



East Aurora coach Walt McLaughlin has led his team to three straight state Class B titles.



Mark Mulville/Buffalo News East Aurora's Catherine Lusardi won the Class B state title.

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## HIGH SCHOOLS

### East Aurora goes the extra mile

*State Class B champson road again forFed cross country meet*

**By Mary Jo Monnin NEWS SPORTS REPORTER**

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While most cross country teams in Western New York have hung up their spikes, East Aurora's biggest races are still to come.

One week after winning their third consecutive New York State Class B title, the girls are on the road again this weekend at the Federation meet. This team is no stranger to putting in mileage, but this postseason plenty of it has been on a bus.

EA rode 292 miles to last weekend's New York State meet at Norwood- Norfolk High School, north of Watertown. Saturday's Federation meet is a 331-mile haul to Bowdoin Park in Wappingers Falls, south of Poughkeepsie. They'll make the same trip the following weekend (Nov. 24) for the Nike Team National/ New York Regional. The top two teams, plus a possible at-large team, advance to the NTN.

The Fed is an important race to EA, but not one they need as they have already qualified for the Regional. EA coach Walt McLaughlin said it gives his team a chance to see the course and stay at a high race level.

The fourth annual Nike Team Nationals are Dec. 1 at Portland Meadows race track in Oregon. They will feature 44 teams from around the country (22 boys and 22 girls squads). The invitational serves as the unofficial team cross country national championship.

McLaughlin said he's taking a more talented team to the Federation meet than last year's squad that placed fifth.

"This has been a process that started in 2001," he said. "We won sectionals that year. Every year they've gotten better. Every once in a while I'll see some girls from a [previous] state team and they'll be saying you're doing so great, and I say it all started with you."

EA will be chasing a Fed field that includes defending Nike Team National champion Fayetteville-Manlius of

Section III Syracuse and Saratoga of Section II Albany. F-M, Saratoga and EA are picked to finish 1-2-3 by tullyrunners.com. F-M is the No. 1-ranked team in the nation on dyestat.com's Super 25.

The Federation field includes the state Class champions from the public schools (NYSPHSAA), Catholic schools (CHSAA), New York City (PSAL) and independent schools (AIS). The girls' race is at 12:15 p.m. followed by the boys at 1 p.m.

The Blue Devils will go with a lineup that includes senior Catherine Lusardi, senior Jenna Hulton, sophomore Catherine Phillips, freshman Megan Hulton, junior Erin Crawford, junior Kristen Weberg and senior Alice Coughlin. Lusardi won the state title in the Class B race covering 3.1 miles in 18:27.8. She was the first Section VI girl to win a state title since Angela Kudla of Starpoint in 2000.

"Catherine, she's got one gear, to go out and run as fast as she can," McLaughlin said. "She brings her teammates along. This is a close-knit team that goes beyond one person. The group makes each person so much stronger."

The Monsignor Martin Association will also represent Western New York. All-Catholic champion Canisius will run Jordan Hamm, Colin Bogdan, Barry Fitzgerald, Cameron Gallivan, Tim Dangler, Sam Lopresti, Bill Hartigan and Ned McGraff. Matt Conway, Matt Collins and Ben Kuch will run for St. Joe's.

Nardin qualified Jill Shea, Anne Pyrak, Alise Johnson, Molly Munchauser, Liz Stanko, Laura Garbes and Martha Santandreu. Sacred Heart is sending Brittany Gibbons and Kim Patterson while Madison Galasso made it from Mount St. Mary.

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Joining the cross country team heading east this weekend will be East Aurora's girls volleyball team. The Blue Devils join Randolph and Eden in playing for a state titles in Glens Falls. Eden and Randolph are past winners while EA goes for its first title. . . . Williamsville North senior Casey Matthews will defend her title in diving at the New York State Swimming and Diving Championships today and Saturday at the Nassau County Aquatic Center. . . . The Iroquois and Akron boys soccer teams are still in the hunt for state titles. Iroquois plays in the Class A semifinals on Saturday at 9 a.m. while Akron plays Plattsburg in Class B at 10:30 a.m. Both games are at the National HOF Complex in Oneonta. . . . The undefeated Williamsville North field hockey team puts its 21-0 record on the line against Ward Melville in the New York State Class A semifinal today at 5:30 at Cicero-North Syracuse.

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