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PRESS PHOTO BY NANCY SCHOLZ

The 2023 Northwestern Lehigh High School football team.

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Tigers want to clear next hurdle

BY CHUCK HIXSON
Special to the Press

One hurdle was cleared by Northwestern last season when it won the District 11 Class 3A football championship. The next hurdle is a little higher, but the Tigers have the talent to give it a shot.

Northwestern has a good chunk of experienced players returning for 2023 and a repeat performance as district champions, followed by

a win or two in states, is not out of the question for this squad.

Thanks to coach Josh Snyder's propensity to give younger players a chance to play if they have the talent, a Tigers team that has just five seniors on the roster and lost the athleticism of Cade Christopher, still has talented players with varsity experience at many of the positions. The senior group is the smallest for Snyder as

he enters his 11th season at the helm.

Senior Dalton Clymer is set to take over as the primary offensive threat after rushing for over 1,400 yards last season and finishing second on the team with 13 catches out of the running back spot. He also anchors the always strong line-backing corps and will be back for that role again in 2023.

Christopher's exit leaves a hole at quar-

terback but again, Snyder is not complaining. Northwestern has sophomores Mason Bollinger and Shane Leh to fill that hole and Clymer can always step in to give an added look on offense.

Bollinger completed 10 of 20 passes last season for 142 yards and a touchdown in limited action, so he has had a taste of varsity football

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PRESS PHOTO BY NANCY SCHOLZ

The 2023 Northwestern Lehigh High School boys soccer team.

Defending state champs are ready to do it again

BY CHUCK HIXSON
Special to the Press

"It's one of those feelings that will never get old."

That's how Northwestern coach Nate Hunsicker describes the feeling of having coached the Tigers to a state championship last season, noting that it feels just as special coming into the next season as it did when the final horn sounded at the end of the game.

Northwestern Lehigh flirted with a state championship in 2016 and 2017 but had to wait until last season to collect the coveted gold medals rather than silver in the PIAA championship.

The state title was the first ever for Northwestern and before the cele-

bration had completely died down, thoughts turned to making it two in a row. Well, the time to do that is here and the Tigers have the arsenal at their disposal to make it happen, especially since the two players who scored goals in the state championship game were sophomores and more than a half dozen starters are back for Hunsicker's squad.

Senior Matt Johnson has already accomplished enough during his high school career to establish himself as one of the best to ever put on a soccer uniform at Northwestern.

If Johnson does nothing more than repeat his numbers from last season – 34 goals and 16 assists – he would be

on the doorstep of 100 goals for his career and would easily surpass the 200-point plateau. If Johnson can find four more goals this season, he would reach 100 for his career.

"Our defenders and our midfielders have great vision on the field and their mentality and the way they play the game is amazing," said Johnson. "My personal goal is to get another chip [gold medal] and then possibly getting the goal record and points record for my personal goals, but it's about that second chip."

Johnson will have some help in junior Jack Mauro, who stepped into the spotlight last

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PRESS PHOTO BY NANCY SCHOLZ

The 2023 Northwestern Lehigh High School girls soccer team.

Defending district champs want more in '23

BY CHUCK HIXSON
Special to the Press

For high school coaches, every new season brings with it the need to fill some holes left by graduation. The only question from year to year is how many holes there will be and how will they be filled.

Coming into training camp this year, the Northwestern Lehigh girls soccer team has had more competition for spots in the lineup than it has in years past.

While not everyone will wind up as a starter, most of the combatants will find themselves with quality time on the varsity field for the defending district champion Lady Tigers.

"We have some returning starters and then we have some good freshmen players who can help right away," said head coach Jordan Smith. "We have a lot of competition, which is good, and it is also going to give us some depth

that we can use as well." A key loss for Northwestern is goalkeeper Naomi Glassberg, who was one of the best goalies in the Colonial League. Sophomore Olivia Reinhart was the understudy to Glassberg and takes over the starting role in goal for the Lady Tigers.

