

MVP

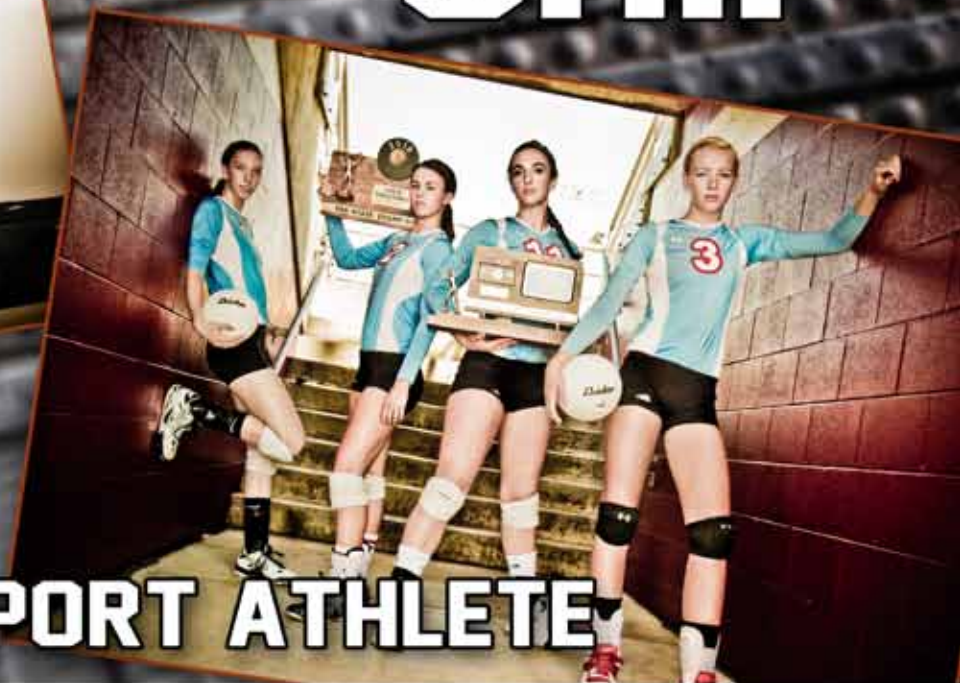
MAGAZINE

SHAWNEE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

OCTOBER 2011



RETURN TO THE
'SHIP



A LOOK AT THE
INDIVIDUAL SPORT ATHLETE

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Return to the 'Ship

Three Shawnee County volleyball teams look to avenge last season's state tournament loss and capture what they believe is rightfully theirs.



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CONTRIBUTORS



Nicole Stejskal

Editor-in-Chief & Designer

My passion for sports is something that's been with me since birth—literally. On nights I would cry into the wee hours of the morning as a baby, my dad would sit in the rocking chair of the living room and watch TV until I fell asleep.

Born in the middle of basketball season, my dad quickly figured out the one thing that could pacify me every time—SportsCenter highlights. The second I saw the action and excitement of sports, my eyes were glued to the TV, and I went silent in the midst of

my wonder. Twenty-two years later, the thrill of sports is still the one thing that can stop me dead in my tracks.

While those days are long gone, my heart has stayed in sports, a passion that I've directed toward my career. After discovering my love for media in college, I'm pursuing my dreams one step at a time, in hopes of someday landing on the pages of Sports Illustrated or reporting on the sidelines for ESPN.

My focus for MVP is to showcase that passion for sports that lies within the Shawnee County community. There's a heart and soul behind every athlete, coach, team and fan, and I want to feature the best of that in every issue.

This month, our main article follows three area high school volleyball teams on their journey back to the state championship, a feat that fell short for each team last season. We also take a look at the differences between individual and team sport athletes, highlighting a few of the county's best players and coaches.

Additionally, the magazine features the story of a high school soccer coach whose travels around the world have taught him the sport and served him well in his coaching career. Our inspirational athlete piece captures the confidence and spirit of a local Special Olympics athlete as she pursues her love for sports. And finally, we finish the magazine with a profile on former Topeka West coach and Topeka Shawnee County Hall of Famer, Warren Seitz. Enjoy!

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- JOE PATERNO, PENN STATE UNIVERSITY



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FOR THE RECORD

Did You Know?

Contrary to popular belief, soccer trumps basketball as the most popular sport in the world.

Left-handed people are said to be better at sports that require good spatial judgment and fast reaction, compared to right-handed people.

Before 1850, golf balls were made of leather and stuffed with feathers.

In 1910, football teams were penalized 15 yards for an incomplete forward pass.

The average man has enough energy in the fat stores of his body to run non-stop for three days at 15 mph.

The odds of making two holes in one in a round of golf are one in 67 million.

It takes 3,000 cows to supply the NFL with enough leather for a year's supply of footballs.

120

The original size, in yards, of a football field when the game was first played.

32

The number of panels found on a soccer ball.

53-58

The distance, in inches, that a tennis ball must bounce after being dropped from 100 inches to meet regulations.

1895

The year volleyball was invented by William G. Morgan at a YMCA in Holyoke, Mass.

170

The speed, in miles per hour, that a driving golf ball can reach.

14:35.7

The fastest time recorded by a high school boy in a cross country race.



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OCTOBER SCHEDULE

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VARSITY FOOTBALL		
October 7	Topeka West vs. Topeka High	7 pm
October 14	Seaman vs. Topeka West	7 pm
October 21	Junction City vs. Topeka High	7 pm
October 28	Highland Park vs. Topeka West	7 pm
VARSITY SOCCER		
October 1	Lawrence vs. Topeka High	11 am
October 4	Topeka High vs. Highland Park	6:15 pm
October 5	Washburn Rural vs. Topeka West	6:15 pm
October 6	Manhattan vs. Topeka High	6:15 pm
October 11	Topeka High vs. Topeka West	6:15 pm
October 13	Wichita NW vs. Topeka High	6:15 pm
October 17	Manhattan vs. Topeka West	6:15 pm
October 18	Washburn Rural vs. Topeka High	6:15 pm
October 19	SMS vs. Topeka West	6:15 pm
October 20	Wyandotte vs. Highland Park	6:15 pm
SPECIAL SOCCER EVENT		
National Junior College Athletic Association Region VI Soccer Tournament		
October 29	Women's Semifinals	11 am & 1:30 pm
October 29	Men's Semifinals	4 pm & 6:30 pm
October 30	Regional Championships	12 pm & 2:30 pm



