

MORRIS COUNTY GIRLS REWIND-WEEK 6

The next time you check out results from a Morris County meet, make sure to take a good look at what grade some of the athletes are in. I am always amazed how much great young talent there is in Morris County.

It's nothing new to see great young distance stars make an immediate impact in the county. There's a huge list of young distance stars from the past like Christine Engel of Mount Olive a couple decades ago, Stepahine Snyder of Randolph, Ariann Neutts of Roxbury, Joelle Amaral of Randolph and currently Liz Lansing of Randolph. There are countless others who became state champs at a young age.

But take a look in the field events this season and you will be amazed. Here are a few of the new faces that have produced impressive results in their rookie seasons in the field events this spring.

BIG SHOT

I have to start out with remarkable freshman Nikolette Dunbar of Whippany Park.

Dunbar brought her wrecking ball to the NJAC Small School Championships at Wallkill Valley last week and loaded a state freshman record and meet record in the shot put with a heave of 45-7 $\frac{3}{4}$!!!!

Dunbar's throw, a personal best by two feet, broke the state freshman record of 45-6 $\frac{1}{4}$ set in 1990 by Nicole Sims of Plainfield, is the No. 1 throw in the state this season, and No. 16 in state history. Sims set the state record of 49-2 $\frac{3}{4}$ in 1991.

Dunbar's next target is the Morris County record of 46-5 by Mendham's Sarah Bella in 2008.

NEW HEIGHTS

Julia Mszanski of Mendham continued her remarkable rookie season in the pole vault when she cleared 10-6 to finish second at the NJAC meet last week, one of the best performance in state history by a freshman in that event.

Mszanski, the top ranked vaulted in the county, has a good chance of

matching and even breaking the state freshman record of 11-0 set in 2009 by Chelsea Vaughan of Southern.

ALL-ROUND STAR

Freshman Leah Wis of Montville is another diamond in the rough, who is as talented as she is tough.

Wis, who has battled through tendonitis in her knees this season, won the NJAC Large School discus with county leading 123-8 and is tied for the top spot in the county in the high jump at 5-2.

MORRIS COUNTY CHAMPIONSHIPS PREVIEW

TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY BOONTON HIGH SCHOOL, 4 P.M.

The battle for the top spot in the team standings should be a good one as Randolph, county relay champion Mendham, and defending champion Mount Olive all have a shot at taking home the coveted title.

Mendham has a chance at pulling off its second championship sweep of the season. The boys and girls both won the county relay titles a couple weeks ago, and have a realistic shot at doing that again.

Keep an eye on the meet record book because there are lots of records that could go down.

HERE IS A LOOK AT EACH EVENT WITH PREDICTIONS

TEAMS: This is a tough one to call, but I am riding the hot hand and picking Mendham to capture its first title.

100-Bria Saunders of Parsippany is back to defend her title, and barring a false start or a DQ, there doesn't appear to be any way someone else wins this. Saunders set the meet record of 12.14 last year and I am predicting that she breaks it.

200-Sparks should fly in this one when Bria Saunders of Parsippany and Keturah Orji of Mount Olive square off what should be a red hot half

lapper. Saunders has gone 25.21 and Orji 25.22 this season. Last year they both broke the old meet record with Saunders winning, 24.53 to 24.67.

400-Junior Keturah Orji of Mount Olive is the defending champion and has run 58.45 this season, but Emilie Cowan of St. Elizabeth has the top time in the county this season of 57.58. Orji, who narrowly missed the meet record with a 56.71 last year, will rise to the occasion. The meet record of 56.24 could be threatened.

800-Sophomore Liz Lansing of Randolph has the top time in the county this season of 2:16.70, but junior Kylene Cochrane of West Morris always seems to race well at this meet. Cochrane has a season best of 2:17.81, but a ran 2:14.22 to win last year. I am picking Lansing.

1,600-Defending champion Liz Lansing of Randolph, who won the Meet of Champions at this distance June, is the top seed at 4:53.80. Kylene Cochrane of West Morris (4:57.26), Megan Curham of Villa Walsh (4:58.86) and Mackenzie Barry of Mendham (5:00.39) will try to score the upset. I see Lansing breaking the meet record of 4:53.04 set in 201 by Joelle Amaral of Randolph.

3,200-This has the makings of an instant classic as 2-time champion Mackenzie Barry of Mendham and Meghan Curham, of Villa Walsh clash for the first time this season and a battle between two of the nation's best. This should be a real fast race!!!

How fast?

Both runners could run in the 10:20 or even faster!!!! I know that sounds awfully fast for a county race, but Barry and Curham are that talented.

Last week, Barry won the Large Schools NJAC race in 10:37.34 while Curham took the Small Schools NJAC title in 10:39.14.

This race could go either way, but I am going with Barry as both she and Curham drop under 10:30. Barry's meet record of 10:26.82 is in big trouble.

HH-State indoor champion Katie Hatler of Jefferson is the only hurdler under 15.00 this season with a 14.88. It's hard to see anyone knocking her off.

IH-Laura Papili of Mendham is the defending champion and has the top

time in the county with a 62.93. Enough said!

HJ-There are five girls at 5-2, so this will likely come down to fewer misses. The contenders are Leah Wis of Montville, Gina Dello Russo of Whippany Park, Kendall Ballotti of West Morris, Alex Matchett of Boonton, and Claire Johnson of Morris Catholic. My gut feeling is that Wis will win.

LJ and TJ-There probably isn't a bigger favorite in any event in any county meet in the state than Keturah Orji of Mount Olive in the horizontal jumps. Orji owns the county records in both events with 20-2 and a 41-0 $\frac{3}{4}$. The meet records of 19-0 $\frac{3}{4}$ and 39-9 $\frac{3}{4}$ could be toast!

SP-Freshman phenom Nikolette Dunbar of Whippany Park, who broke the state freshman record with a 45-7 $\frac{3}{4}$ at the NJAC meet, is the one to beat. But don't forget about senior Carrie Wasdyke of Jefferson, who won the Meet of Champions and broke the Morris County record during the indoor season. I am predicting Dunbar to finish first and break the meet record of 45-1 $\frac{1}{2}$.

DIS-Freshman Leah Wis of Montville, the NJAC Large School winner, is the top seed with a Morris County best 123-8, more than three feet ahead of NJAC Small School champion Carrie Wasdyke of Jefferson. I am going with Wis to throw over 125 and get the win.

JAV-Grace McGurn of Villa Walsh (16-5) and Allison Ross (115-0) of Hanover Park are the only throwers over 110. McGurn is the pick.

PV-Freshman Julia Mzanski of Mendham leads the county at 10-6 and should win this. If she has an off day, Ashley Granato of Whippany Park or Marlena Paz of West Morris, who have both cleared 10-0, are capable of winning.

4x400-Mendham is more than two seconds ahead of any other team with its Morris County leading 3:58.72. Parsippany is next at 4:01.42. I am going with Mendham, which has a good shot at the meet record of 3:57.89.

IN THE PADDOCK

The 43rd East Coast Relays, one of the best and biggest meets of the season, is scheduled for Monday at Randolph at 3:45 p.m. Rain date is Tuesday at the same time and place.

After the East Coast Relays, the state sectionals is next on the schedule (May 24-25) as the Road to the Meet of Champions continues.

FYI-The Meet of Champions is back at Frank Jost Field in South Plainfield (June 5) after spending the last two years at Old Bridge's Lombardi Field.