

2015-16 Spring Sports Preview



supplement to

The Morrow County
SENTINEL



Northmor's boys' track team is in the above picture.

Courtesy Photo/Unique Images

High hopes for Northmor track squads

By **ROB HAMILTON**

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With most of last year's point-scorers back, including a state champion in Demetrius Johnson, Northmor boys' track coach Kevin Ruhl is hoping for some strong performances from his charges this year.

Johnson, a sophomore, is the returning state champion in the Division III long jump. Junior James Walker also had a strong year, making regionals in the 300 hurdles. Ruhl noted that a few other upperclassmen also are poised for success, citing seniors Spencer Adams (distance), Collin Berg (hurdles) and Josh Caudill (shot put) and junior A.J. White

(distance) as examples.

"We only lost two seniors from last year's team," said Ruhl. "Just about everyone who scored points for us last year is back this year."

Due to that experience, the coach feels the fortunes for his program are pretty good. "We want to compete and score more points at big invitationals as a team," he said. "We know that we have several talented individuals who we expect to make it to the state competition."

In the conference, Ruhl expects Mount Gilead to have a solid all-around team that should do well at invitationals.

On the girls' team, head coach Mark

Yaussy has plenty of numbers, including 12 letter-winners. However, he notes his team will be inexperienced in some events.

The team returns seniors Brooke Buzard and Isabelle Ditullio; juniors Allie Borders, Selena Cortez, Kristen Duryea, Rayanna Loyer, Rachel Morrison, Karalee Patterson and Caitlin Young and sophomores Brooke Bennett and Viv Cutrupi. Bennett was the team's top point-scorer last year.

The team also has a number of newcomers, including senior Deanna Delaney, junior Maria Lee, sophomore Cris-tianna Boggs and freshman Sam Peters. However, they did suffer some big losses

to graduation with the departure Allie Tupps, Tia Downard, Lauren Bood, Alisha Pletcher and Megan Milavec. Yaussy noted that group included state qualifier and district placers.

"We should have a very competitive team," he said. "As a team, we do have some events where we will have young and/or inexperienced athletes competing. For us to have a chance to beat some of the upper-echelon teams, we need to get better in those events."

In the league, Yaussy feels Mount Gilead will be tough to beat and that Fredericktown also should be a strong squad.

Rob Hamilton can be reached at 419-946-3010, ext. 1807. Connect with him on Twitter at @SportsMCS



The girls' track team at Northmor is pictured above.

Courtesy Photo | Unique Images

Lady Pirates out to repeat in Blue

By **ROB HAMILTON**
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Cardington softball coach Tod Bringer has high hopes that his team can perform at the same level last year's 26-4 squad which advanced to the district semifinals did, but knows his team will have to overcome the loss of a few talented players.

Graduated are Khyla Jones, who was a first-team performer in the Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference and Central District and a second-team All-Ohio pick, Brooke Snyder and Aubrey Clark.

However, the team also has a number of returnees. Samantha Bringer has been a first-team MOAC and district player in each of her three varsity years. Last year, she also was named the MOAC Player of the Year, as well as an honorable mention All-Ohioan. Alyson Adams was named to the first team of both the league and district last year, while both Brooklyn Whitt and Rylie Partlow received all-league recognition. Also returning are Makenna McClure, Dakota Crum and Allie Moore.

Coach Bringer is also hoping for contributions from varsity newcomers Savannah

Chalfant and Marissah Hall and stated that he isn't expecting any drop-off in overall team performance.

"We expect to compete for, and win, the MOAC Blue Division championship again this year," he said. "We lost several excellent players off last year's squad and they will be difficult to replace. Offensively, we should be on par with last year's team, which averaged 10.8 runs per game."

Bringer also feels his team should be very strong defensively and on the mound.

"Defensively, we return what we believe is the best middle infield in our league, with Samantha Bringer and Alyson Adams," he said. "Brooklyn Whitt returns as our starting catcher and Rylie Partlow moves from left field to centerfield. Our pitching staff is very solid with newcomer Savannah Chalfant and returner Makenna McClure making up the staff."

The coach looks at Fredericktown as the main challenger for the league title, but stated that Highland, Elgin and East Knox all could easily be in the mix, as well.

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MG boys want league title

By **ROB HAMILTON**

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With 11 returning lettermen back, Mount Gilead's baseball team returns a lot of experience from last year's 18-8 club for head coach Greg Gompf.

