

XC finishes third in muddy Forest Park

First among
Missouri teams

BY GREG FISTER
REPORTER

After the once-firm course had been churned muddy by hundreds of runners at the fifth annual Forest Park Cross Country Festival, host St. Louis U. High pulled off a third-place finish overall, first among Missouri teams. The Jr. Bills finished behind O'Fallon (Ill.) and Marquette University High School (Wis.).

The varsity race was held at 12:05 p.m., after seven races and countless runners from all over the Midwest had mixed the already rain-soaked course into a veritable mud pit, where a runner could, and often did, lose a shoe. Despite such adversity, SLUH's top nine runners and second seven varsity runners showed depth and determination, coming away with impressive times for any course.

Immediately after the starting gun fired, SLUH's runners got off to a fast start, speeding to near the front of the pack. Senior Tim Rackers remained in the top 15 for most of the first two miles.

"Being at the top of the SLUH pack, the top of the whole pack, is a different type of racing," said Rackers of Saturday's race compared to the team's first race at McNair Park. Rackers led the SLUH pack and finished with a time of 16:26, good for fifth in his division.

Not far behind him were senior Joe Meier and junior Nathan Rubbelke. Rubbelke was close behind Meier for most of the race, and showed remarkable determination and speed in passing Meier in the last mile to take 28th place with a time of 17:07. Meier remained in the top 20 or 25 throughout the whole race, and he finished in 32nd place with a time of 17:12.

"When you get out fast you don't need to worry about trying to come back (later) in the race. Especially with the mud, you can't afford to use that extra energy to get to the position you should've been in at the beginning of the race, so getting out (fast) was pretty important at this race," said Meier. Although Meier said he was not completely satisfied with his finishing place, he remarked that it's "still early on in the season, so I'm not so concerned right now."

The weather at the time of the race was mild, overcast, and slightly windy. But the most standout feature of this course was, of course, the mud. Mud was flying, and no var-

sity runner finished the race without any mud on his person. Junior Jimmy Griffard, who ran in the second seven, remarked that the muddy conditions had no effect on the team's performance.

"As sloppy as the course was, SLUH's form and dedication were far from (sloppy)," said Griffard after the race, with a considerable amount of mud on his face.

Griffard, along with junior Michael Pollihan and sophomore Parker Shumate, all of whom ran in the second varsity on Saturday's race, stayed together for most of the race, running within five places of each other for the first four kilometers. Porter stressed the importance of sticking with teammates during the race, and many top varsity runners adhered to this strategy.

Another standout racer on Saturday was freshman John Esswein, who ran an impressive 17:48 in his second-ever cross country race. He ran in the top nine and did not disappoint his coaches, teammates, and fans.

The Forest Park Cross Country Festival is held every year in early September at Forest Park's Central Fields and is hosted by SLUH. The tasks of plotting and marking the course, which differed significantly from that of last year, fell mostly upon SLUH's dedicated coaching staff.

"When you have 95 schools, more than 3,000 participants, and no real issues, we are really happy with the way things turned out," said Porter of SLUH's hosting responsibilities.

"(The spectators who came to see Saturday's race) didn't realize what a cross country race entails, and all the intensity that can happen in race in just 15, 20 minutes, everything that goes on, what fanfare and chaos it is. So I think people miss out on that by not coming to our cross country races," said Porter.

Many students showed up to cheer on SLUH's varsity, junior varsity, and freshman teams on Saturday, including the Blue Crew. In addition to spectators, Porter recruited several other students to help out

think we had a lot of depth for the meet."

"We had some solid swims. There will definitely be more State times to come based on the individual splits we saw," said senior captain Steve Hoerr.

"(Junior) Amir (Pascal), being his usual self, really performed, and (junior) Charlie Archer came out of nowhere and dropped time on both days to help propel us into the finals for the breaststroke relay," he said.

Head coach Rachel Graczak was hoping to finish in the top five before the meet. "When we finished fifth, especially considering our competition, I was very pleased," she said. "The guys dropped time in prelims and returned to finals and did the same. The way the guys are so coachable and with as well as they did, and all the dropped times, I believe that we have a lot of potential."

