



Submitted
Members of the Meade County High School “Bomb Squad” this season from left, Annsley Adkisson, Veronica Roberts, Macie Fleenor, Savannah Miller, Emma Tanner, Kennedy Ledford, Kaelyn Ledford, Hannah Carter and Logan Compton. All have at least one career homerun.

Lady Waves’ ‘Bomb Squad’ provides plenty of punch to lineup

Meade softball among state leaders in homeruns

BY JEFF D’ALESSIO
THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

With one swing of the bat Thursday night, Kaelyn Ledford not only pushed Meade County past third-ranked Assumption, 5-3, with a sixth-inning two-run homerun, but she showed off one of the Lady Waves’ biggest strengths — they can hit a softball hard and they can hit them a long, long way.

The success of Ledford and her teammates in hitting homeruns this and many other seasons hasn’t come by accident.

The Lady Waves work at it physically and mentally and the results have followed, so much so that the team’s 23 homeruns this season rank among the best in the state.

“Our girls work extensively in the weight room,” Meade County head coach John Skaggs said. “The high school girls take a weightlifting and conditioning class during the school day, and we have team lifting twice a week in the off-season.”

It’s more than muscle, however, behind the swings that have launched a better than one homerun a game this season average for the 15-7 Lady Waves.

“There’s no secret to our approach to hitting,” Skaggs said. “The girls work extremely hard on owning their swing and by that I mean working on keeping hands inside of the ball, firing the backside through and hitting good pitches.”

He said a player’s stance is based on their preference, although the coaching staff tries to “build a solid foundation.”

“We work with PVC pipes, tee work, front tosses and machine work,” he said. “We don’t discuss launch angle, just emphasize hitting the top third of the ball and swing hard.”

The team also has a hitting board with 12 drills, many of them from one of Skaggs’ former assistant coaches Josh Bloomer, now the hitting coach and recruiting coordinator at Arizona State University and a Central Hardin High School graduate.

Skaggs said the players team up for the drills and coaches provide instruction, if needed.

“We also emphasize knowing the pitch count and knowing that first pitches, and 2-0, 3-1 counts are to our advantage and we try to do damage on those counts,” he said.

Through last week’s release of state statistics, Meade County was tied for 11th in the state with 22 homeruns.

Through 22 games, Ledford, a junior, and twin sister, Kennedy, and senior Hannah Carter, had six homeruns apiece. Senior Savannah Miller had three blasts for homeruns with freshman Macie Fleenor and eighth-grader Annsley Adkisson with one apiece.

Through Wednesday’s games, the six other area teams — Central Hardin, Elizabethtown, Fort Knox, John Hardin, LaRue County and North Hardin — had combined for 30 homeruns

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JAKE KLINECT/The News-Enterprise
North Hardin senior Justice Hamilton, back-center, celebrates at home plate after hitting a two-run home run April 11 against John Hardin at home.

Hamilton’s versatility a big bonus for Trojan baseball team

BY JEFF D’ALESSIO
THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

For North Hardin High School senior Justice Hamilton, versatility is the name of his game as well as a willingness to play where he’s needed to help his team.

This season, Hamilton, 18, has played third base, shortstop, second base and left and right field. And, he’s also pitched in six games — making three starts — prior to Thursday’s play.

“That isn’t an easy task and we still ask for him to produce at the plate and be a leader on the team,” North Hardin head coach Ace Adcock said. “But I know he has embraced it because he wants what is best for them. Justice is a great teammate and is willing to do what it takes to help the team win. That is what stands out the most about him.

“I have challenged Justice this year by playing multiple positions on the field,” he added.

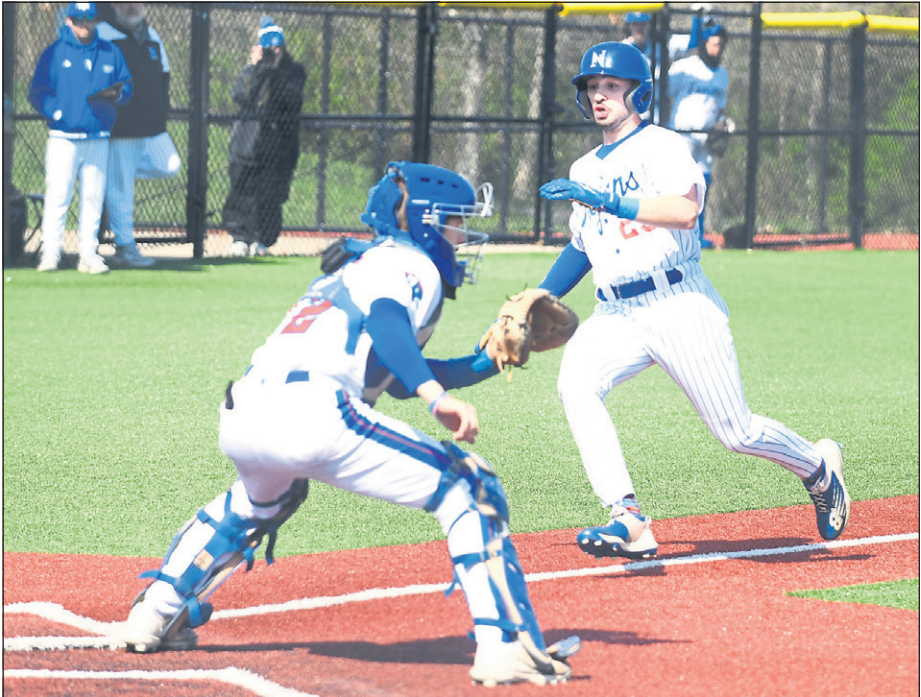
Adcock said using Hamilton at so many positions has been “out of necessity and trying to figure out the best line-ups.”

