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2022 Fort Recovery fall sports preview

Girls cross country team is excited for opportunity return to state finals



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ON THE COVER: Ellie Will leads the Fort Recovery High School girls cross country team at the 2021 OHSAA Division III Cross Country State Championships at Fortress Obetz. Will finished in 70th place with a career-best time while the Indians placed 12th as a team.

All stories and photos in this section are by Ray Cooney
Cover photo is by Chris Schanz

Pictured at right is the 2022 Fort Recovery High School boys cross country team. Front row from left are Aiden Heitkamp, Parker Brunswick, Christian Marchal and Caden Marchal. Back row are coach Christy Diller, Trevor Heitkamp, Evan Evers, Ethan Evers, Caleb Rammel and assistant coach Matt Roessner.



Looking to make an impact at state finals

State. The Indians have shown it's not just a destination. It's somewhere they can compete. After back-to-back trips to the OHSAA Division III Cross Country State Championships, Fort Recovery High School's girls cross country team has its sights set on another visit and a run at the top 10.

And returning state qualifier Trevor Heitkamp hopes to join them there again as he leads the boys team. The Indian girls, the defending district champions, bring back all of

Cross country		
Date	Opponent	Time
Tuesday, Aug. 23	Mercer County Meet at Coldwater	5 p.m.
Saturday, Aug. 27	Bob Schul Invitational	8 a.m.
Saturday, Sept. 3	Treaty City Invite at Greenville City Park	9 a.m.
Saturday, Sept. 10	Tiffin Carnival at Hedges Boyer Park	9 a.m.
Saturday, Sept. 17	Troy Twilight at Troy High School	6:30 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 24	Tour De Sewer at Versailles water treatment plant	9 a.m.
Saturday, Oct. 8	Lions Club Invite at Coldwater	9 a.m.
Saturday, Oct. 15	MAC Championships at Coldwater	9 a.m.
All meets are away		

their top seven runners from last season and add a junior who is coming off of a regional-qualifying track season. "I think it's a season where we could see a lot

of shuffling around," said FRHS coach Christy Diller. "I'm very excited about that because somebody different is probably going to have to step up every week and

that pushes everybody to be a little bit better. We're looking forward to the season and it should be a good one." Ellie Will, a junior, has led Fort Recovery at the

state finals in each of the last two seasons. She was 40th at Fortress Obetz as a freshman when the Indians finished 13th as a team and 70th last season in 20 minutes, 14.5 seconds, as part of a 12th-place finish — the best in school history. "She just provides a steady hand," said Diller. "They know that she is almost always on." The rest of the returning top five is junior Jenna Hart — she was 82nd at the state finals, fifth in the regional and led the Tribe with a 10th-place effort in the Mid-

west Athletic Conference Championships — sophomore Joelle Kaup (132nd at state) and seniors Alexis Wendel (141st) and Megan Diller (144th). Caitlin Weitzel and Anna Roessner rounded out the top five. All of them are capable of breaking the 22-minute mark. Fort Recovery will add Natalie Brunswick to the mix, with Diller saying the junior, who finished third in the track district meet in the 1,600-meter run and was eighth at the regional, could push Will at the front of the pack. See **State** page 8

Hope this season is the best one yet!

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Good Luck, Indians!

Good luck, and keep up the great work!

Wishing this year's student athletes all the best, on the field, on the court and in the classroom! We admire your hard work, dedication and enthusiasm, and we thank you for making this community proud.

Expanded playoffs provide opportunity

For more than two decades, the Indians were a program that couldn't break through.

When they finally made the playoffs for the first time in 2014, they immediately picked up their first win. The next season, they were state champions.

Fort Recovery High School's football team proved last season, the first in which 16 teams from each region made the playoffs, what it could do if it just had the opportunity.

Making the playoffs despite a 1-7 Midwest Athletic Conference record, the 14th-seeded Indians traveled to regional No. 3 seed Arcanum and scored a 40-30 upset.

"We play the best of the best of the best, every week," said FRHS coach Brent Niekamp, noting that the MAC featured state champions Marion Local (Division VII) and Versailles (Division V) along with Division VI state runner-up

Coldwater last season. "And if we just have a shot in that postseason, we're almost always going to have a chance to make some noise because that's the kind of program we have ...

"I've been an advocate of it for a long time. It's already been a great thing for our program."

The proof is in the numbers. Fort Recovery has 10 playoff wins in six appearances and has lost in the first round only once — to MAC

rival and eventual Division VI state champion Marion Local in 2017.