The good news for Reinhart is that she has a strong group of returning players in front of her, with the defense returning three of four

backs for the 2023 season with Abby Pomajevich (senior), Syenna Flores (junior), and Olivia Spaatz (junior) returning.

"I always look for people in the middle, like Cam [Fitch], who is pretty much always open," said Pomajevich. "As a group we work together well and communicate really well, so that makes it easier to get the ball up and know where everybody is on the field."

One of the reasons for the holes that need to be filled is that Northwestern has just four seniors – Katie Brensinger, Cammy Fitch, Jayden Gillette, and Pomajevich – but they are all four-year varsity players. Fitch will team with juniors Brook Balliet and Paige Bissell and sophomore Sophia Czonstka to give Northwestern the makings of a strong offensive attack.

"We think we can be a more dynamic offense

this season and find ways of scoring more goals and keeping pressure on the other team," said Smith.

Fitch comes into the season with 30 career goals and 75 career points, putting her well within reach of both 50 goals and 100 points, considering she amassed 23 goals and 58 points in her junior season.

"We have kind of had the same results that last

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PRESS PHOTO BY RON GOWER

Tiger senior Dalton Clymer returns at running back after rushing for over 1,400 yards last season.

FOOTBALL

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action. His biggest play of the season came in the district championship game against North Schuylkill when he hit Clymer on a reverse throwback pass that put the Tigers up 28-14.

The play was just one of the wrinkles that Snyder has tucked into the recesses of the playbook, which is what makes the offensive schemes at Northwestern difficult to run and difficult to defend. This season, he believes he has the talent and experience to put pretty much every play he has dreamed up into the game plan in any given week.

"I remember as a freshman that my mind was going to explode at times," said Clymer. "There was a lot to digest then and he [coach Snyder] likes to add to that, so you have to keep on your toes and be ready to handle whatever he calls. I like that though because it sets us apart from other teams because they

don't know what to expect next and there is no way they can be prepared for some of the things we are going to do."

Senior linemen Blaine Snyder and Ben Walters have just one newbie to break in this season in Bryer Reichard, who will serve as an offensive tackle and defensive end for the Tigers. The early returns are good not just on Reichard but on other young players who are stepping into new roles.

"It's going really well," said Walters of Reichard's adjustments. "He's working at it because there is a lot to take in and it's not easy. He is definitely doing the work though and it is going to pay off for him. The younger guys on the team are all doing well, and they know that there is a lot expected of them, so they have to work."

Devon Hildebrand was named to the Colonial League all-stars by the league's coaches last season for his work out of the slot for Northwestern. He pulled in 23 catches for over 200 yards and helped out with 17 carries for the

Tigers in addition to playing outside linebacker.

"Devon is a kid who can do a lot of things for us. He doesn't always get recognition but he's steady and we look for him to step forward this season," said coach Snyder. "We have a lot of guys like that who give us depth and let us do some different things. This season, our depth will allow us to give some guys breaks now and then from playing on both sides of the ball and that will help keep those guys a little fresher."

As for Clymer, he is looking forward to his senior season, already having experienced a lot of winning in his time at Northwestern.

"The whole community is great and the support that we get from the community is special and we all pull together. That's what has made this program so strong," said Clymer. "Obviously, we want this to be a special season since we're seniors and we want to go further than we did in states and play every game possible. We just want to go out on a special season."

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PRESS PHOTO BY NANCY SCHOLZ

The 2023 Northwestern Lehigh High School field hockey team.

Field hockey team plans on continued success

BY CHUCK HIXSON
Special to the Press

With the continuing growth of the field hockey program over the past few seasons, Northwestern Lehigh has reached the point where the Tigers plan on being right in the thick of things every season.

After losing to Southern Lehigh in the Colonial League champion-

ship last season, they rebounded to win the district championship with a 3-0 win over Wilson.

In training sessions during the offseason, head coach Lissa Opolsky spent time getting her players to focus on little things that can make a difference, especially against some of the better teams on the schedule like Southern

Lehigh, Moravian Academy, Palmerton and Wilson, who all figure to battle for postseason spots this season.

