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### Softball team chomping at the bit to play

position.

outfield.

runs batted in. Now a

18 runs scored and eight

RBIs. Now a junior, she

In 54 at-bats as

Rvelvnn Glander batted

scored and seven RBIs.

.278, with 15 hits, 15 runs

She could see action in the

Ryleigh Howe, the

team's lone senior, returns

a freshman in 2019.

could also play an outfield

**BY JEFF JONES** jjones@kpcmedia.com

BUTLER — They've been away from the field for a year, but Eastside's softball team is chomping at the bit to get back in action.

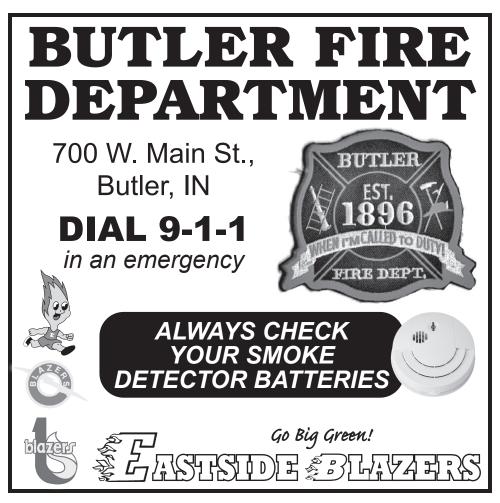
After the Blazers dipped to a programworst 2-16 record in the 2018 season, Eastside bounced back in 2019 with a new coach in Emily Sell, and a new attitude. finishing 11-11 in 2019.

While there were players who graduated without the benefit of a senior season due to the COVID-19 pandemic, several players who played roles in that bounceback season are still in the program.

Sell, now entering her second season, stresses that while the team returns six starters, "no spot is guaranteed on my team," she said. "Week-to-week, my starters may vary. You, as a player, must earn your spot every day at practice.

"As a coach and as a team, we are stoked," Sell stated. "With the letdown of last year and the inability to play, the girls have been working extremely hard in the off-season to ensure they are prepared going into game one."

As a freshman, Mataya Bireley batted .379 with 22 hits, 15 runs scored and 15







after batting .241 as a sophomore in 2019. She is listed as a catcher for the Blazers.

Howe has signed to play softball at Glen Oaks Community College.

In addition to Bireley and Glander, outfield candidates include freshman Jayci Kitchen and sophomore Grace Kreischer.

Kreischer could also play first base, with Grace McClain and Brooke Pittman as candidates for first or third base. Junior McKenna Hoffelder is another candidate at third

Sell has a number of pitching options, including Pittman and fellow juniors Cadence Gardner, Josie Richman and Bayleigh Rutter. Of that quartet, Gardner and Richman had limited varsity pitching experience in 2019.

Additional pitching prospects include sophomore Natalie Lower and freshmen Alyssa Kaufman, Moyra McAtee and Leah Ranger.

Sell said each pitcher has her own

individual strengths, and she expects to use them according to game play situations. For a program with tons of winning in its history, recently, the Blazer softball team

hasn't had any post-season Howe success.

Glander

Since capturing a sectional championship in 2016, the Blazers have been eliminated in the first game of post-season play in each of the past three

Sell wants to change that, especially with the sectional at Eastside this season.

The new sectional field includes Adams Central, Bishop Luers, Bluffton, Churubusco, South Adams and Woodlan. Fairfield replaced Eastside in the old sectional grouping at Westview.

seasons.

A winning record, a sectional win, a team earned-run average under 1.5 and fewer than two errors per game are her goals for the season.

While the team is a mix of upper- and underclassmen, once the players are between the lines, Sell said it is hard to see which group is which.

"What I enjoy the most about them as a team is the fact that on the field, it is incredibly challenging to distinguish the younger from the older," she said. "These girls are versatile and work incredibly hard."

