

Relays, throwers, jumpers: CP boys ready to roll this spring

By Mike Courson

The Oiler boys made major strides on the track and in the field last spring. This season, seventh-year coach Dustin Robison will have most of his squad back. His girls' team was hit hard by graduation and other moves.

"We always miss our seniors who graduate," Robison said. "Cassidy Crites, Keeley Hipp and Kylee Kasselman were work horses and will be missed. Trey Schulte and James Radenberg were veteran throwers and never allowed there to be a dull moment.

"Some losses you can't anticipate are those kids that don't come back out. This season we didn't anticipate some girls choosing a different sport other than track this spring. They were all competitive and made a huge impact on the team throughout the season. Their presence on the girls' squad will be missed, not only on relays that they were part of, but also in the individual events that they competed in at state."

Robison's biggest returning bunch is his 4x800 relay team that placed fourth at state last May. The team of Grant Heldstab, Jacob McAtee, Anthony Oberle, and Alex Barton was sitting at No. 12 in the Class 2A ranks before cutting 24 seconds off its time to miss the bronze by three seconds. Yates Center and Bennington are likely to remain tough in 2018.

Barton, Oberle, and Heldstab all return to the high jump. Barton tied his season best of 6-2 to place fifth at state. Two of the top-three jumpers in the field have graduated. Oberle and Heldstab each cleared 5-10 last year. Oberle placed 10th at state.

Senior Lee Letourneau returns to the javelin after a 15th-place finish at state. His best throw of 2017 came up just shy of 158 feet as the No. 11 mark in 2A during the regular season. Four of the top-seven throwers at state are gone to graduation. "He's on a mission to return and place at state," said Robison.

Dalton Beck topped out at 149-2 on the javelin last spring. He just missed state in 2017 and has the goal of making it to Wichita in 2018.

Back on the track, Letourneau joins McAtee, Oberle, and Barton in the 4x400 relay. The team was ranked No. 7 in 2A but missed qualification during regionals.



Senior Lee Letourneau placed 15th in the javelin last year at state. He is part of a group of talented returners in 2018. (photo by Mike Courson)

"They were pretty darn good all season last year," Robison said. "They fell short at last year's regional but competed at state in 2016. That group is on a mission this season to make the awards stand at state."

Robison also has high expectations for McAtee in the 300m hurdles. McAtee had the No. 7 time in 2A during the regular season last year but missed qualification. He did qualify in the event in 2016, and six of the top-16 hurdlers from 2017 have graduated.

Robison returns five Lady Oiler varsity athletes from a year ago. Wichita is not out of the question for any of them. He also welcomes in a healthy freshman class to both teams.

"Overall, we are a young team," he said. "It is very encouraging to see such a young group out for track. We currently have eight freshmen girls and seven freshmen boys signed up. That's a competitive group and the future backbone of the squad. By adding these kids to the group of juniors and seniors we have, they should be very competitive this season."

"We have a few new students at CPHS, and they have helped start a buzz of excitement for this season. A coach never really knows what to expect until the season gets started, but my coaching staff and I are very excited to see what this group has to offer this year, even with some key losses of athletes to other sports."

Robison is again look-

ing forward to watching hard work pay off for those who want to excel in their events. "In the sport of track, you only get out of it what you put into it," he said. "Hard work isn't fun for everyone, but those who are willing to stay positive and keep an open mind to see progress will benefit from it. An athlete may never win a medal at a track meet, but if he or she takes one second off a sprint time, one minute off a distance race, or even throw just inches farther, those kids will see their hard work pay off in all their other activities as well."

"It is always exciting to see these young men and women make progress. Don't get me wrong, medals are great. But I don't judge the kids after a meet by the number of medals; I look at personal gain and progress. We're here to get better. Track may not be most of this group's favorite sport, but champions are made in the off-season."

The JV squad opened the season on March 27 in Larned. The varsity athletes opened their season on March 29 in LaCrosse.

"The first meet is always exciting and opens my eyes," Robison said. "Last year was our first year attending the meet, which now hosts around nine teams. It looks to be a competitive meet again. May 1 we travel to Tescott for a large meet with around 18 schools. We always anticipate that meet as their track is fast and the competition is always good."



courtesy photo

2018 Hoisington Lady Cardinal softball team

Five state qualifiers back for Oiler squad that finished second in 2017

By Mike Courson

With a Class 3-2-1A state championship in 2016 and a runner-up finish in 2017, the Oiler tennis team is officially one of the premiere squads in Kansas. With five state qualifiers back in action this spring, Central Plains is likely to remain a contender for a team championship.

"The 2018 Oiler tennis team should be a fun one to watch," said coach Gary Bittner. "We return five state qualifiers and two additional lettermen."

Aaron Schneweis qualified for state as a singles player last year and was the only Oiler state qualifier to graduate.

Senior Kade Beck and Brett Liebl advanced to the state championship match last spring. All four doubles players on the first-place and third-place teams to give Beck and Liebl a wide-open shot at a state championship. The duo lost just four times last year.

Junior Devin Ryan placed third at state as a freshman and finished seventh in the singles bracket last year. Three of the top-five finishers at state have graduated, including four-time state finalist Stratton Brown at Sacred Heart. That will cause a shake-up at the 2018 state tournament.

Junior Paxton Hammeke and sophomore Lawson Oeser teamed up to finish second at regionals last year behind Beck and Liebl. The duo went on to pick up two wins at state.

Other players for Bittner this season include senior Colton Potts, sophomores JJ Heredia and Andrew Maier, and freshmen Karter Beck and Michael Menges. Potts and Heredia were early front runners to fill the singles

spot left vacant by Schneweis' graduation.

Bittner understands the importance of playing quality competition during the regular season and hopes that will pay off come regional and state tournament time.

"There are a number of outstanding players and coaches in our area and across the state," he said. "We must improve

our skills each practice, match, and meet. We want to be playing our best tennis when the postseason arrives.

"I think I have a hard working group that loves to play the game. They should be fun to watch.

"A special thanks to our parents and fans in advance. They do a wonderful job of supporting and taking care of us."

Central Plains tennis 2018

March 29	@Russell
April 3	@Ellsworth
April 12	@Ellsworth
April 13	@Conway Springs
April 16	HOME
April 19	@Hoisington
April 24	@Hesston
April 26	@Pratt
April 30	HOME
May 4	Regionals TBA
May 11-12	State

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