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ALL-REGION RECAP

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Winter Sports



GIRLS WRESTLING

Sokolski, Whiting share top honor

Both won state titles this winter

By **MORGAN RODE**
Sports Editor

Girls wrestling continues to grow around the state. Our area is helping lead the charge, with some of the best wrestlers in the state coming from right here.

Bonduel's Maddy Sokolski and Oconto Falls' Taylor Whiting capped impressive seasons with state titles and were named the NEW Media Inc. Co-Wrestlers of the Year for their achievements.

Both wrestlers spent the year listed as the No. 1 wrestlers in their weight class by www.wisconsingrappler.com and then backed up the hype at state in Madison.

Sokolski went 16-0 this season and then won the 138-pound weight class to cap her sophomore season.

"Changing my mindset from freshman year to this year played a huge role in my success," said Sokolski. "Wrestling boys for most of the year is definitely not easy and keeping a tough mindset is so important. Staying humble is also important to me, because rankings mean nothing to me. Since there isn't a lot of knowledge about girls wrestling yet, because it's still new and still growing, rankings aren't the most accurate."

Whiting went 24-1 this winter and emerged atop the 107 weight class as just a freshman.

"This season was filled with ups and downs which I believe pushed me to constantly get better through the season," said Whiting.

Sokolski was a first-place finisher at the WWCA Challenge Series Girls Tournament and Shawano Round Robin this winter.



Bonduel's Maddy Sokolski, top, wrestles during the 2023 WIAA state individual wrestling tournament at the Kohl Center in Madison.

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At state, she advanced to the first-place match with three pins in a combined 127 seconds. In the state title match, she won a 7-0 decision, meaning none of her state opponents scored on her.

"Like I said before, my mindset has changed so much compared to last year, and before matches I usually visualize moves while I'm getting warm," said Sokolski.

"My favorite moment this year was

definitely winning state. It has been a dream of mine since I was 3. Seeing how proud I have made my brothers and parents means a lot to me also. I've looked up to both my brothers Mitch and Max my entire life."

Whiting took first this winter at tournaments in Brillion, Menasha and Peshtigo, along with the Wisconsin Challenge Series.

Whiting won two matches at sectionals to advance to state. She opened

state with a 51-second pin before outscoring her next two opponents 29-7. In the title match, she claimed a 4-0 decision.

"I told myself many times rankings do not matter, no matter who I am wrestling I will wrestle them like it is the state finals," said Whiting. "Before I stepped on the mat I think about all the work I have put in and how I trained for these tournaments. I go in prepared mentally and physically."

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"My favorite moment of this season would be after my state final when I looked into the stands and saw my brother (Clayton — the 2022 area Wrestler of the Year) standing on the railings. It was a moment I will never forget knowing that I have a brother like him. I was filled with so many emotions in that moment but the first thing I wanted to do was go see him."

Honorable mentions

The area advanced 11 girls, including Sokolski and Whiting, to state this year, and several others just missed out on state trips.

Sokolski was one of three Bonduel girls that placed at state. Hailey Berg placed fourth and ended the year with a 22-5 record, while Kaitlyn Kroening capped off an 11-8 season with a sixth-place finish at state.

Onna Hermann and Courtney Schenk were state qualifiers for Shawano. Hermann capped the year with a 20-9 record, while Schenk went 15-9.

Pulaski's Marna Andre placed sixth at state and went 14-7 this season. Laci Lemke and Leah Kapla missed out on state, but had strong records of 17-9 and 19-5, respectively.

Suring/Gillett's Parker Zahn was at state and finished 9-5 this season.



Oconto Falls' Taylor Whiting, top wrestles a match at the 2023 WIAA state individual wrestling tournament at the Kohl Center in Madison.

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BOYS BASKETBALL

Metcalf-Grassman the area's top player

Marion tabbed top team after memorable year

By MORGAN RODE
Sports Editor

The winter boys basketball season was highlighted by special individual performances and some memorable team moments.

