

Frustration mounts as Junior Bills drop Chaminade contest

BY JAMES BOECKMANN
REPORTER

The St. Louis U. High varsity soccer team has not gone winless in Metro Catholic Conference (MCC) play in recent memory, but this year that reality is threatening.

After a stunning 2-1 loss to Chaminade, SLUH was 0-3 in MCC play heading into last night's game against CBC. Regardless of the outcome of that game, the season has been a disappointment, especially considering how highly-regarded the team was entering the season (ranked 9th in the nation by ESPN).

After an embarrassing loss to DeSmet in the CBC tournament, the Jr. Bills desperately tried to get some momentum going, but had a tough time getting big wins even though they were outplaying teams.

The Jr. Bills have really struggled to score, especially early in games, and they haven't been able to close out games late.

"With our tough schedule there is a fine line between failure and success, between disappointing and very good, and we have lost a lot of close games," said coach Charlie Martel. "We aren't far from being very very good."



Junior Blake Gonzalez battles for possession with a CBC opponent in last night's 2-1 loss.

Senior captain Sam Steurer agrees with Martel, saying, "If we fix the small technical things in our game, we can make an unexpected run in the playoffs."

With districts rapidly approaching, SLUH will have quite a chip on their shoulder as they seek redemption for their regular season struggles.

Last Saturday, SLUH played the Red Devils at home. About 20 minutes into the first half, SLUH won a free kick in a dangerous spot, just a few yards outside of the box. Instead of setting up a play, senior captain Ryan Merrifield quickly tapped the ball to se-

nior Paul Buehler, trying to catch Chaminade out of position.

The gamble worked as Buehler cut past a defender and ripped a hard, low shot on goal. The goalie couldn't handle the shot, and junior Matt Steurer crashed the net to tap in the rebound. Sophomore goalie Guillaume Delabar made a few great saves, and SLUH entered halftime leading 1-0.

But just five minutes into the second half, the game's momentum shifted.

"We played a great first half but came out way too defensive for the second," said senior Joey

Ferber.

Five minutes into the second half, Chaminade won a free kick and served a great ball to the back post. A Red Devil headed the ball over Delabar back across the face of the goal to a teammate, who easily headed the ball in. It was a great play which tied the game 1-1 and gave Chaminade the momentum.

With about five minutes left in the game, SLUH started to dominate, and it looked like they would surely have an advantage in overtime if they didn't manage a goal by the end of the game.

However, with 1:30 left in the game, Chaminade got a breakaway on a counterattack and scored a stunner, delivering SLUH their third MCC loss by a score of 2-1.

On Monday the Jr. Bills traveled west to face the Parkway South Patriots on their senior night. From the first whistle SLUH was clearly the dominant team, but once again they struggled to finish early in the game.

It wasn't until late in the first half that the Jr. Bills broke through, on a goal off senior Tommy Behr's head after a perfect Ferber throw in.

After halftime, SLUH contin-

ued to dominate. Merrifield sent a great diagonal ball to Buehler, in a dangerous area outside the box. Buehler diced his defender and unleashed a perfect shot into the back post side netting, doubling SLUH's lead.

Late in the second half, SLUH won an indirect free kick off a mental lapse by the Patriots, and Sam Steurer finished the kick beautifully off a pretty cheeky play, effectively icing the game. In the game's waning minutes, senior Luke Gilsinger capitalized on a scrum for the ball in front of the net to make the lead 4-0, and the game ended at that score.

Right now, all that matters to the team is Districts, and the Jr. Bills will need to play some of their best soccer to advance.

"Even though the results don't show it, we know we're good enough to beat any team in the state. Everyone's got to step it up, starting with the captains," said Steurer regarding the team's potential in the state tournament.

Martel says the team "must improve our goal scoring, and we need to play well for the full eighty minutes" if they expect to win.

Cross Country glides past districts

BY GREG FISTER
STAFF ARTIST

The District meet is the first meet of the postseason for cross country runners, and it's the first race where if you haven't been racing well the rest of the season, "you'll be sitting at home," says head coach Joe Porter.

The Saint Louis U. High cross country team was certainly not sitting at home last Saturday during the District meet at Sioux Passage Park. SLUH's team came away from the Manmaker hill as District Champs, with five runners placing among the top 10 overall, even without two top senior runners.

The intense ups and downs of the course led to generally slower finishing times for all runners, but SLUH wasn't racing for personal bests this time around; they were looking to qualify for the State meet in two weeks.

SLUH's district draws from

schools around the Saint Louis area and North County, and the Jr. Bills' main competitors for this race included Webster Groves, McCluer North, Chaminade, and the Hazelwoods.

SLUH's race was driven by a strong pack of mostly underclassmen runners, who maintained a steady force throughout the race. Runners stayed close together and passed opponents in the latter part of the race, allowing for five of them to finish in the top 10, and for the team to gain the first place trophy.

Junior Matt Nicholson was at the helm of the SLUH warship for this race. He does not run varsity often, but got a chance to really shine in the first race in which he was SLUH's top finisher.

The first mile of the race found most of the SLUH runners in a bunch together, though not close to the lead. But by the second time around, the XC Bills really formed a tight pack and were able to take the front of the pack.

