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This could be “THE” year for Chatham-Glenwood

By Michael Newman

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This has been the season that Chatham-Glenwood Coach **Mike Garber** has been hoping for. The 2A school in the Springfield area has been quietly building up a Boys team with the idea of stepping on top of the podium at Detweiller Park after the 2A Boys race.

With three runners that have the talent to finish as All-State runners, the Titans time could come in November. “I’m looking forward to seeing our progression throughout the first month of official practices,” Garber said. “You never really know what you’ve got until that first hard work out.”

But Garber knows what he has. He just has to keep his team focused on the now instead of the then.

Chatham-Glenwood starts the season as the clear favorite in 2A Boys. 2018 is not going to be the season that we saw a year ago when Mahomet-Seymour outdistanced Normal University for their second straight state championship. The Bulldogs would like to make it three years in a row, but they just might not have the pieces to get to the top. Normal University will not get the chance. The Pioneers will be in 3A for the next two seasons due to the “IHSA Success Factor”.

This classification is wide-open. When I start getting ready to write my previews, I first do my homework in researching each 2A team. They are then graded and separated into ten divisions. In the seven years that I have used this process, 53 to 55% of the teams that I researched usually were placed in the top five sections. For 2018, only 44% of the teams researched fell in the top half.

What does that mean? It shows that this season could even more wide-open than we expect.

Chatham-Glenwood was the clear favorite but there are so many schools, like Metamora, Sycamore, Bloomington, Springfield, and Danville to name a few that are up for the challenge.

It could even be perennial 1A power Rockford Christian that is in this classification for 2018 and has the talent to be in the top three. It is just so hard to tell beginning of this season. Every weekend and every meet in that weekend should tell a different story.

Here is a look at some of the top 2A Boys teams in Illinois for the start of the 2018 Illinois High School Cross-Country Season. Remember, the only rankings that count are the ones that are posted after the race is over state meet day.

1 Chatham-Glenwood

2017 Finish – 5th, 2A State

Coach – Mike Garber

Top Runners – Drey Maton SR (25, 15:17), Cooper Peterson SR (41, 15:35), Dathan Maton SR (69, 15:54), Graham Turk JR (99, 16:11), Cameron Smith SO (111, 16:15), Sampson Desalines FR, Thomas Herbst SO, David Schmitt JR, Grant Edwards SR, Aidan Peterson SO, David Thomas SO, Landon Verenski SO, Liam Rudin JR.

Preview – 2018 will be a wide-open season especially on the 2A Boys side. At the beginning of the season, Chatham-Glenwood will be the top team in the state. At the end of the season, we could be repeating the same thing. After Mahomet-Seymour on top the past two years, it maybe the turn for the Titans. They return five of their top six runners back from their fifth-place state team.

"I didn't push my squad to do anything crazy this summer," said Glenwood Coach **Mike Garber**. "We logged miles and focused on full body health. We had some injury misfortune at the end of last season and it left the team a little unfulfilled. They have eyes for big things this season, but I plan on managing our expectations a bit. We are going to look at each week as an opportunity. I don't want to get lost in end of season goals throughout the fall. My assistant coach and I plan on talking about State one time at the start of season. We want to make sure everyone knows what is possible, but not harp on it every week. We will be on the same page and working for a common goal, but each week is a chance to do something special. I want everyone to enjoy the ride. November comes fast enough, I don't want us wishing for the end of the season every Saturday morning. Every step should be exciting."

What is exciting for Glenwood is that they return their top three runners that could be interchangeable. **Drey Maton** just inched in to All-State territory placing 25th. His brother **Dathan** placed 69th. **Cooper Peterson** finished 41st. In their regional meet, their split was 38 seconds. At state, the gap on the three was 37 seconds. At sectionals when they won the team title, the split was only 14 seconds. All their top three could be All-State in November. Keeping that split will be a key for the three seniors.

Graham Turk and **Cameron Smith** ran close together as the fifth and sixth runners at state. **Thomas Herbst** was the team's seventh runner at sectionals and could be close to those two. Also keep an eye on freshman **Sampson Desalines** who Garber believes that could be in the top seven by October.

The top three is one of the keys. All state for the trio means good things for the team. Keeping their split under 50 seconds could be as close as possible as clinching the state title. At the same time, thinking about their meet on a weekly basis will be a key instead of continuously of state every week. "The team has big expectations, but it is important that we are smart in our approach," added Garber. "Some races this season are going to be important to how we make our final push to State. We need to take away the positives from the season and find ways to improve each week of racing. I don't want the guys to be so serious about November that we lose the fun. These kids have plenty of years of racing in college to be serious. We are going to enjoy the ride in 2018."

2 Sycamore

2017 Finish – 3rd, 2A State

Coach – Michael Lambdin

Top Runners – Aaron Trier JR (31, 15:28), Lucas McKay SR (86, 16:04), David Lerohl SR (105, 16:13), Paul Ruetten JR (108, 16:14), Jack Cambier SO, Cameron Carani JR, Bryce Guerretaz JR, Dayton Ward SR, Donny Gramer SO, Kyle Horn SO, David Ruetten JR, James Cerny SR, Bailin Ferrell SO.

Preview – Sycamore had a breakout season in 2017 resulting in a spot on the podium at Detweiller Park. The Spartans finished third in that race but lost three of their top four to graduation including All-State runner **Stephen Poorten**. In any other season, this would be a rebuilding year for this group. The rankings in 2A will be fluid with teams switching spots dramatically every week. For this Sycamore team, they could just be reloading instead of rebuilding.

Aaron Trier emerged as an elite sectional runner during his sophomore season. He jumped up state elite when he finished 31st in the state meet. A top 20 finish at Detweiller Park is not out of the question. The three other runners back are solid as **Lucas McKay**, **David Lerohl**, and **Paul Ruetten** were within 10 seconds of each other at state. The wild-card in the top five will be Jack Cambier. He was in the top five for the first half of his freshman season before an injury sidelined him for the rest of the campaign. He came back slowly during track but was side-by-side with Trier, McKay, and Lerohl through summer training.

Last year's state meet experience will payoff for this team this fall. Trier could emerge as the team's go to runner in the front. Their pack might not be that bad either. The Spartans need to stay healthy over the next several months to have that chance to get another state trophy. "Last year was a special season, but we have to move on," Coach **Michael Lambdin** said. "We lost three (**Stephen Poorten**, **Jake Carani** and **Riley Melton**) of our top four to graduation and the leadership they provided. Without a low stick at number one, we will be more of a pack team this year. A very different team, but hopefully a strong one. How tightly the pack stays together will go a long way in determining what this year's team can accomplish."

3 Metamora

2017 Finish – 6th, 2A Normal University Sectional

Coach – Gene Jones

Top Runners – Adam Gilbreath-Glaub JR (2A State 3200m Champ in Track), Jacob Gray SR, Andrew Springer SR, Reagan Pace SR, Alex Blackburn SR, Evan Jones SO, Austin Gale JR, Ian O'Laughlin SO, Logan Ramsey SR, Colton Barb SO, Keegan Hartnett JR, Kaelan Ganson SR.

Preview – The finish of the 2017 season was not what Metamora had hoped for. Their top runner **Adam-Gilbreath-Glaub** missed the state series due to personal reasons. Without him, the Redbirds finished sixth in the Normal University Sectional missing a state berth by just two points. This team will be driven this fall returning five from their sectional team but losing senior **John Rapp**, their fifth runner, who has moved to Wisconsin. "Missing the State Meet last year by 2 points has made this team understand nothing is a "given" until you earn the right to be at the State Meet," Gene Jones said. "There was improvement during the track season for most of the team members."

Gilbreath-Glaub is ready for this season. His track season was a successful one winning the 2A State title in the 3200 Meter Run. The junior will be challenging for the state individual title in November. The pack behind him needs to remain tight. Their two to five split without him in the sectional race was only 27 seconds. In their conference meet at Detweiller with Gilbreath-Glaub still racing, the five-runner split was 71 seconds. Seniors **Jacob Gray** and **Andrew Springer** should lead the pack. Ignore their top five split especially at the end of the season. Gilbreath-Glaub should be cruising at that point. The Redbirds keeping that pack spread near 30 seconds with all four of their runners under 16-minutes is something that they will need to accomplish.

