



The Friar Runner

A biannual newsletter about the Fenwick Girls' Running Program



Homecoming fun!

Being in 2A for the first time in eight years, the Friars were ready to make a statement this fall -- and placing 4th in State, they sure did! Not only was this the best place the Friar Runners ever placed, it was the lowest scoring in school history at only 199 points. Although 12 athletes made the State squad, 7 raced and 5 scored, it was the entire team that made this result possible.

The keystone of the arch of success for the team were tri-captains Marie O'Brien, Olivia Rill and Ewa Szeszko. Starting over the summer, the captains began planning to make this the best season it could be. Their summer reading book was *The Animal Keepers*, and

from it they decided on the theme: **“YOU are capable”** which was emblazoned on the team wristbands this year. This became a regular reminder of each’s individual capacity to do great things and how all 51 members can bring greatness to the team. This was epitomized in a myriad of ways over the season. Here are just a handful:

- *Isabel Gonzalez made sure she had a strong summer and was a regular at the camp. She not only gained fitness from a solid season of training under her belt but her toughness grew, too. She is the returner with the largest time drop from her previous best last season, 2:46.*
- *Ava Vaccaro set a goal at the start of the season to run every race, as she has been sidelined at least for a couple races each of the previous seasons. She was diligent to ensure that her shins were well all fall, listened to herself and communicated well with the coaches. She hit her goal of running each race this fall.*
- *Cate Krema, Sarah Zawacki and Katelyn McHugh had their patience tested over the regular season for a variety of reasons. Come Conference, however, their hard work and patience paid off as each of them ran blistering races with smiles on their faces, glad to be running with their friends.*
- *Camillie Nourie persevered with positivity as her race times hovered around her B&W time all season. However, come Conference, she dropped 90 seconds, which was deserving of her drive, positivity, commitment and all that she is.*
- *Goth Day, Dad Day, Br. Trout Day and Bath theme days were some of the novel, creative themes this year from the captains. Each Friday, the team dressed to the 9's, making all laugh and smile wide at the end of another school week.*

The journey that started years ago for many, in June for others, and August for a few led us to a nearly historic Black and White meet to kick off the racing season. After a summer of more deliberate, rigorous training, the coaches were anxious and excited for Black and White, which started off with a bang as expected. The earned fitness from the summer showed with two runners in the 19s and a third off by 2 seconds. This would have been the first year the program had three runners under 20 at Black and White. It was an indicator of great things to come.

But like any great story, there is an inflection point where it could go either way -- this year it was at the RB meet. Although on the outside it looked like a great day with the team winning by nearly half the points of the 2nd place team and doing so in training flats instead of spikes, behind the scenes the stress was palpable. Injuries, school and other life stressors were manifesting. Instead of giving into them, however, the team decided to stay the course, trust the process and focus on the task at hand, which was to become a better team.

The next two weekends, there was a sense of relief from better races and the fun Homecoming weekend, which helped (see top picture), and the team was confident heading into the championship season. But before doing so, the always memorable trip to Sterling was given a twist to help prepare for the races to come.

Br. Trout wisely observed that come the championship portion of the season, places are what matter -- not times. So to shift the team’s mindset into passing people vs.

racing a clock, the race plan was to tempo together the first two miles, and then push the last mile hard to see how many people they could pass. Some Friars (Mikaela Burns, O'Brien, & Maria Quinn) impressively passed 30+ runners in the final mile. Cupcakes and awards were given to the people and groups who passed the most. Melissa McMahan even PR'ed and Mary Jacobs nearly did so as they temped with some speedier teammates. This was a clever way to shift their mindset, and it paid off in races to come.

Conference, as always, is such a special weekend. Leading up to it with 'super awesome fun week', honoring the seniors the evening before, words of wisdom from the alumnae letters, and the drive shown on race day -- it is always an impressive day as the Friars donned their black and white with pink. Katie Cahill won the JV race continuing a Friar tradition (three in a row). The F/S placed second. Although the varsity team placed third, they saw how close they were to top in State-ranked St. Ignatius as Quinn was overheard after saying, "We can get them." The Friars were also the only team with seven All-Conference runners, which is the most any team could have. Also, there were 10 runners under 20 minutes for the Friars that day: a sign of the depth of the team. Not only is this the first time in a season the Friars ever had 10 sub 20, but it was all done in a single day.

Regionals and Sectionals were valuable opportunities to learn as the Friars were up against some top State teams like Latin, Vernon Hills, and Ignatius (all of whom the Friars beat at State). Although the depth of the competition was not as great as it was in 3A, the state spot was still proudly earned against some honorable competition. O'Brien earned All-Regional honors, and Maggie O'Malley earned All-Sectional honors.

Now that the Friars qualified for State as a team (3rd time in school history: 2011, 2014, 2019), they were excited about the earned opportunity in front of them. Coaches around the state kept saying that the girls 2A race would be the closest of the weekend with 10 teams all in the mix. The entire week before the race, the coaches emphasized the pride that they had in the girls for their season and they should go out with a bang, having fun and doing what they've been training for: racing hard. The girls certainly did that. The start of the race was pushed by Quinn on the downhill and at the mile, the top 5 (O'Malley, Quinn, O'Brien, Cahill, and freshman Bella Daley) came through in the low 5:50's with O'Malley's aerobic engine taking the lead. They pushed the second mile at about 6th place as a team and came through in a hoard of runners where we coaches were proudly watching. Although we had no idea of team placing at the finish (places 2 through 11 were determined by a slim 62 points), we knew that they ran great. They were greeted with congratulations and cheers from teammates, parents and coaches. Each runner did all that they could to bring the team to the eventual, impressive 4th place. Daley passing a dozen runners in the last mile; O'Brien's nurturing leadership on and off the course and blazing into the chute making up 10 meters in the last 50; Quinn's gutsy start; O'Malley's metronomic consistency; Seligmann's toughness; Cahill's drive to go sub 19; and Burns' amazing performance beating expectations by 30

places all played a big part in the team's success.

It is with great pride that the decade closes on this program and with much hope for the coming decade. The pride, laughs, tears, and memories shared were great, truly great. With a small yet mighty junior class, a sophomore class full of positive leaders, and a freshman class full of charm, the following decade is sure to have a great start.



The team after hearing the good news of 4th place.

A True Team Player

The weekend of State, Seligmann was noticeably aching. As the 8th runner, Mia Scharpf (who earned All-Conference honors a couple weeks before) was ready to step up and perform. Scharpf knew that she may be called upon, especially after the coaches chatted with Seligmann on Friday. Scharpf was confident, positive, calm and supportive all weekend despite the uncertainty of her situation. When she went to warm up with her team on Saturday, she was focused and ready to perform if called upon.

When it was time to check in the runners, Delaney committed to racing. Mia, spiked, bibbed, and ready to race, was told she wasn't going to race. She stepped back without question, gave a boost of confidence to Delaney, and was amped to cheer on her teammates as they raced.

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