

# JC SPORTS PAGE

May 2022

## SPRING SPORTS

PREVIEW

BASEBALL | SOFTBALL

SENIOR LACROSSE LADIES POISED | BOYS

LACROSSE 'NOTORIOUS' | GIRLS GOLF

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# LAST CHANCE

**For this group of seniors coming through a global pandemic, 2022 is their final chance to hit it big.**

**By SHELBY PEPPER**

A phenomenal group of skilled seniors who have played together for over six years, will finally have a real chance at winning a sectional championship. Although the path to this title is much easier than previous years, that does not mean this team has a lack of dedication and determination.

The Lady Wildcats (0-1) season opened with a tough but close 9-8 loss against the Elmira Express on March 29.

“Returning this year are two senior leaders, Ashlyn Balchikonis and Sydney Majewski. Both girls bring leadership to the offensive and defensive side of the game,” said head coach Erik Legenhausen. “Also returning is our leading scorer from our 2021 campaign, Shelby Pepper who brings an important edge to our offense. Norah Ford, Patricia Nester and Riley Spalik are all returning players who bring a ton of skill and heart which establishes a strong core for our team this year.”

These seniors have been waiting for this moment. At every level of their lacrosse careers, their coaches have been almost certain these would be the girls to win it all.

Although the girls could have had the chance at a chip last year, it was hard for them to adjust to both new coaching staff as well as returning to normal from Covid. The girls’ record from last season was 7-8, they had lost in the Section IV Class B playoffs ranking them second in their division.

The team is putting a lot of faith in newcomer Mackenzie Lombardini, as she has the skill and mindset of a successful lacrosse player.

“Hopefully this year she can prove herself as someone who is capable of leading the team.” Balchikonis said. “I can’t wait to see the impact she leaves on the program these next few years.”



The Maine Endwell game is a must win as it’s what qualifies the team to play in the sectional championship, and would also give them the home turf advantage. It’ll come down to winning on the ground.

“We need to dominate possession numbers,” Legenhausen said. “Especially on the draw circle, and win every ground ball.”

Legenhausen also noted that the program has seen vast improvements and he feels there are some important goals to be reached.

“We’ve seen huge development across the entire program,” he said. “Program cohesiveness and team chemistry is our main goal.”

Cade Dino leads an exceptional cast of veteran talent and solid newcomers



# IT'S **NOT** BRAGGING IF YOU CAN DO IT

By NORAH FORD



Despite falling 18-14 to Maine-Endwell on April 7, Johnson City's notorious boys lacrosse team is looking to take care of unfinished business against their rival Spartans.

"Section IV is always tough because so many of the teams are so close competitively. We want to stay healthy so we can compete against these teams at full strength," said head coach Bo Flynn.

Although the team did not have the outcome they wanted in 2021, they were the only program that had a winning season for Johnson City.

Like always, Flynn and the Wildcats (3-1) are looking to do it again.

"Cade Dino returns for his senior year after being named a US Lacrosse All American as a junior, the first ever in section IV history," Flynn said. Dino exceeded everyone's expectations to go D-1 when he announced his commitment to play at Hobart.

*See LACROSSE, next page.*

### LACROSSE

Dino is not the only player to look out for on the team however. The school brings it all to the table in every position. According to coach Flynn, the class of '23 brings defender Lucian House and another All American and division 1 recruit, Dylan Neer. Class of '25 brings a strong attacker, Troeger Lombardini.

"Jakob Soukthavong all division defenseman and Christian Nester all division midfielder. Losing two players of their ability and leadership will be missed," Flynn said.

With the way the season has been going so far, it is hard to tell the Wildcats are missing anyone at all. As of press time, they came out with a hard fought 12-10 win against Wyoming Seminary, an 18-2 win against Union Endicott, and an 18-3 win against Binghamton.

"Newcomer Dylan Luckey will look to put his stamp on this team. The crafty lefty brings a ton of lacrosse experience to an already solid group," Flynn said. Luckey came from Binghamton and is committed to play at Penn College. It's easy to say he chose the right team to play with for his last year.

"I love these guys more than anything but we always need to work hard. I want to end with a state chip," House said.



# Dino, Wildcats looks to rebound from injury

By KAMREN RICK

It's a nice day just and just around midseason for the Johnson City boys' lacrosse team.

It's game day and it's a fairly close game when, out of the blue, Johnson City's leading player goes down and he is writhing in pain.

Having lost one of their best, they still managed to make it to the Section IV championship game. However, they lost that game and their season came to an abrupt end.

With Dino back and with the addition of some key new players, if all goes well many would say that the lacrosse team has a good chance at making it all the way to the championship game again – yet this time they could come away with the win.

"Jakob Soukthavong, an all division defenseman, and Christian Nester, an all division midfielder," were "two players of [solid] ability and leadership will be missed," said Bo Flynn, JC's head coach.

But with Flynn coaching this team and putting all of these players to work, making them get to know each other and work better together, it isn't that far off.

