



PSC's Simpson Shoots for Three



Northern Cardinal. January 1, 2021 More photos on pages 3, 5, and 11

A Magazine from Small Town & Rural America

Voices and Views from the Valleys of the Nemaha to Sweeten your Coffee Break



Deaths so far from Covid-19 in our "Country Neighborhood."

Source: Google Search; 'Name' County, Nebraska Covid

<u>Date</u>	<u>Nemaha</u>	<u>Otoe</u>	<u>Johnson</u>	<u>Richardson</u>
January 9	10	2	5	15
January 16	12	3	7	15
January 23	12	3	7	15
January 30	13	4	7	15

*Death can result from virus transmission from one to another.
Reduce transmission risk by wearing a mask when in public.
Masks and Vaccines save Lives.*

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Your Country Neighbor

Voices and Views From the Valleys of the Nemaha

Publisher & Photographer, Stephen Hassler

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Online at yourcountryneighbor.com

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"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

February Writers & Contributors

Devon Adams - 6 & 7

Stephen Hassler - 12

Merri Johnson - 10

Dorothy Rieke - 4

Janet Sobczyk - 11 & 12

Thank You!

Deaths from Covid-19 in Counties Bordering Nebraska

Date	Kansas		Missouri		Iowa	
	Brown	Nemaha	Atchison	Holt	Fremont	
01/09	29	50	5	9	5	
01/16	29	50	6	9	5	
01/23	29	50	6	10	6	
01/30	31	50	6	10	8	

Total Deaths from Covid-19 in Nebraska

January 9 1796

January 16 1892

January 23 1948

January 30 2006

About 200 deaths per month; what will February bring?
Check here next month.

Progress is Made to Rebuild in Flood-Impacted Areas of Nemaha County

As 2021 begins, the Northeast Nemaha County Long Term Recovery Group reports progress on key infrastructure projects while continuing to advocate for flood recovery for the region.

As 2020 came to a close, the Northeast Nemaha County Long Term Recovery Group (LTRG) received positive updates on several infrastructure projects that are key to recovery for the region.

"I am pleased to report a contract was signed between the City of Peru and the Auburn Board of Public Works solidifying the plan to join the City to BPW's water supply," said David Pease, Mayor of Peru. "This allows the engineering design and planning for construction to move forward."

The City of Peru has also accepted an offer from FEMA to fund 75% of construction costs (no more than \$5.2 million) related to building the water connection to Auburn. The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency will provide 12.5% match and the City of Peru will provide the remaining 12.5%.

"With the funding from FEMA, the City is well situated to address the costs associated with the water treatment project," said Pease. "The City has already been awarded grant funding to cover part of our match and we have an opportunity to apply for additional funding through the state. Our goal is to cover the City's portion of the project through grants."

Additional good news was shared by LTRG members Brett Adams and Senator Julie Slama, who reported the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020 passed both the House and the Senate and was signed into law by President Trump in late December.

"We appreciate Brett Adams, Senator Slama and Congressman Smith for their efforts to add language to WRDA, which will make the Peru levee eligible for Federal Funding and allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to repair the breached levee that has protected Peru since its construction in 1952," said Dan Hanson, Chair of the LTRG. "With the passage of this act, we hope to see movement and communication from the U.S. ACE regarding the Peru levee this year."

The City of Peru also received notification they had been approved to receive funding through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). These funds will be used to purchase properties in the 100-year flood plain and turn the area into green space.

"We want to celebrate the movement on these flood-related projects," said Deborah Solie, Disaster Recovery Coordinator. "But, also remember the Peru community and surrounding areas suffered an estimated \$7.91 million in economic loss, including \$4.2 million in agricultural revenue losses due to levee damage. The LTRG's goal is to emerge from recovery as a community stronger than before the floods."

The LTRG, City of Peru and leaders throughout the community continue to work together as recovery continues for the region.

About Our Group: The Northeast Nemaha County Long-term Recovery Group brings constituents together to build relationships, coordinate efforts, communicate needs, and pursue funding to rebuild and strengthen the City of Peru and the surrounding region and support individuals following the 2019 floods and other potential disasters.