Opolsky took time to get her players to not just go through drills, but she also stressed the reasons behind the drills and how they are going to make the team better.

"I want them to really focus on each drill,

what it means and why it is important," said Opolsky. "On offense, we want to be able to build plays and not just hit and hope, so it's important that we work on these things now."

This year's roster has just three seniors after six graduated last spring. While that might sound like the Tigers will lack experience, a group of juniors and

even a few sophomores have good amounts of varsity experience, so Northwestern Lehigh continues to simply reload as it prepares for the 2023 season.

"We have a great group of girls and we are all coming out every day and practicing and putting our heart out there," said senior forward Julia Masters. "As a senior this year,

my leadership role will be important, so I am focusing on helping everyone out and encouraging them."

One of the graduation losses came in the cage where Gabby Gober moves on, leaving the Lady Tigers in need of a goalie. No problem. Senior Emma Yanders steps in this season and Opolsky has every con-

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PRESS PHOTO BY NANCY SCHOLZ

The 2023 Northwestern Lehigh High School girls volleyball team.

Last year saw program-best 12-win season

BY CHUCK HIXSON
Special to the Press

After finishing last season with a 12-5-1 record, the best in the history of the program, the Northwestern girls volleyball team looks to continue its growth in 2023.

After just missing the Colonial League playoffs last season, Northwestern figures to be battling with Southern Lehigh and Notre Dame - Green Pond for the top of the league standings. Last season, Northwestern sent an early message when it beat the Crusaders in an early-season match, winning 3-2. Notre Dame bounced back

later in the season to sweep Northwestern.

Hopes are high for this season thanks to a core group of players who return from last year's team and an influx of young players who will mix in where needed.

Setter Shannon Green is back for her junior season and libero Kylie Nagle is back for her senior year on the court. If Nagle repeats her performance from last season when she recorded 298 digs, she will surpass the 1,000-dig mark, becoming just the second Northwestern player to accomplish that feat. Nagle also had 54 aces last season.

Outside hitter Bailey Murray returns to give more experience to the Northwestern attack.

"Digs are super important and it's not only picking up the hard hits, but also the tips and pushing the pushes and covering the deep corners," said Nagle. "It's so important because you're setting up your offense and you need to give them sets so that they can run a fast offense and run different plays."

Outside hitter and defensive specialist Danielle Dengler comes into her final high school season with a plan in place for how she can best help the team.

"I'm definitely going to focus more this year on defense," said Dengler. "We all learn a lot from Kylie, just watching her and how she plays and the energy she brings. I think we can do a good job of improving this season and I'm excited about the season."

Head coach Mike Maston is excited about how the program is progressing. While every coach wants to have a lot of potential players to choose from for their roster, Maston was inundated with 44 players trying out for the team and believes he has some young players who will fit in well. In fact, he can already see the

makings of strong teams down the road.

Freshman Alexa George is in line to be the starting libero on the JV team and the heir apparent to the position when Nagle graduates next spring. Daisy Stringer is another freshman that is poised for a starting role down the road. Both George and Stringer are likely to see some time on the court playing varsity this season.

"I like to develop from below," said Maston. "It's a nice situation to have younger players coming along that you can figure on being a part of your team down the road."

As Northwestern Le-

high looks to chase down Southern Lehigh and Notre Dame, the head-to-head matchups will be key. The first meeting comes on Sept. 7 when the Crusaders visit New Tripoli. Six days later, the Lady Tigers are at Southern Lehigh.

The venues are reversed later in the season when Northwestern visits Notre Dame on Oct. 2 and the Spartans are at Northwestern a week later for the penultimate game of the season. The Crusaders and Spartans meet on September 11 and October 4.

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Golfers start strong in 2023

BY MIKE HAINES
mhaines@tnonline.com

Northwestern golf head coach Tim Miller knew he had some returning talent coming back to this year's team. But after the first three matches he's been pleasantly surprised to see that his players doing even better than he expected as they opened the season with three wins.

"We've been playing great," said Miller, who is in his 13th season at the helm. "They really surprised me. We've have five players in the 80s (in two of the team's first three matches). I don't remember that ever being the case in all my years here."

