



AIA FEATURE STORY By: Don Ketchum

---

## BLUE RIDGE SENIORS KEEP ON RUNNING

PHOENIX, AZ (November 3, 2008) – They keep running, and running, and running.

Lakeside Blue Ridge seniors Jessica Rydberg and Emerald Raney don't plan to stop and catch their breath until their mission has been accomplished.

That would be to finish 1-2, or vice versa, while helping their team win the Class 3A girls cross-country state championship on Saturday, Nov. 8 at Cave Creek Golf Course in north Phoenix. Rydberg won a year ago and Raney finished second as Blue Ridge finished second behind Chinle.

Asked if there is extra pressure on them to repeat Rydberg said, "I don't know that there's extra pressure. I just wanted to go out and enjoy my senior year. It (repeat) does motivate me. We have a big target on our backs and we both know what we have to do."

Added Raney: "It's kind of cool that people know who you are. We knew it would be hard to live up to what we did last year. We knew that it would take a lot of hard work. That's what we've tried to do."

Blue Ridge coach Eric Fogle wanted the girls and their teammates to have more of a challenge in their workouts.

He has commandeered a bus on several occasions and taken the team to various locations in eastern Arizona, to work hard and enjoy the beautiful countryside at the same time.

"It is a good stress-reliever," Rydberg said.

Rydberg has raised her mileage level s and gained strength and endurance.

"I just focus on my own strategy. I don't worry too much about the other runners," she said. "I think I am a smarter runner than I was before."

Raney focuses on speed workouts, but likes to keep the same pace on most of her races.

"People tell me that my last mile is usually my best, and I guess that's true," she said.

Both girls participate in track, are top-notch students and hope to enter the medical field after studying in college.

"They are very dedicated, both to running and to academics," Fogle said. "They always try to be punctual to practice, work hard and continue to improve.

"They are the same on and off the course. They have the discipline. That goes hand in hand with what they are trying to accomplish. They put forth their best effort, do everything they can to succeed."

Said Raney: "We are ready to make our push now."

The home stretch is just around the corner.

“It feels good to accomplish what we have accomplished. We are really proud to see our hard work pay off. We hope we can do it one more time,” Rydberg said.

**Have a Story Idea:**

The AIA is looking for story ideas on member high schools, including its student-athlete, coaches and administrators. Have a story that you think should be shared with the AIA community? Email your idea to Don Ketchum at [dketchum@aiaonline.org](mailto:dketchum@aiaonline.org).