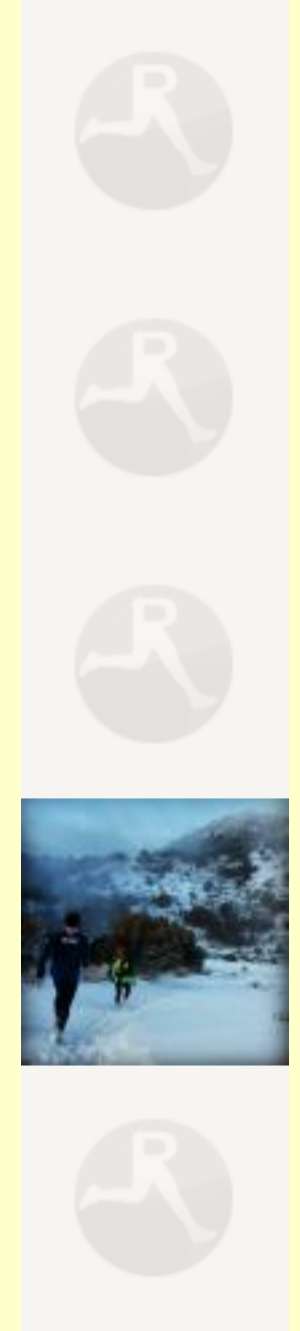




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2019 ILXCTF Illinois HS XC Season Previews - Class 2A Boys Teams

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Could Kaneland go wire to wire in 2A Boys team chase in 2019?

By Michael Newman

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Here was the story in 2018. Chatham-Glenwood was named the pre-season #1 in August. The Titans had some bumps and bruises along the way. When they finished at Detweiller Park last November 3, Chatham-Glenwood won their first state championship.

The road to Detweiller Park in Class 2A will travel a different path this fall. But we could see the same scenario as we saw in 2018?

For now, it is Kaneland that can claim the #1 position. There are up to nine other teams that have the talent to win the state title on November 9. They could go wire to wire especially with how deep the Knights are. There are other teams that hungry to get to the top of the mountain.

Here is a look at the projected top 25 teams for the start of this season in Class 2A. We will also look at some of the other teams to keep an eye on in this classification.

Top 25 Teams

1 – Maple Park (Kaneland)

2018 Finish – 4th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Chad Clarey

Runners to Watch – Daniel Occhipinti SR (9, 15:06), Austin Adams SR (26, 15:19), Ethan Walker SR (7, 15:57), Ethan Neal SR (108, 16:13), Isaiah Dallal JR (116, 16:18), Seth Nosek SR, Nolan Allen SO, Aaron Ludwig JR, Ben Durbala SR, Marcus Ramos SR, Christian Phillips SO, Christopher Fountain JR, Brady Popovich JR, Charles Fitts JR, Parker Malone JR.

Preview – At this time a year ago, Kaneland was ranked #23 in Class 2A Rankings. When they finished second at the First to the Finish Invitational, the Knights were moved up towards the top. So, when you consider when the final results were posted, Kaneland had missed earning a trophy by just one point just behind Bloomington. Three runners had returned from the sixth-place team in 2017. As we enter this season, Kaneland returns five runners from last

year's team. The difference from last year? More fire-power in the front, more depth where 12 runners have the talent to make the top seven.

“Our 2018 season was just tremendous. We had only three runners back from a team that placed sixth,” said Kaneland Coach **Chad Clarey**. “Not many thought we would be back in that kind of position to finish in the Top 10. Many factors helped us reach that point including the rise in consistency from Occhipinti and quick development of runners like Adams, Walker, Neal, Nosek, and Dallal. Nosek was injured at the end of the year but had been a solid #5-7 prior to the conference meet. When we came just one point short of a trophy (actually :00.15 when looking at results with our middle pack runners) the team was absolutely amazing. They handled that moment with such grace, poise, and positivity.”

What could make this team tougher than most other squads in the state is the fire-power that they have in the front. **Daniel Occhipinti** made a step up in his junior season here he was in contention to win every race he was in. What resulted in the state series were wins in his conference meet and regional meets, third in the Kaneland Sectional, and ninth at state. He will be one of the top runners in Class 2A this fall. **Austin Adams** road to improvement was amazing considering last year was his first year of cross country. He had played football the previous two years. Adams came on strong at the end of the year to finish 26th just missing all-state by one spot. He was only 13 seconds behind Occhipinti at state. Expect the two to be closer in races this coming season.

“We had a solid summer of training again, usually seeing 17 to 24 runners each day that we met throughout the summer,” continued Clarey. “At this point, all runners competing for Top 7 spots have been hitting mileage markers that allow them to be in specific training groups for our regular season. Seeing some of the newest members up with our veterans on LT runs and tempo miles is encouraging.”

Ethan Walker, Ethan Neal, and Isaiah Dallal are the other three returning runners for the Knights. **Seth Nosek**, who was in the top five for most of first half of the season, suffered an injury and missed the rest of the season after Freeport. Nosek is again healthy and will push for a top five spot. “Our mantra for this fall will be to be "Humble and Hungry for History." This isn't a team with a ton of swagger. They don't post much on Twitter or carry big egos,” added Clarey “They're a hard-working blue collar type of group. Some have earned the confidence that they run with, and others are growing in confidence each day they inch closer to the front. They are hungry for what's next. We have the best 1-2 punch we've ever had up front. As would be the key for any team trying to hit the Top 3-5 at State, where every single runner counts, we need to see the development of a new pack of scoring runners take shape. If we can get that group of 3-7 close together and feeding off the energy of one another, within 60 seconds of our front two, it will be fun to see. We recognize the depth of Class 2A has been enhanced by some solid programs coming down from 3A. There are plenty of other rosters left intact from other outstanding programs in 2A. There's no favorite as far as we're concerned. We're going to concentrate on what we do best, keep a positive mindset, and let history be whatever is meant to be.”

Kaneland can define the history in Class 2A especially the way that they ran at the end of last season. This squad is deeper than a year ago so they can afford some bumps in the road (though they would like to avoid it). What will be great for the Knights is the possible single digit scores in the first two spots. Keeping the pack at least 40 seconds behind the front two could mean great things for this team.

“This is a group of terrific young men,” concluded Clarey. “They work hard and believe in what they are doing. We recognize that the depth we bring back from 2018 looks good on paper. We also know there's some tough competition in 2A, no different than any other year. We just want to give 2019 our best, grow as people as well as

runners, and keep a positive outlook on what we get to do. We're only guaranteed the day we are given, each day. We'll take it one day at a time. With God's grace, we'll get a chance to run with our full contingent in November.”

Editor’s Note – One more thing from the Kaneland Coach. “One non-roster addition that will pay big dividends this fall is getting **Eric Baron** back as an assistant coach. He'd been a coach in our program for over a decade. Taking time for his family was a critical thing to do. He's rejoining us this fall, and we look forward to having his experience and coaching to make this season outstanding. Not often you get to add a future Hall of Famer to your coaching staff; let alone a very close personal friend.”

2 – Lisle (Benet Academy)

2018 Finish – 7th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Kevin Renicker

Runners to Watch – Sean Donnelly JR (61, 15:51), Ben Grundman SR (62, 15:51), Jack Robinson JR (73, 15:55), Jack Tams JR (98, 16:12), Dominic Adams SR (117, 16:19), Connor Grumbles SR, Nick Super SR, Michael Moran SR, Nikolas Anderson JR, Sage Osborne JR, Dominic Ullmer SO.

Preview – Benet Academy moved down to Class 2A in 2018 and showed what kind of quality team that they were. The Redwings were in the top 10 most of the season ending up finishing seventh. They will miss their all-state runner **Connor O’Keefe** who graduated. Benet does have a strong pack of five runners that return and could put this team into trophy position.

“We had a great approach to the summer,” said their coach **Kevin Renicker**. “It was well attended, relaxed, but intense when it needed to be. The boys are motivated, driven, but have a real sense of balance. If they focus on team/family and all the little things, everything else can fall into place.”

It appears the Redwings will not have a strong presence in the front especially after the loss of O’Keefe. They do have a strong pack of five runners that was only separated by 28 seconds. “ I am really proud of a core group of guys that have really committed themselves: **Ben Grundman, Sean Donnelly, Jack Robinson, Jack Tams, and Dominic Adams,**” added Renicker. “From there it trickled to ever group and every part of the team. It was really infectious.” There is always the saying with cross-country teams is that it is great to have a core of runners in the front, it will not matter if you do not have a quality fifth runner. This team can go nine deep with talent in this group. A key will be moving this pack up more towards the front. Looking at their times from last year, that should not be a problem. Donnelly and Grundman came in together last year at Detweiller Park in 61st and 62nd places.

A key will be having their pack start between 35th and 40th places especially at state. The pack split on five could be as little as 20 seconds. The closer that the group could be near the top 25 when they get to state, the better the chances this team could be tough to beat. In the smaller invitationals, this team could be untouchable. “Winning our conference meet (ESCC) is always a big goal for the Redwings,” concluded Renicker. “From there we want to make sure we are in the best position in every post season meet to make it down state and improve on our finish last year’s 2A finish.”

3 – Dixon

2018 Finish – 5th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Evan Thorpe

Runners to Watch – Brock Drengenberg JR (16, 15:12), Christian Seagren SR (76, 15:56), Cadyn Grafton JR (131, 16:23), Logan Griswold SR (131, 16:23), Aidan Johnson SR (162, 16:51), Thomas Sitter SR, Dominic Lazano JR, Jack Boss (JR), Isaac Rollinger JR, Brayden Bock FR.

Preview – Dixon had a good team last year that resulted in a fifth-place finish at the state meet. Part of that had to do with great running and all-state performances by **Collin Grady** and **Brock Drengenberg**. Grady has graduated but the Dukes do return Drengenberg along with four other runners from that state team.

