

Huron Site of 2022 State Cross Country Championships Set For This Weekend

The 76th Boys and 47th Girls State Cross Country Meet is set for this Saturday, Oct. 22nd, at the Broadland Creek course in Huron. The meet schedule (all times local):

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



Photo courtesy SDPB

Huron last hosted the championships in 2019. The meet rotates among Huron, Rapid City and Sioux Falls. Here is the link to the SDHSAA Championship Central page: <https://www.sdhsaa.com/activity/cross-country/> Live results can be found at www.dakotatiming.com The early weather forecast calls for cloudy skies and a high of 74 degrees.

Following is a class by class look at the meet.

Class B Girls

- Defending Individual Champion: Ella Boekelheide, Northwestern
- Defending Team Champions: Kimball/White Lake (second consecutive)
- Course Record: 2016 Laura Nelson, Gayville-Volin, 18:38.88

Last year, 8th graders captured six of the top seven spots, led by Boekelheide, who defended her title from her seventh grade year. 15 of the top 20 individuals return from last year. The top-Class B time in the field belongs to Emery Larson of Chester Area. The freshman (who also plays volleyball) has had a remarkable season with wins at Beresford, the Flyer Invite, Dell Rapids, Colman-Egan, the Big East Conference and the Region 2B meet where she ran a PR of 17:49.4. She also fared well in two large meets, taking sixth at the Augie Twilight – a meet that featured 256 runners from six states and sixth at the Clyde Cotton meet that featured primarily AA and A schools. She appears to be the odds-on favorite as the second-best time of the season is 38 seconds behind her. She should challenge the course record.

Kimball/White Lake won their second consecutive title last year but did not qualify for this year's state meet. Potter County (Gettysburg and Hoven) could be the favorite to win their first state title with three runners ranked in the top twenty-six. The Battlers were second last year by three points. Fun Fact: Hoven won eight titles in a ten-year span from 1983-1993. With a good finish by their third runner, Arlington could make it a race as they have two in the top eleven.

Class B Boys

- Defending Individual Champion: Lane Krautschun, Bison.
- Defending Team Champions: Miller (first).
- Course Record: 2006 Kiko Mendoza, Takini, 16:09.39.

We will have a new individual and team champion in Class B as Lane Krautschun is now competing for Class A Belle Fourche and Miller has moved to Class A. The race for this year's title appears to be wide open as only nine of the top 20 return. The top times coming into the meet belong to Tavin Schroeder, Freeman Academy/Marion (eighth in

2021) 16:26.3; Nicholas Schlachter, Potter County (fifth in 2021) 16:40.1; Josiah Schroeder, Canistota (second in 2021) 16:42.2; Dax Frandsen, James Valley Christian (41st in 2021) 16:44.6; Finley McConniel, Freeman Academy/Marion 16:46.3; Lincoln Woodring, Northwestern (15th in 2021) 16:47.0 and Silas Holdeman, Mitchell Christian (21st in 2021) 16:49.2.

Phillip appears to be the team favorite with four runners ranked in the top eighteen. The Scotties were fourth last year. They won their only state title in 2014.

Class A Girls

- Defending Individual Champion: Ellie Maddox, Sioux Falls Christian.
- Defending Team Champion: Custer (seventh).
- Course Record: 2016 Haleigh Timmer, St. Thomas More, 18:36.39.

This is a loaded field as eight of the top nine and 15 of the top 20 individuals are back. The early favorite appears to be last year's third place finisher, sophomore Isabell Bloker of Sioux Valley who has the top time in the field at 17:12.1, well under the course record. She has had an impressive season winning nine of the ten meets she was entered in. Her only non-winning effort was at the Big East Conference meet where she was second to Emery Larson of Chester. Halle Bauer of Great Plains Lutheran was eighth last year and is the only other runner in the field to run under 18:00.

