

Runners Finish Successful Year at Sectionals

by Tim Probst

Prep News Reporter

"There is some disappointment, but we had an excellent season and a better pack and higher finishers than we thought we would coming into the season." This was head coach Jim Linhares' reaction to his varsity cross country team's seventh place finish in last Saturday's sectional race, which prevented SLUH from qualifying for the state meet.

The four teams that did qualify were Parkway South (68) points, Webster Groves (73), Parkway West (85), and Oakville (93). SLUH finished with 176 points.

"I don't want to make excuses, but the fact is that we were down physically especially Matt Dougherty, Jack Kennebeck, and Tim Probst," said Linhares. "We wanted to put the momentum on for sectionals, but we were drained emotionally from trying to make it through districts the week before.

"We also ran scared. Mehlville, Oakville, and Cape Girardeau Central also had depth with a lot of seniors, and they ran faster races than we thought they would."

Senior tri-captain Tim Probst led the Harriers in 32nd place with a time of 17:53. Probst missed qualifying for state as an individual by seven places and thirteen seconds.

Sophomore Kevin Myers finished second for the varsity, with a time of 18:05 and 42nd place. Following Myers were junior Ray Griner (18:08), sophomore Pat Hamel (18:09), junior Jack Kennebeck (18:20), senior Mike Russo (18:53), and senior tri-captain Matt Dougherty (19:10).

The races of Kennebeck and Dougherty were slowed by sickness. Kennebeck, battling a cold all week, was not one hundred percent and Dougherty ran with a bad cold that he acquired on Thursday.

But the team is not looking as much at Saturday's disappointment as its success throughout season.

"We overcame a lot of doubts that were present at the beginning of the season," said Dougherty. "Even though we lost a lot of runners from last year, we showed we can compete on any level. We should be real proud of the season we had."

"It was somewhat frustrating to be put through the emotion we did after the district race," explained Linhares. "We would have gone to state if we were in the north sectional in St. Louis."

Looking over the season, Linhares was especially impressed with his team's unity. "Never before could I count on a top seven and know they were getting ready for a race. Especially on Saturday, the team still got together to jog and stretch after the race. That's the legacy this group will leave to the program; they built the tradition of being a real cohesive, spirited group.

"The tri-captains, Tim Probst, Matt Dougherty, and Gene Marshall were indispensable. They did an excellent job and were part of what make the team spirit possible," continued Linhares.

Linhares is also very optimistic about the future. "What this team shows is that we're not a cross country team that comes and goes. We look fantastic for the next two years, and thanks to this year's team, we have a good foundation for success in the future."