

Press Clippings for 9/01/2022

---The Daily Herald---

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Boys cross country: DuPage County and Fox season preview

By: Bobby Narang



St. Charles East's Mitch Garcia is one of the runners to watch this year in the DuKane Conference.
Brian Hill | Staff Photographer

The Hinsdale Central boys cross country team is looking to climb one big spot up the Class 3A ladder this season.

The Red Devils, who finished second in 3A last season, are among the contending teams for the state title due to the return of senior Dan Watcke and junior Aden Bandukwala, Watcke, a standout in track, placed 14th in the state meet and Bandukwala finished 29th.

This group has worked hard this summer and is focusing on staying healthy and running their best toward the end of the season," Hinsdale Central coach James Westphal said.

Addison Trail is in rebuilding mode, but looking for Daniel Lupa, Mike Jarez, Josh Gutierrez and Nehemiah Varghese to make strides this season.

Batavia is looking to make some more noise this fall. The Bulldogs closed out the track season with a Class 3A state championship. Quintin Lowe showed off his potential by winning the Kane County Meet on Saturday, helping lead the Bulldogs to the team title.

Burlington Central is led by Ryan Kries, Adam Hinkleman and Logan Karottu.

Geneva welcomes a solid group of runners in Andrew Warcup, Anthony Ross, David Roeder, Jack Kuehl, Dominic Ross and Julian Hipp.

"The strength of this team will be its pack," Geneva coach Peter Raak said. "They're a very motivated group who work well together and are team focused."

Downers Grove North earned third place in Class 3A last season, just behind state champion Sandburg and runner-up Hinsdale Central. Downers Grove North brings back Topher Ferris, Caden Weber, Ryan Eddington and Asa Gaspar.

"This is shaping up to be another fun year for our group," Downers Grove North coach John Sipple said. "It will be exciting to see how this group develops and the passion that they show throughout the year."

Downers Grove South also had a top 20 showing in state, placing 18th and earning the title in the West Suburban Gold last season. Josh Poeschel, Carter Smott and Shane Hosty are among the top runners.

Elgin's top four of Diego Valdivia, Jack Allen, Austin Villa and Cole Tupper put them as one of the top teams in the Upstate Eight Conference.

"Our strength this season will be racing as a pack to be successful," Elgin coach Chris Vargas said. "This team is hungry to win Elgin's first Upstate Eight Conference title and climb the ranks at sectionals."

Fenton senior Victor Vazquez is a runner with immense potential, according to coach Patrick Fritsch.

"Our strength will definitely be Victor up front, as he will be looking to finish in the top 10 in almost every invite we attend this year," Fritsch said.

Glenbard South has won the last two Upstate Eight Conference titles, and also looking to make a run for a high placing at the Class 2A meet this fall.

Glenbard West's Anthony Nitti and Gio Hernandez are slated to be the team's top two runners this season.

A year ago, Hampshire won the Fox Valley Conference championship, a regional title and qualified for state. Senior Owen Cuplin is looking to lead his team to another stellar season.

Harvest Christian seniors Daniel Winkelman and David Peterson are the leaders on a young team with potential.

Hinsdale South's Adam Fournier is the top returnee, while Mason White and Andrew Peterson both are coming off solid seasons.

Huntley sophomore Tommy Nitz is looking to continue his upward climb following a promising freshman season. Juniors Luke Grubbs and Zach Zuzzio and seniors Ty Rasmussen and Hudson Fisher make for a nice blend of youth and experience.

Kaneland's Evan Nosek established himself as one of the top runners in the area last season.

Lake Park's strength lies in its top two runners -- Jake Zegger and James Guevarra.

"They both push each other every day and will help set the example for the young runners on the team," Lake Park coach Joseph Pacione said.

Larkin seniors Jayden Meyer and Sean Styles, both four-year runners, lead the pack for the Royals. South Elgin's Andrew Strama, Jacob Yachinich and Henry Carr spark high hopes for the Royals this season after a second-place finish in the Upstate Eight Conference meet last season.

Montini had a memorable showing last season that culminated with a Class 1A team advancement. Sophomore Nolan Ferris and juniors Hugh Flannery and Gabe Bianco are the top returning runners.

Naperville North's Colin Corcoran and Addisu Wolski are the established leaders on the team. Junior Luke Donaldson and sophomore Amar Bhanpuri comprise a strong core to build upon for the Huskies.

Neuqua Valley had a memorable showing last season that ended with a 10th-place showing in Class 3A. The Wildcats have a talented group of runners, paced by Zac Close, Robert Glenn, Ryan Palmer, Nico Castrillon, Andres Lopez, Logan Brown, Matthew Gutierrez, Alex Herrera, Tony Hinderliter, Tony Pastore, Bryce Chamberlin, and Connor Boehm.

Marmion is counting on big seasons from Connor Carlson, John Daffenberg and Mitchell Gratz to be among the top teams in Class 2A.