Shawano was in the hunt for a Bay Conference title all season behind Michael Metcalf-Grassman, who was named the NEW Media Inc. Player of the Year. It marks the second straight season Metcalf-Grassman earned the honor, but this time he received it outright.

"Tons of hard work in the offseason, and I wouldn't have been able to do it with my team," said Metcalf-Grassman on what helped him have another big season.

Metcalf-Grassman, known to the Shawano faithful as MMG, averaged 20.3 points, 7.6 rebounds, 3.4 assists, 1.9 steals and 0.8 assists in his senior season.

Despite being the known go-to guy for the Hawks, Metcalf-Grassman shot an efficient 53% overall.

"Again, I put in a lot of hard work this offseason to improve my game in areas where I struggled last year," said Metcalf-Grassman. "Additionally, the help of my team to put me in positions to succeed helped as well."

The senior enjoyed some big-time scoring games and put together many clutch plays to help his team win games. Through it all, crossing the 1,000-point milestone for his high school career — which included just six games before his junior season — was his favorite individual moment.

"Scoring my 1,000th point against Xavier was something I will never forget," said Metcalf-Grassman. "The moment was so much cooler than I imagined it to be. It was awesome to be surrounded by family and friends."

The Shawano senior is set to continue his basketball career at UW-Oshkosh in the years to come.

Honorable mentions

As mentioned before, the amount of individual talent was strong in the area, with several area teams having



Shawano's Michael Metcalf-Grassman leaps up to dunk the ball during the team's win over New London on Jan. 21 in Shawano.

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a guy or two lead the charge.

Derek Shaw led Pulaski this winter and served as one of the top shooters in the entire state. Shaw, who capped his season competing in the state 3-point challenge, averaged 19.6 points, 3.9 rebounds, 3.8 assists and 1.1 steals per game.

Emmitt Kietlinski and Beau Brunner guided Bowler. Kietlinski averaged 15.5 points, 9 rebounds, 2.1 assists, 1.2 steals and 0.6 steals, while Brunner was at 13.3 points, 6.6 boards, 4.6 assists, 3.1 steals and 1.7 blocks.

Parker Miller led a pretty bal-

anced Marion squad. He averaged 15 points, 10.1 rebounds, 3.6 assists and 2.8 steals.

Jesse DeBauch and Austin VandeCorput were the leaders of Gillett's team. DeBauch finished with averages of 15.8 points, 5.1 rebounds, 3.5 assists and 2.7 steals, while VandeCorput averaged 14 points, 5.7 rebounds, 1.3 blocks, 1.6 assists and 1.1 steals.

Alex Haines enjoyed a solid season despite Oconto Falls struggling to earn many wins. He averaged 12.2 points, 5.1 boards, 3.1 assists, 1.4 steals and 0.8 blocks.

Tigerton was paced by Ryder Graham, who averaged 14.4 points, 7.2 rebounds, 1.8 assists and 1.3 steals.

Mason Meverden averaged 15.1 points, 7.8 rebounds 1.9 assists and 1.3 steals per contest for Wittenberg-Biramwood.

Isaiah Moss tallied averages of 20.6 points, 7.7 boards, 4.3 assists, 2.8 steals and 0.6 blocks for Menominee Indian.

Also in the Central Wisconsin Conference-East Division, Bonduel's Noah Weier and Ryan Westrich led Bonduel with 13.4 points a game. Weier also averaged 6.8 rebounds, 3.9 assists, 1.8 steals and 0.8 blocks, while Westrich had 8.3 boards and 1.8 blocks a game.

While Metcalf-Grassman led Shawano, he did get some help from a few teammates. Jacob Landon averaged 11.8 points, 5.2 rebounds and 3 assists, Brandon Reed added 10.9 points, 5.3 boards and 1.8 assists and Logan Sipple had 10.9 points, 3.4 rebounds and 1.1 assists a game.

Team of the Year

Marion is the Team of the Year after winning a conference title for the first time in 55 years. The Mustangs split the CWC-North crown with Northland Lutheran.

While it wasn't always pretty for Marion, the team had the ability to rally from double-digit deficits on several occasions to earn some crucial wins.

