

2020

A publication of The Livingston Enterprise and the Big Timber Pioneer

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FALL SPORTS
GUIDE

A PREP SPORTS GUIDE TO PARK AND SWEET GRASS COUNTIES

2020

FALL SPORTS SCHEDULE



Shields Valley REBELS

FOOTBALL

Sept. 4	Tri-Cities V
Sept. 11	Bridger JH/V Homecoming
Sept. 18	Custer/Hysham JH/V
Sept. 25	Broadview/Lavina JH/V
Oct. 2	DGS - Senior Night JH/V
Oct. 10	Fromberg
Oct. 24	Subdivision Playoff V
Oct. 31	Subdivision Playoff V

VOLLEYBALL

Sept. 3	Gardiner JV/V
Sept. 5	White Sulphur Springs JV/V
Sept. 11	Harrison - Homecoming JV/V
Sept. 12	Ennis JV/V
Sept. 18	Lone Peak JV/V
Sept. 19	Reed Point JV/V
Sept. 24	Gardiner JV/V
Sept. 26	Lima V
Oct. 1	Manhattan Christian JV/V
Oct. 9	Twin Bridges JV/V
Oct. 10	Sheridan JV/V
Oct. 14	White Sulphur Spgs - Senior Night JV/V
Oct. 17	Lone Peak JV/V
Oct. 22	West Yellowstone JV/V
Oct. 24	Harrison JV/V
Oct. 29-31	District 11/12C @ Manhattan Christian V
Nov. 5-7	Divisionals @ Manhattan Christian V
Nov. 12-14	State @ MSU V

* Home games listed in bold type

Get into the spirit
of fall sports and
cheer on the area
teams!

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Park High RANGERS

FOOTBALL

Sept. 18	East Helena
Sept. 28	Townsend
Oct. 5	Fergus
Oct. 12	Laurel
Oct. 16	East Helena

VOLLEYBALL

Sept. 10	Butte Central
Sept. 19	Hardin
Sept. 22	Laurel
Sept. 25	Lewistown
Sept. 26	Gardiner
Oct. 1	Belgrade
Oct. 3	Gardiner
Oct. 3	Hardin
Oct. 13	East Helena
Oct. 16	Lewistown
Oct. 24	Billings Central
Oct. 27	Laurel



Gardiner BRUINS

FOOTBALL

Sept. 4	Noxon
Sept. 12	Hot Springs
Sept. 19	White Sulphur Springs
Sept. 25/26	Valley Christian (Victor)
Oct. 3	Fromberg
Oct. 9	Harlowton

VOLLEYBALL

Aug. 29	Townsend JV/V
Sept. 3	Shields Valley JV/V
Sept. 5	Townsend JV/V
Sept. 8	Ennis JV/V
Sept. 12	Manhattan C/JV/V

BOYS AND GIRLS SOCCER

Sept. 12	Lone Peak
Sept. 14	Mt. Ellis
Sept. 17	Lone Peak
Sept. 24	Laurel
Sept. 26	Billings Central
Oct. 3	Lone Peak
Oct. 8	Laurel
Oct. 10	Billings Central

GOLF

Sept. 4	Anaconda
Sept. 11	Harlowton
Sept. 14	Livingston
Sept. 18	White Sulphur Springs
Sept. 21	Red Lodge
Sept. 24	Billings - Divisionals
Oct. 1-3	Butte - State

CROSS COUNTRY

Sept. 5	Manhattan
Sept. 8	Fairmont
Sept. 18	Twin Bridges
Sept. 26	Dillon
Sept. 29	Lewistown
Oct. 3	Big Timber
Oct. 6	Billings
Oct. 8	Helena
Oct. 10	Townsend
Oct. 16	Divisionals - Lewistown
Oct. 24	State - Kalispell

VOLLEYBALL - continued

Sept. 18	West Yellowstone JV/V
Sept. 19	Manhattan Christian JV/V
Sept. 24	Shields Valley JV/V
Sept. 25	Lima V
Sept. 26	Park High C/JV/V
Oct. 1	Lone Peak JV/V
Oct. 3	Park High JV/V
Oct. 8	Harrison JV/V
Oct. 9	Sheridan JV/V
Oct. 10	Manhattan C/JV/V - Homecoming
Oct. 13	Manhattan Christian JV/V
Oct. 20	White Sulphur Spgs JV/V - Senior Night
Oct. 23	Twin Bridges JV/V
Oct. 29	District @ Manhattan Christian V
Nov. 5	Divisionals @ MC V
Nov. 12	State - MSU Fieldhouse V



