



By Jan Schultz The Imperial Republican

Head Coach Al Zuege says his Lady Longhorn track team is strong across the board in events this season and their first opportunity to show it arrives Saturday.

The 2014 high school track season opens at the Cambridge Invitational, and based on forecasts mid-week, it looks like an ideal day for a March meet.

With 28 on this year's girls' roster, up about 25 percent from last season, Zuege said they are ready for a meet.

"Practice has been going well, it's been decent weather and the kids are working hard," Zuege said. He said all the coaches have been happy with the team's work ethics.

While Zuege said the team has a ways to go yet to be in top condition, they are as well off as usual this time of year on conditioning.

"But, we've come a long way in four weeks," he said.

The team returns all four athletes who were state qualifiers last year—Paige Spady in the 3200, Kristen Jussel in the 100 meter hurdles, Valeria Cervantes, shot, and Jodi Koellner, discus. Spady and Cervantes are juniors while seniors Jussel and Koellner will complete their high school careers this year.

While none of the them were able to medal, they gained some good experience, competing with some of the state's top athletes.

In addition to the experience returning, more than half of the numbers are in the freshman class with 16 ninth graders out.

Chase County's 2014 season follows two runner-up showings at the SPVA Conference and District C-11 meets in 2013. Bayard won last year's district title and will host this year's state-qualifying meet on Thursday, May 15.

As far as the conference, Chase County was just 11.5 points out of the championship last year, finishing second to St. Pat's.

Zuege said the Lady Longhorns, St. Pat's and Sutherland will all be in the mix for the SPVA title this season. Kimball is new to the conference and places some unknowns though, too.

The Cambridge meet has a different format. There are no preliminaries and teams can enter both JV and varsity teams.

Zuege said all of the track team members will have the opportunity to compete Saturday. He expects to have three athletes entered in all events but the 400.

Most of the team will compete in fewer events Saturday than they will later on in the season.

For the field events, athletes will have four throws or jumps from which the top marks will be used for placings. All track events are run against time.

Competition Saturday starts at 9 a.m. MT with the field events. All field events will be completed before the running events start approximately at 11:15 a.m. MT.

Other teams expected for the meet besides Chase County and Cambridge are Alma, Elm Creek, Southwest and Wauneta/Palisade.

Here is the full roster of the girls' team.

Seniors—Anna Bauerle, Andrea Hogsett, Kristen Jussel, Jodi Koellner, Ally Vrbas.

Juniors—Mindy Castle, Valeria Cervantes, MaKenna Ketter, Paige Spady, Makenna Wallin.

Sophomores—Cheyanne Kuhlmann, Alyssa Moreno.

Freshmen—Sarah Allen, Brittanie Benge, Jadin Bussell, Megan Engbrecht, Shaylee Heathers, Molly Luhrs, Taylin McNair, Kaylee Meeske, Kadyn Milner, Mikaela O'Brien, Bridgette Odens, Josie Peterson, Destiny Reinke, Brittany Simeon, Rose Sullivan, Katelyn Wheeler.