This Saturday is the day that most runners and fans enjoy the most outside of the state meet. Five sectionals will decide which 25 2A teams (or more) will head to Peoria for next weekend’s state cross country meet.

The Normal University Sectional is the high-powered meet of the bunch. Top two Boys Teams Normal University and Mahomet Seymour needed a tie broken in last week’s regional race. Anticipation of what happens this weekend is apparent on the grounds of Maxwell Park. Both Boys and Girls races are stacked with ranked teams. It is a shame that some good teams will be ending their season on Saturday.

The top five finishing teams from each sectional will punch their ticket to the state meet. If there is a tie for fifth place, both tied teams will make the trip. The top seven individuals not on a state qualifying team will also qualify to run on November 4.

Here is a look at each of the five sectionals that will take place on Saturday.

**Normal University Sectional @ Maxwell Park**

**Girls (10:00 AM)**

**Ranked Teams** - #1 Dunlap, #4 Mahomet-Seymour, #5 Normal University, #7 Washington, #8 Peoria Notre Dame, #11 Urbana, #15 Urbana University, #19 Normal West

**Teams Previews** – This race is TOO loaded with three ranked teams not running next week at Detweiller Park. Dunlap, the top ranked team in 2A, is the team favorite in this race. It would not surprise me if the Eagles score under 50 points even with the quality of the field. **Campbell Petersen** and **Franny Verville** should be the leaders up front. 5 runners in the top 20 is probable for Dunlap. 5 in the top 15 is possible.

Mahomet-Seymour and Normal University finished 1-2 last week at Metamora. They have good chances of making it to Detweiller Park. The depth of this field does not make it a certainty. Mahomet-Seymour, in their regional win, had four runners in the first ten led by **Brisa McGrath** and **Megan Churm.**The Bulldogs will just need to keep a close pack as well as putting their 5 scorers in the top 35. Normal University could have **Lyndsey Wolters** and **Emmy Mussey** finish in the top 15. The Pioneers will just need 5 runners in the top 35 to solidify their state qualifying berth.

This is when the fun begins. Washington missed state last year by one point and does not want a repeat of that. Freshman **Jaydn Jacobs** could finish in the top ten. It is the pack behind her that needs to stay within 30 seconds of each other and in the top 40 will be something to watch for. Peoria Notre Dame has showed improvement over the past month including a Big 12 Conference Championship**. Grace Breitbach** leads the Irish and should be in the top 20 in this race. A key for Notre Dame is keeping the pack behind Breitbach within 50 seconds of each other and within the top 50.

Urbana has the low numbers up front with **Libby Cultra** and **Olivia Rosenstein** possibly finishing in the top five individually. Getting **Chiann Scott** to within 30 seconds of these two would be a big plus. The Tigers will have a big top five split. It is a given. Getting their fourth and fifth runners in before 75th place could get them into the top five teams. Crosstown rival Urbana University will have **Arielle Summitt** among the top five runners and could have **Anika Kimme** in the top 20. Getting their five-runner split close to two minutes could get them close to the top five. Normal West could be the surprise team in this field. **Mara Smith** has a chance to finish in the top 10. Their five-runner split needs to be within 80 seconds with five runners in the top 50 needed.

It is going to be a close finish among the first eight teams. It could only be a 20-point gap between third-place and eighth-place.

**Individuals Preview** – It could be Dunlap’s **Campbell Petersen** and **Franny Verville** that take the top two spots. **Arielle Summitt** of Urbana University ran 17:45 at the First to the Finish Invitational could be in the front along with **Aspen Gordon** of Morton, and Urbana’s **Libby Cultra** and **Olivia Rosenstein**. Other runners to watch up front include **Rachel Hickey** of LaSalle-Peru, **Jadyn Jacobs** of Washington, **Josie Brown** of Geneseo, **Addie Pulley** of Alleman, **Mara Smith** of Normal West, **Ayah Aldadah** and **Abby Johnson** of Dunlap, and **Lyndsey Wolters** of Normal University.