Kevin Sells is an assistant coach at the varsity level, with former Eastside players Haleigh Czaja and Maddy Minehart coaching the reserve team.

## **ON THE COVER**

After a complete loss of the 2020 spring sports season, Eastside's baseball, softball and track teams are eager to compete in 2021

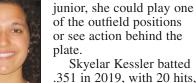
Seniors from Eastside's baseball, softball and track teams are featured.

This preview includes stories, photos

and schedules for all junior high and high school teams.

Be sure to follow kpcnews.com, the Butler Bulletin on Facebook and the DeKalb Eastern mobile app for the latest updates, schedule changes, cancellations and postponements.

All photos in this section were taken by Jeff Jones.







Kessler

## Eastside track teams ready to run in 2021

#### **BY JEFF JONES**

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BUTLER — Like their fellow Blazers in other spring sports, the 2020 track season ended before a single meet ever began.

Trisha Hill was entering her first year as head coach of the boys and girls teams, and practices were in full swing when COVID-19 brought everything to a screeching halt.

The lost season will forever present "What if?" "If we just could have ..." and "Why couldn't we ...?" questions that can never be answered.

What the lost season reinforced is to take advantage of opportunities when they are present because they might not be there tomorrow.

Fortunately, the calendar has turned, spring sports are back in 2021, and Hill wants to be more than a track coach.

"As a coach, my main goal isn't to coach a track and field athlete or team," she said. "My goal is to make a positive impact on each and every one of my athletes, giving them something to reflect back on later in life.

"Whether it be my constant lectures on eating healthy food, sleeping eight hours a night or teaching them that kindness is the key to living a happy life, I want to make a positive impact on their lives."

A 1995 Eastside graduate, Hill was an assistant to former coach Kagan Gentry during the 2019 season.

Ten years ago, Hill began competing in ultra-marathons, as well as adventure racing, which is a four-person endurance contest that encompasses multiple disciplines. In addition to being a member of the U.S. Adventure Racing Association, Hill is a registered Level 1 U.S.A. Track and Field coach, and is completing her Level 2 certification.

Hill has 40 athletes between the boys and girls teams. There are nine seniors, eight juniors, nine sophomores and 14 freshmen.

There are eight returning letter-winners on the boys' team and two on the girls' team: Nicolas Blair, Bobby Davis, Brittney Geiger, Molly Holman, Konner Lower, Jiye Parr, Jared Seiler, David Slone, David Watson and Jared Seiler.

Davis will run sprints while Blair and Slone compete in the 400-meter dash. Davis and Slone are also slated to compete in the long jump. Blair will also run the 800.

In 2019, Blair, Davis and Slone comprised three-fourths of Eastside's 4x100-meter relay team that finished fourth at the NECC meet. Blair placed in four events that year, adding a fourth-place finish as a member of the 4x800-meter relay team and a sixth-place finish as a member of the 4x400-meter relay team. He also finished seventh in the 400-meter dash.

Hill describes Blair, a senior, as "an athlete that is driven by intrinsic motivation and enjoys the opportunity to explore his potential in track. He puts forth a large amount of effort to actualize his potential."

Slone, also a senior, "is one of our most supportive athletes on the team," Hill said. "Whether in training or in a meet, David is positive toward his teammates and continually motivates everyone."

Senior Konner Lower will contribute in distance events. He is a two-time regional qualifier in cross country and was part of the 4x800 relay team that placed fourth in the 2019 NECC track meet.

Geiger and Pfefferkorn, both juniors, will be leaders on the girls' side.

Hill described Geiger as a "passionate athlete that puts forth large amounts of effort to improve in her events." Geiger is slated to run both hurdle events and high jump. As a freshman in 2019, Geiger tied for sixth in the high jump at the NECC meet.

Pfefferkorn will lead the team's sprint contingent, joined by Aly Baker, Audrey Diehl, Allison Hoffelder, Joanie Kimpel and Lydia Sullivan. Sullivan will also do long jump and the 400.

