



ONLINE EVERY DAY

# Mix of young and old to lead Warrenton baseball

By Kelly Bowen  
STAFF WRITER

The Warrenton baseball team is entering the season with a mix of experienced players and new faces, following the graduation of five key seniors. With six returning varsity players, Coach Eric Burle is optimistic about his team's potential.

"It's going to be a little bit different but we have really good kids this year, coachable kids," Burle said. "We have a lot of returning offensive players, so I'm confident that we're going to score runs and put the ball in play."

On the mound will be sophomore Carter Martin, who earned all-conference honors as a freshman.

"I understand now what I need to do to contribute to the team," Martin said. "Last year, I wasn't sure about that, but now I know I can do way better this year."

"He's going to give us a pretty good chance to win when he throws," Burle added.

The pitching staff will also feature Jake Kirkpatrick, Colin DiSilvester and Austin Haas, along with a couple of underclassmen.

Despite having a team of new players, Burle has noticed that the players gel well together,

with DiSilvester adding that the newcomers are adapting quickly.

"The nice thing is a couple of the freshmen that are practicing and potentially playing (varsity) played other sports with the same guys, so they've already got a feeling for how those guys play," Burle said.

Burle will look towards Haas, Colin DiSilvester, Martin, Mason Thompson, Bryce Phillips, Keegan Mellegaard and Ric Standley to fill in the void of the five graduates from last year's team.

"I'm confident in those guys, and really as a team, they're going to have to all come together to fill in some of those gaps left by last year's group," Burle said.

Haas, Martin, Thompson and DiSilvester will also help lead this year's squad.

"I've told them, whenever those guys go, the team's gonna go and they're really good kids so I think they're going to be able to be good leaders for the group," Burle said.

Haas, a senior, is focused on leading the team with positivity.

"I'd like to keep positive energy throughout the whole team and keep our emotions in check throughout the game," Haas said. "It's



Members of the Warrenton baseball team are front row, from left, Kale Lehmkuhl, Mason Thompson, Keegan Lehmkuhl, Austin Haas, Parker Barks, Riley McGee, Keaton Young and Nick Gibson. Back row, from left, Jacob Kirkpatrick, Ric Standley, Carter Martin, Colin DiSilvester, Keegan Mellegaard and Charles Brake. Kelly Bowen photo

an emotional and mental game, so we have to keep our emotions in check to be competitive this year."

The 2024 team reached a program-high of 22 wins and claimed a conference title. Burle acknowledged the tough competition in the GAC North conference, but is hoping that his team repeats its title.

"Every year, we compete for conference, so

our goal is to have a chance to make some noise again," Burle said. "I know we'll be successful, it's hard to tell how successful just because we have so many new guys (and have not played in a game yet)."

Haas added achieving the same success will not be an easy feat, but he is setting his goals high. DiSilvester and Martin added breaking the win record again

would be a nice touch.

"We can learn from last year and realize what helped us," Martin said. "We lost a ton of guys but we got guys this year too. We have good communication coming in and better chemistry."

Burle noted the depth of the bench has decreased and he is looking anywhere from 14 to 17 players to dress in varsity games.

He lauded the team's athleticism, noting many players are three-sport athletes. Offensively, he is expecting the Warriors to be ahead. On the defensive and pitching side, Burle is hoping those areas will come around as they progress.

Warrenton will begin its season at 5 p.m. on March 21 versus Central (Park Hills) located in O'Fallon.

# Wright City baseball sets sights on conference crown

By Kelly Bowen  
STAFF WRITER

The Wright City baseball team is aiming high this season, driven by the leadership of four talented seniors: Drew Elsenrath, Jakeb Orf, Micah Boeckman and Duan McRoberts.

With eyes set on both the EMO conference and district championships, the Wildcats are determined to make a deep postseason run.

"I'm ready to win a conference championship this year and definitely a district championship," Elsenrath said. "We have the talent to do it."

The Wildcats have not won a conference title since 2019, and their last district championship was back in 2006.

In recent years, they have been agonizingly close in the first round of districts, falling just one run short in the past two seasons.

"We've kind of been unlucky. We lost by one run last year and we're right there, we just need to take that step and this year, we're going to make that step for sure," Elsenrath said.

Coach Cody Bair has high expectations for the four seniors, noting the core is the team's biggest strength.

"I couldn't have been blessed with a better group of kids," Bair said. "Those four guys are always stepping up to the plate and taking charge. They make sure the guys are meeting expectations."

McRoberts mentioned the quartet has a nice chemistry on the field.

"We've all played together since we were young and we know each other well," McRoberts added. "A lot of our underclassmen, they listen to us and I feel like that's very valuable to helping our team be better."

Bair will be entering his second year as head coach. He said he plans to bring a holistic approach this season.

"I want to continue to put the kids in the best situation to be successful, so we're working on different things this year, as far as not just the skill development, but nutrition and mental health," he said.

With a roster that blends "passionate" underclassmen with "fiery



Members of the Wright City baseball team are front row, from left, Will Masters, Jakeb Orf, Duan McRoberts, Micah Boeckman, Drew Elsenrath, Easton Feise and Cameron Moyer. Middle row, from left, Christian Schutte, Kaveon Schulte, Christian Mohr, Logan Rose, Brayden Niemann, Bryce Chunn and Tate Mikus. Back row, from left, Kayden McCurdy, Leighton McDonald, Tyler Martin, Dylan Smith, Kolby Bass, Drake Romans, Carter Pierson and Carter Strunk. Kelly Bowen photo

underclassmen, Bair and the seniors are amped about the team dynamic.

"This has maybe been the most fun team that we've had in our last four years," Boeckman said. "We all have great energy and we mesh well together."

Orf echoed the sentiment, adding, "We have a good team culture. Ev-

erybody's friends, we get along very well and we have a lot of talent."

