over from Coach Heselton in 1965, having served as an assistant coach under him. The Banta Bowl opened that year. Roberts led the Vikings to a conference championship in 1966, the first of six titles he would win. In 1967, the Vikings had their first perfect season, going 8–0. In 1991, LU won their first nine games, becoming the first team from the Midwest Conference to go to the NCAA Division III playoffs. They lost the national semi-final game. His overall record is 121–54–1. Coach Roberts earned a Ph.D. in educational administration. He is a charter member of the Lawrence University Hall of Fame and was elected to the WFCA Hall of Fame in 1998. He died in 2012 at the age of 81.

**ADE DILLON** coached football at Lawrence University from 1937–1942 before moving to Appleton High School, where he coached until 1969. He won four conference championships. He was a charter member of the WFCA Hall of Fame, elected in 1980. He taught social studies for 35 years. He passed away in 1987 at the age of 74. In 2014, the stadium field at Appleton West was dedicated in Coach Ade Dillon’s honor.

**PAUL ENGEN** succeeded Dillon at what became Appleton West. He coached there from 1969–1994 before moving to Appleton North. The Terrors won the state title in 1992, and finished second in 1991 and 1993. Overall, Coach Engen led his teams to 14 conference championships, winning more than 200 games. He has a master’s degree in education. He was elected to the WFCA Hall of Fame in 2009. He served as athletic director at both schools, and the football field at North is named in his honor.

**HARLAN “HARLEY” GRUBER** was recognized by the WFCA as a Hall of Fame member in 1998. He served at both Appleton West and Appleton North as a valued assistant coach for 40 years. He has a master’s degree in business education.

**GENE STRUSZ** led the Fox Valley Lutheran Foxes to the WIAA state championship in 2001. He coached FVL for 32 years, also serving 39 years as athletic director. He has a master’s degree in education. He was elected to the WFCA Hall of Fame in 2005.

In addition to their Hall of Fame credentials, each of them has received a multitude of other awards honoring their achievements. Besides being great coaches, they also were great educators. Undoubtedly, they taught thousands of young people life lessons that are much more important than “X’s and O’s.” ■



Matt Erickson starred on Appleton West’s 1992 state championship football team. Matt, who was recently named as third base coach for the Milwaukee Brewers, stopped by the Appleton Historical Society’s Museum recently.



Wisconsin Football Coaches Association (WFCA) Hall of Fame members Paul Engen (Appleton West, Appleton North) and Gene Strusz (Fox Valley Lutheran). Under their tutelage, each won a WIAA state championship, Appleton West in 1992 and FVL in 2001.

# Fox Valley Throws Club Leads to Success for Local Track Athletes

BY GREG SEUBERT

*Building confidence one throw at a time.*

That, in a nutshell, is the idea behind the Fox Valley Throws Club, which offers training and support to area shot put and discus throwers from middle school through college.

Dean Matsche, strength and conditioning coach at Kimberly High School who also coaches the Papermaker track team's shot put and discus throwers, came up with the idea for the club, which offers individual instruction as well as summer, fall, and winter sessions.

"I started the Fox Valley Throws Club right before Covid hit," he said. "It was something that I always wanted to do. I just thought there were so many great athletes in the area who were looking for instruction in shot put and discus. It's an unbelievable opportunity to help a lot of kids get better. It just keeps getting bigger and bigger and kids have an opportunity to learn the shot put and discus technique."

Shot put and discus are two individual track and field events, along with sprints; distance running; hurdles; high, long, and triple jumps; and pole vault.

The shot put event requires athletes to throw a round metal sphere while standing inside a circle. In the discus event, competitors spin and throw a metal-rimmed disc.



able to put a lot of time in, just like any other event in the sport of track and field."

### Outstanding Track Record

Matsche has worked with several outstanding throwers over the years, and they all have something in common.

"You have to have a mindset where you can be able to hit that switch and all of a sudden be ready to go," he said. "You have to be a great athlete and be very strong, particularly in the shot put. It's just not strength alone. Then, you really have to hone in on the technical side of throwing, much like a golf swing. The harder you try, the worse you do. You have to trust the technique and be patient, just like anything else."

Matsche, who will wrap up a 31-year teaching career this spring, came to Kimberly from Oshkosh North High School.

"When I decided to be the throws coach at Oshkosh North back in the day, it was something I really fell in love with," he said. "The nice thing about track and field is it is a team sport, but it's really individual. You really control your own destiny. The tape measure never lies."

"In football, it's great to have 11 athletes on the same page," he added. "In track, if you're a hard worker and willing to put in the time and effort, you have an opportunity to put yourself in a varsity spot. Athletes really have a lot of opportunities to control the controllables in the ring."

The club's next sessions will be held this summer at Kaukauna High School.

"We have some individuals who want private, one-on-one sessions," Matsche said. "We offer group sessions as well. It depends on the athlete, how busy they are, the family and what they want to get out of the instructional process."

Throwing the shot put or discus is often a humbling experience at first, according to Matsche.

"A lot of times, a person who's strong in the weightroom will think, 'Oh, this will be easy because I'm strong,' but they have to understand it's such a technical event," he said. "Technique is going to make a big difference on how far that implement flies in the air."

### Track and Football

Track isn't the only sport where Matsche had success as a high school coach.

He was an assistant coach and the strength and conditioning coach on the Oshkosh North football team that won the WIAA Division 1 state championship in 2000, a 28-0 win over Arrowhead that capped a 14-0 season. It was also the first state championship for an Oshkosh high school.

"That was something so unique and I remember it being such a big thing for the school and community," he said.

