

## Despite injuries, racquetball defeats CBC, wins top seed tournament

BY FRITZ SIMMON  
REPORTER

Just before last Friday's heart-breaking loss to CBC in football, the Jr. Bills took down the Cadets in racquetball. With head coach Joe Koestner and No. 1 seed Joe Koch both out with injuries, the Jr. Billikens knew they had some major work of their own to do.

Filling in for Koestner was long time assistant coach Robert Hoffman, who has helped lead SLUH to multiple national and State titles and is one of the best players in the area. Instead of having someone fill in for Koch, Hoffman decided to just forfeit the match.

The afternoon got started with a solid 15-10, 15-11 win from the newly-reunited doubles team of Luke Hagerty and Ryan Shea.

Shea said, "It came down to us sticking to our hard style of play and keeping the pressure on, and of course our sweatbands and pennies."

They were followed by relatively easy wins from juniors AJ Cirillo and Lorenzo Crim. Cirillo won 15-10, 15-12. Crim won 15-0, 15-9.

Seniors Jack Mohrmann and Fritz Simmon both won their matches as well, but they had a little more trouble. Each player lost his first game, but was able to turn it around and win his next

two games. Mohrmann won 3-15, 15-3, 11-2. Simmon won 9-15, 15-2, 15-5.

The day ended with a great win from Senior Rob Laurentius. Laurentius dominated his opponent the entire match, hitting perfect passes and pinches while mixing in excellent ceiling balls. Laurentius won 15-4, 15-3.

Laurentius's stellar play continued into the Top Seed Tournament that weekend. The tournament consists of the top three varsity members from every team competing against their ranked counterparts. SLUH had not won the tournament in two years, but with three strong top players, they hoped to regain the title.

With Koch and Koestner still out, Mohrmann had to fill in at the No. 1 seed, and Hoffman remained as head coach.

Mohrmann fought hard, but lost in the first round 15-6, 15-13. After Mohrmann's loss the only way for SLUH to win was for both Laurentius and Simmon to win their entire brackets.

Each player did just that. Laurentius kept up his stellar play, beating some of the toughest opponents in the league. He held off Parkway West star Curtis Smith in the semifinals, 14-15, 15-6, 11-3, then went on to beat the Parkway Central star Alex Lazenby in the finals, 15-14, 15-5.

Hoffman said, "Rob displayed extraordinary skill by

crushing his opponent from Parkway Central in the finals."

Simmon won his bracket as well but had to fight for each victory. He won 15-13, 15-13 in the semifinals and 15-14, 14-15, 11-8, in the finals.

These two wins secured the tournament for SLUH. After losing last year's tiebreaker between SLUH, Kirkwood, and Parkway West, and losing to Parkway West in 2009, this was a great win for SLUH. The players joyfully watched their names engraved into the four-foot tall hardware.

Hoffman said after the win, "The Top Seed tournament was a challenge, having lost our No. 1 seed Joe Koch to an ankle injury. Fritz Simmon and Rob Laurentius both had crucial wins for the team."

SLUH hopes to continue their great play this weekend in the annual Winter Rollout. There are six divisions, each broken up by team and seed number. Every player from SLUH plays in the tournament. The tournament begins Friday and continues all day Saturday.



## Young talent runs deep on cross country

BY GREG FISTER  
STAFF ARTIST

This year's JV and freshman cross country teams were the best the program has seen in years, excelling at all the most important JV and freshman races, and leaving the program with a hopeful outlook for the future.

The freshmen ran with courage and heart, proving their worth on the team while finishing the season undefeated. Many individuals on the team showed incredible talent and promise, claiming their place in SLUH XC future.

"The C-team season was outstanding," said head coach Joe Porter. "This was probably one of the top freshmen groups we've ever had."

SLUH dominated the two most important races for freshmen: the Metro Catholic Conference meet and the Findley Invitational at the end of the season. In both races, SLUH freshmen finished in the top five places, giving the team a perfect victory each time.

"They're just a tough group, and they've really answered the bell all year long," added Porter.

"Shayn Jackson was our top freshman. For parts of the season he had to battle some injuries," said Porter.

By early October, the coaches recognized some young talent and chose to race Jackson and freshman Garrett Fox in a few varsity races.

"Jack Sullivan ran extremely well, and Jack Gallagher, and Jacob Marty, and Matthew Hennessy—those guys were outstanding all year long," said Porter.

Junior varsity was able to achieve the same level of success at both races, keeping with their tradition of consistently above-average performance.