Also in the field is senior Jade Ecoffey of Red Cloud who became that school's first ever state track champion in 2020 winning the 1600- and 3200-meter runs. She repeated that feat this past spring. She comes in ranked eight. Teammate Ashly Blount is seeded sixth. No state meet would be complete without a Zirbel competing. This year's race will feature Madison, the eleventh member of her family, who is seeded fifth. The Waubay/Summit clan has had great success at the state meet.

The team race favorite should be Sioux Falls Christian. The Chargers have five runners seeded in the top 16, including defending champ Maddox who is

seeded 12th. Other squad members are Corrine Braun (10th), Natalie Smith (13th), Anna Vyn (15th) and Jerica Glasser (16th). The Chargers have had an exceptional season winning the Beresford Opener, SFC Charger Invite, the Clyde Cotton invite with numerous AA schools competing. That race was run on the Broadland course in Huron. Other team wins include the Rapid City Area School Invite, again with numerous AA schools competing. They took the team title at the Lennox Invite and the DAK XII meet where they had a perfect score of ten. They closed out the season with a win at the Region 2A meet with 17 points.



Photo courtesy SDPB

Class A Boys

- Defending Individual Champion: Sawyer Clarkson, Belle Fourche.
- Defending Team Champion: Sioux Falls Christian (fourth straight, fifth in six years).
- Course Record: 2016 Derick Peters, West Central 15:37.67.

Sawyer Clarkson of Belle Fourche had the fastest time of all three classes at last year's state meet in Sioux Falls. His clocking of 15:27.13 was also a Yankton Trail Course record. Only two of the top eight return as five of the top eight were seniors. Overall, 11 of the top 20 are back.

Clarkson, a senior, ran a 15:03.0 at the Augie Twilight early in the season. That time ranks number one in Class A and he could challenge another course record at Huron. The second-best time belongs to Isaac Davelaar of Sioux Falls Christian with a 15:26.4 effort, also at Augie. Davelaar was second a year ago but has not run this season since Sep. 23, when he

was fourth at the Rapid City Area Schools Invite. Clarkson won the Douglas Early Bird, was runner-up at the Augie Twilight in a field of 300 runners from six states. He was third at the Rapid City meet, won the Black Hills Conference and Region 5A meets. Looking to make a podium finish are Kaleb Foltz of Tri-State, Ricky Berndt of Deuel, last year's Class B champ Lane Krautschum of Belle Fourche and Joe Cross of Elk Point-Jefferson.

Last year Sioux Falls Christian won their fourth straight team title with twenty-six points. Four of their 2021 state meet runners were lost to graduation. They come into the meet with five of the top 31 seed times so a five-peat is possible and a Charger sweep of the Class A titles. Belle Fourche could challenge and also look for Vermillion to make the podium. The Tanagers were runnerup from 2018-2020.

Class AA Girls

- Defending Individual Champion: Alea Hardie, Sioux Falls O'Gorman.
- Defending Team Champion: Sioux Falls O'Gorman (second straight).
- Course Record: 2016 Courtney Klatt, Sioux Falls Lincoln 18:38.58.

Class AA competitors breathed a sigh of relief when Alea Hardie graduated last year. Now running at Nebraska, Hardie was arguably one of the greatest high school female runners this state has ever seen. A three-time cross country champ, she graduated number two all-time in the 800, number two in the 1600 and number one in the 3200. She has made an immediate impact for the Huskers, twice being named the Big Ten Cross Country Athlete of the Week. This year, four of the top five and 16 of the

top 25 placers return from a year ago. Interestingly, nine of last year's top 25 were seventh or eighth graders – not all that common in the AA ranks.

The top returnee is Ali Bainbridge of Sioux Falls Lincoln. The Patriot senior is a state meet veteran placing second in 2021, fourth in 2020, first in Class A in 2019 and second in Class A in 2018, competing for Lennox during those Class A years. Bainbridge has a AA leading time of 17:10.7, which she ran at the Heartland Preview in Sioux Falls in September. She also won the Augie Twilight, Clyde Cotton Invite on the state meet course in Huron in a time of 17:45 – well under the state meet course record. She closed out her regular season with a Metro conference title. O'Gorman's Libby Castelli is ranked second coming into the meet. She was third last year and was runnerup this year to Bainbridge in the Augie Twilight and Metro meet. She edged Bainbridge at the Roy



Photo courtesy SDPB

Griak in Minneapolis, a race that featured 475 runners. Castelli was third in the Gold Division race while Bainbridge was fourth. Briana Holso of

Rapid City Stevens is the only other runner in the field to run under 18:00.

