

MSHSLconnect

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Students on the Beat



Editor's note: In this edition of Connect, the League debuts *Students on the Beat*, a feature that showcases the work of student reporters that cover activities at member schools. Deodatus Gbadoe, a freshman student reporter at Fridley High School, shares the historic journey of the school's undefeated football season, which featured eighth-grader Mya Karsten, the school's first female kicker at the varsity level. If you have the work of a student reporter the League can spotlight, please contact **Tim Leighton** at tleighton@mshsl.org

Fridley football team caps historic season

By Deodatus Gbadoe, Fridley High School

Finishing out a season like no other, the Fridley High School football team completed the 2020 season as the Class AAAA state champions. With an undefeated record of 7-0, the team's impressive feat has demonstrated the grit and perseverance of the Fridley football program. Because of the pandemic-shortened 2020 season and cancellation of the traditional Prep Bowl, in a poll conducted by the Associated Press News service, the Tigers were declared the Class AAAA champion.

It is Fridley's first football state crown since 1990 when the Tigers defeated Sartell for the Class A championship. This year's Fridley squad was led by KARE 11 2020 Co-Head Coach of the Year, Justin Reese and a veteran staff of assistants. The team has experienced much success in recent years under the leadership of Reese, who focuses his team strategies on strong relationship-building and student leadership.

"This has been one of our best seasons, not just because of the undefeated record, but because of how the team as a whole has grown into who they are today," Reese said. "They have built strong relationships with each other over the years. This season has shown that this team has the camaraderie, leadership skills and discipline to stay focused and play for each other."

Fridley Activities Director Dan Roff said the 2020 Fridley football team will be remembered for its crushing defense that did not allow its opponents a single touchdown.

During the season, the Tigers outscored the opposition, 242-16. Defensively, they gave up four field goals, and the only touchdown surrendered was a blocked punt in their sixth game of the season.

"This is a resilient group of student-athletes that bonded and overcame the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic," Roff said.

"Our team has learned how to appreciate all the moments that they have together," Reese said. "And they've learned not to take anything for granted."

The senior class of the football team has been part of an amazing run of section football success. Captain Micah Niewald, a senior wide receiver and defensive back, said he will never forget this football season and he is incredibly thankful to have had the opportunity to play. He added high praise for the entire Fridley football coaching staff.

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Fridley eighth-grade kicker Mya Karsten makes history, too

Continued from Cover

"First of all, they are great coaches, and could easily be the best group in the state," he said. "They are more than just coaches. They care for you on and off the field, and you can have a lot of fun with them. But, when it comes down to it, they want to make you a better person and player."

On top of an unforgettable and record-breaking season, the Fridley football team broke down barriers by recruiting a first-time female football athlete. Mya Karsten, an eighth-grader at Fridley Middle School, served as the team's primary kicker for all varsity-level games.



Karsten, a soccer player her entire life, was spotted by Reese and Roff while she played on the varsity soccer team. With unmatched kicking strength, she was offered an opportunity to compete on the football team. While Karsten is not only the first female football player in the team's history, she is also the first Fridley student-athlete to play two varsity-level sports in the same season.

Karsten, a member of the Fridley varsity soccer team since her seventh-grade season, was nervous about the opportunity, but also excited and ready to take on the challenge. She played in five of Fridley's seven games and converted 17 extra-point opportunities.

"It's definitely different being on a team of all boys, than a team of all girls, but they're really nice to me," Karsten said. "They are definitely supportive, and I've gotten a lot of advice from them."

Said Niewald: "It has been great having Mya on the team. She is a great person and kicker, and since she is an eighth-grader, she definitely has a bright future with many more years to play."

One of those supportive teammates includes her brother, Cale, a junior on the squad.

"I'm very proud and excited for her," he said. "It's incredibly impressive to be an eighth-grader and the only female member of the football team. She has a bright future ahead of her, and I know she will be very good."

To say the 2020 season has been unforgettable would be an understatement. According to Karsten, the season has been a whirlwind and flew by quickly, but she has gained many significant memories, hit important milestones and made new friends.

"My best memory from this season would have to be the first game of the season," she said. "I remember feeling so nervous and anxious. I had a million different thoughts flowing through my mind."

The nerves peaked as she stepped up to kick her first field goal.

"Everyone was cheering and excited for me," she recalled. "And the moment I made that first extra point, the crowd went crazy and a ton of weight was lifted off my shoulders. I will never forget that."

As Karsten has paved the way for young female athletes, she offered words of advice for any student who may have similar aspirations.

"Just go for it," she said. "Don't think twice about it, and just see what happens. You never know if you don't try!"

Karsten plans to continue her Fridley football career.

