

Runners ready to go extra mile for Pirates

Written by STEVE OSTERMANN
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Long-distance talent to set pace for Port boys' track team that may be thin in other areas

When it comes to the numbers game, the Port Washington boys' track and field team should be more than able to hold its own this season.



With nearly 70 athletes out for the sport, Pirates coach Mark Pasten has plenty of choices as he and his staff fill out the lineup.

But just how far varsity talent will take Port in the North Shore Conference and beyond is another question.

“Our numbers are good, and we have 14 returning letterwinners, which is probably more than we did last year,” Pasten said.

“We don’t have a ton of depth, but we should be able to fill most of the events.”

The Pirates, who placed fifth in last year’s North Shore Conference indoor meet and seventh in the outdoor meet, should again be strong in the distance events.

Port lost one of its two state qualifiers — discus thrower Zach Hauser — to graduation. Back in the fold is senior Jason Marhal, who placed 22nd in the 3,200-meter run at the WIAA Division 1 finals.

Marhal, who was also a state qualifier in cross country last fall, should be among the

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conference's top distance runners.

The Pirates are counting on steady scoring from runners such as senior Jack Skelton-Miller, juniors Billy Ernest and Taylor Godersky and sophomore Eagan Norman.

"Jason made a big jump with the way he improved in cross country. We're hoping he can continue that this spring," Pasten said.

Expected to be among the Pirates' other top performers are seniors Derek Haley (pole vault), Anthony Davis (discus) and Perry Schaefer (pole vault), juniors Quentin Lueck (hurdles), Darius Will (jumps) and Marty Franzkowiak (sprints) and sophomore Tom Rose (sprints, jumps).

"We definitely have most of our depth in the distance events," Pasten said.

"We're a little thin in the field events, so hopefully we'll have some people step up and surprise us there."

This week, the Pirates opened the season with a Tuesday scrimmage at Milwaukee Lutheran.

Port will participate in its first official meet — the South Shore Orthopedics Invitational at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside — at 9:30 a.m. Saturday, March 16.

On March 19, the Pirates will take part in the Sheboygan South Invitational at 4 p.m.

Port girls count on young talent.

Middle and long-distance races shouldn't be a problem for the Port Washington girls' track and field team this season.

It's the other events that have coach Joe Adamak and his staff wondering.

"We don't have many sprinters, and the field events are a question," Adamak said.

"We have a lot of young kids. It's too soon to say how well they will do."

Where the Pirates have some certainty is in the longer races. Senior Bianca Benkley, who holds team records in the 1,600 and 3,200 runs, is back to lead a veteran group whose other members include senior Allie Mann and juniors Sydney Greisch, Kristina Rossi and Kristen Smith.

Senior Brianna Krejci, a first-year runner, has also shown promise, Adamak said.

Adamak said he expects Benkley, who has been a multiple state qualifier in cross country and track, to have another solid season. However, she will again face tough challenges vying for honors in the North Shore Conference and a WIAA sectional that will have strong runners from perennial powers such as Neenah.

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“Bianca will have a terrific year, but it will be tough getting through our sectional,” Adamak said.

This week, the Port girls opened the season with a scrimmage at Milwaukee Lutheran on Tuesday.

The Pirates will participate in the Raider Invitational at Sheboygan North at 3:30 p.m. this Friday and the Sheboygan South Invitational on March 19.

Image Information: IT WASN'T TOO COLD or icy for members of the Port Washington boys' track and field team to venture outside for an afternoon of roadwork last Friday. Putting in several miles during a run along Highway C were (front row, from left) Jason Marhal, Jack Skelton-Miller, (middle row) Taylor Godersky, Billy Ernest, (back row) Joe Bortolotti and Eagan Norman. Photo by Sam Arendt