

Fruity Pebbles, Sectionals motivate cross country to win Districts

Impressive finish for XC as five runners finish in the top ten

BY BRIAN SUHRE
REPORTER

As the season winds down for runners outside the top 14, the St. Louis U. High varsity cross country team took its first step towards the State meet last weekend at Blackburn Park in Webster with a District championship.

The district victory was a classic team performance, with all five scoring runners placing in the top ten and all five running under 17:00.

Senior Matt Nicholson led the way, finishing third overall with a time of 16:16. Nicholson led the race for the first two miles, but ended up being narrowly edged out by defending district champion Nicholas Stewart of McCluer North and Dillon Williams of Webster Groves.

"Coming into the race, I knew those two guys would be at the front," said Nicholson. "I knew the kid from McCluer (North) didn't like to lead the race, but at Districts the goal is just to qualify, so I was okay with leading even though it didn't work out in the end. It was more important to qualify than to win the race."

Junior Tom Rubio and sophomore Matthew Hennessey followed close behind in fourth and fifth places with times of 16:30 and 16:33, respectively. Senior Tom Laughlin had his best race of the year after struggling with injury problems early on. He moved up to fourth on the team and finished eighth overall with a time of 16:49.

"Tom ran really well," said Nicholson. "It was really good

to see him come back from injury after not running so hot for awhile."

Laughlin used some unusual motivation to get himself through the race.

"There was one point in the race where it really hurt," he said. "I was starting to slow down, but then I thought of Fruity Pebbles. It made me laugh and refocus. Then I could just refocus and realize, 'You know what, you just have to do it.'"

Senior Joe Archer completed the top five with a time of 16:53, finishing in tenth place overall. Only 37 seconds separated first on the team from fifth. That low split is very encouraging news for the team and makes the team strong contenders for the State title.

Head coach Joe Porter was impressed by the team's tactical performance on the day.

"We had set out as a goal that we wanted five in the top ten at Districts," Porter said. "In our district Webster is a really really good team; they won their conference handily. We knew they'd be a challenge, so we also wanted to put five in front of Webster's four. We accomplished both of those goals, and actually got five across the line before they got three across."

The previous Saturday the team sat six varsity runners, but otherwise ran a full squad at the Borgia Invitational in Washington, Mo. Laughlin led the team with a 17:11, good for eighth place. He was followed by a very young SLUH pack: junior Peter Rackers and sophomores Garret

Fox, Thomas Hogan, and Jacob Marty who completed the scoring for SLUH for another meet victory.

Porter was very impressed by the young squad's performance at a varsity level without the usual top six.

"When we hold out six guys and win a varsity race it's obviously very impressive and shows off the depth of our team," he said. "A lot of guys are really hungry to compete and that's good to see."

The team next raced at the Clayton Invitational the Friday before Districts. Rackers led the way with a fifth place finish and a time of 17:14. Senior Matt Rancilio followed closely behind in eighth place with a time of 17:26. Junior John Esswein had

his most impressive race since his return from injury, finishing 14th with a time of 17:41. Senior Alex Groesch and sophomore Garret Fox completed the top five for SLUH.

The Varsity 2 team managed to win the meet against other full varsity teams, beating Class 3 State favorite Festus in the process.

"The whole team feeling about the race was really relaxed and just to have fun with it," said Rancilio. "We all enjoyed splitting the bushes and the sharp turns around trees; it really made the course unique."

SLUH usually sends a senior-only squad to the Clayton Invitational, but this year ran four non-seniors in the varsity divi-

sion. Porter explained the roster move by saying he wanted to "put in four guys who weren't running at Districts to give them another shot to impress, and they did really well."

The team's next meet is Sectionals, which SLUH hosts this Saturday at Central Fields in Forest Park. A top-four team finish there will ensure qualification for the State meet on Nov. 3 in Jefferson City.

Nicholson is optimistic ahead of the sectional meet.

"We are looking to put our top five in the top ten again," he said. "Obviously to win would be really nice, but qualification is the main goal."



The XC team poses with its plaques after winning the Clayton Invitational.

photo | Kyle Voigt

Jr. Bills put MCC play behind them as Districts approach

BY JUSTIN SINAY
REPORTER

The leaves are changing, the first quarter is over, the weather is cooler, and the St. Louis U. High varsity soccer team is gearing up for District play and a shot at a fourth State championship. With Districts looming next week, the Jr. Bills have won two of their past three games—their loss coming Saturday to Chaminade, the No. 22 team in the country, according to the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA).

SLUH's main District competition the past few seasons has been the Red Devils, as the Jr. Bills and Chaminade have faced off in the past three District championships. The Jr. Bills beat Chaminade, one of the Red Devils' two losses on the year, in the semifinals of the CYC Tournament earlier this year.

Gearing up for postseason competition, the Jr. Bills lost an overtime battle with DeSmet a couple of weeks ago and took a

break from studying the Monday during exam week to top MICDS 6-3, as senior keeper Colin Pratt got his first start of the season.

Senior captain Zach Hoffman scored two goals and had two assists, fellow senior Joey Fisher had two assists, and senior Teddy Thorpe added a goal. Juniors Tony Doellefeld, Tommy Hill, and Sam Chevalier—back from an early season injury—all scored.

On Saturday, the Jr. Bills hoped to duplicate their performance in their first game versus Chaminade by crashing the Red Devils' Senior Day. Chaminade made sure to mark Hoffman, who had a hat trick in their last matchup, often having two to three guys on his jersey.

Head coach Charlie Martel said, "If we played a team and a kid scored three goals on us, he wouldn't see the light of day."

Regardless, in the first half the Jr. Bills put several shots on goal and dominated possession, but the halftime score was 0-0.

Chaminade dominated early in the second half but were typhied by the great play of junior goalie Jack Robinson. As the game wound down, SLUH grabbed the momentum heading into overtime. However, five minutes into overtime, Chaminade scored the game-winning goal on a throw-in.

"(Assistant Coach) Charlie (Clark) had a good point saying that if we beat them Saturday, we would've had to beat them three times to get to the State tournament, and that's hard to do," Martel said. "We were disappointed with the loss, the guys were really disappointed. Our inability to find the back of the goal really hurts us."

The Jr. Bills also celebrated Senior Night this past week, defeating Parkway South on Monday night 4-0. Hoffman had a goal and two assists, and seniors Nick Kocisak, Andrew Robinson, and Joe Grady scored.

Grady said, "These past four years we've had such a strong

bond. It was great to have a chance to show what we all could do. It would be nice to win (on Thursday) and get some momentum going into Districts."

The speculation has already begun about another SLUH-Chaminade matchup in the District final, which takes place on Nov. 3, but the Jr. Bills played CBC last night and have a contest with Ritenour in the District semifinals on Tuesday at Chaminade.

Martel said, "Tuesday we had a really intense practice. Guys were flying all over the place. We did a couple of shooting drills and guys were really finding the net. Wednesday we had a more light-hearted practice. The guys are in a good state of mind, but our ability to score goals is the key."

Senior captain Chris Gys added, "If we come up with a win (against CBC), it ends the year well and we go into Districts with some confidence. If we can score, we can pretty much beat any team."

Attention All Juniors! Are you an Aussie at heart?

There are still spots available for the 2014 trip to Australia. All interested students should see Mr. O'Neil or Justin Lukas for more information about dates, costs, and itinerary.

Election Wisdom of the Week

"You won the elections, but I won the count." -Anastasio Somoza, Nicaraguan dictator