

No. 2 Mid-Prairie excited for postseason possibilities

BY JEFF YODER

The News

WELLMAN

While the Mid-Prairie girls have won each of the last five 2A state cross country championships, the Golden Hawks are not the favorites to repeat on October 28 in Fort Dodge.

The Hawks, ranked second in 2A, were not even expected to take first at the River Valley Conference meet held on Tuesday, October 11 after the publishing deadline for this edition of *The News*.

No. 1 Monticello is the team to beat in 2A.

The Panthers took first place at the Monticello Invitational on September 10 with five runners finishing in under 21 minutes. Mid-Prairie's fourth and fifth runners came in around 21:30 that day.

There is a silver lining for the Golden Hawks, however. Coach Mark Hostetler believes that he has a number of candidates to deliver surprising performances over the next few weeks.

"It just depends on how much our fourth and fifth runners move up," Hostetler said. "And it looks like Greta (Sieren) is really going to be able to do that, and Dessa (Poll) has done it in the past three or four races.

"I'm excited that we have the people that can do it, whether it's Dessa, Annika (Poll) Ivy (Reschly), Tabitha (Evans), Amara (Jones). If any one of them wants to bust one loose, there are a number of them there that can do it."

Greta Sieren was Mid-Prairie's fifth runner in the season opener at the University of Iowa on August 25, finishing behind the four Golden Hawks who ran in the state championship last year. But Sieren has



JEFF YODER/THE NEWS

Mid-Prairie junior Abby Fleming is ranked 11th individually in class 2A and set a new personal record of 19:51 in her most recent race. Junior Phoebe Shetler (far right) is ranked 22nd by the IATC.

been the fourth Golden Hawk to finish in four of the five meets since.

In addition to her individual progress, she's been excited to see the team take steps over the last few weeks.

"I think every meet is just a new challenge," she said. "Everyone wants to try their best and get a PR and just keep building as the season goes on."

Sieren set a new personal record in her most recent race, finishing with a time of 21:20 at Wartburg on October 1.

Dessa Poll had a breakout race as the Golden Hawks' fourth runner at Monticello. She set a new PR of 21:28 just a week after running a time of 23:43 as Mid-Prairie's seventh runner at Pella.

"We've had hard workouts and it's nice to see everyone trying hard," Poll said. "And then it's fun to see what we can do during the meets as well."

The Golden Hawks built some confidence by winning the Clipper Cross Country Classic hosted by Clear Creek Amana on September 26. Mid-Prairie was missing an injured Annika Poll, as well as Reschly, who was out with a sickness. The Golden Hawks still defeated a very good 3A CCA squad with Dessa finishing 14th.

"We were able to push each other," she said. "We kind of surprised ourselves a little bit there."

Two-time state champion Danielle Hostetler ran a season-best time of 18:11 on Oc-

tober 1, and Phoebe Shetler also stepped up against great competition with a season-best time of 20:11 at Wartburg.

"I feel like with Danielle, Abby (Fleming) and Phoebe, we have three veterans that have been there for a while, and they're doing really well," Hostetler said. And I think they're going to keep stepping up.

"We'll see what happens on Tuesday, because we're running against Monticello — our main competition. I just have a feeling... by the way they're running in practice, I'm going to get a good surprise from somebody — and I hope a couple of them."

Mid-Prairie lost its second, third, and fourth runners from

last year's team to graduation. Three seniors who finished in the top 16 in each of the last two seasons.

A big reason why the Golden Hawks are still ranked in the top two is the continual progress of junior Abby Fleming.

She finished 36th at the state meet as a freshman, and 21st last year as a sophomore. She is currently ranked 11th in 2A individually by the IATC.

Hostetler, Shetler, and Fleming have all competed in the state meet twice. But this year, the Golden Hawks will line up without Jaden and Sydney Yoder — and their four state cross country medals.

"I think we're all nervous, but excited to give it our best and see what we can do," Fleming said.

She is coming off of a personal best performance of 19:51 at Wartburg College on October 1.

An offseason of hard work has given the Golden Hawks some depth with nine solid options for the seven varsity spots. The key for Fleming's teammates was their "dedication to train all summer," she said. "You know, it's easy to stop, to say 'I don't want to do it anymore,' but they stuck with it."

