

## Cross country captains set goals, set to lead

BY BRIAN SUHRE  
REPORTER

Each year the cross country team elects a new group of captains recognized by everyone as the true leaders of the team. Although leadership is shared between the coaching staff and team, ultimately with such a large team the captains end up with most of the work. The captains are responsible for maintaining the traditions of what has become one of the top programs in the state in the last 25 years.

Each day, seniors Matt Nicholson, Joe Archer, David Arredondo, and Alex Groesch lead 104 runners through mile warmups (or more), dynamic stretching, core exercise (popularly known as Porter90X), and numerous other drills. Though different personalities abound among these four, they are linked by a love of running and a desire to lead.

Groesch, a 200- and 400-meter specialist, may be better known for his all-state sprinting abilities, but as a four-year cross country runner, he has also grown into a leadership position in the fall season of running.

When asked about his goals for the team this year, Groesch said, "Everyone puts forth their full effort and strives to improve their times."

Groesch views the captaincy with much respect.

"I try to do everything right to provide a good example for the team," said Groesch. "It is hard to

practice after school and I try to help those who need it any way I can. I try to interact with everyone on the team to help us bond as a whole."

Groesch is considering offers from the University of Chicago and the University of Michigan, both for sprinting.

Arredondo began running cross country his sophomore year after playing freshman soccer and emerging as a running talent on the track that spring.

When asked about his personal goals for the year, he said, "Honestly, I'd like to be on the State line in November. I've just missed out two straight years so this is my year."

Arredondo was thoroughly impressed with the effort put in over the summer in the build-up to this season.

"We ran really well this summer," said Arredondo. "We have some young guys that really stepped up this summer and are staking claims in varsity."

Nicholson is another four-year cross country runner. Ranked by Big River Running Company as one of the top 25 individuals in the state, Nicholson has big expectations for the team and himself this year.

He has two main goals for the team this year: "To win MCC on all three levels and to win State, which is always our focus, as it's been four years since we've done it."

"It'd be great to be all-State,

but that's focusing a lot on one race," said Nicholson of his personal goals. "I would like to see how fast I could run a race backwards, though."

Archer is yet another four-year cross country runner.

"The camaraderie of the sport really motivates me," said Archer. "When you're running for an hour everyday with the same people, you get to know your friends really well."

Archer was honored to be named a captain this year.

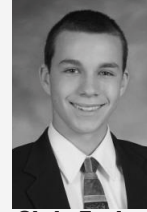
"I see (the captaincy) in a two fold nature: as an in-between for (head coach Joe) Porter and the rest of the team logistically, and the other half as a role model for underclassmen and teaching them about what it means to run cross country at SLUH," he said.

Archer will be a key part of SLUH's State hopes this year.

"We'll have to work really hard but we're definitely going to have a shot at State," he said. "We have a really tight pack going into the season, which is always important at the State meet. Once we get a couple of races in, it'll start to shape up better. We're really set up well to succeed though; many guys went over 400 miles in the summer."

The top 28 varsity and JV runners will be competing at First Capital at McNair Park in St. Charles today at 4 p.m. in their first meet of the year.

## Swim Captains

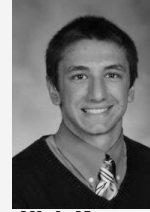


**Chris Favier**

—2011 State Champion 4x200 Freestyle Relay

—Missed qualifying for 50 Freestyle by .06 seconds

"I want to achieve a similar level of success as I did last year, but build upon that success and supplement it as a supportive captain and able diver."



**Nick Koors**

—2011 State 4x100 Freestyle Relay

—2011 State 100 Freestyle

"I would like to try and make it in the top 16 at state for the 100 free. In addition, for the team, I would like at least two of the three relays to make it to the top 16 as well."

## Soccer Nightbeat

photo | Ben Banet



The varsity soccer team squared off against a physical Fort Zumwalt South team last night. Senior Nick Kocisak scored seventeen seconds into the second half to put the Jr. Bills up, and junior Tim Manuel scored later in the half to give the Bills a 2-0 win.

## Soccer Academy forces players to choose between club and school teams

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tween the Academy and their high school.

The St. Louis U. High team lost three probable starters in seniors Blake Gonzalez, Matt Steurer, and Joe Rund to the Academy team. Juniors Luke Nash and Brian Fletcher and sophomore Dennis Kulba round out the rest of former SLUH players who chose to play Academy.

"It's ultimately the player's decision to choose to play for Academy or to wear the jersey of St. Louis U. High," Martel said. "It's a long tradition of soccer here."

The Academy's former eight-month commitment allowed players to play club and high school soccer, but the added months, September and October, conflict with the high school season. Players weighed the options: the extra training for the United States National Team and exposure for college coaches they would get with Academy soccer, or the pride and camaraderie of representing their high school and playing with some of their best friends.

