

SPORTS & SCHOOL NEWS

BOYS CROSS COUNTRY PREVIEW

# Bison hope to continue run

Buffalo moves from Section 2AA to 8AAA seeking fifth-straight title



Bison runners (left-right): Jared Gregoire, Jadon Boots, and Braden Bjornson get some early season running in during the first week of practice on Aug. 16. Buffalo boys and girls switched sections and class sizes for the 2021 season. (Photo by Rob LaPlante)

other boys took a small break and got right into it. Unfortunately, I've only had three weeks of practice going in."

Despite last season's success during the cross country season, it was the first year in several where the Bison didn't have a clear-cut top runner. From the loss of recent standout runners Nick Oak and Isaac Basten, last year's big four sort of took turns sharing the top finish among their teammates.

That depth in the lineup in something that bodes well for team scoring, but Boots admits, there is some friendly competition this year to see who will emerge as the leader of the pack in the majority of this year's races.

"We'll see who that is as the season goes along. For me personally, I already have a road race time in the books, and it was pretty solid," Boots said. "I know a few of us can make state by ourselves. As a whole team, we need to make big moves so we can take the varsity squad to state. That's the goal."

To achieve that goal, a fifth person will need to make strides. Jacob Williams was the seventh member of last year's varsity squad. Zachary Muellerleile has been one of the leaders of the junior varsity squad the past couple years.

"Those four other varsity spots are still yet to be determined," Knutsen said. "We've had a pretty good run here with dedicated kids that have put in the miles. Our numbers are down a bit this year, and that is something we'll need to address down the road, but I'm not overly concerned about this season."

Unlike a year ago, where meets were strictly against Lake Conference opponents, which took place in pods of 3-4 teams with multiple different waves to keep in compliance with Covid guidelines, this year's schedule looks more like the schedules of old. Buffalo placed fifth last year in the conference meet.

Buffalo will still compete against Lake Conference teams in a couple invites and the conference finals, but much of the schedule will feature teams from all areas.

"It's just nice not having to face the same teams every week," Knutsen said. "I like the competition because it makes you better. However, it gets old mentally facing the same competition. Some kids step to the line and see the same kids who beat them the week before, so they start thinking where they are going to finish the race before they started the race. When you see a team that you haven't seen before, you're actually truly running. It's nice to go back to that type of schedule. It's nice to see new courses and new races."

year's Section 2AA championship over second-place Chanhassen with a score of 45 points.

Jared Gregoire, James Dorado, Jadon Boots, Andrew Macheel, and Dillon Huss were the top-five Buffalo finishers, respectively. Buffalo finished with five runners in the top-13 overall. Only Huss and Parker Ryan graduated from last year's varsity squad.

Knutsen has led Buffalo to four state tournaments the past five years. It would have been five in five years, but Covid eliminated last year's state meet. Instead, Buffalo was one of 20 select teams to compete at the TC Running Company Showcase in Atwater.

Buffalo placed ninth in last year's unofficial state meet with a score of 218 points. Prior Lake topped the field with 89. Boots was the Bison's highest finisher with a 24th place time of 16:28.45 in the 5,000-meter event.

Boots is hoping for another strong running season, both in cross country and track. He was on Buffalo's 10th place state 4x400 relay team this past spring, as well as the 8th place state 4x800 relay team. Boots admits, the wear and tear of last season's outdoor season took its toll on his summer miles.

"I came out of track with a couple injuries," Boots said. "I had a much longer break than I thought. Most of the

