

Despite rain, XC takes Granite City by storm, sweeps all 3 races

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CORE STAFF, STAFF

St. Louis U. High's cross country team kicked off their season last Saturday at the rain-soaked Granite City Invitational, on a day where the roster's extraordinary wealth of talent was put on full display.

Since 2016, SLUH has begun its season in Granite City, where a 3-mile course winds its way through the pancake-flat Wilson Park and typically produces very fast times. This year was unlike previous years, however, as rainstorms doused the St. Louis metro area for most of Friday night and Saturday morning, turning the course into a muddy, water-logged mess. The silver lining, however, turned out to be unseasonably low temperatures the rain brought with it, which provided relief for a team that had to spend much of the previous two weeks training inside due to intense heat.

Despite only placing one runner in the top ten—senior Justin Glass, who finished tenth with a time of 15:53—the Jr. Bills took home the team title in the varsity race for the third

straight year in commanding fashion, beating runners-up and Illinois state title contenders Edwardsville by a score of 60 to 91. This low score was made possible without any standout individual performances due in large part to SLUH's ability to run as a pack, something that the team has put a heavy emphasis on in past seasons.

In the end, there was only a 30-second gap between SLUH's highest finisher, Glass, and the fifth finisher, junior Nolan Meara (21st, 16:23), with seniors Baker Pashea (11th, 16:00), Sean Kellogg (19th, 16:18), and Joe LaBarge (20th, 16:22) rounding out the scoring quintet.

Junior Tim Greiner (28th, 16:40) and senior Grant Brawley (29th, 16:44) rounded out the finishers, finishing less than a minute behind their teammates and putting the final touch on what was an exceptional day for the varsity squad.

"It was very good," said head coach Joe Porter, "We talked a lot about focusing our race plan and not worrying too much about Edwardsville and what they do in the race and not adjusting our plans. We just wanted to focus ourselves and

close our gaps, and find each other in the field, which had 41 teams, so it was pretty difficult (to navigate)."

The Jr. Bills' success was not only limited to the varsity race, however, as strong showings in the freshman/sophomore race and the open JV race would go on to showcase the immense depth of the program.

In the freshman/sophomore race, SLUH came away with 52 points, enough to secure a comfortable victory over second place finishers Mt. Vernon, who garnered 75 points. Sophomores Charlie Murray (17:09.3) and Mason Scargall (17:09.6) crossed the line at practically the same time, finishing in sixth and seventh place, respectively, and were followed by sophomores Anthony Zangara (9th, 17:28) and Gabe Sullivan (17th, 17:44).

Freshman Gus Talleur (23rd, 17:48) rounded out the scoring five, with sophomores Noah Evers (41st, 18:59) and Charlie Gray (42nd, 19:00) also running strong races for the Jr. Bills.

In the Open JV race, the SLUH contingent embarked on a display of pure dominance, placing six runners in the top 10



Senior Justin Glass and Grant Brawley leading the pack.

photo | courtesy of Joe LaBarge

and finishing with a rare perfect score of 15, the lowest possible team score in cross country. Juniors Wyatt Seal (1st, 16:54.3) and Will Riggan (2nd, 16:54.8) put on a show, running together at the front, and securing the top two places by a margin of nearly a minute. Juniors Carter Lowe (3rd, 17:44), Lucas Ramacher (4th, 17:54), and Cody Cox (5th, 18:10) ensured that the top five would be exclusively a Jr. Bill affair, with junior Brendan Jones (7th, 18:23) and

senior Alex Mittendorf (12th, 18:36) making up the remainder of the top seven.

This remarkable show of talent has the team's morale at near-atmospheric levels heading into Saturday's Forest Park XC Festival, a meet that consistently draws in some of the top teams in Missouri and Illinois, an event that SLUH has not won since 2009 despite being the meet hosts. This year, FPXC, as it has been dubbed, features a course change from its previous

location centered around Forest Park's Aviation and Archery fields, which is sure to make for an interesting race.

