

PANTHERS FALL SPORTS PREVIEW



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NRHEG football team again aims for district title

By JIM LUTGENS
Editor/Publisher

The NRHEG High School football team is again looking to challenge for a district championship.

The Panthers, 7-3 overall and 6-2 in district play last year, graduated some talented players but have others who look ready to step up and fill their shoes.

Dan Stork enters his 24th year as a coach — 15th as head football coach — and is assisted by 26-year coach John Schultz, 13-year coach Grant Berg, and Drew Paukert, entering his fourth season. Stork has compiled a win-loss record of 78-57 during his tenure. The Panthers' best record over the past five years was last year. The Panthers will again compete in the South Central District Blue Division in Class AA.

Key players graduated include Jack Schultz, a three-year two-way starting lineman who will play college football at UW-Eau Claire, quarterback/free safety Sam Prigge (1191 yards, 12 touchdowns), and Chad Agrimson, who started every game at center and defensive end.

Several members of the squad participated in offseason activities, including Minnesota State-Mankato's 7-on-7 passing league. Alex Buckmeier attended several college camps.

"We started a new workout program that included a speed and agility workout along with weight training that we feel is really going to make a difference this year," said Stork.

Key players returning:

- Cole Staloch, senior, led the team in receiving last year with



Stork



Schultz

290 yards and five touchdowns while starting every game at linebacker and finishing as the team's No. 3 tackler.

- Perry Peterson, senior, was the Panthers' leading rusher with 1049 yards and 12 touchdowns. He also started all 10 games at outside linebacker and was fourth on the team in tackles.

- Buckmeier, junior, has started on the offensive and defensive lines the last two years and was the Panthers' leading tackler with 67 tackles and four sacks.

- Tyler Jacobson, junior, started at fullback and on defense last season.

- Brady Agrimson, junior, was a two-way starter at wide receiver and cornerback who finished with 200 receiving yards and three touchdowns.

- Jack Hogstad, junior, started every game at offensive tackle.

- Quintin Arndt, junior, started five games and offensive and defensive tackle.

- Jake Stork, junior, was a special teams standout and backup quarterback.

- Lucas Bailey, junior, has a lot of speed and looks to have a much bigger role this year at running back and linebacker.

- Cole Thompson, senior, started three games at cornerback and played some offense.

Staloch, Peterson and

2017 NRHEG Football

District: South Central, Blue Division

Section: 2AA

Coaches: Head coach Dan Stork, starting 15th season, 78-57 career record

Assistants: John Schultz, Grant Berg, Drew Paukert and Pat Churchill

Last year: 7-3 overall record (6-2 district)

Key losses: Jack Schultz (two-way starting lineman, playing college football at UW-Eau Claire; Sam Prigge (1191 passing yards, 12 touchdowns), two-way starter; Chad Agrimson (started every game at center and defensive end)

Key returnees: Cole Staloch, Perry Peterson, Alex Buckmeier

First action: Sept. 1 at Pipestone

Key dates: Waterville-Elysian-Morristown Sept. 29; Maple River Oct. 6

Coach's comment: "We need to stay healthy!"



Players to watch for the Panthers in 2017 include Cole Staloch, left, and Perry Peterson, right. On the cover, coach Dan Stork draw up halftime strategy.

Buckmeier were all-district selections last year.

"Our goal is to compete for a district title," said Coach Stork. "We have a great deal of experience returning this fall and hope to continue to improve each week."

The team's strengths, according to Stork, are at the skill positions.

"We have some depth in our backfield and hope to use that depth to give opponents several

different looks," he said.

The coach's biggest concern?

"Lack of depth in a number of positions," he said. "We need to stay healthy!"

Staying healthy, according to Stork, and having some young players step up their game is the key to success for the 2017 Panthers.

Stork sees Maple River and Sibley East as the district favorites and lists Maple River and Blue Earth Area as the top

teams in the section.