“The summer has been outstanding,” said Coach **Evan Thorpe**. “The program is very healthy as these guys truly care about one another. The key to our success will be the development of our 2-4 guys. Somebody

will need to step up and join Drengenberg on the medal stand.”

Drengenberg could be in the top five in what should be a wide open individual race. He may start out slow this season. The junior also participates in swimming. Like their coach said, a second runner to get close to Drengenberg would be nice. **Christian Seagren** and **Cadyn Grafton** could be the runners to step into that spot. If not, look for a strong second through fifth runner pack to develop. Keeping that pack split under 40 seconds and staying within 32 seconds of Drengenberg is something to watch for. A formula like that could move Dixon into trophy contention. “I assume we are a top 5 to 10 team right now,” Thorpe added. “We will have to progress throughout the year to be in the mix on November 9.”

4 – Sycamore

2018 Finish – 6th IHSA 2A State

Coach- Michael Lambdin

Runners to Watch – Aaron Trier SR (30, 15:23), Jack Cambier JR (74, 15:55), Paul Ruetten SR (101, 16:12), Alex Taylor JR, Carson Campbell JR, Bryce Guerra-Haz SR, Anthony Biundo JR, Kyle Horn JR, Danny Gramer JR, Ethan Solfisburg FR, Caden Emmert FR.

Preview – This is a gut feeling of mine to have Sycamore among the top five teams in the pre-season. They have the tradition of peaking at the right time. The Spartans only have three runners back from last year’s sixth-place state team. Coach **Michael Lambdin** has the formula to get his team to among the state’s best.

It could be a rollercoaster of a season early on for this team. Their top returning runner **Aaron Trier** missed all of track season due to a knee injury. He had a good summer and is ready to roll. A top 15 state finish would not surprise me. **Paul Ruetten**, who was the team’s sixth runner at state, missed most of the summer due to a stress fracture injury, but is coming back. **Jack Cambier** is the other returning runner that could finish among the first 40 at state.

“The summer has been a mixture of excitement and frustration,” said Lambdin. “At times, the boys have looked good, running some impressive workouts. Other times, workouts had low attendance, especially July. We would like to improve on last year’s sixth place finish at state.”

Alex Taylor will be in the pack among the runners challenging for one of the top five spots. **Kyle Horn** had a good summer according to Lambdin and could step into the top five. Pack running in Class 2A will be more than necessary especially this fall if a team wants to finish in the state top three. Sycamore has the talent and the formula to be in the hunt.

5 – Metamora

2018 Finish – 9th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Gene Jones

Runners to Watch – Adam Gilbreath-Glaub SR (22, 15:15), Ian O’Laughlin JR (46, 15:42), Austin Gale SR (123, 16:20), Colton Barb JR, Aaron Klobrak SR, Nathan Bucci SR, Keegan Hartnett SR, Chase Ehlers SO, Brad Billerbeck JR, Zach Lane JR, Bowie Adams JR.

Preview – Metamora is a team that could finish in the first three or just on the outside of the first 10 in 2019. The talent level is there to be in contention for a trophy at Detweiller Park. At the same time, the history of illnesses and injuries could put the Redbirds back to the pack.

Three runners are back from the state team that finished ninth last year. They will miss their #5 runner from state **Evan Johnson** who transferred to a school out of state. Metamora has a good 1-2 punch up front.

Adam Gilbreath-Glaub has been on a rollercoaster over the past 18 months. At the end of his sophomore year in 2018, he pulled away to win the IHSA 2A State Championship for 3200-meters. Injuries slowed him down last fall where he was not able to race until the beginning of October. Still not at 100% when he got to the state meet but still finished 22nd. He ran under 9:40 three times for 3200-meters last spring, but then had a bad race at state finishing 15th. He is finally healthy with a great summer of running according to his coach Gene Jones. He could be among the elite Class 2A runners this fall.

Ian O’Laughlin could make a big jump to the next level this fall. He finished 46th last November as a sophomore. He ran under 10:10 for 3200-meters seven times including a 9:54.29 personal best. He could be a surprise among the top 25 this season.

This team could surge to the front with a good pack from their third through fifth runners. **Austin Gale** will lead that group with **Colton Barb** and **Aaron Klobrak** needed to be close to Gale. The pack needs to be within 30 seconds of each other and within 20 seconds of O’Laughlin. “We just need to build through the season to the Mid-Illini Conference Meet and the State Series,” said Jones. “Our team returning to the state meet is a major goal along with finishing better than we did last year.”

6 – Troy (Triad)

2018 Finish – 7th 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Andy Brendel

Runners to Watch – Drake Bleier JR, Jarod Willis SR, Ben Walter SR, Luke Perry JR, Caleb Bagwell JR, Jefferson Bushur JR, Ethan Dudley SO, Carson Dempsey SO, Carter Reeves SO, Keith Gray SO, Ryan Peach SO.

Preview – The Knights entered their sectional meet at Decatur as one of the favorites and almost a lock to make it to the state meet. The team did not run their best race of the year and missed qualifying for the state meet finishing seventh. That is not the way this team wanted to end their season. All seven runners are back from a squad that has a huge chip on their shoulder starting this season.

The Knights had a 43 second split on their top five runners in last year’s sectional race with their first runner placing 25th and their fifth runner placing 59th. That is their last image of cross country racing. “We had a solid summer,” their coach **Andy Brendel** said. “Most of the returning athletes made it to our summer meetings. Our top guys

have improved and are ready for a great season.”

That last race has driven their team this summer. **Ben Walter** according to Brendel stepped up this summer and had a great couple of months stepping into the leader's role. Walter, **Drake Bleier, Jarod Willis**, and **Jefferson Bushur** could be in the #1 spot some time during the season. The potential is there for this team to be a force at the state level if they just stay focused looking at it one race at a time. It looked like they were looking one week ahead to state when what happened at Decatur happened. This team could run even a tighter pack (maybe 30 seconds) and could move that pack closer to the front. This team should make it to Peoria in November. This team could come back from Peoria with a trophy.

“This boys group is hungry for success. They should have been a top 10 team at the state meet but didn't have a great sectional and never made it there,” Brendel concluded. “This year will be different. They are more mature and focused to do great things.”

7 – Chicago (St. Ignatius College Prep)

2018 Finish – 11th 3A Niles West Sectional

Coach – Ed Ernst

Runners to Watch – Jacob Flynn SR (107, 15:24), Liam Linnen JR, Harry Lesak SR, Brian Moore SO, Colin Linnen JR, Connor Walls JR, Carlin Kyhl JR, Theo Conroy SO, Brian Moore SO, Samuel Hansen SO, AJ Kaleski SR, Connor Fitzpatrick JR, Zach Kiley SO, Nick Kiley SO, Jack Rhyner FR.

Preview – It has been a moment that the St. Ignatius Boys team has been waiting for a long time. That moment happened last December when the classifications for cross country were announced. St. Ignatius was moved from Class 3A to Class 2A. It will be the first year that they will compete in this classification.

Things will change for the Wolfpack this fall. The first thing is that they will not have to go through the Class 3A meet grinder of a sectional at Niles West or Lake Park. “Competing at the 2A level will have some influence on the shape of our season,” said Coach **Ed Ernst**. “In the past we have looked at the 3A sectional meet as the biggest meet of our season, requiring the best performance. Just making it out of a 3A sectional as a team—or even as an individual—was a challenge. Accomplishing those things was a major season accomplishment for us. Our 2A landscape for 2019 will be different. To be honest, in past years we have had to train really, really hard just to compete at the 3A level. Sometimes we probably pushed too hard. We will probably take the foot off the gas a bit and train a little bit in a more comfortable zone. We can aim for the state meet.”

Jacob Flynn qualified for the Class 3A State Meet last year and again will be the top runner for this team. Flynn ran 15:24 in that race. It would not surprise me if he finishes among the top 15 this November. A key to watch is the development of their second through fifth runner pack. It could be 50 seconds or under early in the season but could decrease by the time they get to the state series. **Harry Lesak, Liam** and **Colin Linnen, Brian Moore, Kevin Hogan**, and **Connor Wells** could be some of the runners fighting for those four spots.

The split on five runners off Wells is projected to be 90 seconds as the season begins. The Wolfpack will be peaking for the state meet, so a split of 60 seconds by the time they get to November 9 is possible. A finish in the top five that weekend is also possible. “We expect to be better at the end of the season on the cross country course than we look right now,” added Ernst. “We expect to go to state. We think we can compete for a title at sectional level. We have never won a sectional title on the boys side at Ignatius.

8 – Chatham-Glenwood

2018 Finish – IHSA 2A State Champions

Coach – Michael Garber

Runners to Watch – Graham Turk SR (32, 15:29), Thomas Herbst JR (112, 16:16), Cameron Smith JR (122, 16:200, Aidan Peterson JR (174, 17:04), Nathan Michael JR, David Thomas JR, Caden Settlemoir SO, Drew Verenski FR, Sampson Deselines SO, Grant Schreiner SO, Mitchell Bergin FR, Lleyton Turk FR, Eli Morsch FR.

Preview – The Chatham-Glenwood Boys team had one of those forever moments last November when they won the first state championship in the program's history. The Titans did lose three of their top four runners from that state race due to graduation including all-state runners Dathan and Drey Maton. For some teams that lost that many quality runners, this would be a rebuilding season. For this team it will be different. They had a taste of what a state championship is like. This 2019 squad would like another nibble.

“This summer was great for many reasons,” Titan coach **Mike Garber** said. “We have had no significant injury; runners are holding each other accountable and everyone is having fun. We haven't been overburdened with mileage, just concerned with staying healthy. I think we've done a good job maintaining the balance in training. I'm excited to see fitness levels when things ramp up soon.”

