

George-Little Rock officially applies to War Eagle

The first domino has been tapped and the rest should start to fall in rapid succession as change is coming to the high school athletic conferences in N'West Iowa.

The George-Little Rock School District Board of Education gave the go-ahead to its administrators to leave the Siouxland Conference by formally applying to be a member of the War Eagle Conference during its meeting on Sept. 20. The application has been sent and received by the War Eagle with acceptance

still pending. If approved, George-Little Rock would join the War Eagle in the 2023-24 school year.

One could argue that this is not the first move, or attempt at one, recently. Unity Christian has applied to be a part of the Siouxland at least three times and Western



SCOTT BYERS
SPORTS EDITOR

Christian has applied twice.

Western Christian formally left the Lakes Conference at the start of the 2022-23 school year and has been competing as an independent after an appeal to the Iowa Department of Education to get into the Siouxland was denied.

However, the George-Little Rock move might be the one that sets more change into motion. It is awaiting the formal announcement but expects its application to the War Eagle to be approved.

"We've had conversations with the

War Eagle schools, and the feedback we've gotten in those conversations seemed to indicate that they would welcome us with open arms," said George-Little Rock superintendent Tom Luxford.

The move would make the War Eagle a 12-team league, providing Unity Christian remains and does not jump to the Siouxland, which becomes a nine-team group without the Mustangs.

Why move?

The chatter about George-Little

Rock, the smallest school in the Siouxland, leaving for the War Eagle, has been around for years. It became more than chatter during the spring when Luxford informed the other Siouxland superintendents that George-Little Rock would be looking into that possibility. Eventually, George-Little Rock held two public forums on the subject.

"We had one in George and one in Little Rock. They were well-attended, and there was some great discussion

See BYERS on page C10

THE N'WEST IOWA REVIEW

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

HANNAH BROEK

SHE RECORDED 161 ASSISTS AND 24 DIGS AND HELPED HER TEAM FINISH 6-0 LAST WEEK.

What do you enjoy most about playing the setter position? I like being heavily involved in the action.

What is the most difficult thing about being a setter? Having to know how each hitter likes their sets.

What do you think are the most important skills for a good setter to have? Communication and leadership.

Besides your own team, which school has the best mascot? West Lyon Wildcats.

What is your favorite subject in school? Math.

What is your favorite motto or quote? "When I am afraid, I put my trust in you," Psalm 56:3.

Better fall flavor — apple or pumpkin spice? Pumpkin spice.

What is your favorite movie? "Sweet Home Alabama"

How long could you go without using your phone? Two days.

If there were Olympic medals given for everyday activities not related to sports, what category would you do best in? Sleeping.

What is one skill you wish you had that you do not possess? Singing.

If you could travel anywhere, where would you want to go? Greece.

What is something about yourself that would surprise people who don't know you well? I like to sew.

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WESTERN CHRISTIAN | SENIOR VOLLEYBALL

THURSDAY SIOUXLAND CONFERENCE VOLLEYBALL

Aggressive serves set up Sheldon success



Sheldon senior Claire Johnson swings away against George-Little Rock on Thursday. Johnson made her 500th career dig during a three-set sweep by the Orabs. Photo by Charlie Hildebrand

Rock Valley rattled by precision of placements

BY SCOTT BYERS
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ROCK VALLEY 14 20 18
SHELDON 25 25 25

SHELDON—Sheldon senior Claire Johnson hit a significant career milestone and was able to celebrate a victory with her teammates as the Orabs topped Rock Valley 25-14, 25-20, 25-18 in Siouxland Conference volleyball Thursday.

Johnson surpassed the 500 dig mark for her career during the contest.

"She is obviously an asset as a hitter, but also on defense," said Sheldon assistant coach Nicole Dibbet, who filled as coach Heather Keizer had knee surgery. "Claire is good at reading other hitters and reacting to the ball. She doesn't let the ball hit the floor. That's exactly what we need."

The Orabs had a banner night from the service area, converting at 97 percent with eight aces.

Katelyn Grady was 22-for-22 with three aces. Johnson was 10-for-11 with three aces. Reese Strouth went 13-for-13 with two aces.

"We served pretty aggressively as a team," Dibbet said. "Our focus of the night was to serve tough and to really see the other side of the court well on offense. When we weren't able to attack, we found

See ORABS on page C4

THURSDAY CROSS COUNTRY: SOUTH O'BRIEN INVITATIONAL

Mustangs gallop to win by packing near front

GLRCL has medalist on each side of race

BY CHARLIE HILDEBRAND
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PAULLINA—George-Little Rock/Central Lyon won a team title and had two medalists at the South O'Brien Invitational on Thursday.

