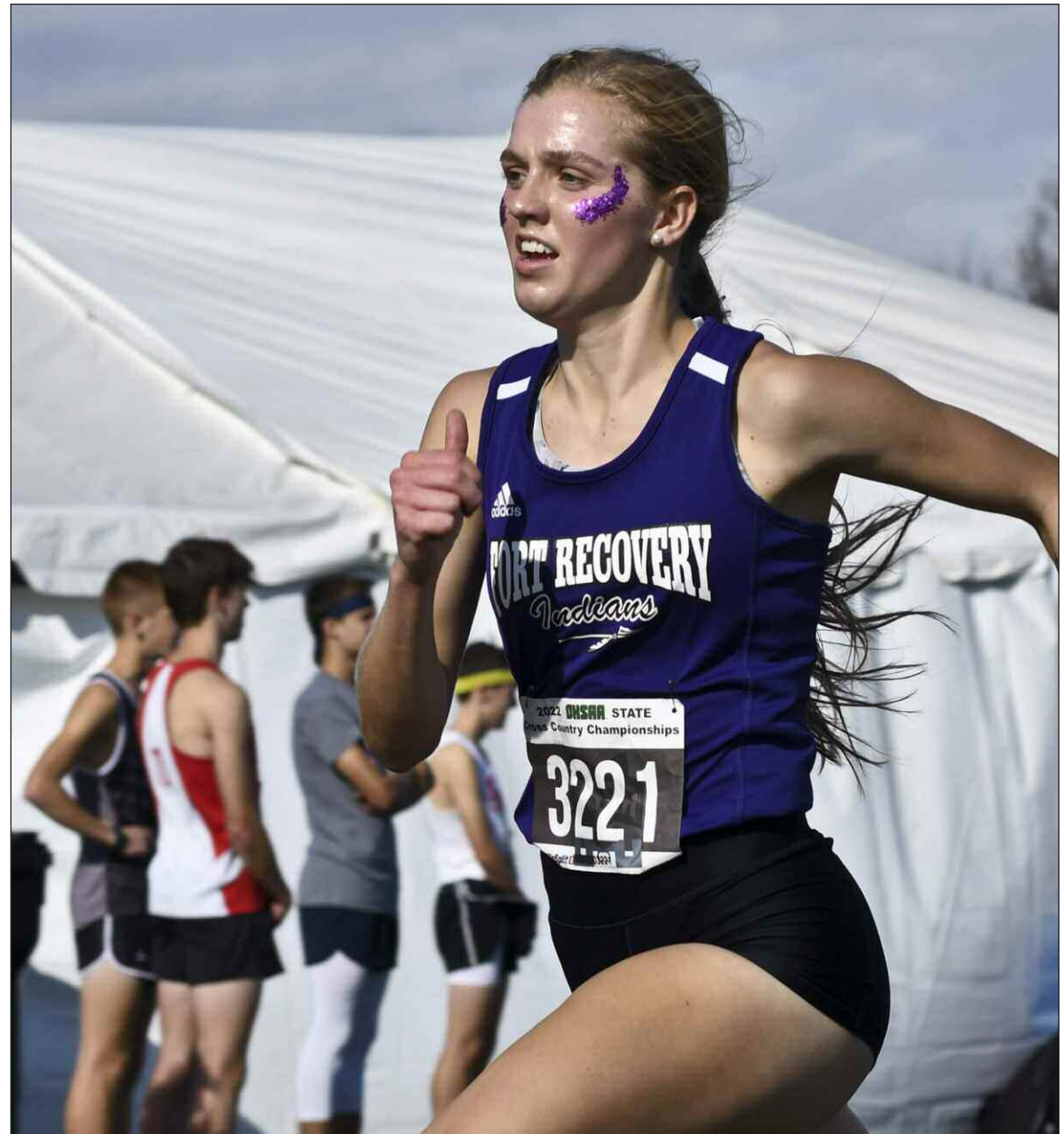


# 2023 Fort Recovery Fall Sports Preview

A special section in The Commercial Review  
Tuesday, August 15, 2023



## STATE

*Fort Recovery runners focused  
on another trip to Fortress Obetz*

# Homan shifting to be dual-threat QB

Troy Homan did it all for the Indians last season.