Big Timber HERDERS

FOOTBALL

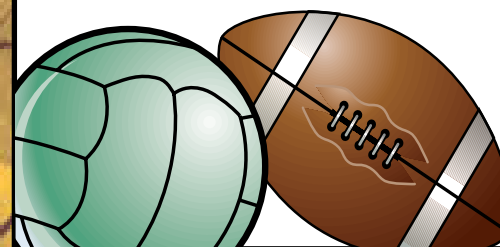
Sept. 4	Colstrip
Sept. 11	Townsend
Sept. 18	Jefferson
Sept. 25	Three Forks
Oct. 2	Fairfield
Oct. 9	Manhattan
Oct. 16	Columbus
Oct. 23	Whitehall

VOLLEYBALL

Sept. 1	Columbus
Sept. 5	Whitehall
Sept. 8	Joliet
Sept. 12	Jefferson
Sept. 15	Manhattan
Sept. 19	Shepherd
Sept. 24	Whitehall
Sept. 26	Red Lodge
Sept. 29	Manhattan
Oct. 1	Townsend
Oct. 3	Joliet
Oct. 6	Jefferson
Oct. 9	Red Lodge
Oct. 10	Three Forks
Oct. 16	Columbus
Oct. 22	Townsend
Oct. 24	Three Forks
Oct. 29	District @ Manhattan
Nov. 5	Divisionals @ Red Lodge
Nov. 12	State @ MSU

CROSS COUNTRY

Sept. 1	Roundup
Sept. 12	Red Lodge
Sept. 24	Eagle Rock
Oct. 3	Home Meet
Oct. 8	Meet @ Colstrip
Oct. 14	Joliet
Oct. 24	Kalispell



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Rangers aim to gain experience and set the tone for varsity return next season



Enterprise photo by Ryan Peerboom

Park receiver Drew Rogge runs upfield during a game last season at McLeod Field. Rogge returns as a member of the Rangers' core of junior players.

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

The Park High football team is working to build off the progress it made last season.

After the first week of the last season, Park coaches and administrators made the decision to forfeit their varsity season in interest of player safety due to a low number of varsity-ready players. Instead, the Rangers only competed at the JV level.

As per Montana High School Association rules, the Rangers will compete in JV games again this season before they can jump back to varsity next year.

Head Coach Nick Coate said things have gone really well so far, as the Rangers already picked up their first win over

Belgrade on Sept. 3, 39-24.

Coate said he was pleased with the performance and that the Rangers played a complete game on both the offensive and defensive sides of the ball.

Coate said the Rangers started slower than they would have liked, but they came on strong and built a big lead. The lead allowed the Rangers to give some of their younger players some valuable experience, something they will try to do whenever possible this year.

Without playoffs to shoot for, Coate said the team has a simple goal this season.

"We just need to focus on improving every week," he said.

Coate added that this season will help set the tone for next year.

The Rangers are led by a small group of seniors, but Coate said the strong core of junior players has the Rangers excited for things to come.

Junior Sebastian Perry takes over at quarterback this season. Last year, Perry saw time as the backup to Sage McMinn.

Sage's younger brother, Kaden McMinn, is also one of the Rangers core juniors that will play a leadership role on both sides of the ball.

Drew Rogge returns as a receiver and defensive back. Rogge started both ways for the Rangers last season.

Coate also mentioned the emergence of Zarren Roninger as another junior to watch this season.

Coate has also seen a huge improvement on the offensive

line, across the board.

It might be easy for some of the older Ranger players to get the itch to get back to playing at the varsity level, but Coate said that hasn't been an issue on this team.

"The guys that are there have really bought into the system," Coate said as the older players work to develop a "new culture" at Park.

In terms of team goals, Coate said he and the players are on the same page.

"I think our goal should be to win every game this year," Coate said, adding that he feels that goal is something that is definitely realistic for the crew he oversees.

Up next

The Rangers are scheduled to play again on Sept. 18 against East Helena.

