



SPORTS

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Senior DJ Sansone competes in Mexico for US National rugby team

BY BRAD PIKE
STAFF

Senior DJ Sansone spent part of his summer in Mexico representing the United States in an international rugby tournament. The tournament consisted of three other teams: the Cayman Islands, Mexico, and Jamaica. The American team beat the Caymans in their first match and Jamaica in their second, before losing to Mexico on their home turf in the finals. Despite the disappointing loss, Sansone learned a lot from the experience.

"The Cayman Islands team was mostly kids from Australia and England who moved to the Caymans with their families, so they were a pretty good team. The kids grew up playing the game a lot more than us, so it was cool to get the opportunity to play teams like that," said Sansone, appreciating the difficult competition he encountered.

Sansone has played rugby for St. Louis U. High since he was a sophomore, when he earned a starting spot on the varsity squad. His sophomore year was his first time ever playing the sport, so he had to learn the rules of the game in the fierce competition of varsity.

"I had the privilege of learning the game from really talented guys like Luke Sextro, Buck Chevalier, and a lot more," said Sansone, reflecting on his early rugby days. These talented athletes helped form Sansone's passion for the game.

During his junior year

he went to a camp for rugby at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, where he was then invited to a tryout in Atlanta for the national team. He made the final cut and played in a few tournaments for the national team, where he proved his worth and was called up to the elite national team, USA South Rugby, which was traveling to Mexico.

"It was really cool being able to represent the US and play against other countries. It was really cool to see all the different people from all over the world, and even the people on our team—a lot of them come from all different backgrounds," said Sansone.

Now, he looks forward to the spring season with the Jr. Bills, who came within three points of a state championship last season.

"I'm going to take on a leadership role on the team and hopefully lead through example. I've been working hard in the off season so hopefully it will pay off come season," said Sansone.

Sansone is also looking towards his future in rugby, as he is in the last year of his high school career.

"I am definitely playing after high school, looking at where I might make my next move to play," said Sansone.

Sansone plans on using the connections he formed while playing for the national team to move up in the rugby world. He wants to play in college, and he is thinking about going to school in a country where rugby is more popular and competitive.



Sansone in Mexico. photo | courtesy of USA Rugby South Twitter

New coach, new season: Varsity soccer readies for year under O'Connell

BY CHRIS STALEY AND BLAKE OBERT
SPORTS EDITOR, REPORTER

Youth, team chemistry, and head coach Bob O'Connell are all attracting attention to the new season for the St. Louis U. High varsity soccer team. Spearheaded by senior captains Alex Lehmann and Brian Lymberopoulos, the varsity team looks to show off its young talent and surprise opponents.

In years past, the team has consisted mostly of seniors. With a clean slate, O'Connell diligently selected his team during tryouts.

tryouts.

"I think nine is a lot of seniors. It's not 20 like Charlie (Martel) used to do, but I was looking for the best 20 soccer players," said O'Connell.

With fewer seniors, new opportunities were open for underclassmen to make the varsity squad. While no freshmen made the team, 14 combined sophomores and juniors did. This younger squad requires mixing individual skill and good relationships—and hopefully a good team will explode into a great team.

"We're definitely very young, and a much smaller team than last year," said Lehmann. "We just hope we can get together as a team more in order to play better. The lack of experience of playing in front of big crowds is my biggest concern."

The five returning players—seniors Alex Lehmann, Louis Vacca, Reid Horton, Alex Johnson, and junior Jake McCullar—are adapting to the new team. With all last year's seniors graduated, they are leaders now.

"Last year, the entire starting lineup was full of returning



The soccer team at practice Thursday.

photo | Louis Barnes

players from the year before, and that's not the case at all this year," said Lehmann.

The team was able to test its ability in a jamboree this past weekend against MICDS and Parkway West. Each game was 35 minutes long. There were no scoring highlights since both games ended in 0-0 ties.

"It was the first time all of us were playing in an organized game together, so we had to get comfortable playing with each other," said junior Ethan Joly. "I think there were a lot of nerves in everyone, but we ended up tying both teams. In the end, I think it gave our coaches a good insight on what we need to work on."

After the game, high hopes were present among the team

as they saw each other start to grow closer and play better as teammates.

"I think the team is coming together nicely and we're getting along very well, meaning our chemistry is boosting and this week we could already see our play boosting as well," said Joly.