This season, he'll be captaining the ship.

Homan will take over at quarterback for Fort Recovery High School's football team in 2023 as it looks to build around him.

The Indians finished last season with a 3-8 record, including a 2-6 mark in the Midwest Athletic Conference, and a loss in the first round of the playoffs to MAC-rival Minster. Their new leader will look to improve that line.

Homan takes over for 2023 FRHS graduate Cale Rammel, who played in nine games last season. He threw for 1,816 yards, connecting on 55% of his attempts resulting in 13 touchdowns and 11 interceptions.

Homan completed 15 of 28 attempts last season while throwing three interceptions for a total of 167 yards.

"I think we've been able to make things pretty simple for him," coach Brent Niekamp said. "He's got a pretty good

grasp of what we're trying to do."

The transition to quarterback will change his role, as last year he was the main target for Rammel with 44 receptions and six receiving touchdowns. See **Shifting** page 8

## Extra work is key the factor

It will take some extra work to change the Indians' fortunes.

That's exactly what Travis Guggenbiller's players have been giving him this offseason.

The Fort Recovery High School volleyball team has been putting in extra work during the pre-season as it gets ready for the year.

"That's huge," Guggenbiller said. "We've actually had several practices this year where I've had girls actually here before, or had girls stay afterwards. That's nice to see as a coach, because that right there is what's going to take it to the next level. Those that put in the extra time — because we're all

putting in a two-hour practice — so what are you doing to get yourself better?"

The extra reps and self-motivation are helping the Indians, who lost four key players from their rotation last season. Fort Recovery graduated one player from each major position, losing defensive specialist Audra Bubp, setter Faith Wendel, middle blocker Allysen Fullenkamp and outside hitter Grace Klingshirn.

"We are losing all four parts of the game," Guggenbiller said. "A back row player, your setter, an outside hitter and a middle hitter, so those are things that we are working on." See **Extra** page 3

### Volleyball

Date	Opponent	Time
<b>Tuesday, Aug. 22</b>	<b>Memorial (St. Marys)</b>	<b>5:30 p.m.</b>
Thursday, Aug. 24	National Trail	5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Aug. 29	Jay County	5:30 p.m.
<b>Thursday, Aug. 31</b>	<b>Parkway</b>	<b>5:30 p.m.</b>
<b>Saturday, Sept. 2</b>	<b>Arcanum</b>	<b>10 a.m.</b>
Tuesday, Sept. 5	Celina	5:30 p.m.
<b>Thursday, Sept. 7</b>	<b>Versailles</b>	<b>5:30 p.m.</b>
Thursday, Sept. 14	St. John's	5:30 p.m.
Monday, Sept. 18	Crestview	5:30 p.m.
<b>Tuesday, Sept. 19</b>	<b>Coldwater</b>	<b>5:30 p.m.</b>
Thursday, Sept. 21	Marion Local	5:30 p.m.
<b>Monday, Sept. 25</b>	<b>Newton</b>	<b>5:30 a.m.</b>
<b>Thursday, Sept. 28</b>	<b>St. Henry</b>	<b>5 p.m.</b>
Saturday, Sept. 30	Knight Invitational	9 a.m.
Monday, Oct. 2	Wayne-Trace	5:30 p.m.
<b>Thursday, Oct. 5</b>	<b>Minster</b>	<b>5 p.m.</b>
<b>Saturday, Oct. 7</b>	<b>Fort Loramie</b>	<b>10 a.m.</b>
Monday, Oct. 9	Ansonia	4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Oct. 10	New Knoxville	5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Oct. 12	New Bremen	5:30 p.m.
<b>Home matches in bold</b>		

All stories and team photos in the 2023 Fort Recovery High School Fall Sports Preview are by Andrew Balko.

