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## Star Eagle

# SPRING SPORTS PREVIEW



SPRING 2015

THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2015



# Track teams aiming for the upper half

Overall numbers down, but boys, girls return several letter winners for 2015

By **JIM LUTGENS**  
Editor/Publisher

NEW RICHLAND — In the top half of the Gopher Conference.

That's where coach Duey Ferber would like to see the NRHEG boys' and girls' track and field teams by the end of the 2015 season.

The girls graduated just one senior, but she was a good one: two-time state high jump champion Carlie Wagner.

The girls finished fourth in the Gopher Conference and fifth in the sub-section last spring, the 24th for Ferber, who's again assisted by Chuck Crabtree, Jay Crabtree and Corrine Schuller.

Returning letter winners for the girls include senior Sandra Quezada, juniors Emily Eder, Katharine Lewer and Hailey Schuller, sophomores Gretchen Ramaker, Maddie Wagner and Marnie Wagner, and freshmen Katie Crabtree and Kelly Harden.

Ferber feels the Panthers'

strengths will lie in the hurdles, short and middle distances, high jump and long jump.

The biggest question mark is their lack of experience and depth.

"We are very young," said the coach. "We don't have a lot of depth."

Ferber picks WEM as the conference favorite and likes Maple River in the sub-section.

"We have an enthusiastic group of girls," said Ferber. "We are very young, but we will be trying to get better every day. We hope to finish in the top half of both the conference and the sub-section."

The NRHEG boys graduated several key athletes, including MVP and state meet veteran T.J. Schiltz along with Raece Johnson, Adam Anderson, Nick Goette and Ross Chester.

Eleven lettermen return, seniors Kevin Kalis, Keith Maxon and Todd Erickson, juniors Ethan Borwege, John Cole, Zach Mely,

Track continued on 3



**BOYS' TRACK AND FIELD** — Returning letterwinners for NRHEG boys' track and field include, front from left: Keith Maxon, Karter Sletten, Aaron Seath and Zach Mely. Back: Kevin Kalis, John Cole, Tyler Schlaak, Nate Krause and Ethan Borwege.



Star Eagle photo by Nicole Billing

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## Track

from Page 2

Tyler Schlaak, Aaron Seath, Karter Sletten and Zeke Erickson, and freshman Brenden McMann.

"We will be strongest in the throws and middle distances," said Ferber, whose boys were third in the conference and fifth in the sub-section last year. "We have some upper classmen that will be great examples for our younger kids to follow."

Weaknesses? The same as the girls.

"We won't have a lot of depth," said Ferber. "Our sprints will need to improve."

Ferber likes USC in both the conference

and sub-section.

"We have a great bunch of boys who will give it everything they have," said Ferber. "We would like to finish in the top half of both the conference and sub-section."

### 2015 NRHEG Track

Mar. 31	NRHEG Inv.	H	4:30
April 2	Waseca Inv.	A	4:30
April 7	Panther Inv.	H	4:30
April 14	USC Inv.	A	4:30
April 21	Maple River Inv.	A	4:30
April 24	Blue Earth Inv.	A	4:30
April 28	Bl. Prairie Inv.	A	4:30
May 12	Conference	Wells	4:00
May 21	Sub-Section		4:00
May 30	Section	Mankato	9:00
June 5-6	State	Hamline	TBD



**GIRLS' TRACK** — Returning letterwinners for the 2015 squad include, front from left: Gretchen Ramaker, Emily Eder, Maddie Wagner and Sandra Quezada. Back: Hailey Schuller, Marnie Wagner, Kelly Harden and Katharine Lewer.

