

# Raiders aim to continue success

**By Greg Oshust**

*Marietta Daily Journal Sports Writer*

Walton certainly made its presence felt in its first season in Region 6AAAA last year, winning both the boys and girls titles.

The 2005 season looks to be more of the same as Walton comes into the year as the clear favorite to defend both its boys and girls titles.

With state individual champion Sam Brylczynski and Jason Perkowski among the graduation losses, the Walton boys return only three of its top seven runners.

However, with junior Jay Heller and senior Corey Hunter leading the way, the Raiders are still a strong bet to successfully defend their 6AAAA championship.

"The boys have a little work to do," Williams said. "But the boys should still be

there at region time."

With six of their seven top runners returning from last year, the Lady Raiders should be in good shape to defend their 6AAAA title with sophomore Leila Norman among the key returners.

The Pope boys face a bit of a rebuilding year after losing three of their top runners, including sixth-place region finisher Xan Gersen.

However, the Greyhounds have some promising young runners coming up, including freshman Miles Szoboda and sophomore Josh Hamadi.

Lassiter lost three of its top five runners from a team that finished fourth in the region and 11th in state last year.

"The boys are showing improvement Lassiter coach Ed Hutcherson said. "I think we have shot to finish in the



**Jay Heller**

top three or four."

Kell hopes to move up a notch in a tough Region 6AAAA from its sixth-place finish last year, while Wheeler hopes to gain some ground after finishing seventh.

Pope should once again be the main challenger to Walton for the girls title, with seniors Kristen Hlott and Rachel White returning.

"We have good depth and we have plenty of runners who put in the time (to train) this summer, so we're ready to contend in the region again," Pope coach Cathi Monk said.

Lassiter has a good chance of moving up the Region 6AAAA girls standings after its sixth-place finish of a year ago, with more of an experienced squad than last year.

Junior Clara Denismore, Kathleen Wilson and Sara Federspiel lead the Lassiter girls.

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4. David Edouard (Sr.)

5. Jon Coolter (So.)

**Outlook:** The South Cobb boys return several runners from a team that qualified for the state meet for the first time in school history in 2004. The girls' team is rebuilding as Wright and Blakely leads an inexperienced club.

## Walton Raiders

**Coach:** Tom Williams, 14th year  
**Last year:** Boys: Second in the state in Class AAAAA, first in Region 6AAAA, first in the county. Girls: Second in the state in Class AAAAA, first in Region 6AAAA, first in the county.  
**Key performers:** Jay Heller (Jr.), Corey Hunter (Sr.), Leila Norman (So.), Sarah Upchurch (Sr.)  
**Projected starters**

### Girls

#### Norman

#### Upchurch

Ellen Black (Sr.)

Anna Day (Sr.)

Kathryn Theller (Jr.)

### Boys

#### Heller

Adam Bradley (Sr.)

James Walker (Sr.)

Thomas Pichod (So.)

**Outlook:** The Walton boys lose state champion Sam Brylczynski, but the Raiders are still loaded. Similarly, the girls' team lost Caroline Miller, but have everyone else returning.

## Whitfield Academy Wolfpack

**Coach:** Townsend Bailey, Third year

**Last year:** Boys: Fourth in Region 5A. Girls: Ninth in state in Class A

**Key performers:** Elizabeth Atkinson (Sr.), Kathryn McCellian (So.), Colton Parks (Jr.), Michael Balena (Jr.)  
**Projected starters**

### Girls

#### Atkinson

#### McCellian

Molly Williamson (Jr.)

### Boys

#### Parks

#### Balena

Matt LeCraw (Jr.)

Brian Nunez (Jr.)

Carter Jones (Sr.)

**Outlook:** With Parks, Balena and LeCraw returning to lead the way once again, the boys' team should be a factor in Region 5A. The girls' team, on the other hand, will be hard-pressed to be much of a factor in the region race with only three girls on its roster.