

With nothing to lose, SLUH upsets field

Missing two top runners, Jr. Bills win District 3 crown

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Sometimes there is nothing quite as dangerous as someone who has nothing to lose.

BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

Going into the Class 4A District 3 competition Saturday at Parkway Central, St. Louis

University High suddenly found itself as underdogs. An extremely solid team, and one of the true powers in the area, SLUH approached the starting line with three of its best runners sidelined and replaced with largely-untested alternates.

Usually, that is not a recipe for success.

Missing were Ken Reichert and Murphy O'Brien, two of the Junior Bills' top three runners, and Tim Huegerich, the squad's more-than-capable fifth man. Reichert and O'Brien were out with genuinely-earned cases of exhaustion, and Huegerich had been sidelined by a sprained ankle.

Replacing those veterans in the most important race yet of the season were three guys from the junior varsity ranks — juniors Dan Westlund, and Matt Brice, and senior Matt Crow.

Before the race started, SLUH coach Jim Linhares put the squad on notice.

"I said 'Today, this is the group, and you have to get it done like you are the only group that's ever run,'" Linhares said.

He challenged them to improve, to turn in their own best race ever, no matter what that meant. So, that's what they did.

SLUH won the district championship, beating the extremely tough — and fully staffed — squads from CBC and DeSmet. SLUH finished with 38 points, CBC had 44 and DeSmet 56.

"We had a great day," Linhares said. "It was one of the most gratifying days since I've been coaching."

Linhares figured that even without all its big guns, the Junior Bills would certainly be in the top four — enough to qualify to next week's sectionals. But the thought of winning was out of the question.

"I didn't think we'd be second even," Linhares said. "I was really caught off-guard. I can't explain it, but it was really wonderful to see."

"I think that those guys realized that they had nothing to lose. No one expected them to be world-beaters and so they went out and



Dennis Caldwell photo

Despite missing Ken Reichert and Murphy O'Brien, far right, St. Louis University High won the Class 4A District 3 cross country meet Saturday at Parkway Central. Ted Snodgrass, left, led the team with a fourth-place finish.

SLUH upsets field for District 3 crown

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had fun."

Beating DeSmet and CBC, both of which the Junior Bills will face again next week, was especially pleasing to Linhares.

"We have a ton of respect for both CBC and DeSmet," Linhares said. "Anyone who looks past either of those teams would be making a mistake."

Leading the way was SLUH's rock-solid No. 1 man, junior Ted Snodgrass.

Snodgrass finished fourth overall in 16 minutes, 34 seconds, keeping up with three of the top runners in the metro area in the process.

DeSmet's Pete Eicholz was first, catching CBC's highly-regarded Mike Krull with only 50 meters or so to go. Krull's teammate Adam Sullivan was right on his heels.

"He (Snodgrass) went out and ran with Krull and Sullivan and Eicholz for a good two miles," Linhares said.

CROSS COUNTRY POLLS

BOYS

1. SLUH.....	100
2. CBC.....	90
3. DeSmet.....	78
4. Marquette.....	72
5. Eureka.....	60
6. Parkway South.....	50
7. Parkway West.....	40
8. Webster Groves.....	26
9. (tie) Francis Howell.....	8
9. (tie) Northwest.....	8

Others receiving votes: St. Charles, Parkway Central, East St. Louis-Lincoln and Lutheran South.

GIRLS

1. Kirkwood.....	100
2. St. Charles West.....	73
3. Parkway West.....	70
4. Hazelwood Central.....	60
5. Marquette.....	50
6. Nerinx Hall.....	45
7. Francis Howell.....	43
8. Lafayette.....	40
9. Edwardsville.....	33
10. Lutheran South.....	28

Others receiving votes: St. Joseph's, Ft. Zumwalt South, Visitation.

"That was a really fine race for him — just outstanding."

Senior Matt Schaefer was fifth in 16:50.

"He just had a tremendous, breakthrough day," Linhares said.

Westlund was eighth with a time of 17:04.

"He ran a race you'd be happy to have out of your number three man any day," Linhares said.

Westlund's breakthrough may be the payoff of potential shown by the runner as a freshman — potential that was not fulfilled as Westlund

slumped through most of last season.

"He's kind of climbed that hill and he's back to where we hoped he'd be," Linhares said.

Junior Nathan Tower took the last medal with a 10th place, 17:05 finish. Crow (17:12) was 11th and Brice (17:50) finished 13th.

Linhares said he will decide later this week what sort of team he will field at sectionals. Reichert and O'Brien will likely be fully rested, but Huegerich's ankle is still suspect.