Star Eagle photo by Nicole Billing

**ON THE COVER** — NRHEG softball player Kelli Harrington keeps her eyes on the ball while making contact last spring. Harrington is one of four seniors and eight returning letter winners for the Panthers. Read about the team on Page 4. (Star Eagle photo by Chris Schlaak)

### 2015 Panther Track and Field

**Conference:** Gopher.

**Section:** Section 2A, Sub-section 5A.

**Coaches:** Head coach Duey Ferber (25th year) assistant coaches Jay Crabtree, Chuck Crabtree, Corrine Schuller.

**Last year:** Boys: Third in conference, fifth in sub-section. Girls: Fourth in conference, fifth in sub-section.

**Key losses:** Boys: T.J. Schiltz, Raece Johnson, Adam Anderson, Nick Goette, Ross Chester. Girls: Carlie Wagner.

**Key returnees:** Boys: Kevin Kalis, Keith Maxon, Todd Erickson, Zeke Erickson, John Cole, Tyler Schlaak, Karter Sletten. Girls: Sandra Quezada, Emily Eder, Katharine Lewer, Hailey Schuller, Gretchen Ramaker, Maddie Wagner, Marnie Wagner.

**Key dates:** May 12 Gopher Conference at Wells.

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# Softball Panthers look to replace Schultzes

Pitching, defense are keys for NRHEG nine

By JIM LUTGENS  
Editor/Publisher

NEW RICHLAND – The 2015 NRHEG High School softball team has some big shoes to fill. Call it the Schultz factor. The Panthers, 6-1 in the Gopher Conference and 14-8 overall last year, graduated six-year starter and all-state pitcher Jade Schultz. Her mom, head coach Wendy Schultz, followed suit and hung up her 17-year coaching career after the season.

But the 2015 Panthers are not completely without Schultzes and the cupboard is not completely bare. Jade has agreed to remain as the assistant for first-year head coach Coy Hupfeld, who's greeted by nine returning letter winners including two all-conference players.

In addition to Jade Schultz, last year's Panthers graduated catcher and leadoff hitter Hannah Lundberg.

Returning award winners this year are senior Anna Stork (Golden Bat, all-conference) and sophomores Kayley Camerer (Golden Glove, all-conference) and Grace Johns (Most Improved). Stork batted .430 last year, with an on-base average of .538 and 20 runs batted in. Camerer, a short-stop, hit .305 with two home runs and 17 RBIs. Johns hit .310.

The other returning letter winners are seniors Ryann Hagen, Kelli Harrington and Alyssa Esplan, juniors Anna Lundberg and Torrie Stencel, and sophomore Rachel Collins. Harrington hit .292 last year with a .440 on-base percentage.

"We are going to be an exciting team to watch," said Hupfeld. "I think we bring vitality to the game that will be difficult to match by any opponent. We are positive towards each other and don't falter when a teammate makes a mistake. Our girls have done a terrific job in remaining a unit and I expect that to continue. This is just a great group of girls to coach and, most importantly, we're just going to have fun with the season and are anxious to get started."

Hupfeld said the Panthers have a number of active athletes on their squad.

"Most of our players compete in either a fall sport, winter sport or both, so they've definitely been keeping active," he stated. "But in the last couple of months, I've noticed more of our girls being in the weight room in the mornings on a consistent basis as well as a few of our pitchers and catchers which has been evident in the first couple weeks of practice."

So far, according to Hupfeld, the Panthers have displayed athleticism and teamwork in practice.

"It's coming together slowly, but that has provided me with a lot of confidence heading into the season," he said. "We are lucky enough to have several very talented athletes who, depending on the streak they are on, may find themselves moving up in the lineup. It's a good problem to have. Our girls can rely on their teammates if they are in a slump."

Hupfeld has also seen good hitting and base running skills. About the only weakness he sees is finding a way to replace Schultz on the mound.

"From the plate, we have a few very talented hitters who make consistent contact," said Hupfeld. "We've also shown great speed around the base paths which we will be able to use to our advantage. Our defense has shown good promise and we expect those skills to grow in the next couple of months. If any weakness, we lost a great pitcher last year in Jade Shultz. She has since become a very valuable addition to our coaching staff and will provide very sound coaching that will help our young pitchers grow. But we have a couple pitchers who have shown their merit for the varsity level this season, and even our younger pitchers show great promise in the years to come."

The keys to success for the Panthers this spring?

"How we perform from the mound and how we back up our pitcher in the field will determine our level of success," said



**VARSITY VETERANS** — Softball varsity veterans for 2015 include, front from left: Jill Peterson, Alyssa Esplan, Rachel Collins, Grace Johns and Anna Lundberg. Back: Jade Peterson, Ryann Hagen, Kayley Camerer, Torrie Stencel, Anna Stork and Kelli Harrington.