The team race could be one of the closest of the day with Brandon Valley, O'Gorman, Sturgis Brown, RC Central, Harrisburg and SF Lincoln battling for podium spots.

Class AA Boys

- Defending Individual Champion: Simeon Birnbaum, Rapid City Stevens.
- Defending Team Champion: Rapid City Stevens (fourteenth)
- Course Record: 2014 Will Lauer, Sioux Falls Lincoln 15:13.20

Just watching defending champion Simeon Birnbaum of Rapid City Stevens run his final SDHSAA-sanctioned race would be worth the price of admission by itself. The Stevens senior placed himself at the top of the ladder when it comes to all-time greats in South Dakota with an epic junior season. He won a state cross country title, set all-time state records in the 800, 1600, 3200 and ran the anchor on the fastest medley relay in state history. He capped his season by becoming just the seventeenth prep in US history to run the mile in under 4:00 (see related story).

He comes into the meet ranked number nine in the nation in the latest Dyestat rankings. His state meet seed time of 14:47.8, run at the Heartland Preview, is almost a minute ahead of his nearest rival. Birnbaum has an undefeated season in the works, highlighted by a win at the Pat Amato Classic in Colorado.

The battle for podium spots will be wide open as only nine of the top twenty return. Four of the top five last year were seniors. Cashton Johnson of Harrisburg, Jared Lutmer of Pierre Riggs have both run under sixteen minutes.

Last year Stevens returned to the top spot on the podium for the first time since 2004. 2022 was their fourteenth title. They won ten straight from 1995-2004. This year's team title could go to the squad with the best fourth and fifth place finishers, as several squads are strong in their 1-2-3 spots. Sioux Falls Lincoln always runs well at the state meet with a whopping 17 state titles to their credit. They recently won their seventh Metro Conference title in the last nine years. Other podium spots could go to Sturgis Brown, Yankton, Brandon Valley, Rapid City Central and Rapid City Stevens.

**Live State Meet
Results:
Dakotatiming.com**

The Wonder of a Cross Country Meet

By Jeff Lukens

If you've never been to a State Cross Country meet, do yourself a favor and go! Heck, maybe you've never been to any Cross Country Meet, ever, but the recommendation still stands—GO! You may have to be dragged to your first one, but you'll be the one dragging others from that point on.

The appeal of the Cross Country experience is intensely personal for each spectator, but there are certainly some non-negotiable commonalities.

The Cross Country season takes place during, arguably, the most beautiful time of year; autumn days being typically cooler and very pleasant than those in the summer. As a bonus, most courses are loaded with trees that are showing off their beautiful colors, being topped only by the palette of team uniform colors assembled on the starting line.

The excitement of the start of the race pales in comparison, though, to the thrill of the finish. The "finish chute" is the stuff of legend at a big meet. Gritty athletes pouring their hearts out for their teams; often to the point of physical collapse. Hysterical, screaming parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, coaches, and teammates. Literally a tunnel of noise that comes and goes in wave after wave.

Then come the hugs, the high-fives, the tears, the laughter, the joy, the celebrations. Followed by more hugs. Yes, there is technically only one "winner" when the race ends. Only one who dons a gold-medal necklace. But don't try telling finishers 2-thru-whatever that they were not winners, because they were. And they are. And most of them are already thinking about their next meet and having the chance to do it all over again—including that "being a winner" thing.

To be sure, Cross Country is a sport like no other. Don't believe it? Go to a meet and see for yourself. Prepare yourself for sensory and joy overload!