Assistant coach Kevin Moore shared Graczak's feelings. "Going into the finals we were trailing Chaminade, and after a few finals swims we were ahead of them," he said.

Despite the loss of freestyle powerhouse Dan Schmidt, who graduated last year, the Jr.



Senior varsity runner Tim Rackers powers through the mud at the Forest Park Cross Country Festival.

at the Festival with marshalling racers and other logistics. A wide variety of students showed up to help the coaches, to cheer for their classmates or to support their friends.

Of SLUH's performance Saturday, Porter said, "You always feel like you could (beat) one more team, but we were within four points of the returning State champions from Wisconsin. We lost to a very good team from O'Fallon, and we beat every other Missouri school."

SLUH's team is ranked second in the state of Missouri, with Lee's Summit North ranked first. SLUH will not race Lee's Summit North until the State meet. Rock Bridge from Columbia is ranked third in the state, and SLUH finished in front of them on Saturday.

SLUH's second seven raced yesterday at Parkway Central. The rest of the team will race at the Paul Enke Invitational at Sioux Passage Park, home of the legendary hill known as "Manmaker," on Saturday morning.

Bills are looking strong for the 2010 season and have already proven themselves more than capable as they continue the season with a 1-1 dual meet record. Next up, SLUH hosts Jackson on Thursday at 4 p.m. in their home dome, Forest Park Community College.

XC NIGHTBEAT

A young squad of seven runners competed last night at the Parkway Central Invitational, taking seventh place overall in the varsity race. The senior-less team was led by freshman John Esswein, who placed 18th with a 17:29. Sophomore Tom Laughlin followed closely in 24th with a 17:39. Sophomores Joe Archer and Matt Nicholson both medaled in the top 45 as well. Sophomore David Arredondo rounded out the scoring for the Jr. Bills, and juniors Michael Pollihan and Jimmy Griffard competed as well. Overall it was a successful meet for the team, as most of the runners raced to season-best or personal record times.

Underclassman sports updates

Friday, September 10

C Soccer (3-0)

SLUH 3, Edwardsville 0

Chris Berutti and Tony Doellefeld had goals in the first half to get the Jr. Bills off to a good start. Brian Fletcher added another goal in the second half to help the team continue its undefeated streak.

—Stephen Lumetta

Saturday, September 11

JV XC (1 first place, 1 fifth place)

Fifth place at the Forest Park XC Festival. Despite having the top 18 runners on the team in the varsity race, the JV team notched a respectable fifth place finish in a competitive field, falling to powerhouses Rock Bridge and Rockhurst among others. Junior Paul Fentress led SLUH by finishing 10th with a time of 18:40, and senior Kyle Jacoby also medaled, placing 22nd.

—Eric Mueth

C XC (1st place)

First place at the Forest Park XC Festival (3k). In their first taste of competition, the SLUH freshman team dominated the field, beating its nearest competitor by nearly 100 points 38-132. Michael Swan was the first SLUH finisher in third overall, closely followed by Sean McLaughlin in fifth and Peter Rackers in seventh. All five scoring runners for SLUH medaled.

—Eric Mueth

Monday, September 13

JV Football (0-3)

Webster 44, SLUH 34

Trailing the Statesmen 20-7 at the start of the second half, the Jr. Bills came back from a dismal first half offensively with 27 points. Sophomore running back Tyler McNeil, who rushed for over 130 yards, led the attack with a rushing touchdown and a kick return for a touchdown, and sophomore linebacker Xavier Reese had 7 tackles, but Webster hung on to win.

—Drew Bruns

C Soccer (4-0)

SLUH 7, Chaminade 0

The Jr. Bills completely dominated both halves, not letting Chaminade have any easy chances for a goal, and penetrating Chaminade's defense several times. Freshmen John Espenschied and Chris Berutti each tallied two goals.

—Michael Daugherty

JV Soccer (5-0)

SLUH 5, Hillsboro 1

The undefeated JV soccer team dominated the Hillsboro varsity thanks to junior Luke Gilsinger's and junior Joey Gasperoni's two goals apiece. Junior Logan Welge also contributed a goal in the lopsided victory.