Star Eagle photo by Nicole Billing

## 2015 Panther Softball

**Conference:** Gopher.  
**Section:** South 2AA.  
**Coach:** Head coach Coy Hupfeld (1st season). Assistant Jade Schultz.  
**Last year:** 6-1 conference (2nd), 14-8 overall (2nd in sub-section).  
**Key losses:** Jade Schultz (Pitcher, six-year starter, cleanup hitter, Golden Bat, MVP, all-conference, all-section, all-state). Hannah Lundberg (catcher, leadoff hitter, Oil Can Award, all-conference).  
**Key returnees:** Seniors Alyssa Esplan, Ryann Hagen, Kelli Harrington, Anna Stork, juniors Torrie Stenzel, Anna Lundberg, sophomores Kayley Camerer, Grace Johns.  
**Opener:** April 6 vs. Bethlehem Academy.  
**Key dates:** May 7 vs. Maple River, May 14 at Blooming Prairie

Hupfeld. "We expect to be able to score runs, and if our pitchers and defense step up to the challenge, we could be a very impressive ball club."

Hupfeld sees Blooming Prairie as the Gopher Conference favorite, with Maple River the team to beat in the section.

The Panthers open the season Monday, April 6 at 5 p.m. at Bethlehem Academy in Faribault.

## 2015 NRHEG Softball

Apr. 6 at Bethlehem Acad. 5:00

Apr. 9	USC	5:00
Apr. 13	WEM	5:00
Apr. 16	LCWM	5:00
Apr. 20	at Medford	5:00
May 5	at WEM	4:30
May 7	Maple River	5:00
May 9	Medford	5:00
May 14	at Blooming Pr.	4:30
May 15	Alden-Conger	5:00
May 19-28	Section	TBD
June 4-5	State	TBD

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# Baseball Panthers again look to compete

By JIM LUTGENS  
Editor/Publisher

NEW RICHLAND — For a long time — 35 years, to be exact — there was no question who would be coaching the baseball team at New Richland-Hartland or NRHEG High School.

Jeff Reese was always there.

That changed last spring when Reese took the year off for personal reasons. He did the same this year, which means the Panthers begin their third consecutive season with a new head coach.

Pat Churchill, the Panthers' head boys' basketball coach, took over the helm last year as the baseball team finished 4-5 in the conference and 4-10 overall, following Reese's 35-year record of 458.258.

Taking over this spring is first-year teacher Drew Paukert, again assisted by Shawn Larson. He's hoping to guide the Panthers back to at least respectability, their last conference championship coming in 2012.

"I look for us to have the opportunity to improve upon our 4-10 record from last year," said Paukert. "We have a great group of returning players off of last year's squad to mix with a number of quality players that will be playing their first year at the varsity level. If we are able to play to our potential, we hope to be extremely competitive in the conference. In order to make a run at the Gopher Conference as well as in the playoffs, we will need to be solid defensively and throw strikes. Last year scoring runs was not a strength of the team, so coming into this season we know we will have to play quality defense and throw strikes too."

The Panthers graduated two key players off last year's squad, centerfielder Dillon Parpart (.341 average) and catcher Noah Krell (.333).

"Defensively, they will be missed as



**VARSITY HOPEFULS** — Among varsity hopefuls for the NRHEG baseball team are, front row left: Dempsey Tucker, Jack Schultz, John Hubly, Trevor Tracy, Dakota Thiele, Grant Kylo and Jet Wayne. Back: Eli Lutgens, Jack Skalicky, Trai Wicks, Andy Shutrop, Matt Jensen, Palmer Peterson and C.J. Schiltz. Star Eagle photo by Nicole Billing

well," said Paukert. "Noah did a fantastic job at the catcher position."

The Panthers have six lettermen returning, including all-conference selection Trevor Tracy and honorable mention all-conference pick Dakota Thiele.

