



# Fall Sports Round-Up

## Cross Country Runs Away with State Title

Second State Title in 3 years for XC Runners



The 2009 State Champion Jr. Billiken Cross Country team

**Head Coach:** Jim Linhares

**Assistant Coaches:** Tom Flanagan, Brian Gilmore '02, Michael Koenigs, Joe Porter

**Overall Record:** 118-1 (overall number of wins/loss in total overall head-to-head competition)

**MCC Record:** MCC Champions (all levels)

**State Overall Finish:** Champions

“You don’t often get a storybook ending to a season. We’ll remember this one again and again for many years to come.” That was how head Cross Country Coach Jim Linhares summarized the 2009 State Championship season. “It was a tremendous year in terms of team spirit, effort, and fun.”

Linhares led the largest team in SLUH’s history with 100 runners. He maintains a “no cut” policy, and any athlete that is willing to put in the effort at practice stays on the roster. The team was so deep that on

some weekends, Linhares entered two varsity meets, sending the varsity runners to one and the JV team to another. In fact, the JV team won a major varsity meet and captured second place in two others. The Freshman squad went undefeated, and the Jr. Bills captured the MCC title at all three levels.

The varsity team won the championship at the First Capitol Invitational, Forest Park XC Festival and the Clayton Varsity Invitational. They traveled to Lawrence, Kansas, for the prestigious Rim Rock Invitational, a meet that attracts top teams from throughout the Midwest. The Jr. Bills placed second, even though they were competing without their top runner, Senior Caleb Ford. Ford was sidelined with an injury.

At the state meet, most fans predicted SLUH would finish second behind powerhouse Lee’s Summit North. “Due to injuries, we had not been able to

Photo by Mrs. Kathi Mimitz





put our best seven runners on the starting line for a month prior to the state meet, so no one really knew what we were capable of," said Linhares. From the starting gun to the one-mile mark, Summit had the lead, even though Caleb Ford (Senior) and Tim Rackers (Junior) were at the very front of the race. At the two-mile mark, Summit still held the lead. In the last mile, through two tough hills and an uphill finish, SLUH surged. Most remarkable was Tim McLaughlin (Senior) who rose from a mid-20's spot to a 10th-place finish, passing 12 to 15 runners down the closing stretch of the race. According to Linhares, it is one of the top finishes in SLUH cross country history. Rackers, who had been third behind Ford, struggled against collapse in the last 100 meters but

hung on for 8th place, another historic finish. Ford broke from the rest of the field and surged home in 2nd place. Emmett Cookson (Senior) had a strong finish to capture 30th place, passing a few runners in the stretch to contribute to the SLUH team score. Tony Minnick (Senior) rounded out our scoring with a crucial victory over Summit North's number 5 runner capturing 42nd place. SLUH had topped Lee's Summit North by 10 points to claim the state championship.

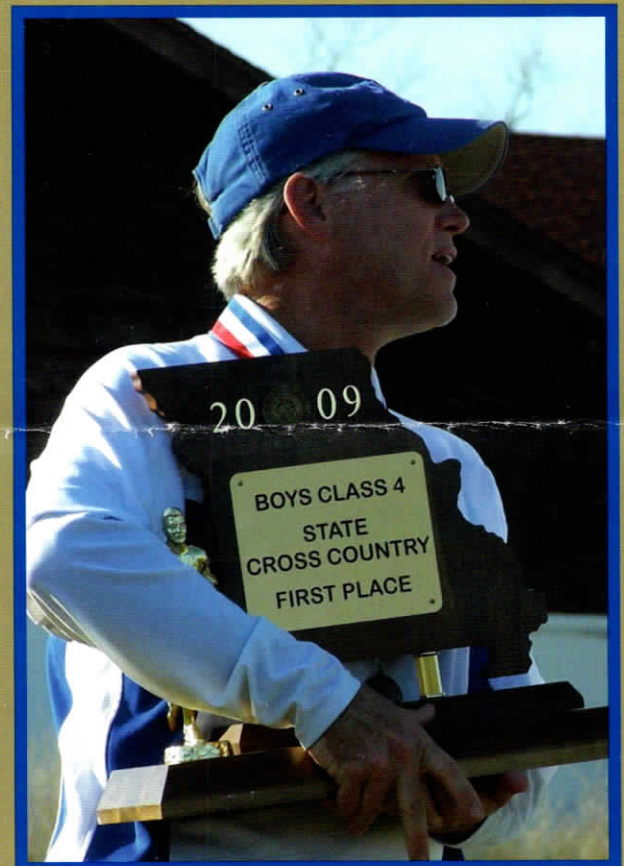
Linhares said that Caleb Ford's second-place state finish capped "the most successful four-year career that SLUH Cross Country has ever seen."

## Jim Linhares Celebrates 25 Years of Coaching XC at SLUH

November 7, 2009 turned out to be a pretty good day for SLUH Assistant Principal and Coach Jim Linhares. Fresh off his second State Cross Country title in 3 years, Linhares returned to the Backer Memorial to find a group of family, friends, and former students gathered in the SLUH Commons for a surprise party to celebrate his 25 years of coaching at SLUH.

The party was organized primarily by fellow Coaches Tom Flanagan, Pete Hamel, Joe Porter, Ben Rosario '98 and Greg Linhares '90. They succeeded in catching the beloved coach off-guard. "It was a total surprise," Linhares said. "I was exhausted when we got back (to SLUH) after the state meet. I saw all the cars in the parking lot, and I thought there were an awful lot of parents on hand to pick up their sons!"

Over 100 people attended the party, including alumni from nearly every team Linhares has coached at SLUH. "To see my parents, family members, alums, and team families all in one place at one time was overwhelming. There were so many different eras of the Cross Country team all together at once," said Linhares. "I don't think I'll ever experience something like that again."



*Linhares with the 2009 State Championship trophy*