While getting to know each other better, the team also has to learn to understand O'Connell as the new head coach. After Charlie Martel retired, O'Connell took over in March. O'Connell was aware that his players would need to get to know him better as a varsity coach, and though the process has been slow, the relationship is improving.

"I think that the kids are still trying to get to know me,

which I didn't think would be a problem," said O'Connell. "At my other spots, it seemed easier and relations between me and the kids were formed quicker. The new players are definitely trying to figure me out and the other kids out. The kids work incredibly hard, and I guess that it's taking a bit longer to come together than I expected."

The five returners are especially used to Martel's coaching. But now with Martel gone, the returning players are adapting to this new way to play.

"I think he's doing great," said Lehmann. "He's really pushing us at practice and coaching us to be the best team that we can be."

As the team starts regu-
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Football starts off season with Jamboree, then against Battle

BY NICK PRAINITO
STAFF

The St. Louis U. High football program began its season last Friday with a couple of practice scrimmages. The varsity team traveled to Washington, Mo. to play in a series of short games at Washington High School. Three high school teams competed in a season-opening jamboree: SLUH, Washington, and St. Francis Borgia. The varsity team officially kicks off its season tonight in the annual Running of the Bills game, against Battle High School.

Rather than full-length games, the three schools involved played half-hour short scrimmages, in which offenses were given 18 successive snaps from the line of scrimmage. After one team used its 18 possessions, they switched sides. Though the Jr. Bills fell to Washington and Borgia, the losses are not counted in the record as the jamboree is a pre-season tournament.

"Our goal is at the end of the week on Friday at 10 o'clock, we hope to be 1-0," said head coach Mike Jones on his hopes for the varsity team this year.

Prior to the jamboree last Friday, several of the varsity team players were suspended from play last week for disciplinary reasons. As such, many JV athletes got a chance to play. Though they failed to score in both scrimmages, the Jr. Bills' offense managed to work its way deep into Borgia's territory a few times during the first scrimmage.

But turnovers and defense would be SLUH's downfall. Both opponents won 7-0 and were able to poke holes in SLUH's defensive line, pulling off several large rushes. In addition, an interception thrown late in the second game against Washington put a halt to perhaps the best chance to score for the Jr. Bills.

Looking forward to the rest of the season, the Jr. Bills have a dual-threat offense, with quarterback Kellen Porter and running back Milo Wilson leading the way. Junior running back Cam Clay will also be an asset this year, as he made a couple of exciting rushes last week. Porter averaged 24.8 yards per return in kickoff and punt return spots last year.

Although he mainly called a mixture of passing and running plays last Friday, Jones believes that the offense will be strongly running-based this year.

"We always want to be
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Cross country team starts strong with six of seven varsity returning

BY JUSTIN KOESTERER, PETER LABARGE
SPORTS EDITOR, REPORTER

The Saint Louis U. High cross country team returns six of seven varsity runners, following a disappointing 2017 season finale, 10th place finish at the State meet. Although the only departing senior was Paul Burka, who placed 25th and claimed the last All-State spot at last fall's state meet, the team readies for a long-awaited season.

SLUH has much to look forward to this season. Led by six returning runners

from last year's top seven and head coach Joe Porter, the cross country program emphasizes its bottom-up structure—that the team is built on support, and that each runner, if he takes the program and its values seriously, can make serious improvements to his running, and his life outside the program. SLUH cross country has had a tradition of excellence, winning back-to-back state championships in 2012 and 2013.

The little things do count in the sport: getting enough sleep, drinking lots

of water throughout the day, stretching properly, eating healthy, and not drinking soda all play roles in the development of a runner, both mentally and physically. Because of its long, arduous races, cross country is just as much a psychological and mental competition as it is physical; it tests the reaction to pain, and who can handle it best.

A cross country race is usually a 5-kilometer (3.1 mile) race, and finishers get a number according to the
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Swimming dives into season after second-place state finish last year

BY NICHOLAS DALAVIRAS
AND JOE FEDER
REPORTERS

In the early morning of Aug. 6, the St. Louis U. High swim and dive team gathered for its first practice in the Forest Park Community College Natatorium, eager to dive into the 2018 season. In the wake of last year's nearly perfect season, this year's team is looking to build upon its second place finish at the MSHSAA State

