

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.

Last year, Frank Jansen was 12-1 in singles wins and 19-6 in doubles. He finished third in the IHSA State Tournament in doubles for 2012 and fourth in 2011 at sectionals.

"This year's team is full of young players who bring in outside tennis experience and drive as well as veteran players for St. Anthony who have tasted success," Reynolds said.

This season marks Reynolds 15th year coaching tennis at St. Anthony. Reynolds hopes to build upon past success and said that his goal for the team this year is to do as well as they can at the 2013 IHSA Sectional Tournament.

Their season began this past weekend with a 3-0 victory at the Alton Marquette Catholic Schools Tennis Tournament. St. Anthony defeated Belleville Althoff 5-0 and went 4-1 against both Quincy Notre Dame and Alton Marquette.

"It was a long day, especially for our first matches of the season," Reynolds said. "It was a pleasant surprise, especially since the weather had limited practice time. It was good to start our season against three schools that have quality tennis programs."

Buehnerkemper won 6-2 and 6-3 over Austin Mueller of Belleville, 6-0 and 6-0 over Notre Dame's Jack Nudo and 6-0 and 6-1 over Alton's Brian Gebben.

The only two match losses came in doubles for St. Anthony. Schottman and Alec Niebrugge were defeated 6-1 and 6-0 by Notre Dame's Vogel and Stegman. Schottman lost again, this time paired with Luke Jansen, against Alton's Fuerst and Hammond, 6-2 and 6-2.

Because of the weather, Tuesday's matches against Robinson were postponed until courts are dry.



2013 St. Anthony Boys Varsity Tennis Team

News Report Photo/Damien Dennis



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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 olds 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 Altamont, 12-1

Devin Mayfield picked up the win Friday as the Effingham Hearts baseball team left Altamont 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 week-end'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.

Brumleve to elevate Teutopolis tennis

By Damien Dennis
News Report Staff

Tennis has run through the blood of Kyle Brumleve since a young age.

In his junior year at Teutopolis High School, he holds the honor of being the boys tennis team's number one singles player entering the spring season.

"I started in about third or fourth grade and it's just always been my main sport," Brumleve said. "I like the singles more than doubles because I can rely more on myself. I like to do it myself."

Since fifth grade, Brumleve has played on tennis teams, first junior team tennis and then high school tennis his freshman year. When the tennis season is not in full swing, he works on his skill any way he can. He has participated in summer tournaments to build his skill and this winter, he began attending weekly group sessions at the University of Illinois.

Last summer, Brumleve attended a week-

end retreat at the university where he was drilled and gained experience from the tennis team and staff at the Big Ten school.

This season, head coach Kaye Kimpling has named Brumleve her number one singles competitor for the Teutopolis team.

"He has been out on the courts constantly working on his strokes and would play a pickup game whenever he had the opportunity," Kimpling said. "If he couldn't find an opponent he would work on his serve or hit against the backboard."

Brumleve has played in tournaments outside of high school that have taken him all over Illinois and even to Indianapolis. The competition he has faced has been challenging, but Brumleve has placed in many, including taking the top spot, while also getting knocked out early in others.

Last year, Brumleve had a 9-1 singles record and went 4-0 in doubles. Kimpling hopes that he will gain more experience because he is in the number one slot.

"I think this year at the top spot will make a tremendous difference to Kyle's game as he gets experience and learns to play different kinds of players," Kimpling said. "I think his confidence will grow tremendously also, as he sees just what he is capable of."

The tennis team has only had one tournament so far this season, where they went 1-3 overall in singles. Brumleve was 1-1 in both singles and doubles competition at that event. Kimpling said that because of the competition at the Triad Invitational, Brumleve's record was actually good.

With this season and his senior year left to make a mark, Brumleve hopes to finish on top and set an example for the rest of the underclassmen on the team. While he doesn't know if he'll get to play tennis at the college level, he does plan to attend and hopes to play.

"If I got the opportunity to play at the college level, I would do it in a heartbeat."



Effingham Flame 10 and under girls 2013 softball team. Front Row: (left to right) Lizzy Meinhart, Emma Huss, Mackenzie Koeiter, Raegan Crippen, Jaidi Davis, Bella Kronewitter and Sawyer Althoff. Back Row: (left to right) Jaelyn Boone, Olivia Martin, Taylor Armstrong, Makayla Allie, Camryn Duncan and Rylee Rothrock. Coaching staff: (left to right) Jeremy Boone (assistant), Nicki Davis (head coach) and John Kronewitter (assistant). Submitted photo

bring between 10 and 12 teams to Effingham.

"We have the tourney at Evergreen so there are always two games going on at the same time," Davis said. "It is early in the season for everyone so the girls are still pretty inexperienced at this point and the tourney gives them a lot of exposure in a few days. Most teams will play four to five games each."

Over 25 games will be played through the course of the April tournament.

The season began for Davis and her team on March 23. Effingham defeated the Charleston Chill 8-4. Pitcher Taylor Armstrong got the win, throwing 100 pitches and 52 strikes.

Jaidi Davis had one RBI while Makayla Allie and Raegan Crippen each had two RBIs.

Effingham shines at indoor track championships

Kodai Nishida placed fourth in the long jump and set a new school record for Effingham Saturday as the track team participated in the Track and Field Indoor Championships at Shirk Center on the campus of Illinois Wesleyan University. Nishida jumped 21'9.75".

Nishida was one of two athletes to qualify for the championships. The other was Taylor Fatheree, who placed ninth in the 800 meter run.

The outdoor track season is scheduled to start this week for the Effingham boys.

Olney softball defeats St. Anthony, 5-0

Elizabeth Walker allowed just two hits, plus drove in two runs, leading the Olney Lady Tigers to a 5-0 victory over St. Anthony in softball action last week.

Walker allowed singles to Morgan Gardewine and Kristen Schuette, while striking out 11 in seven innings of work.

Olney tallied all five of its runs in the first inning. Kenzie Zwilling drove in a run and another was scored on an error.

Meghan Woltman was the losing pitcher for the Lady Bulldogs. She went six innings, allowing all five runs and eight hits. She struck out nine.

St. Anthony was scheduled to play Mulberry Grove on Saturday and Cumberland on Monday, but both games were cancelled due to weather. The Lady Bulldogs are scheduled to play in the Vandalia Round Robin on Saturday and at home next week. They will face Beecher City on Monday, St. Teresa on Tuesday and Charleston Wednesday.

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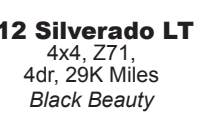
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