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2011-2019
SPORTS REPORTING
AWARD-WINNER

JCC CROSS COUNTRY

Paplow twins lead Huskies in cross country opener



PHOTO BY DAN CONDON

Elese Paplow nears the finish line during last week's season-opening cross country meet in Jackson.

by **DAN CONDON**
 Sports Editor

The Paplow twins each placed fourth as the Jackson County Central boys' and girls' cross country teams opened the season last Thursday at the Jackson Golf Club.

Evan Paplow covered the hilly 4,000-meter course in 15 minutes, 40 seconds, while his sister, Elese, ran the course in 19 minutes, 29 seconds.

The JCC boys finished second in the triangular, while the girls were one runner short of a complete team.

Paplow leads pack

Waseca had the top three finishers in the boys' race at Jackson Golf Club — the first at the site since 1996 — but Evan Paplow led a pack of Huskies that finished in the next four spots.

Andrew Boyum was right behind Paplow, finishing fifth in 15 minutes, 43 seconds. Kie Anderson (15:59) and Clayton Cavness (16:01) finished sixth and seventh, respectively, for the Huskies.

Boyum said even though he knew the course was loaded with hills, he might have still been a bit surprised.

"I started really good when we were going down-

hill, but it was a really hilly course and I might have underestimated it," he said.

Even so, Boyum said he was impressed with how well the Huskies did in the opener.

"I think we did really good for not practicing on it," he said.

Evan In-sichienmay capped JCC's team score by finishing 13th in 17 minutes, 44 seconds.

Following In-sichienmay, the Huskies had another pack of runners.

Ridge VanWesten finished 17th (19:11), Carter Johnson placed 18th (19:15), Keenan Ambrose came in 19th (19:57) and EJ Peterson finished 20th (20:13). Caleb Rubitschung rounded out JCC's varsity team, placing 24th (22:02).

JCC head coach Rafe York said the team's pack running during the meet helped, and also their team mentality leading into the meet paid off.

"This is a really close-knit group," he said.

"Wednesday it was really hot. I told them, 'You need to run on your own today. Here's your workout; go out when it cools off and get your run in.' Immediately they started saying, 'When do you want to run? Let's run together.'"

"IT WAS CHALLENGING FOR THE FIRST RACE. IT'S WHAT WE NEEDED. I WAS VERY HAPPY. SOME KIDS RAN BETTER THAN I THOUGHT THEY WOULD. IT WAS A GOOD DAY."

Rafe York

JCC finished with a team score of 33 to finish second in the three-team field. Waseca used the top three finishers, as well as the eighth and ninth finishers, to post its winning score

of 33. Blue Earth Area finished third with 64 points.

"Waseca is a really good team in the Big School conference and we only lost by a few points, so that's really good for our team," Boyum said. "Waseca had three guys in front of us and then we had four. I think we did really good."

Paplow leads in debut

Elese Paplow should be playing volleyball right now, but she's trying a new sport while volleyball is on hold until the spring.

Paplow finished fourth

to lead the JCC girls in the opener, sprinting to finish one second ahead of Waseca's Alayna Akers.

"That was great," York said of Paplow's performance. "She's been practicing well, but that doesn't always translate. She got out there and got after it."

Olivia Anderson also sprinted to the finish, passing Waseca's Cora McCabe just before the finish line to place sixth in 19 minutes, 58 seconds.

Paplow and Anderson have pushed each other so far this season and it paid off in the opener.

"She pushed me a lot," Anderson said. "I really tried to keep up with her."

The two have enjoyed working together in practice, as well.

"I really like running with Olivia," Paplow said. "She's a really good supporter and we like running together, so it's a lot of fun."

Anderson said having Paplow on the team has been a big help.

"If she slows down, I'm like, 'Come on; keep up,' and vice versa," Anderson said. "I'm really happy that she's running this year and I get to run with her."

But it almost wasn't that way.

Paplow said she only

See **CC** on **B2**

'It's hard without them'



PHOTOS BY DAN CONDON

Blue skies and green grass are all that surrounds Maci Farmer as she runs during last week's spectator-free cross country meet at the Jackson Golf Club.

