

XC seeks second consecutive state title

Brandon Thornberry
Reporter

For most St. Louis U. High cross country athletes, the 2008 season began at the end of May. Although the official organized practices started Aug. 11, the team put in a great deal of mileage during the offseason, with individuals running anywhere from 200 to over 600 miles to prepare for the fall competition.

"Our team worked really hard over the summer to prepare for this season," said senior Connor Hagan.

Along with a lot of mileage, the Ryan-Hallbills enter the 2008 season ranked 17th nationally by the Harrier XC Super 25.

"We can't let the 17th place ranking affect us too much," said senior captain Austin Cookson. "Regionals and Nationals are still a long way off. We need to focus more on the important meets approaching us, such as the Forest Park Cross Country Festival."

Coach Joe Porter believes the hard work

these athletes put in over the summer has formed one of the deepest teams SLUH cross country has ever seen. "We have 95 guys out this year," said Porter. "Our second seven behind our top varsity could take on a lot of other area schools' top varsity (teams) and do very well. Most of the athletes rounding out our second seven and even a few in the third seven would be varsity runners at many other high schools."

However, talent and hard work can only take a team so far. Head coach Jim Linhares believes the leadership and community of this team will really be the underlying cause of the team's success.

"The leadership the senior captains and underclassmen bring to this team really is great," said Linhares. "They bring a mix of fun and seriousness that really unites the team," he said.

The coaches and team recognize there is still room for improvement, especially in executing the strategy that helped last year's team win state.

"Pack racing is really going to be stressed this year," said Porter. Racing as a pack is rarely mastered by teams and really finds its base in the community of the team, which SLUH cross country has plenty of. The Defendingstatechampionbills kick off their season at McNair Park on Tuesday, Sept. 9. The gun goes off at 4:30 p.m.

PN Prophecy of the Week

"While Director of Diversity, Clark also directed work grant and, eerily like Brock Kesterson, taught Psychology and moderated STUCO."

- From a 2003 feature on former Dean of Students Eric Clark (see volume 67, issue 22).

Morgan, '05 drafted by Royals

Peter Mackowiak
Sports Editor

Imagine you've just been drafted and stationed in Idaho Falls, Idaho. Not excited? That's understandable—it's a nightmare scenario for most. But for Ryan Morgan, '05, who was selected by the Kansas City Royals in the 26th round of MLB's First-Year Player Draft in June, it was the fulfillment of a childhood dream.

"I was ecstatic," said Morgan. "From when I started playing baseball as a kid, I've always wanted to play pro ball."

Morgan characterizes himself as a power pitcher. Employing a four-seam fastball, curveball, and change-up, he compiled a 3.89 ERA and led the Rockhurst Hawks with 74 strikeouts in just under 70 innings last spring. His solid junior-year performance earned him phone calls and mail from major league scouts.

Despite the unpredictable nature of the draft, Morgan expected that if he were drafted, he would be joining one of the three franchises who showed the most interest: the Royals, Cleveland Indians, or St. Louis Cardinals.

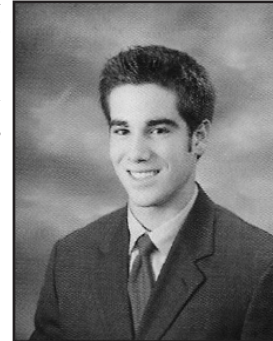
"Obviously, I would have loved to be drafted by the Cardinals, but I grew fond of the Royals," said Morgan, who attended college in Kansas City. "Also, the Royals are a team that likes to bring up young talent, so I'm happy knowing that I might have a better chance to move up," he said.

While the draft represented a step in the right direction, Morgan has started his pro career pitching for the Idaho Falls Chukars—four minor league levels and about 1,200 miles from Kauffman Stadium.

"The first time I heard I'd be playing for the Chukars, I didn't even know what (a chukar) was. I thought it was 'Chuckers,' as in, to chuck something at somebody," said Morgan. "Apparently it's some kind of game bird that flies around the northwest, although I've never actually seen one."

(Editor's note: The chukar, Pakistan's national bird, is a grayish-brown upland partridge that is indigenous to Asia and has been established in the United States. But we've never actually seen one, either.)

PHOTO COURTESY OF 2005 DALPHIN YEARBOOK



Rookie Royal Ryan Morgan, '05, played varsity baseball and football at SLUH.

Morgan, who had never before been anywhere near the Pacific Northwest, enjoys spending his free time in the mountains. But playing ball, through rain, snow, and extra innings, is definitely a full-time job.

The 2008 season has been up-and-down for the rookie. In 13 games—9 of them starts—Morgan is 0-3 with a 7.18 ERA.

"I've had games where I've pitched really well and times where I've pitched really poorly," said Morgan. "But overall, it's been a good year, with lots and lots of learning."

Morgan said he learned a great deal through academics and athletics in his time at St. Louis U. High, where he played varsity football his senior year as a free safety and wide receiver and varsity baseball all four years, as a pitcher and an outfielder. He was named 3rd-team All-Metro in baseball his senior year.

"(SLUH baseball head coach) Steve Nicollerat was the best coach I've ever had," see KC, 15