

2012 Three Rivers Athletic Conference meet

# Gibsonburg, Old Fort front-runners in MAL



Fremont Ross' Valerie Bixler competes in the Norm Bray Invite in Fremont earlier this season. JONATHON BIRD/NEWS-MESSENGER

## Ross looking good in TRAC

By Christopher Graber  
News-Messenger correspondent

FREMONT — Ross' Louis Guardiola and Valerie Bixler are among the top area runners that will be competing at their conference meet this weekend, while Lakota's Cariss Reese is seeded No. 1 in the Midland Athletic League.

Guardiola holds the top area boys time at 16:00, while Bixler holds the top area girls time at 19:12.92.

Little Giants coach Jon Elder said despite having really strong front runners on both of his teams, it will be difficult to compete with the top teams in the second annual Three Rivers Athletic Conference Championships at Sycamore Springs Golf Course in Findlay.

"Our conference is so just so hard with St. Francis, Findlay, St. John's and Central Catholic," Elder said. Heading into the boys race, "We are

kind of banged up and with the boys race being so competitive, I figure that out of the eight teams that will advance out of our district meet to regionals, six of those teams will come from our league."

The top three Ross boys runners are all sub-17 minutes with Tyler Edmonds holding a personal best at 16:43.07 and Devaun Churcha at 16:55.9. Churcha, a senior, has drawn interest from collegiate coaches at NCAA Div. I Detroit Mercy as well as Div. II schools.

The No. 1 seeded runner in the TRAC is Matt Waaland of Findlay at 15:42, while Guardiola is the only Little Giants runner ranked among the Top 14. The top seven runners in each conference race will place among the first-team all-conference list, while any runner among the Top 14 will achieve at minimum second-team honors.

The remaining expected scorers for the Little Giants are Brantleigh Bunting with a PR at 18:03.27 with Justin Schaefer at 18:05.2.

See MAL, page 6A

# MAL

Continued from Page 5A

Bixler enters with the No. 2 seed time in the girls race with the remaining Ross scorers with their respective PRs as follows: Faye Sloma, 20:54.15; Paige Collier, 21:56.73; Holly Fisher, 23:25.85; and Cassidi Lovell, 23:27.28.

“We are pretty strong in the front two with Faye and Valerie,” Elder said. “I think Faye could place second-team all-conference.”

CROSS COUNTRY

# Guardiola sets new Ross record

By Chris Graber

News-Messenger correspondent

In 1995, Fremont Ross' two-time all-Ohio standout and eventual Bowling Green collegiate athlete Jeremiah Wagner won the Great Lakes League meet and established a school record at 15 minutes, 51 seconds that would stand for 17 years.

Little Giants' junior Louis Guardiola finished seventh Saturday and established a new mark at 15:42 en route to garnering all-TRAC first-team honors as Ross was fifth. The top seven runners are first-time while the next seven are second-team.

"I was motivated (to run) by all my supporters, family, friends, teammates and coaches," Guardiola said. "I just wanted to test my limitations. I knew I needed to run hard and keep the position I was at.

"My Dad, Dave Guardiola, came up to me following the race and said that I ran a 15:42, and I was just shocked."

In June, Guardiola met Wagner at the Camelback Run.

Guardiola said Wagner "is a pretty cool guy and he actually gave me some advice to stay relaxed when you run and don't focus on the other competitors, just focus on your race."

Guardiola was not thinking about breaking the record at that point.

"I was really focusing on step-by-step summer training and when the (season) races came, I would overlook my performances to see what I would need to tweak to get to that point," he said.

This season propelled Guardiola to make a name for himself.

"Simply put, he is that talented," Ross coach John Elder said. "Now, he can't look back and has to keep it going next week."

The top seven runners in Saturday's race surpassed Zach Wills' (Mason) state championship time in Division I from 2009.

Guardiola began with a 4:55 mile pace and got to two miles at 9:45.

"He decided to stay up with the front, have some fun and stayed with (the leaders) most of the way," Elder said. "How impressive is our conference? (No. 9 ranked) St. Francis' fifth runner was at 16:19."

Kyle Lach won the meet at 15:27.71, while the Knights finished first as a team.

"That just shows how competitive the TRAC is," Guardiola said. "It is an honor for me to be on that first-team spot. Coach Elder has been pushing the team during the workouts in practice (all season) and it is showing."

No. 2 runner Tyler Edmonds was injured, but Devaun Churchya was 17th (16:33.18) and Ryan Schaffer was 27th (17:04.27) for the Little Giants. Schaffer, Brantleigh Bunting (30th, 17:21.74) and Justin Schaeffer (37th, 17:48.46) ran personal bests.

"Ryan ran awesome, having been in the 18s all year," Elder said. "Everyone ran well for us and without Tyler we were still able to beat Whitmer by 30 points."

Valerie Bixler was 10th (19:17.46) and Faye Sloma 22nd (20:27.21) as the Little Giants' girls were seventh. Oregon Clay's Erin Gyurke won the girls race (18:06.68) and Notre Dame Academy took the team title.