



THE CHARGER

TAKING CHARGE

CROSS COUNTRY GIRLS FINISH 2ND AT SILVER LAKE

Lauren Schutter | sports editor

The cross country team opened up its season Saturday, running on a rather rainy morning in Silver Lake.

For the girls team, freshman Payton Wurtz had a great opening run, taking 2nd place in her first high school meet with a time of 20:59. Junior Rebekah Stuhlsatz took 6th at 22:54. These two are looking to be a dynamic running duo — Stuhlsatz having state experience her freshman and sophomore years of high school already, placing 11th in 2019 and 14th in 2020. “I want to go to state this year, but I really want the whole team to go with me. I also want to crack the top-10 at state this year,” Stuhlsatz said.

Wurtz is also bringing experience, from junior high, where she set a new school record in the 1600 last spring. “I use it as a confidence booster. I keep it in the back of my mind. If I’m nervous it helps me remember what I’m capable of. I’m hoping to go after the high school records during the next four years,” Wurtz said.

The girls finished second as a team Saturday, and they have high hopes as a squad. “This was a good start to the season,” coach Roger Alderman said. “The course was a little wet but conditions were nice for the first meet of the year. Our returning runners averaged nearly 3 minutes better than their times from the same meet last year.”

On the boys’ side of things, the team is working with lack of experience. Though the team finished 8th at Silver Lake, coach Alderman sees this as an opportunity to rise. “We’ve had a complete turnover of varsity runners over the past two years,” Alderman said. “If we work to get better each day, we should see lots of progress by the end of the season.”

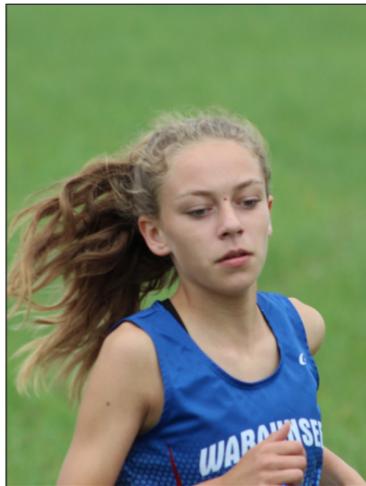
Stuhlsatz said the team is bonding well, even with so many new runners. “We’re close. It’s like it’s more than just a team. We’re all friends and we care about each other. We hype each other up.”

The team also pushed hard during summer workouts, which was a change from individual workouts from previous seasons. “I ran a lot more during the summer than previous years, because I knew what it takes to get prepared. I’ve learned how to run a race better, to avoid slowing down in the middle of the race, so that experience should help me improve,” Stuhlsatz said.

FOOTBALL KICKS OFF SEASON WITH WIN OVER MISSION VALLEY

Wabaunsee football kicked off its season Friday with a 28-0 win over Mission Valley.

“Wins are awesome. They’re never going to be bad. We have



a lot of stuff we need to do better, but overall I’m very happy,” coach Jess Rutledge said.

It was a game Rutledge looks forward to every year, as he is an graduate of Mission Valley. “It’s a great feeling; there’s no better way to start the season than playing your county rival.”

The win is the first step to accomplishing the high expectations the team has for the year.

Seniors Cade Oliver, Brayden Meseke, Caden Yonke, and Aiden Boeckman return a lot of experience to this squad, and plan to propel the team forward. “We are the leaders of the team; most of us have played for four years and know what we’ve got to do to be successful,” Meseke said. “It’s on us to hold the team and ourselves accountable.”

Statistically speaking, senior Cade Oliver is turning a lot of coaches’ heads. Last season alone he threw for 2,083 yards and 21 touchdowns. In his career thus far, he’s started 28 games.

Other key returners are sophomore linebacker Tate Deever, junior lineman Maverick Havenstein, junior wide receiver Eli Oliver, and junior wide receiver Logan Clark.

Success is in the minds of the team already. “Everyone needs to do their job every play,” said senior Cade Oliver, “We also need to just stick to our game-plan and play with intensity the entire game. If we can do those things we will be successful.”