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Dec. 30-31 vs Springfield

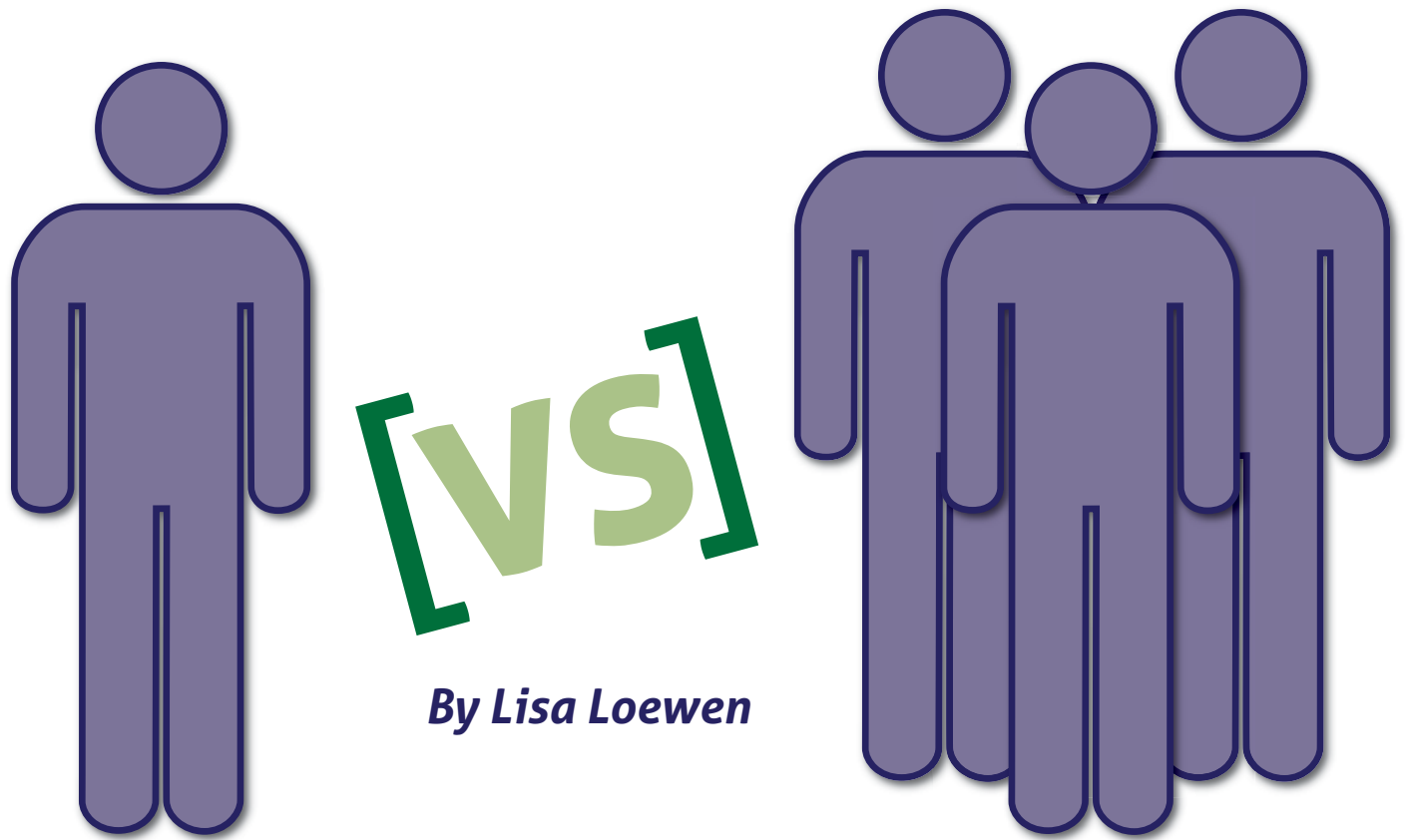
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Jan. 20-21 vs Texas
Jan. 27-28 vs New Mexico
Feb. 2-3 vs Corpus Christi
Mar. 2-3 vs Texas
Mar. 16-17 vs St. Louis
Mar. 31-Apr. 1 vs Odessa

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The differences between individual and team sports run deeper than just the number of athletes on the field or court.

Follow the path and explore the differences in personality traits between individual and team sport athletes as viewed by Thomas Matthews, Ph.D., psychologist and founder of Optimum Performance Solutions.

As members of a team, athletes are part of something larger than themselves. Winning a game is impossible without the contributions of every player. Team members must work together to run plays and put points on the board. For example, football is a team sport because a player cannot pass, catch, run and block all by himself.

Sports like tennis, golf and cross country are often viewed as team sports because athletes' results are combined together to determine whether the team wins or loses. However, these sports cannot become team sports without being an individual sport first. Each competitor must bring his or her best individual performance to the event for the team to be successful.

The following athletes and coaches provide insight into the individual and team sport arena, exploring both the differences in sport dynamics and the distinct types of athletes each sport attracts.

Individual athletes have more liberty to set personal outcomes, while team athletes often sacrifice their own outcomes to meet the goals of the team.

Tennis

Brett Fair Topeka West

Charging to the net, Brett Fair executes a textbook tennis volley that catches her opponent off guard. Winning matches has become routine for this 16-year-old Topeka West junior, but she doesn't brag. Instead, she talks about needing to improve her backhand to strengthen her game.

Practice is over for the day, and as the team leaves the courts, the camaraderie between the girls is clearly evident. They are a family of sorts, offering both criticism and praise.

Brett says she likes being part of a team because her teammates cheer her on while she's playing. But, when she's on the court, she knows the only per-



son she can rely on is herself.

"I think sometimes it's easier to just count on yourself than to count on a whole team," Brett says. "If I screw up, the only person I can blame is myself."

Brett's mother put a racket in her hand nine years ago, and she fell in love with the sport. Her hero? Roger Federer. Her ambition? To attend college on a tennis scholarship. In order to make that happen, Brett knows she has to put in the hard work. She doesn't enjoy the running and conditioning required in practice, but she does it anyway because she knows it will make her stronger and improve her tennis game.

