



The future is here! The first Northeast Nike Team Regional, eagerly anticipated through many late-summer and early-fall weeks is finally upon us this Saturday, November 24 at Bowdoin Park. With the cold waters of the mighty Hudson flowing just a few hundred meters away, nearly all the best teams in the region will toe the line on this chilly Saturday for a chance to win tickets to the national championships in Portland.

All of the top six boys' teams and all of the top four girls' teams in the region are entered, so this already Girls - Hanover and Hunterdown (Voorhees) are far ahead

The ladies' field is not quite as deep as the boys, but it does feature the top four teams in the Northeast who should sort out the medals and transcontinental tickets among them. There are only thirteen full teams entered in the championship race, which favors clubs with good front-runners but not as much depth. In the end, this might not matter much as the top two teams are far ahead of the rest of the field in terms of previous performances this fall.

The Hanover RC Team is of course composed of girls from Hanover HS in New Hampshire (NE #1). They were untouchable this fall in New England, running circles around their state competition and winning New Englands by awe-inspiring 132 points. This Dream Team is led by the great Georgia Griffin who has been collecting course records with surprising ease, even dipping under 18 minutes on occasion, and is a strong favorite to win this Saturday too. She gapped the rest of her team by about a minute, with the rest of the pack consistently coming in with about a 30-second spread.

The Hunterdon Hawks, who ran for the Voorhees HS in New Jersey, are quite similar to Hanover, although their leader Melanie Thompson may be a few seconds behind Griffin (but most people said the same thing about her and Jill Smith before she outkicked the NJ 800m queen to take the all-group NJ title last weekend in 18:02, 8th best time in Holmdel Park history). But the Hawks make up for it with their 2nd and 3rd runners, Katrina Spratford and Katie Petruzzellis, who should both finish before Hanover's second harrier.

In their last meeting at Manhattan, Hanover beat Voorhees by 20 points, but the Jersey team has been consistently improving through the past month and appears to have closed that slight gap with a course-record-breaking performance at Meet of Champions, where they averaged 19:01.0. The key to Hawks' victory should be their fifth girl – whether it's Colette Whitney or Christine Curtis, she will have to finish within about 45 seconds of their third girl to offset Hanover's relatively even pack.

Battle for third

Regardless of who wins, both teams should be well ahead of the rest of the field and on the way to Oregon. The battle for third should play out between Wicked TC Team, made up from girls from Lincoln-Sudbury HS in Massachusetts (NE #3), Suamme XC Club – anagram lovers know they hail from Emmaus HS in PA (NE #4) – and Glastonbury XC Team (NE #8) from Connecticut.

Lincoln-Sudbury had the best outing of the three at Manhattan, finishing sixth but more than 40 points peaking Blue Eagle XC Club, whose girls ran for Immaculate Heart Academy of NJ and lost a 6th-runner tie-breaker for the bronze at Meet of Champions to Ridge (which is also entered), and the mystery team named Lincoln-Sudbury had the best outing of the three at Manhattan, finishing sixth but more than 40 points behind Voorhees, and their pack strategy might not be enough in this small field. Do not discount late-peaking Blue Eagle XC Club, whose girls ran for Immaculate Heart Academy of NJ and lost a 6th-runner tie-peaking Blue Eagle XC Club, whose girls ran for Immaculate Heart Academy of NJ and lost a 6th-runner tie-breaker for the bronze at Meet of Champions to Ridge (which is also entered), and the mystery team named Nancy Lang, which apparently is from the private Phillips Academy in MA and not much is known about their strengths.

Overall, it should be an easy 1-2 for Hanover and Voorhees with Wicked taking the bronze, but it might be hard to get a wild card for them. Griffin will win the individual crown with Thompson close on her heels.