

Water polo looks back on 21-4 season

Third place in State capped off competitive season

Greg Mantych
Reporter

The St. Louis U. High water polo team had much to celebrate at their banquet this past Sunday, ending a terrific season with a 21-4 record and a third-place overall finish in the Missouri District Tournament. However, despite their disappointing third place finish, the Polobills thrived in several aspects of the game.

SLUH dominated opponents offensively this year, scoring a total of 269 goals.

Individually, senior Tim Heafner stood out with 99 goals, a statistic with little competition, and the title of the Team Offensive MVP (a title given to one player voted on by the varsity players).

Defensively, the Jr. Bills controlled the water as they held several teams to only a few goals each game. The Speedobills only allowed 137 goals, a number largely credited to the team's goalie, senior Rick Bettger. Bettger, named Team Defensive MVP, had a 67.9% save percentage with 190 saves and was one of the leaders in the league. Throughout the year, Bettger blocked practically enough

shots in the chest to cause a collapsed lung.

In addition to the Polobills' outstanding play throughout the season, they maintained a moral code of clean play, win or lose, a characteristic instilled by head coach Paul Baudendistel. In a sport played partially underwater, cheating is easy to pull off. Nevertheless, the Jr. Bills stuck to a standard of fair competition and would not have felt right if they had finished in any place by cheating.

However, the team's season was filled with its share of lows as well as highs.

Every player and fan remembers the thrilling overtime victory against MICDS, but also the crushing loss to the same team a short time later. SLUH defeated rival Chaminade in their own pool by one point in a tight battle, but lost to them later in both the MICDS Invitational and the Missouri District semifinal game by one goal.

The loss to Chaminade put the Hydrobills against John Burroughs in the consolation game, where SLUH won handily to attain their third place finish.

"Sometimes, when you wake up," reflected manager Jason Murphy, "it's just another day. That's how the cookie

crumbles."

The Jr. Billiken team was also recognized by water polo fans in the entire area. Heafner was voted Player of the Year by the district coaches as well as being named to 1st Team All Metro Catholic Conference. Seniors Tim Szewczyk, Kevin O'Neill and Rick Bettger were also honored with a place on the 3rd Team All-Conference.

The seniors should be most honored, as they have been with the water polo team the longest and were the leaders the entire season.

"It was awesome to play this year," remarked Heafner, "and I don't regret a thing, no matter where we ended up."

Still, everybody should anticipate a great season next year as a class of juniors and two sophomores return as starters and a whole new class moves up to varsity. "Several teams are losing their star players," commented junior Mark Abram, "but we still have a solid foundation of returning team members."

Living up to this year's standard will be tough, but the water polo program is ready for anything.

ELEVEN

(from 5)

effort. A Spartan striker sent a rocket towards Woods, who made the save to preserve the 0-0 tie and send the game to overtime.

In the first ten minute overtime, the Spartans turned up the heat as they kept the ball in the Jr. Bill end for much of the period. But the SLUH defense, led by Zang, held strong and repeatedly cleared the ball out of the zone, forcing another overtime.

The second overtime was much more evenly played. Junior Chris Schranck had a couple of scoring opportunities, but was unable to capitalize. Then, with less than two minutes left, a DeSmet player took a great shot which hugged the ground and headed for the left corner of the goal. The SLUH defense converged on

see SO CLOSE, 8

Harrierbills end season 8th in State

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Despite finishing a disappointing eighth place at state, head coach Jim Linhares was "happy (about) a very successful year." This year, the team took commanding wins at both districts and sectionals, winning with 26 and 41 points, respectively.

The team dominated nearly all the St. Louis teams they faced this year, running away with several races throughout the year. The Harriers posted strong wins over area teams in the First Capital Invitational, McCluer North Invitational, and the MCC Championships. In these three races, SLUH scored the minuscule total of 114.

The cross country team will lose a plethora of key seniors, including four varsity runners and 26 from the entire team. The cross country program says goodbye to successful seniors Alex Muntges, Dan Meier, Joe Carlson, and Matt Dimbeck.

But top-returnee junior Ben Murphy-Baum will lead the team next year into another promising future. The team also returns juniors Mike Jonagan and Drew Kaiser, who placed 60th and 96th in state, respectively.

The team also looks forward to several sophomore and junior runners from a JV team that placed first in seven of its nine races. The JV team also received some varsity experience, placing sixth in the Jesuit Invitational.