

Sports Briefs

Gill honored by ICCAC

Ellsworth Community College safety Jeremiah Gill had two defensive touchdowns in the Panthers loss to Garden City. One a 65-yard interception return and the other a 76-yard scoop and score on a fumble. The sophomore also added two tackles and was named Iowa Community College Athletic Conference Defensive Player of the Week.

Iowa's pheasant opener busy with hunter success

Hunters are home, the dogs are resting and Iowa's opening weekend of pheasant season is in the rearview mirror. Reports from across the state varied from excellent up north to good in central and southwest Iowa, with the consensus that hunting will continue to improve once all the corn is harvested.

According to reports, hunters turned out in good numbers, filling parking lots and field access lanes.

"It's the best bird numbers we've had since I've been in east-central Iowa. I'm still seeing hunters out today," said Curt Kemmerer, wildlife biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Maquoketa Unit.

"Lots of hunters and good number of birds in central Iowa – a great opener," said Captain Matt Bruner, supervisor for the Iowa DNR's Law Enforcement Bureau for north-central Iowa.

"I counted 14 cars at one 475-acre area in north Iowa. The guys I talked to had seen birds, but also made comments about many more people than in the past," said TJ Herrick, wildlife biologist for the Iowa DNR's Clear Lake Unit.

"Lots of hunters out on Saturday," said Matt Dollison, wildlife biologist for the Iowa DNR's Nishnabotna Unit. "Bird numbers were similar to last year. Warm weather and standing corn made hunting a little difficult."

Nonresident hunters were plentiful as well, with hunters from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Nebraska and Ohio making up to one third of the cars in north Iowa parking lots.

Those field reports mirrored what the annual August roadside survey found.

"Our bird numbers are similar to last year so that should make some folks pretty happy," said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife research biologist with the Iowa DNR. "I think we're set up for a good hunting year for pheasants, especially in northwest, west central and north central regions. Central too. Quail is also looking good in southwest and south-central Iowa."

Iowa's pheasant season runs through Jan. 10, 2023.

On Deck

SATURDAY, NOV. 5

BASKETBALL-
ECC W at NIACC Classic 11 a.m.
ECC M at NIACC Classic 1 p.m.

WRESTLING-
ECC W at Luther Hill Invite 9 a.m.

TUESDAY, NOV. 8

BASKETBALL-
Minnesota West at ECC W/M 5:30 p.m.

► COACH BANKEN

CONTINUED FROM P10

"We have struggled with our hitting, and I think our focus needs to shift from trying to hit home runs to just get base hits. We don't have home run hitters on this team," Banken said.

The new IF-A coach also wants to implement a more aggressive style on the bas-

es and her expectation is that everyone in the lineup will become comfortable bunting.

"That's one area I would like to utilize more. Put pressure on defenses and keep them on their toes with some small ball," said Banken.

Staff wise, Janet Tidman will return as Banken's primary assistant, but there is an opening available to coach the freshman squad.

Banken said she wants her players to develop a passion for playing the sport and hopes to keep them out through their four years of high school.

"I want it to be fun, but we want to be competitive too," Banken said. "If we build enough interest, then we can have competitions for all positions. Ideally, you want the girls to have to work for their starting spots." ■

CLASS 1A STATE QUARTERFINALS



AGWSR celebrated an improbable comeback after scoring nine-straight points in the fifth set of Tuesday's Class 1A State Quarterfinal against North Tama. The win propelled them into the semifinals in the programs second-ever trip to State.

Xtreme Rally

Fifth set run spurs Cougars into semis

BY MARISSA VANWINGEN
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Trailing by seven points in a deciding fifth set to a heavily favored team didn't seem to rattle AGWSR.

During Tuesday's Class 1A State Quarterfinals, the Cougars were two points away from being eliminated from the tournament.

After falling behind 13-6, senior Tessa Sperfslage served up nine points in a row as AGWSR upended second-seeded North Tama in stunning fashion – 25-21, 11-25, 25-27, 25-14, 15-13 – to advance to Wednesday's semifinal.

"No one wants to end their season poorly. Everyone wants to go out playing as hard as they can," said sophomore setter Trevyn Smith. "Something that we've talked about all season is flipping the switch. We kind of flipped the switch and decided that we wanted to just go out playing the best volleyball that we can."

