



# Class 2A Boys Pre Season Preview: Mahomet-Seymour Boys #1

ILLINOIS XC 2016: PRESEASON PREVIEW SERIES

Raymond Lewis  
Aug 19, 2016

25

Page 1 of 3

Next

1



Mahomet-Seymour will be looking to run themselves to the top prize this fall

## 15. Sycamore

2015 Finish: 7th - Woodstock (North) Sectional

Coach: Michael Lambdin



TAGGED

Chatham-

10 more...

WHAT TO



Connor Farrell (Sr.) 16:08

Jake Carani (Jr.) 16:38

Quinton Benzschawel (Jr.) 17:13

John Lerohl (Sr.) 17:17

Riley Melton (Jr.) 17:28

David Lerohl (So.) 17:47

Lucas McKay (So.) 17:46

**Ray's Take:** All-State **Stephen Poorten** was Sycamore's lone representative in Peoria at state after a good 2015 Sycamore team finished 7th in the tough Woodstock North Sectional. Poorten is the #1 returner in the class of 2018 and NIC-Big 12 defending champ, and looks to bounce back after an inconsistent track season. Sycamore returns almost its entire team, and as a result, stand a good chance to join Poorten in Peoria. "This is our deepest team in recent years," exclaims coach **Michael Lambdin**. Lambdin projects that as many as 10 upperclassmen, as well as a couple freshmen, can compete for a top 7 spot on a good Spartan team.

Connor Farrell and Jake Carani lead a pack that hopes to make a charge after last year's 3rd place at NIC-Big 12. Among several others, those two can be joined by **Quinton Benzschawel, John Lerohl, Riley Melton, David Lerohl** or **Lucas McKay**. The depth of the Spartans can prove to be an advantage as they run a handful of deep meets that includes their home invite (Sycamore Invitational), First to the Finish, and the Rock River Run. Lambdin knows this teams potential: "We would like to improve on last year's 7th place finish at the Woodstock North Sectional hopefully resulting in an opportunity to race at the State Meet."

#### **14. Rock Island (Alleman)**

**2015 Finish:** 7th - Normal (University) Sectional

**Coach:** Scott Stoll

**Key returners:**

Augie Darrow (Sr.) 15:24

Spencer Smith (Jr.) 15:40





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Brendan Hird (Jr.) 16:44

Pierre Azar (So.)

Aaron Mickelson

**Ray's Take:** Alleman High has shown it can compete among larger schools after the multiplier, finishing 7th at the extremely deep Normal (University) Sectional in 2015. Based on this circumstance, Alleman and coach Stoll have their sights set on the Western Big 6. Stoll: "Rock Island Alleman is a small school (1A) which has been bumped up to 2A via the success multiplier so our goal is for both teams to win their conference meet. For the boys team this would be a 6th straight Western Big 6 title. After that, we face very difficult 2A fields at the Sectional meet so we are realistic about our chances."

A state berth is not out of the conversation, however, and this is assisted by the front end strength of **Augie Darrow** and **Spencer Smith**. Other proven scorers are **Ben Weaver**, **Brendan Hird** and **Connor Sheley**. Some roster turnover means that Alleman will have to search for the depth to continue competing with mid-Illinois 2A programs but the Western Big 6 belongs to the Pioneers of Rock Island, Alleman.

**13. Crystal Lake (Central)**

**2015 Finish:** 11th - State

**Coach:** Bill Eschman

**Key returners:**

Cole Barkocy (Sr.) 14:57 / 9:30 / 4:24

Weston Sterchi (Sr.) 15:16

Brandon Tomasello (Sr.) 15:53

Josh Johnson (Jr.) 16:19

Jack Flynn (So.) 17:51

Nate Kopp (So.) 17:59

Gio Macias (Sr.) 17:35

Tyler Tomasello (Sr.) 17:06

Adam Zenter (So.) 17:57



come on strong as of recently and will hope to have an allstate campaign on his own in 2016.

**Brandon Tomasello** and **Josh Johnson** join Barkocy and Sterchi on varsity but need help on the back end. The help will likely come from Tyler Tomasello and a pair of sophomores **Jack Flynn** and **Nate Kopp**. CLC runs in the extremely competitive Fox Valley Conference and broke into the top 5 in 2015. If the pack can come closer to Barkocy and Sterchi, CLC will improve on that mark. The Tigers return 10 of their 12 varsity runners from last year's roster so watch for this pack continuity to benefit them later in the season.

