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Above - 1A #1 Rockford Christian huddles up before their race Saturday at the First to the Finish Invitational at Peoria's Detweiller Park (Photo: Adam Aufdencamp)

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## 3A Boys

**#3 Downers Grove North** showed that they are a state championship contender after a great team run Saturday. The name of the game in cross country is to get your top five in before anyone else. The Trojans did that on Saturday and even more on the soggy grounds of Detweiller Park. They followed up their 17 seconds split at St. Charles with a 19 second split at First to the Finish. 5 runners in the first 24, 7 in the first 31. It is tough to beat that. To have a 30 second split on their first seven is something also to keep an eye on. Alec Danner is still the front runner but only by a second ahead of teammate Jacob Ridderhoff and another five seconds ahead of Andrew Marek. They will be at Minooka this weekend. Their next big race will be at Naperville Twilight on October 5.

The one thing that I liked from **#4 Lyons Township** at Peoria is that they were aggressive the first half of the race. Their #3 to #5 dropped back in the second half of the race, but that will pay off at the end of the year when they will be able to maintain that pace. Their top five split was 59 seconds this week. It was 72 seconds a week ago on their home course. They will have their 1-2 punch of Vince Zona and Danny Kilrea always towards the front. Their split from their big two dropped from 62 seconds down to 32 seconds this past meet. Keep an eye on that number the rest of the year. You know their #3 to #5 split will get closer around state series time. An overall split of 35 to 40 seconds in November can put them in position for a state title.

**#6 Hinsdale Central** maintained their split of 60 to 61 seconds on five in this Peoria race. The split between their #1 runner Blake Evertsen and the pack decreased from 50 seconds to 40 seconds based on the 15:46 run by Sean O'Connell. The rest of the pack was close to one minute behind Evertsen. It is only September. One emphasis point is that their #3 to #7 runner gap is only eight seconds. It shows depth. They will just need to get closer to the front. **#7 Whitney Young** did not run their best race of the year...but then again it is only September. Clayton Mendez, who is normally their top man, was the team's third runner in this meet. The Dolphins still

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the eighth place finish by Dylan Zangri, finished ninth overall. Their #2 to #5 split was only 23 seconds, but that gap between their front runner and the pack is right now at 48 seconds. Danny Peterson led **#25 Fremd** to a tenth place finish. He was aggressive towards the front of the race for the first half of the race then holding on to finish fifth overall. Their split on five right now is 90 seconds. The Vikings are projected as the seventh ranked team in the Schaumburg Sectional as of today. That split will need to be cut by 30 seconds for this team to have a chance at running in Peoria in November.

We talked a little about **#9 Wheaton-Warrenville South's** great race at Hinsdale the week before. It will be interested to see them run at Detweiller on Saturday. The Tigers won at Wauconda with the same formula of a tough four runner pack. Their split on that group was only ten seconds this week with an overall five runner split at 36 seconds. **#19 St. Charles East** had an easy time in winning at Lake Park putting five runners in the first twelve with an overall split of 31 seconds. This team will be in the hunt for a top ten finish in Peoria this Saturday. Watch for their #1 runner Jake Beno and #2 runner Cole Adesso to run closer together in this race.

Teams that were close to getting into the top 25 included Glenbard West, Naperville Central, St. Ignatius Prep, Jones College Prep, and Plainfield South.

### 3A Girls

In the latest 3A Girls ITCCCA poll, **#1 Glenbard West** received all of the first place votes and deservedly so. They are the best Girls team in the state as of this week. The Lady Hilltoppers put six runners in the first fifteen in scoring only 37 points at Lake Park. The split did come down just a little bit from last week from 93 seconds down to 90 seconds. That is really good considering you have two of the top runners in the state Lindsey Payne and Katelynne Hart. The two runners came in within two seconds of each other with Hart getting the win. I think the split can come down even further perhaps to 80 seconds. If that happens, Glenbard West could be tough to beat.