**Boys (11:30)**

**Ranked Teams** - #1 Normal University, #2 Mahomet-Seymour, #10 Bloomington, #12 Washington, #13 Normal West, #17 Peoria Notre Dame, #18 Alleman, #19 Metamora

**Teams Preview** – If you thought the Girls race will be tight, the Boys race could be even closer. We got that indication at the Metamora Regional where six of the eight ranked teams were in that field including top ranked Normal University and defending 2A state champion Mahomet-Seymour. The two teams were tied last week with the regional title decided by a sixth-runner tie-breaker. Normal University had the edge because of that.

U-High ran a 15 second split last week led by the ninth-place finish from **Dane Alexander.** **Jared Schuckman** should be in the top five in this race. What the Pioneers will need is keeping their pack within 30 seconds of each other and 5 runners in the top 16. What Mahomet-Seymour will need is a race up front like last week with **Mathias Powell, Ryan Hodge**, and **Riley Fortune** again in the top four. Fortune was within 24 seconds of his teammates last week. It needs to be closer this Saturday. It needs to be even closer at Detweiller Park. **Bryson Keeble** did not run last week. We should see him on Saturday. Perhaps one of their top seven will not run. That has been their trend over the past couple of years.  5 runners in the top 25 could keep them close, or even ahead, of U-High by the time the race is over.

The next five teams could be close together vying for three qualifying spots. Bloomington has the edge over the five with solid pack running. It was 60 seconds last week. A split under 50 seconds with **Nick Doud** and **Austin Bicknell** in the top 15 could solidify a state qualifying position. Metamora finished sixth last week in their own regional but did not have their #1 runner **Adam Gilbreath-Glaub**in the lineup. The sophomore should be in the top five in this race. Metamora will need 5 runners in the top 29 to finish among the top five teams. Washington surprised some by finishing fourth at Metamora. Running a 48 second split in their top five helped get that result. The Panthers will need **Avery Davidson** and **Reese Borlin** finish in the top 20. Their top 5 in the first 45 spots could get them a short trip to Detweiller Park.

Normal West should have **Charlie Wetzel** and **Tyler Dunn** in the top ten in this race. The Wildcats could make it back to state but will need three runners in the top 20, five runners in the top 43. Notre Dame will not have the numbers up front like the teams ahead of them. What they will need is a tight pack. **Chris Gilbert** could finish among the top 25. Their split was 85 seconds last week. It needs to be under 60 seconds to be in the top five team conversation. **Spencer Smith** should be among the top five runners leading Rock Island Alleman. The Pioneers could be among the top five. They will need a 50 second split on their pack behind Smith with all five scorers in the top 50 to be in the top five mix.

**Individuals preview** – This race is going to be close. **Jared Shuckman** of Normal University, **Spencer Smith** of Alleman, and Mahomet’s **Ryan Hodge, Mathias Powell**, and **Riley Fortune** will all challenge for the win in this race. **Adam Gilbreath-Glaub** of Metamora, **Blake Jones** of Lincoln, and Normal West’s **Charlie Wetzel** and **Tyler Dunn** could all be in the front.

**Kaneland Sectional @ Kaneland HS XC Course**

**Girls (10:00 AM)**

**Ranked Teams** - #2 Belvidere North, #3 Vernon Hills, #6 Kaneland, #9 Dixon, #13 Lakes, #16 Crystal Lake South, #18 Carmel Catholic, #24 Burlington Central

**Teams Preview** – Two of the “2A Big three teams” are in this field. It is Belvidere North that everyone will have their eyes on in this loaded field that includes eight 2A ranked teams. The Blue Thunder has the strength up front with **Madison Diercks, Gianna Sagona**, and **Sabrina Elder** all possibilities in the top six. The gap between their fourth and fifth runners at First to the Finish in September was big. It was two seconds in their regional race. Mind you, it was a regional race. It is something to keep an eye on this Saturday.

Vernon Hills is a solid second team in this meet that has been running a good pack on their top five. **Lauren Katz, Payton Makowskyj**, or **Carly Sear** could finish among the first 15. 5 runners in the top 33 is a possibility with a split under 50 seconds. Kaneland will be on their home course for the third time this year in big meets. Rachel Richtman will be challenging up front individually. The Knights could have 4 runners in the top 30. They need their fifth runner in between 50th and 60th to solidify a third-place finish. Dixon will need a solid pack race to get to Peoria. The split on their top four last week at Belvidere was 27 seconds. Keeping it at 45 seconds with 5 runners in the top 55 could also get them the top five finish they are looking for. Carmel Catholic did not have their best race in their regional finishing third behind Vernon Hills and Lakes. They could rebound this week getting **Aileen Hull** in the top 15 and 5 runners in the top 40.