4 Bloomington

2017 Finish – 7th, 2A State

Coach – John Szabo

Top Runners – Roger Mendiola SR (59, 15:50), Nick Doud SR (67, 15:54), Brayden Olmstead JR (93, 16:10), Evan Turnbull JR (116, 16:17), Quinn Olson SR (123, 16:22), Drew Gibson JR (145, 16:35), Zach Reynolds JR, Dylan Kosloskus SR, Luke Moore JR, Suraj Airedy JR, Bryce Reed SO, Michael O'Dell-Henninger SO.

Preview – There was one team that snuck up on the rest in 2017 and that was Bloomington. The Purple Raiders improved during the season and ended with a seventh-place finish at the state meet. It was the first time that the Boys program had qualified for state since 2011. Bloomington did lose All-State runner Austin Bicknell to graduation. Everyone else is back making expectations for this school high this fall. Last year's finish was the highest ever for the program since they finished eighth in 1994.

Nick Doud should be the top runner for this team this fall. He was the top runner for Bloomington most of last season until he was the team's #2 at sectionals and #3 at state. Doud just missed qualifying for state in track in the 3200 Meter Run but still ran 9:30. He showed his fitness level at Detweiller at Dark finished second in the High School race. He could finish 10th or higher in November.

Roger Mendiola peaked at the right time at the end of last fall and was the team's second runner at state. **Brayden Olmstead, Evan Turnbull**, and **Quinn Olson** all finished within 12 seconds of each other last November and will look to bring their pack closer to Doud.

The returning runners' top five split at state was at 32 seconds last year. With Doud most likely fighting for a top finish, if the pack behind Doud can run within 25 seconds of each other, that would be a good thing. "The team has high expectations for the upcoming season," Coach **John Szabo** said. "After finishing 7th in state last year and having six of the top 7 returning, they are motivated and determined to get back to state and improve upon the 7th place finish. That was our school best state finish and now with some experience, the coaching staff is very excited for this season and think we can do very well."

5 Danville

2017 Finish – 9th, 2A State

Coach – Todd Orvis

Top Runners – Michael Moreman JR (64, 15:52), Lenox Li SR (87, 16:05), Noah Hile SR (101, 16:12), Lukas Burleson JR (135, 16:31), Brandon Barfell SR (189, 17:15), Ricky Oakley JR, Roberto Rangel SR, Ethan Barnes SR, Aaron Allen JR, David Enjambre JR.

Preview – Staying healthy, getting from race to race, and keeping their sanity perhaps is some of the things that Danville Coach **Todd Orvis** will be preaching to his team in the autumn of 2018. **Quemari Williams**, who was slotted to be in the top five this fall, decided to play football this season. **Dylan Watson**, their fifth runner from last year's state meet team, was run over by a teammate in a golf cart. Watson suffered a compound fracture breaking both his tibia and fibula causing him to miss the six months. Five runners are back from the ninth-place state team that has visions of a higher placing in November.

Another setback was that their projected top runner **Michael Moreman** suffered a stress fracture at the end of May and still is recovering. He should be the team's top runner that could finish at state in the top 50. Ricky Oakley has showed major improvement over the past summer and could challenge for a top five spot along with **Lenox Li** and **Noah Hile**. This team thrives off pack running. Their gap on the second through sixth runners at state was only 39 seconds. Moreman getting back to 100% and the addition of Oakley could have the Vikings ready to go in October. The tight pack running will pay off during the first few meets of the season. "We would like to have a shot at winning the Big 12," Orvis said. "It will be tough as Bloomington and Normal West have strong squads among several others. We would obviously like to qualify for state again and try to better our 9th place finish from last season."

6 Springfield

2017 Finish – 4th, 2A State

Coach – Dan Devlin

Top Runners – Kyle Boughter JR (18, 15:13), Will Formea SR (50, 15:43), Ryan Waldinger SR (76, 15:58), Zach Kinison SR (83, 16:02), Jack Flesner SR (125, 16:23), Sam Forness JR (169, 16:54), Isaac Becker JR, Luke Flesner SO, Ben Parker SO, Cameron Van Metre SR, Ian Kaisner SO.

Preview – One of the toughest middle of the state conferences is the Central State Eight. It showed last year especially the rivalry between area teams Springfield and Chatham-Glenwood. Springfield finished ahead of the Titans in the state meet and the conference. Glenwood won both the regional and the sectional. The Senators will be powerful again returning six from their state fourth-place team.

Kyle Boughter had a strong sophomore season last fall as he finished 18th in the state race. Injuries slowed him down during April for the outdoor season where he ran 4:42/10:26 at the end of the year. If he is back at 100% health, we could see him finish in the top ten. **Will Formea** is a strong second runner for the team running 30 seconds behind Boughter at state. **Ryan Waldinger, Zach Kinison**, and **Jack Flesner** appear to be the next three in the top five. The five runner splits off Boughter was 49 seconds at state and 60 seconds in the sectional race. Their split from two to five at state was only 19 seconds. We have to presume that Boughter is 100% and could run under 15-minutes on state day. Keeping their overall split under 45 seconds and within 20 seconds from two to five. That formula could get the Senators into the top three and leaving Detweiller Park with a state trophy.

7 Rockford Christian

2017 Finish – 2nd, 1A State

Coach – Randy Moore

Top Runners – Riley Wells SR (5, 15:05), Brent Brunner SR (49, 15:56), D'Artagnon Beaver SO (86, 16:20), Carter Fryer JR (98, 16:32), Cal Granite SR (119, 16:50), Nicolas Capriola SR, Josh Hankamp SR (183, 17:44), Stephen Thomas SO, JT Emenecker JR, Collin Hook SO, Daniel Isely JR.

Preview – There was no preparation for the Rockford Christian team when they were told that they were moved up to 2A for the 2015 season. The Royal Lions finished 18th that year. The past two seasons, Rockford Christian finished fourth in 2016 and 2nd last year running in 1A both years. Since the team finished third in 2014, they qualified for the IHSA's nifty "Success-Factor" rule that will move them up to 2A for at least the next two seasons. This year, Coach **Randy Moore** was ready for the move. "You also know me well when you state that we 'don't worry about goals at the end of the year.' Our philosophy is to focus on how and why we race and the what will take care of itself," Moore said. "Having said that, I think the boys have an expectation to better our 2015 2A finish. Truthfully, we were not emotionally or psychologically prepared for that first bump. We are now."

This team finished second last season in 1A and would have been the huge favorite in 2018 if they would have stayed in that class. Now in 2A with six runners back from the state team that could go nine-deep in talent, I would not count this team out considering the

talent that they have on their roster. It does help to have to have **Riley Wells** as your top runner. The senior has won the 1A 800 Meter Run the past two seasons and finished fifth last fall in 1A. He will be one of the top runners in 2A this fall. The group behind Wells is strong. **Brent Brunner** is another senior that will lead the pack. **D'Artagnon Beaver** could be closer to Brunner than he was a year ago. **Nicholas Capriola** missed his entire junior cross-country season due to a fractured vertebrae. He ran a 2:02 split on the team's 3200 Relay in the spring. According to Moore, Capriola is in shape for this upcoming season. Another runner to watch is sophomore **Stephen Thomas**. He only ran a couple of races last fall before he got anemic and missed the rest of the season. He qualified for 1A state last spring in the 1600 Meter Run. "We don't have a specific time expectation of him," Moore added. "Only that we know the squad will be better with him somewhere in our top five."

This team will have a better pack from two to five than last year when it was 49 seconds in the 1A state meet. Putting the Royal Lions at this spot to start the season. I am sure that will change by the end of this year. "What stands out the most regarding this squad thus far is their independence and creativity," Moore concluded. "I've have limited face to face contact with the boys this year - meeting with the squad just once a week. Many of the boys have had extended family vacations and summer job conflicts, yet that has not stopped them from doing the work. Our theme for this fall is *Discipline Over Default*. I challenged the boys to choose the disciplined life over their default settings, everything from diet to training logs to getting out of bed for morning runs. They've responded better than I had hoped. Everyone has found a way to do the work. When everyone has the same ethos, the cross-country experience is a rich and fulfilling one - and performances outcomes tend to be favorable too."

