

## **BHS FALL ACTIVITIES SUMMARIES 2020**

### **FOOTBALL:**

Head Coach: Craig Lachowitzer (1st year)

Well 2020 was a unique year for all and that was no different for the Bison Football team. I was hired in late February, and within about 3-4 weeks, our school had to be closed down due to the COVID-19 virus. While I was able to meet with players and start some of the important building blocks that I wanted to get in place, it made for a difficult time navigating the start to our new regime. We were able to have players vote on their core values that they wanted this team to be all about. They chose Family, Hard Work, Always Competing, Giving a Perfect Effort and Legacy. These young men were able to identify what mattered most to them and were able to hold each other accountable. We also selected a group of 10-12th grade players to serve on our Leadership Council. This group helped serve as the leaders of our team and worked as an intermediary between myself and the team. We met monthly during the off season and helped plan for our season. I was also able to meet with our players via zoom calls and other virtual meetings to help stay involved with them and help them through the Distance Learning journey in the spring of 2020. We were also able to get our staff in place during this time and prepare for all the things we thought we would get to experience in 2020, and did we ever learn lessons on flexibility, focusing on controlling what we can control, resiliency, grace and the importance of communication.

From the beginning of our summer team activities, almost everything was new. From a new head coach, to five new assistants, to a new offensive scheme, to COVID restrictions, there were many barriers put in our way. We did not get to practice as a team through the entire summer, and even until our first game we were still in pods of 25 or less. Given the fact that football requires 22 players on the field at any time, these restrictions, while totally necessary to keep our kids, coaches and community safe, proved difficult to install many of the new things that come with a new coaching staff. That being said, I must commend the kids on their resilience and their fight throughout the entire year. Given all of these barriers and obstacles, they fought to overcome them and we saw great growth as a team.

We started the year against the #2 team in the state in the Moorhead Spuds and very few things went well for the Bison as they encountered a very skilled and seasoned team. The Bison ended up losing 56-6. The next week, the Bison traveled to Rogers to take on the #6 team in the state in the Royals. The Bison were locked in a back and forth battle with the Royals, and trailed by only a touchdown at the half. Then the Bison had a punt blocked and recovered for a touchdown in the 3rd quarter, and responded with a touchdown of their own to keep the game within a single touchdown nearing the end of the 3rd quarter. Then the Royals returned a punt for a touchdown and took a

two-score lead that they held until the final minutes of the 4th quarter. The Bison gave up a long touchdown late in the game as they were forced to try to sell out and force a turnover. The Bison lost 34-13.

The next week, the Bison lost 43-7 to the District Champion and #5 ranked team in the state in the Andover Huskies, and the following week lost to another good Elk River team, but felt they had a great chance to win the following week vs. St. Francis. Unfortunately, on Thursday afternoon, right before practice, the Bison were informed their opponent could not play due to COVID infection on the St. Francis team. Mr. Bauman quickly got us lined up to play a new opponent. This time we were going to play Hill Murray the following day. Unfortunately, yet again we had our game cancelled due to COVID. On Friday, about 7 hours before kickoff, we found out our game would again be cancelled. Then by Friday afternoon, we were able to line up a game with Mahtomedi, the #8 ranked team in the state. It was a true back and forth game with the Zephyrs and Bison trading touchdowns on each other's opening drives. Then the Bison scored one more time to take a 13-6 lead at halftime. The Zephyrs tied the game up in the second half, and the Bison responded with a drive that got them down to the 3 yard line. The Bison scored to increase their lead, but had a penalty that nullified the touchdown and gave the ball back to Mahtomedi. Unfortunately for us, they drove down and scored in the last couple of minutes to take a one touchdown lead. The Bison would end up losing the game, and would fall to 0-5. Then on Monday, we found out that we had our first positive case on our team and were forced to shut down for two weeks. This effectively ended our season.

While the wins and losses were not what we wanted, we were still able to get some of our foundation in place. We were able to give our young men five games and we were able to build some good life lessons into our season. I am grateful for the support of our school board, our administrators, the coaches and their wives, and the great young men that I got to work with on a daily basis. Though we didn't get the wins I wanted, I was still able to build some great relationships and still develop a love for these young men like I have for my family.

Those are the things that are most important to me. Next year will be better when it comes to the wins, but this year offered many learning opportunities for myself, our staff and our young men.

