

# Spring means crappie to most Kansas fishermen

By JIM MERRIOTT

One of my favorite times to fish is the ice-out, about the time I begin to get spring fever.

Pheasant and duck seasons are over and I can only polish my shotgun so many times anyway.

Since there hasn't been much ice this season crappie feeding patterns depend on water temperature this spring instead of waiting for the spring thaw. Now is the time to hunt down those honey holes where the little critters hang.

In order to understand how to catch those wily little fish, it is necessary to go back to Biology 101. Each new season it's time to start over. Remember, during the winter months crappie are mostly sucking in microorganisms, tiny bug larvae as their metabolism has slowed down. So start small; don't expect to drop in bait that's too big.

Being a successful crappie fisherman means chasing those little rascals around in all types of weather. I am by no means a "fair weather" fisherman. I enjoy keeping track of the seasonal movement patterns of the fish I'm after.

First, since there isn't much ice this season and the majority of the reservoirs are low, it is a little easier to investigate their general movements.

Most of the time, crappie are in deep water near the base of sharp-breaking areas, or in the deep water around dead trees. Get a good hydro survey (underwater lake map); this will help you locate these areas on the lake you are fishing, but remember to look for areas that are close to shallow sunny areas. This is where crappie come in the early morning to feast on the bug hatch as the water begins to warm.

Choosing the right location will eliminate a lot of wasted casting. Look on your map for those underwater highways where the crappie can escape back to safer deep water if predators attack them.

For example, you should fish at the tail end of ice fishing season, and work the base, sides, and top of sharp drop-offs, deep holes off docks, the mouths of coves, deep holes off of entrances and exits of channels, dredged channels leading to underwater islands, deeper break-



## The Jayhawker

By Jim Merriott

lines in channels between underwater islands, and the deepest water that runs near the current flow of the river.

In early spring, concentrate your efforts in 3-10 feet of water along either rocky shorelines or close to submerged brush. Remember, submerged brush will eat a lot of lures, so come prepared. I like to take at least three rods already rigged up. That way if I lose a lure, I just switch to the next rod.

Remember, Kansas fishermen fish with rods; Missouri fishermen fish with poles (*get it? it's a joke, Ha! Ha!*).

A good example is where a spring outlet enters a lake or where a channel has been cut that has exposed several springs. If the springs or the current has good water flow, that creates a current which attracts fish. You are searching for the deeper water affected by this current flow.

A good tip to help you locate areas affected by water flow is take an ice fishing rod spooled with 2-pound test line and tie on a very light No. 10 or No. 12 ice spoon.

Lower the spoon down in the water with no weight attached to the monofilament line. This extremely light rig will easily show you the current flow as the line bends in the direction the current takes. This flow can be very light and still attract fish.

Once you learn these areas, it will become fairly predictable each ice-out to find where the crappie school.

A few other things to remember: Crappie will spook easily and will find the quickest escape route to deep water. When you are looking at your map, look at the area you are fishing and check the quickest escape route to safety. Fish close to it, because that is where the break is.

Crappie are cold-blooded. When the mild weather warms up shal-

lower water, they will migrate to that area.

Use tiny spoons to start; for example, small ice fishing lures such as "Dot lures," "Rembrandt's," "Purists," "Orvis weighted Nymphs," "Lil Chief," "K&E," very small "American Luresmith" jigs and if you go plastic, use either a 1/16th or 1/8-ounce Mr. Twister. Crappie are sometimes finicky, so bring different colors.

I have had my best luck with white or yellow, but a lot depends on the water coloration. (We will talk about water clarity in another column). If you fish the spoons, they should be no bigger than a No. 8 down to a No. 14, but remember bait fishing with minnows in the colder, early spring water will out fish lures.

As the day warms up, and the sun penetrates, the water will warm up and the action will pick up with plastic. Take along some No. 4 hooks for the minnows. If you fish the minnows, place the bobber three feet above the hook, then add a small split shot about six inches above the live minnow.

