Spring Sports Preview

Britney Swarthout ’19

Making Their Mark

Kristen Harrison/The Ithacan
After a first-place finish in the Liberty League last year to the tune of a 35–13 record, the Ithaca College softball team will attempt to improve on a successful 2018 campaign. The Bombers finished tied for third in the country last year after being eliminated in the semifinal round of the NCAA tournament. Their season came to an end at the hands of Virginia Wesleyan University, the team that ended up winning the national title in the next round. The team is coming into the season being ranked No. 3 in the country from a Division III softball coaches poll. The rankings are determined by the coaches from all eight regions who vote on the best teams in the country. From them, rankings are based on the team’s record from the previous year as well as where they finished in the NCAA tournament. This ranking is a big improvement from this time last year, when the Bombers were ranked No. 20 in the polls. Head coach Deb Pallozzi said she is not concerned with the ranking and is looking to get the season started off on the right foot.

“Our season wasn’t easy,” Pallozzi said. “I’d like it to be a little more consistent this year. Everything was full flow at the end, but we had all of our struggles. I’d like to start off strong and maintain that consistency and learn from everything.”

Despite the Blue and Gold’s great season last year, Pallozzi said they did have their struggles early on in the season. They were not consistent at the beginning of the year, including a four-game losing streak that took place at the end of March and carried into early April. Pallozzi said that the team will try to avoid those types of streaks and that it all starts with team leadership.

Pallozzi has said the team’s leadership starts with the seniors because experience matters when leading a team. The Bombers lost four seniors to graduation last year but have eight players in the senior class for the 2019 season.

Sophomore outfielder Gabby Laccona, who was named to the All-Liberty League First Team to go along with her Liberty League Rookie of the Year title in 2018, said the team’s leadership comes from every player on the team and is what sets their team apart.

“I’d like to say that everyone on the team acts as leaders for everyone,” Laccona said. “Personally, I look at everyone as a leader because we are all so good at picking each other up and motivating each other.”

The Bombers will attempt to use their leadership qualities to try to have a more balanced season than last year. In order to do this, senior infielder Vanessa Brown said it comes down to the seniors leaving a mark on the program and helping to motivate the rest of the players on the team.

“One team goal I have is to leave everything on the field,” Brown said. “Especially for seniors going into our senior season, we want to give it all we can and win the games we can win.”

Pallozzi, and the softball program as a whole, have a reputation of success, as she has led the Bombers to 29 straight winning seasons. However, they have not been able to finish the deal and win a national championship since 2002. Although the women would love to cap off this season with a national tournament win, Laccona said, they cannot think about that right now.

“This team needs to forget about last season and just do it all over again,” Laccona said. “We can’t just expect to end up back where we were last year because then it will get to our heads, and that is never a good thing. We need to give our 100 percent effort and focus in every game and practice one day at a time and just live in the moment.”

With eight seniors on the team this year, along with six juniors and six sophomores, the Bombers are loaded with experience. Pallozzi said she thinks that knowing what it is like to compete for a national title will only benefit this team for another championship run this year.

“We seem a little more focused this year,” Pallozzi said. “I think going there and competing and finishing around three or four was an eye-opening experience for the team because I always tell them you can beat anyone on our schedule, you just have to show up and play the game at our level.”

HOPING TO HAVE BALANCED SUCCESS

BY MIKYALA ROVENOLT
STAFF WRITER

The Ithaca College baseball team is looking for another successful season after obtaining a 30–17 record and reaching the NCAA Division III New York Regional Tournament in Spring 2018.

The Bombers were able to reach the NCAA tournament last spring by winning their fourth straight Empire 8 Championship. They are the only team at the college that is still in the Empire 8.

The Bombers graduated three senior pitchers — Jack Morello ‘18, Chris Marinaccio ‘18 and Robby Bulbs ‘18 — who threw 119 combined innnings last season. They also lost captain Domenic Bioresta, who started in left field and hit .294 with three home runs. However, the 15 seniors on the roster will help stabilize the team moving into the 2019 season.

George Valesente ’66 will be returning as the head coach for the Bombers for his 1st season. Last season, Valesente recorded his 1,100th win as a coach May 5, 2018.

