



2017 Ellinwood cross country runners, front row from left: Alicia Mitchell, Courtney Cook, Erin Hammeke, Sarah Hammeke, and Ashtin Klepper. Back row: Jon Whisnant, Jacob Cole, Peter Joslin, Seth Winget, and Christian Feemster. (photo courtesy of Lesli O'Neill/EHS)

# Ellinwood XC squads feature mix of new and returning runners

**By MIKE COURSON**  
Some familiar faces will be missing from the streets of Ellinwood this fall. Four-year runners Joanna Strecker and Maddie Hayes have graduated, but second-year cross country coach Andrew Cherry will have a nice mix of returning and new talent in 2017. “I am really looking forward to seeing what we are going to accomplish this year on both the girls and boys sides,” he said. “Our teams are going to be pretty young, not having any seniors, and I think we are hungry to get back to racing.” Strecker won the league race last year and went on to place 11th at state, leading the Lady Eagles to a fifth-place finish in 2A. Hayes was third on the team at state in 46th. Returning for Ellinwood will be junior Sarah Hammeke, who ran third at league and 13th at state. Junior Courtney Cook is also back after a sixth-place finish at league at a 48th-place finish at state. Just four of the top-20 finishers in 2A, including Strecker, have graduated. Cherry will have some nice addition to the squad this year in freshmen Ashtin Klepper and Erin Hammeke. Freshman Haley Troyer could make an impact if she can get healthy. “We have a couple of freshman girls who I am very excited about,” said Cherry. “I think they are going to make a major impact for us this season.” Cherry knows the 2017 group plus the 2016 group could have made giant waves in 2A, but he’s pleased with the team he has this season.

“Our girls are all willing to learn and put forth their maximum effort every day to improve and are always looking forward to the time to line up and see where they are at,” he said. “I really think we are going to see some pretty impressive races from our girls.”  
**Eagle boys ready to contend**  
The once powerful Eagle boys struggled with numbers for a while. That partly changed last year as Ellinwood qualified for state and finished 10th. Having those runners return could make for a fun fall for Cherry. “Our boys are a great team,” he said. “They enjoy spending time together and look forward to coming to practice just to be together. They know that each person is going to be important and they know that if they aren’t running their best that someone is going to get onto them. They are always trying to bring it every day. I think they got a taste of the state meet last year and I think they are anxious to get back there this year.” Leading the way is junior Peter Joslin, a returning regional

champion who placed 24th at state. Sophomore Seth Winget ran 21st at regionals as a freshman and placed 68th at state. Junior Jon Whisnant finished 38th at regionals and 87th at state. Junior Christian Feemster placed 64th at regionals. That core will be joined by junior Jacob Cole, a transfer from Great Bend. “He is going to add a lot to our team,” Cherry said. “He is a great competitor and is always looking for the chance to improve. He will add to our team and make us all around better.” Seven of the top-20 runners at state from last year have graduated. Central Plains League-rival St. John won the state title by a single point, but graduates two of its top-four runners. The Eagle runners get a preview of the state course on Sept. 9, and get a glimpse of the reigning champion Tigers in Stafford on Sept. 14. “I am very excited to see how we can grow as a team,” Cherry said. “Our kids have really worked hard and they really enjoy spending time together so I am excited to see what we will do when we get a chance to race.”

## Ellinwood XC 2017

|          |                |
|----------|----------------|
| Aug. 31  | @Smoky Valley  |
| Sept. 9  | @Wamego        |
| Sept. 14 | @Stafford      |
| Sept. 23 | @Rim Rock      |
| Oct. 5   | @Sterling      |
| Oct. 12  | CPL @Coldwater |
| Oct. 21  | Regionals      |
| Oct. 28  | State          |

Go Lions!



2017 Lyons High School cheerleaders, back row from left: Holla Bryant, Tania Silva, Tayla Link, and Zury Barroteran. Front row: Brianna Russell, Elizabeth Schaefer, Carolina Landeros, and Erin Cox. (photo courtesy of Amanda Dawson/LHS)



2017 Lady Oiler tennis team, front left: Shelby Vessey, Katie Gunder, Mikayla Menges, Emily Ryan, Hannah Beran, Zoe Potter, Hayley Chamberlain, and Kayla Hass). Not pictured Brooke Farmer. (photo by Mike Courson)

# Hipp-Ryan era ends at Central Plains

**By MIKE COURSON**  
A couple familiar faces will be missing in action around Claflin this fall. Two-time state champions Janae Ryan and Keeley Hipp graduated in May, taking with them the best all-time record of any team, boy or girl, at Central Plains and Claflin High Schools. “We’ll miss three very talented members from last year’s squad,” said CPHS coach Gary Bittner. “Kirstin Gunder played No. 2 doubles. The biggest challenge is the vacancy left by Keeley and Janae.”

