

The Commercial Review

Portland, Indiana 47371

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And then there were ...



The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

Caitlin Weigel (Sir Lawrence Wargrave), left, and Joscie LeFevre (Vera Claythorne) perform together during Wednesday evening's dress rehearsal for Fort Recovery High School's production of "And Then There Were None." Their production of Agatha Christie's murder mystery opens Friday.

FRHS production shifts away from comedy with classic Agatha Christie murder mystery

By RAY COONEY
The Commercial Review

A year ago, a dead man was on stage almost from the start.

This time around, the characters get picked off one by one. Or do they?

Fort Recovery High School will open its production of Agatha Christie's "And Then There Were None" on Friday night in the elementary/middle school auditoria.

The school has focused on musical comedies — 2020's musical farce "Lucky Stiff," for exam-

ple — since he's been with the district, said director Reid Knuth. So while Christie's classic murder mystery has always been one of his favorites, he chose it more in an effort to challenge the FRHS performers with something new.

"I love comedies," said Knuth, who co-directed last year's production along with Tracy Evers-Westgerdes. "But I wanted to try to expand their comfort zones as much as I could. And ... Agatha Christie writes it so well ..."

The production begins with

eight strangers arriving at an island, all on a different pretense. They are greeted by the butler and housekeeper and informed that their hosts will arrive the next day. The guests are all expecting a wonderful island getaway, but ...

"They discover that everything is not as nice and pretty as it seems," said Chase Kaiser, who plays adventurer Philip Lombard. "Stuff starts happening between them and you really start to see the creepiness ..."

All of the guests have a

secret. Eventually, the bodies begin to fall. Those who remain, and the audience, are left to guess at which of them the culprit might be.

Knuth is partial to the show's bookends — the beginning when everyone is interacting — and then ending after suspense has built toward the big reveal.

"They just sell it really well," he said of the final scene. "And it's clear that they're into it when we get to that point."

See **Mystery** page 2

Jay shifts to blue

Positivity rate in county fell to 4.7%

By RAY COONEY
The Commercial Review

For the first time in months, the state department of health considers Jay County to be at minimal risk for the spread of coronavirus.

The county was deemed "blue" (minimal risk) for the first time since mid-October in the metrics updated Wednesday by Indiana State Department of Health.

It had been rated yellow (moderate risk) for each of the last two weeks. It had been at high or severe risk from Oct. 28 through Dec. 29.

Jay County was one of just 11 that were blue statewide and the only one in the area. Adams, Wells, Blackford, Delaware and Randolph counties were all rated yellow. The closest county that was also rated blue was Madison.

The local rating came down because of a decline in the positivity rate. Jay County had a positivity rate of 4.73% this week, down significantly from last week's 9.77% and just below the 5% threshold in the state's metrics.

The county's cases of COVID-19 per 100,000 residents were also down to 63 as compared to 146 the previous week.

The state map continued to show improvement overall.

After 63 counties were rated either orange (high risk) or red (severe risk) last week, only eight were orange this week. None were red. The bulk of the map remains yellow, with 73 counties deemed moderate risk.

Jay County's drop to blue comes about a month after its first coronavirus vaccination clinic opened Jan. 12 at Jay County Health Department.

See **Blue** page 2

Dirt source selected

By RILEY EUBANKS
The Commercial Review

Portland Municipal Airport has a better idea of where it's going to get the dirt needed to extend its runway.

Now it just has to be approved by Jay County's zoning board.

Portland Board of Aviation at its meeting Wednesday voted to recommend that contractor HIS Constructors Inc. purchase dirt from a nearby property owned by Greg Whitenack.

The dirt would come from his property at 1338 W. 100 North, Portland, and would be cleared for the expansion of Whitenack's pond at that site. The pond is currently about 20,000 square feet and Whitenack is looking to expand it to be about 10 times that, said Jason Clearwaters of Butler, Fairman and Seufert, the airport's engineering firm.

Dirt made available from such an expansion is planned to be transported

Airport hopes to repurpose ground to be cleared for pond

about a mile east to the runway construction site at the airport. First, however, the pond expansion must be approved by the Jay County Board of Zoning Appeals.

