

School Board Workshop:

March 9, 2026

Subject:

BHS Activities Fall 2025 Report

Presenter:

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BHS Activities Director**

SUGGESTED SCHOOL BOARD ACTION:

Report only.

DESCRIPTION: Season Summaries

Buffalo High School has officially wrapped up its fall activities for the 2025-26 school year. Our dedicated coaches and advisors have put together brief narratives reflecting on their respective seasons, which are now available for your review. These insights highlight the hard work, growth, and accomplishments of our students throughout the fall.

We'd like to take a moment to express our sincere appreciation for your continued support of activities at BHS. Your encouragement plays a vital role in the success of our students, and we're excited to share these season recaps with you. Thank you for being an integral part of our school community!

Hadestown: Teen Edition

By: Anais Mitchell is a Vermont-based singer-songwriter and the Tony and Grammy award-winning creator of the Broadway musical *Hadestown*, for which she wrote book, music and lyrics.

Fall Musical:

Director: Tracy Hagstrom Durant (45 total years directing high school theater)

Music Director: Zack Carlson-Giving

Choreographer: Julia Carter (former student)

Tech Director: Greg Bestland and Debb Bestland

Lighting Designer: Greg Bestland

PAC Manager: Joel Strand

Directing Asst.: Katie Pitchford and Drew Elo (former students)

Student Stage Manager: Margot Miller

Student Technical Director: Mitchell Nosbush

Stage Management Consultant: Jamie West (former student, volunteer)

Costumes: Jodi Klaphake and Jill Russek (volunteer)

Set Building Asst.: Mike Brovig-Trossen (volunteer)

Musical Synopsis

This intriguing and beautiful folk opera delivers a deeply resonant and defiantly hopeful

theatrical experience. Following two intertwining love stories – that of young dreamers Orpheus and Eurydice, and that of immortal King Hades and Lady Persephone – *Hadestown* invites audiences on a hell-raising journey to the underworld and back. Inspired by traditions of classic American folk music and vintage New Orleans jazz, Mitchell’s beguiling sung-through musical pits industry against nature, doubt against faith, and fear against love.

Origins of *Hadestown*

After its origins as a DIY community theatre project in 2006 and a studio album in 2010, *Hadestown* electrified audiences with its 2016 world premiere at New York Theatre Workshop, becoming the longest-running show in that celebrated theatre’s 40-year history. The production then received its Canadian premiere at Edmonton’s Citadel Theatre in 2017 and then a 2018 sold-out engagement at London’s National Theatre. *Hadestown* opened on Broadway at the Walter Kerr Theatre on April 17, 2019.

BHS Performances

November 14, 15, 21 @ 7:30 p.m. and 22 @ 2:00 p.m.

This year’s production featured 26 high school actors and more than 50 additional students working across our various crews. We were also supported by a pit orchestra that tackled exceptionally challenging music with skill and dedication. Our tech director, Greg Bestland, along with several student technicians, created a stunning, versatile, and symbolic set filled with intricate detail work—much of it completed by senior Tulli Youngquist and freshman Juniper Lostetter. (A meaningful side note: Tulli is the granddaughter of Paul Youngquist, the lead architect who designed Buffalo High School and someone I had the pleasure of working closely with during the creation of the Performing Arts Center. It was a special moment to see him in the audience for our show.) The complexity of the set pushed our student technicians in the best possible way, and they rose to the challenge beautifully.

Once again, our tech crew included students with special needs. One student was accompanied by an adult para, and our students showed tremendous compassion and creativity in finding multiple ways for that student to contribute meaningfully to the production. Their kindness and teamwork make me incredibly proud.

As we all know, the costs of everything continue to rise. Producing a musical is no different. Just the performance royalties (permission to perform the musical four times, script and music rental as well as rehearsal tracks, etc.) for the show was over \$3,500.00. Thanks to the generosity of local businesses, volunteers—including parents, alumni, and community members—and other high school theater programs, we were able to buy, rent, and borrow the equipment, costumes, and props needed to bring this production to life. Our friends at Delano High School rented us a spiral staircase, a turntable motor, and four specialized hanging lights for only \$200. We also stretched our budget further by borrowing additional costumes and props. It truly pays to “know people” and stay connected through professional organizations.