Back to lead the Indians in their effort to make the playoffs and make a little noise is senior quarterback Cale Rammel. He threw for 1,022 yards and six touchdowns last season while adding about 200 yards on the ground.

He'll have junior receivers Troy Homan (28 catches for 344 yards) and Reece Guggenbiller (26 catches for 374

yards) back with him to spark the passing game along with receiver Riggs Tobe and tight ends Owen Knapke and Lucas Acheson.

Ethan Hartnagel and Chase Kaiser, who saw a combined 60 carries for 249 yards last season behind lead back Riley Hiser (1,406 yards), will run the ball out of the backfield.

"I want to be pretty balanced, especially on early downs," Niekamp said. "I think that's im-

portant to not get too predictable."

"We want to run the ball and control the clock and things like that, but Cale probably has a chance to be one of the top passers in the league this year. And the fact that we have that weapon, I think we have to use it a little bit more. ... We have to be able to do it to keep defenses off balance."

Bo Thien will anchor both the offensive and defensive lines. See **Opportunity** page 4

Focus is on handling pressure situations

It's easy to be confident in a blowout win.

The close matches against big rivals are where the Indians are hoping to find improvement.

"We're trying to make sure we understand situations," said Fort Recovery High School volleyball coach Travis Guggenbiller. "We don't want to buckle under pressure. We really want to make sure that we can handle pressure well, communicate with each other and take it game by game. I think that's the biggest issue we're working on this year.

We want to mentally be able to handle tough situations."

St. Henry provides the prime example.

The Indians played their conference rival three times last season. The first was a 2-1 loss in a tournament, the second a 3-1 loss in a conference match after dominating the opening set and the third, a 3-2 loss, to the fifth-ranked team in the state in the district final in a match in which they took the first two sets. (They were looking to repeat as district champions.)

The idea, simply, is to turn those tough losses into hard-fought wins.

Doing that won't be easy as Fort Recovery lost its top three attackers and blockers — Whitey Rammel, who is now at East Tennessee State University, topped the Tribe in both categories with 322 and 85, respectively — and its top two back-row defenders to graduation. (Out of nine players who saw action in a majority of sets last season, only four return.)

The team will look to senior

Audra Bubp to lead the defense. The libero comes off of a campaign in which she recorded 122 digs.

The idea will be to allow Bubp to control the back line as much as possible in order to start the offense.

"Audra is solid," Guggenbiller said. "She handles pressure well. She moves very gracefully on the floor. She's been really improving her serve receive and serving. ... We want the best passer to get every pass that she can."

Fort Recovery's top returning attackers are a pair of juniors — Mara Pearson and Teigen Fortkamp. They finished fourth and fifth on the squad in kills last season with 96 and 89, respectively. No other returning player had more than four.

Fortkamp was also fourth on the squad with 46 blocks.

"Both of them bring leadership on the court," said Guggenbiller. "They're both six-rotation players.

See **Pressure** page 5



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rewarding season!**



Pictured is the 2022 Fort Recovery High School football team. Coming off of a 4-8 season that included a playoff win, the Indians, who open at home Friday against Wayne Trace, are looking forward to continuing to take advantage of the expanded playoff opportunity that was put into place last season.

Opportunity ...

Continued from page 3

He'll be a three-year starter at center — joining him are tackles Gable Knapke and Jacob Heitkamp and guards Alex Evers and Wes Bechtol — and earned All-MAC honorable mention last season. Defensive linemen next to him will be Jose Martinez and Jacob Heitkamp.

The defensive side of the ball will feature linebacker Ross

Pearson, who earned second-team All-MAC honors a year ago as he recorded 72 tackles. He'll be on the outside of the Indians' new 3-4 defensive look, which Niekamp hopes will provide more flexibility, along with linebackers Lucas Acheson, Owen Knapke, Austin Steinbrunner and Conner Kaikala.

"We're trying to play with a

little more speed on the field, which is exciting," said Niekamp, noting that there will be a bit more blitzing and movement with a zone defense on the back end with corners Caden Grisez, Kaiser and Rammel and safeties Homan, Guggenbiller and Tobe. "A lot of times there's going to be a fourth guy rushing, sometimes a fifth or sixth guy, but who that

fourth guy is is tough to figure out."

He said success for his team would simply be to play at as high a level as possible.

"I would suspect that would mean making the playoffs and getting a few wins and seeing where we can go from there," he added. "I really think that we're that kind of team. ... I like where we're going."

