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CROSS COUNTRY

Camp gets Spartans well seasoned

Williamsville North ready to make jump to Class AA

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Mark Mulville/Buffalo News

Orchard Park's Jessica Nowak is among the top runners in WNY.

Every runner knows there is no offseason. Running is a sport that doesn't change with the weather.

That is a lesson that the **Williamsville North** boys cross country team has taken to heart, and if the Spartans' first-place finishes in the first two meets are any indication, their year-round efforts could make a big impact on their season.

Williamsville North jumped to Class AA this season, but its top seven runners returned and many gained some momentum by attending the Aim High Running Camp this summer in Brantingham, about 40 miles north of Utica.

"These boys have a real shot this year," said coach Greg Stang. "A lot of their success this season will come from that camp. The increase in their skill and confidence is unbelievable. You just don't come off of 15 practices and expect to win the championship, and these kids went to the camp wanting to excel this season."

North won the large-school title at the Franklinville Invitational last weekend to go along with the Byron-Bergen Invitational crown it won on Sept. 10.

The Spartans, who finished second in Section VI's Class A behind **Kenmore East** last year, made the move to Class AA this year where heavy-hitting teams like **Lockport**, **Frontier** and **Orchard Park** reside.

"These kids are hungry," said Stang. "They want to put Williamsville North on the cross country map. They've never won a sectional title and with the way they've been practicing, if they keep injury-free, I really believe they can do it."

Senior captain Mike Dobmeier, an All-WNY first-teamer and a three-year veteran of the Aim High camp, believes too.



Mike Dobmeier is Williamsville North's top runner.

"We're looking really good this year, our top runners are all within 20 seconds of each other," said Dobmeier, who finished first at Byron-Bergen with a time of 16:40 and first at Franklinville in 16:06. "The team has trained hard, even during the offseason. There were seven of us who went to the camp, and everyone's times have improved dramatically. It's hard to believe they're the same guys from last year."

One Spartan who improved significantly by offseason training is Jon Adler, who has dropped two minutes off his time.

"I feel like I'm running the best in my life right now, I've got so much more confidence," said Adler. "The camp definitely has helped our team. We got a lot of advice and tips from Olympic runners there. I feel that we have a great shot at going to states this year."

Despite such optimism, Williamsville North still faces a challenge in Lockport, the defending division AA champ and the preseason favorite.

"We will meet Lockport at the McQuaid Invitational (Oct. 1), and, I won't lie, it's gonna be a showdown," said Stang. "I've been coaching for 30 years though. I know this team, and their dedication and the time they've put in all year. The potential is all there."



James P. McCoy/Buffalo News

John Haenle leads Lockport.

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