

## O'Hara Foundation to award scholarships at Hockey Day

BY JASON FELDMAN  
Post Bulletin

To say the past two weeks have been full of mixed emotions for Dan and Jennifer O'Hara is an understatement.

Two weeks ago Thursday — Jan. 6 — marked the 10th anniversary of their oldest daughter, Shannon, passing away at age 13 after bravely battling an inoperable brain tumor.

Two days from now — on Saturday — the O'Haras will stand on the ice at Hockey Day Minnesota '22 in Mankato and hand out scholarships to eight high school hockey players, thanks to a foundation that carries their daughter's name.

The Shannon O'Hara Foundation is expanding its reach this year, and for the foreseeable future.

"This will broaden our reach to a state-wide or regional audience," Jennifer O'Hara said this week. "We hope that we reach more people this way, and not just the eight kids who will get scholarships on Saturday, but families along the way who hear Shannon's story and take it to heart.

"This is a chance to grow the group of people who Shannon matters to."

The Shannon O'Hara Foundation started 10 years ago with a \$5,000 contribution from a group of parents whose daughters played on Rochester's U14 team with the diminutive player who became known as "Shannon The Cannon" due to her not-so-

heavy shot.

The Foundation has raised well more than \$300,000 over the past decade, most of which has been donated for cancer research and to high school hockey playing seniors in Rochester.

The foundation traditionally has awarded anywhere from two to four college scholarships (generally ranging from \$1,000-\$2,000) to Rochester players, who are asked at the start of each season to write an essay about what playing hockey in the Rochester Youth Hockey Association has meant to them. The winners — selected by the foundation's board of directors — are the boys and girls who best exemplify the spirit that Shannon had for the game and her teammates — living life with a positive attitude, working hard and being a good friend and teammate.

On Saturday, the Shannon Foundation will present \$1,000 scholarships to one player from each of the eight high school teams that will play as part of Hockey Day Minnesota '22 — Mankato East girls (Anna Rader), Mankato West girls (Emily Bloemke), Mankato East boys (Aiden Prochaska), Mankato West boys (Blake Como), Andover girls (Ashley Grabau), Edina girls (Audrey Kelley), East Grand Forks boys (Zach Stocker) and Prior Lake boys (Justin Simonson).

"We're excited," Jen O'Hara said. "Our board of directors has been looking for ways to expand our scholarship offerings. We will still do the scholarships for local players

See O'HARA, Page 7



S. O'Hara

## JR. COLLEGE WRESTLING



Post Bulletin file photo

Westfield's Colton Krell celebrates winning the 195-pound Class A championship match against Frazee's Luke Tweeton on Feb. 29, 2020, at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul.

# Krell blossoming with Yellowjackets

## RCTC coaches have high hopes for former Blooming Prairie standout

BY ALEX VANDENHOUTEN  
Post Bulletin

Colton Krell's path to college wrestling — and to Rochester Community and Technical College — was not exactly how he envisioned it.



Krell

Just two years ago, Krell became the first wrestler from Blooming Prairie High School to win a state championship when he won a 7-3 decision against Frazee's Luke Tweeton in the Class A 195-pound state title bout. It capped a prep career that saw Krell win 141 of 158 matches and become a four-time state place-winner for the Westfield Razorbacks (the co-op between Blooming Prairie and Hayfield).

He committed to wrestle at North Dakota State University — a program with a history of producing great grapplers. But after one semester

it was clear to Krell, Fargo wasn't going to work out.

"There were a lot of different things, but I would place the blame mostly on myself," Krell said. "I didn't like doing my homework. ... And you know, D-1 is tough. I went up there and I was extremely out of shape. Those guys did not mess around. They were all in shape and ready to rip. I learned a lot of lessons on my first day of practice."

Krell returned to the Rochester area after that first semester and enrolled at RCTC.

The Yellowjackets were one of the final programs Krell considered before settling on the Bison.

Growing up, Krell knew the RCTC program well. That didn't change when he looked at the roster last season, seeing plenty of familiar faces.

"I mean growing up through high school, I heard of all the names on the roster," Krell said. "I knew a lot of the kids prior to RCTC and I think

that's really cool. That only helps with the team bonding and team atmosphere. ... It's just a fun group to be with."

Krell wasn't ready to wrestle yet at RCTC during the spring semester last year, so he was able to focus on his academics. He seems to have found his footing in that department.