A .456 hitter last season, Hamilton has seen his batting average slip this year to .319.

His value to this North Hardin team, however, goes well beyond his batting average.

“Playing multiple positions is definitely challenging,” he said. “I think playing multiple positions has caused me to fall back on my athleticism more than I might if I was just playing one. But I think playing infield and outfield together, while making me a better athlete as a whole, has taken away some of my technical skill in the outfield where I intend to play in college.

“But I’ll gladly play wherever my team needs me,” he said. “Baseball is fun no matter where



JAKE KLINECT/The News-Enterprise
North Hardin senior Justice Hamilton slides safely into home for a run April 1 against Nelson County at Elizabethtown Sports Park.

I’m put.”

A tough out at the plate, Hamilton has struck out just seven times in 74 at-bats this season and 30 times in 197 career at-bats prior to Wednesday’s 23-5 win over 17th District opponent John Hardin.

“What I do best at the plate is hit my pitch,” said Hamilton, who is among the team leaders in hits (23), runs (17) and runs batted in (19). “I wait for the pitch I want and try to put the best swing I can on it, unless it’s two strikes where I just have to battle and hit anything around the zone.”

He said the drop in his batting average from last season has often been a case of bad luck and the old baseball slogan of “hitting it where they ain’t” has been more challenging during his senior season.

“What I did really well last season was sitting on a fastball early and hitting it hard,” he said. “I struggled in long at-bats so I took that away by attacking early and hitting my pitch. This year I feel like I’m just struggling to find holes in the defense. I hit the ball hard, but recently I’ve just been hitting

the ball straight to the guys on the field whereas last year I had a lot more balls dropping for hits. That’s really been my biggest problem this year. Too many ground balls straight to defenders. A better launch angle and I’d have a lot more hits.”

Hamilton said his plate discipline has been better this season, despite not having as many hits to follow.

“Early in my career if I got to two strikes, I would almost always strikeout, but this year I got better at putting the ball in play and making the other team’s defense work,” he said.

He said his ability to play several positions — often during the course of the same game — has made him a better player.

“In the outfield, I’m best at taking good routes to the ball and getting the ball in quick to my cutoff man or to the base,” he said. “In the infield I’m best at knowing my job. Whether I’m at third, shortstop or second, I know what I’m doing with the ball if it comes to me.”

On the mound this season through 20 games, he’s thrown 18 and two-

third innings with 16 strikeouts and a team-best 2.63 earned run average among pitchers on the team with more than five innings pitched. He has a 1-0 record.

“Although pitching isn’t what I’m best at, I love being in control of the game and going at my own pace,” Hamilton said. “I start to struggle when I think too much, so I try to just go out and compete and keep us in the game, however I can.”

As his senior season nears an end, Hamilton said he has an appreciation about playing in the program and being part of a team.

“Being a Trojan means a lot,” he said. “There’s nothing like being out on the field with my team and giving it everything we’ve got to win. Being a senior this year is amazing because we have the talent to make a run for the region championship at home.”

The Trojans are scheduled to play at 10 a.m. Saturday at Elizabethtown.

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Bluegrass Middle School unveils boys, girls soccer teams

BY JAKE KLINECT
THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

Bluegrass Middle School unveiled its first boys and girls soccer teams in school history with a proclamation for the new teams and coaches who were present for the event.

The student body gathered Thursday afternoon in the

school’s gym for the unveiling, with Hardin County Judge-Executive Keith Taul presenting the teams and designating May 1 as the official Bluegrass Middle School Boys and Girls Soccer Day.

Alongside being the school’s first soccer teams, the two new teams mark the first

school-sponsored middle school soccer club in Hardin County Schools.

“Whereas men’s and women’s soccer continues expanding in our commonwealth and our Hardin County area, whereas the parents and guardians of Hardin County

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JAKE KLINECT/The News-Enterprise
The new Bluegrass Middle School boys’ soccer team poses for a picture Thursday afternoon in the school’s gym.