In addition to tennis, Brett also plays flute in the stage band and is in the color guard for the marching band. She has to juggle band practice and tennis practice because they overlap, but tennis always comes first.

While she has always been a singles player, she hopes to play doubles with her little sister, who will be a freshman next year.

"It will be fun playing together, but she has to stop getting so mad when she messes up," Brett says.



Team athletes have a group mentality and look more for cohesion, unity and a common bond. Individual athletes are more ego-driven and often suffer greater loss when dealing with unacceptable failure.

Q & A

Kurt Davids
Topeka West Coach



Why do team sports seem to be more popular than individual sports?

It's so easy for parents to get kids into team sports at an early age because of the social aspect, the treats after the game—it's fun. It's a hard sell to get kids to put time into an individual sport like tennis for that intrinsic reward of winning.

What motivates athletes who play individual sports?

Individual sports don't get the same level of attention that team sports do. At this level, most of the kids know that the only people who are going to show up to watch them play are a few select friends and their family. But that's ok, because they play for the love of the sport, not the cheers of the crowd.

How are team sports different from individual sports?

A big difference between playing a team sport and playing an individual sport like tennis is that when you're at a tennis match, you play multiple matches in a day. You can get all pumped up for your first match and win it, but if you're not ready to go right back out and do it all over again, you're going to struggle. It's a marathon of emotions, and you have to be prepared both physically and mentally to play every time out. Since tennis is an individual sport, you can't hide behind a team, and your teammates can't hide behind you.

How are individual sports similar to team sports?

A majority of the coaches around here really stress the team aspect of tennis. We keep team points and team titles. And just spending time together and putting in practice time enhances that team dynamic. Older, stronger players help the younger, weaker players because they all understand that if we can bring everyone's play up just a bit, it helps the entire team be more successful.

What are the odds that these girls will play at the next level?

I would tell any one of these girls on my team that they can play at the college level if we find the right college, and they commit themselves and keep that option open.



Q & A

Dan Key
Hayden Coach

Do you consider golf to be an individual sport or a team sport?

In golf, no other person on the team can affect how each individual player performs. However, the sum of the performances of each player determines whether we win as a team. I emphasize to my players that even though they are playing individually, one stroke can make the difference between whether we win or lose as a team. They also know there are only a handful of people who have the ability to win the tournament from an individual perspective. So, if you ask my team if they are more interested in the team score or their individual score, they will likely say the team score.

Are individual sport athletes under more pressure than team sport athletes?

I think it's a different kind of pressure. Individual sport athletes have to perform alone. No one else can hit the ball for them. However, they also understand that even though they are on the course individually, every stroke they make has a direct impact on the team's performance.

How is coaching golf different than coaching football or volleyball?

In most team sports, there seems to be a lot of yelling and screaming to get athletes focused and motivated. In those sports, the harder you try and the more aggressive you are, the better. Golf, on the other hand, is just the opposite. I certainly don't want to yell at a girl for missing a putt because the harder she tries and the more aggressive she becomes, the worse she plays. Golfers need to be relaxed when they play, and coaches have to keep them in a relaxed atmosphere so they can perform better.

Who would be the ideal golfer on your team?

I want someone who is really even-keeled, who doesn't get overly excited when they play well or really discouraged when they play poorly. And, I want someone who is willing to spend the time and the extra work to improve. Too many times, the golf clubs go into the closet when golf season is over, not to come out again until the season starts the following year. I want that person who, when spring comes, is willing to play in some tournaments and work on her game so that when the season starts in the fall, she is ready to play.

Some people live by the mantra "You do your thing, and I'll do mine." They are highly individual in their work preference and highly focused on doing a task well—they make better individual athletes.

Golf

Brooke LaRue Hayden

Brooke LaRue is the epitome of the "All-American girl." At 17, she is a senior at Hayden High School, the student body president and a standout on the Hayden golf team. Golf has been a part of her life for as long as she can remember.

"I did junior golf as a kid, just like everybody does," Brooke says, "and I hated it, just like every kid does."

She crossed that fine line between love and hate sometime during her seventh grade year when she began playing golf competitively. Brooke was drawn to that mixture of physical and



mental ability that golf requires.

"Being a good golfer is not based on who is the strongest or who is the fastest," Brooke says, "but more on a skill base and a mental strategy."

Brooke admits she has always been an individual sport athlete, having never played a team sport.

"I like to make decisions on my own," Brooke says. "If things go wrong, I only have myself to blame. And if something goes right, it's my own accomplishment."

Sometimes, though, it can be frustrating when no one else notices those accomplishments.

"My freshman and sophomore year, we won state," Brooke says. "We had the individual winner both years, and we had no fans. With the volleyball team, we almost had to cancel school because so many people were going to go to the volleyball match. I can't even tell you if anyone knew that I had won state."

Brooke has already verbally committed to play golf at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Va., but for now, she is concentrating on finishing the season, one stroke at a time.





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Cross Country

Jacob Morgan Washburn Rural

It's 5:40 a.m.—while most of us are hitting the snooze button, Jacob Morgan is lacing up his sneakers to hit the road for a quick seven-mile run. Later today, he will run another three miles in the sweltering 100 degree heat. Jacob runs six days a week, year round.

To those outside of the sport, cross country runners seem to be a strange breed. Even Jacob admits that cross country runners are probably insane.

"You have to be crazy to inflict all that pain on yourself," he says. But along with that pain comes a personal sense of satisfaction that fuels his drive to run even faster.

Speed runs in the family. Jacob's dad was known for his speed as a high school football player in Cambridge, Neb., and Jacob grew up running. He fig-



ured out he was fast when he ran the mile for P.E. in fourth grade.

"Everyone was comparing their mile times, and mine was pretty decent," Jacob says.

Boys cross country runners trek a 5K (3.1 mile) race through fields, up and down hills, and over rough trails. Even though it's an individual sport, a team dynamic shows through in training. Jacob says that since all of the team members are training together for the same race, they are a closer knit group. Having that team support also makes it easier to put on his shoes and run every day.

"You know the whole team will be running, and you can't let them down," he says.

However, once the race starts, it becomes every man for himself.

