

Soccer dazzles in opening district matches, prepared for John Burroughs in finals matchup

BY NATHAN RICH
SPORTS EDITOR

When SLUH soccer first took the field two months ago against Marquette, one thing was solidly on their minds: the District final. Now, after commanding wins in their first two District matches, they’re finally there with some pretty significant momentum behind them. Last night’s 5-0 win against Francis Howell North showed the persistence of the Jr. Bills while Saturday’s 13-0 win showed their scoring prowess. Now, the clock is ticking down to their moment of truth.

The first half of last night’s contest against the Howell North Knights was decidedly in the favor of the Jr. Bills. It was 34 minutes be-

fore the Vikings even gained possession in SLUH’s half. Even then, senior Ben Ridgeway quickly stole the ball and sent it back to the midfield, who had their way early with the Howell defense. SLUH easily shot passes through the final third of the field all game.

The initial problem, though, was scoring. SLUH got few opportunities in front of the net early in the first half and even when they did, a plethora of tall Knights kept the ball from the back of the net.

Senior forward Johnnie Ferrara and junior defenseman Jackson Griffiths-Hill created several opportunities up the right side of the field early, but every centering pass ended up out of bounds. Junior Sam Tieber also got a

few chances in open space in the middle of the field, even one that barely trickled past the goal post. Francis Howell put up a respectable fight on defense, showing SLUH’s forwards an unfamiliar look.

“I was a little bit disappointed with how that game started,” said coach Bob O’Connell. “I didn’t expect them to sit (in the box) as much as they did. I would have trained differently. That being said, we’ve got great players. They adapted and it just took a little bit longer to get the first goal.”

That first goal came from Ferrara, who was finally able to capitalize on the effort. At 16:54 in the first half, he fielded a pass right at the spot Tieber had previously missed from and rocketed a beautiful shot that flew past the

Howell keeper. The bench erupted as the scoreboard read 1-0.

Four minutes later, SLUH struck again. This time, senior captain Tyler Van Bree knocked a head ball into the back of the net, bringing the score to 2-0. At this point, with some offensive success as well as a near total ball possession, it began to feel that the game had been sealed, which was just what the team had been hoping for.

“(Francis Howell) needs to be another statement win,” said Van Bree before the game. “We should have it put away by half time. That’s my personal goal and I think that’s the team’s goal as well.”

Van Bree’s hopes came true later in the first half when senior Stephen Saladin scored the third goal of the game off a quick assist from Kevin Cooney. Moments later, that stat line reversed and saw Cooney knock in a shot off an assist from Saladin as both sprinted upfield through the box.

The two goals put SLUH up by 4 after 40 minutes of play. Saladin had more than just the goal and assist to celebrate, though. This past week, he was invited to play

in the 2021 High School All American in Knoxville later this year. Saladin will be representing the West in a match that features some of the top players in the country.

Even as the temperature quickly dropped last night, the Jr. Bills stayed hot in the second half. Eleven minutes in, junior Lucas Hammond scored from outside the box, adding SLUH’s fifth goal of the night. The Jr. Bills, now playing with a majority of their starters on the bench, held on to the shutout and won 5-0.

Last night’s win came off a brutal defeat of Hazelwood Central in their first District game last Saturday. From the start, it was clear that the game would not be close. SLUH’s forwards came out swinging, especially Van Bree. He opened the scoring with a head ball into the back of the net early in the first half. In the following minutes, Van Bree went on to score the first three goals of the game, completing his hat trick.

Before the end of the first half, the Jr. Bills had added 10 more goals, enough to put the game away after just 40 minutes by mercy rule. Junior Kevin Cooney also notched

three goals for SLUH against Hazelwood, making it their second hat trick of the game.

Several players, including senior Jacob Lenley, junior Tommy Reh, and junior Davis Ragan, scored their first goals of the season. Altogether, the Jr. Bills’ combined score of 13 goals ties their most of all time.

Van Bree was happy with the start, but he was well aware that the next games would be tougher.

“We need to know that games going forward are not going to be like that. But, yes, I do think it was good. We got everyone in and we got everyone used to the District feeling,” he said. “It was a solid way to start.”

