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**3A Boys**

There were three teams that enter into the 3A Top 25 after the first full weekend of meets. One of the biggest surprises was the third place finish by **Wheaton-Warrenville South** at the Hornet-Red Devil Invitational. They move into #12 this week. Their formula is simple under new coach Chris Kuntz: just run as a pack. They did that with vigor in this race having four runners within nine seconds of each other. Kyle Thompson led the way placing 11<sup>th</sup>. The key over the next few weeks is closing the gap down from their #4 runner Sean Maison and the #5 spot. In the Hinsdale meet, the overall five runner split was 42 seconds. The good thing is that they have a pack of three runners within six seconds of each other.

**Hersey** is new in the rankings at #13 and should stay within the top 25 the rest of the season. The Huskies were extremely impressive in winning the John Kurtz Early Bird Invite at Fenton winning 43-132 over #23 Oak Park-River Forest. The lineup that they had on varsity led by individual winner Jacob Krupa had a split on their top five of only 29 seconds. They do have help on the lower levels as sophomore Ryan Buch and freshman Josh Methner finished 1-2 in the sophomore race. They would have been the #2 and #3 runners on the Varsity level giving the five runner split at a tight 18 second split. We will see how this team is in comparison to some of the other big guns at Peoria on 9/17 and then the following week at Palatine. In the past years, Hersey Coach Jay Renaud has not moved star frosh/soph runners in these two meets. I am guessing that will happen again but we will have to wait and see.

**Mundelein** is the final team in the rankings at #24 after winning the Lake County Invitational on August 31. It surprised some fans to see them run that good. I got a chance to see their freshman group run last year at the Palatine Invitational where they placed four runners in the first eight. Senior Ben Krauss led the team with a 5<sup>th</sup> place finish. Three sophomores followed led by Robert St. Clair right behind in 6<sup>th</sup>. Their overall split on their top five 65 seconds. Their split on their top four was only 20 seconds. They had a freshman in the open race (Dillon Blake) win in 16:16. It would cut their split down to 49 seconds. We will see how this team matures over the next few weeks. Mundelein is definitely a squad to keep an eye on over the next few years.

**Naperville Central** was one team that just missed moving into the top 25. They finished seventh just ahead of Minooka by two points even without star sophomore Thomas Shingalis who won the individual sophomore race. He was the team's second man. Adding Shingalis into their top five would have got them closer within 4 to 6 points **of #20 Highland Park and #21 Palatine**. Minooka drops in the rankings to #16 because they left sophomores Jordan Feese and Mark Dames in the lower level race. The addition of these two athletes drops Minooka's point total to approximately between 165-170 points ahead of Palatine and Highland Park.

We will spend more time on Hinsdale Central, Lyons Township, and Downers Grove North as the WSC-Silver Rivals go head to head this Saturday at Peoria. Lake Zurich and York will make their seasonal big meet debut in two weeks at the Richard Spring Invitational along with #1 Neuqua Valley in what should be a great race.

### **3A Girls**

There is a ton to talk about in this classification. The addition of freshman Katelynne Hart to the **#1 Glenbard West** lineup makes this team a threat for a state title and a top 15 team nationally. I know it is early September and the Hinsdale race was just their first race but seeing what they could run team wise is promising. They have a good front three with Lindsey Payne, Hart, and Katie Hohe in the top six in that race. The 44 second split on those three is not concerning considering the low point numbers in meets that they will be producing. The #4 - #5 runners Chloe Connolly and Janie Nabholz coming in together along with being 50 seconds behind the pack shows there is room for improvement. 93 seconds on five is impressive especially this early. I'm

really not worried about **#2 Minooka** especially with the similar power that they have up front with Ashley Tutt, Mackenzie Callahan, and Emily Shelton. Their five runner split in Saturday's race was 1:27 seconds. In the 2015 race where they defeated Glenbard West by three points, their split

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Why did I move **Hinsdale Central** up from #10 to #6 this week after they did not run a full team in their home meet? I ranked them in the preseason where I did because I wanted to see where freshman McKenna Revord would end up in her first high school race. She led a 1-2-3 sweep in the sophomore race. It gives the Central a good pack behind Reilly Revord and Grace McCabe who did not race. The combination of those five runners would have placed third in the Varsity race. Hopefully, we will get a better indication how good this team is this weekend in Peoria.

Even though **Wheaton-Warrenville South** finished ninth in the varsity race, they jumped up six spots to #11. Coach Rob Harvey spread his talent around giving them an opportunity for success early in the season. They have a 1-2 punch with seniors Sara Atkins and Allison McGrath who finished in the top eleven six seconds within each other. The big surprise was Amanda Obrist. The sophomore, who was running her first cross country race, won the Girls Open race running the 1.93 course in 11:35 winning ahead of teammate freshman Haley Ansel by 41 seconds! They lost their pack from last year because of graduation. We may not see this group together until maybe October, but the talent is there for good things to happen.