"In team sports, you're working together to accomplish a goal," Jacob says. "With cross country, you're just fighting against yourself—fighting that little voice inside you that tells you to slow down."

Jacob, 17, started running as a freshman at Washburn Rural High School. Now, in his senior year, he hopes to run away with some new cross country records. He won state last year with a personal record of 15:35:20. His goal this year is to break 15:00.



Q & A

Monica Schrag
Topeka High Coach



Do you view cross country as an individual or team sport?

While running is an individual sport, it's also a team sport because we score as a team. The runners know that how they place individually is important because they are a piece to a bigger puzzle.

What personality traits are common in cross country athletes?

I think that cross country kids are a different breed than everyone else. It takes a lot of self-motivation to go out and run on those days you don't really want to, when it's 100 degrees, especially when a team is not waiting on you. Also, out of all fall sports, cross country generally has the best grade point average. The students out for cross country tend to be enrolled in honors classes and are involved in numerous activities—clubs, forensics, speech, debate and music. They are self-motivated in school as well as in cross country. These kids are studious, but they aren't loners because they are involved in clubs and extracurricular activities.

What are the drawbacks to being involved in an individual sport like cross country?

My runners feel slighted because people don't seem to respect cross country as a valid sport. We don't have cheerleaders. Our fans are parents and grandparents, not other students. Athletes on team sports like football and volleyball get their lockers decorated by student fans. The only way we get our lockers decorated is to do it ourselves—even when we won the championship.

Do you have a difficult time recruiting runners?

Yes. People think of cross country as being this weird sport that no one wants to do, because how can it be fun? Mostly, people just don't understand the sport. If USD 501 had cross country in middle school, it would make my job a whole lot easier. It would make our school so much stronger.

So why run cross country?

As a cross country runner, you find great personal satisfaction in just the fact that you're better at the end of the season than you were when you started. You're doing something a lot of people can't do. You run multiple miles across difficult terrain in grueling weather, all in hopes of beating your own personal record.

Some people are driven to help others. They are naturally inclined to lead a group of people toward a common goal—they fit well on a team.

Cross Country

Ramsey McCarter Seaman

Weighing in at a mere 100 pounds and only reaching 5'2" with the help of the heels on her shoes, Ramsey McCarter may not, at first glance, seem like a force to be reckoned with. However, ask the cross country runners who meet her on the course, and they will tell you that for such a small person, she is a giant competitor.

Ramsey had never run cross country before her freshman year at Seaman High School. And she wouldn't have run even then, if her mother hadn't made her join the team.

"I didn't want to do it in the beginning, but my mom forced me to," Ramsey says. "Don't tell her that I said she was right, but she was."

In the first few practices, Ramsey could hardly run three



miles. But once the season started, she surprised herself by medaling at her first JV race. From then on, she was hooked. Now, four years later, Ramsey just runs—all the time. Some days, it's a long road run. Other days, it's a trail run or speed work on the track.

"Practices aren't fun," Ramsey says, "but I know it will make me better for the meets. When I PR, when I place—it's all worth it."

Ramsey runs for the sense of accomplishment, that feeling of pride that comes from doing something most other people won't even try. She has also learned that cross country is more of a mental sport than a physical one.

"In any individual sport, especially cross country, you have to have the fight in yourself, because no one else can do it for you," Ramsey says. "With teams, someone else can go up to bat or throw the football, but with cross country, it's just you out there against every other person, and against yourself."

For Ramsey, cross country gives her the best of both worlds. It can be a team sport because you score as a team, but she can also win individually—something she hopes to do a lot of this season.



Although many differences exist between individual and team sports, one thing remains the same.

No matter what dynamic exists or which personality type is present, the natural desire to be successful will always be a part of an athlete's drive to win.



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Coming In For The Landing: Sports Injury Prevention

The majority of non-contact injuries in athletes occur when they are trying to stop. No matter how fast an athlete may be, the athlete is only as safe as their ability to efficiently stop. Unfortunately, athletics tend to focus on generating force, improving speed and developing explosiveness, with little emphasis on reducing force, stopping or landing.

The following are activities that athletes can implement into their existing training programs to emphasize force reduction and improve their ability to absorb shock. These activities can easily be used as a warm-up and altered to be sport specific training activities:

1 Start with form run activities, such as double and single arm skipping, high knee runs, butt kickers, cross over runs and a lunge walk. Cover a distance of 30 to 40 yards with each activity.

2 Next, jump rope by starting with double leg jumps and progressing to single leg jumps, emphasizing a tall posture and a light touch when your feet hit the ground.

3 Double and single leg hops are next. Start with double leg hops, then progress to single leg hops. Twenty repetitions is a good number for each movement. Remember to stress a soft, full-foot landing (toe to heel) with good control. Stick the landing and keep it quiet with a light touch.

4 Stopping is the next skill to train. Assign a stopping point to your footwork and conditioning drills by placing a cone on the ground 10 to 15 yards beyond where the drill ends. Sprint out and stop on the cone, lowering your hips as you emphasize a smooth, quiet stop.

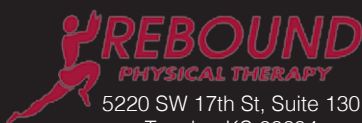
5 Finally, implement change of direction activities into your training and conditioning program. Very few sports require only straight ahead activities, so you need to change directions frequently and make sure your training program mimicks game activity.

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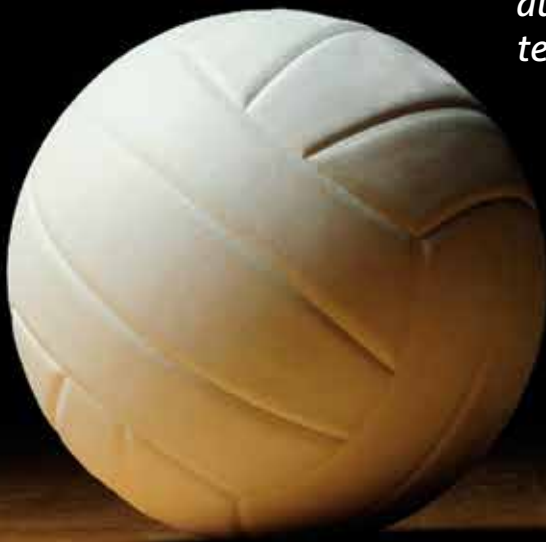


RETURN TO THE 'SHIP

By Nicole Stejskal

Taking home the state championship is what high school sports teams live for. It's a goal that often goes unstated, acknowledged only by dedicating long hours to grueling practices and bringing a competitive spirit to regular season play.