Only four of the team's players will graduate in the spring, with its top-three scorers returning next winter.

Marion also upset Northland Lutheran for a postseason win this winter, the program's first in 11 years.



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BOYS WRESTLING

Gauderman, Young named top wrestlers

Shawano earns Team of the Year nod this winter

By **MORGAN RODE**
Sports Editor

Area boys wrestlers put together another strong season on the mats this winter.

A whopping 17 boys qualified for state, with Shawano's Caden Young and Wittenberg-Birnamwood's David Gauderman earning the top finishes. Young and Gauderman share the NEW Media Inc. Wrestler of the Year honor after their big seasons.

Gauderman placed second in the Division 3 285-pound weight class as a senior. He had an impressive 51-2 record.

"All of my hard work in the weight room and the practice room really helped me on the mats," said Gauderman. "My coaches always pushed me to do my best, and that's what I strive for every day."

Young was the second-place finisher in the Division 1 170 weight class. He finished his senior year with a 47-6 mark.

"I put in thousands of hours on the mat and in the gym year-round so I can wrestle to the best of my abilities," said Young. "All of the out-of-season training really helped put together the season I had."

With a nearly unblemished record all season, Gauderman spent the year atop the rankings put out by www.wisconsinrappler.com.

Gauderman won invites in Neenah, Green Bay, Merrill and Sturgeon Bay during the regular season before taking first at the Central Wisconsin Conference Tournament.



Wittenberg-Birnamwood's David Gauderman, left, wrestles a match during the 2023 WIAA state individual wrestling tournament at the Kohl Center in Madison.

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"I stayed humble by respecting every opponent," said Gauderman. "For each and every match, I had the same mindset going into it — to dominate. I never overlooked

anyone, and that's what made me successful."

On his way to state, Gauderman had to win five matches at regionals and sectionals. All but one of those

wins were by pin, with the other being a 16-1 technical fall.

Gauderman earned two more pins at state before falling in the state title match.

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“My favorite individual moment was unlacing my wrestling shoes for the last time. It was a very sad moment, but I was happy with the way my 13-year career ended knowing I left everything on the table,” said Gauderman.

Young also was near the top of the state rankings all year, but he didn’t get complacent. In fact, it worked as a motivational factor for the senior.

“Honestly, all year-round I looked at the rankings and thought to myself that I was ranked too low,” said Young. “So I kinda used that as a chip on my shoulder to continue to get better. Every match I try to treat the same, and the amount of time I have in put into the sport just gives me confidence and the ability to get my mind right before any match.”

While Young wasn’t able to secure many top finishes in invites during the regular season, he was consistently getting to the first-place matches and racking up tons of valuable experience along the way.

After helping the Hawks win the Bay Conference title, Young saw his fortunes change in first-place matches in the postseason. Young placed first at both regionals and sectionals, with several lopsided victories along the way.

At state, the convincing wins kept coming, as Young took down his first two opponents by 10-2 major decisions. Young earned a hard-fought 3-1 win in overtime in the state semifinals, which was his favorite individual moment from the winter.

“Just a crazy match with a lot at stake and to get a takedown with no time left to make it to the state finals was amazing,” said Young. “Then to see the reactions of everyone watching and especially my coaches was truly great to be a part of.”

Honorable mentions

Six area teams sent boys wrestlers to state this winter, with several going on to place in the top six.

Pulaski’s Trenton Gibbons capped a memorable career with a third-place finish and 43-4 overall record. Broc Ambrosius (21-14) and Mason Wells (10-3) also got to state, with Wells overcoming an early-season injury along the way.

Bonduel’s brother duo of Tyson and Jaxon Bogacz were at state alongside Colin Fischer. Tyson Bogacz placed fourth and finished the year 44-3. Jaxon Bogacz went 41-9, while Fischer was 29-15.

Oconto Falls’ Cole Bozile and Garrett Ganter were also state qual-



Shawano’s Caden Young, top wrestles during the 2023 WIAA state individual wrestling tournament at the Kohl Center in Madison.

