



# 2A Boys Cross Country Team Countdown

## RAYMOND LEWIS

Illinois XC 2015:  
Preseason Preview  
Series  
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**The race to the top spot will be furious and fast come November (Colin Boyle)**

story by Ray Lewis  
([raymond.j.lewis@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:raymond.j.lewis@vanderbilt.edu)); twitter:  
[@raymilesplitil](https://twitter.com/raymilesplitil)

This concludes the rankings for 2A Boys Cross Country. These are not predictions for the state meet, but simply a forecast of what there is to come this season in 2A in Illinois. Mahomet-Seymour may win state, or a team ranked in the top 10, or 25, or maybe a team that we neglected to mention completely in these previews. The beauty of this sport is how it rewards runners and teams with grit and dedication in their

training, and all this beauty is truly impossible to predict. We hope to keep all this 'preseason hype in its rightful order; but we also hope you are as excited about this season as we are!

## **10. Belvidere (North)**

**Coach:** Troy Yunk

**Last Year's Finish:** 7th at Kaneland Sectional

### **Key returners:**

Eryk Yunk (Sr.): (14:53)

Eli Walker (Jr.): (15:54,4:29)

Alec Scott (So.): (16:22,9:58)

Alec Beutel (Sr.): (15:51,10:39)

Max Vittore (Sr.): (16:45)

Will Palmer (Sr.): (16:26)

Jared Ellingson (Jr.): (16:30,10:08)

**Team outlook:** Typical 2A powerhouse Belvidere North missed out on the state meet last year, finishing 7th in the crowded Kaneland sectional. Last year I thought we were ready to qualify for state," says coach Troy Yunk. "But we did not get 5 guys to step up when we ran at the tough Kaneland Sectional." North brings back some major players though and will make a serious run back to Detweiller. Eryk Yunk (7th) returns for his senior season with a new mindset, says Troy: "Finishing 10th at 3A State in the 3200 has motivated him to work a little harder this summer. I have seen him become a lot more focused and his mother has forced him to log his miles every week." Eli Walker has trained with Eryk and has put in a strong summer, expect him to be the #2 runner. Alec Scott (4:33 as a frosh), Alex Beutel, Max Vittore, Will Palmer and Jared Ellingson all return as runners prepared to contribute on the varsity level, and

Belvidere North will look to get further than they did last year. Yunk: "We could be a top 15 team in the state, but we might not get there if we can't handle the pressure of running well at our Sectional.

## **9. Oak Park (Fenwick)**

**Coach:** David Rill

**Last Year's Finish:** 13th at Niles West Sectional (3A)

### **Key returners:**

Alex Marks (Jr.): (15:44,9:59,4:50,2:05)

Emmitt Mcenery (So.): (15:46)

Jack Darrow (Jr.): (15:54,10:10,4:31)

Thomas MuHugh (So.): (10:03)

Riley Mullen (Sr.): (16:03,10:11,4:44)

Patrick Barnett (Jr.): (16:15,4:54)

Jack Gihl (Jr.): (16:40,5:09)

Joe Cozzi (Sr.): (16:41,4:59)

**Team outlook:**The Friars are one of the newcomers to 2A this fall, and bring a young, maturing team who ran one of the strongest frosh-soph teams in the Chicagoland area last in 2014 to the state competition this year.

Although there are no frontrunners, Fenwick's pack will be deep. Alex Marks (9:59), Emmitt Mcenery and Jack Darrow were last year's pack leaders and return to make a similar impact as well. They will be very closely followed by Thomas McHugh, Riley Mullen, Patrick Barnett, Jack Gihl and Joe Cozzi. Although young, the Friars will be competing for a Chicago Catholic League championship and will try to navigate a typically weak Chicagoland sectional to find their way to Peoria. Coach Rill: "Summer training went very well. We had a good turnout and put in a lot of good work. We feel that since we moved

down to 2A this year, we have a good shot at bringing the team downstate.”

