

Hoisington track teams look to carry over momentum

By MIKE COURSON
The Cardinals boys put together a historical run on the track and in the field in 2017. Hoisington Coach Dan Schmidt had to say goodbye to several of his top performers from a year ago, but expectations remain high in 2018 with a group of key returners back.

"We have about the same numbers as last year, but the team is almost completely revamped on both the boys' and girls' side of things," he said. "Gone from the boys' side are some outstanding kids, as we lost state medalists Brenner Donovan, Cameron Davis, and Jonathan Ball to graduation."

Ball, the top pole vaulter in all of Kansas last spring, won four medals at state. Donovan and Davis were part of the 4x400 team that placed fifth at state.

Schmidt will also be without senior Jared Curtis a state placer in tennis and state qualifier in the javelin last year. Due to a new USD 431 rule, Curtis will not be able to participate in both sports this spring.

Leading the returners will be senior Christopher Ball. Coming off a third-straight state wrestling championship, Ball was also a three-time medalist at last year's state track meet. Ball placed eighth in the 110m hurdles at state and missed the 300m hurdle finals in a photo finish. Four of the eight 300m



Hoisington senior Christopher Ball, a perennial medal contender in the pole vault, returns for a final season.

(photo by Mike Courson)

hurdlers in front of Christopher, including brother Jonathan, have graduated. Norton's Jace Ruder, the reigning state champion, left school a semester early to be the quarterback at the University of North Carolina.

In the field, Christopher was one of three pole vaulters to clear 13-6 at state. He finished at the bottom of that pack for fourth place. That event remains loaded for the 2018 season.

Sophomore Dayne Yott returns after state qualification in the 1600m and 3200m runs. Yott ran 13 seconds off his best time of the season to place 16th in the 1600m in his first state meet. Just five of the top-15

runners have graduated, but three more athletes from Galena and Hugoton move to Class 4A this spring.

Yott ran 11th in the 3200m run, just missing his best time of 10:43. Just one runner ahead of Yott has graduated, but three of the top-seven finishers move up to Class 4A.

Also returning for the Cardinals, senior Jake Curtis qualified for state in the javelin as a sophomore with the hopes of a return in 2018. Junior Xavier Robinson returns in the jumping events, and sophomores Daunte Chambers and Wyatt Pedigo also return. Chambers ran a variety of events on the track last spring, and Pedigo, a state champion wrestler, returns to the throws, hurdles, and relay events.

"The team has some very good young talent coming from the freshmen and sophomore classes, but as is the case with young boys in track, they will have to endure the pains of youth competing at the varsity level," Schmidt said.

The Cardinals are looking to stay atop the Central Kansas League after a second-place finish in 2017. Hoisington also placed second in a tough regional. "You would have to go back over 20 years to find a Hoisington boys team that had that kind of season in the past," said Schmidt.

Pedigo, Schmidt return for Lady Cards
Coach Schmidt is excited about a new class of freshman that will join

returners Jocelynn Pedigo and Maleigha Schmidt, who have qualified and medaled at state multiple times.

"They will get immediate help from an outstanding group of freshmen coming into the program, and we should be an overall better team than last year," Coach Schmidt said. "The girls' team was able to win two meets last year."

The senior Pedigo has had to compete with some of the top throwers in all of Kansas in recent years. Last spring, the Class 3A field featured three of the top-10 throws in all of Kansas during the regular season. Pedigo ranked No. 10 heading into state where she placed seventh. Two of the throwers ahead of her have graduated.

Needing a big throw to qualify out of a tough regional, Pedigo missed her best shot put mark of the season by some seven feet to miss state. She had the No. 8 throw in 3A during the regular season at 38-5.5. Class 3A featured three of the top-8 throws in Kansas before state, and two of those throwers have graduated.

The junior Schmidt placed fifth in the pole vault with a height of 10-0. Class 3A champion Grace Stohs of Marysville moves to Class 4A, and the third-place finisher from Central Heights has graduated. Schmidt topped out at 10-4 last season. She also picked up points in the triple jump, javelin, and relays last spring.

Two state qualifiers back for Cardinal tennis team

By MIKE COURSON

Last spring proved to be a successful one for Karisa Cowan's Hoisington tennis squad. Five Cardinals qualified for state and Cameron Knapp and Jared Curtis pulled off an 11th-place finish. Three of those five state qualifiers have graduated, but two are back in 2018.

Missing in action this year will be graduates Knapp, as well as Tre Hinds and Michael MacMahon, who also qualified for state as a doubles pair.

Curtis is joined by senior Kirk Reisner, who qualified for state as a singles player last year. The new roster means a big move for Cowan as she puts her two senior qualifiers together for a strong doubles team.

"They are my best shot at a state medal," she said. "I really think they have a shot. They have been working all summer and really work well together. They are complete opposites, which can be beneficial in a doubles team. I am excited to see them show up and play."

Juniors Keaton Klug and Payton Steiner also return to the squad. Cowan also has high hopes for incoming freshman Braden Mooney as a singles player. "I have only hit with him and have never seen him play in a match," she said. "I am really looking forward to that."

The Cardinals opened the season in Russell on March 29. A tough schedule included some bigger schools in Great Bend on March 31, and several runners in with the state runners up from Central Plains. Hoisington will play at home on April 6 and April 19.

"Central Plains is always a tough match up," said Cowan. "Coach Gary Bittner guides his players to be successful every year. No matter what, he always shows up with some great players. Gary is my good friend and mentor."

Have a Great Season Cardinals!

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Hoisington track 2018

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April 5	@Russell
April 17	@Scott City
April 24	HOME
May 1	@Lyons
May 4	@Russell
May 10	CKL@Halstead
May 18	Regional TBA
May 25-26	State @Wich. State

Thanks to Carrie Feist at Hoisington High for team photos!

Good Luck this Spring!

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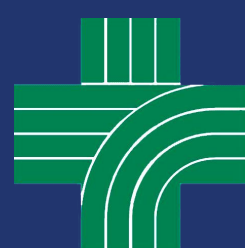
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