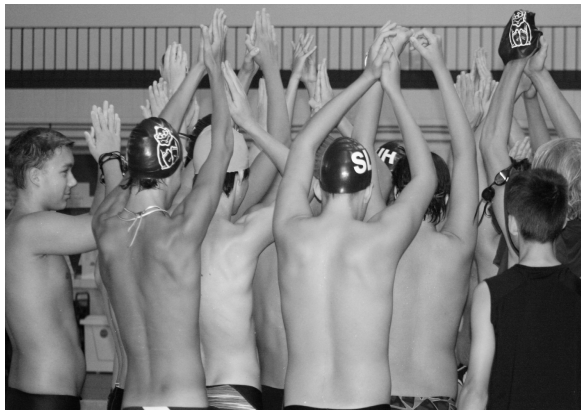
already ranked among the top swimmers in the state in the 100 Backstroke and the 200 Individual Medley.

In addition to the raw natural talent of these new and returning swimmers, three months of Ehret's brutal training regime should be enough to push the team past its goal of 17 individual state qualifiers by November.

In the deep end of the pool, the divers have been pulling together a stellar

valuable purpose of introducing the freshmen to the fast-paced nature of a high school dual meet, as well as helping others learn how to swim tired.

In addition to the Blue and White Meet, the two teams face off after each practice for a fun relay. The relay ranges from the underwater relay, where each team member has to swim a length of the pool underwater, to the Starburst relay, where each



The swimming "White Team" on Saturday.

photo | Daniel Fink

Championship meet with a new state title, which would be SLUH's first since 2003.

In addition to the sub-par air quality in the Natatorium, which caused several lung issues and epidemics of coughing, the Swimbills faced the added chaos of having nearly 50 swimmers on the pool deck for the first week of tryouts, nearly half of whom were incoming freshmen. Due to the historically large number of athletes, this year was the first year that head coach Lindsey Ehret was forced to make cuts since she took the reins of the swim team four years ago. Each returning member of the team was advised to train over the summer and to stay in shape.

"I think that a lot of people contributed to their own improvement because they really tried over the summer," said Ehret. "It really helps us start on a fast foot."

However, with the season beginning a week later than it has in previous years, the team has lost a week of practices.

"There's some adjustments. We normally have two weeks of training before school starts. But we're fast, (and) we're deep," said Ehret.

Despite having lost several seniors who were integral to the success of the team last year, SLUH has ten State qualifying swimmers and divers returning this year, along with several swimmers who barely missed the cut last year.

But perhaps the key to the success of the swim and dive team will be the presence of several outstanding freshmen: Connor Buehring, Ned Mehmeti, Jonas Hostetler, and Cooper Scharff, who is

team as well, growing from just a few divers in the early days of tryouts to a current total of six people. This is much larger than the teams of previous years.

Leading this group, which includes a mixture of new and experienced divers, are junior brothers Gabe and Max Manalang, who, after qualifying for State last year, spent the summer diving. This bodes well for the entire team, as points from diving are often crucial in invitational and the state championship meet since they contribute to the overall score.

Still, such a large team, when coupled with just one diving board, has led to some unique problems.

"It's very crowded," said sophomore Theo Stephens, the final returning member of the squad. "We're all having fun, but our practice times are just reduced."

After just two weeks of training together, the team was split apart into two separate teams for the annual Blue and White Week. This week featured several fun events in which the Blue Team, captained by seniors Joe Feder and Will Slatin, faced off against the White Team, captained by seniors Daniel Fink and Jarrett Schneider. The friendly competition began with an intrasquad meet this past Saturday.

"I was happy with the meet, and we've had some state qualifying times already," said Ehret. "But having it after the Back to School Mixer was maybe a challenge."

Even though several swimmers got as little as two hours of sleep the night before, the meet served the

swimmer grabs a Starburst out of a bag, with each color corresponding to a different stroke. However, the most exciting event of the week was beach volleyball, which saw several members of the Swim and Dive team struggling to compete in a land sport.

"I think that our passion and zeal for volleyball will translate to making state," said junior Josh Brown, a proud member of the Blue team.

Many swimmers have been carried away by love for their team and the desire to win the rubber ducks that are bestowed upon the overall victors from the week. Ultimately, that passion is the point of this week.

"(Blue and White Week) is really fun because it shows our team spirit and camaraderie in trying to win," said junior Jordan Smith.

Looking forward to the weeks ahead, the team is excited for the conclusion of Blue and White Week, which will take the form of an open water swim at Lake St. Louis. The Swim and Dive team will also be continuing on with its regular practice routine until the competition season begins next Friday with a home meet against Francis Howell Central.