This team will be better than people think, and it starts with their top returnee **Graham Turk**. The senior, who was the team's third runner last year at state. That was after he went through an injury right after the Peoria Invitational. He missed running in the Central State Eight Conference Meet. He did run 15:05 in that Peoria race which is significant. He had a great summer of training according to Garber. A top 10 finish is definitely in his reach.

The junior group of **Thomas Herbst**, **Cameron Smith**, and **Aidan Peterson** showed improvement at the end of last season. That has continued this summer as they form the nucleus of the team's top seven. Two more juniors, **David Thomas** and **Nathan Michael**, could challenge for the top five. Freshman Drew Verenski could also push for a spot in the top seven according to Garber.

Turk will be the front runner for Glenwood so the key will be the pack behind him. They are projected to have a 40 second split on their second through fifth runners before the season starts. It could go as low as 25 seconds by the time we get to the state series.

Added Coach Garber: “It is easy to get caught up in the success of 2018. Keeping a level head in 2019 is important to me and my coaching staff. There were a great deal of takeaways from last year. We didn't overthink things, kept things tough but fun at practice and made sure we had a focus every Saturday. I don't plan on changing things this season. Losing the Maton boys and Cooper Peterson left a void in our Top 5. While they are impossible to replace, I think we are going to do a fantastic job reloading the front of our squad. We are a relatively young team, but they have all experienced the top of the mountain and they want to get back there. They know what it takes from last season and are prepared to do everything in their power to get back to the stage in November. I'm excited for this season and even more excited for the future of Glenwood Cross Country. 2019 could be another banner year in Central Illinois.”

9 – Bloomington

2018 Finish – 3rd IHSA 2A State

Coach – John Szabo

Runners to Watch – Bradyn Olmstead SR (33, 15:29), Evan Turnbull SR (38, 15:34), Drew Gibson SR (65, 15:52), Bryce Reed JR (160, 16:48), Om Patel SO, Suraj Aireddy SR, Zach Gardner SO, Brady McCubbies SR.

Preview – It was a great way to end the season for the Purple Raiders as they brought a trophy back to Bloomington finishing third. They will miss Nick Doud who led the team throughout last year finishing fifth at state. They do have a good group of four runners back ready to chase after another trophy.

Bradyn Olmstead and **Evan Turnbull** finished in the top 40 last season and could be in the top 25 when we get to November. Olmstead was slowed by a leg injury over the summer but is up and running according to Coach **John Szabo**. Drew Gibson gives the Purple Raiders a solid third runner that could flirt with a place in the top 25. Finding two runners to step into the fourth and fifth spots will be something to watch on this team during September. Bryce Reed, Om Patel, and Suraj Aireddy are some of the runners to watch. Reed was almost a minute behind Gibson at state. That gap needs to be cut in half at least.

Bloomington has a solid first three that could give the team low numbers. The gap between three and four is something that will need to be worked on. The split on five runners is projected between 85 to 90 seconds. That split needs to come down. “Our goal is to win the Big 12 Conference and qualify for state,” added Szabo. “Once again, we want to be in the mix for a state trophy.”

10 – Aurora (Marmion Academy)

2018 Finish – 10th 3A Waubonsie Valley

Coach – Paul McLeland

Runners to Watch – Anthony Zangler SR, Trevis Clementi SR, Alex Carlson SR, Anthony Standish JR, Charlie Schultz JR, Nick Coleman JR, Joe Fuchser JR, Ernie Rowaldt SR, Ben Okolita SR.

Preview – If Marmion Academy was in Class 3A to start this season, it would be considered a rebuilding season with only two runners back from their sectional team. Now that the Cadets have been moved by the IHSA down to Class 2A, this team could be in the hunt to make it to the state meet. They could get close to a top five finish.

“I thought our summer could have gone better but when I consider the distance the guys have to travel to attend, I am OK,” said coach **Paul McLeland**. “It is much more difficult than going to the community school. Some travel very far so a lot of dedication to show up in the summer. I recall at IMSA we had no summer practices and I had no idea what the Fall would be like. I prefer a huge base but most of the returners are not high mileage guys. I believe they will be ready.”

Anthony Zangler was the #1 runner throughout last season for the Cadets and should again be in that position. Don't count out Zangler finishing in the top 25 in November. The other returning runner, **Trevis Clementi**, was within 28 seconds of Zangler in their sectional, but averaged 40 seconds the rest of the meets. Staying within 20 seconds of his teammate would mean big things for the Cadets. They will have a close pack behind Clementi led by **Charlie Schultz**, **Alex Carlson**, and **Nick Coleman**. Keeping that group within 30 seconds of each other could secure a trip to the state meet for this team.

“We haven't talked about our expectations for the year but there may be a tendency to let up since the team was moved to Class 2A, added McLeland. “I want to have a better team. Better team time, better finish. If we all improve, things will work out. We wanted to qualify last year but that was a very tall order. If we have a better team

time, we should qualify this season.”

11 – Antioch

2018 Finish – 9th 2A Woodstock North Sectional

Coach – Christopher Bailey

Runners to Watch – Charlie Smith SR (4, 14:54), Josh Linck SR, Lucas Baronello SO, Owen Lane JR, Luke Menzies SR, Kyle Miller JR, Ryan Johnson JR, Walker Winkler JR, Ben Ticsay SR, Kaleb Kotlow JR.

Preview – Five runners are back from the Antioch team that finished ninth last fall at the Woodstock North Sectional. “We had a pretty good summer,” Coach Chris Bailey said. “We had about the same number of kids attending summer camp, but they are doing a better job of putting in miles. This will help in the fall.”

It helps that you have one of the top runners in the state leading the way. **Charlie Smith** took a step up in his junior year finishing fourth in last year’s Class 2A race and then in the spring finishing third in the Class 3A 1600 Meter Run. His confidence level is on a high and could be tough to beat him this fall. He will be one of the favorites for the Class 2A individual championship. The team should have a tight pack behind Smith. The question is that they need to close the gap between them and him. **Lucas Baronello, Josh Linck, Owen Lane, and Luke Menzies** should fill up the other scoring spots. That group should have a split under 30 seconds. If they can narrow the projected 80 seconds split between Smith and the pack, Antioch could be among the top 10 Class 2A teams in the state.

“We have some good depth,” said Bailey. “We just have to see who’s willing to step up and make an impact. It could be Owen Lane, Kyle Miller, and/or Ryan Johnson. Sophomore Lucas Baronello had a good freshman year earning all-conference in the NLCC and will give us a good 1-2 punch with Smith.”

12 – Springfield

2018 Finish – 2nd IHSA 2A State

Coach – Dan Devlin

Runners to Watch – Kyle Boughter SR (10, 15:08), Anthony Peralta SO (93, 16:07), Sam Forness SR (149, 16:35), Matthew Johnson SO (186, 17:14), Luke Flesner JR, Ethan Sommers SO, Nick Hanning SO, Braden White SO, Drake Rutledge SO, Jacob Graham SO, Ben Kim SR, Jack Casey SO.

Preview – The Senators came close last fall to a state championship only to fall eight points short to Central State Eight Conference rival Chatham-Glenwood in finishing second. There could be a little rebuilding in Springfield this fall with their second, third, and fourth runners having graduated.

Having their #1 runner **Kyle Boughter** back will help. He finished 10th last year as a junior and will go into his senior campaign chasing after an individual title. Just like some of the other teams that have lost a group of runners, the Senators will need to go back and rebuild their pack.

Anthony Peralta, Sam Forness, and Matthew Johnson have that state experience and will be the nucleus of the pack. There is a talented sophomore group that could challenge for one of the top seven spots. Their two to five runner split is projected to be close to 60 seconds. That does not include the 50 to 55 second projected gap between Boughter and the other scorers. Springfield should make it back to the state meet. They could have trouble getting into the top eight in the splits are not cut down by the state series.

13 – Centralia

2018 Finish – 15th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Kyle Blanchard

Runners to Watch – Brooks Harlan JR (49, 15:43), Cory Freeman JR (72, 15:55), Matt Speidel SR (85, 16:01), Jared Brothers SR (142, 16:30), Adam Moulder SR (201, 17:43), Carson True SO, Alec Cross SO, Kolton Shoemaker JR, Alex Rothlesberger SO, Branson McCray JR.

Preview – The Orphans snuck up on some in the south last year as they showed that a good summer of work, you can accomplish anything. Centralia finished third in their sectional race, then 15th in Peoria. This is a team that could sneak up on some northern schools this season having five runners from that state team.

“After having such a successful season last year, the athletes were geared up to make this summer conditioning even better,” said Centralia Coach **Kyle Blanchard**. “We ramped up our weekly mileage a bit and did more hill work than last summer. I am very happy with how relaxed and committed all of them were this summer.” **Brooks Harlan** should be the surprise Class 2A individual statewide this fall. He had a huge progression curve up this track season winning the 1600 Meter Run at Illinois Top Times in March and then finishing fourth in the Class 2A State 1600 Meter Run. He is running with loads of confidence heading to this fall. It will be interesting to see how high he finishes in November.

If Harlan will be in the top 25 at the end of the year, think of the places that **Cory Freeman** and **Matt Speidel** will finish. Freeman was on an average 11 seconds behind Harlan at the end of the year. He could close that gap. Speidel had a good summer and should be right next to Freeman. Three runners in the first 45 is a possibility. Their fourth and fifth runners are projected to be 30 and 60 seconds back. The gap needs to close for the Orphans to be a top 10 team. “Our goal this season is to do better than last season,” added Fitzpatrick. “I think that our overall average time will be lower this year at all of our meets. I am trying to make sure that all of the boys peak at the right time this season.”

