

SPORTS *extra*

## TEAMS ON THE RISE

→ **Monticello boys' basketball.** Junior-varsity team compiled a 21-0 record in most recent season, and varsity club nearly won 20 games.

→ **Oakwood/Salt Fork wrestling.** Big names — Gage Reed, Reef Pacot and Joe Ashuay — all slated to return to go with talented incoming underclassmen.

→ **Paxton-Buckley-Loda volleyball.** Multiple area coaches tabbed Panthers as a team to watch, given minimal graduation and return of multiple top players after PBL went 30-6 last season.

→ **Uni High girls' basketball.** Illiniks picked up 17 victories last season — fourth-most in 41 years — and are returning four of five starters from that crop.

→ **Villa Grove/Heritage cross-country.** Potential last Blue Devils distance running group — with cooperative dissolving in other sports — is returning almost every athlete and expects to include 25 total competitors.

→ **Westville football.** Tigers improved from 0-9 to 4-5 between 2018 and 2019, and many freshmen and sophomores on that winless team now are experienced juniors and seniors.

→ **St. Thomas More volleyball.** Multi-time All-Area Player of the Year Allie Trames gone, but the rest of the roster returns and is stacked with talent and experience.

→ **Mahomet-Seymour cross-country.** Other than the female program getting a new coach, most everyone is returning for boys' and girls' units that fared well at their Class 2A state meets.

→ **Georgetown-Ridge Farm softball.** Another young group, with multiple freshmen who would've contributed in 2020, as what coach Kim Fraser believes are all the pieces needed to excel in 2021.

→ **Arthur-Lovington-Atwood-Hammond boys' cross-country.** Nearly all key runners are coming back this fall for a group that won multiple team titles.

## SUPER SOPHOMORES

**1. Jalen Quinn, Tuscola.** Division I basketball recruit could have gone in multiple categories in this review after garnering All-Area football and boys' basketball first-team status.

**2. Sally Ma, Uni High.** Defending All-Area girls' swim and dive Athlete of the Year recorded a pair of top-eight state finals finishes and is the area's fastest female freestyler.

**3. Emma Blecher, Unity.** Two-time All-Area volleyball first-team pick was offensive powerhouse for Rockets in 32-win campaign.

**4. Ryder James, Paxton-Buckley-Loda.** Area's top finisher in Class 1A boys' cross-country state meet snatched fifth place en route to All-Area first team recognition.

**5. Kennedy Burnett, St. Joseph-Ogden.** Talented hitter managed to stand out so effectively on senior-loaded state-qualifying volleyball team that she cracked All-Area first team.

**6. Caroline Kerr, St. Thomas More.** Another two-time All-Area volleyball first teamer already, setting prowess makes position non-issue for Sabers.

**7. Tavius Hosley, Unity.** Collected second Class 1A state runner-up effort in as many years, this time at 113 pounds, and aided Rockets in third-place dual-team state finish.

**8. Rachel Koon, Monticello.** All-state performance at Class 1A girls' cross-country state meet — 19th place, to be exact — helped Sages to second in team chase.

**9. Bella Dudley, Tri-County.** Strong second scoring option to Tayler Barry, potent outside shooter and dribble-driver Dudley came up big in Titans' run to third place in Class 1A.

**10. Brooke Erhard, St. Thomas More.** Potential heir apparent to outgoing Sabers girls' golf star Alaina Bowie made All-Area first team for Class 1A's fifth-place squad.

**11. Kyle Nofziger, Mahomet-Seymour.** Key presence for young but highly-achieving Bulldogs boys' cross-country unit, Nofziger was team's top sophomore and No. 2 runner at Class 2A state.

## OUT-OF-STATE ALUMNI TO WATCH

→ **Jenny Kimbro, Salt Fork.** Earned All-America honors and qualified for NCAA nationals' indoor pentathlon with Iowa women's track and field earlier in 2020, and holds multiple program records.

→ **Dylan Dodd, Bismarck-Henning/Rossville-Alvin.** Technically a utility player for Southeast Missouri State baseball, he tossed a team-high 26 2/3 innings in shortened 2020 season while posting 2-1 record, 3.38 ERA.

→ **Tim Finke, Champaign Central.** Sat out last season after transferring to Wright State from Grand Canyon, but 2018 All-Area Player of the Year could make key impact for Centennial graduate Scott Nagy's program.

→ **Anaya Peoples, Schlarman.** Received legitimate playing time for powerhouse Notre Dame women's basketball in down season, making 2020 ACC All-Freshman Team.

→ **Alayna Stalter, Fisher.** Three-time Class 1A girls' track and field state medalist now turning heads at Murray State with hurdling prowess.

→ **Kendle Moore, Danville.** Started in all 32 of Colorado State men's basketball's games in 2019-2020, averaging nine points a game while seeing more than 30 minutes on average.

→ **Ameia Wilson, Danville.** Michigan women's track and field sophomore-to-be already making waves, placing ninth in the 2020 Big Ten Indoor Championships' long jump.

→ **Ema Rajic, Uni High.** California women's swimmer was on this list last year, continues to earn spot by already holding program record in 100-yard breaststroke (58.97 seconds).

→ **Ryan Hodge, Mahomet-Seymour.** Has battled through injuries to make impact with Baylor men's cross-country and track and field.

→ **Luke Smith, Centennial.** Opted to return to college baseball at Louisville instead of going pro, fiery right-handed starting pitcher has chance to become Cardinals' ace in 2021 season.