With that attitude, that is how you succeed on and off the course. That is how you contend for a state trophy.

8 Lisle Benet Academy

2017 Finish – 7th, 3A Plainfield South Regional

Coach – Kevin Renecker

Top Runners – Ben Grundman JR, Connor O'Keefe SR, Jonas Jodwalis JR, Thomas Diehl SR, Jack Robinson SO, Michael Nocernio SR, Ian Smith SR, Sean Donnelly SO, William Foreman SR, Dominick Adams JR, Niklas Anderson SO, Jeffrey Gaydos SR.

Preview – It is not the way to end a season when your team misses qualifying for the sectional meet by finishing seventh in the 3A Plainfield South Regional. The blessing for the Red Wings is that with five of their top seven returning from last year's team, Benet Academy was dropped down to 2A for the 2018 season.

This team will need to exhibit some tight pack running to advance to the state meet. **Ben Grundman** and **Connor O'Keefe** should be the top runners on this and could be separated by ten seconds or less in meets this season. The three to five pack should only be 15 seconds between **Jonas Jodwalis**, **Thomas Diehl**, and **Jack Robinson**. The thing to watch is the gap between the two groups. The groups could be separated by between 45 to 50 seconds. That will need to be addressed early in the season. Benet Academy will be the big favorite to win the East Suburban Catholic Conference. If they have visions of making it to the state meet, dropping the split between the two groups needs to be reduced.

9 Washington

2017 Finish – 16th, 2A State

Coach – Tom Smith

Top Runners – Avery Davidson SR (52, 15:45), Garret Roberts SR (103, 16:13), Ben Learned SR (122, 16:20), Reese Borlin SR (133, 16:27), Caden Davidson JR (178, 17:05), Max Tellefson SR, Zach Tranchitella SO, Jacob Stone JR, Jacob Kunka SR, Rocco Geisz JR, Luke Zobrist JR.

Preview – A team to keep an eye on especially at the end of the year at Detweiller Park. Washington made a slow move during the season finishing third in their conference meet, fifth in the Normal University Sectional and 16th in the state meet. Five runner s are back from that state team. The Panthers could go as deep as nine runners at this fall. They did lose #6 runner **Ethan Sabota** who did not come out for the team.

Avery Davidson and **Reece Borlin** traded off the top spot at the end of last season and should give Washington a strong 1-2 up front. **Chris Hurd** missed all his junior season due to injury. He has been training and keeping up with Davidson and Borlin during the summer. **Ben Learned**, **Luke Zobrist**, and **Garrett Roberts** will be three of a group of runners that could challenge for the scoring spots.

"Summer training went very well," said their coach **Tom Smith**. "We have a strong group of seniors that have improved each of the last four years. Qualifying for State last year as a team has really motivated the guys to work hard." The team could run a 45 second split on their top five. A key to watch is how much the pack is farther up in races. Washington is starting their season two weeks earlier running at Normal West on August 25.

10 Peoria Notre Dame

2017 Finish – 8th, 2A Normal University Sectional

Coach – Dan Gray

Top Runners – Chris Gilbert SR (20, 15:15), Mitchell Mazander SR, Patrick Couri SO, David Robison JR, Luke Sander JR, Kellar Groff JR, Jacob Nora JR, Alex Van Slyke SR, Sergio Teran SR, Brennan Messmer SO, Noah Ribordy SO., Christian Vargas SO, Jac Couri FR.

Preview – The Irish will look to make it to the state meet as a team. Only **Chris Gilbert** went individually as the team finished eighth at the Normal University Sectional. Gilbert had great progression towards the end of last season placing 20th at state. He is among ten of the top individual returning runners. Gilbert should have high expectations for a top finish.

Four of the other top seven runners are back except for last year's second runner **Tony Haddad** who did not come out for the team. **Mitchell Mazander** and **Patrick Couri** should be some of the top runners in the pack behind Gilbert. Freshman **Jac Couri**, who finished 12th in the 1A IESA State Meet last October, and **Christian Vargas** are two runners that we could see in the top five in October. "The Irish have to get four into the low-mid 15:00s with the rest of the top 7 in the low 16:00s to make their mark in 2018," said their coach **Dan Gray**.

11 Crystal Lake Central

2017 Finish – 15th, 2A State

Coach – Bill Eschman

Top Runners – Kaegan Smalley SR (79, 15:59), Jack Flynn SR (99, 16:08), Adam Zentner SR (131, 16:26), Nate Kopp SR (150, 16:37), Nick Camacho SR (153, 16:39), Carson Johnson SR, Trevor May SR, Julian Ryerson SO, Austin May SO, Lucas Seegers SR, Anthony Camacho SO, Ryan Atkinson SO, Joel Brickey SO.

Preview – The Kaneland Sectional race was the race of mysteries. Crystal Lake Central, who slowly built up their resume during the season finished fifth in their sectional and then placed 15th in the state meet. Not a ton of people thought that the Tigers would make it to state at the beginning of the year. That is why we run meets every week until November...hopefully.

Seniors **Keegan Smalley** and **Jack Flynn** should be the top runners again for the Tigers. Both runners could finish in the top 50. Smalley finished 79th a year ago. Crystal Lake Central's third and fourth runners graduated. Their fifth through seventh runners were only separated by 13 seconds at state. This team could have a tight pack during the season near 45 seconds on the top five. If they can hold that spread with a runner in the top 50, the Tigers could better last year's finish.

12 Mahomet-Seymour

2017 Finish – 2A State Champions

Coach – Neal Garrison

Top Runners – Mathias Powell SR (4, 14:45), Bryson Keeble SR (45, 15:39), Kaelan Davis SR (120, 16:19), Nate Douglas SR (166, 16:51), Jack McHale SR, David Wilcoski JR, Gaven Williams JR, Joe Taylor SO, Caleb Mason SR, Caleb Dowers SO.

Preview – There are so many questions that surround the two-time defending state champion Bulldogs heading into 2018. Three runners graduated from last year's team. Coach **Neal Garrison** stated:

"Winning State the first time was very special for everyone involved in the program from the coaches, to the runners, to their parents, and to the alumni. Everyone had invested so much over the years to get the team to win State. It was both a relief and a joyful moment. It was a celebration of all the struggles everyone had gone through to set us up for that win. It really helped us all realize it was worth the sacrifices for us to finally get to the top. I know we aren't the first team to win State or an invitational. For our program, each time we accomplished a step such as winning a small meet for the first time it was almost like winning State for us. But for our program winning State just reminded us all how much everyone had invested for years to get there. Winning State last year was also special. I think there is a unique pressure to be a defending champion in any meet and even more on the State meet. Our boys and their parents did an excellent job handling the expectations put on them to do that well again. Winning State again was special, but it was almost more of a relief once the pressure was gone than it was about accomplishing something we had never done before like the first time."

Mahomet-Seymour has a good nucleus to build off led by **Matias Powell**. The senior finished fourth last season and is the top returning runner from the 2017 race. Powell also finished second in the 3200 Meter Run at last spring's state meet. **Bryson Keeble** finished in the top 50 last November and could contend for a finish in the top 25 at state.

This is when the questions begin. Two seniors, **Kaelan Davis** and **Nate Douglas** look to be the third and fourth runners but will need to move closer to Keeble. Davis was 40 seconds behind Keeble at state. **Jack McHale** and **David Wilcoski** will look to step into the fifth spot. "I think our new runners did a fairly good job this summer running together," Garrison said. "They really helped each other as they transitioned to high school running. Our returning runners mainly ran individually. It will be interesting for me to see how they do when they get together once the season begins." Garrison expects close to ten freshmen to join the team this fall. That would be a projected half of their roster.

There were certainties in this program last year when they won their second state championship in a row. Those certainties are not around staring this season. That is what makes a season so much fun. It is the journey along the way. "I think the runners and myself are very uncertain about what to expect this season," concluded Garrison. "Personally, I think our team could go either way. I could see us not qualifying for State to having another strong year. Many of our returning runners didn't do track or have had some injuries in track or in the summer. So, it has been very hard to know where they are and if they will be able to stay injury free this fall. I am always praying for a miracle, but time will tell if we can piece things together by the State series. I think the returning boys are hopeful for another successful year both as individuals and as a team. They have enjoyed having success and would like to have it again this year."

