

Villa Park REVIEW

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CHRIS FOX PHOTO Villa Park Review

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Dance camp at Willowbrook

Willowbrook High School's varsity dance team held a five-day dance camp for kids (ages 4-13) last week in the school's field house. The camp concluded with Friday morning's showcase that featured brief performances for family and friends. Willowbrook's varsity dance team will hold another camp for kids in October. For more information about that upcoming fall camp, email Coach Emily Isaacson at elisaacson@dupage88.net.

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Four-year varsity quarterback Arthur Palicki prepares to lead young Willowbrook team

Warriors had 10 sophomores playing on varsity last year during 5-5 season

By BOB NARANG
Shaw Local News Network correspondent

Willowbrook senior quarterback Arthur Palicki is starting to hit the home stretch of a long and fruitful career.

A four-year varsity player, the 6-foot-4, 205-pounder has been engrained in the program, helping lift the Warriors on several memorable playoff runs.

As he prepares for his final season, Palicki said he pushed himself throughout the offseason to become a more complete player for a program with a stunning run of playoff success in the past few years. Palicki said working out together with his teammates has been a staple throughout the past few months.

"I've taken great strides this off-season to be the best I can be for the team," he said. "I'm not the only one that has been working hard, though. All of the Willowbrook football team has been hard at work in the gym as well as on the field. We have been going to the field working on speed and agility since last season ended. Along with the speed training, we get together multiple times a week to get our timing on routes that will be run in the season so the balls can be in their hands at the right time for them to make plays.

"The hard work that everyone has put in this offseason is dedicated toward one common goal: Win as many football games as possible."

Willowbrook coach Nick Hildreth said Palicki, widely known as "AJ", brings a strong arm and loads of leadership to his young team this season. The Warriors are coming off a 5-5 season, the program's fewest wins in a nine-game regular season since 2015.

"AJ is a four-year starter who is getting heavy college interest," Hildreth said. "I'm looking forward to seeing what his experience provides this season. I've never had a quarterback with that much experience. I'm excited to see what he can accomplish this season. As a team, we're still working and trying to find our identity. We have a lot of new guys in new spots. We're still very junior heavy. At some point last year, we had 10



Shaw Local News Network file photo

Willowbrook's Arthur Palicki drops back to pass during a Class 7A playoff game against Moline in 2021.

"I've taken great strides this off-season to be the best I can be for the team. I'm not the only one that has been working hard, though. All of the Willowbrook football team has been hard at work in the gym as well as on the field."

Arthur Palicki, Willowbrook senior quarterback

sophomores playing varsity."

Regarding individual workouts, Palicki emphasized hitting the weight

room to bulk up and better absorb hits. He credits strength coach Steve Malock for pushing him.

"Some of the specific things I've been working on this offseason are my throwing mechanics to make myself as accurate with the football as I can be, as well as improving my overall speed and athleticism," Palicki said. "Working on these things has helped my game evolve so now I can do many of the things that I wasn't able to do well before, such as throwing on the run and being a running threat in the read option. My physicals haven't changed very much. I've gained around 15 pounds since last season, which is thanks to our strength coach Steve Malock. He pushed the whole team to get stronger and faster, which has made our football team a lot more explosive. He's a great coach."

Palicki said last season's Class 7A

first-round playoff defeat to Wheaton North is still haunting some of the returnees. It marked the second straight year the Warriors' season ended in the playoffs against Wheaton North. Last year, the Warriors suffered a 35-14 defeat to Wheaton North. They dropped a 10-3 decision to the Falcons in a 7A quarterfinal in 2021.

"The whole team has pushed themselves and each other throughout this offseason and into summer camp because we all have the same mentality to win football games at any cost," Palicki said. "Last year's loss to Wheaton North in the first round of the playoffs has driven us to push beyond what we thought our ceilings were. That loss drove us to work harder than ever because we never wanted to feel the way we did after that loss ever again. We will only get back what we put into training."

