The 2026 Coaches Pre-Season Cross-Country Poll

We are proud to present our fourth cross-country poll as voted on by SD High School coaches. Following is a class by class look at their predictions. The 2026 season will culminate October 24 on the Hart Ranch course in Rapid City.

Class B State Cross Country Champions
Ipswich

Class B Girls

The predictions:

1. Ipswich
2. Deubrook
3. Kimball/White Lake
4. Lemmon
5. Warner
6. Northwestern

Ipswich won their first title since 2016 and their ninth overall by scoring 18 points last season in Huron. The Tigers are picked to repeat as they return four runners that finished in the top 16 a year ago. Isabella Galbraith, Jayla Stiles and Kalynn Oban were 4th, 5th and 11th last year as seventh graders. Deubrook is picked second and will be led by last year's runner up, Nora Olson. Nineteen of the top 25 last year were underclassman.

Class A Girls

The predictions:

1. SF Christian
2. West Central
3. Lennox
4. Chamberlain

Sioux Falls Christian won their fourth consecutive title last year scoring 13 points. The Chargers are picked again this year despite losing 5 seniors that finished in the top 7 including individual champ Ellie Maddox. They will be led by Sadie Pettengil who was 3rd in 2025 and 2024. West Central, second last year, is picked as the runner-up again. 16 of last year's top 25 were underclassman.

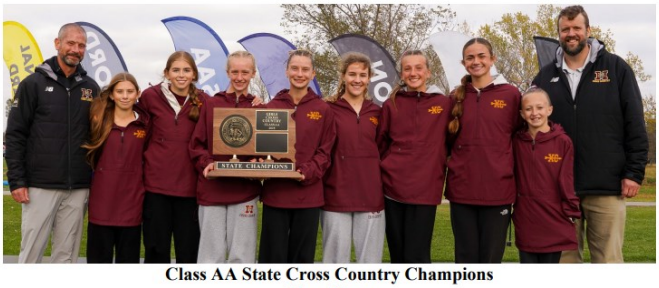
Class A State Cross Country Champions
Sioux Falls Christian

Class AA Girls

The predictions:

1. Harrisburg
2. RC Stevens
3. SF Lincoln
4. O'Gorman

Harrisburg followed up their first-ever title with a repeat last year behind two-time champ, 8th grader Brianna Reilly. The Tigers will go for the three-peat behind Reilly, Hannah Genrich, 3rd a year ago as a freshman and Eloise Scharnberg, 8th as a 7th grader. Rapid City Stevens, fresh off an AA track and field title last spring is picked second while 2026 runner-up Sioux Falls Lincoln is picked third. Last year's individual runner-up, Payton VanDeest, who recorded some outstanding times over the summer on the track, looks to contend for the individual title.


Class AA State Cross Country Champions
Harrisburg

Class B Boys

The predictions:

1. Mitchell Christian
2. James Valley Christian
3. Lemmon
4. Freeman

Philip won their fourth consecutive title last year, but the Scotties graduated four seniors. Mitchell Christian, second last year and led by two-time champ, Silas Holdeman, is picked as the top contender in 2026. MC also returns Luke Mentele (4th) and Sawyer Holdeman (11th). 17 of the top 25 from a year ago were underclassman. James Valley Christian is picked second. The Vikings were fourth in Huron.

Class B Cross Country Champions
Philip

Class A Boys

The predictions:

1. SF Christian
2. Custer
3. Belle Fourche

SFC won their fifth overall title last year, scoring 37 points. They are picked to win their third straight and will be led by top returnees Wesley Lyon (3rd) and Levi Vander Leest (11th). Perennial podium finisher Custer is picked second and will be led by Peyton Kruger, 9th in 2026. Belle Fourche is picked third after placing 5th last year. 15 of the top 25 from last year were underclassman.

2026 State Cross Country Meet
October 24, 2026
Hart Ranch Course
Rapid City

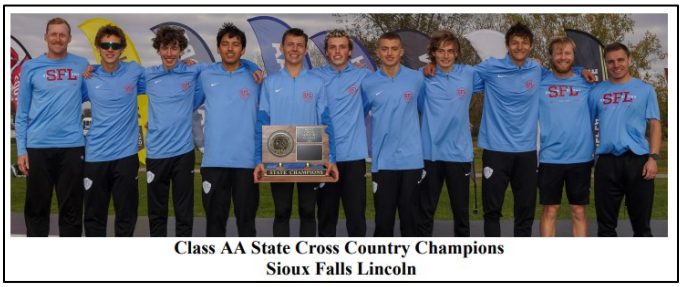
Class A State Cross Country Champions
Sioux Falls Christian

Class AA Boys

The predictions:

1. Sioux Falls Washington
2. Sioux Falls Lincoln
3. Brandon Valley
4. Aberdeen Central

The storied Sioux Falls Lincoln Patriot cross-country squad won their 21st state title last year in Huron, scoring 39 points. SFL graduated three seniors that finished in the top 15, and are picked second. Cross-town rival Sioux Falls Washington is tabbed as the top team in 2026, after a runner-up finish in 2025. The Warriors will be led by Cole Reilly, 5th last year. Tyrus Needles (2nd) and Arvid Nelsen (7th) will lead SFL. Brandon Valley and Aberdeen Central, 3rd and 4th respectively at state, are picked in the same spots this year.



Class AA State Cross Country Champions
Sioux Falls Lincoln

Team Photos courtesy of SDPB