"The strength of the 2016 Indian varsity is the vast experience we will have on this year's team," he said. "Carrying 10 seniors and eight returning starters gives us a lot of on-field experience from last year's district run. The team's baseball knowledge and work ethic at the fundamentals of the game is great."

Returning for the team are seniors Zack Foster, Isaiah Harris, Noah Arrington, Cameron Brown, Jake Wayt, Ben Hayes, Dustin McAvoy and Tyler Connors and juniors Cory Conant, Evan Edwards, Alex Coder and Tyler Bland. Hayes (first team MOAC, second team district), Connors (second team league, honorable mention district) and Arrington (honorable mention district) all picked up postseason honors.

However, the team will have to compensate for one big loss, as Xavier Harris graduated after a year in which he anchored the pitching staff and picked up plenty of postseason accolades for his performance to cap a career that saw him named All-Ohio three times.

"Our biggest concern for the upcoming season is replacing the 2015 OHSAA Division III Player of the Year, Xavier Harris," said Gompf. "Xavier threw 75 innings for us on the mound last year



Mount Gilead's baseball team is pictured above.

and we will have to have a lot of guys step up to fill the pitching void. We will rely heavily on seniors Noah Arrington, Dustin McAvoy, Tyler Connors, Zach Foster and Ben Hayes to make up those innings we are losing."

However, with the experience he has returning, Gompf is hoping his team can go farther into the postseason than the past couple seasons.

"The goals and expectations for the 2016 season are to build on the success we have had over the past two seasons and compete for the school's first league title ever," he said. "We also expect to make our way back to the district tournament and hopefully win a championship for the first time since 1996."

In the league, Gompf is expecting

tough competition again, with a number of teams boasting strong groups and looking for a potential title.

"I see our team right in the mix at the top towards the end of the season if we play sound, fundamental baseball," he said.

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Scot track teams looking forward to season

By **ROB HAMILTON**

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While the Highland boys' track team has a number of skilled athletes they'll need to replace, head coach John Sachleben still has a good number of competitors looking to make an impact in events.

Returning are senior Garrett Mentzer; juniors Austyn Albanese and Jimmy Tebbe and sophomores Dakota Bunting, Kaden Bunting, Gavin Kafka and Travis Mentzer. Last year, Travis Mentzer was a member of the school's regional-qualifying 3200-meter relay team.

The coach also is expecting Jacob Serio, Dalton Lee, Brandon Dionne, Nathan Bentley, Thomas Wheeler, Zach Baker and William Parsley to contribute at the varsity level.

"We should be competitive in all events this year," said Sachleben. "We are not as experienced as in years past, but we have a strong core of athleticism. We're young in shot and discus, and distance."

The coach noted that those events were most depleted by graduation.

"We lost a very large class of athletes due to graduation," he said. "Kevin Jones, James Hubbard and Josh Irvin were very strong in the mid-distance and distance races, Tyler Dudgeon in the hurdles and Dustin Baker in the shot and discus."

Sachleben looks at Mount Gilead and Fredericktown as the front-runners in the Blue Division, but thinks his team can contend if they avoid the injury bug.

"Our expectations are to go out and do our best every time we compete, improve our times and distances throughout the year and have fun," he said.

The girls' team has some quality athletes, but may struggle with depth, according to coach Derek Bower.

Returning are seniors Jena Buchholz and Lydia Morgan; juniors Jenna Brown, Meg Mitchell and Laura Spearman and sophomores Bailey Santo and Sophia Thompson. Brown and Mitchell were both regional qualifiers in the 400-meter relay, while Morgan also was on that relay and also advanced to the state meet in the 300 hurdles. However, due to injury, she won't be able to compete in those events. Bower noted that injuries and graduation have both taken their toll on his squad.

"Lydia Morgan, although still throwing the discus, is a big loss on the track," he said. "She was a state-qualifying 300 hurdler and also anchored our regional qualifying 400-meter relay. Sophomore Alex Debord, regional qualifier in the mile, is also out this year with a torn achilles. She is starting to do physical therapy and is hoping to come back strong next season. We also lost a few to graduation, including Kayla Davies (mid-distance), Katie Lloyd (sprinter) and Bethany Porter (discus)."

Bower does have some newcomers whom he feels will be able to provide scoring help in Taylor Belcher and Erin Conner. The coach feels his team should be strong in the mid-distance and distance events, as well as hurdles and the discus, but feels they may struggle in the jumps and sprints.

"I see Mount Gilead and Fredericktown as being the favorites in the Blue," he said. "I see our team following either third or fourth in the league."