Said Porter, "It's going to be crazy, which is always what we want. I mean, we call it a festival for a reason, we want a festival atmosphere with announcers and music playing and all the craziness that comes with that. We're talking about over 2500 athletes from four states competing across three divisions, and we're in a new part of the

Swim impresses against Howell Central, qualifies for state in several events

BY ALEX WENTZ
REPORTER

Having donned new armor, the St. Louis U. High swim team went to battle for the first time this season against Francis Howell Central last Friday. The Jr. Bills' unrelenting ferocity in the water allowed them to conquer their opponent in dominant fashion, 150-25.

"It kind of felt like normal again," said head coach Lindsey Ehret. "It was our first meet back in (Forest Park), so that was kind of comforting. (It felt) good to have a home pool again. It was fun to see everyone geared up and ready to race new people."

The new squad of Jr. Bills showed immense promise, with many swimmers unveiling the fruits of their labor over the past weeks at practices, which happened six days a week. One of the biggest areas of improvement for the team was the 200 freestyle. Sophomore Kearney Foy claimed first place with a time of 1:54.20, which was

nearly six seconds faster than his previous best.

"(My favorite swim to watch) was Kearney's 200 free," said Ehret. "He was kicking, and he doesn't like to kick, so that had been kind of a roadblock for him in terms of time. To see him drop that much time and to kind of have things click was really cool."

Similarly, junior Brandon Harris shaved off over four seconds from his previous best in the 200 free, earning himself second place with a 1:56.79.

"The highlight for me this meet was swimming the 200 and going sub 2:00 for the first time," said Harris. "It was a huge drop for me."

Another stellar swim at the meet was the 100 fly. Channeling his inner Micheal Phelps, sophomore Mattie Peretz rocketed into the wall after clocking a 1:00.04, over four seconds faster than last year.

While the meet did contain a significant number of time drops, it also showcased the fact that the swim team is competing

at the upper echelon of the state. In fact, the Jr. Bills have qualified for state in five separate events already. Seniors Cooper Scharff and Ned Mehmeti each qualified for the 200 individual medley and are currently ranked second and sixth in the event, respectively. Scharff also qualified in his signature event, the 100 backstroke, an event he took first place in at state last year. In the 50 free and 100 butterfly, senior Jonas Hostetler revealed his sprint skills, making a leaderboard appearance in both events and qualifying for state in both as well.

As a team, the boys in blue made waves in the 200 medley relay. Swum by Scharff on backstroke, sophomore Aidan Brawner on breaststroke, Hostetler on butterfly, and junior Jason Cabra on freestyle, the squad claimed victory and qualified for state in the first swim of the meet, electrifying the atmosphere for the events to follow.

"(The best races to watch) were the relays," said Harris. "I just like the team camaraderie.

I saw people from (all over the pool deck) cheering on everyone's relays."

With one W under their belt, the SLUH swimmers continue to look forward towards the next meet, the Ladue Invitational, taking place tomorrow morning at Ladue High School. With a total of ten teams participating, and an incomplete roster due to conflicts with the ACT, the Jr. Bills will have to embrace the spirit of a hungry great white shark in order to overcome the challenges ahead. The meet will be the new squad's first true test of skill against other competitive teams in the area.

"The goal is a W," asserted coach Ehret. "We're gonna be down significantly because we are missing our divers as well as (some fast swimmers), so it's gonna really come down to those second and third relays. At invites like this, typically, our depth helps us, so hopefully those guys will come through and score some points. It is also just a great opportunity to race more people in a better pool."



Swimmers posing after a dominant win.

photo | Lindsey Ehret

¡Lo Sentimos!

Last week, the Prep News made an unfortunate spelling error. Colombia, the home country of some of our newest exchange students, was misspelled instead as its Missouri counterpart.



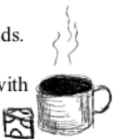
So, as an act of penance, enjoy some fun facts about Colombia:

Colombia is the second most biodiverse country in the world. It also has more species of birds than all of Europe and North America combined.



Colombia is the world's leading source of emeralds.

In Colombia, hot chocolate is commonly served with cheese!



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