St. Charles East senior Mitch Garcia is expected to be the leader for the Saints this season. The Saints, who won the DuKane Conference Meet last season, are looking to make a return trip to state.

"This year the team will focus on creating their own identity as all of the 2019 and 2020 kids have graduated," St. Charles East coach Chris Bosworth said. "This team will need to depend on each other, learn from every race and workout and create realistic and attainable goals."

St. Charles North's Will Lackner is back for another season. Junior Nick Chana is also among the returnees.

"We're a young team that has very little varsity running experience," St. Charles North coach Kevin Harrington said. "Time will tell what we can develop."

St. Edward seniors Thomas Walla and Jorge Reich are part of a small but talented team looking to make some headlines this season.

Streamwood's Alex Harrison, a sectional qualifier last season, is back to lead the **Sabres**, joining Gabe Inorio and Andres Viveros.

Timothy Christian seniors Luke Hubbard and Alex Becker are the most experienced runners on a diverse team. Leyden is set to rely on a talented group that includes Christian Lopez, Samuel Malke and Israel Rodriguez.

West Aurora's top runners include Sean Heetland, Ayden Jenkins, Devyn Jenkins, Brandon DeLeon, Sammy Rocio, Aidan Massaro and Nathan Gehrmann.

West Chicago senior Connor Zenter, a three-year varsity runner and team captain, is back to make another run this fall. Sophomores Zach Williamson and Judah McLean are runners to watch.

Westmont senior Tim Rosland is aiming for a big season to close out his career on a team with quality experience and youth.

Wheaton North has the luxury of depending on several talented runners in hopes of topping last season's 3A 15th-place effort, including Caleb Youngstedt, Aiden Murphy, Ben Shebar and Jude Hubbard.

"We have a good deal of experience up front, especially with Caleb, but we need our younger guys to step up and fill the roles needed," Wheaton North coach Nathan Rose said.

Wheaton Warrenville South's group of Nathan Virginelli, Colin Nelson, Lucas Yonker and Sam Cruz are leaders on a talented team that took third in the DuKane Conference.

"We have a great mix of veteran seniors and underclassmen," Wheaton Warrenville South coach Chris Kuntz said.

Boys cross country at a glance

Key dates: Regionals Oct. 22, Sectionals Oct. 29, State Nov. 5

2021 state champions: Sandburg (3A), Fenwick (2A), Latin (1A)

Top five at 3A state: Sandburg (130), Hinsdale Central (175), Downers Grove North (179), New Trier (196), Oswego (197)

Top five at 2A state: Fenwick (120), Deerfield (141), Morton (164), Kaneland (185), Riverside-Brookfield (235)

Top area runners: Hampshire's Owen Cuplin, Hinsdale Central's Dan Watcke and Aden Bandukwala, Batavia's Quintin Lowe, Kaneland's Evan Nosek, St. Charles East's Mitch Garcia

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Carlin Hass (front) and Maggie Hibbard, pictured at last year's Naperville North Twilight Invitational, return to lead a talented Glenbard West squad. *John Starks | Staff Photographer*



Batavia's Liliana Bednarek and St. Charles North's Norah Dorrance are two of the top returning runners in the DuKane Conference. *Brian Hill | Staff Photographer*



Heather Durrant of Larkin started her season by winning the Kane County meet last Saturday at Northwestern Medicine Field in Geneva. *Brian Hill | Staff Photographer*

The Batavia girls cross country made a big statement for a strong season in late August.

The Bulldogs had a strong showing in the Kane County Meet to earn first-place, riding a wealth of experience in Liliana Bednarek, Ava Thomas, Brooke Silbernagel, Olivia Gebhardt, Madison Wnek and Sasha Semanision.

"Our girls have high expectations," Batavia coach Chad Hillman said. "Liliana is one of our senior leaders and will have another great season."

Addison Trail's senior duo of Lettia Hoda and Ximena Juarez are both back for their final season to lead the Blazers.

Bartlett, which placed third in the Upstate Eight Conference meet last season, is a team to watch with Arissa Kramer and Kristin Farabuagh both looking for repeat all-conference seasons.

Geneva is full of talent due to Mckenna Mertes, Becca Spezzano, Elise Waldchen, Agnes Bolender, Corinne Stanuch, Lila Storaasli and Lauren Verdecchia leading the way.

"The girls have worked hard this summer," Geneva coach Elizabeth Morrison said. "Our team is small, but we would like to build on what we have."

Led by sophomores Anastasija Jankovich and Mariflor Rosas, Fenton is a very young team without a single senior on the roster.

Downers Grove North has six runners back from last season's 13th-place state team, highlighted by Ava Geiger, Sydney Hnatiuk, Karly Harkness, Audrey Casten and Hannah Renner.

"This is a very talented and deep team," Downers Grove North coach Tim McDonald said.

Downers Grove South, paced by West Suburban Gold champion Holly Johnson, is a team to watch despite heavy graduation losses.

