

SPORTS

CROSS COUNTRY PREVIEW

Bronco girls seek third-straight state trip

Falls boys seek top 10 in Section 7A

BY KEVIN BONESKE
Sports Editor

After qualifying for the Class A state meet the past two seasons, the International Falls girls cross country team has a goal of getting there for the third year in a row.

The Bronco girls were runner-up at the 2012 Section 7A meet to make it to state as an entire team with two returning runners placing among the top-seven individuals.

Freshman Lexi Erickson placed fourth at the Section meet while senior Sydney Raboin finished seventh. Both could have been individual state qualifiers had the entire team not advanced there.

The Bronco girls also return senior Amy Auran, who had been part of both state-qualifying teams the past two years and also was an individual state qualifier in 2010.

“We have three talented runners returning in Lexi, Sydney and Amy,” said longtime head coach Paul Hjelle. “These girls have the experience and leadership to get us back to state for the third year in a row.”

However, the Falls has graduated two other girls who were consistently among the team’s top-five runners to count in the point standings, past captains Amber Harms and Rachel Foss.

Though Hjelle said two girls out for cross country this year — junior Jenna Anderson and senior Lexi Owen — “have been working extremely hard in practices,” he also noted it will be “wide open” to fill the No. 4-7 spots on the varsity team.

“Hopefully some of the girls will step up as the



STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN BONESKE

Amy Auran (113), shown finishing Saturday’s Bass Dash 5K at Smokey Bear Park, is starting her senior season on the Bronco girls cross country team. Auran had been part of Falls’ state-qualifying teams the past two seasons and was also an individual state qualifier in 2010.

season progresses and really help us out,” he said.

In pursuit of the goal of finishing in the top-two at the Section 7A meet to once again qualify for state, Hjelle said the teams to watch out for this season in the Section include Esko, last year’s Class A state champion,

and South Ridge.

“South Ridge could really be good this year,” he said.

FHS BOYS HIT BY GRADUATION LOSSES

Falls’ boys team placed ninth at last year’s Section 7A meet and enters the 2013 season with sev-

eral graduation losses, which include past captains Marco Griffith, Logan Veillieux and Cade MacKay, as well as Dakota Ruelle, Jason Pumper and Corin Wenger.

Though the numbers are good for the boys out for cross country this season, Hjelle said the team is “very young.”

“I’m excited about the future though,” he said. “There are some very talented youngsters on the team this year.”

Hjelle noted the only returning runners who have varsity experience for the Bronco boys are senior captain Wyatt Ulrich and junior Cole Tatsak.

“We are going to be a young team that doesn’t have a lot of experience at the varsity level,” he said.

Hjelle said the Falls’ boys team has a goal this season of staying in the top 10 in Section 7A. He noted the teams to watch out for in the Section include Proctor, Esko and Crosby-Ironton.

On both the Bronco boys and girls teams, Hjelle said he is the most concerned this season about depth.

“Hopefully we will have some surprises and see some runners step up and really contribute at the varsity level,” he said.

Hjelle said he is looking forward this season to “just being around great kids.”

“Cross country is always something I look forward to,” he said. “We have quality student athletes who (most of the time) are very respectful, honest and caring individuals.

“I am also looking forward to seeing the improvements in times.”

The Broncos open the season Thursday with a meet at Virginia. Their only home meet will be the Hial Pike at the Falls Country Club on Oct. 10.

GIRLS VOLLEYBALL

Broncos lose season opener to MI-B

Falls sweeps Two Harbors

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

The International Falls volleyball team opened the 2013 season on a losing note Thursday night by dropping a home match to Mountain Iron-Buhl in four games, 20-25, 21-25, 25-15, 19-25.

“There were a couple positive things that we could take away (from this match Thursday night),” said FHS Broncos assistant coach Deana Lorenson. “Our offense was definitely there a lot better. We were running some nice middle hits. Our attack was a lot better (Thursday night) than what I’ve seen us normally start out with.

“Defensively, I thought we had some good digs and stuff, too. The hard part was just to find that chemistry and be able to come together, communicate with one another and come up with plays when we needed them.”

Lorenson said being able to block the Rangers’ 6-2 middle hitter Allie Knuti was key to the Falls being able to win the third game by 10 points.

“When she got to the front

row, I felt like we got behind a little bit,” she said. “When she came to the back row, we were able to come with some offense and kind of catch back up.”

I. FALLS 3, TWO HARBORS 0

The Broncos evened up their season match record at 1-1 Monday night when they won in three straight games at Two Harbors, 25-12, 25-14, 25-8.

“We played well for our second match of the season, but we have much to improve upon,” said FHS head coach Erin Skikowsky. “For example, improving our communication on the court, offensively and defensively, will make a huge difference in our team play.

“We must also learn to transition quickly and as one unit, instead of six individuals on the court.”

Statistical leaders for the Broncos included: Teagan Anderson, six ace serves, 15 set assists; Tessa Walls, six kills, one ace serve; Lauren Rautio, two set assists, nine digs; McKenna Rasmussen, nine kills, one ace block; and Maddie Filipiak, two ace blocks.

The Falls returns to action Thursday to face nearby rival Littlefork-Big Falls in the L-BF High School gym.



STAFF PHOTO BY KEVIN BONESKE

The Broncos’ Tessa Walls (14) blocks a return hit against Mountain Iron-Buhl during Thursday’s match in the Falls High School gym.

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