"The ten months of training is a way to get better, not just to get seen by college coaches," said Rund. "It's for me to get better for college soccer."

Rund also emphasized how tough his decision to play Academy was.

"From my three years experience, it's hard to walk away from my senior year with my friends, which normally means the most to people," Rund said.

United States Soccer justifies a ten-month Academy commitment with the reality that United States soccer has always lagged behind other international pow-

ers, most recently displayed by the absence of the United States' U-23 team in the Olympics this year. United States Soccer modeled its ten-month Academy commitment after other soccer-playing countries who have had an Academy-type system for decades.

In Europe, high school soccer does not exist, so players must play for a club. Other countries' Academy systems are free and have a nationalized style of play for a smoother transition to national teams. American soccer programs don't have the same policies, and are particularly criticized for the cost of playing.

In the St. Louis area, SLSG runs the Academy program. SLSG has always had elite players in the area, so in theory, having their teams together for a longer period of time will groom more developed players for the United States National Team. Having elite players play against elite players should allow the cream of the crop to emerge more quickly. Between cost and transportation, for many families, club soccer is not an option. Those who might need a scholarship more than another player can't pay for the extra exposure.

The issue of college scholarships has created tension in the decision between high school soccer and Academy soccer. The big debate arises in the matter of exposure to college coaches.

"There are college coaches at basically every single one of our games," said Steurer. "That's one of the big reasons I chose Academy."

The Academy holds an advantage over high school soccer

in terms of out-of-state exposure. For the most part, high school teams don't play many out-of-state teams, while many Academy teams play out-of-state often to find other elite teams for competition.

"I understand the promises Scott Gallagher, the Academy, is making in terms of exposure," said Martel. "In my understanding, that's why those guys are going into it."

Martel believes if a player is truly good enough to play college soccer, a college coach will find him, Academy or not.

"I pretty much don't buy that exposure," said Martel. "Apparently Cole Grossman, Tommy Meyer, and Taylor Twellman found their way, and they didn't play for an Academy team."

Grossman, Meyer, and Twellman were amazingly talented players at SLUH, but could an Academy team help a player on the margins of a scholarship with a little extra exposure to secure one? Perhaps it could, but if the player is marginal for a college scholarship, he shouldn't expect a considerable amount of money.

Division I soccer programs only get 9.9 scholarships, compared to football which gets 85 scholarships or basketball which gets 13, because they don't earn the school much money as not many people pay to watch college soccer. And with an increasing emphasis on drawing international players to American universities, players simply cannot count on their athletic talents to earn them money for college.

Another advantage for the Academy system is the intense

training they receive. Most teams practice six days per week for over two hours per day, and many coaches used to be scouts or coaches for the United States National Team. The coaches know how hard they have to push their players to give them best chance for success at higher levels of soccer.

"My coach used to be a scout for the National Team, so he knows what it takes," said Steurer.

If the advantage of getting seen by college coaches doesn't appeal to some players, the prospect of simply becoming a better player may, whether for college soccer or just for self-fulfillment.

"The training we get is big," said Rund. "Our coach now, he used to be a coach for the U-20 National Team and a National Team scout. So he brings a lot of knowledge through the technical aspect of the game."

It would certainly be unfair to draw a comparison and say high school soccer teams don't train hard or don't expose their players to a high level of competition. St. Louis has a rich tradition of having competitive high school soccer with the MCC schools and public schools such as Oakville, Rockwood Summit, and Marquette.

Even with SLUH losing six players to the Academy team, the Jr. Bills will remain competitive. Many other schools in the area have also had to deal with losing players to Academy soccer.

"When the better players leave, I'm not so sure you play at such a high level, but so far, these guys are proving that wrong," said Martel. "Their work ethic

this summer has been great. Our senior leadership has been great, and we like the level of play so far. So maybe (the Academy) isn't affecting us as much as we thought."

With the high competition in St. Louis comes the pride of representing one's school on the soccer field with great teammates and friends.

"The hardest thing for me was leaving my friends I'd played with for three years," Steurer said. "We're all great friends off the field, and we understand how everyone plays on the field."

If playing for the Academy team promises a greater amount of exposure and experience, high school soccer maintains its own benefits, from packed playoff games to historic rivalries to the pride of representing your school.

"(The) camaraderie that exists when (players) sit together at classes, eat together in the cafeteria and then go to the field together as teammates to represent the student body, faculty, the alumni, the community, and all the school stands for in the community," CBC coach Terry Michler recently pointed out in the NSCAA Soccer Journal.

SLUH senior captain Tony Bright looks at the situation honestly and optimistically.

"It would have been great to have the Academy guys, who probably would've been starters, but we have to move forward," Bright said. "I think we've filled the holes well. ... We'll play our game with who we have and see what happens."