## 2021 Schedule Boys & Girls Cross Country

- August**  
 27 St. Paul Central (B) 9 a.m. (Lake Elmo Park Reserve)  
 27 Champlin Park (G) 9 a.m.w (Northwoods Park)  
 31 Big Lake (G) 4 p.m. (Big Lake Liberty Elementary)
- September**  
 2 St. Olaf Showcase (B) 11 a.m.  
 9 Hopkins (B/G) 4 p.m. (Gale Woods Farm)  
 13 Elk River (B/G) 4 p.m. (Fox Hollow Golf Club)  
 16 Hutchinson (B/G) 4 p.m. (Lake Marion)  
 23 Buffalo Invite (B/G) 4 p.m. (Buffalo Heights Golf Course)  
 28 Waconia Invite (B) 3:30 p.m. (Bayview Elementary)
- October**  
 4 STMA Invite (G) 4 p.m. (STMA High School)  
 9 Alexandria (B/G) 10 a.m. (Arrowwood Resort)  
 14 Lake Finals (B/G) 3:40 p.m. (Gale Woods Farm)  
 20 Centennial (B/G) 4 p.m. (Centennial High School)  
 28 Section 8AAA Finals 3:30 p.m. (Fox Hollow Golf Club)
- November**  
 6 AAA State Tourney TBD (St. Olaf College)
- 2020 places:**  
 Boys: 5th - Lake Conference  
 Boys: 1st - Section 2AA  
 Girls: 7th - Lake Conference  
 Girls: 14th - Section 2AA  
**Section Tournament:**  
 1-0 QF loss at Brainerd  
**Head Coaches:**  
 Dave Knutsen - Boys  
 Andrea Carlson - Girls  
**Assistant Coaches:**  
 Nate Conroy - Boys  
 Alicia Berkenes - Girls  
**Captains:**  
 Seniors

By Rob LaPlante  
Sports Editor

If the Buffalo boys' cross country team is to continue its mini-dynasty during the post-season, it will have to come in a different section, as well as a different class.

With the MSHSL moving from two classes to three for the 2021-22 season, the Bison retire as the four-time Section 2AA champions. The hope is to make it five-straight section championships competing now in Section 8AAA.

Buffalo is joined in the new class and new section by Bemidji, Brainerd, Elk River, Moorhead, Rogers, Sartell-St. Stephen, and St. Michael-Albertville.

Bemidji won the Section 8AA championship a year ago but the Lumberjacks graduated three of their top five runners from a season ago, including last year's individual champion from the section in Nathan Alto.

"I thought we came from a competitive section, but I felt the last four to five years we dominated it," said Head Coach Dave Knutsen. "So now we go to 8AAA and there are a lot of quality programs among the eight teams. Is there anyone there that will blow us away? - No. Right now, coming in, I don't know if we're the section favorites, but we have to be close."

The Bison return four of their top-five runners that blew away the field by 73 points in capturing last

## GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY PREVIEW

### BUFFALO BISON SPORTS SCHEDULE

#### GOOD LUCK BISON!

AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE  
Chris Chapman, Agent  
209 5th St. NE, Suite 2  
Buffalo, MN 55313  
Office: 763.682.2575  
Mobile: 612.790.5211  
Fax: 855.401.0313

Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
Aug. 26	Aug. 27	Aug. 28	Aug. 29	Aug. 30	Aug. 31	Sept. 1	Sept. 2
<b>BUFFALO BISON GIRLS TENNIS</b>							
		St. Cloud Tech Invite 9 a.m.			Hopkins 4:00		Wayzata 4:00
<b>BUFFALO BISON BOYS SOCCER</b>							
	Monticello 7:00	Brainerd 3:00			Cambridge-Isanti 7:00		
<b>BUFFALO BISON GIRLS SOCCER</b>							
Monticello 7:00					Tartan 7:00		
<b>BUFFALO BISON BOYS CROSS COUNTRY</b>							
	St. Paul Central Invite 9 a.m.						St. Olaf Showcase 10:30 a.m.
<b>BUFFALO BISON GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY</b>							
	Champlin Park Invite 9 a.m.				Big Lake Invite 4:00		
<b>BUFFALO BISON FOOTBALL</b>							
							Next: Sept. 3 Monticello 7:00
<b>BUFFALO BISON VOLLEYBALL</b>							
Monticello 7:00				Park Center 7:00			St. Francis 7:00
<b>BUFFALO BISON GIRLS SWIMMING &amp; DIVING</b>							
Moorhead 5:30							Hopkins 5:30
<b>BUFFALO/MONTICELLO/STMA COYOTES ADAPTED SOCCER</b>							
							Next: TBD

Bold games are home. All times listed as afternoon/evening. Keep up to date with Buffalo High School cancellations and postponements with the Bison inclement weather hotline at 763-682-8180. Schedules are also posted on-line at [www.lakeconference.org](http://www.lakeconference.org).

