

HUTCH GOES HOLLYWOOD

There's lots of glitz and glamour at the annual skating show / B1

HOOPS FOR A GOOD CAUSE

The annual Tim Orth basketball jamboree returns this year / A3

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 2022

Hogan is butterfly champion

Swimmer wins team's first state title in nine years as the Tigersharks took fifth place

BY STEPHEN WIBLEMO
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There were many fast swimmers Saturday at the University of Minnesota Aquatic Center. When it came to the 100-yard butterfly, however, Hutchinson sophomore Conner Hogan stood above the rest.

Hogan won his first Class A state title Saturday. He's the Hutchinson boys swimming and diving team's first state champion in nine years since Cole Bateman won a pair of titles in 2013.

"It feels amazing, it really does," Hogan said. "I think it felt the best as soon as I finished, and just seeing that '1' next to my name. That was great."

It was a neck-and-neck race as Hogan ended up with a school-record time of 50.12 to beat out Alexandria Area's Nicolas Welle, who finished in 50.35.

"I just remember my legs hurting so bad at the end, and I had to push through it because I wanted to win that," Hogan recalled about the race. "I did not want to be barely out-touched like I was last year."

Hogan was one of nine Tigersharks who made the trip to state this year with 13 entries. Together, the team racked up six medals and nine top-16 finishes, earning enough points to secure a fifth-place overall finish.

Although the team had hoped to break into the top three and earn a trophy, they were still

pleased with their strong performance.

"We had a little bit of a higher goal going into the season, but we swam as best as we could, so everyone was happy with how it played out," senior Noah Tague said.

The finals Saturday got off to an exciting start for Hutchinson in the 200-yard medley relay. After finishing seventh in the prelims, the team of Hogan, Tague, Anthony Witte and Jackson Kramer cut 1.5 seconds off their final time and moved up to fourth place.

"The medley relay has sort of been our team's best event over the past couple years," Tague said about the strong finish. "We always end up coming through on that relay, and I think it's always been a key to our meets. If we can start it out fast, it usually gets us a lot of momentum to keep going."

The Tigersharks did just that, continuing the momentum into the rest of the finals event.

Tague wrapped up his high school career with third-place finishes in the 200-yard individual medley and 100-yard breaststroke. Although he took third in the 200 IM last year, he swam two seconds faster on Saturday and was pleased with that. He was also happy to move up from fifth last year to third place in the breaststroke, and break his own school record with a time of 57.88.

"This year, getting third place and getting the team record was all I could ask for."

Hogan wasn't done yet, either. After winning his first state title, he took second place in the 100-yard backstroke for a second straight year.

Hogan and Tague also teamed up one last time with Riley Yerks and Carter Johnson to take fifth place in the 400-yard freestyle relay to earn the team's final medal.

Swimming to A4 ➤



STAFF PHOTO BY STEPHEN WIBLEMO

Conner Hogan shows off the first-place medal he won Saturday at the Class A State Boys Swimming and Diving Tournament. Hogan took first in the 100-yard butterfly to win the team's first state title since 2013. He also took second place in the 100-yard backstroke.

Two wrestlers win state medals

A pair of local wrestlers earned medals at the individual state tournament

BY STEPHEN WIBLEMO
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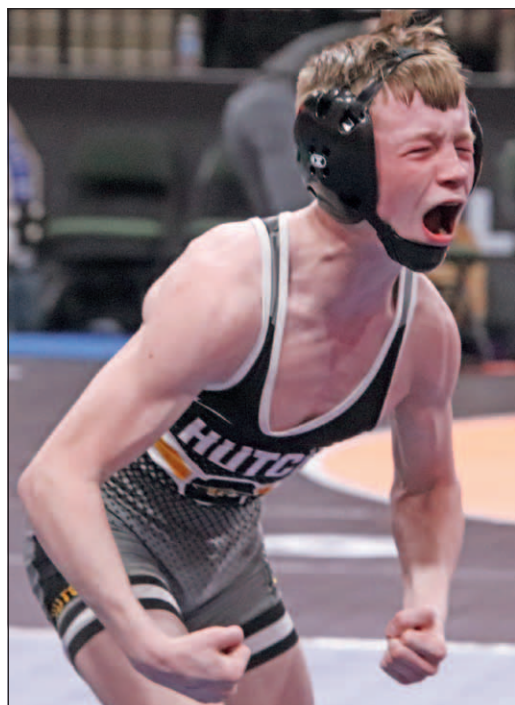
The individual state wrestling tournament is an unforgiving thing. With hundreds of fans in the seats watching the best competition in Minnesota, dreams can end in an instant.