Bair emphasized that success this season will hinge on consistency in pitching and competitiveness at the plate.

Elsenrath will take on the role of the team's ace. Boeckman, who also pitched for the Wildcats last season, will transi-

tion to the infield after an off-season injury. Other pitchers, including Logan Rose, Carter Pierson and a few sophomores, will also play key roles on the mound.

"(Elsenrath) has grown tremendously over the last two years," Bair said. "I think everybody's going to be surprised by what they see

out there."

Wright City is slated to start its season at 2 p.m. on March 21 against Winfield on the road.

"They're always a quality opponent," Bair said. "We'll let our guys test themselves against Winfield, see where we stand early in the year and make adjustments as we go."

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Members of the Wright City girls track and field team are front row, from left, Sadie Sehnert, Alliana Schone, Bailey Love, Lydia Clubb, Lindsay Pettus and Josephine Grueneberg. Back row, from left, Ada Ferrell, Gretchen Stockmann, Jolee Lockhart, Rebekah Riggs, Madison Goodman and Zola Jones. Kelly Bowen photo



Members of the Wright City boys track and field team are front row, from left Terrence Love, Kaden Cross, Hayden Berg, James Guinn, Travon Lampert and Dylan LeNoir. Middle row, from left, TJ Hamel, Kayden Speiser, Aidan Benefiel, Joshua Harris, Matthew Johnston and Lukas Lee. Back row, from left, Kayden Allison, Neshاون Bates, Dayton Humphreys, Joseph Hall, Quincy Rice and Andrew Staats. Kelly Bowen photo

# Wright City girls return three state qualifiers; boys come back stronger

By Kelly Bowen  
STAFF WRITER

The Wright City track and field team is entering the new season with high expectations. The girls squad has three returning state qualifiers with Lydia Clubb, Lindsay Pettus and Ada Ferrell, while the boys team has many athletes returning in top tier shape. Last year, the trio, along with the now-graduated Elizabeth Riggs, placed second in the 4x400 relay at the MSHSAA state championship. Although the team must fill the void left by their fourth relay member, the returning athletes are determined to reach the state meet again. “I have really high expectations for this season. I think we’re going to do great,” Clubb said. “With the adrenaline you have, once you get there (state), it’s like a piece of cake,” Ferrell

added. The girls noted they have an easy-going dynamic between each other, which often helps when it comes to racing together. After having a taste of the state competition last year, they noted it feels like they have a “little chip on their shoulder.” Ferrell also added she feels more at ease this season as a returning athlete. “Being a freshman in general is nerve wracking,” Ferrell said. “But going to state, I realized it’s not as nerve wracking as it needs to be.” Coach Fred Ross noted they are still working out who the fourth leg will be, as they do have a few contenders that could potentially fit in well. “We have a couple of freshmen and they may fit in there. Jolee (Lockhart) has been running really well,” Ross said. “We’re still getting times and figuring things out.”

Outside of the state qualifiers, Ross said his team has returned some promising girls, including Sadie Sehnert. Sehnert, who is now a junior, was a district qualifier in the javelin throw last year. “We’ll look for her to step up,” Ross said. “Track is nice because you compete against your time and your distance and your height, so you can really see positive feedback pretty quick.” On the boys team, many athletes, including those returning from winter track, are already in top shape for the new season. Junior Kaden Cross has already noticed significant improvement after the indoor season. “I’ve been getting way faster with the indoor season, so I’m in shape already and I can only get faster from here,” Cross said. The offseason focus on strength training in the weight

room is also paying off. “We’re pushing it way harder than last year and definitely improving,” junior Dayton Humphreys said. “Everybody’s gotten a lot bigger from last year too, so that definitely made a big change.” Senior Kayden Allison added that after suffering a season-ending injury last season, he is excited to be back on the track and motivated to get to the state meet. Ross added the senior, among many others, has returned stronger. “We have some young sprinters that are faster and some seniors that are faster, so we’re looking for the boys to come in and do well,” Ross said. Ross will look towards the seniors, on both the girls and boys teams, to take on more of a leadership role. “We’re looking for those seniors to lead because they know

what we do in our program and what you need to do to succeed and get better,” Ross said. Ross did note both teams overall are smaller in numbers but he acknowledged the value of more opportunities to participate in various events. “We have a big junior class and a pretty good senior class this year,” Ross said. “Those kids have some experience, conference experience, especially. We’ll look for them to step it up this year.” The boys and girls are both slated to begin their season at the Van-Far Open Warm-Up meet on March 24. “Everything’s pumped up when you’re in a meet, so we’re going to go from those times and hopefully start beating those times and give them something to shoot for right at the beginning of the season,” Wright City coach Fred Ross said.



Members of the Warrenton boys track and field program are front row, Bradley Tucker, Joseph Buechner, Isham Keeper, Kyle Lauck, Marcus Greene, Javon Jones, Joe Greene and Kadin Stroer. Back row, from left, Manager Callin Carter, Noah Cline, Drake Brandriff, Isias Hernandez, Jordan Lopez, Caellum Morris and Antwian Pierce. Kelly Bowen photo



Members of the Warrenton girls track and field team are front row, from left, Alyssa Greenwade, Claire Goldsmith, Paige Sommer, Stormie Conway, Mia Teson, Morgan Marschel, Isabelle Morris, Ava Schneider, Makayla Witthaus, Avery Shaw, Claire Schroeder and Neveah Maxwell. Back row, from left, Emma Klaus, Natalie Sibert, Jamiah Elicke, Antwaniya Pierce, Taylor Stevens, Annabelle Lorraine, Sophie Bennett, Paytin Elliot, Stella Bingman, Morgan Geurin, Ady Rader and Kenzie Phillips. Kelly Bowen photo

# Warrenton boys and girls track teams go to work with small rosters

By Kelly Bowen  
STAFF WRITER

The Warrenton boys and girls track and field teams will have small rosters this spring. The boys squad enters the season with just 15 athletes. They typically have 30-35 athletes on the roster. The girls welcome five new athletes and return seniors Avery Shaw and Morgan Marschel, who were state qualifiers as sophomores.

