



Blue Army returns: Laughlin leads XC to tenth place finish at State meet



photo | Courtesy of John Kelly

(From left to right) Sophomore Reed Milnor, junior Paul Burka, seniors William Kelly and Joe Laughlin at the State meet.

ANDREW MODDER
SPORTS EDITOR

The St. Louis U. High varsity cross country team ended its season on a high note with a tenth place finish at the State Championship this past weekend at Oak Hills Golf Center in Jefferson City, Mo. Rockhurst won the State crown with 109 points, followed by Rock Bridge with 116. The Jr. Bills rounded out the top ten with 223 points.

SLUH didn't go into the race looking to win. Instead, the team focused on taking it like any other race and just trying to compete at the highest level possible. However, the big stage of the State Championship certainly created nerves in many of the SLUH runners.

"We tried to think of it as another race," said head coach Joe Porter. "I think sometimes people spend their mental energy thinking too much about it before it actually happens,

and you're fatigued and tired because of that."

Senior Joe Laughlin led the team once again, continuing his dominant postseason performance. He ran an extremely smart and tactical race, earning him eighth place overall with a time of 15:56, a PR by 20 seconds, as well as All-State honors. Laughlin's time is the third fastest of any SLUH runner on the State course.

Laughlin kept himself near the front of the race in the opening mile, hovering around 30th place with sophomore Patrick Hetlage and junior Paul Burka, and when he saw a chance in the second mile to contend with the leaders, he took it.

"The middle mile is where a lot of people settle in, and there were a couple of kids from other teams who made a move and surged, so I tried to go with them, so I passed a bunch of people

there," said Laughlin. "The third mile I was in the hurt locker and it was time to go as fast as I could for the last mile."

Laughlin moved up from 30th to 18th at the second mile mark, and he catapulted himself into eighth place at the finish with a final mile of only 5:15.

However, once Laughlin finished his race, he discovered that his heels were torn up with large blisters. He had been wearing a teammate's racing spikes after his broke at Sectionals, and unfortunately they were a half size too small for his feet.

"I didn't think that would be a problem until during the race I started to feel like I had some blisters on the back of my heels, but then I didn't think it was that bad until I took my shoes off," said Laughlin. "It looked like someone took a vegetable peeler and scraped it, so it was

pretty gross."

Several of Laughlin's teammates expressed how impressed and proud they were of him, joking around that he had been hiding this type of race all season and was waiting for the right time to unveil it.

"That is the single most impressive thing I've ever seen in SLUH cross country," said senior William Kelly. "I'm kind of at a loss for words at how amazing it was."

Burka was the second Jr. Bill to cross the finish line, finishing in 58th place with a time of 16:37. He ran very consistently over all three miles, staying with Hetlage, who finished 12 seconds behind him in 75th place with a time of 16:49.

Both Burka and Hetlage will be taking on some of the major leadership roles on next year's team, so their State results show promising signs for the future.

Kelly came to the finish line in 105th place with a time of 17:06. He started out really well, running just behind Laughlin, Burka, and Hetlage, but then struggled to keep up in the second mile.

"I've never been more calm on the line because there were like 25 guys who came down to watch us, that was really cool," said Kelly. "Unfortunately, I didn't do the best job moving through the second mile, but then I had a good third mile. Overall, I almost broke 17 on a hard course, and considering I got into cross country to get in shape for track, I guess that's pretty cool."

Sophomore Reed Mil-
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Swim & Dive finishes 13th at State meet

KYLE IRVINE AND JOHN
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The Jr. Bills finished off their varsity swimming season this past Friday and Saturday with a 13th place finish at the State meet, matching their place from last year.

The meet was highlighted by some exceptional swims. On Friday night, junior Barclay Dale went a time of 52.68 seconds in his 100-yard back, good for a new school record and a No. 9 seed for finals. Earlier in the meet, Dale swam a 22.05 50 freestyle, good for a No. 10 seed.

Also on Friday, sophomore Joe Feder swam a 1:44.30 in his 200 free, good for a seventh seed in the finals, and then a 54.55 100 backstroke, which put him in 16th, the last spot in finals.

Overall, the Jr. Bills put six races through to finals: the four races by Dale and Feder, the 200 medley relay, and the 400 freestyle relay.

The six races put through to finals weren't the only impressive events on Friday. Despite not making finals, junior Nick Mattingly, freshman Josh Brown, and senior Luke Smith all raced extremely well, each dropping time in their events.

Another small victory for the Jr. Bills came with the 200 freestyle relay, which ended up placing 27th overall, despite consisting of a team of alternates that had never actually made the State cut. These stellar races by individual swimmers and relays, although not all good enough to make the top 16 in State, demonstrated the incredible depth that led the team to an

undefeated dual meet season and a sixth consecutive MCC title.