Rob Hamilton can be reached at 419-946-3010, ext. 1807. Connect with him on Twitter at @SportsMCS



Highland's boys' track team is pictured above.

Courtesy Photo/HR Imaging



The girls' track team at Highland is in the above picture.

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Scot boys have shoes to fill

By **ROB HAMILTON**

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While the Highland Scots return 10 baseball lettermen, they will have to fill some big shoes if they want to maintain the sort of success they had last year, when they finished 20-7.

The team graduated three four-year starters in Jett Swetland, Dalton Stambaugh and Byron Belcher and one three-year starter in Justin Tuggle. The four players earned plenty of accolades in their high school careers.

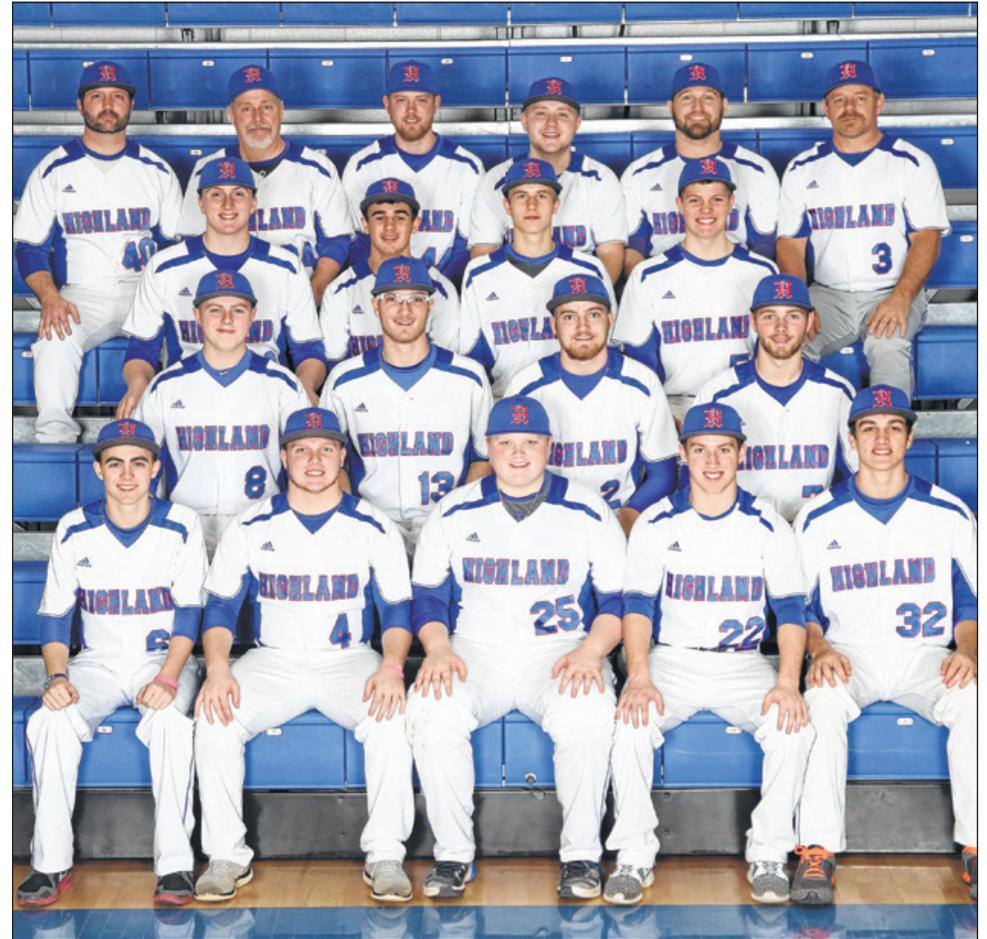
Swetland earned first-team MOAC honors three times and was a second-teamer once. He also picked up Central District honors all four years. Stambaugh was a three-time first-team MOAC pick, who was the league's Player of the Year in 2014, as well as a three-time district selection. Belcher added first-team (2014), second-team (2013) and honor-

able mention (2015) league honors and was also named all-district from 2013-15. Also, Tugger was a second-team MOAC pick last year.

This year, Wyatt Gresh returns after being named a second-team MOAC pick the last two years. He also has been named all-district in 2014. Shane Carney is back as a three-year letter-winner, while Andrew Stillwell joins Gresh as a two-year letterwinner. Jacob Fox, Conner Ulrey, Alex "Wink" Wright, Chase Beam, Max Schreiber, Lane Ballard and Sam LoPiccolo also return as lettermen on the Scots.