Warrenton’s track season begins at 4:15 p.m. on March 25, when the girls and boys teams compete at the Montgomery County Early Invite. With fewer athletes on the boys team, Coach Mark Thomas has adjusted his approach, focusing more on individual development rather than team-wide goals. “We’ll work with the ones that are here, coach them up and find what they’re best at,” Thomas said. “We’re working

towards individual goals rather than team trophies. It’s nice for them because they are going to get more one-on-one coaching.” The Warriors have a mix of newcomers, mainly freshmen, and a solid group of returning sophomores and seniors. Thomas noted he is excited to watch senior Isham Keeper, a newcomer, compete this year. Keeper always had the sport in the back of his mind, even before high school, but with his asthma, he strayed away as a precaution. However, with being a senior, Keeper thought, ‘Why not?’ “He’s never done track before. Now that basketball is done, he’s given it a shot and he’s pretty hungry,” Thomas said. “A lot more technique goes into it than I thought but I’ve been blessed with athleticism, so it comes pretty easy to me,” Keeper added. Thomas will look to put him in jumping events, but also noted he is a fast sprinter. “I want to compete wherever I can win, so if that means doing everything, I would do everything,” Keeper said. Thomas also has high hopes for Kadin Stroer

who recently made his return to the sport after being out for a long period. “We had a really hard workout yesterday and I could hear (Stroer) telling them, ‘hey, just get through it. It’s what we have to do to be ready to run in meets,’ so it’s nice to have the kids be able to communicate that and not just the coaches,” Thomas said. Sophomore Marcus Greene, the conference champion in shot put last year, is another key returner. Greene said he feels more confident coming into this season and hopes to reach sectional. “He did really good in districts for us last year as a freshman, so now as a sophomore, he kind of leads the throwing group over there,” Thomas said. Despite the small team, Thomas has been impressed by the dedication of his athletes. “We’re working hard for low numbers,” he said. “I am pleasantly surprised at how hard they’re working and listening to us and trying to do what we ask.” Even with the increase in numbers, Coach John Jeskey added the over-

all numbers on the girls team are still a bit low, which will have an impact when it comes to team scoring in meets. “Right now, I’m going to set our expectations to at least a couple of state qualifiers,” he said. Shaw, now a senior, went to the state meet as a sophomore and was one place shy from qualifying as a junior. The experience she faced last season has only allowed her to come back more confident and motivated. “Whenever I think about not making it last year, it makes me angry enough and helps push me to throw a little farther and train harder,” Shaw said. Outside of state, Shaw has set her goals high and wants to break the school record for the discus throw. She currently holds the record for shot put and javelin throw. “I just really want to make it to state,” Shaw said. “I also want to try to hit over 12 meters a few times this year and sweeping another meet would be really cool.” “She’s been putting in the extra work and is already in midseason form,” Jeskey added. Marschel’s motivation to get back to state stems

from a different experience. “I had a torn meniscus last year. I didn’t really know how it happened and I had surgery right before districts,” Marschel said. “Before, I ran in conference and I actually placed second with my injury.” Marschel went to the state meet competing in the 400-meter race. Her offseason training, including intense stairmaster sessions and sprint work, has prepared her to come back stronger. “I’m pretty nervous but I know I’ve prepared a lot,” Marschel said. “I probably spent 45 minutes on level nine on the stairmaster almost every day. If I wasn’t doing that, I was running two miles or working sprints outside on the track.” Jeskey will look to the senior duo to help lead the way for the underclassmen, an area that is big in numbers. “They all clearly want to be the top, and all of our seniors are really stepping up trying to be that top one,” Jeskey said. “We had a really tough workout yesterday and we didn’t have people that were quitting on us. They were all trying to push themselves and get better.”

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# Warrenton soccer possess key ingredient for successful season

By Kelly Bowen  
STAFF WRITER

While a first touch and Cruyff are things that can easily be taught, the Warrenton girls soccer team has something that cannot always be taught – tenacity.

“The culture of the team is really good, we have a lot of positivity, a lot of upperclassmen that are really helping to build,” Coach Courtney Nenninger said. “They have a lot of grit and hustle. They are girls that are going to come out here and work hard every day. If we have that, everything else will come.”

Junior Emma Duncan emphasized the importance of team chemistry, highlighting how the bond off the field translates to success on the field.

“Everybody gets along and can have a good time with each other off the field, which comes into play when we’re on the field,” Duncan said.

Senior Isabelle Morris also echoed Duncan’s sentiments about the team’s cohesiveness.

“There’s a very different variety of girls and everyone’s on a different skill level but they’re able to work together,” Morris said.

Both Morris and Duncan are hoping to return to the pitch more competitive this year.

Last season, the Warriors finished with a 2-20-1 record.

“I want the intensity to be

higher and hopefully get some more wins and be more competitive this year, myself included,” Morris said.

Nenninger also shares the vision to have a more competitive team this year. Throughout the season, she will want to see an improvement in fundamentals.

“You know, first touch, having a good touch off of receiving the ball, knowing where to go next and being a step ahead of the play,” she said. “Hopefully, since we have that working hard piece, we can work on those technical things more in practice.”

The Warriors will welcome a strong group of five seniors, including Kiera Daniel and Alana Adams, who are new to the team. Daniel will play goalkeeper.

“We have a really solid group of seniors this year. Two of them have never played for us, but they are both athletes and should help us tremendously,” Nenninger said. “The other three are all really good leaders.”