BHS choir director Zach Carlson-Giving prepared the students vocally and conducted the pit orchestra with great skill. Our choreographer, BHS graduate and former theater student Julia Carter, brought fresh creativity and energy that the students absolutely loved. We were sad to say goodbye as she moved to the Quad Cities in Iowa.

More than 35 students worked in the lighting and sound booth under the guidance of Greg Bestland and PAC Manager Joel Stand, and many others contributed to the costume and makeup crews. *Hadestown: Teen Edition* was a massive undertaking for the BHS Theater Program—a truly transformative piece of theater. The production was a tremendous success, drawing large crowds and showcasing the remarkable professionalism, talent, and dedication of our students.

Bison Football



Head Coach: Jackson Litterer, 3rd year at BHS; 12th overall coaching HSFB

Assistant Coaches: Nick Ward, Troy Holland, Chris Gmach, Micah Morris, DJ Shefland, Mac Mahmens, Josh Butteris, Jeremy Halek, LeRoy Erickson, Dan Reil, Craig Wignes, Matt Barter, Eastman Esson, Cole Koste, Landon Wagner

I am proud to share that our program achieved its third consecutive winning season and finished as District and Section Runners-Up. Prior to 2023, the program had recorded only one winning season since 2010.

This past fall, we won six games for just the second time since 2010, earned a first round bye, and hosted — and won — our first home playoff game in over a decade. We concluded the season by advancing to the fifth Sectional Final in program history, where we were defeated by eventual Class 5AAAAA State Champions, Spring Lake Park.

Our success was anchored by a strong senior class that helped elevate the program and built onto a foundation for long-term success. While we will certainly miss their leadership and production, we are excited about a talented and motivated group of returning underclassmen who will continue to develop within our program.

Offensively, our rushing attack was led statistically by Grant Benson (12th grade) who had 718 rushing yards and 15 touchdowns. Through the air, Hendrix Gatz (11th grade) led the team in receptions (31), receiving yards (639), and receiving touchdowns (5). Grant Benson was our leading passer, completing 129 passes for 1,912 yards and 12 touchdowns.

Defensively, Dolen Brisk (11th grade) and Grant Merz (11th grade) led the team in total tackles with 80 and 67, respectively. Grant Merz and Lucas Phillips (11th grade) each had 7 and 6 tackles for loss, respectively, and Grant also led the team with 5 sacks. The defense also caused and created 16 turnovers this season!

On Special Teams, Jacob Hahessy (12th grade) was a steady kicker finishing the year making 7 field goals and 24-of-25 extra points. Dolen Brisk punted the ball 12 times and averaged 28.6 yards per punt. Hendrix Gatz had 1 punt return for a touchdown.

The following players and coach voted on and named 2025 Northstar West Maroon All-District selections:

- **First Team:** Grant Benson (12th grade), Hans Pederson (12th grade), Hendrix Gatz (12th grade), Dolen Brisk (11th grade), and Tony Jordan (11th grade)
- **Honorable Mention:** Jackson Coss (12th grade), Jacob Hahessy (12th grade), Lucas Phillips (11th grade), Grant Merz (11th grade), Lucas Potter (11th grade), Matthew Jordan (11th grade), and Thomas Jordan (10th grade)
- **District Players of the Year:** Grant Benson, Quarterback of the Year; Hans Pederson, Defensive Lineman of the Year; Jacob Hahessy, Special Teams Player of the Year

The Bison Football Program also gave out seven team awards at the end of the season. At each level of the program, players voted for an MVP for their level. The following players were named team MVP: Grant Benson, Varsity MVP; Max Pegg (10th grade), JV MVP; Tyson Aspen (9th grade), Freshman MVP. The other four team awards were also player-voted, and each award is directly tied to the four core values of the Buffalo Bison Football Program (Character, Toughness, Relentless, Investment). The following four players were a Bison-Branded Award recipient: Hans Pederson (Character), Reiker Wignes (Toughness), Hans Pederson (Relentless), and Zeke Afonja (Investment).



COOL UPDATE: Through the work of countless coaches — past and present — we are proud to share the [Official Buffalo Bison Football Record Book](#) filled with our program's history from the 1920's – present day!