## KRWC Sports Radio

AM 1360

**Broadcast schedule**

Friday, August 27	Loretto vs. Dumont Class C Amateur Baseball State Tourney at Chaska, 7:30 p.m.
Saturday, August 28	Maple Lake vs. Jordan Class C Amateur Baseball State Tourney at Chaska, 4:30 p.m.
Friday, Sept. 3	Monticello at Buffalo High School Football, 7 p.m.
Tuesday, Sept. 7	Rogers at Buffalo High School Volleyball, 7 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 9	STMA at Buffalo High School Girls Soccer, 7 p.m.
Friday, Sept. 10	Coon Rapids at Buffalo High School Football, 7 p.m.
Tuesday, Sept. 14	Howard Lake-Waverly-Winsted at Maple Lake High School Volleyball, 7 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 16	Chaska at Buffalo High School Girls Soccer, 7 p.m.

## Buffalo Gun Club

**Upcoming events**

Thursday, August 26	Summer Trap League, Week 20 5 p.m. - Dusk (Final League Night)
Saturday, August 27	ATA Marathon Event, 9 a.m.
Sunday, August 28	ATA Event "Bison Open Singles/Doubles/Handicap
Sunday, August 29	ATA Marathon Event/Open Shooting 9 a.m./Noon - 3 p.m.

Photos that appear in the newspaper and several that don't make the cut are available online at [www.thedrummer.com](http://www.thedrummer.com)

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sports@thedrummer.com 763.682.1221

# Healthy lineup key to success for small squad

Sophomore looks to regain form shown as an eighth grader

Brooklyn Hart looks to overcome her injuries from her freshman season and regain her form she had as an eighth grader, where she qualified for state. (Photo by Rob LaPlante)

By Rob LaPlante  
Sports Editor

After fielding a team of only 13 girls in 2020, this year's Buffalo girls' cross country squad is even smaller.

Nine girls made it to the opening day of practice on Aug. 16. Head Coach Andrea Carlson anticipated three late arrivals, but with a squad similar in size to a year ago, depth again will be an issue.

Buffalo graduated last year's top runners Sydney Benzer and Maija Hipp. Kasey Hart elected to play basketball this fall after running with her identical twin sister, Brooklyn, a year ago.

One positive, four of the seven varsity runners from a year ago return, including Brooklyn Hart, Payton Tweten, Sophia Ryhorchuk,

and Emily Strommen.

Much of Buffalo's success this season will rely on Brooklyn's legs. Shin splints forced her to miss multiple meets in 2020 and when she did compete, she was running less than 100-percent.

"All summer, I have been doing physical therapy," Hart said. "Besides having less summer mileage of training than last year, I'm feeling pretty good."

Hart finished fifth on her team during Buffalo's seventh-place finish in the Lake Conference a year ago. She improved to third in team scoring in last year's 14th place showing in the Section 2AA championships.

On a team lacking in depth, it's important for Carlson to see her No. 1 runner healthy.

"We really focused on her workouts," Carlson

said. "She hasn't done the summer miles, here. She's trained on her own, and she's had her own rehab training schedule she's stuck to. She looked strong the first day. She's not limping like she was in track. We're going to take it easy with her miles and see how she comes along."

Her goal is to get back to how she ran in 2019, when she qualified for the Class AA individual state meet. Healthy legs and healthy competition are what she's hoping gets her back on track.

"Even though I wasn't at my best last year, I enjoyed running against the big schools," Hart said. "I feel the rest of the runners are doing good. We'll try to run better, stronger and together."

With a more traditional schedule, Buffalo will com-

pete against more runners and teams other than just the Lake schools. The Bison placed seventh in the conference a year ago. They also switch from Section 2AA, where they finished 14th, to Section 8AAA.

This year's schedule has more courses to their liking. "They always love Hutchinson, because it's nice and flat, unlike Gale Woods Farm," Carlson said. "We ran at Gale Woods a few too many times a year ago. "I'm hoping this year's schedule will be very rewarding for them, so they feel like they can compete and not just run against the big teams. One of the questions they always ask is if this is how more comparable to how we race. I do think they will see that success this year, as a team and individually."