

XC moves through Districts, on to Sectionals

Meier leads SLUH in the absence of top runner Rackers

BY GREG FISTER
REPORTER

Despite the absence of several crucial seniors including top runner senior Tim Rackers, the St. Louis U. High cross country team finished first at Saturday's District meet at McCluer North High School. With the win, the team qualified for Sectionals, and revealed some often overshadowed talent in the process. Despite many seniors having to take the ACT the day of the race, SLUH's team performed remarkably well, with the top four runners all finishing in the top five of the race. The win came after solid performances by the second and third teams at the Clayton and Borgia Invationals, respectively.

The conditions were as good as any runner could ask for, with cool but not chilly weather, when the varsity race started at 10:15 a.m. Senior Joe Meier, the only SLUH senior in the race, sped ahead to the first place position in the first mile, his bright red hair matching the fall foliage perfectly. His surge up a short hill in the first 400 meters put him comfortably in first, with juniors Michael McLaughlin and Nathan Rubbelke behind him. Meier, McLaughlin and Rubbelke ran past the mile marker in times of 5:13, 5:19, and 5:20, respectively.

But shortly after that, McCluer North re-

vealed its secret weapon. Sophomore Nicolas Stewart, who was hanging back for most of the first half of the race, pulled ahead to run with, and then in front of, Meier. After two loops of an alternately hilly and flat course around McCluer North's campus, the runners approached the finish line. Stewart finished first, but SLUH runners Meier, Rubbelke, McLaughlin and sophomore Tom Laughlin held the next four places.

Finishing 11th overall was sophomore Matt Nicholson, and not far behind him came sophomore Joe Archer in 17th place. Junior Joe Esswein battled a tough injury to finish 32nd.

The fact that SLUH could hold all but one of its top varsity seniors out and still win overwhelmingly "shows the incredible depth of the team," said head coach Joe Porter. He remarked that sophomores Nicholson and Archer, due to their fast race times, qualified as individuals for the Sectional meet, but will not race because the lineup for Sectionals includes seniors who could not run at the District meet.

Meier, who usually is right behind teammate Rackers in most races, finally got a chance to shine by himself on Saturday, because Rackers was taking the ACT.

"It was a different feeling, not having Tim in front of me the whole race; it felt good to be in the lead. It's a great feeling, but it probably won't happen again," said Meier. He was pleased with the race results, though he was aiming to come in first place.

"The more important part was getting out fast, and simulating what will happen at State. I felt like we accomplished that as a team," said Meier.

Of the next two meets of the season, Meier said, "Sectionals will be a team-

PHOTO COURTESY OF MO MILES/SLU.COM



Determined senior Joe Meier takes the race by the horns.

Soccer drops tough loss to CCP

After 2-0 loss, SLUH's national ranking drops to 24

BY PATRICK HART
REPORTER

The varsity soccer team's nine-game winning streak was snapped in a surprise 2-0 loss to Metro Catholic Conference rival Chaminade last Saturday.

According to senior captain Rob Carr, "they were good, but not nearly good enough to beat us. We just didn't come to play."

It was the Jr. Bills' biggest loss of the year.

Chaminade's big back line kept SLUH's very

potent offense at bay the entire game. The Red Devils' first goal came off a four-on-three breakaway, which ended with Chaminade's forward ripping a shot over senior goalie Andrew Evola.

Their next goal came off a free kick miscue. All of the U.High defense came up to attack, leaving Evola alone on the SLUH half. The Devils stole the ball and broke away. Despite Evola's hustle to get back, Chaminade scored the final goal of the game.

Head coach Charlie Martel did not seem too worried about the loss, saying, "I know we can beat them." Although the game ended 2-0, it could have very easily gone the other way. The rematch could be much more meaningful; the Bills could face Chaminade next Thursday in the district playoffs.

SLUH rebounded from the loss well with a 1-0 win over Parkway South on Monday. Martel was proud of the way his team regrouped:

MCC STANDINGS

1. SLUH 20-4 (2-1)
2. Vianney 16-6 (3-1)
3. CBC 14-5 (2-1)
4. Chaminade 20-6 (2-2)
5. DeSmet 13-7 (0-3)



Senior Richie Hoffmann dribbles between two Chaminade defenders.

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oriented race. We'll stay as a pack for the whole 5K, and then let Tim do his thing at the end. State is often a hard race to plan for, mostly because it usually doesn't go as planned, but our (tentative) plan is always the same: pack up during most of the race, and have a strong finish."

An exciting subplot throughout the race was the ongoing competition between Rubbelke and McLaughlin. McLaughlin was ahead of Rubbelke for most of the first two miles, but Rubbelke pulled ahead in the last 800 meters to finish in third.

