

High Schools

MISSOURI BOYS CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Junior Billikens claim their first title since 1961

Borgia wins 2A as heat punishes many runners

By KEVIN E. BOONE
Of the Post-Dispatch

JEFFERSON CITY — The St. Louis University High cross country team beat the elements — and the Missouri Class 4A field — on Saturday en route to its first state crown since 1961.

"It was a group effort," SLUH coach Jim Linhares said. "There was one word that was key for us. That's team. It was a huge performance."

Led by senior Ted Snodgrass, SLUH produced five runners among the top 50 finishers, and the Junior Billikens beat Liberty by one place 112-113. CBC was third with 118 points and West Plains fourth with 137. The top four teams won trophies and the top 25 runners garnered All-State recognition.

Snodgrass finished 19th in 17 minutes flat. The winner, Matt Tegenkamp of Lee's Summit, ran away from the field and set a new state record, breaking the mark held for 15 years by former CBC standout Chris Borsia. Tegenkamp's time was 15:26.67; Borsia's mark was 15:41.7 in 1984.

It had been much longer since

SLUH had smelled roses — 38 years. "Even in the finish shoot we were packing our runners," Linhares said. "Ted made two key passes in the last 20 meters. Every single one of our guys won the race because each one of them passed people."

Snodgrass (19th), Nathan Tower (30th), Murphy O'Brien (36th), Dan Westlund (37th) and Tim Huegerich (50th) all packed into a tight finish for SLUH's first championship in Linhares' 15-year tenure as head coach.

Perhaps no one was more valuable Saturday than Huegerich, who survived leg-wobbling dehydration that seemed to spread across the 3.1-mile course like a plague. The heat, in the high 70s, pounded the runners, and as many as 40 runners were treated in the emergency tent. Four were transported to local hospitals.

"Tim Huegerich, our last man, had to force his arms through to get across the finish line, and he collapsed there," Linhares said.

Later, Huegerich was up and about with the SLUH celebrants, led by the Junior Billikens' "Blue Crew" awash in blue paint. "The 'Blue Crew' is a tradition at SLUH," Linhares said. "We kept them a little restrained today, but we gave them assignments."

"Some of the were on the team," Linhares said, laughing.

Last season, SLUH finished 12th in the state. Although the Jr. Billikens finished 3rd in 1997, SLUH was a disappointing ninth in 1996 and 16th in '95.

"We got a monkey off our backs today," Linhares said.

In other races, Borgia won its first cross country championship, capturing the boys Class 2A title with 116 points. The Principia (128) and Priory (137) were second and fourth, respectively.

Junior Travis Straatmann finished fifth for Borgia in 17:25. Jordan Millam of Clinton won in 16:17. Grandview senior Alan Heincker was second in 16:49.

Webster Groves' John Stanton-Geddes finished fifth in Class 4A, capturing the St. Louis area's highest finish in the boys division. His time was 16:40. Lane Thrusday, Stanton-Geddes was struck by a motorist while riding his bicycle in Webster.

"The first thing I said to myself when the ambulance came was 'I'm going to run on Saturday,'" Stanton-Geddes said. "This is great."

Cardinal Ritter freshman Kenny Burke, who led for almost two miles, took second in Class 1A in 17:39. Tommy Neal of Leeton won in 17:11.

"I'm only a freshman, and I've never done this before, but I feel I can get back here next year and win this race," said Burke, who joined fellow Ritter freshman Bryan Baldwin in the top 10. Baldwin was sixth in 18:09.

Other top finishers: Potosi's Walker Eye won the Class 3A championship in 16:06. He closes his career as a four-time state medalist. Ladue's Andy Person was third in 16:52. Other team-trophy winners included Clayton (third) and Eureka (fourth) in Class 3A. Valley Park took fourth in Class 1A.



SCOTT LAWRENCE/POST-DISPATCH

Ritter freshman Kenny Burke, who placed second in Class 1A, is congratulated by his coach, Anthony Virdure, after Saturday's meet.

Francis Howell gets 1st-place surprise; several runners collapse

By KEVIN E. BOONE
Of the Post-Dispatch

MISSOURI GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

JEFFERSON CITY — The Francis Howell High girls cross country team won the Missouri Class 4A championship Saturday, but not before a build-up of strange happenings that kept the Lady Knights waiting in suspense.

By the time the Howell girls were awarded their state championship trophy and medals Saturday, it was a moonlit stage on the Oak Hills Golf Course in Jeff City. And it should have been a full moon, given the turn of events. To wit:

■ The Missouri 4A girls competition — the scheduled final run of the day at the 50th annual Missouri High School Cross Country Cham-

pionships — was delayed almost an hour because of near-epidemic cases of dehydrated runners.

■ Amid mid-afternoon heat, a number of runners in the girls 4A race collapsed near the finish line, causing problems for officials handing out the places.

■ A camera was inadvertently knocked over during the confusion on the course as the race drew to a close.

He quickly got over his surprise upon learning that Howell had not only won its second state cross country championship, but the Lady Knights also finished ahead of both West Plains and Kirkwood, both of which were considered favorites entering the state meet.

Howell scored 94 points, followed by runner-up Kirkwood (106), West Plains (107) and Liberty (112). Howell was paced by junior Jill Petersen and senior Katherine Bonugli, who finished fourth and 16th, respectively. Petersen's time was 19 minutes 46 seconds; Bonugli, third last year in Class 4A but running with a sore hip Saturday, finished in 20:12. Blue Springs sophomore Nicole Graham won in 19:13.

In the 3A girls race, De Soto senior Sarah Helenschmidt capped off her career with her first state championship in a time of 19:56.

oelken thus finished her cross country career as a four-time All-Stater.