Stone Sosnovik, one of the stars on the Tigers' District 11 champion lacrosse team, is one of three seniors on this year's golf team. He's the only four-year varsity player and has been named team captain.

Sosnovik led the Tigers in two of their first three outings, shooting 78 in the season opener against Notre Dame and 82 in a win over Pen Argyl.

Along with Sosnovik, senior Erik Mather and sophomore Avri Chandler will likely make up the team's top three players in most matches, while senior Ethan Kozlowski and junior Jon Conti were among the team's top five twice in the first three matches, with freshman Cole Dynda and sophomore Gracie Scheffler also figuring in the team scoring once each. Juniors Addison Remaley and Cadem Monohan, along with freshman Liam Earl could also be part of the team's top five on any given day.

Several Tigers competed in last year's post-season events for the first time and will be looking to improve on their finishes this fall. Chandler finished third in the Colonial League girls competition last year and Remaley was a third-place finisher at girls districts.

Mather placed 21st at leagues last year, while Sosnovik (28th) and Kozlowski (36th) also competed in the league tournament.

Miller said most of See **GOLF** on Page A12



PHOTO COURTESY OF BISHOP PHOTOGRAPHY

The 2023 Northwestern Lehigh High School golf team.

HOCKEY

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fidence that Yanders will have success, even though she has a much different style than Gober.

"Gabby was very vocal, and Emma is painfully quiet at times. She is getting better

though," said Opolsky with a laugh, adding that she believes that Yanders will be able to provide leadership on the field even though it will come in a quieter form.

"You definitely need to be aggressive back there," Opolsky said. "Emma has a very chill mindset, and we like that because a calm-

ing presence is also good, but she has really worked on having that balance."

"For me," said Yanders, "learning to be more aggressive is working better for me and I keep working on that because it's important. The other girls on defense are helping too and they have helped me to be more aggressive

and confident."

Kaia Grantham is the third senior on the team and likes the fact that the team has a good mix of players who have played a good number of varsity minutes and others who are going to be coming along as younger players.

"I like how we have looked so far, and I think we are putting in

the work that we have to do that will make us better," said Grantham. "For me, I have been able to give some of the girls some constructive criticism and help them out if they did something wrong. I think it's important to also give them encouragement and let them know when they are doing something really well."

The schedule opens with an early test, having Moravian Academy up first to open the season and starting Sep. 6, Northwestern has a string of games that will have Palmerton, Wilson, and Southern Lehigh in a three-game stretch that will help to determine which teams are likely to emerge.



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PRESS PHOTO BY NANCY SCHOLZ

The 2023 Northwestern Lehigh boys and girls cross country teams.

Boys XC will reload

BY MIKE HAINES
mhaines@tnonline.com

After graduating five of the team's top seven runners from last year's unbeaten Colonial League Championship boys cross country team, 25th-year head coach Chris Stitzel thought 2023 might be a rebuilding year for his team. But he's been pleased to see his returning runners improving and some new talent joining the ranks.

"We lost some good talent, but I don't think it's going to be a rebuilding year," Stitzel said.

The Tigers have three runners back from last year's postseason line up in senior Sean Kershner (19th at leagues, 26th at districts in 2022), junior Xander Giandomenico (21st leagues, 30th districts) and sopho-

more Lucas Heeps. Tyler Lehr, one of just two seniors on the team, will join the line up, along with juniors Bryce Thrash, Luke Thrash and Greyson Wellings, sophomore Jonathan Fornoff and freshman Brady Furman.

Stitzel said Kershner is his most likely top runner this year, but Giandomenico and Wellings are also candidates to lead the team in any give meet.

"We don't have any studs, but I think they'll run together," he said. "Teams might go 1-2 on us, but hopefully we can get the next four or five spots."