The Sectional meet will be held at McNair Park in St. Charles this Saturday. SLUH will race the other top three teams from the District meet (Webster Groves, McCluer North and Hazelwood West), as well as four teams from St. Charles.

Rubbelke, who will be racing at Sectionals, offered his wisdom about this crucial time in the cross country season.

"This is crunch time—it's time to focus, get your mind into it, and race hard." He hopes and believes that SLUH can win next weekend and at the State meet, and echoed Meier's emphasis on the team's pack strategy, which must be employed for a win at either meet.

"We can't control how other teams race," said Porter, "we can control how we race, and if we race well, and another team races better than us, we'll just tip our

hats to them. But we need to focus on our team and what we can do—that is our hope and focus."

Other cross country highlights:

—SLUH raced its third seven at the Borgia Invitational on Saturday, Oct. 16. The top finisher from SLUH was sophomore Joe Archer, who finished in 23rd place with a time of 17:57. SLUH finished fifth overall in the meet, facing its intense hills with bravery and talent.

—In a traditionally seniors-only race last Friday, SLUH placed third overall, running mostly its second seven in the Clayton Invitational. Seniors Dan Raterman and Alan Raterman finished in third and fifth place, respectively. The course was in Clayton's mildly hilly Shaw Park. Piles of acorns plagued the runners throughout the course.

—The Open race at the District meet last Saturday was open to any high school runners, and SLUH ran its meet alternates juniors Jimmy Griffard and Michael Pollihan. "When I heard the guy call all runners to line for the 'Fun Run,' I knew it was going to be a fun time," said Griffard of the experience. Griffard won the race, for his first ever first place finish. Pollihan finished right after Griffard; both of their times were in the low 18:20s.

CONVERSATION OF THE WEEK

PN talks to Alan Ratermann

BY MIKE LUMETTA
SPORTS EDITOR

I caught up with varsity cross country runner Alan Ratermann to find out about XC's synergy and chances at State.

ML: So, SLUH's fresh off a District victory and once again a top team in the state. What's the road to State look like for you guys?

AR: We have Sectionals coming up this weekend. We're going to be racing the same top seven at Sectionals as we will at State, so we're gonna be getting some good experience in racing with the guys. We'll be able to come together, know what each other can do. We're feeling really confident. It's great to be No. 1, but we know people are out to get us now, so we're going to be wary and focus on our own race and not so much the competition.

ML: I'm curious—do you think Rackers has a shot at the individual title?

AR: Yeah—I do, I do. He's a very competitive person, very tough, and so he has a shot at going the distance with the other guys from across the state.

ML: For Sectionals, the team has already run the course at McNair once this season before. How does that affect your mindset and preparation going into Sectionals?

AR: Since we have seen this course before, it is going to feel a little bit more comfortable. We know what we're doing. We know the hills; we know the course. There is some changes that are going to be in the third mile, so that'll be a little bit different. But we're going to go over those before the race, and we're going to walk it. And we should be ready, should know the course pretty well, turn by turn, and it should make us feel ready to race.

ML: So, this fall you're doubling up as a varsity runner and Vice President for Pastoral Activities. How are you juggling STUCO and XC?

AR: It's tough, and some weekends are quite busy with meetings and races. But I'm having a blast doing it. It's a lot of fun. Both guys from both groups are very good to get along with, they help me out, covering for me here and there. So it's going great.

ML: Pack running is pretty famous as a SLUH XC strategy. Besides getting to run next to Joe Meier's flaming hair, how does that actually help you during a race?

AR: This is going to be good. ... So, running in the pack—it's really good to have such a good group of guys to run with. Joe being as good-looking as he is with his great flow, and his just champion attitude, it really helps. The rest of the pack is great. We have a really solid pack of five guys right behind Tim that are all capable of being All-State, all good contenders, and we should be able to compete with the other packs—or the other teams' packs—across the state. And that's where we're looking, like we're going to have the advantage, is in our fifth and sixth and seventh runners, where the other teams' No. 4, 5, and 6 won't be as strong. So that's hopefully where we get the advantage.

ML: So, synergy?

AR: Synergy.

ML: I always hear about it. What is it?

AR: So our team synergy—versus entropy, of course. Synergy over entropy. Our synergy—we have this unique team bond that—it all focuses around this synergy sword that we have. That sword is wielded by Adam Boehm. And Adam Boehm's synergy sword is a motivational tool used in synergy zones. And synergy zones are surge zones where you pass people because we have more synergy than they do. So, team unity equals we beat them. Synergy.

ML: So is Boehm replacing the inimitable Michael Koenigs now?

AR: He's making a good attempt.

ML: Thanks, Alan.

AR: No problem.

ML: Good luck on Saturday.

