



Sarah Fakler: Go out there, run and have fun. **By MEAGAN BERG** **Arizona Track**

8/18/10 - Xavier College Preparatory's Sarah Fakler got her start running for a team her elementary school started. It was only a year long, so she had to join a USATF club team and compete in road races by herself.

She also played softball and volleyball for her middle school teams for fun and recreation, but running was where she found her fit.

In 2009, Fakler was the 5AI cross country runner up, just behind her teammate Jessica Tonn, who will be running for Stanford this fall.

When asked if she sees herself as state champion this year, she was modest in her response. "Jessica was so fast, I just went out there and wasn't sure how good I was going to be," Fakler said of her 2009 accomplishment. "This year is sort of the same as freshman year. I want to go out there and be competitive with people like Kristy Rush."

But Fakler is no longer the freshman just getting her feet wet.

Both of her coaches noted that the expectations are raised for everyone on the XCP team, and the pressure is on—especially for Fakler.

Fakler has been prepping for the season throughout the summer, and she recently came back from her team camp. "Getting together for camp is sort of a perpetual party, expect we're hurting all the time," Fakler said. "We run the same workouts as during the year, so the fall is a continuation of our summer."

And yes, the rumors are true—Xavier does indeed train at 5 a.m.

Xavier head cross country coach Jeff Messer writes the team's workouts. "Our training is focused on aerobic power development, a unifying theme. In a typical week, we will train Monday through Saturday, with two and a half workouts per week," Messer said.

Messer has had the opportunity to get to know Fakler over the course of her freshman year. "Sarah is very focused and intense in workouts, organized and disciplined," Messer said. "She is a humble young lady, shy almost to a fault. She's a quiet girl who works extremely hard at what she does."

Xavier head cross country coach Dave Van Sickle echoed Messer's sentiments. Van Sickle oversees

the team's administrative needs, such as academics, schedules.

"I don't think she sees herself as being this great runner," Van Sickle said. "The reality is she is very talented. Running as fast as she is, Sarah is going to be unreal when she really works hard. There's no doubt she will fight tooth and nail racing the best girl in state to the finish line."

Fakler does anything her coaches ask her to do, even better than asked to—all while taking the hardest classes that XCP has to offer.

"The second she has an idle minute, she's got her nose in a book," Van Sickle said. "The other girls are trying to get her to be a little more social."

The two coaches were anything but timid while making predictions for the girls cross country state champion this season.

"Fairly, I think that four young ladies have the best chance of emerging as state champion on the individual level in November," Messer said. "They are Brianna Decker of Mesa Mountain View, Kristy Rush of Highland, Kylee Kieser of Casa Grande Union, and Sarah Fakler is definitely a favorite."

While only a sophomore, both of her coaches see Fakler's potential as a collegiate athlete competing in division one like her former teammate, Tonn.

Both Messer and Van Sickle agreed that Fakler has what it takes to compete at the division one level; Van Sickle had a humorous comment to make.

"I could see Sarah being the type of person that all of a sudden says, 'You know what? I'm wasting my time with running'," Van Sickle said. "Instead donate her time for some great cause to save humanity, like finding a cure for cancer."

Regardless of predictions from coaches about the state meet and future collegiate prospects, Fakler is going to run and just enjoy the season.

"Running is a great way to stay in shape, and I don't have plans to quit," Fakler said. "I'd like to be first in state, but I'm not expecting it. I'm going to go out there, run and have fun."