



By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

This year's Longhorn cross country runners number 18, which is tied for the most kids Coach Carl Zuege has had out in season.

The boys' team includes 11 runners while the girls have seven out for the season.

Zuege said this will provide some depth for both teams along with the leadership from six seniors.

The season will kick off Friday at the Cambridge Invitational.

Boys

Zuege goes into the season excited about the team's prospects. "They put in a lot of miles this summer," he said.

As a result, he said they've looked really strong in practice. They'll be put to the test Friday.

The team boasts three seniors including Andrew Vavarek, Garrett Thompson and Korey Krutsinger.

They will be joined by returners Houlden Dreiling, Indy Smith and Mason Meeske.

Newcomers include Ryan Moline, Isaac Maxwell, Cade Francis, Caleb Bubak and Tagan Mays.

Moline joins the team after suffering a shoulder injury that kept him out of football.

Going into the first meet, Zuege said his top six include Dreiling, Smith, Vavarek, Thompson, Moline and Maxwell. Krutsinger and Meeske are right there as well, Zuege added.

Zuege said five of his runners can run the mile in 5:05 or less. That will give the team some speed throughout the race and especially down the stretch.

It should help keep them closer or in the front pack of the race.

That speed and depth isn't something his recent teams have had.

Girls

Leadership on the girls' team will be strong this year as well with three seniors and one returning state qualifier from last year.

Zuege said Emma Engbrecht, Mallory Coleman and Andrea Hogsett have worked hard this summer and will lead as seniors.

Zuege also returns Alyssa Moreno who qualified for the Class C state meet last year as a freshman.

The addition of freshmen Vianey Marquez, Rose Sullivan and Alexandra Valenzuela will provide some needed depth as a team, scoring-wise.

Going into the first meet, Hogsett and Moreno are a little dinged up. Zuege said it's questionable if Hogsett will be able to compete.

Once they return to health, Zuege expects good things from his team.

Class D this year

Zuege said the Longhorns move back down to Class D in cross country after spending last year in Class C.

That should be a real advantage for the Longhorns come district time, Zuege noted.

Junior high program

This year also marks another first—a junior high team.

Zuege said four boys and one girl will compete.

Practice began for them last week in preparation for their first junior high run during the Imperial invitational next week.

Gun time for Friday's Cambridge meet will be 1 p.m. MDT with the girls' race, followed by the boys' race.