13 Aurora Illinois Math & Science Academy

2017 Finish – 7th, 2A Burlington Central Regional

Coach – Grant Bell

Top Runners – Daniel Chen SR (11, 15:03), Daniel Soto SR, Jake Sutter SR, Ishaar Ganeson JR, Gabe Bryk SR, Miran Liu SR, Jason Liu JR, Aaron Rodriguez JR, Lozaro Esquivel SR, Tyrone Whitmore SR, Jay Dong JR.

Preview – The Titans progressed through last season quietly moving up the rankings. It hit a wall when IMSA finished seventh in the Burlington Central Regional missing qualifying for sectionals by just one point. Two of their top five runners missed the meet one ill and the other with an injury.

IMSA again will look to push for a trip to the state meet. New Coach Grant Bell welcomes five runners back from that regional team with **Daniel Chen** leading this squad. Chen made it to the state meet as an individual placing 11th overall. He should be one of the top runners this fall. **Daniel Soto** will be a solid second runner heading the Titans' pack. **Jake Sutter** was the team's fourth runner at the beginning of last October before an injury forced him out. He could be running with Soto this season. Their first three runners should account for some low numbers. The development of their fourth and fifth runners, who most likely will be at least 90 seconds behind Chen is something that will need to be worked on for IMSA to challenge for a state berth. The team does not run a high-pressured schedule. We will see how good this team is at the end of September first at Lisle and then at Burlington Central.

14 Burlington Central

2017 Finish – 18th, 2A State

Coach – Vince Neil

Top Runners – Anthony Farmer JR (21, 15:16), Enrique Martinez SR (114, 16:16), Adam Kries SR (147, 16:36), Gio Martinez JR (151, 16:38), Jack Hartmann SR (173, 16:58), Tyler Gerke SR, Charlie Damagalski SR, Tommy Zeitl JR, Evan Schmidt SR, Logan Metcalfe SR, Noah Karottu SO, Ben Petersen FR, Robert Perry FR, Carl Cassata FR, Zac Schmidt FR.

Preview – The Rockets stepped up to the next level in 2017 qualifying for the state meet placing 18th. Hopes are high to make it for the state meet. Five runners are back from that state team. **Anthony Farmer** emerged last fall placing 21st at state and positioning himself to be one of the top 2A runners this season. Something that will need to be watched is the pack behind their #1 runner.

Enrique Martinez was the team's second runner in 2017 and was on an average 60 to 65 behind Farmer. The pack with Martinez, led by Adam Kries, was within 42 seconds of their second runner at state. Those numbers will need to come down and move up to within 45 seconds of Farmer. Help in closing that gap could come from a group of freshmen including Ben Petersen and Robert Perry. "The boys had a very successful summer," Vince Neil said. "Attendance was very good, and the boys embraced the mileage. This team is hungry to improve on last year's 18th place finish at state."

15 Troy Triad

2017 Finish – 10th, 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Andy Brendel

Top Runners – Jefferson Ross Bushur SO (33, 15:43: 1A State; transfer from Father McGivney), Drake Bleier SO, Jared Willis JR, Ben Walter JR, Deric Patton SR, Caleb Bagwell SO, Isaiah Barker SR, Seth Martin SR, Christian Paddig JR, Marshall Boeren JR, Zach Rose SR, Andrew Plantz SR, Luke Perry SO.

Preview – Expectations are high for Triad after finishing 10th in their sectional and returning all those runners in that race. The biggest addition for the team could be the transfer in of **Ross Bushur** from Father McGivney. Bushur finished 33rd as a freshman in the 1A state meet and then transferred into the school last winter. He did not run track last spring. "I have no idea what kind of shape he is in," said Triad Coach **Andy Brendel**. "He did not train with us over the summer." If Bushur is ready to go, it just makes the Knights tougher in the front.

The team ran a 56 second split on their top five in the sectional race. With Bushur in there, that split could drop by 15 seconds. **Drake Bleier**, **Jared Willis**, and **Ben Walter** are all underclassmen and are the nucleus of a solid pack in the front. "Our boys have been progressing well over the summer. We return all our top boys and they've been training hard to this point," Brendel added. "Our coaching staff is excited about this group. The expectations are high."

16 Mt. Zion

2017 Finish – 7th, 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Kelly Fox

Top Runners – Mason Jones SR (78, 15:59), Carson Fenton SR, Collin Perry SR, Cade Baker SR, Max Klebe JR, Wally Kraus JR, Henry Ellison JR, Nathan Current SO.

Preview – A team that I would keep an eye on in 2018 after having an off race in their sectionals placing seventh. Five runners from that sectional team are back. **Mason Jones** did not run his best race at state with a 15:59 time placing 78th. A month before at the Peoria Central Invitational, Jones ran a minute faster at 14:57. Carson Fenton is a solid second runner that will need to stay at least within 40 seconds of Jones. **Collin Perry** and **Cade Baker** will challenge for the third position. The Braves ran a 61 second five runner split in their sectional race. Dropping that split down 10 seconds puts Mt. Zion in the hunt for a state berth.

17 Chicago Solorio Academy

2017 Finish – 6th, 2A Chicago University Sectional

Coach – Robert Dron

Top Runners – Adonaliz Hernandez JR (29, 15:25), Brandon Galicia SR, Eduardo Maya SR, Filberto Franco SO, Lorenzo Rivera SR, Criston Chaidez SR, Russel Cano SR, Jesus Chavez JR, Julio Vaca SR, Miguel Cordova JR.

Preview – This could be the year that the Sun Warriors could advance to state as a team. Six of their seven runners are back from the sectional team that finished sixth in their sectional. A big loss for the team is that their second runner Xavier Morales is not running this fall. They do have **Adon Hernandez** that will lead them. Hernandez placed 29th individually at the state meet. An all-state finish is within his reach. The pack behind Hernandez, perhaps 70 to 75 seconds back, will be tight led by **Brandon Galicia** and **Eduardo Maya**. It could be as tight as 30 seconds within the group.

The big plus is that this team most likely will be placed in the Fenton Sectional. In 2018, the Sun Warriors could advance to Peoria. "We've been so focused on state the last few years that we didn't necessarily focus on the day-to-day," Coach **Robert Dron** said. "This year, we are highlighting the journey and not the destination. Our vision is "no limits" which is a beautiful thing because we don't know where each individual's cap will lead us. The guys are thinking 'what am I doing today and now, that will benefit me tomorrow'. So, while each guy has a goal tucked in the back of their minds, we keep communicating that anything is possible. It's pretty general, but the guys are really excited about this season."

18 Lake Villa Lakes Community

2017 Finish – 7th, 2A Kaneland Sectional

Coach – Travis Shepherd

Top Runners – Ethan Schuamer SR, Owen Wenberg SR, Talon Knauf JR, RJ Migas JR, Charlie Halberg SR, Jack Erwin SR, Jay Patel SR, Jack Engel SO, Tim Smith JR, Ty Dwyer SO, Sean Humpa JR.

Preview – The Eagles came close to making to state last year but fell short. Lakes placed seventh at the Kaneland Sectional missing the trip for Peoria by nine points. The future looks bright in Lake Villa this fall with their top five runners returning from that sectional team. “I think this Summer training was really solid. I was not pleased with last year as there was a lack of accountability and I felt like guys underwhelmed as far as their mileage. We didn’t have the leadership that I was expecting. I challenged the top 7 this year to put in the work and leave no stone un-turned. They have responded quite well,” **Travis Shepherd** said. “What makes this Summer better is the quality of work up front and the quantity of work happening in the background. In addition, we have a 2nd group forming behind the varsity group. While we have had talent the last few years, we have lacked solid depth. We finally have a group of 5 forming behind the top 7. This should not only help push the guys in front, but also prepare our next group to step up when the Seniors graduate.”

Owen Wenberg and **Ethan Schaumer** ran close to each other and should share the top spot. Talon Knauf had a good summer and has closed the gap on the front runners. **RJ Migas, Jack Erwin,** and **Charlie Halberg** close the back end of the pack and give this team depth. 43 seconds separated the top five in the sectional race. Moving those five runners close to the front could advance the Eagles out of this sectional.

