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3A Boys

A number of teams to look at in this classification. The biggest story was the performance by **#4 Lake Zurich** in winning the Palatine Invitational last Saturday. The Bears pack up front was the difference in holding off St. Xavier KY who had a #2 to #5 split of only four seconds. The potential of Lake Zurich was shown in this meet especially up front. Brian Griffith showed at Peoria that he will be one of the top runners in the state this year with that meet's win. He followed that up this weekend with a second place finish. They had the strength up front with Kyle Griffith and Matt Pereira 26 seconds behind B Griff while Patrick Burns was another fifteen seconds behind his teammates. The key was that their overall split was only 68 seconds compared to the 113 seconds was the meet before. We will have to wait and see at their next meet in two weeks at Wheeling if K Griff and Pereira can get closer to the front. It could mean trouble for some of the other top teams when we get to the state series.

#3 Lyons Township did a good job of destroying some good Indiana and Michigan schools at the Culver Invitational in Indiana. The Lions scored 36 points to win ahead of Fort Wayne Concordia (132 points) and West Lafayette (180 points). Danny Kilrea made a statement winning the individual race (15:25 for 5 kilometers) by fourteen seconds ahead of teammate Vince Zona. The split of 56 seconds on their top five was good. The split between #3 runner Dan Palmer and #5 runner Alex Pall was only ten seconds. What was impressive in the race was that the gap between Zona and Palmer was only 32 seconds. LT looks good heading into Saturday's race at Peoria against top ranked Neuqua Valley.

I debated on whether to move Lake Zurich towards the front. At this point, I could not. The top four schools in 3A are extremely good with not much separating the quartet. One team that is moving closer to the four is **#5 Hersey**. The Huskies had a good race at Peoria and then followed that up with their fourth place finish at Palatine. They did that a little shorthanded. Ryan Thiesen, who has been a part of their top five, has a strained calf and has not been given clearance to run. Ryan Buch dropped out of their dual meet against Prospect two days before Palatine and was held out. Two more of their top seven, Josh Methner and Max Svienty, ran the freshman race where they finished first and third. Nevertheless, Hersey finished fourth in the Palatine Varsity race off of the eleventh place finish by Jacob Krupa. Even though they finished behind Hinsdale Central in the team standings, their depth showed that they are among the top five teams in the state and pulled ahead of the Red Devils in the rankings.

The Thursday before the Palatine meet, Hersey ran a dual against conference rival **#10 Prospect**. The Knights prevailed in a close race 27-28. The question you would have to ask is why Prospect is not ranked ahead of Hersey? I moved Prospect down one spot even though they finished 23rd in the Varsity race at Palatine. I could not move them up further because of the fact that I put more weight on invitational performances compared to a dual meet. Prospect has not put their full lineup on the starting line in any invitational so far this season. With no balance of work to consider off of, it made it hard to move them. The Knights will be racing at Peoria this weekend. If their top seven is ready to go, then we can analyze the team at that point. I know the talent is there to be ranked among the top ten in the state.

#6 Hinsdale Central dropped down a spot even though they finished third ahead of Hersey at Palatine. According to assistant coach Noah Lawrence's latest blog about the race, their seven runners lost 100 places in the final two miles. There are some constants for this team. They have Blake Evertson among the front runners in the race. Their top five split has been near 60 seconds during their early season invitational meets. Last Saturday it was 65 seconds. #2 runner Ethan Planson was 45 seconds behind Evertson. Their pack has been close during the season. It was 20 seconds on Saturday.

#9 York looked better than their Peoria race in placing fifth at Deer Grove East behind the individual race win by Charlie Kern. Even though their top three split on Kern was 52 seconds compared to 48 seconds the week before at Peoria. You do have to consider Kern was in 8th in the Peoria race compared to his win. If you put senior Liam Hill in the top five, their split would have been 92 seconds compared to 84 seconds last week with their top two frosh / soph runners in the mix. It will be interesting to see where their split is when the state series starts.

Two teams that raced at Palatine found their way in to this week's top 25. **#12 Maine South** ran their best race of the year so far in finishing sixth in the Meet of Champions. Reese Jordan led the way with an overall fifth place finish. One thing to watch from the Hawks is the 93 second split that they had on their top five runners. Their split on their #2 to #5 pack was 54 seconds. Those numbers will need to decrease in order to get out of a tough Niles West Sectional. **Jones College Prep** enters at #18 after finishing twelfth in the Palatine race. Jeremy Adams had a top ten performance placing tenth individually. Their split on five was 97 seconds in this meet. If you add freshman Ian Bacon, who finished fourth in the Frosh/Soph race, into the Varsity, Jones scores 50 fewer points and drops their split to 81 seconds. Jones is a team that I would keep an eye on. They are at least ten deep which could benefit them at state series time.

