

Colby team faces Andale Indians

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The Colby High School football team will be in the state playoffs for the first time in 11 years, though the Eagles will be underdogs when they face the Andale Indians at 6 p.m. Tuesday in Andale.

The Indians are the defending Class 4A state champions. One sports service rates them as the 15th best team in the state in any class. They finished first in the Chisholm Trail Division of the Ark Valley League with an 8-1 record. "They run really hard, and their quarterback does a nice job of running the offense," said Colby Coach Chris Gardner.

Fans can come to the high school parking lot at 8:15 a.m. Tuesday to give the team a sendoff. Andale is northwest of Wichita, and can be reached off of K-96 from either Hutchinson or Wichita.

There is no doubt that the Colby team must be in top form if the boys want pull off an upset, but it would be foolish to count the Eagles out.

The Eagles have shown their capacity to respond to adversity on several occasions this season. After losing the opening game to St. Francis, the Eagles went on to win their next four.

When the Eagles were down 21 points to Phillipsburg early in the third quarter, most people probably figured the game was over. But no one told the Eagles that they were supposed to concede defeat. Instead of rolling over and letting the Panthers finish them off, the team staged a ferocious rally that led to an improbable 30-21 Eagles victory.

Then there was the Concordia game. It was the Eagles first district game, and a win would have given them momentum and confidence heading into the final two games. Instead they lost 22-14, losing starting quarterback Heath Stephens to an injury. The Panthers sacked sophomore Kale Arnberger in the end zone in the final minutes. That seemed to symbolize a season that had come apart at the seams.

But the Eagles and their new starting quarterback responded

by laying a 40-0 beating on the Smoky Valley Vikings from Lindsborg the following week. They went on to clinch a playoff spot by defeating the Larned Indians 28-6 on Thursday.

There is no denying the Eagles have a tough road ahead them. Defeating the defending state champions is no miniscule task. But many recent developments should give Colby fans hope.

The first reason is that Stephens, a senior, will be returning as quarterback on Tuesday. While Arnberger has done a terrific job while he was out, the Eagles certainly lost one of their most dangerous weapons on offense when Stephens was on the sidelines. His return might also give the Eagles an emotional boost going into Tuesday's game.