This year has 13 seniors, and that makes a difference on a team because they are really committed and focused,” Valesente said. “They’re a very competitive group that has experienced two years of regional play where we lost [in the Regionals], and they have determined to not let that happen again.”

One of the returning starters is junior Andrew Bailey, pitcher and first baseman. Bailey is coming back from a season in which he started 45 out of the 46 games he appeared in for the Bombers and had a 2.89 batting average.

“What I’m looking forward to most is playing this final season with the same guys I’ve played with these last four years,” Bailey said. “There are a few key players from last year that are going to be missed, but I trust that some of the young guys will step up to fill those roles.”

Senior pitcher Jake Binder agreed with Bailey and said the veterans need to set the standard and create the team culture for the underclassmen.

Others returning to the Blue and Gold’s roster are seniors Adam Gallagher, Christian Lalamia, Matt Eiel and Emmett Thull. Lalamia is coming into this season with a record of pitching innings with multiple strikeouts. Binder was named Empire 8 First-Team All-Conference with a 3.56 ERA, while Eiel was also named Empire 8 First-Team All-Conference with an ERA of 4.38. Dunn was named to last season’s Empire 8 All-Tournament Team with a 5.18 ERA on the season.

Also on for another season is starting pitcher Tyler Hill, a graduate student with a 3.99 ERA. Hill, who was a captain last year as a senior, was able to come back as a result of rehiring his junior season, during which he suffered a season-ending injury before play began. Collegiate athletes are granted four years of eligibility once they are officially enrolled, but when athletes redshirt a season or refrain from playing, they do not lose the year of play.

“It’s a huge bonus that we get our captain and starting pitcher back from last year,” Bailey said. “[Tyler] had a large presence for the team last year, and we know he will be a huge part of our season this year.”

Coming back from success at regionals last season, the Bombers and Valesente are looking to take their success to the next level. The ultimate goal is to continue playing well into June and win the College World Series.

“We’re all getting anxious to play,” junior catcher Chris Dierz said. “We’ve been working indoors for so long, and we’re seeing improvement. Now we just want to see that move onto the field.”

Dierz is one of three returning catchers on the team who will compete with Gallagher, junior Andrew Wolfer and sophomore Sam Kruma for the job. Having more than one strong catcher is crucial because the Bombers play many doubleheaders throughout the season, and catching 18 innings in one day is grueling.

The Blue and Gold had their first series against Virginia Wesleyan College canceled due to weather, but they will now be kicking off the season against SUNY New Paltz at 10 a.m. March 2 in Winchester, Virginia.

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RETURNERS SEEK REGIONAL VICTORY

BY MIKYALA ROVENOLT
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The Bombers went 6–10 during their first season in the Liberty League. This was the team's first losing campaign since the 2004–05 season. While the courts are sufficient, they have a different surface than most indoor tennis courts. Other indoor tennis courts are strict-
Men’s Lacrosse

Aiming to make a playoff run

After its inaugural season in the Liberty League and having advanced to the second round of the conference playoffs last season, the Bombers are looking forward to what could be a breakthrough season in 2018.

The Bombers have strong leadership across the offense and defense, but a handful of decisions will need to be made to determine whether the team can make the next step forward.

Senior midfielder Brendan King said that although Cotton’s shoes have already been filled, there is now a new fresh class coming in.

“Our biggest challenge will be our ability to perform consistently,” said King. “It’s fun for our team to move up in the rankings. We’ve been looking to take care of business and to keep getting better.”

King will man the midfield line along with senior teammates Josh Bella Puca and Sean Seaberg, making a trio that will be able to dominate opposing defenses.

“Midfielder Dillon Filippa” said King. “He’s one of the best players in the country and he’s really taking advantage of that. He’s really taking advantage of that. He’s scored over 10 goals in 42 opportunities. His scoring power and ability to make big plays at critical moments will be key for us this year.”

On offense, the Bombers are looking to return to the same levels of success that they had last season. Leading the way will be junior attackman Matt Montgomery and sophomore attackman Kevin Enos.

“We’re a run-and-gun team, and we like to attack at the hip,” said King. “Last year, we took a lot of risks in order to score points on defense and we did well, but we didn’t work on our offense. We have two new players this year, but one of them has already stepped up and contributed to our offense.”