Northern Cardinal, 01/01/2021
Nice way for a photographer to begin a new year.



Cardinal approaching feeder during freezing rain.



Cardinal on seed on snow covered ground.

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Sweet Communications Bring Sweet Connections

Dorothy Rieke, Julian

If you have ever received a love letter, you have never forgotten the thrill of that message from someone you love or hold in high esteem. Love letters, sent by youngsters, teenagers, and adults, all have one purpose, to reveal one's affections for another. Children's love letters may only contain one sentence, "I love you." Teenagers' love letters may be more complex with certain "in words" and phrases. Adults often enlarge upon their letters' contents not only voicing their affection but including bits of news or complimentary statements.

Love letters are common accompaniments with courtships, relationships, or marriages. Elizabeth Barrett Browning held such intense love for her husband Robert that she wrote love notes to him throughout their marriage often hiding the notes in an overcoat pocket for him to discover later. In this case, love letters nurtured the marriage and made it special.

Love letters foster better understanding of each other. Harry Truman wrote many love letters during his courtship to Bess. Undoubtedly, these letters served not only to introduce, inform, and entertain, but to show his affection. Through letters, they exchanged points of view, revealed personality traits, and expressed opinions. Knowing about a loved one and his or her opinions and thoughts represents a great advantage for long-term relationships and marriages.

Then, too, it is generally easier to write sentiments than voice them. Shy individuals find that writing love letters fit their purposes well.

If a relationship is faltering, a love letter may revive it. Making your partner aware of your feelings often has positive lasting effects.

Most individuals look forward to receiving love letters even if they are short and sweet because love notes serve as reassurance of love.

Today, some love letters have become victims of technology. Facebook and email serve to keep in touch with loved ones. However, written love letters are more lasting and generally more impressive. They speak of love and deep affection. Even the simplest love letters are appreciated because they express love in a caring manner.

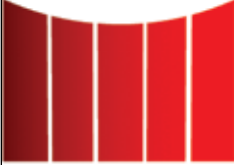
Love letters represent something to anticipate and enjoy. They raise spirits and embrace one in deep layers of devotion and love. These letters are so precious, they are often wrapped with ribbon and put away to be read again and again. Write a love letter today to your loved one and bask in the knowledge that you have expressed your love in a wonderful way.





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Cardinal on high alert!



Cardinal finding seed among the shells.



Winter scene in Peru with Northern Cardinal. January 6, 2021



Birds “puff up” their plumage for better insulation from the cold.

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IS HERE!!** 
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WITH LOVE FOREVER

The stores are full of lovely bouquets that seem to make you feel guilty if you don't buy one for the love of your life. If you don't remember to take home a kiss in the form of roses or chocolate, you will be condemned to the basement for a month . Selling psychology puts a handy stack of the fancy candy boxes by the front door as you come in, and just in case you are being a dud, there will be yet another counter full of heart-shaped red foil packages full of creme fillings inside chocolate shells. These will be displayed next to more flowers, living in pots, or having cut stems. You will have to decide if you'll get more points for a one off bunch in a vase, or for a living plant that will keep on saying "I love you forever, or at least until you forget to water me."

CHOCOLATE CHIPS

They are always waiting for me at the grocery. Even if they're not on my list, they jump into my cart and come home with me. Then their little voices won't be quiet, as I move through the day. Amazing how I can always hear them, whether it is a whisper or a scream. "Come and get us out of this bag. We're suffocating. We're getting old and we won't taste as good if you don't eat us now!" So what can I do? I rescue them at the first desperate pang of my addiction that only seems to get worse instead of better. "I'm coming," I tell them, and "I promise you won't ever be trapped in a bag again!"

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Your "2-cups-of-coffee" companion

including local photos and articles

with the flavor of rural America.

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WINTER DOVES

A soft coo sails
on the breeze from
the bare branches
of the old oak that
lives by the bend
in the road that
runs up the hill.
Blue shadows
on the morning
snow reach across
the yard to the
tray where corn
kernels wait for
hungry birds.