## **VOLLEYBALL:**

Head Coach Jennifer Peterson (5th year)

The Buffalo Girls Volleyball program had an interesting year with all the changes to the season and match requirements. We ran almost 2 weeks of Fall practices before the MSHSL Board approved our season to start. With the pandemic occurring and the importance of protecting their families, several coaches were unable to take on their role and we replaced 3 coaches within a 2-week timeframe. Our Booster club did a lot

of leg work this season helping myself and the Athletic Department organize changes and communicate information clearly and quickly to all the volleyball families. With the changes to the season structure, we only had conference matchups, with the addition of 2 non-conference teams right before our season ended (North Branch and Big Lake).

This year at the freshman level, Lauri Zumach rejoined the staff for the 9A team and was joined by Taylor Tody as the 9B coach. Their teams were among the top three 9th grade teams in our conference before a few hiccups occurred and both teams were required to quarantine. 9A was able to return for the last week of volleyball and they ended up with a winning record. Autumn Senger returned as a coach for the 10th grade level. They made great strides in their skills and played the best they had all year right before they had to quarantine due to an exposure. They were able to return for the last 2 matches of the season as well.

Madeline Amon joined the volleyball staff, leading the charge for the JV team. Their team consisted of half juniors and half 9/10th graders who were new to the JV level. The junior leadership and underclassman energy was a great combination. They were able to beat St. Michael-Albertville twice, which is always an exciting rivalry. Their team really found their groove and displayed teamwork in the second half of the season!

Jenn Penney joined me this year as the Varsity assistant coach. At the Varsity level, our personnel were also split, 6 underclassmen players and 6 upperclassmen (2 seniors). Our upperclassmen did a great job welcoming and encouraging our underclassman. If I were to describe our team with 3 words it would be dedicated, versatile and supportive. I am so proud of our team for their accomplishments; they made it through a season amidst a pandemic, were flexible in their academic and athletic settings, made it through a time that was very challenging for our mental health and showed true commitment and love for the game! Playing in the Lake Conference again this season, we knew we were going to face really tough competition, but we focused on small goals and the importance of competing until the last point. The majority of our varsity players had the ability to play multiple positions in the front and back row, which made for the ability to create some different and dynamic lineups throughout the year. We had 2 conference wins, both against Hopkins! We played some of our best matches against top teams in the state in our Lake Conference vs. Wayzata and Minnetonka. Our 2 seniors this year were Hannah Dannewitz and Hayley Radcliff. Hannah was a co-captain and left her mark by helping her teammates learn the importance of playing every game, practice and point, like it might be your last. Hayley was the most supportive player on the team and was voted most improved, growing from a player who had no playing time at the beginning of the season, to a starting player! She is also nominated for the Triple "A" Award - Academics, Arts and Athletics Award, which honors high school seniors throughout the state who have a 3.0 or higher-grade point average (she has a 3.9!) and who participate in League-sponsored athletic and fine arts activities.

Other major awards were given to Grace Therrien - a 9th grader, as an All-Conference

Player! This is an incredible honor as a freshman to be amongst the top players in the Lake Conference. Kaia Caffee (9th grade), Kaya Garrett, and Macie Guida (both 11th grade), were also named All Conference Honorable Mention Players! Next season will bring new challenges and hopefully NO MASKS! We will have a very large senior class - with lots of skills, leadership and competitiveness. We are also very excited for the growth of the program and the future it holds with our underclasswomen!

## **BOYS CROSS COUNTRY:**

Head Coach Dave Knutson (7<sup>th</sup> year)

The Cross Country program entered into a season full of change and uncertainty. First, after 35+ years, Coach Jill Hanson was not going to be part of the program. For the previous seven years she had primarily worked with the girls program, but still had some influence with the boys program. Second, as everyone is well aware, COVID changed the way practices, meets, parent nights, spaghetti dinners, fundraising, Camp Run and a variety of other activities would have to be conducted. The boys program adopted the attitude of "we are happy to have a season, let's roll with the punches".

After a very good summer of training, the boys were ready for the season to begin. This was the first time in program history that the boy's team was ranked coming into the beginning of the season. They were now going to be one of the teams that other teams were going to measure themselves against. They had the target on their backs. That was fine. We knew coming into the season we had a very tough top five. We did not have a clear #1 runner as we have always had in the past, but we had five very solid boys. Dillon Huss (Sr.), Jadon Boots (Jr.), Jared Gregoire (Jr.), James Dorado (Jr.), and Andrew Macheel (So.) were our clear top five. Parker Ryan (Sr.) and Jacob Williams (Jr.) rounded out the top seven for most of the season.