Either hook the minnow just behind the dorsal fin (in the back just below the spine or in the meat in of the tail) for best action.

Remember when you set the hook that crappie have soft mouths. If you yank too hard, you will either miss the fish or rip out its mouth, so work your technique. Use good-quality ultra-light equipment, and good-quality two-pound monofilament line. If you can, tip the jig with a perch eye, a larvae bait such as waxworms, mousies, weedworms, or spikes (maggots). If necessary, add micro shot. Suspend the baits between 1 and 3 inches beneath a small pencil bobber or a very small round bobber.

Think small. Slow and shallow are guidelines for these early fish.

# Golfers ready to hit links

By JIM MERRIOTT

Dick Ahlberg, in his 27th year as golf coach at Decatur Community High, will have seven lettermen returning to swing the sticks this spring.

Senior Jonathon Richards, a two-time letter winner, All-Northwest Kansas League player and three-time state qualifier, heads the list of veterans returning for the Red Devils. Richards has improved each season, finishing 50th at state as a freshman, 25th as a sophomore and 14th as a junior. Coach Ahlberg said he feels Richards has a chance to crack

the top 10 with a good year.

The junior class will be headed by Breck Simonsson, a state qualifier, Jobey Black, Corey Cook, Andy Gilliam and Nolan May

No sophomores went out for the team.

The freshman list is comprised of Nathan Baker, Haley Barrett, Chris Larson, Andrew Richards, Nathan Simonsson, Jordan Tally and Jay Wessel.

"We will have a good team this season," Ahlberg said.

The team will have a scrimmage against the high school staff prior to

the Oberlin Invitational, he said.

Ahlberg's Army begins competition at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, April 8, hosting the Oberlin Invitational, which includes all Northwest Kansas League teams along with Phillipsburg and Grinnell, at the Oberlin Country Club.

Spectators are welcome, but must follow gallery guidelines by remaining 20 to 50 yards away from any golfer.

Tuesday, April 11, Oberlin travels to Goodland to take on the Cowboys at Sugar Hills Golf Club starting at 2 p.m.

# Dozen kid wrestlers place

Five Oberlin wrestlers brought home first-place trophies from the subdistrict youth wrestling tournament March 11 in Phillipsburg.

Twelve of 14 Oberlin wrestlers qualified for the district tournament in Goodland on Saturday. Placing first were Oberlin's Kelly Brown, Dayton Dreher, Kade Brown, Gage Reichert and Everett Urban.

District results are not yet available.

"Our kids did an outstanding job," said coach Kevin Brown. "We qualified 12 out of 14 wrestlers that we took to Phillipsburg."

"Tabor Erickson did an outstanding job, winning four straight matches out the back door to place third."

Phillipsburg subdistrict results:

- First Place:**
  - Kelly Brown, 8 and under, 80 pounds.
  - Dayton Dreher, 10 and under, 73 pounds.
  - Kade Brown, 10 and under 85 pounds.
  - Gage Reichert, 16 and under, 130 pounds.
  - Everett Urban, 16 and under, 140 pounds.

**Second Place:**

- Wesley Geihlsler, 8 and under, 55 pounds.
- Jordan Baker, 10 and under, 55 pounds.
- Dalton Paul, 12 and under, 115 pounds.

**Third Place:**

- Tabor Erickson, 8 and under, 61 pounds.

**Colt Diederich, 16 and under, 215 pounds.**

**Fourth Place:**

- Gatlin Reichert, 14 and under, 105 pounds.

**Fifth Place:**

- Kolton Paul, 10 and under, 76 pounds.
- Regent Erickson, 10 and under, 90 pounds.
- Channing Farr, 10 and under, 150 pounds.