The Bombers are returning six starters from last year’s team, including Montgomery, Enos, and senior midfielder Brendan King.

“We have a big number of defenders, so we don’t really figure out what’s going to play together and we’re going to go well,” said Seaberg. “I think we’re going to go well and we’re going to go well.”

Younger players like sophomore Matt Montgomery and sophomore Kevin Enos are expected to have a big role in the team’s success.

“We’re going to go with a smaller role this year but we’re looking forward to using the seniors. King said. “We’ve integrated really well into our team culture and we’re going to go well.”

The Bombers are looking forward to what could be a breakthrough season in 2018.

Women’s Lacrosse

Working to break the trend

The No. 19 Ithaca College women’s lacrosse team is looking to bounce back from last year’s loss and will be a force for the squad in the center of the field.

“Senior midfielder Jacqui Hallack will be a force for the squad in the center of the field. She was named Liberty League Rookie of the Year in 2018, starting in all 37 games as a freshman, scoring 36 goals. Defensively, she recorded 17 ground balls and caused six turnovers.”

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Graduation hit the Blue and Gold’s defense hard last year. Senior defender Molly Long was named to the IWLCA All-Empire Region and was awarded Liberty League Defensive Player of the Year. “I feel really good about where we are going and we’re going to go with a smaller role this year but we’re looking forward to using the seniors. King said. “We’ve integrated really well into our team culture and we’re going to go well.”

The Bombers are looking forward to what could be a breakthrough season in 2018.
The Ithaca College men’s outdoor track and field team ended its last season on a high and plans to continue its momentum following the winter season. The Blue and Gold finished third in their first outdoor Liberty League Championship meet last year. They also placed seventh in the All-Atlantic Region Track & Field Conference Championships and had four team members honored by the United States Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association.

The South Hill squad graduated eight seniors in 2018 but still has an experienced team coming back this season. It has also added 22 freshmen to the roster. Head coach Jim Nichols said he believes that the current group is strong and that the freshmen can do what is needed to get the job done.

“We improve through your current returning athletes getting better because they’re older and stronger and more experienced,” Nichols said. “And you improve through recruiting and getting new incoming freshmen that can help and assist the program.”

The freshman class is already showing its strength in the indoor season, as two athletes have already set school records. Freshman pole vaulter Dominic Mikula broke the college’s pole vault record with a vault of 4.72 meters Dec. 7 against SUNY Cortland, then shattered his own record by clearing 4.80 meters at the Utica College Pioneer Open on Jan. 26. Fellow freshman Dan Monchek broke the 60-meter hurdles record with a time of 8.51 seconds Dec. 7 against Cortland.

The returning athletes have potential as well. Junior Dan Harden-Marshall has also had a record-breaking indoor season that bodes well for the spring. Harden-Marshall set the 200-meter dash record with a time of 21.86 seconds Jan. 26 at the John Thomas Terrier Classic in Boston. He also ran 54.99 seconds to break the 300-meter dash record Dec. 1 at the Greg Page Relays at Coastal University.

Senior co-captain Jake Dombek has struggled with injuries during the past two years but has been a strong performer for the Bombers during the winter, putting a collegiate best in the 60-meter dash. Dombek said he hopes to maintain his health during the spring so he can continue to contribute.

“Me, personally, I’m just trying to stay healthy and be a good motivator for the team,” Dombek said. “The past two years, I have torn both my hamstrings, so I’m just trying to get through the season.”

Nichols said he plans to push the team to success in the championship meets at the end of the spring. He said he plans the team’s training for the season around these races so that it will be at its best when it counts.

“We tend to peak near the end of the season, so we want to try and do well at the Penn relays,” Nichols said. “We want to try to do well as a team to the Liberty League conference in early May and then All-Atlantic Regional Championship right after finals in the middle of May. Hopefully, we’ll have five or six people that will be at the national championship.”

The senior class will continue to take on a strong leadership role for the younger athletes as the team transitions from indoor to outdoor. Senior pole vaulter Jakob Markwardt said the 14 seniors have focused on unifying the group.

