

SPORTS



From left, the Broncos' Teagan Anderson and McKenna Rasmussen both deliver a pitch during Monday's softball practice in the Falls High School gym.

STAFF PHOTOS BY KEVIN BONESKE

Broncos softball and baseball practices begin

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

While several inches of snow still cover the fields outside, softball and baseball practices have begun inside at Falls High School. The Broncos have 30 girls

in grades 7-12 practicing for the upcoming softball season, which is scheduled to begin for the varsity, weather permitting, April 1 at Chisholm. The first home game is set for April 14 against Lake of the Woods.

The Falls has 45 boys signed up for baseball in grades 7-12 for the 2014 season. The first varsity game is scheduled April 8 at Hibbing. The first home game is set for April 10 against Cherry.



First baseman Serina Sprecco makes a catch during Monday's softball practice in the Falls High School gym.



The Broncos' Luke Spilde fields a ball off of the Falls High School gym floor in Monday's baseball practice.

SIJHL HOCKEY

North Stars win first playoff game over Fort Frances Lakers

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Kris Kellaway scored the game-winning goal with 3:39 left in the third period Saturday night when the Thunder Bay North Stars edged the visiting Fort Frances Lakers, 4-3, in Superior International Junior Hockey League postseason play at the Fort William Gardens.

With the win, the North Stars lead to two-game, total-goal No. 1 vs. No. 2 showdown series heading into the finale at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Ice for Kids Arena in Fort Frances.

The winner will get the

right to choose the semifinal opponent.

Thunder Bay's Cary Brown scored the lone goal of the opening period when he put the puck past Lakers goalie Devin Tappenden at the 13:53 mark.

Fort Frances tied the game early in the second period on a Lucas DeBenedet power-play goal at 1:34.

The score stayed at 1-1 until 6:44 of the third when



Lucas DeBenedet

Brent Aiken put the Lakers in front as his shot went past Eric Mann in the North Stars' net.

Thunder Bay then responded with two goals 79 seconds apart from Trevor Hynnes and Brandon Miha-lus to put Thunder Bay back out in front 3-2.

Aiken's second goal of the evening tied it with just over five minutes to go, only to see Kellaway score the game-winner past Tappenden.

North Stars goalie Eric Mann finished the night with 40 saves.

Tappenden saw 23 shots in recording the loss for Fort Frances.

YOUTH WRESTLING



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

In front, the Mighty Mustangs' Kalan Kittelson drives over a Hibbing wrestler at Saturday's Virginia tournament.

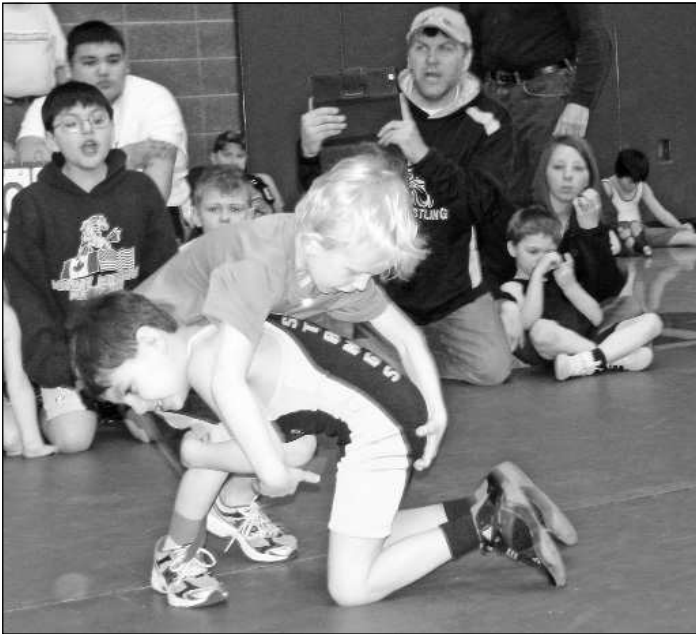
Seven Mighty Mustangs first at Virginia

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

Seven youth wrestlers with the local Mighty Mustangs finished first and another 10 placed runner-up at a tournament Saturday in Virginia, which was a qualifier for the Minnesota Jaycees State Wrestling Tournament.

The Mighty Mustangs' first-place finishers (by grade/weight, wins-losses and pins) included Wyatt Jantzen (K/52, 3-0, 1), Kyan Swanson (K/47, 3-0, 2), Diego Christianson (4/83, 3-0, 2), London Rasmusen (6/114, 3-0, 1), Nathan Anderson (4/139, 2-0, 2), Ashden Lennox (K/48, 3-0, 2) and Pierce Guinn (3/76, 3-0, 0).

Those finishing runner-up included Anthony Bechick (4/65, 2-1, 2), Hudson Mann (3/89, 2-1, 1), Trent Stenberg (K/42, 1-2, 0), Parker Wiersema (PreK/46, 2-1, 0), Pablo Christianson (PreK/42, 1-2, 0), Calvin Silvers (PreK/41, 2-1, 2), Noah Armstrong (2/70, 2-1,



In front, the Mighty Mustangs' Pablo Christianson shoots in on a wrestler at Saturday's tournament in Virginia.

1), Carter Ellison (2/55, 2-1, 1), Charlie Bannert (1/42, 2-1, 2) and Austin Randall (PreK/37, 2-1, 1).

Another wrestler, Kalan Kittelson (2/52, 1-2, 1), came in third.

The Mighty Mustangs,

who totaled 21 pins for the tournament, have had 19 wrestlers already qualify for next month's state tournament. The next tournament they will participate in is another state qualifier Saturday in Grand Rapids.

BOYS BASKETBALL

Esko beats Annandale in Class AA state championship game

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Esko's top scorers differ slightly on how long they've played together and how long they've been itching to win a state championship game — Marc Peterson says since fourth grade and Kory Deadrick says sixth, when fellow senior Casey Staniger arrived in town.

Regardless, it was a long time coming after years of second-place finishes, which made Saturday's 60-41 win over Annandale on Saturday for the Eskomos' first-ever state 2A title all the more sweet.

"If you look back in those sixth and seventh and eighth-grade Pacesetter tournaments, we took second every year," Deadrick said, his first-place medal hanging around his neck after the game. "It was like,

'in the championship, we ain't going to do that again tonight.'"

Peterson scored 16 points and Deadrick added 14. Staniger had 13 for the Eskomos (29-3).

Deadrick, the school's all-time leading scorer, was well below his 25.9-points-per-game average coming into the tournament, but Esko had a well-balanced offense in the rematch of last year's third-place game, a 1-point win by Annandale (25-7).

"We knew any given night, any given one of us — me, Kory or Casey — can put up 25, 30 points a night," Peterson said. "So if one guy's cold, we just get it to the next guy. It's tough guarding three legit scorers."

Now, Esko coach Mike

Devney has the unenviable task of trying to replace all three of those legit scorers.

"The cupboard's not going to be bare next year, even though we lose three thousand-point scorers, but it's going to be tough to replace," Devney said.

Matt Miller led Annandale with 10 points, but no other Cardinal scored in double figures. The Cardinals led early and stayed within striking distance for much of the game until a 16-4 run by Esko put the game out of reach. A 3-pointer by Tanner Olean cut Esko's lead to 38-32 before the Eskomos' game-turning run.

With his red-eyed players slowly filing out of their locker room, Cardinals coach Skip Dolan tried his best to put things in perspective.

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