Football

Date	Opponent
Friday, Aug. 19	Wayne Trace
Friday, Aug. 26	Urbana
Friday, Sept. 2	Coldwater
Friday, Sept. 9	Minster
Friday, Sept. 16	St. John's
Friday, Sept. 23	New Bremen
Friday, Sept. 30	Marion Local
Friday, Oct. 7	Parkway
Friday, Oct. 14	Anna
Friday, Oct. 21	St. Henry
All games start at 7 p.m.	
Home games in bold	

Good luck to INDIANS!



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Pictured is the 2022 Fort Recovery High School volleyball team. Front row from left are manager Kayla Gaerke, Nevaeh Lennartz, Cali Wendel, Kayla Heitkamp, Autumn Leuthold and manager Courtney Overman. Middle row are Megan Evers, Audra Bubp, Allysen Fullenkamp, Grace Klingshirn, Faith Wendel, Mara Pearson and Kensey Gaerke. Back row are assistant coaches Rachel Klosterman and Mandy Diller, Karlie Niekamp, Teigen Fortkamp, Kennedy Muhlenkamp, Paige Guggenbiller, Saige Leuthold, assistant coach Tiffany McEl-downey and coach Travis Guggenbiller.



Pressure ...

Continued from page 3
“They see the floor the entire time. They really communicate. They work hard. They’re great leaders on the floor.”

Faith Wendel, a senior, is the other returner who saw major playing time last season as she shared the setter role with Fortkamp. She recorded a team high 354 assists — Fortkamp had 240 — and is third among returning Indians in digs (105) behind Fortkamp and Bubp.

Fort Recovery will look to seniors Allysen Fullenkamp and Grace Klingshirn to play much bigger roles on the front line after seeing limited court time last season.

Kennedy Muhlenkamp will also have the opportunity to expand her

game after being used mostly as a serving specialist and third setter during her freshman season. She played in less than half of the Tribe’s sets but had the highest serve percentage and third-highest ace percentage on the squad. She was also third on the team with 89 assists.

The rest of the FRHS team includes juniors Saige Leuthold, Kensey Gaerke, Cali Wendel, Paige Guggenbiller and Megan Evers, sophomores Kayla Heitkamp, Karlie Niekamp, Kennedy Muhlenkamp and Nevaeh Lennartz, and freshman Autumn Leuthold.

Following a 14-12 season with a 5-4 Midwest Athletic Conference record last season and with a roster

full of athletes being asked to step into new or bigger roles, the Indians, who open at home Aug. 25 against National Trail, are looking to continue to build on the steps they’ve already taken in the preseason.

“We’re making big improvements really fast,” said Guggenbiller. “It’s nice to see that.”

“We’re a younger team this year. We’re going to take it game by game, set by set and really just focus on who we are as a team. We want to control the ball, control all aspects of the game, be disciplined and just work hard. In the end, we want to peak at the right time for tournament. That’s the main goal, to be successful and have a long post-season.”

Volleyball

Date	Opponent	Time
Tuesday, Aug. 23	Memorial (St. Marys)	5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Aug. 25	National Trail	5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Aug. 30	Jay County	5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 1	Parkway	5:30 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 3	St. Henry Invitational	9 a.m.
Tuesday, Sept. 6	Celina	5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 8	Versailles	5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 15	St. John’s	5:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Sept. 20	Coldwater	5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 22	Marion Local	5:30 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 24	Shawnee	10 a.m.
Thursday, Sept. 29	St. Henry	5:30 p.m.
Saturday, Oct. 1	Knight Invitational	9 a.m.
Thursday, Oct. 6	Minster	5:30 p.m.
Saturday, Oct. 8	Fort Loramie	9 a.m.
Tuesday, Oct. 11	New Knoxville	5:30 p.m.
Thursday, Oct. 13	New Bremen	5:30 p.m.
Saturday, Oct. 15	Arcanum	10 a.m.
Home matches in bold		



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Pictured is the 2022 Fort Recovery High School boys golf team. Front row from left are Drew Backs, Evan Keller, Garret Diller, Kyle Huntsman, Drew Stammen, Caleb Smith and Eli Albers. Middle row are Riley Grieshop, Nate Jutte, Isaac LeFevre, Sage Wendel, Keegan Muhlenkamp and Reece LeFevre. Back row are Reece Evers, Eli Lennartz, Alex Dues, Carson Fullenkamp, Brennan Dues, Matthew Romer and coach Dean Sanders.