Getting the dirt from nearby will be efficient but also would reduce the amount of time truckloads of dirt would be transported on county roads if soil came from somewhere further away, Clearwaters said.

A risk that had to be considered was that the pond expansion could possibly attract more wildlife that may make its way to the

airport, but that's an unlikely scenario due to the pond's distance from the airport, according to Clearwaters.

Any purchase would be covered by HIS Constructors since money for buying dirt was included in the contract awarded to the company in 2020 to complete phase one — grading and drainage — of the nearly \$3 million runway extension from 4,000 feet to 5,500 feet.

Construction for that project is expected to get underway in early May, Clearwaters said.

See **Airport** page 2



The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

Clearing again

After having cleared roads from the more than a foot of snow that fell Monday and Tuesday, plows were back out again this morning thanks to about an inch of accumulation overnight. An additional few inches was expected today. Jay Schools were closed for the fourth day in a row and Fort Recovery Local Schools were closed for the second time this week.

Deaths

Lauranna Teeter-Fox, 55, rural Decatur
Lavern Wolters, 89, Coldwater, Ohio
Details on page 2.

Weather

About an inch of snow fell overnight in Jay County. The high temperature was 19 degrees Wednesday, up from a low of minus-4 early in the day. Snow is possible until about 8 p.m. tonight with a low around 10. Expect partly sunny skies with a high of 17 Friday. See page 2 for an extended forecast.

In review

Both the Indiana House and Senate are working on bills that would curtail the governor's ability to issue executive orders. What are your thoughts on the legislation? Send letters to the editor to rcooney@thecr.com. There is a 700-word maximum.

Coming up

Friday — Results from tonight's JOHS swimming sectional at JCHS.

Tuesday — Coverage of Monday's Jay County Commissioners meeting.



Important work is far from over

Herald Bulletin (Anderson)

Three years ago Sunday, 17 people were stolen from their loved ones in an immeasurable tragedy.

A 19-year-old gunman entered Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and unleashed a hail of bullets on students and staff.

When the final toll was determined days later, it included freshman soccer player Alyssa Alhadeff, who dreamed of playing for the U.S. national team; Martin Duque Anguiano, a member of the U.S. Army Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps; geography teacher and cross country coach Scott

Hoosier Editorial

Beigel; Nicholas Dworet, who planned to join the University of Indianapolis swim team and dreamed of going to the 2020 Olympics; football coach Aaron Feis, who died running toward the gunfire; 14-year-old Jamie Guttenberg; athletic director and wrestling coach Chris Hixon; freshman Luke "Lukey Bear" Hoyer; freshman and dancer Cara Loughran;

Girl Scout, soccer player and Color Guard member Gina Montalto; 17-year-old Joaquin Oliver; Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps member Alaina Petty; senior and youngest of 10 grandchildren Meadow Pollack; Helena Ramsay, a lover of cats and music; trombone and baritone player Alex Schachter; straight-A student Carmen Schentrup; and Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps cadet Peter Wang, who was West Point-bound.

Seventeen families destroyed. Hundreds of others forever scarred.

It is a dark moment in American history, sadly one of too

many involving the deaths of our young people in educational settings.

And yet, those touched deepest by this devastating event are determined to turn their experience into victory for the light.

In the aftermath of the Parkland tragedy, students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas banded together to form Never Again MSD, an advocacy group that has organized protests, led marches, including the March for Our Lives, and started boycotts in an effort to keep other children from enduring what they experienced on Feb. 14, 2018. Using the hashtags #NeverAgain and #EnoughIsE-

nough, the organization seeks legislative action to prevent similar shootings with gun control measures.

Parents of the victims, including Jamie Guttenberg's father Fred, have also become advocates for change.

And their combined efforts have been fruitful. Since 2018, more than half of our states have taken steps to prevent future tragedies with gun control laws and mental health legislation.

Their work, and ours, isn't over. We'll never be able to bring those 17 beautiful lives back, but we can and must do everything we can to not add anymore to the list.

Key indicators are changing

By CATHY O'NEIL

Bloomberg Opinion

Millions of vaccinations, together with the end of the perilous holiday season, are having the effect I had hoped for: Finally, U.S. COVID-19 cases have entered what looks like a terminal decline.

