

Priddy girls hope to join boys at state this year

By Mike Lee
Eagle Contributor

The Priddy boys' cross country team is the defending Class 1A state champion. The Lady Pirates hope to join the boys' team at the UIL state meet this year.

The Priddy girls have had some individual success here and there, but haven't qualified for state as a team since 2002.

"It's just a lot more fun when you have the boys' and girls' teams both doing well – both going to state," said Priddy boys' coach Curtis Hurst, who has coached the Pirates to three state championships since 1994.

Not only do the Priddy girls have returning experience and talent from last year's sixth-place team finish at the Region II-1A meet, the Lady Pirates have a new coach with a proven track record. Rick Lasley, who coached San Saba to a state runner-up finish in 2013, introduced the Priddy boys and girls to a rigorous volunteer summertime running program.

"We're going to be on the medal stand (top three) at state this year. We've been working too hard not to be," Lasley said of his Priddy girls' team. "We are solid with our No. 1 through No. 4 runners. My job is to develop a No. 5 and No. 6 runner. We've got seven girls working hard to fill those two spots.

"It's not the 1-2-3 runners that win for you at state. It's the 4-5-6 runners that make the difference at that level."

The Priddy boys won state last year by one point and one-tenth of a second over Cumby Miller Grove – a team the Pirates had lost to in three prior meets.

"After they beat us at regional, I wrote on the board what place all of our runners were going to have to finish at state for us to beat them. And our kids did it," Hurst said.

Last year's state meet was run in a quagmire. Several runners lost their shoes while running in the mud, and even some spectators got muddy. Priddy got a little help from a couple of alumni in attendance at state.

"Brian and Clint Davidson, two of our former runners, were there. They came up to our boys before we ran and re-tied every one of their shoes," Hurst said. "They tied them tighter around the ankles, and not a one of our kids lost a shoe during the race."

Priddy lost only one senior, Tylor Raines, whose 14th-place finish was the difference in winning the state title last year. The returnees include senior Matt Smith, who finished third at state last year; senior Zach House, who finished ninth at state; sophomore Chandler Hurst, who finished 10th at state; and sophomore Louis Schimmel, who finished 18th at state.

Although their finishes didn't figure in the team scores, Priddy's Jayden Schrank finished 65th at state last year and Adam Hurst finished 78th. Both return this year – Adam Hurst as a senior and Schrank as a junior.

"We'll have a bullseye on us all year that's for sure – especially by the team (Miller Grove) we beat by one point at state last year," Coach Hurst said. "The kids

returned from the summer in better shape this year. We only lost one senior from last year, but he was the difference in us winning state. Somebody has to step up and fill that spot."

Other upperclassmen returnees include juniors Aaron Ivy and Guthrie Peters; and sophomores Dominic Goehmann, Cotie Timmerman and Flint Lethco.

The Priddy girls will be led by junior Alex Evans, who finished fifth as an individual at last year's state meet. Other proven return-



ees include seniors Amber Breum, Gloria Gutierrez and Dani Diaz, along with junior Cara Ivy and sophomore Shelby Smith.

Incoming freshmen Linda Evans and Savannah Schrank are expected to make an immediate impact on the varsity.

"This group of girls is hungry and competitive," Lasley said. "They don't like seeing the boys going to state and them not going."

Priddy competes in District 19-1A with Zephyr, Blanket, Lometa, Gustine and Sidney.

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