

SPORTS

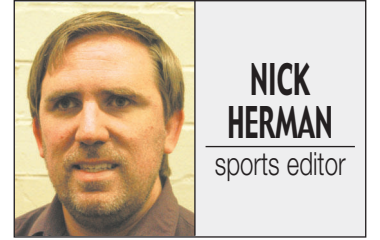


Photos by Nick Herman

OFF AND RUNNING — Participants in Tuesday's boys' cross-country race head out while getting vocal support from onlookers, including the LA girls' cross-country team that had run its race earlier in the afternoon at Lake Rabon Park.

SCHSL needs to change how it schedules football

South Carolina High School League commissioner Jerome Singleton announced Tuesday a decision to add an extra week to the regular season in November, a direct result of the games postponed following last week's arrival of Hurricane Florence.



NICK HERMAN
sports editor

The decision to extend the season by a week is a good one - and could easily be extended by two weeks if enough games were missed this week as well. This marks the third time in four years that a hurricane has impacted the schedule. In 2015 major flooding along the coast forced the schedule to be extended. The following year Hurricane Matthew struck, pushing the playoffs back two weeks to make up missed games, and led to the state championship games being played the same day as the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas all-star game.

Of the 55 SCHSL-level games that were washed out, it is likely that there is a mix of region and non-region games. The non-region games not being made up are easier to stomach than region games not being made up. And even though the idea of not making up a non-region game is something many could tolerate, it is unfair for teams to have played fewer games than others leading into the playoffs. A team that has played 10 games will be slightly more worn down than a team that played nine, or eight, giving the team that has played fewer games an unexpected, and still unfair, advantage.

And those non-region games missed could have a direct impact on tie-breakers to determine who gets into the playoffs and what seeding out of a region a team could get. That impacts playoff match-ups across the board - from the first round until, potentially, the final.

There are options that can be utilized to help fix most of the rescheduling trouble. Both involved eliminating what is presently "Week Zero" — something of a precursor to the official start to the regular season. Eighty-four games, according to MaxPreps, were played this year in "Week Zero," which was Aug. 17. Those teams will all have a bye during the regular season as a result. The rest of the teams that didn't have a game in "Week Zero" are scheduled to play 10 straight weeks, leading straight into the playoffs.

With "Week Zero" eliminated a bye week would be scheduled -

either across the board for the entire start at the end of the season, or each region would schedule a bye week during the season that could be used as a make-up week in case any more games in the future are impacted by hurricanes or tropical storms. The entire region would have the same bye week, making it easier to reschedule games within the region. If the game was an inter-region game and both teams had the same bye week, the game would be made up then. If the teams impacted don't have the same bye week, then a make-up week could be utilized at the end of the season.

The move to put a full week off at the end of the season could give some teams a competitive advantage if, as is the case this year, a team from the Upstate that did not miss a game due to the storm, were to open with a team from the Midlands or Lowcountry in the first round that missed at least one game due to the storm. Scheduling a week off at the end of the year, along with the in-season bye, can mitigate such a disadvantage by a healthy amount, but even then a multi-week interruption may make such an issue unavoidable.

And by scheduling the end-of-season week off, the state championship games can be locked in for dates around the state - most notably at Williams-Brice Stadium in Columbia. Moving the games in previous years due to storms has not been an issue, but moving a game by a week necessitates a lot of factors being shifted - including security, stadium workers, and game officials. It's a problem that should be avoided at all cost, and having the extra week off at the end of the season would mean not having to move the playoff dates back unless there an extraordinary disaster.

Once is happenstance, and twice is coincidence. But three times, even in a four-year span, is a trend, and it's time for the SCHSL to turn the trend of delayed postseason play into a thing of the past. It's time to make a change.

Laurens' Prince, LA's Quarles claim XC meets

By Nick Herman
Sports Editor

Laurens District High cross country runner Evan Prince has run nothing but sub-20-minute races since he was in the seventh grade. Prince kept up that standard Tuesday at Lake Rabon Park, powering through the course in 17 minutes, 45 seconds to take first place at a four-team cross-country meet.

"I don't want to break that record," Prince said. "I want to keep that going. That was what was driving me today."

Prince's overall victory helped Laurens to a second-place result with 30 points.

Prince has run the course at Lake Rabon many times before - it is the Raiders' home course - and on a course like this, with a number of S-curves to travel, his main goal is to make his trip through the course as short as possible. He also makes it a point to not look over his shoulder, as it can cost him a half-second when he does it, and to be aware of any stones or holes along the course that can throw him off his line.

Prince said his goal this year is to win a regional championship.