Mariners wrap up their season at the Red Division 'A' Meet

Lydia Aldana and Elin Stempel win three individual events each in the 9-10 girls level; the two Mariners also contribute to a pair of relay victories

The Villa Park Mariners finished their 2023 season by competing at the DuPage Swim and Dive Conference's Red Division 'A' Meet in Bartlett on July 22.

The Mariners placed fourth in the event's team competition. Bartlett won the team title with its total tally of 816.5 points. Roselle finished in second place with 780.5 points, while Butterfield claimed third with 678 points. Villa Park wound up with 570 points.

The Mariners will compete in the conference's Blue Division next season. Bartlett will move to the conference's White Division.

Villa Park swimmers won 13 individual races and four relay races during the Red Division 'A' Meet in Bartlett. The Mariners earned all of those victories in girls' competitions.

Lydia Aldana of the Mariners won three individual titles in the 9-10 girls level of the July 22 meet. She delivered her first of those individual wins in the 50-yard freestyle, which she finished in 34.52 seconds. She added victories in the 100-yard freestyle, which she finished in 1 minute, 18.21 seconds, and the 50-yard breaststroke, which she completed in 46.08 seconds.

Villa Park's Elin Stempel also won three individual titles in the 9-10 girls level of the Red Division 'A' Meet. She swam to her three victories in the 100-yard individual medley (which she finished in 1 minute, 26.22 seconds), the 50-yard butterfly (37.50) and the 50-yard backstroke (38.37).

Phoebe Aldana provided the Mariners with two wins in the 11-12 girls level of the July 22 meet in Bartlett.



The Villa Park Mariners completed their 2023 season by swimming at the DuPage Swim and Dive Conference's Red Division 'A' Meet in Bartlett on July 22. Villa Park's Lydia Aldana raced to three individual victories in the meet's 9-10 girls level. She is pictured (above left) during her first-place effort in the 50-yard breaststroke. Elin Stempel of the Mariners also won three individual titles in the 9-10 girls division of the meet. She is pictured (above right) during her victory in the 50-yard butterfly. Villa Park's Naomi Aldana swam to a pair of victories in the 13-14 girls level of the meet. She is shown (at right) during her win in the 50-yard butterfly. The Mariners finished fourth in the team standings of the four-team meet. Villa Park will compete in the conference's Blue Division next year.

She earned her victories in the 100-yard individual medley (1:15.47) and the 50-yard breaststroke (37.26).

Villa Park's Naomi Aldana swam to two wins at the season-ending meet in Bartlett. Competing in the 13-14 girls level, she turned in first-place finishes in the 100-yard individual medley (1:11.68) and the 50-yard butterfly (29.96).

Leighton Stempel of the Mariners claimed two individual wins in the 8-and-under girls division of the July 22 competition in Bartlett. She

delivered her victories in the 50-yard freestyle (43.45) and the 25-yard breaststroke (23.74).

Villa Park's Maddie Lynch won one race in the 8-and-under girls level of the Red Division 'A' Meet. She swam to a first-place finish in the 25-yard freestyle (21.75).

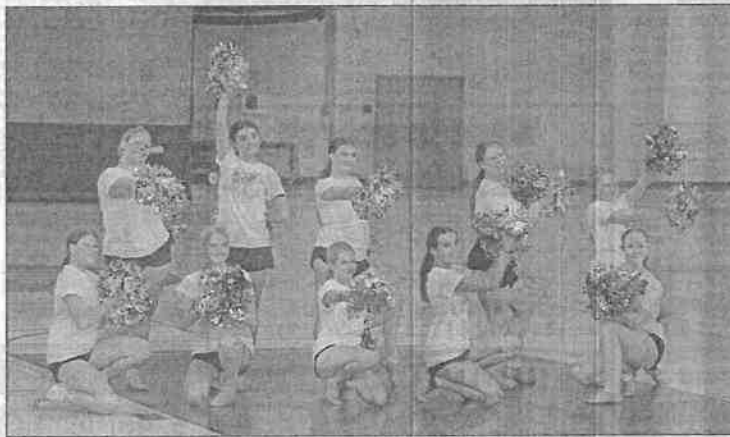
The Mariners' 8-and-under girls foursome of Kennedy Grobe, Maddie Lynch, Leighton Stempel and Penelope Kuhl won a pair of relay events at the recent meet in Bartlett. The four Villa Park swimmers won

the 100-yard medley relay (1:40.27) and the 100-yard freestyle relay (1:25.89).

