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Motivational speaker to talk to students and families at Larkin High Feb. 24

Submitted by: Elgin Area School District U-46



Motivational speaker and former NFL linebacker Robert Jackson will speak at Larkin High School on Feb. 24 as part of U-46's Black History Month celebration.

As part of Elgin Area School District U-46 events celebrating Black History Month, an acclaimed motivational speaker and educator will speak to U-46 families about how students can succeed both inside and outside the classroom.

Keynote speaker Robert Jackson is an author, educational consultant, former NFL player, and former teacher. Jackson will be the main speaker at Larkin High School on Monday, Feb. 24 for an event titled "Refocusing Our Vision: Honoring Our Legacy and Pursuing Promise in Our Children." During the event, which starts at 6:30 p.m., Jackson and district officials will recognize 22 African-American students from across U-46's five comprehensive high schools who have earned a cumulative grade-point average of 3.5 or above as of last semester.

Earlier in the day, Jackson will offer a professional development session for U-46 staff members at Larkin High School. Jackson will speak on the topic of culturally responsive practices to increase engagement through relationships. Jackson helps educators employ the core beliefs and values necessary to best serve Black and Latino male students and become the educator that these students need.

He was also a guest of U-46 in February 2019.

"We are excited to welcome Robert Jackson back to School District U-46. He serves as an inspiration to students and provides a thoughtful perspective on pursuing goals," said April Wells, the district's Coordinator of Gifted Education. "We are also proud to recognize the academic excellence of our African-American seniors. It is important to highlight their dedication and accomplishment."

During Jackson's teaching career in Indianapolis Public Schools, he refused to let his students feel sorry for themselves or let their circumstances define their futures. He

speaks and teaches on topics of cultural diversity, restorative practices, socio-emotional learning, and how to retain troubled students in school. He challenges parents to take a more active role in their children's education, and he works with students to overcome hardships through discipline and accountability.

Jackson's visit supports the district's ongoing Equity work. The district's Equity Plan was approved by our board of education in November. A diverse committee of U-46 team members are working to raise awareness of the plan's purpose and objectives, to monitor its implementation, and to share and address our progress toward ensuring equitable practices throughout every area in the district.

SPORTS

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South Elgin bowlers ready for return to state; Kelsay takes over Batavia volleyball

By: Dave Oberhelman



The South Elgin girls bowling team is pictured after winning the regional tournament. From left to right standing are Samantha Thaller, coach Nicole Maciorowski, Mia Rivera, Karlea Ceasario, Monica Darrow, McKenna O'Donnell, coach Mike Anzalone and Delaney Brown. Kneeling left to right are Kaylee Mann and Breanne Augustine.



McKenna Kelsay

South Elgin is back for more.

The Storm girls bowling team has competed twice this season at The Cherry Lanes in Rockford in invitational settings. Heading into this weekend's state finals at the same bowling center, familiarity is a plus.

So is the experience of last year's finals, when South Elgin finished 11th in its first state appearance.

The sole Fox Valley representatives heading to Rockford for this weekend's girls championship, three weeks after St. Charles East won the boys title, South Elgin returns its entire 2019 scoring lineup intact -- senior Karlea Ceasario, juniors Breanne Augustine, Monica Darrow, Kaylee Mann and Mia Rivera.

Senior McKenna O'Donnell also bowled a couple Saturday frames at state last year, and the Storm -- their fans are known as "The Storm Chasers" -- also includes juniors Delaney Brown and Samantha Thaller.

Under coach first-year head coach Mike Anzalone and assistant Nicole Maciorowski it's obviously still a young team with a good future.

Their time may also be now.

"With us returning this year we have a better idea of what to expect," said Ceasario, whose 1275 score placed seventh at the top-flight Kaneland sectional that featured contenders Harlem and Sycamore.

"Everyone's grown from last year, so we're hoping to do better than what we did last year. We're hoping for top-five this year," said Ceasario, who will bowl and study nursing at Aurora University. She's also a drum major for the South Elgin Marching Storm.

At Kaneland, South Elgin's sectional total of 5870 pins placed fourth but would have led three other sectionals and taken second in two others.

On Feb. 8 in Dixon, led by Ceasario at 1400 and Augustine at 1295 the Storm's total of 5930 was the sixth-best score at any regional.

"I believe we have a really good chance to be in this whole thing, without trying to jinx ourself," said Anzalone, familiar with several of these girls through the youth league at Poplar Creek Bowl in Hoffman Estates. He's been in the game about 15 years but is an architect by trade.

"If they hold together as a team like they have, they have a really good chance to be a big part of this event," Anzalone said.

And in an event where half the field of 24 teams is eliminated after the first day of competition, it's good to have a cool head.

"Whatever gets put in front of them, they rise to the top and overcome the challenge, quickly, as a team," Anzalone said of his repeat Upstate Eight Conference champs.

Championship teams contain diverse personalities. South Elgin has them. It's helped the Storm get where they are and could fuel a positive end to the season.

"You've got Monica, who's the loud one, and then you've got Kaylee, she's the quiet one," Ceasario said. "Then you've got Mia, who's always there to make you laugh and do a TikTok dance. There's Breanne, who's there to make you laugh, too. She's the one who makes the jokes about throwing herself down the lane, just to make you smile.

"Overall we're just like a really great group of girls," Ceasario said. "We're always there to make you laugh and smile at the end of the day, no matter what."

A woman emboldened

A mother who taught Advanced Placement psychology at Addison Trail and a father who was a psychologist at the same school gives McKenna Kelsay a built-in edge working with high school student-athletes.

It's only one perk Kelsay brings to Batavia girls volleyball. A three-year history teacher and assistant girls volleyball coach at the school, on Wednesday Kelsay was announced as the retiring Lori Trippi-Payne's successor as Bulldogs head coach.

Trippi-Payne is retiring after this school year, her 34th as a Batavia physical education teacher. She coached the girls volleyball team the last 33 years, finishing last fall with 592 victories.

Kelsay said she learned "so much" as Trippi-Payne's assistant and head junior varsity coach beyond that dry, essential administrative stuff.

"I think some of the biggest things are her passion and her love for not only the game of volleyball, but her support of the program and for Batavia itself, it's been so huge," Kelsay said.

She also made a pal.

"I think the day I got the (teaching) job she called me up," Kelsay said. "I've been under her wing and trying to learn as much as possible, but she has also become my friend."

Kelsay delivers on both parts of the student-athlete spectrum.

A volleyball star and state champion at St. Francis, Class of 2013, she went on to play setter and defensive specialist at the University of Illinois. She squared off against her older sister, Kristen, a Michigan State star now coaching at Northwestern. Their younger sister, Nikki, is a senior art student at Illinois.

McKenna Kelsay was a three-time Academic All-Big Ten honoree, twice a Big Ten Distinguished Scholar.

She said her coach at Illinois, Kevin Hambly, instilled the importance of personal development off the court. That will be Kelsay's primary emphasis.

"First and foremost comes the players, the young women," she said. "Emboldening them to become better people, better students, that's a huge piece of it."

She is an equal-opportunity motivator. A hurdles coach with Batavia's boys track team -- her father, Bruce, was Addison Trail's boys track coach for 18 years and in retirement remains its hurdles specialist -- McKenna Kelsay helped Sam Conger win the 2018 Class 3A 110 hurdles and place eighth in the 300 hurdles.

For certain, though, volleyball is her game.

"Coach Trippi-Payne has had such a tradition and such a successful program for the last 33 years that I'm really excited to take over, put into fruition what she's been able to teach me -- obviously with my own personality as well."