

HIGH SCHOOL & MIDDLE SCHOOL XC TEAMS OPTIMISTIC AFTER OPENING JAMBOREE

By Ron Barry

The life of a long-distance runner can sometimes be a lonely one.

Pounding the pavement of back roads or the undulating hills of a grass course – often in temperatures blowing past 90 degrees – isn't for everybody. But that's what it takes to prepare for a "fall" season that begins during the infamous "dog days" of summer. And these training runs must often be made alone, either because of various schedules or, truth be told, some athletes are willing to work harder than others.

Even then, these dedicated runners have no accurate way – other than seeing if they can better their own personal times each session – to know how they'll fare against competitors from other schools until there's an actual organized race. A training run can tell you if you're improving, but it can't tell you if the racers you'll be competing against have been working just as hard or harder than you have.

So the first organized race of the new school year is a barometer of where everybody stands. And after Saturday's West Tennessee Jamboree at Jackson State Community College, Crockett County cross-country coaches Julie Nass (high school) and Deanda Manning (middle school) both found reasons to smile broadly.

For Nass, it begins with the off-season efforts put forth by sophomore Alivia Hale and senior Aidan Klonowski.

"Alivia and Aidan ran the most summer miles, with both getting over 300 in training," Nass said.

"Their hard work showed up today as they led each of our teams. Both of them were actually fifth overall among Class AA runners today, so they are both looking to be leaders in our Region this year."

Hale, one of seven Lady Cavalier athletes who are doubling up between cross-country and soccer this fall, finished 28th overall in a race of 175 runners which included a host of the area's best AAA teams. And none of the seven dual-sport athletes is a senior, and only one – Avery Thornton – is a junior. Nass had eight runners overall to finish the girls 3K-course, and four of them are freshmen: Caroline Scruggs, Marley Thornton, Catherine Scruggs, and Hannah Wede.

Of course, Nass still has senior Claire Evans as a mainstay on the squad, and she finished 42nd overall, just ahead of Avery Thornton's 44th. That helped Crockett's overall score place sixth among the 17 schools that fielded complete teams.

"The girls' sixth-place finish was great," Nass said, "but among Division 1-AA schools, they were first. So everyone was very excited. The girls' goal was for everyone to run the 3K in under 20 minutes, and they all did!"

While the boys team didn't match the overall success of the girls, Nass was still impressed with Klonowski's showing of 37th overall out of 236 runners.

"For the boys, we were hoping to get everyone under 14 minutes for the 3K," Nass said.

"Our top three made it easily, and our next three got very close." Nass saluted sophomore Uriel Diaz (104th overall) and junior Hutson Stephens (115th) for running great races Saturday. The Cavaliers were 14th of the 18 full teams that competed.

Individual winners of the high school races were Dresden freshman Hudson McDaniel, who captured the girls' title in 11:27.1, and Westview senior Jack Mantooth, the boys' champion in 9:29.6. Houston High School of Memphis won both team titles for the day.

Nass was also optimistic because she witnessed the possibility of a bright future as Manning's middle school teams also showed promise in their respective 2K races, led by Cav runner José Aguirre, who was fourth out of 204 participants to pace the CCMS boys to a fourth-place team finish. Aguirre posted a time of 6:59.1, just 37 seconds behind overall champion Declan Murphy of University Middle School.

Aguirre led a contingent of 13 Cav runners, who combined to defeat squads representing schools such as Collierville, South Gibson, University, Lake Road, Martin, Dresden, JCs, and TCA, among others. Besides Aguirre, four others placed in the top 70: Lucas Morales (19th), Caleb Ferguson (21st), Jaaziel Perez (56th), and Harrison Duvall (70th). Two more – Reed Eison and Gabe Williams – were in the next group of ten.

Crockett's girls' squad – which includes three seventh-graders and three sixth-graders among its 12 competitors from Saturday – was 12th overall, sparked by Kenzleigh Gooch, who was 57th out of 149 racers. Colbie Clement placed 67th, Maria Stewart 85th, Kamryn Baggett 87th, and Kori Hail 98th for the Lady Cavs in the top 100.