Runners rely on teammates as fans are not allowed at meets

by **DAN CONDON**
 Sports Editor

Things were pretty quiet for runners with no fans on the course during last Thursday's season-opening cross country meet at the Jackson Golf Club.

Instead of hearing shouts of encouragement and instructions from coaches and fans, runners instead had to rely on themselves and teammates for motivation.

"It feels kind of weird without people out there cheering you on or telling you to keep going or how much is left," Jackson County Central junior Olivia Anderson said. "It's a little bit harder, I think. It's something to get used to."

Luckily, Anderson is an experienced runner and also has teammates to help provide encouragement.

"It's hard without them," Anderson said of having a spectator-free meet. "It's all on you. There's no one to really keep you going. It's nice to have teammates out there."

Andrew Boyum said having a pack of runners on the

boys team all fairly close together helped provide motivation, but it was a bit strange without fans.

"It's definitely different because I didn't hear crowd noises or anything," he said.

Elese Paplow doesn't know what it's like to run in front of fans. Last week's cross country meet was her first, as she typically plays volleyball in the fall.

But even she said competing in front of no fans was different.

"It's definitely weird,"

she said. "I like hearing stuff from my teammates saying, 'Good job' and 'You got it,'" she said.

Those words of encouragement came from teammates in the race and also from Huskies who weren't running. Those done with their races or yet to compete provided cheering from various spots along the course.

JCC head coach Rafe York said while the fans provide plenty of encouragement and excitement at meets, he kind of liked

being able to save his voice a bit.

"Without the fans, it's a little different," he said. "I like how easily I can talk to the kids when they're running. I don't have to yell over parents and fans, so that's nice."

That might not last long, though, as fans are eventually expected to be able to watch meets.

That'll be the case when JCC hosts a meet at the Loon Lake Golf Course Sept. 24 and fans are able to attend.



Jackson County Central girls' cross country team members Elsa Landherr (from left), Elese Paplow and Maci Farmer cheer on members of the JCC boys' cross country team during last week's season-opening meet.



PHOTO BY DAN CONDON

Andrew Boyum is thankful to get the opportunity to run cross country this fall, even if it means smaller meets and no fans.

In a strange fall, let's choose to be thankful for what we still have

There were no fans. Only three teams. No awards handed out.

There was plenty missing from last week's cross country meet at the Jackson Golf Club.

But even more, there was plenty there to enjoy.

The smiles. The sweat. The pain. The cheering. The (air) high-fives. The competition. Simply put, there were sports.

This fall will look different than any other we've ever seen.

We should be getting ready for a football game tomorrow night and throwing on the navy and silver to cheer on the volleyball team.

We should be checking standings, predicting how the football team will fare and talking about how the volleyball team will do in the conference or section.

We should be getting ready for homecoming, looking for that trusty Huskies sweatshirt we wear to all the games and getting ready for a tailgate meal or two.

While those are all put on hold until the spring, we can still en-

joy what we've got.

The cross country team hosts a meet later this month at the Loon Lake Golf Course and fans are expected to be able to attend.

Do so. It's a fun sport to watch and the only chance you'll get to see the Huskies this fall.

While you're at it, go to Fairmont to cheer on the Jackson County Central players playing soccer for the Cardinals.

Instead of looking at what we're missing, take advantage of what we have.

As cross country runner Andrew Boyum said following last week's season-opening meet, be thankful.

"I'm happy to be out here running," he said. "It's definitely a blessing. It's pretty cool that we get to be running."

We might not have it all, but what we have is still plenty for which to be grateful.