Matsche was also an assistant coach and strength and conditioning coach on the Kimberly football team that won five consecutive state championships and 70 straight games from 2013-17.

Conditioning and time in the weightroom played a big role in the Papermakers' success during that run, he said.

"The weightroom is a huge separator and is probably the most important as far as athlete development for football," he said. "I think it is a must for football because it is a very physical game and you're trying to do whatever you can to protect the athlete from injury, lessen the chance of injury, increase athletic performance, and keep the athlete healthy throughout the whole year. It makes a big difference and gives kids so much confidence once they're building their bodies up and getting stronger. That weightroom confidence gets translated onto the football field."



Matsche has been a physical education teacher and track and football coach in his 22 years at Kimberly, but that will come to an end after he retires at the end of the 2025-26 school year.

"There are so many good people and building those relationships with everybody that's involved, whether it's other coaches, athletes, parents. That's the thing I think I'll miss the most."

However, he'll continue to run the Fox Valley Throws Club.

"I'll do something in my retirement," he said. "I want to continually help people get better and that's one of the reasons why I have the club. I will have that opportunity to make a huge impact on kids' lives."

### Back to the Club

Details on the club's upcoming sessions can be found at foxvalleythrowsclub.com. The club also has Instagram, Facebook, and X accounts.

"We have a lot of athletes who come in and maybe they're just interested in learning how to throw the shot put and discus," Matsche said. "Everybody's welcome and we take all ability levels from beginners to advanced. Last year, we had the (girls) Division 1 state shot put and discus champ in Thea Kral (of Ashwaubenon),

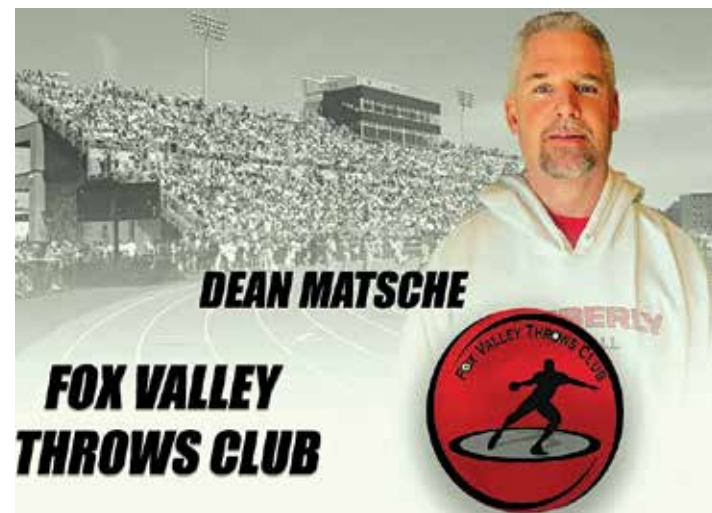
who's now at the University of Wisconsin, and we had the boys Division 1 shot put and discus champion, Hunter Sprangers (of Kimberly), who's now at Kent State University. We've had the best of the best, we've also had people who are just getting started. We just want to help them attain their goals and help them become a better thrower."

Matsche said he's thrilled that several throwers he's worked with have found success at the state level.

"It means the world to me," he said. "That's why I started this club and that's why it's such a passion. It doesn't surprise me. We have so many good athletes in the Fox Valley area and I think it's a wonderful opportunity to get a lot of other athletes who are like-minded. The friendships that they have from being in the club and throwing against other kids from all different schools really takes them to the next level." ■



**Greg Seubert** is a freelance reporter, photographer and editor based out of his rural Weyauwega home. He spent 28 years covering high school sports for the Waupaca County Post, a Waupaca-based weekly newspaper, before stepping down in April 2024. Before that, he spent 10 years as a reporter and editor at four other newspaper in Wisconsin. He joined the Waupaca County Post prior to the start of the 1996-97 school year and eventually covered sports teams from Waupaca, Iola-Scandinavia, Weyauwega-Fremont, Little Wolf (Manawa), Amherst, Wild Rose, Almond-Bancroft, Stevens Point, New London, Clintonville and Hortonville high schools.



Dean Matsche, who coaches the shot put and discus throwers on Kimberly High School's track team and has worked with several state champion throwers, started the Fox Valley Throws Club, which provides training for both events.

"They go hand-in-hand," Matsche said. "Getting athletes to spin in a 7-foot ring in shot put or an 8-foot-2½-inch ring in discus takes a lot of athleticism. It's very technical, so you really have to understand how your body moves in space. It's so unique in that you start with your back to the throwing area where the implement lands. You have to be strong, you have to be explosive, you have to have good balance, you have to have good mobility, and you really have to be

## TAKE TIME

~ Take time to think ~ it is the source of power.      ~ Take time to love and be loved ~ it is God's greatest gift

~ Take time to read ~ it is the fountain of wisdom.      ~ Take time to laugh ~ it is the music of the soul.

~ Take time to play ~ it is the secret of staying young.      ~ Take time to be friendly ~ it is the road to happiness.

~ Take time to be quiet ~ it is the moment to seek God.      ~ Take time to dream ~ it is what the future is made of.

~ Take time to be aware ~ it is the opportunity to help others.      ~ Take time to pray ~ it is the greatest power on earth.



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## West Coast Roots, Midwest Journey: Sibling Athletes Thrive at Lawrence

SUBMITTED BY LAWRENCE UNIVERSITY

When Adrie Villa left California for Lawrence University, she wasn't just chasing the opportunity to play softball—she was chasing something new.

"Lawrence truly gives me the best of both worlds," she said. "I wanted to experience a real winter, see the trees change colors, and go somewhere far away where I would learn how to be on my own and independent."