The Chargers played Hillsboro and Council Grove in a jamboree August 27, which helped sharpen up for the season. The Charger defense didn’t allow any scores during the scrimmages. “It helps get in live reps before the first game,” head coach Jess Rutledge said. “Helps the team see what they need to work on and their strengths and weaknesses.”

VOLLEYBALL LOOKS TO BUILD ON RECENT SUCCESS WITH NEW COACH

The Wabaunsee volleyball team expects to achieve great things again this season.

The team returns four starters, with three previous state appearances for the senior class — taking second as freshmen, first as sophomores and third



Senior Cade Oliver passes under pressure during the first half of the Mission Valley game Friday night. Oliver went 16/27 for 185 yards and 3 touchdowns. The Chargers hit the road again Friday to play Uniontown. Photo by Dee Glotzbach.

Left: Freshman Payton Wurtz runs at Silver Lake Saturday. Wurtz finished 2nd with a time of 20:59. The girls team finished second behind West Franklin. Cross country races at Wamego Saturday morning. Photo by Eli McDaniel.

as juniors. Though the team is bringing in a lot of previous players, there is a new addition to the group.

Coach Chris Smart is entering his first season with the Wabaunsee Volleyball squad. Upon entering the extremely successful program, he gives a lot of credit to previous head coach Tracy Capoun. “There is no question that Tracy is a great coach. She’s not only a regionally recognized coach but a state recognized coach that coached in the volleyball all-star game this last summer. I don’t think there is a lot of pressure. The seniors are still the ladies she coached and got them to the level they are at right now.”

Speaking of those seniors, they definitely feel the excitement of this upcoming season. “I’m definitely feeling it this year,” senior Kaelyn Conrad said. “I’m not joking around when I say we have a state championship in our future. We have the talent, ability, and positive attitude to do it.”

The team opened up its season August 28, playing in the annual Amy Schutter memorial tournament. Teams that competed in the tournament this year included Axtell, Centralia, Mission Valley, Osage City, and Rock Creek. The Chargers have placed first or second in each of the past nine years, and won this tournament in both 2019 and 2020. The team continued this trend, earning first place and going on a 5-0 run.

The Chargers took on the Riley County Falcons and the Chapman Fighting Irish August 31 at Riley County High School. The Chargers defeated the Falcons 25-15, 25-20, then went on to defeat the Fighting Irish 25-17, 18-25, 26-24. Their next

competition is September 11 at Lyndon.

SMALL TENNIS SQUAD STARTS SEASON WITH STRONG SINGLES PERFORMANCES

The tennis team opened its season August 26 at Wamego, with both singles players bringing home medals.

Senior Mayah Mumpower went 4-0 to place first in #1 singles and sophomore Baylie Tharman went 2-2 to finish second in #2 singles.

Though the team numbers are a little lower than usual, coach Brendan Praeger sees this as an opportunity to improve. “We graduated 7 people, so initially we dealt with small team issues. As we continued, this pushed players to work harder. These players can just get in more reps, and I’ve seen the younger players improve a lot more quickly than in previous seasons.”

The tennis team returns seniors Mayah Mumpower and Sarah Vanstory. This experience definitely paid off, as Mayah came away from their opening competition at the Wamego Invitational with a gold medal. Praeger had a lot of confidence in Mayah’s return, saying, “She should hit the ground running. She’ll play singles when she’d been playing doubles last year.”

Other returning players include Danielle Murphy and Baylie Tharman. “Bailey is basically a freshman in experience,” Praeger said. “She is a dual-sport athlete and only got to go to two meets last season because of Covid cancellations. I think she’ll improve a lot this year.” Murphy enters her third year and had some varsity experience last season. “She can hit the

ball really well,” Praeger said. “We just need her to be more consistent and she’ll be pretty competitive.”

As for new players to the program, freshmen Meredith Denton and Ava Huske earned their first variety victory last week against Atchison. “You’d usually prefer to bring more experienced players to varsity events this early in the season, but that experience will definitely pay off,” Praeger said.

The team competes again Wednesday at Seaman and Thursday at Clay Center, both rescheduled meets from last week. Next week they play at Chapman, Ellsworth and Clay Center.

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