Lakes could get into the top five teams but will need freshman **Brooke Stromsland**in the top 10 and her four other teammates in the top 53. Crystal Lake South has snuck up on people all season. This could be another instance of that. The Gators ran a 12 second split on their top four, 42 seconds on their top five in finishing second last week behind Kaneland. Those splits would work to get them to Peoria, but will need either **Mackenzie Aldridge** or **Emma Murphy** finish in the top 20. Burlington Central had a 65 second split on five in their Kaneland race. That number needs to dip to 50 seconds with 5 runners in the top 60 to get close to the top five teams.

**Individuals Preview** – Belvidere North’s **Madison Diercks** and **Gianna Sagona** should be leading the pack in the front. **Rachel Richtman** will be on her home course and could be close to the two Belvidere North runners. **Kayla Schiera** of Sandwich, **Chelsea Gale** of Prairie Ridge, **Kylie Hagmann** of Woodstock, **Sophia Oury** of Hampshire, **Brooke Stromsland** of Lakes, and **Sabrina Elder** of Belvidere North are some of the other runners to watch in the front.

Boylan Catholic qualified in the Belvidere Regional but did not run their all-state runner **Grace McLaughlin**in that race. The senior has only run one race this season at Sterling as she has been recovering from iliac apophysitis over the summer which is caused by growth plates fusing faster than the tendons. She ran 17:55 in that race. If she is healthy, she could qualify for the state meet.

**Boys (11:00 AM)**

**Ranked Teams** - #3 Sycamore, #4 Kaneland, #15 Dixon, #16 Belvidere North.

**Team Previews** – Sycamore and Kaneland have raced each other for the past two weeks with two more to go. Sycamore won last week at Burlington Central 48-72. It could be closer in this meet. **Stephen Poorten** and **Jake Carani** could finish in the top five with Poorten vying for the individual title. They placed five runners ahead of Kaneland’s fourth runner in the regional race. That kind of effort will be needed again. Kaneland will have **Matthew Richtman** up front going after the sectional win. **Daniel Occhipinti** and **Sam Webster** lead the pack that will need to be within 25 seconds of each other in this race.

It should be wide-open for the three other qualifying spots in this race. Dixon edged Belvidere North by one point in last week’s Belvidere Regional. Dixon ran a 40 second split on their top five in that race and will need to duplicate that on Saturday with two runners in the top 20. Belvidere North had the same split on their top five but was separated by only one place on their fifth runner. The Blue Thunder could make it in if they just duplicate the split with 5 runners in the top 50.

It will be who has the best pack. Lakes could have a runner in the first 20 with **Ethan Schommer** but will need 5 runners in the first 58 to qualify. Hampshire and Crystal Lake Central tied for third at the Burlington Central Regional. Getting two runners in the top 20 like **Santiago Arreola** and **Elijah Stuart,** Hampshire could sneak into the top five. Crystal Lake Central has been up and down this season but may be running their best at the right time. **Josh Johnson** finishing in the top 25 maintaining a 25 second or under split could get the Tigers to state. Antioch could have **Charlie Smith** among the top five in this race. Their second-place finish in their own regional came with a 22 second split on their second through fifth runners. Getting that pack closer to Smith will be a key to finishing in the top five.

**Individuals preview** – This is a preview of the state race a week from now with 4 of the top 6 2A runners in this field. **Jake Gebhardt** of Sterling will be the runner to watch having run 14:25 at Peoria at the end of September. **Matthew Richtman** of Kaneland edged Crystal Lake South’s **Jack Becker** by three seconds at the Burlington Central Regional. Both runners should be pushing Gebhardt. Sycamore’s **Stephen Poorten** held back in his regional race finishing third. He should be close to Becker and Richtman in this race. **Daniel Chen** of Illinois Math & Science Academy, **Charlie Smith** of Antioch, **Eli Minsky** of Grayslake Central, **Anthony Farmer** of Burlington Central, and **James McDonald** of Vernon Hills are runners to watch towards the front.