Loyola Academy, Oak Park-River Forest, and Stevenson were teams that finished behind Jones at Palatine were some of the teams that were considered. Lincoln-Way Central, with their win at Bartlett, was another team that was looked at.

3A Girls

Both Yorkville and Naperville North ran good in the meets that they were at last weekend. The two teams flip flopped positions in the rankings. #2 Yorkville destroyed the competition at the Palatine Invitational winning by almost 100 points. What impressed me in watching **#2 Yorkville** race on Saturday was their pack. Nicole Greyer was towards the front most of the race before she finished sixth overall. The split on #2 runner Alyssa Edwards to #5 runner Alexis Grandys was only 19 seconds with an overall split of 40 seconds on the top five. **#3 Naperville North** finished third in

the Gold Division of the Roy Griak Invitational on a rugged University of Minnesota course. Sarah Schmitt is one of the most underrated runners in the state yet she continues to put up great performances. She finished fifth overall to lead the Lady Huskies. The team's split on their top five was 76 seconds. Their split on #2 Alex Morris to #5 runner Claire Hill was 47 seconds. Both teams will get better. It will be fun to watch them race against each other in another week at Naperville North's Twilight Meet.

Another team that is improving is **#4 Minooka**. The Indians easily won the Macnider Invitational at Harper College with only 19 points putting six runners in the first ten. Minooka still has their top three of individual winner Emily Shelton, Mackenzie Callahan, and Ashley Tutt within nineteen seconds of each other. One thing to watch is that their #4 runner Vivian Van Eck is now only 37 seconds behind their front three. The split on the top five in this meet was down to 109 seconds. The key of their top four within 56 seconds of each other makes this team a threat for another state trophy.

Downers Grove South Coach Doug Plunkett was telling me a team that I should keep a team on was **Lyons Township**. Before the Palatine Invitational, they did not have "all of their pieces" together. With an impressive second place finish at Palatine, Lyons jumps into the top 25 at #9. Sarah Barcelona (11th) and Emily Henkel (16th) were only separated by three seconds at their finish. The split on the top five was 66 seconds. The split on #3 runner Cara Paliakas to #5 runner Kirsten Meyer was 25 seconds. Watch for both splits to come down in future meets.

#6 Downers Grove South placed five runners in the first fourteen to win the Naperville Girls Invitational last Friday. They did this without one of their top five runners Erin Reidy. Katie Stapleton led her team placing second overall. The split on their top five was 55 seconds. The split on their #2 to #5 pack was only 29 seconds. #12 Batavia was in control in winning the Bartlett Flyin' Hawk Invitational without one of their top five runners Marygrace Golden. Freshman Audrey Pellico led the Bulldogs with a fifth place finish. The big bonus for the team has been the improvement of last year's #1 runner Emma Stephens. She was the team's second runner placing seventh. She led the #2 to #5 pack that had only a twelve second split.

#10 Hersey moved to their present spot from #16 after finishing third at Palatine. Part of their success has been the front running leadership by Sarah Harden who finished 13th in the race and Hailey Bowes who finished 18th. The emergence of Teagan Beckley, who was the team's third runner placing 29th last week, has been a boost to the team. The split of 94 seconds on their top five is big but with three runners that are placing high up front, that split is less of a problem.

After one week out of the top 25, **Prospect** jumps back in at #17 after placing fifth only two points behind #11 Palatine. Brooke Wilson finishing second for the Knights of course was a big help. Sophomores Marissa Valenti and Jenna Baltes finished within twelve seconds of each other to help Prospect. Their split on five with Wilson up front was over two minutes. The split on the pack behind Wilson was only 52 seconds.

2A Boys

We are really not going to spend too much time on the top two ranked teams in this classification. **#1 Mahomet Seymour** scored a perfect 15 points to easily win the East Peoria Invitational. Jack Franklin and Jared Shuckman finished first and third to lead **#2 Normal University** to the win in the Gold Division at the Aurora Central Classic. The split on their top five was 53 seconds. That race is a good tune up for this Saturday when they run in the 3A race at the Peoria Central Invitational at Detweiller Park.