NRHEG 2017 Football

Sept. 1	at Pipestone
Sept. 8	Sibley East
Sept. 15	at Norwood-YA
Sept. 22	GFW (Homecoming)
Sept. 29	at WEM
Oct. 6	Maple River
Oct. 13	at LeSueur-Henderson
Oct. 18	LCWM

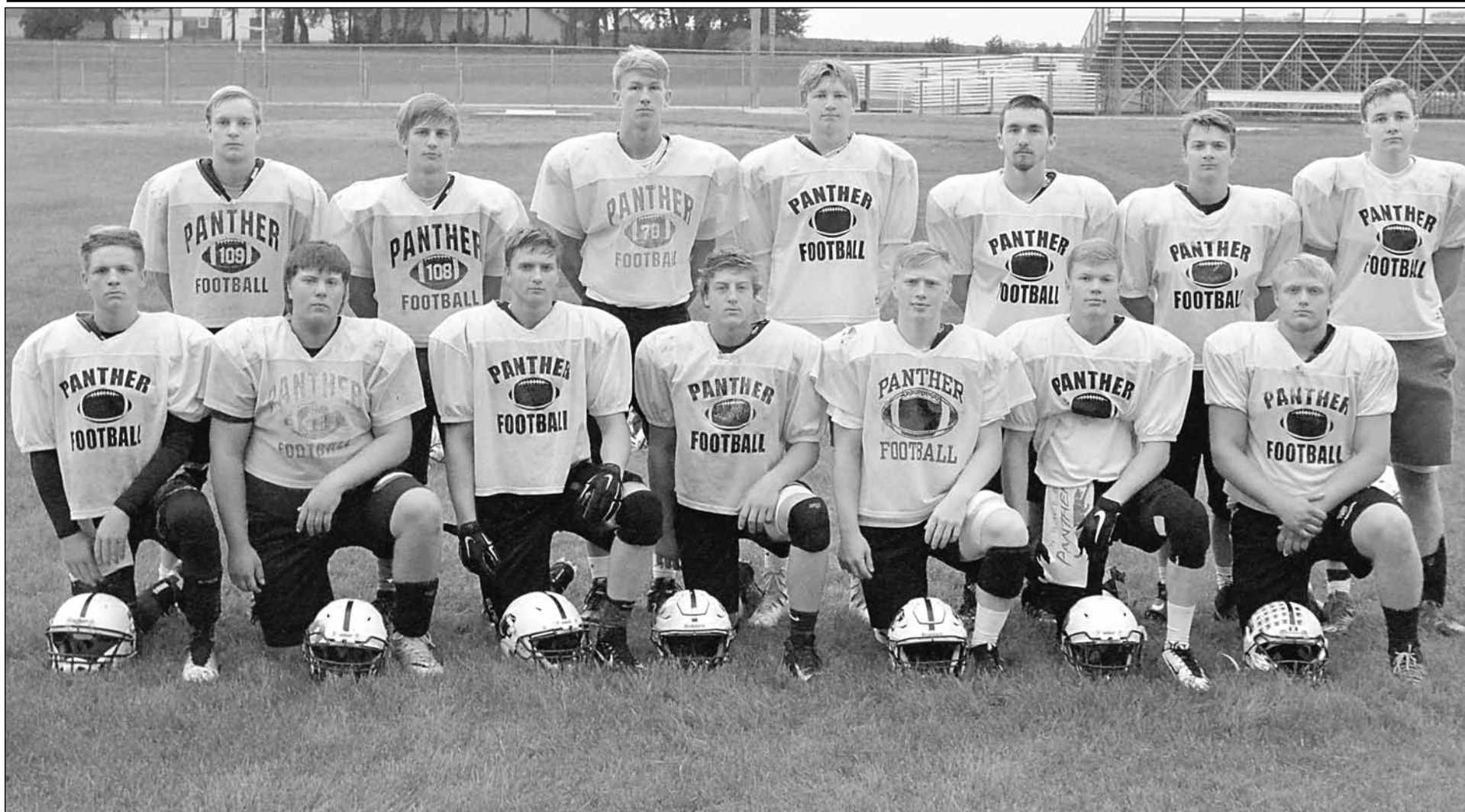
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Panther football returning letterwinners for 2017 include, front from left: Jake Stork, Quinten Arndt, Lucas Bailey, Tyler Jacobson, Perry Peterson, Cole Staloch, Alex Buckmeier. Back: Cole Thompson, Sawyer VanMaldeghem, Brady Agrimson, Jacob Schuller, Jack Hogstad, Brendon Strand, Caleb Harpel.

Star Eagle photo by Chris Schlaak

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New look for NRHEG spikers

By JIM LUTGENS
Editor/Publisher

Many players were lost through graduation by the NRHEG High School volleyball team.

Many more return.

The list of returning juniors and seniors for coach Onika Peterson's Panthers is a long one, but the group who graduated accomplished much last season. They include Rachel Collins (466 assists, 33 kills, 33 digs, 10 ace serves), Grace Johns (273 digs, 5 assists, 1 kill, 19 ace serves), Maddie Wagner (178 kills, 160 digs, 18 ace blocks, 18 ace serves), Marnie Wagner (180 kills, 298 digs, 19 ace blocks, 6 ace serves), Gretchen Ramaker (109 kills, 82 digs, 14 ace blocks, 5 ace serves) and Natalie Aaseth (22 kills, 10 digs, 2 ace blocks).

