



# WINTER SPORTS UPDATE

Friday, March 27, 2020

OHSAA recently canceled the winter high school sports tournaments due to the COVID-19 crisis. Columbus Grove Schools wants to express its deepest appreciation to our winter athletes who had their seasons end so abruptly. You represented our district so well both on and off the courts and mats of competition! Please know that we will be planning a special recognition for all of you when things get back to normal!

## **Wrestling**

This wrestling season saw two of our wrestlers qualify for the state wrestling tournament at the Schottenstein Center in Columbus. Junior Ezra Jones qualified as an alternate this year in the 170 lb. weight class. Ezra is on pace to pass the coveted 100 win mark next year as a senior at CGHS.

Junior heavyweight Jeff Meyer earned his third consecutive trip to state competition this year, making history as Columbus Grove's first ever three-time state qualifier in wrestling! Earlier this year, Jeff earned his 100<sup>th</sup> match victory and broke the school's all-time victories mark at the NWC meet. Jeff was heading to Columbus as the third ranked wrestler in the state in his weight class. Kudos to both Ezra and Jeff on outstanding seasons and we look forward to cheering you on during your senior seasons next year!

## **Basketball**

The undefeated, #1 ranked, lone undefeated boys' basketball team concluded their perfect season on March 10 at the Stroh Center in Bowling Green, beating the #2 ranked Antwerp Archers by a score of 55-50. This is the first ever undefeated boys' basketball team in school history! Led by 1<sup>st</sup> Team All-Ohio/PCL and NWC Player of the Year Blake Reynolds, the Bulldogs rolled through their entire schedule unscathed. With the sharpshooting of 1<sup>st</sup> Team NWC/PCL Tayt Birnesser, outstanding defense and clutch shooting of Gabe Clement (Honorable Mention NWC/2<sup>nd</sup> Team PCL), tremendous all around defense/rebounding of center Ethan Halker, the Bulldogs provided our community with a season's worth of highlights that will not be soon forgotten! We look forward to seeing these players on the court next year, along with rising stars Blaine Hoffman, Landon Myers, Trey Sautter, Jackson Schroeder, and Brayden Bellman. The future is bright for the Columbus Grove Bulldogs!

We also want to express our many thanks to the wonderful Columbus Grove Bulldog Cheerleading squad. These ladies committed many hours of practice and did an admirable job of leading the fans in support of the basketball team this year. This year's varsity squad included seniors Madisyn Ditto (Rhodes State majoring in Nursing), Makena Doseck (University of Findlay/HS English Education), Morgan Halker (BGSU/Social Services), Ivy Parker (UNOH/Medical Assisting), Kara Schmidt (ONU/Pharmacy), Kaylee Stauffer (Rhodes State/Nursing), Emma Wenzinger (University of Toledo /Communications-Marketing) and junior Stephanie Messer. We also want to thank our outstanding student cheering section, led by numerous seniors, for your support of the boys' team this season!

This basketball season would not be what it was without our four senior members. These young men, unfortunately, do not have the opportunity to chase after a state title next year. We want to thank them for their contributions to this year's team and for the way they represented our school district off the court!

**#14 Owen Macke-** Owen, whose first love is baseball, went into his senior season knowing he would play a reserve role. Owen's work ethic and team-first attitude set a wonderful example for his teammates. Owen was also a fan favorite of our student section! The coaching staff is grateful that Owen chose to be a four-year member of our high school basketball team. Next year, Owen will attend Bluffton University, majoring in Early Childhood Education/Intervention Specialist and will play on the Bluffton Beavers Baseball team.

**#21 Tanner Smith-** Tanner is another four-year member of the boys' basketball program. Known for his quick feet and excellent defense, Tanner provided crucial minutes off the bench for the Bulldogs throughout the entire season. We also remember Tanner hitting a number of end-of-quarter buzzer beaters this season. In a tough double weekend against Crestview and Arlington, Tanner got a steal against the Knights and hit a shot right at the end of the third quarter. The next night, Tanner got a key offensive rebound and put it up for another buzzer beater against the Red Devils. After graduation, Tanner will begin an Electrical Apprenticeship.

**#23 Alex Schneider-** Alex entertained fans for four years with his athleticism on the basketball court. While he would have started for virtually every other varsity team on our schedule, Alex played the critical role of sixth man who could provide an instant spark off the bench. Many remember Alex catching on fire, along with Tayt Birnesser, in the second half against Crestview, quickly turning a close game into a 24-point rout of the Knights. Alex also hit two clutch free throws in the final minutes of the district final game against Kalida to end the Wildcats' season. In his last game against Antwerp, Alex always seemed to be in the right position to deflect a pass or make a steal to help the Bulldogs reach the regional final. Alex's future plans are undecided, but they will likely include playing baseball, as Alex is an excellent three-sport athlete at Columbus Grove.

**#4 Evan "Hop" Hopkins-** As Denny Ricker noted on Senior Night, Hop has some of the quickest hands of any Bulldog player in school history. Along with junior Gabe Clement, Hop played phenomenal defense, wreaking havoc for the opposing teams' guards. Not just an excellent defender, Hop could also provide offense for the Bulldogs, with either a clutch 3-pointer or a breakaway layup after a steal. No one will ever forget Hop's steal at the beginning of the fourth quarter versus Antwerp that tied the game and gave the Bulldogs the momentum to end up victorious against the Archers. Coach Sautter called it the play of the game! Next year, Evan will attend the University of Toledo, majoring in Nursing.

Thank you, Owen, Tanner, Alex, and Evan for giving us so many wonderful memories!

We also want to express our appreciation to Wrestling Head Coach Eric Siefker, Cheerleading Advisor Traci Kohls, Boys' Head Basketball Coach Chris Sautter and their respective staffs for their efforts this past season. Your leadership and guidance for your athletes, particularly in the handling of this sudden end of the season is truly admirable. All of our student athletes at Columbus Grove are fortunate to have such dedicated and caring coaches!

**Please check out the following video that summarizes what a special year this was for the 2020 boys' basketball team:**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1J6Bu\\_ZqTMujseUDPCIONOwGWWIToUNaL/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1J6Bu_ZqTMujseUDPCIONOwGWWIToUNaL/view?usp=sharing)

Finally, we want to thank our many fans who supported our student athletes this past season. We have often said that our school district is the hub of our community, but our community's wonderful support and attendance at our games/matches creates a wonderful atmosphere for our student athletes. We thank you for your tremendous support and look forward to celebrating these accomplishments together very soon!