

## Bills march over Red Devils and Mustangs to start season 2-0

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a few minutes into the second half thanks to a quick counter and a string of passes cutting into the box, SLUH had the tough task of playing catchup in front of a large Chaminade crowd in the blazing heat. As time ticked away, the momentum seemed to shift further away from SLUH. To add to the frustration, 11 minutes into the second half, junior captain Grant Locker flew up the right wing and swung the ball to Cooney who answered with a powerful header which was again saved by the Chaminade goalkeeper.

However, freshman Henry Sanders wouldn't let SLUH come up short again. Sanders took advantage of a loose ball from Chaminade's goal keeper and equalized the match.

"It was a good feeling, especially celebrating in front of the Chaminade crowd. It was definitely a goal we needed," said Sanders. "I hope there will be many more to come."

Sanders' goal brought SLUH back into the driver's seat, resuming the dominance seen in the first half. But the Jr. Bills still couldn't break

the tie, and the game went to overtime.

Heading into a golden-goal overtime, there seemed to be no stopping the energy of the Blue Crew, especially with most of Chaminade's student section having left. Blue Crew had already disturbed the game by letting some baby powder leak onto the field which forced the referees to pause the game, but the overtime brought their energy to an all-time high.

"The hype was almost indescribable. To put it in layman's terms, the crowd was so electric that the referees gave us a final warning to settle down or we'd be kicked out," said senior Kyle Verzino. "The baby powder was a genius idea as it kept the Billies smelling fresh in that Saturday afternoon heat."

The first half of overtime felt a lot like the beginning of the game; lots of pressure from the Jr. Bills, but no results. The first period of overtime yielded no goals as both sides looked to end the intense game.

SLUH suffered a scare off the kick to start the second overtime as Chaminade

gained possession and had a breakaway, but junior goalkeeper Chris Lewis made an amazing save to keep the game tied.



art | Colin Schuler

A few minutes later, the opportunity finally came for the Jr. Bills. Cooney received the ball in the middle of the field and turned to play a lofted through pass to Locker, who settled the ball inside the Chaminade box and put the ball past the Chaminade keeper to send the team and spectators into a frenzy. The student section ran the length of the field to celebrate the game winner with Locker in the corner of what used to be

the Chaminade student section. It was a true storybook ending for the Jr. Bills, getting their first victory against Chaminade under O'Connell.

"It was just like any other game. It just happened to be Chaminade, a team that we haven't been able to really have much success against the last few years," said O'Connell. "I was happy that we got to win. But I honestly just was more appreciative of the opportunity to play a quality team like that early in the year and I was happy with how the guys played."

On Tuesday evening the Jr. Bills struck again against

Marquette, this time in Drury Plaza. In the early minutes, Marquette was dangerous on offense, but the strong defensive core of juniors Will Wolfe, Christian Thro, Matt Baldus, and senior Jackson Griffiths-Hill were able to hold them off and retain possession.

Unfortunately, the Mustangs got on a break down the right side, capitalizing off of a good through ball and lucky finish that hit the back of the SLUH net. The goal was a slap to the face for the SLUH defense.

Not three minutes later, on a long throw-in by Marquette, SLUH cleared the ball and senior Joseph Olascoaga played a superb through-ball to Cooney on the counter attack. Cooney outpaced the Marquette defender and broke away, clinically finishing in the bottom corner. The student section erupted and the Jr. Bills were immediately revived. Though the half ended 1-1, the Jr. Bills clearly felt they had another one coming.

Four minutes into the second half, SLUH struck again when senior Jack Hulett took it down the left sideline, dic-

ing the Marquette defense with a give and go with senior captain Sam Tieber. Hulett hit the crossbar, creating the opportunity for Locker to clean up and sneak one past the goalkeeper to put SLUH in front. The rest of the second half consisted of scrappy play with SLUH focusing on holding off an equalizer from Marquette. The Jr. Bills succeeded in maintaining their 2-1 lead with Griffiths-Hill and the defense sweeping away any offensive pushes.

The Bills will look to continue their streak again today at the Drury Plaza vs. Springfield-Glendale.

"We've only played four halves, and we've had some really good moments in terms of creating chances. There's a lot of things we could do in terms of our organization and shape and having more quality in front of the goal and connecting more of our passes," said O'Connell. "I'm excited about these next two games and maybe try to see some new things and see if we can improve on some of the quality against Glendale who has traditionally been a solid team."

## Cross Country underclassmen shine at O'Fallon, varsity ready for Granite City

BY LUCAS RAMMACHER AND  
BRENDAN JONES  
REPORTERS

After four weeks into hot and exhausting daily practices, the freshmen and sophomore cross country runners finally showed their hard work at their first meet: The O'Fallon Futures Meet. This meet started the season with some jaw dropping performances and makes an already hyped Granite City debut even more eagerly anticipated.

"We have a lot of guys that are inexperienced racers," Porter said of the team's goal going into the race. "We want to learn how to race, and to go out and compete against other people. Let's see where we're at because it's still very early in the season. We have a long way to go with nine and a half weeks left in the season. So this race is just a nice starting point for us to see where we're going to continue to improve and get better."