Boys golf

<u>Date</u>	<u>Opponent</u>	<u>Time</u>
Monday, Aug. 8	Tri-Village	9 a.m.
Tuesday, Aug. 9	Mercer County	9 a.m.
Friday, Aug. 12	Mississinawa Valley	4 p.m.
Monday, Aug. 15	Parkway	4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Aug. 16	Botkins	4 p.m.
Thursday, Aug. 18	Versailles	4:30 p.m.
Monday, Aug. 22	St. John's	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Aug. 25	Coldwater	4:30 p.m.
Monday, Aug. 29	Marion Local	4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Aug. 30	Russia	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 1	St. Henry	4 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 8	Minster	
Monday, Sept. 12	New Knoxville	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 15	New Bremen	4:30 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 17	Jordan Moeller invite	8:30 a.m.
Monday, Sept. 19	Celina	4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Sept. 20	Lehman Catholic	4 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 24	MAC Championships	9 a.m.
Home matches (at Portland Golf Club) in bold		

Large roster looks to build strong program

The Indians have just one senior.

But with larger groups stacked up behind him, the hope is that the building blocks are there for a solid, stable program for years to come.

The Fort Recovery High School boys golf team, which opened its season last week, hopes to be able to be competitive in every match and

improve its standing in the conference and sectional.

In pursuit of that goal, Isaac LeFevre returns as the lone senior to lead the team.

LeFevre is coming off of a junior season in which he shot 98 in the Midwest Athletic Conference Tournament at Arrowhead Golf Club and posted the same score in the Division III sectional tournament at Colonial Golfers Club in Herrod. He earned honorable

mention All-MAC honors last season.

Coach Dean Sanders referred to LeFevre as a strong all-around golfer who worked on his game by playing in the Lima League this summer.

Beyond the senior, Sanders has six juniors, six sophomores and six freshmen out for the team this year.

"I'm real excited this year to see that we've got so many who

are coming out to play golf," said Sanders. "They're working really hard to improve their game. That's going to bode very well for us in the future to be able to develop a program of competitive golf year after year."

The rest of the starting lineup early in the season has featured Alex Dues, Eli Lennartz, Keegan Muhlenkamp and Reece Evers. (Matthew Romer saw varsity action when the Indians played a

six-man lineup in the season-opener against Tri-Village.)

"We've got some kids who have got pretty good skills," said Sanders.

Lennartz showed off his skills late in the 2021 seasons when he led the Indians with a career-best 88 in the sectional tournament. He was also their No. 2 golfer with a 96 in the MAC Tournament.

See **Build** page 8

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No seniors in all-new lineup

The Indians lost their entire starting lineup.

As if that wasn't a big enough challenge, one of them was the best girls golfer in school history.

The Fort Recovery High School girls golf team has almost no varsity experience after Jalyn Bruns and her fellow seniors dominated the starting lineup in 2021.

Bruns, who is now playing at Indiana University – East, closed her career by finishing fourth in the OHSAA Division II Girls Golf State Tournament at Ohio State University's Gray Course. She was also the sectional champion and MAC Player of the Year.

"The last two years have been very special for our program," said FRHS coach Joe Bruns, Jalyn's father, whose team shot a season-best 401 and finished fourth in the sectional last season. "We really moved up in the ranks. Unfortunately we lost five seniors last year, so we're a very young team."

Not only did the Indians lose a full starting lineup from the Class of '22, they



Pictured is the 2022 Fort Recovery High School girls golf team. Front row from left are Ella Westgerdes, Brynn Stammen, Rylee Bulp, Marissa Schoen, Ewian Briner and Emma Will. Back row are assistant coach Jeff Vaughn, Ella Schoen, Eva Kahlig, Malory Evers, Georgia Wenning and coach Joe Bruns. Not pictured is Olivia Knapke.

have no seniors this year to help fill the void. The roster is made up of three returning juniors — Marissa Schoen, Ella Westgerdes and Brynn Stammen — and returning sophomore Eva Kahlig. The other seven players — two sophomores to go along with five freshmen — are all new to the team. "I'm excited to see the improvement that these

girls are going to make throughout the year," Bruns said. "It's definitely going to be a learning experience. There's a lot of rules to teach with seven new players. ... That's going to be a challenge but the girls have a great attitude." With no full-time varsity players returning, Bruns will be looking to his handful of those with any

golf experience to anchor the starting lineup. That starts with the trio of juniors. "Marissa Schoen has really gotten better with her short game from last year," said Bruns. "Right now, she's been my No. 1 player." "Ella Westgerdes has really improved on her driving. I think Brynn Stammen has a chance

to have a complete game."

Schoen has held the No. 1 spot in the lineup early this season, with Kahlig, the returning sophomore, in the No. 2 spot.