That sense of adventure brought her to Appleton, Wisconsin, where she quickly discovered that life in the Midwest looked very different from the only state she had ever known.

"If you ask any of my current or former teammates, they will tell you that I did not handle my first winter well," Villa said with a laugh. "Seeing negative numbers in the forecast was completely foreign to me."

Learning to layer up for class, practice, and everyday life became routine. But the cold wasn't the only adjustment. She also noticed something unexpected about the pace of life.

"In California, sometimes life feels really rushed," she said. "But in Wisconsin you can tell the world moves a bit slower. People take the time out of their day to say hello."

That welcoming atmosphere helped Lawrence quickly feel like home.

A few years later, her brother Gabe arrived on the same campus and discovered many of the same things—though not before facing a few Midwest surprises of his own.

"The biggest adjustment for me, as you could probably guess, was the weather," Gabe said. "Having to dress correctly for the cold and all the layers that go with that."

Playing baseball in the chill came with its own challenges. Then came a moment he'll never forget.

"The thing that surprised me the most was the first time I got wind burnt," he said. "I didn't really know that was a thing, but I found out about it really fast, and it doesn't feel good."

Despite the shock of winter, Gabe quickly found warmth in the Lawrence community.

"Everyone is really nice, and it's not a crazy big school, so you see a lot of familiar faces around campus," he said. "It's pretty cool having that small bond community where I feel like I can ask anyone a question and they would be nice enough to answer."

For Gabe, transferring to Lawrence from Northland meant finding the right place to finish his college career without another cross-country move. The opportunity to join the baseball program under Coach Whitcomb helped make the decision easy.

But the biggest bonus was already on campus.

"It is pretty cool having Adrie on campus with me," Gabe said. "She is the person I go to if I have a question about anything that's Lawrence-related. Having her here has definitely made my experience better."

For Adrie, the roles reversed when her older brother arrived.

"It was sort of strange showing my big brother around the campus that I have been at for four years," she said. "But I am really grateful to have him here with me. It's nice to have a familiar face from home."

Even with busy schedules filled with practices, games, and classes, simply knowing the other is nearby has made their final year in college more meaningful.

"It's nice to know that she is just a phone call or text away if I need anything," Gabe said. "And vice versa."

Their time at Lawrence has also been shaped by the teams they represent.

On the softball field, Adrie has embraced the program's focus on connection and trust.

"We have a list of core values that we use in the program, but I think the most important one is 'play for each other,'" she said. "These girls have become some of my best friends, and we know that whenever we step on the field, we are playing for something bigger than ourselves."

That mindset helped lead the Vikings to the Midwest Conference Tournament last season for the first time in a decade. Now, the team is aiming even higher.

"Our goal is to make the Midwest Conference Tournament and win it," Villa said. "We have a great group of freshmen

and transfers along with experienced players who will help us achieve anything we set our minds to."

Across campus, Gabe stepped into a baseball program with a reputation for success.

"It's only my first year on the team, but you can instantly notice the winning culture here," he said. "Lawrence is a big dawg in this conference, and you can feel that energy in practice from coaches to players."

For Gabe, joining a group with that competitive mindset has been energizing.

"It's really fun and exciting to be a part of," he said. "All the guys are great."

While their athletic seasons unfold on different fields, the siblings share a deeper connection during this final year together. Their journey carries extra meaning after the loss of their younger brother, Christian, in 2022.

"I know that he would have been ecstatic to know that his older siblings are graduating from college together," Adrie said. "Being able to share this final year with my older brother is an experience that I will never forget."

Beyond athletics, both have taken full advantage of the opportunities Lawrence offers. Adrie will graduate this spring with an English major and psychology minor after experiences that included studying abroad in London, writing for the student newspaper, and serving in leadership roles on campus.

Gabe's focus this year is simple: finish strong.

"On the field, the goal is to win the conference and contribute to the team in any way they need me," he said. "Off the field, the goal is to graduate and enjoy my last year of college."

From California sunshine to Wisconsin winters, the Villa siblings have found something lasting at Lawrence: a second home, two teams that feel like family, and a college experience made even more meaningful by sharing it together. ■



## THIS MONTH IN SPORTS HISTORY

**April 1, 1930** Chicago Cubs catcher Leo Hartnett breaks the altitude record for a catch by gloving a baseball dropped from the Goodyear blimp 800 feet over Los Angeles, California

**April 2, 1931** 17-year-old girl Jackie Mitchell strikes out New York Yankees stars Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig in an exhibition baseball game at Engel Stadium in Chattanooga, Tennessee

**April 3, 1987** Bill Elliott sets NASCAR qualifying record of 212.809 mph at Talladega

**April 5, 2003** The Kansas City Royals become the first MLB team to begin the season 5-0 after losing 100 games the previous year

**April 6, 1896** First modern Summer Olympic Games open in Athens, Greece

**April 8, 1976** Lee Roy Selmon from University of Oklahoma first pick in NFL Draft by Tampa Bay Buccaneers

**April 9, 1947** Baseball Commissioner Happy Chandler suspends Brooklyn Dodger Leo Durocher for 1 year for "association with known gamblers"



**April 11, 1975** Hank Aaron returns to County Stadium as a Milwaukee player after his off-season trade from the Atlanta Braves

➤➤➤ **April 12, 1877** Catcher's mask 1st used in a baseball game

**April 13, 1980** US and its allies boycott the Summer Olympics in Moscow in protest against Russia's invasion of Afghanistan

**April 15, 1947** Jackie Robinson becomes the first African American to play in Major League Baseball for the Brooklyn Dodgers

