

# Trojans and Scots in the middle of OK Conference shake-up

**Brett Bremer**  
Sports Editor

There is a new plan for the Scots' and Trojans' futures in the OK Conference.

The OK Conference will have separate conferences for football and for all other sports beginning with the 2024-25 school year the conference announced Monday.

The Thornapple Kellogg High School athletic teams will continue on in the OK Gold Conference in all sports other than football, joined current league-mates South Christian and Wayland while being joined by Grand Rapids Union, Wyoming, Northview and West Catholic.

In football the Trojans will be included in the OK Black Conference with current OK

Gold Conference members Ottawa Hills and Grand Rapids Catholic Central along with Northview, Holland Christian and East Grand Rapids.

At least one competition will remain intact in the OK Conference. The OK Red will continue as is in football with Rockford, Caledonia, Grand Haven, Jenison, East Kentwood, West Ottawa, Hudsonville and Grandville rolling on as an eight-team conference. In all other sports, Jenison and Caledonia are making the move into the OK Green Conference joined by Byron Center, Mona Shores, Reeths-Puffer and Muskegon.

"It works out fine," Thornapple Kellogg athletic director Brian Hammer said. "It is not a big change from

what we currently have. I think the football gives us more flexibility. When you're focused on playoff points and such, that makes a big difference."

"In this current playoff alignment that we have from the MHSAA, essentially if you are a Division 3 team, like we are, you want to try and schedule as many Division 3 or higher as you can, while still holding on to the rivalries we have," he added highlighting the chance to keep playing teams like Wayland and Hastings in non-conference contests.

"We gain a few Division 3 teams in that new league for football [East Grand Rapids and Northview]. That is a good thing. When you flip back to the OK Gold, as you will in all the other sports, I

don't think it is too big of a change for us."

Caledonia High School athletic director Fred Townsend said he and the Scots are taking a wait and see approach to how they feel about the changes.

"The new conference realignment was very difficult to navigate through," Townsend said. "I'm truly uncertain on how I feel about both conferences for our teams. They both have benefits and difficulties because of our size. If the new conference stays in existence for next fall, we'll communicate our feelings on how things are different and how they are for our student athletes. At this point, we are truly unsure what we prefer."

The OK plan for 2024-25 realignment was thrown into

chaos this fall when Allendale, Cedar Springs, Coopersville, Greenville, Kenowa Hills, Lowell and Sparta announced they'd be leaving the OK Conference to form the River Cities Alliance. Those schools had issues with travel, the consistent realignments limiting rivalries and issues with OK Conference set-ups placing schools with different sports offerings at the different levels causing scheduling headaches.

The original plan for 2024-25 realignment, before the seven schools announced their official departure from the conference in October had the Trojans a part of the OK Gold Conference along with Holland, Forest Hills Eastern, Hamilton, Holland Christian, Unity Christian,

South Christian and Wayland in all sports.

"I'm excited to get scheduling and to get things done," Hammer said. "Obviously, we're behind. I would almost have next year's fall and winter completed. We're always working a year ahead."

Hammer said one of the benefits of the larger OK Conference is the opportunities it can provide in sports like swimming, hockey and others where teams have the ability to co-op and shuffle conferences into Rainbow or tiered divisions as needed.

"We're all better together than we are apart, and that's why I think we need to continue to be a part of a larger league. It think it offers a lot of good opportunities for our kids," Hammer said.

