



## Walton still team to beat

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Once again, Walton is the team to beat as the top girls cross country program in Region 6AAAAA.

Walton won the region title by a convincing margin - scoring 33 points to runner-up Centennial's 100 - and despite the loss of top runners Leila Norman and Stefanie Hush, the Lady Raiders have everybody else back from last year's team that finished second at the Class AAAAA state meet.

Juniors Kylie Womack and Lena Hamvas and sophomore Mara Canning return to lead a deep and talented Walton squad.

Once again, Walton will get its biggest challenge from the north Fulton squads, with Centennial, Roswell and Milton expected to be the other top contenders in the region.

Pope, Kell, Wheeler and Campbell are the other local teams competing in 6AAAAA.

In Region 5AAAAA, the battle for the title should be a close one, with Kennesaw Mountain and Harrison contending with Etowah for the top spot.

Kennesaw Mountain finished as the runner-up to Etowah last year in the region meet and should be a serious contender once again with a talented group led by the strong 1-2 punch of juniors Cori Coogan and Elisse Day.

Harrison, which finished third in 5AAAAA last year, will also be in the mix again with senior Caroline Oshust leading a strong group that also includes junior Ali Waterson and senior Margaret Tucker.

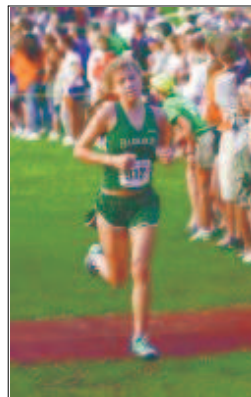
Both Kennesaw Mountain and Harrison, however, will have a hard time dethroning defending champion Etowah, which is returning its top four runners from last year.

Marietta will also be a contender for a berth in the state meet, with sophomores Maggie Henderson and Beth O'Connell and senior Caroline Hartin returning to lead the way. North Cobb, coming off its first berth to the state meet in nearly 30 years, will try for a second consecutive state appearance despite losing three key runners from its lineup.

McEachern and South Cobb will be in rebuilding mode in 5AAAAA this season.

Hillgrove will be a team to watch in Region 7AAAA, with all of its key runners returning from last year's team that finished second in Region 5AAAA and 13th in Class AAAA. With senior Danielle Derenthal and juniors Lydia McAliley and Anna Davis leading the way, Hillgrove is the clear favorite to win the region after finishing second behind state power Chapel Hill in its first two years of cross country competition as a 5AAAA member.

Sprayberry and Osborne are also in Region 7AAAA, but both are in rebuilding mode and aren't expected to be a factor this season.



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