

Boys' cross country

# Returners, rookies ready to run

## Runner-up

## Charleston

## Invitational

By STACEY LAFEBER

Citizen correspondent

With nine of 10 letter winners returning and a record number of rookies in a decade, the Mather-Seymour boys' cross-country squad is ready to run the 2010 season right on past 2009. "Thanks to our older runners setting the standard of running 400-500 miles over the summer, we now have many of our freshmen running 250-450 miles over the summer," ninth-year coach Neal Garrison said. "It takes a lot of commitment, sacrifice, and suffering to run that many miles. As a result, these same freshmen are entering in very good physical and mental shape before the season has started."

Returning letter winners in 2009 include seniors Evan Forbes and John Prillaman; juniors Daniel Lewis and Lucas Prather; and sophomores Robert Butler, Jonathan Schap and Ryne Swenson. Prillaman's and Prather's efforts placed them in the area's top 20 best times, earning them all-area honorable mention and conference honors for the area's third-rated team and Corn Belt Conference runner-up.

Prather also picked up both the team's most valuable and Brent Johnson "True Grit" awards, while Lewis was named most improved.

The other letter winner from last season, sophomore Ryan Pin-

Neal Garrison —  
Coach on returning players

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tar, was prevented from running due to a medical condition.

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Butcher, Lewis, Prather and Schap posted over 500 miles this summer, one of the criteria to receive captain's status.

Ten freshmen joined the Bulldogs this season: Kyle Appleguis, Christopher Carlton, Nathaniel Cebulski, Jeffery Coburn, Kurt Kupferschmid, Daniel Middledorf, Ethan Russell, Forrest Smoes, Dhairav Vakil and James Williams.

Russell and Smoes have been running in the team's top seven. Appleguis, Carlton and Vakil have been running in the top ten. "I must give a lot of credit to both the junior high cross-country and track coaches for how they take great care of their runners and how they make kids love running," Garrison said. "In particular, Tom Appenzeller and Lisa Martin, our junior high cross-country coaches, have really done a fabulous job getting the junior high runners to learn how to both work extremely hard as well as enjoy running."

Now it is up to the returners in nurturing the rookies, so as to have a chance in sustaining the team's marks of No. 2 in the area and No. 14 in Class 2A and at least yet another second place in the conference to Normal University.

"Each year our goal for our team is for us to improve as individuals and as a team," Garrison said. "In both areas we improved. Our team has been getting slightly better each year for the past nine years."

Nathan Seal returns for his seventh year as an assistant coach, while Todd Lafond returns for his second year as a volunteer assistant. Gary Garrison joins the staff as a volunteer assistant.

Full speed ahead.

"We opened the season with our strongest times ever in this invitational," Garrison noted of Mather's five-year tenure there.

Six Bulldogs gained a spot in the top 25 of 69 total runners to earn medals: Prather seventh (16:02), Johnson 11th (16:28), Schap 13th (16:32), Butcher 15th (16:34), Smoes 18th (16:53) and Russell 25th (17:26).

Invited September 4, barely getting finish at the ten-team Charleston start the season with a runner-up of guys." Their dedication paid off to a top strength of this group team doing well. Their dedication is a top strength of this group because they love the sport. They run because they care about their team doing well. Their dedication is a top strength of this group of guys."