

# 2A Boys preseason preview: can anyone halt #1 Morton?

## ILLINOIS XC 2021: PRESEASON PREVIEW SERIES

Carson Vittorio  
Aug 21, 2021

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The best of the best competed in Chillicothe last year. While Morton came out on time as a team, it was a tough but fun day with the temperatures in the lower 70s. We cannot forget Wilson Georges of Limestone dominant performance at Three Sisters Park. 2021 is expected to be back to "normal" and if that is true, look for some great cross country racing!

### [\\*2020 Shazam XC Championship page](#)

15. [Lisle \(Benet Academy\)](#)

**Head Coach:** Kevin Renicker

**Last Year's Finish:** 9th at 2A ShaZam XC Championships

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Belvidere North High School

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*Aug 23, 2021*

**3A Girls preseason**

**Key Returners:** [Dominic Ullmer \(Sr.\)](#), [Ryan Amidei \(So.\)](#), [Sean Kingston \(Sr.\)](#), [Logan Osborne \(Jr.\)](#), [Ben Farrell \(Jr.\)](#), [Charlie Phelan \(So.\)](#), [Drew Donovan \(Sr.\)](#)

**Carson's thoughts:** The Redwings return with what appears to be another potential top 10 team in the state, but will sit a little outside that position to start the season. Led by the duo of Dominic Ullmer and Ryan Amidei who will try and break 16:00 this season. They will need their back three runners of Sean Kingston, Logan Osborne, and Ben Farrell to move up and try and close the gap on them if they wish to be in the top 10

#### 14. [Chicago Mather](#)

**Head Coach:** Joe Sullivan

**Last Year's Finish:** 7th at 2A Chicago Latin Sectional

**Key Returners:** [Yasir Hirsi \(Sr.\)](#), [Kevin Gee \(Sr.\)](#), [Emmanuel Nwatu \(Sr.\)](#), [Leo Camargo \(Sr.\)](#), [Xavier Alvira \(Sr.\)](#), [Muhiyadin Ali \(Jr.\)](#), [Ammar Alnatsheh \(Jr.\)](#)

-This could be one of Mather's all-time best seasons with a senior-heavy lineup. Coach Sullivan has done a fantastic job in assembling his program despite tremendous obstacles. "Because of various commitments our athletes have had over the summer we haven't been able to train together as a team as much as we would have liked," he said. However, the team culture is there and if that can hold up for the pending few months of the season, it should be a successful run in the Chicago Public League and IHSA post-season.

#### 13. [Normal Community West](#)

**Head Coach:** Chad Aubin

**Last Year's Finish:** 10th at 3A Normal Community Sectional

**Key Returners:** [Luke Reinhart \(Sr.\)](#), [Harrison Taylor \(Jr.\)](#), [Sky Riddle \(Jr.\)](#), [Quentin Irwin \(Sr.\)](#), [Cody Dunn \(Sr.\)](#), [Ethan Snyder \(So.\)](#), [Jason McConkey \(Jr.\)](#)

-Just like Marist, Normal West was a late add to the 2A classification after the cutoff marks changed just a few days ago. Led by Luke Reinhart and Harrison Taylor, the Wildcats have a great 1-2 duo that will try and be in the top 30 in the state this season. Quentin Irwin had a great track season this spring recording 4:47 and 10:41, expect him to be in the mix as one of the wildcat's top three runners. Sky Riddle had a great xc season last year running 3 miles in a time of 16:34, he will be a key runner to this squad. The wildcats will need to see a big year out of one more member of their squad if they wish to finish in the top 10 in the state this season.

#### 12. [Maple Park \(Kaneland\)](#)

**Head Coach/Assistant Coaches:** Chad Clarey / Eric Baron, Clayton Brundige

**Last Year's Finish:** 2nd at 2A Lake Villa (Lakes) Sectional

**Key Returners:** [Nolan Allen \(Sr.\)](#), [Brady Babka \(Jr.\)](#), [Logan Cunz \(Sr.\)](#), [Christian Phillips \(Sr.\)](#), [Trevor Neal \(Jr.\)](#), [Palmer Behrends \(So.\)](#)

**Says coach Clarey on his new yearlings:** we have not yet seen any new upperclassmen joining the program who could make an impact, the influx of freshmen has been encouraging for both levels of our team. Freshman Evan Nosek comes to us with an extensive history of competing well at both the IESA level, and independently with varied 5K, mile, and triathlon experiences. He owns a 4:49 career PR in the 1600m without yet putting on a high school jersey. He's hungry and humble, just like his older brothers and sister. Zachary Murdoch is another incoming freshman who is working hard to find out more about what he can do at the high school level. Both of these runners and their freshmen classmates have a good core group of sophomores to work with.