### **8. Crystal Lake (Prairie Ridge)**

**Coach:** Judd Shutt

**Last Year's Finish:** 12th at 2A State

Filip Pajak (Jr.): (15:04)

Mike Ostrow (Jr.): (15:37)

Tyler Figgins (Sr.): (16:06)

David Tulke (Jr.): (16:33)

James Lasak (So.): (16:45)

Austin Nobbe (So.): (17:26)

Jake Hanacek (Jr.): (18:28)

Brian Dorn (Jr.): (17:43)

**Team outlook:** Prairie Ridge helped demonstrate the strength of the Kaneland sectional last year; although they were the final qualifier, the Wolves placed in the top half (12th) of the state meet and bring back a young squad to try to improve on that mark. Coach Judd Shutt tells us about the forecast for the team: “Four of the athletes who competed at the state meet last season return, & hope to maintain their varsity position. Filip Pajak looks to compete with the state's elite 2A runners. Competition for the remaining varsity positions should remain interesting throughout the entire season with 8 to 10 runners feasibly working to grab a spot. We need several of our bodies who ran somewhere in the 6-10 positions for us last year to make a challenge for the #2 job.” Pajak (24th) was the sixth of six All-State sophomores last year. Mike Ostrow (59th), Tyler Figgins (111th), David Tulke (157th), James Lasak, Austin Nobbe, Jake Hanacek and Brian Dorn will all help Prairie

Ridge return to the state meet, out of the tough northern Illinois sectional, but first will focus on improving themselves preseason. "We focus on a new team identity each year. Regardless of the number of returners, each group of boys has to "become a team" before they can identify clear goals. We will live in the moment for the first month of the official season. I do hope that we have at least 10 boys who have a legitimate shot at earning a spot on the varsity 7."

## **7. Vernon Hills**

**Coach:** Mark Whitney

**Last Year's Finish:** 7th at 2A State

### **Key returners:**

Shane Williamson (Jr.): (14:37,9:32,4:33)

Tim Krashevsky (Jr.): (15:57,4:38,1:56)

Alex Geier (Sr.): (15:58,10:21)

Trevor Moyers (Sr.): (16:04,10:30)

Caleb Ju (Sr.): (16:07,10:22)

Bryan Castellanos (Sr.):

Nick Mohrdieck (Jr.): INCOMING (17:18  
Detweiller at Dark 2015)

Zak Baumann (So.): (16:58)

Sam Laneman (Sr.): (16:41)

**Team outlook:** Vernon Hills loses their 2nd and 3rd runners from a 7th place finish last year but return everyone else and add some new talent. Shane Williamson is your #1 returner in 2A this year. Williamson gave chase to the Hofferts and ran a brave race, finishing third just a few seconds off the twin duo. Now he is an upperclassman and leads the Cougars once again. Tim Krashevsky (94th) finished 3rd in the 2A 800 state championship and shows serious range as a potential returning scorer. Alex Geier (98th), Trevor Moyers (105th) and Caleb Ju

(124th) give Vernon Hills five total runners with state experience. The addition of Nick Mohrdieck adds potential depth to the varsity scorers, and look for Bryan Castellanos, Zak Baumann, and Sam Laneman to supplement the whole varsity team. Coach Mark Whitney recognizes the talent and attitude his team has. "The summer training has been all positive; guys are healthy, motivated and ready for the season. With five of the top seven runners returning from 2014 (7th at State Final) and more experience at the State meet, our goal is to compete for a trophy on November 7th." If this talented team closes the gap behind Williamson, a trophy can be well within reach for the Cougars.

## **6. Springfield (H.S.)**

**Coach:** Dan Devlin

**Last Year's Finish:** 4th at 2A State

### **Key returners:**

Heath Warren (Sr.): (15:13,4:09,1:52)

Logan Besalke (Sr.): (15:37,10:41)

JD Kropid (Sr.): (15:55,10:37,4:36)

Reece Koke (Jr.): (15:59,10:47)

Evan Northrup (Sr.): (16:08,4:39)

Matt Waldinger (Sr.): (16:19)

Jack More (Sr.): (17:02)

**Team outlook:** The Senators watched Illiana Christian hoist the third-place trophy after the 2014 state meet, finishing just 15 points off of the podium. Springfield was the only team in the top 14 not to be represented by an All-State runner, but they made up by displaying the tightest scoring split in 2A: 42 seconds. Eric Wise and Mike Neposchlan graduate and leave a slight vacancy in the top seven, but the vacancy is just that: slight. Springfield returns five of their

seven from the state meet and their pack will run for an even tighter split as they aim for the podium this year. Heath Warren (28th) had an incredible track season at the mid distances and his top-end speed make him a dark horse candidate for the state title. Logan Besalke (58th), JD Kropoid (90th), Reece Koke (99th), and Evan Northrup (112th) return with state meet experience and will be backed up by Matt Waldinger and Jack More.

