

NicoletPRESENTSNational Bank

SeniorSpotlight

# Mason Keller, SPASH hockey

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Mason Keller was a four-year player on the SPASH boys' varsity hockey team. Just finishing up his senior campaign, Keller tallied 43 points, the third most on the team. Most importantly, Keller was a finalist for defenseman of the year. As a senior captain, Keller contributed to SPASH's tremendous 21-3 season with 22 goals.

**When did you begin playing hockey?**  
"I started skating when I was three, and I started playing when I was four."

**What other sports did you play throughout your life?**  
"I played no other sports in high school, but I played baseball and lacrosse for awhile in my youth."

**Can you talk about this season and being nominated for defenseman of the year?**  
"I had a lot of fun this season. It was awesome to be able to go undefeated in the conference again, as well as

complete a three-peat in the conference. Having a great record and some really big wins made this season arguably the favorite of my high school career. It feels good to be nominated and to have all of the time and effort through the last four years recognized."

**What were the emotions like when SPASH was eliminated from the playoffs?**  
"Obviously, it is heartbreaking taking a loss as your final game. But through all of that bitterness, there's also another chapter in your career to look forward to and I am excited about that."

**What would you consider your favorite moment from this season or your high school career?**  
"It would be beating Wausau West at the K.B. Willett in 2021, which hadn't been done in eight years."

**What is your dream job and why?**  
"I would be a farmer, be my own boss and I'd live a quiet life."



**Who is your favorite NHL team?**  
"The Boston Bruins mostly because my favorite player is Charlie McAvoy."

**What is your favorite restaurant?**  
"I like Polito's pizza. I get one slice of steak and fries, the other slice as nacho."

# Falcons have down year after losing production

The 2022-23 season for the Amherst girls' basketball team did not end as perfectly as the previous couple ones have. The Falcons came into this season needing to replace their top three scorers, which is no easy task. Amherst got quality performances from a few players throughout the year, ending the season 9-16 (5-9).

The Falcons fell to Xavier in the playoffs for the second consecutive season. Amherst lost in the regional semifinal game to end the year. The 2022-23 campaign started on a high note, beating Waupaca behind junior Scout Spadoni's 20-point performance. Spadoni stepped into a larger role, Amherst's main offense threat down in the post. She had three 20-plus point performances in the team's 4-2 start to the season.

Spadoni led the team in scoring and rebounds, averaging 15.9 points per game and 9.5 rebounds. Inside the 3-point line is where most of the offense was generated for Amherst. In late December, during the Sentry Classic, the Falcons focused on playing



Amherst's Scout Spadoni led the Falcons in points and rebounds this season. The junior averaged 15.9 points per game and 9.5 rebounds. **Jacob Heid photo**

together and finding a leader on the floor. Seniors Payton Jastromski, Hailey Peskie and junior Tatum Maves switched off with big games. Peskie scored in double figures in four of the last five games. The Falcons traded good wins with some losses

through the middle of the year before hitting a skid as the season closed. Amherst hit a tough stretch on its schedule, losing six straight games, four of which came by four or fewer points. Amherst coach Brandon Trzebiatowski did not respond to requests for comment.

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figured that out, she went on a tear," Pettersen ended. She even had a 30-point game vs. Marion on Feb. 9. Gagas and Trzinski led the team in scoring at 13.3 and 10.4 points per game, respectively. "There may be a duo as good as these two together

in the conference, but I am confident there won't be a better duo," Pettersen said about his stars. With a rollercoaster ride of a season, the Hornets still had fun. Pettersen ended by commenting on what he thought the most interesting part of the season was. "The most exciting part for me was to witness the

transition of the girls. As we watched the film together or other basketball games, the girls would pick up on what the other teams were doing right and wrong," Pettersen explained. "That wasn't happening at the beginning of the season. I could not be more proud of each individual and the team as a whole."

# Youth helps Eagles to best season in over a decade

Some things are just worth remembering. Almond-Bancroft coach Keith Dernbach and his team will always remember the 2022-23 season after it being the best in the girls' program since 2010-11. The Eagles finished the season 22-4 (10-2). Dernbach explained at the beginning of the year that the team goal was to be at the top of the conference, despite having one of the youngest teams in the Central Wisconsin Conference-South. Almond-Bancroft had six freshmen on the roster this year. They achieved that by tying Wild Rose at the top with a 10-2 record. The Eagles started the season 11-0 before losing their first game to Pittsville on Jan. 10. "We had a very successful season. I knew

we had the talent and work ethic, but getting these ball players to gel together that early in the season was outstanding," Dernbach said. "What we can take away from the season as a team is we can be very good in the coming season. But we need to work during the off-season as a team and as individuals." The youth was the theme of Almond-Bancroft girls' basketball this season. The underclassmen exceeded expectations right from the jump, impacting games all season. Freshman guard Aaliyah Newby averaged 8.8 points per game, the second-best on the team. Newby shot the ball at a 42% clip, with her season-high being 20 points in the regional semifinal loss to No. 4-seeded Iola-Scandinavia on Feb. 24. Sophomore forward

Madalyn Potts averaged 6.2 points per game and was the second-best rebounder on the team with 6.3 per contest. The 6-foot sophomore collected 75 offensive rebounds out of the 164 she had. Dernbach just wrapped up his seventh season at the helm. He looks forward to more successful seasons, returning four of the top five scorers next year, including leading scorer Lexie Dernbach. "Our off-season will consist of going to a team camp and having one night a week for team play," he explained. "It's also up to the ball players to work themselves. But one thing I truly believe in is kids need to be kids for a while and step away. I have seen too many times kids get burnt out."

# Panthers dominate to sit on top of Valley Conference

The SPASH girls' basketball team sits atop the Wisconsin Valley Conference after its 2022-23 season. The Panthers finished the season with an 18-8 (11-1) record. The Panthers ran through the conference with ease, beating every team twice except for a 48-45 loss to Merrill on Feb. 7. SPASH coach Kraig Terpstra mentioned what he thought the best moment of the season was as a team.

"I think the four wins against Wausau West and Marshfield this season were the most memorable for the players," he said. "Being picked behind them in the conference gave the girls extra motivation and made the wins more special." Senior forward Emma Jossie was the spotlight of the team, averaging just over 18 points per game. Jossie showcased her scoring ability on all three levels this season. She shot 46% from the

field and 33% from behind the 3-point line. Jossie finished the last five games with two 30-point efforts to wrap up her senior season. Jossie isn't the only SPASH player to talk about. The complementary pieces around her are what helped them achieve success. Everyone bought into their roles. The guard tandem of senior Tahlia Moe, the all-time leading assist leader in SPASH girls' basketball, and

sophomore Adaleah Nest combined for 7.2 assists per game. The duo also took care of the ball, turning the ball over only 3.7 times per game. Senior Brittany Beadles was the spot-up shooter for SPASH. Beadles shot at a 40% clip from deep this season, averaging just over eight points per game. Terpstra talked about how building a culture like the one at SPASH is important.

"Part of the success of our team this year is attributed to the balance and cohesiveness. Each player filled a role to make the team successful," Terpstra explained. "Moe did a great job handling the ball and distributing it. Beadles was an amazing defender who also shot the ball well for us. The return of Lauren Strasman this season after her knee injury was also a major key for us." Terpstra has been coaching for a long time

and has been through losing production to graduation. The Panthers will lose five seniors, including three of the top four scorers for next year's team. "I always look forward to younger players becoming another year older and gaining bigger roles in the program," Terpstra stated. "They become our leaders and step into bigger roles on the court. Each team has a different personality, skill set and forms its own legacy."