Pfefferkorn and Kimpel will also pole vault. Baker, Diehl and Hoffelder will high jump. Baker will also do hurdles.

Destiny Bonecutter, Kennedy Helbert, Grace Rotz and Morgyn Willibey are slated to run distance events.

Throwers include Molly Holman, Hailey Mack, Eleanor Neumann and Erin Snyder.

"Molly is a positive force on our team, and always puts forth effort in helping our younger throwers improve," Hill said. "Erin is always ready to work hard. We are looking forward to seeing her progressively improve each meet in the throw events."

Boys sprinters include Parr, Watson, Binyam Biddle, Cody Collins, Bobby Davis, Xavier Davis and Marcus Diaz. Diaz will also run hurdles and do high jump.

Collins, Johnny Eck, Xavier Davis and Jadin Seiler will compete in pole vault. David Burns will do long jump.

Carson Days and Chandler Dangler will compete in the 400. Bradon Greutman, Seth Firestine and Brock Seiler will run distance.

Boys throwers include Logan Capp, Joey Eck, Matt Jacobs, Sam Neumann, Dane Sebert and Garrett Thompson.



### Molly Holman, left, and Erin Snyder are seniors on Eastside's girls track team.

Goals for her program, Hill said, are to build a team that views track and field as a team sport rather than an individual sport and values good sportsmanship.

She wants to set goals for each athlete and teach them to become competitive against themselves so they are driving to wanting more.

Hill will coach middle and distance runners. Erika Brock and Casey Moughler will work with sprinters. Jon Hollabaugh, Brian Kessler and Todd Moughler will work with athletes in hurdles and jumps. Brock will also work with hurdlers.



There are seven seniors on Eastside's boys track team. In front, from the left, are Konner Lower, Brock Seiler and Jiye Parr. In the middle row are Nicolas Blair and David Slone. In back are Tanner Huff and Jared Seiler.

Tony Smith will coach pole vault. Lucas Chapman will work with throwers.

Eastside's first meet is at Woodlan Wednesday.

Home meets are April 13 with Hamilton and Fremont, April 20 against Lakewood Park and May 4 against Garrett.

The NECC girls meet is May 12 at Churubusco, with the boys NECC meet May 14 at Angola.



# Versatility is a strength of the baseball team

#### BY JEFF JONES

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BUTLER — It's a situation nearly every Indiana high school baseball team will face this season: how much game experience do they have after losing the entire 2020 campaign due to COVID-19?

The Eastside Blazers put together an outstanding 2019 season, winning the Northeast Corner Conference season championship. They finished 22-4, losing to LaVille in the championship game of the Westview Sectional.

Their first action of the 2021 season came March 23 in a scrimmage at Fremont.

"It opened our eyes to what we need to do better in a few areas," head coach Aaron Willard said. "It was just good to get back out there.

"It's a little different this year. Now, we're teaching a couple of different classes instead of just one class," he said. "Usually, you have to get your freshmen up to speed, but this year, we have to get two classes up to speed. Some of the sophomores who are going to play varsity baseball, they have to catch up real quick.

"That's just the reality," Willard said. "It's not just going to be our problem, it's going to be everybody's problem."

What will help the 2021 Blazers is there are six seniors, including four with varsity experience, and three underclassmen who had roles in the team's success in 2019.

Seniors Hayden Gardner, Dylan Hertig and Wade Miller were all starters two years ago.

Gardner returns at first base after batting .259 with 14 hits, nine runs scored and eight runs batted in during the 2019 season.

Hertig, who played third and caught as a sophomore, will be Eastside's primary



Buchanan

Willard

catcher this season. As a sophomore, he batted .361, with 26 hits, 20 runs scored while driving in 21.

Miller, a lefty, played center field and pitched. In 2019, he batted .241 with 20 hits, 31 runs scored, seven RBIs while drawing a team-leading 20 walks.

