

## The face behind the Hink mask: St. A alum Maria Jansen takes on NCAA

By Damien Dennis  
News Report Staff

The bright lights of Houston for the 2011 NCAA Men's Basketball Final Four didn't cause Hink to miss a beat. When the Butler University basketball team made it to the championship game, the mascot did its job of entertaining the fans and getting the crowd pumped.

The face behind the mascot's mask was that of Maria Jansen, an alum of St. Anthony High School and current student at Butler University. Jansen is a pharmacy major in her fifth year with an expected graduation date of May 2014.

"Freshman year, we get an email with different announcements on it," she said. "There was an announcement for mascot tryouts. I thought it sounded like a cool gig so I decided I'd tryout."

The tryouts had her get into costume and dance to music. They gave her different game scenarios, such as what she would do for a game winning shot or what to do if a kid pulls on her tail. They asked her if there was anything else she'd want to try in costume.

"I decided I wanted to try a somersault or a forward roll and a cartwheel," Jansen said. "The head is really big so doing a somersault is really hard. I failed miserably and I ended up just scooting my head across the floor."

She wasn't expecting to make it, since most of the time it was guys wearing the Hink mascot suit. The first event she did was her freshman year for the Special Olympics at Butler. Jansen has been inside the suit all five years at the university. Her first sporting event didn't happen until her sophomore year.

Jansen is one of four people who portray Hink this year for the Butler sports teams.

Her most memorable event as Hink was the 2011 Final Four. Because of the tournament finals, she was able to appear on The Today Show as Hink, as well as performing during the games and at pep rallies before the games.

"I had the best seat in the house, sitting right down on the floor," Jansen said.

Other memorable events for her included traveling to Hawaii last

Thanksgiving with the basketball team, where they played and lost to Illinois, and this last weekend when she traveled with the basketball team for the NCAA tournament games. Jansen was on the court for Butler as Hink during both the Bucknell and Marquette games, played at Kentucky's Rupp Arena in Lexington.

"My favorite part of being a mascot is interacting with the kids," Jansen said. "It just makes my day whenever I can make a little kid smile and even the older people at the game. I just love to interact with the fans."

Games are different for Jansen when she is performing as Hink at home as opposed to traveling with the team. At home, she is able to roam the arena and go wherever she wants. She tries to run out with the team and out on the court for the starting lineup.

During games, she splits her time by being near cheerleaders, out on the court during timeouts and mingling in the crowd.

"I spend a lot of time taking pictures and a lot of people ask if I smile in costume," Jansen said. "The answer is yes. I have full blown facial expressions in costume."



Maria Jansen has performed as Butler University mascot Hink since her freshman year of college. She has had the honor of traveling to the 2011 Final Four in Houston and appearing on The Today Show. She traveled this past weekend with the basketball team for the second and third round games of the 2013 NCAA Tournament against Bucknell and Marquette.

Submitted photos

## Bulldog tennis looking for titles St. Anthony to continue success this season

By Damien Dennis  
News Report Staff

Cold weather and snow storms can't stop the boys at St. Anthony as the tennis team looks to duplicate and improve the success the team had last year.

The 2012 season saw St. Anthony go 15-1. Over the last three years, they are 54-2 with the two losses being to Belleville East and Troy Triad.

"We have a real strong and solid team," Head Coach Joe Reynolds said. "We have won eight sectionals in the past 13 years and nine doubles sectionals in the last 10 years. We want to see the boys get further into the postseason this year."

The roster this season includes two seniors, Cole Buehnerkemper and Jack Fifer.

Buehnerkemper was 25-2 in 2012 regular season play. He won his third consecutive IHSA sectional title. He gave up just two games in four matches at the sectional championships. Buehnerkemper is considered one of the top players in south-central Illinois and has a handful of colleges expressing interest in him, including University of Illinois-Springfield.

