

LADY CAV CROSS-COUNTRY TEAM THIRD-BEST FROM WEST TN AT STATE MEET



Above: Concluding her cross-country career was Kristin Lewis, also Crockett soccer's top scorer, who will now turn her attention to the spring track season.



Above: Freshman Avery Thornton (left) tries to break out of a pack of runners within the first two miles of Friday's race.

By Ron Barry

She didn't get the final team placement overall that she was hoping for, but Crockett County cross-country coach Julie Nass can't be too disappointed in what her team accomplished at the TSSAA Girls State Championships Friday in Hendersonville.

Nass, who continues to build an impressive running program at Crockett in both cross-country and track – despite not even having a track for practice purposes or meets – was cautiously optimistic that perhaps her Lady Cavaliers could produce a higher finish than the 21st position they achieved a year ago.

But while that was not to be – Crockett placed 25th overall out of the 31 full teams competing – her relatively young squad was the third-best unit from West Tennessee in a sport that continues to be dominated by schools from East and Middle Tennessee. Nass faced a season-long challenge of piecing together a team that had to share half of its racers with the Crockett soccer program, yet still finished second at the Region 7 A-AA meet to qualify for the State for the second straight year.

The State race – held over a 5,000-meter layout (3.1 miles) at Sanders Ferry Park in Hendersonville – had 249 total runners, thundering over a rock-hard path which was obviously suffering from Tennessee's state-wide lack of rain this fall. Consequently, few racers had their best day, despite reasonable temperatures and the adrenaline that comes from competing in your sport's biggest event.

At the end of the day, Signal Mountain was the team champion, followed by Station Camp (of Gallatin), Alcoa, David Crockett High School (the East Tennessee one), and Liberty Creek (also of Gallatin). Obion County Central, which dominates West Tennessee, was a distant ninth overall. The only other squad to fit itself in between Obion and Crockett County was Camden Central, a school that emphasizes the sport.

But the Lady Cavs topped Lexington, Covington, and Brighton – the other three West Tennessee teams in the field – and did so with four underclassmen among its seven competitors.

Sophomore Claire Evans led the way, as she has done all season, by posting a time of 22:13.43 and a placement of 71st. Junior Harmony Walker was next in 165th (24:43.07), followed by senior Casey Thornton in 167th (24:46.54), freshman Avery Thornton in 173rd (24:57.95), freshman Olivia Mann in 185th (25:45.23), senior captain Leyla Silva in 191st (26:03.30), and senior Kristin Lewis in 203rd (26:38.04). Ashley Boone, Leah Moore, and Miley Silva are three other Lady Cav runners who will return next season.

The State race's individual champion was Sydney Tackett of Liberty Creek, who recorded a time of 18:26.54. She was 13 seconds better than runner-up Brynn Balturshot of Station Camp and 21 seconds ahead of third-place finisher Ava Moody of Anderson County. West Tennessee's top racer was Obion's Olyvia Underwood in 21st, posting a 20:24.16 timing. Brenley Little of Greenfield was 26th, Klicey Campbell of Obion was 30th, and Halle Trevathan of Westview was 32nd.

Crockett's runners will now turn their attention to practicing for the spring track season. Nass has qualified a relay team for the State meet for the past two years.



Above: Another freshman, Olivia Mann (center), was Crockett's fifth-place finisher in the State meet.

Right: Casey Thornton, who also plays soccer for the Lady Cavs, was Crockett's top senior finisher in the State meet.



Right: Sophomore Claire Evans pulls away from two competitors with about 500 meters to go in the State cross-country meet Friday. Evans was Crockett's top finisher.

Left: Next for Crockett was junior Harmony Walker (right), dueling for position on the backside of the course.



Right: Senior captain Leyla Silva (right) ran her final cross-country race for Crockett in the State meet.