For three Shawnee County volleyball teams, dreams of hoisting the state trophy fell short during last year's tournament. While each team's focus is different, this season's end goal is the same — to fight with a vengeance and capture what they believe is rightfully theirs.





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HAYDEN

2010 Class 4A
State Runner-Up



Varsity Leaders (l to r): Nicole Henderson, Maura McGivern, Nicole Federico, Carrie Cummings

The history between two sports teams often determines the level of intensity in the matches between them, and when it comes to 4A high school volleyball, no one can beat the rivalry between Hayden and Saint James.

In the last four seasons, these two teams have faced off in the state championship. After Hayden prevailed in the 2007 title match, Saint James went on to oust the Wildcats from their state title spot three years running, including last season's championship match.

As Hayden's coach, it's difficult for Jessica Farmer to watch her players work hard to get to the title match, only to fall once again to their arch rivals.

"We always play pretty close with them, but they always seem to get us," said Farmer. "I think in last year's title game, they just came out being the better team in the end. I think our girls played really well, but there were some experience factors that made the difference."

That experience will once again play a factor this season, as the Wildcats lost seven seniors and return only two starters. Farmer hopes that their strength of schedule will help the girls gain valuable playing experience against tough competitors in the regular season.

"We're trying to take a young, inexperienced team and make them into a veteran team fast," said Farmer. "Our

schedule is pretty tough, but we made it that way because we wanted to prepare them for the end. We thought if we gave them the tough games at tournaments, then they'd be ready to go for the post season."

Throughout the regular season, Farmer looks to focus on improving the team's skills defensively and finding a consistent rotation that works for each of the players. As the girls work to increase their experience as a team, Farmer hopes her seniors will take the lead in bringing everyone else up to speed.

"The seniors have been here for four years, and they know what it feels like to be in a state tournament," said Farmer. "I look for these girls to be leaders and work to get our young players up to their experience level. All four seniors are very positive people, so I think they'll have a good influence on the other girls."

It is likely that the Wildcats will meet their rivals again in this year's state tournament, and Farmer plans to have them ready not only through playing experience, but mental preparation as well. She believes it's important for the girls to have faith and confidence in themselves in order to play well with the championship on the line.

"They're amazing players, so it's just a matter of getting that game experience, and getting them to trust in each other will go a long way."

FAST FACTS

Coach Jessica Farmer (7th year)
League Centennial
Returning Varsity Players 2

TOP MATCHES

October 1 Lawrence Tournament
October 11 Washburn Rural Quad
October 13 Bishop Miege
October 15 Blue Valley North
October 22 Sub-State
October 28 State
October 29 State

KEY PLAYERS

Nicole Henderson
Defensive Specialist, #14, Senior
"My role is to encourage other teammates to do their best."

Maura McGivern
Outside Hitter, #9, Senior
"My role is to make a kill every time."

Nicole Federico
Rightside Hitter, #26, Senior
"My role is to contribute leadership and a positive attitude."

Carrie Cummings
Middle Hitter, #7, Senior
"My role is to keep the team's spirits up."

SHAWNEE HEIGHTS

2010 Class 5A
State Third Place



Varsity Leaders (l to r): Cassie Steuart, Kylee Kennedy, Haley Brun, Hallie Williams

To perform as a championship caliber team, it often takes the right combination of talent and experience. It comes as no surprise then that, with a young coach and a young team, Shawnee Heights' run to the state tournament last season was what many would call a Cinderella story.

Coach Carolyn Raynes believes that it all started in the sub-state tournament. After easily winning their first round game, the Thunderbirds were matched up with Gardner-Edgerton, the tournament's number one seed and an overall tough competitor.

"We had lost to [Gardner-Edgerton] earlier in the season, so it was do or die at that point," said Raynes. "The girls came out and played their hearts out though, and we ended up beating them."

The victory sent the team to the state tournament, and after winning all three games in their pool, the Thunderbirds fell to Bishop Miege in the semifinals. After a game that felt like Bishop Miege could do no wrong, Raynes and her team set their sights on more than just a place in the state tournament this season.

"A lot of times, when you play those tough teams in the state tournament, they don't make mistakes," said Raynes. "So, our goal going into this season is to figure out how we can be that team that doesn't make mistakes. If we lose a point, we need to learn how to bounce back and not lose the next four points."

For Raynes, one of the keys to eliminating errors on the court this season was to implement two-a-day practices before school started.

"One thing I realized last year was that we started playing so fast," said Raynes. "I didn't feel like we got enough practices in. I barely had a lineup when we started our first match, so doing two-a-days was important for us because we got to spend more time together. We've been trying to figure out where kids are going to fit best so we can eliminate as many mistakes as possible."

Although the Thunderbirds are returning five young varsity players, Raynes' expectations are still set very high. She hopes that as natural leaders, the girls will step up and set the example for younger team members.

"I expect them to keep the level of competition up throughout the season," said Raynes. "They know what it feels like to get to state and what it takes to get there, so I hope that throughout the season, they keep our level of intensity very high."

While the players' sights are set on the state championship game, Raynes knows the importance of taking things one step at a time.

"We always want to be there in the long run, but we try to keep our goals week by week knowing that if we reach those goals, we will make it to state."

FAST FACTS

Coach Carolyn Raynes (2nd year)
League Centennial
Returning Varsity Players 5

TOP MATCHES

October 1 Lawrence Tournament
October 8 Manhattan Tournament
October 11 Home Quad
October 15 Emporia Tournament
October 22 Sub-State
October 28 State
October 29 State

KEY PLAYERS

Cassie Steuart
Setter, #3, Junior

"My role is to deliver a ball that the hitters can hit, and play smart."

Kylee Kennedy
Outside Hitter, #11, Senior

"My role is to keep everyone pumped up during the season."

Haley Brun
Defensive Specialist, #2, Junior

"My role is to make sure a lot of talking is happening on the court."