In a normal year, the CC team has 7/8 meets before the Conference/Section/State meets. Obviously, this season was different. The boys had four meets before the Conference meet. We needed to get that race experience and learn quickly. The Lake Conference has seven boys CC teams. Only one of those teams was not in the top 12 in the rankings this year. To state the obvious, this is the toughest CC conference in the State. The boys ran very well at the Lake Conference meet. Most of the boys set their personal best 5k times during this race. We ended up 4<sup>th</sup>, with the split between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> being under 20 pts.

After the Conference meet, we set our sights on defending the Section 2AA title. We were the 3-time defending champions and were very motivated to be the champions for the 4<sup>th</sup> straight year. There are 17 teams in this section. The boy's teams ran all morning in waves of 3 to 4 teams. We were in the final wave. We did not run our best but still managed to score a Buffalo Boys Section meet record low 45 pts. The next closest team was 118pts. The Buffalo boys have been the Section 2AA champions 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. This would have been the 5<sup>th</sup> straight year they have qualified for the MSHSL State meet.

The boys have achieved these goals through hard work and self-sacrifice. Each year they are eager to carry on the traditions that the athletes before them have started. They spend countless hours together pounding down the road to make themselves and the team better. They inspire the younger athletes with their dedication and hard work. They set the bar very high. Next year's squad returns four of the top five boys. The JV has several athletes poised to fight for the 5-7 spots. The 2021 team will enter the season with high expectations and with athletes eager to match this season's goals and to create new ones for themselves.

### **GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY:**

Head Coach Andrea Carlson (1<sup>st</sup> year)

First, I want to say how grateful I am that we were able to participate in having a season this fall. I was very excited to begin the year and looked forward to working with these talented young ladies that made up the Bison Girls Cross Country team. I knew that I had some pretty big shoes to fill with the departure of such an amazing and talented coach in Jill Hanson!

The girls were anxious to run after not being able to participate in track and field this past spring. Many of these ladies came faithfully to summer practice ready to work and put in some miles. Running is a sport that is challenging, but running with friends makes the challenge of this sport well worth it.

We began the season with lots of changes; a new coach, a new hybrid learning model, lots of social distancing rules and other COVID protocols in place. Now add the uncertainty of knowing if and how meets would run. The athletes took it all in stride and were willing to keep working and running hard, regardless of the circumstances. This year proved to be more challenging and difficult as time went on.

One of the things that Coach Hanson instilled in these athletes was the importance of traditions. Many of those traditions are what these athletes look forward to. Camp Run was different this year as we no longer travel to Coach Hanson's cabin in Longville. We had many parents step up and offer to host in their back yards and this allowed us to create some new experiences that could easily become new traditions.

From the onset, all the Lake Conference coaches met on Zoom to create a meet schedule. We were allowed to run five meets this year and every meet was well run. Everyone worked together to follow distancing rules. The big crowds were certainly missed, but at least we got to run. These girls really dug in and worked hard to compete. They put in the miles and time to hone their skills.

We had 12 girls on the team this year. There were 2 seniors, 3 juniors, 4 sophomores, and 3 freshmen. For most of the year we were able to run six Varsity runners and six Junior Varsity runners in meets. Unfortunately, due to injuries ranging from hip issues

to shin splints, a few of the runners had to be sidelined to allow their bodies to heal. Brooklyn Hart was our State qualifier last year and we were looking forward to seeing what she would do this year. She developed shin splints early in the season that set her training back; however, with this shortened schedule, she was on her way back when our season ended. Maija Hipp and Sydney Benzer took turns being our top Varsity runners this year. Although we finished 7<sup>th</sup> in our Conference and 14<sup>th</sup> in our Sections, all the girls worked hard and improved their times by as much as a couple minutes from the beginning of the season. The entire team has a lot to be proud of. They still worked together as a team, even when we were trying to keep a safe distance. They showed up every day to give their all not only to their sport, but as students as well.

The Bison Girls Cross Country team may be small right now, but we have a promising future ahead. I am blessed to be a part of it.

### **GIRLS TENNIS:**

Head Coach: Alex Revenig (1st year)

Bison tennis had around 40 players this year. We had a varsity and a large JV and we were able to have a few C squad matches for our lower level players. Due to COVID-19, our season was shorter and was limited. We were unable to do our yearly Duluth trip or participate in triangulars or tournaments. We played 10 regular season matches. We played our tough Lake Conference schools, had three non-conference matches and had a team section tournament. We made it to the second round of section play. Highlights for the year was the great support from the athletic department, the parents and the players. We were all on the same page - we were just fortunate to have a tennis season this fall! Captains this year were Joselyn Peterson and Allisen Carothers. We had a total of five seniors this year and they all contributed on varsity.