"We graduated six girls who played huge roles for us last season," said Coach Peterson, whose team finished 10-13 overall and 2-6 in the Gopher Conference. Peterson, a fifth-year head volleyball coach, has a career record of 41-57-5 and is assisted by

Jackie Schultz and Corrine Schuller. The Panthers' best finish the last five years was in 2015, when they went 14-13 and finished as the sub-section runner-up.

Junior Olivia Christopherson is the lone player returning who started and played every match last season, totaling 105 kills, 154 digs, 8 ace blocks and 6 ace serves, but the list of other varsity candidates is a long one.

It includes seniors Betsy Schoenrock, Kelly Harden, Gabby Muri, Erin VanWilgen, Makenzi Rhoades, Michelle Katzung, Emily Crabtree and Lauren Herrmann, and juniors Alexis Anderson, Caitlin Goette, Darian Pearson, Laura Worrell, Hannah Budach, Kylie Arndt, Jayna Finseth, Sydney Schlinger and Lexie Ignaszewski.

The 2017 Panthers will definitely have a new look and Peterson is eagerly anticipating



Peterson

2017 NRHEG Volleyball

Conference: Gopher
Section: 2AA
Coaches: Head coach Onika Peterson, fifth year, 41-57-5 career mark. Assistant coaches Jackie Schultz and Corrine Schuller
Last year: 10-13 overall record, 2-6 conference
Key losses: Rachel Collins, Grace Johns, Maddie Wagner, Marnie Wagner, Gretchen Ramaker, Natalie Aaseth
Key returnees: Olivia Christopherson, Betsy Schoenrock, Kelly Harden, Erin VanWilgen
Conference opener: Aug. 31 vs. Blooming Prairie
Key dates: WEM Sept. 21; Bethlehem Academy Sept. 28
Coach's comment: "We graduated six girls who played huge roles for us last season."

what they can do.

"We had some girls (such as Kelly Harden, Betsy Schoenrock and Erin VanWilgen) who had opportunities to contribute, but overall, this team will virtually be a new team," said Peterson "It is going to take us a bit to get into the groove of things, but I am very excited to see what this group will accomplish."

For one thing, they'll be taller, led by the 6-3 Schoenrock who contributed heavily in basketball last year and figures to be a big factor on the volleyball court this fall.

"That will allow us to be more aggressive offensively and defensively (blocking) than we have

been in the past," said Peterson.

The coach's biggest concern is an obvious one: lack of varsity experience.

The key to success for the 2017 Panthers?

"Not to get frustrated and not to settle," said Peterson. "We are going to go through a learning curve, we are going to need some time before we are firing on all cylinders. If the girls stay positive and push each other, we will be successful."

The coach lists WEM, Bethlehem Academy and Maple River as the top conference contenders. In the section, she favors Mayer Lutheran, Cedar Mountain and WEM.

NRHEG 2017 Volleyball	
Aug. 29	at Nicollet
Aug. 31	Blooming Prairie
Sept. 5	Fairmont
Sept. 7	Medford
Sept. 12	Alden-Conger
Sept. 16	at Mankato West Inv.
Sept. 19	at LeSueur-Henderson
Sept. 21	WEM
Sept. 25	at Cleveland
Sept. 26	TCU
Sept. 28	Bethlehem Academy
Oct. 2	JWP
Oct. 5	at USC
Oct. 7	at Blue Earth Area
Oct. 9	at LCWM
Oct. 10	at Maple River
Oct. 12	at Blooming Prairie
Oct. 17	Maple River

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Returning letterwinners for NRHEG volleyball include, from left: Makenzi Rhoades, Emily Crabtree, Michelle Katzung, Erin VanWilgen, Betsy Schoenrock, Lauren Hermann, Kelly Harden, Laura Worrell, Olivia Christopherson, Gabby Muri.

Star Eagle photo by Chris Schlaak

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CC teams return experienced runners

Lewer, Mely figure to lead Panthers in 2017

By JIM LUTGENS
Editor/Publisher

The overall numbers aren't spectacular, but hopes are up for the NRHEG cross country teams in 2017.

The boys graduated just one runner, Josh Fleming, and the girls figure to have a full squad for every meet, which was somewhat of a problem last year.

