

THE FULL CURL

Announcements

- We will have the Holiday Hoops Basketball Camp after Christmas. I have attached the flyer to this email.

Kudos

- A big thanks to Suzan Bast for having the magnets made for our basketball players!
- A big thanks to all the folks who helped man the concession stand and gate for this past weekend's basketball games with Glennallen.
- A big thanks to Lynne Puryear for buying the food and organizing the concession stand.
- A big thanks to Tracy Snow for helping her big sister clean the concession stand and get it ready for the basketball season.
- A big thanks to Joyce Gavora for organizing team and individual pictures for our junior high girls and our high school boys and girls!
- A big thank you to Kathleen Welborn for saying yes to creating the program for this year's Mt. McKinley Bank Classic.



Dear Parents:

Welcome to week seventeen of The Full Curl.

This week, I thought I might try something a bit different. Instead of sharing my thoughts or a particular point of view, I will take the opportunity to highlight some amazing students who exemplify our school and who we are. I wish I had the time to recognize more students, but here are a just a few who jumped out at me this week

I remember doing a Thanksgiving basketball camp four years ago. There was a player who caught my eye that I hadn't really seen before. I mentioned to the father of a current Monroe student who was also attending camp, that I was really impressed with this particular player. The dad told me, "That's Gavin Jackson, he's coming here next year." I had no idea this was the case and when the parent asked if I wanted to meet the young' man's father, I readily said yes. I simply told the dad I was impressed by how hard his son worked and how well he listened. Before I could say another word, he thanked me and told me Gavin would be here playing for me next year. I was more than thrilled.

The following spring, Gavin ended up having surgery for a

Last Week's Recap

- The Monroe Catholic Hockey Team continued to roll along, defeating Hutchison 15-1 last week.
- The 7th-grade girls' basketball team lost to Tanana in the city championship game. These young ladies showed a level of extraordinary growth during the season and have a very bright future.
- The 8th grade girls' basketball team also lost in the city championship game to Ryan. This is a special group of young ladies and to say I am excited to see them coming into 9th grade year is an understatement.
- Tanner Clark and Riley Rust won the first state wrestling championships in school history.

medical condition that impacted the blood flow to his knee. Gavin recovered over the summer and came to school in the fall ready to play. Gavin was an eager learner and hard worker and it was obvious he loved the game. However, we play a little differently than they do at other schools and very much differently than most players coming from comp programs are accustomed to. Gavin had to learn our definition of a good shot and to make the extra pass. Gavin was eager to succeed, almost too eager. Like most kids his age, he wanted to not only be a varsity player, but to be an integral part of the team's success. However, Gavin was stuck on JV, a designation I know he did not enjoy.

It didn't help matters that Gavin often had health issues. He walked around with a constant limp, but he never missed an opportunity to play. Over his first two years, Gavin had his ups and downs. When his good friend Divon Davis went down with a knee injury, Gavin, now a sophomore, took the reins and led us to the state semifinals. Playing the point-guard position, Gavin had a great state tournament, eventually being named all-tournament as we placed third. His future was bright.

Gavin's junior year came with high expectations and while I was happy with his growth as a player, I was happier with how far he had come as a young man. Gavin seemed to not only grasp our style of play, but to relish it. He smiled more and no longer put his head down when told of a mistake he'd made. He was quick to ask if I needed anything. Over the course of two years, he came to fully understand the meaning of service and on the court, he was now telling other players to make the extra pass. I was thrilled.

The season began with Gavin starting and playing an integral role in our first five victories. Unfortunately, Gavin's health issues caught up with him. At a doctor's appointment, Gavin was given the news he would have to sit out the rest of the season. Gavin, as all of us would be, was devastated. It's one thing to not be able to play; Gavin had to sit courtside and watch his team win 30 straight games and lose in the state championship game, knowing he could have made the team even better. It had to be heart-wrenching.

However, Gavin handled it better than most of us would have. He was everywhere we were and always supporting his teammates. Without question, he had bought into the concept of loving and supporting the team. I felt awful he couldn't play, but incredibly proud of who he had become.

Gavin had his surgery at some point during the season and recovered over the spring. We knew there would be an

MCHS Sports Trivia

TRIVIA QUESTION:

RULES

To win the trivia contest, you must give me the answer IN PERSON. Emails, texts and phone calls will not suffice! Remember, only one guess per household. The first person to correctly answer the trivia question will win an MCHS T-shirt.

LAST WEEK'S WINNER

SMALL PRINT

The spouse of the Director of Athletics, parents and STAFF who work directly inside CSF are not eligible for participation in The Full Curl trivia competition for 24 hours after the emailing of The Full Curl.

appointment in the summer to decide whether the surgery was successful. I still remember getting the text message from Gavin saying the doctor had told him his knee was good to go and that he was cleared. You could feel the excitement in his message.