"Dylan Neer, another Division 1 recruit and first-team all-division midfielder will look to take his game to the next level," Flynn added. "A few other key pieces in Troeger Lombardini, Dylan Luckey and Lucian House will help lead the Wildcats this year."

Even though the Wildcats have all of these new all star players there is still the chance that they may not even make it to the Championship game as a whole, but on the chance that they do make it to that game they still have to deal with another elite team and their all-star players.

"Maine Endwell's Gabe Thompson and Sam Toton will be key for M-E this year," Flynn said. "They have a lot of varsity experience to lead the Spartans."

# SLUGGING IT OUT



By **CADE DINO**

After a difficult season last year, the Johnson City Boys Varsity Baseball team looks to improve this upcoming season. Led by fourth year head coach Paul Stanton, the Wildcats look to improve their record this season and have a chance to play in Sectionals.

Stanton and his Wildcats finished the 2021 season with a record of 5-11-1. Now, on paper that might not look too good, but many of these losses were close games that could have been decided either way.

"We are very excited about the team we have this year," Stanton said. "A lot of guys that have been in the program for a while. We expect to be very competitive in Class A." *See **BASEBALL** next page.*

**BASEBALL**

The Wildcats have a handful of key returning players that are looking to improve from last season. The list includes seniors Joe Miller, Braeden Miller, Eron Mason, Harrison Smith, Joel Hovancik, and Keller Springfield, as well as juniors Ryan Fendick, and Cooper Iannon.

“All of them,” Stanton stated, when asked what his team's key games were. “We have 19 games scheduled and every one of them is important when you have to qualify for sectionals.”

As a team with a lot of experience, there are many newcomers that will also look to play a key role in improving the Wildcats this season. Jake Taylor, Peyton Brzozowy, Nate Moses, Evan Beard, Logan Mackey, Ian Morrison, Kenniel Cotto, and Nate Godoy are all among the team's key players who are looking to avenge last year's season.

“I think we have a long role ahead of us but will need to turn it around quickly,” senior infielder Keller Springfield said. “I also think we have a very good chance to compete for a sectional title.”

The Wildcats are off to an 0-2 start but are already looking better, despite falling 8-4 to Corning recently. The Hawks, who have five Division I commits, and are favorites to win the state title.

“Our goal every year is to make and win sectionals,” Stanton said.

# Baseball looking for turnaround season

By **AVERY CUNNINGHAM**

Make and win sectionals. That's the goal every season.

But after a disappointing 2021 season, posting a record of 5-11-1, the Wildcats are looking to bounce back on the baseball diamond in 2022. This despite kicking off their season April 4 with a heartbreaking 8-7 walk-off loss at Chenango Valley.

“Definitely to make and win the sectional tournament,” senior middle infielder Keller Springfield said. He also added that the team is “looking to have a record above .500”.

The Wildcats seem to all be on the same page as they are striving for a common goal of competing in the sectional tournament for a Section 4, Class A championship. It has been some time since a sectional banner has been hung in the gym for baseball, and they are definitely due.

Section 4 Baseball is very competitive across all classes, making it a challenge for Johnson City to make sectionals. However, you cannot count out the wildcats this season, as JC brings plenty of young stars and key returners.

When asked about which game is most important this year, Coach Stanton stated, “all of them. We have 19 games scheduled and every one of them is important when you have to qualify for sectionals.”

After losing senior captains Corey Casteline and Caleb Taylor, there is much more pressure and responsibility for this year's team. These two carried the load last season as one of the top pitcher/catcher duos in the entire section.

After a second loss to the Class AA Corning Hawks 8-4 on April 6th, Johnson City starts the season 0-2 with plenty of room for improvement and adjustments to be made. The Wildcats have the ability to turn the season around and get back on the right track.

Johnson City will face off against Chenango Valley for a second time on April 8th looking for redemption and to take their first win of the season back to Wildcat territory.

By Ashlyn Balchikonis

# Tourney honors dad, raises \$\$\$

JOHNSON CITY – When Avery Cunningham thought of ways to honor his late father’s memory, he thought a charity basketball tournament would be a great way to pay tribute.

“I wanted to pay memory to my father because he was always there for me in sports,” said Cunningham, a senior basketball star at JCHS. “This proved to be a great way shown by the team and audience participation.”

On Friday, March 25, Johnson City High School’s own National Honors Society held The Matthew Cunningham 3-on-3 Tournament in the high school gymnasium. This was a way to raise money for The American Diabetes Association and make a tribute to Cunningham’s late father, who had the disease.



CUNNINGHAM





The tournament, which raised just about \$3,000, featured a total of 14 staff and student teams. The teams were split into different brackets which included a staff, boys, and girls brackets. Those in the brackets played a couple rounds of pool play to determine who would make it in the playoffs.

“The National Honor Society members did an amazing job organizing the tournament.” said National Honor Society advisor Catherine Dubrava. “Led by Avery Cunningham and Shelby Pepper, students were responsible for almost every aspect of planning and putting on the event.”