14 – Carbondale

2018 Finish – 17th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Greg Storm

Runners to Watch – Alex Partlow SO (86, 16:01), Tucker Poshard JR (88, 16:02), Jackson Watts JR (147, 16:32), Ethan Stevens JR (190, 17:20), Jackson Beaupre JR (199, 17:35), Adrian Bryson SO.

Preview – Carbondale is a young team that is talented with a ton of potential. That potential could come as early as this year. The Terriers finished 17th at last year’s state meet and return five of their top seven. They will miss their #1 runner **Ethan Cherry** who graduated and **Rawley Beck** (state #5 runner) who did not come out for the team. “I believe the training has went as expected,” said their coach **Greg Storm**. “Coaching staff put a lot of the responsibility on the athletes this summer so they could take ownership of the team. Our top 4 out of 5 from last year put a good consistent summer so hope to build off of that and increase their quality workouts as well as weekly mileage depending on how they adjust.”

The Terriers have a good 1-2 punch in the front with **Alex Partlow** and **Tucker Poshard**. Both could finish in the top 50 at state. **Jackson Watts** had a good summer of training and could close the gap and get closer to the front two. This team is not as deep as in previous years so staying

healthy will be a key. Keeping the top five split under 60 seconds will be something to watch for. “We try to stay consistent as possible at beginning of the season in terms of our running and really build towards the post season. In terms of experience, we have 5 guys returning that ran the state meet last year so they have a clear understanding of what it takes to get there. I believe our gap from the 2nd man to the 4th man will be much closer than last year by the post season which should put us in nice position come October. We should have a solid two low sticks with Alex Partlow and Tucker Poshard which will benefit greatly in bigger meets. Also, we currently do not have any seniors on the team, so this is definitely a building year for successful 2020 season.”

15 – Crystal Lake (Central)

2018 Finish – 12th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Bill Eschman

Runners to Watch – Austin May JR (82, 16:00), Julian Ryerson JR (148, 16:33), Thomas Landt JR, Anthony Camacho JR, Ryan Atkinson JR, Noah Blome JR, Reilly Wheeland JR, Owen Mize SR, Joel Brickey JR, Balin Palmer SR, James Perkins SO.

Preview – This could be a rebuilding year for the Tigers with their focus perhaps being in 2020. Only two runners are back from last year’s 12th place state team. Their top nine returning runners are all juniors. **Austin May** and **Julian Ryerson** are the only returning top seven runners back. May finished 82nd a year ago and could get close to the top 50. We could see some growing pains early in the season. This team is projected to have a top five split around 58 seconds in September. That could come down when they gain more confidence in themselves and improvement in their races.

16 – Peoria (Notre Dame)

2018 Finish – 16th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Dan Gray

Runners to Watch – Brett Dickerson JR (110, 16:16), Kellar Graff SR (118, 16:19), David Robison SR (136, 16:26), Logan Keene SR (138, 16:28), Patrick Couri JR (150, 16:36), Luke Sander SR, Brennan Messmer JR, Hayden Plack SR, Bailey Streitwatter SR.

Preview – The dynamics of some great pack running are there for the Irish. They return five runners from the team that finished 16th in the state meet. The split of these five runners from the state meet was only 20 seconds. The key will be moving that pack closer to the front.

Brett Dickerson, who finished 110th at Detweiller Park last November, is the top returning runner. **Kellar Graff** was only three seconds back in that state race. If their pack can start between 55th and 60th places at the state meet on November 9, the Irish could finish in the upper half of the state final standings.

17 – Burlington (Central)

2018 Finish – 10th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Vince Neil

Runners to Watch – Anthony Farmer SR (3,14:53), Gio Martinez SR (50, 15:43), Zac Schmidt SO (170, 16:59), Tommy Zettl SR, Nathan Guy JR, Robert Perry SO, Noah Karottu JR, Ryan Shafer SR, Kyle Farmer SO, Aaron Erb

JR, Ben Peterson SO, Jonah Hamell SO.

Preview – The Rockets have a good 1-2 punch with **Anthony Farmer** and **Gio Martinez** able to get low points in the races they are in this fall. Three runners are back from the squad that finished 10th at the state meet. “We have had solid attendance this summer and the boys have high goals for the team this fall,” Coach Vince Neil said. “Some newcomers have joined the team. The boys are a year stronger coming off of last fall and a great spring season in track.”

Anthony Farmer had a strong junior season last fall that culminated with a third-place state finish. He will be one of the runners to watch at Detweiller in November. Farmer went through some injuries during the outdoor track season. He is ready to go according to Neil. Gio Martinez finished 50th at state and has a good chance of finishing in the top 25. Filling the next four spots will be something to watch the first month of the season. Zac Schmitt should lead the group behind the front two. The split on five looks huge right now. Some of that has to do with Farmer and Martinez being up front. A three to five runner split under 50 seconds is necessary. Staying within 50 seconds of the front two is something also to watch for. “I believe that we can improve on last year’s 10th place finish,” added Neil. “We will lean on our top 2 boys to be out front and give us that low number. After that we need 3-7 to close the gap, run as a pack and break up other teams. I think that as the season progresses you will see tremendous growth from this team.”

18 – Bartonville (Limestone)

2018 Finish – 10th 2A East Peoria Sectional

Coach – Brian Glaza

Runners to Watch – Wilson Georges SO (42, 15:39), Ashton Horchem SO, Kole Dusek JR, Cole Leach JR, Edwin Monroe JR, Kieran Baurer SO, Bryce Baker JR, Reece Dusek FR, Connor Melton FR.

Preview – A team that I could see making some noise this fall in Central Illinois. This team is young where there are no seniors on the rosters. It was hard to gauge the team last year since it was basically a Frosh/Soph team. Coach **Brian Glaza** made the smart move of keeping the majority of his runners down in the lower level races during the invitational. They were able to taste success in those races that will benefit them this fall. The Rockets finished 10th in the East Peoria Sectional last year. They should qualify for state this year. They will be in position to win a state trophy a year from now.

“Anyone who knows our team knows that we are small, and we are young,” said Glaza. “Last year, we had 7 runners total, and all of them were either freshmen or sophomores, which was difficult, because our young group had no older runners to model or follow. While the group worked hard that summer, they hadn’t quite

become a team through the natural trials and tribulations that come with a full season together. This year, that has all changed. From the start, this group came in with a different focus and motivation. We kicked off our summer together on our team trip to Wisconsin, where we logged our first miles of the summer, created our team pillars, and established our mission moving forward. This trip set the tone for a strong and fun summer, and our guys have put in the work since. I can confidently say that every person on the team has gotten better in some facet, and we are more of a unit than ever before. One of the best things to see this summer was the evolution of a deep pack, which I think will ultimately be our strongest quality as the season goes on. Based on our summer workouts, it’s become clear that we have a group of 5-6 boys who could be interchangeable in any given race. As the boys continue to learn to race as a team and push each other to reach their full potential, this

pack will become scarier each weekend.”

Wilson Georges did make it to state last year and finished 42nd. Keep an eye on him. He should be in the top 25 this season. As Glaza said, the pack behind Georges is interchangeable. They had a 49 second two through five split in their sectional race. That year of experience should cut that split in half by the time they get to the state series.

Coach Glaza added: I’d love to say we expect we will win this meet or that meet, or we expect that we will make state as a team, but I have to stop myself short of that. While we’d love to win any meet we enter or qualify for state as a team, those are not our expectations or goals. Simply put, I expect the boys to show and up put in the work every day, to grow stronger as a team through our love for each other, running, and competition, and to be better people, both on and off the course. A big focus with this young group has been reminding them that it’s a 4 year journey, not a 1 year sprint. Everything else besides this is secondary, because it’s not about where we go in the process, but who we become.”

19 – Geneseo

2018 Finish – 8th 2A East Peoria Sectional

Coach – Todd Ehlert

Runners to Watch – William Plumley JR, Justin Johnson SO, Colby Rapps SR, Refe Morison JR, Lucas Nicke JR, Neo Colter SR, Spencer Lindstrom SR, Will Sammons SR, Malaki Schaad SO, Isaac Kuster SO, Bode Neff SO.

Preview – Geneseo could be in the hunt for a top five sectional finish. The Maple Leafs finished eighth at the East Peoria Sectional returning six of their top seven runners. “Most of the team has made it to some of the summer running,” said Geneseo Coach **Todd Ehlert**. “There are a lot of conflicts with jobs and vacations. The guys need to be kids. This is only high school. We will find out at the first meet who made the most progress.”

William Plumley was the team’s 31 runner as a sophomore and should be in that role again. He could run under 16-minutes this fall. The team is projected to have a top five split of between 50 to 55 seconds. Moving that pack closer to the front could get this team close to sectional qualifying. Geneseo also moved into the Western Big Six from the now defunct NIB-12 Conference. The Maple Leafs could win the conference championship in their first season.

20 – Morton

2018 Finish – 7th 2A East Peoria Sectional

Coach – Joel Zehr

Runners to Watch – Sam Lange SR (51, 15:44), Cade Zobrist SO, Tyson Martin JR, Jake Turner JR, Brady Zobrist JR, Kyle Davis SR, Tristan Sterham SO, Keegan Anderson SO, Jake Scarfe SR, Kelan Grimm SR.

Preview – The Potters could make the short trip to Detweiller Park after finishing seventh last year at the East Peoria Sectional. Expectations are high to accomplish that with six of their top seven runners back. “Our summer was productive,” **Joel Zehr** said. “There was some inconsistency in a few of our varsity members so we will have to wait and see what the fall brings for them.”