Some other familiar faces will be back. The long-time coach Bittner returns and has three returners from last year’s squad that finished fifth at state. Sophomore Emily Ryan returns as the squad’s No. 1 singles player. In her freshman debut, she posted a 32-6 record, winning a regional title and finishing fifth at state. The Class 3-2-1A brackets finally saw some top athletes graduate. Multi-state champion Anna Riedmiller is out at Independent, and Hesson’s Morgan Holopirek, the reigning runner up, has also graduated. Sterling’s Maddie Thrasher, the fourth-place finisher who beat Ryan at state last year, has also graduated. Kansas City Christian sophomore Lilly McNeil, the reigning third-place finisher, and Marysville junior Shelby Downard, will join Ryan on the list of contenders this fall. Ryan defeated Downard 9-4 in the fifth-place match last year. Ryan and Hipp were the staple at No. 1



Sophomore Emily Ryan returns as a fifth-place finisher at state. (photo by Mike Courson)

## Central Plains tennis 2017

|            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| Aug. 29    | @Ellsworth    |
| Sept. 5    | @Hoisington   |
| Sept. 7    | @Smoky Valley |
| Sept. 9    | @Hesston      |
| Sept. 14   | @Newton       |
| Sept. 19   | HOME QUAD     |
| Sept. 23   | @Wakeeney     |
| Sept. 28   | HOME @GB      |
| Oct. 6-7   | Regionals     |
| Oct. 13-14 | State         |

doubles. With them gone, seniors Hannah Beran and Mikayla Menges are likely to move to the No. 1 spot. Beran teamed up with Gunder for regional play last fall. “The duo has some work to do, but they have the capabilities to play well together,” Bittner said. Junior Katie Gunder and sophomore Zoe Potter will likely play in the No. 2 doubles spot. Junior Hayley Chamberlain should fill out the varsity roster as the No. 2 singles player. Other players on the squad include: junior

Kayla Hass, sophomore Shelby Vessey, and freshman Brooke Farmer. Bittner and his Oiler teams have been successful in past seasons. The goal is again to peak late in the year and make a run for state points. “There are many fine players and coaches in our area,” said Bittner. “We must be ready to meet those challenges. We must work very hard every day to improve our skills in each practice, match, and tournament. If this happens, we want to be playing our best tennis at the end of the year.”



2017 Central Plains cross country runner, front left: Jaydon Whiterock, Brian Whiterock, Paxton Hammeke, Lydia Bailey, Jennah Jeffrey, Monica Short, and Kaylan Blackwood. Not pictured: Hannah Redetzke. (photo by Mike Courson)

# Whiterock, Hammeke return for CPHS

**By MIKE COURSON**  
Central Plains has had some remarkable fall seasons in recent years. The cross country team is hoping add to that fun this season. With a pair of runners back, fourth-year coach Rhiannon Weber is hoping to see improvement out of her squad in 2017. “I hope our runners will be more competitive this year,” she said. “We return two males - junior Paxton Hammeke and sophomore Jaydon Whiterock - both of whom look to be stronger this

season. On the female side, we are gaining several talented freshmen who have the potential to do well this season.” Both Whiterock and Hammeke ran at the Class 2A regional in Hill City last October. Whiterock placed 54th in the crowd, and Hammeke finished five spots behind Whiterock. Weber had two Lady Oilers running at last year’s regional. Jade Wissing and Jada Whiterock ran 43rd and 44th, respectively, but both graduated in May. That

leaves the door open for new runners to make a mark on the program. “I am looking forward to all the new runners out this season,” said Weber. “I’m excited about the energy, commitment, and work ethic they bring to practice and to our team.” Central Plains does not have a home meet this year, but the Oilers will stay close to home with meets in Hoisington (Sept. 2), Stafford (Sept. 14), Larned (Sept. 21), and Ness City (Sept. 28).