The team will comprise mostly of upperclassmen, but Nenninger recognized the importance of the underclassmen in shaping the team’s future success. The Warriors have three dual-sport athletes, and when those athletes are away for other sports, the underclassmen will be key to filling those roles.

“It sometimes hurts our num-



Members of the Warrenton girls soccer team are front row, from left, Emory Martinez, Autumn Heard, Morgan Marschel, Katelyn Morris, Isabelle Morris and Lana Le. Middle row, from left, Emma Duncan, Alana Adams, Charlee Kersting and Taylor Duncan. Back row, from left, Raven Gaffney, Breeyn Young, Alyssa Adams, Kiera Daniel, Audrey Lombardo and Madeline Schoppenhorst. Kelly Bowen photo

bers with our games when they are gone but it’ll be nice to have those younger ones fill in their spots,” Nenninger said.

Tactically, the team will play a 4-4-2 or 3-5-2 formation, with a zonal marking system. Though some defensive positions are still to be filled, Nenninger is confident in the team’s well-roundedness and versatility.

“We have girls that are willing to step up into different posi-

tions and they are the ones that can handle being moved around and being versatile, so that will help,” Nenninger said.

Nenninger will enter her second season on the sidelines as head coach. Alongside her will be two new assistant coaches, Courtney Bayer and Grace Kaminski.

“Collaboratively, we all work very well together,” Nenninger said. “We all have our strengths of positions and they all happen

to be different from each other.”

With varying expertise in different positions of the field, Nenninger noted the benefit of being able to split practices into position specific groups.

“That’s going to help big time because we can get more individual training per position. I think that’ll make a big difference from last year,” she said.

Warrenton will begin its season March 21-22 at the Blair Oaks Shootout in Jefferson City.

# Wildcats enter final stage of three-year plan as growth continues

By Kelly Bowen  
STAFF WRITER

When Jake Wallace was hired as the Wright City girls soccer coach in 2022, he and the coaching staff set a clear three-year plan for the program.

The first year focused on building a solid team culture, while the second year aimed to show marked growth.

Having accomplished both goals, the Wildcats are now in the final stage of their plan: striving for the program’s first winning record and advancing past the first round of districts.

“We are right where we expected to be,” Wallace said. “Our numbers are bigger than they’ve ever been and we’re more competitive.”

Last season, the Wildcats finished with an 8-12 record, but this year, they are determined to make significant strides. Senior captains Paige Kirn and Paige Rees noted they are committed to helping the team achieve a winning season.

“Usually our first week of tryouts, everyone is just kind of getting into it but this year, everyone came in hard,” Kirn said.

“We have really good communication this year and we

work well as a unit,” Rees added.

Wallace lauded the two captains as key players to their team. Rees stepped into the goalkeeper position for the first time last season and will remain in goal, while Kirn is often busy scoring goals on the other end of the field.

“I would have colleges come up to me and say, ‘Hey, does (Rees) have an interest in playing? I would tell them she’s more of a softball player,’” Wallace said. “(Kirn) has an incredible skill level but also a relentless drive to continue to improve.”

Kirn broke two school records last season for single-season goals and career goals.

As her final high school season unfolds, Kirn is focused on surpassing her own records.

“I definitely want to beat the single-season record and hopefully it can add up,” Kirn said. “The goal is (to reach) 75 and just keep pushing forward.”

Wright City will return many familiar faces and a significant increase in program numbers. With 41 girls on the roster, the program will have a C-team.

“I’m very excited to see our junior varsity team play this



Members of the Wright City girls soccer team are front row, from left, Ashley Luna-Martinez, Florencia Diego, Leslie Hernandez, Daysi Diego, Norma Diego, Daisy Hunter-Valencia, Trinity Caton-Hernandez and Callee Reimers. Second row, from left, Alison Thomas, Taylor Flotron, Malia Pryor, Claire Leary, Ada Ferrell, Addie Ward, Riley Rapa, Katarina Diego, Sandy Lopez-Luna, Rosy Birkemeier and Mackenzie Holloway. Third row, from left, Lilliana Weidemeier, Alexis Slayden, Anahi Hernandez, Mariela Ortiz, Selina Hirt, Marli Burkhardt, Paige Kirn, Brenda Hernandez and Juliana Lopez-Luna. Back row, from left, Helene Michel, Mia Litterst, Meadow Jones, Maura Juden, Paige Rees, Lillian Brown, Olivia Wilson, Audrina Graves, Zoey Jones and Lexcee Scurlock. Kelly Bowen photo

year because historically it has always been half of people who have played and half who haven’t played,” Wallace said.

While Wallace has not settled on a concrete formation yet, he plans to utilize a back four on the defensive side.

In practice, the Wildcats have been focusing on increasing competitiveness and improving their conditioning.

“Any 50-50 ball, we want to win and win with a little bit of toughness too,” Wallace said. “With the conditioning aspect,

the biggest thing has been trying to get our fitness in gear and in a spot where we can go for a full 90 minutes.”

Wright City is slated to begin its season at 4:30 p.m. on March 27 against Veritas Christian at home.



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# Warrenton golf shoots for conference championship

**By Kelly Bowen**  
STAFF WRITER

The Warrenton boys golf team is entering the season with high expectations. With three varsity returners, the Warriors are hoping to build off of last year's momentum.

"We are always going to compete for the conference championship," Coach Aaron Jinkerson said. "The main thing about golf is to improve year after year, so if you're returning you have to make sure to build off of your finish last year. I think we have a good opportunity to have some all conference first-team golfers."

The three returners—Gavin Thompson, Gavin Solari and Ethan Leavitt—are expected to play pivotal roles for the team.

"I really look for them to be the leaders of the team because they have a lot of experience," he said. "They played a lot in the offseason and I'm looking forward to their development this year and tournament play."

Jinkerson added Thompson and Solari have "built tremendous experience competing on varsity as freshmen."

Thompson earned all-conference honors as a freshman, alongside his brother Owen, who is graduated.