Time to celebrate? Not quite. To get a sense of the suffering this disease has yet to visit upon humanity, we'll have to focus on other data.

Cases will no longer be a reliable leading indicator, for a number of encouraging reasons. For one, they'll be less likely to lead to deaths, as more elderly and otherwise vulnerable people get vaccinated. Also, testing is becoming increasingly convenient: When more people start doing at-home tests before traveling or going to work, more asymptomatic cases will be recorded.

What matters, then, is how the people affected are actually faring. Here are some indicators to watch:

- Hospitalizations and related illnesses. Death isn't the only bad outcome for people who get COVID-19. People with cases severe enough to require hospitalization also experience other long-term health problems. Some require oxygen for months. Some experience symptoms — such as brain fog and severe fatigue — that bear a troubling resemblance to a condition called POTS, or postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome. Worse, it seems that even mild cases can trigger POTS. I'm afraid these longer-term consequences will become the center of the story by this summer.

- Suicides and overdoses. Whether or not people get infected, the long period of social isolation is taking a toll on their mental health. The opioid epidemic appears to have gotten worse, and suicide hotlines have been busier. Comprehensive official data on causes of deaths during the pandemic haven't come out yet. They'll merit attention when they do.

- Variants. New variants of the virus can be problematic if they're more contagious, less contained by vaccines or (worst of all) both. Again, the health consequences matter more

