

Fall Sports Preview

GSL Cross Country: New regulations and intense competition.

DAVID WANG
Staff Reporter

CENTRAL VALLEY

Megan O'Reilly, Sean Coyle, Kelly Lynch. The names of recent greats decorate the record boards in schools across "America's Rift Valley," leading their teams to the regional and state levels of competition.

The path they took just got a bit steeper.

The Greater Spokane League (GSL) will now only send the top two cross country teams in the league to the regional competition, one less from previous years.

Though appearing to not be entirely dramatic, such a rule in a league like the GSL could result in races to be far more than intense.

The limited spots for the regional qualifiers may seem like Olympic medals for all the 4A teams, and the GSL title, a world record. Forget Beijing. The real races are in Spokane.

"Cross country is a sport where you only get out of it what you put into it," Mead boys coach Steve Kiesel said. "If you don't work and work hard, you're going to get left behind."

However, working hard just may not cut it this year. Because of that, the narrowed gaps have not been especially popular with local runners and coaches.



Kelsey Wardsworth/ Staff Photographer
Sam Sheahan, a cross country runner for Mead high school, at practice.

"The new qualification rules for the regional meet stink," Mead's head girl's coach Dori Robertson said, "Getting to regionals may be the toughest part of the season. There will be very good teams left at home."

"It's just unfair," Kelsey Richards, a senior at Ferris said. "It'll be the same few schools every single year, and it won't give the rest of the league a good fighting chance."

Despite these accusations, some believe that the new rules could bring out the best, literally, in the GSL. James Noble, head girls coach at Ferris, feels that it might result in a better league than before.

"[The new rule] raises the stake and should raise both expectation and goals of all the GSL teams," Noble said. "There should be plenty of exciting races this season."

Nonetheless, there are certainly a few favorites in the race to claim these cherished few spots. From the boy's side, top dogs Mead, Ferris and Central Valley are all suspected to be fighting for the honors. From the girl's, Mead and Central Valley again are the ones to beat.

"I think this league is young," Ferris boys coach Mike Hadway said. "I

think we have a good chance to qualify for state this year." Hadway remarked on his top runner, Adam Thorne, a returning junior who is one of the top runners in the league.

The powerhouse Panthers at Mead are also a force to be reckoned with, returning several state championship veterans to their roster this year. Kiesel believes the best way to take on the new GSL is to stay focused.

"I'm not a fan of the new format, but what can we do about it?" Kiesel said. "We can't use up energy worrying about it. The guys know they have to be at the top of their game each week during the season."

Let's not forget North Central, ranked number one in Washington state. With five of seven runners from last season's number one team returning, the Indians led by seniors Andrew Kimpel, Leon Dean and Jeff Howard, are in serious contention for the honor of being number one in the nation.

Though not in contention for the two spots at regionals due to their 3A status, North Central is still vying for back-to-back GSL titles.

"Historically, it is harder to win a GSL title than a state title, so we always have the utmost respect for our

league competitors," North Central boy's coach Jonathan Knight said.

"Along with Mead, Central Valley and Ferris, I'd suggest that teams will want to keep a close eye on Lewis and Clark and Mt. Spokane. Lewis and Clark girls coach Mark Vandine is also excited about the upcoming season.

"Our depth comes from our great numbers, and we have some talent returning, but we are relatively inexperienced, especially compared to Mead and Central Valley.

Those are definitely the two teams to beat." Robertson agrees. "Central Valley was very good last year and will be again this year. They will probably be the team to beat," Robertson said. "But I would never discount any of the other teams. With girls cross country, anything can happen."

With the new standards in place, it seems like Spokane can look forward to a fall season of fast times, cutthroat competition, and possible "black horse" upsets in the cross country spectrum. In the end though, only gold and silver reach regionals. A bronze medal finish just won't cut it in the GSL.

Football offers competitive play in Spokane this season

NICK MARQUISS
Staff Reporter

EAST VALLEY

Brisk fall air, cheering fans, and muddy gridirons all herald in one thing: football season. Last year's Greater Spokane League, Great Northern League, and Northeast A League were great, and this season should prove to be no exception.



Rilee Yandt/ Photo Editor

East Valley football senior Ian Byrne collides with opponent during a pre-season training.

GSL: According to Marty Kulisek, senior defensive tackle for East Valley, "There's a lot of talent in the GSL this year, this should be a great year for football."

Returning state champion Lewis and Clark High School hopes to repeat the success it had last year. However, a talented Ferris High School team, which won the GSL last year, plans to challenge their supremacy.

Mead and Gonzaga Prep should have another strong season, and both hope to im-

prove on their 7-3 records from last year.