Hallie Williams
Middle Hitter, #6, Junior

"My role is to block, hit and keep everyone positive."

WASHBURN RURAL

2010 Class 6A
State Third Place



Varsity Leaders (l to r): Whitney Gifford, Peyton Evans, Dani Musselman, Sarah Williams

Bringing home a state championship trophy creates a sense of pride and accomplishment in a school's volleyball program. Capturing the title for multiple seasons takes that pride to the next level, turning a season-long goal into an expectation for success.

For Washburn Rural, the expectation of winning the state tournament last year was a no-brainer. After taking the crown four consecutive years prior to last season, most people naturally assumed that the Junior Blues would be in the championship match. However, after a loss in the semifinals to Manhattan, a team they had beat twice in the regular season, coach Kevin Bordewick couldn't help but feel disappointed in the team's performance.

"Not many teams get to say they were third place at state, and we did, and we still felt bad about it," said Bordewick. "Every time we walked by the trophy case after last year, it left a bitter taste in our mouths. We're at that point where we're pretty greedy, and we want to be in that championship match."

Bordewick attributes much of the loss to the team's inability to handle the pressure, a preparation mistake he takes the blame for. With the frustration of the semifinal loss in the back of their minds, Bordewick's focus for the players this season is to keep their heads in the game and their emotions off the court.

"You can't let emotions get in the way of the job you have to do," said Bordewick. "Emotions are only going to carry you so far in a match. You've got to maintain your composure, even if things aren't going well, and I think that's one thing we've got to emphasize."

Maintaining that focus throughout the season is something Bordewick looks to his returning varsity players for help with. In addition to their state tournament experience, Bordewick gives the players an opportunity to pass their knowledge and skills along to younger team members.

"When we have open gym time, I let the older girls go through the drills, and I just sit back and watch," said Bordewick. "I let them coach and help the younger ones. I think when I do that, it helps the older girls with their leadership responsibilities, and it allows them ownership in the program and a say in what goes on."

Despite falling short of the ultimate goal last season, Bordewick believes that if this group of players can shift their focus in the right direction, the state title will easily be in their reach.

"I think every year is different, and even though we have a lot of returners, it's going to be a different group," said Bordewick. "We've got a chip on our shoulder, but if we use that in the right way, I look for good things from them this season."

FAST FACTS

Coach Kevin Bordewick (17th year)
League Centennial
Returning Varsity Players 6

TOP MATCHES

October 4 Manhattan Quad
October 8 Derby Tournament
October 11 Home Quad
October 13 Olathe East
October 15 Emporia Tournament
October 22 Sub-State
October 28 State
October 29 State

KEY PLAYERS

Whitney Gifford
Defensive Specialist, #21, Senior
"My role is to play as well as our former defensive specialist did."

Peyton Evans
Setter, #3, Senior
"My role is to play smart and be accurate with my sets."

Dani Musselman
Outside Hitter, #7, Senior
"My role is to stay mentally tough for my team."

Sarah Williams
Rightside Hitter, #24, Senior
"My role is to be ready to play in whatever position my team needs."



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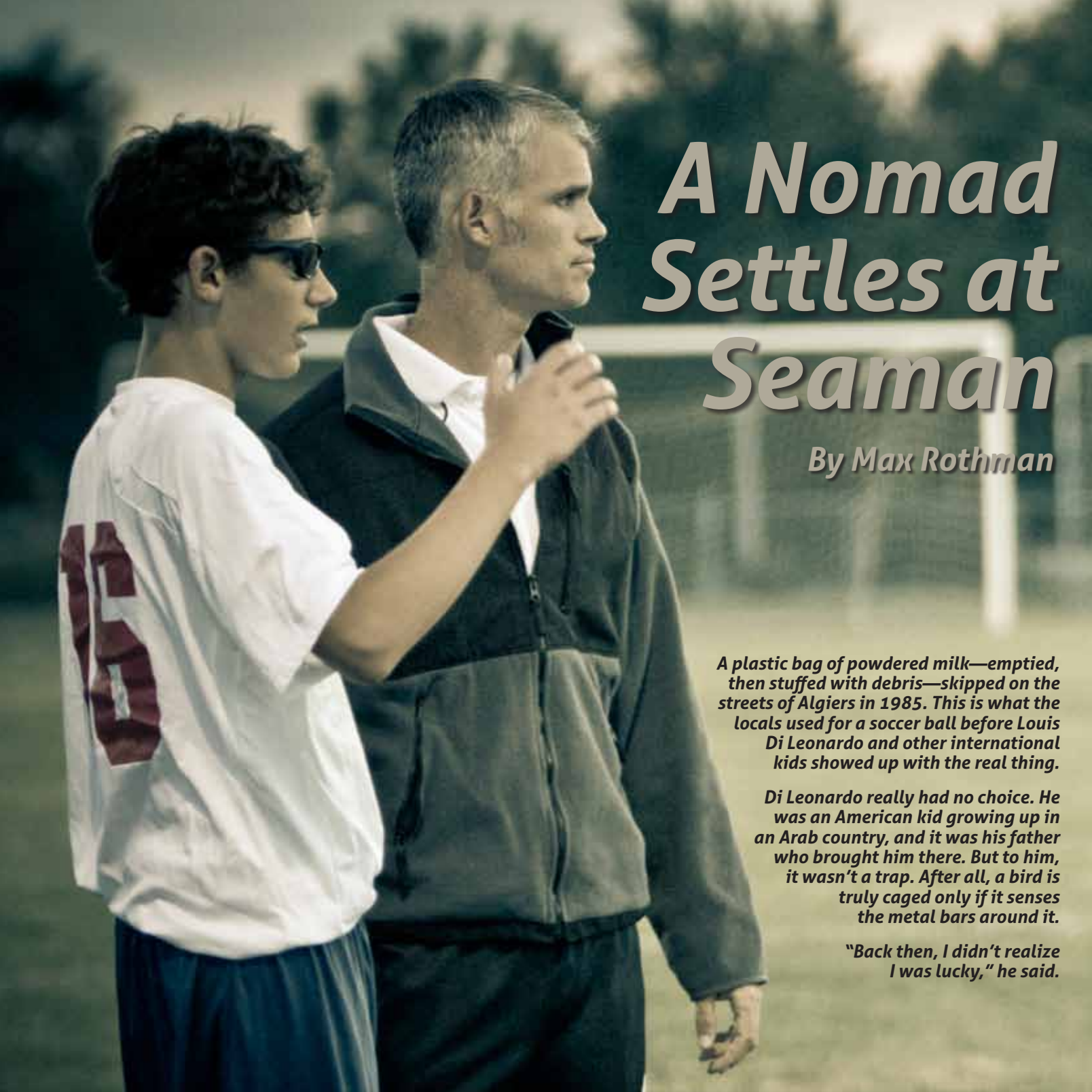
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A Nomad Settles at Seaman

By Max Rothman

A plastic bag of powdered milk—emptied, then stuffed with debris—skipped on the streets of Algiers in 1985. This is what the locals used for a soccer ball before Louis Di Leonardo and other international kids showed up with the real thing.