Cathy O'Neil

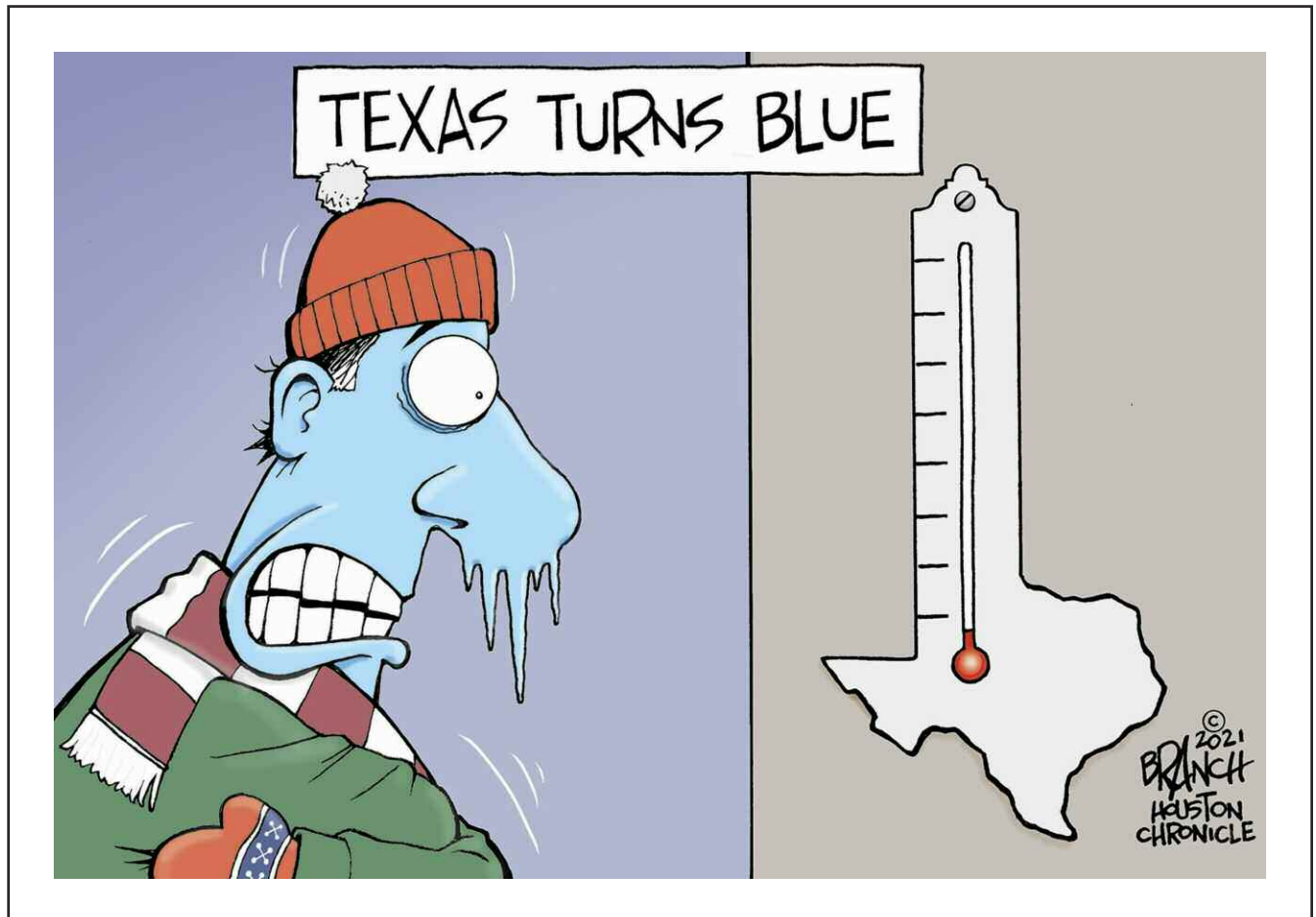


For now, most vaccines seems to offer pretty good protection against bad outcomes. But we'll have to keep tracking variants and the vaccines' effectiveness against them.

than the number of cases. That's why some of the research on the South African variant has been misleading: It looked primarily at mild cases in young people, which offers little insight into how the variant would affect most people (what's the mortality rate, the prevalence of long-term health issues?). For now, most vaccines seems to offer pretty good protection against bad outcomes. But we'll have to keep tracking variants and the vaccines' effectiveness against them.

In the meantime, aside from getting vaccinated, people will have to remain cautious.

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O'Neil is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist. She is a mathematician who has worked as a professor, hedge-fund analyst and data scientist. She founded ORCAA, an algorithmic auditing company.



Weather provides a reminder

By DAVID VON DREHLE

The Washington Post

If your news regarding the energy future begins and mostly ends with Elon Musk's Twitter, you might get the idea that we're near a green nirvana in which most homes and businesses generate and store their own power in sleek batteries hanging on the walls of the garage.

The batteries juice our smart appliances and charge our electric cars and trucks. If electrical grids have any role in this future, they'll function mainly to buy surplus power from our green homes and sell it to more backward consumers, thus greening their lives, too.

Like a lot of science fiction, the Musk marketing pitch has a toe in reality and might someday come true. It's fun to imagine. But the cold truth is something different, as Middle America is being reminded.

And I mean cold. Snow on the beach in Galveston, Texas; subzero wind-chill factors across Texas; sheets of ice in Oklahoma and Louisiana; days on end without a thermometer above zero across thousands of square miles in the Upper Midwest. The polar vortex put a dagger in us this year. Mother Nature delivered a pop quiz to the 14 states in the regional electrical alliance, and the power grid failed.

Like the bloom of youth, electricity is a bounty few ponder until it is gone. Let the grid run low on juice in a cold snap, though, and people pay attention. The thermometer read 5 below zero Tuesday morning in my neighborhood of greater Kansas City when our turn came to endure a rolling blackout. The temperature inside the house dropped 10 degrees in an hour.

We were lucky: Our power returned to the blackout rolled on. Across much of Texas, many residents haven't been so fortunate. More than 4 million people were

David Von Drehle



without power during much of Monday. Oncor, the utility serving North Texas, found its plan for rolling blackouts stalled across much of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. To conserve enough electricity to meet the extraordinary demand while protecting key facilities such as hospitals, the power company had to shut down neighborhoods and keep them dark and shivering.

While demand surged, supply fell. Solar farms lost juice as snow clouds filled the skies. Wind turbines froze in the bitter cold. Icing was evidently a problem at steam-driven plants, too, whether powered by coal or natural gas.

The good news: A warming trend is forecast as the jet stream resumes a more familiar course. Texans should be back in their shirt sleeves in a week, the snow and ice melted into memory. Late-February temperatures in the 30s and 40s will have Kansas Citians off the weather and back to the urgent matter of acquiring offensive linemen to protect Patrick Mahomes.