"I just hope I can follow in his footsteps because he had a good senior year," Thompson said.

While Jinkerson notes the personality differences between the two brothers, he believes Gavin Thompson can inherit his brother's leadership qualities this season.

Leavitt, a senior, is focused on finishing strong in his final year of high school golf.

"I just want to do better and do all I can and keep moving forward," he said.

The team has 13 players on the roster, which Jinkerson noted is typical for the program. While the newcomers have little to no experience, Jinkerson is encouraged by their determination to improve.

"We have kids who want to work hard at the game," he said. "They're really serious about improving, which, as a coach, that's all I can ask for. They're a fun group to be around."

The varsity lineup will in-



Members of the Warrenton boys golf team are front row, from left, Tyler Johnson, William Ohmes, Ethan Leavitt, Gavin Solari, Luke Bolm and Eli Peth. Back row, from left, Assistant Coach Mike Holt, Cooper Cornell, Chance Klasing, Nate Kutsch, John Poindexter, Gavin Thompson, Ty Cook, Noah Molina, Coach Aaron Jinkerson and Assistant Coach Brendan Schanuel. Kelly Bowen photo

clude Leavitt, Thompson, Solari and Eli Peth, with the fifth spot potentially being filled by a mix of other players.

In practice, the players spend plenty of time working on their game after a long off-season, with an emphasis on daily improvement and refin-

ing the short game.

"We're trying to focus on smaller things that will allow them to improve their score," Jinkerson said.

The Warriors will tee off their season at 3:30 p.m. on March 27 in a home dual against St. Charles West.

Jinkerson expects St. Charles West to be their biggest competition in the GAC North conference.

"I look forward to seeing us compete against those guys," he said. "It's the first match of the year and we'll see where we stack up."

# Wright City golf sees jump in numbers under new leadership

**By Kelly Bowen**  
STAFF WRITER

Stephen McClain has made an immediate impact in his first year as Wright City boys golf coach, increasing the numbers to 16 golfers.

"I got the word out early and let them know it was more of an experience and skill learned throughout their lives," McClain said. "It's something they can continue to build on after they graduate."

McClain added the newcomers come in with a mixture of experienced and inexperienced golfers.

Veteran players like Dustyn Bailey, Aiden Taylor and Kye Schnarre have been instrumental in mentoring younger teammates, lightening the load for McClain and creating a supportive environment for the less experienced golfers.

"It's a lot of weight off my shoulders," McClain said. "Just getting them out here is probably the best experience for them."

Freshman Tristan Bonnell, with two years of experience under his belt, is one of the

newcomers adjusting smoothly to high school golf. He noted there is not much to complain about when he's out in the nice weather and beautiful course.

"I've been playing for two years, practicing out here," Bonnell said.

In practice, the team has been focusing on developing the fundamentals, with an emphasis on improving the short game and pacing.

"I've been trying to get them out of the habit of trying to attempt long shots or trying to kill the ball in practice," he said. "A lot of them were taking nice and easy swings just to get the form down."

McClain also added that splitting them into groups based on their ability levels has seemed to help them improve.

McClain has been impressed with the team's enthusiasm, a key indicator that the program is heading in the right direction.

"It's tough to find," McClain explained. "They're excited to get out here, they're asking questions about the game. They're kind of in charge of their own learning



Members of the Wright City boys golf team are front row, from left, Coach Stephen McClain, Grant Stockmann, Andrew Hunn, AJ Simon, Mason Wendt, Tristan Bonnell, Sam Pohl, Dustyn Bailey and Parker Brown. Back row, from left, Landon Juden, AJ Wilber Jr., Aidan Taylor, Kye Schnarre, Johnathan Windmann, Brody Buttry and Jaden Bricker. Kelly Bowen photo

for this game, much like the classroom."

As for individual goals, McClain hopes to see senior Kye Schnarre advance past districts. Schnarre shares that goal and is eager to make the

most of his final season.

Overall, McClain's vision for the team is focused on growth—both on the course and as individuals.

"I want them to be able to go out after this and say they can

play golf and feel confident in themselves," he said.

The Wildcats will tee off their season with a home dual against Montgomery County at 3:30 p.m. on March 27 at Innsbrook Golf Club.

## Mizzou opens against Drake in opener

No. 21/22 University of Missouri men's basketball learned its postseason fate on Sunday, earning the sixth seed in the West Regional and facing 11th-seeded Drake on Thursday, March 20.

Staying local in Wichita, Kansas, the Tigers and Bulldogs tip off at 6:35 p.m. on truTV.

Mizzou earned its highest seed since 2012, marking just the fourth time in the last 31 seasons the Tigers have been seeded sixth or higher. The winner advances to play the winner of No. 3 Texas Tech and No. 14 UNC Wilmington on Saturday.

The Tigers are one of a record-setting 14 schools from the SEC to earn a bid to the 2025 NCAA Tournament under the direction of third-year Whitten Family Men's Basketball Head Coach Dennis Gates. The Tigers enter the tournament with a 22-

11 overall record and are ranked No. 21 in the AP poll and No. 22 in the USA Today Coaches poll.

Drake earned its bid to the 2025 NCAA Tournament after winning the Missouri Valley Conference title. The Bulldogs enter the tournament with a 30-3 record, making their third-straight appearance in the national tournament. Former conference foes, the series between the two schools goes back to 1910 with Mizzou holding a 27-7 all-time advantage in the series. The teams last met in 1987 with the Tigers winning at Drake, 76-74.

The Tigers are set to compete in their 30th NCAA Tournament and first in two years. Overall, Mizzou owns 23 victories in the national championship, advancing as far as the Elite Eight five times in its history (1944, 1976, 1994, 2002 and 2009).

