

Eagles' rushing attack overwhelms Prior Lake

EP passes tough test on Lakers' turf to go 5-0

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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The strength of Eden Prairie's rushing attack was too much for Prior Lake Friday, Nov. 6, as the Eagles remained undefeated (5-0) by overpowering the Lakers 35-7.

Eden Prairie's three key backs did most of the damage behind a massive offensive line led by 6-7, 300-pound right tackle Forrest Scheel and 6-3, 260-pound tight end Trent Jones II. Junior fullback Javon Palmer-Pruitt scored touchdowns on 1- and 3-yard runs. Senior quarterback David Warren-Mitchell had scoring runs of 5 and 13 yards, and senior halfback Johnny Hartle capped the victory with a 3-yard scoring run in the fourth quarter.

"Prior Lake had played Wayzata and St. Michael-Albertville tough," Eagle head coach Mike Grant said after the game. "But they might have been missing some guys tonight."

Whatever the case, Eden Prairie had 337 yards in total offense to the Lakers' 124.

Warren-Mitchell's passing was super efficient. He connected on three of five attempts for 78 yards. Hartle rushed 18 times for 78 yards and Palmer-Pruitt picked up 34 yards on eight carries. Leif Benson only rushed twice, but gained 83 yards.

Grant was well aware of the impact his offensive line had on the game's outcome. "I let them talk among themselves about how they're going to block," the coach said. "They remind me of the group we had on our offensive line in 2007. They're



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

The Eden Prairie High football team uses tough rushing defense to limit Prior Lake to one touchdown in a 35-7 win Nov. 6 at Prior Lake. Above, Eagle defensive tackle Trent Jones wraps up a ball carrier, while teammates Tyler George (7), Justice Sullivan (11) and Bennett Larson (32) look for a piece of the action.

smart football players."

Prior Lake's defensive strategy was to blitz on just about every snap, but the push from the Eagles' offensive line negated the effectiveness of those blitzes for the most part.

When Eden Prairie went to the air, Warren-Mitchell was able to find his favorite target, Kramer on some well-run sideline

patterns. One of the biggest completions was a 34-yarder in the second quarter on which Warren-Mitchell ran almost all the way to the sideline before firing a perfect strike to Kramer.

Grant is pleased to have Warren-Mitchell, a second-year starter, executing the game plan. "David made a couple mistakes tonight, like the play when his pass

was deflected and he ended up catching it. He thinks he can make a play out of almost anything."

Warren-Mitchell is one of the quickest quarterbacks the Eagles have had during Grant's long tenure at the school, and the

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Jeff Hopkins resigns as Minnetonka girls soccer coach



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Minnetonka High's head girls soccer coach has stepped down after 13 seasons in the girls program and 17 seasons overall.

He won two state Class AA titles in his 13 seasons

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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Citing health and family reasons, Jeff Hopkins has decided to step down as Minnetonka High's girls soccer coach.

In 13 seasons of coaching the Skipper girls, Hopkins won five section championships along with State Class AA Tournament titles in 2013 and 2018.

"Jeff is a class act," Minnetonka High activities director Ted Schultz said. "He cared deeply about the program and was a great coach for the athletes at our school - passionate, hard-working, dedicated and detailed. He was not only competitively successful, but also showed a great understanding of the purpose of high school sports."

Tony Peszneker, Wayzata's head girls soccer coach, said, "Jeff always had his teams very well prepared. He had his girls working hard and playing disciplined soccer. When he won his second state title [in 2018], Jeff's team was prepared for the tournament. They won two shootouts - in the state quarterfinals and also in the finals."

Coach Hopkins talked about what coaching at Minnetonka High meant to him.

"I was the boys soccer coach for four years before moving to the girls side," he said. "I felt it was the right time for me to go out, and I am leaving on my terms. Some people were surprised that I resigned, but 17 years is a long time in this business."

Ironically, Hopkins feels that his success as the Tonka girls coach was born in a 5-1 loss to Wayzata in 2011. "That game changed it for me," he said. The next time his team played Wayzata, in 2012, Hopkins found himself on the winning side. Ever since, the rivalry has gone back and forth, with both teams getting

their share of victories.