"We came to the top of the Manmaker the second time and I felt pretty tired, but in my pre-race plan I had decided to surge there, so I wanted to go further than third, but once I got there I stayed," said Nicholson. He finished third on the race overall, with a time of 17:36, incredible considering the daunting hills of Sioux Passage Park.

"The second time up the Manmaker, Matt Nicholson really gained some ground and put a lot of guys away," said senior teammate Joe Esswein.

"It's a little different to be out there in front, because that means people are kind of looking ahead to you," said Nicholson of his position in the lead for the school. "When you're in the front, you've gotta make sure you're where you need to be, because your teammates will be following you."

And follow him they did.

Senior Joe Esswein came in fifth place with a time of 17:50, just one second behind him was junior Joe Archer, and following about 20 seconds back were junior David Arredondo and sophomore John Esswein, in seventh and ninth places, respectively.

Courageous sophomores Tom Rubio and Peter Rackers rounded off SLUH's score, passing the finish line in 15th and 18th place.

SLUH's group unity first, individual speed second method really paid off, as the Jr. Bills won the race over McCluer North who, though their junior runner Nick Stewart did take first place, did not have a strong group of runners to carry the victory as SLUH did.

"We asked them to be competitive, we wanted them to run straight to the front... we wanted our guys to be right with the likes of Nick Stewart (from McCluer North), and it showed; we didn't run three top guys and we still had five runners in the top 10," said Porter.

"I was really impressed we got five guys in the top 10," said Joe Esswein. "Our depth is incredible, and our mindset going into the race is that we are as good as or better than the guys running next to us, and this really helped us think cohesively."

Head coach Joe Porter said that he chose to withhold senior Michael McLaughlin and junior Tom Laughlin because of some minor aches, and senior Nathan Rubbelke because he had raced the day before at the Clayton Invitational.

"Sectionals, State and Regionals will all be just a tough race after a tough race, but the goal is to qualify, and when we bring those three guys back in for Sectionals (this Saturday) we will try to do the same thing: to get as many guys as we can in the top five and top 10," Porter said.

Hockey ties Red Devils

BY NATHAN RUBBELKE
CORE STAFF

Though quarter exams ended last Thursday afternoon, the St. Louis U. High hockey team still had one test left: their final game of round-robin play in the annual pre-season Top Hat Tournament against the Chaminade Red Devils, believed to be a top three team in the area. The Jr. Bills came away with a passing grade, tying Chaminade 3-3.

Since both teams were missing close to five players each due to club hockey commitments, the game's meaning was somewhat lessened. However, other players got more ice time than they normally would.

"This was not an indication of what will happen during the regular season," said head coach Charlie Busenhart. "Neither team played with the lines they normally would be playing with."

The word of the night for the Jr. Bills was resiliency. The Jr. Bills never led the affair, trailing three separate times.

Chaminade scored quickly in the first period, but the lead only lasted for about 30 seconds, as sophomore defenseman Stan Pawlow notched the first goal of his varsity career.

In the second period, Chaminade scored to take the 2-1 lead. But once again, the Jr. Bills offense wasted no time evening score. Senior forward Dan Warnecke tied the game at two on an assist from senior forward Trent Lulow.

Redemption

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lar season at home tonight against Lindbergh.

This night will be special for two reasons for the senior class: it's the Jr. Bills final game at home, and they are honoring their deceased classmate Brendan Langford who died in June of 2009. Brendan's bronze statue near the

The story stayed the same later in the second period. Chaminade took a 3-2 lead, but junior forward Chase Berger tied the game 3-3 less than a minute later.

After a scoreless third period, the game ended with a 3-3 draw.

"We were happy because when they scored, we scored on the next shift," said Busenhart. "I was very pleased with that situation."

Members of the team were disappointed in their inability to pull off the win.

"It wasn't our best game," said Lulow.

Added Warnecke, "They were missing more quality players, and that's why I felt we should have beaten them."

While the Jr. Bills were disappointed with the performance, they played an effective game.

The game highlighted the potent offense and its ability to create quick scoring opportunities. Once again, the front line of Lulow, Warnecke, and Berger led the team with two of the team's three goals.

Missing a number of players required the young SLUH defense to control the ice. Senior defenseman Joey Luongo was forced to leave the game with a shoulder injury. In his absence, the young defense stepped up to protect senior goalie Thomas Place.

The Jr. Bills were back in action last night in the quarterfinal round of the Top Hat Tournament as SLUH faced off against Francis Howell North.

Berthold entrance will serve as a reminder of what he means for the team, and will be in the hearts of every football player and fan tonight.

Now, as the leaves turn and the weather gets colder, our boys are on the brink of the most exciting act of their season. My voice is ready and I've cleaned the tears off my face. I'm hungry for more magic. Let's go Jr. Bills.

Swim tops CCP

SLUH faced off against Chaminade in one of the most anticipated dual meets of the season on Monday. Last year, the Red Devils dominated the Jr. Bills, but this year, the team was able to put up a fight that led to a much-needed win.

"We all swam pretty fast, and our relays were clutch," said senior Michael Slaughter, "We pretty much dominated the meet."

Senior and team Captain Sam Erlinger humiliated the Chaminade competition in the 200-yard freestyle, qualifying in yet another event for the state meet.

"I feel good to avenge last year's loss, which is good going into MCC's. We can win it if we all swim our best," said Erlinger.

—compiled by David Greaves