—Connor Madden

Tuesday, September 14

C Soccer (5-0)

SLUH 2, CBC 1

The Jr. Bills, led by a goal off a beautiful left foot from Tony Abbacchi, tied the game at 1-1 before half. Near the end of the second, Abbacchi assisted a gorgeous header by Brian Fletcher to give the Jr. Bills the win.

—Michael Daugherty

Wednesday, September 15

B Soccer (4-0)

SLUH 2, Webster Groves 0

Sophomore Nick Kosciak scored the first goal of the game after using a brilliant move to get around the Webster defender, and sophomore Zach Hoffman rifled a shot from outside the penalty box into the right corner of the net for a second goal. The Jr. Bills controlled possession for most of the game as the Bills' defense pitched its fourth consecutive shutout.

—Justin Siny

Swimmers pull off fifth at Marquette

Relays push past
Chaminade toward end

BY BLAKE GIBSON
AND JORDAN GIBSON
REPORTERS

The Jr. Bills met with success last weekend at the Marquette Relays, finishing fifth out of 11 teams and qualifying another relay team for the State meet.

"We'd been seeking a State time for a little while now, and now we have it," said senior captain Michael Hagerty of the 200-yard freestyle relay, composed of himself, senior Jake Chisholm, senior Michael Slaughter, and junior Sam Erlinger. Excluding two events, the Bills were seeded in the top six for every race, and almost all of the relays held on to their seed positions or moved up in the rankings.

"The team did well," said Hagerty. "We had some strong individual swims, and eight out of 10 relays came back for the finals. I

Jr. Bills outswim rival CBC, fall to Lafayette

BY CULLIN TRIPP
REPORTER

The St. Louis U. High swimming team (2-2) split meets against the last two teams it faced, losing 112-74 at Lafayette and topping Metro Catholic Conference rival CBC, 123-62.

Although they suffered a loss to Lafayette, the Jr. Bills qualified a few new swimmers for State events. Senior Michael Hagerty qualified in the 50-yard freestyle with a time of 22.95 and also helped two relays qualify. The 200-medley relay of freshman Luke Sloan, senior captain Steve Hoerr, junior Amir Paschal, and Hagerty qualified with a time of 1:45.54, and Hagerty, Paschal, junior Sam Erlinger, and Sloan qualified in the 400-free relay with a time of 3:26.68.

"It was a good challenge and I think it pushed our guys to swim hard. I also thought it was great to be able to enter more swimmers in this meet," said head coach Rachel Graczak. "We were able to put some new techniques we worked on in practice to good use, and I think we held our own against the

Lancers."

After the loss against Lafayette, the Jr. Bills bounced back Monday with a 123-62 win against CBC at Forest Park Community College. In this meet, they had the advantage the whole way and took two of the top three spots in almost every race.

State qualifiers at the meet included junior diver Michael Barry, who improved his State score for diving to a 253.75 (the State cut is 210) and Hagerty, who qualified in the 100-yard freestyle with a time of 50.45.

"We had a lot of improved times in this meet. In addition to getting a win, we defi-



Junior Sam Erlinger emerges for a breath of air.

nately had better stroke technique, and our practice is starting to pay off," said Graczak.

The team hosted Jackson last night, and will compete at the DeSmet Invitational tomorrow at the Rec-Plex.

PHOTO BY TED WIGHT

Underclassmen sports updates

Thursday, September 16

C Football (1-2)

SLUH 28, CBC 27

SLUH's offense looked sharp in the first half, leading 28-14, but it stalled after half and CBC gained momentum but missed the tying extra point.

—Robert Braddock

Friday, September 17

B Soccer (5-0)

SLUH 2, DeSmet 0

Sophomore Teddy Thorpe scored the first goal off a Matt Steurer free kick, and freshman goalie Colin Joern made an excellent save before Steurer volleyed in a corner kick for the Bills' fifth straight win.