If past is prologue, elected officials and policymakers will quickly move on as well. Modernizing the electrical grid to make it more resilient, more efficient and more secure is the worst kind of challenge: complex, expensive and easy to ignore.

The complexity is largely a function of local ownership and local regulation of electrical utilities. They see overall demand for electricity leveling out, thanks to more-efficient homes and businesses,

which means a future without growth for their bottom lines. Because a grid is only as strong as its weakest member, major improvements would require every local utility to make major investments despite the no-growth outlook. Most would prefer to look away.

So here we are. Millions of chilly folks have received a stark reminder that our daily lives are governed by the flip of a few switches. When electricity flows, we're part of the 21st century; shut it off and we feel ourselves reeling backward toward the Dark Ages. Yet local companies lack motivation and capital to build a stronger grid on their own.

This is a job for the federal government. By law and by regulation, Congress and the Biden administration should set standards for efficiency and reliability that local utility companies must meet, and provide grants and other financing to pay for upgrades. This may not have the cool factor of a sleek electric car or a battery-powered house, but it is the urgent here-and-now.

This is more than a matter of comfort in a cold snap. Intelligence agencies warn that the United States' power grids are increasingly vulnerable to attacks from hackers sponsored by foreign adversaries. Hardening the nation's electrical supply against cyberwarfare is clearly a federal responsibility and a matter of national security. It only makes sense to engineer a more efficient, flexible and reliable electricity network at the same time.

Maybe there's a future far ahead in which every American life goes cordless. Meanwhile, few of us can thrive for even an hour unplugged. The truth just hit us like a cold slap in the face.

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Von Drehle writes a twice-weekly column for The Post.

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HUGH N. RONALD (1911-1983), Publisher Emeritus



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JACK RONALD
President

TONIA HARDY
Business manager

RAY COONEY
Editor and publisher

BRIAN DODD
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"Were it left for me to decide whether we should have government without newspapers or newspapers without government I should not hesitate to prefer the latter." — Thomas Jefferson

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Sports

2021 IHSAA wrestling state finals preview

Cody Rowles, Tony Wood and Cameron Clark have been working for this moment all season. Now, with the state final set for 11 a.m. Friday, the trio is preparing to get ...

... One more win

By CHRIS SCHANZ

The Commercial Review
Combined, they have 102 victories this year to just a dozen losses.

None of that matters now. What's important to the trio of Jay County High School freshmen — Cody Rowles, Tony Wood and Cameron Clark — is the next one.

They've already made program history by becoming freshmen state qualifiers. One more win puts them in Patriot lore.

Each will be trying to become a state medalist as they compete in the IHSAA Wrestling State Finals at 11 a.m. Friday at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis.

"It's going to take a really strong effort," said JCHS coach Eric Myers. "Talked about this going into semi-state (on Saturday), from here on out you're going to have to grind out every single match. We don't have a lot of matches you're going to get a pin.

"They're just going to have that mindset that they're able to and willing to grind out a 6-minute match and maybe more."

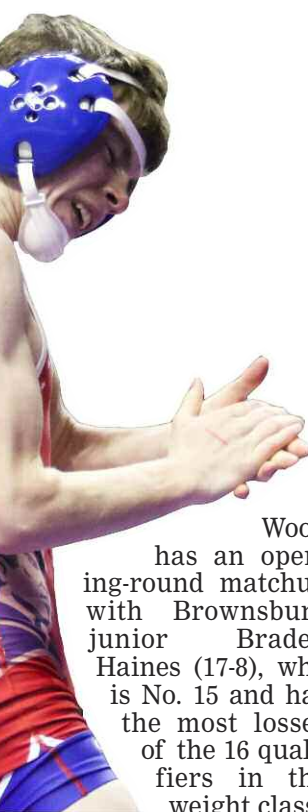
Because of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the opening round will be a split session. Weight classes of 106 pounds through 145 will be at 11 a.m., and 152 through 285 will wrestle at 7 p.m. to limit the number of people at Bankers Life Fieldhouse.

A win on Friday guarantees a top-eight finish and a state medal. The quarterfinal round will resume at 9:30 a.m. Saturday with semifinals to follow. Consolations will start at 5 p.m. and the championships at 7:30 p.m.