## 12. Peoria (Notre Dame)

**2015 Finish:** 16th - State

**Coach:** Dan Gray

### **Key returners:**

Jade Baille (Sr.) 16:16

Patrick Bruch (Sr.) 15:21

John Couri (Jr.) 18:23

Tony Haddad (Jr.) 16:58

Thomas Kortz (Sr.) 16:43

Mitchell Maushard (Sr.) 15:45

Patrick Menke (So.)

**Ray's Take:** For the second year in a row, Peoria Notre Dame will be putting a very experienced team into meets this year. A big gap exists between their first three runners: **Patrick Bruch** -who could be all state, **Mitchell Maushard**, and **Jade Baille** are the top three Irish runners. Their pack will be determined by **Tony Haddad** (who ran state last year as a sophomore), **John Couri** and **Thomas Kortz**. PND is also the defending 2015 Big 12 team champ and will have to fight off the pack from Danville. Bruch enters the season as the #1 returner from the conference meet.

## 11. Crystal Lake (Prairie Ridge)

**2015 Finish:** 8th at 2A Woodstock (North) Sectional

**Coach:** Judd Shutt

Mike Ostrow (Sr.) 16:19

David Tukle (Sr.) 16:46

James Lasak (Jr.) 16:10

Brian Dorn (Sr.) 16:54

Jake Hanacek (Jr.) 17:31

Kevin Gilbert (Jr.) 17:10

Jake Laukert (Jr.) 18:22

Tyler Harth (Sr.) 18:13

Ryan Figgins (Jr.) 17:41

**Ray's Take:** Having your first runner score 1 point at most races never hurts, and that is exactly the privilege that Prairie Ridge will enjoy during **Filip Pajak's** senior year. Prairie Ridge, another strong northern Illinois team, runs against most of the top individuals in the state frequently and Pajak holds his own with the ranks of the best in Illinois- expect him to be sharp when Peoria rolls around, and do not be surprised if he wins the state title.

The Wolves are typically neck-and-neck with the other Crystal Lake schools (Central and South) and this year will prove to be the same in a race for the Fox Valley Conference now that Grayslake has vacated the conference. A very competitive team joins Pajak: **Mike Ostow, James Lasak, David Tukle and Brian Dorn** are a good pack with the chops to compete in the Woodstock sectional. If these runners can dip into the 15 minute range, they could take one of the five qualifying spots. Shutt: "We return a strong foundation of experienced athletes that put in a consistent summer. We need to race more aggressively and with greater confidence in order to challenge for a title."

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Aug 19, 2016

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← Prev

Page 2 of 3

Next →

1



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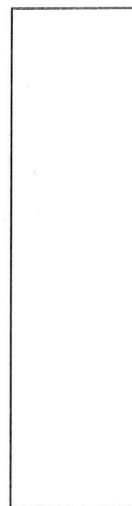
WHAT TO



Can Shane Williamson (#1458) and his Vernon Hills mates be a major player this season?

## 10. Vernon Hills

2015 Finish: 6th at 2A Woodstock (North) Sectional



Shane Williamson (Sr.) 14:51

Tim Krashevsky (Sr.) 15:26

Nick Mohrdieck (Sr.) 16:35

Teddy Chen (Jr.) 16:46

Zak Baumann (Jr.) 16:37

Evan Webber (Jr.) 17:31

**Ray's Take:** In 2015, a very good Vernon Hills team finished just outside of the qualification for state in a good Woodstock North sectional. Vernon Hills returns a good portion to avenge last year's disappointment. The team is very clearly led by harrier **Shane Williamson** who has torn up courses in northern Illinois for three years now. His second runner is 800m specialist **Tim Krashevsky**, who is not too shabby on the course himself (possible all-state contender). **Nick Mohrdieck, Teddy Chen, and Zak Baumann** are the 3-5 runners entering the year. The Cougars also have a unique challenge this year, their first year in the powerful Central Suburban League. Watch to find out if the competition of this 3A heavy conference benefits Vernon Hills as they try to send more than just Williamson and Krashevsky to Peoria.