—Justin Sinay

C Soccer (6-0)

SLUH 7, DeSmet 3

Freshmen Chris Berutti, Ed Howe, Chris Klipfel, and Tim Murphy each scored a goal in a solid victory for the Jr. Bills over the Spartans.

—Connor Madden

Saturday, September 18

C Soccer (7-0)

SLUH 5, St. Dominic 0

Freshman Tony Abbacchi scored twice in a convincing shutout for the undefeated Jr. Bills. Freshmen Tony Doelleseld and Chris Klipfel each added a goal as well.

—Connor Madden

B Soccer (6-0)

SLUH 4, St. Dominic 0

Sophomore Zach Hoffman scored the first goal off a beautiful cross from sophomore Mitchell Starrs and also scored the second, and sophomore Brian Dugan netted two goals in the second half.

—Justin Sinay

JV XC

1st place at Paul Enke Invitational The SLUH JV squad clawed its way to a 7 point victory over second-place St. Dominic up the famous Manmaker hill. Junior Nathan Fox took 5th in 20:02, and five other runners medaled in the top 25 of the race.

—Eric Mueth

B/C XC

1st place at Paul Enke Invitational Freshman Sean McLaughlin led the B and C Jr. Bill runners up and down the hills of Sioux Passage finishing second overall. He was closely followed by a hoard of other freshmen including Michael Swan, Tom Rubio and Peter Rackers, who all finished in the top 10.

—Eric Mueth

Monday, September 19

JV Soccer (5-0-1)

SLUH 3, CBC 3

The JV soccer team tied its last two games this week against CBC and DeSmet. Juniors Joey Gasperoni, Logan Welge and Joey Ferber contributed goals in the game against CBC.

—Evan Becton

JV Football (0-4)

CBC 43, SLUH 21

The Jr. Bills trailed early, but they came back with 21 in the second half. SLUH's late surge was led by Colin Barrett (85 rushing yards, 1 rush TD) and sophomore Jack Hovater (4 tackles and forced fumble).

—Drew Brunts

Tuesday, September 20

JV Soccer (5-0-2)

SLUH 1, DeSmet 1

Junior Joey Gasperoni scored the only goal in a tight defensive struggle on both sides of the ball. SLUH finished the tournament with two ties.

—Evan Becton

XC shows depth as top runners get week off

SLUH finishes 7th
in two races
and 5th at Fox

BY GREG FISTER
REPORTER

Though St. Louis U. High's top varsity runners did not run this week, the rest of the cross country team stepped up and filled the running shoes of the top seven.

The busy week began when a group of young runners were sent to Parkway Central last Thursday to compete in the Parkway Central Invitational. Freshmen John Esswein led the sophomores and juniors through the narrow, wooded course, staying in the top 20 of the race the entire time.

The rest of the team packed up the first two miles and blazed on the third. Sophomore Tom Laughlin broke from the pack and finished in 17:39, good for 24th, behind Esswein's 17:29 for 18th. Sophomores Joe Archer and Matt Nicholson medaled as well, and the team took 7th in the meet.

While part of the XC team competed at Parkway Central, the third varsity team raced twice in four days, braving the intense hills of Sioux Passage Park and the heated plains of Arnold Park and showing incredible depth, determination, and some promising new talent.

On Saturday morning, SLUH's third varsity, junior varsity and B/C runners arrived at the Paul Enke Invitational at Sioux Passage Park in North County, some of them seeing the park, and its legendary hills, for the first time.

Many students at SLUH have probably heard of the Manmaker, the immense hill that starts the course at Sioux Passage Park. It is a massive, grassy behemoth that stands as a sort of rite of passage for SLUH XC runners, and it is the first course most freshmen run for an official 5K.

SLUH finished seventh overall in the race with their third string. Despite the absence of their fastest 14 runners, SLUH revealed its impressive depth by placing next to such incredible teams as Jefferson City.

Junior Jack Milford, who played soccer the last two years but switched to cross country this year, came away with a then-personal best of 18:44, a 26th-place finish overall, and the highest finish for any runner from SLUH at the race.

