

SLUH stakes its claim, finishes 2nd

Junior Bills' showing solidifies top spot among area squads

CROSS COUNTRY

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That's one question put to rest.

Two weeks ago, St. Louis University High finished an extremely strong fourth at the Mizzou Sports Shake Invitational in Columbia. The best schools in the state were there, and being in the top five was a clear sign that this may be a year of greatness for the Junior Bills.

Still, coach Jim Linhares admitted to a nagging little question, a momentary doubt.

"We wondered if maybe that was a fluke up there," Linhares said. "It didn't look like a fluke, it didn't feel like a fluke, but this is a final confirmation that we are running with the toughest teams in the state."

What answered his question, eased his mind, and put his doubts to rest was SLUH's outstanding second place finish at the Hancock Invitational on Saturday, losing only to Jefferson City. Both Jefferson City, who had 33 points, and SLUH, who had 77, were in a class by themselves. Third place wasn't even close — West Plains with 144 points.

"This is the best team I've ever coached," he said. "There is no contest, really, even after the fine teams we've had."

The best team he's ever had may be in the heading into the best season he's ever had.

The highest the Juniors Bills ever finished, not counting their 1961 state championship season, was their eighth place finish at state in 1991. The performance at Hancock put that record — and maybe even the state title — into play.

There are a lot of reasons for the solid team this year, and one of them is named Ben Rosario. A senior, Rosario finished

See SLUH, Page 2D



John Conrey photo

Class 3A boys runners trudge up a hill at the start of the Blue Division race during Saturday's Hancock Invitational.