

Cross Country sees consistency in Parkway Invitational, claims MCC Championship for 19th year in a row

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The St. Louis U. High cross country team showed its deep talent once again this past Saturday, this time at the Parkway West Dale Shepherd Invitational. The varsity team took on competition from O'Fallon (Ill.) and some District rivals, but still swept three of the races with a very close second place finish in Varsity. Although the team is still far from perfect heading into the final month of the season, the positive results—at least six runners received medals in each race—experienced at Parkway West indicate that the runners are beginning to hit their stride as the push for the postseason looms.

“I'm happy that the team came away with victories in three of the four races. By adding the sophomore race in this meet, it is an opportunity for our program to show off our depth,” said head coach Joe Porter. “We lost a close meet on the varsity to a very strong O'Fallon team, but that will give us the focus we need to improve over the next couple of weeks.”

On the cool morning at Living World Methodist Church in Wildwood, the races were kicked off with the varsity squad, who took a close second place to O'Fallon, falling just four points behind the Panthers' total of 29. Such a low score was achieved by placing three runners before SLUH's first, something that proved difficult to overcome. Still, the tight knit SLUH contingent finished close together with a 1 to 5 finisher split of 21 seconds. Each varsity runner took home a medal and the team as a whole had a 31 second faster split compared to its performance at last year's meet.

The Jr. Bills' first finisher was senior Nolan Meara, who finished in 5th place with a time of 16:46 and led three more runners to the top 10. Following in a pack were senior Tim Greiner (16:52; 6th), senior Carter Lowe (16:57; 7th), junior Charlie Murray (16:58; 8th), freshman Jaden Elgin (17:07; 12th), sophomore Gus Talleur (17:19; 18th), and senior Wyatt Seal (17:34; 23rd).

The next race was the sophomores, and they didn't disappoint. Despite the loss of Talleur, who was running in his first varsity race, the remaining sophomores didn't back down and secured a perfect score of 15 points, earned by placing the first five individual finishers. With a dominating finish, the Jr. Bills placed six runners before the second place team even had their first finisher.

The win was led by sophomore race champion George Donahue with a time of 17:17. The close following scorers consisted of Alex Bendaña (2nd), Gavin Smith (3rd), Patrick Jones (4th), and Ethan Bognar (5th). Then SLUH medaled four more by way of Logan Phillips (7th), Rowan Lemp (10th), Otto Reitenbach (15th), and Jesse Heater (22nd).

This was SLUH's fourth consecutive sophomore division championship at Parkway West, and had the sophomore team raced in the varsity race, they would've secured sixth, once again showing the impressive depth of the Jr. Bills.

"I think we performed really well," said Donahue. "We started out fast and I made sure to get to the front of the pack and hold that lead for the entire race without dropping much time in between mile splits. We absolutely crushed it. It was a huge day for the team overall with fast times and multiple medals. The day really displayed how deep and skilled the team really is."

In the freshman race, the team took home the program's third straight freshman championship at Parkway West. Nick Ahlheim was the first finisher, finishing in 4th place with a time of 18:31. Jake Fitzpatrick (19:15; 8th) and Tristan Kujawa (19:26; 10th) both finished in the top 10, and Preston Eash and Hendrix Fyvie also put in strong finishes to round off SLUH's victory against Fort Zumwalt West. These top five finishers all finished in under 20 minutes, which is an amazing accomplishment for a freshman team on such an unfavorable course.

As the sixth and seventh place finishers, Martin Miller (20:21; 23rd) and Ben Schnieder (20:33; 28th), ran personal records races to aid in the victory. Several additional PRs followed them, including a fantastic one from Alex Juan, whose dash to the finish line generated excitement as Juan shattered the thirty-minute barrier.

Despite a valiant fight from a good Webster Groves JV team, the Junior Varsity division ended the day and claimed the third consecutive JV championship for the program at Parkway West. Early in the race, Anthony Zangara and Charlie Gray were the front-runners. However, just before the two-mile point, Zangara began to draw away and finished first in a time of 17:26, earning him his first-ever race championship. Senior Brendan Jones led the rest of the team with 17:41 for 3rd to ensure the victory, followed by juniors Charlie Gray (17:45; 4th) and Noah Evers (18:15; 5th), senior Tyler Barks (18:46; 8th), junior Matthew Musial (18:54; 10th), and seniors Nicholas Purschke (18:54; 12th) and Joel Miller (19:21; 18th), rounding out the incredible day.

Yesterday in the MCC Championship meet at Jefferson Barracks Park, varsity claimed their 19th straight conference title, comfortably winning with 22 points. Meara took the individual conference crown with a time of 16:51. In the JV race, SLUH put on a display of utter dominance, placing 20 runners before any other school could muster one; Zangara won individually with a time of 17:12. To round out the day, the freshman team made light work of their race, notching 17 points and placing seven runners in the top 10. Ahlheim made it a sweep of individual championships, as he crossed the line first with a time of 19:07.

A full article covering these triumphs, as well as the team's performance in Oct. 15's Hancock Invitational, will be published in the first *Prep News* issue of the second quarter.