

PANTHERS WINTER SPORTS PREVIEW

NRHEG Star Eagle



Basketball girls have their eyes on the prize

2011-12 Panthers shooting for state tournament

By **DALE KUGATH**
Contributing Writer

NEW RICHLAND – When you rack up 20-plus wins in a season, it's tough to consider the year a disappointment. However, the New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva girls' basketball team fell short of its state tournament goal last season, and would love to atone for that this winter.

And with the personnel head coach John Schultz can put on the court, that goal is a distinct possibility.

Schultz returned to the head coaching spot last season, leading the Panthers to a 23-4 record. The Panthers tied with USC for the Gopher Conference championship (15-1) and reached the sub-section championship game before their season ended.

Schultz coached NRHEG earlier in his career before bowing out for a number of years. His teams have compiled a 132-57 record in eight years as a head coach. Schultz will be assisted by Grant "Air" Berg (B-squad) and Onika Peterson (9th).

A year ago, the Panthers opened their season with a loss to LeSueur-Henderson. Six wins followed before a loss to St. Peter in the finals of the St. Peter Holiday Tournament.

NRHEG then ran off nine straight wins before USC edged the Panthers in overtime. NRHEG won eight straight games, defeating Triton and USC in sub-section play.

Blue Earth became the only team all season to hold the Panthers under 50 points, suffocating them in a 39-34 loss in the sub-section title game.

NRHEG's only loss from that team was Kristina Cole, a three-year starter and 1,000-point career scorer. She is playing for St. Catherine's College this winter.

Schultz is smiling from the list of returning players, which includes four starters from last season. And the Panther B-squad was 22-2 a year ago.

The returning starters are senior Anna Schlaak (6'), junior Raelin Schue (5'10") and sophomores Carlie Wagner (5'10") and Jade Schultz (5'9"). Schlaak, Wagner and Schultz were all-conference players a year ago, and Schue was honorable mention.

Schlaak averaged seven points, 11 rebounds, three assists and four steals a game as a junior. She

"Our key will be to stop teams from scoring and pushing the ball up the floor." — **Coach John Schultz**

set a single season rebound record for the Panthers with 273 boards. Schlaak blocked 71 shots.

Schue is a crafty left-hander who averaged six points and eight rebounds per game.

Wagner runs the show for the Panthers. She fired in 551 points last season, second most in NRHEG history. She averaged 22 points, seven rebounds, five assists and four steals each night.

Schultz set a new Panthers three-point record with 52 trifectas a year ago. She averaged 12 points, eight rebounds, three assists and three steals a game.

The remaining letterwinners are Tori Raimann (5'7 senior), Katie Cole (5'10" junior) and Danielle Krueger (5'6" senior). Raimann averaged three points and four rebounds off the bench last year, while Cole contributed two points and four boards.

Rounding out the 10-person varsity will be Abby Crabtree (5'6" Jr.), Kayla Lindell (5'11" Jr.) and Hannah Lundberg (5'6" Soph.).

"We feel like team speed and good chemistry will be our strengths. We should have balanced scoring, fast break ability, good rebounding and average size," said Schultz. "Our key will be to stop teams from scoring and pushing the ball up the floor."

"We also need to get quality time from our players off the bench. We want each of our 10 kids to have a role on this team," said Schultz.

Schultz expects Faribault BA to challenge the Panthers for the top spot in the Gopher Conference. He thinks Southland, Hayfield, St. Peter and Blue Earth will all be formidable foes come section



Schultz

NRHEG Girls' Basketball

Conference: Gopher.

Section: 2AA, South Sub-Section.

Coaches: John Schultz (8th season), Grant Berg (B) & Onika Peterson (9th).

Last year: 23-4 overall, 15-1 in Gopher Conf. (tied for 1st), lost in sub-section championship.

Key losses: Kristina Cole (1,000 pt. scorer, 3-year starter).

Key returnees: 7 returning letterwinners, including starters Anna Schlaak (7 pts., 11 reb.), Carlie Wagner (22 pts., 7 reb.), Jade Schultz (12 pts., 8 reb.) and Raelin Schue (6 pts. 8 reb.).

Key dates: FBA at home Dec. 13, St. Peter on the road Dec. 29, Hayfield at home Jan. 7.