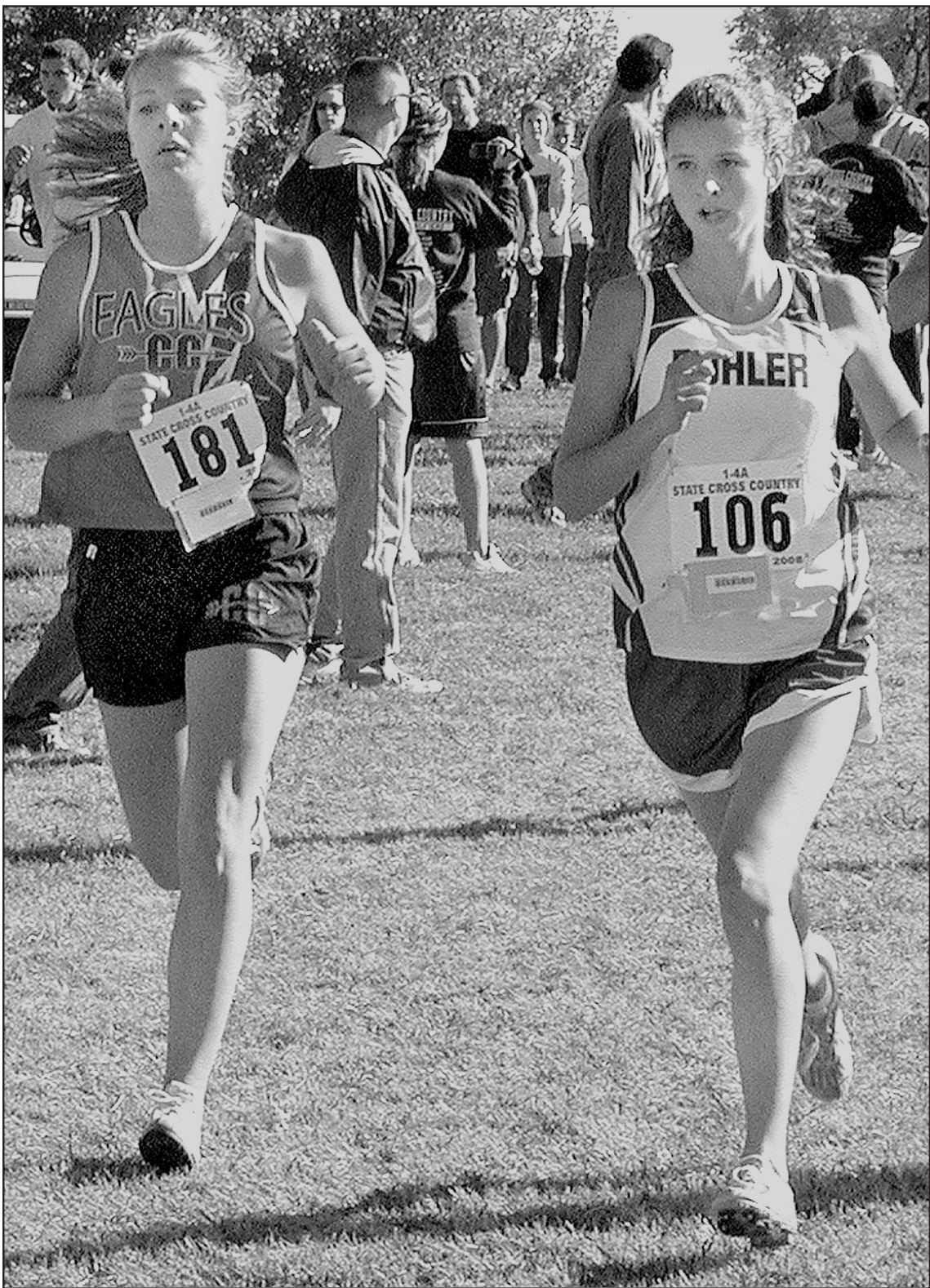
Another reason for optimism has been the recent performance of the Eagles' defense. Over the last two weeks, Colby's defense has given up just six points.

If the team wants to make any noise in the playoffs, the defense will have to be at the top of its game. This means the Eagles will need solid performances from leading tacklers Tanner Kriss, a senior, and Corey Sager, a senior.

The last reason Eagles' fans have to hold out hope for their team is the play of junior running back Ethan Stickel. Stickel seems to have hit his stride at just the right time. He scorched the Smoky Valley defense for 163 yards two weeks ago and he put up 119 yards against Larned on Thursday.

Gardner said his team isn't satisfied with merely making the playoffs.

"We're not going into this game with the idea that this is the icing on the top of some nice cake," he said. "We don't view this game as an end — we view it as a start."



DICK BOYD/Colby Free Press
Colby's Katherine Kaus stayed stride for stride with her competition at the state meet in Wamego on Saturday.

Eagles run well at state

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Colby High sister runners Katrina and Katherine Kaus finished 23rd and 35th at the state championship cross country meet in Wamego on Saturday.

Katrina finished with a time of 16 minutes, 19 seconds while Katherine finished in 16:52. Officials said 104 runners competed at the race.

Katrina just missed bringing home a medal. Those went to runners who placed in the top 20.

Coach Bob Mannebach said Katherine improved her time from last year's state meet on the same course by 14 seconds. She also finished 11 spots higher than she did last year, when she was 46th overall.

While Katrina was six seconds slower then her time last year, it was not because of lack of effort, Mannebach said. It due to bad luck.

"Katrina got a sideache after running a mile," Mannebach said.

He said she ran the rest of the race in considerable pain.

Mannebach said he was happy with how the girls, both sophomores, had done.

"When they can finish that high in a state meet of 104 people, you have to be pleased," he said. "I'm sure they wanted to finish higher, but they still had a great season."

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