

Coles County Sports

CROSS COUNTRY, GAME PREVIEW

Mahomet, ALAH leading contenders in boys Charleston Invitational



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By Kyle Daubs

Richard Dorjahn is taking his last win with a grain of salt.

The Arthur-Lovington-Atwood-Hammond cross country coach is thrilled that the Knights won last week's Light It Up Clinton Invitational, but acknowledges that one key team was missing from

the field. Despite being listed as a team participant, the boys' cross country team from Mahomet-Seymour did not run.

Four of the Knights placed top-7 at the meet, which included beating Decatur St. Teresa and Normal University High. However, Dorjahn believes with what the Bulldogs are bringing back, they should be considered the overall favorite to win the title.

"The competition Saturday at EIU should be outstanding," said Dorjahn. "A strong and deep field will step to the line. I feel Mahomet – Seymour is a leading contender for the boys' championship. They were runner-up in Division 2 at Shazam and return a powerful group of senior runners on the boys' side. Their girls will be toward the top as well."

Seniors Kyle Nofziger and Jonathan Scheele figure to be top contenders for the individual title. Both were All-Apollo for the conference champions, as well as senior teammates Taylor Fan and Jonah Singer.

"The boys' race should be very competitive," said Shelbyville coach Chris Mosley. "Mahomet has to be the favorite in everyone's mind, but ALAH, Mattoon, Newton, and Centennial all bring very good teams. We would love to crack the top 5 with that deep group."

Arthur Lovington Atwood Hammond's cross country team was quite successful in 2020. They were champions at the Decatur St. Teresa 1A Regional and Sectional. The Knights finished second in the Shazam State Championship in Division 1. ALAH also were Lincoln Prairie Conference Champions and returned all Conference runners Logan Beckmier, Lyle Adcock, and Jace Green. Beckmier finished 26th at Shazam, one place from all State recognition. Green won his flight of competition at Shazam.

Newton brings Nick Zwilling, who leads a team that finished second at the Doc Acklin Invite last week. Newton returns as the Little Lillini Conference runner-ups.

"As far as favorites, the boys race should be a good one with ALOH runners," said Newton coach Brock Tarr. "Our boys are wanting to improve on our 2nd place finish in the conference last year and go after the LIC title. We returned everyone and have worked hard all summer."

Mount Zion coach Bill Harbeck believes that Mahomet remains the favorite, while the rest will fight for the middle of the pack.

Unfortunately, that may not be the Braves since sophomore Julian Baker, who placed eighth at the Apollo meet as a freshman, will not run due to injury.

Mattoon, who placed fourth at the meet a year ago, will have many new runners after losing three varsity boys to soccer and graduation, but it returns All-Apollo and state qualifier Brock Davee.

“We are excited to see how we stack up, and where we are as a team,” said Haacke. “The kids have been working hard so hopefully we perform well.”

Shelbyville should figure to compete in the middle pack after placing sixth last year. The team brings back state qualifier Lucas Stokes and All-Conference runners Ty Zerrusen and Calvin Miller.

“This will be only our 2nd meet of the season, as we had a quad meet on Monday,” said Mosley. “Season is going very well though. We want to run well at Charleston. Our kids love the course. We had 4 in the top 40 a year ago and would like to improve on that number this Saturday.

Big 12 members Champaign Centennial, Urbana, and Danville will be on display. Centennial brings Aaron Hendron, who should contend for a top-20 spot. Danville brings a state qualifier in Eli Mojonier, who recently won the individual title at Paris this week. However, Danville coach Todd Orvis said the team has been battling COVID issues.

“Our teams are currently down a bit,” said Orvis. Our number two boy just came off a Covid quarantine and is still recovering. We also lost our number 3 guy from last season to football. We didn’t have enough runners for a full team last Saturday in Paris, but we should be able to put together enough for this Saturday. However, we still won’t have our number two runner.

Coming out of the woodwork will be Flora High School. After four years of running independent cross country, the team will have their first boys team. The team is led by Isaac Stanford, Owen Ayers, and Jaymen Cook. Stanford qualified for state last year after placing eighth at the Decatur Sectional with a time of 16:13. Stanford is a former Regional champion and Little Illini Conference selection.

“There are a lot of strong runners and teams out there this season,” said Flora coach Leah Stanford. This will be the first time Flora will be able to have a boys team in many many years. We hope to see Isaac and some of their teammates be able to make it to state.

Charleston Invitational Information

Race Format

3 miles around EIU's Panther Trail

9:15 am: Varsity Girls (no limit on entries)

10:00 am: Varsity Boys (no limit on entries)

Teams

(1)Arthur-Lovington (2)Bismarck-Henning (3)Champaign Central

(4)Charleston (5)Danville (6)Effingham (7)Flora (8)Olney

(9)Mahomet-Seymour

(10)Mattoon (11)Mt. Zion (12)Neoga (13)Newton (14)Shelbyville

(15)Sullivan

(16)Urbana (17)Champaign Centennial

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