

Ed Grant Weekly XC Report

Week 3 (28 Sep 09)

All eyes will be on the “B” races this Saturday when the 2009 cross-country season in New Jersey really gets under way with the massive Shore Coaches Invitational at Holmdel County Park.

On the boys’ side, there is the individual match of defending all-group champion Tyler Udland of Millburn and the Rosa twins of West Windsor-Plainsboro North: Joe, who finished second in that races and James, who placed 6th and went on to win the all-group 3200 last spring when an injury sidelined Udland. The field will also include Jeremy Elkaim of Livingston and David Forward of Shawnee, both of whom broke 9:10 in that outdoor 3200.

On the girls’ side, the field will be headed by Chelsea Ley of Kingsway, who won the C race at Holmdel a year ago in 17:44, third fastest time in the history of the course behind the legendary runners of the 1980s, Janet Smith of North Edison and Michelle Rowen of Washington Twp. Her rivals will include Jillian Prentice of Montgomery, who has two major wins to her credit this fall, and Caroline Kellner of West Windsor-Plainsboro South, a sophomore who bids fair to eclipse her older brother Katie, third behind two-time AG champion Melanie Thompson of Voorhees and Ley a year ago.

The next best individual boys’ race could be in E where Jon Vitez of Haddonfield, winner at last weekend’s Bowdoin Classic in Wappingers Falls, New York, goes against D.J. Thornton of Union Catholic and Pat Rono of Lyndhurst, the son of 1988 Olympic 1500-meter champion Peter Rono, who has won his two major starts this fall. The D race has Pat Schellberg of Delbarton, second last Saturday at the Ocean Classic in Rhode Island, the A field is headed by Matt McDonald of North Hunterdon, who was the fastest winner at last Saturday’s Stewart Memorial at Warinanco Park and the F by Dave Oster of Verona, top hand at the Passaic County Coaches Invitational at Garret Mountain.

Julie Jablonski of Hopewell Valley, who won the A at the Stewart Memorial, heads a strong C field which includes 2009 all-stater Megan Venables of Highland, and Ajee Wilson of Neptune, a double winner at last summer’s AAU National Junior Olympics in the 400 and 800. Marielle Hall of Haddonfield, who doubled the 1600 and 3200 at the USATF Junior Olympics, has not run a major race to date this fall, and, if she makes her debut this weekend, faces a tough challenge from Caroline Williams of Mt. St. Mary’s, fastest winner at the Magee Memorial class meet two weeks ago at Warinanco.

The A race has an interesting field with no clear favorite. South Brunswick has sophomore Cayla DelPiano, another winner at the Magee meet, and senior Sophia Ginez of South Brunswick, who sat out last weekend after collapsing near the finish of the Magee senior race. Caitlin Orr of Lenape, who won the large school race at the Coiugan Invitational last weekend, Alyssa Harris of Millville, winner at the South Jersey shootout, and Ashley Smolinka of Hillsboro, a second team all-stater last fall, are also in the field.

The state’s top two teams met last weekend at the Bowdoin Classic with Vitez leading Haddonfield to a 54-57 win over Germantown Friends, Christian Brothers placing third at 67. Jon’s time of 15:41 was third fastest in the history of the course and teammates Ben Potts and Colin Baker were also in the top 10. The teams will be far apart this weekend, Haddonfield in the morning B race and the Colts in the afternoon A affair against Gr. IV contenders Old Bridge, Bridgewater, Toms River North and Westfield.

The girls’ A race will also be somewhat of a preview of the Gr. IV meet with Hunterdon Central, South Brunswick, Toms River North and Southern Ocean in the field. But two key players will be missing. Ridge., with two wins this fall, is in the B race against Immaculate Heart Academy and Westfield, and Randolph, easy winner of the A race at the Passaic Coaches meet, will be absent entirely.

Three potential state champions, Summit (Gr. II), Voorhees (Gr. III) and Holy Angels (Parochial A), head a strong field in D and the F race has the state's top four Gr. I teams, headed by defender Robbinsville, and also including Mt. Lakes, North Warren and New Providence.

The Passaic meet last weekend had a pair of interesting incidents, one perhaps unprecedented, the other an occupational hazard in cross-country. In the first, the meet was delayed an hour or so after runners in an early race were attacked by a bee swarm. An exterminator had to be summoned, to solve the problem, while the runners sat around and waited for action to resume.

The second came in the boys' A race when the top three runners, cross-country novice Curtis Richburg of West Orange, who had won handily in the senior race at the Magee meet, Colin Frost of Randolph and Elkaim, went off course around the two-mile mark and wound up out of the first 10.