Finals on Saturday was another exciting day for the Jr. Bills. The atmosphere in the St. Peters Rec Plex was hyped to say the least.

"It was really hot," said junior alternate Jack Laux.

Before the swimming section of the day, the Jr. Bills had their first diver compete at the state meet since 2014. Senior diver Andrew Gammon made the State cut in one of the last meets of the season, and ended up placing 23rd in the state on Saturday.

"I never achieved my goal of having someone give me the lowest possible score of 0.5 on a dive," said Gammon. "But someone did give me a 1.0 at State so I was happy."

The 200 medley relay kicked off a slew of time drops, going a 1:38.35, dropping a second from their finals performance the night before and earning them 11th place in the state of Missouri.

Next up came Feder in the 200 freestyle, who posted a time of 1:43.84, a time drop from the night before and a new personal record for the up and coming star, which earned him seventh place overall.

Following this came Dale in the 50 free, dropping more time and breaking the 22 second barrier with a 21.74, earning him a tenth place finish.

The most impressive event of the night, the 100 back, was next up on the Jr. Bills' list, and it saw massive time drops from both Dale
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Hockey takes care of business, handles Westminster, Vianney with ease

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SPORTS EDITOR

The St. Louis U. High varsity hockey team kicked off the regular season last week with a solid 7-0 win over the Westminster Wildcats and an 8-1 win over the Vianney Griffins on Monday.

For the first game of the season, the Jr. Bills were missing more than a few key players, giving a chance for younger guys to get some time on the ice against Westminster.

"The guys that got a lot more time have definitely improved themselves," said head coach Kevin Fitzpatrick. "So we're able to roll four lines. We're adjusting very well."

After a slow start, sophomore Gabe Schwartz got the Jr. Bills started, putting a puck from junior Jack Wachter in the back of the net with 5:40 left in the first period.

After one, SLUH didn't look back. Less than a minute into the second period, senior

Luke Sextro took a shot from the dot that found the back of the net, extending the lead to two. Sophomore Christian Berger slapped one in three minutes later, followed by a goal from sophomore Henry Wagner, who skated through the defense to put the Jr. Bills up 4-0.

With three minutes left, Westminster got a few shots off, all saved by sophomore goalie Dylan Bak. A minute later, junior Louie Perotti's shot deflected off the goalie and was put in by junior Trevor White to send the Jr. Bills into the third period with a 5-0 lead.

The third period was much like the first two, as the Jr. Bill defense held the Wildcats scoreless and tacked on two more of their own, from Wagner and senior Liam Knobbe, who cleared the neutral zone and rolled the puck five hole on a Westminster goalie who wasn't paying attention, ending the game 7-0

in favor of SLUH.

"It was a big win," said Schwartz. "First game of the season to set the tone."

On Monday, with almost a full roster, the Jr. Bills beat Vianney 8-1 to extend their record to 2-0.

Unlike the first game, the Jr. Bills came out shooting. Junior Nick Corker netted a goal only three minutes in to send the Jr. Bills up 1-0.

The Griffin offense retaliated, but all attempts were shut down by sophomore goalie Brendan Rasch, playing in his first regular season game after missing the game against Westminster.

"I tried to stay in it as long as I could," said Rasch. "Make sure I didn't pay any attention to what the crowd said, and kept my head in it and didn't make any eye contact, just focused on the game."

With 2:55 left in the first, senior John Sieckhaus tipped one in off a nice pass from senior Luke Gassett to send

SLUH up two goals, and then netted another goal with eight seconds left to end the period with a 3-0 lead over Vianney.

The second period saw a sort of lull until Knobbe broke through with three minutes left to make it 4-0.

However, the Griffins finally answered the Jr. Bills with 20 seconds left, getting the puck past Rasch in a scrum to secure their first and only goal of the night.

"I feel good; we had a little lull there in the second period," said Fitzpatrick. "But we got a good team and a good group of boys."

After the goal from Vianney, SLUH poured on the offense, netting goals in the third period from Berger, Wagner, Corker, and junior Joe Winkelmann to give the Jr. Bills the 8-1 victory at Kennedy Ice Rink.

"We kept up the intensity throughout the entire game, didn't let up," said Rasch. "Kept passing the puck, keep-



photo | Courtesy of Mr. Charles Jellinek

Junior Barclay Dale before his school record-breaking race.

ing our feet moving, staying in the right mindset even though we were up by a lot."

As the season starts to get into full swing, leadership will become a very important part of the team and their success. While captains have not been picked yet, Fitzpatrick stressed the need for leadership from all seniors, not just from the future captains.