Speake takes the reins as Park High hopes for fresh season



Skylar Higgs leaps to hit a ball during the Lady Rangers' whiteout game last season at Park High School. Higgs is one of three key seniors that will lead Park this season under new coach Brenda Speake. Enterprise photo by Ryan Peerboom

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

The Park High volleyball team aims to reload this season with a new face at the helm.

Brenda Speake takes over as head coach after coaching the JV team last season and has high hopes for the Lady Rangers.

COVID-19 has already impacted much of their season, including some conference games against Billings Central and Hardin. But the pandemic has also forced the Lady Rangers to miss some of the early season tournaments that they usually participate in.

Speake said it's been challenging for the Lady Rangers because they haven't faced the amount of competition they normally do.

"The hardest part is giving varsity a challenge during practice," Speake said.

In order to accurately simulate another varsity opponent, the coaches have had to step in to give the Lady Rangers some action against stronger swings that they'll see during conference play.

Due to some of the cancellations, Park will only face some of their normal conference opponents once this season, meaning they will have less opportunity to game plan for the teams as the post-season approaches.

Park will rely on their three key seniors, according to Speake.

Terran Speake, Coach Speake's daughter, returns after a full season as Park's setter last year.

Skylar Higgs will be important on the offensive end as she comes back to play outside hitter for the Lady Rangers.

Raina Floyd's role will expand this year as she steps into a starting role as the right-side hitter for Park.

Coach Speake said she hopes the core

group of seniors can help lead the team through mistakes and lulls in momentum that are a natural part of volleyball.

"Volleyball is such a game of momentum and mistakes," Coach Speake said.

Speake believes in the group of players she has and said they are "super connected" and play well with each other as a team. She isn't putting a ceiling on what this team is able to accomplish this year.

"This team has the potential to do great things," she said.

Park already got underway with a game against Butte Central. The Lady Rangers won the first two sets before they dropped the final three sets to fall in five.

Despite the loss, Speake said she's happy with the way her team played.

"We walked away from that game pretty happy because we played strong," she said.



Enterprise photo by Ryan Peerboom

Park's Tristan Stenseth (10) puts a move on a defender during a game last season. Stenseth returns for his senior season after finishing as one of the state's top goal-scorers last year.

Rangers added depth brings new opportunities

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

The Park High School boys' soccer team added some much-needed depth this off-season and looks to improve this season with a fuller roster.

Last year, the Park boys had just 14 players on their roster. This year, the Rangers have upped that total to 24, according to head coach Jeff Dickerson.

Of those 24 players, 11 of them return with significant varsity experience.

The Rangers added seven freshman to help fill out their roster and added a few players that didn't turn out for soccer last season.

This year is also the first where the Park soccer program has done a co-op with Sweet Grass County High School, which has afforded them another extra player that makes the trip from Big Timber.

The newfound depth gives the Rangers a chance to field a JV roster to develop some of the younger players.

Additionally, the Rangers will be able to have a deeper bench on varsity, with more experience than previous years.

"I think it's going to give us a bench of about four to give highly skilled players," Dickerson said.

The bigger roster will also allow the Rangers to do more

scrimmages during practice, which will increase the team's intensity along with their experience, Dickerson added.

The Rangers senior experience will help guide the team this year. Tristan Stenseth was one of the leading goal-scorers in all of Class A last season. He returns alongside Nathan Brown, who led Class A in assists. The senior duo will look to build on their impressive junior campaigns this season.

Last year, the Rangers fell just shy of the playoffs as they lost in a shootout in the play-in game last season. Dickerson said he believes the team can improve on that finish and make a run toward a top finish in state.

"We have the hopes that this team will go much deeper into the playoffs," he said.

After facing cancellations due to COVID-19, the Rangers had to wait longer than usual before their first matchup of the season. That first match came on Sept. 12 against Lone Peak.

Although Lone Peak is a new addition to their conference this season, the game did not count toward their conference record.

The Rangers played Lone Peak to a 1-1 draw in the opener. Dickerson said the team got off to a slower start than they were hoping for and "couldn't quite get everything put together."

He said that a slower start is

normal, especially after waiting so long to see game action. Due to scheduled water breaks in the game, Dickerson said it played like a game with four quarters as opposed to two halves. He was happy to see that his team got better with each passing quarter.

The Rangers will face Lone Peak again in their first official conference game on Sept. 17.