"We will look to rebuild after losing our entire infield to graduation, as well as the top three pitchers on our staff with 16 wins," said head coach Donovan Kline. "We have nine seniors, but little experience outside of our catchers and outfield."

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Pictured above is Highland's baseball team.

Courtesy Photo/HP Imaging

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Lady Knights looking to move up in standings

By **ROB HAMILTON**

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After finishing 12-12, 8-6 in league play, in his first year as Northmor head softball coach, Russ Montgomery is hoping a talented cast of returnees can help his team continue to move up in the Blue Division standings in the Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference.

While the Knights graduated shortstop Kelsie Reeder, an all-league and all-district player currently with Bluffton University, they return nine letter-winners. Seniors Karlee Carroll, Mikayla Briggs, Deanna Delaney and Cheyenne Shelton; juniors Shelbey Lilly, Lydia Farley and Andrea Weis and sophomores Cristianna Boggs and Kelsie Fike all are back.

Boggs was an all-league and all-district player, while Carroll also earned all-league honors. Briggs is currently coming back from surgery, but Montgomery is expecting her back by mid-April.

They will be joined by a handful of varsity newcomers, including freshmen Aly Blunk and Lily Tate.

“With the addition of a few talented underclassmen, we’re looking to improve on last year’s 12-12 record,” said Montgomery. “Being in six 1-2 run ballgames, we have to improve on two-out hits with runners in scoring position. Hopefully, our work in the offseason will improve that aspect of the game.”

The coach noted that a few of his players are learning new positions, as he completely revamped the outfield from last year.

“It should be a strong defensive team with the addition of a couple talented freshmen,” he added.

Montgomery noted he looks for his team to improve on last year’s 8-6 mark in league play.

Rob Hamilton can be reached at 419-946-3010, ext. 1807. Connect with him on Twitter at @SportsMCS



The 2016 Northmor softball team is in the above picture.

Courtesy Photo/Unique Images



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The Northmor baseball team is pictured above.

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Knights will have young team

By **ROB HAMILTON**

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A young Northmor baseball team will take the field this year. The Knights have three seniors, but the majority of the athletes in the program are in either ninth or 10th grade.

The team graduated four important players in Daniel Donner, Brock Trom-

bly, Mitchell Whisler and Dominic Cortez. Three-year varsity player Jarod Vanderkooi also is gone, as he turned pro in flat track racing.

Leading Northmor are seniors Jake Farley, Bryan Hammond and Gunnar Lilly. Farley was a first-team pick in both the Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference and in the Central District, while Hammond

got honorable mention recognition by the league. Head coach Buck Workman noted that he looks at his seniors as a strong point on the team.

Other returning letter-winners are juniors Jordan Wiseman, Sam Eichorn and Nate Hall and sophomores Conan Becker and Tyler Kegley. Workman also expects juniors Kade Sayre and Dylan

Timmons, sophomores Kyle Kegley and Austin Wheeler and freshman Mostyn Evans to contribute at the varsity level.

"We are very young and 15-of-23 kids are freshmen and sophomores," said the coach. "We want to compete every night."

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Young Lady Scots hope to maintain momentum

