

IL Class A Girls State Preview

Tony Jones- Dyestat IL/ESPN RISE

Defending state champion **Bloomington Central Catholic** has wore the #1 crown the entire season... so why should they stop now? They won the Lewistown sectional comfortably over Stanford (Olympia) 95-72 albeit in no so impressive fashion. But the sectional round is not necessarily about winning a title. It's about getting the most important athletes and/or relays to state. They have gotten their most important parts to Charleston.

Eureka placed 16th last year and it was a disappointment. They will look to shore up that with experienced athletes such as **Kalla Gold** and **Kelsey Holman**. This is probably the only team's trophy hopes will depend heavily on relays to score a big hit. The 4x1, 4x2, and 4x4 are paramount to Eureka's success.

Two names to watch for in leading **Sherrard**: **Sarah Boraas** and **Lacey Hainline**. They will team up together and separately in events such as the 100-400m, relays, and hurdles. They may just come out on top.

Byron will be extremely dangerous with **Paige Knodle** leading in both hurdle races. She will also be on a relay or two.

Jena Hemann will lead her **Breese (Central)** team in four categories. Watch in the field and on the track to defend her high jump title and improve on her two seconds in the jumps.

-Distance-

[Top 5 minimum]

800m-

Key athletes: Kelly Curran (Bloomington CC), Julie James (El Paso), Kaley Ummel (Lexington), Sydni Meunier (Gibson City), Krista McClure (Havana)

Outlook: Curran will look to embark on the second leg of a possible triple individual qualifying effort. It is not known if she will compete in the team's 4x4r. Still, Curran has the second fastest league mark of 2:15.9 achieved in the sectional round. Freshman Julie James will look to spoil things for the veteran Curran. Meunier has experience as she placed 8th in last year's final. But Ummel is the top returner in the half-mile. She ran 2:19 for 4th place in 2009.

1600m-

Key athletes: Kelly Curran, Julie James, Sydni Meunier, Kaley Ummel, Kristen Busch (Freeburg), Hanna Booker (Tremont), Caitlin Busch (Freeburg)

Outlook: Curran is the clear favorite here despite only running 5:23 at sectionals. Her season best of 5:03 was achieved in a winning effort at the prestigious Palatine Relays. Plus, Curran was runner-up to former Tri-Valley superstar Stephanie Brown. Meunier, Ummel, and James all have solid 5:16 times. They should battle for a top 3 spot or even better if Curran falters from a long weekend of races.

3200m-

Key athletes: Kelly Curran, Julie Buford (Chicago Latin), Stephanie Simpson (Chicago Luther North), Ellen Devereux (Decatur St. Teresa), Kristen Busch (Freeburg), Ivy Handley (Decatur St. Teresa), Julie James

Outlook: Curran carries a deceptive 11:52 clocking into the final. That of course was to conserve as

much energy as possible. The outlay of the run to state glory and possibly history will depend on this particular event as it's the first distance final of the day. Defending state champion Kristen Busch will look to push the pace at some point and upstage Curran even if it results in a loss. Can Curran hold back against the likes of newcomer and good miler Simpson? How about Kristen's twin sister Caitlin? It will be interesting to see how this possible drama filled race will shake out.

-Sprints-

100m-

Key athletes: Jena Hemann (Breese Central), Kimarri Campbell (Rock Falls), Erica Dynes (Kewanee-Weathersfield), Taylor Farley (South Holland Seton Academy), Lacey Hainline (Sherrard)

Outlook: the multi-talented Hemann placed third here last year. She will battle against fellow star Hainline in the final should they meet.

200m-

Key athletes: Kendra Pierce (Bushnell-Prairie City), Taylor Farley (South Holland Seton Academy), Lacey Hainline, Daniele Hoult (Georgetown-Ridge Farm), Morgan Ransom (Melrose Park Walther Lutheran)

Outlook: the league's fastest athlete Jena Hemann did not contest the race at her sectional. It doesn't matter because Pierce ran a speedy 25.35 earlier in the season and she has the top sectional clocking of 26.04. A host of quality half-lappers will dot the field including last year's lone holdover Ransom.

400m-

Key athletes: Lacey Hainline, Kalla Gold (Eureka), Kendra Pierce, Taylor Farley, Sophie Fairman (Stauton), Mackenzie Bollinger (Aurora Christian), Lauren Adcock (Moweaqua Central A & M), Megan Johnson (North Boone), Liz Mosbach (Spring Valley Hall).

Outlook: this is perhaps the deepest and most talented sprint field with the top 10 seeds under 1:00. Consider the starpower names like Gold, Hainline, and Adcock. But newcomer Pierce may have other plans as she comes in with the top seed. Hainline was indoor champion and Farley second. The final could be a fast one.

100HH-

Key athletes: Ashley Holden (Greenville) Tawnie McGann (IVC), **Courtney McKibben (Rockford Christian)**, Sarah Boraas (Sherrard), Paige Knodle (Byron), Alexa Allen (Port Byron Riverdale), Kankakee (Macnamara).

Outlook: the field returns five of the state's best athletes in Allen, Boraas, Knodle, McKibben, and Ryan. Look for one of these five young ladies for the win.

