

## XC stays unbeaten with wins at Borgia and MCCs

**Brandon Thornberry**  
Reporter

The 2008 St. Louis High cross country team continued on its history-making path at the MCC Championships and the Borgia Invitational these past two weeks.

The morning following the SLUH football victory over Chaminade, the team arrived on Chaminade's campus looking to bring home another victory. In the varsity race, DeSmet's Connor Callahan, Chaminade's Matt Estlund, and SLUH's own Austin Cookson were all favorites to contend for the title of conference champion.

SLUH's varsity jumped to an early lead, taking seven of the top ten places in the first mile. As the rest of the field tried to close in on SLUH during the second mile, Cookson, Callahan, and Estlund broke away and battled for first.

Following a brief period in which the field disappeared around the backside of the school, three figures could be seen rolling down the final hill toward the track finish. Chaminade's Estlund led, closely followed by DeSmet's Callahan. Cookson had suffered a fall in the back part of the course but still fought hard to catch up to Callahan and ultimately finished third.

Despite the fall, Cookson and junior Caleb Ford, who took fourth, led the SLUH cross-country team to a decisive first place victory. SLUH placed all seven runners in the top ten: senior Cliff David took fifth, junior Tim McLaughlin took seventh, senior David Kuciejczyk-Kernan claimed eighth, and juniors Bill Gabler and Tyler Jennings rounded out the top ten.

Cookson, SLUH's number one man on the day, broke the 16-minute barrier with a personal best of 15:56. McLaughlin also ran a personal best, posting a 16:41.

"The varsity really went out and got the job done," said head coach Jim Linhares.

Following the outstanding varsity performance, the junior varsity race was the quickest of its kind in SLUH history.

SLUH dominated the field from the very start and led the race with a pack of ten runners. Junior Emmett Cookson and senior Ben Carron led through the first two miles.

Then Cookson and first-year SLUH



Junior Caleb Ford (left) and senior Cliff David come down the sunlit home stretch in stride.

PHOTO BY ZAC BOESCH

cross-country runner junior Nick Seckfort battled into the final downhill for the win. Seckfort, well known in track circles for his 400-meter speed, exploded when the course made its way onto the track loop for the first place finish. Seckfort, followed by Cookson and Carron, led the junior varsity team to a first place victory by sweeping the first seven places and taking 19 of the 25 medals. Seckfort, E. Cookson, and Carron all broke the seventeen-minute barrier with times of 16:41, 16:50, and 16:59, respectively.

"This junior varsity made history today," said Linhares at the meet. "It was the quickest junior varsity race in SLUH history, hands down."

The freshman squad swept the first six places and took eight of the top ten spots.

The Saturday following the team's victory at MCCs, SLUH sent a few juniors, sophomores, and freshman Nathan Rubbelke to compete in the Borgia Invitational at Big Driver Golf Course in Washington, Mo. Juniors Charlie Stoltze and Bill Franey led the squad to a fifth-place finish out of 18 strong teams' top varsities.

"These guys are varsity runners," said Linhares. "Fifth place out of eighteen tough teams is a great accomplishment."

SLUH is in the Clayton Invitational today after school at Shaw Park with races beginning at 4 p.m. Also, SLUH's top seven competes tomorrow in Districts at Parkway Central. The gun goes off at 9:30 a.m.

## Berger, '09 commits to Princeton for hockey

**Tony Billmeyer**  
Reporter

Senior hockey star Jack Berger has committed to Princeton for the 2010-2011 school year. Despite talking to coaches from Yale and a few other Division III coaches, Princeton's was his first offer.

"It was really a big surprise," said Berger. "I was questioning whether I would even get an offer before the end of the season. I was really excited to get one this early."

Berger will have to play in a junior league for a year before going to Princeton, since he is committed to the team for 2010. "If you're just ready for the college level, which is rare, you will go straight to college," explained Berger, "but a lot of kids will play one or two years in a junior league first."

In his year off, he hopes to play in the USHL, a junior league, saying, "I would ideally play in Des Moines or Chicago, or I might end up staying in St. Louis and playing with the St. Louis Bandits."

SLUH's leading goal-scorer can not take any college classes next year, since Princeton does not accept transfer students.

Berger was first drawn to Princeton while at a hockey camp over the summer. "I liked the campus a lot. It had a lot of old and really cool buildings," he said.

The program's prestige especially appealed to Berger—Princeton enters the upcoming season ranked ninth in the nation by the USCHO/CBS poll.

Despite his attraction to the hockey program, Berger explains that "Princeton was my first choice, either for hockey or for academics." Berger will not receive any scholarships, because Princeton does not offer any scholarships, only financial aid.

With the decision made, Berger will be focused on the upcoming season. "It's going to be a lot different without (last year's goalie Alex) Effinger," he said. "I think we're going to be competitive. It's kind of a down season for the league in general."