

## Macksville XC building up for 2017

**By MIKE GILMORE**  
 In the last few seasons, the Macksville "Running Mustangs" cross country seasons have rolled with the changes, but at least one thing remains the same.

Getting to the state meet at Wamego will be tough.

"Not only is 2A cross country one of the toughest classifications, but we will also have to score the first five runners now for a team score," noted Macksville cross country coach Mike Hullman. "We have high expectations going into the season, as always, but we know that we will need each and every runner this season since we do not have as big of a team as in the past."

The Mustang boys will be facing some stiff competition in local meets this season, from teams like Kiowa County and St. John. As it usually does, however, some running room has opened up in front of the pack, as Frank Cuevas won his last 2A individual title in October. The St. John boys have come on strong of late, winning the team title by edging Stanton County.

On the girls' side, Stanton County's Rebecca Avelar set a course record at regionals and then won state last year as a senior. Kiowa County's girls won regionals at Meade, but Bennington put three in the top 10 to edge out the Lady Mavs at state.

Last season, senior Emma Stimatze, who is running this year at Johnson County, was the Lady Mustangs' solo runner at Wamego and the boys finished fourth at regionals.

"Our runners are very competitive, but we are really going to challenge them this season to accomplish our goals every

practice," Hullman said.

### Girls' team outlook

The Lady 'Stangs will have challenges out of the gate. Junior Itzel Garcia (22:32 PR) will be taking on a leadership role as a returning top-four runner on the team. "She has learned from our past leading runners and is now ready for her turn," Hullman said.

Senior Serena Blaske will be running her first season and junior Christine Garza (27:50 PR) is a one-year letterwinner. "Serena is looking forward to the challenge and has been doing some running this summer. Christine is back for another season and we have challenged her because she has the ability to be a good runner for us."

The balance of the squad is sophomores. Kiley Blevins (27:02 PR); Caren Holguin (27:45 PR); Kaylee Hottovy (26:58 PR); Elena Kuckelman (28:55 PR) and Lydia Mendez (24:45) each lettered last year as freshmen. "These sophomores had to step up already last season to help us with our team scores," Hullman noted. "They earned a lot of great experience with most running on the regional team that will help them along the way."

Anna Suiter is a fresh-

man who ran distance last year as an eighth-grader.

### Boys' team outlook

The Macksville boys' squad was hit hard by graduation, losing its top three runners. Four of the top seven return in 2017. Senior Brandon Ibarra (19:30 PR) is in the top six and senior Wilhelm Penner (23:38) came on late last season.

Three juniors, Trey Britton (22:25 PR); Andrew Cross (19:40 PR); Jacob Suiter (21:04) are returning two-year letterwinners. "This is the group that we will be counting on heavily this season," Hullman said. "Trey started the season with some great times; Andrew is one of those runners that just needs a little more confidence on the course. We will need to keep Jacob healthy this season since he has been through some past injuries."

Harley Blaske (21:12 PR) and Gabe Wolff (20:15) are sophomores. "Harley was challenging for a top spot last year and Gabe really helped us out at the end moving up to the regional team."

Clevin Huggins is the lone freshman in his first season of cross country.

The Mustangs open the season Saturday, Sept. 2, in Hoisington.

## Macksville XC 2017

Sept. 2	@Hoisington
Sept. 9	@Pratt Skyline
Sept. 14	@Stafford
Sept. 21	@Larned
Sept. 28	@Pratt
Oct. 5	@Sterling
Oct. 12	CPL @Coldwater
Oct. 21	Regional
Oct. 28	State @Wamego

## Lady Cougars

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bright, however, for the five starters among eight letterwinners returning from the 2016 season.

"We are looking forward to the season with high expectations for the girls," noted Maier. Lacy Mitchell, a 5-4 libero/hitter who with Regan was named to the 2016 State All-Tournament team, joins seniors Molly Schneider and Madison

Schneider, all three-year letterwinners. Junior Kaleigh Maier returns as a two year letterwinner, as does Hannah Tanger. Maddie Wiltse, a 6-0 sophomore middle hitter, earned valuable court time as a varsity freshman.

The Lady Cougars opened the season Aug. 28 with a sweep of the Healy pre-season tournament.



2017 Larned cross country runners

## Larned cross country roster grows in 2017

**By MIKE GILMORE**

For going on three decades, Larned High School cross country coach Gary Wager has joked about his runners being crazy enough to go out for the sport in the fall. In every other sport, running is punishment, he says. But in cross country, not only is running required, it's fun.

But he doesn't joke about how good his runners've been getting lately. "We've already logged quite a few miles," he told LHS parents and fans at last week's booster club dinner. "We are on the road a lot."

The Larned boys' squad started turning heads last season with a second-place team finish on a rain-soaked Hesston course. Thomas Harmon, now a senior, was the Indians' front-runner in that race, with a third place time of 19 minutes, 9.8 seconds.

They won their own highly-attended Abby Trapp-Prescott meet on the Larned Municipal Golf Course, among more than 300 runners. Wagner has boosted the field for the 2017 meet, and also ordered in electronic timing, just to catch it all.

Meanwhile, Brooke



Brooke Butler ran some shorter races during the track season last spring but will again log some cross country miles this fall. (photo by Mike Courson)

Butler and Cierra Nord were turning in top-10 times for the girls. This year, they will have company. Five runners make a team, and the

Larned girls have five on the roster, which hasn't happened in a while. Not only that, but they might win a meet or two. It's their turn.

## Larned XC 2017

Sept. 2	@Hays-TMP
Sept. 7	@Hesston
Sept. 14	@Stafford
Sept. 21	HOME
Sept. 28	@Pratt
Oct. 5	@Sterling
Oct. 12	CKL @Pratt
Oct. 21	Regional
Oct. 28	State

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