## MDC announces Discover Nature Girls Camp for June 16-17

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is announcing its Discover Nature Girls Camp for 2025, which is scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, June 16 - 17, at the August A. Busch Memorial Conservation Area and Shooting Range and Outdoor Education Center. The camp is open to girls aged 11-15 years. This is a free, two-day camp aimed at introducing girls to a range of outdoors skills in a supportive learning environment.

The Discover Nature Girls Camp will run from 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. each day. Day one will start at the MDC St. Louis Regional Office on the Busch Conservation Area, 2360 Highway D in St. Charles. The girls will experience canoeing, fishing, fire starting, and other outdoor activities.

On day two, participants will meet at the nearby Busch Shooting Range, 3550 Hwy D in Defiance. They will learn and practice all the skills needed to become Missouri Hunter Education Certified. They'll also get hands-on experience shooting .22 rifles, shotguns, and archery, along with learning the skill of atlatl throwing.

"The goal of this camp is to encourage participants to gain the confidence to explore Missouri's diverse outdoors on their own," said MDC Conservation Educator Becky Robertson.

Discover Nature Girls Camp is free with all equipment provided. The camp is limited to 60 girls between the ages of 11 to 15 years old. The first 60 applications received will be selected to attend.

To apply, participants should follow these steps:

- Pre-register online at <http://short.mdc.mo.gov/4jc>
- Supply a current email and address when registering
- Watch for an email confirmation and an information packet in the mail
- Fill out the packet as soon as possible and return. Students must complete the knowledge portion explained in packet.
- Return the packet prior to attending the Discover Nature Girls Camp by May 12.

For additional information, contact Becky Robertson at [Becky.Robertson@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:Becky.Robertson@mdc.mo.gov), or 636-441-4554, ext. 4126.



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# Warrenton boys volleyball feeling optimistic in inaugural season

By Kelly Bowen  
STAFF WRITER

The expectations have changed for the Warrenton boys volleyball team after its first couple weeks of practice. Led by Coach Jake Brown, the Warriors are aiming for a promising inaugural season.

“We have so many good athletes, so we’re really hoping to be competitive with a lot of teams,” Brown said. “The kids are really buying in and we’ve been working really hard on the fundamentals, but also on the team structure and how the game works.”

This year, the program has 15 players and will compete in the varsity and junior varsity levels. Because of the roster size, there will be several players who will participate on both teams. Many players come in with prior experience even though they are participating with a first-year program at Warrenton.

Brown noted that sophomore Matthew Faubion plays select volleyball, while freshman Lucas Payne has a solid recreational background. Additionally, several juniors and seniors have experience competing in sand volleyball tournaments, even winning a few over the summer.

“It’s a different experi-

ence, but it’s some kind of experience,” Brown said when asked about the sand volleyball group.

Instead of holding try-outs, the Warriors dove straight into practice, emphasizing fundamentals and game strategy right from the start.

“We’ll start practice by getting a lot of touches on the ball. In the second half of practice, we’re working on all the game strategy and all that good stuff,” Brown said.

One of the key aspects Brown is instilling in his team is a culture of positivity. The Warriors have a unique tradition where, at the end of each practice, they go around the circle and highlight something another teammate did well.

He noted the team also has a no cursing rule, and they often try to encourage each other.

“We have really positive attitudes. We’ve been talking a lot about that and really drilling it into them about staying positive and picking each other up,” he said. “I’ve been amazed at how great they’ve been around each other.”

Beyond the court, the program will also look to immerse itself with a couple of service projects with Oak Pointe and city trash pickup.



Members of the Warrenton boys volleyball team are front row, from left, Brayden Brown, Dillen Coleman, Ken Le, Austin White and Deadrick Forrest. Middle row, from left, Team Manager Grace Ruediger, Austin Gentry, Jamarion Fulton, Jeremiah Montgomery, Lucas Payne and Team Manager Chandler Blondin. Back row, from left, Assistant Coach John Schulte, Head Coach Jake Brown, Matthew Faubian, Carter Flake, Issac Wagner, Teegan Williams, Caleb Lauck, Bernie Strum and Assistant Coach Casey Dildine.

Kelly Bowen photo

The Warriors will also have help from their two managers, Chandler Blondin and Grace Ruediger, both of whom played for the Warrenton girls volleyball team.

“It helps with them both being volleyball players and (Blondin) is going to be a college volleyball player, so her being around and help-

ing us with some things has been really good,” Brown said. “She actually ran some stations for us during our first week of practice.”

With 10 upperclassmen on the team, Brown has seen a few different players show some leadership on the court.

“I do see some leaders, not any names to men-

tion yet, but there’s some kids working really hard towards that,” he said. “We’re junior and senior heavy, so those guys have been on the football team and they know how it looks to lead.”

The Warriors will begin their first season of volleyball against Timberland at 5 p.m. on March

21 at home.

“They’re excited, a little giddy and a little nervous,” Brown said. “We’ve been talking about being a sponge, so they’ve been sponging up everything and soaking in all the information. It’s a lot to learn when you’re starting a new program, so we’re enthusiastic.”

## Harper named Mizzou women’s basketball head coach

University of Missouri Director of Athletics Laird Veatch announced Tuesday that Kellie Harper has been hired as the head coach of the Mizzou women’s basketball program. A proven winner with a deep-rooted history of success in high-major college basketball, Harper brings a championship pedigree at the sport’s highest level, including 16 postseason appearances in 20 seasons as a Division I head coach, including nine appearances in the NCAA Tournament.

Harper, who becomes the fifth head coach in Mizzou program history, is a decorated leader with extensive experience in the Southeastern Conference as both a coach and student-athlete. With an established track record of recruiting and developing elite talent, Harper is one of two coaches in women’s college basketball history to guide four different programs to the NCAA Tournament.

Harper will be formally introduced at a press conference in Mizzou Arena. Further details will be announced at a later date.

