

XC survives Sectionals, clinches spot at 24th straight State championship

ANDREW MODDER
SPORTS EDITOR

The St. Louis U. High variety cross country team sprinted its way into the State meet this weekend with a third place finish in the Class 4 Sectional 2 race at Warren-ton High School. Rock Bridge took home the Sectional title with a mere 21 points, followed by Jefferson City with 59, then SLUH at 90.

After strong showings at the MCC Championship and Districts, the Jr. Bills were looking to continue that momentum and teamwork they had used to be successful in those races.

"Our general expectation was that we could try and repeat our performance from Districts," said head coach Joe Porter. "We wanted to focus on our one to five gap and keep ourselves in a pack as much as possible."

Going into the meet, Rock Bridge was certainly the favorite to win, but SLUH hoped that it could fight hard against Jefferson City for that second place spot. This could only happen if the team ran as a unit and worked together to fend off other teams, but the Jr. Bills struggled a lot with that.

"We needed to work on pack running, and since we were fragmented, that was a little tough," said senior William Kelly. "I really think we can do that with a bigger, less windy course."

"We had some missteps

Burka didn't run his best race, struggling a little in the second mile, it was still enough for him to earn a medal.

Sophomore Reed Milnor made a huge contribution to the team score as he came in as the third SLUH runner in 28th place. Milnor stepped it up and ran a great race to help out the runners who were struggling, earning a medal for his time of 17:24.

"Reed Milnor fought a heck of a race, finishing third on our team," said Laughlin. "He really stepped up to the plate."

Milnor has been making strides as the season has gone on, and his improvement is evident considering his top three finish on the team in an important and competitive race like Sectionals.

Sophomore Patrick Hetlage finished fourth for the Bills, coming in at 17:39, putting him in 36th place overall. Kelly finished just behind Hetlage in 38th place at 17:40. Though they had a tough day, the rest of the team helped them to focus positively on the next race.

"I think the thing I am most grateful for and that we do really well was using that cohesive team unit because I did not have a very good race, and the guys were telling me to put it behind me because I can beat myself up a little bit. That was awesome," said Kelly.

"We've had a pretty good season so far, and everyone's going to have one bad race, like

together as long as possible throughout the race.

"We are trying to keep it like a normal race," said Laughlin. "There's nothing magic about the State meet, we just have to focus on running together in packs and being aggressive."

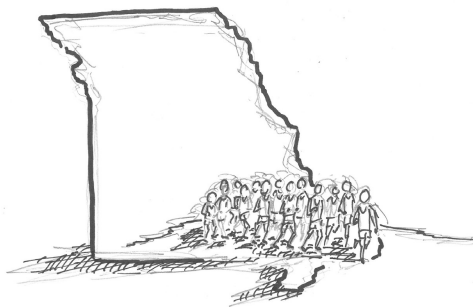
SLUH will be running Laughlin, Leeker, Kelly, Burka, Hetlage, Milnor, and freshman Noah Scott in the State meet. There is not a very high chance of the team winning the title this year due to the amazing depth of the field that qualified.

"We do not have a shot at the title this year. There are just too many strong teams," said Porter. "I would hope for us to finish in the top eight."

For seniors like Laughlin, Leeker, and Kelly, this will be their final race in a SLUH uniform, and they're looking to go out with a bang.

"I am incredibly proud to wear this SLUH uniform one last time, to run with the guys one last time, and I hope we leave everything on the course Saturday," said Laughlin. "I have faith in the underclassmen, so I guess it's time for the last race."

"My goals for State are simply to have everyone run to the best of their ability, that doesn't necessarily mean setting a PR or anything like that, it means you're working with your teammates, doing things like lengthening your strides at the tops of hills, things you have cultivated from your



artwork | Will Kramer

off the line and had trouble grouping up like we normally do and it affected our racing," said Porter.

The course was tighter and featured more turns than the team was used to, and the really big field of runners on a tight course made the problem worse because it was harder to pass other runners.

Senior Joe Laughlin continued to fill the top spot for the Jr. Bills, competing with three Rock Bridge runners, especially in his first mile, which he ran in exactly five minutes. He medaled in seventh place overall with a time of 16:43, claiming the honor of First Team All-Sectional.

"I had a tough race, I definitely left something out there on the course," said Laughlin. "Not my best race, but the team qualified through to State so that's all we needed."

Junior Paul Burka crossed second for SLUH in 17:14, placing 21st. Although

anything else, you just gotta put it behind you."

Kelly especially emphasized the difficulty in passing people and how it was very easy to get trapped for a long period of time because of the tight course and large field of runners.

"I got out a little slow, and I think that was because how windy the course was," said Kelly. "Because of how cramped the field was and how cramped the course was, I let that get to my head."

Seniors Roman Lipinski and Thomas Leeker filled the last two finishing spots for SLUH, with Lipinski coming in 40th at 17:48 and Leeker in 47th at 18:04.

Despite these struggles in the Sectional meet, the team is looking to refocus and get itself in sync and ready for the State meet this upcoming weekend. Porter will continue to stress the importance of

running in packs and staying

time at SLUH cross country," said Kelly.

The Jr. Bills are one of the competitors in the Class 4 race, which kicks off at 10:40 a.m. at the Oak Hills Golf Center in Jefferson City.