"I'm looking forward to trying new things, like kickoffs and maybe punts," she said. "I'm really excited to see what the future holds!"

Staff Reflection

A dark time shines a light on what is good

By Jason Nickleby



The Year 2020 has caused many of us to focus on what we have lost.

We lost the opportunity to rekindle relationships forged in the fire of a long season. We missed the sound of a walk-off home run at Coswell Park or the starter's pistol at Hamline University. Soccer and football teams were not able to walk off the U.S Bank Stadium field as champions. Officials did not have the opportunity to finish the season with the distinction of being recognized as a championship crew. Coaches did not get that last chance to embrace their fellow coaches as they concluded another fulfilling season.

That hurt. It continues to hurt.

But how did we prosper? I gained a new appreciation for family, my Minnesota State High School League family. Like most families, we are dedicated to our daily rituals and our completely full calendars. Practices, recitals, meets, and grocery store runs dominate our schedule. We operate in silos with our immediate families and our professional pursuits without truly taking the time to look around us to appreciate what we have.

Activities administrators, coaches, advisors, judges and officials are the lifeblood of League activities.

These dedicated professionals give selflessly to students throughout the year with little fanfare and recognition. The quality education-based experiences they provide is the envy of the nation. This pandemic forced me to slow down and recognize the backbone of League programming. Activities administrators are working tirelessly to implement guidelines and protocols to provide the safest opportunities for our students. Coaches and advisors continue to make meaningful connections with student participants. Officials and judges continue to hone their craft so they can be ready when they are called.

In a typical year, these folks go about their business with love and precision because that is what they do. As a result of this pandemic, the incredible contributions of these stakeholders have come out into the light during a very dark time. Activities and athletics can only occur if these stakeholders have a common mission and belief system. They have demonstrated this and more. They have all come together to prioritize student well-being through safe and effective education-based activities and athletics.

Many coaches, judges and officials have chosen to focus their efforts on immediate family and personal health by sitting out during their seasons. Their contributions are not diminished or devalued. They continue to support their League family from afar and we look forward to calling plays with them, calling balls and strikes or fine-tuning that One Act Play performance when the timing is right.

We will come out of this pause and pandemic with a stronger sense of what is truly important. I have never been more thankful to be part of the League family that loves fiercely, educates with compassion and pushes us all to be better today than we were yesterday. Activities administrators, coaches, advisors, judges and officials: Thank you! It is the great honor of my professional life to work with you all as we work with common purpose to provide impactful connections with our student participants.

It is a dark time, but your light continues to shine bright.

Sponsor Spotlight



In 2018, the Minnesota State High School League and Smitty Official's Apparel, LLC, announced an exclusive partnership that provided Minnesota high school sports officials access to state-of-the-art, dye-sublimated official's uniforms. Made in the United States, these uniforms are adorned with the League logo and are used in the following activities: Basketball, wrestling, volleyball, adapted soccer, adapted floor hockey and swimming and diving. The uniforms made their debut during the wrestling and basketball state tournaments in 2018.

"Our MSHSL officials are excited to move to the new Smitty official's uniforms and Smitty has demonstrated a great willingness to meet our needs and the needs of our officials and programs," League Executive Director Erich Martens said at the announcement of the partnership.

Smitty was founded by Joe DeRosa, who officiated in the National Basketball Association for 22 seasons. Since acquiring the Original Smitty Lanyard Company in 2004, the Canton, Ohio-based company has grown into a leading manufacturer of sports officials' apparel with nearly 3,000 products in various styles and sizes.

"I am very excited about the opportunity to be the proud supplier of MSHSL official's apparel," said DeRosa, the chief executive officer of Smitty Official's Apparel. "Our goal is to support MSHSL officiating programs and provide quality products at affordable prices to MSHSL sports officials throughout the entire state. We look forward to our long-term partnership."

To learn more about Smitty Official's Apparel, see <https://smittyapparel.com/>

in memoriam



Longtime Minnetonka High School tennis coach Dave Stearns passed away on Saturday, Dec. 12. He was 72.

Stearns coached the Minnetonka girls tennis team for the past 27 seasons and also coached the boys tennis team during a career that spanned 33 years at the school. This past fall, he led the top-ranked Skippers to a 14-0 record and the Section 2AA crown. During the COVID-19 era, section play was the culminating level during the Minnesota State High School League's abbreviated season.

Minnetonka was the Class AA runner-up in 2018 and 2019 was heavily favored to capture the big-school title in 2020. In 98 matches during the course of the 2020 season, the Skippers won 96 of them.