Coach Hopkins feels there is much more to high school sports than having a winning record year in and year out. "I am very proud of our team's academic success," he noted.

"The girls won the Minnesota State High School League's Gold Award this year with a team GPA of 3.89 [based on 20 girls]. I am also proud of the girls for their community service. This year they volunteered for Feed My Starving Children."

Activities director Schultz said mid-December is the target time for interviewing candidates for the Tonka girls soccer coaching position. He will soon be accepting applications.

Coach Jeff Hopkins at Minnetonka High

Boys Soccer Coach: 2004-2007.
Girls Soccer Coach: 2008-2020.
Section Titles: 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020.
State Titles: 2013 and 2018.

Hopkins football team shoots for the .500 mark

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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Hopkins High's 28-0 football loss to Spring Lake Park Nov. 6 was hardly your typical 28-0 game.

At the beginning of the fourth quarter, the visiting Panthers led by only a touchdown, 7-0, at Hopkins High Stadium.

"We did a good job defensively the entire game," Hopkins head coach John DenHartog said. "We had a couple of turnovers that hurt us in the second half."

Hopkins offense was slowed by an injury to Ricky Dixon the previous week in a 47-21 loss at Armstrong, and with

Dixon out the Royals had to look more to the passing attack.

"Spring Lake Park is a very sound team," DenHartog said. The Panthers did a good job of moving the chains with their triple-option offense. However, it took them until the fourth quarter to score more than 7 points.

Quarterback Aaron Clausen was the main man on offense for Spring Lake Park. He scored on a 2-yard run in the second quarter and added a touchdown on a 4-yard run in the fourth quarter. In addition, he passed 19 yards to Kaleb Skelly for another fourth-quarter touchdown. The Panthers tacked on another

score late in the contest on a 28-yard pass play from Nate Litke to Skelly.

Joey Sorenson made nine tackles, while teammates Andy Pahkala and Nathaniel Weninger each made seven tackles to lead the Panthers' defense. Hopkins linebackers Aaron Aune and R.J. Chakolis matched their performance.

"R.J. really has a nose for the football," DenHartog said. "And he is able to slip past blockers to make a lot of tackles. He is also a great leader. It is a pleasure to coach him."

The Hopkins coach praised 6-3, 120-pound sophomore Deshawn Ricks and 6-2, 250-pound senior Will Simon for their play in the defensive line.

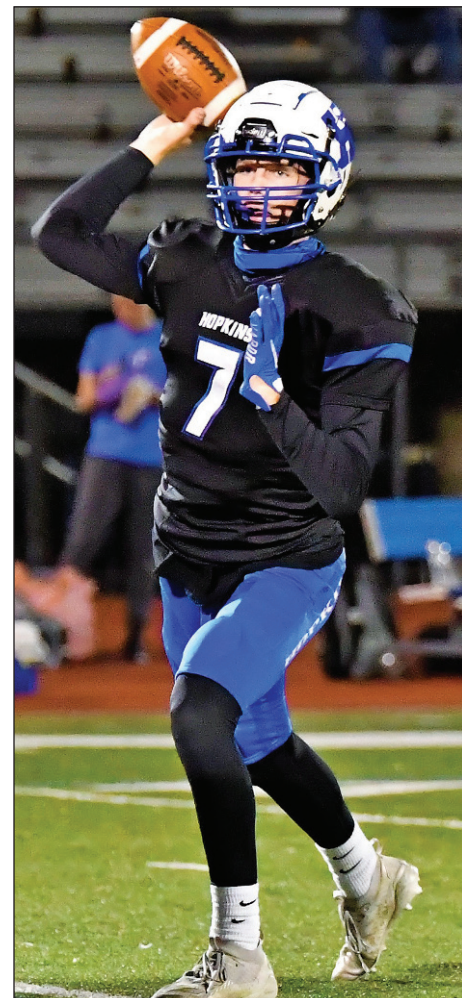
Senior quarterback J.T. Zell continued to run the ball successfully. "J.T. is a tough kid who knows how to pick the holes," DenHartog said. "Earlier this season he had back-to-back 100-yard games."

