

# 2018 Class 2A Boys XC Preview: The Countdown #25 to #15

## ILLINOIS XC 2018: PRESEASON PREVIEW SERIES

Carson Vittorio

Aug 11, 2018

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Our countdown to the end of the XC previews is halfway done and next on deck is 2A Boys. We are extremely excited to bring you our opinions on who are the top 25 teams to start off the season. So sit back and enjoy our #25 team to our #15 and make sure to check back later in the week for the rest of the teams

### 25. Springfield (Sacred Heart-Griffin)

**Coaches/coaches:** Josh Bluhm/Tammie Blough

**Last year's finish:** Decatur MacArthur Sectional- 12th place

**Key Returners:** [Jacob Coady](#) (Jr), [Grant Sarnowski](#) (Jr), [Brendan Fahey](#) (Sr), [Jake Wagoner](#) (Sr), [Nathaniel Bell](#) (So), [Augie Davis](#) (Jr)

**Newcomers:** Martin McGrath (So), Max Kersting (Fr)

**Coach's thoughts on the team:** We lost only one runner from last year's top seven - this team will be improved. We lack a break out superstar on this team. So, their success will depend on how well they run together. Our 1 to 7 split will need to be consistently 20-25 seconds.

### 24. Peoria (Notre Dame)

**Head Coach:** Dan Gray/Trevor Birkmeier, Tyler Franciscovich, Geoff Girsch, Michael Kouri

**Last year's finish:** Normal Sectional- 8th place

**Key Returners:** [Chris Gilbert](#) (Sr), [David Robison](#) (Jr), [Patrick Couri](#) (So), [Mitchell Mazander](#) (Sr)

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**Projected top 7:** Gilbert, P. Couri, Robinson, [Luke Sander](#) (Jr), [Mickey Lawless](#) (Sr), J. Couri, Mazander

**Newcomers:** Christian Vargas (So), Jac Couri (Fr)

**Coach's thoughts on the team:** Led by All-State returnee Chris Gilbert, now with a year of cross country experience under his belt, the Irish are more of a deep veteran group, with a lot of balance. Look to see more pack running by the Irish early on, in taking advantage of that depth. Leadership from senior Mickey Lawless, and junior Luke Sander along with Gilbert's running have helped the Irish put in a good summer of training, which needs to continue into the big miles that will yield the strength to be ready at the end of the season when it matters most! We have to get four into the low-mid 15:00s with the rest of the top 7 in the low 16:00s to make their mark in 2018. Gilbert has some high ambitions to go along with his status as a Top-10 returnee for 2A Boys. A strong season and State showing followed by an All-State effort in the 800m during track season will help him as he pursues opportunities as a collegiate runner down the road. Lawless and Mazander likewise have the ability to take their running on to the college ranks in 2019.

### 23. Antioch

**Head Coach/coaches:** Chris Bailey/Ryan Hlniak

**Last year's finish:** Kaneland Sectional- 12th place

**Key returners:** [Charlie Smith](#) (Jr), [Mike Volkmar](#) (Sr), [Eric Hart](#) (Sr)

**Projected top 7:** Smith, Volkmar, Hart, Kyle Miller, Owen Lane, Ryan Johnson, Luke Menzies

**Newcomers:** John Baronello

**Coach's thoughts on the team:** The Sequoits are returning All-State runner junior Charlie Smith as the leader of the team. He is coming off of a 10th place finish at the 2A state finals in XC and a solid spring where is qualified for the 3A state meet in the 1600m. He had sophomore PR's of 2:01, 4:22, and 9:55. We lost some key individuals due to graduation and changing sports, but will look to Smith, Volkmar, and Hart for the experience. We will look to fill the losses with Menzies, Lane, and Miller. Sophomore Ryan Johnson is stepping up and will add some depth for the Sequoits. Newcomer John Baronello will also make an immediate impact.

### 22. Marion

**Head Coach:** Eli Baker

**Last year's finish:** State- 14th place

**Key returners:** [John Bruce](#) (Jr), [Jade Chew](#) (Sr), [Joe Sullins](#) (Sr), [Isaac Donaldson](#) (So), [Timothy Surburg](#) (Sr)

**Projected top 7:** Bruce, Sullins, Donaldson, Surburg, Steven Kosco (Sr), Chew, Ben Parks (So)

**Carson's outlook:** Marion is an under the radar team that can be very good this upcoming season. The Wildcats are coming into the season with experience and talent as they have 4 returning state qualifiers from last year and a very talented #1 runner in John Bruce. Bruce will be the best runner on this team by far after taking home the first all-state honor this past track season in the 4x800m and running at state in the 1600m as well. This team is not very deep as their 5th runner is only at a 17:40, but expect Marion's #4 runner, Timothy Surburg to break out after him getting an All-State honor with Bruce in the 4x800m.

### 21. Rockford (Christian)

**Head Coach:** Randy Moore

**Last year's finish:** State Runner Up- Class A

**Key returners:** [Riley Wells](#) (Sr), [Brent Brunner](#) (Sr), [D'Artagnon Beaver](#) (So), [Carter Fryer](#) (Jr), [Cal Granite](#) (Sr), [Josh Honkamp](#) (Sr)

**Projected top 7:** Wells, Brunner, Beaver, Fryer, Granite, Honkamp, Stephen Thomas (So)

**Coach's thoughts on the team:** Thus far the boys have put in an excellent summer's worth of running. They might be the most disciplined and independent squad in program history. It will be a fun season.