**Decatur MacArthur Sectional at Hickory Point Golf Course**

**Girls (10:00 AM)**

**Ranked Teams** - #12 Springfield, #14 Chatham-Glenwood, #17 Waterloo, #24 Troy Triad

**Teams Preview** – This race is wide-open with any one of the four ranked teams capable of winning the team sectional championship. Waterloo bounced back from their narrow loss to Triad at the Mississippi Valley Conference Meet to win the Highland Regional placing three in the first five. The Bulldogs will have **Jenna Schwartz** who will be one of the individual favorites in this race. Ella King is a solid second runner for Waterloo. What could be a big plus is if **Rachel Patterson** is back in the lineup. The sophomore has not raced since the beginning of September due to a foot injury. If she is healthy, Waterloo could have an advantage in this race. If not, it gets just that much closer.

Triad is five runners deep led by **Alyssa Kowalski** and **Maddie Keller** who could finish in the top 15. Keeping their split under 45 seconds on their top five as well as getting them in the top 25 could secure a sectional win. Springfield edged Chatham-Glenwood by three points to win the Jacksonville last Saturday off **Gabby Wood’s** individual win. The Senators need to have their split under 55 seconds, Wood in the top 10, and 5 runners in the first 40 to secure a top five finish. Chatham-Glenwood had a 77 second five-runner split off **Ali Wynn’s** third place regional placing. The Titans will need to get their split back under 60 seconds in this race. Wynn and **Reagan Weichold**are possibilities to finish in the top 12. Keeping 5 runners in the top 30 could get Chatham-Glenwood on the starting line at Detweiller Park next week.

Mascoutah looks like they have the edge for the fifth and final team qualifying spot. The Indians finished only seven points behind Triad in the Highland Regional. **Arianna Climaco** finishing in the top 15 along with keeping their split under 45 seconds could get them to Peoria. Mt. Zion, Highland, Mattoon, and Charleston are teams to also keep an eye on in the top ten.

**Individual Preview** – Danville’s **Shanice Garbutt** and Waterloo’s **Jenna Schwartz** have faced each other twice with Garbutt coming out ahead in both races. Will third time be the charm for the Waterloo senior? Garbutt ran 17:08 to win at Peoria at the end of September. Schwartz lowered her personal best down to 17:20 in her conference race. It should be a close race between these two fine runners.

Waterloo’s **Ella King** should be a runner to watch in the chase pack along with her teammate Sydney Haddick, Samantha Hengehold of Highland, **Megan Garrett** of Charleston, **Bria Moore** of Mt. Vernon, and **Alyssa Kowalski** of Triad.

**Boys (11:00 AM)**

**Ranked Teams** - #5 Chatham-Glenwood, #7 Springfield, #8 Waterloo, #9 Mascoutah, #11 Danville, #20 Mt. Zion, #22 Charleston, #23 Olney Richland County, #25 Triad.

**Teams Preview** – There are nine state ranked teams in this field. It should be the 5 ranked teams in the first 11 that we should pay attention to.

Chatham-Glenwood placed 5 runners in the first 11 in winning the Jacksonville Regional with a 58 second split. **Dathan** and **Drey Maton** are possibilities in the top five. Getting 5 runners in the top 20 secure a sectional championship. Waterloo should have a solid pack giving them a chance to qualify. **Adam Robson** and **Jackson McAlister** should lead the Bulldogs in the top 15. Having a 40 second or faster split on 5 runners in the top 31 could even get them the sectional title. MVC Conference rival Mascoutah could be close to Waterloo. **Casmir Cozzi** and **Brandon Johnson** could be among the top ten in this race. Keeping their split under 43 seconds on their scorers gets them to Peoria. Springfield will need **Kyle Boughter** in the top 5 and **Will Formea** in the top 10 in this race. The Senators need their pack behind these two 40th place of lower for the team to make it to state. Danville used a 30 second split in their top five to win the Charleston Regional. **Brandon Barfel** leading that pack that starts between 10th and 15th place could get the Vikings to Peoria.