Although the staff games were a bit slow and had trouble keeping the audience engaged, the Middle Ages team, which contained Mr. Nichols, Mrs. Johnson, and Mr. Bowen, ended up on top.

In contrast there was good competition in the boys and girls brackets, which ended up ending in the freshman teams winning.

In the girls bracket, team Freshies won which included Emma Phelan, Emery Guyzik, and Annabel Burke. In the boys bracket The Water Boys team won, which had Zubayr Griffin, Troeger Lombardini, Owen Johnson, and Felix Morales.

“It felt good to see a smile on everyone's face,” Cunningham said, “especially for a good cause.”

# It's Madness!

JC students followed the NCAA tournament, made some predictions. In the end, only one was left standing.

By **BARRY COMSTOCK**



Genius.  
Skill.  
Luck,  
What's needed to win the NCAA March Madness bracket? Well, if you play NCAA Div. I-A basketball, it might take all of the above.

However, if your goal is to pick 'em and win 'em on paper, maybe just one of the three will suffice.

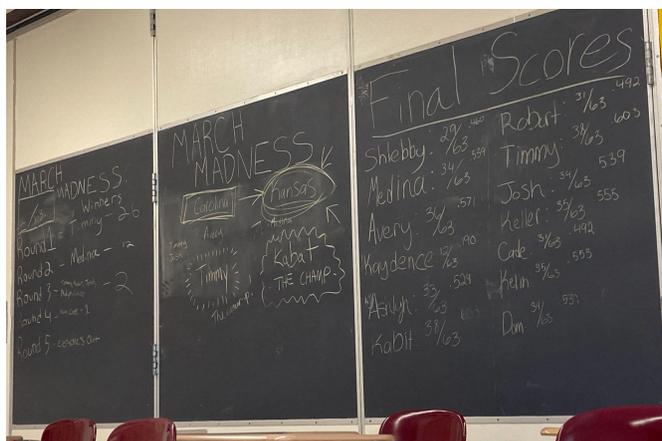
Just ask Timmy, a pseudonym for a student bracket-filler turned tournament-bracket-buster, whose skills are now the stuff of legend.

"I don't know anything about basketball," said Timmy, who fell one championship-game pick short of ousting in-school champion sophomore Nick Kabat. "It's really funny that my random picks beat every 'expert' in [Mr. Medina's] sports journalism class."

For fun, students in and out of Medina's sports journalism class filled out brackets to see who could pick a winner.

Kabat and Timmy entered the final round with 38 winning picks each, leading to a coin flip to decide the final picks. Timmy ended up with UNC as her final pick, leaving Kansas with Kabat, and the Jayhawks' win solidified his on-paper victory.

"I can't remember what I had for breakfast, let alone know how I won this," Kabat said, gleefully. "I guess I'm just gifted with the ability to win. I'm a winner."



# A SWING, AND MAYBE A HIT

## **SOFTBALL** By **ASHKYN BALCHIKONIS**

Johnson City Softball has a new addition to its team – a new head coach – which begs the question, can she turn the program around?

The Lady Wildcats posted a 6-10 record in the 2021 season. They return a veteran squad with lots of playing time together, but also Jessica Duff, a first year Varsity coach.

Duff brings a new edge to the veterans, her new perspective on the team and also her decisions for the program, which includes an exception to their tight-knit team, an incoming freshman.

“Annabel Burke is a freshman who brings skill to the offense, and defense,” Duff said. “She is a strong addition to this year’s versatile varsity team.”

This season will provide the final high school season of softball for seven seniors. Three are going on to play in college – Kaylie Kendrick, Mackenzie Emmons, and Olivia Colgan – but all of them have been playing together since youth.

“Communication with the athletes on the field and off,” Duff stated, in regard to the players having familiarity because of playing together for so long. “I want to work with the players in order to create an atmosphere, where they feel that they can collaboratively work on individual and team goals.”

Hoping to build the program back up, Duff sees this season as an opportunity to create a better environment not only for this year’s team, but also for them to set the precedent for future teams coming up.

## **GIRLS' GOLF LOOKS TO IMPROVE**

**Spring sport continues looking upward, hopeful to continue growth in 2022.**

## **Girls' Golf** By **DOMINICK BIRTCH**

The biggest goal for the season’s golf league is to improve daily and to keep all seven girls throughout the season.

If that can happen, according to coach Joe Mars, perhaps more girls will join the program.

“The biggest teams to look out for this season are Corning and Horseheads,” said coach Mars. “This season we have five newcomers, two seventh graders and three tenth graders”

The girls look to improve their 4-10 record from last season with help from third-year players Anna Regulski and Athanasia Mohammed.

“Some things we want to continue doing throughout the season is to continue to get every girl better,” Mars said. “And recruit more girls to the team for the future.”

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“I think this season will be different, normally we have a losing season, but this year we will surprise everyone,” senior Olivia Colgan said. “We’re coming for that sectional chip.”

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