“The one person that’s really had a breakout year is Sarah Rudge,” Nichols said. “Her name is not well known, but she has a record-breaking indoor season that bodes well for the spring. Harden-Marshall set the 200-meter dash record with a time of 21.86 seconds Jan. 26 at the John Thomas Terrier Classic in Boston. He also ran 54.99 seconds to break the 300-meter dash record Dec. 1 at the Greg Page Relays at Coastal University.”

“Since she joined the program, she’s been very consistent and has a good result every time she competes,” Nichols said. “She’s done a great job of pushing the team.”

The team has a goal program in which the athletes create long-term goals, as well as smaller goals, for themselves that they plan to achieve throughout the two seasons. Wellauer said this was developed by their sports psychologists and implemented into weekly meetings between event groups and the whole team.

“It’s kind of neat because you each do it individually and then you share it as a group,” Wellauer said.

“We’ve got a pretty big senior class, so we’ve been trying to really focus on the team aspect and supporting each other,” Markwardt said. “That’s sort of the biggest thing, at least, the seniors are kind of invested in — just making sure we are all there to support each other.”

Dombek hopes to pass on his knowledge to the underclassmen during his final season so that the team will continue to succeed after his graduation at the end of this year.

“When I was a freshman, I really didn’t know what to expect, but, luckily, we had some really great senior leadership,” Dombek said. “My goal has always been to take that leadership and kind of apply it every year down to the younger guys.”

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“I’m excited to have the opportunity to work with them every day and see them grow as people and as athletes and see where it takes us.”
**WOMEN’S CREW**

When the Ithaca College women’s rowing team’s boats hit the water this spring, it will attempt to compete with the best that Division III has to offer. After a strong 2018 season, the team is excited about its potential for 2019.

Spring 2018 was the Blue and Gold’s first season in the Liberty League, but they were dominant throughout. They went on to take first at the league championships. The third-ranked Bombers then won the New York State Championships, qualifying for NCAA Division III Championships only a day later. The Blue and Gold finished fourth as a team at the NCAA National Championships. Their first Varsity 8 boat placed second, only four seconds behind the champions, Bates College.

Head coach Becky Robinson said that although the team performed well last season, there is still room for improvement. She hopes the team will continue being successful and exceed last year’s results.

“Every year, the goal is to do even better than last season,” Robinson said. “So, for this season, that means fourth or better at the NCAA Championships.”

The team had four different competitions in the fall and will compete against more than 12 different colleges over the course of the spring season. The Knecht Cup, a 2,000-meter regatta held April 13 on the Cooper River in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, is a new competition added to the Bombers’ schedule this year. The Knecht Cup simulates the NCAA Championships, according to Robinson. The event used to be just a dual race but now includes different heat, semi-final and a final to mimic the structure of the championships.

“I’m really excited for it,” Robinson said. “It’s a new event with Division I teams whose speed we want to match.”

The South Hill squad graduated 12 seniors after last season, four of whom were a part of the Varsity 8 boat at nationals. Seven new seniors, including captains Savannah Brija and Greta O’Hara, have stepped up to fill their spots. According to O’Hara, the team is young, hungry and excited.

“We’re a lot faster than we think we are, even though it’s still early,” she said.

Two freshmen, Dania Bogdanovic and Eliza Worth, will be members of the varsity team this season. The novice squad has also earned 17 new members from all over the country.

Armed with talent from as far as Oregon, Colorado, California and Wisconsin.

“I love the freshmen this year — they’re eager,” Brija said. “Varsity feeds off the novice energy; they keep us excited and competitive all season long. They keep us grandmas young.”

Although the Bombers are still in their preseason training, O’Hara said she has already noticed the difference in the team’s drive.

“We haven’t even hit the water yet, and I can tell that our energy levels, strength and willingness are already up,” O’Hara said.

The biggest difference this season, according to Brija, is how the team stacks up against the competition this year.

Even though the competition has gotten tougher, the Bombers are still ready, coming off of last season’s success.

“We’re not the underdogs anymore,” Brija said. “People know our names now.”

Because the team won both the Liberty League and the New York State Championships and placed at nationals, the team has even greater goals this season than it had before.

“We have high standards for ourselves,” said O’Hara. “Having a season like we did last year only raises those standards.”

The varsity women’s rowing team will attempt to start off its season strong March 30 at the Cayuga Duals on the Cayuga Lake Inlet.

