

# SPORTS

## QUICK HITS

### Lucas DeBenedet named SIJHL rookie of the year 2013-14

The Superior International Junior Hockey League announced this week that Fort Frances Lakers forward Lucas DeBenedet of International Falls has been named the SIJHL's rookie of the year for 2013-14.

DeBenedet edged out fellow rookie of the year finalist Daniel Del Paggio of the Thunder Bay North Stars for the honor along with Jason Reynolds of the Minnesota Iron Rangers, who was also nominated.

The 18-year-old DeBenedet led all skaters in the league in both goals and points with 48 and 112, respectively.

He was also second in game-winning goals with seven and points-per-game average at 2.0 while registering at least one point in 45 of the 56 regular season contests he took part in.

DeBenedet also had 35 multi-point games during the regular season to help the Lakers finish first overall in the SIJHL standings.



Lucas DeBenedet

### Falls' Mason Meyer named SIJHL's most improved player

The Superior International Junior Hockey League announced this week that Fort Frances Lakers forward Mason Meyer of International Falls has been named the SIJHL's most improved player for the 2013-14 regular season.

Meyer edged out fellow finalists Zach Grzelewski of the Thunder Bay North Stars and Chris Sitco of the Dryden Ice Dogs for the honor in balloting done by the SIJHL member clubs.

The 19-year-old Meyer registered a 63-point improvement from the 2012-13 season with the Lakers. He also shattered personal single-season career highs in goals, assists and points with 40, 50 and 90, respectively, while finishing fourth overall in SIJHL offensive production.



Mason Meyers

Meyer, who was earlier named to the CCM first all-star team along with fellow Falls native and Lakers forward Lucas DeBenedet, was also a three-time recipient of the Pizza Hut player of the week award.

It marks the second straight year a Fort Frances player has received the most improved honor, joining Colton Spicer, who earned the award last season.

### Ben Gordon 2nd in CHL 'Best-of-the-Best'

Tulsa Oilers forward Ben Gordon of International Falls has finished second in two categories in the Central Hockey League's "Best-of-the-Best" poll.

Gordon, the Oilers' point-leader, finished second in the voting for "Best Overall Player" behind Denver's Garrett Bembridge and was also second to Bembridge in the category of "Player Judged Most Valuable To His Team."

Going into Friday's home game against Wichita, Gordon led Tulsa with 35 goals and stood fourth in the CHL scoring race with 83 points.

## GIRLS TRACK AND FIELD PREVIEW

# Broncos seek more success in 2014

## All individual state qualifiers return to team

BY KEVIN BONESKE  
Sports Editor

After winning multiple meets, including last year's Section 7A and North Sub-Section meets, and having three individuals and two relay teams qualify for the Class A State Meet, the International Falls girls track and field team is looking to more of the same in 2014.

Jen Erickson is entering her 16th season as the Broncos' head coach with all the individual state qualifiers from last season among the top returning athletes from a team that also won the Iron Range Conference Meet for the first time since 2003.

Back is senior Breanna Shofner, who was a state qualifier the past three years in both the 100- and 200-meter dashes and in the past two years in the 4X100 relay. Last year at state, Shofner placed seventh in the 200 and ninth in the 100.

In addition to Shofner, most of the sprint-

ers who comprised the Falls' state-qualifying 4X100 and 4X200 relay teams that didn't reach the finals also return. They include seniors Lexi Owen and Jaci Scholler, sophomore Madeline Dahle and eighth-grader Emma Gilbert. Junior Maddie Filipiak, who was on both relay teams last season, won't be out this year for track and field.

Also returning is junior Savanah Olson, who qualified for state last year in both the shot put and discus and was a 2012 state qualifier in the discus and a 2011 state qualifier in the shot put. Olson won a medal in the shot put last year by placing eighth.

Senior Hailey Fentem is back after qualifying for state in the 100 hurdles the past two years and in the high jump last year. She won a medal in the hurdles last year by placing seventh.

In addition to the state qualifiers, several others who advanced to last year's Section 7A Meet also return.

Senior Amy Auran, the team's top pole vaulter last season, was a Section qualifier in that event and also the 4X800 relay.

Sophomore Abby Kos-



STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN BONESKE

The Broncos' Emma Gilbert takes off from the starting blocks during a track and field practice this week in the Falls High School gym.

tiuk is back after having been a Section qualifier in the 400 dash and 4X200 and 4X800 relays.