Central Valley School District boasts two strong squads in University High School and Central Valley High School. Both had winning records last year, and have the talent to improve their records in the upcoming season.

Central Valley, lead by quarterback Blake Bledsoe, has the talent to challenge Ferris and Lewis and Clark as the top team in the GSL.

Shadle Park and Rogers hope to improve on last year's bumpy season, and a stronger senior class should help them do so.

As far as triple-A GSL football teams are concerned, East Valley has an experienced squad and a soft schedule; so a winning record certainly isn't outside their reach.

Mt. Spokane and North Central both have very talented teams and have a strong chance at improving their 2-7 records from last year.

Stand out GSL players include Chris Mastin, senior defensive end for Lewis and Clark, who has accepted a scholarship to Washington State University. Also, Travis Long, senior inside linebacker for Gonzaga Prep, has been offered scholarships by a number of Division 1 schools.

According to Lewis and Clark High School's head coach, Tom Yearout, "There is really no clear-cut favorite (to win the GSL) this year as in years past. Mead, CV, Ferris, LC, Prep, and Mt. Spokane are all teams that I think could be in the hunt for the title."

GNL: The Great Northern League has boasted some talented teams in the past, and the 2008 season shouldn't be any different.

"(This season) will be a dog fight. Five teams could win the league: Clarkston, West Valley, (Pullman), Cheney...and Colville" Pullman coach, Bill Peterson said.

Pullman High School, which finished with an 11-1 record in the 2007 season, hopes to find its way to the top of the GNL again this year. Pullman graduated a number of seniors, especially on the offensive line, but plans to rely on its defense and skill players to repeat the success it had last season.

Clarkston and Colville hope to steal some of Pullman's spot light, as both teams finished with 9 wins last year and have

the talent to challenge Pullman as the top team in the GNL.

Riverside, Cheney, and West Valley all had average seasons last year, but certainly have the talent to take a stab at becoming a

"(This season) will be a dog fight. Five teams could win the league: Clarkston, West Valley, Pullman, Cheney... [or] Colville"

contender in the GNL.

Deer Park and Medical Lake didn't have as good a season as either team hoped for last year, but both teams are optimistic about moving up in the standings in the coming 2008 season.

With the talent on each team's roster, an improvement on last season's record isn't out of the question. A few more road wins by either team could easily make them GNL contenders.

Despite the graduation of a lot of talented seniors, the GNL still has some players worth keeping an eye out for. Notably, Jared Byers, Pullman's returning all-league linebacker, should have another spectacular season.

All in all, the GNL is still as "good as its been in years" Peterson said.

NEA: Though small, the Northeast A League has six talented teams that will make for an incredibly exciting 2008 year.

Having recently dropped down from 2A, Lakeside won the Northeast League with a 9-2 record in 2007.

With such a talented roster, lead by senior quarterback Brady Blankevoort, Lakeside has the potential to repeat the success it found last year.

Colfax (6-4), Kettle Falls (5-5), and Freeman (4-6) all hovered around .500 last year. However, each team has a talented enough squad to challenge Lakeside for the league title.

Chewelah, at 3-7, hopes to rally around the success it found in the final two games of last season, winning both, to have a strong season this year.

Despite a 2-8 2007 season, Newport is hopeful about the upcoming 2008 season.

GSL Girls' Soccer should provide for an entertaining season.

DANY BOLEN
Staff Reporter

NORTH CENTRAL

Each year in the hot sun of August, girls from high schools in the surrounding area take to the field and begin to set foot for a journey ahead of them.

It's soccer season, and some of Spokane's finest female athletes are taking the field.

"Kristi Wirtz at Shadle always plays hard and is dangerous up front. Megan Lindsay at Prep is probably the best forward in the league. Avery Hallman at Mt. Spokane is superb," said Charles Curtis, Lewis and Clark's girls soccer coach.



Derek Harrison/ Staff Photographer

Lewis and Clark girls soccer team playing a scrimmage at a pre-season practice.

"Mead is the defending champs, so until someone knocks them off...then they are the team to beat.

Prep is always solid and I'm sure it will be an interesting race," Curtis said.

Mead held off Gonzaga Prep in the championship game last year to take the 07-08 season title.

"I think most coaches go into the season expecting their teams to try to compete for a league title. We are not different. I always expect us to try to

win the GSL before the season starts.

Go big or go home I think," Curtis said.

Curtis believes that Lewis and Clark should be pretty decent this year. They finished fifth in the league last year and hope to do better this year.

They have a group of talented freshman and now the girls in the program know what it takes to win.

He hopes they finish near the top.

