

MIFFLIN COUNTY CROSS COUNTRY

Huskies

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Keenan Walker and Shane Sennett. Aultz and Sennett turned in strong showings at last year's league JV championship meet, while Valez and Walker are making the switch from other sports.

On the girls side, the Huskies had 13 runners come out this fall. That includes two seniors, Jessica Miller, who crossed 21st at districts, and Anna Taptich, who was 26th in that race.

"We are young and are going to need their leadership," Loht said.

Juniors Kaitlyn Yearick and Makenna Pollock should be in the mix for the top five, along with sophomores Amanda Hassinger and Maggie Wilson. Yearick ran well at last year's league JV meet. Loht is also high on promising freshmen Kierra Russler and Shayla Milligan.

"There's a lot of talent there, we will have to see how it develops," Loht said. "A lot of them looking good, they put in the miles this summer."

"Our first three look to be sophomores, with Alexis, Amanda and Maggie," Loht



Sentinel photo by BRADLEY KREITZER

Members of the Mifflin County girls cross country team are, from left, front, Makenna Pollock, Jess Miller, Shayla Milligan, Ally Knepp and Kristen Neavling; back, Maggie Wilson, Anna Taptich, Maddie Elsesser, Alexis Kibe, Kierra Russler, Amber Reed, Amanda Hassinger and Kaitlyn Yearick.

said. "After a year off, Maddie is running again and is in the mix along with Kaitlyn and Makenna for the seven

varsity spots. "Our lineups are not set in stone," the Huskies coach added. "As we develop and

gain experience, everyone will be able to contribute, with the team reaping the benefits. We have a terrific

group of kids who are willing to put in the work and effort it takes to be successful distance runners. We want to

improve every day and continue to do the little things that will add up to make a big impact."

the team's Most Valuable Player last season, as well as three other starters should make the Thunder stout on defense.

"I'm happy the progress he's made the last two years," Renno said of Pollock's play. "He anticipates well and has a lot of closing speed. He's also solid with the ball at his feet."

Senior Sam Morgan is another defensive stalwart. "He takes up a lot of space," Renno said. "He works well at not allowing attackers to turn with the ball, and he wins a lot of the 50-50 balls in the air."

Filling the other starting slots will be junior Kyle Derstein and sophomore Josiah

Yoder. Of Derstein, Renno said, "He understands the game well and has good leadership skills. The Belleville Mennonite coach likes the progress of young Yoder, along with his closing speed.

"If we can be injury-free, these four should be there all year," Renno added. "I don't want to rely on our goal-scoring to win games."

Depth isn't a luxury that Belleville has with only three players on the bench. And the Thunder need to limit their unforced errors.

"We need to be training at a high level in the preseason, so we are ready for the long season," Renno said. "Last year,

we were panicking with the ball at our feet. When we're playing the ball without any pressure, we seem to get too anxious. We tended to miss a pass that we need to be connecting on."

That created missed scoring opportunities and put opponents on the offensive.

The Thunder are also counting on a big season from goalie Sammy Kauffman, who registered four shutouts a year ago to go with 120 saves and a 1.58 goals against average. Kauffman struggled at times last season and Renno challenged his keeper to improve during the offseason.

"Sammy went to two camps and put in an incredi-

ble amount of work on his fitness and conditioning," Renno noted. "We have high expectations for him. We expect him to be a big difference-maker in some of our games by making some big saves for us."

making that task even more daunting is the fact that Belleville Mennonite beefed up its schedule with likes of Huntingdon, Bald Eagle Area, Juniata, Montoursville, Cambria County Christian and nemesis Bishop McCort.

Thunder

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field," Renno said. "Alex brings that to the table."

Juniors Jacob Knable, Colin Peachey and Caleb Treaster are vying for time in the midfield, along with sophomore Derek Byler.

"Hopefully, our strength is that we have gained an understanding of each other's tendencies," Renno added. "I think we're beginning to initiate play and getting better off the ball. We're looking past the next pass and looking at the second and third passes."

In the backfield, the return of senior Josh Pollock, voted



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