Di Leonardo really had no choice. He was an American kid growing up in an Arab country, and it was his father who brought him there. But to him, it wasn't a trap. After all, a bird is truly caged only if it senses the metal bars around it.

"Back then, I didn't realize I was lucky," he said.



Di Leonardo, head coach of the soccer teams at Seaman High School, returns after arguably his most successful season as a coach—the boy's team finished fourth in the state tournament, and the girl's team reached the state quarterfinals.

"Once again, the expectations are high," he said.

Traveling the world

Di Leonardo has dealt with lofty expectations his whole life, no matter where he was living. His father served with the U.S. Army in Vietnam, and later in Beirut, Lebanon, where Di Leonardo was born in 1974. The family lived in Beirut for a year before moving to U.S. Army forts in California, Kansas and Virginia.

While the family was stationed in Fort Leavenworth, Kan., his father learned Arabic and played soccer against his peers. Di Leonardo, seven years old at the time, watched his father play the sport the hard way.

"[After playing], he'd have to go get stitches," he said.

Learning the sport

After a few years in Kansas and Virginia, the family moved to Algiers, Algeria. Di Leonardo attended the American School of Algiers, an international academy in Algeria's capital with just a few local attendees.

Recess at school was where Di Leonardo honed his skills as an athlete. Kids from all continents played soccer on a dirt field bordered by a 3-foot cement wall and a 7-foot fence. The large, rectangular goals were constructed with 2-inch plumbing pipes. All types of skills were showcased.

Olaf, a tall and lanky Norwegian, taught him control.

"He was very good at shielding the ball and keeping you away," Di Leonardo said.

Mohammed, a local, flashed incredible footwork. The Nigerians zoomed down the dirt field at astonishing speeds, keeping the ball close to their feet.

"You get to see all these different styles, and you learn a little bit from each one," he said.

For a kid who craved soccer, the social and athletic environment of Algiers was ideal. But terrorist organizations began to threaten Americans living there, and Di Leonardo's father was re-stationed to Heidelberg, Germany halfway through Di Leonardo's seventh grade year.

Fueling the drive

Heidelberg may have been nothing more than the next stop on the endless journey of an army family, but it was also home to a highly competitive soccer environment. Di Leonardo attended the Heidelberg American School, where boy's soccer was a spring sport.

To make the team, Di Leonardo had to compete against the fall football players, a competition that strengthened his game. After earning a spot on the team, he refined his soccer skills against premier talent for his age.

In Algiers, he learned. In Heidelberg, he blossomed.

Teaching the youth

After Germany, Di Leonardo returned with his family to the United States and played soccer at the University of Saint Mary in Leavenworth, Kan.

He was skilled and passionate for the game of soccer, but he knew that he couldn't make a career of playing the sport. That's when Di Leonardo got into education.

After graduating from Saint Mary, he took a teaching job at Washburn Rural Alternative High School, where he was tasked with educating kids who didn't want to learn.

"After being there five years, it's tough on you," he said.

In 2003, Seaman High School hired Di Leonardo because of his versatility as both an English and history teacher. The soccer coaching job only sweetened the opportunity.

Rebuilding the team

When Di Leonardo took over the soccer coaching job at Seaman, the girl's team needed work. They had only recorded one winning season in the program's history, and the team didn't have enough players.

In his first few seasons, Di Leonardo had to recruit in the school's hallways just to find enough girls to play. Since he started coaching, the girl's team hasn't had a losing season, and in the last five years, the team has made the state quarterfinals four times.

With a boy's team well equipped from the start, Di Leonardo has notched seven winning seasons in nine years as the head coach.

"If we don't win, we've got to figure out what we did wrong," Di Leonardo said. "That's what life is about."

Coaching the future

Junior defender Cody Scheck said that Di Leonardo favors ball possession over long, risky kicks.

"American soccer is all about kicking it up the field," Scheck said. "That doesn't really work."

Checking the ball backwards and keeping possession is typical of good European teams, and it's a style Di Leonardo brought back with him from Algiers and Heidelberg.

"He knows how to teach proper team defense and good etiquette on the field," Scheck said.

In addition to coaching, Di Leonardo has his own boys to take care of—7-year-old Landon, 5-year-old Grayson and 2-year-old Owen.

While Di Leonardo's mother never let him play football, his sons are starting to show some interest in the sport. Of course, he would like them to be soccer players, but he realizes that it's not his decision. Soccer gave Di Leonardo more than just a ball and a grass field. His kids may choose another sport, but that's something he can live with.

"They've got to find their own way."



cole foster, #15
senior, shawnee heights

tyus jacob, #5
senior, topeka high



hayden vs manhattan



topeka west vs washburn

SOCCER



HIGHLAND park vs hayden

Football



ALEX SCHMIDTBERGER, #40
SENIOR, HAYDEN



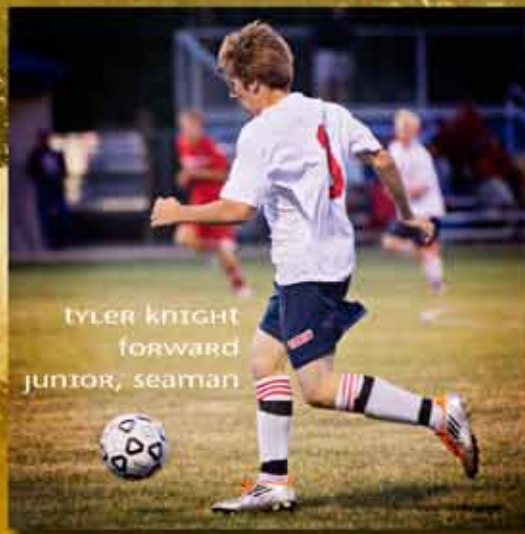
RURAL



Hayden vs manhattan



CODY SCHNECK
FORWARD
JUNIOR, SEAMAN



TYLER KNIGHT
FORWARD
JUNIOR, SEAMAN



VICTOR ORTEGA, GOALIE
JUNIOR, HIGHLAND PARK

Brave in the Attempt

By Karen Ridder



Allison Nichols may not always win, but she is always brave in the attempt.