2011-12 NRHEG Girls' Basketball

Date	Opponent	Place	Time
Nov. 29	LeSueur-Hend.	H	7:30
Dec. 2	Belle Plaine	A	7:30
Dec. 6	Mankato Loyola	A	7:15
Dec. 13	Faribault BA	H	7:15
Dec. 16	USC	A	7:15
Dec. 20	Blooming Prairie	A	7:15
Dec. 22	JWP	H	7:30
Dec. 28	St. Peter Tourney	A	2:00
Dec. 29	St. Peter Tourney	A	2:00
Jan. 2	Montgomery	H	7:30
Jan. 7	Hayfield	H	7:30
Jan. 10	Medford	A	7:15
Jan. 13	Randolph	H	7:15
Jan. 16	Maple River	H	7:30
Jan. 17	Waseca	H	7:30
Jan. 19	WEM	A	7:15
Jan. 20	Mankato Loyola	H	7:15
Jan. 24	Faribault BA	A	7:15
Jan. 26	USC	H	7:15
Jan. 28	Goodhue	A	7:30
Jan. 31	Blooming Prairie	H	7:15
Feb. 3	JWP	A	6:00
Feb. 10	WEM	H	7:15
Feb. 13	Blue Earth Area	A	7:15
Feb. 14	Medford	H	7:15
Feb. 16	Randolph	A	7:15

Girls continued on 8

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LADY PANTHERS — Coach John Schultz has seven returning letterwinners from last year's girls' basketball squad that finished 23-4 and tied for the Gopher Conference championship. Pictured front (l-r): Carlie Wagner, Jade Schultz and Danielle Krueger. Back: Tori Raimann, Katie Cole, Raelin Schue and Anna Schlaak.

Star Eagle photo by Jody Wynnemer

THE COVER — NRHEG sophomore Carlie Wagner goes to the hoop in the Panthers' season-opening victory over LeSueur-Henderson. University of Minnesota women's basketball coach Pam Borton and a scout from Kansas State University have been in New Richland to watch Wagner.

Star Eagle photo by Chris Schlaak

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NRHEG Wrestling

Conference: Gopher.

Section: 2A.

Coaches: Head coach Paul Cyr (26th season), assistant coaches Shawn Larson, Joe Haggerty, Ed Dahle & Nathan Jensen.

Last year: 12-9 overall, Gopher Conference champs, 2nd in section.

Key losses: Cody Root

Key returnees: Five state tourney performers in Dustin Esplan (3rd in state), David Lassahn, Seth Petranek, Jacob Staloch & Brandon LeBlanc. 18 returning lettermen.

First action: Dec. 3 at Faribault Invite.

First home meet: Dec. 8 vs. Blooming Prairie.

Key dates: Redwood Riot in Redwood Falls, Dec. 16-17; USC at Wells, Jan. 19; WEM/JWP in NR, Feb. 9.

2011-12 NRHEG Wrestling

Date	Opponent	Place	Time
Dec. 3	Faribault Invite	A	10 am
Dec. 8	Blooming Prairie	H	7:00
Dec. 10	St. James Classic	A	9 am
Dec. 15	Medford	H	7:00
Dec. 16	Redwood Riot	A	9 am
Dec. 17	Redwood Riot	A	9 am
Dec. 29	Irondale, C. Lakes	A	10:30 am
Jan. 6	Panther Duals	H	5:00
Jan. 14	Stewartville	A	9 am
Jan. 19	USC	A	7:00
Jan. 21	Hutchinson	A	10:30 am
Jan. 27	Waseca	H	6:00
Jan. 28	Kasson	A	10 am
Feb. 2	Kenyon, Pine I.	A	5:00
Feb. 3	Lakeville North	A	9 am
Feb. 4	Lake C, Wabasha	A	10 am
Feb. 9	WEM/JWP	H	7:00

Wrestlers return five state tourney veterans

By DALE KUGATH

Contributing Writer

NEW RICHLAND – Despite the return of five state tournament veterans among 18 letterwinners, the challenges appear to be strong for the New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva wrestling team this winter.

Veteran Coach Paul Cyr feels that United South Central and Waterville-Elysian-Morristown/Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton will be the favorites.

And waiting in Section 2A is defending state champion Jackson County Central.

However, Cyr does have 18 letterwinners returning to improve on last season's 12-9 record. The Panthers were Gopher Conference champs with a perfect 4-0 mark.

Cyr begins his 26th season as NRHEG's head coach. It is his 30th season as a head coach as he also spent four years at Fertile-Beltrami. Cyr's overall record is 418-291-12.

Assisting Cyr will be Shawn Larson, Joe Haggerty, Ed Dahle and Nathan Jensen.

Cody Root was the only Panther starter that graduated a year ago.

Five state tournament grapplers return to lead NRHEG. All are seniors this season.

Dustin Esplan finished second in the section a year ago. He won four of five matches at state to earn a third-place finish. Esplan racked up a 33-8 record as a junior.

Esplan suffered a serious injury during the summer, but the Panthers are hopeful he will be ready to go this season.

David Lassahn is a two-time state qualifier at NRHEG. Lassahn placed second in the section and had a 31-8 mark overall.

Seth Petranek was NRHEG's only section champion last season. He went 2-2 at state and was one win away from placing. Petranek finished 33-11 for the year.

