

Foot Racers

Area Harriers Are Ready To Go The Course

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The Post-Dispatch Staff

While there probably are few dominant teams, the area's high school cross country landscape seems packed with individual nuggets.

At St. Charles West, sophomore Ken Breckenridge already has won three major races, including Saturday's Hazelwood Central Invitational in a time of 16 minutes and 54 seconds.

Following is a capsule of some area cross country teams to watch this season.

Edwardsville: Joe Hofeditz already broken 17 minutes this year, taking third at the Tiger Fall Classic in 16 minutes and 27 seconds. Last year, Hofeditz also was third at the McCluer North Invitational.

As a fifth-place finisher in the 2-mile race in the Class AA track meet last year, Hofeditz leads a deep Edwardsville team. The Tigers grabbed second-place finish in the First Capital Invitational, and were first and second, respectively, in the Tiger Classic and the McCluer North Invitational.

Other runners to watch: Nick Campbell, ninth at the McCluer North Invitational; Ken Price and Shawn DeGage.

"We have a lot of depth," coach Terry Meathery said.

Edwardsville was awarded an Illinois Class AA sectional meet by the Southern High School Association. The meet will be held on the Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville campus.

Hazelwood West: West is a young team with only two seniors.

"Overall, our team is better than last year," coach Terry Meathery said. "We have five or six kids who can go under 18 minutes."

Runners are Sean Bernsen, Brian David Meyer and Matt Best. The Wildcats' toughest foe will be the North favorite Hazelwood

Hazelwood Central: The Hawks were impressive at Saturday's Hazelwood Central Invitational, finishing second to team champion St. Louis University High. Central has won the McCluer North Invitational and finished

third at the Granite City Invitational.

Central has a solid nucleus, including Louis Lane, who was 14th at the Central Invitational. He was 25th at the state meet last year.

Joining Lane in a pack is Ken Saylor, Chris Hall, Brad LaCroix, John Cunningham, Dan Saylor and Chad LaCroix. Hall and Saylor were 11th and 12th at the Central Invitational.

House Springs: Coach Stan Nelson has one of the area's top runners in Corey Young.

Young was second at the House Springs Invitational and he won the 12th-grade division at the Sikeston Invitational. Young is trying to rebound from a disappointing junior season.

Other runners to watch: Chris Whorton, Ken Campbell, Brian Woods and Brian Cassidy.

CBC: The Cadets are short on depth but long on talent.

"We have five good runners," coach Gaylerd Quigley said. "After that we're pretty slim."

CBC won the First Capital Invitational and finished second at Oakville's Tiger Paw Classic at Jefferson Barracks Park. Paul Fitzpatrick, a sophomore, covered the 3.1-mile course in 17 minutes and 12 seconds. Fitzpatrick was fourth at the Central Invitational in a time of 17:07.

Joining Fitzpatrick are Owen Donahue (ninth at the Central Invitational), Ron Hefley, Mark O'Donnell and Marty Buckley.

Tim Bauer finished second in the ninth-grade race at House Springs. "The main thing for us is to stay healthy," Quigley said.

St. Charles: The Pirates lost the heart and soul of their '92 state championship team. State 3A champion Craig Maxwell and 11th-place finisher Oren Birks both graduated.

"We should be competitive," coach Dave Lehman said.

The Pirates' top three runners are Joe Taylor, Jay Bowman, and Brad White. St. Charles ran at the Parkway Central Invitational on Friday.

St. Charles West: Every year, a runner emerges to the front of the area pack, and that role has gone to

Breckenridge early on. Only a sophomore, he won at First Capitol (16:44), McCluer North (16:44) and finished on top at Hazelwood Central.

Chaminade: Seth Goldkamp took fourth at the state 3A meet last year, and should be better this season.

Teammate Chris Kell is expected to recover by October from hernia surgery. Goldkamp was 11th at First Capitol and fifth at the Country Day Invitational meet.

East St. Louis Lincoln: The Tigers are led by the strong tandem of Demond Gatlin and Quintelle Jones. Gatlin and Jones were first and second, respectively, at the Fall Classic in Edwardsville.

Lincoln will play host to a Class AA regional meet at Frank Holton State Park.

Webster Groves: The Statesmen feature Steve Johnson and Ron Wagner, two of the area's premier runners.

Johnson was eighth in Class 4A at the state meet last year. Wagner is running ahead right now, having finished second at the Tiger Paw Classic and first in the Webster Invitational.

Other runners to watch: Gary Grow, Joel Maisenhelder, Derrick Young, John Seiffert, Jason Gardner, Josh Lang and Andrew VanBrunst.

The Statesmen were ninth in the state's 4A team standings last year.

John Burroughs: Ryan Anderson, Dip Banerjee, Jeff Gilbert, Blake Thompson, Chris Loving and Brian Miller make up the Bombers squad, which lost state medalist Kevin Cloud to graduation. The Bombers were second in Missouri Class 2A last year but will be put to a test when they move up to 3A this season.

St. Louis University High: The Junior Billikens have 61 runners, and they showed their depth by winning the Hazelwood Central Invitational. SLUH scored 119 points to win the meet.

"We stack up real well," coach Jim Linhares said.

"We have no standouts, but a pretty good pack."

Leading the way for SLUH on Saturday was Pat Hamel, who was sixth in 17:36.

Ray Griner, a captain, and Jack

Kennebeck are front-runners, along with Kevin Myers.

SLUH finished second at the recent Eureka Invitational and was third at the South Paw Invitational; only nine points in back of winner Webster Groves.

Lutheran South: The Lancers had four of the top 19 sophomores in the Class 3A state race last year: Jay Preus, Bryan Gill, Matt Rall and Jason Maddox. Gill was 32nd at the state meet last year. Other feature runners include Bryan Looney, Brian Dehnke and Shawn McGrath. "We think this could be as strong a team as we've ever had," South coach Phil Kershner said.

Parkway West: The Longhorns always are tough, as they proved at the Parkway Central Invitational last Friday. West was second with 83 points behind Kirkwood. Matt Peters won the race in a time of 16:50. Peters, who was state Class 4A runner-up in the two-mile run last spring, also finished second at the Francis Howell North Invitational.

Andy Grimm, Bob Garrett, Will Holcombe and Bryan Volk are strong supporting cast for Peters, who was 28th at the state cross country meet last year.

Kirkwood: Kirkwood scored 83 points to nudge by Parkway West at the Parkway Central Invitational Friday. The Pioneers haven't qualified for state in 10 years, but this may be their year. Kirkwood is led by Nathan Terpstra, who was sixth at Parkway Central in a time of 17:10. Teammate Will Reeves was ninth in 17:13.

Parkway South: In the Suburban West — maybe the toughest cross-country conference in the state — South features standouts Adam MacDonnell, John Haugen and Jason Larch. The trio finished eighth, 10th and 12th, respectively, at the Parkway Central Invitational on Friday.

Other individuals to watch: Derek Russell, Francis Howell North; Nathan James and Matt Jacobs, Mehlville; Neal Herman, Wentzville; Loren Villarrodo, Lafayette; Tim Schlichting and Dan Nickels, Fox; Don Conrad, Country Day; Jason Zallaros, Fox; Zumwalt South.