

Sioux Falls Site of 2023 State Cross Country Championships Set For This Weekend

The 77th Boys and 48th Girls State Cross Country Meet is set for this Saturday, Oct. 21st, at the Yankton Trail Course in Sioux Falls. The meet schedule (all times local):

12:00 Noon	Class AA Boys
12:30 PM	Class B Boys
1:00 PM	Class A Boys
1:30 PM	Class AA Girls
2:00 PM	Class B Girls
2:30 PM	Class A Girls
Awards	Following final race



Photo courtesy SDPB

Sioux Falls last hosted the championships in 2021. The meet rotates among Huron, Rapid City and Sioux Falls. Here is the link to the SD High School Activities Association Championship Central page: <https://www.sdhsaa.com/activity/cross-country-championships/>. Live results can be found at www.dakotatiming.com. The early weather forecast calls for partly cloudy skies and a high of 64 degrees.

Following is a class by class look at the meet.

Class B Girls

- Defending Individual Champion: Emery Larson of Chester.
- Defending Team Champions: Potter County (first title as a coop).

- Course Record: 2015, Aleah Steger, Ipswich, 19:17.62.
- Coaches Pre-Season Poll: 1) Potter County, 2) Arlington, 3) Gayville-Volin.

Last year, freshmen captured the top five spots, led by first-year runner Emery Larson of Chester, who set the Huron course record of 18:15.24 with her win. Two-time defending champ Ella Boekelheide from Northwestern was runner-up. 15 of the top 25 individuals return from last year. The top-Class B time in the field belongs to Larson. The sophomore (who also plays volleyball) has had another solid season with several wins. She also fared well in two large meets, taking fourth at the Augie Twilight – a meet that featured 256 runners from six states – and fourth at the Clyde Cotton meet that featured primarily AA and A schools. She appears to be the odds-on favorite to defend her title and her season best time of 17:36.85 is well under the course record. Boekelheide will challenge and has a third-place finish at the Heartland Preview on her season resume.

Potter County put three runners in the top 17 last year to win their first title as a coop (Gettysburg and Hoven). Those three runners are back and are currently ranked in the top ten heading into the state meet. The Battlers will be led by last year's fifth place finisher Dannika Kaup, who won the Region 4B title last week. Fun Fact: Hoven won eight titles in a ten-year span from 1983-1993. Last year's second and third place teams, Arlington and Gayville-Volin, were picked second and third in the coaches' pre-season poll.

Class B Boys

- Defending Individual Champion: Josiah Schroeder, Canistota.
- Defending Team Champions: Phillip (second title).

- Course Record: 2011, Duane Jongeling, Parker, 16:24.02.
- Coaches Pre-Season Poll: 1) Freeman Academy-Marion, 2) Philip, 3) Northwestern

This could be one of the more interesting races of the day as ten runners have run under 17:00 minutes. Overall, 15 of the top 25 from 2022 are back. The top times coming into the meet belong to Wakely Burns, Philip (fifth in 2022) 16:14.73; Tavin Schroeder, Freeman Academy/Marion (second in 2022, eighth in 2021) 16:27.56; Nicholas Schlachter, Potter County (third in 2022, fifth in 2021) 16:30.82; Asher Peterson, Philip, (16th in 2022) 16:34.86; Silas Holderman, Mitchell Christian (sixth in 2022, 21st in 2021) 16:36.4; Caden Schwader, Howard (11th in 2022) 16:41.81; Trey Larson, Philip (15th in 2022) 16:44.09; Baylor Burns, Philip (12th in 2022); Landen Johnson, Deubrook Area (27th in 2022); and Ethan Hartong, McCrossan (13th in 2022) 16:56.77.

Philip has emerged as the odds-on favorite to defend their team title (their second overall). They have five of the top ten times in the state and went a remarkable 1-5 at the Western Great Plains Conference and Region 5B meets.

Class A Girls

- Defending Individual Champion: Isabelle Bloker, Sioux Valley.
- Defending Team Champion: Sioux Falls Christian (first title).
- Course Record: 2015, Ella Byers, Chamberlain, 18:41.21.
- Coaches Pre-Season Poll: 1) Sioux Falls Christian, 2) Vermillion, 3) Custer.

Two things seem obvious when sizing up the Class A Girls – Isabelle Bloker of Sioux Valley should repeat as the individual champ and Sioux Falls Christian should repeat as the team champions. Bloker set the Huron course record last year in winning her tenth meet of the year. She has not let up in 2023 and comes in with a season-best time of 17:24.36, 40 seconds ahead of her nearest competitor and well under the Yankton Trail course record. She has six individual meet titles to go along with a second-

place finish at the Augie Twilight as well as a stellar fourth place finish at the Roy Griak in the Twin Cities, one of the most elite meets in the country.