One game that will certainly not be like that will be the District final this Saturday against John Burroughs. O’Connell, though, is confident in his team, regardless of opponent.

“The whole year the goal is to win Districts and I’m excited that these kids put themselves in a situation to get that,” he said. “I don’t think (opponent) matters. We will play anybody that’s in our path these next four games and just go out and play.”



Junior Kevin Cooney scores against Francis Howell North.

photo | Michael Urbanski

Congratulations to senior forward Stephen Saladin who was selected to the 2021 All American Game in Knoxville, Tenn. on Dec. 11

Cross Country lands second at District; team qualifies for State

BY SEAN KELLOGG
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REPORTER

This last week has been an eventful one for the SLUH XC team as the JV and C teams capped off an amazing season at Findley, while the varsity squad took second place at Districts, continuing their State qualification streak.

The majority of the team ended the season last Wednesday at the Findley Invitational. Both the JV and freshman teams were able to obtain a perfect score in their respective races, making for a great end to the season.

The freshmen kicked off the day with a very impressive pack at the front of the race. Gus Talleur finished second overall with an impressive time of 18:31. Following Gus was George Donahue (3rd; 18:54) and Logan Phillips (4th; 18:55). Mason Lauber (5th; 18:56) and Gavin Smith (6th; 18:56) rounded out the top five for the freshman. In total the freshman medaled 14 runners and capped off a great season.

The JV team followed the freshmen with another impressive race, complete with the second SLUH perfect

score of the day. Junior Will Riggan was the race champion, running an amazing race and finishing with a time of 17:14. Following Riggan was sophomore Mason Scargall (2nd; 17:21) and junior Nolan Meara (3rd; 17:42) who ran very well to place in the top three. Rounding out the scoring for the Jr. Bills was junior Tyler Barks (4th; 17:46) and senior Flynn O’Connell (5th; 17:50). The team had the top 12 runners in the JV race and medaled 17 total runners. Medaling just one senior in the top five, the racers proved themselves a part of a promising future for the Jr. Bills.

“It was a great way to end the season, and even though the times were a bit slower than expected due to course conditions, it was really impressive to see our whole group go straight to the front,” said Porter. “It was a great way for the seniors to finish out their cross country careers and gave us a lot of confidence looking to the future in later seasons.”

While the majority of the team’s season ended on Wednesday, the varsity squad had a day at Districts, qualifying for their 29th State ap-

pearance in a row, the longest streak of any team in Class 5. A very tight race with Kirkwood led to an exciting day.

The Jr. Bills travelled to Hillsboro on Saturday to compete in the Class 5 District 1 meet and took home the second place team title, falling just three points short of Kirkwood. Despite the cold weather and muddy conditions the team was still able to run very well, continuing their streak of state qualifications. Senior Sean Kellogg (3rd; 16:19) led the way for the Jr. Bills, running a very impressive race, coming in front of Kirkwood’s top two. Closely following were seniors Baker Pashea (6th; 16:31) and Grant Brawley (7th; 16:36) both earning first team all district honors along with Kellogg. In addition, Justin Glass (12th; 16:53) earned a second-team all district honor. Rounding out the scoring for the Jr. Bills was junior Tim Greiner (26th; 17:09), scoring for the varsity team for the first time in his cross country career. Charlie Murray (32nd; 17:25) and Joe LaBarge (33rd; 17:27) rounded out the varsity contingent on the day, both narrowly missing

medal positions (top 30).

The Jr. Bills did a great job of placing their top three in the lead pack of the race and competing throughout the entire race. Even though they fell short of Kirkwood, the Jr. Bills were still able to bring home an impressive five medals and score 54 points.

“I really liked how our top three went straight to the front because it showed

that we weren’t scared to put ourselves up there with some of the top runners in the state and even though our back half faded in the latter half of the race, we are still very optimistic going into state next week” said Porter. “Our only goal that day was to qualify and we did just that, continuing the streak of going to state for longer than Coach Lally has been alive.”

The team will leave to-



Senior Joe LaBarge leading the pack at Cross Country Districts.

photo | courtesy of Joe LaBarge