**April 16, 1929** Cleveland Indians become the first MLB team to permanently feature numbers on the backs of uniforms; numbers correspond to the position in the batting order

**April 17, 1951** Mickey Mantle makes his MLB debut, with the New York Yankees; he goes 1 for 4

**April 18, 1981** Longest game in Professional Baseball: Pawtucket Red Sox tie Rochester Red Wings 2-2 in 32 innings (game resumed 23rd June)

**April 19, 1897** 1st Boston Marathon (B.A.A. Road Race), won by John J. McDermott in 2:55:10

**April 22, 1969** American Joe Frazier KOs American Dave Zyglewicz in 1st round to retain heavyweight boxing title

**April 23, 1914** MLB Chicago Federals host the Kansas City Packers in the 1st game played at Weeghman Park (now Wrigley Field)

**April 24, 1974** NFL grants franchise to Tampa Bay Buccaneers

**April 26, 1920** Ice hockey makes its Olympic debut at the Antwerp Games

**April 29, 1961** ABC's "Wide World of Sports" debuts

# ONE ON ONE

BY DIANE BAST | PHOTOS BY PAUL STUMPF

## CASEY ALGER-FESER

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS  
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### ETS PERFORMANCE HAS BUILT A STRONG REPUTATION IN THE FOX CITIES—WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE SETS YOUR TRAINING PHILOSOPHY APART FROM OTHERS IN THE REGION?

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What separates our philosophy from others is that no athlete is ever put into a one-size-fits-all program. Every training plan is individualized based on the athlete's age, sport, training history, strengths, weaknesses, and current season. Whether you're a 12-year-old who has never stepped foot in a weight room or an 18-year-old heading off to play Division 1 football, there's a place for you at ETS.

We also place a huge emphasis on the relationship between coach and athlete. Athletes perform best when they feel supported in their goals and achievements. Our coaches take the time to know each athlete beyond their sport, which builds trust and accountability inside the facility.

### FROM YOUTH ATHLETES TO COLLEGIATE AND PROFESSIONAL PROSPECTS, HOW DO YOU ADAPT PROGRAMMING TO MEET ATHLETES AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT?

Our programming is largely based on the initial evaluation we conduct with all ETS newcomers. The eval process gives us a chance to get to know the athlete, their parents, and any siblings that tag along. We are able to identify their goals, injury history, and sporting background. We then take them through the physical

portion which includes testing their acceleration, speed, change of direction, vertical jump, and strength through our VALD Speed Gates and Force Plates. Grading running form and a mobility screening also play a role in identifying restrictions or compensations that could affect their training. To close out the process, we regroup with the parents to discuss the results and create an action plan.

### WHAT FIRST DREW YOU TO STRENGTH AND PERFORMANCE TRAINING—WAS THERE A DEFINING MOMENT OR MENTOR WHO INFLUENCED YOUR PATH?

I fell in love with the game of basketball at a young age, but I didn't get involved in sports performance until years later. While I was in college a friend of mine who played football brought me to the weight room and showed me the basics of strength training. After a few months, my vertical and explosiveness took a massive jump, and that was the moment I was sold. The second I could see and feel the impact it had on my abilities on the court, I wanted to learn more.

I was also very lucky to make a connection that led me to intern at ETS Green Bay when it opened in 2021. Alex Tassoul, the Director of Operations in Green Bay, taught me about servant leadership and how ETS puts their athletes first. Without that experience, I would not be where I am today.

### GROWING UP, WERE YOU THE ATHLETE WHO LOVED THE WEIGHT ROOM, OR DID YOUR APPRECIATION FOR TRAINING DEVELOP LATER?

I had a late start to strength training in general. In high school we did have a weight room, but no specific coaching or programming to follow. As a basketball player, I chose to spend time on the court as opposed to the weight room, so it wasn't until my college experience that I truly appreciated the consistent hard work and dedication it takes to get to the next level athletically.

### WHAT'S ONE LESSON SPORTS TAUGHT YOU THAT YOU STILL APPLY IN LEADERSHIP AND LIFE?

The first word that comes to mind is perseverance. Every kid has big dreams and so many factors can play a role in those dreams coming true. The road to success is full of challenges and roadblocks. Sports have taught me to stay strong and believe in myself. I see myself in so many of our young athletes who maybe don't play for the best AAU program or don't get the playing time they hoped for or haven't hit that

growth spurt yet. Our job as a strength coach is not just about increasing their squat and improving their sprint time, it's also about getting them to see what they are capable of and believe they can accomplish whatever they set out to achieve even if they don't believe it at that moment.

### OUTSIDE OF ETS, WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING TO RECHARGE AND STAY BALANCED?

My world revolves around my incredible, supportive wife and our two-year-old son. Most of our free time is spent together reading, going for walks, and playing with whatever sports ball or truck our son can get his hands on. We also enjoy camping and Packers football.

### IS THERE A PARTICULAR ATHLETE STORY THAT HAS STUCK WITH YOU OVER THE YEARS—ONE THAT REMINDS YOU WHY YOU DO THIS WORK?

One story that stands out to me highlights not only athletic improvement, but also confidence and personal growth. Two years ago, Jordan Nettekoven came to us hoping to get bigger, faster, and stronger so he could play a big role on the football field for the Winneconne Wolves. Since then, Jordan has been one of the most consistent athletes I've ever trained. When he first started and wasn't where he wanted to be, we constantly talked about trusting the process and putting in the work each week. Off-season training was always standard for Jordan, but the special part was during this past football season. Jordan trained at ETS twice a week even with daily football practice. Fast forward to the end of the season, Jordan helped his team achieve an undefeated record, win a state championship, and now has the opportunity to play at the next level for UW-Stout. He's led by example and we can't wait to see him succeed at the collegiate level.