Stearns, a St. Cloud native and a three-sport standout at Tech High School, was a four-year letter winner with the University of Minnesota men's tennis team and served as a Gophers' co-captain in 1971. He went on to lead Minnetonka's boys tennis team to Class AA championships in 2016 and 2017, respectively. It was Minnetonka's first boys tennis championship since 1974. In 2018, Stearns was honored as the Class AA Coach of the Year by the Minnesota Tennis Coaches Association.

Technology News

CHECK THIS OUT!

News Articles found at www.mshsl.org provide timely updates on League news. At any time, several news stories are featured on the home page of the website. By choosing "View All News" you can see additional news stories that have been posted in reverse chronological order. News Articles are divided into categories: John's Journal, Tournament News, League News, Connect Newsletters, and Awards.

From within a news story, it is one easy click to email the story or share to social media.

The League encourages you to explore the evolving website and its features.

do you know?

1

Who proclaimed Jan. 30-Feb. 3 as "Co-Curricular Activities Week?"

What national program that emphasized "curiosity, confidence, courage and constancy" was introduced to the League's member schools?

Where was the Alpine Skiing State Meet held in 1989?

Can you name the two coaches that reached the 400-victory milestone in early 1989?

What MSHSL Hall of Fame member was selected the Section 5 speech educator of the year by the NFHS?

Answers on page 5

Fine Arts Spotlight

Minnesota State High School League Fine Arts educators Burton Svendsen and Ben Bakken Ballentine have been honored with Outstanding Educator Awards by the National Federation of High School Associations. Svendsen, of Rushford, was honored for his longtime work in the music classroom, as an adjudicator and Fine Arts Administrator. Ballentine, in his 10th year at Hill-Murray High School, was recognized for excellence in Speech, Debate and the theater.

As the Minnesota recipients, Svendsen and Ballantine are eligible for the Section 5 award and national citation awards that are still to be determined by the NFHS.



Svendsen, a native of Racine, Wis., graduated from Wartburg College in 1973 with a degree in Music Education. After a five-year stint in the Exira (Iowa) Public School System, he moved on to Rushford, Minn., where he taught band in that district, as well as the consolidated Rushford-Peterson until his retirement in 2016. He directed bands from the fifth grade to 12th grade levels.

He was the kind of educator that arrived at school early and stayed late for the betterment of students and their passion to learn music. While he would strive to teach the basics of music to all, he encouraged students to embrace their musical experience, one that would carry them into their adult lives. Going beyond the notes and touching on the emotion that music can stir in everyone, Svendsen enriched the band experience beyond the traditional high school setting, in part, by shepherding field trips for his students to attend the Minnesota Opera, the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre or the University of Minnesota Concert Band.

"He's been an incredible ambassador for music education for students in our member schools," said Tim Leighton, the League's music coordinator. "Having a passion for music doesn't end when you graduate. He helped instill an enthusiasm and appreciation for music that students carried with them well beyond the high school experience."

As an administrator, Svendsen was an active member in the Iowa Band Masters, the Iowa Education Association, the Minnesota Music Educators Association, the Minnesota Band Directors Association and the Region IA Committee.



Ballentine has been the artistic director at Hill-Murray High School for the past nine years. He came to education by way of a career as a professional actor in the Twin Cities. In becoming an educator, Ballentine was looking for a path to share the lessons he had learned about the Fine Arts during his high school experience.

"In a very short time, Ben established himself as one of the brightest new high school directors in the state," said Gregg Sawyer of Holy Angels High School and president of the League's One Act Play Coaches Advisory Committee. "In his first year competing in the (One Act Play festival), he took his production of 'The Great Gatsby' all way to the state stage, the show earning a well-deserved star rating. Under his direction, the school has been to state three times with two star ratings."

According to Sawyer, a recipient of the NFHS award in 1998, Ballentine "instills in his students the same professionalism that he exhibits in his own work as an actor. He trains the students to stretch their skills, hone their craft, and perform with confidence and great skill. He is bold and brave in his pedagogy, looks for ways to use the art to advance the causes of social justice, and works tirelessly to ensure that his students have all the tools and training necessary to be successful."

Under Ballantine's direction, Hill-Murray students produce up to eight shows per school year, which creates a multitude of opportunities for participation. Hill-Murray's theater program has been awarded the Spotlight Awards Outstanding Overall Achievement in Musical Theatre and the League's One Act Play Festival starred performances.



