

Teams take aim at West Plains

CLASS 4A BOYS

By Chris Murphy
Correspondent

Dale Shepherd and Jim Schmuck, two of the most successful cross country coaches in west county, see next Saturday's Class 4A boys race as a possible battle for second place.

West Plains, two-time defending state champions, is the favorite to make it three in a row and set a Class 4A state record for consecutive titles.

"I'd be an idiot not to think that," said Shepherd, the coach at Parkway West. "I heard by word of mouth that Blue Springs is pretty good, but I'm not too sure about other outstate teams."

"Out of the St. Louis area, Hazelwood Central and Webster Groves look very good."

"I think West Plains is the prohibitive favorite," said Schmuck, the Parkway South coach. "They won their sectional with 24 points and won at Hancock with 36 points (while West was a distant second with 119)."

"Parkway West, Springfield Kickapoo, SLUH and Webster Groves are all possible top three teams."

Even if West Plains is the favorite, the race still has to be run and coaches enjoy putting pressure on the favorite. The Class 4A boys will race at 12:20 p.m. Saturday at Hough Park in Jefferson City.

Four West County boys teams qualified: Parkway West, Parkway South, SLUH and Webster Groves.

Webster Groves won the Jefferson Barracks sectional with 61 points, including top 10 finishes from Steve Johnson, Gary Grow and Ron Wagner.

South placed second, sparked by the second-

place finish of junior John Haugen and the third-place finish of freshman Adam McDowell.

"If John goes out near the front, he stays in front," Schmuck said. "I've never seen him go out and blow up. He is learning that he can run with the best from the start. This is a kid with a lot of talent."

SLUH, which won its district by beating Webster Groves and Parkway South, placed third to qualify.

West placed second at the Sioux Passage sectional. The Longhorns ran without usual No. 2 runner Andy Grimm, who has been sidelined with tendinitis. Shepherd expects to have Grimm in his top seven Saturday.

Senior Matt Peters is West's top runner. Peters finished third at the sectional and set a school record on the course with his time of 16 minutes, 38 seconds. Junior Will Holcombe ran in the Longhorns No. 2 spot and finished 11th in 17:29. Bob Garrett and Allen Dyke, a first-year runner, give West a solid and consistent pack.

"Our kids ran pretty well," Shepherd said. "We didn't have our No. 2 kid, but then again (Hazelwood) Central was without one of their kids as well."

Four of West's top seven runners have previous state experience.

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CBC junior Owen Donahue, one of three Cadet individual sectional qualifiers, won the sectional meet at Jefferson Barracks in a time of 16:30. Donahue, Ron Hefley and Paul Fitzpatrick will represent CBC in Jefferson City.

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Kirkwood, which had a fine regular season, finished fifth and failed to qualify for state as a team. The Pioneers will have three individuals competing Saturday: Nate Terpstra, Brian Graham and Rob Kilpatrick.