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FYI

Girls and boys wrestlers were factored into determining the Team of the Year.

ifiers. Bozile took fourth at state and capped the year with a 52-9 record, while Ganter went 47-12.

Both of Lena’s boys state qualifiers placed. Dylan Comins placed fourth and finished the season 52-11. Luke Misco capped an injury-filled high school career with a memorable fifth-place finish and 37-6 mark.

Witt-Birn’s Devin Wudtke (41-13), Ben Miller (40-13), Andres Sanchez (39-11) and Nathan Waupekenay (30-13) all joined Gauderman down at state.

Carson Herm (38-13) was a second Shawano boy at state.

Team of the Year

Shawano is the area Team of the Year after winning the Bay title for a fifth straight season.

The Hawks were perfect in Bay duals and had 10 total wrestlers make an all-conference team.

Eight boys wrestlers went on to qualify for sectionals, while eight girls also wrestled. Along with its four total state qualifiers, three girls missed out on state by one place.

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GIRLS BASKETBALL

Rogowski tabbed area's top player

Bonduel the top team after winning 2 titles

By **MORGAN RODE**
Sports Editor

Area girls basketball teams enjoyed another successful winter on the courts, with several individuals and a few teams standing out.

Wittenberg-Birnamwood's Reese Rogowski capped her strong high school career with another big season and earned the NEW Media Inc. Player of the Year honor for her efforts.

"I had a lot of confidence coming into this season. I understood our system really well, and I had great support from all of my teammates," said Rogowski on what helped her have a big season.

Even with a talented freshmen class joining the team, Rogowski still led the Chargers in several statistics.

The senior averaged 19.1 points, 4.5 rebounds, 4.6 assists, 4 steals and 1.9 blocks over the team's 25-game season.

Despite being a focal point for opposing teams and having most of her shot attempts being jumpshots, Rogowski made nearly 42% of her shots. She was just under 36% as a 3-point shooter.

"I used to rely on the dribble getting open more, but this year I had to expand offensively by working hard to get open off of the ball," said Rogowski.

Rogowski, a track and field commit to North Dakota State University, had a handful of special moments during her basketball career, but her favorite individual moment was when she topped 1,000 career points in a conference win over Menominee Indian on Dec. 16. She scored 30 points in the contest.

"One of my favorite individual moments this year was reaching 1,000 points in my home gym, because I had no idea that I was gonna reach 1,000 points that game so it was a good surprise and special moment when I realized that I did," said Rogowski.

Rogowski had a difficult time narrowing down her favorite team moment from the winter, but that had a lot to do with the team's overall success.



Wittenberg-Birnamwood's Reese Rogowski smiles before making a pass during the team's conference win over Shiocton on Dec. 2 in Wittenberg.

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"This whole season was exciting because we were always competing for the conference championship and a high playoff seed, so the whole season was special in that aspect," Rogowski said.

Honorable mentions

Pretty much every area girls team

had a player or two that led the way.

Freshman Leah Nordin powered Shawano this winter. She averaged 20.7 points, 10.4 rebounds, 2 assists, 4.1 steals and 0.5 blocks per game.

Bonduel had a special season behind a pretty balanced approach. Hailey Zernicke and Ella Hischke most often led the team. Zernicke averaged

12.6 points, 7.6 boards, 1.8 assists, 1 steal and 1 block, while Hischke had 11.4 points, 4.2 rebounds, 4.2 assists, 2.6 steals and 0.2 blocks.

Mariah Fish and Kaysha Wilber were the leaders for Menominee Indian. Fish averaged 15.6 points, 5.6 rebounds, 3.2 assists and 1.8 steals. Wilber contributed 13.4 points, 6.3 rebounds, 2.3 assists, 2.5 steals and 0.6 blocks.

Suring's Christine Sleeter was one of the top players in the Marinette & Oconto Conference this winter. Sleeter averaged 17.6 points, 9.1 boards, 3.3 blocks, 2.7 steals and 1.3 assists per contest.