FROM WAY DOWNTOWN
 Dan Condon



HUSKIES PUMMEL PANTHERS IN SEASON OPENER

One year ago, Sept. 5, 2019

The Jackson County Central football team took advantage of early miscues by New Richland-Hartland-Ellendale-Geneva and never relinquished control in a 46-0 season-opening win. The Panthers fumbled the opening kickoff and JCC scored four plays later, then added two more first-quarter touchdowns. Rudy Voss ran for two first-quarter touchdowns and later threw a touchdown pass to Trevin Gaustad. Bradley Buhl ran for a score, Alex Bretzman threw a touchdown to Damian Meyer-Andre and Nathan Hinkeldey returned an interception for a touchdown.

CHRISTOFFER STARTS SEASON WITH VICTORY

Five years ago, Sept. 3, 2015

Jessica Christoffer opened the cross country season with a win in the sophomore race at the Early Bird meet in Fairmont. Christoffer covered the course in 16 minutes, 28 seconds, which was the second best overall time in the meet. Annika Lilleberg was seventh in the junior race in 18:32. Carter Heinrichs led the JCC boys, finishing fifth in the junior race in 15:27. The JCC girls finished fourth in the team standings and the boys were fifth.

HUSKIES OPEN WITH SWEEPS

10 years ago, Sept. 9, 2010

The JCC volleyball team swept Southwest Star Concept (25-16, 25-25 and 25-18) and St. James to open the season. Whitney Burmeister, Courtney Donnelly and Kaylee Benson each had eight kills against SSC and Michelle VanEpps had 10 set assists and five ace serves. Lexi Schneekloth had 13 set assists.

STEEN WINS CLUB TOURNAMENT

25 years ago, Sept. 7, 1995 - Jackson County Pilot

Lee Ann Steen won the championship flight in the Jackson Golf Club ladies club tournament and Linda Handevitd placed second. Dorothy Miller won the first flight and Eileen Simpson was second. Nancy Hansen won the second flight and Ev Jasper placed second. Dawn Feil was the third-flight winner ahead of Mary Ann Finstad. Lois Connors won the fourth flight and Susan Place placed second. League winners were Jodi Edlin and Carolyn Sieler in League A and Marcy Sether and Pat Jones in League B.

BULLET GRIDDERS WIN OPENER

25 years ago, Sept. 7, 1995 - Lakefield Standard

Israel Olson's 13-yard touchdown run and two-point conversion with 2:36 to play gave HLOL an 8-7 win over Belview-Danube-Renville-Sacred Heart in the season opener. BDRSCH took a 7-0 lead in the second quarter and made that lead stand until the Silver Bullets went on a 10-play, 52-yard drive in the fourth quarter. Olson set up the drive with a 26-yard punt return and the Bullets converted twice on fourth-down on the drive. Jared Rademacher was in on 10 tackles for the Bullets and Andy Schmidt had eight. Olson ran for 68 yards and a touchdown.

SPORTS CALENDAR

Thursday, Sept. 3

CC at Waseca

Friday, Sept. 4

SOC (B) at St. Peter

SOC (G) vs St. Peter

Saturday, Sept. 5

No events

Sunday, Sept. 6

No events

Monday, Sept. 7

No events

Tuesday, Sept. 8

SOC (B) vs St. Peter

SOC (G) at St. Peter

Wednesday, Sept. 9

No events

twitter @PilotSports

Aug. 27, 9:51 a.m.

Elese Paplow finished fourth and Olivia Anderson was sixth to lead the JCC girls at their home cross country meet.

Aug. 27, 10:40 a.m.

Evan Paplow, Andrew Boyum, Kie Anderson and Clayton Cavness finished 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th and JCC's home meet.

Aug. 27, 2:22 p.m.

Results from JCC cross country meet today:

BOYS:

1. Waseca 23

2. JCC 33

3. BEA 64

GIRLS:

1. Waseca 15

2. BEA 40

3. JCC Incomplete

Follow for more updates

ATHLETES OF THE WEEK



Name: Elese Paplow
Grade: 9
Sport: Cross country
The week that was: In her first career meet, Paplow led the JCC girls with a fourth-place finish.
Coach's comments: "Elese has been a great addition to the girls' team," Rafe York said. "She regularly sets the pace in practice and it carried over to the meet."



