

The 2011 edition of the Fulton County Public Schools Cross Country Championships will play out this Saturday afternoon at the venerable Webb Bridge Park course in Alpharetta. After an 8-year run as hosts, Chattahoochee HS has turned the reins over to Coach Mike Morris and the Northview HS Titans to host this excellent meet. A BIG THANK YOU goes to BOTH schools, their coaching staffs and Booster Clubs for their hard and dedicated work on hosting this important mid-season competition.

This year 11 of the 14 high schools will field teams to compete for the best in Fulton County. Alpharetta, Banneker, Centennial, Chattahoochee, Johns Creek, Langston-Hughes, Milton, Northview, Riverwood, Roswell & Westlake will all toe-the-line on the course that has been used since 2003.

Girls Preview:

In the team battle, on paper it looks like a big dual between arch-rivals the Lady Hornets of Roswell (7th-All Class & 8th-AAAAA) and the Lady Eagles of Milton (8th-All Class & 9th-AAAAA). In their only meeting so far this season at Berry Milton got the upper hand but Roswell is now at full strength and has had strong results at Covered Bridge (1st) and WarPath (a close 3rd behind Walton & Woodstock). Milton counters with wins at both Volunteer Classic (TN) over Florida 6th-ranked Spruce Creek and their home invite (besting then #2 All-Class & #1 in AAAA Lakeside-Evans & AAAA ranked Johns Creek). Speaking of Johns Creek, the Gladiators are ranked 4th in AAAA and will battle with the AAAAA schools as well as #9 ranked Riverwood in AAA. Individually it looks to be a 5-way battle with returning 3rd & 4th placers from 2010 in Allie Buchalski of Johns Creek and Annie Kelly of Milton who have already raced each other just 2 weeks ago and are running well. Throw in the mix the defending champ Rachel Thorne of Alpharetta and the up & coming Peyton Thomas of Roswell, along with Haley McKay of Centennial and it is sure to be an exciting race for the win. The course record is 18:57 by Brett McDaniel of Riverwood from 2009.

Boys Preview:

The battle for the top-spot may mirror the girl's race as Milton & Roswell will challenge for the overall team honors. The Eagles are coming into the meet ranked 4th in AAAAA & 7th All-Class with a close runner-up finish to Lakeside-Evans (4th All-Class & 1st in AAAA) just 2 weeks ago at their home invite. The Hornets of Roswell (ranked 9th in AAAAA) have been improving every week after dropping to Milton at Berry with a runner-up finish at Covered Bridge (to Pope 5th in AAAA) and a solid 5th at Warpath with a sub-17 average for their top-5 runners. Defending boys varsity champs Riverwood (6th in AAA) will also be a factor as they always are at this meet. Individually the top-returner, Conner McDaniel of Riverwood (3rd in 2010) will have his hands full in dealing with Roswell's Drew Kelly (sub-16 at Warpath) and the Milton duo of Nate Riech & Ryan Kelly. Also contending for a top-spot will be Chattahoochee's Austin Erickson (4th in 2010), Riverwood's Said Hernandez (5th in 2010), Kane Davis of Centennial & James Ryden of Riverwood. The boy's course record is 16:53 set by Austin Ulich of Chattahoochee in 2010.

The meet kicks off at 3pm with the JV races followed by the girl's varsity race at 4:30pm and

the boy's varsity race at 5:15pm. Unique to this meet, the Best Overall Program Award, goes to the school that scores well in all 4 races, both JV and varsity. The Eagles of Milton have won the award 2 of the last 3 years.