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Fun runs

With several area teams in contention for high finishes at the state meet, here are a few of the top meets of the year, courtesy of preps coordinator ANTHONY ZILIS:

Richard Spring Invite, Saturday — Three of our top four teams — Mahomet-Seymour, St. Joseph-Ogden and Monticello — head to Detweiller Park in Peoria, the site of the state meet, to square off against some of Illinois' best. No. 10 St. Thomas More will also make an appearance along with Rantoul.

Spartan Classic, Sept. 26 — Top 10 teams Urbana Uni High, Monticello, Unity, PBL and St. Joseph-Ogden all take part in one of the biggest local meets of the year.

Twin City Championship, Oct. 6 — The six high schools in Champaign and Urbana come together to fight for Twin City bragging rights.

Oakwood/Armstrong-Potomac's Jon Davis, who won the Class 1A state cross-country championship last season, is seeking even bigger goals this season. The senior might have a realistic shot at Craig Virgin's state-meet record of 13 minutes, 50.6 seconds, which was set in 1972.

Darrell Hoemann/for The News-Gazette



DAVIS

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While he's attempting to break 14 minutes, Davis said, he might as well go for the all-time state-meet record of 13:50.6 set by former Olympian and former Illini Craig Virgin in 1972.

That projection may seem outlandish, but Davis has shown a history of reaching his goals. Last year he hit his target time on the money.

"It was really impressive to watch because I think that was a 20-second PR," O/A-P coach Damon Ehrett said. "There's a reason Craig Virgin's record has been around for so long, but no one works harder than Jon Davis, and I really think the possibility is there."

But that isn't even his ultimate goal. Davis, who said he will announce his college

N-G Top 10: Boys' cross-country

| TEAM | COMMENT |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Mahomet-Seymour | Returns five of top seven |
| 2. Unity | Returns entire top seven |
| 3. St. Joseph-Ogden | Returns six of top seven |
| 4. Monticello | Returns four of top seven |
| 5. Danville | Returns five of top seven |
| 6. Champaign Central | Returns five of top seven |
| 7. Paxton-Buckley-Loda | Returns six of top seven |
| 8. Urbana Uni | Returns six of top seven |
| 9. Clinton | Returns five of top seven |
| 10. St. Thomas More | Returns six of top seven |

choice on Nov. 11, finished in 37th place in the 5K Foot Locker National Championships in 16:28, a disappointment despite the fact that he was sick.

In 2015, he's shooting higher.

"I want to win it this year," he said.

Because the pinnacle of his final cross-country season doesn't arrive until November, early-season races are still considered somewhat of a preseason for

Davis. But they're important for a reason that didn't exist in years prior.

Last year, Davis didn't technically have a team to run with because O/A-P's collection of three runners didn't meet the requirement of five runners to score. Because of that, he took meets off when it fit with his training plan. This year, that's not the case. Davis will run in most of his team's scheduled meets, aside from a few weekends

when he'll run in races with the state's top runners. During many of them, he said, he'll run like the races are workouts instead of running all-out, which should be good enough to notch a first-place score to help the team total.

Running with a team hasn't only affected his schedule.

While he still runs alone during most of the workouts, he begins runs with a gaggle of 14 runners for about half a mile before taking off at his own pace, and road trips are no longer silent.

While solitude is crucial to his success, it will be limited to races and runs.

"There will be sound on the bus," Davis said. "It won't be silent, with two or three people talking. ... Being my senior year, I think it's the perfect environment to end on."