The high school tennis courts are going to become more of an issue for our program. In my opinion, we will need to get those resurfaced if we would like to play our home matches at the high school next year. This year we played our home matches at BCMS because of better viewing for COVID-19 measures and also the condition of the tennis courts.

Overall, thank you for the opportunity to coach at Buffalo! This year was a great experience and I am looking forward to another great season next fall!

### **GIRLS SWIM & DIVE:**

Head Coach Rachel Busch (6th year)

Another great season was had in the pool! This team has always been flexible and we embraced the many changes that came about this season with positivity. The girls were extremely hard-working, patient and persistent. We were still able to have team-

building events at the beginning of the season, including our traditional Purple vs. White competitions and meet. We originally planned to head up north, but plans shifted and the team demonstrated their flexibility. We stayed local and rented out a movie theater, competed in various events at Beebe Lake and enjoyed an outdoor barbeque and crafts. The captains led us in developing team goals, we all discussed the importance of living drug and alcohol-free lives, and we strengthened our family-like community through a variety of in-water and out-of-water activities. The beginning of the season also brought discussions on our four pillars: be accountable, be dedicated, be grateful and be respectful. Throughout the first half of the season, Coach Busch read aloud *The Positive Dog* by Jon Gordon and the team discussed the benefits of positivity and how to apply strategies for a positive life. The 2020 captains, Elle Kaiser, Lily Leahy, and Alayna Mills, did a great job leading our team of 31 throughout the season, demonstrating great communication and creativity. The team made eight goals for the season: (1) 3.75 GPA, (2) be healthy in and out of the pool, (3) beat STMA, (4) be a good teammate and practice the 4 pillars, (5) stay under 35 sentences (sentences were a negative consequence for various things), (6) make the team underwater sets, (7) work hard and (8) have fun. They did a fantastic job at working toward these goals and accomplished all of them. The team finished the season with a 3.79 GPA.

For our coaching staff, we had four returning coaches and two new. Coach Busch completed her tenth season overall, Kelsea Smith (Swim Assistant) completed her third, Kelsey Ortmann (Part-Time Strength) completed her fourth and Shannon Barclay (Diving) returned for her sixth season after taking off the 2019 season for maternity leave. New to the deck was Gina Pogue (Swim Assistant) and in mid-October Gina went on maternity leave. We were blessed to have 2019 BHS graduate Kaitlyn Schendel on deck to help finish out the season. The team was very fortunate to have such a dedicated and caring coaching staff.

The season wrapped up with a 3-5 dual meet record, finishing 5<sup>th</sup> in the Lake Conference (an improvement from 2019). The team swam and dove well at the JV Conference Meet, with many personal best times and scores posted. Instead of an invite, JV Champs operated as dual meets within the conference. The majority of girls swam/dove season-best times/scores at the Section Meet, where we finished 2<sup>nd</sup> as a team (highest finish in at least 10 years), and only a half point behind the champions. The Section meet also operated in a modified fashion, with the 7 teams split into two pods. For the fifth year in a row, there was a girl in the top 16 in every event.

Participating in the theoretical State Meet were five girls: Kolby Schendel (11<sup>th</sup>), Brianna Shroyer (10<sup>th</sup>), Ellie Carik (11<sup>th</sup>), Ellie Kaiser (12<sup>th</sup>) and Hayley Crosland (10<sup>th</sup>). The 200 Medley Relay, composed of Schendel, Shroyer, Carik, and Kaiser was Section Champion. The 400 Free Relay, composed of Kaiser, Carik, Crosland and Schendel, was Section Runner-up. Individually, Kolby Schendel would have qualified in the 100 Freestyle (Section Champ) and 100 Backstroke (Section Runner-up), and Brianna Shroyer would have qualified in the 100 Breaststroke (Section Champ).

For Conference awards, Brianna Shroyer received All-Conference and Elle Kaiser and Kolby Schendel received All-Conference Honorable Mention. As a team, the girls earned the Section 8AA Gold Academic Award and Section Academic Champions. Additionally, school records were set in the 200 IM (Brianna Shroyer), 100 Backstroke (Kolby Schendel) and 100 Breaststroke (Brianna Shroyer).

We had many successes on the scoreboard this season, but most importantly, I am extremely proud of these girls for who they are and how they positively represent themselves, their team and the entire BHM community. This team is truly a family and it is fun and rewarding to be on the girls' swim and dive journey with them. Many girls commented that this has been one of their favorite seasons, and it was one of mine as well. The entire team was a joy to work with and we are looking forward to the 2021 season. The captains for 2021 are Ellie Carik, Rachel Lawrence, Kolby Schendel and Taylar Swearingen. Go Bison!