The core of the team have clocked lifetime personal records between 16:12 to 16:39 on their home course. Still, the coach Clarey yearns for added depth that's needed for a strong team in the postseason. "Our goals are simple, like any other year: keep the pack split low, and stick together," added Clarey.

#### 11. [Grayslake Central](#)



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cannot be discounted  
Aug 22, 2021

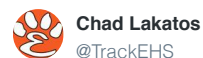


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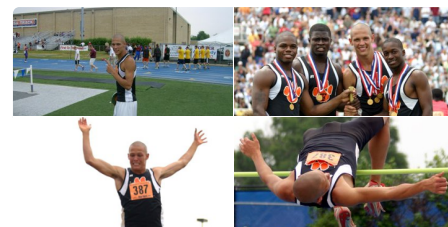
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**Chad Lakatos**  
@TrackEHS

Last night Eric Thompson (Herrin, 2007) was in a motorcycle accident and died. Words can't describe how I feel right now 💔. Prayers to his three little girls and family! #RIPEric



9h

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**Head Coach/Assistant Coaches:** Jimmy Centella / Chris Palmer, Greg Lannoye, Colleen Lill, Mary Beth Zerwic

**Last Year's Finish:** 7th at 2A Lake Villa (Lakes) Sectional

**Key Returners:** [Bryan Vale \(Sr.\)](#), [Trey Sato \(So.\)](#), [Will Welty \(So.\)](#), [John Vagnoni \(So.\)](#), [Kyle Bianchi \(Jr.\)](#), [Camden Heavelyn \(Jr.\)](#)

-Freshman Zane Smith was a middle school state qualifier back in 2019 as a 7th grader. He has been running some of the workouts with the varsity group and I anticipate that he will be in the mix in that 5th-7th range. Coach Centella reported that former contributor Christopher Purgol has moved.

**Coach Centella on his team:** "We will have a very strong top 4 this year, probably our second-best top 4 in school history. Vale and Sato were all-shazam last fall. Vale is continuing to improve as our number one and could possibly be in the front pack at Detweiller this fall. Vagnoni and Welty are closing the gap on Sato who continues to improve. It is the development of our 5th-7th runners that can possibly take us from a ranked team to a podium-level team. I am hopeful that Smith, Bianchi, and Heavelyn can continue to develop and emerge as high-level 5th-7th runners.

## 10. [Chatham-Glenwood](#)

**Head Coach/Assistant Coaches:** Mike Garber / Caleb Cox, Gloria Esarco, Grant Kaiser

**Last Year's Finish:** 3rd at 2A ShaZam XC Championships

**Key Returners:** [Samson Dessalines \(Sr.\)](#), [Drew Verenski \(Jr.\)](#), [Lleyton Turk \(Jr.\)](#), [Caden Settlemoir \(Sr.\)](#), [Eli Morsch \(Jr.\)](#), [Dequan Page \(Sr.\)](#)

**New Additions according to coach Garber:** incoming freshman Carter Simmons learned a lot and grew a great deal in his 8th-grade season. He is committed to our process and has had a great summer of training. It could take a few meets, but he will likely be in our top five by the middle of the season. Will Patzia - Will was one of the top IESA runners all last season. An off-season knee injury has been a setback for him and we are being careful with his progression. He is tall and strong and really wants to get back to racing. He is a horse that we will unleash eventually but I want to wait until he is ready to race before doing so. He is a lock for the top seven when at full health.

