

2 state qualifiers return to lead wrestlers

By Paige Happ

With the 2023-24 wrestling season starting, junior Kady Kraklio and senior Lainey Shelangoski will lead their respective teams after qualifying for the state tournament last February.

Shelangoski placed eighth at the state tournament in Des Moines and was the first girl from Durant to qualify for state.

She is ranked sixth in the state in the 105-pound weight class to start this season, according to the Iowa Wrestling Coaches & Officials Association.

Shelangoski continues to set goals for herself in the 2023-24 season.

“Obviously everyone’s big goal is to win the state title at the end of the season, but small goals are what make big ones attainable,” Shelangoski said.

“My goals are to be the most dominant wrestler I can be, outwork everyone else, maintain my weight healthily, and overall perform to the best of my ability in every aspect.”

Shelangoski enjoys watching Durant girls try the same sport she began three years ago, and she sees wrestling as a great opportunity for girls at Durant.

“I think it’s cool to see other girls in the exact same position I was in when I first started,” said Shelangoski.

The girls’ wrestling team has a

strong roster with three returning from last year and five new faces joining.

“Maybe some girls will find a passion for it like I did,” said Shelangoski.

Coach Casey Strub, the boys’ and girls’ wrestling coach, agrees that Lainey has changed girls’ wrestling at Durant for the better.

“She has shown other girls through her actions on and off the mat that wrestling is just not a boys’ sport,” said Coach Strub.

Coach Strub looks forward to watching Shelangoski compete because of the determination she shows on the mat.

“It’s exciting to see someone compete for six minutes as hard as they can,” Coach Strub said.

Kraklio competed at the state wrestling tournament in the 160-pound weight class but ended up losing his first two matches and not placing.

Kraklio strives to not let his emotions get the best of him this season after struggling with his emotions at the state tournament.

“I didn’t want to let everyone down that came to watch me, so I freaked out, and I let my emotions get the best of me,” said Kraklio.

Now that Kraklio is considered an upperclassman and has a state appearance under his belt, he feels he has more experi-

ence to succeed. Kraklio’s goal for the season is very simple but significant.

“Go in there and give it my all,” said Kraklio, who plans on using his parents to motivate him during the wrestling season. Over the summer, Kraklio wrestled in a few freestyle tournaments and national tournaments.

Sophomore Trey Ramer is still seeking his first appearance at state.

During the district meet last year, the first and second-place wrestlers advanced to the state tournament.

Ramer placed third, ending his season too early.

Ramer strives to get his first tournament win this year, but his ultimate goal is to make it to state. He has been wrestling for about ten years.

In the off-season, Ramer has been wrestling for Pack 732 in Wilton, along with some other Durant wrestlers.

The boys’ team consists of 10 wrestlers. Coach Strub holds high expectations for all of his wrestlers, both in the classroom and on the wrestling mat.

At the start of the season, Coach Strub has his wrestlers fill out goal sheets.

“Their goal sheets are put in a location where they can revisit/self-reflect on them anytime during the season,” said Coach Strub.



Photos by Carlie Jo Fusco

Senior Lainey Shelangoski and junior Kady Kraklio wrestle at their respective state tournaments last February. Shelangoski placed eighth at the weight class of 105 pounds.

Girls’ lineup features 5 returning Wildcat starters

By Colby Gast

The Durant Wildcats girls’ basketball team heads into the season with a steady foundation as all five starters return from last year.

Led by sixth-year Head Coach Ross DeLong, the Wildcats plan to use their toughness and experience to guide them through a successful season.

“I really feel if we all come together and play like we are capable of, we should be really tough to beat,” said Coach DeLong.



Photo by the Chronicles staff

Junior Adison Daufeldt looks to the bench during the Regina Catholic playoff game last year.

The Wildcats finished last season with an overall record of 7-15, going 3-11 in conference games. The Wildcats fell in the second round of the playoffs to Regina Catholic.

A key player returning to the team for her senior season is Isabelle DeLong. DeLong has already set her mark on the Durant record book, holding the single-game scoring record. DeLong scored 37 points in a game last season against the North Cedar Knights.