Bison Boys Cross Country

Head Coach: David Knutsen, 12th year as Head Coach; 19th year in the program

Coming into the 2025 season we knew this would be a rebuilding year. We had two returning seniors, Tristan Lenton and Justin Woodruff. Both of these boys had done a great job of putting in their summer miles, but they were going to be leading a young group of inexperienced athletes.

At the first meet of the year, an early 2 mile, Tristan Lenton showed that he was going to be an athlete to be reckoned with during the season. Tristan placed a close 4th to three other state ranked athletes. He would spend the rest of the season in and out of the class AAA top 10 rankings.

Although we were mostly young and inexperienced the boys continued to work hard and slowly improved each week. Gavin Jacobson, Ryan Gohl, Everet Lenton, Wilder Warhol, Makar Kotyk, Grant Grossman, and Carson Sloan showed improvement as the season progressed.

At the Lake Conference meet, Tristan Lenton and Justin Woodruff both earned All-Conference honors. Tristan was 2nd and Justin was 19th. Tristan's time of 15:46 for the 5k distance was one of the fastest times for that course in school history.

At the 6AAA Section meet, Tristan qualified for the CC State meet with an 8th place finish. Justin narrowly missed qualifying by one spot. Justin had a great season and really came on in the last 3 meets.

The 2025 State meet was held at the Les Bolstad golf course at the U of M. It was one of the fastest State meets in history. 25 boys ran under 16 minutes for the 5k distance. Tristan earned All-State honors with a 21st place finish.

Overall, it was a good learning year for the Bison. We had a lot of young athletes that grew a great deal during the season. With more miles and more racing experience the boys will grow together and continue to improve.

Bison Girls Cross Country

Head Coach: Amber Sedbrook, 4th year as Head Coach; 3rd year in the program

Assistant Coach: Alicia Berkeness

Our goals in the girls program were to continue improving our team building and performances. We were hoping for another state appearance this season, but sections took a different turn than we were expecting. Our number one runner this year was 10th grader Cady Macheel with 9th grader Gabriella Broadhead and 7th grader Madonna Buselmeier close behind.

The girls team made huge gains again this season in times and placing at meets. Our senior, Madeline Jackson, helped lead the team and create a strong team bond this season. The section meet was hosted at Gale Woods as we had to change sections this season. Unfortunately, we didn't have any individuals technically qualify for state, but everyone still had strong performances at sections.

I was extremely proud of the girls this year. They worked very hard over the summer and throughout the season which is tough because it is a long season that starts to wear on physical and mental toughness. Through the team's determination, they showed steady improvement and we are super excited to see how the program grows in upcoming years. We have a strong team that has each other's backs and supports one another through physical and mental moments of challenge which is what being a part of a team is all about.

Bison Girls Soccer

Head Coach: Josh Soukup, 14th Season

Assistant Coaches: Carrie Schmitt, Mike Walters, Sam Haryn, Kelli Barth and Shelby Halderson

After a phenomenal 2024 season we worked hard to replace some very talented ladies who graduated. We didn't match our success but had a very competitive and successful season. We completed our 3rd consecutive 10-win season, went to our 3rd consecutive Section Finals (this time losing in shoot-outs). Mike will be moving on as his daughter will be a freshman at Watertown-Mayer and wants to have the time to watch and support her. He has been integral in the growth and competitiveness of our program. We'll miss him! He will be replaced by Coach Alex Ciacco. Alex has been working with our goalkeepers for the last three years and has been very involved in our youth-development programs and summer camps. We're excited for her to become a fulltime member of our staff.

2025 Captains: Jeannette Bermudez (12), Sophie Alderman (12), Cate Reineck (12), Kennedy Herrboldt (12), and Hayden Arvola (11)

2026 Captains: Hayden Arvola (12), Courtney Kotish (12), Zainab Akram (12), Mya Panke (11)

2025 Team Awards:

All-State: Sophie Alderman (2nd team)

All-Conference First Team: Sophie Alderman and Jeanette Bermudez

All-Conference Honorable Mention: Cate Reineck, Ella Danielson, and Emma Marzean

Ms. Bison Soccer: Emma Marzean

Game Ball: Jeanette Bermudez

Best Defensive Player: Jeanette Bermudez

Best Offensive Player: Sophie Alderman

Most Improved: Zainab Akram

Ms. Gritty: Emma Marzean

Bison Girls Swim and Dive

Head Coach: Jocelyn Woytcke

Season Recap for Girls Swim and Dive 2025

Team Bonding Activities - We are so proud of all of the seniors and captains for helping plan and organize these activities. It was a wonderful time for the girls to get to know one another better and to have fun outside of the pool as a team.