A cooing comes
again, followed by
the outstretched
wings of an asian
dove as he lands
on the tray. Bigger
than our summer
mourning doves,
this species hangs
around in meaner
weather. And what
a blessing he is,
chanting prayers
for our weary souls,
filling our hearts
with the sweet
sounds of grace.

FRIDGE FAMILIES

Almost every kitchen
has a fridge door full
of photos of family
faces. If you're not
so neat, there will
be old prints under
newer images of
children as they grow
so fast you can't keep
track of days, let alone
years. Then, when a
flurry of photos falls
on the floor when you
get a jug of milk out
to pour on your cereal,
it's time to sort and
file into random piles
that are stuffed in the
messy drawers in
your desk. If you're a
neat freak, you'll still
have to remove and
relocate members of
your family so that
they can be arranged
in proper albums all
in order on a separate
shelf in the basement,
until you are so old that
you don't remember who
is who, or what day it is.

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FALL OUT

So here we all are,
sitting between yesterday
and tomorrow, wondering
how our decisions today
will affect our lives.
Guessing what comes
next on the calendar
of events is like buying
enough lottery tickets
so that you know you
will have to win. If you
can afford that many
tickets, you don't need
the lottery. Sometimes
very small actions can
have big consequences
that we could never
have imagined. If you
over-think a situation,
you may not come out
as well on the other
side as if you had just
listened to your gut and
your heart and plunged
into a final decision.
Good luck with that.

SNOW ON CEDARS

Snow is magic
when it falls in
flakes so big
they smack like
kisses on the
sidewalk. How
can water become
so beautiful so fast?
One glance out
the window and the
air is all white and
wiggly, and the next
time you look, the
cedars have been
sprayed with flocking
from a can, except
that it is real. The
cardinals look like
winter apples, sitting
on the branches that
are weighted down
and drooping lower.
Sometimes life is
like a greeting card
or a perfect puzzle
picture in a frame.



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(S) '18 Hustler Raptor SD26, 60" deck, 157 hrs, 26hp.....	\$3,550
(S) '05 JD 1445 4wd, 60" rear discharge.....	\$7,555
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(S) '13 JD 997, commercial zero turn, diesel, 72" deck, 2530 hrs.....	\$7,800
(S) '14 JD Z930R, 1094.5 hrs, 54" MOD deck, sus seat.....	\$6,200

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The little Nuthatch is getting its breakfast.



This Goldfinch appears to be sheltering itself from the freezing rain.

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Diary of a Part-time Housewife

Merri Johnson, Auburn

Many of you will remember the days of party-line telephone service. Growing up on a farm in the fifties, I recall listening for the unique ring-tone that signaled an incoming call for us. I called my newly-95-year-old mother this morning to ask if she remembered our family's ring tone. She thought maybe one long and two shorts. It's as good a guess as any. At any rate, it was not unusual to pick up the phone to place a call, only to hear a conversation between your neighbors already in progress.

Progressing to private phone lines, to email, and now to texting, I feel like we have almost come full circle on the party line idea. My four sisters and I have frequent texting marathons. At times, the messages jump in and out somewhat out of sequence; rather like picking up the phone in the middle of someone else's conversation. The threads of commentary may be running in several directions at once. Not so different from an actual conversation among sisters who can basically anticipate each other's thoughts to start with.

Here's a recent example from January 15, 2021.

Donna (Sheldon, in far NW Iowa): Hope you can enjoy today's blizzard from inside.

Linda (Brooklyn, in central Iowa): No blizzard here; just a slushy mess.

Me: Very windy here with snow.

Sheree (Cherokee, NW Iowa): Good day for a puzzle.

Linda: No wind here. Snow is too heavy to blow away. Stay safe and warm.

Donna: All schools closed today with blizzard warning until 6. Wind gusts up to 60 mph, 1-3" additional snow. Nice fire going and a new puzzle to start.

Linda: You are prepared, Donna.

Donna: Yep, as long as we have enough milk, we're in good shape. But let that milk level get low and Craig gets nervous.

