

Sports



XC defends tradition, continues 17-year winning streak at MCC Meet

BY NOAH APPRILL-SOKOL AND PETER JAMES
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The St. Louis U. High cross country team raced two laps of a 1.5 mile loop in hot and uncomfortable weather last Wednesday. Despite the weather, the program successfully defended its long tradition of victory at the annual Metro Catholic Conference meet, earning both team and individual first place titles at every level of the meet.

In the first half of the varsity race, two Chaminade racers, Conrad Hogenkamp and Henry Hardeman held a lead. Captain Daniel Hogan, fighting to regain his team some ground, turned a corner in the second lap, gapped the Chaminade racers and took the lead for SLUH.

"I knew it was still pretty early in the race, and I wanted to see how tired Hogenkamp and Hardeman were before I committed to a strong move," said Hogan. "So, I made a soft push to just see how tired they were. It turns out that was the move, so I went with and really tried to widen that gap between me and them."

Hogan, who won the freshman race four years ago, pushed through the last mile to win the varsity race with a 5K time of 16:48 and become SLUH's

12th runner to win the conference championship. SLUH's other four scorers took fourth through seventh place, continuing the 17-year winning streak at the MCC on the varsity level.

"I was really excited to be a part of the XC tradition," said Hogan. "We have a really long history of great runners that have won at this meet. I am really grateful for all of the racers that have come before me, and it is a great feeling to know that I have successfully passed on this legacy to next year's runners."

For the JV race, each team, with the exception of Vianney, had to split their JV squad in half to accommodate the restrictions in place to minimize the spread of COVID-19. SLUH took the individual and team victories in both heats, and clearly demonstrated that they were the deepest team in the Metro Catholic Conference.

In the first heat on the JV level, a sea of blue and white jerseys flew past the first mile and continued to charge throughout the rest of the race. SLUH, more than just perfect, scored the race (having all 5 racers in the top five places), and put 14 racers in front of any other school's top finisher.

"We found each other in the race, we were working together in the race, and those are things we want to see," said head coach

Joe Porter.

Sophomore Nolan Meara and juniors Sean Kellogg and Francis Alfred led the pack of fleur-de-lis through the first two miles with a time of 11:30, on pace to run almost 18 minutes flat for 5K. SLUH's other two scorers in the race, sophomore Will Riggan and junior Joe LaBarge, were only seconds behind.

"Going into the race, Coach Porter had told us to really compete with our teammates and to push each other during the race, so as the race started I really wanted to assert myself at the front and push the pace," said Kellogg. "Through the first mile, I think the team did a really good job of packing up and running with each other."

In the last miles, moves were made, and the large time gap between SLUH's scoring pack and the rest of the competitors continued to expand. Meara made an incredible move going into the final mile, which gave him the individual victory and a PR by one second. Riggan moved up from fifth to third place, almost catching Kellogg in second.

"A few minutes after the second mile Nolan made a move right before we hit Devil's Hill and while Francis and I tried to stay right on his back, we were falling behind," said Kellogg. "By the time we reached

the top of the hill, we had fallen about 15 meters behind him. We tried to chase Nolan down, but he had an amazing third mile and was able to hold off Francis and I."

"The entire team was more tired that day, but they were not less determined; they still wanted to win and our team won," said senior Keegan Cantwell, who caught two of his fellow SLUH racers to earn himself 7th place.

In the JV 2 race, senior Alex Thro and junior Jack Werremeyer battled for the individual victory for two miles before Thro made a move in the third mile to secure the first place victory. Those two were then followed by juniors Peter James and Sam Quinlivan and sophomore Lionel Moise.

The freshman squad was excited to prove themselves after a fourth place finish at the JV 3 Parkway West Invitational, running against other teams of mixed grade levels. In this race, however, it was a solely freshman race, and the freshmen quickly demonstrated their strong competitive spirit and strength.

"It really comes down to confidence when you compete," said Boyer. "I think this freshman group did just that, and I am excited to race with them in the future."

Charlie Murray took the



Senior Daniel Hogan racing to the finish line. photo | Brian Gilmore

individual victory by storm, his second first place finish this season after winning at the Parkway Invitational not even a week before the race.

"I was very confident going into this race. I knew that there was a pretty big chance that I was going to win the race," said Murray. "After winning the Parkway race with some juniors and sophomores in it last week, I did not see any reason why I could not win this race, too."

Murray jumped off the line quickly joined by a Chaminade racer. Together, they battled for first place through the first mile until Murray made a decisive move going up Devil's Hill for the first time.

"He was scaring me a little bit, so I was trying to face him," said Murray. "But, then I realized there was no way he was going to hold this up, so I just dropped back and let it happen. Around the hill, I got him and that was that."

Overall, Wednesday was a very good program day, and the Jr. Bills hope to continue their strong performance this week at Jefferson Barracks, where they will again race Chaminade, De Smet, and CBC.