By **ROB HAMILTON**

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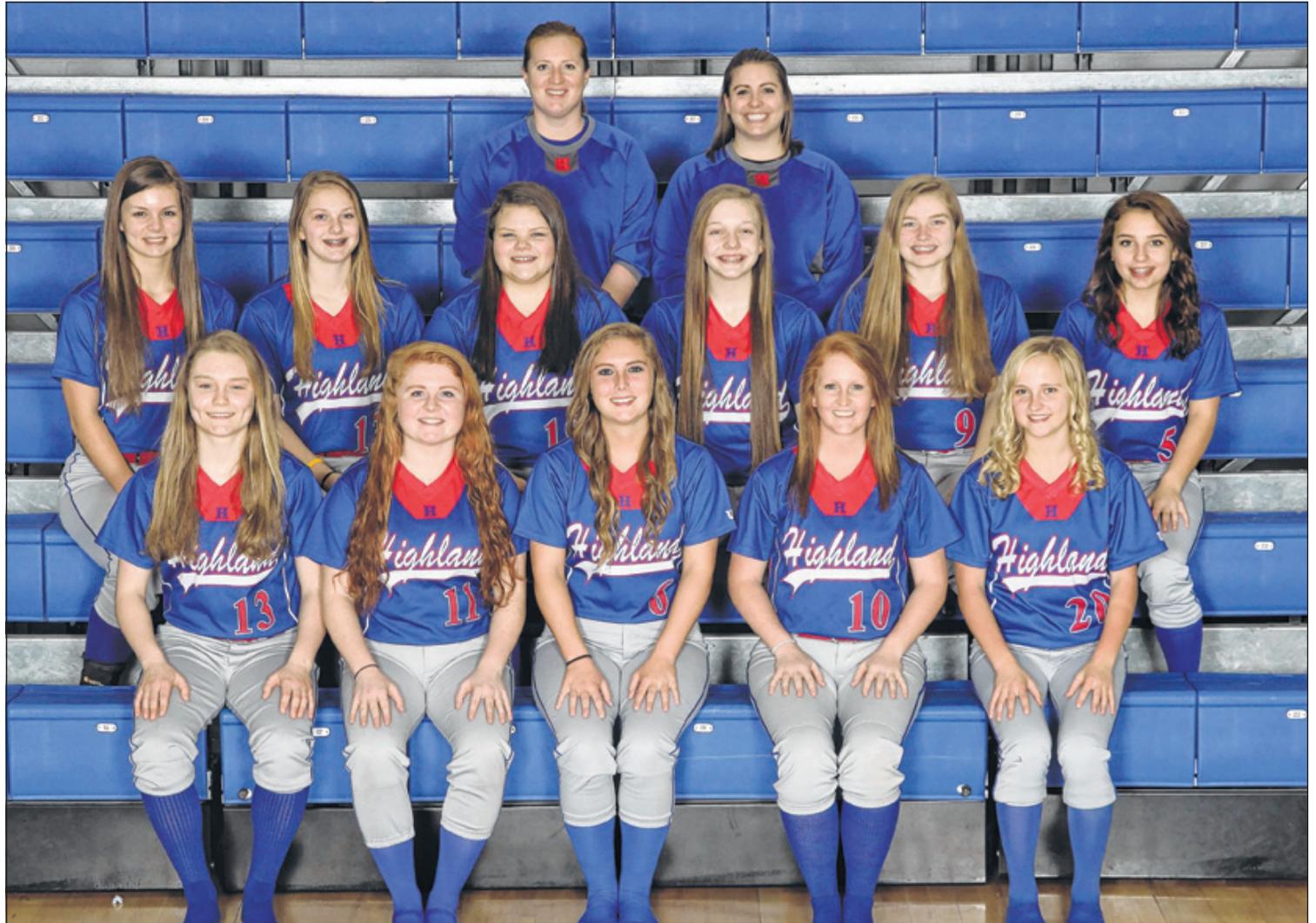
After finishing in the top half of the Blue Division last year, the Highland softball team will hope for another strong year.

However, the Scots will be a young squad this year. Three letter-winners return and the team has graduated a pair of girls who earned several accolades in 2015. Of their graduates, Megan Oder was a first-team pick in both the Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference and Central District, while Mikayla Robinson was named honorable mention in both.

The squad does return junior Harlee Steck and sophomores Parker Steck and Erica Sardinha to anchor a team that's loaded with freshmen.

Of the newcomers, only senior Ashlyn Jordan and junior Katie Coffee are upperclassmen. Freshmen Kaitlyn Carney, Elizabeth Jenkins, Abby O'Bryant, Bridget Oder, Lucy Smith and Morgan Wilhelm round out the rest of the roster.

"Our goals are to work hard and have fun and finish at the top of the conference," said head coach Ashley Ball. "Cardington, Fredericktown and Northmor are a few teams to look out for."



In the above picture is Highland's softball team.

