

Junior Bills muddle their way to medal

CROSS COUNTRY

By Daniel J. Ladd
Correspondent

The St. Louis University High Junior Bills continue to shock their competition.

At Saturday's 31st annual Hancock Invitational Cross Country Meet (and Mudbath), SLUH finished third, despite running in ankle-deep mud against some of the top runners in the state.

The meet came on the heels of last week's stunning first-place upset at Hazelwood Central. Coach Jim Linhares said this is the strongest SLUH team in 30 years.

Central to the SLUH rebirth has been junior Pat Hamel, who was 14th in the Boys Gold Division with a time of 18:12.

"We were pumped," Hamel said. "We just wanted to run well because we knew there would be tough teams here."

Hamel said that the excitement of running at the Hancock Invitational — historically one of the most challenging and respected meets in the state — may have given him a little too

much adrenalin.

"I went out a little strong, and didn't have a whole lot left at the end," Hamel said. "I don't know if I can attribute that to going out too fast or just the conditions."

Hamel said he had never run in worse conditions.

"The course was just completely mud," Hamel said. "There wasn't any grass left to get a grip on, even though we have spikes."

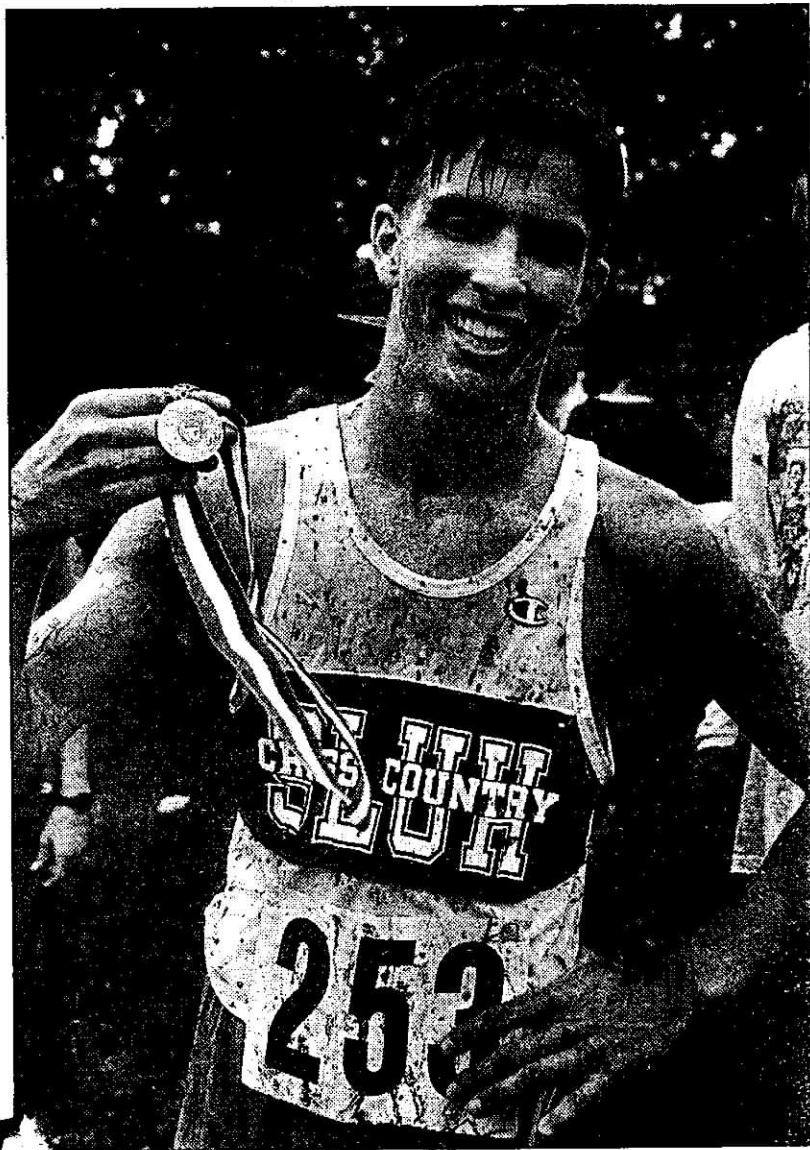
Although the course was sloppy, Hamel said he was glad that Linhares had decided to let the team continue competing.

"I love to race too much," Hamel said. "I definitely wanted to run this, if I got a medal or if I finished dead last."

West Plains won the boys Gold Division with a score of 36, Parkway West was second with 119 and SLUH followed with 166.

The Junior Bills' next challenge will be the highly competitive Parkway West Invitational next Saturday.

"It's not as big as Hancock," Hamel said, "but it's just as competitive. All the best teams usually come out for it."



Gene Berman photo

Mudfest

A muddy Pat Hamel of St. Louis U. High stops to pose with his medal after finishing 14th in the Boys Gold Division of the Hancock Invitational. Hamel and the Junior Bills finished third as a team, the highest finish of any area squad.