The Golden Hawks have a chance to make history again with a sixth consecutive state championship. Mid-Prairie currently holds the record with both City High ('98-93) and Dowling Catholic ('07-11) at five straight titles.

But the Golden Hawks, this season can be a successful one with or without another championship trophy. Their focus is on getting better every week, and giving maximum effort on race day.

"We're just going to do our best," Sieren said, "and do what we can do."



PAUL D. BOWKER/THE NEWS

Left, Mid-Prairie senior hitter Ella Groenewold celebrates a Golden Hawks point. Right, Paige Safly and Ella Groenewold go up for a block during a win at Regina last Thursday.

Golden Hawks sweep Regals in RVC regular season finale

BY PAUL D. BOWKER

The News

IOWA CITY

Mid-Prairie finished off its best River Valley South volleyball season with a sweep last Thursday at Iowa City Regina.

The Golden Hawks defeated the Regals by scores of 25-19, 25-22, 25-13 for a third straight sweep over Regina after breaking an 11-match losing streak in 2020.

After being pushed in the first two sets, the Golden Hawks turned their offense into fast gear in the final set, scoring 9 of the last 11 points to secure the victory.

"We moved the ball very fast," Golden Hawks head coach Sherry Evans said. "They didn't know who it was going to go to, so they couldn't really get any hands up on us. Their defense didn't know where to set up."

Landry Pacha, a senior, led Mid-Prairie with a match-high 14 kills. She also had 19 assists and a block.

Jovi Evans, a freshman, had 10 kills and a team-high 22 assists. Ella Groenewold, a senior hitter, had 7 kills and a block.

Regina (13-13) trimmed Mid-Prairie's big lead in the second set down to two points with a series of soft tips over the net, but the Golden Hawks held on for a three-point win to set up the sweep in the third set.

Mid-Prairie scored 8 of the



PAUL D. BOWKER/THE NEWS

Mid-Prairie libero Dakota Mitchell celebrates a Golden Hawks point against Iowa City Regina.

first 10 points in the third set and cruised to the victory.

The win was the fifth in six River Valley South matches for Mid-Prairie, leaving the Golden Hawks in second place in the conference standings for the first time in school history behind league champion West Liberty.

Regina freshman Reese Naeve, the River Valley South's

kills leader, led the Regals with 13 kills. Sydney Wager, a junior and the River Valley South assists leader, had a match-high 39 assists.

Mid-Prairie sophomore Dakota Mitchell, who ranks No. 2 in defensive digs, had a match-high 20 digs.

CCA Invitational

The Golden Hawks were the

only team to win a set against North Scott, the No. 2-ranked team in Class 4A, at Saturday's Clear Creek Amana Invitational held in Tiffin.

Jovi Evans, a freshman, had a team-high 24 kills and sophomore libero Dakota Mitchell had 91 defensive digs in a tournament featuring five matches in a round-robin competition.

Mid-Prairie dropped a three-

set match to North Scott, but won the second set by a score of 21-18 before losing the deciding set, 15-8. Outside of that, the Lady Lancers won every match by sweeps.

Mid-Prairie faced three ranked teams in the tournament: North Scott, Class 4A No. 10-ranked CCA and Class 3A No. 5-ranked Union. Those opponents have combined for nearly 90 wins this season. The Golden Hawks were swept by CCA, but lost in three sets to North Scott and Union.

Mid-Prairie swept Iowa Valley and Central DeWitt, a pair of matches in which Behla Schmidt had 8 kills and 3 blocks.

Golden Hawk sisters Landry and Harper Pacha combined for 38 kills in the five matches. Evans had 7 kills against North Scott and Landry Pacha had 6.

Senior hitter Ella Groenewold had 14 kills and a pair of blocks. Callie Huber, a sophomore, led the Golden Hawks with 4 blocks.

Landry Pacha, Harper Pacha and Evans each had 5 service aces.

The No. 2 seed in the RVC South tournament, Mid-Prairie will face No. 7 Durant on Thursday at 5:00 in Wilton.

The winner will face West Branch or Tipton in the semifinal. The regular season champion West Liberty earned the No. 1 seed and a quarterfinal-round bye.