

# Deep SLUH squad setting torrid pace

## CROSS COUNTRY

By Dan Ladd  
Correspondent

St. Louis University High School coach Jim Linhares is starting to sound a little embarrassed about repeating himself.

"I know I've said this before," Linhares said, "but it continues to be true this season as it was last season: we still seem to be on an upswing. This is one of the best cross country teams I have ever coached."

Linhares' embarrassment of riches continues to grow.

First, he is blessed with an abundance of athletes. More than 70 runners have chosen to carry the banner of the Junior Bills, making the competition to don the varsity jersey extremely healthy.

Second, many of those 70 have plenty of experience. The Junior Bills aren't hurting for seniors, or for leadership.

Third, his squad is so filled with talent across the age group that he does not fear graduation — he has good juniors to replace his good seniors when the time comes.

"All the way to the freshmen," Linhares said, "we're looking pretty good."

During his 15 years as head coach, Linhares has looked for landmarks, for areas of demarcation to show the growth between bad to good, good to better, better to now.

Linhares can tell you the day that the Junior Bills' decade-long march toward true regional power began. It started in 1987, the day they won their first invitational trophy in

as many years as Linhares can remember.

There are other road signs:

- In 1989 they qualified for the state meet for first time in his reign.

- In 1991, they finished eighth at state — their highest finish under Linhares to this day.

- In 1993 he had five runners running under 18 minutes.

- And in 1997, just one week ago, SLUH finished fourth at the Mizzou Sport Shake Challenge, putting the team neck-and-neck with the elite of Missouri schools.

"All of the teams that had won state in the last 10 years were there," Linhares said. "It

See SLUH, Page 5D