“We are absolutely thrilled to welcome Kellie Harper and her family to Mizzou,” Veatch said. “Kellie is a proven winner and dynamic leader who understands the ‘Will to Win’ necessary to succeed at the sport’s highest level. She is nationally respected, and her experience in the SEC, her deep ties to the state of Missouri and her ability to recruit and develop championship-level players make her the ideal leader for our program. We are incredibly excited about the future of Mizzou Women’s Basketball under her leadership.”

“I am incredibly honored to be the next head coach at Mizzou,” Harper said. “Missouri is a special place, and I know firsthand the

passion and pride that surrounds this program. Our family is excited to return to the state of Missouri. I look forward to working with our leadership and our student-athletes, building strong relationships throughout the community and winning championships in Columbia. The foundation is in place for success — and I can’t wait to get started.”

A native of Sparta, Tennessee, Harper, 47, returns to the state of Missouri after most recently serving as the head coach at Tennessee (2019-24), with previous head-coaching stops at Western Carolina (2004-09), North Carolina State (2009-13) and Missouri State (2013-19). In 20 seasons as a Division I head coach, Harper has led her teams to a 393-260 record and nine NCAA Tournament berths. She has piloted her squads to 15 top-three league finishes and four conference tournament championships. In 2022-23, Harper led the Lady Volunteers to the NCAA Sweet 16 for a second consecutive season.

“Kellie Harper is a proven winner with a total commitment to excellence,” University of Missouri President Mun Choi said. “She has developed a championship culture throughout her career, and we know that she will elevate Mizzou women’s basketball and build a program that all Missourians will be proud to celebrate.”

“We believe Kellie Harper is the exact leader we need to take Mizzou women’s basketball to new heights,” said Todd Graves, Chair of the University of Missouri Board of Curators. “She is an established head coach with a track record of success and a vision that aligns with our championship expectations in the SEC.”

Spending five years with the Lady Vols, Harper rebuilt the historic program to national prominence. Two of her last three teams won 25 games, including a 25-9 record in 2021-22 with an 11-5 mark in SEC play and a 25-12 record in 2022-23 with a 13-3 mark against league competitors. The Lady Vols’ 13 SEC wins in 2022-23 were the program’s most since 2014-15 as they recorded 25 victories in back-to-back seasons for the first time since 2013-14 and 2014-15.

Overall, Harper compiled a 108-52 record at Tennessee, including a 53-24 mark against SEC competition, ranking third in winning percentage in league games behind only LSU’s Kim Mulkey and South Carolina’s Dawn Staley.

A staunch presence on the recruiting trail, Harper signed the No. 15-ranked class in 2021 and inked the nation’s No. 6 ranked transfer portal class in 2023, as rated by 247Sports. Harper has established a track record for recruiting elite players across the Midwest and throughout the SEC footprint. While at Tennessee, Harper coached four WNBA first-round picks in Rennia Davis (2021), Rae Burrell (2022), Jordan Horston (2023) and Riquea Jackson (2024). She is one of only three coaches all-time to produce four straight first-round picks in the WNBA Draft.

In her five years in Knoxville, Harper’s players earned All-SEC honors eight times, SEC All-Freshman recognition three times and SEC All-Defensive honors twice.

Individually, she was honored on the Naismith National Women’s Coach of the Year Award Late Season Watch List and named the Tennessee Sports Writers Association State Women’s College Basketball Coach of the Year.



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# Liberty Christian will focus on growth in inaugural season

By Kelly Bowen  
STAFF WRITER

The Liberty Christian boys and girls track and field team will be focusing on growth in its first season within the program.

“I really want the kids to learn and enjoy what they’re doing, enjoy being out here on days like this and really glorify God with their efforts,” Coach Doug Smith said. “We’re going to try to glorify God with everything we do, try our hardest and have fun.”

Smith started the program after he joined the Liberty Christian staff earlier this year as the head administrator. After having coached track for about 15 years, and having a daughter that competes in the sport collegiately, Smith brought the idea to start the program to Athletic Director Butch Clark.

“When you start something from scratch, it’s starting from scratch. The biggest thing is we show improvement every meet,” Smith said.

Smith is grateful for the support of his assistant coaches, Scott Townsend and Dana Buche, as well as the access to Wright City High School’s track and equipment.

The team is mostly com-

posed of middle schoolers, with about 12 athletes slated to compete in high school meets. Smith added the team does not have any seniors and is a very young team.

Smith added he has no experienced runners but they are eager to learn.

“The first day we were out here, we had to walk the track and figure out where everything was and what things were,” Smith said. “It’s a blank slate but it’s fun. We’ve got some kids who are working hard.”

Junior Zach Goddard decided to join the team to stay in shape for soccer. He plans to participate in the throwing, relay and jumping events. He expressed some nerves about competing in his first meet, but is driven to do the best he can.

“It’s been going good so far,” Goddard said. “I would say my body’s getting more used to it and I can run for a longer amount of time.”

In their first two weeks of practice, the Eagles focused on conditioning and learning the basic techniques and fundamentals of track and field. Smith said he’s already seeing signs of progress.

“The first time I tried to teach these kids a triple jump, you would have thought it was



The Liberty Christian boys and girls high school track and field team are front row, from left, Van Carlisle, Cole Nelsen, Zach Goddard, Reed Bauer, Asher Lyons and Danny Duncan. Back row, from left, Caroline Keller, Jaydon Helig, Cruz Meyer, Tommy Meyer, RJ Hoffman and Morgan Boenker. Kelly Bowen photo

like a big comedy of efforts, I mean there was no concept of it,” Smith said. “Now, we’ve got some kids who are already going pretty far and who are doing a good job.”

The Eagles are slated to begin the season March 27 at Bowling Green.