Gillett's Carleigh Kaczmarek also had a strong senior season in the M&O. She averaged 15.4 points, 5 rebounds, 2.9 assists and 3.6 steals.

Sophomore Eva Brooks was Lena's leader, especially after senior Natalie McNurlen went down with an injury. Brooks averaged 13.4 points, 10.4 boards, 3 blocks, 2.6 steals and 2.6 assists.

Gresham made things look easy on its way to a CWC-North title, mostly using a balanced approach. Maddie Haffner led the team in points (13.4), rebounds (7.2), assists (2.7) and steals (3.1) as a junior.

Isabella Stevens also had a strong showing as a junior, averaging a double-double for Bowler. She finished the year with 12.9 points, 11.2 rebounds, 2.4 steals, 1.6 blocks and 0.9 assists per game.

Rory Salvesen and Melaina Granquist were part of the strong freshmen class at Witt-Birn. Salvesen averaged 15 points, 4.6 rebounds, 3 steals and 2.3 assists, while Granquist was at 10.5 points, 9.5 boards, 1.7 steals, 0.8 assists and 0.7 blocks.

Team of the Year

Bonduel is the area Team of the Year after its CWC-East and regional titles.

The Bears started the season 3-3 before getting hot. Bonduel lost just one game the rest of the regular season and finished 13-1 in the CWC-East to take the title.

Bonduel won two regional games to claim a Division 4 regional title before falling 42-40 to eventual state qualifier Mishicot.

Only three players — one starter — were seniors on the roster.

HOCKEY

Pulaski's Simons earns top honor again

Bay Area girls the top team after state title

By **MORGAN RODE**
Sports Editor

Scoring goals is what typically steals the highlights for hockey, but a strong goalie is key to a team's success.

Pulaski High School's Lincoln Simons wasn't only a strong goalie for the Ashwaubenon co-op this winter, but also was one of the top net defenders in the state. For his efforts in his senior season, Simons was named the NEW Media Inc. Player of the Year, marking the second straight year he's earned the honor.

"Having all the experience of being a starting goalie for four years really made this season a lot easier for me," said Simons on his big season. "Also while our team didn't score much, we played amazing defensively in front of me the entire season, which was a major factor in me succeeding this year."

In 25 total games this winter, Simons accumulated 548 saves. He only surrendered 42 goals on the season for a save percentage of .929. Simons helped the team to 15 wins and posted eight shutouts.

The senior had 525 saves and only 39 goals allowed during the regular season for a save percentage of .931. That save percentage was the fourth-best in the entire state for goalies who faced at least that many shots, and Simons just a couple ticks off their percentages.

"To put up great numbers once again my senior year felt amazing. To consistently be on the top of the save percentage leaderboard was also amazing for me to see," said Simons. "Granted our team didn't have the success we had hoped in playoffs, for me to still have good numbers all season made the season much better."

His eight shutouts tied for the most in the state during the regular season.

It was one of those shutouts that served as Simons' favorite memory from the winter season.

"My favorite game this year was definitely when we beat Fond du Lac 1-0," said Simons. "

This game was special because our two best defensemen were out this game and for me to still get a shutout and lead my team to victory in this game felt very good."

Simons' favorite team memory from the season was a 2-1 win over De Pere.

"De Pere every year we seem to lose, as that's who has eliminated us in playoffs the past two years, so to finally beat them as a team felt amazing," said Simons.

Honorable mentions

Simons wasn't the only Pulaski boys player to enjoy a successful season for the Ashwaubenon co-op.

Anthony Steffen finished the year with nine



Pulaski's Lincoln Simons reaches up to grab the puck during Ashwaubenon's Fox River Classic Conference matchup against Notre Dame on Jan. 7 at Cornerstone Community Center in Ashwaubenon.

MORGAN RODE | NEW MEDIA

goals and five assists for the co-op. Jackson Lampeur totaled 11 goals and five assists, while Caden Czyzewski had six goals and five assists.

Ethan Pullen and Zach Westcott served as defensemen and helped Simons protect the net. Pullen had two goals and six assists on the year, while Westcott had eight assists.