Name: Evan Paplow
Grade: 9
Sport: Cross country
The week that was: Paplow finished fourth in JCC's season-opening meet last week at the Jackson Golf Club.
Coach's comments: "Evan came into the season in great shape and it showed in our first meet," Rafe York said. "He ran a strong, confident race."

Athletes of the week sponsored by:

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HL-O CORNER

Cross country teams featured in this week's preview

The Heron Lake-Okabena boys' and girls' cross country teams are featured in the Fall Sports Preview, which is in this week's paper.

The Wildcats should have complete teams this year, even though it looked like that might not be the case a few weeks ago.

Head coach Gary Hildebrandt expects the boys to be near the top of the Red Rock Conference and hopes the inexperienced girls' team can keep improving throughout the season.

The Wildcats had a meet this past Friday in Slayton, which the boys won behind first- and second-place finishes from Tim Salentiny and Paul Salentiny, respectively.

The next meet for HL-O is Sept. 12 at Voss Park in Butterfield. The RRC meet is scheduled for Oct. 5 in Mt. Lake.

Volleyball and football are postponed until the spring.

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Labor Day: The end of summer's fun

Happy Labor Day weekend! Traditionally, this weekend marks the beginning of the end of the summer activities. Apparently, September is too cold to have fun.

Summer fun activities, including camping, boating, baseball and softball, are coming to a close. It will not be long before we are trading in our baseball bats for ice fishing rods.

Thankfully golf can continue for a couple more months. I need the time to get my golf game back on track. It is imperative I get my game in line with my high expectations. It is not a pride issue but a clothing issue.

I am running out of golf shirts to wear. Not that I am superstitious or just plain weird or anything, but if I have a poor round of golf, I do not wear the shirt again while golfing.

Unless I forget and I accidentally wear it. Sometimes on the second chance, I realize the shirt learned its lesson and I play a good round while wearing it.

The downside is I now have a closet full of shirts I no longer plan to wear to the course. Or on it for that matter. If the shirt would have only been cooperative.

Unfortunately for me and for my shirts, I have struggled in golf this year. If anything could go wrong, it would. While heart disease is a leading cause of death, strokes are the leading cause of Stevie Weevie temper tantrums. Excess strokes begets excess tantrums.

The struggling certainly is not my fault; we all know it is the shirt and not what is in the shirt that determines the quality of play. I am the same "me" day in and day out. The only variable is the shirt.

When I put the shirt on, I expect it to have my back. Or at least to cover my back. Certainly not to help a little old golf ball hide in the woods. Aiding and abetting at its finest.

It is not just golf. I know if I wear certain Twins shirts the Twins will play sloppy that evening. Same with football. The Vikings play a lot better when I am wearing a Cris Carter or Adam Thielen jersey than when I wear a Randy Moss or Randall Cunningham.

I could go on and on; the data are there. They are as visible as the shirt off my back. Certain shirts bring better results. Other shirts are better left hanging.

So, I have a closet full of golf, Twins and Viking shirts just hanging around waiting for their luck to change. Or to make a trip to Goodwill or some other "we take your junk off your hands" store.

Kathy used to wonder why I needed a big walk-in closet while she was able to get by with a crawl space. But it did not take long before she understood. About two days.

Another two days later she figured if things did not change, it would not be long before our bedroom became my closet and the closet our bedroom. Kathy and I are pretty close but we do not want to sleep that close. I am sure that has nothing to do with my snoring.

So, new policies were put into place. Every time I buy a new shirt, I have to get rid of an old one. This summer with the way I have been playing, my golf shirts have been flying off the hangers.

The upside of the shirt turnover is I feel like a movie star wearing a new outfit for every public appearance. Plus, the shirts do not stay in the house

long enough to even get dirty.

No dirt, no wash. Save on laundry detergent that way. Which frees up more money for new shirts. That is a wash cycle I could learn to love. I wonder if that would work with dishes.

I am stretching the truth a little there. It is not like I play a round of golf and stop on the way home at a clothing store. I would if I could. Plus, I am not going to head over to Goodwill every time another shirt has not lived up to my golfing expectations.