**Coach Garber's added thoughts:** I'm really excited for this season. It probably looks like we've lost a ton of great athletes to graduation and there is no way we will be competitive. While we did lose some great seniors that have had a large impact on our team, we still have a very solid base of strong runners. Guys like Samson and Verenski really grew last XC season and during the track season. Both ran 4:42 in the mile and sub 1:58 splits in the 800. They are pumped and ready to lead. Turk, Morsch, and Settlemoir will be trying to race with each other all season and push one another to greatness. A few incoming freshmen will also be in the mix for the top seven spots. It is going to be a fun season with a ton of room for growth.

## 9. [Belvidere North](#)

**Head Coach/Assistant Coaches:** Ken Husser / John Paddock, Aaron Leonard

**Last Year's Finish:** 9th at 2A Lake Villa (Lakes) Sectional

**Key Returners:** [Cade McNulty \(Sr.\)](#), [Brandon Massman \(Sr.\)](#), [Nick Lenzen \(Sr.\)](#), [Caden Lendman \(Sr.\)](#), [Orlando Hernandez \(Jr.\)](#) [Luke Smith \(Sr.\)](#), [Will Ward \(So.\)](#)

-Cross Country newcomer junior Evan Horgan will be a welcome addition to the team. He ran 2:02 during the track season and it will be interesting to see where he ends up over the three-mile distance. Freshman Jesse Kramer will challenge for a top-seven spot according to coach Husser.

The key to any team's success is the scoring split (between 25-30 seconds) and how the top seven match up overall. Husser acknowledged that a good track season produced tons of improvement, especially in Cade McNulty and Brandon Massman. "We had a good track season and there was an improvement, especially in Cade McNulty and Brandon Massman," he said. "To be at our best we will need a split in our top 5 of 25-30 seconds. Our summer training has gone well, with a consistent turnout and we are senior-heavy, so hopefully, that experience translates into a more competitive team."

## 8. [Oak Park \(Fenwick\)](#)

**Head Coach:** David Rill

**Last Year's Finish:** 17th at 2A ShaZam XC Championships

**Key Returners:** [Grayden Rill \(Jr.\)](#), [Nathaniel McKillop \(So.\)](#), [Zac Daley \(Sr.\)](#), [Lee O'Bryan \(Sr.\)](#)

[Dean O'Bryan \(So.\)](#), [Carl Lukas \(Sr.\)](#), [Michael Domke \(Jr.\)](#)

**Coach Rill's Outlook:** We have everyone on our top 7 returning so that is exciting. We come into this season with two All-state runners in the 800 this past season. Grayden Rill 4th and Lee O'Bryan 8th. We also had a state qualifier, Zac Daley, in the 3200. These guys have really bought in now since having a taste of the state meet. Most of our guys have been training very well this summer and I am really excited about this season.

## 7. [Dunlap](#)

**Head Coach/Assistant Coaches:** Chris Friedman / Steve Carter, Scott McGuire

**Key Returners:** [Henry Welsh \(Jr.\)](#), [Noah Hopkins \(Sr.\)](#), [Isaiah Hamann \(Sr.\)](#), [Brandt Adreon \(Jr.\)](#), [Braden Cox \(Jr.\)](#), [Aiden Mohr \(Jr.\)](#), [Charlie Serrahn \(So.\)](#)

**Key Additions:** [Andrew Luebbers \(Sr.\)](#) didn't run last year but is returning after a good track season, freshmen Josh Mu, Jacob Gladstone, and Nate Acklie could be in the mix before the end of the season. Coach Friedman loses [Nick Sell \(Jr.\)](#) who went back to soccer. Sam Blascyk (So.) moved to Minnesota.

**Coach Friedman's Outlook:** This group has some unfinished business. Henry emerged as our #1 last year, and we developed a nice pack with Isaiah, Brandt, Braden, and Aiden. Noah had a tough cross country season last year but recovered nicely to have a track season as a double-event state qualifier (3200m relay, 1600m). We will be a solid pack team. Henry, with potentially Noah, will be a solid front runner and we will have a solid pack of five to six guys with others battling to get into the top seven. Qualifying for the state meet is the goal every season and is certainly this group's goal.