Cover photos and design are by Ray Cooney.

## Deep roster back on links

Dean Sanders will have a question throughout the season.

Who gets left behind from varsity today?

The Fort Recovery High School boys golf team maintained 19 golfers while returning nearly its entire starting lineup as it looked to make another improvement in the Mid-

west Athletic Conference and the sectional.

The Indians' sole loss was No. 1 golfer, Isaac LeFevre, who earned All-MAC first-team honor in 2022. LeFevre led Fort Recovery in both the MAC tournament and the sectional with scores of 85 and 89, respectively. See **Deep** page 6

## Going to Bat for Our Student Athletes

Good luck, Indians, on a great season!



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# Extra ...

Continued from page 2  
While the Indians lose Klingshirm as an outside hitter, they return their top two outside hitters in seniors Teigan Fortkamp and Mara Pearson. The duo led the team in kills last season with Pearson racking up 183 and Fortkamp adding 134.

"We are strong on our wings, and you live and die on your outside hitters," Guggenbiller said. "That's where all those junk balls go. They are doing a nice job of accepting that role and saving those plays that aren't quite going to work the way we wanted them to."

The duo will be the team's outside hitters. Kennedy Muhlenkamp will shift out of being the backup setter into an opposite hitter this year.

Muhlenkamp wasn't much of an attacker for the Indians last season, but tallied 112 assists and 109 digs. Guggenbiller thinks the change could help make this a big year for Muhlenkamp.

"I think our silent killer this year is gonna be Kennedy Muhlenkamp," Guggenbiller said. "Yeah



Pictured is the 2023 Fort Recovery High School volleyball team. Front row from left are Managers Cierra Gaerke, Rihanna Wuebker, Jordy Ranly, Kaylor Wendel and Emma Patch. Middle row are Cali Wendel, Kayla Heitkamp, Megan Evers, Saige Leuthold, Mara Pearson, Kensey Gaerke and Nevaeh Lennartz. Back row are coach Travis Guggenbiller, Teigen Fortkamp, Karlie Niekamp, Paige Guggenbiller, Kennedy Muhlenkamp, assistant coach Tiffany McEldowney and assistant coach Rachel Kosterman. Not pictured is assistant coach Mandy Diller.

it's her third year, but it's her first year playing this role as an attacker. I think people are going to be surprised what my middles bring. Paige (Guggenbiller) and Saige (Leuthold) are connecting really well early on in the year and that's exciting to

see." Karlie Niekamp may also get some reps on the opposite side.

Faith Wendel, the 2022 setter, had 129 assists, second only behind Fortkamp (180). Guggenbiller is looking to Kayla Heitkamp, who worked

absence, with Niekamp getting some reps in the middle as well.

Cali Wendel took over the libero role part way through last season and will look to reprise it.

"Cali is one of the strongest liberos I've had. She does a fantastic job with coverage," Guggenbiller said. "It's an un-glorified position ... but a good (defensive specialist) can kill an offense by getting some big digs."

Bubp still played a lot of sets for the Indians, leading the team with 205 digs. Filling in for her as a defensive specialist in the starting rotation will be senior Kensey Gearke while Naveah Lennartz and Megan Evers will get opportunities on the back row as well.

A major advantage of Guggenbiller's team is having so many players who accept their roles and lead in their own unique ways, he said..

He has vocal leaders like Gaerke, Wendel and Niekamp directing traffic on the court. He has quiet lead-by-example players in Muhlenkamp and Heitkamp. Pearson

and Fortkamp fall somewhere in the middle of that scale, being respected as having the most varsity experience and stepping up however they are needed. Guggenbiller even pointed out how Lennartz and Evers excel at acting as player-coaches from the bench and pointing things out to those on the floor.