Practice - We had a lot of tough sets, some tears were shed, but also a lot of laughs and memories made. It was a joy to see all the hard work pay off in the post season meets.

Dual Meet Season - We competed against some tough teams again this year (for some perspective, 3 of the top 4 teams at state are in our conference), but we used that to our advantage as we trained for championship meets. We ended with 2 dual meet wins this season and had another very close meet with Moorhead to start the season.

Spring Lake Park Invite - We placed 2nd for the third season in a row.

True Team - We moved from a 4th place finish last year to a 3rd place finish this year. This is the best finish the team has had since 2019. We got the lay of the land for sections and new athletes to the team were able to see what a big championship meet would be and feel like. We loved seeing some improvements early on in the season and great team spirit.

JV Champs - This was such a fun meet! Not only high energy and positivity, but the support shared among the team was incredible to see. The meet was hosted like a major championship meet, which was exciting to be a part of for the second year in a row. We saw some major time drops and it was so encouraging to see the team supporting one another.

Sections - We moved from a 5th place finish last year to a 4th place finish this year, beating Bemidji by about 20 points. We saw amazing improvements all around! I think every single athlete dropped time in at least one of their events...some a lot of time. We saw a lot of podium finishes and again, great support of one another, and great team spirit.

State - A fun weekend to bring new and returning athletes to the state stage at the U of M. The girls were excited and well prepared. It was a great weekend of racing and team spirit.

Results:

Medley Relay: Elena Close (30.33), Estelle Bergs (31.16), Emily Larson (26.98), and Avery Lowe (24.95) - Placed 21st

Adi Anderson: 500 Freestyle (5:29.70) - Placed 25th

Emily Larson: 100 Butterfly (59.79) - Placed 20th, 100 Breaststroke Prelims (1:05.60) - Placed 10th, Finals (1:05.57) - Placed 10th

Avery Lowe: 100 Butterfly (59.36) - Placed 17th

Bison Boys Soccer

Head Coach: Jordan Danielson, 8th year

Assistant Coaches: V Assistant: Marc Mens, JV: Joe Ortmann, 9A: Alex Loukinen,
Assistant: Ashlyn O'Conner

2025 was such an incredible year for the Bison boys soccer program. The varsity team built on their success from 2024 to make 2025 the greatest season in program history. One of the biggest highlights of the year came in the third game of the season when we traveled to Edina to take on the Hornets. A perennial top 5 team in state and owning one of the hardest stadiums to play in, our team has competed well against them in the past, but had lost all prior matchups. This year we came out with our absolute best and finished with a 4-1 win, for the first conference win against one of the top tier teams.

The confidence this gave the boys is indescribable. It propelled us to a regular season record of 12-0-4, the first ever undefeated regular season in program history. The boys rallied over and over and never quit fighting in any of their games. They scored twice in the last four minutes at STMA to take a 3-2 win. In a home matchup of the top two teams in the state rankings, we outplayed #1 ranked Minnetonka for much of the game, and only a few last minute saves by their keeper kept the final score tied 1-1.

From here the team entered the section tournament where we dominated competition, outscoring our opponents 16-2 in three wins to qualify for the state tournament for only the second time in school history. Buffalo earned the #2 overall seed, drawing Rochester John Marshall in a quarterfinal matchup at Spring Lake Park High School. Cade Nissen scored the lone goal with 10 minutes to play to seal the program's first ever state tournament win and to send the team to US Bank Stadium.

At the Bank, we suffered our first loss of the season to rivals Maple Grove, in a moment that saw the environment and pressure of the moment get the better of us at the start. Thankfully the boys rebounded the following morning to finish third with a win over Wayzata without our top defender and a top ten player in the state, Wyatt Anderson. Senior Gavin Johnson scored the lone goal to wrap up his career with the team win.