Wittenberg-Birnamwood's Owen Dickman enjoyed a big season while playing for the Antigo boys. Across 25 games, he scored 29 goals and assisted on 24 other goals.

Bonduel's Karson Stoss, Louis Hrabik and Gavin Hundt guided the Shawano co-op this winter. Stoss totaled 15 goals and eight assists on the season, while Hrabik had nine assists and six goals and Hundt tallied nine goals and five assists.

On the girls side of things, Pulaski's Faye Brunke turned in an impressive freshman season for the Bay Area Ice Bears. She posted 11 goals and seven assists on the year.

Team of the Year

Bay Area earns the Team of the Year honor after winning a state title.

The Ice Bears had Pulaski's Brunke, Briana Anundsen and Olympia Simons on the state roster.

Brunke scored a goal in the team's state semifinal win. Anundsen and Simons helped anchor the team's defense, which allowed just one goal across its two game at state.

BOYS SWIM

Pulaski's Lara the top boys swimmer

Shawano earns team honor

By **MORGAN RODE**
Sports Editor

Pulaski and Shawano served as the area's lone boys swim teams this winter season.

While no area swimmers were able to qualify for state, several were able to turn in strong results near the end of the season. Pulaski's Patrick Lara is the NEW Media Inc. Boys Swimmer of the Year for his efforts late in his junior season.

"I would say the thing that allowed me to put a strong season together was my team pushing me and me pushing my team — and my coach getting on me about arm rotation and kicking," said Lara.

Lara placed fifth in the 500-yard freestyle during the Division 1 Neenah Sectional with a time of 5 minutes, 17.47 seconds. That finish was Lara's favorite individual moment from the year.

"Taking it all and condensing it down to one favorite part is really difficult. But if I had to choose, I would say at sectionals when I broke my 500 free time. I was so happy and excited, can't wait to break it next year," said Lara.



Pulaski's Patrick Lara swims the 200-yard IM during the team's dual against Bay Port on Jan. 10 in Pulaski.

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Lara was a top-10 finisher in the 200 freestyle, coming in ninth in 1:58.15. That mark beat his seed time by nearly two seconds.

Lara was also on the team's seventh-place finishing 200 freestyle relay (1:37.68) and eighth-place finishing 400 freestyle relay (3:37.56). Both of those relay times were also better than their seed times coming in to the sectional.

The Pulaski junior's favorite team memory from the season wasn't some-

thing that occurred in the pool.

"My favorite team moment would have to go to Pizza Ranch," said Lara. "After a couple of the meets we swam, we went to Pizza Ranch and we all got a lot of food."

Honorable mentions

Pulaski's Jace Olson also turned in some solid times and finishes are the Neenah Sectional. He placed seventh in the 100 freestyle (52.92) and 11th in the 50 freestyle (23.85), while joining

Lara on the two relay teams.

Shawano's Ben Langlois earned two top-10 finishes at the Division 2 Ashwaubenon Sectional this winter. Langlois claimed seventh in the 200 freestyle (2:04.21) and eighth in the 100 butterfly (1:00.28). He was also on a fifth-place finishing 400 freestyle relay (3:54.01) and seventh-place finishing 200 freestyle relay (1:43.1).

Earlier in the season, Langlois took third in the 200 freestyle and fourth in the 100 butterfly during the Great Northern Conference Meet.

Team of the Year

Shawano earns the Team of the Year nod after taking fifth at the GNC Meet.

Along with Langlois' top-five finishes, the 200 medley relay team of Langlois, Braden Barkley, Daniel Bergmann and Jon Jumonville placed fourth.

Bergmann grabbed fifth in the 200 IM, while Barkley was sixth in the 100 backstroke. Baelyan Putz finished sixth in the 100 freestyle.

Putz, Barkley, Langlois and Brady Hannes teamed up for fifth in the 200 freestyle relay, while Putz, Jumonville, Hannes and Bergmann formed the fifth-place finishing 400 freestyle relay team.

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