As a freshman, Owen Willard batted .325 with 13 hits, scoring 10 runs and driving in nine. On the mound, he went 3-0 in 9.2 innings.

Now a junior, Nick Snyder picked up a varsity win in 2019.

pitching eight innings with nine strikeouts.

While not logging an at-bat in 2019, junior Laithyn Cook was used as a pinch-runner, scoring 10 runs for the Blazers.

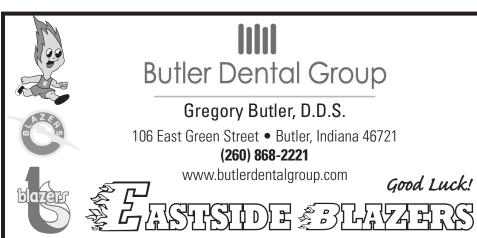
Senior Caleb Vanover didn't play in 2019, but was used as a designated hitter as a freshman in the 2018 season. He batted .111, driving in six runs.

What this Eastside squad lacks is experienced varsity pitching, as the three top pitchers on the 2019 team graduated after that season.

In the scrimmage, the Blazer mentor said pitchers had difficulties throwing strikes at times.

"We've got to be able to throw it across a little more," coach Willard said. "At the same time, we have some good, strong arms.

"Offensively, I think we'll develop. I think it will be a work in progress," he said. "I don't think we're as athletic





There are six seniors on Eastside's baseball team. From the left are Liam Franz, Wade Miller, Caleb Vanover, Hayden Gardner, Dylan Hertig and Colben Steury.

overall as we were a few years ago, but I still think we'll be pretty good 1-9 (in the batting order)."

This year's Blazers will need to be versatile, as several players will move to different positions on the field depending on who's pitching. There's also the issue of finding a lineup balance between players who are better on defense or at the plate.

Owen Willard, Snyder and junior Jack Buchanan will anchor the Blazer pitching rotation. Miller, seniors Liam Franz and Colben Steury and sophomore Carsen Jacobs should also take turns on the mound.

Sophomore Caeden Moughler and freshman Ryder Reed may get looks as well.

As of now, coach Willard sees Gardner at first, with Steury at second, Owen Willard at shortstop and Snyder at third.

Buchanan and Snyder will get chances at first or third base. Cook, Franz, Jacobs and Reed could all play at different infield positions, depending on who pitches for the Blazers.

Miller returns to center field. Buchanan, Cook, Franz, Jacobs, Moughler, Vanover and junior Hugh Henderson could also see time in the outfield as well.

"It's not like we have a third baseman that's just going to play third base," coach Willard said. "We have guys who JEFF JONES

can play multiple spots."

The 2019 coaching staff returns with Tony Emenhiser, Garth Fiedler, Kevin Fiedler, John Gravante and Bryce Yoder.

Just as Willard's softball teams did year in and year out, winning is an expectation. In four years with the baseball program, his teams have gone 78-27, averaging more than 19 wins per season.

After winning sectional titles in 2017 and 2018 and playing in the title game in 2019, all at Westview, Eastside will host a new sectional grouping this year, consisting of Adams Central, Bluffton, Churubusco, South Adams and Woodlan.

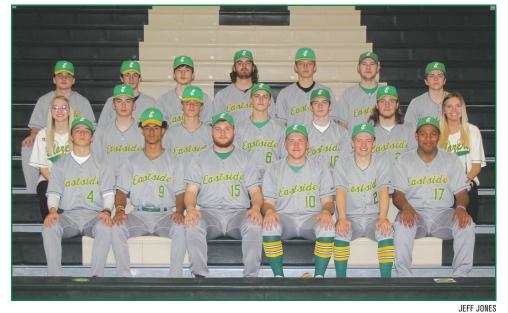
"I like our potential on the mound," coach Willard said. "I like some of our hitters. They have the capability of hitting the ball pretty hard at times.