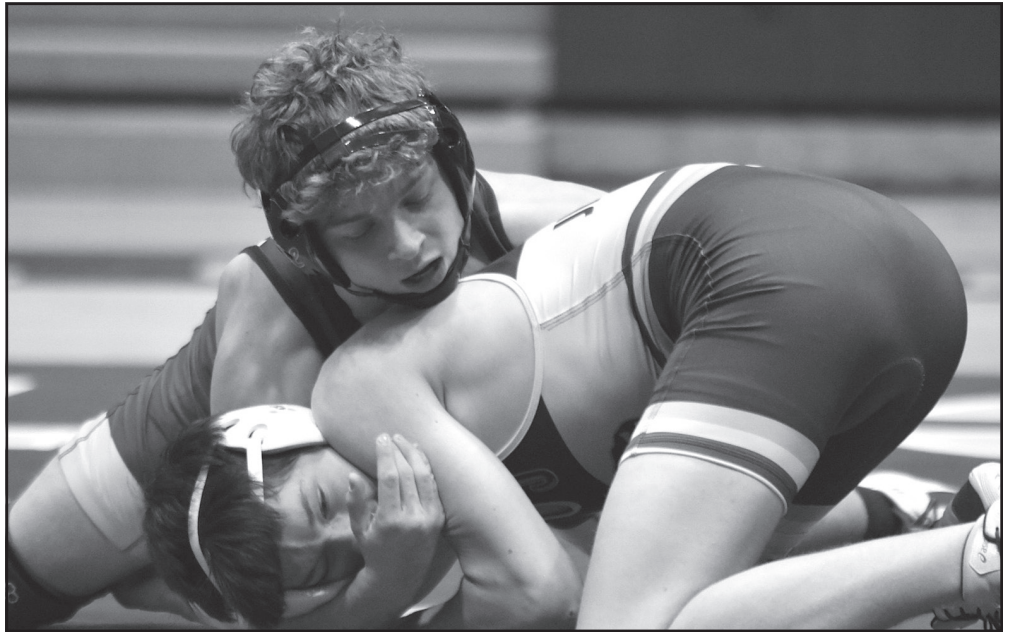
## Jenison bests Scots in first conference dual



The Fighting Scots' Sean Sorrell nears a pin of Jenison's Cameron Pike during their conference dual at Caledonia High School Wednesday. (Photo by Perry Hardin)



Caledonia freshman 106-pounder Josh Grace looks for an opening on top of Jenison's Peter Priest before pinning him in the first period of their OK Red Conference bout Wednesday. (Photo by Perry Hardin)



Caledonia 150-pounder Will Sheely works to pin Jenison's Gabriel Woodworth during their OK Red Conference dual Wednesday at Caledonia High School. (Photo by Perry Hardin)

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Jenison managed to beat out Caledonia by a score of 41-30 in the first OK Red

Conference dual of the season Wednesday at Caledonia High School.

Caledonia got pins from Josh Grace at 106 pounds,

James Carrow at 138, Will Sheely at 150 and Sean Norrell at 165 in the dual.

The Scots also got six points from Halle Stout thanks to a forfeit win at 113 pounds.

The teams were back and forth throughout the dual, but the Wildcat's heavyweights clinched it winning the 175-pound, 190, 215 and 285 weight classes with a pair of pins in that run.

Caledonia headed into the dual off a solid day at the Kent County Championships at East Kentwood last Saturday, Dec. 16, where a handful of the most experienced Scots competed. Maddie Hayden pinned Allendale's MacKenzie Maka in the finals to win the girls' 155-pound championship and

all three Caledonia girls competing finished in the top five in their weight class. Hayden was named the most outstanding female wrestler at the tournament.

"She looked solid there. She took care of business pretty doggone quick," Caledonia head coach Shawn Veitch said.

The Scots' Kiersten DeHaan was the runner-up in the girls' 170-pound contest. She had a pair of pins before being pinned herself by Kelloggsville's Alondra Preciado in the finals.

Halle Stout was fifth in the girls' 110-pound weight class with two wins.

Carrow had the top finish among the guys for the Scots. He placed fourth at 138 pounds. He took two quick pins before falling to Byron

Center's Harper Cheng in the 138-pound semifinals.

Veitch said it was great to see Carrow in the semifinals, noting that he has taken some nice steps in working a cradle series that paid off on the mat.

Grace placed sixth at 106 pounds with a pair of victories in consolation. He started his consolation run by pulling out a 14-12 win over East Kentwood's Gregory Patrick.

"For a freshman there to come out and get a medal, I was really pleased with him," Veitch said of Grace. "What I

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