Looking forward, with only five seniors, the added depth this season means nearly 20 Rangers will return next year. Dickerson said that the returning experience will help the Rangers strengthen their program for years to come by building depth, experience and player quality.



Enterprise photo by Ryan Peerboom

Park runners take off from the starting line during the Seamus Camp Invitational last season at Park High School.

Ranger runners already off to a hot start

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

The Park High Cross Country team is looking to do big things this season. With talented, committed runners, the only obstacle is finding meets.

Head Kirk Lentz said the Rangers have been forced to search for some different options as meets they normally would attend have been limited to fewer teams due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When the Rangers have found a place to run, they've run well.

"They're pretty much picking up right where they left off," Lentz said.

Sophomore Ellianna Wester has built off her success after finishing 8th in Class A State last season. In three meets so far this year, Wester has won twice and placed third in the other.

Lentz said about 50 percent of her success comes from her work in the offseason, while the rest comes naturally.

"About 50 percent is just her raw talent," Lentz said.

Lentz also mentioned Elise Wadle as a runner that has built off last season. Fionn Camp has consistently been the third finisher for Park and Lentz also mentioned Fiona Alverson as someone who has improved by "leaps and bounds."

On the boys' side, three runners are leading the pack for the Rangers. Andrew Durgan, McCrae Wester and Charlie Serafin have placed top three, in order, in two of their three meets this season. They have finished in that order every time so far this year.

The only time they didn't take the top three spots, Durgan finished third and McCrae and Serafin fin-

ished seventh and eighth, respectively.

COVID-19 has forced the Rangers to take things one week at a time and remain flexible, but Lentz said he

expects big things from the team over the remainder of the season.

"This is a small group, smaller than we'd like to see, but they're a great group," Lentz said.

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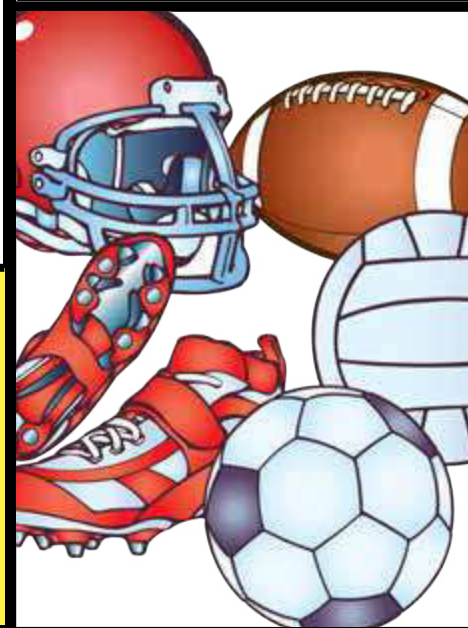
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Park takes aim at tough conference foes



Enterprise photos by Ryan Peerboom

LEFT: Severn Sienkiewicz winds up to kick a ball during a game last year. **RIGHT:** Kodie Vondra takes the ball with her as she drives past a defender.

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

The Park High girls' soccer team is looking to make waves in the toughest conference in Class A girls' soccer.

The Lady Rangers have to face Laurel and Billings Central on a regular basis. The two programs have been successful year in and year out. Last year, they met in the State Championship, with Laurel winning it all.

The Lady Rangers have faced similar issues to teams around the state, as COVID-19 has forced cancellations of many of their early season matchups.

The team did start the season on the right track on Sept. 12

when they opened their season with a 3-0 win against Lone Peak.

Lone Peak joins the conference this season, but this game was played as a friendly, non-conference game to get experience before the teams start their conference schedules.

Park welcomes three new players this season that are making the trip from Big Timber as part of the first year of the co-op with Sweet Grass County High School.

"Having the extra players will be huge," Head Coach Matt Pierson said.

Pierson added that the co-op "will really open up the opportunities for this team in the future," according to Pierson. He hopes that the co-op will help the

Lady Rangers fill out a full JV and varsity roster by next season.

Kodie Vondra returns to the team this year as the Lady Rangers' lone senior and will play a significant leadership role.

Park will also rely on a group of junior players that saw varsity experience last season.

Severn Sienkiewicz returns after leading Park in goals last season.

Hailee Harshbarger and Stella Davis also serve as junior leaders for the Lady Rangers.

Vondra, Davis and Sienkiewicz all made their presence felt in the opener against Lone Peak as each scored a goal for Park.