"It's exciting to see guys running well in those races knowing that we only have so many few races to begin with, and only a few races left," said Porter.

Swim and dive remain undefeated, hope to increase state qualifiers in coming weeks

BY CARTER SPENCE
STAFF

The St. Louis U. High swim and dive team coasted to another victory, taking down Fort Zumwalt West and Liberty in a tri-meet last Tuesday at St. Peter's RecPlex. The Jr. Bills broke open the lead early and never looked back, earning 160 points to second place Fort Zumwalt West's 92.

SLUH placed first in 11 of the 12 events. After SLUH had several historic performances in their last competition, a quad-meet victory, the stakes were not as high, but there was still much to be excited about.

"Usually after a big invitational, it's tough to swim as well as you did with the lack of practices," said head coach Lindsey Ehret.

Senior Eli Butters, for the second consecutive meet, just barely missed on replacing a school record in the 200-yard freestyle. Butters improved his time from the previous meet, and although missing on the record, he was still the source of praise from Ehret.

"When you're beaten down and tired and racing at that speed, it's a great spot to be at," she said. "It was great to see his consistency."

While qualifying for state is a big piece of the swim

team's puzzle, so is training and keeping those qualifiers ready and in shape. Junior Jason Cabra, who has qualified for state in several events, continued his success and consistency with a first-place finish in the 50 freestyle and a second-place finish in the 100 freestyle, just behind Butters.

The Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) met last Monday to discuss plans for a potential state meet, and met again on Monday with the Advisory Council, made up of many representative coaches from the state. An initial possible proposal would condense typically two days of competition, including preliminary heats, into one day. While nothing is finalized, Ehret and her team still have their eyes on the prize: a third consecutive state title.

"We're looking towards the end of the season now, and making the most of what we have," Ehret said.

SLUH, due to graduates, suffered the most losses of any program since last year. Last year's squad featured several experienced senior swimmers, leaving some gaps on the team and opening spots for underclassmen to step up to the plate. Collectively, SLUH is dealing with the loss of seven scorers



The team practicing at Villa Duschene. photo | Nicholas Figge

from state last year, whereas programs like Rockhurst and Lee's Summit West only lost two or three.

As of now, SLUH has six possible scorers qualified for state. Lee's Summit West, on the other hand, has ten, which would present an obstacle for SLUH if others do not qualify. While Ehret expressed some concerns over the disparity between the two programs, she still has lots of faith in the team and their progress over the next few weeks.

"I am confident in our guys," Ehret said. "I am confident we will have many more swimmers qualify for state that have not yet."

With fewer meets than a typical year—especially fast-

paced, competitive meets—each competition takes on added significance. Most races have been held at Chaminade, which is not the best pool for producing the quickest times, according to Ehret.

The team will look to build on its undefeated season on Monday in a dual meet vs. Parkway Central. They will then compete next Friday in another tri-meet vs. MICDS and Parkway West at MICDS.

"It's another great opportunity for the guys to race in a fast pool," Ehret said of MICDS' pool. "There is a difference in the pools—it's crazy. So we have to take advantage of it and add some more qualifiers."

Racquetball set to return in early November

BY JARED THORNBERRY
REPORTER

Racquetball is back! The 14-time National Champions are storming the courts again in preparation for the 2020-2021 season. With the proper COVID-19 precautions, the St. Louis U. High racquetball team is able to start participating in their fall ladder league at Vetta. With the racquetball program having approximately 95 players, the coaches have had to split up the students into three groups but four practices throughout the week based on the placements and seeds from the year before.

"My hope is that we can create fun experiences for people to play the sport of racquetball," said head coach Stephen Deves. "I hope we can have fun playing the sport of racquetball while also being able to do it safely and to do it in a way that makes people feel comfortable playing."

This year, there are over 70 returners and more new freshman players who want to give racquetball a try or have little experience in the sport. The freshman group goes on Sunday nights and seems to be making way for a bright future for SLUH racquetball.

"It's been great," said freshman Vincent Weinbauer.

"It's been nice playing this fun sport that everyone can play and easily learn and it's also a nice opportunity where I can talk to some of the people from the other half of my class that I haven't met yet."

For the team's returning players, competition is fierce as ever, regardless of COVID. Several upsets occurred the first practices. Currently, senior Danny Juergens holds the top position, with juniors Max Telken and Will Shorey not far behind.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, players leave school excited to compete. Even with the pandemic over the summer, players were able to practice and get better, which ranged from working out on their own time, or participating in one of the four SLUH summer camps.

"I was able to play at Vetta this summer through a camp," said Telken. "They screened us every time we came in, kept us socially distanced, and made us wear masks unless we were playing."

Even through the pandemic, the SLUH racquetball team continues to prepare for what could be their eleventh straight state championship. As of now, the season will hopefully start in early November.