Sam Lange did not have his best race last November at state finishing 51st running 15:44. He had run 15:22 a month before at the Peoria Invitational. He is ready to go after running 15:12 at Detweiller at Dark in July. A top 15 finish should happen for him. “We would like to improve on

our 7th place finish at sectionals last fall as we mostly have the same team back from last fall with a year more of experience,” added Zehr. This team should have a good pack behind led by **Cade Zobrist** and **Tyson Martin**. The pack has a potential of having a 35 second split with the pack needing to be behind Lange by 45 seconds. That is the formula of getting this team to state. “

21 – Woodstock

2018 Finish – 7th 2A Woodstock North Sectional

Coach – Jay Fuller

Runners to Watch – Aidan Schlutermann JR, Jack Hansen JR, Max Hodory SO, Adam Thomas SR, Logan Hagmann JR, Dan Berkebile SR, Clark Schulfer SO, Daniel Berkebile SR, Alex Wickersheim SO, Nick Weber SR, Reid Kenyan JR, Dylan Hanson FR, Thomas Sieck FR.

Preview – Woodstock will look to improve on last year’s seventh-place sectional finish. Four runners return from that sectional team. “Our expectations for the upcoming season is to train hard and to compete for the conference championship,” said **Jay Fuller**. “After that we will see what happens to us during the state series.”

Aidan Schlutermann should step into the top spot after being the #2 runner at sectionals. **Jack Hansen** ran close to Schlutermann most of last year and will challenge for the top spot. Their projected top five split is 70 to 75 seconds. That needs to be under 60 seconds with two runners under 16-minutes to get this team back to the state meet.

22 – Lake Villa (Lakes Community)

2018 Finish – 14th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Travis Shepherd

Runners to Watch – RJ Mijas SR (105, 16:13), Jack Engel JR (113, 16:16), Talon Knauf SR (125, 16:21), Nathan Rolla SO, Aidan Gillespie JR, Sean Humpa SR, Gavin Murrie SO, Tim Smith SR, Ty Dwyer JR, Jacob Jarvis SR, Quin Maloney FR, Micah Lind FR.

Preview – “Last year was our best season ever,” said Lakes Coach Travis Shepherd. “We finally broke through and qualified for state. We put together a nice day at Detweiller, culminating in a top 15 performance. Our graduating Seniors set a high bar, but they also proved what's possible.”

What was possible was a 14th place finish at the state meet. Three runners are back from that team. The confidence that is flowing throughout their team, a return trip is possible. Keeping the team’s top five split will need to stay under 70 seconds. The three runners that were in the state meet (**RJ Mijas, Jack Engel, Talon Knauf**) were within eight seconds of each other in that race. All three working together could find them running times consistently in the 15:50’s. **Nathan Rolla, Adam Gillespie**, and possibly freshmen **Quin Maloney** and **Micah Lind** could help with their top five.

Said Coach Shepherd: “The 2019 team has not backed down from expectations and I believe that they want to surpass our 2018 success. We were very deep last year and will rely on that depth to step up this Fall. We still return 3 members of our top 7 but will need others to prove their worth. Our team will not look the same as it has the last few years (due to graduation) which is exciting and scary at the same time. We have a lot of potential, but it will take a true team effort to bring that out this Fall. We should be a threat to win the NLCC again and should be in the mix for another Regional title. Pending a crazy shift in the Sectional, I expect that we will be in contention for a State Qualifying

spot. We will not hold back expectations though just because we lost talent.”

23 – Chicago (Brother Rice)

2018 Finish – 10th 3A Marist Sectional

Coach – Tom Wazio

Runners to Watch – Eddie Burke JR, Jimmy Maguire SR, Michael Corcoran JR, Harrison Morg SR, Alex MacFarlane SR, Charlie Walsh FR, Sean Deane JR, Matt Quattrocchi JR, Kyle Gallagher JR, Kevin Lynch JR, Dylan Warda SO, Jack Finnell SO.

Preview – Another Class 3A school that is moved down to Class 2A. It depends what sectional they are assigned to. In the last time Brother Rice was moved down to Class 2A, they were assigned to the Kaneland (Last Year site) Sectional. There is also a possibility of being sent to the Chicago Sectional. The Chicago Sectional would be the “easier” of the two. They return five runners from the team that finished 10th in the Class 3A Marist Sectional.

Their top runner this year could be **Jimmy Maguire**. He ran cross country for the first time and ended up the team’s fourth runner. With a summer of good training, he could change **Eddie Burke** for the top spot. Burke and Maguire could run in the 15:40’s this year. Keeping their top five split under 68 seconds could mean extending their season an extra week in November. “The idea is that for the most part getting moved to 2A, the possibilities are unknown,” Brother Rice Coach **Tom Wazio** said. “From my own perspective, I think this team has the potential to finish top 3 in the CCL as well as be a state qualifying team. The most important expectation that the team and coaches have discussed is to run to the best of our ability and that the outcome will take care of itself.”

24 – Mt. Zion

2018 Finish – 6th 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Kelly Fox

Runners to Watch – Max Klebe SR, Zach Fenton JR, Kolby Koslofski SO, Henry Ellison SR, Byron Galardo SO, Jake Oelfke SO, Wally Kraus SR, Bobby Kraus SR.

Preview – The Braves came within five points of going to the state meet last year finishing sixth at Decatur. It could be a little more difficult for Mt. Zion to make it to Peoria in November. Four runners are back from that squad. They will be missing three of their top five runners from that group.

Max Klebe was the top runner at sectionals and could be in a position to qualify as a state individual. **Zach Fenton** and **Kolby Koslofski** give the Braves a solid two-three runner pack. The fourth and fifth runners could be as much as 60 seconds from the top three and will need to come down in order for this team to take the next step to Detweiller Park.

25 – Hampshire

2018 Finish – 14th 3A Waubonsie Valley Sectional

Coach – Ryan Hollister

Runners to Watch – Aidan Gonzalez SO, Isai Morales JR, Tim Puczek SR, Aiden Moseley JR, Max Beer SR, Ismael Paniagua SO, Jason Schmidt SO, Sebastian Abreu SO, Evan Johnson SR, Samuel Lyon SR.

Preview – After a year up in Class 3A, Hampshire moves back down to Class 2A. Four runners are back from their 14th place sectional finish including their top two runners. **Aidan Gonzalez** and **Isai Morales** have the talent to run under 16-minutes this fall. “Considering we have our top two runners returning, we should have a great shot at extending our season this year,” said Coach **Ryan Hollister**. “It's difficult to say we want a certain number of runners to qualify for sectionals or state because you never know how well other teams are going to run. Ultimately, we have just trust in the process, work to get better, and see how far that takes us.

The Next 15 Teams (in alphabetical order)

Arlington Heights (St. Viator)

2018 Finish – 21st IHSA 2A State

Coach – Wayne Edelman

Runners to Watch – Patric Natindim SR (120, 16:20) , Michael Schumacher SO (137, 16:27), Matthew Goss SR(140, 16:28), Patrick Schumacher SR (182, 17:11), Lucas Doland SO (188, 17:14), Nathan Kuchera JR (194, 17:24), Conor Flynn JR, Ryan Politzki SR, Daniel Bottcher JR, David Hegberg SR.

Preview – The Lions ran tough at the end of the season winning the Fenton Sectional and then finishing 21st the following meet at the state meet. St. Viator could make a repeat trip to Peoria despite the fact that the regional that they were assigned to last year could have St. Ignatius and Fenwick in there.

Six of there seven top runners are back led by last year's #2 at state **Patric Natindim**. The senior also had a good track season earning all-state honors in the Class 2A 800 Meter Run. **Michael Schumacher** and **Matthew Goss** were within eight seconds of their teammate at state giving St. Viator strong runners in the first three. The key is moving that pack up where the three are running under 16-minutes. A split in their top five will need to be under 50 seconds for this team to advance back to state.

Champaign (Centennial)

2018 Finish – 12th 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Jeremy Owen

Runners to Watch – Luke Manolakes SR (29, 15:22), Ben Olaivar SR, Chance Yentes SR, Alex Geissler SO, Gabe Ollaivar SR, Brennan Easter JR, Ethan Rice SR, Carter Herbert SR, Nick Maurer JR, Gavin Ash SO, Gunveer Singh SO.

Preview – The Chargers could make a run to the top five of their sectional this year even though they finish 12th last year at Decatur. Their entire top seven from that team returns. “Our goal is to make it to state as a team this year,” said Centennial Coach **Jeremy Owen**. “We realize it will be very difficult considering how competitive our sectional has been, but a lesser goal would not acceptable given the improvement the team has had over the last few years.”

Luke Manolakes again should be the top runner for this team. Injuries slowed him down at the end of the season, yet he still was able to finish 29th. He should be one of the elite Class 2A runners this fall finishing in the top 10. There could be close to a 50 second gap between Manolakes and their pack led by **Ben Olaivar**. Watch for a split on the group of 60 seconds or faster if they want to be in the hunt for a state berth.

Chicago (Payton Prep)

2018 Finish – 18th 3A Niles West Sectional

Coach – Fred Schuler

Runners to Watch – Matthew Sullivan SR, Zach Rose SR, Simon Huffman-Goltschling SR, William Thakur JR, George Woodson SO, Elias Wilkin SO, Jameson Huge JR, Jaideep Singh JR, Christian Corpio SR, Steven Li SR, Ben O'Mara SO, Ryan Thomas JR.

Preview – The Grizzlies move from an 18th place finish in the Class 3A Niles West Sectional to a possible top five finish this year in Class 2A. All seven runners from their sectional team are back. The biggest returning runner is **Zack Rose**. The senior missed more than a month last year due to an injury. He bounced back during the track season and earned all-state honors by finishing ninth in the Class 2A 3200 Meter Run. He will be a factor in the top 25 in this classification if he can stay healthy.

Matthew Sullivan was the top runner for most of the season after Rose got injured. The two will form a good duo in the front in races. Payton Prep will need to keep their split on five under 62 seconds in order to get to the state meet.

Columbia

2018 Finish – 16th 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Laura Homan

Runners to Watch – Ethan Sturm SR, Curtis Crossley SR, Tristan Oestreich SR, Thomas Crossley SO, Caleb Bahr SR, Dominic Dalpoas JR, Patrick Dent SR.