Five Hutchinson/Buffalo Lake-Hector-Stewart wrestlers were at the Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul this past weekend, and while some learned this lesson the hard way, others battled their way through the ranks to earn a spot on the final podium. Regardless of the outcome, head coach Todd Card said he was proud of how all five boys wrestled.

The team's top wrestler was 195-pound junior Hayden VanderVoort, who was one of only a handful of wrestlers in the state to end the season with a win — taking third place overall. Although he fell short of his ultimate goal of making it to the finals, he was proud to beat his fifth-place finish last year and go 4-1 at state.

"It feels really good. When I started out the season, my goal was to get top three, and then I guess I moved it up a little once the (state) seedings came out," he said. "I wrestled pretty good in my semifinals match but lost by one."

VanderVoort opened the tournament with



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jason Schwanz, the Tigers' 106-pound wrestler, let out a roar after defeating Foley's Cyler Ruhoff 3-2 in his state quarterfinal match Friday at the Xcel Energy Center. Schwanz went on to finish fourth at state and was one of two Tigers to earn a medal.

a pair of quick pins to make it to the semifinals Saturday morning. That's when he faced Soren Herzog of Simley and lost 7-6 in a back-and-forth match that came down to the final

Wrestling to A4 ➤

State COVID rates lowest since August

New cases, hospitalizations and deaths are all declining

BY CHRISTOPHER MAGAN
St. Paul Pioneer Press

Minnesota's rate of positive coronavirus tests has officially fallen below the 5% caution threshold for the first time since August as the nearly two-year-old coronavirus pandemic enters a new phase.

The state's belated measure of test positivity, which is delayed by about a week to allow

for data corrections, stood at 4.9% on March 4. The actual rate is even lower with 833 new infections from about 25,700 tests reported March 4, putting the current seven-day rolling average at about 3.6%.

The rate of hospitalizations continues to fall with 472 people needing care, including 60 in critical condition. A month ago nearly three times as many people were hospitalized with COVID-19.

And the rate of COVID-19 deaths also appears to finally be declining with 11 fatalities reported Friday. The average rate of death

COVID to A2 ➤

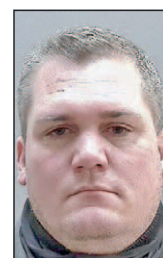
Hutchinson man accused of falsifying policing hours

Jury trial is this week in Renville County District Court

BY JEREMY JONES
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A Hutchinson man accused of falsifying work hours during his time as the commander of the Brown-Lyon-Redwood-Renville Drug Task Force is on trial this week.

Jeffrey Michael Morris, 41, pleaded not guilty in 2020 to two felony counts of theft by swindle and gross misdemeanor public officer misconduct.



Jeffrey Morris

The felony charges say Morris reported false hours while employed as a Renville County sheriff's deputy and acting as the task force commander.

Morris' jury trial is scheduled through March 11 in Renville County District Court.

One felony charge alleges he received \$7,054 in public funds Aug. 26, 2019, through Feb. 10, 2020, for working a reported 214 hours when he only worked 47. The second charge alleges he received \$1,385 from Feb. 10, 2020, to March 2, 2020, for working 42 hours when he only

Morris to A2 ➤



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