Mt. Zion will have individual favorite **Mason Jones** leading them. The Braves could make it to Peoria, but will need a 40 second split on their pack behind Jones with their scorers all finishing in the top 50.

Marion, Charleston, and Triad are teams that should be watched. Marion did not have top five runner **Levi Bryant** in their lineup last Saturday at Highland. **John Bruce** will be among the top five runners in this race. With Bryant back in, Marion will need to keep their pack split at 38 seconds with the group in the top 40 to be close or in to the top five teams.

**Individuals Preview** – The race is open with Mt. Zion’s **Mason Jones,** Marion’s **John Bruce,** and Charleston’s **Nick Oakley** all capable of winning this race. Chatham-Glenwood’s **Dathan** and **Drey Maton, Kyle Boughter** of Springfield, and **Casmir Cozzi** of Mascoutah are some of the other runners to watch in the front.

**Wheaton Academy Sectional @ Kress Creek Farm, West Chicago**

**Girls (10:00 AM)**

**Ranked Teams** - #20 Wheaton Academy, #21 Riverside-Brookfield, #22 Lemont

**Teams Preview** – It looks like it could be a close team race like it has been the past two weeks between Wheaton Academy and Riverside Brookfield. It was Wheaton Academy with the one-point win at Riverside-Brookfield last week. **Julia Robleski** and **Stephanie Gregersen** could finish in the top ten in this race. Keeping their split under 58 seconds could get Wheaton Academy the sectional title. Riverside-Brookfield should match top ten finishes with **Tara Janney** and **Nadia Kaczmarz** in that group. **Hailey Jurgens** could finish in the top 15. What the Bulldogs will need is keeping their top 5 in the first 40 with a split under 100 seconds.

Rosary has been without their top runner **Claire Hengesbaugh** since the end of September. They still could make it to Peoria led by **Brooke Delahanty** and **Maia Italia** in the top 20 with their split under 60 seconds. Lemont should be battling for the sectional crown using typical pack running. **Marin Schiffman** and **Julianne McClatchy** finishing in the top 15 along with Lemont keeping five runners in the top 30 could mean a repeat trip to Peoria.

GCAC teams Montini and St. Francis are two of the teams to watch for the fifth qualifying spot. **Juliane Billote** is a good bet to finish in the top ten for Montini. Keeping their 5 scorers in the top 40 could get this team back to the state meet. St. Francis has demonstrated good pack running this fall led by freshman **Minnie Rolston**. Keeping their split under 70 seconds with Rolston in the top 20 could get their team to Peoria. Glenbard South has a similar pack to St. Francis led by **Kelly Anderson.** With Anderson in the top 25 and the Raiders with a split under 40 second on the group, Glenbard South could be on the starting line next Saturday in Peoria.

**Individuals Preview** – **Tara Janney** of Riverside-Brookfield looks like the runner to watch in this sectional race. It will be a tight pack behind her led by **Neha Chinwalla** and **Patrice Trzupek** of Hinsdale South, **Julia Robleski** of Wheaton Academy, **Julianne Billote** of Montini Catholic, **Brooke Delahanty** of Rosary, and **Marin Schiffman** of Lemont.

**Boys (11:00 AM)**

**Ranked Teams** - #6 Riverside Brookfield, #14 Illiana Christian, #21 Hinsdale South

**Teams Preview** – Riverside-Brookfield is the team favorite in this sectional as they could have 4 runners in the top 15 led by **Jacob Wardzala** and **Connor O’Brien**. Watch for the Bulldogs to keep their pack close together with a split of 50 seconds or faster. Illiana Christian has strength up front with **Austin Ohm** as one of the individual favorites and **Derek Van Prooyen** finishing in the top five. What the Vikings will need is getting their pack behind these two runners into the top 30. Hinsdale South could surpass Illiana Christian in this meet led by **Brett Haffner** who will challenge for the individual win but will need a split of 29 seconds or faster with their pack in the top 34 to accomplish that.