Freshman Lexi Erick-

son, the top runner of Falls' girls cross country team, returns after being a Section qualifier in the 3200 run and 4X800 relay.

Other underclassmen who were Section qualifiers last year include

Track to B2 ►

## BOYS TRACK AND FIELD PREVIEW

# I. Falls Broncos seek improvement in 2014

## Team lacking depth with low athlete numbers

BY KEVIN BONESKE  
Sports Editor

After having gone two years in a row without a state qualifier, the International Falls boys track and field team will be seeking to do better as the 2014 season progresses.

Longtime Broncos head coach Paul Hjelle's list of top returning athletes includes senior Jakob Ettestad, who qualified for last year's Section 7A Meet in four events. Ettestad placed seventh in the pole vault, eighth in the 200-meter dash and was also part of the 4X100 and 4X200 relay teams that each placed fifth.

Another returning senior is Jake Piekarski, who placed eighth at last year's section meet in the 400 dash.

Junior Austin Ruport, who just missed out on qualifying for state last year with a third-place section finish in the discus, is also back for the Falls.

Other returning section qualifiers include sopho-

more Wyatt Helgeson, who placed 10th in the high jump and junior Cole Tatsak, who placed 12th in the triple jump. Senior Paul Skoglund qualified in the 110 hurdles and junior Nehemiah Olson qualified in the 100 dash, though neither advanced to the section finals.

The Broncos key graduation losses include Jason Pumper, Nick Janttie and Marco Griffith.

"We'll also miss Logan Veillieux in the 1600 and 3200 runs," Hjelle said. "Pumper, Janttie and Griffith were very versatile and could help us in so many of the events. They will definitely be missed."

Hjelle said the strengths of this year's team include having "some pretty good sprinters back," namely Ettestad and Olson.

"These two will help us in some field events, too," he said. "All of our seniors should help us out.

"Our senior leadership should really help us out. We have a lot of seniors who will score some big points for us. We will need them to set an example for our younger student athletes."

Hjelle said the team currently is weak in the dis-



STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN BONESKE

The Broncos' Jakob Ettestad practices pole vaulting this week in the Falls High School gym.

tance events.

"We will need some of the guys from last year that are back to contribute here," he said. "Billy Brokaw and John Cowman will have to improve with each meet. They can definitely do it."

Hjelle said the team goals for this year include getting stronger with each meet and being competitive in every meet.

"We don't have the depth

that we will need in all the track events," he said. "Being a little thin on numbers will make it challenging for us.

"The guys will try new events early on and hopefully find some events that they can be successful at."

Hjelle said the work ethic that most of the team members have "has really impressed our coaches early on."

"We are looking forward to improving with each meet," he said. "Also, the confidence that will come from competing is always great to see."

The Broncos began the season Friday with an indoor meet at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. Their first home meet, weather permitting, is the Bronco Booster Invite on April 10.

## JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The Rainy River Community College softball team opened the 2014 season with three games Wednesday at the Rosemount Irish Dome, where RRCC won two of three.

The Voyageurs won their first game over Anoka-Ramsey, 21-3, in five innings.

Oashaja Dobie recorded

the pitching victory for RRCC, working three innings without allowing a run or a hit with one walk while striking out five.

The Voyageurs' leading hitters included: Rebecca



Oashaja Dobie

Dilley, who batted 4-4 with a double and 4 RBI; Andrea Barylski, who batted 3-3 with 2 RBI; and Lynsi Emery, who batted 2-4 with a double and 3 RBI.

**RRCC 6, Mesabi Range 5**  
The Voyageurs' second game went nine innings when they defeated Mesabi Range, 6-5.

Dobie threw all nine innings to record the pitching victory, allowing all

five runs, none earned, on five hits with four walks while striking out 12.

RRCC's leading hitters included: Alexis Fancy, who batted 3-4 with a home run and 3 RBI; and Alisha Brinker, who batted 2-4 with a home run and 2 RBI.

**Marshalltown 21, RRCC 2**  
The Voyageurs' played their final game of the day against Marshalltown, a Division I community col-

lege from Iowa, and lost, 21-2 in five innings.

Dobie pitched 3 2/3 innings in recording the loss, allowing nine runs, four earned, on nine hits with two walks while striking out six.

Rachel Clark batted 1-2 and drove in both of RRCC's runs.

The Voyageurs had six other games scheduled this week at the Irish Dome.