

Harrierbills finish disappointing 8th in State

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Reporter

Someone once said, "Life is what happens when you've made other plans." Last Saturday in Jefferson City, the cross country team got a heavy dose of this thing called life. Poised to make a run at the school's third state championship, the team finished a disappointing eighth overall. They were third in the area, behind DeSmet (4th) and Parkway South (5th).

Team champion West Plains ran one of the strongest state races in recent memory, placing five runners in the top 25, all garnishing all-state medals, and scoring a mere 56 points. Liberty took second place with 76 points.

The day wasn't a wash for all Jr. Billikens, however, as Tipper O'Brien became a two-time cross country all-state runner, finishing in 25th place (16:54.77). Physically drained from the effects of running such an intense race, O'Brien literally couldn't have gone one step further. Desperately trying to keep his bal-

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people just guard the right side."

In the first minute of overtime, DesPain gave the SLUH crowd even more to cheer about when he scored a goal to give the Jr. Bills a 6-5 lead. As DesPain swam free toward the goal, a Parkway South defender dunked him at about the 4-meter mark. The refs awarded DesPain a penalty shot, and he easily put the ball into the top right corner.

The Polobills played solid defense for the rest of the first and second overtimes to prevail, 6-5. Goalie Mike Petersen had an impressive 22 saves on 27 shots to hold the Patriots to five goals. The Jr. Bills' scoring was led by seniors DesPain and Szewcyk, who each had two goals.

This win over Parkway South in the semifinals set up a rematch of last year's championship game against the MICDS Rams. MICDS won the game last year, and they had beaten the Jr. Bills two out of three times in this year's regular season.

ance, he stumbled to the finish and collapsed a step before the line, barely crossing the plane with his falling body and hitting the ground in an unconscious heap. It was a truly gutsy performance that will never be forgotten by those who were there to witness it.

Drew Noblot ran a strong race as SLUH's #2 man (41st, 17:11), finishing as the third highest returning St. Louis area runner. Pat Leinauer (52nd, 17:20), Kevin Crean (69th, 17:36), Kyle G o n n e r m a n (73rd, 17:38), John Parr (107th, 18:04), and Peter Schaefer (127th, 18:22) were the other five SLUH finishers.

Nobody wants to offer any excuses

for what happened Saturday, but it's an understatement to say that nobody was happy with the way the season ended.



Junior Drew Noblot chugs through the course.

Head coach Jim Linhares offered the following perspective. "We had an outstanding season with tremendous senior leadership. Even though the state meet didn't represent our true talent and ability, there's no taking away from what we accomplished. Peter and John were both sick, and Pat just had an off day. It happens, but that's the heart of our scoring lineup right there. Tip, Drew, Kevin,

and Kyle performed very well, however, and should be recognized for that."

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However, the Jr. Bills had defeated them 4-3 in their final meeting of the regular season on Oct. 13.

In front of a huge SLUH cheering section, the Polobills got off to a great start when Abram notched a quick goal in the first quarter. Driving down the right side of the pool, he hurled the ball off the post and into the goal.

Szewcyk gave the Jr. Bills a 2-0 lead later in the first when he scored a goal off of a pass from Breandan Sanders. "I drove and put my man on my back. Brendan threw me a great pass, and I stepped up and put the ball in the goal," said Szewcyk.

The scoring barrage continued in the third quarter when DesPain scored after a display of brute strength and coordination. With a defender grabbing his arms and trying to pull him down, DesPain quickly spun around him. Fighting off the pesky defender, DesPain tipped the ball up to himself and tapped it past the goalie to make the score 3-0.

The Polobills enjoyed their best fan support of the year in the second half as many of the Jr. Billiken faithful began to sense a state championship. During timeouts the SLUH student section constantly yelled at the MICDS team directly below in an attempt to disrupt the huddle. "I was talking to one of the MICDS players after the game and he told me they couldn't hear anything during timeouts because our fans were so loud," said Szewcyk.

Price agreed, saying, "It was the most fans we had all year. Their cheers helped motivate us, and they got in the MICDS players' heads."