Team scores: 1. Dixie, 25 points; 2. Laurens, 30; 3. Ware Shoals, 83; 4. Laurens Academy, 107.

Laurens runners: 1. Prince, 17:45; 5. Luis Rios-Brenna, 20:28; 6. Murphy Rush, 20:34; 9. Jaden Rice, 21:09; 11: Jackson Edwards, 21:27.

LA runners: 19. Jonas Smith, 22:39; 31. Blake Quarles, 25:09; 46. Austin Clardy, 29:03; 47. Garrett Murphy, 29:19; 49. Caleb Howard, 29:30.

Girls: Laurens Academy's Blair Quarles is among those getting ready for the defense of the girls' basketball state title by taking part in cross country, and on Tuesday her performance was good enough to take first place overall in Tuesday's cross country meet. LA was the only team to have the minimum five runners to qualify for the team competition.

Quarles finished her run in a time of 24 minutes, 13 seconds, bettering Zoey Sward of Laurens by 31 seconds. Samantha Burnett of Dixie was third, finishing in 25:48.

Quarles said she doesn't worry about the runners behind her, or someone trying to get after her on the course. All she worries about is pushing through the hills - something she did quite well on Tuesday.

"I just try to think about hills going up, trying to make it a game in my mind," Quarles said when asked how she tries to handle running the Lake Rabon course that, until Tuesday, she hadn't run before.

LA runners: 1. Quarles, 24:13; 4. Audrey Noffz, 26:17; 6. Julia Kerber, 27:40; 8. Ivy Codington, 30:28; 9. Penelope Kerber, 32:18.

Laurens runners: 2. Sward, 24:44; 5. Vanessa Harshaw, 26:54; 7. Ryleigh Bragg, 29:15; 12. Dani Prince, 33:30.

PREPS Volleyball

Clinton 3, Newberry 2 (Tuesday): The Red Devils were forced to a fifth set before finally turning bak Newberry on the road. Set scores were 27-25, 25-22, 16-25, 19-25, 15-7.

Laurens Academy 3, W.W. King 0 (Tuesday): LA continued its roll of late by sweeping King, 25-21, 25-13, 25-17.

Kinsley Atkins had 16 kills and 13 digs, Ruthie Moore had 13 kills and 13 digs, Katelyn Suttles picked up 28 assists, and Florence Mitchell served up eight aces for the Crusaders.

Girls' tennis

Laurens 4, Easley 3 (Tuesday): The Raiders broke through with their first region victory of the season, edging out Easley on the road.

Three singles contests went to match tie-breakers, with Anna Jenkins (No. 1) rallying from a set down to win 4-6, 6-2, 13-11. Becky Brownlee (No. 5) won her



Photos by Nick Herman

TOP RUNNERS — Laurens' Evan Prince and Laurens Academy's Blair Quarles each took first place in their respective races during Tuesday's cross-country meet.

match, 7-5, 6-1, while the two doubles teams (Anna Jenkins/Abby Davis at No. 1, Kelsie Little and Skylar Douglass at No. 2) won their matches. The No. 1 team won in straight sets, while the No. 2 won in three sets.

McKenzie Little rallied from a set down to force a third set at No. 3 singles, before dropping a marathon 16-14 third set. Bella Youssef nearly went as long in her No. 4 singles match, falling 4-6, 6-1, 15-13.

Clinton 6, Newberry 1 (Tuesday): Clinton came within one singles match of a full sweep, but still evened its overall record at 2-2 with a victory over Newberry.

Mary Catherine Dailey (No. 1 singles), Gracie Spangler (No. 3), Kaitey Threatt (No. 4) and Reese Gowan (No. 5), as did the No. 1 doubles (Dailey/Spangler) and No. 2 doubles (Mary Grace Johnson and Gracie Wiggins) teams.

COLLEGE Men's soccer

Belmont 1, Presbyterian 0, 2OT (Tuesday): Yacine Tchermoun headed home a corner kick off the post with more than two minutes left in the first overtime period, and the Bruins held on through the second overtime period to pick up their first victory of the season. Belmont is 1-5-1 overall, while PC fell to 0-7.

Women's soccer

Charleston Southern 3, Presbyterian 2, OT(Wednesday): Emily Kifer scored an unassisted goal in the sixth minute of overtime to lift the Buccaneers and send the Blue Hose to their second straight loss.

Preston Robinette assisted on the first goal for PC, scored by Kori Lawrence in the 20th minute, then scored an unassisted goal in the 86th minute to eventually force overtime. Riley Rumbley had both goals in regulation for CSU.

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