"I think it's going to depend on the day," Guggenbiller said. "I think all 11 of them are going to lead in their own way."

"I was trying to figure out who my captains are going to be and I think it's just gonna depend on the day. I just got a really good group of girls that just mesh well."

The mark of a great year for the Indians is being able to be proud of the product they put on the floor, knowing that they gave all their effort.

"When we leave that last day out of that locker room, we want to say that we gave it our all and we don't regret anything that we did," Guggenbiller said.

# GOOD LUCK!

Wishing all of our local athletes a successful year in the field, on the court and in the classroom. Your achievements make this community proud, and we salute your hard work and dedication to the sport and to the team. Keep up the great work!

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# State meet remains the ultimate goal

"State.

"The Indians have shown it's not just a destination. It's somewhere they can compete.

"After back-to-back trips to the OHSAA Division III Cross Country State Championships, Fort Recovery High School's girls cross country team has its sights set on another visit and a run at the top 10.

"And returning state qualifier Trevor Heitkamp hopes to join them there again as he leads the boys team."

That's what we wrote in the 2022 Fort Recovery fall sports preview story about the cross country teams. All that needs to be changed is replacing "back-to-back" with "three straight."

Despite losing three seniors, the Fort Recovery High School girls cross country team is looking to make it back to state for a fourth year in a row.

Megan Diller, Caitlin Weitzel and Alexis Wendel all graduated from the team that finished 13th at

the state championships in 2022. They were the fourth, fifth and sixth scorers, respectively, for the Indians, finishing in 140th, 144th and 147th. During the 2022 season, the trio would often finish anywhere between third and seventh on the roster. What did they lose with the departures?

"Four years of varsity experience," coach Christy Diller said. "It's a big hit. And you know, those girls were definitely the leaders on the team."

Despite the losses, Fort Recovery returns Natalie Brunswick, Ellie Will, Jenna Hart and Joelle Kaup, who all ran in the state championship race. Will and Hart both have three years of state experience while Kaup has two. Brunswick, Will and Hart were the top three finishers for the Indians at both the state and regional meets last season.

Despite Brunswick, Hart and Will all being seniors, the group doesn't have a sense of urgency, but rather will take each race as it comes without



Pictured is the 2023 Fort Recovery High School girls cross country team. Front row from left are Nicole Braun, Megan Weitzel, Makenna Huelskamp, Anna Roessner, and Jenna Hart. Back row are assistant coach Matt Roessner, Kyla Dues, Ellie Will, Joelle Kaup, Natalie Brunswick and coach Christy Diller. Not pictured is Madison Heitkamp.

worrying about expectations.

"They know what they're capable of," Diller said. "I think that they're a very practical bunch, they

know what they can do. And if they execute, they'll be right where they need to be."

To offset the three losses, Diller will look to a

few new faces and a few returners to step up. Makenna Huelskamp, the only freshman on the girls team, was the Midwest Athletic Conference

champion for the junior high team and has the opportunity to make an impact right away.

See **State** page 5  
Continued from page 4

## Good luck to INDIANS!



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Pictured is the 2023 Fort Recovery High School boys cross country team. Front row from left are Milo Fiely, Parker Brunswick, Russell Hart and Reese Diller. Back row are coach Christy Diller, Christian Marchal, Trevor Heitkamp, Evan Evers, Caden Marchal and assistant coach Matt Roessner. Not pictured is Aiden Heitkamp.

Cross country		
Date	Opponent	Time
<b>Tuesday, Aug. 22</b>	<b>Mercer County Meet</b>	<b>5 p.m.</b>
Saturday, Aug. 26	Bob Schul Invitational	8 a.m.
Saturday, Sept. 2	Treaty City Invite at Greenville City Park	9 a.m.
Saturday, Sept. 9	Tiffin Carnival at Tiffin Calvert	8 a.m.
Saturday, Sept. 16	Troy Twilight at Troy High School	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 23	Tour De Sewer at Versailles water treatment plant	9 a.m.
Saturday, Oct. 7	Lions Club Invite at Coldwater	9 a.m.
Saturday, Oct. 14	MAC Championships at Coldwater	9 a.m.
<b>Home meets are in bold</b>		



# State ...

Diller also expects that Anna Roessner can improve from last year now that she's fully healthy.