**MEN’S CREW**

The Ithaca College men’s rowing team plans to break through this year as one of the best teams in the state and nation by developing returning athletes and improving its young core.

In the 2017–18 season, the Varsity 8 boat placed fourth in the New York State Championships. At the Liberty League Championships, it placed second overall. After graduating two seniors last year and having only one on the current roster, the Bombers are looking to improve on their results from 2017–18.

Six of the eight members of the Bombers’ Varsity 8 boat are returning and will be competing together again this year. Senior captain Eric Stamer said he is excited to have a lot of returning rowers.

“In the past, we haven’t really had a lot of returners in the same boat, so the lineups are constantly changing,” Stamer said. “So it’s good we’ll be able to build on that.”

Junior Hunter Flamm said that with many returners, the team members’ chemistry and trust in one another will improve. He believes the team’s spring break training trip to Lake Lanier, Georgia, will be crucial.

“We want to try and forge really strong bonds going into our spring break training trip and over the winter months when we’re training inside,” Flamm said. “When we get on the water in March, we’re a really cohesive unit and can carry that over into the racing season.”

Head coach Dan Robinson said the recent small senior classes have prevented the Bombers from having good depth. Similar to last year — when 28 of 32 rowers were underclassmen — this year 24 of the 33 rowers are underclassmen.

Flamm said that although this year’s team has a small number of upperclassmen, there is still strong leadership within it.

“I think the younger guys looking up to us as not many upperclassmen don’t really change how they look up to us,” Flamm said. “If anything it magnifies it a little bit because, as Eric being the only senior, what he says carries a lot of weight. The same is for some of the juniors now, as we’re starting to get older. We seem to be starting to occupy that position of leadership as well.”

Robinson said the main focus for this year will be exceeding results from last year at all races.

“The last couple of years, our goal has been growth because our roster had dipped,” Robinson said. “Most of our top guys in our varsity boat are back. This year it’s more about improvement.”

Flamm said the returners on the team are very eager for the upcoming spring based on previous races.

“The freshmen are very motivated to continue achieving high results,” Flamm said. “A lot of upperclassmen and returners that were disappointed how last season went are also very highly motivated to flip those results this spring.”

Stamer said the team’s mindset this year is about going the extra mile.

“This year, a lot of people have been mentioning they’ve been eager to do more work than necessary,” Stamer said. “We try to incorporate it, even if it’s just an extra body circuit at the end of a workout.”

Robinson said New York State Championships and National Intercollegiate Rowing Championships are the two races that the team gears their entire season towards.

“Our two big races are at the end of the year,” he said. “Our championship race is called the National Invitational. That’s our goal. Get there and do well. Make the finals. Our goal is to get to the final in that and win a New York state title the week before.”

Crew is one of two varsity sports at Ithaca College that does not have an NCAA Championship, the other being gymnastics. For rowing, the 2019 National Invitational will be held May 12 at Saratoga Springs, New York. The top six teams make the finals and the top three earn medals. Division I schools like Boston College compete in the race alongside Division III teams like the Bombers.

The South Hill squad kicks off its season with the Cayuga Duals at 8 a.m. March 30 at the Cayuga Lake Inlet.

“We’ve gotten faster every year in terms of our averages on the rowing machines as a team, and guys continue to do things that they thought they couldn’t do,” Flamm said. “They prove themselves wrong.”

**RETURNING SQUAD SEeks IMPROVEMENT**

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**HUNTER Flamm ’20**

**PHOTOS BY SAM FULLER**
BY THAD HAYFORD  
STAFF WRITER

Head coach Keith Batson enjoyed a successful first season at the helm of the Bombers’ golf team in 2018, but losing the majority of his team to graduation has changed the dynamic of this year’s squad.

Despite this, Batson said he is ready to rebuild with a young group of athletes who are ready to take on the challenge of filling the shoes of the Class of 2018. The Bombers finished first in three of their nine invitationals in the 2018 season and achieved a second-place finish in the Liberty League Championship. They were lead by Kyra Dennis ’18, Indiana Jones ’18 and Lauren Saylor ’18. However, for the 2019 season, the Bombers have no seniors and only one junior on the roster.