Sometimes those shirts are on "death row" for a month or more before I can donate them to Goodwill where they can hang around until someone feels sorry for them and posts bond, freeing them up so they can screw up their new owner's round of golf.

The way I look at it, if I really like the shirt, I just have to wait another month or so and it will be back in Goodwill. Maybe by then it will have learned its lesson.

And now, I shall be like a summer activity and end my typing for this week. I have labored long enough on it. Until next week, enjoy the day we do not labor to honor all the other days we do labor. And, if you golf, I just might have a shirt for you.



WIDE WRITE
Stephen A. Condon

CC: Boys are second in opener

Continued from B1

started thinking about going out for cross country when she realized volleyball might not be an option this fall.

"I heard that volleyball might be getting canceled this year so I decided to go out for cross country because I like to go out for runs," she said. "This summer I went on a lot of runs just for fun."

Maci Farmer is also a volleyball player running cross country this fall. She was JCC's third finisher, placing ninth in 20 minutes, 42 seconds.

"There's a chance this is a one-year thing for some of these girls and a few of the guys, but we'll make the most of it and try to have a good season," York said.

Elsa Landherr rounded out JCC's team, finishing 12th (21:43).

"The girls have three new runners today that really impressed me," York said. "We need to figure out some things about how to race, but it's their first time."

JCC had just four runners, so it didn't have a team score. Waseca scored a perfect 15 to win and BEA totaled 40.

Huskies sweep junior-high races

JCC had the top two finishers in the junior-high races.

Quinn Landherr won the 2,000-meter boys' race (7:49) and Clay Malchow placed second (8:18).

Also running for the JCC boys were Ryan Weinzetl (fourth, 9:15), Thomas Sether (fifth, 9:17), Kristoph Olsem (seventh, 9:25), Chase Adkins (eighth, 9:32) and Ryan Burgoyne (11th, 9:57).

Cailee Pauling won the girls' race, finishing in 10 minutes, 23 seconds to beat teammate Astrid Olsem by one second. Lily Johnson finished sixth (11:35), Josie Dvorak was eighth (12:04), Kylie Zischka placed ninth (12:25) and Taylor Schultz came in 10th (12:27).

Good opener on tough course

York has been push-

ing to get a meet at the JGC for years and said it was as good as he hoped for despite running just a 4,000-meter varsity course as opposed to the usual 5,000.

"I really liked it," he said. "I'm partial to hilly courses. I think it kind of separates things out and makes it more cross country compared to just he flat course. You can do that on a track."

Even with it being the

first meet of the year after an abbreviated preseason and it being a tough course, York said he was impressed with the Huskies.

"It was challenging for the first race," he said. "It's what we needed. I was very happy. Some kids ran better than I thought they would. It was a good day."

Up next

The Huskies compete in a meet in Waseca today (Thursday).



PHOTOS BY DAN CONDON

Evan Paplow crosses the finish line just ahead of teammate Andrew Boyum during last Thursday's season-opening meet at the Jackson Golf Club.



Kristoph Olsem gets an air high-five from head coach Rafe York during last week's cross country meet.

SPORTS PREVIEW

With postseason up in the air, Huskies trying to keep getting better

by DAN CONDON
Sports Editor

Last year, the Jackson County Central boys' cross country team used a balanced roster to finish near the middle of the pack in most races.

If the first meet of the season is any indication, that will be the case again this fall.

While the JCC boys will use a similar approach as last season, things are much different for the JCC girls.

The Huskies had just three girls run in varsity meets last year and never had a complete team.

This year, the Huskies should have five pretty fast girls to fill out the varsity team.

The Huskies opened the season with a home meet last Thursday and have five more scheduled.

Head coach Rafe York said there's still no Big South Conference or Section 3A meet planned, which makes things challenging.

"It's hard to set goals when you don't know what the postseason looks like," he said. "At this point we don't know what the Big South looks like. Are we competing for some sort of

place in a dual meet championship? We don't know if there's going to be a section meet or state meet."

