

## Varsity cross country places second at districts



Junior William Kelly in last Saturday's district meet at Blackburn Park.

PHOTO | ANDREW PLUFF

BY JOSEPH REZNIKOV  
CORE STAFF

Frustrated after losing their first district meet in 12 years last Saturday, the St. Louis U. High varsity cross country runners are determined to rebound in Sectionals tomorrow.

Though the team didn't win, their second place finish was enough to qualify for Sectionals for the 23rd year in a row. SLUH placed second to Webster Groves by a single point—33-34.

"We didn't have the competitive fire that I would have liked to see at this point in the season," said coach Joe Porter. "But we advanced and we're going to put that one behind us and hopefully get our revenge on Webster at sectionals."

"It was a rough day, but we've had two or three good weeks in the past and we know that we can get back on it," said junior William Kelly.

Senior Dustan Davidson has been a cornerstone for SLUH throughout the season,

and he once again stepped up and delivered for the team at districts, finishing first overall in the meet with a time of 17:05.00, beating the nearest opponent by an impressive 12 seconds.

"I felt pretty good about my race," said Davidson. "I was right around five-minute pace at the mile mark, which was good. It was kinda tough with no one pushing me at the last mile, so I kind of just cruised in."

Junior Joe Laughlin (17:25) and Kelly (18:00) also ran exceptionally well for the team.

Kelly knows that in order to be competitive at Sectionals tomorrow and state next week, they need to run more as a team pack.

"It's hard running by yourself without any teammates around you, said Kelly. "We just need to make sure we're really working together as a team."

The race was held on Webster's home course at Blackburn Park, so while it was fairly foreign to many of

the SLUH runners, Webster has run it countless times, giving them a slight advantage.

"It's a tight course and it was slow and windy, which made it tough," said Davidson.

Though they didn't have the race that they wanted, the team will move on to sectionals and a shot at qualifying for state as a team for the 24th year in a row.

Though SLUH's runners won't practice on the course before the sectional meet, they will still have a chance to get a look at it in a fairly unconventional way. Last year, Porter rode a bike while wearing a GoPro, and then sped the video up and talked over it. So the team is able to watch and study video to experience the course rather than having to drive out to Warrenton, where the race is being held.

The seven runners that will race at sectionals are seniors Dustan Davidson, Billy Balossi, Joe Butler and Jake Lepak; juniors Joe Laughlin and William Kelly; and freshman Patrick Hetlage.

Butler, who originally planned to run varsity at the beginning of the season, contracted mono two different times over the course of the season and was forced to ease back on his running. But after Butler ran exceptionally well at the Clayton Invitational with a time of 17:22.08, Porter decided to bring him back up to run with varsity at sectionals.

"You never know when a guy is coming back from mono, especially since it was the second time he's had it," said Porter. "He placed fourth overall in the meet which is outstanding considering where he's been."

The group will race in sectionals tomorrow at Warrenton High School. If the team places in the top four, it will move onto state next Saturday.

"We just had one of those days (at districts), but I still am excited and I think we'll be ready to run well at sectionals," said Davidson.

## Hockey season to start on Monday

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With Warnecke between the pipes, the Jr. Bill defense was as dominant as ever. Warnecke's night was highlighted by a brilliant two-on-one save where he kicked the puck back to himself. The Jr. Bill defense was also able to kill off multiple penalties in the final period.

This championship win along with the rest of the Top Hat tournament victories will propel the team into the regular season, which starts Monday night against Westminster at Hardees Ice Plex at 7:40.

The preseason brings distinct challenges such as an unfinalized roster, since players are still involved in fall sports and club players have commitments with their select teams.

"I think the team is looking as good as it can right now because we still have guys not going to practice and full lines not being there," said Pence. "We're still working on the chemistry aspect of it."

The preseason is always a great way to prepare for the season, especially to give new varsity players ice time before the start of the regular season, where games matter and teams look toward the post-season.

This year, the team has several young players on whom they hope to rely throughout the season. Amongst these newcomers are standout freshmen such as defenseman Christian Berger and forwards Justin Jacoby, Henry Wagner, and Gabe Schwartz.

Another great aspect of the preseason is to realize the importance of each game.

"We got to focus on one game at a time," said Pence. "I know we can all be caught up in the CBC games and the De Smet games but there's a few teams that you might not really hear about like Lafayette, they have a good squad this year."

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## JV and C wrap up season, freshman team takes first place at Findley



Junior Thomas Leeker during the Findley Invitational on Wednesday.

PHOTO | BRENDAN VOIGT

BY JOSEPH REZNIKOV  
CORE STAFF

The JV and C cross country teams wrapped up an extremely successful season on Wednesday at the annual Findley Invitational.

JV placed third in the SLUH-hosted event, led by junior Xavier Ludwig (18:04) and sophomore Paul Burka (18:06).

The freshmen took the first place title and scored nearly perfect, with the first four runners to cross the line all from SLUH.

Freshman Reed Milnor was the overall first place finisher on the day with a time of 17:59—an incredible time for a freshman. Milnor was a swimmer in grade school, but decided he would give running a try in high school and couldn't be happier with the decision.

"I had no idea if I was going to be good because I

had never run before," said Milnor. "But it's been a great experience and I've had a lot of fun running and getting to meet the guys."

This year's freshman team has been one of the most successful in a long time, and head coach Joe Porter is very happy with the way the guys have run throughout the season.

"It's been really fun watching Reed and the rest of the guys develop," said Porter. "They just keep getting better and better and it's really fun to watch. The freshman team is one of the deepest we've had in awhile."

"The way we've run and been able to win makes us feel really good," said freshman Patrick Hetlage, who has been running with the varsity team as well as the freshman team on and off this season. "It especially makes us feel good for next year when we're going to be running JV and var-

ity races. This year has been a great stepping stone into that transition of running those races next year."

The JV team also had a very successful season, with the highlight of its season coming in a first place finish at the MCC Championships.

Juniors Thomas Leeker and Roman Lipinski have been leaders of the JV team all throughout the season and Porter is proud of the way that they've carried themselves while leading the rest of the guys.

"(Thomas) is just a great leader and a guy people look up at," said Porter. "And Roman has been consistently one of our fastest guys."

"It's been a really successful season at the JV and freshman levels, but we're going to continue to train and develop over the offseason to be better next year," said Porter.