

Eagles pursue playoffs

Crucial district stretch kicks off at Concordia

By R.B. Headley
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Beautiful Kansas, where hope springs eternal without even mentioning Jayhawk basketball practice.

Many football teams would surely love to relocate for the ultimate "wipe-your-slate-clean" fresh start.

Because beginning Friday night, every high school squad including the Colby Eagles basically has no defeats.

Every record re-sets at 0-0 entering district competition.

Colby (0-6 overall), Clay Center (4-2), Goodland (3-3) and Friday night's opponent — the Concordia Panthers (1-5) — began a two-week battle for two playoff spots that will be decided by Hal-

loween night.

"That's Kansas high school football," Colby coach Chris Gardner confirmed. "We win two of our next three games, we're in the playoffs."

The Eagles must first win one and Concordia presents a rather large challenge despite its 1-5 record.

These Panthers know power running is their meal ticket behind 285-pound senior Zak Romo, 275-pound juniors Josh Kennedy and Trey Workman, 265-pound junior Stefan Guevara and two more teammates listed around 230.

Concordia has attempted two passes during its two previous games (completing none) while rushing 116 times for 536 yards. The Panthers ground their way to 373 in their lone victory, 29-20, over winless Marysville two

weeks ago.

Their most dangerous backs can likely hide behind their blockers before dashing through openings. Junior 170-pounder Drake Hake, listed at 5'6", gained 156 yards against Marysville and added another 106 during a 27-21 defeat to Chapman last week.

Quarterback Zach Kyle's just one inch taller at 5'7", and 5'8" 165-pound senior Kaleb Pounds averaged better than 10 yards per carry (12 for 122) vs. Marysville.

There are many other Panthers listed between 5'5" and Pounds' 5'8".

Kickoff on Friday is set for 7 p.m. in Concordia after Colby completes the three-hour-plus road trip. The Eagles are home for their other two district games with Clay Center (Oct. 25) and Goodland (Halloween).



R.B. HEADLEY/Colby Free Press
Colby High junior quarterback Josh Matchell (12) ran away from Norton Bluejays to help ignite a 22-point first half for the Eagles Friday night at Dennen Field.

'Sassy' Colby golfers prepare for state

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History deserves more than scores and putt pictures, especially when teams have a lot of personality like Colby High's state-qualifying golf girls.

"We all have a sarcastic sense of humor. We're very sassy," the six Eagles agreed before Wednesday's team practice at Meadow Lake Golf Course.

"And we're all very competitive. We have some (sassy) moments at each other out on the course," senior Andrea Barton added. "But then we're hot tubbing together before regionals."

The hot tub led to one super-cool performance from "cold-blooded" regional champion Miranda Kern, Barton, senior classmate Haley Mengel, junior Kelly Sloan, sophomore Elissa Zerr and soph Jenna Crampton.

Together, they fired their way to Colby's lowest season score by 19 strokes and a second consecutive state tournament team berth — something never achieved before since Eagle girls' golf began in 1995.

However, that doesn't answer two far more interesting questions: why are Kern's shirts as smooth as her golf game?

"Miranda can't stand her shirt being wrinkly," the other five revealed. "She always has it on a hanger while ours are in bags. She's superstitious like that."

"I just feel more comfortable with a wrinkle-free shirt," Kern explained.

Who can complain she shot a career-low 86 at regionals, four strokes better than anyone from region champ Goodland or six other teams.



R.B. HEADLEY/Colby Free Press
Colby High sophomore Elissa Zerr and every Eagle state qualifier worked on their chipping skills during Wednesday's practice.

Is that why she can also be cold-blooded?

"Actually, I like the suburban (on road trips) to be cool and Andrea likes it warm," Kern said. "We're changing the temp back and forth through the whole trip."

"We're used to it," the others agreed.

The six Eagles and coach Rick Williams will make this one final rewarding road trip to Pittsburg's Crestwood Country Club for 4A state tourney play on Monday.

Kern, Barton, Mengel and Zerr are among those seeking redemption after making state last season.

"I choked last year," Mengel admitted in a familiar refrain among her teammates.

They'll also be seeking plenty of restaurants, especially one where people try to avoid choking on wings.

"When there's a KFC (Kentucky Fried Chicken) in town, we have to stop there," they said. "Team suppers are also very im-

portant. Lasagna, enchiladas, spaghetti, homemade chicken-and-noodles. And we love desserts."

"I'll basically eat about any food," Barton concluded.

What are some other important facts about these Eagles going into state?

Mengel
"She's an obsessive laugher," the others revealed.

"I am. I start laughing about something and can't stop," she confirmed.

Sloan
"I like Starburst, get that blood sugar up. And my key to success is no five-putts," she said. "I've improved a lot. One of my first (tee) shots bounced back off the wooden box and hit me."

Zerr
"We also call her Elsa," the others explained. "She's very spontaneous about saying things."

