

Lancers' Behnke falls just short at the end

Illness catches up with Lutheran South senior as Potosi's Swearingen wins title

By **TOM SCHNABLE**
CORRESPONDENT

Overcoming an illness can be a difficult thing. Everyone has worked with a cold, fever or even a sore throat, but competing for a state cross country championship while battling all three is not an easy thing.

Just ask Lutheran South's Adam Behnke. The senior runner finished second in his quest to capture the Class 3 cross country title on Saturday at Oak Hills Golf Course in Jefferson City, even though he had battled these symptoms the whole week before the race.

"I haven't been sick all year and then the week before state," Behnke said. "It happens for a reason; it's still not clear to me why it happened, but it did."

Behnke could have been feeling anger after falling one place

short of his goal, which he had set for himself in his freshman season. He had improved each year, finishing 79th his freshman season, fourth the next year, then fifth his junior year while cutting 19 seconds off his time.

But afterwards, he just wanted to feel anything.

"After the race, I wasn't feeling much just because I was so out of it," he said. "I couldn't really stand on my own two feet. I had people holding me up. I was just so fatigued."

Despite Behnke's effort, Lutheran South finished in ninth place as a team, well behind Potosi, the state champion for the third straight year. Behnke started the race running at his regular pace.

"I had my game plan," he said. "I knew I was going to run my race and not let anybody



ERICA BURRUS PHOTO

Lutheran South's Adam Behnke (left) leads the pack in the Class 3 boys state cross country meet on Saturday in Jefferson City. Behnke had to pull up before the finish and Jacob Swearingen, right, of Potosi came on for the victory.

rabbit me or go out too fast."

Through the second mile of the race, Behnke gained the lead and began to increase it. At that point, there was nothing

left to hold back.

"I was ready to push and go through that last mile, give it

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Jr. Bills edge 'Horns, claim Class 4 crown

By **TOM SCHNABLE**
CORRESPONDENT

Five points.

In a cross country meet, five points is nothing. But five measly points is what separated St. Louis U. High from its closest competition, allowing the Jr. Billikens to capture the Class 4 cross country state championship on Saturday.

"It's five points," SLUH coach Jim Linhares said. "If anybody had given just a little bit less, you lose a race like this. It was a race in which team was spelled with a capital T."

The title marks the second time Linhares has led SLUH to the state crown, the last one occurring in 1999. That year also marked the last time a Class 4 team championship was decided by fewer points than this margin, with SLUH edging Liberty by only one point. It might have been three titles for Linhares, but the Jr. Bills took a runner-up prize last year to Fort Zumwalt South.

"Last year, Fort Zumwalt South was the team of destiny, everybody's pick, and they went and they had their day," he said. "We didn't feel disappointed at all.

But we sure would have had a hard time swallowing it if we came up second today, because we really felt like we had the talent and we had the opportunity, so it's sweet."

Junior John Clohisy led the SLUH charge with an 18th-place finish, which on the surface would seem disappointing because it is five spots worse than he placed at last year's state meet. But considering the journey Clohisy took to finish where he did, it's quite a feat.

"Clohisy is coming off of a period where he had to deal with, not that he would ever complain about this, but two stress fractures," Linhares said.

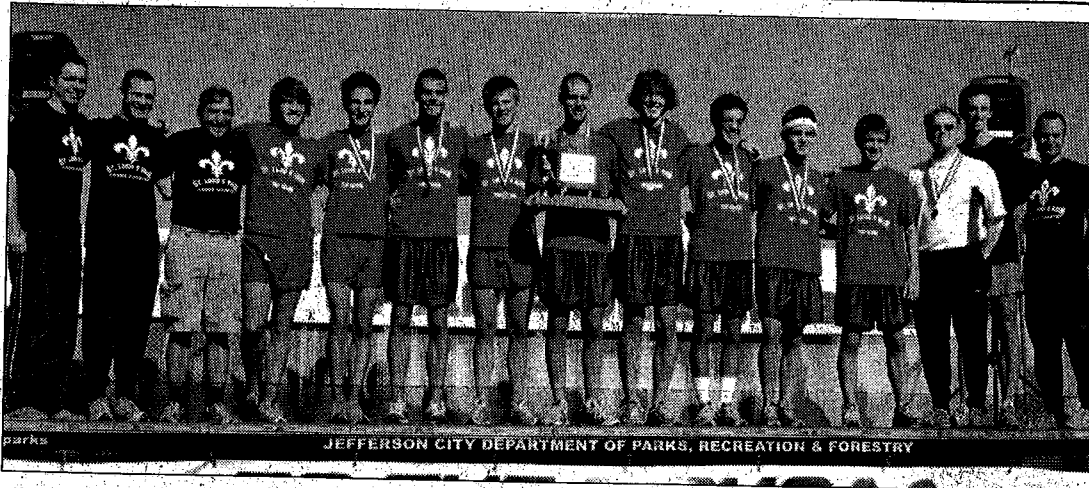
The injuries forced Clohisy to alter his training program, and Linhares had him run extra miles and scheduled special practices to make up for the time lost.

