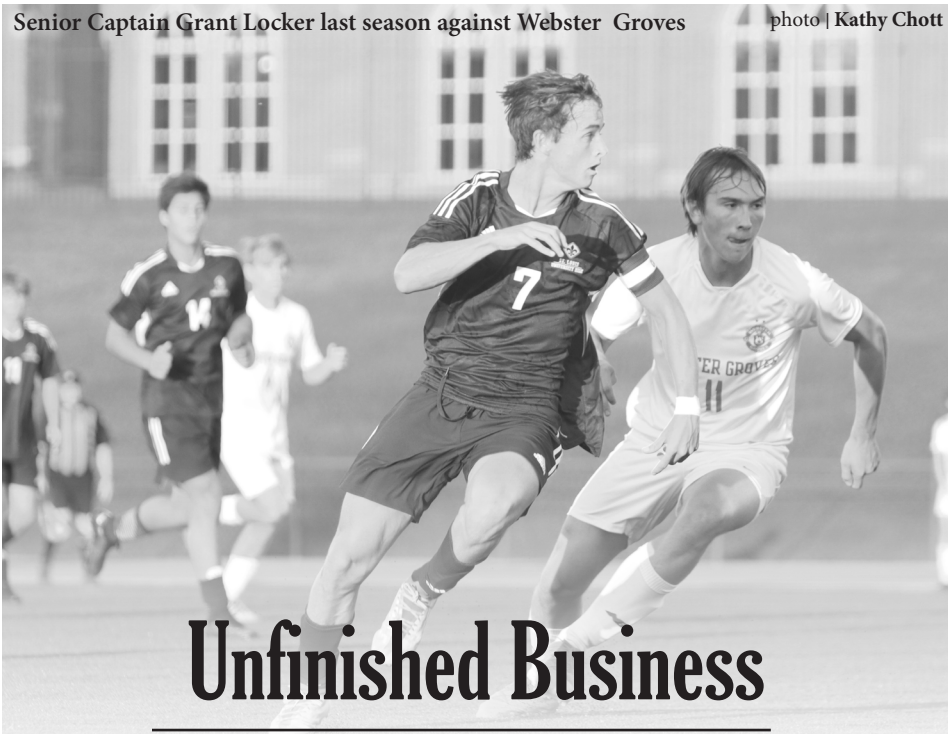


Senior Captain Grant Locker last season against Webster Groves photo | Kathy Chott



Unfinished Business

Soccer looks for a state run after two years of losses in district finals

BY WILL FEISE
REPORTER

Two thousand twenty-three is the year of the Soccer-Bill. After the 2022 playoffs loss against Chaminade, the boys’ minds have been set on one goal: to win state. But this goal does not come without sacrifice. It takes hard work, determination, and a keen mind.

“Man can’t conquer the world, until he conquers himself,” said senior captain Will Wolfe.

Wolfe believes that the mental game is just as powerful as the technical game. The ability to stay concentrated, even during the midst of a 100 degree practice, is a key component to make it far this season.

“The mind is everything. What you think, you become,” said senior captain Christian Thro.

This attitude is apparent throughout the whole team, and was executed during the Jamboree at Gay Field this past weekend. The first opponent of the day was Clayton, who possessed the home field advantage. The advantage didn’t mean much as senior Keegan Kesterson juked the goalie early in the first half and pounded the ball into the back of the net for the first of what promises to be many goals this season.

After Clayton tied it up, senior captain Grant Locker quickly turned the tide of the game. Locker found himself alone with the goalie, and his only option was to slot it home. 2-1. Locker realized he

wasn’t finished, and scored another goal making the final tally 3-1.

The Jr. Bills’ next opponent was MICDS. After valiantly persevering and battling all game, the Jr. Bills settled for a 0-0 tie.

“The boys were buzzing throughout the day. They really turned up against Clayton,” said junior manager Steven Baudendistal.

The Jr. Bills played their hearts out and they have very positive views on the upcoming season.

“We have a nice chance of getting past districts and winning the state final,” said senior Chris Lewis.

The rest of the team shares this optimism. SLUH has not won a state championship in 10 years. Despite numerous

chances such as back to back playoff runs in ’22 and ’23, they have not been able to seal the deal. This year could be the year.

“We have a lot of depth this year and we are really well bonded,” said Kesterson.

Key assets such as Locker, Thro, and Lewis will have immediate impacts on the game. All three have been three-year starters and they are not afraid to control and dominate the turf. The mixture of these three and the new upcoming varsity talent will be a hard team to stop.

The squad’s strong depth should also help tremendously throughout the season. If a starting player is injured, many skilled athletes are on the bench that can close the gap to keep the team rolling. The ability to stay strong through setbacks such as injury is extremely important in soccer, and the Jr. Bills have the backup to stay lethal.