**9. Chatham (Glenwood)**

**2015 Finish:** 12th at 2A State

**Coach:** Mike Garber

**Key returners:**

Logan Capps (Jr.) 16:08

Chris Durr (Sr.) 15:35

Dathan Maton (So.) 15:54

Drey Maton (So.) 16:09

Cooper Peterson (So.) 16:17

Eli Rudin (Jr.) 16:45

Martin Carter (Jr.) 20:17

Cameron Dees (Soccer in 2015)



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in multiple directions. **Chris Durr** finished 30th last year and is the top returner. He is joined by twin brothers **Drew** and **Dathan Maton**, who may be two to watch, says coach Mike Garber. "They worked hard on their physicality this summer and will surprise this season," Garber remarks. "They were small last year (5 feet 1 inch) but have grown six inches since last season. They want to be near 15:30 by Peoria Notre Dame and in the low 15s by State. And these are Sophomores!" Newcomer **Cameron Dees** can be a varsity contributor, and keep an eye on Martin Carter to be a surprise for the Titans this year in the tough Central States 8 Conference.

**Coach Garber's Take:** "We have been talking about returning the CS8 Conference Title to GHS since last season. Springfield High School has had some very talented squads the last few years and edged us out. We have eyes on winning Conference, Regional and Sectionals. These young men have told me they will settle for nothing less than Top 5 at State. From the work I've seen so far, it is hard to believe that won't accomplish it."

### 8. Dixon

**2015 Finish:** 9th at 2A Woodstock (North) Sectional

**Coach:** Evan Thorpe

#### **Key returners:**

Collin Grady (So.) 15:30

Blaine Masterson (Sr.) 15:54

Sean Masterson (Sr.) 16:18

Jonah Fulton (Jr.) 16:00

Andrew Lohse (So.) 17:35

Luke Stees (Jr.) 17:15

Luke Wedekind (Jr.) 16:02

Christian Seagren (Fr.) Sub 5:00 1600 in 8th grade

Logan Griswold (Fr.) Sub 5:00 1600 in 8th grade

**Ray's Take:** The absence of Dixon from the state meet last year is misleading-they are an extremely capable and young team looking to make a huge statement in northern Illinois this year. Fantastic freshman star **Collin Grady** is now a super soph and looks to bounce back after a disappointing track season. The pack is determined by **Blaine** and **Sean Masterson**, **Jonah Fulton**, and **Luke Wedekind**,





should make an immediate impact on the team.

"This has been my favorite team to coach at Dixon and they deserve to be at Detweiller in November. The group is determined to be at the state meet and would like to be in the top 10 come November."

## **7. Danville (H.S.)**

**2015 Finish:** 13th at 2A State

**Coach:** Todd Orvis

### **Key returners:**

William Powell (Sr.) 15:29

Phillip Hall (Jr.) 15:57

Sincere Williams-Davis (Jr.) 16:16

Tyler Huckelberry (Sr.) 16:18

Brandon Barfell (So.) 16:27

Terry Dalton (So.) 16:59

Michael Moreman (Fr.) 1A IESA XC State Runner-Up

**Ray's Take:** At the 2015 state meet, Danville High split's was tighter even than champion Grayslake Central's, bringing their top five in less than 43 seconds. This number could shrink in 2016 for the Vikings, who bring back five of their top eight runners in 2016. **William Powell** was their top scorer at state and he is joined by **Phillip Hall**, **Sincere Williams-Davis**, and **Tyler Huckleberry**. Danville gets an added boost from incoming freshman **Michael Moreman**, who finished behind only Rockford's **Tristian Olpin** in the IESA 1A state championship in 2015.

**Coach Todd Orvis' Take:** "We have two big goals which have been the same for us the past couple years. We want to win the Big 12 Conference title (which we haven't won since '82) and we want to be a top ten team at the state meet. I believe our team can be better than last season. We have had a solid summer of training and we should be able to make a significant improvement over last year's 13th place finish."

## **6. Darien (Hinsdale South)**

**Key returners:**

Brett Haffner (Jr.) 15:30

Chris Joseph (Sr.) 15:50

Trevor Schauer (Jr.) 16:34

Trevor Lehmann (So.) 17:11

Tim Rudolph (So.) 17:24

Tyler Gaytan (Sr.) 17:12 (2014)

Nick Beronio (Fr.)