Last season the Tigers went 24-0 in the regular season before winning the Colonial League title. But at districts the team slipped to fourth de-

See **BOYS** on Page A13

Girls harriers look to defend District 11 title

BY MIKE HAINES
mhaines@tnonline.com

When we left off last season, the Northwestern Lehigh girls cross country team ended its season at the state championship meet after a somewhat surprising first-place finish at the District 11 Class 2A Championships. The Tigers had gone 19-5 in the Colonial League and finished third as a team at the league meet before coming up big in the postseason.

This year's team will be without two graduates from last year's team as Angelina Klein has graduated after three seasons as the team's top runner. Maci Fisher also graduated after being part of last year's district

line up.

This year's team has only nine runners, but many of them bring talent and experience to the line up.

"We should be good with what we have back," said 25th-year head coach Chris Stitzel. "We don't have a lot of depth, but the runners we have will be good."

Last year's No. 2 runner Sophia Cornell, a junior, returns this season along with classmate Kelcey Pedron. They both finished in the top 10 at last year's district meet. Returning senior Haley Dubois and newcomer Megan Fornwalt, a junior, will likely be part of the team's top four this

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SOCCER

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last three years going to the state quarterfinals, and we want to get past that, especially for our senior year,” said Fitch, who watched her older brother win a state championship with the boys team last season. “I was really happy for him and it would be great for us to get there this season and I know he will be pulling for us.”

As if to add another degree of difficulty for the Tigers, their schedule is a difficult one.

In addition to the usual tough Colonial League teams – Southern Lehigh, Saucon Valley and even up-and-coming Moravian Academy – this year’s schedule has non-league games against some of the best teams from last season. Class 2A state champion Central Columbia (25-0) will welcome in the Tigers and Northwestern will also be on the road against Upper Perkiomen (23-1-1), the class 3A state runner-up. If that’s not enough, the Tigers also travel down Route 309 to play EPC and District 11 4A champion Parkland (23-1) on September 22.

“You know the old saying, to be the best, you have to beat the best,” said Smith. “We want to be tested throughout the season because when you get into playoffs, and especially if you go deep into playoffs, you are going to be seeing really good teams. We want to be seeing them throughout the season to get us prepared for that.”



Tiger senior Camryn Fitch enters the 2023 season with 30 career goals.

PRESS PHOTO BY NANCY SCHOLZ

GOLF

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the players on the team compete in offseason tournaments in Golf Association of the Lehigh Valley junior events, adding that with such a short varsity season, staying “golf-ready” in the offseason is important.

The Tigers opened their season on Aug. 10 and will play their last match on Sept. 11. The league tournament is slated for Sept. 18, making golf the shortest regular season of any fall sport.

No matter how his team fares the rest of the season, Miller is already proud of the way his players conduct themselves on and off the course.

“They’re tremendously good kids,” he said. “They’re better people than they are golfers. They’re like sponges. They’re coachable and they’re very enthusiastic.”

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PRESS PHOTO BY NANCY SCHOLZ

The 2023 Northwestern Lehigh High School cheer team.

BOYS

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spite graduate Matt Santana taking first place individually.

The Tigers missed out on a trip to states because of the subpar district performance. While only three runners on this year's team competed that day, oth-

ers were part of the team and felt the loss just as much.

"I think they're upset a little bit about not going to states last year," said Stitzel.

In addition to their Colonial League schedule, the Tigers will compete in three invitationals, beginning Friday, Sept. 1 at Moravian Academy's Lion

Invitational. Just over a week later they will be at the DeSales Invitational to compete on the same course where leagues and districts are held. They'll also run in the PIAA Foundation Invitational later in September, which is held in Hershey on the same course as the state championship meet.

GIRLS

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season. Also returning from last year's district championship line up at sophomore Ava Smedstad, senior Kathryn Griffith. Junior Devon Heinley, who ran at leagues but not districts, also returns.

Stitzel said his runners have put in some work in the offseason as he takes the team to different courses around the area for a change of pace during spring and summer work outs. He's been pleased with the turnout and work ethic during the offseason.

"They want to be here. They want to work

hard and they want to compete," he said.

While Notre Dame (Green Pond) and Southern Lehigh might be tough to beat in the Colonial League, the Tigers will look to repeat at districts in Class 2A as the Spartans move up to 3A while the Crusaders drop down to Class A at districts.