## **5. Darien (Hinsdale South)**

**Coach:** Jim Dickerson

**Last Year's Finish:** 9th at 2A State

### **Key returners:**

Charlie Nodus (Sr.): (14:53,9:17,4:22)

Roman Drabchuk (Sr.): (15:02,9:38,4:15)

Tristan Ramirez (Sr.): (16:15,10:51)

Chris Joseph (Jr.): (16:18,10:20)

Brett Haffner (So.): (15:59,10:16)

Trevor Schauer (So.): (16:44,11:22)

Brian Jordan (Sr.): (17:39)

**Team outlook:** When reviewing track performances from the 2015 season, there is one teammate duo from all three division that pops out immediately: Hinsdale South's Charlie Nodus and Roman Drabchuk. Hinsdale South's athletes competed in 3A this past spring and found scoring in two distance events. Nodus finished 9th in the 3200, and carries a 9:17 personal best as well. Drabchuk finished 6th in the 1600 with a 4:15 performance. Both were All-State at Detweiller in 2014, and both are returning this year. The Hornet's incredible firepower at the front is an asset, but if they want to chase a trophy, the supporting cast will have to provide as well. Tristan Ramirez (130th),

Chris Joseph (136th) and Trevor Schauer (171st) are the returning state qualifying athletes but the returning split is almost 2:00, which will have to come down. Hinsdale South will receive from sophomore transfer Brett Haffner, who will have to nurse an injury before making an impact. Coach Jim Dickerson: "The summer has been very solid for the core group of young men. They are committed and consistent, and the leadership has done a good job in getting guys together for runs on days I don't see them." Hinsdale South has some of the frontrunning power that other schools do not have, and although there is a lot of work to be done, the potential is very high, and Dickerson knows it. "My main summer goal is to have my guys get out the door and be consistent. The State meet is in November, not August, so I'm not in a hurry to have them super sharp. Having said that, it helps to have some goals getting you out of bed in the morning, and I would say the main two are a [Western Suburban Gold] conference championship and State trophy."

#### **4. Metamora**

**Coach:** Gene Jones

**Last Year's Finish:** 5th at 2A State

**Key returners:**

Jake Gillum (Jr.): (15:02,4:22)

John Crotteau (Sr.): (15:37,9:57,4:39)

Matt Crotteau (Sr.): (16:04,10:35)

Nick Koval (So.): (16:31,11:02)

Seth Gunter (Sr.): (16:29)

Ryan Meyer (So.): (16:52)

Ross Stanley: (16:55)

**Team outlook:**



Metamora was the fourth ranked 2A team in our computer rankings and is the fourth ranked team in the subjective rankings as well. The Redbirds face the challenge of replacing their 2nd, 3rd and 4th scorers from last year's fifth place team at the state meet due to graduation and look to an array of pack seniors and sophomores to get the job done. Jake Gillum (23rd) is a returning all-state runner from the strong class of 2017, and after his track season (4:22 1600), several rival coaches have Gillum pegged for a dark horse candidate for the individual state championship. He will be followed by John Crotteau (103rd), Matt Crotteau (145th) and Nick Koval (154th) from last year's state squad. Metamora's program has increased its depth and ability to develop strong varsity runners especially over the last two or three years; the Redbirds will have to develop a small handful of other varsity runners to maintain their top 5 spot come November, however. Seth Gunter, Ryan Meyer and Ross Stanley are the first candidates to round out the top seven but Metamora is a proven team that can, and will, run with whoever its competition is come November. Look for Metamora to finish in the top 10 for the third straight year.

### **3. Yorkville**

**Coach:** Chris Muth

**Last Year's Finish:** 1st in 2A State

**Key returners:**

Trevor Wills (Sr.): (15:13,9:40)

Zack Price (So.): (15:35,10:12)

Alexx Nauman (Jr): (15:38,9:59)

Cody Hornyak (Sr.): (15:53)

Jake Firrantello (Jr.): (16:10)

Thor Hester (Sr.): (16:02,10:18)

Patrick Black (So.): (16:16)