## **BOYS SOCCER:**

Head Coach Joe Pokorney (5th year)

Boys Soccer successfully navigated an unprecedented 2020 season on several fronts. Obviously, COVID-19 had a significant impact from Day 1. Coaches and players throughout the program, and the entire Lake Conference, took social distancing and COVID mitigation strategies seriously, and the shortened season ran as smoothly as could be expected. Per MSHSL guidelines, the original 16-game schedule was reduced to 11. All Lake Conference games were played, but our non-conference schedule was limited to two games against Monticello. Our varsity group finished the season with a 0-9-2 overall record, with our two draws coming in very competitive games with Monticello, this year's Mississippi 8 Conference Co-Champions. We had 46 players out for our three teams this fall. Everyone who came out for the program had a roster spot. Like our varsity, our lower level teams played a demanding schedule against excellent competition and showed tremendous growth. All three levels were playing their best soccer at the end of the season. The varsity season ended with a hard-fought loss to eventual section 8AA champion Maple Grove. In summation, the season was difficult - no question - but it also provided plenty of valuable lessons and moments to celebrate.



Our senior class showed great leadership this year. Each game was a gift, and our seniors especially embodied that attitude. We thank them all for their commitment and contribution to Buffalo Boys Soccer.

Awards/Honors - All-Conference honors went to Wyatt Hiers (Sr.) and Carson Smrz (Sr.). All-Conference Honorable Mention awards went to Mitchell Hansen (Sr.), Ben Eastlund (Sr.) and Carver Tierney (Jr.). AAA Award winner was Kelton Gray. Wyatt Hiers led all AA goalkeepers in Minnesota with 153 saves. Varsity team GPA of 3.55 qualified for the MSHSSCA Silver Academic Award.

### **GIRLS SOCCER:**

Head Coach Josh Soukup (1st year)

The 2020 Bison Girls soccer season was filled with ups and downs. Our second year in the Lake Conference was an improvement over the first; including our first Lake Conference win with a dominant 3-1 win over Eden Prairie. We also tied girls' soccer powerhouse Wayzata as well as STMA; these were big steps for the girls' soccer program.

We had 11 seniors this year; it was a special group of girls both on and off the field. The culture that this group has built over the last three to four years will be their legacy well beyond their years in our program. The next couple of years will be very young for us and building on our success in the Lake Conference will be difficult but not impossible.

I love coaching soccer at Buffalo High School and look forward to continuing to build the Girls Soccer program in the coming years. The athletic department and support staff are truly special. Tom will be missed very much. Thank you for allowing me this privilege.

### **FALL MUSICAL:**

Director Debb Bestland (11<sup>th</sup> year)

I've worked as a director and choreographer at BHS for the last 11 years and this year's fall play was the biggest challenge from the start! We knew the COVID-19 situation would make chances of an in house production slim at best. In agreement with H.D. and Nick Lostetter, I choose to do *A Christmas Carol* as a radio show. My acting classes have had radio show as an assignment and I knew we could do it, maybe not a professional version, but at least one that would be fun and educational for the students. We held online auditions and decided to include everyone who came. We found a script online by Mike Ferrians and Brenda Chapman that the students liked and I wrote for permission to use it by cutting and arranging it to fit our needs. The Authors were so gracious and willing to let us work with it. Three of our students, Abi Hilden, Kylie Cox and Olivia Telecky stepped up to the plate and tackled re-writing the script.

Our cast was primarily female so they chose to make the main character a female: Fanny Scrooge Marley, Ebenezer's sister and wife of Jacob Marley. It was a fun twist by defining her character as a spirited feisty woman who married for money, and nearly died for it as well. The whole time they wrote, they were focused on keeping true to the original. They would bring the script to us as a team and we would offer suggestions, or send messages of approval until we got a final script. Then we assigned parts and rehearsed the story over and over, talking through voicings and the challenge of playing multiple roles.

When time came to record, we were not able to meet as a team. Instead, each student recorded their lines on a single recording and sent me the digital copy. This was strange to all of them, but is a common option for voice actors. Then began the almost overwhelming task of cutting and splicing lines to fit it together to sound like a conversation! We contacted Zach Carlson early in our process and asked for him to record some of the public domain Christmas carols from the time period. BHS singers and BHS Treble singers both contributed. I want to thank them for the time and energy. Another thank you goes to Lauren and Joel Strand, a father daughter team who knew more about the sound app we were using than I did. Their help made my task in editing much easier! Finally, I added sound effects and then we shared our version of *A Christmas Carol* on YouTube. As Dickens said in his original version: "May it haunt your houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it to end! "