
MIDWESTERN LEAGUE CROSS COUNTRY

Front-Runners: District champion Brittany Arch is among the top runners returning

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Thurston's Brittany Arch is back to defend her Midwestern League district girls cross country title and so is almost the entire Marshfield girls team.

Arch won the district title in 20 minutes, 35 seconds last year to finish more than 30 seconds ahead of any other runner. Now a senior, Arch looks to take her entire team along to state this year after the Colts missed out last season by finishing third behind Marshfield and Springfield.

"The nicest thing about Brittany is that we are so young and she is such a good leader, so that contribution to our team is more important than how well she is running," Thurston coach DeWayne Cantrall said. "Her first two races this year were an improvement over last year, so she is looking pretty good. She has a little more excitement because our team is a little better and that matters to her."

Marshfield returns four of its five scorers from last year's district meet, which it won with 51 points.

Leading the way is sophomore Jana Sadler, who placed sixth individually last year. The multi-sport athlete went to state in cross country, swimming and track last year.

"She swims and runs year-round, so she's always a well-conditioned athlete," Marshfield coach Doug Landrum said. "Her goal is to contend for the district title individually. She's definitely on the way up and still taking big steps each year in her development."

Marshfield also returns sophomore Tori Scott, who placed eighth at district, along with junior Shelby Paulson and senior Amber Reis, who placed 15th and 17th, respectively. Sarah Cooney was 19th at district last year and recently ran a race in 21:19, which was a personal best by more than a minute.

Thurston will be a factor in the team race with the return of Arch and sophomores Hailey Peterson and Lauren Renie, who placed ninth and 10th, respectively, at district.

"Hailey and Lauren are both much better than they were last year," Cantrall said. "Those two are not only hard workers, but good kids, and their leadership is

invaluable to the rest of the group. "

Sophomores Kelly Cogburn and Suzanne Lande are among Thurston's top seven along with senior Laura Ford, who is running cross country for the first time, and freshman Kelsie Renie.

Springfield returns three runners off last year's team that qualified for state. Sophomore Caitlynn Holmes was 14th at district, sophomore Jessica Gonzalez was 16th and senior Lindsey Leighton was 18th. Freshman Amanda Merrill has added to the team along with Rebeca Silva.

"The goal is to get back to the state meet," Springfield coach Scott Touchette said. "We need to keep training to the district meet, and the potential is there. Marshfield returns almost everyone, and Churchill and Thurston are strong and North Eugene has some solid runners, but nobody is unbeatable. You can compare times all you want, but you have to show up on race day."

Churchill lost its top runner when Sydnie Johnson suffered an ankle injury while winning a meet against North Eugene and Springfield last week. Coach George Walcott said Johnson turned her ankle early in the race and was found to have ligament problems. She is out indefinitely, but he hopes she can return in time for the district meet.

Freshman Lydia Huey and junior Jane Bishop lead the team along with Sierra Lessel, a standout softball player who joined the roster.

North Eugene senior Jessica Dowdy is one of the top runners in the league, and she is joined by a strong sophomore class that features Katie Petersen, Rachel Jensen and Pearl Shapland.

Sophomore Lisa Payne is the only runner for Willamette.

Thurston is the defending district boys champion and remains among the favorites to win the title despite losing its top three runners from last year.

"We're starting over," Cantrall said. "The group last year was so good they planted the seed, but there is nothing like experience, so these guys will have to learn how to run in some big meets and how to work hard. They haven't shown any hesitation to do those things so far, but there is a lot of work to be done."

Senior Alex Jones and juniors Michael Bennett and Logan Lewis all ran at state last year when the Colts finished in third place. Sophomore Crosby Green is among the top newcomers in the lineup along with junior Cameron Bernatzki.

"Even though we're young, we're pretty deep, so in our league I think we can be pretty good," Cantrall said. "Every time I go into a season, no matter what I start with, I start with the goal of making it to state. I don't know what it would be like to look at a group and say 'If we work hard we can get third or fourth.' First or second is what I am looking for."

Springfield finished second at district to qualify for state and returns three runners from that team, including junior

Tim Costin, who placed fourth at district and ninth at state last year. He has already won two races this year, including the South Salem Invitational.

"He trained hard over the summer and he is a tough runner," Touchette said. "He is coming in with high hopes and high expectations."

Drew Gerg and Derick Olsen also return, while sophomore Dylan Arana is focusing on cross country after also playing soccer last year.

Marshfield senior Jared Bassett placed third at district and sixth at state last year.

"Jared is running real strong and he did some cross training this summer; he's healthy and expecting big things," Landrum said. "He's matured, and he seems capable of being up for a challenge running against the top boys in the state."

Churchill senior Russell Drummond was sixth at district last year and has finished second to Costin at one meet this year and was fifth overall at the South Salem Invitational. He heads up a young team that includes freshmen Mark Sheridan and Mark Whittier.

North Eugene has six seniors on the roster including Justen Pohl, who is currently the No. 1 runner.

Dillon Blanks, Chase Cerbin, Tyler Woodke, Dion Brown and Chad Westbrook are also veterans while sophomores Keaton Wallace and Johnny Lari are also competing for spots in the lineup.

New Willamette coach Colleen McGhee takes over a young team that is led by seniors James Boggs and Josh Embury.