**Ray's Take:** Hinsdale South boasted the best 1-2 in maybe all of Illinois in 2015, but now that **Roman Drabchuk** and **Charlie Nodus** (along with most of the varsity team), 2016 means a much different team for **Jim Dickerson's** Hornets. Says Dickerson, "We graduated a whopping 24 seniors; for a program that is lucky to get 10 freshmen out each year, that means this really is a different team culturally and they need to buy in to the same things our graduates and experienced returners did." South's team is led by 2015 St. Ignatius transfer **Brett Haffner**, the fifth returner in the class of 2018 for 2A. Haffner is joined from 2015's team by **Chris Joseph** and **Trevor Schauer**. After those three, the roster is young and open. Possible scorers include **Trevor Lehmann** and **Tim Rudolph**, two frosh stars from last year, and **Tyler Gaytan** who returns after taking 2015 off. Keep an eye out for **Nick Beronio** as well, a freshman without experience but with a strong summer of training, reports Dickerson. Coach Dickerson added: "As a team, we will probably be off the radar at the beginning of the season, especially compared with last year, but I think we can be vastly improved by championship season and surprise some people."

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ILLINOIS XC 2016: PRESEASON PREVIEW SERIES

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Aug 19, 2016

25

Prev

Page 3 of 3

1

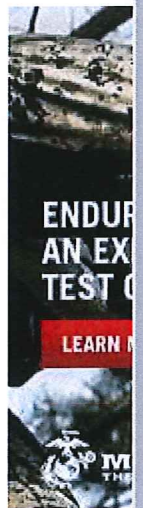


©LazarG Photo

Filip Pajak will be one of the top runners this season regardless of classification

## 5. Belvidere (North)

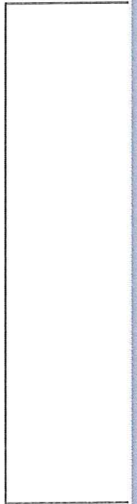
2015 Finish: 8th at 2A State



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WHAT TO





Alec Scott (Jr.) 15:42

Jared Ellingson (Sr.) 15:47

Jake Martocci (Sr.) 16:12

Brandt Lerma (Sr.) 16:21

Jack Macaluso (Jr.) 16:24

Austin Harnois (Jr.) 16:30

Virgil Munyemana (Jr.) 17:43

Tyler Paddock (Jr.) 18:12

**Ray's Take:** Troy Yunk knows that this team is different from all the other North squads he has coached: "For the past 9 years we have always had a strong all state type front runner who can give us low points at the front of the race, but this years team will not have that and we will need to be more of a close pack team from 1-5." And now for the first year since 2006 without a Yunk on the team, the Blue Thunder look to **Alec Scott** and **Jared Ellingson**, both with multiple years of state experience, to lead Belvidere North back to Peoria. But first, they have a conference title to defend, says Coach Yunk. "We hope to be able to push Hononegah for the NIC-10 title," says Yunk. "The key for us in the NIC-10 will be our split from 1-5. If our 5th man is too far off of our first we will have trouble beating Hononegah."

For the pack mentality to work, **Jake Martocci, Brandt Lerma, Jack Macaluso** and **Austin Harnois** must improve together through the year and work closer to Ellingson and Scott. Having six runners under 16:00 is possible for the Blue Thunder but may not be enough to make an impact at state without a frontrunner. Still, North looks strong and will continue to be a force on the 2A scene.

#### 4. Metamora

**2015 Finish:** 7th at 2A State

**Coach:** Gene Jones

**Key returners:**

Jake Gillum (Sr.) 14:51

Ryan Meyer (Jr.) 15:44



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Will Cloninger (Jr.) 17:13

Frank DeLuca (Jr.) 17:10

John Rapp (So.) 17:35

**Ray's Take:** Perennial Mid-Illini Conference power Metamora looks set to defend their conference title and run for another state qualifier berth in 2016. Once again led by the talented **Jake Gillum**, who will be vying for a top three spot, Coach Jones' Redbirds return a small handful of runners with state experience, including **Ryan Meyer, Kick Koval. Ross Stanley, Will Cloninger, Frank DeLuca** and **John Rapp** all made an appearance on the top 12 roster in 2015 and those seven are the most qualified Redbirds entering this season. Metamora is another team who always improves well throughout the year so do not be surprised to find Gillum and Metamora higher in the rankings come October.