"(Buehnerkemper) has been working really hard to get where he is at entering this season," Reynolds said. "He has been practicing in the offseason and gaining experience from finding new competition to keep him on his game. He will be a strong force for St. Anthony this season."

Fifer was 14-1 in 2012. Reynolds said that Fifer has an outstanding serve and forehand.

The rest of the team is rounded out by juniors Scott Rentfrow, Frank Jansen and Luke Jansen; sophomores Chad McWhorter, Alec Niebrugge and Tom Schottman; and freshmen Ian Harris, Chris Jones and Jay Niebrugge.



2013 St. Anthony Boys Varsity Tennis Team

News Report Photo/Damien Dennis



Kyle Brumleve has been playing tennis since his mother got him involved in third grade. He is in the number one singles spot for the Teutopolis varsity boys' tennis team this year.

Submitted photo

## Effingham Flame coach looks to create love for sport

By Damien Dennis  
News Report Staff

"I want the girls to develop a love for the sport of softball," said Nicki Davis, head coach of a local traveling softball team for 10 year old girls.

The program has been functioning as an organization for three years, supported by volunteers and officials in the city. The program features a team of 10 year olds and under with about 12 to 14 girls. The softball team plays a local schedule with traveling up to 100 miles away.

"At the age of 10, I don't focus on wins and losses," Davis said. "I actually don't allow the girls to say we lost a game. When the other team scores more runs than us I tell them it was a lesson learned, and then we focus on the things they learned during that game that we will need to work on at practice."

This year's team features Olivia Martin, Mackenzie Koester, Camryn Duncan, Lizzy Meinhart, Makayla Allie, Rylee Rothrock, Raegan Crippen, Sawyer Althoff, Taylor Armstrong, Jaidi Davis, Bella Kronewitter, Jaelyn Boone, and Emma Huss. All of these girls will see playing time.

"Our bats are amazing. I have no weak spots in my batting order," Davis said. "I have some kids with amazing potential and I cannot wait to watch them grow and develop into high school players so they can bring home a state championship to Effingham."

Davis graduated from Effingham in 1995. She has played softball for numerous teams and played as a pitcher. She hasn't played for a team in a couple years now.

"We play a lot of double headers lasting 75 minutes per game," Davis said. "This year we have a very intense schedule and thanks to fundraisers and hard work on getting sponsors, we are able to play a lot of games."

Every year, the team ends their season at Mattoon for Bagelfest.

In April, the team will host a 10 and under tournament that will

## Effingham baseball topples Atlamont, 12-1

Devin Mayfield picked up the win Friday as the Effingham Hearts baseball team left Atlamont with a 12-1 victory.

Mayfield pitched three innings, allowing just two hits and recording three strikeouts. He also scored one run.

The Hearts had nine different players score runs. Preston Walker, Braydon Bone and Dirk Levitt each scored two runs. Walker had three RBIs, while Bone had two and Levitt one.

The other runs came from Alex Carie, Mayfield, Khye Heuerman, Carter Hayes, Ken-

non Mahaffey and Swayde Sanders. The Hearts had a total of 10 RBIs.

Sanders also pitched three innings, allowing just one run and two hits. He had one strikeout and allowed one error.

Altamont's Ruckman took the loss, allowing seven hits and seven runs in two innings. He had just one strikeout and recorded five errors.

Effingham will travel to Teutopolis Monday, with the first pitch at 4 p.m.

## St. Anthony cancels games due to winter storm

St. Anthony announced Tuesday morning that a number of sporting events would be cancelled for March 26 and 27 due to the weekend's winter storm.

Tuesday, St. Anthony junior high track with Oblong would be cancelled along with boys and girls high school track against Teutopolis. Boys' varsity tennis against Robinson and varsity baseball against Flora were both cancelled.

No reschedule dates for these events were announced, but officials said the schools are working on finding a date to make up the missed games.

Wednesday's high school girls' softball game against South Central was also cancelled and has been rescheduled for 4:30 p.m. on April 5.

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