He is studying business and marketing as he hopes to one day take over Krell Electric — the business his father Charles (Chuck) Krell started in 2004 in Blooming Prairie.

"I want to get the marketing idea or concepts and I want to take it back home," Krell said, "hopefully expand the business a little bit."

With that side of being a student-athlete now figured out, Krell knew it was time to get his body right so he could get back to doing what he loves. But that's obviously easier said than done — especially with how his time at NDSU shook out.

"You just really have to

See KRELL, Page 7



Jason Feldman / Post Bulletin

A memorial for Shannon O'Hara hangs in the lobby at Graham Arena in Rochester. O'Hara died Jan. 6, 2012, at age 13, after a battle with an inoperable brain tumor. A foundation started in her honor has raised more than \$300,000 over the past decade, and will award eight \$1,000 college scholarships to high school hockey playing seniors at Hockey Day Minnesota on Saturday in Mankato.

# Minn. rises up in girls basketball recruiting

## 15 Minnesotans among McDonald's All-American Games nominees

BY RON HAGGSTROM  
Star Tribune

MINNEAPOLIS — Paige Bueckers changed the landscape. The Land of 10,000 Lakes is no longer considered a backwater of girls' basketball recruiting.

The former Hopkins star was the nation's No. 1 recruit two years ago, when she chose Connecticut. Minnesota has reached another peak this season, producing the state's deepest and most talented senior class. The evidence: 15 Minnesotans were among the McDonald's All-American Games nominees revealed last week.

"We have had some really good classes, and some subpar classes, in the past," said Metro Stars AAU and Hopkins coach Tara Starks, whose

team has two highly regarded seniors. "This class is loaded with heavy hitters from top to bottom."

It also has plenty of versatility.

"It's not loaded at just one position," Starks said. "You have high-level kids at all five positions. They also bring with them different styles of play."

### TALENT IN THE GOPHERS' BACK YARD

Coach Lindsay Whalen and her Gophers staff landed four of Minnesota's top recruits: Hopkins 5-11 guard Amarya Battle, Wayzata 5-11 point guard Mara Braun, Chaska 6-1 forward Mallory Heyer and Eden Prairie 6-1 forward Nia Holloway. All but Holloway are ranked in the top 55 players in the country by ESPN's HoopGurlz; Braun ranks

highest at No. 28.

ESPN ranked the Gophers' recruiting class 10th-best in the nation.

"As the highest-ranked class in school history, we are not only proud of the basketball players that these young women are but how they carry themselves in the community and in the state of Minnesota," Whalen said after signing the group in November. "They are going to make an impact that will last for years to come."

The state's top senior recruit is headed elsewhere. Hopkins 6-4 forward Maya Nnaji, ranked No. 9 in the country, is bound for Arizona.

Three other Minnesota seniors are headed to Big Ten schools: Chanhassen 5-8 guard Callin Hake to Nebraska, DeLaSalle 6-2 forward Savannah White to Wisconsin

and Rochester John Marshall 6-2 forward Lilly Meister to Indiana.

"What sets the 2022s apart from other years is the quantity and quality of the recruits," said Minnesota girls' basketball historian Kevin Anderson, an assistant coach at Mahtomedi. "The top 10 players are headed to BCS-level programs."

"This class will take their place with other outstanding classes like 1997, 2000 and 2013. What sets them apart from the other years is they are staying close to home. Gopher fans will have front-row seats to see their continued progress on the next level."

### LOTS LEFT IN THE PIPELINE

Hopkins' talent — and that of Minnesota — won't run out when the Class of

2022 departs. Beyond its two seniors, Hopkins has junior 6-foot guard Taylor Woodson and junior 5-11 guard Nunu Agara; they are the 26th- and 38th-ranked players in the country in their class. Agara has committed to Stanford.

Hopkins' starting lineup is rounded out by the 11th-ranked player in the Class of 2024, 5-8 sophomore Alivia McGill. All five starters have scoring averages in double figures.

"The talent pipeline is not going to run dry," Anderson said. "The Class of 2023 and later are set to continue to produce quality players."

Benilde-St. Margaret's 6-foot sophomore guard Olivia Olson is ranked No. 3 in the Class of 2024, and Providence Academy

See BASKETBALL, Page 7