However, DeLong didn’t just make her mark on one game; she played a large role for the team all season. DeLong led the team in points per game with 15.5 and led the team in rebounds per game with 7.1.

DeLong, who will be a full-time varsity starter for the third year in a row, attributes some of her success to a competitive attitude she developed growing up with two older brothers.

“Being competitive has never been a bad thing for me; if anything, it is the fuel to my fire,” said DeLong. “I’ve always been told that my competitiveness is something that’s special because you can’t teach it.”

DeLong is not just confident in herself this year but also in the team’s ability as a whole.

“We have a very athletic group

from top to bottom this season, and I think that will be in our favor,” said DeLong. “We have a bunch of girls who love the sport and each other and are willing to put it all out there for the team.”

Senior Avery Paper will also be returning for her third varsity season. Paper averaged 7.3 points and 1.9 assists per game last season.

“I think having the experience will help me greatly this season,” said Paper. “I will be confident and comfortable on the floor, which will help a lot.

Paper has some goals set for the season, including delivering more assists per game.

“I want to set the team up for success and put them in a position where they can score,” she said.

Coach DeLong also has some goals set out for this season. He wants to keep it simple and win the games the Wildcats should win but also compete with the top teams they will face.

“I’m hoping to be more physical and confident this year,” said Coach DeLong. “We have some really athletic girls, and if we can play more physically, especially in the paint, we can do some really great things.”

Coach DeLong feels a lot of the

girls on the team have progressed immensely from last year, but he has one in mind who has really stuck out: junior Adison Daufeldt.

“She has put the time in the weight room and on the floor this summer,” said Coach DeLong. “She is coming off some nice games down the stretch from last year, and I’m hoping that confidence will propel her this year.”

Daufeldt played a big role in her sophomore season. She led the team in assists with 2.2 per game and averaged 1.2 steals per game.

Daufeldt has been waiting for the season for a long time, and she has been training for it since the summer.

“During the summer, we had lifting three times a week, open gyms throughout the week, and summer league every Sunday, and I would go to as many of those as I could,” said Daufeldt.

Basketball is Daufeldt’s favorite sport because she loves all the bonds she makes with her teammates, but she also loves the aggressiveness and intensity it has.

Daufeldt’s goals for the year are to become more of an offensive threat and be the best teammate, on and off the court, she can be.

The season opener is November 28 against the Northeast Rebels.

Junior players expected to play big role in upcoming season

By Lauren Callison

The junior class is expected to turn some heads this season for the boys’ basketball team.

The Wildcats lost nine players to graduation, including all-time leading scorer Nolan DeLong and key starters Garrett Holtenback and Lane Felske.

Last year, the boys had a record of 6-16 and were 2-11 in conference games. They lost to the West Branch Bears in the first round of the playoffs.

Three of this year’s seniors, including Caden Meyer, who would have been the highest returning scorer, are not going out for basketball because of other sports conflicts. Senior Mason Badtram will now be the highest returning scorer with an average of only 2.8 points per game last season.

That leaves at least three juniors who will be expected to fill some big shoes.

Head Coach Matt Straube recognized some of the junior players putting in the work in the off-season.

“Junior Race Starr, junior Kayden Kerr, and junior Bryce Daufeldt have been in the gym a ton this summer/fall getting better,” said Coach Straube.

The Wildcats will have a significant height disadvantage after losing a 6’5” senior last year.

“We definitely are going to be a small team comparatively speaking to last year,” said Coach Straube.

“You always have to adjust to the players you have, and it will affect what we do as a team.”

Starr’s biggest concern this season

is the team’s lack of height as well.

“I think our shooting is probably going to be our strength this year,” he said. “The main problem we will run into is our lack of height on our team.”

Starr acknowledges some struggles he had on the JV team last year but hopes his off-season work will have prepared him.

“Turnovers were my main problem on JV, and I’m hoping that the work in the off-season has helped with that,” he said.

Daufeldt, Starr, and Kerr participated in the students vs. teachers basketball game, beating the teachers, and giving a sneak peek as to what the season will look like.

“I am extremely excited for this basketball season,” Starr said. “I’m happy that I get a chance at the sport I love.”



Photo by the Chronicles staff

Head Coach Matt Straube talks with his team during a timeout last season.