

## CROSS COUNTRY

# Zain, Hegedorn in elite company

By Bryan Sullivan

With just 14 athletes on their roster, the Harley-Allendale Columbia boys cross country team probably isn't the most intimidating squad on first sight. When the race starts though it's hard to miss the two Wolves battling for first place.

H-AC seniors Aamir Zain and Russell Hegedorn have been two of the top runners in the Finger Lakes League this fall.

The Wolves ended the dual meet portion of their schedule on Tuesday and kick off the post-season with the Finger Lakes League Championships on Oct. 26. One week later Zain and Hegedorn will take aim at a Class D title at the Section 5 Championships.

"When you watch (Russell) run he looks like a natural runner, like it comes easily to him," said Seth O'Bryan, H-AC head coach. "He is going to give it everything. He's a really reliable runner with lots of experience and is never intimidated by the race or opponent."

Aamir could run forever. He looks so happy, like he could run 50 miles at the same pace and run down. In practice he does exactly what you tell him. He appreciates the work you have to put in."

The duo has finished

in the top five at every league meet this fall and three times Zain and Hegedorn have finished first and second. Zain has won three of the dual meets, while Hegedorn won the league meet on Oct. 1 at Keuka State Park.

Zain recorded some memorable performances in some of Section 5's biggest meets, running a career best time at the McQuaid Invitational where he finished in sixth in the small schools race. One week earlier he finished third out of 126 runners at the GCC Invitational, site of this year's sectional meet.

"I feel like I have been running times I should have been running," Zain said. "I feel good, I feel healthy. I haven't had any injuries for which I am thankful. I am just looking forward to the end of the season, doing well at sectionals and then getting back to states."

Zain is quick credit Hegedorn for getting him into cross country. Zain played soccer as a seventh grader but after training with Hegedorn during the spring track season, he decided to make change sports.

While Zain was just learning the ropes of cross country in the eighth grade, Hegedorn was trying to move up the varsity lineup.

"Back then I was just



**Harley-Allendale Columbia's Russell Hegedorn, left, and Aamir Zain work out during a practice Monday at Allendale Columbia. Both are among the top runners in the Finger Lakes League.**

pushing myself to get better because I was the youngest guy," Hegedorn said. "It's been an interesting experience going from the middle of the pack to the front."

Hegedorn's career got off to a memorable start as he was running on the varsity in eighth grade and was part of the team who won the Class D team title his freshman year. The next two seasons though Hegedorn faced challenges off the course.

Knee and back problems slowed him down throughout his sophomore year, then he battled an illness last season. Going into this postseason, Hegedorn's

health is no issue.

"I want to go out there and have a relaxed race, have fun and see what happens," Hegedorn said about sectionals. "I want to get to states because it's my last chance to."

With Hegedorn battling injuries Zain emerged as the Wolves top runner last fall. He culminated an excellent junior season by qualifying for the state meet.

"Going to states was my greatest accomplishment," said Zain, a three-sport athlete at H-AC who also competes on the boys swim team. "It was a surprise, I never expected myself to do it. I hope Russell and I can get there this year."

## GIRLS SWIMMING

# Panthers head into final week perfect

Submitted to MPM

Pittsford swimming and diving team continued their unbeaten season against Webster (112-67) and Fairport (136-50). The Panthers dominated their Section 5 competition this year and look to be unstoppable in winning their 12th consecutive sectional title in November.

In the meantime they continue to rewrite the record books at every away meet. This past week was no exception at Fairport where records were broken in both the 50 and 500 Free. The 400 Free Relay also tied the pool record.

There were some close races in both meets, but the Panthers won every single battle and were unbeaten in all individual events and relays.

Webster was the visiting team on Tuesday and individual winners were Katie Smith (200 freestyle), Lindsay Stone (200 individual medley and 500 Free), Steph Andrews (100 Free), Emma Corby (100 butterfly), Becca Evans (100 free and 100 breaststroke), and Stephanie Riley (100 Back).

In addition to being unbeaten in all the individual events, they placed 1-2-3 in four of those events demonstrating the depth of the team. The four events were 200 IM (Stone 2:15.99; Annie Birmingham 2:23.41; Maddie Holodnik 2:25.85), 50 Free (Andrews 25.98; Anne Marie Mozrall 26.40, Katie McPherson 26.44), 100 Free (Evans 56.10, Andrews 56.83, McPherson 58.00), and 500 Free

(Stone 5:00.81, Birmingham 5:28.45, Katie Drake 5:30.61).

The Red Raiders are always a big rival, however this week they came to the meet with a 3-3 record and could not compete with Pittsford. The meet started quickly with the best race of the meet in the 200 medley relay.

The team of Riley, Evans, Mozrall and McPherson won in 1:55.23 just out touching the Fairport team who finished in 1:55.45. The team of Bianca Lopez, Corby, Drake, and Holodnik were just behind in 1:57.99 with the team of Megan Mayall, Genny Tripler, Leslie Davidoff and Jenna Connolly finishing in 2:10.80.

In addition to the two dual meets, on Saturday, the divers went to the Monroe County 11-Dive Invitational and Maddie Schaefer narrowly missed qualifying for States. Schaefer finished fourth with 382.45 points while Kirsten Fleming scored 292.10.

The new pool records set at Fairport were Katie Smith in the 50 Free, breaking Fairport's E. McGraw's time of 24.39 (2006), Smith swam 24.04. The second pool record was set by Lindsay Stone in the 500 Free breaking the record of K. Small (Brighton), Stone swam 5:04.17.

This week the team will finish their dual meet schedule beginning on Tuesday when they hosted Penfield. The team recognized seniors Steph Andrews, Leslie Davidoff and Megan Mayall.

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