



TOAST OF THE COAST

HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETICS • GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY • 2008-09



By RANDALL HILL rhill@thesunnews.com

Waccamaw's Kaitlyn Matthews was selected as the Toast of the Coast Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year.

The sky's the limit

By JOSH HOKE
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Waccamaw's Kaitlyn Matthews spent time last summer running the hills and valleys of Blowing Rock, N.C., a small town at a high elevation.

After running at 4,000 feet, competing at sea level was a breeze for the Toast of the Coast Girls Runner of the Year.

Matthews, a freshman, and her teammates used their time at the mountainous summer camp to their advantage and all of them came back to the beach in better shape than when they left. But nobody was as strong as Matthews.

"That really helped and we also ran a lot during the summer," Matthews said. "In Blowing Rock, there are a ton of hills that really got you in shape."

Matthews' fastest run of the year was 20:41. She was the fastest area runner at any of the state championships, running only three seconds slower in the Class AA state championship meet than her best time of the year. She finished eighth overall at the state meet.

Waccamaw's Matthews has unlimited potential

Kaitlyn Matthews, Girls Cross Country Runner of the Year

- **School** | Waccamaw
- **Class** | Freshman
- **Notable** | Finished eighth at the Class AA state meet with a time of 20:44. Finished fifth at the Lower State qualifier with a time of 21:14.38. Won six regular-season meets.

She won all six of her meets during the regular season.

"Kaitlyn took her running to another level," Warriors coach Kathleen Heineman said. "She was our No. 1 runner. She was more consistent. She worked hard and ran faster in practices than she did last year."

"She kept getting her time down. She got the confidence she needed to set her goals high and keep bringing her times down."

Matthews clearly distanced herself from her talented teammates this season after battling for top billing with Kristina Chandler and Grace Barnett in 2007. Considering she's only a freshman, Heineman believes she has unlimited potential.

"If Kaitlyn stays healthy and stays enthusiastic and motivated about cross country, there is no reason why she can't run in the 19s," she said. "I think she can break 20 minutes early next year."

- **Contact** JOSH HOKE at 843-626-0318.
- **ONLINE** | To view Hoke's high school sports blog "Prep Talk," go to MyrtleBeachOnline.com.

The Team

The Grand Strand's best in girls cross country:

Emily Schassler

- **School** | Carolina Forest
- **Class** | Freshman
- **Notable** | Won Horry County meet. Did not finish Class AAAA state meet due to injury. Finished 20th at the Lower State qualifier with a time of 21:26.8.



Meghan Weisen

- **School** | Aynor
- **Class** | Senior
- **Notable** | Finished ninth at the Class AA state meet with a time of 20:53. Finished second at the Lower State qualifier with a time of 20:52.35. Second at Horry County meet.



Paige Cox

- **School** | Myrtle Beach
- **Class** | Junior
- **Notable** | Finished 55th at the Class AAA state meet with a time of 21:29.29. Finished 18th at the Lower State qualifier with a time of 21:51.78.



McKensie East

- **School** | Carolina Forest
- **Class** | Junior
- **Notable** | Finished 58th at the Class AAAA state meet with a time of 21:20.50. Finished 25th at the Lower State qualifier with a time of 21:55. Finished seventh at Horry County meet.



Nicole Powell

- **School** | Carolina Forest
- **Class** | Senior
- **Notable** | Finished 60th at the Class AAAA state meet with a time of 21:22.18. Finished 16th at the Lower State qualifier with a time of 21:12. Finished third at Horry County meet.



Benjamin Jenerette

- **School** | North Myrtle Beach
- **Class** | Seventh grade
- **Notable** | Finished 69th at the Class AAA state meet with a time of 21:55.10. Finished 51st at the Lower State qualifier with a time of 24:00. Finished fifth at Horry County meet.



THE SERIES

This is the third installment in an eight-day series honoring the top high school athletes on the Grand Strand.

SELECTION PROCESS

The Sun News' selections of Toast of the Coast and Player/Athlete of the Year are based on coaches' nominations, discussions with coaches and staff observations. While an athlete's statistics are considered, they are not the sole factor used in Toast of the Coast decisions.

ONLINE

The Toast of the Coast can be seen on the Web at MyrtleBeachOnline.com.

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