Nicole Braun and Maddie Heitkamp will also be in the mix for the Indians this year.

Trevor Heitkamp is looking to cap off his senior year with a third trip to state. He placed 76th as a sophomore before working up to 35th as a junior.

"He definitely comes in way more confident and I think that will benefit him quite a bit," Diller said. "He's definitely not afraid to lead a race now. Our thing we'll be working on this year is racing and racing tactics, because that's the thing that we need to work on."

He will lead the boys team that loses seniors Caleb Rammel and Ethan Evers, who were both consistent scorers last season.

Diller has her eye on No. 2 runner Parker Brunswick to have a breakout year.

"Generally, guys get a

little better each year," Diller said. "He had a great season last year. I mean, he really made big strides in his racing and just in his maturity as a competitor."

The Indians also return junior Evan Evers, who consistently scored, while adding freshmen Reece Diller, Milo Fiely and Russell Hart to add some needed depth.

The boys team will set its sights on improvement and making the regional tournament. The girls will be looking for a fourth state appearance and improving their placement.

Diller is looking to take the pressure off of her athletes and let them enjoy their sport.

"They have so much pressure on them in every aspect," Diller said. "This is supposed to be the best part of your day, this is supposed to be the fun part of your day. So we try very hard to mix that in. If we happen to end our season at state, that'd be pretty good too."

**GOOD LUCK**  
*to our teams!*



501 Greenville Rd, Fort Recovery, OH 45846

To the student athletes, coaches and fans who keep the spirit of friendly competition, teamwork and achievement alive, we wish you a successful and rewarding season!

*Hope this season is the best one yet!*

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Good Luck, Indians!

# Deep ...

Continued from page 2  
Despite the loss, Sanders isn't too worried about his team. It reloads every other golfer that competed in the MAC tournament and the sectional. They include Eli Lennartz, Matthew Romer, Keegan Muhlenkamp and Alex Dues.

On top of those four, the Indians return seniors Reece Evers, Sage Wendel and Nate Jutte, and sophomore Reece LeFevre, who all garnered varsity experience last season.

With eight players returning with a wealth of varsity experience and 11 others on the roster, Sanders has the challenge of who to carry on varsity for any given match.

"It's really tough because we have so many great golfers right now and so many of them have the ability to play on varsity," Sanders said. "It is very difficult for us to pick our varsity match. It's also hard for us to pick our junior varsity players, too, because we have 19 guys.

"I think that's the one thing I'm so happy about is

Boys golf		
Date	Opponent	Time
Tuesday, Aug. 8	Mercer County	8 a.m.
Thursday, Aug. 10	Mississinawa Valley	4:30 p.m.
<b>Friday, Aug. 11</b>	<b>Botkins</b>	<b>4 p.m.</b>
<b>Monday, Aug. 14</b>	<b>Parkway</b>	<b>4:30 p.m.</b>
<b>Thursday, Aug. 17</b>	<b>Versailles</b>	<b>4:30 p.m.</b>
Friday, Aug. 18	Tri-Village	9 p.m.
Monday, Aug. 21	St. John's	4:30 p.m.
<b>Thursday, Aug. 24</b>	<b>Coldwater</b>	<b>4:30 p.m.</b>
Monday, Aug. 28	Marion Local	4:30 p.m.
<b>Thursday, Aug. 31</b>	<b>St. Henry</b>	<b>4:30 p.m.</b>
<b>Thursday, Sept. 7</b>	<b>Minster</b>	<b>4:30 p.m.</b>
Monday, Sept. 11	New Knoxville	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 14	New Bremen	4:30 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 16	Nate Niekamp invite	9 a.m.
Monday, Sept. 18	Celina	4:30 p.m.
<b>Tuesday, Sept. 19</b>	<b>Lehman Catholic</b>	<b>4:30 p.m.</b>
Thursday, Sept. 21	Russia	4 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 23	MAC Championships	9 a.m.
<b>Home matches (at Portland Golf Club) in bold</b>		