"She's a good basketball player, so she is a very good athlete," said Bruns. "Her driving is probably her best (area). Her short game is something she needs to address."

He said he looked to sophomores Ella Schoen and Emma Will to compete for the No. 5 spot in the lineup.

With massive roster changes, and losing a

golfer the caliber of his daughter, Bruns knows low numbers and wins might be difficult to come by. His team will be focused on improving while learning the game.

"Success for us is to have four kids consistently in the 50s," said Bruns. "That's not going to win a ton of matches, but it's something that we always shoot for. ..."

"This year is one of those years that it's like starting the program over. But when you've got 11 kids and they all want to be there, it makes life a little easier."

Girls golf

Date	Opponent	Time
Monday, Aug. 8	Tri-Village	9 a.m.
Tuesday, Aug. 9	South Adams	4:30 p.m.
Wednesday, Aug. 10	Gary Broering invite	9:30 a.m.
Monday, Aug. 15	Parkway	4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Aug. 16	Arcanum	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Aug. 18	Versailles	4:30 p.m.
Saturday, Aug. 20	Fort Loramie	9 a.m.
Monday, Aug. 22	St. John's	4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Aug. 23	Crestview	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Aug. 25	Coldwater	4:30 p.m.
Monday, Aug. 29	Marion Local	4:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Aug. 30	Jay County	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 1	St. Henry	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 8	Minster	4:30 p.m.
Thursday, Sept. 15	New Bremen	4:30 p.m.
Saturday, Sept. 24	MAC Championships	9 a.m.

Home matches (at Portland Golf Club) in bold

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Pictured is the 2022 Fort Recovery High School girls cross country team. Front row from left are Anna Roessner, Jenna Hart, Caitlin Weitzel, Megan Weitzel and Kylie Dues. Back row are coach Christy Diller, Madison Heitkamp, Ellie Will, Alexis Wendel, Megan Diller, Natalie Brunswick and assistant coach Matt Roessner. Not pictured is Joelle Kaup.

State ...

Continued from page 2

The clear leader of the Tribe boys team is Heitkamp, who broke out as a sophomore to make the state finals in cross country and again in the 3,200-meter run in track. He is looking to build off of his 76th-place finish from a year ago.

“That is definitely Trevor’s intention and his goal,” Diller said. “And that elevates everybody. They see him work so hard, day in and day out ... And to see him achieve that last year I think was very inspiring.”

Freshman Parker Brunswick,

Natalie’s brother, figures to give Heitkamp a push at the top of the lineup after placing fourth in the junior high MAC championships last season. Brothers Ethan and Evan Evers, a senior and sophomore, respectively, return to the squad after running in the

No. 2 and 3 spots last season. And senior Caleb Rammel is likely to round out the top five.

Diller said she’s excited to see what Heitkamp can accomplish with another summer of hard work behind him.

And she’s looking forward to a big season from the girls

team, which has never advanced to the state finals in three consecutive seasons.

“Their goal is to be top 10 in the state,” said Diller. “You never know how the season is going to shake out, but they have the potential to do that, for sure.”

GOOD LUCK to all our teams!

We’re proud of our student athletes for their sportsmanship, their commitment to the team and the hard work they put in every day.

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We’d like to wish each and every player success on the field and in the classroom, all season and all year!

Build ...

Continued from page 6
Those efforts helped earn him the honor of being the most-improved player on the team.

Lennartz opened strong this season as well, leading Fort Recovery in its first match against Tri-Village and posting the best score again in the Mercer County Tournament.

“He’s got a pretty good, solid game,” said Sanders. “He got better at his swing, the fundamentals of the swing, and then, honestly, I think the thing that really helped out is his course management.”

In addition to the start-

ing five and Romer, he said he also sees an opportunity for Nate Jutte, Brennan Dues, Caleb Smith and Reece LeFevre to see varsity time this year.

Ultimately, regardless of the lineup, they will focus on key aspects on the course.

“No. 1 is short game,” said Sanders. “The part that we need the most work on is probably chipping. Putting is not too bad. Your short game is always the primary factor as to whether you’re going to score well or not.”

“If we can do those

things, we may not be shooting par golf, but we’re going to be very competitive.”

And that’s the goal — to be competitive in all matches — and to have a chance to move up from the seventh-place finishes the Indians posted in the conference and sectional last season.

“To us it’s about playing competitive golf,” said Sanders, “and we’d like to finish in that upper one-third of the conference and obviously do better than we’ve done in previous years in the MAC and the sectional.”