**Downers Grove South** moved up eleven positions to #9 after a strong win at Fenton last Saturday. They have the good senior leadership with Katie Stapleton who finished 2<sup>nd</sup> overall. The pack behind her is young with three sophomores and a freshman. What did impress was that there was only a two second split between their #2 runner and their #4 runner. The split on five was 77 seconds. **#10 Lockport Township** looked good in putting five runners in the first thirteen to defeat 2A #8 Lemont. Morgan Bollinger gives the Porters a solid #1 runner as she has been her high school career. The addition of three freshmen to the top five led by second place finisher Madison Polinski. The split was big (109 seconds on five) but not all of their top five was in their lineup. We will see how they fare on Saturday in Peoria.

**#4 Naperville North** finished second with 55 points at the Pleasant Valley Spartan Classic in Bettendorf, Iowa behind nationally ranked Edina (MN). Sarah Schmidt ran a good 18:37 for 5k to win individually. It was a good opener for the Huskies. Claire Hamilton led the pack that had a 21 second split from Hamilton to #5 Gabby Champion. Their overall 5 runner split was 59 seconds. A good check point will be Saturday's race in Peoria.

Three schools entered the top 25 this week led by **#18 Edwardsville**. They dominated the Granite City Invitational with 49 points ahead of #21 O'Fallon's 105 points. It has been freshman Abby Korak along with sophomores Abby Schrbilgen and Jaycie Hudson that have made this team strong early on. Korak has been the key stepping up as the team's #1 runner. She ran 18:34 to finished second individually on Saturday. The split on five is good especially this early in the year at 57 seconds. **York** jumped into the top 25 at #20 after a good race in St. Charles where they finished third. Sarah May led the team with a top five finish in fourth. Their split on five was 78 seconds. Bridget Berger, who won the Girls Open race could step in and be a difference maker for the Dukes. **Palatine** was the final team in at #24. Sophomore Liz Lechowicz, who is out for cross country for the first time, led the Lady Pirates with a 12<sup>th</sup> place finish. They also had an encouraging 73 second split on their top five.

## 2A Boys

Invitational, the Rams finished second behind JAMundelein. Jack Aho had a great opener running 14:35 for the win. Matt Aho finished third in that race. We will see how their pack evolves this weekend. In their county race, their split from Matt Aho to #5 runner Ben Steinbeck was 96 seconds.

**#4 Chatham-Glenwood** will be at Springfield this Saturday after their second place finish last week at Granite City. Chris Durr stepped up to the #1 spot that graduated Landon Skelly was a year ago. Durr ran a personal best 15:24 to lead the Titans. The sophomore pack of Cooper Peterson along with brothers Dathan & Drey Maton were within 25 seconds of each other. Their split on five was 73 seconds. The gap between Durr and the "sophomore pack" was a good starting point of 29 seconds.

I liked what I saw from **#8 Dixon** and **#9 Sycamore** in the past week as they moved into the top 10. Dixon edged Sycamore 96 – 97 at the Sycamore Invitational last Tuesday. Dixon came back to win the Galesburg Invitational on Saturday with 64 points. Brothers Sean and Blain Masterson were the top two runners in both races. Their split on five in Tuesday's race was 50 seconds. The Dukes did a better job in Saturday's race with their pack as their #1 to #5 split was only 29 seconds. Sycamore had a good start in their meet with a 65 second split from #1 runner Stephen Poorten (who finished 9<sup>th</sup>) to #5 runner Quinton Benzshawel. If the race was a dual meet, Sycamore would have won 26-29.

Even though **East Peoria** finished ninth at Galesburg, they moved up to #11. Michael Church and Mark Skaggs give the team a strong first two runners. What boosted them up was Dawson Dobbelaire and Tyler Billingsley who finished third and fourth in the Frosh/Soph race. With them in the varsity race, their split would have been 79 seconds and finishing second with 87 points.

With Rockford Christian being switched to 1A, there were six teams that entered the top 25 in this classification. **Hinsdale South** entered at #15 after finishing 11<sup>th</sup> at Hinsdale. Chris Joseph and Brett Haffner finished within five seconds of each other in this race. We should see improvement from the Hornets in each of their upcoming races. Their split on five was 131 seconds at Katherine Legge Memorial. **#16 Sterling** had good races at Sycamore and Galesburg to get them into the Top 25 finishing third at Sycamore and second at Galesburg. Jacob Gebhardt (4<sup>th</sup>) and Jonathan Landis (7<sup>th</sup>) finished in the top ten at Galesburg. A good pack has developed behind Gebhardt and Landis. Their #3 to #5 split was 21 seconds. Their overall 5 man split was 93 seconds.

**#21 Vernon Hills, #22 Dunlap, #23 Taylorville,** and **#25 Rock Island Alleman** were the other teams that advanced into the Top 25.