Hopkins was hoping to finish the regular season 3-3 with a win over Park Center in a 5 p.m. game Wednesday, Nov. 11, at Park Center.

The game was in progress when this week's Sun Sailor began arriving at homes in the Hopkins-Minnetonka area.

"Park Center is a team with a lot of speed," DenHartog said. "It should be a good game."

Section playoffs throughout Minnesota will get underway the week of Nov. 16. There will not be a State Football Tournament this season, so the section tournament will be the final event.



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Hopkins quarterback J.T. Zell gets off a pass during the Royals' 28-0 football loss to Spring Lake Park Nov. 6 at Hopkins High Stadium.

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Minnetonka volleyball team spikes Chanhassen, Hopkins

Skippers improve to 7-1 overall record

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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With the system running smoothly last week, the Minnetonka High girls volleyball team improved to 7-1 with victories over Chanhassen and Hopkins.

Playing at Chanhassen Nov. 2, the Skippers started slowly and lost the first set 25-15, but in the next three sets they won 25-6, 25-20, 25-14.

"Hats off the Chanhassen," Minnetonka head coach Karl Katzenberger said after the match. "They outplayed us in all phases. We were able to right the ship in the second set and go on to win the match. Our girls couldn't have responded better."

Four hitters reached double figures for Minnetonka - Kali Engeman with 13, Abby Stanwood with 12 and Morgan Rooney and Sonia Dahlin with 10 apiece. Senior setter Olivia Koeppen did an outstanding job with 43 assists, while getting all of her hitters involved. Libero Morgan Ryan led the Skippers with 17 digs, while Stanwood had 10 and Koeppen and Rooney each had eight.

Dahlin and 6-4 sophomore Kate Simington each had six blocks to lead the Skippers in that category.

"There are certainly some growing pains

for every sophomore at the varsity level," Katzenberger said. "But Kate is making a lot of progress and leveraging her height advantage."

Engeman's leadership, along with Koeppen's, has been a big factor in Minnetonka winning seven of its first eight matches this season.

"Kali was all-conference last year," Katzenberger said. "This year, she's playing at an All-State level, scoring in a ton of different ways. We're a multi-dimensional team with a lot of options in a balanced attack."

Morgan Ryan leads the back-row play with her ability to pass. "Morgan wasn't satisfied with how she played against Eden Prairie [in a five-set loss], so she watched film and made the adjustments for the Chanhassen match," Katzenberger said.

Minnetonka's match against Hopkins Nov. 3 was never in doubt after the Skippers dominated the first set 25-8. The next two sets were 25-12, 25-11.

Engeman and Stanwood shared the lead in kills with 10 each and Simington added seven. Koeppen had 19 assists and teammate Anna Lockhart chipped in with 13. Stanwood led the way in digs with 13, while Koeppen and Engeman each provided two service aces.

All 14 Minnetonka varsity players contributed to the victory, including Dahlin, Ryan, Rooney, Grace Arndt, Ahna Carlson, Justina Felknor, Abby Gabler, Macy Osenga and Anna Shoemaker.

Edina's late score beats Minnetonka 14-13

Hornets net first win of 2020 football year

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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After four weeks of frustration, the Edina High football team found a path to the win column Friday, Nov. 6, edging Minnetonka 14-13 at Kuhlman Field.

Minnetonka scored all 13 of its points in the first quarter and were still ahead by that score late in the game.

"Then Edina scored on its last two drives of the game," Minnetonka head coach Mark Esch said. "It was our game to win."

"We talk about life lessons all the time," Edina head coach Jason Potts said. "Things like perseverance, mental toughness, not giving up. Our players stayed together, stayed positive."

At the end of the night, Christian Smith's extra-point kick was the margin of Edina's victory.

Minnetonka opened the scoring late in the first quarter on Ben Tolkinen's 5-yard run, and just over one minute later the Skippers scored a second touchdown. Andrew McCalla blocked an Edina punt, which was followed by a 21-yard scoop-and-score by linebacker Andy Dill.

Two scoreless quarters kept the Skippers' lead at 13-0 going into the last 12 minutes.