# Students swim in McCook

SEVERAL OBERLIN STUDENTS took part in the winter swim program at the McCook YMCA as part of the Devil Rays Swim Team. Kaylee May (above) showed off her freestyle form and Keagen Blau (right) did the backstroke during a 25-yard race in competition this season.



# Red Devil makes all league

By JIM MERRIOTT

Oberlin's Andy Inman heads the Northwest Kansas League All-League Boys Basketball team for 2005-06.

Inman was Decatur Community High's leading scorer, averaging 12.8 points per game and was the Red Devils' top rebounder with 6.5 per game.

The 6-foot, 2-inch senior finished with 2.1 assists per game, one steal, a 46.6 percent shooting average from the field, a 34.3 percent three-point average and was the top free-throw shooter for the Red Devils with a 77.1 percent average.



Andy Inman

Other leagu:

- Tyler Reed, 5 foot, 9 inches, senior, Quinter.
- Jase Hart, 6 foot, 2 inches, senior, Goodland.
- Mykel Rodriguez, 5 foot, 10 inches, senior, Oakley.
- Joel McAtee, 6 foot, 2 inches, junior, St. Francis.
- Jake Moss, 6 foot, 3 inches, junior, Hoxie.
- Trent Blackwill, 5 foot, 8 inches, senior, Quinter.
- Paul Kuhlman, 6 foot, 4 inches, junior, Oakley.
- Trey Barnett, 6 foot, 2 inches, junior, Colby.
- Jeff Riener, 6 foot, senior, Atwood.

Honorable mention:

- Nick Angelos, 6 foot, 4 inches, junior, Goodland.
- Craig Finger, 6 foot, 5 inches, senior, Quinter.
- Toliver Bird, 5 foot, 11 inches, senior, Hoxie.
- Rodney Rippe, 5 foot, 9 inches, senior, Atwood.
- Robert Cooksey, 6 foot, 1 inch, senior, Oakley.
- Levi Weeden, 6 foot, 2 inches, junior, St. Francis.
- Trevor Siebert, 5 foot, 8 inches, junior, Colby.
- Mikey Doll, 5 foot, 10 inches, junior, Goodland.
- Wyatt Dautel, 5 foot, 10 inches, senior, Goodland.
- Brandon Ahrens, 6 foot, 1 inch, senior, Oakley.

# Oberlin girls make top team

By JIM MERRIOTT

Decatur Community High juniors Lauren Fortin and Tricia Dorshorst have been voted to the Northwest Kansas League girls basketball All-Conference team.

Fortin, 5 foot, 7 inches, was voted to the first team and Dorshorst received honorable mention.

Fortin led the Lady Red Devils in scoring for the 2005-06 season with a 13.8-point-per-game average and 4.1 rebounds per game.

Dorshorst, 5 foot, 9 inches, ended the season with 10.9 points per game average and 8.1 rebounds for the 8-13 Lady Devils.

Other all-league selections include:

- Lissa Mazanec, 5 foot, 11 inches, sophomore, Colby.
- Danielle Pratt, 5 foot, 8 inches,



L. Fortin



T. Dorshorst

senior, Hoxie.

- Justeen Koehler, 5 foot, 10 inches, senior, Goodland.
- Joelyn Anderson, 5 foot, 11 inches junior, Quinter.
- Chelsey Kramer, 5 foot, 11 inches, senior, Atwood.
- Whitney Archer, 5 foot, 10 inches, junior Goodland.
- Callie Baalman, 5 foot, 9 inches,

junior, Oakley.

- Tiffany Goetz, 5 foot, 7 inches, junior Hoxie.
  - Jessica Stephens, 5 foot, 6 inches, senior, Colby.
- Honorable mention:
- Carrisa Heim, 5 foot, 7 inches, senior, Hoxie.
  - Kaylee Billinger, 5 foot, 6 inches, junior, Goodland.
  - Ashley Barnes, 5 foot, 8 inches, junior, Colby.
  - Bethany Holste, 5 foot, 7 inches, senior, Atwood.
  - Megan Dennis, 5 foot, 7 inches, junior, Oakley.
  - Megan Cahoj, 5 foot, 3 inches, junior, Atwood.
  - Melissa Grandison, 5 foot, 6 inches, junior, Quinter.
  - Lauren Ross, 5 foot, 7 inches, junior, St. Francis.