“We really like to set high targets. We don’t shy away from pursuing excellence,” Shepherd added. “Last year we had an expectation to make it to state and finish in the top 15. While I think we were a top 20 team, it just didn’t work out for us to race at Peoria. We embrace being in a tough Sectional, so we know it will be a battle to make it Detweiller every year. We have been knocking on the door the last few years and in 2017 we were agonizingly close. We talked with the guys about the race and I was happy with how they responded. We felt like we did everything in our control to be ready to run our best. The guys had good races, but we got beat by other teams who had better days. We let the athletes drive the expectations and they are high again. The target is not just to get to Detweiller, but to do something there. We have such a strong pack (top 5 under 16:20 w/ a 16 sec pack) that should put us in the mix in every race. Teams with an average of under 16 minutes typically finish in the top 15 at the state meet. We have the potential to have an average under 16 and if we can continue to keep our pack tight, we should be right in the mix. This Senior group wants to be the 1st ever team to qualify from Lakes and they want to leave a legacy of excellence. They are an inspired group who are ready to compete each meet. They welcome the spotlight and are pumped when they have an opportunity to compete against good teams. They are diligent in their preparation as they meticulously take care of what is in their control. When the moment is here, they will be ready to strike. A team with this makeup is a delight to work with and I am beyond excited to coach this group.”

19 Dixon

2017 Finish – 6th, 2A Kaneland Sectional

Coach – Evan Thorpe

Top Runners – Christian Seagren JR, Andrew Lohse SR, Brock Drengenberg SO, Cadyn Grafton SO, Collin Grady SR, Logan Griswold JR, Isaac Rollinger SO, Dominic Lazano SO, Aidan Johnson JR, Thomas Sitter JR.

Preview – The Dukes came close to qualifying for state missing by six points in finishing sixth at the Kaneland Sectional. **Colin Grady** was the team’s top runner but could not run in the sectional race due to a hip impingement. Grady is healthy and should again be Dixon’s top runner and possibly a top 25 finisher at state. Another top five runner, **Logan Griswold** suffered a stress fracture two weeks before his conference meet and missed the rest of the season. Getting both healthy this fall will be a huge plus for this team.

The team ran a 38 second split on their top five at the end of September at the Peoria Invitational. Their split at sectionals, without Grady and Griswold, 49 seconds. **Christian Seagren** and **Cadyn Grafton** had good summers and will make this team even better. Ranking this team close to 20 is a “safe” ranking for now. If everyone is on the same page health wise, the Dukes will rise into the top ten by the state series. After that, the sky is the limit.

20 Antioch

2017 Finish – 12th, 2A Kaneland Sectional

Coach – Chris Bailey

Top Runners – Charlie Smith JR (10, 15:02), Mike Volkmar SR, Josh Lynch JR, Eric Hart SR, Luke Menzies JR, Owen Lane SO, Kyle Miller SO, Brandon Jordan SO, Ben Ticsay JR, Dan McPherson JR, Ryan Johnson SO, Lucas Baronello FR.

Preview – The Sequoits have improved over the past year but still it could be tough for this team to advance out of the tough Woodstock North Sectional. Antioch finished 12th in last year’ sectional and have four of that top seven back. “First and foremost, everyone’s goal is to get better,” said Coach **Chris Bailey**. “Our team success depends on individual improvement. Getting everyone to understand their role on the team will be important and something we will focus on during the season.”

Charlie Smith will be one of the 2A runners to watch this fall. The junior placed 10th in last fall’s state meet and could contend for the state title after a good summer of training. **Mike Volkmar** leads the pack behind Smith. He was anywhere from 50 to 70 seconds behind Smith during the season. The positions for the third through fifth runners will need to be developed as Josh Lynch and Eric Hart appear to be the leaders in that group. Freshman **Lucas Baronello** could step into the top five this fall. Antioch is solid with their first two runners. Getting their three through fifth runners within 55 seconds of each other and close to Volkmar will be a plus.

21 Lake Forest

2017 Finish – 18th, 3A Hoffman Estates Sectional

Coach – Matthew Jerina

Top Runners – Nathan Schmitt JR, Ben Rosa JR, Elijah Fietsom SR, Joshua Lane JR, Ethan Lane JR, Garrett Carden SR, Carson Ward JR, Ryan Peters JR, Jack Hartline JR, Daniel McKiernan JR, Michael Raupp JR.

Preview – The Scouts were the final team in the 3A Hoffman Estates Sectional standings last fall. The move to 2A will be something to watch. Lake Forest returns four of their top five from that sectional team.

They have strength in the front led by **Nathan Schmidt** and **Ben Rosa**. Schmitt just missed making it to the 3A state meet finishing 13th in that race. He dropped his personal best down to 9:31 for 3200-meters during the track season. He should contend for a top 20 finish at state this November. Rosa did not have a great sectional race finishing 44 seconds behind Schmitt. He appears to be having a good summer of training with a 15:31 at Detweiller at Dark as evidence. Juniors **Joshua** and **Ethan Lane** along with senior **Elijah Fjetsom** give the Scouts a good pack that will probably be 60 seconds behind Schmitt. Keeping their pack within 20 seconds of each other could get Lake Forest close to a qualifying position.

22 Olney Richland County

2017 Finish – 9th, 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Louis Gassmann

Top Runners – Gavin Kirby SO, Braden Nicholson SR, Owen Powell SR, Caleb Thomas SR, Jordan Belcher JR, Collin Gilreath SO, Barak Berger SO, Keaton Hancock SO, Colin Locher SO.

Preview – Richland County could be an up and coming team in the Decatur Sectional. Six of seven runners are back from the team's ninth-place finish in their sectional. **Gavin Kirby** became the team's top runner in 2017 as a freshman and could rise in the sectional ranks this fall. Kirby finished 39th in the sectional race. "With the spring track season, he had and with the summer of training he has done I don't see him doing anything but continuing to make great strides on racing faster," his coach Louis Gassman said.

The team has improved over the summer and could show a trio of seniors (**Braden Nicholson**, **Owen Powell**, **Caleb Thomas**) challenge Kirby for the top spot. Their pack was tight in their sectional race at only 30 seconds for the top five. If the pack moves closer and up with Kirby, the Tigers could be one of the top five sectional teams in October. "I'd like to see us win our conference (Little Illini Conference), but that won't be easy. We will be battling Lawrenceville and Robinson, both whom advanced to class A state last season," Gassmann added. "Of course, we'd like to advance out of the Decatur Sectional. That too won't be easy. That sectional at Decatur is extremely loaded. We'll need to be healthy and running on all cylinders to accomplish a trip up to Peoria in November."

23 Maple Park Kaneland

2017 Finish – 6th, 2A State

Coach – Chad Clarey

Top Runners – Daniel Occhipinti JR (66, 15:53), Aidan Ludwig SR (95, 16:10), Jacob Wielgos SR (110, 16:14), Ethan Walker JR, Blake Finn SR, Isaiah Dullal SO, Jacob Patrik SR, Seth Nosek JR, Ethan Neale JR, Kyle Orczykowski SR, Brady Popovich SO, Nolan Allen FR, Christian Phillips FR.

Preview – It could be a reloading year for the Knights after finishing sixth at state. Kaneland does lose 2017 2A individual champion Matt Richtman to graduation. This team will challenge again for a state spot with three runners back that have state meet experience. **Daniel Occhipinti** should lead this team and could be among the top 40 at state. **Aidan Ludwig** and **Jacob Wieglos** should be close behind giving the Knights a solid top three. "The core of our team had a solid summer of conditioning. A few raced in Peoria, but ultimately our goals are not fast finishes in July," said Coach **Chad Clarey**.

It could be the new faces in the top five that will be difference makers this fall. **Juniors Ethan Neal**, **Seth Nosek**, and **Ethan Walker** all had solid summers of training. All should contribute to a top five that will need to keep under 65 seconds for this team to again qualify in October for Peoria. "This team shouldn't feel the burden of pressure for the postseason from the coaching staff, but at the same time, they are hungry for it. The top 3 have had a taste of it, and they are working to get their teammates on board. They understand the sacrifice and work that it takes to reach that level," added Clarey. "When October rolls around, we hope to have a better pack split than a year ago, with a team that is 9-10 deep. We don't measure a season on whether we qualify as a team, but in the improvement our runners see by the end of the campaign. We'll take some lumps in early meets as we work to find a consistent lineup. We are young, but we are getting great leadership from our seniors. They're driven to see this team find its own identity within our program's history."