Danville received some great news Friday afternoon. Last year, they were placed in a sectional with top ranked Mahomet-Seymour as well as Normal University. Danville presumed they would be heading to Metamora for that sectional. Instead, they will be heading to Decatur for the MacArthur Sectional. The following day at the Springfield Invitational served as a sectional preview against their chief competition at the end of October Chatham-Glenwood. **#3 Danville** prevailed but only by one point 66 to 67 ahead of Glenwood. The Vikings used a good pack to help them to the win. The split between their #1 runner Phillip Hall (6th place) and #5 runner Tyler Huckelberry (23rd) was only 40

seconds. **#4 Glenwood** was led by the individual win by Chris Durr. A focus point for the Titans is tightening up their #1 to #5 split. The split on Durr to #4 runner Cooper Peterson was 57 seconds. Glenwood had four runners in the first sixteen in the race. Their split between Peterson to #5 runner Marvin Carter was another 26 seconds with an overall split of 83 seconds. That needs to come down in order for Chatham-Glenwood to be a trophy contender.

#11 Marion finished ahead of host Springfield last Saturday but Springfield stays ahead of Marion. The Senators would have moved up at least 54 points if they had freshman Kyle Boughter in the lineup. He would have been the team's #2 man in the Varsity race. Marion has a good 1-2 punch up front with Zach Young and John Bruce who finished second and third in the individual race. The split on their #3 to #5 pack was only 43 seconds. The overall split on five is 115 seconds which could be a concern getting closer to the state series.

#5 Grayslake Central stays at the same spot as of last week after finishing eleventh at Palatine. Jack (3rd) and Matt (8th) Aho finished in the top ten in this race. Their split on five crept back up to 119 seconds from the 93 seconds they were at the week before at Warren. Watch for the progress of Eli Minsky in the next few weeks. Last week, he was within 51 seconds of Matt Aho. That split needs to come down.

There were two teams that enter into the top 25 this week. **#23 Antioch** finished second in the Blue Division at the Aurora Central Classic Charger Classic. Part of improvement of this team comes from #1 runner Charlie Smith. The freshman finished fourth overall in the race. They also have a good #2 to #4 pack led by Alex Beeson that is only separated by five seconds. The split of 98 seconds on five is something that will need to come down in order for this team to get in position to qualify for the state meet. **#25 Charleston** is starting to come on strong especially after winning at Mattoon last Thursday. Sophomore Austin Ames led the Trojans in this meet with a third place finish. The team's five man split was 79 seconds.

2A Girls

How good is **#1 Belvidere North**? You have to take notice when a 2A squad dominates a top ten 3A team in an invitational. Belvidere North showed that in winning the Rock River Run with 33 points. 3A **#8 Geneva** was second with 68 points. Jenna Lutzow won her second race in a row covering the 3 mile course in 17:27. She was 53 seconds ahead of freshman teammate Gianna Sagona. The Blue Thunder placed three runners in the first four and their top five in the top fifteen. This was done while holding all-state runner Mia Rodriguez out of this meet. The four runner split off of Sagona is 46 seconds. Five of their top seven runners in this meet were freshman.

We can't forget about **#2 Dunlap** who turned in another great performance in winning at East Peoria. The Eagles took the top three places and put six runners in the first eleven to win with only 24 points. Franny Verville, Abby Johnson, and Ayah Aldadah were within nine seconds of each other in the top three. Their overall five runner split was only 33 seconds. **Mahomet-Seymour** was a distant second with 79 points, but still moved up to #6 in the rankings. Brisa McGrath and Megan Churm led the Bulldogs finishing fifth and sixth coming across the line together. Their split on five was 84 seconds in the meet. The split on #3 to #5 was only 14 seconds.

#16 Chatham-Glenwood won at the Springfield Invitational having their top three runners in the first thirteen and within 23 seconds of each other. Katie Curry has stepped up as the team's #1 runner. Their split on five is 89 seconds which is something that will need to be worked on in future meets.

Three teams entered the top 25 this week. **#25 Mascoutah** has been running strong through the first part of this season. They displayed that by finishing second at Springfield behind the eighth place finish by Melanie Cozzi. Their split on five was 117 seconds. **Payton Prep** started the season in the top 25. They come back in at #17 in winning the Ziomek Invitational at Chicago's Washington Park with only 47 points. The Grizzlies placed four runners in the first eleven led by the third place finish by Alana Chandler. The split on that foursome is only 26 seconds. The split between #4 runner Ella Marden and their #5 runner Catalina McLaughlin was 34 seconds with an overall five runner split of 60 seconds.

