



2017 Hoisington Cardinal cross country runners

photo courtesy of Karisa Schneider/HHS

## Yott, Kindscher return to lead Cardinal cross country squads

By MIKE COURSON

The Cardinal runners began gaining a little steam last fall. Coach Krisa Schneider hopes to continue some of that success in 2017 with three runners back in action.

Dayne Yott made an immediate impact in his freshman season. The Class 3A regional in Sterling featured Hugoton and Halstead, the top-two teams in the classification. Yott edged out a 16th-place finish to qualify for state where he ran 52nd.

"Dayne did an excellent job last year as a freshman," Schneider said. "He medaled in all seven regular-season meets and competed well at state. I am excited to see what he can do this year with some experience under his belt. We are hoping to return to state and possibly bring home a medal this year."

There will be room to advance in 3A this year as eight of the top-20 runners from state last fall have graduated. Yott saw some of those runners at the state track meet in May where he finished 15th in the 1600m run.



Hoisington sophomore Dayne Yott (center) returns after qualifying for state as a freshman.

(photo by Mike Courson)

Also returning for the boys is senior Christopher Ball. The state wrestling champion and perennial contender in the pole vault battled some injuries last fall. "If we can keep him healthy he will compete well for us on the boys' side," said Schneider.

Last year's regional in Sterling also featured some of the top female runners in 3A, including state champion Celia Biel of Hutch Trinity. Jessi Kindscher had ran well heading into the meet but placed 27th in the field to miss a spot at state. She finished 10th at the Central Kansas League meet a week earlier. As a junior this year,

she will be the leader for the Lady Cardinals this fall.

"Jessi works hard for us and continues to improve," Schneider said. "She has the potential to do some great things this year after medaling in a very competitive league meet last year."

Schneider's squad opens the season at home on Labor Day weekend. She's hoping for a successful fall. "I am excited to see what our returning athletes have to offer this year and see what our new runners can contribute to our team," she said. "The athletes have tremendous potential to go far this season."

## Beck back for final season with Lady Panther volleyball team

By MIKE COURSON

The Lady Panther volleyball team is coming off a winning 2016 season at 18-16, but with seven varsity returners back, more is expected from Kelsey Perry's 2017 bunch.

"This group of young ladies, freshmen team through varsity, have great team chemistry and that is something you can't coach," Perry said. "Each day with them is productive because of their work ethic and drive to get better."

Kate Warren was one of just two graduates last year, but she played key roles at the net as the school's all-time leading blocker and the top hitter from a year ago. Her absence makes the Lady Panthers a little undersized for the 2017 campaign.

"We're a small team but we're focusing on our defense right now," Perry said. "That's going to be a huge key for us."

At the heart of that defense is senior Baylee Beck, a three-time All-WAC player who led the team with 441 digs last year. Beck will add to her 1,207 career digs as the all-time school leader.

"Baylee will be huge," Perry said. "She developed this summer into our big vocal leader. Her focus has been phenomenal all summer long. She is definitely driven and she's in charge of our team."

Beck will be joined in the back row by senior Olivia Urban, sophomores Jenna Mauler and Ryen Wilkens, and freshman Sydney Unruh. Mauler was third on last year's squad with 213 digs.

"This mix gives us the potential to have a great back row," Perry said. "Baylee, Olivia Urban, Jenna, and Ryen bring us a lot of experience. Sydney plays above her age level and covers the court extremely well."

Perry should have a solid passing game this fall. Mauler led the team with 314 assists last year, and sophomore Alyssa



Great Bend senior Baylee Beck already has the school record for career digs heading into her final season.

(photo by Mike Courson)



Assistant coach Kurt Schaub readies a partial squad for a drill.

(photo by Mike Courson)

Herter returns after dishing out 232 assists last year.

Great Bend got some bad news just as the season was starting as Wilkens broke a finger and had surgery that will likely keep her out the rest of the season. The sophomore transfer from Kapaun in Wichita is already getting looks from major colleges, and Perry has to rework some of her planned personnel moves.

"Ryen brings us a ton of court knowledge and understanding of the game," Perry said. "She has the ability to be a threat on the front row with her jump setting skills and attacking ability."

Great Bend's success could hinge on the ability to find some front row players. The Lady Panthers lost their top-two hitters from a year ago, and Perry is looking for someone to fill those shoes.

"We are looking for

a consistent hitter to emerge," she said. "Right now every day we are seeing someone different stand out. That is great - it shows us they can be that go to hitter - but we need consistency."

Senior Trista Wilt is battling a shoulder injury but will eventually be a contributor at the net. Sophomore Olivia Mull returns to the net, as does senior Sidney Meitner, who will play as an outside hitter and middle blocker. With Wilkens passing the ball, Mauler can move to the net.

"Jenna will play on the outside for us this season," said Perry. "That is a switch from her being a setter last year. She's an excellent serve receiver and defender. Her being on the outside allows us to utilize that more."

Perry will also have hitting options with juniors Kaylee Unruh and Aleah Urban. Senior Hunter Ruppe will see some time in the middle.

## Great Bend boys looking to make waves in Class 5A ranks

By MIKE COURSON

Lyles Lashley made powerhouses out of the Ellinwood cross country teams. His boys won three-straight Class 2A titles, and his Lady Eagles won seven-straight regional titles and a state championship.

Now it's time for Great Bend to make the move. In just his second season in Class 5A, Lashley's Panther boys could make a run at a title. Private schools St. Thomas Aquinas and Bishop Carroll have combined to win the last nine Class 5A boys' titles. Aquinas has won the last three.

"We'll see (on Aug. 31) where we're at," Lashley said in reference to the first meet of the season. "They're biting their heads off just to race somebody."

Leading the returners is senior Kerby Depenbusch, who missed the start of last season due to illness but finished strong as a regional champion and fifth-place finisher at state. All four runners ahead of Depenbusch at state have graduated, and the sixth-place finisher ran 19 seconds behind Depenbusch last year. That makes the senior a frontrunner for a title this year.

"It's exciting," he said. "I'm really excited for our team this year. We're going to have a great team this year."

The excitement will have to wait a little bit. De-



Once healthy, Great Bend senior Kerby Depenbusch, seen here at the state track meet in May, will be among the favorites for a Class 5A state championship later this fall.

(photo by Mike Courson)

penbusch suffered a stress fracture over the summer. That did not stop him from setting a new PR in a 5K race in July, but he's spent the last several weeks in a boot. He is, however, able to continue training.

"At Central Kansas Orthopedic Group they have

me run on the underwater treadmill there," he said. "I get to do my workouts that go on the treadmill so that helps a lot. I also use an elliptical. I shouldn't be too far out of shape."

Depenbusch is hoping see GBXC, page 24

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