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## Scholastic Spotlight: Cross Country Outlook

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At 4-foot-10, 98 pounds, sophomore Olivia Chase blends in with all the other students walking the halls at Starpoint. But on a cross country course there's no mistaking who she is.

Her coach calls her a once-in-a-lifetime-athlete and anyone competing against her may attest to the same thing.

"I've been coaching quite a long time, at such a young age, her training is kind of like the best I've ever had," said Starpoint coach Brian Lasher, in his 23rd season. "She's right there with the girls I've had in the past ... girls who have gone on to become state champions. She's right there with them already."

Chase put on a show at the West Seneca Invitational, winning the large school girls race in the fastest time of the day 18:49.02. On Saturday's East Aurora Invitational she placed third in 18:17.91.

Over the summer she trained in Kobe, Japan, located on the southern side of the main island of Honshu. There she stayed with extended family. "I would go to like a track, it wasn't like a normal track like we have around here," she said. "It was like a bigger track and it had a little park on the inside and I'd just run on that every morning. It's really hot and they had a sprinkler there, so after my run I'd go under the sprinkler and it would feel so good."

Lasher continues to be impressed with Chase's training and said she rarely leaves when practice ends. He's gotten in the habit of calling her The Amazing Livia Chase, something he's not afraid to broadcast over the morning announcements.

She's soft spoken, yet makes a big statement when she runs. The Spartans will need big runs from her and teammate Courtney Laderer if they hope to repeat as Section VI Class A champions. The Starpoint boys, last year's section runners-up, are led by junior Paul Swartz, a returning state qualifier and junior Matt Prohaska, who comes over from soccer.

### Going the distance

Alden has a third sibling running in the footsteps of her sisters. Eighth grader Jackie Wallace is the youngest sister of Jamie (a sophomore runner at Canisius College) and Jenna, a junior on this year's team. Jackie was among the top finishers in Saturday's small school race at the East Aurora Invitational.

Sacred Heart is coached by a former Olympian. Sue Epstein competed in the 1984 games in Los Angeles and in 1986 was selected to the USA Track and Field team. She was ranked No. 10 in the world in the Women's Marathon in 1984. Last year she was a parent volunteer for Sacred Heart's outdoor track team. Her daughter, Aleza is a runner and member of the Sacred Heart Class of 2014.

Coach Ken Hans from da Vinci was honored as a 2011 Top 10 finalist for the Brooks Inspiring Coaches program. The program was created to identify and honor high school cross country and track and field coaches across the nation who go above and beyond to build and keep their programs strong.

"There are so many outstanding people in the coaching profession, many of whom have accomplished significantly more than I have," said Hans. "Brooks' treatment of all the coaches was first class and my athletes are really enjoying the new shoes and spikes we received from the company. It was a wonderful experience."

Both boys and girls Columbia Cup titles should be a battle between Hutch-Tech and City Honors. Based on early results, the Engineers are a clear favorite on the boys side, while City Honors get the nod among the girls.

The City's top boys runners are Rhace Colon of Hutch-Tech and Seamus Degan of City Honors while the girls are Jenna Rossi of Hutch-Tech and Niamh Durfee of City Honors.

### **East Aurora blazes trail**

The East Aurora boys and girls are undefeated so far having won the JFK, West Seneca West and East Aurora Invitationals. The program prides itself by not only running to be the best small school in Western New York but the best, period.

The girls have won the last six New York State Class B championships, but winning a lucky seventh will be tougher than ever. New York State eliminated the Class AA classification with all schools now falling into the four remaining classes.

Because it wasn't divided evenly, Class B has over 28 percent of the schools in the state. The Blue Devils find themselves up against much larger schools, including last year's Class A state champion, North Shore of Long Island.

How will EA handle the changes? "Business as usual," said coach Walt McLaughlin. "We will try to focus on the things we can control and try to prepare and stay focused on our long-term goals including running our best when it matters the most -- at the championship meets at the end of the season. The key as always will be to improve and stay healthy as the season goes on."

East Aurora is so deep it fielded separate boys and girls teams in the large and small school divisions at Saturday's East Aurora Invitational. It's large school teams won both titles while the girls finished second and the boys fifth in the small schools race. Martha McLaughlin, Paige Anderson and Sarah Anstett are the top point getters this season.

The boy won last year's NYS championship in Class B. The top returning seniors are: Larkin Bohanan, Elliott Martynkiewicz and Nick Zee.

### **Boys chart a course**

Returning All-WNY: First team - TJ Hornberger-10 (Lake Shore), Eddy Pfeil-11 (Roy-Hart), Sean Phillips-12 (East Aurora). Second team - Adam Murphy-11 (Amherst), Frankie Pfeil-12 (Roy-Hart), Corey Wefing-10 (Maple Grove).

Honorable mention: Justin Bender-12 (Clarence), Gene Barritot-11 (East Aurora), Jake Eneix-11 (Orchard Park), Brendan Keany-11 (East Aurora), Nicholas Konotopskyj-12 (Williamsville North), Jeremy Rushok-12 (Akron), Arturo Salas-12 (Hutch-Tech), Josh Szukala-12 (Fredonia).

Barker finished as state runnersup in Class D last year. A Section VI title this year would be the Raiders' fifth straight. Barker is currently ranked No. 1 in the state. Senior Tyler Scheving placed in the top 10 in the state a year ago. Senior Mike Lantinen was runnerup at sectionals last year.