Crampton
A fairly quiet and insightful observer who probably said plenty

that this reporter forgot to write on his notebook. Or maybe she saw what this article might become.

Barton
"She can sing along with any song," the others observed. "We'll change stations on the radio, and she'll just start singing with the next one."

Favorite sayings among the team?

"Hit it, Nancy," Barton said. "I don't know exactly where it came from. You hear old guys on the course saying 'hit it, Alice', so we went with hit it, Nancy."

Other favorite sayings?
"We quote the Grinch a lot, like wake up, it's Christmas."

Some might say making state is like Christmas for every high school golf team.

Yet no matter how the Eagles finish, it's been a great run featuring three team state appearances during these past four seasons.

"Most people didn't think we would make it going into regionals," they concluded. "It was fun to prove them wrong."

Watch for results next week.

Trojans rise in rankings

After upsetting the No. 2 nationally-ranked team in country last weekend, the Colby Community College men's cross country team is now ranked second in the latest NJCAA (National Junior College Athletic Association) national rankings.

The Trojans were ranked 10th in the nation before compet-

ing at the Fort Hays State University Tiger Open where they upset previously ranked No. 2 Allen County and No. 9 Garden City. In the latest rankings, Allen County dropped to fourth and Garden City held the ninth spot.

Central Arizona continues to hold the top spot for the seventh week in a row.

Trojan earns league honor for defense

Colby Community College libero Danielle Rodriguez was selected as a Division I Defensive Player of the Week by the Kansas Jayhawk Community College Conference for week eight of competition.

The freshman from Greeley, Colo., helped lead the Lady Trojans defensively by notching 77 digs, averaging 5.13 a set.

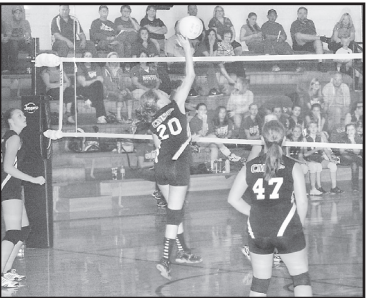
Colby (18-7 record overall) leads the Jayhawk Community

College Conference with a 10-1 record entering another important match tonight against Cloud County Community College. The match begins at 6:30 p.m. in the Colby Community building.

The updated league standings through Wednesday evening:

1. Colby 10-1, 2. Hutchinson 10-2, 3. Seward County 8-4, 4. Cloud County 7-5, 5. Barton 5-6, 6. Garden City 3-9, 7. Pratt 2-9, 8. Dodge City 1-10.

Colby spikers place at league



R.B. HEADLEY/Colby Free Press
Colby Middle School's Carson McLaughlin (20) helped lead a sweep of Norton last week.

The Colby Middle School eighth graders won three of five matches to finish fourth among Great West Athletic Conference tournament teams on Saturday.

Colby swept Goodland 21-4, 21-9; Ulysses 21-12, 21-10; and took a three-set thriller from Oakley 22-20, 17-21, 15-11.

Holcomb kept the Eagles from a shot at this championship by winning 21-14, 21-16. Scott City also scored a 21-8, 18-21, 15-12 triumph over Colby.

The eighth graders delivered a 21-17, 21-18 sweep of Norton. Colby's seventh graders also conquered Norton 25-23, 22-20.

The seventh grade girls ran into four tough Great West Athletic Conference tournament foes, though three of their matches went three sets.

Goodland won over Colby 14-21, 21-12, 15-13; Holcomb rallied 12-21, 21-13, 18-16; Ulysses prevailed 21-8, 21-8; and Scott City also edged the Eagles in three.

Bulldog JV drops tight matches

By Hailee Spresser
Golden Plains High School

Golden Plains' junior varsity volleyball team participated in a triangular against Northern Valley and Triplains/Brewster on Oct. 8 in Alma.

The JV came in with a record of 2-4.

"We need consistency," sophomore Brianna Stoll said. "As a whole, we need to develop full games."

The Lady Bulldogs' first match was against the Northern Valley Lady Huskies. Golden Plains couldn't quite pick up the momentum in the first, falling short 15-8.

In the second set, the Lady Bulldogs came back to grab the set win, 15-8. Golden Plains played a close game with the Lady Huskies in the third set but couldn't cap-

ture the win, falling 15-12.

For the second game, the Lady Bulldogs took on the Triplains/Brewster Lady Titans.

Golden Plains came out in the first set and annihilated Triplains/Brewster, 15-6.

The Lady Bulldogs tried to seal the win in the second set, but the Lady Titans pulled ahead to win

the set, 17-15.

Triplains/Brewster took hold of the third set, defeating Golden Plains, 15-13.

"We played as a team for the most part," freshman Arianna Camacho concluded. "Our communication still needs some work. In practice, we will continue to work on our weaknesses."

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MICHAEL W. SMITH
& Angie Miller
Fri., Dec. 13

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