# Our students could have played polo

By JIM MERRIOTT

If things had gone differently, the Oberlin Red Devils might not have played football or basketball this year. Instead students might have been playing polo, billiards and lawn tennis.

In our earliest years, the English origin of sporting games molded our culture and attitudes.

From America's first colonization in Jamestown, Va., in 1607, sports have played a critical role in the development of the American society. Capt. John Smith recorded that these new settlers spent four hours a day working in the field, and the rest in "merry exercise." Sporting games like cards, chess, dice, cock- and dogfighting were part of everyday life. In the southern colonies, it was common to stage battles between a bear and a bull.

In 1773, it was recorded that early colonists bet on horse races at the Richmond, Va., courthouse. Fist fights were recorded in 1774 in Richmond. These rough-and-tum-

blers pitted lower-class white men who fought for money, while wealthy plantation owners were the bettors and horse breeders.

As America grew it developed its own identity, culminating from a melting pot of immigrants bringing sports from their countries. For example, the Scottish brought golf and the English, polo.

If American sports had developed along other lines, our high school youth might be playing completely different games.

There is no question that track and field, wrestling, gymnastics, soccer, swimming, tennis, and golf would be major sports in high school.

If sports had developed a little differently, American high school students would participate in fencing, archery, polo, bicycling, billiards, nine-pin (bowling), cricket, rounders, boxing, juggling, lawn tennis, lacrosse, fox hunts, shuffleboard, quoits (a ring-toss game similar to horseshoes), cudgeling (once used as a punishment; a person would run

a two-line gauntlet while being hit by short fat sticks), ice skating, sleighing and shooting sports.

Junior high and elementary children would play marbles, kickball, fly kites, chase greased pigs, and play different forms of tag: stoop tag, wood tag and a tag game where kids put baby birds in their mouth.

Football, baseball, basketball and hockey most likely would not exist in America. Stadiums would be geared toward sports few spectators would pay to view. America would be different.

James A. Michener said in his book "Sports in America," that sports should be fun for the participant, enhance the health of both the participant and the general society and entertain the public.

America's society and culture have developed to the point that towns, states, and regions identify with their sports. College and professional athletic teams have changed America.

Sports into today's society is no

longer sport. Sports is a competitive business.

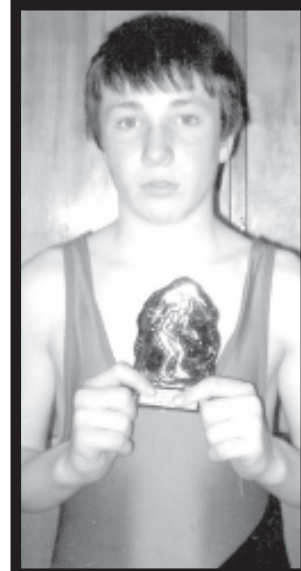
This millennium, baseball players sign contracts well in excess of \$42 million; heavyweight boxers earn over \$18 million a fight and television networks pay in excess of \$2 billion to broadcast sporting events for a season.

From Jamestown to the Super Bowls of the future, only time will tell where sports are headed in the next 300 years in America.

# Basketball tourney set

The Atwood Pool Project is sponsoring a youth "3-on-3" basketball tournament at 8 a.m. Saturday, April 1, for students grades 1-8.

Entry fee is \$27 per team and must be postmarked by Friday. For information, contact Rhonda Arabright at argafive@ruraltel.net or (785) 626-3079.



# Good Luck at State, Dalton

Love, Dad, Kolton, Dallas and Grander and Papa