## 6. [Wheaton \(St. Francis\)](#)

**Head Coach:** Scott Nelson

**Last Year's Finish:** 4th at 2A ShaZam XC Championships

**Key Returners:** [Daniel O'Connell \(Jr.\)](#), [Andrew Hernandez \(Jr.\)](#), [Christopher Spahn \(Sr.\)](#), [Chris Covone \(Sr.\)](#), [Nate Rodriguez \(Sr.\)](#), [Sam Andzejewski \(Jr.\)](#), [Alex O'Donnell \(Jr.\)](#)

**Carson's thoughts:** The track season did not shape out the way that this squad had probably wanted it to. Still, they return five members of their 4th place ShaZam XC Championships Team. Led up front by Daniel O'Connell and Andrew Hernandez, the duo should make a great 1-2 for the Spartans. Christopher Spahn enters the season as a major midcard as he had a great start to his season last year before some inconsistent racing near the end of the season. Spahn has all the potential to run with their top two duo.

While their track season wasn't the best, a great step was taken for Sam Andzejewski who seems to be back on track. He clocked the best 1600m time for the team last year running a 4:42. After a great freshman year running at State, Andzejewski only ran one race last year due to unknown reasons, but it seems like he is ready to step up this season into a top 4 spot for his school. Rounding out the top 5 is Chris Covone who comes in around 16:30. Overall this is a very strong squad, it's a matter of moving up their pack to enter trophy contention.

## 5. [Marion](#)

**Head Coach:** Eli Baker

**Last Year's Finish:** 13th at 2A ShaZam XC Championships

**Key Returners:** [Dylon Nalley \(So.\)](#), [Logan Morgan \(Sr.\)](#), [Jack Gregory \(Sr.\)](#), [Cade Parks \(So.\)](#), [Benja Stone \(Jr.\)](#), [Sean Hudspath \(Jr.\)](#), [Christopher LaChiana \(Sr.\)](#)

**Carson's thoughts:** Led by one of the top freshmen in the state last year, Dylon Nalley. The Wildcats squad looks to be hunting for a state trophy this season. With a low stick front runner like Nalley who should be sub 15:00 this season and potentially a top 5 runner in the classification, the focus will be on the next four runners to improve and bring this squad to the next level. Next up on the squad are the duo of Logan Morgan and Jack Gregory, both should be sub 16:00 after solid track seasons from both. Cade Parks follows that group as he looks to run in the low 16:00's, but the real difference-maker will be where their 5th runner is located. With a few guys that can all fit

into that number 5 spot, this should be a very compelling season.

#### **4. Deerfield**

**Head Coach/Assistant Coaches:** Scott Friedlander / Sam Friedland, Bill Anderson.

**Key Returners:** [Cole Bernstein \(Sr.\)](#), [Ryan Bernstein \(Sr.\)](#), [Lucas Moskovitz \(Sr.\)](#), [Eric Lakemaker \(Sr.\)](#), [Jon Wool \(So.\)](#), [David Fisher \(Sr.\)](#), [Carter Levinson \(Sr.\)](#)

**New Additions:** Carter Levinson transferred to Deerfield last year as a junior and started running for the first time. He has made tons of progress, and now as a senior, he has a chance to move into the top seven even though he wasn't close last year. He ran 17:40 last year but I bet he's in 16:50 shape now and rapidly improving.

**Coach Friedlander's Outlook:** I'll address the obvious first. Our enrollment is decreasing, and we got moved from 3A to 2A. We live in a mostly 3A world where I frequently get questions about whether we're happy about 2A or whether we feel that cheapens whatever we might accomplish. I could follow up my answer to that question with an entire essay, but I'll summarize my thoughts: No, it's definitely not cheap, and our feelings about it are irrelevant. Forces we don't control dealt us a hand, and we're going to play it.

This might be our best team in a long time. This senior class has been on our minds since freshman year when they immediately made a varsity impact. However, they have had no shortage of adversity. And there is zero State Meet experience on our entire team. Four of them have run at Detweiller at a regular-season meet or two as freshmen and sophomores, but nobody else on the team has ever raced there. Given the strength of the 2A teams coming from Central Illinois who race at Detweiller frequently, the lack of experience is something we must compensate for.