Debate

- Eagan senior Lincoln-Douglas debater Arush Iyer won the 2020 Dowling Paradigm Debate Tournament and earned a second bid to the Tournament of Champions. He also took home 3rd speaker at the tournament.
- Eagan sophomores Eric Lil and Archan Sen won winning their Octofinals round and earned their second bid to the Tournament of Champions.
- Eagan's Congressional Debate team participated in the NSDA National Qualifier where seniors Prapthi Sirkay and Samantha Lee qualified for the national event in the summer.
- Section competitions for Congressional Debate were held virtually on December 4-5. Twenty-four debaters qualified for the virtual state tournament.

- Section competitions in Lincoln-Douglas, Policy and Public Forum will be held virtually on January 7-8.
- The Debate State Tournament will be held on a virtual platform on Jan. 14-15.

Music

- League Staff continues to work with the Music Advisory Committee on updating the Approved Music List and preparations for section contests on a virtual platform that will begin on March 1.

One Act Play

- Numerous sections have been hosting virtual meetings with directors to discuss this year's guidance and rules, and to brainstorm creative ideas. Directors are dedicated to offering a positive experience for the students in a safe way, while knowing it will look different than other years.
- Sub-section tournaments will begin later this month.
- The awards ceremony and oral critiques for the virtual One Act Play State Festival are scheduled for Feb. 13.

Speech

- At its meeting on Dec. 3, the League's Board of Directors approved updated rules and policies.

Visual Arts

- The Minnesota Scholastic Art Awards will be held via a virtual platform. Many of those works, typically, are displayed as part of the League's Section Visual Arts competitions.

Fine Arts Copyright Do's & Don'ts

Copyright Do's and Don'ts Cheat Sheet

DO

- View score and sound on YouTube or sample pages to review and select music.
- Arrange songs in the public domain.
- Make copies from classroom resources that are labeled as reproducible.
- Secure Public Performance Rights for all non-exempt performances.
- Copy non-performable excerpts to use for academic purposes.
- Make emergency copies if a performance is imminent and purchase a replacement within a reasonable time.
- Support the arts by legally purchasing music.



Learn More:
NFHSLearn.com
Copyright and Compliance Course



Copyright Do's and Don'ts Cheat Sheet

DON'T

- Download and copy sample pages to avoid purchasing the music.
- Post copyright materials or recordings online.
- Use illegal copies of copyrighted material.
- Break the law.
- Share reproducible materials from school to school – one is required per organization.
- Create your own arrangements of copyrighted material without prior written permission.
- Make "practice" copies for students.



Learn More:
NFHSLearn.com
Copyright and Compliance Course



MSHSL Officials



• All communications regarding registration, rule or mechanics clarifications, and reminders will take place via email from officials@mshsl.org via Arbiter.

• Winter sport coaches and officials are encouraged to be aware of the rule changes in their sports. The National Federation has completed that annual process for winter sports, and the results can be found on the MSHSL website or through either your Coach's Dashboard or Arbiter Central Hub page. Go to your individual sport information and select the link to the news release from the NFHS. Look for "2020-2021 Rule Changes."

• Continue to review and follow the sport-specific guidance documents for your sport. Information from the MDH and MDE results in updates on a weekly basis.

• The deadlines to complete online meetings and exams are posted on the Arbiter

Central Hub. Please plan ahead to complete these items on time. The Eligibility Badge cannot be printed or shared without completing all of the required items. The current deadline for winter sports is Jan. 6.

• We continue to develop our observation program in basketball, hockey, and wrestling during the winter season. If you have not been observed in the last three years and would like to be, please email officials@mshsl.org with your interest. Most observations will be completed remotely.

• Officiating training will continue in a virtual format for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year.

• Important reminder: Officials MUST bring the printed Eligibility badge (Profile tab) or a device with the badge on it to EVERY varsity contest. Officials need to be proactive and show the badge to someone at the site without a request. The AD's/site person/coach still needs to check at the site as we have last minute replacements.

• Select section officiating assignments will be assigned via Arbiter and paid with ArbiterPay during winter tournaments. All State assignments will be assigned via Arbiter and paid with ArbiterPay.

• Nominations for the 2022 Distinguished Service Award are now being accepted. Please connect with your Association leadership if you are interested in making a nomination.

quiz answers

Questions on page 3

1. Minnesota Gov. Rudy Perpich
2. The "Dreamers and Doers" program, sponsored by Walt Disney
3. Welch Village when the event was known as Slalom Skiing
4. Minneapolis Southwest boys hockey coach Jim Baxter and Anoka wrestling coach Ron Malcolm
5. Michael Tillmann, a longtime Speech and One Act Play coach and director at Marshall and Owatonna high schools, was honored for his work by the NFHS.

Sponsor Salute



THE MINNESOTA STATE HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE IS GRATEFUL TO OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS THAT CONTINUE TO INVEST IN HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITY PROGRAMS.



BAUER

Fleet  Farm™