Jacob Staloch and Brandon LeBlanc were both section runner-ups last winter, earning their first trips to state. Staloch

"Success at the end of the season will be determined by individual success of all of our athletes."

— Head coach Paul Cyr

ended the year at 26-14, while LeBlanc finished 23-11.

Cyr knows what he will get from his five veterans. The key to NRHEG's season may be the development of his remaining 13 letterwinners.

The senior returnees are Geoff Ramaker, Matt Dahle, Jade Walz and Mitch Akemann.

The remaining lettermen are Todd Erickson (3rd in section), Dillon Kubiawicz, Tyler Logan, Dustin Burshem, Ben Christensen, Nathan Krohn, Dillon Parpart, Luke Stout and Jet Wayne.

The five state tourney returnees and Krohn were all-conference performers last season.

Other candidates vying for mat time is senior Tyler Holz; juniors Brad Claycomb, Cody Ripka, Matt Webster, Sam Jewitt and Zach Edon; and sophomores Ben Whiteaker and Hunter Schwartz.

Underclassmen competing are freshmen Cole Lenort, Keith Maxon, Matt Jensen and Nick Bartness; eighth-graders Bryant Reese, Cordell Peterson, Jonathan Weller, Trey Hoppe, Wyatt Fitterer and Zeke Erickson; and seventh-grader Gunther Olson.



Cyr

Wrestlers continued on 8

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PANTHER WRESTLERS — Ready to take on the competition this year for Coach Paul Cyr's Panther Wrestling Team are returning letterwinners front row (l-r): Sam Jewett, Jet Wayne, Nathan Krohn, David Lassahn, Dustin Esplan, Brandon LeBlanc and Dustin Burshem. Back: Tyler Logan, Matt Dahle, Mitch Akemann, Cody Ripka, Dillon Parpart, Seth Petranek Geoff Ramaker, Jake Staloch and Jade Waltz. Star Eagle photo by Jody Wynemer

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Seniors will have to carry NRHEG boys' basketball team

By DALE KUGATH
Contributing Writer

NEW RICHLAND — New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva boys' basketball coach Pat Churchill has to replace five seniors from a year ago, all who logged a lot of minutes on the floor.

The Panthers do have some experienced players back, but Churchill will have to figure out a way to overcome a lack of size and depth.

Churchill begins his second season as NRHEG's head man. Last year's squad overcame a horrendous start to finish 13-13 for the year. The Panthers finished fourth in the conference (9-7), but were eliminated in the opening Section 2AA Tournament game.

Panther assistant coaches are Chad Buendorf (varsity), Isaiah Lundberg (B-squad) and Joe Kuechenmeister (9th).

Churchill's squad got off to a 2-10 start a year ago, but rebounded to win 11 of their final 13 regular-season games before the tournament loss.

NRHEG Boys' Basketball

Conference: Gopher.

Section: 2AA.

Coaches: Head coach Pat Churchill (2nd year) and assistant coaches Chad Buendorf, Isaiah Lundberg & Joe Kuechenmeister.

Last year: 13-13 overall, 9-7 conference (4th), lost first section game.

Key losses: Hunter Eustice (3-year starter), Evan Ferber (all-conference), Matt Nafe (captain).

Key returnees: Seven returning letterwinners, all seniors. Matt Carlson (11 pts./game), Sam Lundberg (4 pts., 5 reb.), Carter Tollefson (2 pts., 3 reb.), Tyler Sorenson (4 pts.).

First home game: Kenyon-Wanamingo Dec. 2.

Key dates: Loyola at home Dec. 6, Hayfield at home Jan. 7, at USC Jan. 27.

Gone from that team are Hunter Eustice, Evan Ferber, Matt Nafe, Brian Billing and Kyle Bayerkohler. Eustice was a three-year starter and two-time honorable-mention all-conference performer, Ferber was an all-conference player last season and Nafe was the team's captain a year ago.

Churchill does have seven lettermen to build this year's team

around, all of them seniors. None of the returnees are over 6'2".

Matt Carlson, a 6' guard, was NRHEG's leading scorer



Churchill

Boys continued on 8

2011-12 NRHEG Boys' Basketball

Date	Opponent	Place	Time
Dec. 2	Kenyon-Wan.	H	7:30
Dec. 6	Mankato Loyola	H	7:15
Dec. 13	Faribault BA	A	7:15
Dec. 16	USC	H	7:15
Dec. 17	JWP Tourney	A	7:30
Dec. 20	Blooming Prairie	H	7:15
Dec. 22	JWP	H	6:00
Dec. 27	Bethany Tourney	A	6:00
Dec. 28	Bethany Tourney	A	6:00
Dec. 29	Bethany Tourney	A	6:00
Jan. 7	Hayfield	H	6:00
Jan. 10	Medford	H	7:15
Jan. 12	Randolph	A	7:15
Jan. 13	WEM	H	7:15
Jan. 16	St. Clair	H	7:30
Jan. 17	Blue Earth	A	7:30
Jan. 20	Mankato Loyola	A	7:15
Jan. 24	Faribault BA	H	7:15
Jan. 27	USC	A	7:15
Jan. 31	Blooming Prairie	A	7:15
Feb. 2	JWP	A	7:30
Feb. 9	WEM	A	7:15
Feb. 14	Medford	A	7:15
Feb. 17	Randolph	H	7:15
Feb. 21	Waseca	A	7:30