### IF YOU COULD GO BACK AND GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF ONE PIECE OF ADVICE ABOUT SPORTS OR CAREER, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

From a personal perspective, I would tell myself to start strength training in middle school to develop a foundation to build off when I reached high school so I could maximize my athleticism and become the best basketball player I was capable of. From a career perspective, I would highly recommend finding a mentor early on to help show me the ropes and give me a good perspective of what it takes to train athletes of all ages and abilities. ■

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# Sports Nutrition Across the Stages of Life

BY KATE HARRELL JENKINS, MS, RD, CSSD, LD | YMCA DIETITIAN AND PERSONAL TRAINER, NEENAH-MENASHA

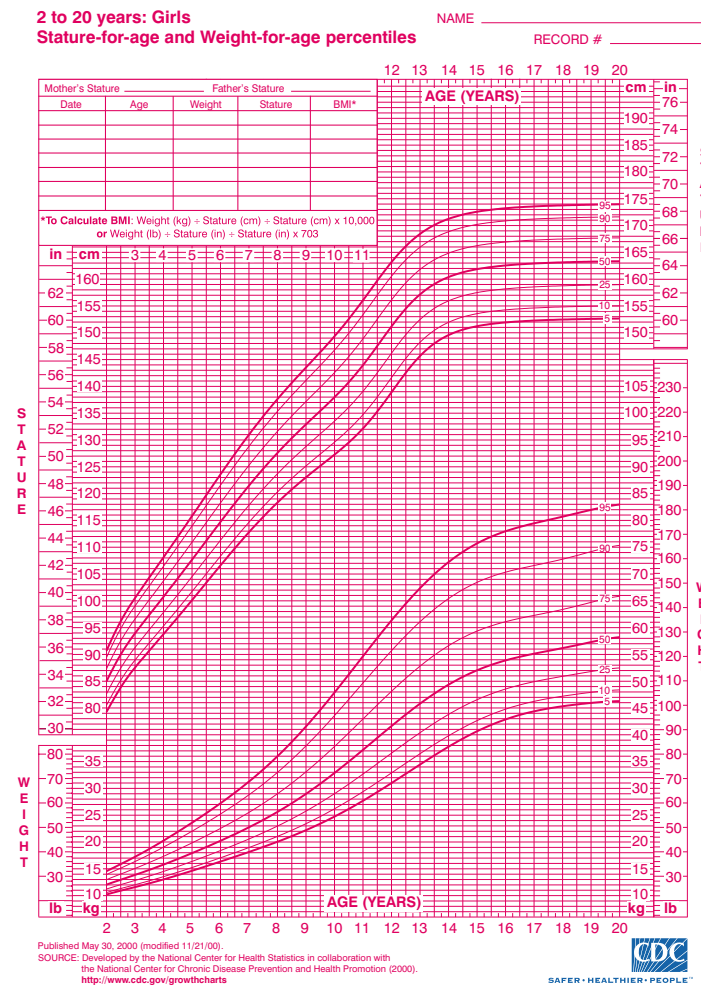
Your body isn't the same at 12, 22, 42, and 62 — and your nutrition shouldn't be either.

As we age our body shifts and changes, as do our nutritional needs to support those changes. Sports nutrition, similarly, shifts for different ages and stages based on the changes going on in the body.

For example, children experience a significant amount of growth, which paired with the demands of sports training, can increase calorie and protein needs especially in addition to other nutrient needs. On the flip side, older adults may see a loss of muscle mass with age, which we can slow with the pairing of exercise and solid nutrition. Below are a few key age groups and the nutritional emphases related to changes within each age and stage.

## School age children (6–12 years of age)

Growth is a key theme for children, as evidenced by the CDC growth chart below. School-aged children also start to participate in sports, some at an even younger age than 6. Nutrition is critical to support the high calorie and nutrient



demand for both continued growth and activity. The growth chart can be a helpful tool to make sure children are continuing to grow healthfully in both height and weight.

Calorie and protein needs can be quite high for growing, active children. Often, the busy schedules of the day can affect meal and snack times, so it is important to provide fuel for active children throughout the day. If energy intake is inadequate, especially over a longer term, children can experience short stature, delayed puberty, poor bone health, and more. This may mean packing extra snacks for your children to have throughout the day, before practice or exercise sessions, and even in the car between school and activities.

Easy options might include:

- Peanut butter and jelly or honey sandwiches with fresh fruit
- Smoothie or smoothie drinks
- Granola bars (make sure to provide both carbohydrates and some protein)
- Apple slices and peanut butter or string cheese
- Trail mix

Younger children have less efficient thermoregulatory (body temperature) mechanisms. Therefore, with dehydration, they may see a faster rise in core temperature. It's important to provide fluids and encourage fluid consumption for young athletes. Watch for the red faces! Sports drinks may be more appealing over water due to the flavor. If you're not a fan of sports drinks, there are many homemade sports drink recipes that can be a great add for child athletes (feel free to contact me for options).

Due to continued growth, nutrients like calcium and vitamin D are also important as children are working to continually remodel and build bone, which will carry with them into adolescent and adult years. Calcium sources can include yogurt, milk and milk alternatives, fortified cereals, greens, and more!

Food experiences are also important for active children. Aim to keep food experiences positive and supportive and model positive food experiences and choices for your children to learn from. They are sponges: Let them soak up the good stuff!