It was expected to come down to a matter of points at Peoria especially when you have three of the top four teams in the state. Only one points separated the top two teams in this race. **#2 Naperville North** did not run their best race of the year according to Coach Dan Iverson but it was good enough to win. Sarah Schmitt led the team with a fifth place finish overall. The pack behind her led by Alex Morris had a 23 second split on their #2 through #5 runners with an overall split of 52 seconds on their top five. The week before in Iowa, their overall split was 59 seconds and 21 seconds on their #2 to #5 with Claire Hamilton in their lineup. Hamilton did not run on Saturday. The Lady Huskies will run at the Roy Griak Invitational on September 24. It will be interesting to see how they race against Edina MN who they finished second to in Iowa.

**#3 Yorkville** had the race won through four runners. It was the gap between four and five that hurt. Their split between #1 runner Nicole Greyer (7<sup>th</sup>) and #4 runner Emily Eberhart (20<sup>th</sup>) was only 25 seconds. The gap between that quartet and the next two runners Alexis Grandys (40<sup>th</sup>) and Alyssa Edwards (41<sup>st</sup>) was 33 seconds. You can expect that gap to close by the time the teams face off again at the Naperville Twilight Meet. **#4 Minooka** is not that far off of these other two teams even though they were 36 points behind in third place on Saturday. Their strength up front with Emily Shelton (2<sup>nd</sup>), Ashley Tutt (3<sup>rd</sup>), and Mackenzie Callahan (6<sup>th</sup>) is their anchor up front. Their fourth runner Vivian Van Eck was only 36 seconds behind Callahan in this race. Their normal fifth runner Emily Ellis had an off race were she was the team's eight runner. Their split climbed to

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fourth in this race. The key for this team especially on the sloppy course was their pack. The split between #1 runner Katie Stapleton and #5 runner Erin Reidy was 47 seconds with all runners between 17<sup>th</sup> place and 48<sup>th</sup> place. The race for **#7 New Trier** was a little better than the week before as the Trevians finished fifth overall. They were missing some of their top five due to ACT testing. Caroline Fix (14<sup>th</sup>) and Grace Fagan (16<sup>th</sup>) led the team that ran a 66 second split on five. **#9 Hinsdale Central** did not run their best race of the season so far but they did finish sixth overall. Reilly Revord finished 32<sup>nd</sup> overall to lead the team. Their split was 43 seconds on the top

five. Expect that to grow in their next few races especially if Revord and Grace McCabe are closer to the front.

Three teams stepped into the top 25 rankings this week. **#16 Naperville Central** was the highest team coming in after finishing ninth in Peoria. There are no "front-runners" on this squad but a 40 second split between #1 runner Meghan Donovan and #5 runner Ellen Spencer helps with that. **St. Charles East** bounced back from a "so-so" race on their home course a week ago to finish fourth at Lake Park this past Saturday. The Lady Saints move into the rankings at #19 this week. They ran a 69 second five runner split off of eleventh place finisher Anna Arrick. East did this without two of their top five runners Hannah Ewald and Hannah Willging who will be running in Peoria this Saturday. **Evanston Township** had a good race last week at Hinsdale and then followed that up with a better one last Saturday at Peoria. Their eleventh place finish in that meet moves them into the top 25 at #24. Enyaeva Michelin has stepped up as the team's #1 runner. She finished 19<sup>th</sup> last week. Their split was 83 seconds on their top five. The addition of freshmen Samantha Steman and Eaven Norman have been a big help.

Fremd just missed getting into the rankings after twelfth place finish at Peoria just being edged out by MSL conference rival Schaumburg. Lyons Township, Lincoln-Way Central, Oswego, and Glenbrook South were other teams that we considered.

## 2A Boys

It will be very interesting to see **#1 Mahomet-Seymour** race this Saturday at Detweiller Park. The Bulldogs have not been challenged in their first two meets. Led by the individual win by Andrew Walmer, the team put seven runners in the first nine to score only 23 points ahead of **#4 Chatham-Glenwood**. Their split on seven was only 22 seconds.