Villa Park's quartet of Ary Carrola, Lydia Aldana, Ruth Aldana and Elin Stempel also won two relay titles at the Red Division 'A' Meet. The four girls won the 200-yard medley relay

(2:42.13) and the 200-yard freestyle relay (2:25.97).

While some Mariners finished the season at the Red Division 'A' Meet in Bartlett, other Villa Park swimmers concluded the season at the combined Red and Blue Division 'B' Meet in Carol Stream on July 15.



CHRIS FOX PHOTOS Rock Valley Publishing

Learning from the Warriors

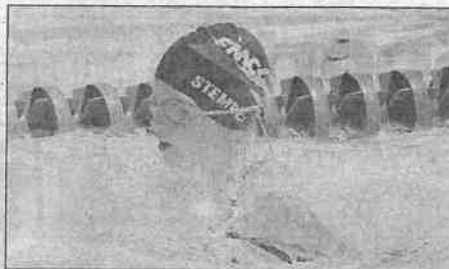
Willowbrook High School's varsity dance team conducted a five-day camp for children (ages 4-13) last week. Each of the five morning sessions took place in the school's field house. The camp featured some special theme days, including Disney Day, Beach Day and Tie Dye Day. The campers finished the camp by performing for family and friends at the end of Friday's session. Members of the Willowbrook varsity dance team (above) also gave a brief performance on Friday.



JOE PEARSON PHOTOS Rock Valley Publishing

Willowbrook Booster Club presents Most Outstanding Male Athlete award to two Warriors

Willowbrook High School's Athletic Booster Club held its senior athletic banquet near the end of the 2022-23 school year. The banquet, which was held at the school, featured the presentation of scholarships and awards to several members of Willowbrook's Class of 2023. There were two recipients of the Booster Club's Most Outstanding Male Athlete award this year. Dallas Isaacson and Isaac Sobieszczyk were both honored with the award. Isaacson was a member of the Warriors' football and boys gymnastics teams during his senior year. One photo (above) from the banquet shows (left to right) Willowbrook football coach Nick Hildreth, Isaacson, Willowbrook boys gymnastics coach (and Dallas' father) Andy Isaacson and Willowbrook Athletic Director Brandon Murphy. Sobieszczyk played for Willowbrook's boys basketball and baseball teams during his senior year. Another photo (below) from the banquet shows (left to right) Willowbrook baseball coach Vic Wisner, Sobieszczyk, Willowbrook boys basketball coach Chris Perkins and Murphy. Isaacson will attend the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Sobieszczyk will attend Bradley University, where he will be a member of the Braves' baseball team.



CHRIS FOX PHOTOS Rock Valley Publishing

Victorious Mariners

The Villa Park Mariners completed their 2023 season by swim at the DuPage Swim and Dive Conference's Red Division 'A' in Bartlett. The Villa Park swimmers who earned individual victories during the July 22 meet included Leighton Stempel, who won races in the 8-and-under girls division. She is pictured (above) during her first-place performance in the 25-yard breaststroke. Another photo shows Villa Park's Phoebe Aldana, who swam to two individual wins in the meet's 11-12 girls level. She is shown (below) during her victory in the 50-yard breaststroke. One more photo shows Aldana (bottom) of the Mariners entering the water during the girls division's 200-yard freestyle relay. Villa Park's foursome of Carrola, Lydia Aldana, Ruth Aldana and Elin Stempel delivered a place effort in the race. The same four Mariners won the 200-yard relay earlier in the meet. Bartlett won the team title in the four-Red Division 'A' Meet. Roselle finished second. Butterfield landed third place, while Villa Park wound up in fourth place. The Mariners swim in the conference's Blue Division next season.