That basically leaves one goal at this point, York said. "It's all about getting better every meet," he said.

Meets also look different, as just three teams can compete together and each race has to have 25 or fewer runners.

Teams can only compete against others from their conference or section, so the Huskies will see the same teams multiple times this season.

York said that can help in terms of individuals trying to gain on those from other teams

or for the team to improve against the same team from previous meets.

"The triangular allow for that a little more," he said. "You don't get lost in the pack quite as much."

The first retest for the Huskies comes today (Thursday) as the Huskies run in Waseca. They faced Waseca in the home meet last week.

"It'll be interesting when we see how we respond when we see Waseca this week," York said. "We know what happened: they went 1-2-3. I think our guys can run with that No. 3 if they really get after it."



PHOTOS BY DAN CONDON

Members of the Jackson County Central boys' cross country team line up at the start of last week's season-opening meet at the Jackson Golf Club.

Balanced boys team

Last year, five JCC boys finished as the team's leader or second-place finisher in meets and three of them are back on this year's team.

Freshman Evan Paplow led the team twice last year and was its second finisher in two other meets. Junior Andrew Boyum led the team once and was second in another meet. Junior Clayton Cavness was the team's second finisher in four meets.

Boyum finished 15th at the BSC meet last year and was 31st at the Section 3A meet. Paplow was 18th in the conference and 39th at sections. Cavness finished 20th at the BSC meet and came in 23rd at sections.

Add in junior Kie Anderson, who was a scoring runner in six meets, and junior Evan Insichienmay, who was the sixth finisher in

six meets, and the Huskies have a pretty good group to lead the team.

"We've got that top four pretty locked up and Ish is pretty secure with that fifth spot," York said. "After that, we've got a pack of guys fighting for six and seven."

Battling for the final two varsity spots are juniors Ridge VanWesten, Keenan Ambrose, Kaden Cother, Reese Adkins and Caleb Rubitschung; sophomore Carter Johnson; and freshman EJ Peterson.

York said not only are the boys packed together on the course, but they work well together in practice.

"That was really nice last week when we had the heat," he said. "They took care of it themselves. That makes it a lot easier for me. I can trust these guys. I can say, 'Get this workout in' and they'll take care of

business. They want to get better and win meets."

That hard work started long before the season ever did.

"Our team did a lot of offseason training, which I think helped a lot," Boyum said. "We'd run a lot in the summer and get the most guys we could."

Middle school runners for JCC are eighth-graders Quinn Landherr, Clay Malchow, Thomas Sether and Chase Adkins and seventh-graders Ryan Weintzel, Kristoph Olsem and Ryan Burgoyne.

Girls are complete

It might only last a year, but the JCC girls will have a complete team this fall.

Junior Olivia Anderson returns after a strong season last fall and is joined by eighth-grader Riley Cother, who bumped up to varsity late last season.

Sophomore Elsa Landherr is new this season as are sophomore Maci Farmer and freshman Elese Paplow, who normally play volleyball.

"I'm really excited that we have a girls' team," Anderson said. "I'm super excited and really pumped." York said he knows

Paplow and Farmer might be done with cross country after this year, but is glad they're out.

"I know it's probably going to be short-lived because some will return to volleyball next year," he said. "There's a chance this is a one-year thing for some of these girls and a few of the guys, but we'll make the most of it and try to have a good season."

Anderson finished eighth at the BSC meet last season and 19th at the section meet, coming close to a trip to state.

Paplow was the leader during last week's season-opening meet, with Anderson not far back. Farmer and Landherr both made strong debuts and Cother will be in the lineup soon, giving the Huskies a solid group of runners.

"We've got five girls for varsity and six for middle school," York said. "Having that team atmosphere, that's going to push them for the future."

Running for the middle-school team are eighth-graders Astrid Olsem, Lily Johnson and Kylie Zishka and seventh-graders Caillee Pauling, Josie Dvorak and Taylor Schultz.