Edina captain Sawyer Anderson scored on a 1-yard run with 8:16 remaining in the game. After Minnetonka ran off some clock with first downs, the Hornets got the ball back late in the game, and quarterback George Sandven led them to the

promised land.

With 59 seconds remaining, Sandven threw an 8-yard touchdown strike to wide receiver Kalid Ahmed. Then Smith came onto the field and banged his kick squarely between the uprights.

"I was very thankful for that extra point," Edina coach Potts said. "Christian is a quiet kid. It was good to see him have success."

One fan mentioned that Smith is the third leading scorer for Edina this season.

As for the senior quarterback and captain, Sandven, he played his best game of the season, completing 20 of 36 passes for 206 yards and the last-minute touchdown.

"George found his accuracy in the second half," Potts said. "He hung in the pocket against the blitz, and I was happy with his decision-making. Our receivers did a good job of catching the ball."

Sandven's ability to spread the ball around was his strength. Ahmed, Jack Dickey, Ayden Breyfogle and Brady Anderson each had five catches. It was Brady Anderson's first game on offense after playing in the defensive backfield the first four weeks.

"Brady played receiver in a JV game last week and dominated," Potts said. "So that's why we moved him. When Minnetonka began double-teaming him, other receivers were open."

For Minnetonka, returning All-West District playmakers Tolkinen and Jaxen Iverson accounted for much of the yardage.

"We dropped some passes," Minnetonka coach Esch said. "And in the last minute, we had the ball on Edina's 35 yard line and couldn't make the plays we needed. Give Edina credit - they got behind early and didn't quit."



(PHOTO COURTESY OF GUY WARREN PHOTOGRAPHY)

Minnetonka wide receiver Tyler Lien (11) has the ball knocked out of his hands by an Edina defensive back during the second quarter of Edina's 14-13 West District football victory Nov. 6 at Kuhlman Field.

Going into Week 6 games, scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 11, Edina and Minnetonka both had 1-4 records. A win for either team in Week 6 might mean avoiding No. 1 seed Eden Prairie in the first round of the West District playoffs the following week.

Going back to the Nov. 6 game between the Skippers and Hornets, both coaches

named several players who did a good job.

Potts praised two players who saw action on both sides of the ball - 6-6, 295-pound lineman Bastian Swinney and 6-4, 220-pound tight end and defensive end Ayden Breyfogle.

Coach Esch mentioned the consistent play of three linebackers - Tolkinen, Ivan Li and Will Richman.

Lake Conference teams finish in top 10 at statewide CC races



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Sydney Drevlow, Hopkins' eighth-grade cross country star, placed seventh overall in the TCRC Showcase, held recently in Atwater, Minnesota.

By **JOHN SHERMAN**
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With the cancellation of the Nike Heartland Meet, Nike Nationals and the Footlocker Series, high school boys and girls cross country runners had only one option for the postseason, and that was the TCRC (Twin Cities Running Company) Showcase Oct. 31 in Atwater, Minnesota.

Atwater, located close to Willmar, hosted a final meet for the premier high school clubs in Minnesota. Teams could not be coached by their high school coaches, nor could they wear their high school uniforms. Competition was in waves of four teams, due to COVID-19 protocol.

The Lake Conference did well on the boys and girls sides of the competition. In the boys ranks, the Lake had three top-ten finishers with Wayzata in third place, Eden Prairie in sixth and Minnetonka in tenth.

Section 6AA champion Edina won the girls race by defeating runner-up Minnetonka, with Wayzata taking fourth place.

Eden Prairie's boys coached themselves in this final event of the season, according to coach Jeff Lindlief, who attended the TCRC event as a spectator.

"One of our alumni runners, Adam Lindahl, the owner of TCRC, organized

the event with help from others [one of them Wayzata High track coach Aaron Berndt]," Lindlief said. "It was fun for our runners to compete on a course they hadn't been on before."

Eden Prairie and Wayzata have had an ongoing battle in races this year, and the meet in Atwater was one more chapter.

Sophomore Hamza Mohamed led Wayzata, finishing 15th overall with a 5K time of 16:15.2. With that time, he finished a second ahead of Minnetonka sophomore Nick Gilles, the Lake Conference and Section 6AA champion. Friday's result sets up a nice rivalry between Mohamed and Gilles for the next two seasons.