Sioux Falls Christian has had another outstanding season winning the Beresford Opener, Charger Invite, Heartland Preview, Rapid City Invite, Lennox Invite, Dak XII conference and the Region 2A meet where they scored 18 points. They also finished second at the Augie Twilight. The Chargers have five runners ranked in the top 12. Vermillion has been solid all year long and could contend for second.



Photo courtesy SDPB

Class A Boys

- Defending Individual Champion: Sawyer Clarkson, Belle Fourche.
- Defending Team Champion: Belle Fourche (first title).
- Course Record: 2021 Sawyer Clarkson, Belle Fourche, 15:27.13.
- Coaches Pre-Season Poll: 1) Belle Fourche, 2) Sioux Falls Christian, 3) Hill City.

The individual and team titles are up for grabs in a wide-open field. 15 of the top 25 from a year ago are back and seven have run under 16:00 minutes. Luke Rupert of Hill City (third in 2022) has the top time coming into the state meet at 15:16.7. Joe Cross, Dakota Valley (ninth in 2022) has had a solid season and comes in ranked second at 15:33.51. Other contenders include Payton Brown, Milbank (sixth in 2022) 15:46.25; Lane Krautschun, Belle Fourche (second in 2022, first in Class B in 2021) 15:48.22; Alex Schumacher, Miller (11th in 2022)) 15:53.20;

Leighton Avers, Hill City (15th in 2022) 15:57.8 and Pierce Baumberger, Miller (seventh in 2022) 15:59.09. Rupert has won the Northern Hills Invite, Heartland Preview, Rapid City Invite, Black Hills Conference meet and the Region 5A meet. Krautschun has been in the mix in many of those same meets.

Last year Belle Fourche interrupted a streak of three straight team titles for Sioux Falls Christian as the Broncs won their first ever title. The key to this year's team title will come down to the number three and four runners for several squads. Hill City has four ranked in the top 15, while Sioux Falls Christian has four in the top 25. Dakota Valley and Vermillion will battle for podium spots.

Class AA Girls

- Defending Individual Champion: Ali Bainbridge, Sioux Falls Lincoln.
- Defending Team Champion: Rapid City Stevens (18th title).
- Course Record: 2021, Alea Hardie, O'Gorman, 17:31.28
- Coaches Pre-Season Poll: 1) Brandon Valley, 2) O'Gorman, 3) Spearfish

The first race of the day for the girls should be a great one as Peyton VanDeest and Mia Wentzy will challenge O'Gorman junior Libby Castelli. Castelli was second last year and has run 17:31.11. Wentzy, an outstanding triathlete from Brandon Valley has a 17:45.4 effort this season. VanDeest of Spearfish was fourth last year as an eighth grader and has clocked 17:47.2. Castelli has won at Augie, Heartland Preview and the Metro Conference meet. She was runner-up at the Griak.

Brandon Valley, the coaches pre-season pick, had five runners ranked in the top 15 and will be looking for their second-ever state title. Harrisburg will be looking to make the podium as they have four runners ranked in the top 14.

Class AA Boys

- Defending Individual Champion: Simeon Birnbaum, Rapid City Stevens.
- Defending Team Champion: Rapid City Stevens (15th title).
- Course Record: 2011, Tony Smoragiewicz, Rapid City Central, 15:24.84.
- Coaches Pre-Season Poll: 1) Sioux Falls Lincoln, 2) Rapid City Stevens, 3) Rapid City Central.



Photo courtesy SDPB

We will have a new individual champion as arguably the greatest distance runner in South Dakota history, Simeon Birnbaum of Rapid City Stevens, has graduated and is now competing for Oregon. 14 of the top 25 are back from last year's

state meet with Pierre's Jared Lutmer the early favorite. He comes into the meet with a time of 15:19.9 and was third a year ago. He has four meet wins this year including the ESD conference. A total of ten runners have run under 16:00 minutes this season. Look for Mikah Peters, Brandon Valley, Miles Lechtenberg, Sioux Falls Lincoln, Grady Loos, Rapid City Stevens, Dylan Payer, Yankton, Cole Reilly, Sioux Falls Washington, Kieran Weigelt, Sioux Falls Jefferson, Peyton Cast, Douglas, Jack Castelli, O'Gorman, Ty Petrocco, Sturgis and Joseph Perkins, Aberdeen Central to all be in contention.

Last year Stevens defended their team title and won their fifteenth overall. They won ten straight from 1995-2004. Sioux Falls Lincoln is the coaches pre-season pick and always runs well at the state meet with a whopping 17 state titles to their credit. The Patriots were third behind Yankton last year. They recently won their eighth Metro Conference title in the last ten years. Lincoln has five runners ranked in the top 16. Sioux Falls Washington could be a surprise with five ranked in the top 19.