Linda: I ordered powdered milk just in case of dire emergency.

Donna: Not a bad idea. Wonder if Craig would use that on cereal. His day just can't begin without a big bowl.

Me: Craig sounds just like Hubby. He even drinks a glass

of milk with his cereal. Except on days that he eats eggs and sausage.

Linda: Older people need lots of protein, including dairy. The guys are just following their instincts.

Me: I think all of Hubby's dietary instincts are in his taste buds.

Linda: Yep. That's actually part of how it works.

Donna: Wonder what instinct calls for chips and dip? Craig seems to have that one, too.

Me: Hubby says his instincts are as good as a pig's that will chew on wooden fencing if they are missing something in their diet. Not sure what they would be missing.... splinters?

Linda: You two have interesting table mates.

Me: You are so diplomatic, Linda. I nominate you for Secretary of State.

Donna: Wooden fencing, eh? Not sure what that would be besides roughage? I cut back on salty foods and adding salt. Now chips don't have the appeal anymore. Craig hasn't gotten to that point, but maybe I can add some wood shavings to his food. P.S. I second the nomination!

Me: We have lots of planing shavings from Hubby's current shop project. Want some? They are cherry wood, so they should be tasty.

Donna: We have lots from the basement wall project. But cherry wood....yum.

Linda: What is life without whimsy.

Sheree: Well, cherry wood pairs well with white wine.... bet you didn't know that. Donna, a year ago you were snowed in with me in Cherokee and we went to Jazz Fest.

Me: Sounds like when school is cancelled, but no one actually stays home "snowed in."

Sheree: Yes. Most of the musicians were already in town so we ventured out. It was fun....No Jazz Fest this year.

Linda: As soon as people can be out safely again, I anticipate an avalanche of travel and entertainment. A satirical piece about side effects of COVID vaccine says, "If you experience facial contortions known as a smile, seek medical attention immediately. You could be experiencing hope."

I will close with a wish that we will all be experiencing that "hope" very soon.

Happy Valentine's Day and Happy Vaccination to you all.

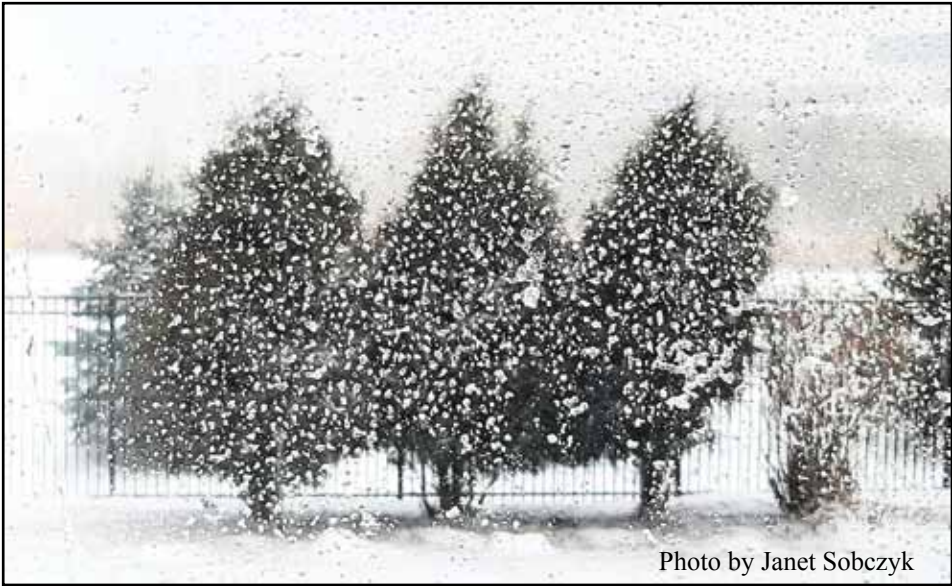


Photo by Janet Sobczyk

Dancing Trees

Janet Sobczyk, Omaha, © 2021

All
lined up
like chorus girls
not high-kicking
but swaying in time
to the winds of the storm
snow swirling 'round them
dusting, clumping on branches
in unison they bend to the right
forced to bow by a gust
straighten up
shimmy
nod to their audience
watching from the window.