that we do have 19. Guys, they're interested in playing golf, they're developing as players. They're developing their skill level. And that's the great thing for us to grow the program."

The Indians opened the season Aug. 8 carrying Dues, Jutte, Lennartz, LeFevre, Muhlenkamp and Romer. In their first dual meet on Aug. 10, Sanders kept the same six players for varsity, just switching

positions based on the results from the Mercer County Invitational (Muhlenkamp and LeFevre have finished as the top two in both events).

While Lennartz had one of the better seasons in 2022 among the returning players — he was named to the as an honorable mention for the All-MAC team — Muhlenkamp has had the best start to the year, shooting an 89 in the



Pictured is the 2023 Fort Recovery High School boys golf team. Front row from left are Drew Backs, Caleb Smith, Eli Albers, Garrett Diller, Reed Albers Rile Grieshop and Evan Keller. Middle row are Matthew Romer, Reece LeFevre, Colson Post, Nate Jutte and Sage Wendel. Back row are coach Dean Sanders, Eli Lennartz, Reece Evers, Carson Fullenkamp, Mason Diller, Lucas Acheson and Alex Dues.

team's first invitational and a 39 in the first dual meet.

Sanders expects this older group to excel when it comes to leadership and helping the new golfers get their feet under themselves, to help solidify the foundation of the program for future years as well.

"I have several seniors that I think are just going to be simply fantastic this year," Sanders said. "We're expecting a lot of leader-

ship out of them and a lot of great scoring. ...

"We're developing a great program, because we have a lot of great guys who want to play golf."

As everything comes together, the goal is to improve on an individual level, set the younger players up for success in the future and improve the team's standings in the sectional and the MAC. Last season, the Indians

finished sixth out of 10 in the MAC and eighth out of 12 in the sectional.

Sanders wants to crack the top third for both.

"I would say we definitely have the ability to do that," Sanders said. "If we play very well, we have a wonderful opportunity to do better than that. ...

"We're really expecting a great season this year."

# GOOD LUCK

*to all our teams!*

*We're proud of our student athletes for their sportsmanship, their commitment to the team and the hard work they put in every day.*

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**We'd like to wish each and every player success on the field and in the classroom, all season and all year!**

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Good luck to our local student athletes!

*We admire your hard work, dedication and enthusiasm, and we thank you for making this community proud.*

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Pictured is the 2023 Fort Recovery High School girls golf team. Front row from left are Emma Will, Evvian Briner, Rylee Bulp, Brynn Stammen, Marissa Schoen and Ella Westgerdes. Back row are Olivia Knapke, Mallory Evers, Eva Kahlig, Georgia Wenning, Ella Schoen and assistant coach Jeff Vaughn. Not pictured is coach Joe Bruns.

## Girls golf

Date	Opponent	Time
<b>Monday, Aug. 7</b>	<b>Tri-Village</b>	<b>9 a.m.</b>
Tuesday, Aug. 8	South Adams	4:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Aug. 9	Gary Broering invite	8:30 a.m.
Monday, Aug. 14	Parkway	2 p.m.
Tuesday, Aug. 15	Arcanum	9 p.m.
Thursday, Aug. 17	Versailles	4:30 p.m.
<b>Monday, Aug. 21</b>	<b>St. John's</b>	<b>4:30 a.m.</b>
Tuesday, Aug. 22	Crestview	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Aug. 24	Coldwater	4:30 p.m.
<b>Monday, Aug. 28</b>	<b>Marion Local</b>	<b>4:30 p.m.</b>
Tuesday, Aug. 29	Jay County	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Aug. 31	St. Henry	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 7	Minster	4 p.m.
<b>Monday, Sept. 11</b>	<b>New Knoxville</b>	<b>4:30 p.m.</b>
<b>Thursday, Sept. 14</b>	<b>New Bremen</b>	<b>4:30 p.m.</b>
Monday, Sept. 18	Fort Loramie	4 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 23	MAC Championships	9 a.m.
<b>Home matches (at Portland Golf Club) in bold</b>		