"We're kind of rotating," said Fitzpatrick. "We're still looking at it, haven't made any final decisions. They don't

need a letter to be a leader. Those guys all have to be leaders no matter if they have a letter on their jersey or not. It takes 25 guys to win this thing."

The Jr. Bills played last night against Chaminade (see Nightbeat), and will face off against Edwardsville on Saturday at 7:30 p.m. at Affton Ice Rink for the first home game of the year.

Soccer exceeds expectations, advances to State quarterfinals for first time since 2013

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back out to Goedecker, who easily tapped it in. SLUH was ahead 1-0 only six minutes into the first half.

"I didn't think we'd go up on CBC first. I thought, if anything, they'd be up on us first and we'd have to recover, but it was nice," said Rudder.

SLUH continued to create scoring chances throughout the first half, and CBC matched them. With 15 minutes left in the first half, junior Billy Hughes fouled a Cadet winger, which resulted in a free-kick chance close to the left corner of the field. However, as the dangerous kick entered the 18-yard box, it was booted away by junior captain Cam Verzino.

CBC continued to create serious scoring opportunities. With four minutes left in the first half, a CBC defender played a perfect through ball between senior Carson Berry and junior Pietro Nicastro that found the foot of a Cadet forward, who powered it past junior goalkeeper Alec Meissner to tie the match at one.

"Right after that goal we knew we had to get another one pretty quickly to put some pressure on them for the rest of the game," said Ditto.

The first half ended in a 1-1 deadlock with both teams fighting for the decisive goal.



Junior Kurt Schumacher sending in a cross against CBC last Saturday. photo | Brendan Voigt

"I was confident because we had six goals in our previous two games," said Martel. "I knew the forwards were really starting to step up. I knew we were going to get chances."

The second half featured a very physical pace, with both sides pressuring the other's defense looking for a crack, but neither squad scored, and regulation ended in a tie.

"We were going to have to fight to win, it wasn't going to be easy at all," said junior Peter Kickham. "Everyone out there was exhausted."

Both sides had serious chances in overtime. SLUH had two major breakaways where victory seemed only a

touch away. Only two minutes into overtime, Kickham headed the ball to Goedecker, who made an impressive run down the middle of the offensive zone, but right as he was going to shoot, two CBC defenders and the goalkeeper closed in on him and stopped the run, knocking Goedecker to the ground. As the SLUH student section screamed for a penalty kick, play continued with no whistle.

The next key chance for SLUH was when junior Stephen LaVigne stole the ball and played a great through ball to Goedecker, who barely got a shot off before being met by the CBC goalkeeper. The

Cadet keeper barely blocked the shot, keeping the score all knotted up with four minutes left in the first overtime period.

"We could've ended it there, but both ways, CBC had some that they missed too. It was really anyone's game to finish," said Ditto.

However, with only 12.9 seconds left in the first overtime, CBC found a crack in the SLUH defense. A CBC defender ran up the middle of the field and chipped a pass to a striker, who outlegged Berry and struck a hard shot just past Meissner and into the left side of the net to end the U. High's season.

"When you've been coaching long enough, there are always games that end that way," said Martel. "I'm not sure I get used to it, but that's just the way it goes."

"I thought it was the best game we played all year," said Kickham. "I thought we were a different team by the time we got into overtime because I thought we were playing our best soccer all year."

The overtime loss was the final game for eleven seniors, including regular starters Trusler, Walter, Berry, and Ditto. Joey Krause, Nic Delgado, and Luke Marcouiller also played substantial minutes throughout the year for the team.

"I was mad for myself, but mainly for the seniors in their last game, it's tough for them," said Rudder.

After losing 20 seniors from last year's 25-3 team, expectations by many were lower for the team. But the team silenced critics, finished 16-9-3, and returned to the State quarterfinals for the first time since 2013.

"I'm proud of what we overcame throughout the season," said Trusler. "Not necessarily negative views, but people didn't really have high expectations for us."

Throughout the season, the starting lineup fluctuated

and Martel used many different starting elevens. The team often went deep into the bench looking for a spark.

"The guys who have come off the bench all year—it's been an amazing thing. Guys have given us good minutes when we ask them to come off the bench," said Martel.

Certain juniors emerged as stars throughout the season, most notably Meissner, who ended the campaign with 13 shutouts, tied for sixth in the state, even though he missed five games due to a fractured hand.

Nicastro and captains Kurt Schumacher and Verzino also had impressive seasons, a sign of hope for next year's success.

"It's encouraging for next year to see those guys step up and fill in," said Martel. "I'm thinking that next year, if they can maintain that level of play, I think we'll be pretty good."

Martel has fond memories of this year's squad.