Ryan and Cole Bernstein have been our rocks, and they should lead our team both literally and figuratively. Their work ethic is outstanding, and they have a burning desire to put Deerfield on the map. However, Ryan got hurt at track sectionals and just recently returned to running after 4-5 weeks off. He has had no issues so far, so hopefully, he can climb in mileage.

Lucas Moskovitz and Eric Lakemaker should be on their heels, although sometimes they mix the order up and finish ahead of a Bernstein or two. We don't yet know who will join those four.

In track season, rising sophomore Jon Wool looked great with a 4:45 freshman PR despite his strength lying much more with long-distance than mid-distance. David Fisher and Carter Levinson are this summer's most improved and should factor into it.

We've been 2A for four interspersed seasons in the last decade and finished 9th, 8th, 14th, and 13th. This year we're aiming for a much lower number. Thinking about our history, and I ran for Deerfield from 2004-2008, this year could be extra special. We had some of the country's best teams ever in the late 70s, faded from relevance for 20 years, and then a special group of runners decided they were sick and tired of losing and created a very special culture around the turn of the millennium that changed a lot of lives over the years. I wasn't part of that original group, but I was proud to be a product of it and to help carry the torch they lit. That torch has been burning for 20 years, and while we've been over-achieving our talent, we've been consistently good but not great with very little standard deviation.

When I think of our boys possibly lifting a trophy on the award stage at Detweiller at the end of this season, I can't stop thinking of the guys who lit the torch. To me, it would feel like a 20-year culmination. Not that amazing things haven't happened over the last 20 years, because they certainly have, but it would be such an amazing public celebration of something fantastic that a bunch of special high schoolers started and many more special high schoolers elevated along the way. It would be about much more than the guys on the stage. And the possibility for this year's team to do that and then show it to our alumni community gives me goosebumps.

#### **3. Riverside-Brookfield**

**Head Coach:** John Brady

**Last Year's Finish:** 11th at ShaZam XC Championships

**Key Returners:** [Paul Proteau \(Sr.\)](#), [Cooper Marrs \(So.\)](#), [Hayden Marrs \(So.\)](#), [Alex Terry \(Jr.\)](#), [Jack](#)

**[O'Brien \(So.\)](#), [Zack Gaynor \(Jr.\)](#), [William Kallas \(So.\)](#)**

**New Additions:** Brady Norman (Fr.)

**Outlook:** Paul Proteau is primed for a great fall, went 4:20, Soph. Cooper Marris went 4:25, 2 more impressive sophs make up a solid top 4- Jack O'Brien 10:03 in 3200, and Hayden Marris who has been up with Jack all summer. The rest of the team is up in the air, there are a few great options, but will take until late September before it might develop. Sophomores William Kallas and Brennan Lester and juniors Tyrike Jenkins and Zack Gaynor have the talent but need to do it on race day. Top newcomer frosh Brady Norman is another option, he's very passionate about his running and adds so much to our young core.

## **[2. Mahomet-Seymour](#)**

**Head Coach/Assistant Coaches:** Neal Garrison / Andrew Walmer

**Last Year's Finish:** 2A ShaZam XC Championship runner-up

**Key Returners:** [Taylor Fan \(Sr.\)](#), [Hayden Grotelueschen \(Jr.\)](#), [Kyle Nofziger \(Sr.\)](#), [Joseph Scheele \(Sr.\)](#), [Jonah Singer \(Sr.\)](#), [Karsten Waisath \(Sr.\)](#), [Ben Wallace \(Jr.\)](#)

**New Additions:** The Titans will be so good this season that will be difficult for any newcomer to make their top seven. But Lukas Nykaza and Blake Dillman are two incoming freshmen who may have what it takes.

-Coach Garrison welcomes a nice group of returners, he calls them nice guys. They certainly won't finish last (haha!) in any contest. But seriously, they all enjoy one another's company and will be ready to win more plaques this fall.

**Carson's thoughts:** this team returns a ton of talent from last season's second place ShaZam team; they may be the only team that can dethrone the juggernaut that is the #1 ranked team in the classification. Expect a huge season for Joseph Scheele who had a great track and has the potential to be an all-state runner. The Bulldogs have had a tendency to start the season off slow, they will most likely be in shape when November rolls around.

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