Heading into the tournament, North Tama (39-5) had not lost a match in a month and carried an 18-match win streak dating back to Oct. 1. However, AGWSR (19-23) was on a run of their own and had won five in a row and had not surrendered a set during postseason action.

After an early 3-3 tie in the fifth game, North Tama scored three in a row, forcing a Cougar timeout. The Redhawks tallied three more to lead 6-3, forcing another AGWSR stop. The lead would be 10-3 before a Brynn Smith hit stopped the bleeding.

Just two points away from elimination, Lila Vaughn produced a kill to give the Cougars the ball back and put the ball in Sperfslage's hands.

"I honestly don't know (what changed). I think part of it was that I had a group of seniors that didn't want to see their season be done. We've got kids that are really competitive that battle for every point and I think it was also, just deep down somewhere, they knew they could do it and it was getting that momentum shifted to our side a little bit so we could kind of roll with it," said AGWSR head coach Jill Smith. "Tessa first off, way to make your serves. She was a rockstar. She hit those zones right where we needed her to. They were having trouble getting into their offense and part of it with them, and I think (Jadyn) Rausch was in the back row during that run which helped us because she couldn't be an attacker."

Down 13-7, Sperfslage went back to serve for the Cougars and jumpstarted the 9-0 run – which included an ace to win the match.



Junior Karis Lippert (left) and senior Tessa Sperfslage converge on a ball in AGWSR's 3-4 win over North Tama in the Class 1A State Quarterfinal round.



AGWSR made multiple comebacks to advance to the Class 1A State Semifinals. Tuesday, Elise Olson got low for a return against the Redhawks.



Junior Ava Olson recorded two of AGWSR's 58 kills against North Tama in the Class 1A State Quarterfinal. The Cougars won in five sets.

The quarterfinal was full of ups and downs and momentum shifts. In the opening game there were six even scores. North Tama led for the last time at 18-17 before a double hit was called and knotted the game at 18-all. A hit that went into the net gave AGWSR the advantage. On top 24-21, the Cougars won it on one of B. Smith's match-high 28 kills.

The Redhawks jumped out to an early 6-0 lead and scored 10 of the first 12 points of the second set. The Cougars could never recover and a Shae Ewoldt kill ended the game in favor of North Tama.

Game three was up and down once again, but the Redhawks had the advantage. They built a 21-18 lead on one of their 14 service aces, however, the Cougars came storming back and knotted the game four more times. The final tie was at

25-all on a Vaughn kill. North Tama then ended it with kills from Laine Willenbring and Breanna Hochstetler to take the 2-1 lead.

AGWSR trailed early on in the fourth set but then, with T. Smith back to serve, scored 13 in a row – including a pair of aces. That run allowed the Cougars a 15-5 separation. Late in the game, the Redhawks would score three in a row to cut the deficit to 10 but a hit that went into the net would knot the match at 2-2 and send it into the fifth and deciding game.

"It's a huge pressure lifted off your shoulders because we aren't expected to win anything coming here. We were not expected to win that match. That's just how it is," senior B. Smith said. "They were expected to come out and beat us pretty easily and if you look at everything, it said that we were to lose in four. I just think we

Class 1A State Quarterfinal

Tuesday at Coralville
AGWSR: 25 | 11 | 25 | 25 | 15
N. Tama: 21 | 25 | 27 | 14 | 13

AGWSR Stats:
Kills: Brynn Smith 28; Lila Vaughn 9; Trevyn Smith 9; Karis Lippert 6; Brylea Metzgar 4; Ava Olson 2.
Assists: T. Smith 43; Tessa Sperfslage 4; A. Olson 1; Elise Olson 1; B. Smith 1; B. Metzgar 1; Lippert 1.
Digs: B. Smith 16; Sperfslage 11; Tori Metzgar 11; T. Smith 11; Lippert 8; E. Olson 8; B. Metzgar 4; Vaughn 2; A. Olson 1.
Blocks: B. Metzgar 2.5; A. Olson 2; Vaughn 1.5; Lippert 1; T. Smith .5; B. Smith .5.
Aces: T. Smith 4; Sperfslage 1; Lippert 1.

use it as a confidence boost. We talk a lot about how things are going to get hard, but we do hard better. Each step is going to get harder, so we just have to do hard better." ■