"I have great memories from here from last year," said Clohisy, who dropped only seven seconds from his 2006 meet time. "Coming off the injuries, I just wanted to prove to myself that I'm still up there and I'm on the rise, and I

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St. Mary's Joel Lindquist (#465) approaches the finish line en route to a 91st place finish.

ERICA BURRUS PHOTO



The SLUH cross country squad poses for its team picture after winning the Class 4 state meet on Saturday at Oak Hills Golf Center in Jefferson City.

ERICA BURRUS PHOTO

SLUH

▼ CONTINUED FROM PAGE D1

feel like I did that today. With the team (victory) to top it off, that's just amazing."

Clohisy credits the pace of the eventual individual champion, Eric Fernandez of Parkway West, for helping him realize his goal.

"The first mile we went off pretty slow; it was rough," Clohisy said. "Then Fernandez put on a huge move, and it kind of strung out the race so everyone started to fit into their place in the race, and that helped a lot."

Fernandez's Parkway West squad ended up being the team that fell five points short.

It took more than just the efforts of Clohisy to bring SLUH the title. Austin Cookson and Dan Warner finished 26th and

27th, respectively, helping the Jr. Bills' overall score.

"Austin and Dan ran times that our right at their best on this course," Linhares said. "You've got to say they absolutely came through for us."

Caleb Ford and Chris Murphy finished 43rd and 49th to round out the SLUH top five, and even SLUH's sixth and seventh-place runners finished before Parkway West's fifth best, something that made Linhares particularly proud.

"For us today, it was the whole group of seven that made the deal," he said.

For Clohisy, the Oak Hills Golf Center course in Jefferson City felt just like home. Clohisy does a lot of his running at The Bogey Club, St. Louis Country Club and Old Warson Country Club, so the layout was nothing new for him.

"It's one of the toughest courses anyone races on all year," he said. "(But) I really

like the course, because I run on golf courses by my house so I'm really used to that."

Not everything went SLUH's way, with only one runner winning an individual medal. But overall, they'll gladly take what they got.

"We would have hoped for a few more all-staters," Linhares said. "We would have wished for some of our guys to be a little faster and further up, but when you look at the whole picture of the team, they really came through for each other."

Behnke

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all I got and go for it," he said, reliving the excitement of the race.

People spotting Behnke at that point of the race told him he had opened up a 10-second lead, and thoughts of the title began to creep into his head.

"I was thinking, 'Good, here we go, this is my time to get the championship,'" he said.

But thoughts of a championship proved to be a bit premature. Behnke made the final turn, but barely made any progress up the hill before things went wrong.

"I took two good strides up that hill and my legs, they died on me," he said. "I don't know how to describe it, but I couldn't move them in any way to run the way I wanted to."

The only person more surprised with the turn of events was Jacob Swearingen of Potosi, the eventual winner. It was Swearingen who Behnke outran in winning his first Hancock Invitational title back in September.

"As he passed, I felt him out of the corner of my eye," Behnke said. "Everything was pretty blurry, I was kind of faint, but the one thing I do remember was him staring at me for a solid three seconds. The look on his face was very confused, like 'Am I really in this position to win the race, why aren't you already finished?'"

Swearingen finished the race in 16 minutes flat, with Behnke

it was the worst feeling I've ever felt before. Just seeing the championship ahead of me, knowing it was in my grasp right there."

Adam Behnke

Lutheran South senior cross country runner

wobbling in 12 seconds behind him.

"It was the worst feeling I've ever felt before," Behnke said. "Just seeing the championship ahead of me, knowing it was in my grasp right there."

Ever the competitor, Behnke began to put some of his disappointment aside and put the race in perspective.

"At first, on the surface it's

upsetting, just cause it's been my goal since freshman year," he said. "It's what I've worked towards for the last four years, but once I think about it and actually realize how great of an experience it is, to be that fortunate to place that high, I'm not going to be selfish about it because I'm sure there are 500 other kids that would be more than happy to finish second."

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