SPORTS

Voyageurs baseball

Strebing named MCAC North Player of Week

B2

QUICK HITS

Ben Gordon named to the All-CHL Team

Tulsa Oilers forward Ben Gordon of International Falls is one of six players who have been named to the 2013-14 All-Central Hockey League Team.

Gordon, who also finished runner-up in the voting for CHL Most Valuable Player, was named the Oilers' MVP and Offensive Player of the Year. He ended the regular season — his second in Tulsa — as the team leader in goals (36) and points (89).

Ben Gordon

Gordon's point total is the highest of any Oiler player since Todd Marcellus registered 93 points during the 2002-03 season.

The 29-year old Gordon was named the CHL Player of the Month for February and has been tabbed as CHL Player of the Week on four occasions this season. He tallied five hat tricks and posted four points or more in seven contests this season.

Joining Gordon on the All-CHL Team are Denver forwards Garrett Bembridge and Troy Schwab, Missouri defenseman Matt Stephenson, Allen blue-liner Tyler Ludwig and Missouri goaltender Shane Owen.

Tulsa, which finished the 2013-14 regular season with an overall record of 34-29-3 for seventh place in the CHL standings, begins the playoffs Friday when the Oilers host the No. 2-seeded Denver Cutthroats to open the best-of-seven series.

Brooke Millerbernd named the NLC MVP

For the second year in a row, Littlefork-Big Falls girls basketball forward Brooke Millerbernd has been named the Northern Lakes Conference's Most Valuable Player.

Millerbernd, a senior who has exceeded 1,000 career points, is also one of four L-BF players to be named All-Conference along with senior forward DyAna Imhof, senior center Abby Thompson and freshman guard Kaylee Kennedy.

A sophomore guard on the NLC champion Vikings, Breann Larson, received honorable mention.

The three L-BF boys basketball players named All-Conference in the NLC include senior center Jacob Franz, senior guard Taylor DeLack and junior guard Rylan Henrickson.

SPORTS SCHEDULE

Saturday's games
Girls track and field
I. Falls in Virginia IRC Indoor Meet at UW-Superior, 10 a.m.
Men's baseball
RRCC in MCAC Crossover, TBA

Sunday's games
Men's baseball
RRCC in MCAC Crossover, TBA

Monday's games
Girls softball
Eveleth-Gilbert at L-BF, 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday's games
Girls track and field
I. Falls in Don Arola Invite at Nashwauk, 3 p.m.
Girls softball
Deer River at L-BF, 4:30 p.m.
Boys golf
I. Falls at Eveleth, 4:15 p.m.
Boys baseball
I. Falls at Hibbing, 4:30 p.m.
Girls softball
I. Falls at Lake of the Woods, 4:30 p.m.

GIRLS SOFTBALL PREVIEW

Vikings seek another deep playoff run

L-BF pitching staff inexperienced

STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN BONESKE

From left, Vikings shortstop Emily Knaeble relays a throw while Breann Larson looks on during a softball practice last month in the Littlefork-Big Falls old gym.

BY KEVIN BONESKE
Sports Editor

After being the Section 7A runner-up last season, the Littlefork-Big Falls girls softball team will be seeking another deep playoff run in 2014.

The Vikings, who finished 19-5 overall after having lost to Cherry for the 2013 Section 7A title, return most of their key players from last year.

Mike Imhof enters his 12th season as L-BF's head coach with his list of top returning players including senior Brooke Millerbernd, who led the team in 2013 with five home runs. Others key returners include sophomore shortstop Emily Knaeble, senior first baseman DyAna Imhof and sophomore catcher Ellie Julson.

However, the Vikings have graduated their starting tandem of pitchers for the last few years – Courtney Pfeifer and Kristy Horne Dunn. Catcher Claire Simon has also graduated.

Imhof said the strengths of this year's team include a "solid infield" and the return of five of the top hitters – Millerbernd, Knaeble, Imhof, sophomore Amanda Nelson and senior Karli Little.

However, with Pfeifer and Horne Dunn having graduated, the head coach noted the team is entering this year with an inexperienced pitching staff that will include Millerbernd, Nelson and sophomore Karly Swenson.

Imhof said the team goals this season include getting the No. 1 seed in the North Sub-Section and making "a deep run into the playoffs, hopefully the (section) final four."

Going into the season, which is scheduled to start Monday, weather permitting, with a home game against Eveleth-Gilbert, Imhof said he is the most concerned about the pitching staff's lack of varsity experience.

"They didn't get a lot of opportunities to pitch with seniors Courtney and Kristy getting most of the innings pitched," he said.

Imhof said he is looking forward this season to "watching the freshmen and sophomores playing very important roles in the success of the team and getting back to the final four in section playoffs."

He said the teams to watch out for this season include defending Section 7A champion Cherry, where L-BF is scheduled to play at April 10 during the regular season.

GIRLS SOFTBALL PREVIEW

Broncos seek improvement in Section 7AA

FHS to rely on junior leadership

BY KEVIN BONESKE
Sports Editor

After winning only five games last season and losing in the opening round of the Section 7AA playoffs, the International Falls girls softball team will be looking to do better in 2014.

The Broncos, who finished the 2013 campaign 5-10 overall following their playoff loss to Greenway, have lost three starters to graduation. They include center fielder Olivia Santee, first baseman Jessica Ringhofer and second baseman Shawna Misner.

Santee, who was offered a partial scholarship to play Division II softball at Southwest Minnesota State University and is the all-time Bronco career leader in several offensive categories, missed most of the 2013 season after sustaining a wrist injury early in the year.

Kevin Gordon enters his 16th season as Falls' head coach with his list of top returning athletes including:

- Pitcher/infielder Teagan Anderson, a junior captain and two-year starter who compiled a 5-9 pitching record and batted .333 last season.
- Shortstop Cassie Tomczak, a junior captain and three-year starter who batted .380.
- Third baseman/outfielder Ashley Jonson, a junior who led the team in 2013 with a .418 batting average.
- Pitcher/outfielder McKenna Rasmussen, a junior who batted .333.

Gordon said the strengths of this year's team include having eight players who started return in 2014.

"Both pitchers are returning – Teagan Anderson and McKenna Rasmussen," he said. "Our team should be better on both sides of the plate."

However, with only one senior on this year's team, Gordon said the Broncos "will be looking for leadership from our juniors" and "need to improve defensively in all positions to be competitive in Section 7AA."

He said the team goals this season include seeking to "attain a higher seed in the section tournament" and "play more consistently against our (Class) AA opponents."

The Falls is scheduled to play its first game, weather permitting, next Tuesday at Lake of the Woods. The Broncos' first home game is set for April 14 against the Bears.

STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN BONESKE

Broncos shortstop Cassie Tomczak throws the softball during a practice last month in the Falls High School gym.