24 Geneseo

2017 Finish – 11th, 2A Normal University Sectional

Coach – Don Fredericks

Top Runners – Neo Colter JR, William Plumley SO, Colby Rapps JR, Rafe Morrison, SO, Andrew Rizzo SR, Nathan Carroll SR, Luke Henkhaus JR, Ricky Chavez SO, Ky Ariano JR, Luke Sebastian SR, Spencer Lindstrom JR.

Preview – The Maple Leafs will look to improve on last year's 11th place sectional finish. Four runners are back from that team led by **Neo Colter** and **William Plumley** who should step into the top spot vacated by the graduated **Blake Duncan**. Geneseo had a 69 second split off Duncan in the sectional race with only a 12 second split from two through five. This team and will exhibit their front running prowess. The key will be moving that pack closer to the front.

25 Vernon Hills

2017 Finish – 9th, 2A Kaneland Sectional

Coach – Jason Rush

Top Runners – James McDonald SR (33, 15:29), Oskar Jedynak SO, Cameron Overbeck SR, Alex Utsis SO, Evan Peepo SR, Matt Huse SR, Chase Johnson JR, Francis Gorham SR, Antoni Okinczyc SR, Sean Kim SR, Carter Sherwin JR.

Preview – **Jason Rush** steps in as the new coach for the Cougars replacing the retired **Mark Whitley**. Rush was the Girls track coach at the school from 2010 to 2016. Rush has five runners back from the team that finished ninth in the sectional in 2017. The second and third runners on that sectional team have graduated.

Jimmy McDonald gained valuable experience at state last fall placing 33rd. A top 20 finish is a possibility. "Jimmy McDonald is a

phenomenal overall athlete,” Rush said. “He probably should be playing tight end on the football field as he’s 6’1, 175 - easily the biggest fast kid I’ve ever coached. He went 15:27 at Detweiller and has wants to go 15:00 this year. He had to split his time between summer camp and summer lacrosse. I wish I had more time with him, but I think he’s a low mileage kid who craves speedwork. I think I can get him close to 15:00 by November but that will likely be his last XC race of his life as his real passion is lacrosse.” **Oskar Jedyndak** will lead a pack that will need to stay within 55 seconds of MacDonald. Chase Johnson had a good summer of training and could step into the third spot.

Next 15 2A Boys Teams

Waterloo

2017 Finish – 12th, 2A State

Coach – Larry Huffman

Top Runners – Jackson McAlister JR (68, 15:54), Eli Ward JR (107, 16:13), Matt Dawson SR (177, 17:02), Sam Kreinberg SR (188, 17:15), David Lewis SR, Allen Kraus JR, Ethan Kirchner SR.

Preview – The Bulldogs could make a return trip to Peoria after finishing 12th at state in 2017. **Jackson McAlister** and **Eli Ward** have improved over the past year and are two of the four returning runners on this squad. Both ran sub two-minute splits at in the 3200 Meter Relay at the state meet. Senior Matt Dawson will lead the pack behind McAlister and Ward. We watch this team this fall to see how the pack develops heading into the state series.

Darien Hinsdale South

2017 Finish – 19th, 2A State

Coach – Jim Dickerson

Top Runners – Tim Rudolph SR (137, 16:32), Nick Beronio JR (144, 16:34), Antonio Garcia SR (171, 16:56), Alex Grindenau SR (183, 17:09), Josh Baron JR, Jayden Arquinea JR, Jose Pacheco SR, Jonathan Chen SR, Trevor Lehmann SR, Tanner Booth SR, Julian Watson SO.

Preview – It would not surprise me to see the Hornets back at the state meet. Even though they lost All-State runner Brett Haffner to graduation, Hinsdale South has a good group back with four runners back from the state team. The biggest surprise over the summer has been the improvement of **Julian Watson** who did not run on the team last fall. “Watson came out late for track, after basketball almost at spring break,” Coach **Jim Dickerson** said. “After running a solid 2:15 800 off “newcomer” training, he was one of our most consistent runners this summer and has shown the ability to possibly even be our top runner this fall. As he adjusts to increased training he could improve greatly.”

The pack should again be tight for Hinsdale led by **Tim Rudolph** and **Nick Beronio**. **Trevor Lehmann**, who missed most of last season due to injuries after running as the team’s fourth-runner at state in 2016, could make an impact on the top five.

“This will be a different kind of Hinsdale South team than we have been since 2013. We have always had front runners and a large 1-5 split. Especially if a 5th runner emerges to run with Nick, Tim, Julian, and Max, and there are a lot of young men who could do it, our split could be very tight,” added Dickerson. “The question is, will everyone be running 16:30 or 15:30? That obviously is a huge difference. I am optimistic because our runners will put pressure on each other and we will not have a set order or top runner. But they have to be aggressive and not settle for comfortable pack running or mediocrity. We are actually experienced and deep, with 5 runners who have run at State and 2 more who have run in at least one state series race. I feel that we are one of the deepest teams in 2A, but obviously our top 5 will all have to continue their improvement and run much faster than they have in previous years. We might start invisible, but I think we could sneak up on people at the end of the year.”

Grayslake North

2017 Finish – 7th, 2A Antioch Regional

Coach – Anthony DeStephano

Top Runners – Connor Riss SR, Brandt Batteau JR, Ryan Schroeder SR, John Kalstrup JR, Alex Larivee JR, Jordan Boxer SR, Charlie Lay SO, Payton Taylor SR, Kyle Engstrom SO, Connor Smith SO, Kelechi Akalaonu SO.

Preview – This team could show the most improvement of the teams in the Woodstock North Sectional. The Knights missed sectionals a year ago finishing seventh in their regional. The top five runners from that team are back including sectional individual qualifiers **Connor Riss** and **Brandt Batteau**. Riss showed improvement during the track season dropping his time down to 4:26 for 1600-meters. Riss missed qualifying for state placing 15th in last fall’s sectional race. He should qualify individually in 2018. The team could go down with Riss to compete only if they can keep their five-runner split under 75 seconds.

Dunlap

2017 Finish – 9th, 2A Normal University Sectional

Coach – Chris Friedman

Top Runners – Shivam Paudel SR, Dane Tow SR, Lincoln Metzger SR, Max Varness JR, Kyle Brooks SR, James Rikken SR, Elijah Blaszyk SO, Gavin Dean SO, Will Pressler SO, Aidan Wyman JR.

Preview – Successful pack running will decide whether the Eagles will be running at Detweiller Park in November. Five of their top seven that ran on the ninth-place sectional team return. **Shivam Paudel** and **Dane Tow** look to be the top runners on this team. Their top five split is the key especially with no “stars” on this squad. Their sectional split on the top five was only 34 seconds last October. “This team has the talent to be a state qualifier,” said **Chris Friedman**. “We have a solid group of guys returning. However, they need

to run races as a team, not seven individuals. Our split one to five will be pivotal to our success since we will not have a lights-out front runner. Our expectations remain the same from year to year: improve every day, win the conference meet, and qualify for state."

Glen Ellyn Glenbard South

2017 Finish – 7th, 2A Wheaton Academy Sectional

Coach – Doug Gorski

Top Runners – Austin MacClure SR, Wesley Jedlicka SR, Edwin Svoboda JR, Deven Kinch JR, Tyler Kalebic JR, Ryan Allspach SO, Cole Hardtke SR, Mike Eloubary JR, Colin Hughes JR, Ryan Daca SO, Jacob Mack JR, Ethan Woods FR.

Preview – The Raiders could return to the state. They qualified six years in a row from 2010 to 2015. Glenbard South returns six of their top seven from the sectional team that finished seventh at Wheaton Academy. The team had a solid one through four pack last year averaging 25 seconds at the end of the year. **Austin MacClure** and **Wesley Jedlicka** should lead that pack that will need to move closer to the front in 2018. "I feel we had a productive summer in term of mileage the guys put in," **Doug Gorski** said. "We ran more miles this summer than in the past, hopeful this will produce results during the season. With 6 of the 7 guys who ran in the sectional meet last year returning, the goal for the team this year is to make it to the state meet. We are now in the Upstate 8 Conference. We hope to contend for a conference title this season."

