

Youthful LHS linksters looking to team state appearance

By MIKE GILMORE

Larned golf coach Mike Seeman is looking at a bigger picture for the Larned Indian golf team this spring.

Larned junior state qualifier Colton Massey returns to lead the Indians to the links in 2016, as three juniors, three sophomores and two freshmen attempt to take a full team to state after a two-year hiatus.

The last time the Indians went to state was in 2014, when a senior-laden squad fired up a fifth place Class 4A state finish at the Mayetta Firekeeper course.

Last year, Massey and Brandon Bartz represented the Indians at Class 4A state's meet on McPherson's Turkey Creek. It was a tough go; Turkey Creek's large greens boosted Massey's state score to 77 to finish outside the top 20 medalist ranks.

This year, however, Massey, Bartz and Braeden Corman are prepping for a season that will hopefully land some state-qualifying hardware for the Indians at their Class 3A tour of Tamarisk



Golf Course bordering the Arkansas River in Syracuse. Right now, Seeman and the squad doesn't know much about Tamarisk, it being their first tour there and first Class 3A regional in a while.

They are more concerned about what happens on a familiar season opener Monday at The Highlands in Hutchinson. "I'm sort of throwing the guys to the wolves again," said Seeman, who noted that the Hutchinson course already sports some golf challenges without having to be concerned with the shape it's in after a recent management change.

"Obviously, I have high hopes for Colton and Brandon," Seeman

said. "Braeden has really worked hard in the off-season. He's hit a lot of balls, played a lot of golf and it's starting to show. The Highlands is always one of our toughest tests of the season and the guys are going to be thrown into the gauntlet immediately. So are all the other kids, though, so it's something that we just have to go experience and see what happens."

As the season progresses, Seeman is hopeful that the progress will lead to a strong showing in Syracuse. "We've never been there, we know absolutely nothing about it at this point. At this point, I have high hopes of qualifying a team for state this year."

Class 3A state golf is at Emporia on May 23.

Joining the juniors are sophomores Londen Wittington, Jacob Simmons and Colton Schmidt, with freshmen Devin Burger and Theron Wray.

"Everyone is coming along, the freshmen too, and hopefully by the end of the season getting into regional play we might have a full squad and can compete as a team."

Larned's Gordon hopes drop to 3A means rise in podium prospects

By MIKE GILMORE

Going from Class 4A to Class 3A isn't always a step down. Sometimes it can be seen as a step up.

Larned senior Delaine Gordon heads into her senior season as a three-time state qualifier in distance. Through her four years, she's run with some of the best. Thomas More Prep's Heather Ruder was an early opponent. Pratt's Halle Helfrich is a current one.

Helfrich will be making her mark again as the Central Kansas League thinclads travel the 2016 circuit. Gordon will be there, too, as a state qualifier in the 1,600 meters where she placed 13th in Class 4A last season. Girard's Callie Logue, who recorded a sub-5-minute mile and near that winning the 1,600 at state, will be the girl to beat in Class 4A distance. Last year as a sophomore, she ran a 10:55.89 to win the 3,200.

But as the season gives way to regionals, and then the state

meet in May in Wichita, Gordon will be running with a largely different crowd. And that crowd is going to change up, too, from last year's Class 3A state distance races.

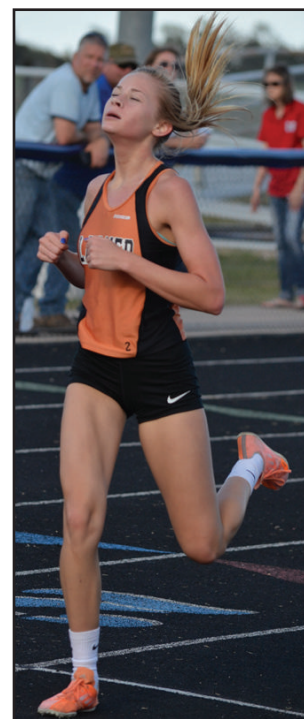
For starters, most of the girls' Class 3A headliners will have graduated. Hesston's Mikaela Heddin ran last year's Class 3A state 3,200 in 10:58.40, finishing with six runners ahead of her. Same in the 1,600; last year's podium was all filled with seniors.

That, as they say, clears some running room at state.

Gordon will be looking to make her senior year a good one. Her career bests come from the 2014 season, where she ran a 5:37 1,600 and an 11:53 3,200 at state.

This year, too, she will have a freshman teammate chasing her. Brooke Butler has come up from the middle school ranks as a top distance runner in junior school runs and summer events.

Meanwhile, Kaitlyn Finger and Katton



Gordon

Glover return in the throws. Finger is a returning state qualifier.

On the boys' side, Wyatt Davis returns as a silver medallist in the Central Kansas League javelin; Thomas Harmon and Danyon Green will compete in distance.

The Larned track teams opened the season Thursday in Nickerson.



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