

Prep Cross Country Preview



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Pam Doepke-Hurd photo

SLUH on the defensive this fall

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excitement, added
pressure for Jr. Bills

by Joey Cavato
staff writer

Coming into the 2000 cross country season, the St. Louis University High Junior Billikens have plenty to be defensive about.

A CROSS COUNTRY

After all, they'll be defending conference, district and sectional championships, along with one other fairly important title — the Class 4A state championship.

"It does bring excitement," SLUH coach Jim Linhares said about the school's first cross country state championship since 1961. "It adds expectation and it adds a little bit of pressure."

But before the Jr. Bills try to defend anything, head coach Jim Linhares will have to fill a void left by last year's seniors, who did all of the scoring at last year's state meet.

"We've got some really big shoes to fill," Linhares said. "We didn't have many juniors or sophomores in those key spots. We've never really had a year like this where we have so much stepping up to do. Some guys have put in some decent work in over the summer and we're just going to have to find out what they can do."

Dan Leinauer, Ryan Hatch and David Godar will have to provide leadership as the senior captains. Leinauer and Hatch do have some state experience as they placed 83rd and 94th, respectively, at state last year.

Other runners who will have to help fill some holes are juniors John Parr,

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Patrick Leinauer and Tipper O'Brien.

"We're looking at a completely different, new group," Linhares said. "I've never graduated so many seniors who were contributing to the top spots. There were eight or nine very strong seniors and they're all gone. We need some juniors and sophomores to step up into some pretty high places in order to compete with our conference rivals. CBC and DeSmet will be extremely tough this year."

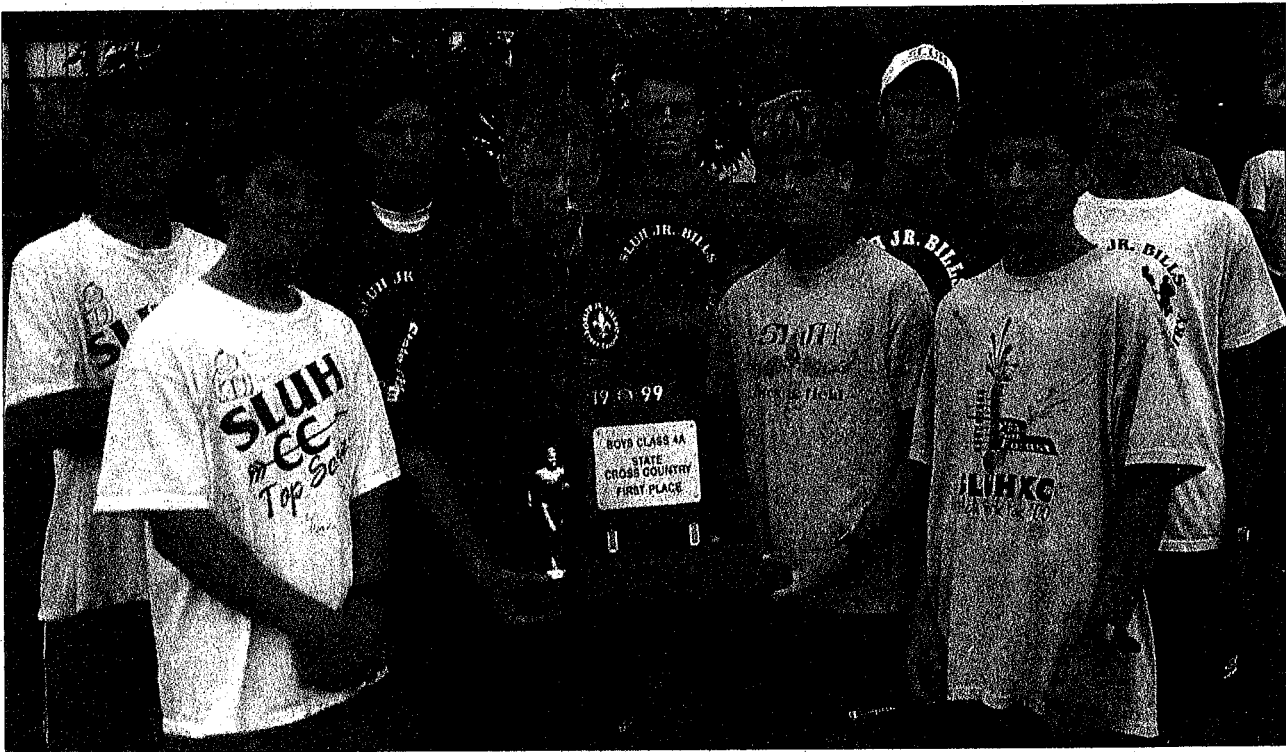
While all the seniors who contributed

to the state championship have moved on, the Jr. Bills can still use some of the momentum from last year.

"It does teach you that such things are possible," Linhares said. "We're not going to talk much about last year in terms of 'don't you remember when?' When it's necessary we're going to talk about lessons we learned. We did learn some key lessons right up to the finish of

See SLUH, Page B2

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See SLUH, Page B2

SLUH to get defensive

Continued from Page C1

that race at state. We'll look at what some of those guys were doing in workouts to create some of that success."

The Jr. Bills will also have a new meet in their schedule this season. SLUH and DeSmet will host the National Jesuit Invitational. About 10 teams from Jesuit schools across the country will converge on Chaminade Sept. 30 for the event.

Even though there are a lot of different things for the Jr. Bills to contend with this year, their goals will remain basically the same.

"What we've set as a goal is pretty much what we've set as a goal every year for the past

1999 MSHSAA 4A BOYS TEAM CROSS COUNTRY RESULTS

1. St. Louis University High, 112;
2. Liberty, 113;
3. Christian Brothers College, 118;
4. West Plains, 127;
5. DeSmet, 144;
6. Parkway West, 158;
7. Lafayette (Ballwin), 204;
8. Parkway South, 204;
9. Lee's Summit, 207;
10. Jefferson City, 240.

seven or eight years," Linhares said. "That is to be competitive with the top teams in state."

"Once the season unfolds a little bit and we get an idea of what these guys are capable of we might refine those goals and really focus on specific goals. Right now we just know we want to be working as hard as anyone else out there."