Woodstock

2017 Finish – 13th, 2A Kaneland Sectional

Coach – Jay Fuller

Top Runners – Julio Arellano-Zapata SR, Aiden Schleutermann SO, Diego Cruz SR, Elvis Valadez SR, Adam Thomas JR, Paul Ferguson SR, Jack Hansen SO, Nick Weber JR, Nolan McCoy SR, Adrian Fernandez SR, Daniel Berkebile JR, Max Hodory FR.

Preview – The Blue Streaks will look to improve off their 13th place sectional finish from a year ago. Five of their top seven runners return. Sophomore **Aiden Schleutermann** and **Julio Arellano-Zapata** should be the runners up front leading Woodstock. "We want to get to sectionals and see what happens," **Jay Fuller** said. "The guys are just working hard to improve. We had good attendance this year for summer running for the Boys team led by **Diego Cruz** our captain who encouraged and helped every day this summer."

Springfield Sacred Heart-Griffin

2017 Finish – 12th, 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Josh Bluhm

Top Runners – Jacob Coady JR, Grant Sarnowski JR, Brenden Fahey SR, Zach Megginson JR, Nathaniel Bell SO, Jack Wagoner SR, August Davis JR, Samuel Cavanaugh JR.

Preview – Six runners are back for the Cyclones who could find their way into the top half of the sectional standings. Juniors **Jacob Coady** and **Grant Sarnowski** are juniors that could be the top runners this fall. Their pack split on five was 30 seconds last year. That could move them up. "We return the core of our top seven runners from last year, having lost only one senior from the top group to graduation," said **Josh Bluhm**. "While we lack a standout runner, our team will have its strength from the "peloton" mentality. I expect our top six or seven to shift around during the year."

Crystal Lake South

2017 Finish – 10th, 2A Kaneland Sectional

Coach – Rich Eschman

Top Runners – Matt Brown SO, Alex Picci SO, Clayton Pfeifer SR, Chris Davis JR, Josh Martinez SO, Jack Lyons SO, KT Seversten SO, Josh Dierson SO, Ethan Nabong SR, Garrett Czajkowski SO, Colin Rennak FR.

Preview – It could be tough for the Gators to duplicate their finish from a year ago especially losing All-State **Jack Becker** to graduation. Four runners are back of that sectional team. Three of them are underclassmen. **Matt Brown**, who was the team's third-runner at the end of last year should step into the first position for Crystal Lake South. "We are going to have a very young team this year. Most likely our top 7 will have 4 sophomores, 1 junior, 1 senior and 1 freshman. Our summer training went very well, we did not run as many miles as in the past due to fact that we are young. The guys are excited for the upcoming season," said **Rich Eschman**. "This is going to be a growing season for these guys. I think that they are going to be pretty good in the near future. Our expectations are to finish in the top 5 in the Fox Valley Conference and qualify for sectionals."

Midlothian Bremen

2017 Finish – 6th, 2A Wheaton Academy Sectional

Coach – Bill Griffin

Top Runners – Angel Lopez JR, Sam Luna SR, Matt Lovrich JR, Fabian Avila JR, Tony Jucik JR, Brian Jasien JR, Mike Dudek JR, Kevin Guerrero SO, Angel Suarez SR, Erick Oliva SR, Diego Frausto FR, Zach Casper SO.

Preview – It could be a rebuilding year for the Braves. At the same time, Bremen could make it to state. They missed qualifying for state in 2017 by two points placing sixth at Wheaton Academy. **Angel Lopez** and **Sam Luna** will look to be the top runners for Bremen. "Our 2018 season expectations will be first to win conference for the 3rd straight year. Many teams at Bremen have won 2 in a row but getting the threepeat is on the kids minds. They also want to wipe away the pain of last year and qualify for state," **Bill Griffin** said. "During the first week of practice we set up the goals that they want to accomplish, then we map out how we plan to get there. We

have talked about last year and the gut punch that was sectionals. They agree with my assessment that the subpar conference and regional meets had them doubting themselves during the week of sectionals. We need to erase that doubt and feed the hunger to get to state."

Elgin Harvest Christian Academy

2017 Finish – 3rd, 1A State

Coach – Steven Bland

Top Runners – Matthew Olech SO (50, 15:56), Erik Richter JR (136, 16:59), Chris Dobrescu SR (147, 17:07), Hayden Colclasure SO, Josh Peterson JR, Dean Ahrens JR, Sam Morris JR, Griffin Ellis SR, Noah Schneiderwind SR, Micah Steiner SO, Carson Welch FR.

Preview – The IHSA's "Success-Factor" strikes again as the small Harvest Christian Academy Boys team moves from Class 1A to Class 2A for the next two seasons. "I am not sure how to prepare the boys for the move, we've talked about, we are working, but with an enrollment of 175 students we can't manufacture athletes to compete against the depths of the 2A schools," said Harvest Coach Steven Bland. "None of the seven boys who ran for us on the state championship team two years ago are on our team this year, and only two from last year's third-place team will be in our top seven. This year is going to be a challenge."

Matthew Olech and **Erik Richter** should be the team's top runners. That depends if Olech plays soccer. He could have a breakout season if he concentrates on running. This team has risen to the challenge as we have seen the past couple of years. 2018 is no exception. "The mileage has been less than in years past, we will be a very young team and most of the athletes aren't ready for the kind of work it takes to be a podium contending team," Bland stated. "In 2A we are realistic, we are hoping to make it to the state meet but even that may be a challenge."

New Lenox Providence Catholic

2017 Finish – 8th, 2A Wheaton Academy Sectional

Coach – Dawn Gura

Top Runners – Kyle Bell SR (77, 15:58), Jimmy Grill SR (109, 16:14), Brock O'Neill SO, Nathan Krabbe SR, John Morrison SR, Joe Murphy SR, John McGuire SR, Matt Lahey JR, John O'Connor SO, Gabe Spesia SO.

Preview – The Celtics had two individual state qualifiers in their 8th place sectional finish. **Kyle Bell** and **Jimmy Grill** finished 110th or better and will look to improve on last year's finish. Providence Catholic returns their top five from the 2017 team. Closing their gap from fourth to the fifth runner will be something to watch.

Mascoutah

2017 Finish – 6th, 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Darren Latham

Top Runners – Casmir Cozzi SR (43, 15:36), Kristian Knecht SO, Jordan Eddy SO, Brendan Jones JR, Alex Midkiff SR, Avery Cozzi SO, Nathan Mostoller SR, Maguel Squires SO, Sean Ede JR, Israel Ignacio JR.

Preview – **Casmir Cozzi** finished 43rd at state in 2017 and could be among the 2A top 25 best this fall. This could be a rebuilding year for the Indians as only two runners are back from the sixth-place sectional team. There is depth on this roster that could get Mascoutah qualifying. Their two to five pack split is projected to be close to 60 seconds. Getting that pack to 50 seconds on Cozzi will be the challenge.

Marion

2017 Finish – 14th, 2A State

Coach – Eli Baker

Top Runners – John Bruce JR (14, 15:08), Joe Sullins SR (187, 17:14), Isaac Donaldson SO (208, 18:05), Timothy Surburg SR (210, 18:46), Jade Chew SR, Ben Parks SO, Caleb Flesh SO, Kaden Barber SO, Dillion Bruno JR, Steven Kosco SR.

Preview – Four runners are back for Marion after finishing 14th at state. **John Bruce** finished 14th individually as a sophomore in 2017 and will be among the 2A best this fall. Jade Chew was injured after his conference meet and did not run in the state series. It could be tough for the Wildcats to repeat the state trip this fall. The gap on their three to fifth runners is projected to be near two minutes. Getting that split down could get Marion closer to a top five sectional finish.

Lemont

2017 Finish – 11th, 2A Wheaton Academy Sectional

Coach – Tim Plotke

Top Runners – Andrew Deuschle SR (160, 16:46), Lucas Zaczek SR, Joe Cantone SR, Niko Vallianatos SO, Kyle Schuickel JR, Matt Deuschle SO, Nicholas Kania SO, Zackary Freitag JR, Jacob Mielczarek JR.