"Junior varsity was just a very impressive group, a very dedicated group, and they really showed the depth of our program," said Porter. "If we didn't run our varsity, our JV would be running in the varsity race, and doing extremely well and beating teams that are qualifying for the state meet."

Sophomore John Esswein was the singular champion for JV at the Findley Invitational.

"When I look back at our freshmen team and our JV team, some of the things that stick out necessarily aren't always just the top guys, but some of the guys that are in the middle of the pack or towards the back of the pack that have had consistent improvements throughout the year," Porter summed up. "I think about the year, how much their times dropped, how much they have improved."

"It's kind of sad to see the seniors go. We've had them on the team for three years, but I'm excited for senior year," said junior and JV runner Nick Wottowa.

## Wrestling hopes experience pays off; tops Hazelwood in first duel

BY CLARK DEWOSKIN  
REPORTER

photo | Harold Wayne

Win. Win. Win.

That's the simple goal for this year's St. Louis U. High wrestling team.

"I don't wanna lose. Win every match," said senior Nick Danter.

After a disappointing last season saw two-time State placer Epen Conley wrestle only seven matches, the Jr. Bills are ready for another go at it.

Fellow senior and captain Will Whitney, last year's lone state qualifier, likewise has his goals set high. "I wanna place at state," Whitney said. "I know that's a lofty goal, but shoot high, ya know?"

For team goals, Whitney would like SLUH to "win a few tournaments, no reason not to win the conference. Multiple state qualifiers; placers at every tournament."

Whitney fell early at state last year, losing both of his matches at the Mizzou Arena.

It will be the first time in three years that the Jr. Bills will wrestle without Conley as a clear standout going into the season.

"Last year a lot of the expectations were on (Conley), this year I think we have a solid core," said coach Sean O'Brien. Conley suffered a broken leg that cost him nearly his entire senior season and possibly SLUH's first ever

state wrestling title.

"They're used to not having Epen, though," O'Brien added, "and it forced them to mature last year."

The StillHereInSpiritBills worked hard this offseason, wrestling at Team Missouri Select as well as completing Crossfit strength and conditioning workouts. Several wrestlers competed in offseason tournaments and many attended open-mats in SLUH's wrestling room.

"Ideally the first few weeks of the season aren't reminding guys how to wrestle," said O'Brien, "and I feel like we're in a good place with the commitments these guys made."

This year will see a varsity lineup return nearly from top to bottom but with all around much more experience. Veteran wrestlers are expected to start from 120 all the way through heavy-weight, excepting only a few open spots in the lineup and a possible underclassman at 126.

Strong seasons are expected from both Danter and Whitney, as well as fellow senior captain Joe Mungenast, all of whom wrestled to 20-plus win seasons last year. What is unknown is how returning varsity starters Jack Flotte, Sam Wilhelm, and other current juniors will fare after some struggles their sophomore years.

"They took their lumps as sophomores, as you're supposed to, but they showed a lot of im-



Senior Will Whitney (top) locks up his opponent in last night's match against Windsor.

provement," said O'Brien.

"For example, Jack Flotte's made a huge improvement," said head coach Jon Ott. "He got much better towards the end of last year, and he's a totally different wrestler now than he was this time last year."

"Guys get more mature; Nick Geiser used his struggles and he put in a lot of work this offseason." Whitney agrees with his coaches.

"It's easy to walk away," said Whitney. "It shows a lot of growth for those guys to work hard and come back this year. They're gonna be tough."

Of course a wrestling team

wouldn't be complete without its share of underclassmen. Sophomores Brandon Bollinger and Jim Onder both figure to have an impact on this year's lineup whether or not they both will start all year. An underclassmen will fill the 106-pound slot at times as well. Also, returning starter and sophomore Sean Mulligan will wrestle.

It will be the success of the juniors and sophomores that shapes this year's varsity team. Last year, six sophomores combined for a 57-117 record going into districts.

"Multiple state placers, that's the goal this season and every season," said Ott, "and I think that's realistic."

The team wrestled its first competition, a dual meet at Hazelwood West, last week on Nov. 23. It was a full week earlier than they have begun wrestling the past few seasons.

Both teams were open at 106 pounds, the lowest weight class. At 113, sophomore Brandon Bollinger received a bye. Fellow sophomore and returning varsity starter Sean Mulligan secured a pin to win his match at 120.

Junior Nick Geiser wrestled at 132 pounds, securing a first period pin.

"It felt great getting a quick win," he said after a rocky sopho-

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