Preview – Columbia will look to improve on last year's 16th place sectional finish. Five of their top six runners are back. Ethan Sturm again will be the team's top runner. The split on their top five is projected to be just over two minutes. Curtis Crossley and Tristan Oestreich should be key runners in Columbia's top five.

Crystal Lake (South)

2018 Finish – 12th 2A Woodstock North Sectional

Coach – Rich Eschman

Runners to Watch – Matt Brown JR, Alex Picchi JR, Colin Rennhak SO, Christopher Davis SR, Hugo Prado JR, Garrett Czajkowski JR, Jack Lyons JR, Josh Martinez JR, KT Silversten JR, Josh Dierson JR, Gabe Waz SR.

Preview – “We think we are capable of finishing in the top 5 in the Fox Valley Conference,” said Coach **Rich Eschman**. “We also believe that we are capable of qualifying for the state meet.” Eschman does have a good group back from the team that finished 12th in their sectional. Their top runner **Matt Brown** missed most of track season and early summer due to a stress fracture. He is healthy now. **Alex Picchi** has showed great improvement during track and in his summer training to challenge for the Gators' top spot. The team will need to work to get their five runner split under 70 seconds in order to be in touch of a top five sectional finish.

Danville

2018 Finish – 8th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Todd Orvis

Runners to Watch – Michael Moreman SR (37, 15:31), Ricky Oakley SR (56, 15:48), Lukas Burleson SR (134, 16:34), Tyler Supernaut SO, Michael Compton SO, David Enjambre SR, Aaron Allen SR, Ashton Thompson SR.

Preview – It could be a tough year for the Vikings after finishing eighth in the state meet. Four runners are back from that state team. Michael Moreman finished 37th last November but chose to play baseball in the spring instead of run track. He did run this summer. We will see how this scenario plays out. **Ricky Oakley** was the team's #2 runner last year and could challenge Moreman for the top spot.

Darien (Hinsdale South)

2018 Finish – 19th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Jim Dickerson

Runners to Watch – Julian Watson JR (47, 15:42), Josh Baron SR (171, 17:01), Jayden Arquines SR (179, 17:10), Nick Beronio SR (185, 17:13), Deon Bomar SO, Jake Estrada JR, Umair Arshad JR, Glen Hogan JR, David Roloff SR, Andy Mei SR, Quartus Rassi SO, Aaroon Koehler FR.

Preview – Could the Hornets make it back to the state meet in 2019? Chances are good. Four runners are back from South's 19th place state team. Julian Watson has only been running for little over a year, but he came up strong at the end of last cross country season finishing 47th. His growth curve indicates he could be in the top 25 this season. The Hornets will have a strong 12 to 15 second split on their second through fourth runners. Finding a fifth man will be something to watch for.

"I think we will be very solid through 4 and the 5th will be between 3 long sprinters with good endurance (**Jayden Arquines** with state meet experience, Uche Obasi, Isiah Lashley), 2 freshmen, and steady and improving returners **Quartus Rassi, David Roloff, Jake Schilling, and Umair Arshad,**" said **Jim Dickerson**. If one or more of those runners exceeds expectations, we can be surprisingly good."

Mahomet-Seymour

2018 Finish – 6th 2A East Peoria Sectional

Coach – Neal Garrison

Runners to Watch – Kyle Nofziger SO, Joe Taylor JR, Jonah Singer SO, Joseph Scheele SO, Josh Wilcoski SO, Peter Slezak SR, David Wilcoski SR, Gaven Williams SR, Avery Seaman SO, Chase Misenheimer SO, Karston Waiseth SO, Grant Garrison SO.

Preview – A streak ended for the Bulldogs of making it to the state meet. Mahomet finished sixth at the East Peoria Sectional missing qualifying for state by 16 points. Some may be writing off this team because they did not make it to Peoria. They will miss their leader state champion **Mathias Powell** who is now off at Villanova University. They do have a load of talent that could surprise people this fall.

When talking to Powell after races, he would always tell me about **Kyle Nofziger** and how good he will be. Nofziger was the team's third runner last year and will be the team's top runner. There could be as many as four sophomores and two juniors on this team's top seven this fall. This is a team to keep an eye on during the season and see how they develop before the state series. It would not surprise me if the Bulldogs make it back to the state meet.

Marion

2018 Finish – 11th 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Eli Baker

Runners to Watch – Taylor Dreyer SO, Jack Gregory SO, Isaac Donaldson JR, Peyton Craig SO, Logan Morgan SO, Caleb Flesch JR, Noah Walters SO, Christopher La Chiana SO, John Bruce SR.

Preview – Five runners are back after Marion finished 11th in their sectional. It should be a young squad with no seniors projected to be in the top seven. Taylor Dreyer led the team last year as a freshman and should do so again.

Normal (University)

2018 Finish – 25th IHSA 3A State

Coach – Lester Hampton

Runners to Watch – Alex Hess SR (182, 15:57), Andy Kehias JR (204, 16:50), Derek Nanni SR, Michael Kirkton JR, Dylan Eble SO, Aidan Schuing JR, Ryan Rice SO, Tom Scott SR, Joe Tulley SR, Zach Hutchins SO.

Preview – After one year in Class 3A, U-High moves back down to Class 2A where they will be placed for at least the next two years. In their one year in the big class, the Pioneers did make it to the state meet finishing 25th. It could be a rebuilding year as only two runners from their top seven are back from that team.

Alex Hess should be the top runner for this team.

Olney (Richland County)

2018 Finish – 8th 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Louis Gassmann

Runners to Watch – Gavin Kirby JR (57, 15:48), Keaton Hancock JR, Barak Berger JR, Brooks Julian SO, Jordan Bolcher SR, Chase Travis SO, Drew Blank SO, Colin Kocher JR, Collin Gilreath JR.

Preview – This could be a year of growth for the Tigers. Richland County returns four of their first six from the sectional team that finished eighth. Six of their top seven runners projected in those spots will be either sophomores or juniors. **Gavin Kirby** qualified individually last season and will look to improve on his 57th place finish. He could be in the top 25. This team could be a year away from big things in 2020.

Rochester

2018 Finish – 7th 2A Taylorville Regional

Coach – Bill Owens

Runners to Watch – Matt Herrin JR (27, 15:20), Andrew Day JR, Nathaniel Cross SR, Elliott Staley SR, Charles Archey SO, Adam Gibbons SO, Spencer Loy SO, Jacob Western SR, Max Wilber SO, Adam Transue SO.

Preview – Rochester will look to advance to the sectionals after finishing seventh last year in their regional meet. **Matt Herrin** just missed all-state last year finishing 27th. A top 15 finish could be within reach. Their #2 runner **Andrew Day**

will miss most of the season due to surgery that he needed on August 13 for a lung condition. "I have a talented group of sophomores that will contribute," said their coach **Bill Owens**. "I feel like we will make a strong presence in the Decatur sectional."

Urbana

2018 Finish – 14th 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Forrest Farokhi

Runners to Watch – Jeremie Bokata SR, Sam Lambert SO, Yabetsega Demisie SR, Jacob Barker JR, Park Mitchell SO, Aaron Lyubansky SR, John Mulunda SR, Malcom Forsyth SR.

Preview – The tigers finished 14th last year in the Decatur Sectional and will look to improve on that finish this fall. Six of their seven runners are back led by **Jeremie Bokata**. This team will have a tight five runner pack with a split near 35 seconds. Moving the pack closer to the front could get this team in the top 10 in their sectional.

Washington

2018 Finish – 11th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Tom Smith

Runners to Watch – Jackson Ward SO (129, 16:22), Jacob Stone SR, Rocco Geirsz SR, Caden Davidson SR, Luke Zobrist SR, Noah Anske SR, Jacob Minastan SO, Noah Johnson SO, Harrison Maloney FR.

Preview – This will be a rebuilding year for the Panthers. **Jackson Ward** is the only runner back from their 11th place state team. **Caden Davidson** and freshman **Harrison Maloney** could be the top runners behind Ward.

Wheaton (St. Francis)

2018 Finish – 18th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Scott Nelson

Runners to Watch – Dan Weizeorick SR (28, 15:20), Christopher Corone SO (133, 16:23), Luke Orwig JR (158, 16:47), Sam King JR (193, 17:24), Clayton Merker JR, Larry Li SR, Christopher Spahn SO, Alex Kubik SR, Preston Schuster SO, Tom Enland JR, Nate Rodriguez SO.

Preview – The Spartans just missed the top 25 pre-season but should be in that group in September. St. Francis finished 18th at state last year and returns six of their top seven. It is a good bet that they will be returning to Detweiller Park in November if they can stay healthy.

Dan Weizeorick once again will be St. Francis' #1 runner. He just missed all-state last fall finishing 28th. He will be in the top 15 this year. Weizeorick also helped his team finish fifth in the spring in the 4x800m Relay and finished eighth in the 1600 Meter Run. The team will need to keep their two through five split under 60 seconds for this team to make it back to the state meet.

Other Teams to Watch (in alphabetical order)

Champaign (Central)

2018 Finish – 12th 2A East Peoria Sectional

Coach – Argie Johnson

Runners to Watch – Alex Ahmari JR, Luke Hartmann SR, Quin Kolodziej JR, Victor Smith Jacob Seraphin JR, Max Dillow JR, Marco Rodriguez SO.

Preview – Central returns three of their top four runners in pursuit of bettering their 12th place sectional finish from a year ago. Alex Ahmari came on strong at the end of the year to be the team's top runner. This could be a rebuilding year for this team as they will need to find some runners to step into the fourth and fifth spots.