"I'm gonna remember the captains, I thought they did a really good job," said Martel.

"They tied the No. 1 team in the country (St. Ignatius) after a nine hour bus ride. In terms of being gratified—oh yeah, through the roof. These guys overachieved in my mind. I thought they had a great season."

Dale breaks school record in the 100-yard backstroke

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and Feder. Feder went a 53.59, a time that would have almost beaten the previous SLUH record had Dale not broken it the night before. This stellar time bumped him up to 11th in the state.

In that same race, Dale broke his seed time, the SLUH record, and the hearts of his competitors by posting a time of 52.28 en route to a ninth place finish.

Lastly, the Jr. Bills competed in the 400 freestyle relay, a team consisting of Mattingly, Dale, Jellinek, and Feder. In the best finish SLUH had in the evening, the team

dropped a second and went a 3:14.07, a sixth place finish.

Overall, the team earned 73 points, four points higher than last year's team, albeit placing the same overall.

"I think we all agreed that the competition was harder this year," said Dale. "The times were faster, there were more swimmers, and it was simply a hard year to break top ten."

Looking toward next year, the team is hoping for a top ten finish in state and another undefeated season. With not many seniors leaving the team, things look optimistic.

XC looks to next fall, four of seven varsity starters will return for another season



Sophomore Patrick Hetlage (800) last Saturday at the State meet. photo | Courtesy of John Kelly

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nor ran another great race, placing 122nd in 17:22. He has cemented his role as one of the leaders for next year's team thanks to his outstanding races in the past couple of months.

Senior Thomas Leeker overcame his early nerves, concluding his SLUH cross country career with an impressive race of 17:28, landing him in 137th place overall.

"It was bittersweet. Just being there at the State course with all those people brought the nervous level up," said Leeker. "I still felt pretty good. I was excited to be there, excited to be running in the State meet, which was a goal I had had for a couple years."

After a strong first mile, Leeker had a bit of trouble maintaining the pace being

set by the runners in front of him, and, even though he was losing ground, he continued to battle and make the most of his final race.

"I ran a good race for myself, about 20 seconds off the fastest time I had ever run for a 5K, but it's a little difficult to see people going past you if you're doing the best you can," said Leeker. "I gave it my best, and these were the best runners in Missouri, and each of them had great days."

Freshman Noah Scott came in last for the Jr. Bills in 164th with a time of 18:05. Considering Scott's lack of experience in large meets, this result was certainly one the team was proud of.

"The first time you go into the race it's different. Everyone is good. It's not something you see in all your other

races," said Porter.

There were several State travelers who came up with the State runners, and a few seniors organized for the rest of the runners in the program to come out and support SLUH on the biggest stage of the season.

"That had kind of been our goal the entire year, when I met with a group of guys at the beginning of the year to talk about what we called the return of the blue army, that everyone felt ownership, whether you're the fastest or slowest guy, you felt you were a part of the team," said Porter.

It was no doubt that the blue army had returned, with teammates and parents making signs, painting themselves blue, banging drums, and cheering their team on throughout the race.

"We wanted to bring that enthusiasm for team and racing back to team life, and especially the idea that everyone is a part of it," said Leeker. "I heard (cheering) while I was running and it really helped. It was awesome, one of the best atmospheres at any sporting event I've ever been to."

For Laughlin, Leeker, and Kelly, this State meet was their final race in SLUH uniforms. Each of them have mixed emotions about their careers coming to an end, but they are all grateful for the four years they have been associated with the SLUH cross country program and the friends they have made in the process.

"If I had a good race or a bad race, it was going to be about running for four years being more important than this last race," said Laughlin. "I didn't really hold anything back in that race. It is kind of sad to know it's over."

"It still is registering with me, and I think that's why I have been confused about this last weekend, but I know it's not my last race because I still want to run for the feeling of satisfaction, the daily meditation," said Kelly.

"It's been an incredible ride," said Leeker. "It's been a long four years, lots of miles and hours, but I'm glad to have done it and wouldn't change a thing."

Next season, Burka, Hetlage, Milnor, and Scott will look to follow in the footsteps of the graduating seniors and lead the team back to another State meet.

Hockey Nightbeat

SLUH hockey beat Chaminade last night 6-0 to improve to 3-0 on the season. Senior captain Luke Gassett netted two quick goals to boost them to a 2-0 lead and SLUH never looked back.

Gassett finished with four goals and senior Louis Garavaglia and junior Jack Wachter each scored one.

The IceBills are back in action Saturday night against Edwardsville at 7:30 at Affton Ice Rink.

—Compiled by Nick Gima

Sports Quote of the Week

"Some people want it to happen. Some wish it would happen. Others make it happen."

—Michael Jordan