Barker has been unbeaten in the Niagara-Orleans League the last three years. Coach Paul DerSarkissian said this is his most talented team, which speaks volumes when you consider since 2003 Barker has won five sectional titles, four league championships, one state title and was state runner-up twice.

Besides Barker, the Niagara-Orleans League also boasts junior Eddy Pfeil and senior Frankie Pfeil of Roy-Hart, who finished 1-2 in last year Section VI Class C race. Both placed among the top 20 at states.

Canisius is the defending All-Catholic champion. Conor Tumrel and Joe Georgen are a pair of promising juniors for St. Joe's. ... Gow's top runner is junior Grant Sepiol. ... Senior Alex Schaffstall is a returning All-Catholic runner for St. Francis, coached by 30-year veteran Pete Cavaretta. ... Senior Ben Smith has been a consistent team leader for Timon/St. Jude.

Lake Shore's TJ Hornberger is one of WNY's exciting young runners. Among the highlights so far from his sophomore year is breaking the course record at the West Seneca West Invitational. Last year he won the Class A sectional race and placed 20th at states. Teammate Ian Yergeau looks for a top 10 finish at sectionals.

Williamsville North will be striving for a third consecutive Section VI title. Last year's Class AA champs return plenty of talent, including Section VI runnerup Nick Konotopskyj. Senior Brian Dobmeier and sophomore Christian Tjahjadi-Lopez are also looking for a third trip to states.

Clarence, coming off a 9-1 season and Class AA runner-up, return its top runner, Justin Bender, fourth at sectionals last year. Alex Eaton is another runner with state meet experience.

West Seneca West Kalen Sullivan is coming off an outstanding sophomore track season in the 800 and 1,600. He had a good summer and so far is trying to make the switch to the longer distances of cross country.

Orchard Park has two solid runners with junior state qualified Jake Eneix and three-year varsity runner senior Mark Mercer. . . Junior Adam Murphy is a returning state qualifier for Amherst. ... Senior Jeremy Driscoll looks to qualify for states for Tonawanda. ... Defending ECIC II champion Hamburg is being led by senior Ben Brucker, who hopes to return to states. ... Among the goals for Maple Grove sophomore Corey Wefing is repeating as Section VI Class D champion and placing among the top 10 at states. ... Senior captain Edwin Bleimeister looks to fill the void left by Nick Orlando and lead Alden to another ECIC IV title. ... Senior Mike Specht should win his share of races for Iroquois. ... Kevin Hanes is a five-time first team all-league runner for Wilson. ... Craig Kaiser and Jake Schmitz had strong finishes for Lancaster at the West Seneca Invite.

### **Girls blaze a trail**

East Aurora (Class B) and Maple Grove (Class D) brought New York State titles back to Section VI last year. Plenty of talent returns.

Returning All-WNY: First team - Sarah Anstett-12 (East Aurora), Jenny Delsignore-11 (Sweet Home), Kirsten Holmberg-10 (Falconer), Shannon Murphy-12 (Falconer). Second team: Caroline Benson-10 (Maple Grove), Katherine Carbeck-12 (Orchard Park), Lauren Reyda-9 (Fredonia).

Honorable mention: Paige Anderson-12 (East Aurora), Danielle Dorogi-9 (Williamsville North), Cassidy Fritsch-11 (Orchard Park), Emily Garrett-10 (Clarence), Megan Marsh-8 (Maple Grove), Hope Pietrocarlo-8 (Maple Grove), Kaylea Rustay-11 (JFK).

Defending Class AA and ECIC I champion Clarence boasts five-year varsity runner, senior Kaitlin McCadden and sophomore Marissa Saenger, who won sectionals as an eighth grader.

Williamsville North looks to be in the thick of the ECIC I race with Sarah Loud, Rachel Dorogi and Danielle Dorogi.

Sophomore Caroline Benson was the Class D state runnerup last year as Maple Grove captured the state title. The Red Dragons are eyeing a repeat with Hope Pietrocarlo, Megan Marsh, Taylor Norris and Katelyn Benson back from last year's undefeated team.

Orchard Park's Katherine Carbeck looks to cap her senior year with a return trip to states. East Aurora and Maple Grove finished ranked No. 1 in the state last year.

Newfane is poised to make a run at a fourth straight Niagara-Orleans League title, competing as a Class C school. Sophomore Sarah Ziemba looks to defend her N-O League title and earn a third trip to states. Kelly Bochnewetch and Kiki Dy are two other sophomores who bode well for the Panthers present and future.

Junior Megan Weinreber is the lone West Seneca West runner from the Indians state team in 2009. ... West Seneca East is coming off back-to-back 10-0 season as Bayley Zubler looks to repeat as a state qualifier. ... Immaculata is the defending All-Catholic champion. ... Buffalo Seminary is fielding a team for the first time. ... Senior Allie Johnson is a returning state qualifier from Amherst. ... Tonawanda, proud to be fielding a full team, is led by sophomore Annie Draves. ... Amanda Murray is Hamburg's top runner and also excels in the 800 and 1,500 in outdoor. ... Sweet Home junior Jenny DelSignore looks to repeat as Section VI Class A champion. ... JFK's Kaylea Rustay has already qualified for two state meets and she's only a junior. ... Sophomore Morgan Kennedy, a state qualifier last year in Class A, looks to go this year in Class B for Williamsville South. ... Wilson returns five of its top six, including the hard-working Shannon Nye.

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