Alex Loos (Fr.): INCOMING

### **Team outlook:**

The defending state champions compete now in the first year after the graduation of **Jake** and **Luke Hoffert**, now Bradley University student-athletes. This is a much different looking team now that they will likely not be grabbing both the 1 and 2 scoring sticks at the state meet and the typical leaders on the team. This does not mean the Foxes will not compete for a state title, however; the Hofferts are the only runners coach Muth and Yorkville lose from last year's state championship team and Muth expects competition for the scoring spots to motivate the mid-pack runners on the team. Trevor Wills (29th) is the top returner and will be running for an All-State spot. Zack Price (53rd), Alexx Nauman (64th) and Cody Hornyak (87th) are the returning top 100 runners, and the scoring should be filled out by Jake Firrantello (118th), Thor Hester, Patrick Black and incoming freshman Alex Loos. For Coach Muth, a different looking team means a different approach: "The biggest challenge this year is losing the Hoffert twins to graduation and trying to find our identity without them and filling the leadership void that has been created. We have been scaling back this year on intensity, and really been focusing on putting in base mileage to this point." However, it does not mean different aspirations: "Our goal never changes and is always the same every year. We strive to train hard, stay healthy and going into the state meet be in the conversation to be a top five team." The two-time defending state champions may not be the preseason favorites but we will not see them relinquish the state trophy easily.

## **[2. Grayslake \(Central\)](#)**

**Coach:** Jimmy Centella

**Last Year's Finish:** 6th at 2A State

**Key returners:**

Jack Aho (Jr.): (14:54,9:12,4:20)

Matt Aho (Jr.): (9:39,4:35)

John Girmscheid (Sr.): (10:00)

Jack Battaglia (Sr.): (15:25)

Eli Minsky (So.): (15:58)

Danny Vincent (Sr.): (16:09)

**Team outlook:**

One of the great surprises of last year's state track meet in Illinois was Jack Aho's third place finish behind **Jesse Reiser** and **Irwin Loud**, running 9:12 and placing himself squarely in the middle of the conversation for a possible state championship in 2A Cross Country in 2015. Like 2014, Jack Aho will be the Rams' top runner this year. Unlike last year, however, Jack Aho will be joined by his twin brother Matt Aho, a converted soccer player who logged a 9:39 3200 in track and immediately adds possible All-State firepower to Central's arsenal and could have a 1-2 punch that rivals any other in the state. Jack Battaglia (37th), John Girmscheid (89th), Eli Minsky (96th, 4:30 1600 as a freshman) and Danny Vincent (113th) all return from the 6th place team at 2A state last year. This deep squad makes the challenging Fox Valley Conference even tougher. Coach Centella is excited for this year with Central: "We were sixth last year and hope to improve upon that. With the addition of Matt Aho, and returning 5 other athletes from last year's state meet, we think we can improve upon last year's finish. As long as we work hard and guys run PRs, that goal should be within reach. However we can only control ourselves and not the other teams. Ultimately as long as we get better week to week and improve our times from last year, we cannot help but define that as a successful season."

## **1. Mahomet (M.-Seymour)**

**Coach:** Neil Garrison

**Last Year's Finish:** 2nd in 2A State

### **Key returners:**

Alex Keeble (Sr.): (14:49,9:23,4:28)

Andrew Walmer (Jr.): (15:28,9:58,4:42)

Jack Hyde (Jr.): (15:37,10:29)

Ben Craw (Jr.): (15:41)

Gabe Pommier (Jr.): (15:53 in 2013)

Brian Butcher (Jr.): (15:42)

Riley Fortune (So.): (15:48)

### **Team outlook:**

Last year's runner-up from just to the west of Champaign returns six of their runners from state 2014 and an additional one from their 2013 state team. Alex Keeble (4th) is the top returning senior in the state and will be one of the favorites to win the individual title this year. Every other returner from last year was top 80: Andrew Walmer (41st), Jack Hyde (60th), Ben Craw (67th), Brian Butcher (69th), and Riley Fortune (78th), and this kind of depth is currently unmatched in the state. Coach Garrison believes the depth of his team can yield many other runners to the top seven. But the Bulldogs have their focus on developing the plan throughout the year. "I haven't set my training plan for this season yet," coach Garrison explains. "I will wait and see how good of shape they are in during the first weeks of practice and where they stand mentally (desire and confidence)." The goals will stay conservative for now as well. "I would love to see our team qualify for State again this year. From what I have heard about their summer training I think they have a chance to be in the top 10 and if all goes well in the top 5 teams at State. However, there are so many strong teams throughout the State it would be foolish to

underestimate their desire to also be in the top 10 teams." Still, the Bulldogs have exciting roster depth and will enter this season as MileSplit's #1 ranked team in Boys 2A... a top ranked team who will be graduating only one of their top seven returners in 2016.

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## COMMENTS

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MileSplit Illinois Editor: Tony Jones, [tjones@milesplit.com](mailto:tjones@milesplit.com)

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