Eden Prairie's senior All-Lake trio all finished in the top ten in Atwater, with Jack Gschwendtner fourth in 16:05, Alex Gutierrez eighth in 16:13 and Isaac Hartman tenth in 16:13.2.

Other Lake Conference boys among the top 50 finishers - Wayzata freshman Daniel McCollor (21st in 16:22), Buffalo's Jadon Boots (24th in 16:28), Wayzata freshman Parker Dietrick (34th in 16:40), Wayzata junior Nick Cichoski (35th in 16:40.2), Buffalo's James Dorado (37th in 16:40.4), Minnetonka senior Josh Koehnen (38th in 16:40.9), Buffalo's Andrew MacHeel (39th in 16:41), Minnetonka senior Austin Hunter (40th in 16:41.7) and Wayzata's Blake Hayden



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Eden Prairie High's boys cross country team finished sixth at the TCRC Showcase. From left are Isaac Hartman, Matthew Holje, Jack Gschwendtner and Alex Gutierrez.

(50th in 16:47). Hopkins' top runner, senior Ben Haberman, placed 53rd in 16:48.2.

Prior Lake won the TCRC boys team title and Stillwater finished second.

Stars OF THE WEEK

Andy Dill

The Minnetonka High football team blocked a punt during a 14-13 loss Nov. 6 at Edina. Dill scored Minnetonka's second touchdown of the game when he returned the blocked kick 21 yards to the end zone.

Sydney Drevlow

Hopkins High's eighth-grade cross country runner capped her season by placing seventh in the Twin City Running Club's Showcase in Atwater. Her 5K time was 18:20.

Josie Fieldman

The Hopkins High senior midfielder has been named first-team All-State in Minnesota Class AA girls soccer.

Johnny Hartle

The Eden Prairie senior halfback gained 78 yards on 18 carries and scored on a 5-yard run as the Eagle football team ground out a 35-7 win Friday, Nov. 6, at Prior Lake.

Trent Jones

To quote Eden Prairie head football coach Mike Grant, "Jones was all over the field" during the Eagles' 35-7 victory Nov. 6 at Prior Lake. Jones played both ways, starting at defensive tackle and tight end on offense.

Benji Pomonis

Pomonis had a goal and an assist as The Blake School defeated Benilde-St. Margaret's 3-1 in the title match of the Section 5A Boys Soccer Tournament. Keegan James and Jay Bowles scored the other goals for the Bears.

Abby Stanwood

Minnetonka's girls volleyball team beat Hopkins 3 sets to 0 Nov. 4 with Stanwood supplying 10 kills and 13 digs.

Ben Tolkinen

Minnetonka High's All-West District halfback scored the Skippers' lone touchdown Nov. 6 in a 14-13 loss to Edina at Edina's Kuhlman Field.

Tolkinen rushed for a 5-yard touchdown in the first quarter. In addition, he started at outside linebacker on defense and helped hold Edina's running attack in check.

EP, Hopkins, Tonka players make All-Lake girls team

Conference coaches name elite performers of 2020

By **JOHN SHERMAN**

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Minnetonka High's girls soccer team finished second behind Edina in the Lake Conference race, but in the Section 2AA championship match the Skippers turned the tables and beat Edina 2-0.

Four of the players who made that possible were named to the All-Lake Conference team by the league's head coaches. They are seniors Marli Bertagnoli, Lissa Mizzutani and Liz Muehlberg and junior Claire Carver.

Minnetonka coach Jeff Hopkins, who stepped down after 13 seasons recently, was happy to have four All-Lake selections along with three honorable mention choices - seniors Julia Dlugosch, Avryn List and Ella Roach.

"Marli had a fantastic season and was our leading scorer," coach Hopkins said. "She had nine goals and five assists. Marli was one of the best players on the field, game in and game out, and a treat every time she touched the ball."

Mizzutani was known not only for her defense, but also for a booming shot that she would take from long range. The three-year starter had seven goals and five assists this season. "Lissa is a versatile player who we could move from defense, to midfield to forward," coach Hopkins observed. She scored her goals when they counted most.