### 20. Aurora (Illinois Math and Science Academy)

**Head Coach:** Grant Bell

**Last year's finish:** Burlington Central Regional- 7th place

**Key returners:** [Daniel Chen](#) (Sr), [Daniel Soto](#) (Sr), [Jake Sutter](#) (Sr),

**Projected top 7:** Chen, Soto, Sutter, Jay Dong (Jr), [Ishaar Ganesan](#) (Jr), [Ajay Jayaramon](#) (Jr), [Gabe](#)



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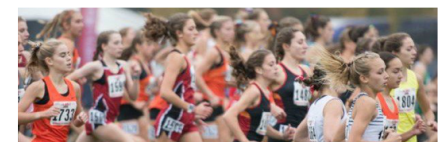
It's hard to say goodbye... but we are going to try.  
"Salute to the class of 2018" coming this evening



13h

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The opening bell of the 3A girls pre-season rankings ----> [bit.ly/2OupUts](https://bit.ly/2OupUts)



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**Bryk (Sr) Carson's outlook:** IMSA will be relying a lot on Daniel Chen this upcoming season. Chen is the Titans only state qualifier from last season and they are lucky that he is returning. Chen is the runner that will lead the Titans to a state berth. They have an ok team as they return three runners that broke the 16:30 barrier and look to have a 1:00 2-5 split.

### 19. Sterling

**Head Coach:** Greg Hendrix

**Last year's finish:** Kaneland Sectional- 11th place

**Key returners:** [Isaiah Moorman \(Sr\)](#), [Mikio Martinez \(Sr\)](#), [Dillon Nitz \(Jr\)](#), [Ruben Leal \(Sr\)](#), [Javon Bruce \(So\)](#), [Sam Brown \(So\)](#)

**Projected top 7:** Moorman, Martinez, Nitz, Leal, Bruce, Brown, [Andrew Ivarson \(Sr\)](#)

**Coach Hendrix's outlook:** We return 6 of our top 7 from last season, and all runners have put in a lot of work over the summer. This is my 4th year as head coach, and it has been by far the best-attended summer for practices. We will be led by seniors Isaiah Moorman and Mikio Martinez, who both could qualify for state as individuals. We will rely on runners from all four classes this year to complete our top 7.

### 18. Olney (Richland County)

**Head Coach:** Louis Gassmann

**Last year's finish:** Decatur (MacArthur) Sectional- 9th place

**Key returners:** [Caleb Thomas \(Sr\)](#), [Braden Nicholson \(Sr\)](#), [Gavin Kirby \(So.\)](#), [Owen Powell \(Sr\)](#)

**Projected top 7:** Thomas, Nicholson, Kirby, Powell, [Jordan Belcher \(Jr\)](#), [Collin Gilreath \(So\)](#), [Barak Berger \(So\)](#)

**Coach Gassmann's outlook:** Our top four runners are back this season and they've had a solid summer of training. We have several returning runners that made great strides during the track season in the spring and look to fill the #5 spot. There are incoming freshmen that aren't going to make the #5 spot easy to keep. I am hopeful the inner squad competition for that 5th position will make us much better. The old saying, "You are only as good as your #5 runner." may hold true this season for the Tigers. We know from the start that it will be a dogfight in the always competitive, deep seeded Decatur (MacArthur) Sectional.

### 17. Mahomet-Seymour

**Head Coach:** Neal Garrison

**Last year's finish:** State Champions

**Key returners:** [Mathias Powell \(Sr\)](#), [Bryson Keeble \(Sr\)](#), [Kaelan Davis \(Sr\)](#), [Nate Douglas \(Sr\)](#)

**Projected top 7:** Powell, Keeble, Davis, Douglas, [David Wilcoski \(Jr\)](#), [Kiel Ledin \(Sr\)](#), [Jack McHale \(Sr\)](#)

**Carson's outlook:** After years of being a powerhouse on the 2A level and even on the national level, the Bulldogs are in a rebuilding mode after three of their top runners graduated this past season. They are not as deep as they have been other years. They still do have their superstar runner, Mathias Powell in the wings. Powell will be focused on winning an individual state title as he could have won one the last few opportunities he has had, but came up a little short each time. Overall, the team has some experience with returning four members of their state qualifying team. With the Bulldogs history, it is hard to count them out so it will be interesting to see how they do.

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**Last year's finish:** Decatur (MacArthur) Sectional

**Key returners:** [Luke Manolakes \(Jr\)](#), [Chance Yentes \(Jr\)](#), [Zach Dixon \(Sr\)](#)

**Projected top 7:** Manolakes, Yentes, Dixon, [Ben Olavair \(Jr\)](#), [Joe Simmons \(Jr\)](#), [Ethan Rice \(Jr\)](#), Nick Maurer (So)

**Carson's outlook:** The Chargers' success is going to be based off the performance of one runner this year, their returning state qualifier Luke Manolakes. Manolakes will be the main factor for his team's success as they don't have an amazing 5th runner. He looks to barely break 18 minutes this season. They do have an ok top 4 with them all being sub 17, but Manolakes needs to go above and beyond this year.

### 15. Lisle (Benet Academy)

**Head Coach:** Kevin Renicker

**Last year's finish:** Plainfield South Regional- 7th place

**Key returners:** [Connor O'Keefe \(Sr\)](#), [Ian Smith \(Sr\)](#), [Joans Jodwalis \(Jr\)](#)

**Projected top 7:** O'Keefe, Smith, Jodwalis, [Michael Nocernio \(Sr\)](#), [Ben Grundman \(Jr\)](#), [Thomas Diehl \(Sr\)](#), [Jack Robinson \(So\)](#)

**Carson's outlook:** The Redwings are moving down a class this year after competing in 3A for the past several years. One thing that stands out to me is that Benet Academy will be battling against 3A teams for the whole season. No disrespect to the 1A and 2A competition, but is just not as competitive as 3A. Benet has a great pack as their 1-5 split looks to be around 45 seconds and that is with Connor O'Keefe being about 30 seconds ahead of the group.

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