Milford enjoys cross country because there's "no pressure of not making the team, because it's a no-cut sport. The atmosphere is more laid back, or at least that was my impression."

"But as one rises through the ranks, it gets a lot more intense, and then the pressure is on," said Milford of his rise to XC stardom. Milford's situation is somewhat similar to the situation senior Tim Rackers, SLUH's top varsity runner, found himself in last year around this time. Milford stated that assertions that he is the next Rackers are "outrageous accusations. I do not think (Rackers) can ever be replaced, but I'm trying my best to emulate him."

Senior Riley Konzen and sophomore Michael Dowd, who finished 46th and 49th, respectively, were the next SLUH runners to finish after Milford. All seven of SLUH's athletes finished in the top 85 of the varsity race on Saturday.

Three days later, SLUH's XC team raced at perhaps the polar opposite of Saturday's course—the sunny, hot, and stubbornly flat course at Arnold Park at the Ed White Fox Warrior Invitational. Most of the team agreed that race times were a bit slower due to the heat, which peaked around 92 degrees on Tuesday, and the fact that most of the team had raced just three days prior at the most physically demanding course on the schedule. The race was originally scheduled for this Friday, Sept. 24, but due to a disagreement about the name of the invitational, it was moved to Tuesday.

The course barely changes altitude at all for its 3.1 miles, circling three times through a sunny field, around a dog park, through a shady grove, and around a wide lake. Despite the heat, many runners gained personal records.

SLUH placed fifth overall, with Milford once again leading the SLUH pack. Milford finished in 12th place with a personal best time of 17:58, and junior Jimmy Griffard and Konzen finished in 21st and 26th with times of 18:24 and 18:32, respectively.

Milford's success in this race has established him as a truly formidable force in the SLUH cross country powerhouse.

Griffard, meanwhile, raced varsity in Thursday's Parkway Central Invitational and did significantly better on Tuesday than Thursday. Griffard asserted that the drastic geographic differences between Thursday's and Tuesday's races affected his, and many others', race performances.

"Terrain plays a big role in cross country, both mentally and physically. Mentally, if you see a flat course, you think it will be a PR course, and you'll do really well, and physically because I'm a flat-land kind of guy," said Griffard.

Griffard's goal for this season is to obtain a varsity letter, and to do so requires that he runs a 5K in under 18:15. His current PR is

18:24.

"I'm thinking that with a month left in the season, lots of hard work and dedication, and praise to the wise and quick-footed Mr. Gilmore, I can attain that goal," said Griffard. Head coach Joe Porter said that these last two races, by virtue of the absence of the top 14 SLUH runners, revealed just how deep the SLUH XC team is.

"At Fox (Warrior Invitational on Tuesday) we came away with fifth place, just barely behind Webster, which is a team that qualifies out of our district," said Porter. The team's depth means that many of SLUH's runners who are not on the top or second seven could easily run varsity for many of the other teams SLUH faces on any given day.

"Races like Fox really give our third seven an opportunity to shine and show they are really quality runners, because otherwise they just get left in the mud," said Porter. Running the third seven is also a look to the future.

"The other reason we do these races is to give these guys varsity experience so that when we do rely on them in later years, we are ready to step up with runners who do have varsity experience—they didn't just dominate JV every time, they were able to compete at the varsity level," said Porter.

Next, the SLUH cross country team will show off its top and second seven runners' hard work and intense training at Palatine High School in Palatine, Ill. on Saturday.

Tuesday, September 20, cont.

JV XC

2nd place at Fox Warrior Invitational High temperatures plagued times at Arnold Park for SLUH, but they pulled away with a solid second place behind Lindbergh. Senior Eric Mueth led the Jr. Bills in 9th, and was closely followed by senior Simon Clark and juniors Joshua Zink-Duda, Sam Bufe and George Carroll, who all placed in the top 15.

—Eric Mueth

B/C XC

1st place at Fox Warrior Invitational The freshmen and sophomores dominated the front of the race again, crushing the next closest team by 47 points. Freshmen Michael Swan, Peter Rackers and Tom Rubio finished 3rd, 4th, and 5th.

—Eric Mueth