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PANTHER BASKETBALL — Returning Panther Boys' Basketball letterwinners include: front (l-r): Sam Lundberg, Lucas Meyer and Pete Blowers. Back: Matt Carlson, Ty Sorenson, Carter Tollefson and Spencer Hanna. Star Eagle photo by Jody Wynnemer

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Girls

from Page 2

tournament time.

NRHEG averaged 67 points per game last season, and out rebounded its opponents by 600 boards during the year. Four Panthers hauled down over 200 rebounds last year.

Schultz had a 25-game schedule lined up for the Panthers, 13 of them to be played at home.

In addition to the conference slate,

NRHEG has Le Sueur-Henderson, Belle Plaine, Montgomery-Lonsdale, Hayfield, Maple River, Waseca, Goodhue and two games at the St. Peter Holiday Tournament on the schedule. The Panthers will play Goodhue at Carleton College in Northfield.

After non-conference games against Le Sueur-Henderson and Belle Plaine, the Panthers will open defense of their conference championship at Mankato Loyola Dec. 6. First conference home game is against Faribault BA Dec. 13.

The St. Peter Holiday Tournament is set for Dec. 28-29.



Boys

from Page 6

last season at 11 points per game. Churchill describes him as a solid three-point shooter and the Panthers' best defensive player.

Sam Lundberg can play either guard or forward at 5'10". He averaged four points, five rebounds and three assists per game a year ago. Lundberg is NRHEG's most aggressive player and good decision-maker who is not afraid to do the dirty work on the team.

Carter Tollefson will be NRHEG's biggest player at 6'2". He averaged three

points and two rebounds a game last season. Tollefson will be the Panthers' most physical player and best inside threat.

Tyler Sorenson, a 6'1" guard averaged four points a game last season.

"Tyler should be a solid playmaker and creator for us," said Churchill.

Spencer Hanna (6'1"). Lucas Meyer (5'8") and Pete Blowers (5'7") also earned letters as juniors.

Churchill is also looking for contributions from juniors Nic Mangskau and Kevin Minter.

"Mangskau is a good offensive player who must improve his defense and Minter is an athletic, long player who brings defensive intensity," said Churchill.

Also competing for playing time will be junior Dallas Culver; sophomores Jarek

Schendel, Kellen Ferber, T.J. Schiltz, Noah Krell, Preston Peterson and Nick Goette, along with freshman Spencer Tollefson.

"We return a lot of experience and will work extremely hard, but do not have a lot of size or depth," said Churchill. "We hope to remain in the upper half of the Gopher Conference."

Churchill looks for WEM and USC to be the conference favorites. He adds St. Peter and Maple River to the mix come section time.

"We need to become more physical and limit our mistakes and turnovers. We will have to combat our lack of size with smart, disciplined play," said Churchill. "Our defense will have to carry us and we need to run our offense to get the shots we

want."

NRHEG has a 25-game schedule in place; only 11 games are at home. The Panthers will play in the JWP Rotary Classic and the Mankato Bethany Holiday Classic this year.

NRHEG opens with three of its first four games at home, including the season opener against Kenyon-Wanamingo Dec. 2. The Panthers will be looking to avenge last year's 71-46 thumping.

NRHEG will open Gopher Conference play with a home game against Mankato Loyola Dec. 6. The Crusaders finished second in the league behind WEM last winter.

NRHEG's first road game is at Faribault BA.

Wrestling

from Page 4

"I think that WEM/JWP and USC will present the biggest challenges if we want to repeat as Gopher champs," said Cyr. "Jackson will clearly be the favorite in the section."

"We may have the athletes to challenge Jackson at the season's end, but that will rest on the shoulders of our wrestlers and their willingness to make a commitment to that goal," said Cyr. "Our overall balance

will be a strength of this team, but success at the end of the season will be achieved by individual success of all of our athletes."

Cyr has 17 dates on the schedule before tournament wrestling begins. The Panthers have five home dates, starting with the conference opener against Blooming Prairie Dec. 8.

NRHEG is entered in eight tournaments during the season, including the Redwood Riot in Redwood Falls Dec. 16-17.

Mapleton will host the Section 2A Team Tournament Feb. 18. The section individual tournament is at Blue Earth Feb. 24-25.

NRHEG opens its season at the Faribault Invite Dec. 3.



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