## Adolescence

Adolescence is a period of peak growth and growth spurts, occurring at a younger age for females and slightly older age for males. This heightens additional calorie, protein, and nutrient needs. As an example, a growing teenage athlete may need upwards of 1.6–2.0g/kg per day of protein. On the energy side of things, I have had high school athletes with calorie demands up and over 5,000 calories per day due to their age, stage, and high activity demand. Carbohydrates are also very important to provide sufficient energy for the demands of sport.

Schedules and independence of eating can also affect food choices for adolescents. Snacks provided during school or pre- and post-practice are critical to meeting energy and nutrient demands. Encouraging your adolescent athletes to fuel during these times is important!

During this peak growth stage, adolescents are also continuing to build bone mass, moving towards their peak bone mass. This makes the intake of calcium and vitamin D important, during a stage where we may see a low intake of calcium due to independent food choices (such as eating off-campus for lunch).

As this is an age of increased independence, it is important to emphasize positive food talk and food experiences. Athletes may be sensitive to what their friends are doing or what they are now seeing on social media. It's important to be mindful of the development of disordered eating behaviors during this age and stage, such as meal-skipping. Some may be very sensitive to changes they are experiencing in their bodies as well as sensitivity to social pressures or ideals.

Female athletes who start menstruation during this time will need additional iron in their diet as their needs will go from 8mg/day to 18mg/day. Iron-rich foods include meat, beans, nuts/seeds, greens, fortified foods, and more!

## Older Adults

Have you ever watched the National Senior Games? If not, I highly encourage you to do so. Age need not be a limitation and exercise is truly medicine! Though there is typically a loss of muscle mass, strength, and power with age, both exercise and nutrition can help to stave off these losses, or the extent of them. The Senior Olympics are a great example of those who refuse to play the age card, and as a trainer and dietitian working with older adults, I love it!

Assuring adequate calorie intake is key, but also an increase in protein intake, perhaps even to the level noted previously with adolescence (1.6g/kg/day+). Part of the rationale behind this is the idea of "anabolic resistance," which may occur especially in those 70 and older. Anabolic resistance refers to a decreased,

or what they call blunted, response to the stimuli of exercise and nutrition.

Arthritis and inflammation, common in older adults, may also impact performance. Nutrition can aid in reducing inflammation. The Mediterranean Diet is a nice template for a diet to reduce



inflammation. Key emphasis areas are on whole foods over processed, anti-inflammatory fats like omega 3 fatty acids found in fish or plant-based sources like flax or chia seeds. Emphasis is also placed on more fruits and vegetables and whole grains.

Hydration is also critical for older adults who may have a less sensitive thirst mechanism but also often a hesitation to hydrate due to needing to use the bathroom (yes, I have heard this as a reason to not hydrate during workouts or races). It is also important to consider medication interactions, which may affect both food and fluids (for example, diuretics).

In summary, every athlete is an individual, whether it is age, stage, sport, medical conditions, etc. that affect needs. Each life stage is unique in the demands it places on the body of an active individual. The information above is a great starting point for personalizing nutrition in different life stages. ■



**Kate Harrell Jenkins** is a registered dietitian, certified sports dietitian, personal trainer and group fitness instructor. She loves all things wellness, and is an avid runner with over 20 marathons and ultramarathons under her belt. She also has a passion for working with Parkinson's and is certified in Rock Steady Boxing, PWR! Moves and Pedaling for Parkinson's. Kate believes in bringing together nutrition and fitness and would love to talk with you! Feel free to email Kate at [kharrell@ymcafoxcities.org](mailto:kharrell@ymcafoxcities.org) or [kateharrellrd@gmail.com](mailto:kateharrellrd@gmail.com). Photo by David Schuhart, DRS Photos

## IN THE BLEACHERS



# From Amateur Shows to Pro Card and Mr. Universe, One Man's Journey into Bodybuilding

ARTICLE AND PHOTO BY CHRIS RUGOWSKI, CHICKEN OR THE EGG PHOTOGRAPHY

Three-time National Gym Association (NGA) winner James White has loved fitness for a long time. However, he never considered bodybuilding, so when he saw the posters at Crunch Fitness in Appleton his interest was piqued. White talked to Warren Egebo, co-promotor of the Green Bay Hardbodies, who convinced him to join.

Preparing for the show was a real "wake-up call" about the sport for White. He jokingly says at first he thought bodybuilding was "just" flexing muscles and getting judged. He didn't know everything that goes into it: prepping for a show, the diet, the workouts, even the lack of energy during a carb cut.

When it came to show day he said, "Stepping on stage was one of the scariest things, no doubt. Afterwards, I realized I love being on stage."

In his first competition, Green Bay Natural Hardbodies Championships, he got his NGA Pro Card, cementing his access to



Bodybuilder James White strikes a pose. Photo by Chris Rugowski, Chicken or The Egg Photography

the Kentucky Natural Classic and the NGA Universe Championships in Florida, where he won third place overall.

White, 45, says he didn't know that the bodybuilding was inside of him, especially at his age. The sport has changed his life, and he talks about the discipline it brought, noting it has bled into different aspects of his life.

"It started with the decision to remove a lot of the activities that were not good for me," he said. "There were areas of my life where I felt like I was weak, and bodybuilding got me stronger by following a regime."

It helps to have a supportive family for starters. White says his wife knew how he felt about working out and fitness, and after the first week of the diet she was convinced.

He said, "I sent a photo to her and she was on board, from the meal prep to holding me accountable. Plus having my family at every show, and with all of them being my first time, was an amazing feeling."

White praises both Warren and the NGA as "very important" to him because bodybuilding gave him an opportunity to better himself with a direction and a new perspective and purpose.