After scoring another goal, the Jr. Bills enjoyed a commanding 4-0 lead in the fourth quarter. "When we got up 4-0 in the fourth quarter, everybody knew we had a good chance to win," said Price. "So everybody started getting excited."

Yet the Rams showed they weren't

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RUNNIN' WILD

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In a season filled with so much glory, it's unfortunate that the season had to end like this. However, the beat goes on, and the team must focus itself on training harder than ever for next season if they want to defeat the likes of West Plains and Liberty.

They will return four varsity runners who ran at state and many sophomores and juniors from a junior varsity squad that dominated the area all season. The freshmen are also ready to make a run at varsity spots. The future looks bright.

"The underclassmen are already fired

NO SPLASHING

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going to give up when Ross McConnell put one past Petersen to spoil his shutout. The Rams' intensity grew, but Pimmel knocked the wind out of their whole team with a clutch goal. He alertly cheated down the pool to offense on a quick transition. Using his soft scoring touch, Pimmel then lobbed the ball over the helpless goalie's head to give the Polobills another 4-goal lead.

The Rams' McConnell added another goal, but MICDS had no chance to come back because of the intense pressure of the SLUH defense. The Jr. Billiken cheering section counted down the final seconds of the game and began to celebrate the 5-2 championship victory.

The team jumped into the water, and a few players even tossed head coach Charlie Busenhart (who can't swim) into the pool. "The best part was when the whole team was cheering while Mr. B. clung to the side," said Price.

Most of the team members agreed that Saturday's game was probably the best they had ever played together. "We worked hard all season, we knew we could do it, and it all came together in the end," said DesPain.

Szewczyk said, "We won because we played as a team with intensity the whole game, and we had great fans there."

up for training for next season, and I fully expect us to again be a force," said Linhares.

Right now, however, the wounds are still open, especially for the seniors on the team who had to sit back and watch as the dreams they had worked towards for four years slipped through their fingers in the span of one race.

"The memories, friends, and fun times can never be erased. I would give anything to have that day back, but it can't take away from the sacrifices I've made and love I have for the team," reminisced

Busenhart also emphasized that winning the championship took a team effort. "Every player was an integral part of the program that launched us to the championship."

Baudendistel agreed, saying, "They picked a good time to play their best game of the season."

Petersen, who saved 12 of 14 shots in the final game, said, "We had the fewest

a sullen Parr.

"Thanks to everyone on the team for their support and dedication," added Leinauer. "This team has made me a better person."

Everyone on the team would like to thank the school for its support this season, especially in the week leading up to state. A special thanks goes out to all those who made the trip to Jeff City with the team to see the race.

For a more personalized perspective on the results from Saturday, and much more, log on to www.sluh.org/xc/xc.htm.

goalie," he said.

As the Polobills celebrated in the water, the Jr. Billiken fans continued to cheer. The "We are Jr. Bills" cheer, led by Stuco Sports Commissioner Adam Shukwit, turned into a spirited "We are state champs."

"We were all having fun until Jason (Jacobi) 'accidentally' pushed the life guard in the water," said Baudendistel.

Spirits were high as the team accepted their plaque, a plaque symbolic of hard work and many hours in the pool.

On Tuesday night, Fox 2 honored the team in an "Athletes of the Week" segment which featured short interviews of Klein and Szewczyk.

The championship win illustrates the team's great success, but there are a number of Polobills who made the Suburban Central All Star teams. Price, DesPain, and Petersen made the first team, while Pimmel made the second team.

At the start of the season, the Polobills were chosen by many

area coaches as the best team in the area. However, after the team lost to MICDS in both of their first two meetings of the season, newspapers and other teams shifted their praise to MICDS. Saturday night the Polobills proved to themselves and everyone else that they truly are the best team in the state.



Goalie Mike Petersen leaps to save a Ram shot. Petersen's stellar netminding was a big key to Jr. Bill success in water polo this year.

mistakes in the last two games of the season. Kevin Price and Greg Szewczyk probably played their best game of the year against MICDS."

Pimmel thought the Polobills' intense defense was key in their victory. "(MICDS) only scored two goals, so that says a lot about our team defense and our