"We might look like an older team, but we're really kind of inexperienced," he said. "It isn't like we have a lot of kids that's played a ton of varsity baseball.

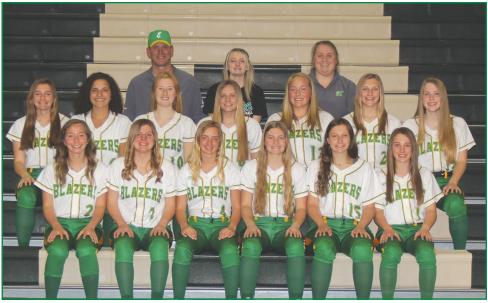
"It could be a learning curve early, (but) if we just grow and grow and grow, as we get going, we could be hard to handle later in the season."

The Blazers open their season today, March 30, against Antwerp, Ohio, and visit Woodlan Thursday. Eastside faces DeKalb Wednesday, April 7 at Parkview Field.

#### **Varsity Baseball**



Eastside's varsity baseball team is shown. In front, from the left, are Liam Franz, Wade Miller, Hayden Gardner, Dylan Hertig, Colben Steury and Caleb Vanover. In the middle row are manager Trinity Phillips, Reece Myers, Ryder Reed, Carsen Jacobs, Hugh Henderson, Brady Laub and manager Zoe McBride. In back are Loden Johnson, Laithyn Cook, Caeden Moughler, Jack Buchanan, Nick Snyder, Lincoln Pfefferkorn and Owen Willard.



**Varsity Softball** 

JEFF JONES

Eastside's varsity softball team is shown. In the first row, from the left, are Skyelar Kessler, Ryelynn Glander, Ryleigh Howe, Faith McClain, McKenna Hoffelder and Jayci Kitchen. In the middle row are Cadence Gardner, Mataya Bireley, Josie Richman, Grace McClain, Brooke Pittman, Grace Kreischer and Moyra McAtee. In back are assistant coach Kevin Sells, manager Audrey Roose and head coach Emily Sell.

**Girls Track** 



Eastside's boys track team is shown. In the front row, from left to right, are Brock Seiler, Konner Lower, Jared Seiler, Nicolas Blair, David Slone, Tanner Huff and Jiye Parr. In the second row are Carson Days,Sam Neuemann, Bobby Davis, Marcus Diaz, Johnny Eck and Cody Collins. In the third row are Jadin Seiler, Bradon Greutman, Xavier Davis, Matt Jacobs, Garrett Thompson, Dane Sebert and Seth Firestine. In the fourth row are Chandler Dangler, Joey Eck and Logan Capp. In back are coaches Casey Moughler, Tony Smith, Trisha Hill, Lucas Chapman and Erika Brock. Team member Binyam Biddle is not shown.



Eastside's girls track team is shown. In front, from the left, are Brittney Geiger, Erin Snyder, Molly Holman and Whittney Pfefferkorn. In the second row are Joanie Kimpel, Kennedy Helbert, Destiny Bonecutter, Aly Baker and Grace Rotz. In the third row are Hailey Mack, Morgyn Willibey, Lydia Sullivan, Audrey Diehl, Allison Hoffelder and Eleanor Neumann. In back are coaches Casey Moughler, Tony Smith, Trisha Hill, Lucas Chapman and Erika Brock.