Pierson said that the Lady

Rangers will use different formations than they did last year in order to better fit in with the current personnel.

Due to all the COVID-19 cancellations, Pierson has described this season as "mentally challenging."

"In all the years I've coached, I've never seen anything like it," he said.

Pierson said the shifting schedule has also made it hard for the team to set goals for the season.

"It's hard to set goals when you don't know when you're going to be playing," he said.

That being said, Pierson said he's excited to start playing more games because he has "just a really good, solid team."

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Park finds practice wherever it can



Enterprise photos by Ryan Peerboom

Danyk Jacobsen follows through after swinging during Park's Invitational at Livingston Golf Course last season.

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

Practice makes perfect for the Park High Golf team. At least, that's what they've been forced to do thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"A lot of our season was impacted by COVID," head coach Jamie Cahoon said.

Travel restrictions and tournament capacity limits have kept the Rangers from competing against other schools for much of the season.

In response, Cahoon has taken her team to courses around the state in order to give her team some experience playing different courses so that they are prepared for the postseason tournaments later this fall.

Even though they've seen different courses, Cahoon said it's hard to gauge where they're at.

"It's hard to see where we stack up with other teams around the state," Cahoon said.

Cahoon added that the only real tournament they participated in, an invitational in Dillon, turned out well for the Rangers.

Both the girls and boys teams emerged victorious in overall score.

Danyk Jacobsen, who put up strong numbers last season as a freshman, tied for first individually on the boys' side shooting a 76. Fellow Ranger Bryce Hayes finished third with a 79 and Houston Dunn

finished eighth.

For the girls, Elsa Cajune shot a 97, which put her third, while Ashlan Mortensen tied for sixth with a 102. Jessica Gubler also cracked the top 10 as she finished eighth with a 105.

"My boys are really solid and my girls are really consistent," Cahoon said of her team.

The Rangers also hosted a dual with Dillon, which saw both the boys and girls take home a win.

Cahoon said the season has been interesting with all of the changes due to the pandemic, but she aims to keep her team sharp for the postseason.

"I've just been trying to keep them out and playing golf," she said.



Park's Jessica Gubler swings during Park's Invitational at Livingston Golf Course last season.



Enterprise photo by Ryan Peerboom

Shields Valley's Aidan Jenkins escapes from a would-be tackler on his way to the end zone during a game last season.

Rebels seek to build off 2019 success

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

The Shields Valley High School football team has wasted no time building off of its unprecedented run to the Class C 6-man quarterfinals last season.

The Rebels aim to do even bigger and better things this year and are already off to an undefeated, 3-0 start.

"We've started the season exactly how we wanted," Head Coach Mitch Ward said.

The Rebels have 11 players out for football this season, up from 10 last year.

The Rebels had to replace significant production from Emmett Gilbert, who graduated after leading the Rebels in rushing last season

with over 1,000 yards.

To help bridge the gap left by Gilbert, Aidan Jenkins returns for his senior season after a dynamic junior campaign that saw him lead the Rebels in receiving and provide a change of pace from Gilbert in the run game.

Across the first two games this season, Jenkins has already filled in as Shields Valley's leading rusher.

Jenkins toted the ball 36 times in the first two games, amassed 349 yards and scored three touchdowns. He also caught eight passes for another 121 yards and two more touchdowns.

After splitting time last season as a freshman, Kaden Acosta takes over at quarterback full time for the Rebels this season.

"He grew a little, got a little bit stronger and settled into his role," Ward said.

Acosta has already shown efficiency under center, completing 18 of 23 passes for 316 yards and seven touchdowns to just one interception across the Rebels first two wins.

Dylan Flatt, who split time with Acosta at QB last season and led the Rebels in passing, has shifted over to tight end and already leads Shields Valley in receiving with 199 yards on 11 catches with four touchdowns.

All told, the Rebels saw four players score two or more touchdowns in the first two games.

On defense, Flatt lead the Rebels with 33 tackles and has had a nose for the football as he's intercepted

three passes.

Hazen Marshall amassed 30 tackles and also picked two passes for the Rebels early on.

The community rallied behind the Rebels on their run last season, and Ward said that has continued so far this year.

"It's been so great to see how the community has been supporting our guys," he said.