Courtesy Photo/HR Imaging

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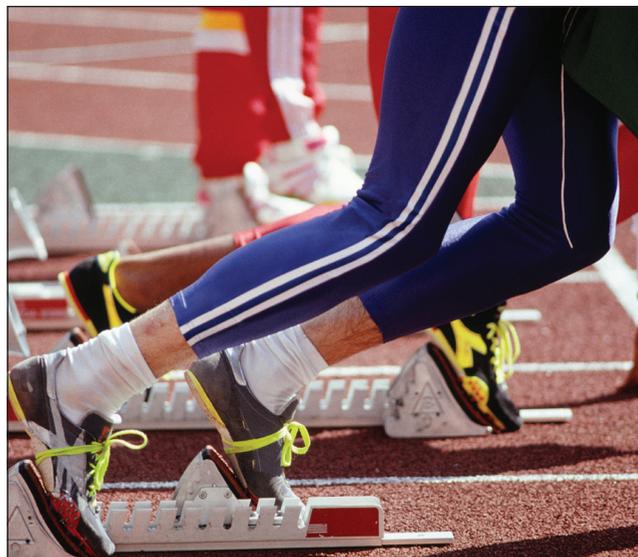
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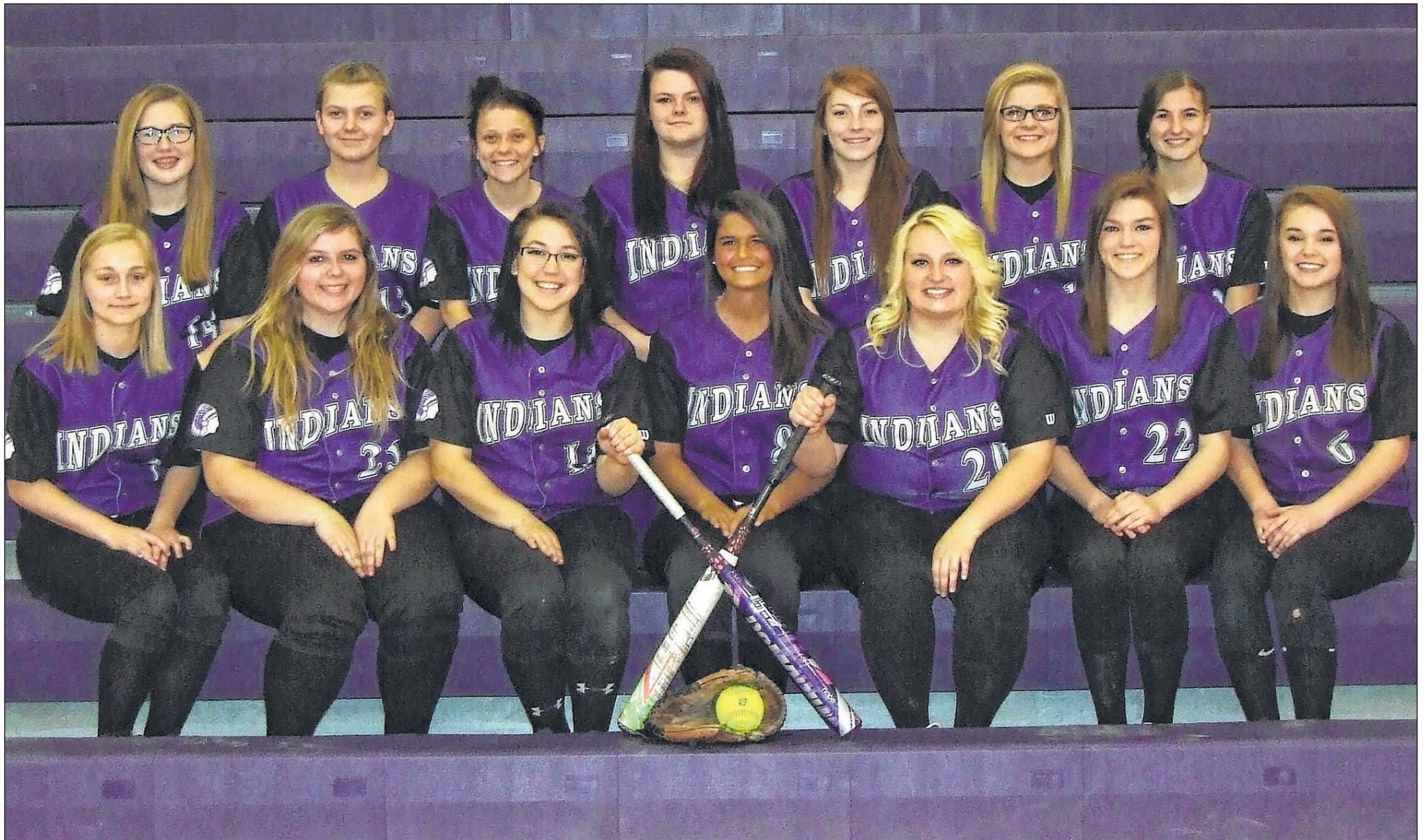


Mount Gilead's girls' and boys' track teams are pictured above.

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Mount Gilead softball



Above is Mount Gilead's softball squad.

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