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By J.P. Butler Olean Times Herald Olean Times Herald

ALLEGANY — It's been a hugely successful event for 18 years and running.

And running is what made it a reality.

It was back in 1993 that Bill Sprague, the former cross country coach at Allegany High School, started an annual event that brought cross country teams from all over Western New York to the area.

For years, the meet was held at St. Bonaventure Golf Course, where teams would meander the valleys and fairways to the finish. It's since been moved to the St. Bonaventure campus. And that's where runners — both girls and boys, from junior high to varsity — representing 20 schools, will meet for the 19th Annual Southern Tier Cross Country Invitational on Saturday morning.

"It's been a very successful meet," said Kathy Stamets, the current cross country coach at Allegany-Limestone, who took the reins nine years ago. "It will be a little smaller due to another meet in Buffalo — we lost some Buffalo schools. But we still have very good competition."

The meet will consist of a boys' and girls' large and small school division. Entered in the boys' large school pool are Alden, Dunkirk, Eden, Fredonia, Gowanda, Hornell, Maple Grove, Niagara Wheatfield, Olean and Southwestern.

The small school division will consist of Addison, host Allegany-Limestone, Coudersport, Cuba-Rushford, Franklinville, Leonardo da Vinci, Otto-Eldred, Randolph, Sherman and Silver Creek. The girls' divisions are the same except with Randolph moving up to the large school pool.

The junior varsity and varsity teams will run a 3.1-mile course, equivalent to a 5K, while the junior high programs will run a 1.5- to 2-mile course. The starting and finishing point will be behind the Reilly Center near the softball field.

"The walking trail (at Bona) out front crosses over into an area we'd been using, so we moved the race out back," Stamets said. "We'll start behind the Reilly Center, cover a good part of campus through the woods, head out past Saint Francis, run in the open field near there and head back."

Stamets said Maple Grove, Fredonia and Alden appear to have the strongest teams in the boys' large school division while Addison looks like the frontrunner in the small school division. Her own Allegany-Limestone girls' team and junior runner Alyssa Stroud may be a factor in the girls' small school portion.

Both teams and individual runners will receive awards for top finishes.

"The top five runners on each team get points," Stamets said. "You add your score up according to your top five runners. The goal is to have the lowest score."

Stamets said the event continues to be a success because of the number of people who get involved.

"Bill Sprague still helps out every year," she said. "We work together to make changes to the course. My assistant coach, Brian Rohrabacher, has been a big help. And we have tons of parents and volunteers from the school that come out and help that day."

The event has seen both rain and shine, and sometimes even a snow flurry or two. But the forecast looks good for the 19th annual meet.

“We’re looking forward to good weather,” Stamets said. “It’s supposed to be a good day. It might be a little warm for the runners, but it’s better than the alternative.”

Race	Time	Runners
1	10 a.m.	Junior High Boys
2	10:25 a.m.	Junior High Girls
3	10:50 a.m.	JV Boys
4	11:25 a.m.	JV Girls
5	noon	Varsity Boys’ Large School
6	12:30 p.m.	Varsity Boys’ Small School
7	1 p.m.	Varsity Girls’ Large School
8	1:35 p.m.	Varsity Girls Small School

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