

CROCKETT RUNNERS COMPETE AGAINST THE BEST

By Ron Barry

Julie Nass likes to put her Crockett County cross-country teams up against the best possible competition.

That's why both the boys and girls squads were entered in Saturday's City Auto Twilight Run at the Rose Soccer Complex in Memphis, an event that hosts many of the premier distance runners from several neighboring states. Nass enters her teams in the meet every year even though she knows that a high team finish – or one by an individual, for that matter – is a low probability.

“One of the reasons we go is to find out exactly what we've got,” she said earlier in the week, fighting through some personal congestion in the West Tennessee humidity. “The best of the best will be there, so we'll just see how we do.”

How they did was this: the girls finished 35th out of 42 complete teams, and the boys placed 53rd out of 61 full squads. That may not sound very impressive until you consider that many of the best teams they'll run against during the regular season don't even bother to enter the Memphis event because they know they won't do well. Give Nass points for not ducking any challenges.



The quality of the field is illustrated by the fact that the victorious school in both high school 5,000-meter races was Rock Bridge High School of Columbia, Missouri, a program that churns out collegiate scholarship runners like an assembly-line machine. The boys individual winner – Andrew Hauser of Rock Bridge – covered the distance in just 15:16.95, a full three minutes ahead of Crockett's top racer Angel Garcia. And Garcia is no slouch.

The girls event was captured by Emma Wade of Vista Ridge High in Cedar Park, Texas – yes, Texas – and she was nearly five minutes faster than the Lady Cavaliers' Claire Evans, who regularly medals in more local contests.

It hasn't helped Crockett's race preparation that its most recent meet in Lexington had been canceled by extreme heat conditions, so the runners hadn't been in an official event since an early Jamboree race at Union University. Still, Garcia and Evans distinguished themselves by finishing in the top half of the racers in their respective contests.

Garcia ran a time of 18:24.10 to finish 147th out of 470 total participants in the boys event. Lane Foster was next-best in 310th, followed by Jacob Wede (350), Aidan Klonowski (397), Noah Mayfield (434), and Leck Lucky (437), flowing through the mass of humanity.

In the girls race, Evans posted a 23:03.84 to place 145th out of 326 runners. Freshman Avery Thornton wasn't far behind in 171st, recording a time of 23:49.87. Also competing for Crockett were Casey Thornton (260), Kristin Lewis (264), Leyla Silva (268), Olivia Mann (286), and Ashley Boone (295).

The Cavalier runners return to action Thursday afternoon in a meet at the Milan Ag Center at 4:30.