## 2A Girls

Five of the top six teams in this classification will face off this Saturday at Peoria. **#1 Dunlap** easily won at Galesburg putting six in the first eight placers. Belvidere North and Vernon Hills switched places in the rankings. I would imagine it will stay close with switching places happening among the top three. Both schools ran two races in the last week. What we found out about **Belvidere North** is that they have four freshmen that complement the three all-state runners that they have coming back. They had an easy time scoring only 27 points at Sycamore and 26 points last

**Vernon Hills** packed it up to finish second last Saturday at Fenton behind 3A ranked Downers Grove South. Their best race of the week occurred three days earlier at the Lake County Invitational when they won the team championship with 72 points. This team is young with one junior, three sophomores, and a freshman in their top five. Lauren Katz finished 6<sup>th</sup> to lead the team in the race followed by Payton Makowskyj 18 seconds behind. Their 3 to 5 pack only has a split of six seconds. Their overall split on five was 65 seconds. Good times are ahead for this team.

**Waterloo** was the top team to enter the top 25 at #14 after finishing fourth at the Granite City Invitational. All-state runner Jenna Schwartz had a convincing individual win ahead of the pack by 24 seconds. Sophomores and freshmen are part of their top five. Ignore the top five split. Schwartz is 90 seconds ahead of her teammates. Their split from #2 to #5 is 73 seconds. **#17 Burlington Central** and **#24 Montini Catholic** were the other two teams that moved into the Top 25.

We will be able to talk more about this classification next week. 19 out of the top 25 schools in this ranking will be racing at First to the Finish this Saturday.

## 1A Boys

I really wanted to look at this classification a little ever since Rockford Christian found out they will be in 1A this season. "Our principal discovered that the IHSA did not update our enrollment from last year. They took full responsibility for the mistake and reclassified us as 1A for both boys and girls," said Rockford Christian Coach Randy Moore. "The IHSA numeric enrollment page was updated and reflects this, but the school classifications page has not been updated. The IHSA has confirmed the change with our principal and our School Center Sport and Activity tracker indicates we are 1A."

**Rockford Christian** would have been ranked #11 in 2A because of their 6<sup>th</sup> place finish at Crystal Lake South. Instead, they are now #4 in 1A. I do not think that will last that long. Their five runner split was 52 seconds led by the 23<sup>rd</sup> place finish by Riley Wells. The split is good especially a tough course like Veteran Acres Park.

**#1 Elmwood-Brimfield** was without their all-state runner Derrick McCoy who is still recovering from an injury. They still won at Canton with 64 points. Cooper Hoffmann was the team's top runner placing third. Their split on five was 76 seconds in this race. It is a split that I am sure that will come down.

**#2 Harvest Christian Academy** looked good placing five runners in the top ten winning their invitational with only 33 points. This team has the tools to win a state championship. Andrew Dobrescu and Michael Sisko led their pack that had a top five split of 48 seconds. They defeated 2A ranked Kaneland in this meet. They will race the again in a week.

One team to keep an eye on is **#3 Freeburg** who has looked good in their first two races. After easily winning at Edwardsville on August 27, they came back to finish fifth in the Granite City Invitational. After winning at Edwardsville, Charlie Parrish came back to finish fourth at Wilson Park. Their top 5 split was 72 seconds off of Parrish's finish. Their split from #2 runner Alex Mack and #5 runner Corbin Schwable was only 31 seconds.

**St. Thomas More** won the Chrisman Cowchip Classic and entered the Top 25 at #14. **Athens**, led by Wyatt McIntyre, enter the rankings at #19 after a strong third place finish at the Canton Invitational.

## 1A Girls

**St. Joseph-Ogden** and **Tolono Unity** most likely will be trading off the top spot in this classification this fall like they did a year ago. The two teams faced off at the Kickapoo Kickoff Classic on August 30 with #1 St. Joseph-Ogden winning 46-50. #2 Unity had a 45 second split off of sixth place finisher Jordan Harmon. St. Joseph-Ogden put Faith Houston and Keely Smith ahead of Harmon in this race. Their five runner split was 153 seconds.

One of the surprises early in the season has been the overall performance by **Williamsville**. They enter the Top 25 at #14 this week after finishing second at the Rochester Invitational behind #4 Liberty. The pack on their top four is good led by Audra Koechle. The first four were only separated by 33 seconds. Two things to work on to get to state is moving the pack up and the gap between the top 4 and then the rest of their pack. Their top 5 split was 110 seconds.

Anna Sophia Keller has qualified individually the past three seasons to the state meet. She may have her teammates with her in November. **#16 St. Anthony** has looked good in the early meets. They had a good performance at Chrisman that has a flight formatted meet after finishing third at Edwardsville the week before. **Decatur St. Teresa** entered back into 1A for this season and enter this week at #25 in the rankings behind a third place finish at Harvest Christian.