Glenbard South has a wealth of talented runners back, including Lauren Price, Mary Kate Pinkleman and Diana Kalvelage.

Glenbard West is always a team full of talented runners, sparked by nine straight state meets with at least one top-five placer in 3A. Carlin Hass, Maggie Hibbard, Devyn Carr, Moira Ahern and Maddie Morgan are the key runners this fall.

Hampshire is one of the youngest teams in the area, with several freshmen and sophomores taking up the top seven.

"I'm incredibly excited to see our girls in action this year," Hampshire coach Ryan Hollister said. "We have a very talented group of young runners and plenty of senior leadership."

Juniors Emma Leslie and Caitlyn Terrien are the top runners back for Harvest Christian.

Hinsdale Central, which took third in Class 3A last season, is returning numerous talented runners to make another run at state.

Huntley has a strong foursome in Breanna Burak, Brittney Burak, Molly Allen and Ava Allison that have led to high expectations following a 19th-place showing in Class 3A last season.

"This team needs a fifth girl to step up, and we will see how good this team can be," Huntley coach Matthew Kaplan said.

IC Catholic Prep is a young squad, with 11 of its 15 members either freshmen or newcomers. Sophomore Grazi Narcisi and juniors Kelsey McDonough and Meghan Van Koughnet are the top returnees.

Jacobs qualified for state for the first time since 1985 last season, but lost four of its top five runners. Bailey Schwartz is back, though, along with three runners from last season's team.

Kaneland brings back six of its top seven runners from last season, including top runner, Alli Gonnella.

"The goals the girls have this year are to regain the conference team title back from last year's champion, Morris," Kaneland coach Doug Ecker said. "The team depth should be better than last year with several underclassmen seriously challenging for varsity spots in the top seven."

Lake Park's Brynn Ellenbecker and Jade Benavides are both aiming to top last season's sectional showing.

Larkin senior Heather Durrant opened up the season by winning Saturday's Kane County Meet. Her twin sister, Hannah, along with Jinni Jimenez and Brinlee Jimenez and Makayla Preuss, give the Royals a solid group of runners.

Naperville Central has the luxury of returning its entire lineup from last season's Class 3A sixth-place time. Liv Phillips, Ava Hendren, Kate Tueting, Addison George, Lola Satre-Morales, Abby Mogg, Julia Laird and Becca Liaw round out a talented and deep team.

Naperville North's top runners includes Julie Piot, Emma Berres, Shania Tandon and Logan Brennan. The Huskies, who placed seventh in state, enter the season with high expectations.

"We expect to take a step forward from where we were last year," Naperville North coach Dan Iverson said. "The girls have worked hard, and continue to grow."

St. Charles East returns a strong group of runners, including Marley Andelman, Morgan Sandlund, Brooklyn Walker, Eleanor Clark and Colleen Thumm, to make them a potential contender for the Class 3A state title.

"We're looking to compete well in our regular season invites and then running well when it matters at our DuKane Conference meet and into the IHSA postseason," St. Charles East coach Bradley Kaplan said.

St. Charles North is looking top last season's third-place showing in the DuKane Conference. Led by Norah Dorrance, Camille Sabau and Paiten Kruse, the North Stars are hoping to build toward a strong season.

"We're a pretty young team, but I have high hopes that our young runners will develop into strong varsity runners by the end of the season," St. Charles North coach Shari Hayes said.

South Elgin is led by seniors Angelica Harris and Roberta Morales. "This year we're looking to be competitive within our conference, and we're hoping to get some of our new runners up to varsity," **South Elgin** coach Jorie Bartholomew said.

Streamwood's top three returnees of Sophia Baumert, Ashley Harrison and Jazlynn Castelon headline a promising group. "Sophia is ready to take the next step and try and qualify for state," **Streamwood** coach Dylan Lau said.

Timothy Christian senior Juliana Norman and freshman Ella Potoshnick are the runners to keep an eye on for the Trojans early this season, according to coach Rachel Mirra.

Wheaton Warrenville South has four runners with state series experience.

"We spent a lot of time focusing on getting stronger and building our aerobic strength after a speed focused track season," WW South coach Rob Harvey said.

York is overflowing with talent, as Bria Bennis, Michaela Quinn, Katherine Klimek, Maggie Owens and Brooke Berger are the veterans of the team.

Girls cross country at a glance

Key dates: Regionals Oct. 22, Sectionals Oct. 29, State Nov. 5

2021 state champions: York (3A), Grayslake Central (2A), Tolono Unity (126)

Top five at 3A state: York (62), Prospect (151), Hinsdale Central (197), Minooka (204), Yorkville (244)

Top five at 2A state: Grayslake Central (148), Crystal Lake South (162), Vernon Hills (165), Latin (188), Lakes (220)

Top area runners: Batavia's Liliana Bednarek, St. Charles East's Marley Andelman and Brooklyn Walker, Larkin's Heather Durant and Downers Grove South's Holly Johnson