

Region track meets getting under way

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Walton's girls track and field team will try to add a region championship to the county title it won earlier this season when the Region 6AAAAA girls championships get under way today at Roswell High School's Ray Manus Stadium.

Reigning champion Kell will try to win a second straight title, while Lassiter is also expecting to contend at the meet, which will begin today at 5 p.m. with field-event finals and running-event preliminaries and conclude Saturday at 9 a.m. with finals in both field and running events.

Wheeler, Campbell and Pope are the other county teams competing in the 6AAAAA meet. Alpharetta is also expected to be one of the top contenders, while fellow north Fulton teams Milton, Roswell and Centennial are the other teams competing.

Hillgrove will also try to bring a girls region title to Cobb County as the Lady Hawks are expected to contend for the team crown at the Region 7AAAA girls meet Saturday and Monday at Woodland High School in Cartersville.

Pebblebrook will be in action as well as it competes at the Region 4AAAAA girls meet Saturday and Monday at Westlake High School in Atlanta.

The top two finishers in each event will qualify for the state meet, which will take place May 6-8 in Albany.

Walton, which was the runner-up to Kell at last year's region meet, will attempt to build on the momentum it gained from winning the girls title at last month's Cobb County meet.

"We've had some great performances this year and won some important meets like Cobb County, but we all know the season really starts (today)," Walton coach Travis Gower said. "We hope that our young ladies can perform to their best, and if they do, you can't be upset with the result."

Walton will depend primarily on a strong core of distance runners to put it over the top, with Mara Canning leading the way in the 800- and 1,600-meter runs and Caroline Sullivan and Kylie Womack expected to contend in the 800 and 3,200, respectively.

Kell, meanwhile, is hoping to hold on to the region title it won last year. The Lady Longhorns will rely on freshman standout Kendell Williams, who is favored in both hurdle events, as well as the long jump.

Kell will also be led by Josephine Akinwumiju in the discus and the shot put.

Lassiter is expecting to be in the mix based on its strength in the sprints and jumping events, though coach Jim Reichenbach acknowledged winning the competitive 6AAAAA meet won't be easy.

"Our region, this year, will be as competitive as the Cobb County meet was," Reichenbach said. "Walton won county, and it will be difficult to beat them at the region meet. You have some strong Fulton County teams that will also make a run for the championship. We are healthy, and if we don't make any mistakes, we should be in contention to compete for the championship as well."

Gabrielle Piper and Julienne McKee are seen as strong contenders in both the sprints and field events for Lassiter. Piper is expected to contend in the 100 dash, 100 hurdles and the long jump, with McKee standing out in the 400, triple jump and long jump.

In Region 7AAAA, is Hillgrove hoping to bring home its first region title in the program's history.

"We are looking strong going into this weekend with all of our athletes being healthy," Hillgrove coach Allerie Sweet said. "We have been setting school records almost every meet and are hoping to send more girls to state this year."

Hillgrove will be led by Melanie Mainor, who is the favorite to win the high jump and is a solid contender in the 100 hurdles. The Lady Hawks are also led by Damika Goddard in the shot put and discus and Lydia McAliley in the 1,600 and 3,200.

Allatoona, Sprayberry and Osborne will also be at the 7AAAA meet, while Pebblebrook will be at the 4AAAAA meet, led by Alisha Murray in the sprinting events and Isis Land in the 800.