Woodstock Marian Central Catholic has been close to entering the top 25 in the first weeks of the season. After finishing third at Grant, the Hurricanes jump to the 21 spot in the rankings. Abby Jones finished third for her team. She has been the top runner for Marian all season. Junior Shelby Truckenbrod was also in the top ten in this race finishing seventh. They had three runners within 37 seconds off each other. The split on their top five is over three minutes. In a sectional as tough as Belvidere is, it could be tough for this team to make it into the top five. Then again, it is a month away.

1A Boys

I was really hoping to see how the top two teams in this classification fared at the Aurora Central Catholic Charger Classic. However, **#1 Rockford Christian** ran in the Gold Division. **#2 Harvest Christian Academy** ran in the Blue Division. Rockford Christian finished eighth in the Gold (Large) Division of the meet. Riley Wells finished seventh running 14:51 on the 2.95 mile course. The Royal Lions had a tight pack between #2 runner Josiah Wells and #4 runner Jack Kurtz of only fifteen seconds. Their split on five was 102 seconds. Harvest Christian Academy won the Blue Division scoring only 51 points. Andrew Dobrescu and Michael Sisko finished sixth and seventh only three seconds of each other. They placed five runners in the first sixteen with a 44 second split. Both teams are evenly matched even though their splits are not. When you look at team times, both teams are close to each other in this meet. Rockford Christian had an average time per runner of 15:50. Harvest Christian Academy have an average time of 15:51 per runner. Rockford Christian had a faster top five team time by only seven seconds (79:10 to 79:17) ahead of Harvest Christian Academy. We will get a better idea of how these teams match up as they are competing against each other in the Winnebago Regional and possibly the Oregon Sectional.

#3 St. Joseph-Ogden looked good in winning the Spartan Classic with 82 points. Justin Phillips showed that he will be one of the contenders for the 1A individual championship running 15:03 to finish second behind an impressive win by Arthur-Lovington's Logan Hall who ran a quick 14:48.6. The Spartans have a good 1-2 punch up front with Phillips and Wyatt Wolfersberger (6th). The #2 to #5 split off of Wolfersberger is 72 seconds.

#7 Richmond-Burton jumped up from #14 after finishing second behind Zion Benton last Saturday at Grant. Ryan Hommowun was the team's top runner placing fifth overall. They placed five runners in the first twenty-four with a 75 second split. This team has the runners to be a threat in Peoria in November. **Robinson** was also a big mover in the rankings as they jumped to #16 from #24 after winning the Mattoon Invitational last Thursday. Lukas Baird finished seventh and leads a solid first four that are only separated by 36 seconds. Their five man split in this meet was 48 seconds.

Showing on how strong the SJO Spartan Classic was, **#19 El Paso-Gridley** finished seventh and **#23 Paxton-Buckley-Loda** finished eighth. Both teams enter the top 25 this week.

1A Girls

Top ranked **St. Joseph-Ogden** showed again why they are the team to beat this November in this classification placing four runners in the first ten, six runners in the first fifteen to easily win their own invitational with only 39 points. Their five runner split makes this team tough to beat. The split off of #1 runner Faith Houston on the top four is only 39 seconds, the top five split is 58 seconds. Even though **Tolono Unity** is ranked #2 right now, it seems like they are a light year behind SJO. It is not a slight to the Rockets, but it shows how strong St. Joseph-Ogden is right now. Unity scored 120 points to finish second behind SJO. Jordan Harmon finished tenth to lead her team. Their split right now on their top five is 81 seconds.

The Springfield Invitational did have some 1A teams that made some "minor" statements in that meet. **#4 Williamsville** showed their packing strength finishing fourth overall. Caroline Gwaltney finished 22nd to lead three freshman in the team's top five. This squad does not have the runner up front but has a great pack. Their top four split is only 24 second split. Their split on the top five is 67 seconds. **#10 Litchfield** finished sixth overall in the meet and has a great three up front led by Madison Throne. The split on that trio is only nine seconds. **#5 Liberty** finished

eighth at Springfield but without their #1 runner Katelyn Robbins who was rested in this meet. With her in the lineup, it is projected that Liberty would have finished fifth overall just behind Williamsville.

Two teams entered the top 25 came from the powerful St. Joseph-Ogden Spartan Classic. **#19 Deer Creek-Mackinaw** finished seventh five points ahead of eighth place **#25 Heyworth**. One thing that I had to do is take off **Springfield Lutheran** from the top 25. Heading into last weekend, the Crusaders were ranked #11. This team only has four runners that have competed for them so far this season not posting up any team results. There is talent within the group. Once they have five runners scoring, I am sure we will put them back in the rankings.