While it can take a lot of effort, South O'Brien coach Jeremy Lanskink said it was good to host a meet.

"There's a lot that goes into running a meet, several reasons you don't see many schools hosting multiple in the same season," he said. "For the kids, it's a kind of refresher in a sense to not travel

anywhere and still be at a meet."

Mustangs girls win two

Class 2A 16th-ranked George-Little Rock/Central Lyon had a big day on the girls side.

The Mustangs won the team title over seven other squads with a score of 49, nudging past West Lyon by two points.

"Having three in the top six and then our next three in the top 25 was a big improvement for the girls," said Mustangs' coach Mandi Ver Beek. "Our four through six runners were all within four seconds of each other. This group of girls improved

See MUSTANGS on C5



George-Little Rock/Central Lyon junior Lexi Landis, West Lyon sophomore Claire Metzger and freshman Abby Knobloch and George-Little Rock/Central Lyon senior Afton Schlumbohm battle for position Thursday afternoon at the South O'Brien Invitational. Photo by Roy Tucker



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SPORTS

MONDAY VOLLEYBALL

Warriors take sole control of first in league

Sioux Center gets sweep over Comets

BY SCOTT BYERS

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SIoux CENTER 25 25 29
BOYDEN-HULL 13 19 27

HULL—Class 3A fourth-ranked Sioux Center took sole possession of the lead in the Siouxland Conference volleyball race Monday, starting strong and then emerging from a difficult final set to top Boyden-Hull 25-13, 25-19, 29-27 in Hull.

The match between the last two teams still unbeaten within the league didn't start as much of a battle.

Sioux Center took charge in the first set.

"We came out aggressive and served them tough," said Sioux Center coach Julie Oldenkamp. "Everything was clicking for us in that first set. Our hitting efficiency was very high."

The change started to take place in the second set.

"We had more errors and they picked up their intensity quite a bit," Oldenkamp said. "They served a lot tougher and we weren't in system as much as we'd like to be, but it still felt like we were in pretty good control of that set."

Boyden-Hull coach Justine Draayer said that put the Comets in a difficult spot.

"We could have started out a lot better," she said. "It makes it tough not being able to win one of the first two sets."

Boyden-Hull was the team in control in the third set.

By the time the Comets had built a 22-14 lead, Oldenkamp



Sioux Center senior Reagan Jansen jump serves Monday in Hull. The Warriors swept Boyden-Hull to take sole possession of first in the league.

“We made it interesting. It was a battle to the end. I'm really proud of the girls for the way they were able to come back and close it out for a big conference win.”

Julie Oldenkamp

SIoux CENTER COACH

had already used both of her timeouts.

"Later in the night, we played better at the net and made better choices," Draayer said. "We started to play our game of volleyball. That seemed to help get some momentum for us. We pushed hard to get that lead in the third set."

The Warrior players were able to rise up and meet the challenge.

"We picked up our defense. The girls were relying on each other and looking to each other," Oldenkamp said. "They took matters in their own hands. We were able to get some blocks and some aggressive hitting."

