



## Soccer tryouts finally start; games seem close



art | Alexander Deiters

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For the first time in 2020, jerseys were being worn on the St. Louis U. High soccer field on Monday and Tuesday night. No, it was not SLUH vs De Smet or another MCC Rival, but Jr. Bill. vs. Jr.

Bill as tryouts were held for the SLUH soccer program. Originally scheduled for the week of Aug. 12, tryouts had been postponed indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the loosening of restrictions by the city this past week, they're now on.

Before this week, the SLUH soccer program was engaging only in low contact, fitness-related activities. For a five-week period, over 40 varsity hopeful players continued to show up, not knowing if they were going to play or not.

"It's been very difficult

and confusing for everyone," said junior Andrew Thompson. "It's been tough to adjust and we didn't know if we were going to have a season.

However, the lifted restrictions allowed them to go 10 v 10 for the first time this season.

Late Sunday night, an email from varsity head coach Bob O'Connell was sent to prospective players announcing that tryouts would take place the following two days. The worries of Thompson and countless other players of not having a season were put to rest.

When players arrived on Monday, reversible blue and white jerseys that had a unique number on the front were handed out. Teams were then formed of the senior, junior, and invited underclassmen for the 10 v 10 format. These teams competed against each other, giving coaches the opportunity to watch the players in a game-like environment.

The varsity coaches present remained silent, observing and making notes, and O'Connell, although quarantined at home due to COVID exposure, was present at the tryouts via Zoom, examining players from the press box.

The occurrence of tryouts early this week proved to be a satisfying reward to the players who could only stand by and hope for loosened restrictions by St. Louis City.

"After weeks of hard work, it's great to be out here just playing," said junior Jared Thornberry.

Tryouts for varsity players consisted of 20-minute scrimmages, full field from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.. The first game-like scenario players have had in months will prepare them for their upcoming season.

"I think we will be allowed to compete at the earliest Oct. 3 or Oct. 6," said O'Connell. "We are moving quickly and hopefully we have a match this weekend or earlier next week."

As SLUH soccer has already lost well over a month of their traditional fall season, O'Connell believes that varsity will try to compete Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday for the rest of the month, allowing soccer programs in St. Louis to still have a season with ten to 12 regular games.

During the course of the season, health procedures will remain a prominent force even in a game envi-

ronment. As of now, St. Louis City will not allow spectators into the stadium to watch games, and masks will continue to be worn when players are not actively competing.

Although the soccer season has faced many setbacks and is being started much later than usual, all members of the SLUH soccer program remain positive and upbeat about even having a season.

"I am just thrilled that the kids can get an opportunity to compete," said O'Connell. "We've been together since early July, and we are going to have a lot of fun playing into October and hopefully late in November as well."

When the season starts underway, SLUH will be able to play against teams located in St. Louis County and City. However, the status of games that require travel, such as the Kansas City tournament, are still largely unknown. As well as games that are out of St. Louis County, postseason play is also largely a mystery.

SLUH is in the same district as Chaminade and Kirkwood this year, but whether there will be a State Tournament is questionable.

## XC Bills top five teams at the Cowboy Classic to start season

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Two weeks ago, the City of St. Louis allowed low risk high school sports to compete against other teams in the St. Louis area. So SLUH's cross country team was able to race last Saturday at Parkway West's Cowboy Classic against five other teams in the area and is scheduled to compete twice this week, once on Thursday and again on Saturday.

Going into the race on Saturday, head coach Joe Porter's goals were simple.

"For most of these guys, the last time they raced in a SLUH jersey was in late October. It has been a little less than a year since then," said Porter. "I just wanted them to go into this race with confidence and with a competitive mindset and to just embrace the opportunity to race other people."

On the varsity level, the XC bills took first place by a comfortable margin, beating second place Parkway South by over 30 points. With all of the top seven finishing in the top seventeen, the varsity squad really demonstrated

their strength and fitness that they had been working on throughout the off season.

In the top pack, senior Daniel Hogan and juniors Grant Brawley and Baker Pashea led the charge, joined by Marquette's Connor Del Carmen and Parkway Central's Andrew Ahrens, the top runners for their schools. That group went through mile one with a quick average time of 5:10.

"I was really relaxed at that point," said Hogan. "I thought that I was in a pretty good position."

Halfway through mile two, however, Del Carmen and Ahrens made a surge and gapped the SLUH trio. Unfazed, Brawley, Pashea, and Hogan continued to work to the end to seal third, fourth, and fifth place respectively.

"Del Carmen made a beautiful move going up that hill," said Porter. "But, I thought they handled it well. They didn't freak out or panic in any way."

"The main thing in this race was to try to stay really relaxed," said Hogan. "When he made that move, I just

tried to relax and work with the people that I was with."

Senior Hayden Zenor (13th) and junior Justin Glass (15th) crossed the line shortly after, finishing well ahead of the five men from any other team and securing the first place title for the team.

For Porter, the race was a success, but it was only a starting point. Porter hopes that the team will continue to put the effort in and get stronger and faster.

"We had a good race, but I know we can do better," said Porter. "I would say that the gap between our 1 to 5 man needs to be shorter. It was a little over a minute, and I want it closer to 45 seconds."

While SLUH did not win any of the other races, there were still some amazing performances from SLUH racers. In the JV No. 1 race, sophomore Steffan Meyers broke his personal record by 49 seconds and placed third while racing against other schools' second seven racers. Freshman Charlie Murray also had a stellar race, breaking 20 minutes for 5K for the first time and placing



Senior Aidan Byrne leading the pack at the Cowboy Classic.

photo | Coach Jack Sullivan

6th. In the JV Nos. 2 and 3 races, senior Maurice Safar and freshman Nolan Nester had over 2 minute PR's, and freshman Keller Maher took three minutes off his previous time.

"It is always very exciting to see guys PR and see the effort that they are putting in pay off," said Porter. "We saw a lot of people make risks out there on Saturday, and I would say that many of

them paid off."

This week, the program plans to split the XC bills between two different meets, one at Chaminade and the other at Parkway West. At Chaminade, SLUH will compete against CBC, De Smet, and Chaminade, and at the Parkway West Invitational, SLUH will race on the same course as last Saturday against 11 teams around the St. Louis area.

"No matter which race we are racing in, I think that the races are going to be more difficult and challenging," said Hogan. "We are going to more competition and for some of us, we are going to be in tougher, more competitive races. But, I am really excited to see what we can do."