The Nuthatch is a frequent visitor to my feeder, especially when the weather is harsh.

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The Lady Cardinal is watching for her chance to get to the bird feeder.

Stinkbug in the House

Janet Sobczyk, Omaha, © 2021



Slow and deliberate
might buzz off quickly
but crawls for now
balancing angular body
on delicate legs
wanders close for a look at me
then turns and creeps away
the dog ignores it
tried eating one once
expected it to be
as delicious as cicadas
spit it out
shook head in disgust
took one more sniff
then backed away
still remembers that scent
no longer is alarmed
knows I'll take it outside
only to find another, later
or is it the same one?
keeps getting thrown out in the cold
finds its way back inside
feasts on houseplants
blends in with woodwork
ventures near the human
oops! too close
captured in a tissue
back outside again.



*2020 was a bountiful year for stinkbugs
because, due to the weather, they had
2 growth seasons instead of the typical 1.*



Closeup of the Nuthatch

Window On Fifth Street

Stephen Hassler, Peru

As I look out my window on Fifth street, I can't tell an essential worker from anyone else. Obviously, law enforcement and other "first responders" are in that category, and what about college campus maintenance workers and snowplow drivers? It's been said grocery store clerks, postal workers, utility workers, and bus drivers are essential as well. The general population needs to eat, pay their bills, and some need to get to work or school. On the other hand, in some stores one can scan an item's bar code with their smart phone and it goes on their credit card. At this time it's a limited process, but hindsight says this technique should have been developed more quickly. Okay, so we're all learning.

I've never thought of myself as an essential worker, and that's never bothered me, but now it bothers me to think that I might be a non-essential worker. I feel as if I should reflect on what I am doing and what I am providing through my publications and photography. Well, if not essential, at least my work is appreciated by my readers and advertisers. Or so people tell me. So essential or not, I do what I gotta do.

Have you thought about who you are and what you do with respect to what is essential and what is not? Let's distinguish between essential people and essential work. I would like to think we are all essential people, and if there exists any work that is not essential, maybe do something else. As I like to say; if on Sunday evening you are not looking forward to going to work on Monday morning, then it's time to make a change. This is a guide I live by.

But if this publication went away, life would go on, just maybe not mine. There might be an inconvenience, as there would be if there were no grocery clerks. But even groceries can be delivered, as some are already. We can use our phone to pay bills, as some do already. So just who is an essential worker anyway? Looking in my mirror, probably not him. Okay, so what? Through my window on fifth street, I can't judge who is an essential worker, but most, maybe even everyone I see, are working... essentially.

It's February; love everybody and have a good month.

Your Country Neighbor

Your "2-cups-of-coffee" companion

including local photos and articles

with the flavor of rural America.



PSC Men's Basketball

JAN 9, PSC v WILLIAM PENN UNIVERSITY, Loss 73-90
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PSC Women's Basketball

Jan 16, PSC v CLARK UNIVERSITY, Loss 47-89
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Peru State College News

Peru State College Open for Spring Semester Continues Weekly COVID-19 Testing

Peru, Nebraska – Peru State College started the Spring Semester on Monday, January 11. On-campus classes were available this fall and spring due to extensive on-campus testing.

Peru State is dedicated to on-campus testing for students, faculty and staff. Testing is an important part of the College's plan to keep campus and our community healthy and safe.

The College's Vice President of Enrollment and Student Affairs, Jesse Dorman, writes, "The College determined that continuing policies from the fall, and requiring testing, is best for the health and safety of our campus and community."

"We came to this conclusion after examining our cases and quarantines from last semester; and consulting with experts, including the Southeast District Health Department and an alum at the Yale School of Public Health, Joseph Fauver."

Peru State, in partnership with TestNebraska and Corteva (Des Moines), was able to administer more than 6000 tests on campus last fall. The College will continue to administer tests on campus and support vaccination opportunities for students, faculty and staff.

