

PRESEASON PREVIEW

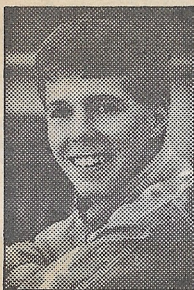
In cross-country: 'One heckuva year'

By LANGSTON WERTZ JR.

Staff Writer

It's going to be a good year for Mecklenburg County in cross-country.

Consider that both Observer cross-country runners of the year are back, as are a wealth of talented performers at all the area's schools.



Cline

"This," said East coach Larry McAfee, last season's Observer coach of the year, "is going to be one heckuva year for cross-country in Charlotte."

Ami Herrman of Providence heads the list.

She led Providence to the school's first state championship in

any sport last season and was named The Observer's cross-country athlete of the year for the second straight season.

She was also named The Observer's girls track athlete of the year for the second straight season last spring.

She's about as dominant an athlete as you'll find, but she has competition.

Her younger sister, Beth Herrman, was all-conference last season and East Mecklenburg's Shontel Jung made the All-Mecklenburg team. Independence's Farrel Quinn is another runner capable of some championship times.

With the boys, Myers Park's John Cline won both the cross-country and boys track athlete of the year awards last year and is one of several candidates for the award this year.

East Mecklenburg has three runners who are all capable of a state championship in Aaron Roberts, Brad Taylor and John Hooks. Roberts ran a 16-minute, 39-second race last year. Taylor's best was 16:47, and Hooks was the best of the bunch with a 16:01 best.

Also Garinger's Robert Easter is one of the best distance runners around, and Providence's Jesse Wood could qualify for the state meet.



JONATHAN TEDDER/Staff

Top dogs: Three of East Mecklenburg's top runners who may challenge for state titles are

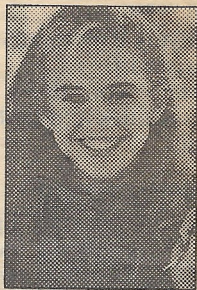
Aaron Roberts (from left), Brad Taylor and John Hooks.

Aug. 26, 1992

Southwestern 4A cross-country

Runners to watch: Providence's **Ami Herrman** is a four-time Observer athlete of the year, twice in cross-country and twice more in track.

Barring injury, she may



Herrman

become the first six-time winner. East Mecklenburg's **Shontel Jung** and **Michelle Ruble** are also two to keep an eye on. With the boys, Myers Park's **John Cline** was last season's Observer track and cross-country runner of the year. Better not bet against him, either. Garinger's **Robert Easter** and East Mecklenburg's big three — **John Hooks**, **Aaron Roberts** and **Brad Taylor** — also will be runners to watch.

The favorites: With either the boys or girls, you can take your pick: East Mecklenburg or Providence. With the boys, East's top three — Hooks, Roberts and Taylor — may give them a slight advantage. In girls, Providence's Herrman is simply on another level. She'll lead Providence to a title run.

The dark horse: With boys, it's Myers Park. Behind Cline, the Mustangs could slip past the favorites and win it all. The same is true of the Mustangs girls.

Worth mentioning: Providence's boys team has lost conference champion **Bryan Calloway** to graduation, and for the first time in the school's short history, underclassmen will lead the way. Can they stick up to East Mecklenburg's tireless pressure?

Predicted finish: Boys: 1. E. Mecklenburg; 2. Providence; 3. Myers Park; 4. Ashbrook; 5. S. Mecklenburg; 6. Garinger; 7. Hunter Huss; 8. Independence. Girls: 1. Providence; 2. E. Mecklenburg; 3. Myers Park; 4. S. Mecklenburg; 5. Ashbrook; 6. Independence; 7. Garinger; 8. Hunter Huss.

— Langston Wertz Jr.

AUG. 26, 1992

Tri-County 4A cross-country

Runners to watch: Anyone, boy or girl, wearing a North Mecklenburg uniform. Coach **Rick Jackson** must put something in the water in Huntersville. The Vikings are always good. West Mecklenburg's **Melanie Dobson** is a senior team captain who finished fourth in the conference last season. Teammate **Stephanie Alexander** was a state champion last summer in the Junior Olympics and enters her freshman year of competition.

The favorites: With boys and girls, the race seems to be for second place. Jackson's North Mecklenburg teams have been dominant of late, measuring themselves by the stronger teams in the Southwestern 4A.

The dark horse: If there is one, among girls, it's West Mecklenburg. Alexander could lead the girls to a good year, but West has only about five strong runners and is young. With the boys, West Charlotte should push North a little.

Worth mentioning: This really is a chase for second place. West Mecklenburg seems best equipped, among its boys and girls teams, to get there. North's just that good.

Predicted finish: Boys: 1. N. Mecklenburg; 2. W. Charlotte; 3. E. Gaston; 4. Olympic; 5. W. Mecklenburg; 6. Harding; 7. Crest. Girls: 1. N. Mecklenburg; 2. W. Mecklenburg; 3. W. Charlotte; 4. E. Gaston; 5. Harding; 6. Olympic; 7. Crest.

— Langston Wertz Jr.

CISAA cross-country

Runners to watch: Providence Day's **Graham Cospers** won the CISAA meet the past two seasons. Charlotte Christian junior **Abby Reeder** has the potential to be one of the city's top cross-country runners. Charlotte Latin's **Ken Kiser** was an all-state performer last year, and coaches say Country Day's **Scott Mahoney** is another runner to watch.

The favorites: Country Day's boys and girls are near-unanimous picks. The Bucs boys have five returning runners who ran some key times a year ago, and the girls have three.

The dark horse: In boys events, it's Charlotte Latin. The Hawks have Kiser, and newcomers **Mike Coyle** and **Wade Milam** will make a difference. With the girls, again it's Latin. Senior **Lauren Brittan** will lead the team.

Worth mentioning: Providence Day coach **Gil Murdock** feels that Cospers could be one of the best runners "in the conference, in the county and in the state." Latin has its deepest teams in several years, both boys and girls, and Country Day coach **Charlie Bodine** says his team's maturity will make a big difference this season.

Predicted finish: Boys: 1. Char. Country Day; 2. Char. Christian; 3. Char. Latin; 4. Providence Day. Girls: 1. Char. Country Day; 2. Char. Latin; 3. Providence Day; 4. Char. Christian.

— Langston Wertz Jr.