

# sports PREVIEW



PEQUOT LAKES | PINE-RIVER BACKUS

## tennis



Kelli Engstrom / Kelli Engstrom Photography

The Pequot Lakes tennis team, shown in August 2023, includes, front row from left: Eva Mumm, Ellie Wolthuizen, Kenzi Quam, Kessa Eggert, Aubrey Wiczek, Shelby Balmer, Kayla Joyce, Allyson Yahn, Ellie Ouradnik and Noor Ellingsgard. Middle row: Cassidy Wick, Isabelle Ziesemer, Jenna Stoerzinger, Carlie Eggert, Samantha Sesin, Dana Balmer, Mandy Malecha, Becca Polchow, Francine Ganley, Olivia Flategraff and Nikki Crocker. Back Row: Kallie Ebnet, Brianna Howe, Sophie Biley, Katya Ellstrom, Sierra Larson, Kendall Gallaway, Claire Oseland, Keira Strong, Sadie McGuire, Rebekah Deemer, Bailey Westerman, Mairin Kennedy and Emme Sullivan.

## BRILL LOOKING TO NOTCH HER 100TH WIN AS PATRIOTS COACH

Her goal is to continue to grow the program she first coached 20 years ago

PINEANDLAKES  
ECHO JOURNAL

## PEQUOT LAKES

**M**indi Brill has returned as Pequot Lakes Patriots tennis coach this season after a 20-year hiatus, and she hopes to continue to grow the program and take a team to state.

Last fall, the Patriots finished 18-7 overall and second in Section 7A behind Rock Ridge. Pequot Lakes was 6-0 in Mid-State Conference matches to win its ninth straight conference title.

"Although we graduated three strong players, I believe we will be competitive with nine letterwinners," Brill said. "The girls have put in a lot of work over the summer, so I'm confident that we will do well."

Brill added that the Patriots should be a top-three contender as they join the Granite Ridge



Conference. "We also have a chance to be a section favorite, along with Foley and Pine City," she said.

Returning letterwinners include: seniors Ellie Ouradnik (who began the season with a 56-6 record), Allyson Yahn (53 career wins), Aubrey Wiczek (43 wins), Kessa Eggert, Eva Mumm and Kayla Joyce; juniors Carlie Eggert and Jenna Stoerzinger; and sophomore Nikki Crocker.

Last year, Ouradnik teamed with Peyton Mudgett in reaching the section quarterfinals. All six of the Patriots section participants advanced to the second round.

Assistant coaches are Chad Rudbeck and Dan VanBlaricom while middle level coaches are Sean Bengtson and Deanne Trottier.

## August

31 - Pequot Lakes at Perham meet 10 a.m.

## September

5 - Foley at Pequot Lakes 4:30 p.m.

7 - Pequot Lakes at Pine City 4:30 p.m.

8 - Glencoe-Silver Lake at Pequot Lakes 4 p.m.

9 - Pequot Lakes at Brainerd tourney 9 a.m.

12 - Pequot Lakes at Little Falls 4:30 p.m.

14 - Mora at Pequot Lakes 4:30 p.m.

18 - Crosby-Ironton at Pequot Lakes 4 p.m.

19 - Pequot Lakes at Pierz 4:30 p.m.

26 - Aitkin at Pequot Lakes 4:30 p.m.

30 - Pequot Lakes at Conference (Foley) 9 a.m.

of it," she said. "And Monica (Sargent) was my assistant at the time, and her girls (Kayla and Megan Lenz) were coming up and I knew that the program would be in good hands with her."

As fate would have it, Sargent left coaching last year after 20 seasons as head coach.

Besides taking a team to state, Brill's other goals this season are to continue to grow the program and to provide memorable experiences for her players.

"Like I've told them, and I told the parents too, it's not just about playing tennis. It's about developing good people. And they are such wonderful girls and nice families," she said.

Brill also looks forward to getting her 100th win. She recalls her career coaching record stood at 91-35, meaning she picked up win 92 in her team's opening match Aug. 17.

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MINDI BRILL

Brill first coached the team for seven years

starting in 1997, when she first came to the Pequot Lakes School District as a teacher. She turned over her head coaching duties when she was nine months pregnant with her second child at the end of the 2003 season, taking the next 20 years off from coaching to raise sons Brendan, Keaton and Landon with her husband, Wade.

"I just decided at that point it would be difficult to be a mom, have a full-time job and coach on top