Fleming, of course, was the boys' MVP the past two years and a captain last season, and he'll be missed. But returning are four lettermen in seniors Ben Lewer and Kollin Reese, junior Jager Beck and freshman Daniel Nydegger.

"We have experienced letterwinners returning for the upcoming season," commented head coach Mike Weber, who's again assisted by Lori Tomsche, both in their ninth season. "Ben Lewer is a returning captain and a hopeful all-conference runner. He was one place away last season from earning conference recognition. Kollin Reese, Jager Beck, and Daniel Nydegger all contributed last year on varsity."

While Weber expects those runners to be consistent scorers for the Panthers, he said the overall success of the team will hinge upon some new, younger athletes in Agro Gushwa, Gavin Anderson and Tylar Malakowsky.

"All are possible athletes who could step up this season," said Weber.

Lewer will be the man to watch, but Weber feels Nydegger — who battled injury last year — could be a top runner for the Panthers despite being only a freshman.

Weber took a guess at the top conference teams this season with Mankato Loyola/Cleveland and Martin County West. The Panthers are looking to improve on an eighth-place finish last year.



NRHEG boys' cross country runners are, from left, front: Eric Arvis, Gavin Anderson. Back: Tylar Malakowsky, Agro Gushwa, Daniel Nydegger. Not pictured: Ben Lewer, Kollin Reese. Star Eagle photo by Chris Schaak

In the section meet, where the NRHEG boys finished 20th, Weber favors Loyola/Cleveland and Gibbon-Fairfax-Winthrop.

The girls return 2016 MVP Jade Mely, a sophomore. Also back as letterwinners are junior Madisyn Bueltel, sophomore Mia Williams and sophomore Destiny Medrano. All earned NRHEG postseason awards last year.

"Jade Mely has been our MVP for the past couple seasons," said Weber. "Madisyn Bueltel and Mia Williams could once more push Jade this season as the top runner. Destiny Medrano has also been a solid runner for us the past

couple seasons."

What the Panthers are looking for is a fifth runner to complete the varsity.

That could be junior Brooke Wobschall, junior Rachel Horejsi or sophomore Journey Olson.

"Our main four will give us leadership and bring lots of experience at the varsity level," said Weber. "To be competitive, the girls will have to lower their times and bring along some new runners from the high school. A couple junior high runners might also influence the point production if they progress and land on our varsity squad. The team has potential to do well, but much depends

on additions to the squad this season."

Weber sees Martin County West and LCWM/Nicollet as teams to beat in the conference. Fairmont and Belle Plaine look to be strong on the section.

2017 NRHEG Cross Country

Aug. 31	at Stewartville
Sept. 7	at Mont.-Lonsdale
Sept. 12	at Blooming Prairie
Sept. 14	at Maple River
Sept. 19	NRHEG Invitational
Oct. 5	at Waseca
Oct. 10	at United So. Central

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NRHEG girls' cross country runners, from left: Olivia Hutzal-Kofstad, Madisyn Bueltel, Jade Mely, Mia Williams. Not pictured: Destiny Medrano, Journey Olson. Star Eagle photo by Chris Schlaak

2017 NRHEG Cross Country

Conference: Gopher-Valley

Section: 2A

Coaches: Head coach Mike Weber, assistant coach Lori Tomsche, both starting 9th season

Last year: The boys were 8th in the conference and 20th in the section. The girls had an incomplete squad for both meets

Key athletes lost: Boys: Josh Fleming (2015, 2016 MVP and 2016 captain); Girls: None

Key returnees: Boys: Ben Lewer (2016 Panther Award and captain), Kollin Reese (2016 Most Dedicated), Jager Beck, Daniel Nydegger (2016 Most Improved); Girls: Jade Mely (2015 and 2016 MVP), Madisyn Bueltel (2016 Most Improved), Mia Williams (2016 Panther Award), Destiny Medrano (2016 Most Dedicated)

First action: Aug. 29 at Fairmont

First (and only) home meet: Sept. 19 at Riverview Golf Course, 4:30

Coach's comment: "We have experienced letterwinners returning for the upcoming season."

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Fall cheerleaders



Fall 2017 NRHEG sideline cheerleaders. Front from left: Cary Solland, Natalia Galindo, Sophie Thompson, Karenn Strom, Kyra Possin, Ashley Hagen. Back: Brenlee Knudson, Taytum Ihrke, Tali Wayne, Lillian Bell, Lorelei Strom, Makayla Knutson. Submitted photo

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