Mummified Meissner leads soccer to wins while playing with cast

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be a lot harder, but it's actually not that hard," said Meissner. "I can still move most of my hand, so I'm using what I got."

With the victory against Chaminade, SLUH earned their spot in the sectional final against Jackson at home. Last season, SLUH lost in their sectional matchup against De Smet.

An unfamiliar opponent to the Jr. Bills, Jackson held a record of 19-2 going into the game.

Jackson shocked the stout SLUH defense just three and a

Swim and Dive wins sixth consecutive MCC title

KYLE IRVINE
REPORTER

The Jr. Bills turned up the heat in the water this past week, winning their sixth consecutive MCC championship. The Bills made swift work of the opposing teams—Chaminade, De Smet, Vianney, and CBC—as they scored a grand total of 394 points. This was more than enough to beat CBC, who came in second with 311.

SLUH had a number of good swimmers. Junior Joe Jellinek dropped over a second and a half in his 100-yard breast, clocking a time of 1:05.48 and finishing third.

"For me it's really about trusting the process," said Jellinek. "I knew I had been working hard at practice and my drop was only a matter of having a good taper and then executing."

The great swims from the Bills didn't stop there. The most notable swimmer of the meet was senior captain Thomas Nordmann. Drop-



SwimBills hoist the trophy after winning the MCC meet.

photo | Courtesy of Mrs. Mary-Jo Nordmann

ping time in both his 200 IM (2:10:59) and his 100 freestyle (52:48), Nordmann was an absolute manatee in the water.

The fun of course didn't end there. Once again junior Barclay Dale flexed his speed in the 100 backstroke, swimming a time of 53.60, a new personal best for this exceptional junior, and putting him within half a second of the school record. This swim placed Dale first in the event, beating out fellow teammate and friend Joe Feder, who placed second with a solid

time of 54.68.

"When the crew hits the water, we mean business," said senior sensation Matthew Book. "It is just an awesome sight to see the boys tearing up the lanes into frothy foam as they barrel down the pool."

The swimmers will hopefully continue to tear up the lanes at State this weekend. Prelims take place today starting at 1:30 p.m. Finals will then be held tomorrow, with competition starting at 9 a.m. The action is taking place at Saint Peter's Rec Plex.

25th anniversary of historic conference

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each other with respect and show proper sportsmanship no matter the outcome of the competition.

"As Catholic schools, we all represent something bigger than ourselves and it is important to remember that," said Vianney interim principal and head basketball coach Kevin Walsh. "We may battle on the court or on the field but we come together when we need to."

Another thing that the MCC prides itself in is the talent and quality of all of its coaches, and how they have created and mentored teams that have dominated certain sports and garnered many championships since the MCC's founding.

"I think when you look at football, soccer, basketball, baseball, track, tennis, golf, volleyball, and I know I'm leaving out some sports, this league has dominated high school sports since its inception in 1990," said Wehner.

The conference has

boasted high competition in all of its sports and continues to dominate, priding itself on the exceptional of its teams.

"I was on Maxpreps two years ago, and they rated our

baseball conference fifth best conference in the country, which blew me away," said head baseball coach Steve Nicollerat. "I think it's the most balanced conference for all the sports of all of them. It's good in all of them and I'm really proud of that."

The entire atmosphere of being in the MCC or being a part of an MCC rivalry game is an incredible experience for the coaches and players who have the opportunity to be a part of it.

"I love everything about our league. There is nothing that I don't like about it. You see the top players and teams year in and year out," said Walsh. "If you go back over the years, even if a team is 1-7 or 2-6 in the MCC, they are a dangerous opponent for everyone and usually they give the top-tier teams everything they want."

As you attend sports games this year, keep in mind the tradition and sportsman-

ship of the longest tenured conference that St. Louis University High has been a part of and enjoy the great competition that comes along with being a part of the MCC.

years ago, and they rated our

half minutes into the game. A clear by Meissner resulted in a corner kick for Jackson, and the opposing player put a beautiful ball right onto the head of a Jackson player who headed it into the top right of the net. SLUH was quickly down 1-0.

"I wasn't really worried," said Ditto. "We were pressuring them pretty well."

However, Rudder and the Jr. Bills quickly responded. Just three minutes after Jackson's goal, Rudder's heroics continued when he used beautiful skill moves to beat

multiple Jackson defenders and hit a bouncing shot into the bottom right corner to tie the match at one.

After the game-tying goal, the Jr. Bills never looked back. With ten minutes left in the first half, Schumacher played a great ball to Hughes who finished to put the Jr. Billikens up 2-1 at halftime.

Twelve minutes into the second half, the U. High sealed the victory when Ditto played a through ball to Goedecker, who powered home a shot into the bottom left corner which extended the lead

to two. "We were just thinking 'We can't lose to these guys,'" said Goedecker.

The match ended with a 3-1 victory, which set the stage for a state quarterfinals match on the road against CBC tomorrow at 6 p.m. SLUH has played their conference rival three times this season, losing 1-0 and 2-0 and winning 1-0 in the CYC Tournament final.

"I think we know we can beat them," said Rudder. "We're going to have that mindset going in that we can beat them."