Wood and Rowles followed in their father's footsteps — Bruce Wood and Pat Rowles — by becoming sectional and regional champions. They were the first two father-son duos in program history to accomplish the feat.

Tony Wood, who is just one of two freshmen in the 120-pound state field, had a chance to one-up his father by becoming a semi-state champion, but he lost in the final to sixth-ranked Aidan Sprague of East Noble.

As a semi-state runner-up, Wood has the best draw of the three Patriots as he meets a wrestler who was third at his respective semi-state. So



Cody Rowles

Wood has an opening-round matchup with Brownsburg junior Braden Haines (17-8), who is No. 15 and has the most losses of the 16 qualifiers in the weight class.

"Tony has a little more favorable draw," Myers said. "Brownsburg is always a tough program. Those are two guys that are somewhat evenly matched. Some of the (Haines) strengths play into Tony's strengths. I'm hoping we can take advantage there."

The rest of Wood's bracket features the top four wrestlers in the state, including top-ranked Chesterton sophomore Sergio Lemley (33-

1), who was a 113-pound state champion in Illinois as a freshman. Rowles, who is 37-2 at 106 pounds, meets fifth-ranked Nathan Smith (27-5) of Southport in the second overall match Friday morning. Rowles is one of four freshmen at 106, and only three of the other 12 wrestlers are returning state qualifiers.

"He's wrestling with a lot of confidence right now and he feels good about that matchup," Myers said.

Rowles made easy work of his opponents on his way to the sectional and regional championships, but at semi-state he dropped a 9-5 decision to Vicente Eckman of Goshen. After that loss, though, Rowles rebounded by pinning No. 16 Keegan Malott of East Noble in 57 seconds for third place.

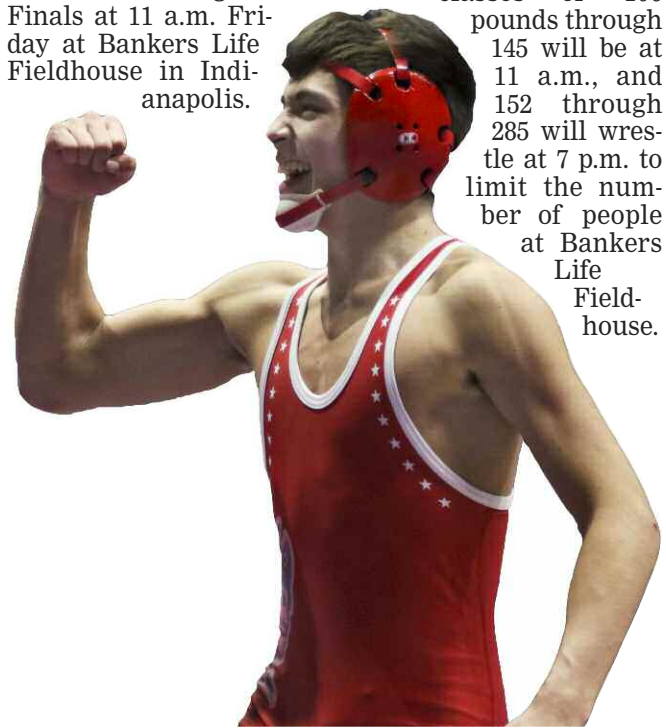
"Cody is not one to back down to anyone," Myers said. "He's going to give it everything he has."

Cameron Clark, the only freshman in the 16-wrestler field at 132 pounds, has the toughest first-round matchup. Clark, who is 28-6 and placed fourth at semi-state Saturday, meets fourth-ranked Browns-

