

Season Preview

Gross Country

25 to Watch: Boys

KSHSAACovered

25 BOYS CROSS COUNTRY RUNNERS TO WATCH

MICAH BLOMKER, SM NORTH

After coming up just short of a state championship as a freshman in Class 4A last season, Blomker will give things a shot in Class 6A this year. Blomker ran for Miego during his freshman season and took second at state in the 4A race to Hayden's Tanner Newkirk, coming in three seconds behind the Wildcat standout. He transferred mid-year to Shawnee Mission North and competed for the Bison in track last spring, taking second in the 3,200 and fourth in the 1,600.



Micah Blomker



Devin Chappel

DEVIN CHAPPEL, GARDEN CITY

Chappel took 12th at the Class 6A state cross county meet last year as a junior. He claimed a regional championship and was the runner-up in the Western Athletic Conference meet. His personal best was a 16:14. He finished in the top six or higher of every regular season meet and won at Hesston and Newton. “Devin’s goal this season is simply to do better at every meet than he did last season, including state where his goal is to be top five,” Garden City coach Krista Linenberger said.

KODI DOWNES, COUNCIL GROVE

Like Blomker, Downes was a freshman sensation a year ago who came up one place shy of starting his career as a state champion, A winner of six races a year ago, including the Flint Hills League title, Downes didn’t finish lower than second all season. He was a regional runner-up to Smoky Valley’s Ryan Heline, but beat Heline at state by four seconds, finishing only behind two-time champion Cormick Logue of Girard despite posting a career-best time of 16 minutes, 35.15 seconds.



Kodi Downes



Eli Gilmore

ELI GILMORE, TONGANOXIE

Over his first two seasons of high school, Gilmore has been one of the top runners in Class 4A, twice posting top-five finishes at the state meet. He captured the Frontier League title last year as a sophomore after taking second as a freshman. Following a fifth-place finish at state as a freshman, he improved one spot to fourth last year as a sophomore.

KAMRYN GOLUB, STANTON COUNTY

Golub set a personal record at the Class 2A state cross county meet with a 16:26 last year a sophomore, placing third individually to help the Stanton County boys take second as a team. In track, he took third at state in the 3,200 with a personal-best of 9:50.35. His personal record in the 800 is 2:07.03. Stanton County coach said Mike Horton said Golub has a tremendous work ethic and is constantly pushing himself to become better.



Kamryn Golub



Andrew Harder

ANDREW HARDER, BEREAN ACADEMY

After an injury slowed his first high school season, Harder led Berean Academy to the Class 2A title with his fifth-place finish in 16:47.50 last fall at Victoria’s Sand Plum Nature Trail. The junior gives the Warriors a formidable 1-2 punch with senior Eli Nord, a two-time state medalist, as Berean shoots for a three-peat after winning 1A in 2019.

ASHTON HIGGERSON, ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

Higgerson was one of five Saints to earn a state medal a year ago as they cruised to their seventh straight Class 5A state championship. Higgerson finished seventh at the state meet in 16:23.98 after taking third at regionals and fifth at the Eastern Kansas League meet. Higgerson was Aquinas’ second finisher at state during its 2019 state championship season, placing seventh and behind only older brother Aiden, who was third. He’s posted a career-best of 15:53.60 and also was a state runner-up in track in the 1,600 to teammate Logan Seger.



Ashton Higgerson

JOSH HOWARD, OLATHE HERITAGE CHRISTIAN

Running for Kansas City Christian a year ago, Howard placed seventh at the Class 2A state meet, third among underclassmen in the race. He transferred to Heritage Christian immediately following the fall season. As a sophomore he finished 24th at the Class 2A state meet.

TANNER LINDAHL, BUHLER

Lindahl has led the Crusaders to the top of 4A each of the last three seasons. He won the 2018 individual title by almost 37 seconds, then followed it with third-place finishes as a sophomore and junior. His time of 15:59.08 last October at Wamego Country Club was his fastest at state.



Tanner Lindahl



Daniel Little

DANIEL LITTLE, JACKSON HEIGHTS

A three-time Northeast Kansas League champion, Little has finished in the top 10 at the state cross country meet each of his first three seasons. He finished ninth in Class 2A as a freshman in 2018 and then improved to fourth as a sophomore. Last year in Class 1A, Little finished sixth. Little has won 16 of the 19 races he’s competed in during the regular season, never finishing lower than third, and holds five of the top-10 times in Cobra program history with his fastest time of 16:23 ranking third.

ANDREW MASON, BLUE VALLEY NORTHWEST

Mason came on strong at the end of his junior season. After taking seventh at the Eastern Kansas League meet and fifth at regionals, Mason placed eighth at the Class 6A state meet with a time of 16 minutes, 48.44 seconds. It was a breakout season for Mason, who didn't qualify for state as a sophomore. He's already off to a fast start this season, posting a personal best 16:09.40 at Northwest's first meet of the season.



Andrew Mason

CARSON MCEACHERN, BISHOP CARROLL

After the graduation of Class 5A cross country champion Erik Enriquez of Kapaun Mount Carmel, runner-up McEachern returns as the top finisher from last year's state meet. The three-time state qualifier ran his best time of 15:43 last season, and did not finish lower than third in seven races.



Carson McEachern

CJ MEYER, WICHITA COLLEGIATE

Meyer returns for his junior season as one of Class 3A's top distance runners. He finished fifth at the state cross country meet, trailing only two fellow underclassmen with his time of 17:15.25. In the spring, he finished third in the 3A 3200 meters (9:48.75) and fifth in the 1600 (4:34.76).