I was surprised to see **#2 Normal University** in the 2A race after pre-race entries showed that they had opted for the higher level race. What did not surprise me is the way that U-High ran at Detweiller Park. They had a five runner pack in the top twenty-five during the first mile of the race. It split up and the second half of the race but they still won by almost 100 points ahead of Danville. Jack Franklin led the way for the Pioneers with a third place finish followed by teammates Jared Schuckman (8<sup>th</sup>) and Zach Wolford (12<sup>th</sup>). U-High had six runners in the first forty with an 87 second split.

Only six points separated Danville, Sycamore, and Grayslake Central from second to fourth. **#3 Danville** jumped up two spots in the rankings after running a great pack race. That is what will drive them to big finishes this fall. Their split was only 26 seconds from #1 runner William Powell (23<sup>rd</sup>) and #5 runner Tyler Huckelberry (56<sup>th</sup>). With fourteen ranked teams heading into this race, that packing shows what the Vikings could do in the state series. **#6 Sycamore** had a good race

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how far they come down.

**#9 Riverside-Brookfield** showed that they belonged in the top ten of the rankings finishing sixth in Peoria. Mateo Nunez led the Bulldogs with a tenth place finish. RB will still need to work on their split from #4 to #5. The split from Nunez to #4 runner Jack Sagan was only 50 seconds. Their #2 to #4 split was only sixteen seconds. The key to watch is the gap of 60 seconds between

#4 and #5. If their overall split on five can get to 90 seconds, this team could be in the top five hunt.

Four teams enter into the rankings this week led by **#13 Burlington Central** that finished ninth at Detweiller. Josh Teets (30<sup>th</sup>) and Tate Henrikson (39<sup>th</sup>) led Central who ran a 64 second split on their top five. **#14 Lakes** makes an appearance in the top 25 for the first time in five years after they finished tenth behind Burlington Central. Jeremy Wallace led their team with a 20<sup>th</sup> place finish. Their split on five was 79 seconds. One thing to remember about this team is that they have six underclassmen in their top seven including four sophomores and one freshmen.

**Waterloo** finished fourteenth at Peoria and entered the rankings at #23. **LaSalle-Peru** was impressive with their win at Princeton and takes the final rankings spot at #25. Salem, East Peoria, and Mascoutah were other schools that were considered.

## 2A Girls

Even though Dunlap defeated Belvidere North 80 – 100 to win this classification race in Peoria, Belvidere North gets the nod as the top team in 2A. They were without their #1 runner Jenna Lutzow who would have changed the outcome by at least 30 points. The big factor for the Blue Thunder is the addition of five freshmen in the top seven for this race led by top finishes by Madison Diercks (9<sup>th</sup>) and Gianna Sagona (11<sup>th</sup>). Their split on the top five was only 48 seconds.

**#2 Dunlap** really impressed me with their team running in the Peoria race. Their split on five was only 36 seconds between #1 runner Franny Verville (10<sup>th</sup>) and #5 runner Miranda Kruiswyk (24<sup>th</sup>) was 36 seconds. The split on their top three was only five seconds. **#3 Vernon Hills** finished third in the race behind the eight place finish by Lauren Katz. It was not that bad of a race for the Cougars. Their #2 to #5 split was only 37 seconds. What was impressive is that their three runner pack from #4 to #6 was only three seconds. Both Dunlap and Vernon Hills will be factors in November.

There were four teams that entered into the top 25. The biggest performance of those teams was **Lakes** who finished fourth at Detweiller. The addition of freshman Olivia Schmidt, who finished seventh overall as the team's #1 runner, has been the big plus for this squad. Their split on the top five was 110 seconds but 38 seconds from #2 to #5. They will need to stay healthy. Their split from #5 to #6 is 155 seconds.

**Metamora** is the biggest mover in the 2A ranking after they finished seventh in Peoria causing them to jump to #9 from #22. **Mahomet-Seymour**, off of their win at Springfield, jumped up seven spots to #12. A surprise into the top 25 came in the Springfield meet when unranked

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**#14 Woodstock** finished ninth at Peoria while **#21 Trinity** finished fourteenth in that race. They are the other top teams into the top 25. Payton Prep, Morton, and Riverside-Brookfield were other teams that were considered.