Tracy was fourth on the team last year with a .306 batting average and, according to Paukert, is a great bat handler and outstanding bunter. He was the team's ace on the mound with a 2-3 record and 30 strikeouts and, when not pitcher, is an outstanding shortstop. Thiele tied for tops on the team last year with a .341 average and bring tremendous speed to the middle of the Panthers' lineup. He plays second base.

Also returning are Matt Jensen (.302 average), Andy Shutrop, Grant Kylo and Jet Wayne.

Returning to baseball after two years in track is senior Spencer Tollefson.

"Spencer is a tremendous athlete with a tremendous amount of athletic ability," said Paukert. "We expect Spencer to add some much needed depth to our pitching staff this season, as well as give us another athletic outfielder. Offensively, he could also play a key part in our team's success both on the bases and at the plate."

One of the Panthers' strengths, according to Paukert, should be the infield.

"We have four seniors returning who started at first base, second base, shortstop, and third base last season," he said. "Overall, we have a number of guys on our roster with great speed. Our top three pitchers in our rotation should be solid,

## 2015 Panther Baseball

**Conference:** Gopher.

**Section:** 2AA.

**Coaches:** Head coach Drew Paukert (1st year). Assistant coach Shawn Larson.

**Last year:** 4-5 Gopher, 4-10 overall.

**Key losses:** Center fielder Dillon Parpart (.341 batting average), catcher Noah Krell (.333).

**Key returnees.** Trevor Tracy (all-conference), Dakota Thiele (all-conference honorable mention), Matt Jensen, Jet Wayne.

**Season opener:** April 6 at Bethlehem Academy

**Key games:** April 6 at Bethlehem Academy, April 9 at USC, April 28 vs. BA, April 30 vs. USC.

anchored by seniors Trevor Tracy and Matt Jensen. We have only one starting outfielder back from last year's team. We have a number of athletic kids that will be competing for time in the outfield."

The biggest question mark is offense.

"We graduated two of our top hitters from last year's team in Parpart and Noah. Seniors Thiele (.341), Tracy (.306), and Matt (.302) all return to the top part of our lineup from last year's team. We will need other players to help out and step up offensively."

Pitching and defense are key.

"We will need to make sure our pitchers are throwing strikes and not giving up free bases," said Paukert. "Defensively we will need to make the routine plays consistently and minimize our mistakes."

Paukert lists USC and Bethlehem Academy as the conference favorites. He

sees Tri-City United, Albert Lea and Glencoe-Silver Lake as the top schools in the section.

## 2015 NRHEG Baseball

Apr. 6	at Bethlehem Acad.	5:00
Apr. 9	at USC	5:00
Apr. 10	JWP	5:00
Apr. 13	WEM	5:00
Apr. 16	Maple River	5:00
Apr. 20	at Medford	5:00
Apr. 23	at Blooming Pr.	5:00
Apr. 28	Bethlehem Academy	5:00
Apr. 30	USC	5:00
May 4	at WEM	5:00
May 9	PACT Charter School	5:00
May 14	Blooming Pr.	5:00
May 19	Blue Earth Area	5:00
May 22-30	Section	TBD
June 2,4	Section	TBD
June 11-12	State	TBD



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# High hopes for NRHEG spring clay target team

By JIM LUTGENS  
Editor/Publisher

NEW RICHLAND — NRHEG High School is not without a returning conference championship for the 2015 spring season.

The NRHEG clay shooting team returns looking stronger than ever, coming off two conference titles and a runner-up finish the last three years.

Last spring was especially good. The Panthers won the Class AAA Conference 1 championship, placed third in the Class AAA state tournament and finished 11th in the Minnesota State High School League state tournament.

There are 54 students signed up for the spring season, which continues a trend of growth since the team first fielded a squad in 2011. Those kids represent NRHEG, Waseca, JWP and Albert Lea, and the squad has two homeschooled students.