"Warren reassured me that they'd have an amateur show where I'd be able to compete and it wouldn't be against a bunch of people who've been competing for years," he said. "That's what I like about the NGA, they level the playing field with the different types of shows for people who may not look the best, may not pose the best—but they give them a chance to get up on stage and present what they have. I will be forever in debt to the NGA for that opportunity."

White will continue seeing how far he can take this and is excited to see where the future will lead, especially as the 2026 competition is on May 2 at the Meyer Theatre in Green Bay. ■

Learn more about the competition at [www.gbhardbodies.com](http://www.gbhardbodies.com).

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## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

**NAME:** Adel Schneider  
**AGE:** 18 **GRADE:** 12th

**SCHOOL:** St. Mary Catholic  
**SPORTS:** Tennis and Power Lifting

**1. HOW DO YOU BALANCE ACADEMICS, TRAINING, AND COMPETITION?** I set my goals, short- and long-term, and then plan my schedule to meet those goals: Time management to balance training, practices, school, friends, and work helps me achieve my goals. That motivation and planning help me balance everything.

**2. WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO PUSH THROUGH TOUGH PRACTICES AND GAMES?** I always want to do better than I have previously done, and beating my prior achievements is always motivation for me. This tennis season, my partner Vivie Auth and I set the goal of giving up fewer games at the Wisconsin State Tennis Tournament. In 2024 we gave up nine games in our four matches. In 2025 we gave up six games in our four matches.



Adel and boyfriend, Dominic Todd, both took 6th place in their weight class at state and are both heading to Nationals in Texas.

For powerlifting, I started my junior year and have worked to build my strength over the last year, exceeding my previous lifts at each meet. I had a 175 pound improvement in my lifting totals from last year, a huge jump! I finished 6th at State (held March 7 in Appleton) and am excited to compete at Nationals March 27 in Texas.

**3. WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT LESSON YOU'VE LEARNED THAT APPLIES BEYOND SPORTS?** Never give up. There have been matches when I have been down and I have to dig in and push myself and look for why I am doing this.

**4. HOW DO YOU HELP BUILD A POSITIVE TEAM CULTURE?** Having a good attitude and trying to lift my teammates up when they need it. I will always cheer and try to motivate my teammates and friends.



**5. HOW WILL YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A STUDENT-ATHLETE SHAPE YOUR FUTURE?** By teaching me important skills like never giving up and that teamwork is essential to success. Working together and motivating each other to win as a team. ■

Adel has committed to Macalester College in St. Paul and will be playing tennis for the Scots.

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## Early Opener Not Expected to Affect State Trout Fishery

Bob Dylan released “The Times They Are A-Changin’” in 1964. The same can be said for Wisconsin’s inland trout-fishing opportunities, as anglers will soon have another month to harvest brook, brown, and rainbow trout in streams, ponds, and springs.

Beginning this year, the harvest season changed from the first Saturday in May—Wisconsin’s general inland season opener—to the first Saturday in April.



The DNR is in the process of updating signs like this along the Waupaca River in Waupaca, which lists the opening day for anglers. Greg Seubert Photo

The change is one of several fisheries-related questions approved at last year’s state Department of Natural Resources and Wisconsin Conservation Congress spring hearings held in all 72 counties.

“The change is basically moving the harvest season opener for trout by one month,” said Bradd Sims, a DNR fisheries biologist based in

Madison. “This year it’ll begin the first Saturday of April. The close is still the same, October 15. It’s going to be for inland streams, springs, and spring ponds.”

Sims is a member of the DNR’s trout team.

“We have an inland statewide trout team which consists of DNR staff and external members, representatives from the angling community and Wisconsin Conservation Congress, and tribal representation,” he said. “We have what we call the statewide Inland Trout Management Plan, which is from 2019 to 2029, and one of the objectives of that plan is to increase angling opportunities for anglers. Part of that would be extending seasons. We extended the September closure to October 15 and now the opener. It’s another month of harvest that they’ll be able to go out and enjoy the resource.”

An earlier opener has been talked about for years, according to Sims.

“There were a lot of anglers who supported earlier opportunities if possible,” Sims said. “Wisconsin has always been a state that’s really strong in our outdoor traditions. Part of that outdoor tradition was having a harvest opener for fish the first Saturday of May. It’s not so much of a biological reason than a social reason. With the generation of anglers changing as time moves on, folks are more willing to change that tradition and try something new.”

“Minnesota opens up in April, I believe Michigan does, and Iowa has a year-round season,” he said. “Those states have an earlier open season and don’t see any adverse impacts on their trout fisheries. Opening up in April gives you another month before the hot summer months when the vegetation grows up and some of the smaller streams close up and the mosquitoes and other insects that you have to deal with.”

Sims said it’s too soon to tell how most anglers will respond to an earlier opener, which this year fell on April 4.

“There will be a handful of anglers that didn’t know the rule changed yet or maybe aren’t familiar with it,” he said. “I think you’ll see anglers take advantage of it, the ones that keep up-to-date on the rule changes and regulations. Your diehard trout anglers will definitely take advantage of it. We are trying to get the word out to people that they can start harvesting trout in April. In the following years, we’ll probably start to see more and more anglers partake in the April opener. I talked to some anglers and they said, ‘the first Saturday in May is something our family’s always done and something we’re going to continue to do instead of switching to the April opener.’”

Sims doesn’t believe an extra month to harvest trout will have a major effect on the fishery.

“It will not,” he said. “One thing the trout team really took a look at is would there be a negative impact on the trout fisheries. Iowa doesn’t have the amount of trout resources that we have and they’re open



The Waupaca River is one of hundreds of inland streams, ponds, and springs now open to trout harvest. The inland opener changed this year from the first Saturday in May to the first Saturday of April. Greg Seubert Photo

year-round with harvest. They’re not seeing any negative impacts to their fishery. Minnesota and Michigan haven’t seen any negative impacts.