On Friday night Gavin, now a senior, stepped on the court for the first time in eleven and a half months, representing our school. We won the tip and Divon called the first play. After a quick stagger screen and flair screen, the ball ended up in Gavin's hands, and he did what he was meant to do, what he had longed to do for almost a year; he shot it and knocked it down. Every one of us smiled.

While Gavin returned to the home court this past weekend, senior Tanner Clark and freshman Riley Rust did something nobody has ever done at Monroe: they won state wrestling championships. Tanner came to us in 9th grade. I have had the pleasure of coaching Tanner on the basketball court over his time at Monroe. Tanner is an exceptional young man who will do whatever is asked of him to the best of his ability, all the time. I have yet to see him smile, and I don't think he has ever responded to a question with more than a one-word answer. However, he is a guy you can trust to give you a great effort and never give you an ounce of trouble.

Earlier this year, before wresting started, Tanner came out for football. The team needed him and while playing football is not something Tanner loves to do, he showed up and played in support of his classmates. Not only did he play, he played well.

Where would you find Tanner on the Monday following the state wrestling championship? On the basketball court where his presence as the only experienced "Big" man is desperately needed. Imagine . . . football practice from late July to early October, wrestling practice immediately following football till mid-December and now basketball practice till mid-March. This kind of commitment and sacrifice commands my respect and is representative of this school and community.

Riley Rust came to us late in his 8th-grade year and is in many respects the exact opposite of Tanner Clark. While Tanner wrestled at 220, Riley wrestled at 126. My first glimpse of Riley was on the football field. How many 126-pound defensive linemen do you see? Not many. But here was Riley mixing it up with guys who weighed over 250 pounds and making their lives miserable. Riley appeared to be one big piece of gristle. I don't think you will find a 126 pound lineman impacting a varsity football game too many places. At Monroe, Riley makes a difference.

These two young men have proven what I have said for years: there is nothing you can aspire to do that you cannot do here at Monroe. While we did not have a wrestling team that could practice daily at Monroe, these two young men were able to practice with Lathrop, receiving quality instruction from a great coach and at the same time, representing you and me and our entire community, while enjoying a faith-based education. As a school we owe a debt of gratitude to Steve Zanazzo, the AD at Lathrop, who has gone out of his way for the past ten years to help our student athletes participate in swimming, wrestling, and cross-country skiing.

Beyond the contributions of Gavin, Tanner, and Riley, I'd like to tell you about a couple of young ladies. Grace and Audrey Batts are new to the Catholic Schools this year. They have been homeschooled up to this point. Both expressed an interest in girls basketball and chose to come out for the team this year. Neither of these young ladies has played organized basketball and both are currently in the process of learning the game. Like most homeschooled students, there is a steep learning curve when it comes to sports. However, these young ladies show up every day and work hard. It should be noted, there is really no other school where two girls who have never played organized basketball, could show up and contribute to the varsity basketball team. Here at Monroe, they are impactful and a true blessing.

I am in awe of this level of courage. Imagine being in a new school, and playing a sport you have never played before. Consider for a second that we have only ten total girls in our basketball program and only nine who can currently suit up. The willingness of these young ladies to love and support their teammates, many of whom they barely know, is remarkable. Usually this is something you might see in a student who has been here for several years and over that time came to care enough about their classmates that they might play just to support them. For Grace and Audrey to grasp the concept of who we are as a school so quickly warms my heart.

It's important to understand there is no shortage of boys and girls here at Monroe who resemble Gavin, Tanner, Riley, Audrey and Grace. I am simply proud to work at a school with such amazing young people.

You can follow all Monroe sports events by following me on Twitter. My handle is @thefullcurl. We are currently up to 285 followers!

This Week in Monroe Catholic Sports

Hockey

There are no games scheduled

High School Girls' Basketball

Thu. Dec. 28	6pm	Hutchison JV	Monroe
Fri. Dec. 29	6pm	Valdez JV	Monroe
Sat. Dec. 30	1:30	North Pole JV	Monroe

High School Boys' Basketball

Thu. Dec. 28	7:30	Hutchison JV	Monroe
Fri. Dec. 29	7:30	Valdez JV	Monroe
Sat. Dec. 30	3pm	North Pole JV	Monroe



My former assistant, Patrick Chapman (Center) took this picture on Sunday and sent it. Jalon McCullough (far left), who plays for UAF and Tyler Wells (far right) plays for Concordia. The two teams met on Sunday with UAF winning. Tyler didn't get to play due to a knee injury, but it was cool to see the two of them on college basketball teams.