### 3. Normal (University)

**2015 Finish:** 10th at 2A State

**Coach:** Lester Hampton

**Key returners:**

Jack Franklin (Sr.) 14:41

Zach Wolford (So.) 15:19

Jared Schuckman (Jr.) 15:21

Tanner Gillam (Jr.) 15:45

Liam Vaughn (Jr.) 15:49

Dane Alexander (So.) 16:20

Jackson McClure (So.) 16:37

Josh Nepomuceno (So.) 16:37

Harris Porter (Jr.) 16:06

Matt Zacharias (Jr.) 16:25

**Ray's Take:** Incredibly, all but two runners on Normal U-High's top 12 last year were freshman and sophomores, so 2016 could be the first of two years we see a young team maturing quickly. The

senior **Jack Franklin**, the third returner to 2A and possibly a contender for the state title. Franklin turned 9:22/4:27 during the track season and finished 3rd in the 3200m final last spring. Franklin's senior presence at the front is crucial for U-High, who then look to a crew of juniors for the rest of the scoring: **Jared Shuckman, Tanner Gillam, Liam Vaughn** and **Harris Porter** lead the team and are closely followed by **Dane Alexander**, who are seven of the 10 runners returning under 16:40 for U-High. This year could be a trophy performance for the Pioneers, but don't be surprised to find Normal (University) at the top of the rankings in 2017 as well.

## 2. Grayslake (Central)

**2015 Finish:** 2A State Champions

**Coach:** James Centella

### **Key returners:**

Jack Aho (Sr.) 14:24 / 9:00 / 4:07 / 1:58

Matt Aho (Sr.) 14:42 / 9:25 / 4:27

Eli Minsky (Jr.) 15:08 / 10:33 / 4:22

Ben Steinbeck (Sr.) 16:47 / 10:42

Luke Reblin (Jr.) 16:51 / 4:54

Noah Boelens (Sr.) 16:44

Matt Droessler (So.) 18:34 / 11:32

Matt Reynolds (Sr.) 18:05

**Ray's Take:** Grayslake Central come on hard at the end of 2015 and won the state championship in what seemed, at the time, to be an upset of Mahomet-Seymour. But in retrospect, we should have expected that result as the Rams rose steadily throughout the course of the year. If you want to explain the team's rise, look no further than the **Aho** brothers, **Jack** and **Matt**. Jack Aho is the defending cross country champ and the easy favorite to win again. His brother, Matt, improved immensely throughout the course of the season and is the fourth state returner. Do not rule out the possibility of a 1-2 team finish this year for the Aho brothers- the minuscule scores at the front make Grayslake Central so dangerous. **Eli Minsky** also returns this year to round out the best 1-2-3 punch in 2A.

goal is always to maximize the abilities and talents of the group that we have and hopefully some of our younger guys and veterans can step up and carry on the tradition that we have begun to establish at Grayslake Central."

2A Boys Race Highlights

## 2015 2A Boys State Championship Highlight Reel

### 1. Mahomet (M.-Seymour)

**2015 Finish:** 2nd in 2A State

**Coach:** Neal Garrison

#### **Key returners:**

Andrew Walmer (Sr.) 14:48

Brian Bucher (Sr.) 15:05

Gabe Pommier (Sr.) 15:27

Ben Crow (Sr.) 15:47

Ryan Hodge (Jr.) 15:44

Mathias Powell (So.) 16:13

**Ray's Take:** The Bulldogs ran as the favorites all year long until their pack got stretched out at Peoria, allowing Grayslake Central to win the championship. However, look for Mahomet-Seymour to give the state championship their best shot again, returning five of their top seven from the state runner-up squad and filling in the holes nicely with young runners. **Andrew Walmer** highlights the team, finishing 10th last year and returning as one of the few sub-15 runners in 2A. **Brian Bucher's** Richard Spring time of 15:05 makes him a strong second option, and he will hope to make up for a disappointing go at state in 2015. **Gabe Pommier, Ben Crow, and Ryan Hodge** were have experience running with the Bulldog pack in 2015 and return to give the Bulldogs their depth in 2016, and **Riley Fortune, Bryson Keeble** and **Mathias Powell** are the most likely candidates to run as the rest of the top seven. Keeble and Powell, sophomores, will also be the future of Mahomet-Seymour cross country.

**The roundabout thoughts from boys editor Ray Lewis-**

In these rankings, it is often difficult to compare the times on a screen and even the information that coaches give. Across the state, the consensus pick for the state champion is Grayslake Central, but in these rankings you see Mahomet-Seymour begin the year #1. This ranking is based on the returning strength of each team, and as we begin the year, Mahomet Seymour returns the most top to bottom of teams in the state. However, it would be a mistake to expect Grayslake will be anywhere other than in position to take the trophy home as well. The wonder of XC is that we do not have to wonder about the theoretical side of running- we can see how the season itself plays out! November's rankings are the ones that matter.