With these efforts, the College best continues its mission to provide a personalized and engaging educational experience for all students. That mission has guided adjustments to new ways of living and operating in the midst of the COVID-19 epidemic.

A broad-based team of campus constituents, in consultation with health experts, developed new procedures over the summer for academic experiences, athletics, dining, on-campus housing and student life. These procedures continue into the spring semester.

Several college amenities including the library, dining hall and fitness center continue to be closed to the public. Home fans are invited to athletic competitions, but no visiting fans will be admitted through the end of the winter season.

COVID-19 Forces Bobcat Basketball Changes

After getting through most of the late fall/early winter part of their schedules, the Peru State basketball teams are now having to reschedule several contests due to the coronavirus. The decision was made after contact tracing and cautionary quarantine procedures have been enacted at the College. This has impacted all four of the basketball teams.

At this point, the women's varsity team has tentatively rescheduled the Central Methodist and Missouri Valley contests for February 8 and 10 respectively at 5:30 p.m. The other teams are in process of arranging new dates. Please follow the College's athletic website at www.pscbobcats.com, the College's Facebook at www.facebook.com/PeruStateCollege, and/or the College's Twitter at <https://twitter.com/pscbobcats>.

Peru State Announces "VolleyCats" Program

The Peru State volleyball coaching staff recently announced its new "VolleyCats" program which will begin in February. Bobcat assistant coach Madison Peters and members of the Peru State team will be hosting two five-week skill sessions beginning February 7, in the Al Wheeler Activity Center on the College's campus.

The first session will be on February 7, 14, 21, 28, and March 7. The second session will begin the following week March 14 and will go through April 18 while skipping Easter Sunday. The sessions will run one hour each Sunday from 4 to 5 p.m. The cost per five-week session is \$80. If someone cannot attend the entire session, they can drop-in on any given week for \$20.

VolleyCats is open for boys and girls, ages 12-18 who want to sharpen their volleyball skills and/or get some extra reps. It is open to anyone, whether playing club volleyball or not.

Social distancing and face masks will be required. Individuals will need to supply their own water bottle. Temperatures and symptom checking will take place prior to entry into the Al Wheeler Center.

To register, contact Madison Peters at mpeters@peru.edu.

Peru State Dance Competes in First-Ever Competition

Peru State history was made Friday night in Crete as the Bobcat Dance Team competed for the first time in the Doane Invitational. The Bobcats finished fourth and scored 51.6 points in their first performance. Peru State did have a deduction due to not having a minimal number of dancers as they were impacted by COVID-19.

In dance team scoring, there are many categories for judging which includes jazz technique, pom technique, hip hop technique, and team turn sequence. In addition, the three judges also rate the team on staging, transitions, musicality, choreography, technical skills/execution, performance impression, overall degree of difficulty, team turn, and team leap. The Bobcats scored their highest in jazz technique and in choreography.

Peru State will next compete in the Concordia Invitational on Saturday, Feb. 6, in Seward.

2020 Peru State Men's Cross Country Season Wrap-Up

After not having a program for nearly 35 years, the Peru State men's cross country program was brought back to life by College officials.

The College hired James Cole, a former club runner and graduate of Peru State, to coach both the men's and women's program. In addition, Peru State hired Jim Thurman from Nebraska City to assist coach with both programs.

With a late start in recruiting, Cole and Thurman were able to put together a team for the 2020 season and unfortunately, were impacted, too, by the coronavirus. However, the team was able to get off the ground and competed in five meets in their first season.

Cole and Thurman are busy recruiting as they will be replacing several runners from the 2020 team as they anticipate five returning.

Busy Schedule for Bobcat Bowlers

After having the fall season cut short due to the coronavirus, on February 20 the Peru State bowling teams will take their longest trip, and participate in their biggest of eight tournament competitions this year, at the Hoosier Classic in Indianapolis at the Royal Pin – Expo and Royal Pin – Western.

Peru State's final tournament will be March 27 and 28 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. It is the Five Seasons Tournament at the May City Bowl.

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- ♦ Score of 18 or above on the ACT.
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