

John Glenn off and running

Nemode's girls team aims to be best in county again
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It's not often you hear the phrase "wait 'til next year" uttered at the beginning of a sports season, especially by a coach.

Don't get Matt Nemode wrong, he believes his Bangor John Glenn girls' track team will be strong this season, possibly strong enough to defend the county championship the Bobcats earned last year.

But with the top nine athletes on the team all juniors, Nemode is salivating at the thought of what lies down the road.

"We're excited because if we stay healthy, we look good (this year), but we're really looking forward to next year," Nemode said. "Everyone is getting another year of experience this year and tuning up ... we don't have a senior on the team this season, but next year there will be a bunch of them."

Among them is Gratia Trahn, who broke the school's 3,200 meter record by 20 seconds (11:47) at the indoor meet at Saginaw Valley State University last month. Add in sophomore Kristen Callahan and the Bobcats have one of the best 1-2 punches in distance runners in the area.

"Our distance relays will be strong, too," Nemode said. "The difference between last year and this year is we have two quality people to put in every event. Last year we couldn't do that and it cost us a lot of points in duel meets."

Another junior, Sarah McCreery, returns to defend her county championship in the 200 and is part of a strong 1,600 meter relay team. Ashley Christie was county champ in pole vault last year and third at regionals, and part of a strong field event team for the Bobcats. Teammate Maggie Locky placed sixth in the pole vault at the SVSU meet.

"Pole vaulters have been very important for us the last two years, and we expect that to be the case again this year," the coach said. "We also have (former state high jump champion and SVSU basketball player) Josh Ode working as an assistant coach, and he's got all of the hurdlers and jumpers excited."

John Glenn's other top juniors include Angela Jankoska, Maggie Leinberger, Erin McParlan, Brooke Rahn and Shavonne Davis.

"Shavonne is probably our top hurdler and high jumper, but she hurt her shoulder (earlier this spring)," Nemode said. "We're banged up right now, but that should get some of the younger kids some experience, too."

Bay City Western

While the John Glenn team doesn't have a single senior, first-year coach Jeff Rahl's Western Warriors feature a handful of talented seniors. Spinter/hurdler Kate Rinz and distance runner Rikki Owczarzak will lead a close-knit team.

"We've got a good mix of leadership and youth, and it's great that all these girls know each other, because it's made for a closer team," Rahl said. "There are several very talented girls here ... if they develop, they'll score a lot of points."

A junior, Heather Jahr, took the Division I high jump competition at the SVSU meet, and another junior, Ashley Pfenninger, is one of the area's top discus and shot throwers.

"The weather's not been too bad and they're all working hard," Rahl added. "And how far we go will depend on how hard we work."

Bay City Central

Thirteen is the lucky number for the Wolves this season - 13 seniors back from a year ago, and 13 freshmen new to the team this season.

"Last year we lost a lot of kids to the soccer program and only had two girls out for the team, but the good news is we have 13 kids back out here this year," Central coach John Young said. "And those kids, if they develop, will really help us."

Back for their fourth and final seasons are sprinters Leigh Przygocki and Emilee Witbrodt, and the duo are expected to be team leaders as well as point producers.

"They are both very good sprinters, two of the best in this part of the state," Young said. "They'll be hard to replace when they're gone."

Another senior, Emily Opheim, is a top distance runner, taking all-conference cross country honors the past two seasons. Junior Katie Fraser is one of the team's best at 200 and 400 meters.

"We look at Midland as the team to beat, but depending on the weather and how our attitude shapes up, we should be pretty good," the coach added.

Essexville Garber

First-year coach Kim Wright has just two seniors on her team, but those two are expected to make some noise in the TVC this season.

Rachel Daily and Kristen Kazmierski are both returning regional qualifiers in the 800 meter run, and Wright sees big things from the pair this season.

"I'm impressed with what I see so far," Wright said. "We're looking good all through the distance events, and some of the field events as well."

Junior Cara DeSanto, who along with Daily and Kazmierski was a part of the Dukes' regional qualifying 3200 relay team last season, has sister Stacy DeSanto, a freshman, joining her. Those two, along with junior Melissa Martin, are looking good in the jumping events.

"(Martin) jumped over five feet (in the high jump) in our last meet, so that's very encouraging," Wright said. "We've got good numbers (27 girls), so we're optimistic."

Pinconning

The Spartans might be very young, but they're not without a great deal of talent, according to coach Jim Lyman.

A large group of freshmen and sophomores show promise, the coach said, but senior sprinters Jenny Bishop and Michelle Sobieray lead the team. Seniors Jayme Meyer and Sarah Klumpp, along with junior distance runner Vanessa Hus provide experience.

Sophomores Annie Diener (long jump, high jump) and Danielle Raushi (middle and distance) look good, as do freshmen Kim LaBean (distance), Sarah McLellan (sprints) and Sheila Sequin (discus, shot), the coach said.

"We're very young, but these kids have a lot of potential," Lyman said. "We have a pretty good freshman class, and the sophomore class is just phenomenal."

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