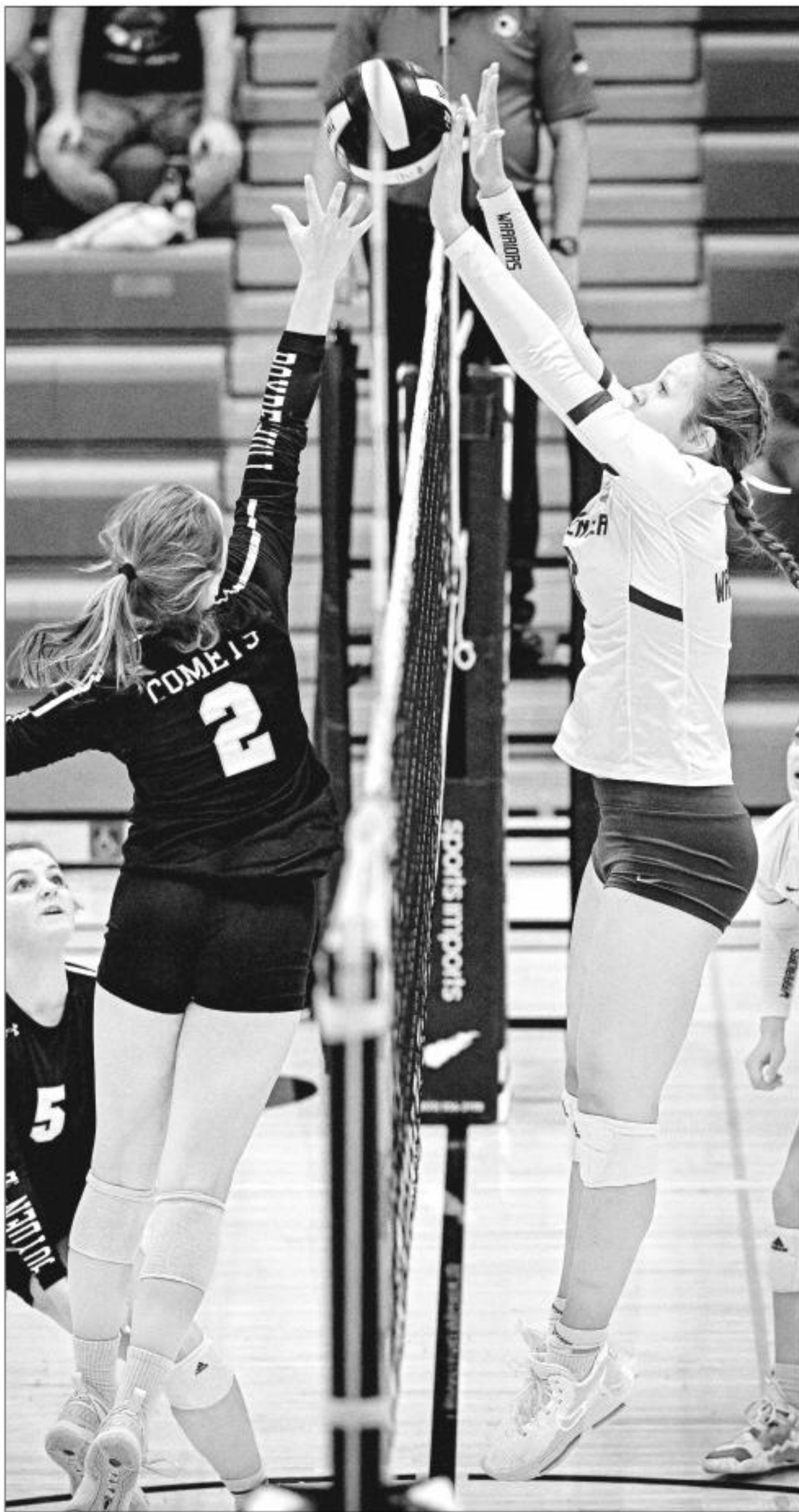
Margo Schuiteman, who is not normally asked to serve, got the ball with her team down 24-21 and brought the score back to even. The set went back and forth the rest of the way.

"We made it interesting. It was a battle to the end," Oldenkamp said. "I'm really proud of the girls for the way they were able to come back and close it out for a big conference win."

Draayer said the Warriors earned the victory.

"We got caught up to unfortunately. Sioux Center is a great team and that says a lot about them for making a comeback like that," she said. "We stopped making plays and that's why we couldn't finish the third set like we wanted to."

Reagan Jansen slammed 12 kills. Makenna Walhof, Schuiteman and Makailyn Vanderwaal each had six kills. Willow Bleeker issued 28 assists. Jansen served three aces. Bleeker had 12 digs. Tatam Schmalbeck and Emily Vos each made 11 digs. Walhof



Boyden-Hull sophomore Clara Hoegh tries to get the ball over the net as Sioux Center senior Makenna Walhof leaps to block it during a Siouxland Conference match on Monday in Hull. The Warriors won 25-13, 25-19, 29-27. Photos by Dan Wolfswinkel

had two solo blocks and three assisted blocks.

Avery Noble and Gretta Van Es each had five kills for the

Comets, who hit for a negative .049 efficiency as a team. Clara Hoegh sent up 15 assists. Dennie Boogerd was 15-for-15

serving with two aces. Noble was 11-for-12 with two aces. Boyden-Hull served at 93 percent with seven aces as a

squad. Boogerd handled 23 digs and Noble made 12. Reagan Damstra and Van Es each got in on two blocks.

Siouxland looking at choices with Mustangs slated to depart

BYERS

Continued from page C1

on both sides of it," Luxford said. "There was a lot of dialogue back and forth. We made a PowerPoint presentation that showed all the pros and cons of a possible switch. We've been very transparent about it the whole time."

He said while there are pros and cons to every decision, it seemed like the move would be "good for the kids in our district."

