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Natalie Ebner  
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Charles Eggen  
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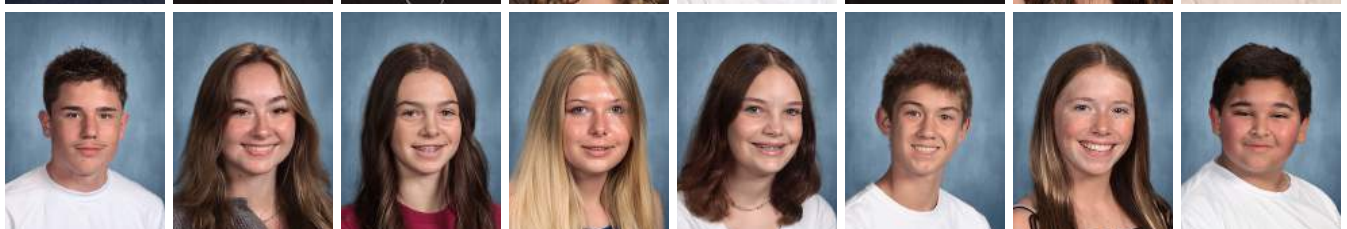
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# FRESHMAN

# KARSON HILGERT



Photos by A. Pfanstiel

## FRESHMAN KARSON HILGERT SHARES HER ROCK CLIMBING EXPERIENCE

BY ABIGAIL PFANSTIEL

Joining a sport such as climbing at a young age could be difficult, but Hilgert knew very early on what she wanted to pursue. "My brother had a birthday party at Lifetime one year and part of it was climbing and I really liked it. I was really good at it. They told me I should join the program for new partners because I was good," Hilgert said.

Along with climbing, Hilgert participated in several other sports in her youth. "I've been swimming for nine years and I played basketball for maybe seven years. Swimming definitely [helped with climbing] because I still use it as cross training," Hilgert said.

Competitions in rock climbing were very different from tournaments in other sports. "In rock climbing competitions, you get eight routes, and there's these things called "zones," which are the middle points. There is also the "top" which is the most points and you try reach it in the least number of attempts. You try to get the most points on all the boulders. First, you get like two or three lead routes, and then it's marked by hold. The judges have a map of the number of every single hold,

and then the number of holds you get is the points you get," Hilgert said.

Hilgert competed at competitions in hopes of reaching larger events. "I want to be the best basically. My goal is to go to World Cups, win big competitions, and maybe even the Olympics. Winning now is like a booster and more competitions mean more practice," Hilgert said.

**"HARD WORK IS WHAT GOT ME HERE!"**

Rock climbing required enormous amounts of work and dedication. "Hard work is like the most important thing. When I was little and I didn't have very much discipline, I wasn't doing well. When I decided that I wanted to be good and that I actually wanted to do this as my sport, I realized that I needed to work really hard to make it happen."

Every athlete has an outlet, and for Hilgert, it happens to be rock climbing. "Climbing is an activity that when I go there I can just clear my head. It's almost like therapy for me. I do hit mental blocks

sometimes, which are probably the most difficult part of climbing because if you don't have a good mentality, you can't do well. My coach taught me this trick when I very first started climbing to imagine that everything is a canvas and then imagine I a paint brush to paint over it. [At competitions,] you're not allowed to have music and you're not allowed to have your phone or anything. I know a lot of people sing songs in their heads but I just try not to think of anything," Hilgert said.

Climbing was both taxing on the body and the brain. "I don't think I'd be mentally as tough or physically as tough as I am today without climbing. When I'm having a bad day, climbing is the thing that cheers me up. It's taught me a lot about discipline, hard work, and it's definitely made me work harder in school and in all things," Hilgert said.



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