The COVID-19 restrictions threw a wrench into the way the Rebels practiced early, but Ward said it's become second nature to the team and something they are used to dealing with.

Pandemic distractions aside, Ward said the Rebels have their eyes set on repeating as conference champions and making another deep run in the playoffs.

Lady Rebels mark the win column early



Jaeli Jenkins, center, turns around to bump a ball in a match at Gardiner last season.

Enterprise photos by Ryan Peerboom

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

The Shields Valley volleyball team faced an uphill battle last season with a new coach and a young team. Wins were few and far between, and it was definitely a learning year for the Lady Rebels.

The struggles last year and trial-by-fire experience is already paying off for Shields Valley this season.

"We've grown quite a bit," Head Coach Shannon Jenkins said.

The Rebels started the season with two wins in their first three matches to get out on the right foot.

"The girls are able to bounce back and face adversity," Jenkins said of her team this year.

The wins have helped the Lady Rebels

realize what they are capable of doing this season, Jenkins said.

"A couple wins under our belt have given them confidence," she said.

Gwen Collins is a leader for the Lady Rebels as a team captain and Haven Sager has also assumed a leadership role this season.

"They are solid kids as far as always being there for their teammates," Jenkins said.

Jaeli Jenkins showed raw potential for Shields Valley last season as a freshman. This year, Jaeli has refined her skills and been a force at the net for the Rebels.

"She's coming out like a totally different player this year," Coach Jenkins said, adding that she's shown a lot of growth and maturity.

Jaeli has led the Lady Rebels in kills in

each of their matchups this season.

Tyler DeFord has stepped in and replaced Rane Sager at libero after she graduated.

"She's come in as our libero and really done a great job," Jenkins said.

Jaeli, DeFord and Sager have also been leaders on the defensive end, notching multiple digs in the early games for the Rebels.

Collins has been the assist leader for the Rebels from the setter position so far this season.

Now that the Lady Rebels have wins under their belt, Jenkins said their goal is to be consistent and continue to apply the skills they learn in practice to the games.

The Lady Rebels play in a competitive district, but Jenkins sees no reason they can't finish in the top half of the group and shake things up when it comes time for the district tournament.



Tyler DeFord lunges toward a ball during a game in Clyde Park last season.

Lady Bruins set eyes on return to state



Enterprise photos by Ryan Peerboom

Gardiner's Josie Thomas rises up to knock a ball over the net during a game against West Yellowstone last season.

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

The Gardiner volleyball team has their sights set on the state tournament after falling just short in the divisional tournament last season.

"That's our goal every year — to make it to state," Head Coach Carmen Harbach said.

The Lady Bruins have a reloaded roster that features some experienced players from last season.

Gardiner is led by a group of seniors with "big shoes to fill" from the class that graduated last year, according to Harbach.

Josie Thomas returns at outside hitter after a strong junior campaign that earned her All-Conference and All-State honors.

Thomas is joined by Chase Cunningham, a senior setter that also received All-Conference and All-State honors

last season.

The third senior is Veronika Macy, who played a key role as a starter for the Lady Bruins last season.

"I think the future looks pretty bright right now," Harbach said.

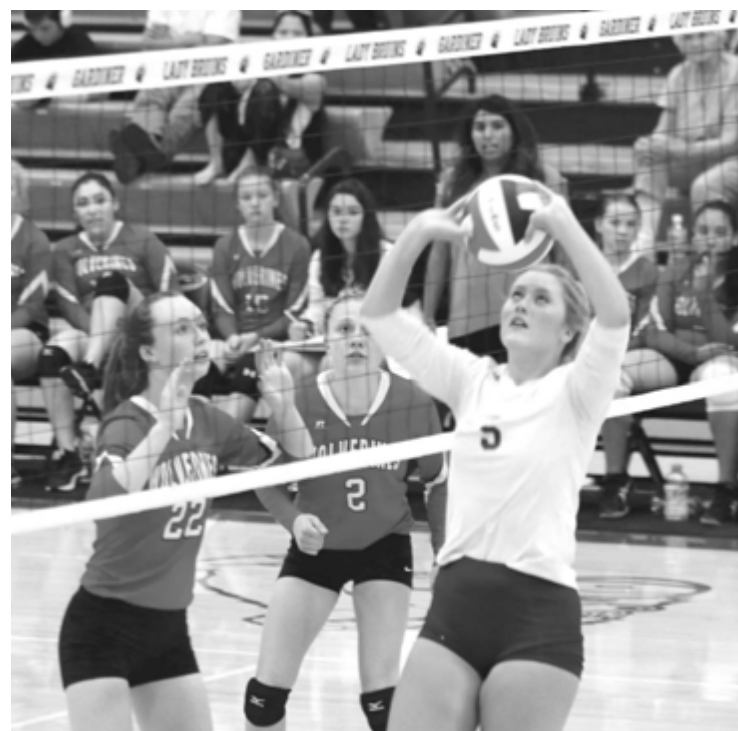
The Lady Bruins already have a few games under their belt. They started the season 2-1 after beating Shields Valley and splitting matches with Townsend.