# Full roster returns to keep improving

The exact same roster. No departures. No newcomers.

That's what you'll see if you look up the Indians roster.

Fort Recovery High School's girls golf team returns all 11 girls from last year as it embarks on the 2023 season.

Last year was the first time many of them had ever played competitive golf or, for some like Emma Will and Ella Schoen, ever even touched a golf club. The work they put in during the offseason has already started to pay off.

"They don't have a lot of experience playing, but they've been getting better," assistant coach Jeff Vaughn said. "I was amazed at the beginning of this season, how all 11 of them actually got better."

Despite last year being Will's first season, she found herself as Fort Recovery's No. 1 golfer by the end. She shot a 103 to help lead the Indians to an eighth-place finish out of 12 teams at the sectional.

Vaughn attributed a lot of Will's success to her

mentality and drive to be better.

"She is very competitive," Vaughn said. "As I watched her play last year, I could tell she wanted to be good and she worked at it. I know she played a lot outside of practice once the season started last year.

"I just see that drive that she doesn't want to be last."

One name to keep an eye on during the season is Olivia Knapke. She has posted the team-low in two of the team's first three matches — she was not on varsity when the Indians played South Adams — and Vaughn thinks she can have a breakout season.

"I really have high hopes for Olivia Knapke. She has a really nice swing, and she's played well here early on," Vaughn said. "I think Olivia, and those younger girls, if they want to continue to work could have a really good year."

While the Indians lack an abundance of experience, their three seniors, Marissa Schoen, Brynn Stammen and Ella Westgerdes, all have been a

part of the program for two years. Vaughn hopes they can help provide some consistency in the lineup.

Stammen and Westgerdes have competed in all three of the Indians' first matches (along with Will) while Schoen only missed the dual match against the Starfires. Stammen had the team-low in that match.

Eva Kahlig and Ella Schoen have both had opportunities on varsity in the first three matches as well.

Kahlig improved in the Gary Broering Invite, shooting a 110, after making an adjustment to tee off with her irons instead of a driver.

Schoen, on the other hand, has shown to excel at hitting her driver thus far, showing potential to have a big year if she can work on her short game.

"Ella has a really huge upside and potential," Vaughn said. "She can boom it. (She's even nearly drove the green.) It's just working on her short game to fine tune that. You can hit a ball 300 yards but you still need to get up and down

on the green."

Vaughn doesn't want the team to get caught up in wins and losses. He would rather have his players focus on getting better each day and enjoying the game.

"I've heard (coach Joe Bruns) tell the girls, 'You're out here playing free golf,'" Vaughn said. "It's just the little things and getting better every day and having fun."

Vaughn will fill in as the head coach for the Indians this season during matches that Bruns cannot attend as he is undergoing treatment for cancer. So far, he made it to the match against Tri-Village for an hour and the Gary Broering Invite for about two.

"We've been great friends. I mean, we've been best friends since kindergarten," Vaughn

said. "I told him I'll do whatever I can to continue this to go on.

"It's great to have him out there. The girls enjoy to see him. (At the Gary Broering Invite), they did honor him beforehand. I think we had at least nine former players that came out. And so it was a really neat day, and we just continue to pray that he gets better."