Chicago (Mather)

2018 Finish – 22nd IHSA 2A State

Coach – Joe Sullivan

Runners to Watch – Yasir Hirsi SO (96, 16:09), Kevin Gee SO (163, 16:53), Daniel Bekkouche JR (180, 17:11), Alex Baidales SR (200, 17:42), Emmanuel Nwatu SO (203, 17:48), Jesse Jaimes SO, Mustafa Zakell JR, Arias Hirsi SR.

Preview – Mather made it out of Fenton Sectional by finishing third. They then finished 22nd in the state meet with six runners from that team coming back. The Rangers right now are on the border if they will make it back to Peoria since St. Ignatius and Fenwick, dropped down to Class 2A, will be in the same sectional as Mather.

Yasir Hirsi is the top returning runner. He ran 16:09 last year at state as a freshman. There is a time drop off after that with **Kevin Gee** estimated to be 40 seconds behind their front runner. Their top five split is projected to be close to 125 seconds. That pack will need to get tighter by the time they get to the Chicago Public League Championships.

Chicago (Solorio Academy)

2018 Finish – 24th IHSA 2A State

Coach – Robert Dron

Runners to Watch – Filiberto Franco JR (126, 16:21), Miguel Cordova SR (155, 16:43), Alejandro Blanco JR (195, 17:26), Saul Rios JR (205, 17:49), Osvaldo Barranco JR, Jesus Chavez SR, David Duran SO, David Servin SO.

Preview – Solorio Academy made it to the state meet for the first time last year finishing 24th. It might be tough to repeat this year for the Sun Warriors as they will return four of their top seven but will not return their top runner **Adonaliz Hernandez** who is no longer on the team according to Coach **Robert Droz**.

Filiberto Franco and Miguel Cordova will be the top runners on this team to begin the 2019 season. "The only expectations we have is to do our best at getting better," Droz said. "We don't want to limit ourselves or set goals that are too hard or easy. We're focusing on the day in and day out and looking forward to leaving it all on the course on the weekends. Whatever happens, happens."

Mascoutah

2018 Finish – 9th 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Darren Latham

Runners to Watch – Kristian Knecht JR, Jordan Eddy JR, Sean Ede SR, Dylan Lyons SR, Avery Cozzi JR, Joshua Sturgill JR, Brendan Jones SR, Israel Ignacio SR, Gabriel Ecins JR, Tommy Podzena SR, Lance Miller SO.

Preview – Four runners are back from Mascoutah's ninth-place sectional team. They will miss their #1 runner from last year **Casmir Cozzi** who finished sixth at state and has graduated. **Kristian Knecht** appears to be the top runner for Mascoutah heading into this season. **Jordan Eddy** and **Sean Ede** will be the core of their pack which will need to keep the top five split under 80 seconds.

Midlothian (Bremen)

2018 Finish – 11th 2A Kaneland Sectional

Coach – Bill Griffin

Runners to Watch – Angel Lopez SR, Zach Casper JR, Matt Lovrich SR, Bryan Barban JR, Brian Jasien SR, Elijah Richardson SR, Mike Dudek SR, Kevin Guerrero JR, Alexander Alvarado SO, Miguel Serrato JR.

Preview – The Braves could take giant steps up their sectional ladder this year going from 11th place last year to perhaps the top five in 2019. Six runners are back from their top seven. **Matt Lovrich** had a good summer of training dropping his personal best down by almost a minute to 16:28 at Detweiller at Dark. He will give Bremen a strong 1-2 along with **Angel Lopez** in the front. “We expect to compete for the Conference title again after having a down year last year,” said **Bill Griffin**. “The team has also talked about not only qualifying for state but being the highest placing team in Bremen's history. The 1980 team is the best in Bremen history, by place or time and they placed 17th. I would love them to try to match that team's times, too, but that is a tough feat. 1980 had 6 guys at 16:00 or under, led by Joe Taylor's 15:13 at State.”

Mt. Vernon

2018 Finish – 7th 2A Triad Regional

Coach – Clint Turner

Runners to Watch – Kevin Perkins JR, Hunter Mays JR, Maliq Petties JR, Eli Epplin JR, Max Zinzilieta SR.

Preview – The Rams will look to advance to their sectional after finishing seventh in the Triad Regional last year. Five runners return from that regional team led by Kevin Perkins who qualified individually for the sectional meet.

Oak Park (Fenwick)

2018 Finish – 11th 3A Marist Sectional

Coach – David Rill

Runners to Watch – Chris Brady SR, Joey Schultz JR, Matthew Zuber SR, Lee O'Bryan SO, John Carmody JR, Tommy Nettleton SO, Salvatore Aguilar JR, Vinny Micucci SR.

Preview – It could be a rebuilding year for this team after being moved down to Class 2A. The Friars finished 11th in the Class 3A Marist Sectional. They return three from that sectional team but lost their first four runners to graduation.

Chris Brady appears to be the #1 runner entering this year for Fenwick. Work will need to be done on the pack behind

Brady. The projected split on their top five should only be 66 seconds but the pack needs to move closer to the front in races in order to advance back to the state meet.

Vernon Hills

2018 Finish – 14th 2A Woodstock North Sectional

Coach – Jason Rush

Runners to Watch – Oskar Jadynek JR, Alex Utsis JR, Chase Johnson SR, Hamar Shifrin SR, Ian Joe JR, Christian Gitzinger SO, Erik Giezycki SO, Nathan Feitsch SO, Ryan Kuczynski SO, David Palmer SR.

Preview – The Cougars will look to improve on last year's sectional. They finished 14th at the Woodstock North Sectional and return their fifth, sixth, and seventh runners from that race. **Oskar Jadynek, Alex Utsis, and Chase Johnson** will challenge for the #1 spot on this team.

Waterloo

2018 Finish – 13th 2A Decatur MacArthur Sectional

Coach – Larry Huffman

Runners to Watch – Eli Ward SR (18, 15:13), Jackson McAlister SR, Jude Tepper SR, Allen Kraus SR, Cole Warden SR, Jackson Lee SO, Caleb Brown JR.

Preview – Waterloo returns four from their 13th place sectional team. **Eli Ward** advanced to the state meet last year where he finished 18th. A top 10 finish this fall should be in his reach. Both Ward and **Jackson McAlister** qualified for the Class 2A State Track Meet in the 800 Meter Run. McAlister finished ninth in the finals ahead of Ward who finished 12th. It might be tough for this team to qualify for the state meet. It is a good bet that Ward and McAlister both qualify individually.

Woodstock (Marian Central Catholic)

2018 Finish – 16th 2A Woodstock North Sectional

Coach – Murray Domich

Runners to Watch – Ryan Jones SR (24, 15:18), Peter Walsdorf JR, Chris Atadero SO, Jack Suarez JR, Andrew Pascente SR, Ben Reuter SR, Evan Knudsen SR, Luke Moreland SR, Anthony Carney SO.

Preview – The Hurricanes finished 16th last year at the Woodstock North Sectional returning four runners from that team. **Ryan Jones** earned all-state honors when he finished 24th overall. Jones is a good bet to qualify again for the state meet if the team does not. **Peter Walsdorf** had a strong sophomore season and could get closer to Jones as the season progresses. You could see both of these athletes at the state meet.

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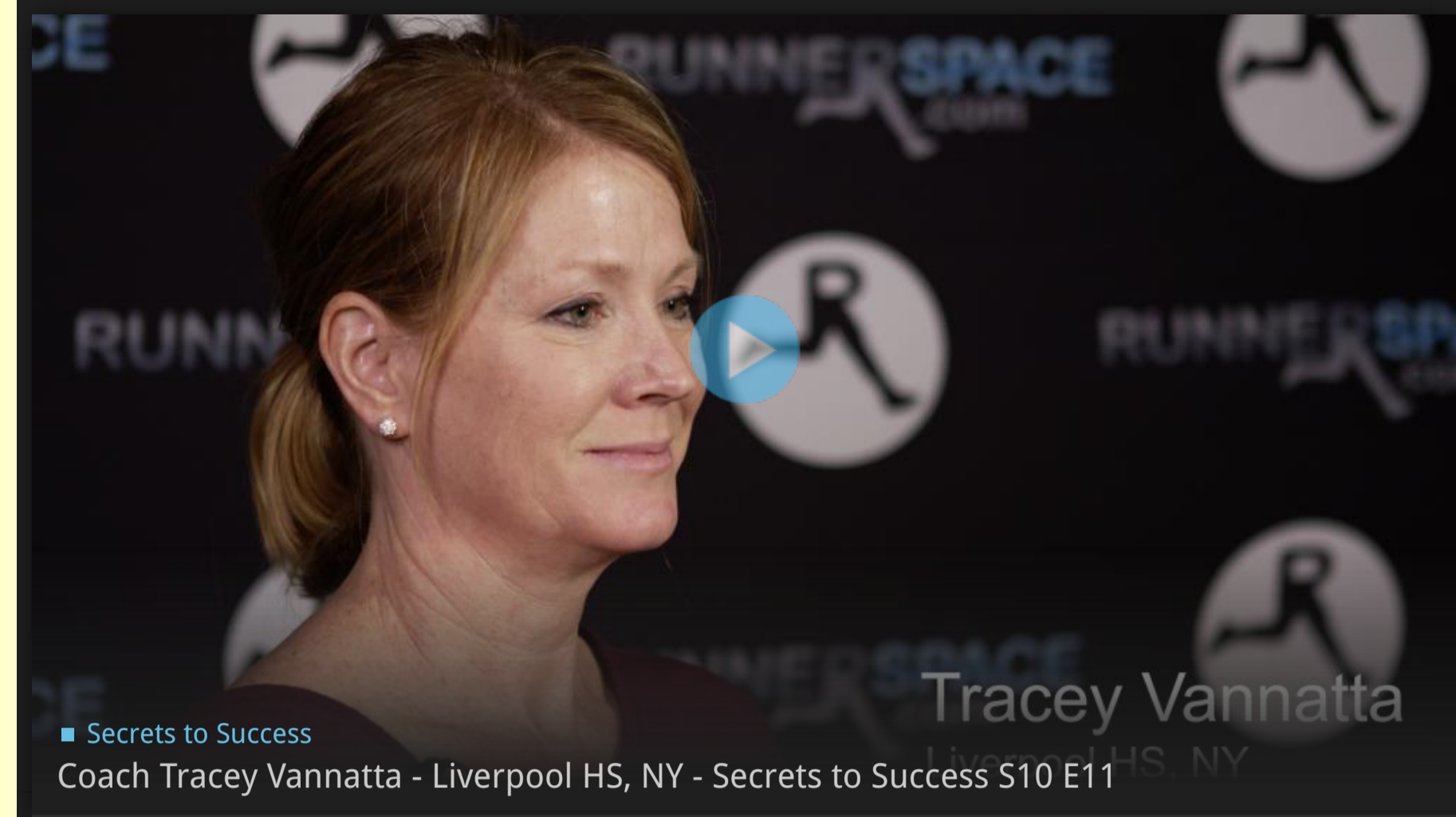


