

Lady Nuggets Double Team Size, Look To Compete As A Team

Kelsey Buchholz
Sports Writer



It is rare that a team can bring back its full squad from the previous year. Then, on top of that, add depth, strength, endurance, and heart to their lineup. But that is just what the Hawley Lady Nuggets did to their cross country program.

A strong upperclass showing has returned for the Hawley harriers. Senior Sophie Helgeson, juniors Faith Justesen and Alisha Robertson, and sophomore Mia Tickle all bring

their experience back to the Lady Nuggets.

Despite only being a sophomore, Tickle has had a strong impact on Hawley's girls' cross country program. Four-year head coach Nathan Stoa said, "Mia has led our team for the past three seasons. She will be looked at to lead our younger runners and help them through their first cross country season."

Another strong runner with great experience is Lily Peterson, a freshman who is new to the Nugget cross country program, transferring to Hawley, but brings an impressive track record with her. She was a top-10 runner in the section meet last year and has notched two years of participating at the state meet under

her belt already in her young career.

"She is a great addition to our school district," Stoa said. "She has great running and athletic ability, but most importantly, she's a young woman of great character who will fit well in our district."

Peterson is still recovering from a summer injury but Stoa is confident that she will be back to running this season.

"We'll bring her along at proper pacing, hoping to get her back to her regular form by the championship portion of the season. Her experience will benefit our team greatly and our young girls will look to her and Mia to get them comfortable throughout the season and meet days."

The veteran experience will be a

good foundation for the Hawley lady harriers, but some of the newcomers could make waves as well.

"Victoria Branden will be out for the first time as a senior," Stoa said, "but she is a bulldog of a competitor and I believe will do a fine job leading by example early."

Joining Branden as novices to the Lady Nuggets cross country program are freshmen Kira Thompson and Kristen Cook, and seventh graders Piper Myran, Ivy Tickle, Cianna Gilbert, and Brylee Fenske.

"This is the most female athletes we've had out for cross country in the past four years," noted Stoa. "My hope is to see our upperclassmen bring our seventh graders along and eventually have them join the varsity.

That will add some excitement to the team aspect of cross country and I think it will add great motivation to our competitors."

While being able to move around the courses as a team is a plus for the Lady Nuggets, they will have some stiff competition. The Perham Yellowjackets perennially put a strong team together and this year is no different.

The Nuggets opened their season at Breckenridge then follow up with Detroit Lakes then Ada-Borup, each meet about a week apart. These early season meets will be good indications of what is to come for the Lady Nuggets. The team my start out small but as the season strengthens, so will the runners.

"I'm excited to see us be able to put a team score on the board once our young girls are ready for the 5Ks," Stoa said, "Plus it will be fun for our returning runners to get to finally add the team score aspect to their goal setting."

Assisting Stoa in guiding the girls toward successful accomplishment of their goals and season performances is Chris Baxter, who previously worked with a different fall girls' sport, volleyball.

Goals of working as a team, improving scores individually, and continuing to garner interest in the program have gotten off to a strong start for the Lady Nuggets.



The Hawley Nuggets girls and boys cross country team members are, left to right, front row-Steven Sellin, Brevin Stoa, Alisha Robertson, Sophie Helgeson, Ian Kronbeck, Kirsten Cook; row two-Piper Myran, Alex Lien, Brendan Sanvik, Kris Rasmussen, Ivy Tickle, Simon Joy, Brylee Fenske; row three-Landen Bahls, Drew Peterson, Kelso Anderson, George Pasche, Will Daggett, Isaac Ames, Masyn Johnson, David Flaten; back row-Jack Ford, Mia Tickle, Victoria Branden, Kira Thompson, Lily Peterson, Billy Renner, Michael Robertson, Faith Justesen and Hannah Johnson. Not pictured Cianna Gilbert.

Hawley Nuggets to Rebuild But Lean On Experience To Lead The Way

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"Our upperclassmen need to be leaders and groom some of our younger talented runners throughout the season. It is possible that we can surprise some people late in the year."

From his preseason outlook, it is clear that Coach Nathan Stoa has faith in what his cross country runners can accomplish this year.

Despite losing six seniors to graduation, including Satchel Tickle, a three-time most valuable runner for the Nuggets and a three-time state meet participant, the Nuggets have

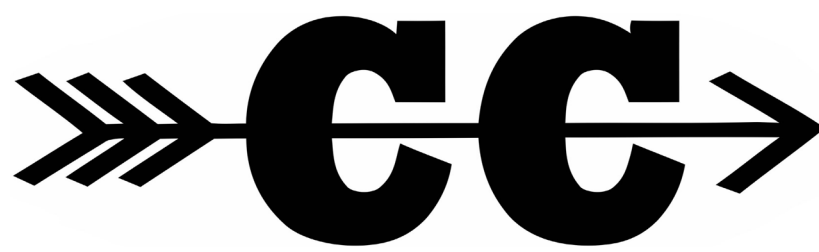
had some runners step up, fill the shoes, and lead the way for continued improvement of the Hawley cross country program.

"Masyn Johnson did a very nice job of organizing off-season runs," said Stoa, "And Steven Sellin, as a young runner, has led by example by running high miles throughout the summer."

Johnson, a junior, and Sellin, an eighth grader, are just two of the key veterans for varsity runners. Also returning to the Hawley cross country program are seniors George Pasche and David Flaten, juniors Will Daggett and Kelso Anderson, sophomore Landen Bahls, freshman Drew Peterson, and eighth grader Kris Rasmussen.

Johnson, Sellin, Dagget, and Peterson all competed at sections last year and are working to repeat that feat again this season.

In addition to a strong



returning group, there are quite a few newbies to the team, too, almost doubling team numbers. Junior Isaac Ames, sophomore Billy Renner, eighth grader Ian Kronbeck, and seventh graders Brevin Stoa, Simon Joy, Alex Lien, Brendan Sanvik, and Michael Robertson also join the Nugget harriers this season.

The equal combination of veteran and rookie runners will play into the Nuggets' strengths this season. The Hawley cross country team has already shown in the off-season that their goal is to improve and get better as a team. They have pushed each other over the summer and are continuing to do so as this fall sport gets underway.

"Our main goal is to keep improving throughout the season," Stoa said. "We should be able to put up a solid team score on the board at the section meet."

This is a doable goal despite stiff competition for the Nuggets. They have to face the Perham Yellowjackets at both conference meets and the section meet.

"Perham is the top team in the state," Stoa noted, "And they've earned every bit of recognition that they've received."

But strong competition breeds strong competitors. The Nuggets have the right runners, depth, and attitude to rise to the

challenge they face this season. The experience and upperclass leadership have shined early this preseason. And under the direction of four-year head coach Nathan Stoa and assistant coach Chris Baxter, the Hawley Nuggets are planning to end the season even stronger than their already confident and impressive start.

BOYS ROSTER

12th
David Flaten
George Pasche

11th
Isaac Ames
Kelso Anderson
Masyn Johnson
Will Daggett

10th
Billy Renner
Landen Bahls

9th
Drew Peterson
8th
Ian Kronbeck
Kris Rasmussen
Steven Sellin

7th
Alex Lien
Brendan Sanvik
Brevin Stoa
Michael Robertson
Simon Joy



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