

River girls step up for 2010

By Jim Horvath

Sports

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As the 2010 girls cross country season approaches, there are a number of questions that will be answered in the weeks ahead.

Will defending Division I state champion Magnificat have to rebuild, or simply reload?

Is the young, talented group of runners at Rocky River ready to improve on their 11th-place Division II state finish of a year ago?

Are the Bay Rockets ready to make a run behind state qualifier Hanna Sterle?

And can either Westlake, North Olmsted or Olmsted Falls make their presence felt in the Southwestern Conference?

...Two members of last year's team, senior Kat Stultz and junior Abbie Marquard, return to anchor this year's team. Two seniors, Laura Hogan and Courtney Kishbaugh, have come up from the junior varsity, while sophomores Macey Walker and Katherine Kerr will look to step up and make an impact.

In the SWC, Westlake has one of its biggest and deepest teams in over a decade, according to Demons head coach Travis Haselswerdt.

"It's also one of our youngest with just two seniors on the team," Haselswerdt said. "Overall, we've made a conscious effort to increase our mileage significantly from the past few seasons. So far, the girls seem to be buying into that.

"If we can stay healthy, we should be a much-improved team that could challenge for a regional spot," he added.

Those two seniors, Alesha Beverly and Katherine Beaton, were both honorable mention SWC last year and will be the team's co-captains. The team's top runner and team MVP, sophomore Liz Kobe, returns along with junior Megan Duffy and sophomores Jacky Gardner and Brittany Antognazzi.

In addition, sophomore Bridget Smik is making the transition from soccer to cross country while freshman Grace Jenkins is expected to be a strong contender for the team's top spot, according to Haselswerdt...