As a junior at Washburn Rural High School, Allison's strongest subject is math. She loves reality TV, show tunes and musical movies like "Mamma Mia." She was also born with Down syndrome, which makes participation in her other love—sports—an inspiration.

Year-Round Competitor

This fall, Allison can be found on the volleyball court twice a week and at the bowling alley once a week preparing for regional and state Special Olympics competitions. For ten years, she has participated in these sports, and her competitive spirit has grown. Her additional involvement in basketball, swimming, track and cheerleading makes competition a year-round pursuit.

Team Camaraderie

For Allison, stepping on the court is not just about the competition. It's also about the camaraderie she finds with athletes matched to her abilities. And the Special Olympics playing field is one where athletes care as much about the other competitors as they do about themselves.

"They have the biggest hearts ever. They could be competing

against each other, and if one of them fell down, everyone would stop immediately and go pick them up," explains Allison's mother, Mary Kay Nichols. "They care about each other. It's amazing how wonderful they are."

Positive Attitude

In that sense, all Special Olympics athletes are an inspiration, but Allison displays the best of this team spirit. A contagious optimism and confidence pours out of her. Allison's sense of humor keeps people on their toes and exemplifies her positive approach to life.

"I usually have a smile because I like being in sports," says Allison.

Allison is the type of person to say "Heck yeah" or "No problem" when asked to help—an attitude that sets her apart from the crowd. She also thrives on not only doing well for herself, but encouraging others to do well, too.

Coach Mike Multer says Allison has a positive influence on the team.

"Any time anyone is doing well, she's cheering them on," he says. "If she's not playing, she's on the bench cheering the team on."

Because of the physical and mental challenges some of her fellow teammates face, it is not uncommon for someone to have a difficult day. Allison's response is often to

give them a hug or offer words of encouragement. That example of compassion is something Multer believes all athletes can benefit from, no matter what level their abilities.

Attempt = Victory

The Special Olympics program focuses on trying your best and working hard, but also realizing that the attempt itself is a victory. However, the athletes are very competitive, and they set winning as their first goal. The words, "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt," is a mantra Allison and her teammates repeat at the beginning of practice. It is a reminder that the willingness to try your best is what's important. The Special Olympics is an opportunity for people who don't typically find themselves in the positive center of attention to receive accolades and celebrate their achievements.

Inspiring Confidence

When asked how she wanted to inspire others, Allison answered that she'd like people to know that, "I'm smart, and I'm brave." It's an answer that reminds people that she doesn't want to be prejudged. Allison is aware of her disability, but she doesn't let it hold her back. She has an approach to life both on and off the court that is bold and confident. Older sister Katie Deichl says Allison's confidence is something that keeps her inspired, too.

"She doesn't worry about how people will react to her. She just wins their heart instantly," says Katie. "It's the way she approaches her whole life that's taught me to worry less about what people will think of me. It's served me pretty well. She's an amazing kid."

Allison's Achievements

10m Unassisted Swim 1st Place	15m Flotation 1st Place	20m Unassisted Swim 1st Place
100m Run 4th Place	50m Dash 4th Place	4x100m Relay 1st Place

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High School

Topeka West High School

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- All-City first team
- All I-70 League first team
- Nominated as a Carnation All-American
- Designated as a top five quarterback in the U.S.

College

University of Missouri

- Three-year starting quarterback
- Played in the 1983 Holiday Bowl
- Played in the 1985 Senior Bowl

Professional

National Football League

- Drafted in the 10th round of the 1986 draft as a wide receiver/tight end
- Played one season with the Pittsburgh Steelers
- Played one season with the New York Giants

Canadian Football League

- Played one season with Hamilton Tiger-Cats

Coaching

Topeka West High School

- Head football coach for 15 seasons
- Coached in the 5A state championship game in 2002

Kansas Koyotes

- Head coach for two seasons
- Won American Professional Football League titles in 2004 & 2005

Nemaha Valley High School

- Current athletic director & head football coach

1) What is the biggest difference between playing in the NFL versus playing football in high school and college?

"The atmosphere is a lot different in high school and college because all of the guys are close to the same age, and you hang out with them a lot. On the professional level, there are guys that are 22 or 23, and there are guys that are 35 or 36 that are in a different place in their lives. They have wives and kids, where some of the younger guys don't, so you don't hang out with as many guys at the professional level."

2) Did you always have the desire to be a teacher and a coach?

"No, I discovered it after I was out of college when I helped coach football at Highland Park High School as an assistant for a year. I really enjoyed working with high school kids and athletics, so that's what made me want to go back to school and get my teaching certificate."

3) What was it like to return to Topeka West and coach for your former high school football coach, Frank Walton?

"I loved it because I always looked up to him as a coach. He was a great motivator, and he was my mentor early on in my coaching career, so I enjoyed being his assistant."

4) Is there anything in your coaching career that really stands out to you?


"The relationships I've had with the players and the work, sweat and tears they've put in for me really stands out. I've had a lot of guys who have gone on to be very successful, and that's always satisfying as a coach to see."

5) Looking back on your career as an athlete and a coach, what are you most proud of?

"I am most proud of living up to my potential as an athlete and sticking it out, because there are some very tough times you go through in college and on the professional level, and I've never been one to give up."

The Topeka Shawnee County Sports Council inducted Seitz into its Hall of Fame in 2011.

5 Questions for Warren Seitz



“Do right. Do your best.
Treat others as you want
to be treated.”

--Lou Holtz

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