Nine letter winners return: NRHEG's Collin Christensen, Frank Altrichter, Tyler Raimann and Tory Christiansen, Waseca's Kyle Bartz, Zach Eustice, Sam Bartz and



**CLAY TARGET PANTHERS** — Members of the 2014 NRHEG Fall Clay Target Team. Front from left: head coach Dan Sorum, Justin Bartz, Noah Alinder, Caden Beauvais, Charlie Pittman, Tory Christenson, Noah Nielsen, and assistant coach Dawn Raatz. Row two: Marshall Pederson, Dylan Mosher, Carter Suchanek, Braden Routh, Evan Dobberstein, Zach Eustice, and Gabe Dahle. Back: Sam Bartz, Frank Altrichter, Collin Christenson, Colton Hagen, and Tyler Raimann. Not pictured: Alex Romer and Otto Oquist. Submitted photo

Noah Lund, and Albert Lea's Tanner Alfson.

The prospects are bright for the Panthers' returning shooters, according to coach Dan Sorum. Collin Christensen and Kyle Bartz were both individual qualifiers for the MSHSL State Individual Shoot and

Collin was the top shooter in the conference. Altrichter was the team's top shooter at conference for the fall team.

Only one letter winner was lost to graduation, Tyler Logan.

"However, we have a lot of new faces on the team so it is hard to predict how the

team will do, but we are very excited to get started," said Sorum.

The team remains young with 16 shooters in the junior high grades. There are also 11 seniors. Of the seniors, three were

Clay continued on 8

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# Golfers return with lots of experience

By **JIM LUTGENS**  
Editor/Publisher

**NEW RICHLAND** — Don't look around for any graduating seniors for 2015 NRHEG High School golf.

There aren't any.

The Panther girls did not graduate a golfer from their 2014 crew, leaving fifth-year head coach Brad Root downright optimistic about challenging in the Gopher Conference and improving on last year's 11-2 overall record and third-place finish in the conference tournament.

Root believes the Panthers have the firepower to finish as high as second in the conference, battling Blooming Prairie and United South Central for the crown.

Root, who has a record of 48-20 in his five seasons as the girls' head coach, is also hopeful the Panthers can give Waseca a run in the section meet.

They'll be led by returning letter winners Jessica Nafe, Bayli Possin, Jill Jongbloedt, Lauren Hermann, Tali Wayne and Kyra Possin. None of those girls are seniors. The other varsity candidates are Maddy Reed, Maddy Schwierjohann, Brina Bergland, Liz Eder, Lizzy Stohl and Ryley Koziolk.

Root said he feels good about the Panthers' team chemistry and work ethic. He expects the squad to have a positive attitude in poor weather, make aggressive shots and be risk takers.

"We want to make a good showing at the conference and sub-section tournaments," said Root. "We hope we have some all-conference honors as well as advancement to the section tournament. The girls need to be mentally tough and focused this year. We are counting on continued improvement in all our girls. Making sure they are prepared for whatever weather conditions exist, as well as dealing with situations on the course, will be a priority. As always we want our student athletes to enjoy the sport and have fun while at the same time representing our school well. In order to best enjoy the game, a good grasp of the rules of golf is necessary. We will be working on the rules and golf etiquette so our golfers will be knowledgeable and welcome wherever we travel to play."

The NRHEG boys also have a veteran squad this spring with only Colton Ryg graduating off last year's team.

Returning lettermen are seniors Jake Langlie, Cole Lenort, Kelson Titus, Hudson Mrotz and Macoy Schwierjohann.

Other varsity candidates: juniors Nick Shultz, Mike Altermatt and Lucas Hermann, and sophomores Spencer Enger, Will Rudau and Kolton Koziolk.

"We had a good season last year and the boys got some good experience so we are pretty well set on six varsity spots," said Root. "We will again have good numbers

## 2015 Panther Golf

**Conference:** Gopher.

**Section:** South 2AA.

**Coaches:** Head coach Brad Root (5th year), assistant coaches Pat Churchill and Al Shultz.

**Last year:** Boys: 5-7, 5th in Gopher, 7th in sub-section. Girls: 11-2, 3rd in Gopher, 6th in sub-section.

**Key losses:** Boys: Colton Ryg. Girls: None.

**Key returnees:** Boys: Seniors Jake Langlie, Cole Lenort, Kelson Titus, Hudson Mrotz and Macoy Schwierjohann, juniors Nick Shultz, Mike Altermatt and Lucas Herrmann, sophomores Spencer Enger, Will Rudau, Kolton Koziolk. Girls: Juniors Jessica Nafe and Bayli Possin, sophomore Jill Jongbloedt, freshmen Lauren Herrmann, Tali Wayne and Kyra Possin.

