

Coach expects lots of progress from young girls track team

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By Alan Babbitt
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HOLLAND -- Nick Kramer likes what he has seen so far out of the Holland girls track team.

The Dutch may be young in a lot of spots, but they have some talent, too, and Kramer is confident he is going to see a lot of progress this season.

"We have a nice group of underclassmen to mix with some good senior leadership," said Kramer, Holland's coach. "Team-wise, we're going to be young, but we have some fine, talented athletes."

Holland has competed in two indoor meets already in 2000. The Dutch are scheduled to go outdoors for the first time today during a four-team meet today at West Ottawa, along with the host Panthers, Holland Christian and Zeeland.

The same four schools also are slated to host a boys quadrangular today at Holland High School.

The event was moved from Holland Christian because the remodeling of its facility isn't finished.

It will be the first competition for any of the teams since before spring break.

"Because we're young, we're going to be working on developing," Kramer said.

Kramer is thankful for the support he receives from assistant coaches such as Roi Gibson. Gibson coaches sprinters and some field events, helping to make sure there is enough individual attention paid to each event.

"You need a lot of (athletes) to compete in track," Kramer said. "There are some 50 positions to fill. We have some 46. I would like to see the numbers go up. They've increased over the past few years, and that makes me happy.

"Roi is doing a super job up with the sprint crew and the field event people. He's just a super guy to have on the team."

Gibson is working with a young crew of sprinters, with senior Alicia Evans the most experienced of the group. A strong athlete, she finished second in the long jump at last year's O-K Red Conference meet but will concentrate on events such as the 100 and 200 meters as well as the 400-meter relay because of an injured foot.

Junior Laura Akridge and sophomore Ashley Woodall are back to bolster the team in the high jump.

Senior Heather Reed heads the group of pole vaulters. She has been doing the event ever since she was a freshman.

The Dutch have a number of new pole vaulters, including three freshmen.

Sophomore Mary Patterson is out to do the pole vault for the first time. Her older brother, Andy, finished second in the event at last year's Class A state meet. Freshmen Joy Love, Leah Koopman and Jennifer VanderMeer have come out to learn the event as well.

Holland also has some capable throwers with a group that includes senior Jonithia Lawson, sophomore Amanda Gasaway and sophomore Mary Stam and freshman Janet Stam. The Stams are sisters.

Kramer is looking forward to working with a gifted pack of middle-distance runners.

Three of the four runners who ran in the school-record 3,200-meter relay have returned. All three of them are juniors -- Amy Hoving, Kendra Snyder and Kirsten Werley.

Heidi Hondorp, a senior, also ran on that record-setting relay last season. She is back as well.

Hoving is strong individually, as well. She qualified for last year's state meet in the 3,200 meters. She can run the 300-meter hurdles swiftly, too.

Freshman Jennifer Thaxtin should figure prominently into the mix for Holland. She can run a variety of events.

"We have a strong distance crew coming back from last year," Kramer said. "We've got some solid runners."

The Dutch don't take long to get into their O-K Red Conference season. They have their first league meet April 18 at Mona Shores, then come back to host Grand Haven two days later.

O-K Red teams have four weeks to fit in duals against seven league opponents. The conference meet is May 15-16 at Grandville.

"Mona will be a good meet for us," Kramer said. "They're good competition and we can compete with them in a good meet. We'll have a lot of fun."

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