#### **Boys Track**

# **2021 EASTSIDE SPRING SPORTS SCHEDULES**

	VARSITY BASEBALL	
Mar. 30	ANTWERP, Ohio	5 p.m.
Apr. 1	@ Woodlan	5 p.m.
Apr. 7	DeKalb @ Parkview Field, Fort Wayne	4:30 p.m.
Apr. 10	HICKSVILLE, Ohio (DH)	11 a.m.
Apr. 12	@ Leo	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 13	*@ Angola	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 15	*@ Fremont	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 17	*@ Churubusco	3 p.m.
Apr. 19	LAKEWOOD PARK	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 22	* PRAIRIE HEIGHTS	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 24	@Edgerton, Ohio (DH)	10 a.m.
Apr. 26-30	NECC Tournament	5:30 p.m.
May 1	NECC Tournament finals @ Fremont	11 a.m.
May 4	* FAIRFIELD	5:30 p.m.
May 6	*@ Garrett	5:30 p.m.
May 8	FW NORTH SIDE (DH)	10 a.m.
May 10	@ East Noble	5:30 p.m.
May 11	* LAKELAND	5:30 p.m.
May 13	* WEST NOBLE	5:30 p.m.
May 14	@ FW Concordia	5 p.m.
May 18	* CENTRAL NOBLE	5:30 p.m.
May 20	* @ Westview	5 p.m.
May 26-31	SECTIONAL @ EASTSIDE	ТВА
	<b>RESERVE BASEBALL</b>	
Apr. 3	@ Edgerton, Ohio (DH)	10 a.m.
Apr. 13	ANGOLA	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 15	FREMONT	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 17	@ Churubusco	5 p.m.
Apr. 19	@ Homestead	5 p.m.
Apr. 20	@ East Noble	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 22	@ Prairie Heights	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 30	FW SNIDER	5:30 p.m.
May 4	@ Fairfield	5:30 p.m.
May 6	GARRETT	5:30 p.m.
May 7	HICKSVILLE, Ohio	5:30 p.m.
May 10	WOODLAN	5 p.m.

@ Lakeland

5:30 p.m.

May 11

May 13	@ West Noble	5:30 p.m.
May 17	DEKALB	5:30 p.m.
May 18	@ Central Noble	5:30 p.m.
May 22	JV TOURNAMENT	9 a.m.
	VARSITY SOFTBALL	
Mar. 30	FW CONCORDIA	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 1	@ FW North Side	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 2	EDON, Ohio	5 p.m.
Apr. 5	@ Edgerton, Ohio	5 p.m.
Apr. 7	DEKALB	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 10	HICKSVILLE, Ohio	11 a.m.
Apr. 13	*@ Angola	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 15	*@ Fremont	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 17	*@ Churubusco	11 a.m.
Apr. 19	@ Lakewood Park	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 22	* PRAIRIE HEIGHTS	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 26-29	NECC Tournament	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 30	NECC TOURNAMENT FINALS at Eastside	5:30 p.m.
May 3	HERITAGE	5:30 p.m.
May 4	* FAIRFIELD	5:30 p.m.
May 6	*@ Garrett	5:30 p.m.
May 11	* LAKELAND	5:30 p.m.
May 13	* WEST NOBLE	5:30 p.m.
May 14	LEO	5:30 p.m.
May 15	FW SOUTH SIDE (DH)	10 a.m.
May 17	@ FW Bishop Luers	5:15 p.m.
May 18	* CENTRAL NOBLE	5:30 p.m.
May 20	*@ Westview	5:30 p.m.
May 21	FW NORTHROP	5:30 p.m.
May 24-29	SECTIONAL AT EASTSIDE	ТВА
	<b>RESERVE SOFTBALL</b>	
Apr. 13	ANGOLA	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 14	@ Woodlan	5 p.m.
Apr. 15	FREMONT	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 20	HAMILTON	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 21	@ Leo	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 22	@ Prairie Heights	5:30 p.m.
Apr. 30	@ Adams Central	5 p.m.

