

Soccer vaporizes the Stars, Final Four next

Rob Bertucci
Sports Editor

The St. Louis U. High soccer team (20-6-1) waited patiently on the sidelines for its turn to play on Soccer Park's main field, and watched as CBC defeated Vianney in double overtime in the State quarterfinals. The outcome of this game livened the Jr. Bills' State Championship hopes, as it made the Cadets—whom the Jr.

Bills have beaten twice during the regular season (4-0, 2-1)—the main contenders on the opposite side of the bracket.

But the Jr. Bills could not be caught looking ahead and had to first take care of

their quarterfinal opponent, the McCluer North Stars.

The Jr. Bills immediately set the tone for the entire match by pushing the ball quickly into Star territory. After four solid minutes of possession, SLUH obtained an early 1-0 lead as senior forward David Burr put in a goal off a rebound.

When the Jr. Bills strike first this season, they have not been beaten. In fact, under head coach Charlie Martel and assistant coach Charlie Clark, SLUH is 180-2-2 in games where they score first.

Although the Jr. Bill offense came ready to play, the defense was shaky early in the

first half. Uncharacteristically, the Jr. Bills handed McCluer North the equalizing goal on a sloppy pass in front of the net. The goal was the first allowed by senior goalie Dave Kirner and the defense this postseason.

"There was a little bit of miscommunication between Joey (Rund) and A.J. (Andrew Johnson) and Dave," said senior captain Dom Hewitt. "It was a gift and a rare mistake by our defense."

This mistake was the only chance that the Jr. Bills gave McCluer North all game, though. The defense tightened up, and the offense quickly responded to the tied ballgame. Senior forward Grant Welge one-timed a pass from senior captain Joe Bettger past the McCluer goalie, putting SLUH up 2-1 heading into halftime.

The Ostrichbills continued to outplay the Stars throughout the entire second half. Senior Matt Reda gave the Jr. Bills some breathing room with his first goal of the season off a pass from Bettger, and the team

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Richie Hoffman dodges past a McCluer North's defender to get the ball down the field.

Roadrunnerbills sixth at Midwest Regional

Will Bufo
Reporter

The St. Louis U. High cross country team, running under the pseudonym "St. Louis XC Club," placed 6th last Sunday at the Nike Cross Nationals (NXN) Midwest Regional in Terre Haute, Ind.

The squad competed in what has been considered by many to be the hardest region in the country, consisting of Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio.

Despite four sections of hay bales placed throughout the course to make it "extreme," the high level of competition showed its strength as Missouri's individual state runner-up Caleb Ford took 38th place, finishing with an elite time of 16:01.

"There were a lot of fast people. I came through the first mile a little under 4:50 and I was probably around 50th, and I've never experienced that before. The hay bales were pretty useless. I thought they were a waste of time," said Ford.

Junior Tim Rackers sprinted in alongside Ford, placing 39th overall while running a personal best time of 16:02.

Senior Tim McLaughlin also set a personal record at 16:30, packing together

with teammate Emmett Cookson, who finished with a time of 16:32. Despite the fast times, the pair finished 90th and 95th, respectively.

"It's like grappling a wild beast, but there is a mutual understanding of love between you and the beast. No matter how hard you fight the beast, you know it's always going to love you back," reflected McLaughlin on the sport to which he dedicated the past four years.

Senior Tony Minnick (16:42), junior Alan Ratermann (16:56), and senior Tyler Jennings (17:07) wrapped up the championship race for SLUH, bringing the team's score to 265.

Although the places may have told one story, the SLU High cross country team had one of its best races of the season. Powerhouse teams across Illinois—Troy, Naperville South, and Loyola Academy—were simply too good to be beaten by the Missouri state champions.

SLUH was, however, able to capture the regional open race title, led by key performances from senior Charlie Stoltze (16:49, 6th), junior Joe Meier (16:53, 10th), and senior Bill Gabler (17:00, 14th).

After winning the open race, the squad was awarded a magnificent trophy.

"It's amazing," described Stoltze. "Shine a light through it, and it refracts to illuminate the deepest recesses of happiness in my soul. I don't want to take my eyes off of it because I wonder how I will ever so completely see myself again if I look away."

"To beat a team like York and Nequa Valley says a lot about SLUH's program. The fact that the Varsity was 6th and the JV pulled out a win in the Midwest shows that the team's and coaches' tremendous amount of dedication and hard work has paid off," said Gabler.

The 2009 season may have featured the greatest team in the St. Louis U. High cross country program's history. After many days of logging miles through the hot summer months and long runs on chilly, October days along the paths and trails of Forest Park, the season has finally come to an end. The hard work and dedication have paid off, and the team building, friendships, and lasting memories will live in the runners' hearts. It was an amazing season for the St. Louis U. High Cross Country team—the 2009 Missouri State Champions.