



## FAB FRESHMEN

Three freshmen play on varsity basketball team

Natalie Guanella (9), Arezo Safi (9), and Amelia Rosin (9) were the three freshmen who played on varsity.

"It was fun for us because we played together for a while, and then we joined the upperclassmen. It's kind of a different team, which is fun because they challenge you to do more things," Guanella said.

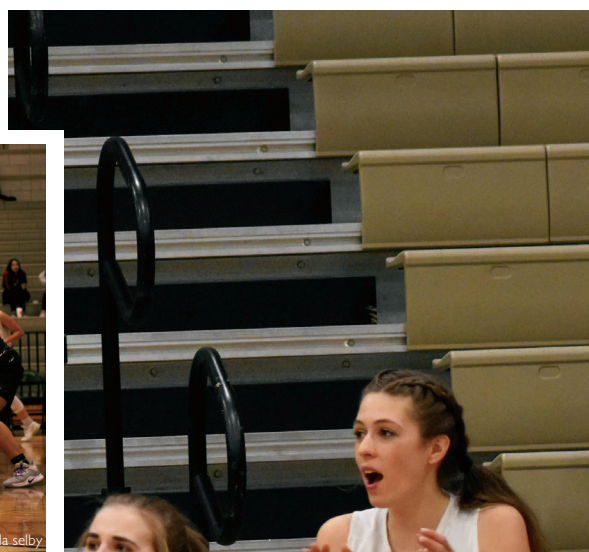
Stepping up to varsity came with increased pressure.

"I think it was [a lot of pressure] at the beginning of the year, but I think [now that] we've done it for longer... it's more natural," Safi said.

The upperclassmen made the girls work harder to keep up and boost their skill level.

"They definitely challenged us more and made us more competitive, but now I think we've played with them for longer, and it's more fun to compete with them," Rosin said.

**BLAKELY'S BOSS BALLERS** Cadence Taht (12), Amelia Kennie (12), Coach Michael Blakely, and Natalie Guanella (9) celebrate a good play while standing at the bench. "You'd think [coaching after so many previous coaches] would be super hard, but it's actually been sort of a good thing because the girls have played for previous coaches [and have experience from them]," Blakely said. **TEAMS TOGETHER** Ali Inge (10) jump stops and looks for a pass against Horizon High School on Jan. 31. "I learned the importance of teamwork and the importance of all [the teams] working together because last year was a bit more separated and Blakely really really tried to make it one unanimous program," Inge said.



## NEW COACH ON THE BLOCK

Coach Michael Blakely works hard to rebuild the girls basketball program

Business teacher and basketball coach Michael Blakely was the fourth coach in four years for the varsity team. Even so, all the girls loved the experience of working with him.

"He really emphasizes how much he genuinely cares about all of us, and I think that when you have that kind of relationship with a coach, it's really easy to take their coaching points and apply them [to the play]," Mia Schmanski (11) said.

Blakely played basketball all through high school and played through adulthood. As he grew up watching his dad coach, he was bound to love the sport.

"I remember growing up watching [my dad] coach and be on the sidelines, and I was their waterboy and towel boy for his teams when I was young, and I always just loved it," Blakely said.

Even though Blakely had a role model and knew what he liked from his old coaches, he still found

challenges in coaching.

"You invest a lot of time both as a player and a coach to get good at whatever sport you choose to play or participate in, so one of the challenges is making sure there's enough time [in your day]," Blakely said.

Even though many coaches had come and gone, Blakely took the time to learn each player's strengths and to bring together all the girls as a team. He helped many of them improve their skills and improve their player to coach relationship.

"I think [Blakely has] a lot more experience and I also think he's much more open to talking with us about the game, whereas [our past coaches], we never really talked with [them]," Anna Trujillo (11) said.

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**LIGHTEN UP** Mia Schmanski (11) and Anna Trujillo (11) keep it loose during warmups. "We all get serious [during the game], but I think in warm ups, especially when we're having fun and playing more loose I think we just generally play better," Schmanski said. **ALL IN THIS TOGETHER** Clara Butler (12) jumps up for the tip-off in a game against Legacy High School on Feb. 14. At six feet tall, Butler was perfect for the tip off. "Coach Blakely helped us to come together more as a team. As in past years other coaches have focused on one specific player or a couple, but [Blakely] had us all come together," Butler said.

“It’s really cool to see that family environment that [Blakely’s] worked really hard to create and to hopefully keep.”

-MIA SCHMANSKI (11)



**FREE THROW FUN** Amelia Rosin (9) practices her free throw during warmups the game against Legacy High School on Feb. 14. Rosin was one of the three freshmen on varsity. "I feel like playing on varsity makes everyone play together better and the competition is higher," Rosin said.



## CAPTAIN CADENCE

### Cadence Taht reflects on four years of change

As one of the captains of the varsity team, Cadence Taht (12) felt a little more weight on her shoulders.

"It's a little more pressure than just being on the team, but I also feel like I have a similar role as everybody else [on the team]," Taht said.

Even as a captain and a senior, Taht learned many things throughout her senior season, especially about how important her team was.

"We've learned to play hard for each other because we've had four coaches over four years, and our teammates are the only ones who are just always here for us," Taht said.

Having four coaches over four years was difficult at times, but it also benefited the team.

"Although it wasn't the best thing to have four different coaches in four years, I think it also gave us all an opportunity to learn a lot of new things," Taht said.