In addition to all of the success our team experienced on the field and the numerous accolades they won at the section and state level, we had the best behaved, most respectful group of kids we have ever had. Throughout the season I repeatedly had total strangers reach out to me to compliment not just the play, but the behavior of our boys when they were getting food together at Culver's or Applebee's. These boys were incredible role models for younger kids and players in our community.

What a joy this past season was, and I can't wait to keep working with them this coming year!

Bison Girls Tennis

Head Coach: Simona Erickson

2025 was exciting and challenging at the same time. After losing 7 seniors last year, we had some big shoes to fill. We had to replace 5 varsity spots with new players. The girls stepped up, put in the work and showed up to play their best. The team had a lot of new matches the past season.

Despite being 7-18 overall for the season - we had some great matchups. We changed sections to 8AAA and gained another big school to the Lake Conference, which was already tough. This was our building year. We had some pretty big wins against Champlin Park and STMA as well as some close matches with Rogers and Eden Prairie.

Looking ahead to next season, we have a good number of varsity returners and some great younger players that are ready to step up. I have seen many players putting in the work during the off-season as well as playing in tournaments, which is something that makes a huge difference for them once they come back next year.

We cannot wait to see what the next season is going to look like for us!

2025 Team Awards:

- All-Conference: Rosary Gilbertson, Evie Lubben
- All-Conference Honorable Mention: Lauren Berg, Kate Siemek, Sabrina Friesz

Bison Team Awards:

- MVP: Lauren Berg
- Most Improved Player: Margit Jayson
- Bison Spirit: Rosary Gilbertson
- Most Singles Wins: Jayda Sorenson
- Most Doubles Wins: Evie Lubben

Bison Volleyball

Head Coach: Steve Novacek, 2nd Year

Assistant Coach: Kristina Sloan

JV Coach: Aviary Bouman

B Squad Coach: Rachell Roushar

9A Coach: Kaya Garrett

9B Coach: Nicki Shawn

Bison volleyball finished the season 12-20 and progressively got better throughout the season. We had 2 conference wins which helped the Bison get 2 All-Conference awards and the 7 seed in our section. We ended our season with a hard fought battle against St. Michael and despite us losing we came away winning in multiple categories: hitting percentage, digs, and serving aces. We were right there!

Season Highlights

- Bison volleyball took its first overnight trip to begin the season in a long time. We had a great win in Bemidji and a tough loss to Moorhead on the 2nd night but more than the wins and losses, the girls and staff got to bond and had a successful start to the season within our team culture.
- Bison volleyball had a huge win late in the season against top seeded Monticello where the Bison took charge in a 3-0 dominate section win at Monticello and during their homecoming week. Nothing beats a good rival win during their homecoming!
- Huge success off the court with our Big Sister/Little Sister program that we will continually try to make better. A 12th, 11th or 10th grade Bison volleyball athlete was paired with a 9th grade athlete to make them feel welcome, support them, and be there for them during the fall and hopefully after!

All Conference - Junior - Libero - Addison Pajari (2nd Time)

All Conference - Senior - Opposite Hitter - Danika Rosenau

All Conference Honorable Mention: Sophomore - Middle Hitter - Brianna Eggers and Junior - Right Side - Kendra Harris

Bison Team Awards:

- MVP - Autumn Halberg
- Most Improved - Quinn Penney
- Hustle Award - Rose Hibbard
- Defensive Award - Addison Pajari
- Best Teammate - Autumn Halberg
- Bison Volleyball Award - Danika Rosenau

Looking to the fall of '26, I am really excited about the young talent coming into the high school and really excited about our Sophomores that will push our upperclassmen for spots on Varsity. Our sophomore class has been relentless in the pursuit to be better, challenge themselves, and fight to change and put us up against the best! Next year we will be more athletic, not as refined from an attacking standpoint, and will be solid in SR and Defense lead by 2x All-Conference libero Addison Pajari. We will be taller, faster, and a lot more energetic on the court. It should be fun to watch and see us grow as there might be some young talent on the floor.

ATTACHMENT:

- BHS Activities Participation Fall 2025