"The waters are still. In the distance, though, a commotion: the waves are churning," said one of last year's captains, John Burke, '18. "Is it a school of piranhas, getting ready to feast? Basically. The SLUH Swim and Dive team is coming, hungrier than ever for some big wins."

XC team excels at Alumni Race; positive outlook despite injury

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runners' numbers are counted and the team with the lowest score wins.

SLUH has run one informal race, the annual alumni race, which is held at the SLUH track. Competitors run two miles; the students compete against alumni. The trophy this year went to Matt Lawder, '07. Although four runners on the current team were with him at the mile marker, Lawder slowly pulled away from junior Lucas Rackers and senior Patrick Hetlage, eventually taking the gold with a 9:42 for two miles, edging Rackers by two seconds. Hetlage came in second for the students, and third overall at 9:52. Junior Noah Scott crossed next, in 10:03, and senior Reed Milnor took the students' fourth spot at 10:21. Senior Chris Staley, rounding out the scoring and sealing victory for the students, finished fifth for the student Junior Bills, running 10:35 for two miles.

With the departure of Paul Burka to Purdue, and a tibial injury to junior Adam Mittendorf, a second spot has opened on the varsity squad. Mittendorf's cross training has come in the form of aqua jogging, which is exactly what it sounds like, jogging in water. Mittendorf's injury will see him gone for at least the next couple of weeks.

"We're optimistic. We



The lead pack at the Alumni Race.

photo | Mr. Jim Hetlage

know we're still ten and a half weeks from the state meet and nine weeks from the Findley meet, which is our last freshman and JV invitational. A lot of racing to go. Based off of the alumni results and based off of the workout results that we've seen so far, we're pretty optimistic about what this team can do," said Porter.

Although Mittendorf will miss the first couple of meets, Porter isn't worried in the slightest. When asked how Mittendorf's injury would affect the team, Porter coolly responded, "Pretty minimal. If you're going to get injured, getting injured in the preseason over the summer

where we can crosstrain him, we're talking about Adam potentially only missing one race out of the whole season because of his injury. We're not going to race him; we're going to be smart with bringing him along in the best way we can. But in terms of his impact, Adam's been really diligent about aqua jogging and riding the bike and cross training, keeping his fitness level as high as it's been."

The first race of the season is for freshmen and sophomores only, the O'Fallon Futures Invitational. The first all-team race will be held at Granite City, on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend, on Sept. 3.

Football seeks winning start to season at Running of the Bills

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more of a heavy run team," said Jones, who noted that running plays comprise 65 percent, on average, of plays in football. Jones also mentioned that a strong running game could improve the passing game as well.

"If we are successful running the football, then that sets up our passing game," said Jones.

The defense will be a team effort and will be critical to the success of the Jr. Bills this fall, as Jones mentioned that the they would be playing with an aggressive style.

"We're an attacking defense. We won't be sitting back and reacting," said Jones.

Jones was quick to point out that this wouldn't necessarily become a blitzing defense.

A gap-control defense is Jones' defensive vision for a running play. For example, the Jr. Bills would open a gap in the

defensive line, allowing the opposing team's running back to cut through what would seem to be an opening, only to be tackled by a waiting gap-control defender.

Tonight the Jr. Bills play the Battle High School Spartans from Jefferson City at 7 P.M. at SLUH. Minutes after opening kickoff, 250 screaming freshman will give the stadium a burst of school spirit as they get "baptized in blue." Jones will begin his second regular season at the helm of the SLUH football program with a tough test, facing a program that went 6-3 last season and advanced fairly deep into the State Tournament.

With the start of the season, the Jr. Bills are hoping to improve from their 3-6 record last year. SLUH will be playing nine games this season, as in years past, and five of those nine are at home. The Jr. Bills

will be taking on all of their Metro Catholic Conference (MCC) rivals this season—Chaminade, De Smet, CBC, and St. John Vianney. After tonight, they play next Friday night at Ladue Horton-Watkins High School.

"They're all going to be good games," said sophomore slot receiver Charlie Albus.

Speaking about what needs to improve from last Friday to tonight, Jones noted the mental aspect of the game, saying that there were some mental errors made last week that would be relatively easy to fix, such as moving too early on a play.

"Keep the same intensity, we should be fine," mentioned Jones. "I thought we tackled well and played with great energy."



The football team at practice Thursday.

photo | Louis Barnes