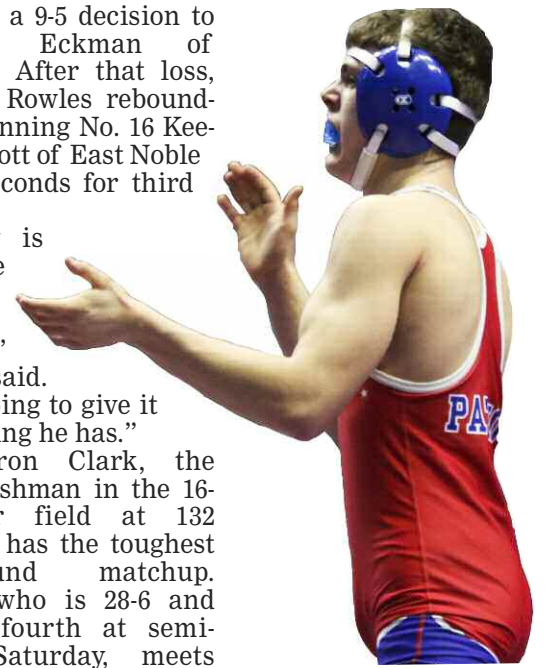
burg senior Kysen Montgomery (27-3) in the opening round.

"He's a good wrestler, obviously," Clark said of Montgomery, a three-time state medalist who was third at 126 pounds last year, fourth at 120 as a sophomore and fifth at 106 as a freshman. "I'm going to go out and wrestle my best and if I beat him that's awesome. If he beats me and I wrestled good, at least he beat me because he out-wrestled me and it's not because I wrestled bad.

"I'm really excited." See Win page 7 Continued from page 8



Tony Wood



Cameron Clark

Two Indians earn all-MAC

The Indians came up short in their bid for back-to-back conference championships.

The Midwest Athletic Conference still honored a handful of Indians on Wednesday.

All Vaughn and Kierra Wendel were both named all-MAC first team, the conference announced Wednesday.

Whitley Rammel was named second team and Paige Forkkamp earned honorable mention.

Vaughn led the Indians with 11.4 points per game, which was 10th overall in the conference. She also averaged 5.9 rebounds per game, which was tied for ninth in the league.

Wendel put in 10.2 points per game, was second on the team with 21 made 3-pointers and her 2.7 assists were also second on the team. Her 54 total helpers ranked 10th in the MAC.

Whitley Rammel averaged 8.4 points per game (she missed five contests), which was fourth on the team, and her 7.5 rebounds per game were a squad best.

Paige Forkkamp led the team with 30 made 3-pointers and was third with 9.3 points per game and 5.5 rebounds.

Fort Recovery, which begins tournament play at 7 p.m. tonight at home, finished the year 14-6 and 6-3 in MAC play. The Minster Wildcats, who won Division IV state championships in both 2018 and 2019 and were heading to the state tournament in 2020 before it was canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic, were a perfect 9-0 in the MAC to win the conference championship.

Minster's Ivy Wolf, who has signed to play with Miami (Ohio), was conference player of the year, and Wildcat coach Mike Wiss was coach of the year.

Pacers top T'Wolves

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Domantas Sabonis had 36 points, 17 rebounds and 10 rebounds, and Malcolm Brogdon added 32 points and nine rebounds as the Indiana Pacers beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 134-128 in overtime on Wednesday night.

Sabonis, Brogdon and the Pacers erased a 10-point deficit in the fourth quarter. Indiana trailed 98-88 and eventually took a five-point lead in the fourth.

Sabonis knocked down a pair of free throws with 11.1 seconds left in regulation to help send the game to overtime tied at 121.

"We got some key stops, and that helped our offense," said Sabonis, whose 36 points were a career high.

The Pacers played their second straight overtime game, coming off an OT loss to Chicago on Monday.

After giving up the first five points in overtime Monday, Indiana jumped out to a quick five-point lead Wednesday in OT.

Brogdon hit a 3 to start overtime, and Sabonis followed with a basket in the

paint for a 5-0 run. "That's exactly what the guys were talking about at the end of regulation, getting into that last five minutes and really digging in," Pacers coach Nate Bjorkgren said. "I thought we came out more assertive on offense to

start that (overtime)." Karl-Anthony Towns had 30 points and 10 rebounds for Minnesota.

Malik Beasley added 31 points in his first game of the season off the bench, and Ricky Rubio finished with a season-high 20 points and 13 assists.



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To check if you or someone you know qualifies, go to [OurShot.IN.gov](https://www.ourshot.in.gov). Seniors can also call 211 to learn more.



Remember, we need to keep wearing masks and following other protective measures to keep everyone safe.



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