300H-

Key athletes: Tawnie McGann, Ashley Holden, Sarah Boraas, Sarah Fisher (Kewanee Weathersfield), Paige Knodle.

Outlook: this one is a little easier to call: Knodle is defending state champion and may be the best long hurdler in the entire state.

-Relays-

4x100m relay-

Key teams: Sherrard, Melrose (Walther Lutheran), Carthage (Illini West), Eureka, Byron, Athens, Lisle, Kankakee (McNamara)

Outlook: Could it be that Sherrard is next in line as the state champion? After all, they are less than

eyelash before Illini West for the best season mark. Sherrard is positioned well coming into state as the fastest quartet and they do have Hainline and Boraas on the relay.

4x200m relay-

Key teams: Melrose Park (Walther Lutheran), Sherrard, Carthage (Illini West), Byron, Lisle, Port Byron (Riverdale), Eureka, Prairie Central

Outlook: the indoor champion Sherrard appear to be the real deal after posting the top mark coming into the state meet at 1:45.73. That's nearly a second faster than Illini West and defending state champion Walther Lutheran.

4x400m relay-

Key teams: Byron, Carthage (Illini West), IVC, Macomb, Gibson City, Bloomington (Central Catholic), Melrose Park (Walther Lutheran), Pittsfield, Petersburg-Porta

Outlook: Byron has the league's top overall seed and season mark of 4:02. They certainly are the candidates to break 4:00 if pushed. However, they are not invincible as they were bested by Eureka at IPTT. Gibson City and several other teams in the 4:06 range will look to put pressure on the favorites.

4x800m relay-

Key teams: Palos Heights (Chicago Christian), Princeton, Petersburg-Porta, Elmwood, Byron, Kewanee (Weathersfield), Eureka, Kankakee (Macnamara), Winnebago, Elmhurst (Timothy Christian).

Outlook: Chicago Christian is the top team by far with the sectional and season bests to boot (9:33/9:41). They were in line to win it last year until the heroics of Tri-Valley's Stephanie Brown's 2:06 anchor spoiled the fun. Porta, Princeton, and Timothy Christian will be there in the end.

-Field-

Long Jump-

Key individuals: Jena Hemann, Lauren Adcock, Ashley Holden, Amy Martin (Oakwood), Shelby Bachman (Carmi-White County), Sarah Kapp (Sterling Newman Catholic)

Outlook: look for Hemann and Martin to dominate this event. They are the only two in the field over 18-0.

Pole Vault-

Key individuals: Taeler Hillyer (Rock Island Alleman), Sarah Bell (Bloomington CC), Alyssa Applebee (Seneca), Lauren Fredenhagen (Princeton), Paige Knodle, Erica Betrand (Rochester)

Outlook: Bell, the freshman, is sitting pretty at the top of the charts at 11-6 with Hillyer. Both vaulters dueled earlier this season at IPTT before Bell got the best of Hillyer and the meet record. Expect more of the same in Charleston.

High Jump-

Key individuals: Jena Hemann, Chloe Wild (Byron), Kandle Bloch (Argenta-Oreana), Melissa Bull (Pearl City), Maura Cummings (Newton), Kelsey Holman (Eureka)

Outlook: Hemann has the 16th best jump in the state at 5-9 that was achieved earlier in the season. The defending state champion appears to be well on her way to repeating after leaping a sectional best 5-7. Holman has the #2 league seasonal mark with Wild at 5-6.

Triple Jump-

Key individuals: Jena Hemann, Amy Martin, Mackenzie Bollinger, Isimeme Edeko (Melrose Park Walther Lutheran), Taylor Brunner (Argenta-Oreana)

Outlook: Bollinger was indoor champion with a leap of 35-6. She has improved to over 36-feet. The problem is several other girls have leap-frogged her. Hemann is the sectional leader and top returner.

She shows no signs of being contained after moving on to state with the top effort. Edeko is someone to be aware despite being a freshman. Martin is seasonal leader at 37-4.5.

Shot Put-

Key individuals: Kelsey Card (Carlinville), Olivia Herzog (Sullivan), Melanie Thompson (Manlius Bureau Valley), Jennifer Moeller (Nashville), Erica Jenkins (Lexington), Whitney Walker (Illini Bluffs), Janie Howse (Central A & M)

Outlook: last year, the cutoff to make the final was 36-4. It will certainly take more than that to be among the 12 twelve finalists- even without the great Kelsey Card. There are at least half-dozen throwers with personal bests over 40-feet. Of course, all eyes will be on Card who happens to be the heir apparent to former all-time great and the best ever Dani Bunch of Mahomet-Seymour. Card has already made her name since her freshman year when she won the state championship. Card has repeated and is well on her way to a possible third title and more ahead of her.

Discus-

Key individuals: Kelsey Card, Whitney Walker, Megan Lauzon (Rushville), Kristi Naylor (Polo), Rachel Price (North Greene), Janie Howse

Outlook: Card is a monster when it comes to this event. Never mind her throwing 48-feet plus in the shot put, anyone in the entire state and very few young women would be hard pressed to heave a rubber plate 164-5 (US #4). It ties the all-time record that she now shares with Dore' Debartolo (Aurora Rosary). It is a matter of time before she completely owns the mark. The nearest competitor is Walker at a respectable 137-8.