Peyton Greco, the team’s lone junior, has had to adjust to her new position as a leader. During her freshman year, the team was made up mostly of juniors and seniors, but seeing a six-shot difference in her stroke average from freshman year to her second season, Greco said she is doing her best to provide a veteran presence in only her second season on the team.

“It certainly was a big adjustment from last year,” Israel said. “As one of the older people on the team, it was quite the adjustment for myself to step into that leadership role, but I was very open and excited about that.”

Having a strong core of seniors led to a successful first season at the college for Batson. With so many changes in his second season, he has a different mentality.

“We knew, going into this year, that we were not going to have the same type of year this year,” Batson said. “Our goal was to improve day by day and week by week. Improvement in golf is so hard to see in the short term, but when you look back after a few months, you can see it.”

The golf team also competes at the beginning of the fall season. In the fall, it posted top-five finishes as a team in four of its six invitationals. Batson is optimistic about the future of the program.

“We are hoping to have a solid spring and finish this season on an upward trend and come back next fall a much more experienced team with a few fresh faces,” Batson said.

An important part of the South Hill squad’s spring training is its annual spring break trip to Port Saint Lucie, Florida. Ithaca’s notoriously snowy springs don’t always provide the best practice ground for golfers.

“Spring break is vital for us as golfers since it’s very rare for us to actually go outside and practice,” Israel said. “We have a great opportunity to go down to Florida to help kickstart our season.”

According to Israel, the trip to Florida improves the team’s skills on the course while also serving as a great team-building activity.

“Individually, this is the first real test to see if our offseason work pays off,” Israel said. “Teamwise, trips like these are crucial for team bonding.”

The future is bright for the Bombers because their underclassmen majority means this squad will be together for several years. However, success is not only about the current members of the team.

“It’s all about recruiting,” Batson said. “We want to bring in a particular type of student athlete. They have to love golf and have the drive to get better.”

While her role is new to her, Greco is attempting to embrace it.

“It’s definitely different being the only upperclassman on the team,” Greco said. “That said, I’m the captain this year. I think I have the ability to really set the tone for the entire team and help everyone improve both individually and collectively as a team.”

Batson also said he sees Greco as a capable leader for the Bombers this season.

“Our junior and captain Peyton Greco struggled her freshman year but saw a six-shot difference in her stroke average from freshman to sophomore year,” Batson said. “I lean on her a lot to show leadership and guide the underclassmen.”

With so few older athletes, the Blue and Gold will require some leadership from their underclassmen. Sophomore Sophia Israel said she is doing her best to provide a veteran presence in only her second season with the team.

According to Israel, the trip to Florida improves the program.

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Having a strong core of seniors led to a successful first season at the college for Batson. With so many changes in his second season, he has a different mentality.

“We knew, going into this year, that we were not going to have the same type of year this year,” Batson said. “Our goal was to improve day by day and week by week. Improvement in golf is so hard to see in the short term, but when you look back after a few months, you can see it.”

The golf team also competes at the beginning of the fall season. In the fall, it posted top-five finishes as a team in four of its six invitationals. Batson is optimistic about the future of the program.

“We are hoping to have a solid spring and finish this season on an upward trend and come back next fall a much more experienced team with a few fresh faces,” Batson said.

An important part of the South Hill squad’s spring training is its annual spring break trip to Port Saint Lucie, Florida. Ithaca’s notoriously snowy springs don’t always provide the best practice ground for golfers.

“Spring break is vital for us as golfers since it’s very rare for us to actually go outside and practice,” Israel said. “We have a great opportunity to go down to Florida to help kickstart our season.”

According to Israel, the trip to Florida improves the team’s skills on the course while also serving as a great team-building activity.

“Individually, this is the first real test to see if our offseason work pays off,” Israel said. “Teamwise, trips like these are crucial for team bonding.”

The future is bright for the Bombers because their underclassmen majority means this squad will be together for several years. However, success is not only about the current members of the team.

“It’s all about recruiting,” Batson said. “We want to bring in a particular type of student athlete. They have to love golf and have the drive to get better.”

PHOTOS BY JACKIE MARUSIAK

LONE JUNIOR KEEPS SQUAD ON COURSE

Catch all the Bombers’ action on South Hill this spring