JCC CROSS COUNTRY

Head coach: Rafe York

Aug. 27
Sept. 3
Sept. 10
Sept. 17
Sept. 24
Oct. 1
Oct. 8

Jackson Golf Club
at Waseca
at St. James
at Blue Earth
Loon Lake Golf Course
at St. James
TBD



Olivia Anderson (from left), Maci Farmer, Elsa Landherr and Elese Paplow take off at the start of last Thursday's season-opening meet. The four will be joined by Riley Cother for a complete varsity team this fall.

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Numbers up for Wildcat cross country team

by DAN CONDON
Sports Editor

For a while, Gary Hildebrandt wondered if he'd even get to coach the Heron Lake-Okabena cross country team this fall.

For one, there were questions as to whether or not there would even be a season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Then, once the Minnesota State High School League said there would be a season, Hildebrandt didn't know how many kids he'd get on the team.

Not only do the Wildcats have a cross country program, they'll have complete teams most meets this season.

The Wildcats have nine boys out this fall and six girls.

"Originally I thought it was going to be six kids," Hildebrandt said.

That changed when football and volleyball were moved to the spring and a few of those kids decided to try cross country.

Four of the six girls were going to play volleyball, as well as three boys.

With a shortened pre-season and fewer meets, Hildebrandt said he's modifying his training for the season.

"It is interesting putting together a season plan," he said. "My season plan so you peak out at the end is 11-12 weeks long, not seven. I've had to do some changing."

Another change is the wearing of masks, which is required when riding

together and at meets at all times except while racing. Social distancing is also implemented in practices and meets.

"The shelter house in Okabena has posts 10 feet apart, so we're able to spread out enough where we don't have to wear masks when we're warming up," Hildebrandt said, adding he has to remind his team to mask up from time to time. "If we want to stay in business, you just have to do it."

Hildebrandt said he'll miss coaching against teams like Jackson County Central, Martin County West, Windom and Worthington, but said he understands the situation.

"You have such a good support system among other coaches," he said. "I don't like missing out on that. We're just glad we get to have some form of a season."

Salentiny brothers to lead boys

The boys will be led by senior Paul Salentiny and

his brother, freshman Tim Salentiny.

They battled back-and-forth a year ago, with Paul getting the upper hand in the final two meets. He was second at the Red Rock Conference meet and 32nd at the Section 3A meet, beating his younger brother by one place at each meet.

Juniors Mason Bode and Joshua Eigenberg and freshmen Thomas Bartosh and Trevor Bass also return from last year's varsity team.

Also on the team are freshman Tate Eidhammer, eighth-grader Caleb Eigenberg and seventh-grader Daniel Ruthenbeck.

Hildebrandt expects Eidhammer to battle for a spot among the team's top five finishers and said Caleb Eigenberg could also

"WE'RE JUST GLAD WE GET TO HAVE SOME FORM OF A SEASON."

Gary Hildebrandt

"IT IS INTERESTING PUTTING TOGETHER A SEASON PLAN. MY SEASON PLAN SO YOU PEAK OUT AT THE END IS 11-12 WEEKS LONG, NOT SEVEN. I'VE HAD TO DO SOME CHANGING."

Gary Hildebrandt

get to that point by season's end.

With the two Salentiny brothers leading the way and some pretty good depth, Hildebrandt said he thinks the team can be near the top of the standings if there's a Red Rock Conference meet like there is currently planned.

"Our boys, if the season goes seven weeks, we hope to finish in the top two in the conference," Hildebrandt said. "I really believe we can do that."

He said Mt. Lake Area is loaded, but the Wildcats should be able to compete with the rest of the conference.

"We feel like we can be in there and duke it out with everyone else if we keep everyone healthy," he said.

If there's a Section 3A meet — there have been no decisions by the MSHSL as far as section and state meets yet — Hildebrandt said he hopes to move up from last year's 12th-place finish.

"We'd have to finish in the top six or seven of the section meet for me to be happy," he said. "We only graduated one kid and the others have gotten better."

