

Simpson takes over experienced cross country squad in Sterling

By Mike Courson

With lots of returning runners, Sterling cross country coach Pamela Simpson picked a good time to take over the program. She will have six of the seven varsity boys back from 2017, and all five Lady Black Bears who ran at regionals are back.

"I'm looking forward to seeing what these teams can do," Simpson said. "There is a lot of talent and I expect to see success in terms of personal growth and effort. I'm also excited to work with the junior high runners to continue to build a strong program."

"Sterling has a strong tradition of competitive cross country teams. It's an honor to be given the chance to work with these athletes in a sport that can quite literally change their lives. It's a good time to be a Black Bear."

Leading the returners is senior Max Dutton. He went down with an injury last season but has logged more than 50 miles a week this summer and has mentored several of the younger runners on the team.

Senior William Weiner has



2018 Sterling High School Runnin' Bears

been among the team leaders in each of his three varsity seasons, and Carter Crank makes his varsity debut as a freshman. Dutton, Weiner, and Crank took the top-three overall spots in the July 4 Freedom Run. "A number of underclassmen have been working hard and should bring a lot to

the table," Simpson said.

With all that talent back, Simpson's is looking for a record season from the Runnin' Bears. "This team has the potential to show exponential growth and really come together as a cohesive unit," she said. "I expect lots of school course records broken and

personal best times beat."

The Lady Bears finished eighth at the Class 3A regional in Ellsworth last October, but with all five runners back, there is plenty room for growth, especially with the addition of more teammates.

"With the addition of Chris-

tina Erhart, this team has the advantage of running a 6-man varsity, an edge many schools our size don't have," said Simpson. "Our underclassmen are really going to challenge the seniors for the 3 and 5-man team spots. It is going to be a fun year to watch these ladies compete."

Seniors Nikki Clark, Zoe Miller, Jillian Millhouse, and Debi Schmidt each return, and do sophomores Risa Boeken and Macy Brownlee. Boeken and Brownlee ran 25th and 32nd, respectively, at the regional race last year.

The Runnin' Bears will stay close to home for much of the 2018 campaign. Sterling runs in Hutchinson on Sept. 4 and in Lyons on Sept. 25. The big Sterling Invite is Oct. 4, and the Heart of America League race will be at Berean Academy on Oct. 11. The Bennington girls dominated Class 2A last year, and Berean finished third.

"We always look forward to our home meet and running on our 'home field,'" Simpson said. "The HOA League meet should be a highlight this year."

Sterling XC 2018

Aug. 30	@Smoky Valley
Sept. 6	@Hesston
Sept. 13	@Stafford
Sept. 18	@SE of Saline
Sept. 25	@Lyons
Oct. 4	HOME
Oct. 11	HOA @ Berean
Oct. 20	Regionals
Oct. 26	State

Sterling volleyball 2018

Aug. 30	@Ellinwood Tri.
Sept. 4	@Chaparral Tri.
Sept. 11	HOME TRI.
Sept. 15	@Marion Tourn.
Sept. 18	@Sedgwick Tri.
Sept. 22	@Lyons Tourn.
Sept. 25	@Trinity Tri.
Sept. 29	@Burrton Tourn.
Oct. 2	@Moundridge Tri.
Oct. 9	@Centre Tri
Oct. 13	HOA @HOME
Oct. 17	@Hutch Trinity Tri.
Oct. 20	Sub-state
Oct. 26-27	State

Myers returns under center for Black Bears

By Mike Courson

After a winless 2014 season, the Sterling football team has made consistent gains in each of the past three seasons. Tyson Bauerle coached the Bears to a 10-9 record in the 2015-16 seasons before leaving for Hesston. Last year, Derek Schneider made his head coaching debut in the way of a 6-2 season.

With five returning starters back on offense, Schneider's players will be working to fill some big shoes, but the Black Bears will have one of the top offensive weapons in the area in junior Brady Myers.

Myers proved to be a workhorse in 2017, leading the Central Kansas Rocket statistical leaders with 1,228 rushing yards and 16 touchdowns on 206 carries - in spite of an Oct. 6 rainout game against Ell-Saline that shortened the season by a game. Myers also completed nearly half of passes for another 510

yards.

Myers will have some help with senior Conan Ball returning in the backfield. Senior Dylan Stewart and sophomore Caden Webb return on the offensive line, and junior Logan Weigel returns at wideout.