**Season opener:** Boys April 13, 4:30, Riverview; Girls April 14, 4:30, Riverview

on the boys side, so someone may emerge as a surprise to help us recapture the conference title. We did not have many JV meets last year so the non-varsity players didn't get much meet experience last year. The varsity boys have pretty good golf skills, but need to work on the mental side of the game and course management this year and consistency."

Added Root: "Course management is a huge part of the game as well as becoming strong mentally. We need to move from being practice players to tournament players. We would like to advance our team to

section and get an all-conference selection or two this year. We want them to learn the game so they can enjoy it throughout their life."

## 2015 NRHEG Golf

April 13	USC (B) at Oak View	4:30
April 14	Triton (G) A	4:30
April 23	USC A	4:30
April 27	Bl. Prairie A	4:30
April 28	Triton Inv. (B) A	1:00
May 7	FBA (B/G) A	4:30
May 11	NRHEG Inv. (B/G)	4:30
May 14	at Waseca (B/G) A	10:00
May 26	Sub-Sect. New Prague	
June 1	Section New Prague	TBA
June 9-10	State	TBA

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**GIRLS' GOLF — NRHEG girls' golf letterwinners for 2015 include, from left: Bayli Possin, Tali Wayne, Jessica Nafe, Lauren Hermann and Kyra Possin.**  
Star Eagle photo by Nicole Billing



**BOYS' GOLF — NRHEG boys' golf letterwinners for 2015 include, from left: Ethan Thompson, Nicholas Shultz, Jake Langlie and Lucas Hermann.**  
Star Eagle photo by Nicole Billing

## Clay

from Page 6

part of NRHEG's first team in 2011.

The team is again getting sponsors from area businesses. If anyone would like to support the team in the form of a scholarship, contact Sorum at 507-417-2627.

The Panthers start their season Wednesday, April 8, with shoots every week through the end of the school year.

The Minnesota State High School Clay Target League (MSHSCTL) will host more than 8,600 registered student athletes representing 243 trap shooting and 25 skeet shooting high school teams for the 2015 spring season. Led by the support of their schools and more than 2,400 volunteer coaches, thousands of student athletes will participate in shooting sports weekly April through June at more than 150 shooting ranges throughout Minnesota.

"Last year, 6,100 student athletes participated in the spring league," said Jim Sable, Executive Director of the MSHSCTL. "With the addition of 83 new teams, the expansion of existing teams, the increased capacity of shooting facilities, and the addition of the new spring skeet league are some of the factors attributing to the continued success as Minnesota's fastest-growing high school sport since 2008."

The clay target league is also the safest sport in high school. Since 2001, the MSHSCTL has no reported injuries or gun-free zone violations at school.

Upon completion of the spring league, all trap shooting teams are invited to participate in individual and team competitions at the 2015 MSHSCTL Trap Shooting Championship at the Alexandria Shooting Park in Alexandria, Minnesota scheduled for June 11-16. "With an expected 20,000 attendees including more than 5,000 student athletes, this tourna-

ment will be the largest shooting sport event in the world" Sable said.

The spring league culminates with the State Tournament that includes the Minnesota State High School League as a presenting partner. This State Tournament provides the opportunity for the highest qualifying individual and team achievers from the clay target league to compete for the ultimate recognition as state champions from the Minnesota State High School League. In 2014, the Minnesota State High School League became the first state high school interscholastic athletic association in America to provide support and recognition for trap shooting as a high school sport.

The USA High School Clay Target League is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and operates the Minnesota State High School Clay Target League as the independent provider of shooting sports as an extra curricular co-ed and adapted activity for high schools and students in grades six through 12 who have earned their firearms safety certification. The organization's priorities are safety, fun and marksmanship — in that order.

For more information visit <http://mnclaytarget.com>.



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