PRESS PHOTO BY NANCY SCHOLZ

The 2023 Northwestern Lehigh High School band.



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PRESS PHOTO BY NANCY SCHOLZ

Senior Matt Johnson scored 34 goals and had 16 assists last season.

CHAMPS

Continued from page A3

season, especially when he scored the winning goal in the PIAA championship.

After going from five goals as a freshman, Mauro had 12 goals last season and with Josh Zellner graduating, Mauro is in the right spot to give the Tigers a compliment to go with Johnson.

“Jack showed what he was made of in that moment,” said coach Nate Hunsicker. “He’s not the biggest kid on the field, but he has no fear of going head-to-head with anybody and everybody.”

Mauro is coming into the season remembering the feeling of winning a state championship and wanting the program’s success to continue.

“Yeah, I want another chip to go with the one from last season,” said Mauro. “We have had a lot of success in my first

two seasons, and I want to keep that going. For me, I don’t have a lot of personal goals, but I want us to keep having success.”

Any team that out-scores opponents by 100 goals is going to win a lot of games. Last year’s Tigers amassed a school record of 109 goals while allowing just nine goals on the season. Goalie Damian Krapf graduated, but the job stays in the family with younger brother Brandon Krapf taking over in goal.

The losses of Zellner and Damien Krapf, along with Dartanyon DeLillo, Cayden Fitch, Zach Grohotolski, and Jaylen Lowthert will have an impact, but Hunsicker figures to have other players step into those holes after waiting in the wings for their opportunities.

“There weren’t a lot of tough times last year, but when there were, Cayden and Josh weren’t afraid to take the bull by the horns and steer us in the right

direction,” said Hunsicker. “It’s little things like that, the intangible things that separate you from being good and great and reaching the pinnacle.”

“Jake Van Lierop will probably get some time up top in Josh’s old spot; Isaac Frey will probably get some time there and we really love our mid-field group and we’re going to look to feed the ball and stay aggressive to score a lot of goals again.”

While a lot can happen before Sep. 16, the Tigers have that date circled and highlighted. That is their regular season matchup with Southern Lehigh, the only team to beat North-western last year and it came in the Colonial League championship game.

Johnson has a concise thought about Southern Lehigh and not winning the Colonial League championship last season. “Yeah, we’re going to get that title back this year,” he said.



PRESS PHOTO BY NANCY SCHOLZ

Junior Jack Mauro scored 12 goals last season, including the game-winner in the state title game.



PRESS PHOTO BY NANCY SCHOLZ

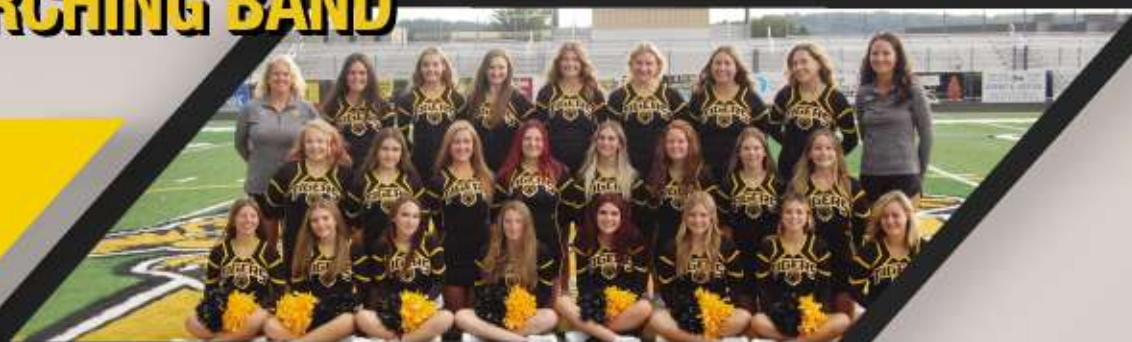
Junior Jake Van Lierop is one of several returning players who will help the Tigers make up for the graduation of a few key seniors.



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