"The big reason we looked at is, with schools, a lot is based on the BEDS numbers, and ours are very low compared to other schools in the conference," Luxford said about the Basic Educational Data Survey. "Some of them are growing quickly, and we are just not in that same area. Our numbers have remained pretty steady."

The latest BEDS numbers had George-Little Rock at 102 students in grades 9-11 for the 2021-22 academic year. Every other Siouxland school was at 166 or higher, with Sioux Center the highest at 363. Of the War Eagle schools, Remsen St. Mary's was the smallest BED number at 52. Unity Christian had the largest number at 228.

If you remove the Knights, West Sioux becomes the largest War Eagle school at 199.

Luxford said there will be more travel costs associated with being in the War Eagle.

"We will have to travel farther, but we'll only be making those trips every other year," he said. "In the end, looking at the schools in the War Eagle, we're more alike than different."

Luxford said the move seems to be good for everyone involved.

"We're still in the very early stages of this. I met with the other Siouxland superintendents, and we talked about it," he said. "They are dynamite people, and we want what is best for them, too."

Luxford said George-Little Rock athletic director Tyler Glanzer and the coaching staff have talked with the student-athletes about the looming change.

"Kids just want to compete," he said.

George-Little Rock does plan on continuing with its sharing agreements with Central Lyon for football, cross country and wrestling.

What's next?

Sioux Center School District

superintendent Gary McEldowney, who is serving as the Siouxland president, said he appreciated Luxford and the George-Little Rock School District keeping the conference informed and updated every step of the way.

"At their latest board meeting, they decided to take action based on what was best for their district. We had our monthly meeting, and we have the letter that says they are leaving," McEldowney said. "Now, we are going through the process of discussing a variety of options going forward."

He said those options include going forward as a nine-team conference, adding another school to get the number back to 10 or expanding to an even larger number.

"Going beyond 10 is probably the least likely just due to scheduling," McEldowney said. "This isn't all about basketball, but in regard to basketball and the way we do those schedules, we only have three nonconference dates available if we have 10 schools. If you go beyond 10, you lose any kind of flexibility to play teams outside the conference."

Either way, an even number

of teams is the general preference.

"We communicate a lot with our ADs because they are the ones that deal with the day-by-day and year-by-year of it," McEldowney said. "Some of these games are on multiyear contracts. From their perspective with the scheduling, an even number is preferred."

He said there will likely not be a formal announcement when the Siouxland decides, but people who are interested will know quickly.

"It's a small world. People around here tend to keep their ears low to the ground on things like this," the superintendent said. "Everybody in the neighborhood is generally aware of what is going on. And we do work hard to communicate with everyone."

McEldowney said the Siouxland has two applications for membership at this time. They are from Unity Christian and Western Christian. He said the league is open to looking at other applications if they come in. He said what is contained in those applications is important to any future debate and decisions.

"Generally, how it works is in their applications the schools that apply share their

thoughts on why they would be a good fit for our conference. With the ones we have, they've both done a good job of that. In terms of size and geography, they make sense," McEldowney said. "We'll have to look at it and do what we feel is best for a large number of people. We know what George-Little Rock is interested in doing, and we'll look at where they go and how it impacts that conference. How do things change? There are multiple schools, including some outside of the Siouxland, that are impacted by any decision we make."

In Western Christian's appeal to the state board, which was denied on Sept. 8, 2021, it was stated that one of the biggest reasons for the conference rejecting the Wolfpack's application at the time was its desire to remain a 10-member conference that plays true round-robin, home-and-home schedules. McEldowney is assuming that will still ultimately remain the case.

"With what we went through at that time, we collectively made the determination that first and foremost we wanted to remain at 10. That was a driving force. That

is a number that has served us well and something we've hung our hat on," McEldowney said. "This is just one person's opinion, and I can't speak for everyone in the conference, but I'm guessing 10 is still where we want to land."

The process could move quickly.

"We want to be timely in coming together to make collective recommendations to our school boards. They are the ones that will ultimately decide," McEldowney said. "We want it to be a timely decision, but not a hasty one. What we decide is going to have a huge impact. We're dealing with a shortage of officials in our state. A lot of our game contracts are for multiple years. There is a lot that needs to be figured out. For the sake of the schools, the coaches, the athletes and the communities, we need to get a recommendation to our boards in a timely fashion."

He said the league will remain strong, no matter what happens.

"We've always been a strong conference with strong ties to each other that works together to do whatever is best for everybody," McEldowney said.