Harbach said the team's loss in the semifinal round of the district tournament is still fresh in their minds.

"That's a loss that has stuck with us," she said.

Gardiner's varsity roster also features three juniors: Mariah Henry, Leah Veress and Paige Holland. Veress saw significant time in the varsity rotation last season.

Sophomore Maya Kowski and eighth grader Ellie Reinertson are also in the varsity rotation for the Bruins.



Gardiner's Chase Cunningham sets the ball for a Lady Bruin hitter in a game against West Yellowstone last year.

Young Bruins building for the future



Enterprise photo by Ryan Peerboom
Gardiner's Elijah Byrd stiff arms a White Sulphur Springs defender. Replacing Byrd has proven to be difficult for the young Bruins.

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

The Gardiner football team is facing an uphill battle this season, with low numbers and a lot of lost production.

Not only do the Bruins have to replace Elijah Byrd, who accounted for nearly 75 percent of the team's total offense and led the team in tackles, but they have to do so with just six players.

Every player has played every snap for the Bruins this year. In total, they have just one senior, four sophomores and a freshman.

Mike Baer takes over the program again after coaching the team years ago. Baer said this season is mainly about learning for the Bruins.

"They're just learning and playing against juniors and seniors that are bigger, faster and stronger than them," Baer said.

The lack of experience and low numbers have made the first two games challenging for the Bruins, who lost by a large margin to both Noxon and Hot Springs, without marking the scoreboard in either game.

The Bruins were scheduled to play on Sept. 19 against White Sulphur Springs, but will have to forfeit because one of their six players has to sit out with a concussion.

Baer said he's aiming to build unity and consistency. To do that, he is also coaching the middle school teams to keep things consistent throughout the program.

The Bruins are scheduled to play Valley Christian on Sept. 26.

Baer commended the Bruins lone senior, Tyler Koel, as someone who has remained committed to the program and been a leader despite the struggles.

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Young Herders trying to piece things together during learning year



Big Timber Pioneer photo by Ryan Peerboom

Herder defenders wrap up a Red Lodge running back during their season opener on Aug. 28 at Graham Field in Big Timber.

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

The Sweet Grass County football team is searching for positives in a season that sees a lot of new faces taking the field.

The Herders kicked off practice on Aug. 14, but they had to close up practice for a few days while a player was awaiting results from a COVID-19 test.

"We had a player tested for COVID, but it came back negative so that actually shut down for three practices so we're kind of feeling like we're behind," Head Coach J.V. Moody said.

The Herders are young, but Moody hopes his five seniors help the younger players get acquainted with the system.

"Hopefully those guys will step up and get these younger kids to realize what it's all

about," Moody said.

Senior Payson Morgan has been one of the senior leaders for the Herders. He said he realizes how fortunate the Herders are to be playing this year and he's not taking it for granted.

"Just being out here right now, we don't really know what the future will hold as far as shut downs and everything," he said. "We're just going week-by-week and we're grateful to have every practice and every game that we do get to have."

Moody said there are a lot of new faces on the roster this season, which means he has to look at each player to see how they fit into the scheme.

"We're young," Moody said. "Trying to figure everything out again. The make up of our team is way different than it has been in the past. We're trying to figure

out a spot for everybody. We've got to figure out where to plug them in."

The Herders will have a new face under center as junior Connor Giesecke steps in to play quarterback. Moody said he's comfortable handing the reins to someone with varsity experience.

"Quarterback situation is good," Moody said. "Connor Giesecke, he's probably one of our most athletic kids. He's got some game experience, not a lot at quarterback, but I think he started every game last year on the defensive side of the ball."