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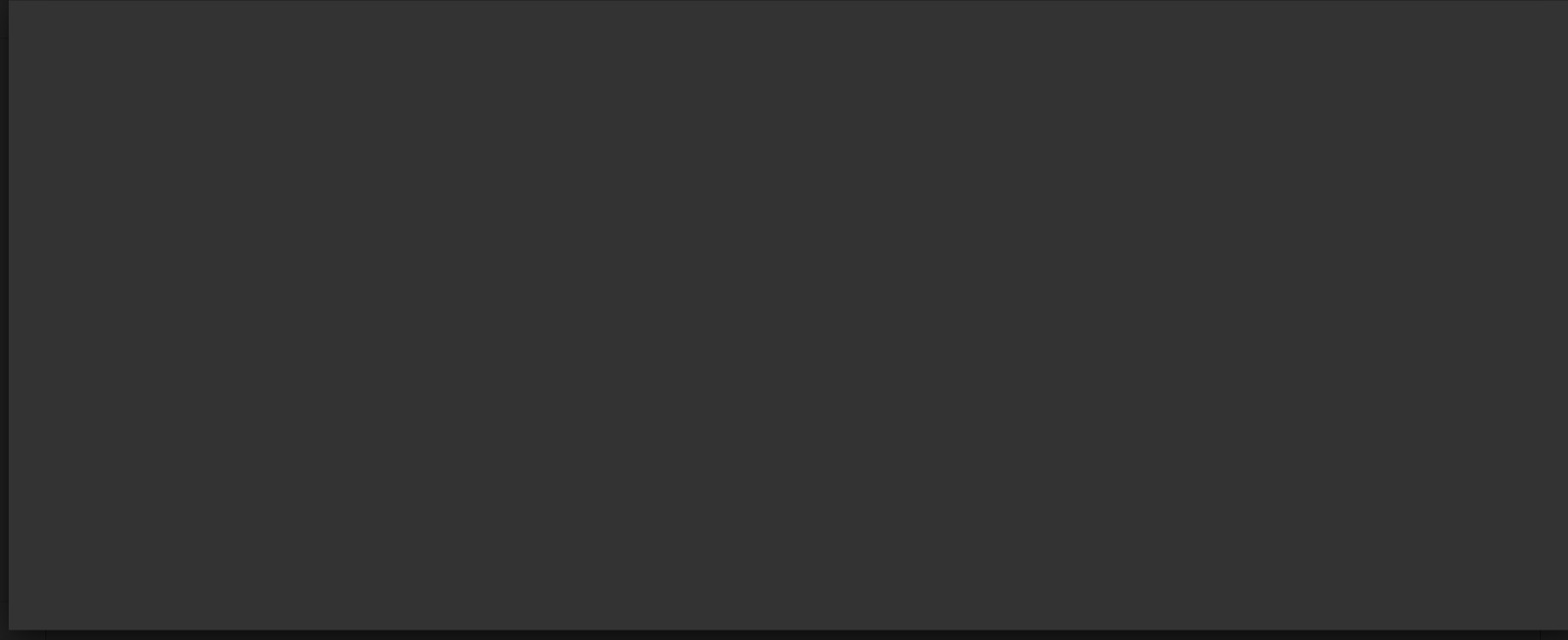
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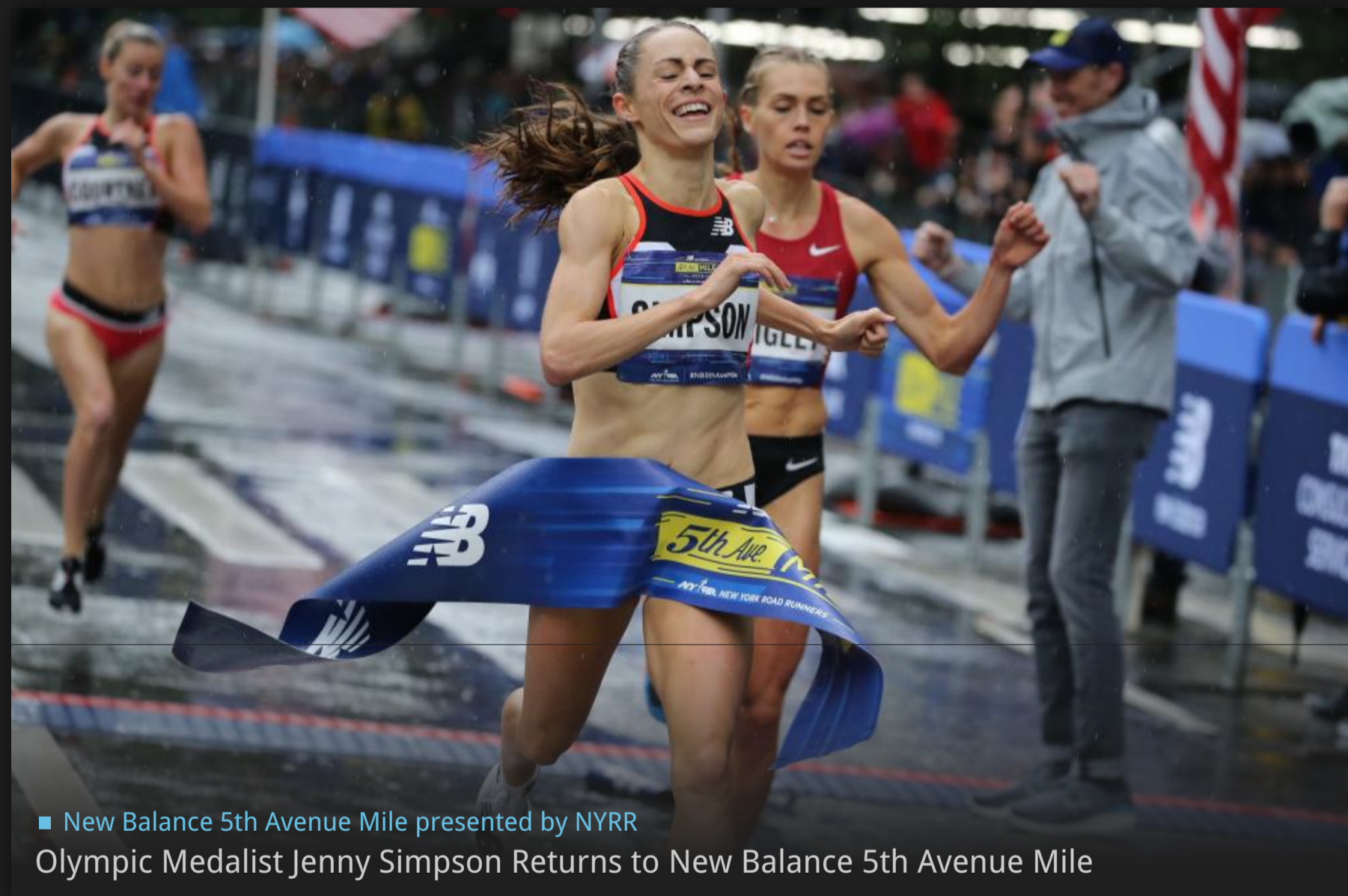
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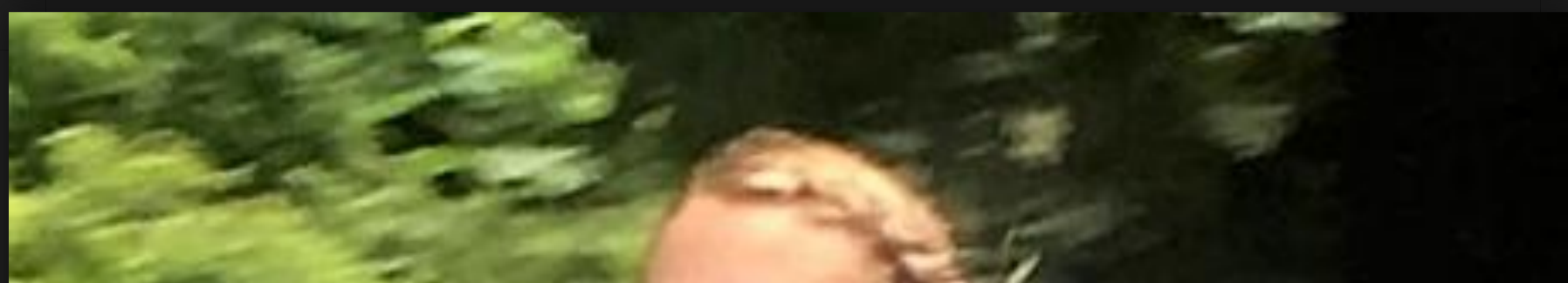
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