# Eagles on the hunt for another state title

By Kelly Bowen  
STAFF WRITER

After a late penalty kick decided their fate last season and left the Liberty Christian girls soccer team just one win shy of a state championship, their eagerness to claim the title is more palpable than ever.

The last time the Eagles won a state title was 2023.

“I’ve been coaching for well over 30 years, boys and girls, and this is probably one of the best groups that I’ve had that can actually communicate and talk and be willing to take that first step to be a leader,” Coach Ken Dildine said.

The team is mostly made up of returning players. Dildine said his team has plenty of underclassmen.

“We’re still really young. I have five seniors, two juniors and the rest are sophomores or younger,” he said. “17 [on the roster] is a really good number to have.”

This year, Liberty Christian will play in Division 1, but Dildine is not fazed by the challenge of facing bigger schools.

“We run with them really well and we will continue to run with them well,” Dildine said. “The goal this year is to keep

building them up and work with the younger players.”

Despite their youth, Dildine emphasized the team’s maturity. He often sees the players coming to him with concerns, asking to lead practices and supporting each other both on and off the field.

The team will have four captains: Lauren Moss, Raelee Bruno, Jubilee McGowan and Allie Brazier.

Moss, Bruno and Brazier all shared Dildine’s goal of wanting to get back to the state championship.

“I think we’re going to be a way, way better team than we were last year. We have more girls and more experience,” Moss said. “Everybody has a good head on their shoulders and we can see the field and ball movement,” Brazier added.

The senior trio will play a key role in the team’s offense. They added they have a very good chemistry with each other on the field.

“I feel like both (Moss and Bruno) can read my mind and know what I want,” Brazier said. “We know how to play with each other, and we know each other’s weaknesses and strengths,” Bruno added.

Moss will be returning to the



The Liberty Christian girls soccer team are front row, from left, Zoey Goddard, Josie Schulte, Skylin Chowning, Elsie Kimmel, Adelyn Lyons, Laila Barron and Remington Hoffman. Back row, from left, Madison Scheer, Lauren Moss, Jubilee McGowan, Raelee Bruno, Allie Brazier, Bristol Barron, Emma Woodson, Team Manager Isiah Roach, Assistant Coach Matt Dildine. Not pictured, Trina Scheltens, Addie Scheltens and Assistant Coach Kim Meyer. Kelly Bowen photo

pitch after sitting out most of her junior year due to an ankle injury.

“With the team that I’ve got now, and with the front line we’re going to have, it’s going to be a fun season to watch,” Dildine said. “Right now, I only really see one team that could beat us and with (Moss) back, she’s the type of player that’s going to get her (goals) regardless.”

Dildine also lauded his de-

fense, which will be led by Trina Scheltens, Madison Scheer and Katie Edmundson.

“They never cease to amaze me. We call (Scheltens) the lawnmower or the great wall of Trina,” Dildine said.

The Eagles plan to play in a 4-4-2 formation, with the possibility of moving into a 3-5-2 formation. They will also focus on utilizing the outside wings to create space, then move the ball inside.

“We try to be the chasees not the chasers,” Dildine said.

The Eagles won its first game 8-0 on March 11 against Mid-Missouri Soccer Club. Emma Woodson had two goals and four assists. Bruno recorded two goals and three assists. Moss scored two goals and had two assists. Brazier and Elsie Kimmel each had one goal.

Liberty Christian will take on Crosspoint Christian at 5 p.m. Thursday on the road.

## MDC wants public comments on resident, nonresident hunting

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) is interested in learning more about the experiences of Missouri residents and nonresidents who hunt deer, turkey, and waterfowl in the state -- three of Missouri’s most popular game species.

To learn more, MDC is conducting a survey of a sample of resident and nonresident hunters who purchased permits for deer, turkey, or waterfowl in the past two years. In addition to the surveys, MDC is requesting public comment on the topic online.

MDC created the survey and public comment opportunity in response to public feedback it has received from resident hunters regarding increased hunting pressure in Missouri by nonresident hunters.

MDC is emailing the survey to 56,000 resident hunters from around the state

and 1,800 nonresident hunters.

According to MDC, 542,532 Missouri residents and 84,568 nonresident hunters purchased one or more of the related hunting permits over the two years.

In addition to the survey, MDC will be accepting public comment on the topic online through March 24 at [moconservation.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_6KEkmFst4NyA9oy](https://moconservation.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6KEkmFst4NyA9oy).

MDC is considering a range of potential regulatory changes regarding nonresident hunting. They could include limiting nonresident hunting during portions of the deer, turkey, and/or waterfowl hunting seasons; changing the price of nonresident permits; restricting nonresident hunting in portions of the state; and/or restricting nonresident hunting on MDC conservation areas.

## Mizzou basketball trio earn SEC honors

Graduate student Caleb Grill was named SEC Sixth Man of the Year, junior Mark Mitchell collected All-SEC Third Team accolades and sophomore Anthony Robinson II was named to the SEC All-Defensive Team.

The second Tiger in school history to collect Sixth Man of the Year honors by the conference, Grill finished the regular season ranked second on the team with 14.2 points and first during league play with 14.8 points per game. Additionally, his 14.2 points are the most in the country by a player with fewer than five starts.

Mitchell collects third-team all-conference honors in his first season at Mizzou, finishing the regular season as the team’s top scorer with 14.3 points per game. The junior is also second on the team with 4.7 rebounds, third with 62 blocks, fifth with 31 steals and first with 25 blocks.

Robinson becomes just the second Tiger in school history to earn SEC All-Defensive Team accolades, joining Dru Smith in 2020-21. The only underclassmen in the conference to earn the accolade the last two seasons, Robinson leads Mizzou and ranks 38th nationally with 2.03 steals per game, swiping 61 in 30 games as a sophomore.

The trio is set to lead Mizzou into the postseason, starting on Thursday when the Tigers play in the SEC Tournament at 6 p.m. against either Mississippi State or LSU.

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