

Parkway's Ringle ready to make run at cross country state title

Written by Russell Hedges

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Parkway junior Alison Ringle would love to win the individual title in the Class 5A cross country meet Tuesday in Natchitoches.

In fact, that is her goal. She has been preparing for the race — running dozens and dozens of miles — since the end of the outdoor track season last May.

But while the individual title would be great, it's not her overriding concern.

That's because Ringle is all about her team.

"What I really enjoy about this is the team itself," she said. "We run for each other, and we're best friends. We're more than a team; we're a family. That alone gives me and all of us something to run for."

Ringle will definitely be one of the favorites in 5A Tuesday.

Two years ago, she surprised some observers by finishing second in the Class 4A meet, covering the 3-mile course in 19 minutes, 57.87 seconds.

Last year, Parkway moved up to Class 5A and Ringle finished 13th in 19:58.55.

This season, she has won five of the seven meets in which she has participated. She set course records in two meets, running an 18:43.25 5K (3.1 miles) at Hot Springs, Ark., in the Lake Hamilton Invitational and an 18:14 3-mile in the Ruston Bearcat Invitational.

At the state meet, she will obviously be facing some tough competition. Parkway coach Kent Falting said Nicole Durham of Fontainebleau will likely be Ringle's main obstacle to the title.

The two have gone head-to-head twice this season. Ringle finished ahead of Durham in the prestigious Mobile Challenge of Champions in Mobile, Ala., which was a 5K. Durham won a 4K (2.5 miles) race with Ringle second in a meet in Mississippi last month.

Parkway finished an impressive sixth in the state meet last year, and Ringle expects an even better showing this time.

"I feel really good about it," she said. "We are really excited. We have a chance to do some great things. We've been working hard all season so we're ready for it."

"We're definitely going for the championship. That's our biggest goal."

Ringle didn't start running seriously until she was a seventh-grader at Elm Grove Middle School. She went out on the track, ran a mile and liked the way it felt.

"I went out there and I realized I was pretty good at it," she said. "I had no clue I would be able to beat people and everything. I went to Parkway in the ninth grade and that's when I started to do the real long distances."

Not only has Ringle developed into one of the state's best cross country runners, she's also one of the best on the track.

Last May, she finished second in the Class 5A 1,600- and 3,200-meter runs in the state outdoor track meet in Baton Rouge.

Beside running with her teammates, Ringle likes cross country and track because it allows her to test herself.

"It's the feeling at the end of the race, that you ran three miles and gave it your all and did something really difficult. The workouts are really difficult, and the race is really difficult. At the end of the week after the race you just feel so accomplished."

"It's a great feeling to know that you are able to put yourself through all of that. That's really what I enjoy about it, plus running for my team and my family."

For Ringle, running is a year-round activity. After the cross country season, it will be time to get ready for the outdoor track season.

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But she is still very much involved in her church and community.

At Parkway, she is involved in Destination ImagiNation, Astra Club and Beta Club.

She serves on the Shreveport-Bossier Rescue Mission council. At her church, she is a member of the youth council.

While much of Ringle's success in running can be attributed to her own hard work, she gives a lot of credit to Falting.

"He's like a father to me," she said. "He inspires me and motivates me all the time. He always knows what to say to motivate me and the team. He's done great with workout schedules and stuff.

"We've done things a little differently this year. I can really see an improvement in the team. His heart is in it. There's not a better coach than coach Falting. He's the best anybody can ask for. I'm so blessed to be running for him."

Falting said Ringle has been a pleasure to coach.

"She has the ultimate work ethic," he said. "The really good thing about her is that anything you suggest for her to do she's going to do.

"I have this belief that a lot of kids are born with certain talent and other kids have to work. She's earned every ounce of it so far from her work."