Preview – The Indians could be a team that might challenge for a state meet appearance. Lemont finished 11th in their sectional but returns six from that team. **Andrew Deuschle** made it to state last fall and will again lead this team. They will have a tight two to five pack of under 30 seconds again this fall. Getting that group to near 60 seconds on Deuschle could mean big things for this team this season.

Galesburg

2017 Finish – 16th, 2A Normal University Sectional

Coach – Craig Hillier

Top Runners – John Peterson SR, Aaron Burrows SR, Mark Frenster SR, Alex Buchen SO, Blake Warfield SR, Jared Shipp JR, Ryan Nash SO, Matrix Silberer SR, Ben Vasquez SO, David Pepple SO.

Preview – All seven runners back from last year's sectional team should mean a higher finish in this year's sectional. They finished 16th a year ago. The top three returning runners are seniors with **John Peterson** expected to be the team's top runner. The top five split was near 60 seconds last year. A 10 to 15 second improvement by runner with the same split moves Galesburg in the top ten in whatever sectional they are assigned to.

2A Boys Teams to Watch

(In Alphabetical Order)

Belvidere North

2017 Finish – 8th, 2A Kaneland Sectional

Coach – Troy Yunk

Top Runners – Max Beutel JR, Myles Vining SR, Eric Rodriguez SR, Logan Walsh SR, Zander Casis JR, Steve Brown JR, Aiden Massman JR, Noah Anderson JR, James Murphy JR, Hayden Zalucki SO.

Preview – Belvidere North missed qualifying for state by nine points finishing eighth at Kaneland. It could be tough for the Blue Thunder this fall graduating their top three runners and returning only three of their top seven back. **Max Beutel**, who was the team's fourth runner in the sectional race, should be the top runner for this squad starting the season.

Breese Mater Dei

2017 Finish – 16th, 1A State Meet

Coach - Marv Eversgerd

Top Runners – Alex Detmer SR (78, 16:43), Andrew Stevenson JR (146, 17:05), Nick Wolden SR (177, 17:38), Steve Hirte SO (198, 18:15), Ryan Clancy JR (199, 18:18), Matt Fuehne JR, Toby Uew SO, Tommy Marron SO, Janes Sullivan SR.

Preview – Mater Dei makes the move from 1A to 2A for the 2018 season returning five from their 16th place 1A state team. **Alex Detmer** should lead the team in the front heading into this campaign. A top ten finish in their sectional is a possibility.

Champaign Centennial

2017 Finish – 18th, 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Jeremy Owen

Top Runners – Luke Manokales JR (23, 15:16), Chance Yentes JR, Joe Simmons JR, Ethan Rice JR, Carter Herbert JR, Nick Mauer SO, Brennen Easter SO, Will Martin SO, Michael Lee SR, Antonio Buchanan SR.

Preview – All-state runner **Luke Manolakes** leads all last season's top seven runners back looking to improve on last year's sectional finish. Manolakes finished 23rd as a sophomore in 2017. The two through five split was near 70 seconds towards the end of last season. That spread coming down would and their experience from a year ago will guarantee an improvement for Centennial.

East Peoria

2017 Finish – 7th, 2A Metamora Regional

Coach – Brandon Shaver

Top Runners – Kolby Miller JR, Kenton Vendel SO, Dawson Dobbelaire SR, Caleb Alt JR, Donnie Vanwinkle SR, Nate Steenbergen SR, Sam Williams SR, Isaac Nelson JR, Daniel Vangunten SR, Ryan Sasnowski SR.

Preview – With the top two runners from last year graduated, East Peoria still has the chance to make it to sectionals after finishing seventh in the Metamora Regional in 2017. **Kenton Vendel** and **Kolby Miller**, who qualified for sectionals, should lead this team with hopes of lowering their top five split under 90 seconds.

Elmwood Park

2017 Finish – 8th, 2A Chicago University Sectional

Coach – Patrick Sheridan

Top Runners – Khris Vicencio SR, Carlos Sanchez SR, Tyler Ocampo SR, Jeremiah Roman SR, Luis Gomez JR, Vicente Guereca JR, William Bermudez JR, Johnny Diaz JR, Gio Nare JR, Marco Lopez SO.

Preview – Elmwood Park missed making state for the first time in five years in 2017. They will look to reverse that trend this fall returning four of their top seven from the eight-place sectional team. **Khris Vicencio** could be one of their top runners challenged by **Luis Gomez** who qualified for the 3200 Meter Run last spring. “Last year was a down year for the program. We didn’t run well when we had to and that is something we want to remedy (one-point loss at conference and missed qualifying for state for first time in five years,” **Patrick Sheridan** said. “Someone from the middle will have to rise to the challenge to close out our scoring and stop the bleeding. 1-3 are seniors who ran 16:40ish last year (one of those ran 16:01 at state in 2016 as a Soph). All could go sub 16 if they dedicate themselves fully. This is the first group of seniors I have coached for all four years in xc. They’re a special group and deserve to go out with a season of forever moments ending at historic Detweiler Park in November.”

Evergreen Park

2017 Finish – 14th, 2A Wheaton Academy Sectional

Coach – Eva Manzke

Top Runners – Miguel Xique SR, Horace Holifield SR, Anthony Richter JR, Kevin O’Toole JR, Fabian Llames SO, Nolan Brennan SR, Charlie Novak JR, Nick Casas JR.

Preview – Four of last year’s top five runners are back looking to improve on last year’s 14th place sectional finish. Seniors **Miguel Xique** and **Horace Holified** will lead this team with eyes on keeping their top five split under 100 seconds.

LaSalle-Peru

2017 Finish – 14th, 2A Normal University Sectional

Coach – John Beatty

Top Runners – Logan Johnson JR, Connor Bean SR, Logan Schaefer SR, Jack Brittin SO, Jacob Pocivasek SR, Matt Robinson JR, Matt George JR, Luke Carus SO, Net Patel SO, Braydon Porter SO.

Preview – The Cavaliers could be a top ten team in their sectional this fall. Six of the top seven runners are back from that team. **Logan Johnson**, who was the Frosh/Soph NIB-XII Conference champion last year, should be the top runner on this team. Connor Bean leads the pack that should be 60 seconds behind Johnson.

Marengo

2017 Finish – 25th, 1A State

Coach – Kenny Johnson

Top Runners – Luke Chaffin SO (123, 16:58), Aaron Mosbrlin SO (149, 17:02), Zach Soper SO (174, 17:36), C.J. Arevalo SR (187,

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Morris

2017 Finish – 13th, 2A Normal University Sectional

Coach – Joe Blumberg

Top Runners – Tony Pethtel JR, Aaron Day SO, James Ator SO, Nolan Robbins SR, Jase Cole SR, Alex Warrick SR, Kevin Preuss JR, Sean Smith SO.

Preview – Morris could have trouble climbing up the sectional ladder after finishing 13th last year. They return four runners from their top seven led by **Tony Pethel**. It was not the best of summers for this team as their second and third returning runners are not back with the team. The team could have close to a 70 second split on their top four runners. Keeping a split on five at under 90 seconds will be a goal. “We were six points from winning a Regional last fall with 3 Fr, 1 So, and 2 Jr in our top seven. But with the tough offseason and some poor summer training mileages and intensities, I think we’ve taken a step backwards,” said Joe Blumberg. “And in our brutal sectional, steps backwards are detrimental. Our expectations are to get better every day, get guys committed to running cross AND track, and fall in love with distance running.”

Morton

2017 Finish – 8th, 2A Metamora Regional

Coach – Joel Zehr

Top Runners – Sam Lange JR (80, 16:01), Tyler Timmons SR, Jake Turner SO, Tyson Martin SO, Kyle Davis JR, Levi Fowler SR, Brody Zobrist SO, Connor Mulkey SR.

Preview – Morton would like to make it back to sectionals after finishing eighth in the Metamora Regional. The top three runners are back led by **Sam Lange** who finished 80th in the 2A state meet. The junior could finish 40th or better in 2018. The split on Lange could be over two minutes. That time will need to come down if the Porters would like to extend their season by a week.

Niles Notre Dame