

Rugby in Hebron Sunday

Written by hebronjournal

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By Nancy McGill

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Hebron will welcome a women's collegiate Rugby exhibition double-header April 17. Four-time national champion, Wayne State will face Central Missouri and Chadron State. The event begins at 2 p.m., on the Thayer Central football field.

Students in kindergarten through 12th grade will be admitted free.

After the games, Wayne State players will host a free youth rugby camp for 45 minutes for grades kindergarten through 12.

As an extra bonus, two Thayer Central alumni — Jasmine Kovacs and Maddie Reece will show their fieldwork. Kovacs is on the Wayne State team and Reece is the captain of the Chadron team.

Rugby is a fast-moving, rough game with close contact.

"You are up close and personal with your teammates and the opposing team," Reece said. She is a scrum half for her team, which is like a quarterback on a football team.

Kovacs is also a scrum half, and recently, she and Reece faced each other on the field for a March Madness tournament last weekend.

About 90 teams were there, Reece said.

The Wayne State Wildcats have qualified for the national competition again this year and they will travel to Charlotte, N.C., in early May to defend their title.

Chadron went 2-2 in qualifying play. The team lost only one game this season.

Kovacs started playing her freshman year. She said it sounded exciting.

"At orientation four years ago, one of the girls just grabbed me and told me to go to practice," Kovacs said.

Reece also started as a freshman.

"My cousin played and I didn't want to play college sports. Rugby was a good option and I just stuck with it," she said.

Reece is now a sophomore. Both girls played a variety of sports in high school, and both played on a summer softball team together.

Kovacs said the reason for the exhibition game is to bring rugby to smaller towns.

"We're trying to get the game out there a little more so people are familiar with it," she said.

"I hope people will come and watch it," Reece said.

A 15-man lineup will be used for the exhibition game. Rugby also plays 7-man teams, and has fall and spring seasons.

"I'm excited because we always like to cover different sports," Thayer Central Athletic Director Dan Desmond said.

For more information, both teams are on Facebook.

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All teams will be welcomed by the Hebron Chamber of Commerce. Arrangements have been made for the teams to attend a Saturday evening movie at the Majestic Theater. From there, they will take the lanes at Blue Valley Bowl.

On Sunday, the United Methodist Church in Hebron will provide a meal for all three teams.

“We want to make this a great experience,” Chamber Director Jana Tietjen said.

She is looking for donors to send the teams home with pizza.

To donate, contact the chamber at 402-768-7156.