

Westlake High School: Runners take their marks

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Mike Holzheimer, Sun News

Westlake High School girls cross country coach **Travis Hasselswerdt** will have a young squad in 2010, but the number of participants are most impressive.

"This is the biggest and deepest team we've had in over a decade," noted the Lady Demons coach, who starts his eighth season at the helm. "We will also be one of the youngest teams that we've had in quite some time with only two returning seniors on the squad."

Those two seniors are captains **Alesha Beverly** and **Katherine Beaton**, both of whom received honorable mention laurels within the Southwestern Conference last season, will be counted upon to be the overall core of this young squad.

Other returning varsity letter-winners running for the green and white this fall will be sophomore **Brittany Antognazzi**, junior **Megan Duffy**, sophomore **Jacky Gardner**, sophomore **Liz Kobe** and sophomore **Nora Lee**.

Kobe, Westlake's team MVP last fall, along with Duffy, are also expected to be team leaders for Hasselswerdt this year. If healthy, Kobe and Duffy figure to seriously challenge for the top spots on the Lady Demons lineup.

Newcomers to keep an eye on this year include freshman **Grace Jenkins**, sophomore **Bridget Smik** and freshman **Jasmine Welch**.

Smik, who will be making the transition from the sport of soccer to cross country this year, looks to really round out the varsity team in 2010. Jenkins figures to be the team's No. 1 runner this year, and according to Hasselswerdt, should impress a lot of people this year.

"If we can stay healthy, we should be a much improved team," said Hasselswerdt. "This is a team that could challenge for a regional spot."

For the Westlake boys, third-year varsity coach **Cindy Bailey** returns three of her top seven runners from the 2009 team.

Leading the way will be seniors **Jack St. Marie**, **Peter Ogonek** and **Josh Buzzard**.

St. Marie, a first team performer regarding the Southwestern Conference last fall, qualified for the regional meet at Tiffin for the third season in a row.

Ogonek has stepped up his pace in preparation for the fall season and is looking for several strong finishes, while Buzzard is aiming for a healthier season. St. Marie and Ogonek are three-year letter winners for the Demons, while Buzzard is a two-year varsity performer.

Others to watch in the Westlake pack of runners this season will be juniors **Chad Clark, Stephen Fleischer, Harrison Keppler, Conor Mancini** with sophomore runners **Aaron Brown, Kevin Dempsey, Jacob Ogonek** and **Jonathon Simon** rounding out the 10th grade class.

Freshmen to keep an eye on include **Peter Eyre, Brian Hood, Ian Hulse, Gavin Kelly, Rudy Keppler, Dillon Renick** and **Daniel Squeri**.

"We're a young team," noted Bailey, whose hoping to improve upon a seventh place finish (out of eight teams) in the SWC last year. "We have tremendous leadership, though, with our upperclassmen. We look to improve meet by meet and have the younger runners get stronger throughout the season."