		_	
May 4	FAIRFIELD	7 p.m.	
May 6	GARRETT	5:30 p.m.	
<b>May 7</b> May 10		5 p.m.	
•	@ Heritage LAKELAND	5 p.m.	
May 11	@ FW Northrop	5:30 p.m.	
May 12 May 13	@ West Noble	5:30 p.m. 5:30 p.m.	
May 18	@ Central Noble	5:30 p.m.	
	SITY BOYS AND GIRLS T		
Mar. 31	@ Woodlan	5 p.m.	
Apr. 6	@ East Noble	5 p.m.	
Apr. 13	* FREMONT and * HAMILTON	5 p.m.	
Apr. 15	*@ Churubusco	5 p.m.	
Apr. 17	Boys track @ Churubusco Invitational	9 a.m.	
Apr. 20	LAKEWOOD PARK	5 p.m.	
Apr. 23	Boys track @ Heritage Relays, Monroeville	5 p.m.	
Apr. 24	Girls track @ Turtle Town Invitational, Churubusco	9 a.m.	
Apr. 27	*@ Angola	5 p.m.	
Apr. 30	Boys track @ Central Noble Invitational	5:30 p.m.	
May 1	Girls track @ John Reed Invitational, Kendallville	9 a.m.	
May 4	* GARRETT	5 p.m.	
May 12	Girls NECC meet @ Churubusco	5 p.m.	
May 14	Boys NECC meet @ Angola	5 p.m.	
May 18	Girls sectional @ Angola	5 p.m.	
May 20	Boys sectional @ East Noble	5 p.m.	
JUNIOR HIGH TRACK			
Apr. 14	@ Lakeland with Garrett	5 p.m.	
Apr. 21	CHURUBUSCO	5 p.m.	
Apr. 26	@ Leo	5 p.m.	
Apr. 28	@ Fremont	5 p.m.	
Apr. 30	Westview Invitational	5 p.m.	
May 3	@ Angola	5 p.m.	
May 5	@ Woodlan	5 p.m.	
May 10	HAMILTON and PRAIRIE HEIGHTS	5 p.m.	

# **2021 EASTSIDE SPRING SPORTS SCHEDULES**

May 15	NECC meet @ Fairfield	9 a.m.
	VARSITY GOLF	
	Home matches played at Bridgewater Golf Course, Auburn	
Apr. 15	* @ Fairfield with * Fremont	5 p.m.
Apr. 17	Northrop Invitational, Colonial Oaks G.C.	9 a.m.
Apr. 22	* WEST NOBLE and * CENTRAL NOBLE	4:45 p.m.
Apr. 24	Lakeland Invitational, Heron Creek G.C.	8 a.m.
Apr. 27	* PRAIRIE HEIGHTS and * HAMILTON	4:45 p.m.
Apr. 29	* WESTVIEW and *CHURUBUSCO	4:45 p.m.

May 1	DeKalb Invitational @ Bridgewater	9 a.m.
May 6	@ Fairfield with * Lakeland	4:30 p.m.
May 12	*@ Garrett with * Angola	4:45 p.m.
May 13	@ Heritage	4:30 p.m.
May 15	Leo Invitational @ Noble Hawk G.C., Kendallville	9 a.m.
May 20	@ Woodlan	4:30 p.m.
May 22	NECC meet @ Noble Hawk G.C., Kendallville	9 a.m.
May 25	@ Fremont with Hamilton at Lake James G.C.	4:45 p.m.
June 1	Hawk Invitational @ Leo	9 a.m.
June 4	Sectional at Noble Hawk G.C., Kendallville	9 a.m.

	JUNIOR HIGH GOLF	
	Home matches played at Bridgewater Golf Course, Auburn	
Apr. 19	CENTRAL NOBLE and FREMONT	5 p.m.
Apr. 22	FREMONT	5 p.m.
Apr. 26	WEST NOBLE and LAKELAND	5 p.m.
May 4	DeKalb and Leo (location TBA)	4:45 p.m.
May 7	DEKALB and GARRETT	4:45 p.m.
May 10	Westview and Fairfield (location TBA)	5 p.m.
May 12	ANGOLA and KENDALLVILLE	5 p.m.
May 17	NECC meet @ Wawasee	5 p.m.

Home matches are in all CAPS and bold \* Before school indicates NECC contest