Captain Muehlberg was cited by Hopkins for her distribution skills and ball winning in the midfield. "Liv is a very crafty player, who spent five seasons in the program," the coach said.

Carver, who will return next season, scored five goals as a forward. "Claire plays well with her back to the goal," Hopkins said. "And she has a really quick release on her shot."

Eden Prairie, coached by Kelly Taylor, a former Minnetonka assistant coach, has two All-Lake selections.

One of them is two-time All-State midfielder Maddie Ishaug, the other is forward Lauren Becker. Both are seniors.

"Maddie is a great player," Taylor said. "What coach wouldn't love to work with a player like her? It will be interesting to see how she does playing for the University of Wisconsin. She contributed to about 65 percent of our goals this season."

As for Becker, Taylor appreciates her leadership as one of the Eagle captains along with Ishaug and defender Megan Bohlig.

"Lauren scored some big goals throughout the season," Taylor said. "She works really hard all the time and is a player who leads by example."

Hopkins has two All-Lake players - senior midfielders Josie Fieldman and Anika Fire-



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Senior forward and captain Marli Bertagnoli (12) attacks during the Minnetonka Skippers' Section 2AA soccer victory over Prior Lake at Einer Anderson Stadium.

hammer.

"There is no question Hopkins' strength was in the midfield," Wayzata head coach Tony Peszner said. "Josie Fieldman is one of the best players in the conference."

All-Lake Girls Soccer 2020

Edina: Senior goalkeeper Liv Jamison, senior defenders Annika Eckroth and Lily Hendrikson, junior forward Maddie Dahlien and junior midfielder Wesley MacMiller.

Minnetonka: Senior forward Marli Bertagnoli, senior midfielders Lissa Mizzutani and Liv Muehlberg and junior forward Clair Carver.

Wayzata: Senior forward Abby Brantner, senior defender Brianna Monahan and junior midfielder Dana Bruer.

St. Michael-Albertville: Senior goalkeeper Meriel Orham, senior midfielder Emma Strait and senior defender Rheana Zerna.

Eden Prairie: Senior forward Lauren Becker and senior midfielder Maddie Ishaug.

Hopkins: Senior midfielders Josie Fieldman and Anika Firehammer.

Buffalo: Senior midfielder Carly Kaufmann and junior midfielder Lauren Feddema.



(SUN PHOTO BY JOHN SHERMAN)

Midfielder Liv Muehlberg of the Minnetonka High girls soccer team, a captain in her senior season, has made the All-Lake Conference team.

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TCRC Girls

Edina's win in the TCRC girls race followed the Hornets' victory over Minnetonka and Wayzata in the Section 6AA Meet at Gale Woods Farm.

Junior Maggie Wagner led the Edina club at the TCRC competition, placing sixth in 18:19. Teammates followed suit with

Macy Iyer taking ninth in 18:27 and Mary Verner running tenth in 18:30.

Hopkins eighth-grader Sydney Drevlow added another strong performance to her season portfolio by taking seventh place in 18:20.

Sophomores Abbey Nechanicky of Wayzata and Maya Mor of Minnetonka did not compete in TCRC, and that gave Edina a better chance at first place in the team standings.

Ninth-grader Ella Graham was Minnetonka's top finisher, taking 13th place in 18:36. Wayzata's leader, sophomore Grace Weber, placed 16th in 18:42.

Other Lake Conference runners placing among the top 50 - Minnetonka ninth-grader Elizabeth Weider (18th in 18:43), Minnetonka junior Kate LeBlanc (20th in 18:48), Eden Prairie senior Miriam Sandeen (21st in 18:49), Eden Prairie senior Ella Bakken (27th in 18:55), Edina

senior Emma Hudson (30th in 18:59), Wayzata sophomore Teegan Anderson (31st in 19:02), Wayzata senior Emelia Arnone (33rd in 19:04), Wayzata senior Grace Link (40th in 19:18.6), Edina ninth-grader Ellie Hinkie (41st in 19:18.9) and Wayzata sophomore Grace Mignone (44th in 19:23).

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