"I think that Ferris will be better this year now that Coach Jones has had a year in the program. CV returns some talented

kids, and U-High has a promising group of youngsters. Mt. Spokane is kind of the forgotten team because they are 3A, but they were probably the best team in the league at the end of the year last year, so I expect them to be tough," Curtis said.

Last season Mead finished on top with a record of 9 wins and 1 loss followed by Mt. Spokane and Gonzaga Prep tied with a record of 8 wins and 2 losses.

This will be the first year that Freeman High School will have a girls' soccer team.

Fantasy Football offers a way for excited fans to own and run their own NFL team.

CODY DELISTRATY
Staff Reporter

LEWIS AND CLARK

Millions of people now play a game that was created by three men in a hotel room forty-six years ago.

In November 1962, an Oakland Raiders limited partner, a bay area journalist and a public relations man had extra time between football games because they didn't have to fly anywhere for the Raiders' next game.

They devised one of the most played games in history. A game that would draw spectators into football for a whole new reason. They stayed up all night planning how it would work, who would play, how one would play, and how one would score.

This marked the beginning of Fantasy Football. Fantasy Football is now one of the most popular games in the United States. It is featured in many newspapers and there are even magazines solely devoted to the fantasy football season. It has bettered sports journalism everywhere, forcing journalists to have knowledge of all NFL teams, not just their regional one.

The rules aren't exactly simple, but once you get the hang of it, your score can be something you get to dangle over your neighbor's head with pride. Before the NFL regular season begins, anyone may sign up on a fantasy football website (the biggest being ESPN, CBS and Yahoo's free fantasy football websites).

There are many types of fantasy football that aren't solely on the Internet but also take place in bars and restaurants or ones with less teams. But I'll be focusing on the most traditional form of the "sport."

The draft is definitely the most important day of fantasy

football all year. Because you're given a limited budget, the way to win fantasy football is to pick "breakthrough players," or players that you can draft for a low salary but do exceedingly well in the season.

The most common way the fantasy football draft is executed is in "serpentine" format, where the "owners" (the player of the game) take turns drafting players. The owner who picks first has to pick last in the next round to make the draft as fair as possible.

The point system is quite intricate, and it awards points for offensive and defensive accomplishments by your drafted players.

Points are given for amount of yards (1 point for 20 passing yards or 10 running yards), 6 points for a touchdown, -2 points for every interception thrown or fumble lost, 1 point for each extra point made, points for safeties, sacks, blocked kicks and more.

Each week fantasy football participants devoutly watch their drafted players play in their respective games, hoping for big plays and lots of yards, thus earning them maximum points.

Participants get the excitement of having their own team and matching up superstars that have not ever played with one another before.

What started as a spare time project for three men in a hotel has grown into an exciting and competitive activity for people of all ages.

Whether you're a football fan or not, Fantasy Football can be a way to follow the NFL season, compete with friends, and have fun, so why not try it? Just hit up ESPN.com, sportsline.com, or yahoo.com and get yourself started!

Title IX: Female coaches too often face great amounts of unjust ridicule.



SARA BLAKELY
Staff Reporter
LEWIS AND CLARK

Success in a specific sport can be achieved or destroyed by one or a combination of these five aspects: dedication, heart, skill, teamwork, coaching. When things are working and wins are stacking, many feel that all these components are being successfully completed and that the coach is brilliant. However, in a world that thrives on success and abhors losing, coaches are constantly questioned by parents, observers and anyone else who feels that they somehow know miraculously more than the coach. In this type of situation, it seems that when competitions get close or are lost, female coaches tend to deal with more backstabbing and ridicule than their male counterparts. Even with reasonable credentials, a female coach often undergoes questioning and "back seat-coaching" by spectators who feel that they can do better. While this may seem a severe state-

ment, the reality is that our society, among most, sees women as developmental rather than experienced and knowledgeable. With the exception of a few historical, record-setting coaches such as Pat Summit or Anne Donovan, female coaches are often stereotyped as unaware and confused by disgruntled audiences. And, although men have been in higher authoritative positions since the beginning, of women's athletics, they have grown and gotten stronger; dominant female athletes have learned from the best and trained with the strongest of coaches; they now eventually become coaches themselves after "retiring" and go on to educate aspiring athletes around them. Over the centuries, women have proven to a male-dominated world that they can read, write, and lead just like men do. So, just as women are beginning to take more authoritative roles in politics, they are also beginning to take more authoritative roles in sports. Let them coach, let them learn. Experience may factor into controversial decisions, but this notion can be applied to all yearling coaches, regardless of their gender. Over the years, women have proven they can play. Let us now prove that we can also coach.