## 1A Boys



The addition of **Rockford Christian** into this classification shakes things up just a little. After their Peoria race, it shows that they could be the team to beat. The #1 Royal Lions scored 132 to win the team championship led by top twenty finishes by Riley Wells (3<sup>rd</sup>) and Brent Brunner (17<sup>th</sup>). The split on their top five was 79 seconds. What impressed me the most is that there is only nineteen seconds that separates #3 runner Josiah Vogel and #7 runner Jack Kurtz. That depth could be a difference maker especially during the state series.

**Tremont** was the big surprise in this classification. The #6 Turks were unranked heading to Peoria but came up strong finishing second forty points behind Rockford Christian. One of the reasons is the 1-2 punch up front with the addition of freshman Leland Sumer (15<sup>th</sup>) to help out Jesse Pflederer (16<sup>th</sup>). They put four runners in the first fifty with a 38 second split on that group. Their overall split on five was 75 seconds. **#7 Carlinville** is a team to watch after their third place finish. Jason Landon led the team with a 20<sup>th</sup> place finish in which the team had a 42 second split on their top five. **#4 Elmwood-Brimfield** will not put on spikes for races until they get to October. That formula has always led to big things when the moment counts the most. The Trojans finished fourth led by the 19<sup>th</sup> place finish from Cooper Hoffmann. Their split on five was 75 seconds. Their pack split from two to four was only 21 seconds.

**#17 Rock Falls** was the only other team to enter the top 25. The addition of freshman Dawson Smith, who finished fourth overall in this race, along with 1A favorite Brayden Hamblen pushed this team to an eighth place finish at First to the Finish. Winnebago, Marquette Academy, DePaul Prep, El Paso-Gridley, and Peotone were other teams that were considered.

## 1A Girls

**#1 St. Joseph-Ogden** continue to run good winning at Paxton-Buckley-Loda last Saturday putting four runners in the first five. Faith Houston led the way for the Lady Spartans with a second place finish. The split on their four was 41 seconds. Their split on the top five was 81 seconds. **#2 Tolono Unity** finished second in that meet. In three races so far this season, both teams have finished 1-2 led by SJO. Audrey Hancock led the way for the Rockets with a sixth place finish. Their split on five was 86 seconds. It will just be a matter of moving their pack up in order to challenge for the top spot.

It was closer than expected for **#3 Chicago Christian** as they won the 1A Girls race at the First to the Finish Invitational. They scored 141 points led by the individual win by April Van Ryn. Ignore the split off of Van Ryn. She is more than two minutes ahead of her teammates. The split on the pack behind her was 59 seconds. The team that was a surprise in the race was **#5 Williamsville** that finished only four points behind Chicago Christian. Audra Koechle (17<sup>th</sup>), Grace Gudwien (20<sup>th</sup>), and Caroline Gwaltney (22<sup>nd</sup>) all finished within sixteen seconds of each other. Their overall split was 70 seconds. This puts them in the mix for trophy considerations in November.

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at #8 after finishing fourth. Madison Franseen had a great race finishing third to lead her team. The split on the pack behind her was 85 seconds.

**#3 Liberty** dominated the PORTA Invitational in Petersburg behind the win by Katelyn Robbins. Liberty placed five runners in the first twelve with a split on the group of 117 seconds. **#9 Springfield Lutheran** did not run their complete team in that race but had Bernadette and Brigid

Tournoux place in the top ten. Bernadette's time of 19:23 was sixteen seconds behind race winner Robbins.

**#20 Johnsborg**, who placed 8<sup>th</sup> at FTTF, and **#25 El Paso-Gridley**, who finished six points behind in ninth, were the only other teams to enter the top 25. Teams that were considered included Illinois Valley Central, Herscher, Amboy, and Byron.

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