At the meet, the freshmen were led through a proper warmup and drills by the Varsity seven in preparation for the race.

"It's kind of hard to keep 40 guys together in a crazy freshman squad," said senior team captain Tim Greiner. "But I think they all got it together when it became time to race. They were serious and everyone had a good day."

The course, which features a straightaway-laden 2-mile loop that runners complete one and a half times, was almost perfect if it hadn't been for the dry 85 degree weather. But that obstacle was not enough to stop some of St. Louis U. High's underclassmen from having excellent races to

begin their season. The freshmen dominated the race after filling the line with blue, they got away with a second place team finish.

Their race went out quick off the gun with many freshmen runners making their way to the front. SLUH's highest finisher overall was freshman Jaden Elgin, who finished first place with an outstanding three-mile time of 16:17, shattering the previous course record. In only his first race for SLUH, he earned a Varsity letter and blue shirt.

"I felt really high. I felt ready to go. Felt really prepared from a lot of my workouts," Elgin said about going into the race. "I really wanted to get the course record so that was what my mind was set on. I was thinking about the whole race. That's what kept me going and it finished well."

Elgin was followed by a five-man pack of sub-20 minute three miles led by Jake Fitzpatrick, who earned a top-10 finish with a time of 19:12. And as the rest of the pack came through the finish, the team supported each other with Tristan Kujawa keeping the mood high, singing "Oh When the Bills..." immediately after he finished.

"I honestly felt a little intimidated by Jaden and his time, but I knew if I trusted myself in all the work we did, I would be just fine," sophomore race champion Gus Talleur said. "I knew as a team, we were going to absolutely crush everyone."

In the end, the sophomores took the win. Along with Talleur's finish, a big pack of George Donahue (16:33), Gavin Smith (16:36), Alex Bendana (17:01), and Patrick

Jones (17:22) were very close behind.

Tomorrow, the entire team runs at the Granite City Invitational at Wilson Park in Granite

City, Ill. Like O'Fallon, Granite City is a three-mile race as opposed to the more common 5K race, which, coupled with a flat course that features virtually no significant elevation change, often results in fast times.

"We're going to focus on our own team and if we can go out and compete against other people and kind of get used to racing again," said Porter. "Again, for all this year's seniors, it's still their first race of the season so there's lots of guys that are getting their chances to go out."

After graduating five spots in varsity in the spring of 2022, the lineup was a hard decision with this deep of a team. It looks different with returners Tim Greiner and Charlie Murray coming back and the rest with Nolan Meara, Carter Lowe, Wyatt Seal, Will Riggan, and Lucas Rammacher, while not racing at State 2021, have many Varsity and Varsity 2 races under their belts.

The top seven varsity runners will compete in the Varsity race at 9:10 a.m., which will be followed by the freshman/sophomore race, which will feature SLUH's top seven finishers from O'Fallon. All remaining runners will race in the Open Race at 11 a.m.

SLUH will look to continue a recent pattern of success at Granite City, and hopes to take home the team title in the Varsity race for a fourth consecutive year with more outstanding times in each of the races.



SLUH freshmen and sophomores in the O'Fallon meet

photo | Brian Gilmore

## Conversation of the Week Grant Locker, Blue Crew Athlete of the Week

BY AUSTIN WALD  
SPORTS EDITOR

This week I sat down with junior soccer captain Grant Locker, who scored the golden goal in overtime to give SLUH Soccer a win against Chaminade for the first time in five seasons. He was also named Blue Crew's first ever Athlete of the Week.

**Austin Wald:** So big win on Saturday, how'd it feel to end the drought against Chaminade, especially with a goal in overtime?

**Grant Locker:** So good because I've obviously never beaten them before during my three years on varsity, but it felt good to finally score the goal and win the game and get the win for our coach.

**AW:** What was your reaction to the crowd that showed up? Did it motivate you when

the game was stopped because of all the baby powder from our student section?

**GL:** Well, I didn't know if we were gonna have a big crowd to start because Chaminade's crowd was definitely a lot bigger. But once everyone showed up with the baby powder, and obviously if you've seen the picture, the baby powder was kind of going everywhere and the referee had to stop the game. It was pretty cool.

**AW:** You had a big standout season last year, how different do you feel this year compared to last year, especially being a captain as a junior?

**GL:** Obviously, it's a little different because we lost some big pieces last year, but I feel like we're going to be just as good. We've just got to figure out how to play our own way. And then with the leadership piece, I feel

like no one really cares that it's a junior leading us now. So I feel like it's not going to make too much of a difference.

**AW:** You guys had a bit of an early and unexpected exit in last year's district finals, how hungry are you for revenge?

**GL:** I'd say very very hungry because of seeing other people win state championships around us. Obviously we were one of the teams that was expected to win last year. I definitely need that state championship.

**AW:** What team are you most nervous to face this season?

**GL:** I'm gonna go with De Smet just because there's always that rivalry between us being the two Jesuit schools. But I'd say they have a very good team this year so it's going to be a tough game.