Complete results of teams and Crockett individuals from Saturday:

HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS TEAMS: (1) Houston 39; (2) Collierville 52; (3) Arlington 128; (4) Dresden 130; (5) University 141; (6) Crockett County 192; (7) Camden 216; (White Station 224; (9) Memphis-Area Home Education 251; (10) Hutchison 263; (11) Chester County 299; (12) USJ 358; (13) Millington 364; (14) West TN Home Education 374; (15) Hardin County 396; (16) TCA 407; (17) Madison Academic 421. Crockett Individuals: (28) Alivia Hale 13:38.1; (42) Claire Evans 14:23.8; (44) Avery Thornton 14:35.9; (61) Caroline Scruggs 15:35.1; (62) Marley Thornton 15:35.2; (117) Catherine Scruggs 18:03.6; (131) Kate Davis 18:49.6; (136) Hannah Wede 19:03.7. Total Runners: 175.

HIGH SCHOOL BOYS TEAMS: (1) Houston 32; (2) Collierville 98; (3) Arlington 109; (4) University 159; (5) Dresden 165; (6) Union City 170; (7) Madison Academic 188; (White Station 196; (9) Chester County 249; (10) Westview 253; (11) South Gibson 319; (12) USJ 333; (13) Munford 373; (14) Crockett County 390; (15) McEwen 392; (16) Memphis-Area Home Education 401; (17) Hardin County 494; (18) TCA 543. Crockett Individuals: (37) Aidan Klonowski 11:07.9; (104) Uriel Diaz 12:36.4; (115) Hutsen Stephens 12:49.7; (168) Leck Lucky 14:01.4; (169) Mase Utley 14:03.2; (182) Jose Diaz 14:23.0. Total Runners: 236.

MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS TEAMS: (1) Dresden 30; (2) Collierville 100; (3) Martin 109; (4) Lake Road 114; (5) South Gibson 130; (6) West Collierville 134; (7) McEwen 137; (Maxine Smith STEAM Academy 209; (9) Community Montessori 270; (10) West TN Home Education 272; (11) Memphis-Area Home Education 289; (12) Crockett County 308. Crockett Individuals: (57) Kenzleigh Gooch 9:43.3; (67) Colbie Clement 9:57.6; (85) Maria Stewart 10:15.3; (87) Kamryn Baggett 10:20.3; (98) Kori Hail 10:47.1; (132) Madison Zabriskie 12:54.5; (133) Saniya Walker 13:07.7; (136)

Mary Reid Hutcherson 13:20.7; (137) Keeley Walls 13:29.5; (144) Lynslee Crews 13:47.3; (145) Ja'Riah Byrum 13:53.3; (146) Britzel Perez 13:55.3. Total Runners: 149.

MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS TEAMS: (1) West Collierville 58; (2) Augustine 132; (3) Memphis-Area Home Education 138; (4) Crockett County 150; (5) Maxine Smith STEAM Academy 170; (6) Collierville 189; (7) South Gibson 206; (University 223; (9) Lake Road 225; (10) Martin 246; (11) Dresden 295; (12) Community Montessori 309; (13) JCS 325; (14) Scotts Hill 337; (15) West TN Home Education 370; (16) McEwen 406; (17) TCA 416. Crockett Individuals: (4) José Aguirre 6:59.1; (19) Lucas Morales 7:37.5; (21) Caleb Ferguson 7:38.6; (56) Jaaziel Perez 8:27.3; (70) Harrison Duvall 8:35.8; (79) Reid Eison 8:42.3; (80) Gabe Williams 8:43.7; (116) Davis Manning 9:14.5; (153) Mason Claybrooks 10:01.7; (171) Szabi Gulyas 10:27.5; (177) Levi Gulyas 10:44.2; (193) Sebastian Sammons 12:29.8; (199) Israel Pena 13:03.5. Total Runners: 204.



Above: Crockett's high school girls, led by sophomore Alivia Hale (#340), take off on the starter's gun for the 3K West Tennessee Jamboree Saturday. (Photo by Terry Thornton)



Above: Lady Cavalier senior Claire Evans posted a solid 42nd-place finish Saturday (out of 175 racers) to help Crockett to sixth place in the team standings, but best among Class AA schools. (Photo by Terry Thornton)

Below: Crockett junior Avery Thornton pulls away from a USJ runner down the stretch to earn a 44th-place finish, the third Lady Cav in the top 50 Saturday at Jackson State Community College. (Photo by Terry Thornton)



Above: José Aguirre placed fourth overall out of 204 runners in the middle school division, leading the CCMS squad to a fourth-place finish overall among 17 teams. (Photo by Deanda Manning)

Below: The CCMS boys finished fourth as a team Saturday at the West Tennessee Jamboree, providing optimism for the rest of the season to come. (Photo by Deanda Manning)