Bremen has a good chance to make it to Peoria for the first time since 2010. **Danny Meza**leads this team and could finish in the top 10 individually. The Braves will need their first 4 runners in the top 30 and their fifth runner between 45th to 50th place to have a good chance to advance. St. Francis and Lemont could challenge for the final qualifying spot. St. Francis could do it with **Alex Hernandez** and **Dan Weizeorick** in the top 15 and a split on five under 59 seconds. Lemont could find **Andrew Deusche** in the top 15. Keeping their top five in the first 50 could surpass St. Francis.

**Individuals Preview** – Illiana Christian’s **Austin Ohm** and Hinsdale South’s **Brett Haffner** will be the runners to watch in the front. **Jacob Mondschean** of Montini, **Derek Van Prooyen** of Illiana Christian, **Jacob Wardzala** and **Connor O’Brien** of Riverside-Brookfield, **Jimmy Gill** of Providence Catholic, **Thomas Leonard** of Marist, and **Jeffrey Ridge** of Wheaton Academy will also be runners to watch up front.

**Chicago University Sectional @ Washington Park**

**Girls (9:00 AM)**

**Ranked Teams** - #10 Latin School, #23 Trinity

**Teams Preview** – Latin School was not at full strength last week in edging out a win in their regional race with some of their top runners battling colds. They could have four runners in the first 11 this week led by individual race favorite **Marianne Mihas**. Trinity is running strong and could have **Emma Creviston** in the top five Keeping five runners in the top 30 could secure a state trip. Payton Prep lost top five runner **Alana Chandler** to a stress fracture after First to the Finish. The Grizzlies still have a good chance to make it to state with **Samantha Helffrich** and **Ella Marden** in the top 5 and 4 runners in the top 12. They could surpass Latin School but will need to get their fifth runner near 30th-place.

St. Viator has been a surprise this fall and could make a trip to Peoria. **Katie Castelli** in the top ten with their top five in the first 28 could punch their ticket south. Deerfield is solid with **Hope Leman** and **Kelly Osborn** possibilities to finish in the top 10. The Warriors make it to state their top five finishes in the top 30/ Solorio Academy has showed improvement throughout the season. They will need to keep their split under 60 seconds with 5 runners ahead of Deerfield’s fourth runner to make the school’s first trip to Peoria.

Individuals Preview – Latin School freshman **Marianne Mihas** has the fastest seasonal time in this sectional by more than a minute and will be the big favorite in this race. Her teammate Laura Katunas along with **Samantha Helfrich** of Payton Prep and **Emma Creviston** of Trinity will challenge for the second individual place.

**Boys (9:45 AM)**

**Ranked Teams - #24 Deerfield**

**Teams Preview** – Although Deerfield is the only ranked team in this race, it be close between them and Fenton for the sectional team title. Deerfield has the power up front with **Matt Gold** and **Henry Shore** good possibilities to finish in the top five and maybe 1-2. Deerfield had a 10-point margin ahead of St. Viator last week at the Fenton Regional. They will need to have a split under 54 seconds to secure a sectional championship. Fenton finished third in that race but could get the second spot if they can get four runners in the top 20 with **Christian Sanchez** in the top five. St. Viator finished 14th at state last year and is ready to make another trip. That means **Patric Natindim** finishing in the top 10 and all their scorers in the top 32.

It is wide open for the next two spots. One of the teams that could make it is Solorio Academy who won the De La Salle Regional last week. The Sun Warriors should have 3 runners in the top 20 led by **Adonaliz Hernandez**. Getting five in the first 40 could give them their first trip to the state meet. Payton Prep, Elmwood Park, Niles Notre Dame, and Mather all are within 15 points of each other and will make it close for the fourth and fifth spots along with Solorio.

**Individuals Preview** – Deerfield’s **Matt Gold**, **Brad Brodesky**, and **Henry Shore** all finished in the top 7 last week at Fenton. Gold looks like the runner to watch in this race. Fenton’s **Christian Sanchez** and **Alfredo MacLaughlin** of DePaul Prep look to be other runners to challenge for spots in the top five.

Read more: [Mike Newman - News - Illinois High School Cross Country - IHSA 2A Sectional Previews](http://mike-newman-ilxctf.runnerspace.com/profile.php?member_id=42240&do=news&news_id=498223#ixzz4wjZSzgGO)