**Ted Romer | Eric Brackman**

**Kelly Walter | Amanda Siegrist**

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Pictured is the 2023 Fort Recovery High School football team. After going 3-8 last season, the Indians will open their season at Wayne-Trace on Aug. 18 before their home opener in week two against Urbana.

# Shifting ...

Continued from page 2  
He was also the leading rusher for Fort Recovery — 428 yards and five touchdowns on 120 attempts.

Niekamp will look for Homan to be a dual threat out of the backfield by running with the ball after the snap when appropriate and fanning the ball out to a group of receivers.

“We know we can run from previous years,” Niekamp said. “I think with him being able to run and throw, and we feel like we have pretty good weapons out on the edges, I think that’s going to be our best way to move the ball and score.”

The primary target for Homan will be Reece Guggenbiller. The senior was second in receptions (34) and yards (579) while only scoring one touchdown. Being

Football		
Date	Opponent	Time
Friday, Aug. 18	Wayne-Trace	7 p.m.
<b>Friday, Aug. 25</b>	<b>Urbana</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>
Friday, Sept. 1	Coldwater	7 p.m.
<b>Friday, Sept. 8</b>	<b>Minster</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>
Saturday, Sept. 16	St. John’s	1:30 p.m.
<b>Friday, Sept. 22</b>	<b>New Bremen</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>
<b>Friday, Sept. 29</b>	<b>Marion Local</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>
Friday, Oct. 6	Parkway	7 p.m.
Friday, Oct. 13	Anna	7 p.m.
<b>Friday, Oct. 20</b>	<b>St. Henry</b>	<b>7 p.m.</b>
<b>Home meets are in bold</b>		

the leading returning receiver in the position, he will get more opportunities and has the potential to have a breakout season for the Indians.

Joining him out on the edges will be senior Austin Steinbrunner, junior Gavin Evers and sophomores Alex Gaerke and Caden Grisez.

Niekamp hopes that having a plethora of options will help the first-year varsity quarterback by forcing defenses to make decisions and allowing Homan to make a read for his best play.

“What we want to try to do is distribute the ball to a lot of guys and really force the defense to spread out with us,”

Niekamp said. “I hope it puts defenses in a bind where they have to decide that they’re going to cover those guys and they’re going to try to stop us from throwing the ball and and leave the box open for Troy to run, or they’re going to pack it in there so he can’t run and then you know we’ll we have guys open up.”

Joining Homan in the backfield are junior Ethan Hartnagel and sophomore Reece Wendel. Hartnagel was the No. 2 rusher for the Indians with 344 yards and one touchdown on 86 attempts in 2022.

Protecting them on the offensive line will be seniors Owen Knapke, Alex Evers, Connor Kaikala and Drew Langenkamp and junior Gabe Knapke. The line will have varying strengths to complement

each other, with Owen Knapke being a good leader for the group, Gabe Knapke and Evers having experience on the line last year, and Langenkamp taking the offseason seriously to prepare him for the jump to varsity.

Kaikala and Evers will also be on the defensive line, joined by tackle Owen Heitkamp and Steinbrunner at edge.

Homan and Grisez will be on the edge as cornerbacks while Wendel, Owen Knapke and Hartenagle play as linebackers.

Rounding out the defensive side of the ball, Guggenbiller and Gaerke will play back as the pair of safeties for the Indians.

One of the biggest challenges the Indians will face this season is a lack of depth, especially in the junior class, with

only four players to complement the nine seniors. Staying healthy will be a must for Fort Recovery this season.

“We need a couple more guys that we can get just in the rotation to give us some snaps and then that’s assuming we stay healthy,” Niekamp said. “We’re working really hard with a lot of the sophomores to see who can give us some snaps.”

Playing in a conference as difficult as the MAC, Niekamp wants to keep things simple for his players, giving them only one primary goal.

“Just improve every day,” Niekamp said. “We don’t do goals. Literally, it’s ‘improve every day.’ Go out tomorrow and have a better practice than we had today. That’s it. We will see how far we can get doing that.”