Girls have full team
The HL-O girls will have



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAROL SCHREIBER/TRI-COUNTY NEWS

Members of the Heron Lake-Okabena cross country team are (front, from left): Tim Salentiny, Skylar Fisher, Arianna Stearns, Renae Salentiny, Trevor Bass, Paul Salentiny and Joshua Eigenberg. Middle: Taylor Fisher and Thomas Bartosh. Back: Brooklyn Fisher, MacKenzie Ehlers, Tate Eidhammer, Caleb Eigenberg, head coach Gary Hildebrandt and Daniel Ruthenbeck. Missing: Mason Bode.

a full varsity team, which is a big improvement over the two girls the Wildcats had running last year.

The only returner is junior Skylar Fisher, who was 36th at the conference meet a year ago.

Senior Ariana Stearns is out this season, as are freshman Brooklyn Fisher and seventh-graders MacKenzie Ehlers, Taylor Fisher and Renae Salentiny.

The three seventh-grad-

ers and Brooklyn Fisher were going to go out for volleyball, but Hildebrandt is glad they're in cross country for at least one year.

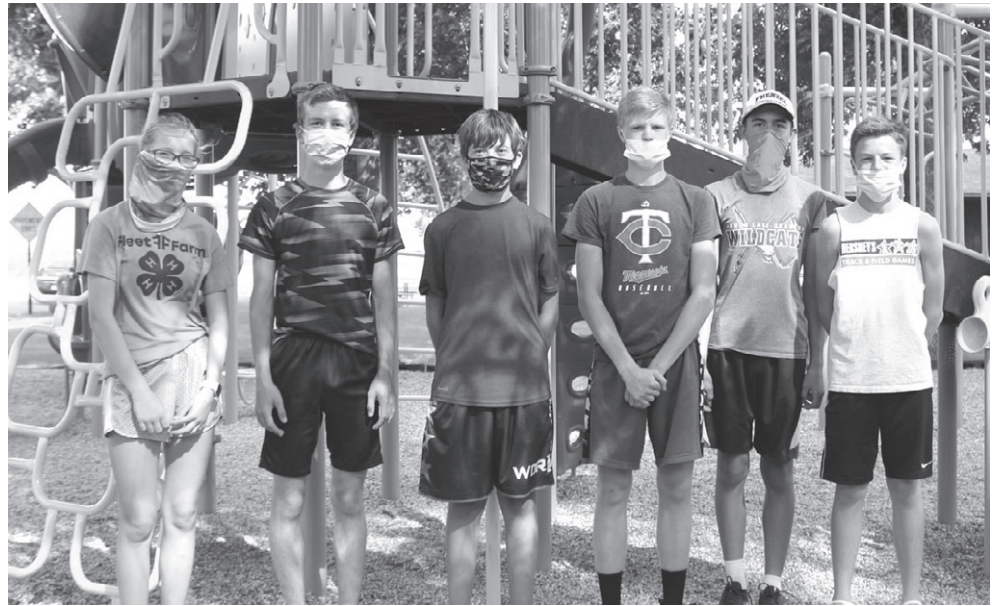
"I want to move the girls from not running at all to wanting to go out and have some fun running," he said. "At this point, it's a chore to get three miles in."

The younger girls ran three miles without stopping for the first time earlier this week and are mak-

ing pretty good progress, Hildebrandt said.

"The goal is to get everybody under the 30-minute mark," he said. "They've got to stick together, push each other and challenge each other."

At the beginning of the season, the Wildcats will likely have the younger girls run junior varsity races, but the plan is to have at least five varsity runners at the end of the season.



Returning letter winners for the Heron Lake-Okabena cross country team are Skylar Fisher (from left), Joshua Eigenberg, Trevor Bass, Paul Salentiny, Thomas Bartosh and Tim Salentiny.

HL-O CROSS COUNTRY

Head coach: Gary Hildebrandt

Sept. 12	at Butterfield
Sept. 17	at Slayton
Sept. 22	at Adrian
Sept. 26	at Butterfield
Sept. 29	at Mt. Lake
Oct. 5	RRC Meet at Mt. Lake

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