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# PIAA Cross Country Championships is loaded with NTL talent

By RYAN LEMAY Staff Writer

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Athens freshman Sara Bronson crosses the finish line first at the NTL Coaches Invitational.

The 2021 PIAA Cross Country Championships take place today and there are high expectations for the NTL runners competing.

The Wyalusing girls, Northeast Bradford girls and Wyalusing boys are sending their full teams to Hershey for the state meet.

It was business as usual for the Wyalusing girls 10 days ago as they clinched their third straight District 4 title as all five scoring runners placed within the top 25.

Wyalusing cross country coach Jim Schools believes that the girls have the talent to place within the range of top 50 to top 100.

Wyalusing's Kayla Beebe finished fifth overall at the District 4 meet with a time of 21:38. Madison Patton came in 19th with a 23:51 time.

Schools highlighted both runners for having a great race and said that Patton had her best race of the season.

“We had a good mix of veterans and new people, and the new kids stepped up and we don't lose too many from this year so this year was a positive step in the right direction,” Schools said. “We didn't have the unknown of whether or not school would be canceled this season which allowed us to get a lot of positive work done.”

Wyalusing's Zion Laudermilch placed second at the district championships in 16:43 just three seconds behind Hughesville's Morgan Gavitt.

Schools said that he knew it was going to be a dogfight up front between the Wyalusing and Hughesville runners, but the boys were great, didn't let themselves get overwhelmed by Hughesville and ran a solid race.

The sky is the limit for Wyalusing's Laudermilch at states. The Ram standout was one of the top runners in the NTL this season and Schools believes that he can improve on his 19th place finish last year and possibly finish top 10.

The Northeast Bradford girls team was a force to be reckoned with all season and head coach Adam Russell had plenty of praise about the team.

“What impressed me most with the girls team was their effort in practice,” Russell said. “I believe this is a great step in the right direction for our program and I am excited to see how our runners perform in states.”

Northeast Bradford's Gracelyn Laudermilch is the team's top runner and it was turbulent season as she was sidelined for 34 days with a broken foot.

Laudermilch bounced back in stride, taking home fourth place in the District 4 Championships with a time of 21:31.

Laudermilch said that after recovering from her injury it felt great to run again and although her times were slower than she may have liked she believes that her and the rest of her team are strong enough to have a great showing at states.

Laudermilch also mentioned that five runners are returning to the girls

team next year and it is only up from here. One of those five runners is freshman sensation Lila Hughes. In a remarkable feat for a freshman, Hughes recorded her personal best time at districts placing eighth in 22:10.

Hughes came into the season with the goal of qualifying for states and she was thrilled to accomplish her goal. Hughes said that she would love to finish top 100 in states and at some point compete with the top runners in the state during her high school career.

Northeast Bradford's Creed Dewing and Ryan Jones also qualified for states. Dewing finished fifth at districts in 17:31. Dewing said that he vastly improved his pacing this season and feels very confident heading into states. He believes that he can finish within the top 25 runners at states and he has the long term goal of becoming one of the best runners in Pennsylvania.

Troy is sending Alyssa Parks, Lance Heasley and Seth Seymour to today's state meet, while Towanda's Taylor Brennan, Nate Spencer and Eric Mcgee also earned a trip to Hershey.

Athens' Emma and Sara Bronson both accomplished their goal of qualifying for states.

“This has been my goal for the season, and it's really nice. It paid off,” Sara said. “I've been working hard all season with amazing teammates and great coaches, so it feels really good. I'm super excited for next Saturday, and I hope I do well.”

Emma is just as excited.

“It's super exciting. At the beginning of the season, my goal was to qualify for states and I did, so it's awesome,” she said. “Having a goal set and having something to work for really helps you work hard to achieve it.”

Athens' Matt Gorsline also earned a spot at states.

“It feels great. It's what I've always wanted to do and finally got to succeed in doing it,” Gorsline said. “I've been working hard all year and getting better with the races. It definitely helped to have invitationals this year, unlike last year. I was able to prepare better for this.”

Ryan Lemay