

September 28, 2010

Cross country outlook: No one catches East Aurora

Blue Devils are deep and dominant; Canisius senior made summer trip to Kenya

By **Mary Jo Monnin**
News Sports Reporter



The East Aurora girls cross country team is so deep, they entered separate teams into the large and small school divisions of Saturday's EA Invitational and won both.

The Blue Devils have their largest teams ever with 39 girls and 51 boys. The girls are ranked No. 11 nationally and No. 1 in New York State in Class B.

The girls' goals of winning ECIC III, Section VI, the New York State title and qualifying for the Nike National Championships are lofty, but attainable. Freshman Marta McLaughlin has won the JFK and West Seneca invitationals.

The boys are No. 2 in the state and not surprisingly both boys and girls are ranked No. 1 in the Western New York small school coaches poll.

Kevin O'Connor and Sean Phillips placed in the top 10 at the EA Invitational among a field of 36 teams.

Canisius' Townsend reaches new heights

Cole Townsend took going to a summer running camp to a new level.

The Canisius senior trained in Kenya at a high altitude camp from June 27 to July 21. He learned about the camp doing a casual web site search.

He raised what money he could on his own to finance the \$3,750 trip and his grandparents kicked in the rest. A 24-hour, one-way plane trip took him to the small, rural town of Iten, located on the edge of the Kerio Rift Valley of Kenya, 8,000 feet above sea level.

Townsend, along with five boys and three girls, was housed at the High Altitude Training Centre. The experience of a lifetime did not disappoint.

"It's so relaxed there. It's stress-free. If something goes wrong, they don't worry about. It's slower-paced," said Townsend. "In school they sit on old wooden benches and have old paperback textbooks. They learn about preserving food, and about the flood season. They have next to nothing, but they're always thinking about their fellow countrymen and what they can do to help someone who doesn't have as much as they do."

Townsend went on two training runs a day, one in the morning and one at night. That left plenty of time for service work and to interact with the world class Kenyan and international athletes who train there. He said a hard day for a Kenyan runner might be 12 miles at 95 percent effort.

He said the belief that Kenyan school children all run barefoot is a myth, but the ones lucky enough to have shoes don't wear them outside of school because they know it's going to be years before they get another pair.

Remembering track/CC official Art Reimer

Chances are, runners in Western New York didn't know his name, but mention the track official with the handlebar mustache and the image is clear.

Art Reimer was the tall, lanky track official holding a clipboard at the finish line and wearing a wide smile under his trademark 'stache. He died of a heart attack July 3 at age 63. He retired in 2005 from the Buffalo Public Schools. He had been an official for 25 years, working as a starter and on the finish line.

There was a moment of silence before Saturday's meets at East Aurora and Grand Island in his memory.

The reaction to his untimely death was swift:

"At the state track championships in St. Lawrence after our girls 4x800 broke the Section VI record, Art gave one of our girls a small 3-inch [orange] cone from the track. She had mentioned that she really, really wanted one because she had never seen such a small cone and had to run around the cones as our second leg of our 4x400. He was just a very nice man who will be missed."

--Walt McLaughlin, East Aurora cross country/track coach

"Art Reimer, simply put, he was an official for the kids. I was most impressed watching him quietly root for the Western New York athletes at the state meet. When Jordan Hamm won the state title in the indoor 1,600 meters, he quietly snuck away for a brief second from his post to go congratulate him.

"Last year when Katie Niblock placed fourth at states, he went right up to her on the infield to congratulate her. He was there for all the right reasons, and he supported all of our student-athletes. His charisma is going to be missed by the entire Section VI cross country and track and field community."

--Brian Lombardo, Canisius cross country coach, Sweet Home girls track coach

Around the courses

The **Clarence** boys and girls are ranked in the top 20 in the state among Class AA schools and are No. 1 in both WNY large school polls.

The Red Devils girls were third at Baldwinsville and Genesee CC meets. Kaitlin McCadden had two 10 finishes. Freshman Emily Garrett is the daughter of Dan Garrett, a Clarence graduate who was a cross country All-American at Notre Dame. The boys are led by senior Alex Polino, who was on the outdoor 4x800 that went to states.

Williamsville North, last year's Class A champs, takes on the competition in Class AA this year with co-captain Carl Copeland and Don Seitz.

West Seneca West's boys and girls were Section VI Class A runners-up last year. Senior co-captains Robert Battista and Joseph O'Mara, along with sophomores Kalen Sullivan and James Tobias, give the boys a solid core in the move up to Class AA.

West's top seven girls return, led by co-captains Chelsea Needham and Mary Janak. Five runners have state championship experience.

Grand Island's boys return all seven from last year's third-place team at sectionals. The top runner is a two-time state competitor, senior Nick Masiello. He is vying for a third trip to states and hopes to have his team with him. The Vikings are the defending Niagara Frontier League champs.

Grand Island returns five girls from its NFL co-championship team. Dominique DeGregorio is the top runner but is pressed by junior Megan Karpie and sophomore Ayla Marino.

Look for **Canisius** to make a run at defending its All-Catholic title with Cole Townsend, winner of the West Seneca Invitational, and returning All-Catholic first teamers Paul Riester and Tim Hartigan.

Timon-St. Jude's top runner is junior Ben Smith, who has been running since grammar school. A cross country booster club formed by Neil Farrell, and alumni of Timon from all over the country, has been supporting the team.

The **Frontier** girls return all seven runners and are looking to challenge for the Class AA title. Rebecca Love was runner-up at sectionals last year.

Buffalo's defending Columbia Cup boys champion, **Hutch-Tech**, is led by senior Arturo Salas, who missed states by one place last year. Seniors Ronald Langhorne and Nick Serediuk, along with juniors Jake VanEvery and Verdall Cole, return for the Engineers. **City Honors** returns an All-High runner in sophomore Seamus Dagan.

Defending Buffalo Public School girls champion **daVinci** returns senior twins Ana and Sarah Rivera. **City Honors'** front runners include junior Niamh Durfee and senior Sarah Miller. Hutch-Tech is set to challenge with senior Anabelle Berrios-Irizzary.

The **Maple Grove** girls (Class D) join East Aurora as a No. 1 ranked team in the state. ... **St. Francis** has a nice junior class led by Alex Schaffstall and Ben Fielding along with senior Anthony Pivarunas. ... **Mount Mercy** is led by sophomore Meaghan Cullen, who will contend for a top spot at All-Catholics this year. ... **Nichols** is led by three-year Federation qualifier Paige Peltan. ... **Eden's** boys are led by junior Victor Castillo, who runs in the low 18:00s, while the girls look to Laura Robinson, who is running well after two injury-filled years. ... **Wilson** senior Kevin Hanes is a four-time state qualifier. ... **Starpoint's** girls, ranked No. 14 in the state in Class A, boast senior Amy Cooper and freshman Livia Chase, both overachievers and hard workers, according to coach Brian Lasher. ... The **Amherst** boys return senior lettermen Zak Fox, Kyle Cotter, Jamey Schwartz and Steve Klementowski. ... **Roy-Hart's** boys team is led by Eddy and Frankie Pfeil, who come from a running family. Eddy won Saturday's WNY Official's meet at Beaver Island.

mmonnin@buffnews.com