CJ Meyer

ELIJAH MOORE, ST. JAMES ACADEMY

After finishing 17th at the Class 5A state meet as a sophomore in 2019, Moore moved up to an eighth-place finish last year as a junior and will look to challenge his Eastern Kansas League rivals from St. Thomas Aquinas for the crown this season. Last year at state he was the Thunder's top finisher and led them to a runner-up team finish.

BEN MOSIER, MANHATTAN

A complement to two-time Class 6A state champion Daniel Harkin the past three years, Mosier takes over as Manhattan's top runner this season. Mosier qualified for state as a freshman and sophomore with a best showing of 64th, but made a big leap last year into the top 20, finishing 13th. He took third at the season-opening Manhattan Invitational last Saturday.



Ben Mosier



Tanner Newkirk

TANNER NEWKIRK, HAYDEN

The son of two-time Emporia state cross country champion Kevin Newkirk, Tanner followed in his father's footsteps bringing home his first state championship last fall in Wamego. Battling a field that included past champion Tanner Lindahl of Buhler and freshman sensation Micah Blomker of Bishop Miege, Newkirk pulled away late to win by three seconds in 15 minutes, 53.32 seconds – the second fastest time of any of last year's state champions. Newkirk battled a hip injury throughout track season last spring, but is back to form this fall, winning the Missouri Western Griffon Invitational to start the season.

SAM PINKERTON, LOGAN

Pinkerton entered his junior season this year with a personal record of 17:06. His PR came at the state meet in Victoria, where he finished seventh in 1A, improving from 46th place as a freshman and 18th as a sophomore. Because Logan does not have a cross country team, Pinkerton competed with Phillipsburg during the regular season. Pinkerton placed in the top eight in all of his meets last year.



Sam Pinkerton

CORBAN PRIEST, WINFIELD

Priest and the Vikings gave 4A champion Buhler and runner-up Bishop Miege a strong challenge, thanks in part to his ninth-place finish. Priest, a junior, won the regional at Chanute and was All-Ark Valley-Chisholm Trail Division III. A state track qualifier at 3,200 meters, his personal best 5K in cross country is 16:25.



Corban Priest

AJ RUBIO, MISSION VALLEY

Pulling double duty in the fall as a kicker for the football team, Rubio has been an impact performer for the Viking cross country team since his freshman season when he qualified for state and placed 35th. Last season, he handed Council Grove freshman Kodi Downes his only regular-season loss and finished runner-up to Downes at the Flint Hills League meet. Qualifying for state again, Rubio earned his first state medal, finishing sixth in Class 2A. His best time of the season was a 16:25.



AJ Rubio



Sawyer Schmidt

SAWYER SCHMIDT, AUGUSTA

Schmidt, a senior, finished sixth at the 4A cross country meet last fall, and ran a personal best of 16:02 at the Orioles' league meet. When the calendar flipped to 2021, he continued to roll. Schmidt swept the 4A 1,600 and 3,200 races after eclipsing Augusta's long-standing school records in both events during the regular season. He won the JK Gold Invitational (16:17.30) to start this season.

LOGAN SEGER, AQUINAS

A three-time state placer who has helped St. Thomas Aquinas extend its Class 5A state championship streak to seven straight titles, Seger will take over as the Saints' undisputed top runner this season after the graduation of third-place state finisher Tommy Hazen. Seger placed 14th at state as a freshman, moved up to ninth as a sophomore and then took fourth last year, while also being a regional and Eastern Kansas League champion in 2020. Seger also was a regional champion as a sophomore and has a PR of 15:25.90. He captured the Class 5A 1,600 title last spring and was runner-up in the 3,200 to Hazen.



Logan Seger

BEN SHRYOCK, FREE STATE

One of two returning state placers from last year's Class 6A state championship team, Shryock had a strong bounced-back season last year after tough finish to his sophomore season when he didn't earn a state medal due to an illness the week of the state meet, taking 57th. He had placed fourth at state as a freshman and was third at the Sunflower League meet going into the 2019 state meet. Last year, Shryock was back to form, capturing the Sunflower League title and taking second at his Class 6A regional before finishing seventh at the state meet.



Dylan Sprecker

DYLAN SPRECKER, SOUTHEAST OF SALINE

Sprecker has led Southeast of Saline to state championships each of his first three seasons. He added an individual state championship as a sophomore in 2019, but saw a stress fracture wipe out the bulk of his junior season. He returned for the postseason and finished second at the North Central Activities Association meet before battling his way to a fourth-place finish at the Class 3A state meet. Sprecker returned to full strength last spring and swept titles in the 800, 1,600 and on the Trojans' 3,200 relay.

CAMERON TEN EYCK, SILVER LAKE

As a sophomore in 2019, TenEyck helped Silver Lake to a runner-up team finish in Class 3A as the Eagles narrowly missed knocking off Southeast of Saline for the title. TenEyck placed ninth at state that year and last year took over as Silver Lake's lead runner and had a big junior season, winning four meets, including Mid-East League and regional titles. A three-time state qualifier, TenEyck finished sixth at the Class 3A state meet last year and he has the third-fastest time in program history.



Cameron TenEyck



ELIJAH ZORTMAN, FOWLER

Zortman placed eighth at state cross country in 1A last year as a junior, turning in a personal-best 17:09. He took third at the Greeley County regional with an 18.15.7. At state track, Zortman took fifth in the 3,200 and was seventh in the 1,600.

Elijah Zortman