The offense did lose some key pieces to graduation. Trent Jones with big on both lines, and Hans Anderson carried the ball 88 times for 529 yards, and Lucas Briar pulled in 27 receptions for 433 yards in 2017.

Defensively, the Black Bears did well against Heart of America League opponents. Sterling allowed just one touchdown against Inman, Moundridge, and Marion, and the Bears gave up 20 points in a week-one win against Remington.

Schneider has back a solid linebacker group of Myers, Weigel, Stewart, Gage Farney, and Alan Anderson. Webb is back on the defensive line, and Ball returns as safety.

With that 6-2 record, the Black Bears missed the playoff by sheer bad luck. Sterling and Halstead each posted 2-1 records in district play. Sterling defeated Halstead 26-24 in its final game of the season to miss the playoffs on point differential.

Hutchinson Trinity won the district outright and went on to finish 6-4 with an early playoff loss. Schneider again expects the Celtics to be the team to beat in the HOA.

This year the Black Bears and many other

3A teams from 2017 will drop down to 2A. This year's district includes Cimarron, Ellinwood, Southwestern Heights, Lakin, and Lyons. Lyons went winless in 2017, and Ellinwood posted just two wins in the 8-man ranks. The Eagles went winless in 2013, the last time they play 11-man football. Lakin went 7-3 a year ago and advanced to the 3A playoffs, and Schneider says the Broncos will likely be the team to beat in district play.

Sterling football 2018

Aug. 31	@Ell-Saline
Sept. 7	@Marion
Sept. 14	SEDGWICK
Sept. 21	LYONS
Sept. 28	CIMARRON
Oct. 5	@Ellinwood
Oct. 12	@Lakin
Oct. 19	SW HEIGHTS
Oct. 26	Playoffs TBA

Drier, Boeken back for Lady Black Bear volleyball team

By Mike Courson

The Lady Black Bear volleyball team picked up a big sub-state win against Southeast of Saline last fall, but Sterling still came in just under the .500 mark at 19-20. This year, with just two returning starters back, third-year coach Jennifer Mantz is ready to see some youngsters make strides.

"We will be very young, which is exciting because we will do nothing but improve each time out," Mantz said. "I'm expecting us to get more comfortable playing with each other and playing at a higher level."

Sterling loses a big graduating class of five, including a pair of all-league players. "That group had played together since third grade and a couple had played club, so they were athletic and volleyball smart,"

said Mantz.

Mantz loses two of her top-three hitters from a year ago. Camille Schweizer led the team with 196 kills, and Kelsie Boeken finished with 99 kills. Lexi Edwards and Aniston Ramsey were not far behind with 76 kills apiece. Boeken and Ramsey accounted for 120 of the team's 211 aces last year, Ramsey was second on the team with 235 assists, and Raegan Mantz was big on the back row with a team-high 111 digs.

The two returners back for the Lady Black Bears did see plenty of varsity time last season. As a freshman, Karlie Boeken finished second on the team with 107 kills. Junior Shelby Drier added 65 kills. Boeken was also big on defense with 19 blocks.

Miller returns to lead Sterling tennis team

By Mike Courson

Boys or girls, Curtis Thompson usually has one or a few of his tennis players still kicking during the state tournament. This fall, Sterling has back two players with state experience to keep expectations high for the long-time coach.

Leading the returners is senior Lydia Miller. She finished fourth in a tough Hesston regional before going on to finish 12th at state.

As a sophomore in 2016, Jasmine Bates

teamed up with Miller to win a pair of matches at state. Bates makes her return to the squad this year.

Thompson has a host of returning athletes. Senior

Morgan Simpson placed fourth in doubles at league last year. Senior McKiah San Miguel, junior Kiah Zambo, and sophomores Natalie Schweizer and Christina Voth also return.

Senior Grace Rowland joins the team fresh off two state track titles, junior Kinzley Comley converts from the volleyball team, and Riley Richter makes her varsity debut.

"With the addition of these three players and the return of Jasmine, we could qualify more athletes to state this year," Thompson said.

Sterling tennis 2018

Aug. 30	HOME
Sept. 4	@Wellington
Sept. 6	@Nickerson
Sept. 8	@Russell
Sept. 13	@Ellsworth
Sept. 15	@Lindsborg
Sept. 22	@Chaparral
Sept. 27	HOME @GB
Oct. 2	CPL @ Wichita
Oct. 5-6	Regionals
Oct. 12-13	State

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