The Herders have been in action for three weeks now, but they've only played two games after their week two matchup with Colstrip was canceled due to poor air quality.

The Herders' two games against Red Lodge and Townsend

showed just how young the team is as they lost in convincing fashion in both games and managed just one touchdown in each game.

The Herders have improved, but they still make drive-killing mistakes that keep them out of the scoring column.

Giesecke looked more comfortable under center in game two against Townsend and was able to lead the Herders downfield and put them in scoring position multiple times, but some ill-timed penalties halted drives and stunted any momentum the Herders managed to get.

Defensively, the Herders have gotten off to slow starts in both games, but they've tightened up as the games progressed.

The Herders will look to piece things together as they hit the road and take on Jefferson on Sept. 18.



Big Timber Pioneer photo by Ryan Peerboom
Sweet Grass County's Darby Johnston reaches to block a ball during a match against Jefferson on Aug. 12

Lady Herders finding their roles as the season progresses

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

The Sweet Grass County Volleyball team has shown promise in the early stages of this season. Although they sit at .500 as of Sept. 12, they've put together multiple competitive matches.

The Lady Herders lost in their season opener to Shepherd. After winning the first set, SGCHS fell in three straight to fall in four sets.

Head Coach Kasey Stephens said the lack of experience might have played a factor in the opening loss.

"I think our inexperience at the varsity level showed here but I know these girls are hungry and will learn from this," Stephens said.

The Herders bounced back and beat Columbus in four sets in their second match and followed that game with a win over Whitehall.

Darby Johnston and Hailee Brandon have been strong on the offensive end for the Lady Herders, marking multiple kills over the first few games.

Alyssa Boshart is also settling into her role and using her height to her advantage on the defensive end at the net.

Stephens said she likes the way setter Bailey Finn is finding her footing this year.

"Bailey did a great job of running the offense and getting everyone involved," Stephens said after their first win against Columbus. "She's really taking ownership of the setter position as a sophomore."

The Herders lost to a tough Jefferson team in four sets on Sept. 12, but if they continue to settle in together as a team, they can only go up from here.

Stephens said she's already noticed some of the teamwork that keeps the Lady Herders fighting.

"I am really proud of this team for how they are able to focus in and grind out points when they need to," she said. "We're still young and it's still early in the season so we do have moments when we doubt ourselves during matches. These girls' ability to pick each other up, come together as a team and fight out of the holes they find themselves in is really special. They really do play for each other which doesn't happen all the time."

Herder runners finding groove as they find more races to compete in

By Ryan Peerboom
Yellowstone Newspapers

The Sweet Grass County High School Cross Country team hasn't avoided the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The team has run at unfamiliar meets and been forced to search for different ones as cancellations and capacity limits have impacted their preseason schedule.

"We're going to a lot of races that we've never done before," Head Coach Jenn Wood said.

Wood said the team is smaller this year, but

they've got some talented runners on their team.

Due to the changes in schedule, the Herders have found themselves running against a lot of teams in Class B from the eastern side of the state, which has upped the competition level as well.

"We're running against a lot of the fastest girls in the state," Wood said.

In their first meet in Colstrip, the Herders faced a tough course and sweltering conditions, making for a difficult run. Despite the obstacles, Natalie Wood finished fourth for the girls and

Colter Fleming finished 11th for the boys.

Two days later, the Herders ran in roundup, fatigued from the tough run in Colstrip. Fighting through the fatigue, Natalie Wood finished in third by a nose and Fleming finished ninth.

After proper rest, the Herders were in Red Lodge on Sept. 12 and Natalie Wood, Coach Woods' daughter, finished first.

"She had a phenomenal race," Coach Wood said.

Lea Polivkova, an exchange student, ran her first 5K race in Red

Lodge and managed to finish 12th overall.

On the boys' side, Ty Ferguson is the only other runner that joins Fleming, so the Herders won't be able to post team scores in boys' competitions.

The girls, led by Natalie Wood who finished sixth in state last year, have goals on placing well at state this year, Coach Wood said.

The Herders have been limited to Class B competition so far this year, but they'll compete in a Class A race in Lewistown on Sept. 18.



Enterprise photo by Ryan Peerboom

Herder runners take off from the starting line at Park's Invitational last season in Livingston.

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