“One of the reasons that we were looking at this early opener is when we look at our creel surveys, we’re seeing more anglers becoming strictly catch-and-release anglers,” he said. “When you look at some of the creels that were taking place from the ‘70s to the early 2000s, harvest rates decreased anywhere from 50 to 75% I think it’s just that general attitude of anglers. The way we fish now is different than we used to.”

Whether anglers will take advantage of an earlier opener remains to be seen, according to Sims.

“If we have good weather, folks will definitely get out,” he said. “Turkey seasons don’t open until later in April, so there won’t be any interactions or user conflicts. Survey results show a peak in use. The first weekend in May is your highest with the number of anglers per hour. Folks like to get out and fish the first weekend or the first couple of weeks that the season’s open. They get their fill and it kind of tapers off. I think you’ll see the same thing with this. You’ll have the first couple of weeks of April probably being the highest angler effort, a decrease after that and stabilizing during the summer.” ■



**Greg Seubert** is a freelance reporter, photographer and editor based out of his rural Weyauwega home. He spent 28 years covering high school sports for the Waupaca County Post, a Waupaca-based weekly newspaper, before stepping down in April 2024. Before that, he spent 10 years as a reporter and editor at four other newspaper in Wisconsin. He joined the Waupaca County Post prior to the start of the 1996-97 school year and eventually covered sports teams from Waupaca, Iola-Scandinavia, Weyauwega-Fremont, Little Wolf (Manawa), Amherst, Wild Rose, Almond-Bancroft, Stevens Point, New London, Clintonville and Hortonville high schools.

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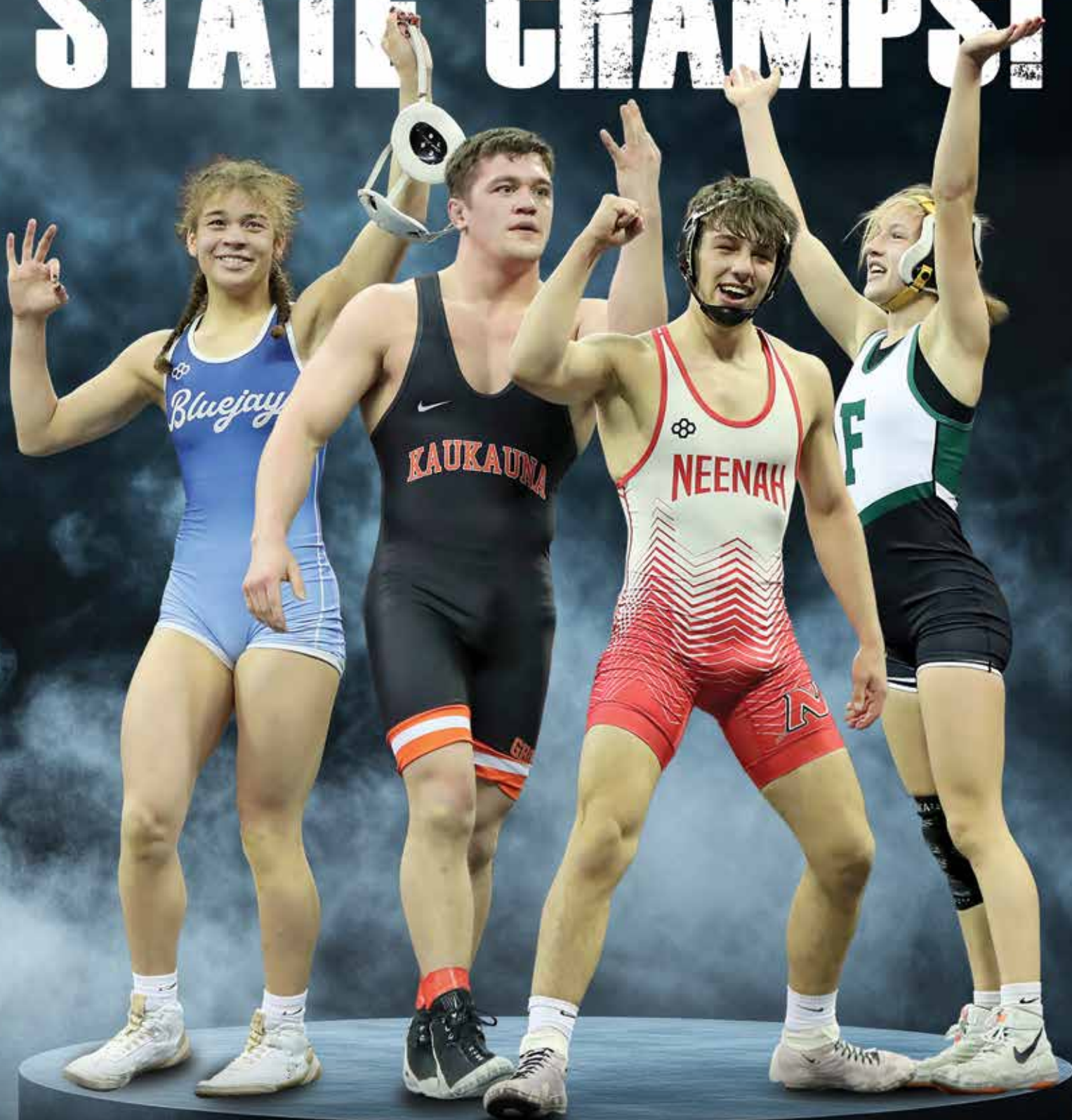
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