In order to excel in a competitive sport like soccer, players must not only possess skill, but they must possess chemistry. It’s not the type of chemistry in Ms. Chott’s lab, but it’s the personal bond that each player has with one another. The friendship and brotherhood on the team is deep.

The combination of elite skill and beautiful team chemistry makes this squad a force to be reckoned with, and a team to watch this fall. The jamboree was a sneak peak at the power they possess, but there is much more to come in the future. Come watch the first home game against Chaminade on Aug. 26, because senior Mathew Birch says it best: “We have unfinished business.”

SLUH soccer takes on Barcelona and hoists the Manresa Cup

BY VINCENT WEINBAUER
SPORTS EDITOR

Los bills fútboleros han conquistado España. From winning the Manresa Cup to seeing the Cave of St. Ignatius, what didn’t the Fútbolbills accomplish on their trip to Spain this summer?

On the morning of June 7, the St. Louis U. High soccer team arrived in Barcelona, Spain. Not even two hours after their arrival the Jr. Bills, eager to play fútbol, were already on the pitch practicing for their first game the following day against CE L’Hospitalet. However before that match was able to take place, they first got to visit Camp Nou to see the stadium where FC Barcelona plays their home matches.

With all the excitement of the trip, the Jr. Bills were headed into their first game. Unfortunately, the game did not turn out as hoped, as SLUH lost 5-0.

“As we were going on the trip, we all kind of had this mutual feeling that we were going to get demolished,” said senior Dylan Freeman. “After the first game, that feeling did not go away.”

After the heartbreaking defeat, the Bills had the night in Barcelona to hang out and experience the Spanish culture.

The third day allowed for the team to recoup and enjoy Spain, going on a tour of the Barcelona Sagrada Familia. Although the boys had practice in the morning with local Spanish coaches, most of the day was spent enjoying the city and the unfinished cathedral that began construction in 1882.

On day four, the group visited Montserrat where Saint Ignatius left his sword and decided to live a holy life. Like Ignatius, the boys then headed over to Manresa and saw the cave where he spent eleven months creating the

Spiritual Exercises.

By day five, it was time for the cup. The Manresa Cup is a round robin between three Jesuit schools which were comprised of SLUH, FC Pirinaica, and Guardiolaenca AFA. The first match was against FC Pirinaica and the team secured its first victory of the trip by a narrow margin of 1-0.

The second game took place and because of the small numbers in the tournament, a win meant the cup would be theirs. After a hard-fought match from both teams, SLUH was able to slide one in late and secure the victory.

“It was so fun,” said varsity soccer coach Bob O’Connell. “It felt as if we won the World Cup, the people there treated us so well. The game was dramatic, we scored a late goal to win it and it was an amazing experience in and of itself.”

The final two days of the trip were free days where the team was able to spend time at the beach and exploring the city. On the last day, the team faced off in Spain one more time against CD Fonstanta Fatjo. The team was able to use the momentum from the Manresa Cup and swiftly defeated their opponent in a 3-1 final to cap off their memorable trip with a W.

After a week of a culture immersive and soccer combination in Spain, the group’s key takeaway was not raising the cup or being able to see Ignatius’s cave, but the brotherhood that was formed between the young men who conquered Spain.

“There’s guys from all different age groups,” said senior Keegan Kesterson. “Some of us didn’t really know each other that well, but as the days went on we got to forge these bonds with these guys we weren’t close with at all. We all became good friends and made so many great lifelong memories.”

XC has eyes set on state as they move into the season

BY CHARLIE GRAY AND
TRISTAN KUJAWA
REPORTERS

After the first two weeks of the official MSHSAA Cross Country season, St. Louis U. High’s Jr. Billikens seem confident with the spot they are in. After an underwhelming end to the 2022 cross country season, the Jr. Bills look to bounce back with a more successful year. With 100-plus members in the program, this year is one of the largest teams in the program’s history.

Every year in XC, four seniors are voted on as team captains. Since the program has so many underclassmen, it is crucial to have this leadership from the oldest guys on the team to form them into great people and runners. The four senior captains—Noah Evers, Charlie Murray, Mason Scargall, and Anthony Zangara—believe that they can create a positive and uplifting environment for the program.

“It is important to have faith in a program,” said Murray. “Faith is what will allow us to build the community we strive to achieve.”

Unlike many other sports, it can be hard to tell where a cross country program stands in terms of times. In order to

have a better understanding of where the team is, the program had the annual two mile Alumni Race on Friday, Aug. 11. This event not only serves as a pre-season glimpse into how the program is doing, but also as a chance for the alumni to come back to their old team and race with each other. The athletes, however, see this as their first opportunity to see where they are on the team time-wise.

A typical cross country race is five kilometers, or 3.1 miles. The Alumni Race can still provide powerful insight about how the team is performing.

“We always look at things at the beginning of the year as a starting point,” says head coach Joe Porter. “We want to know where we’re at so that we can focus on our improvement.”

Looking at the numbers, the times from the Alumni Race may seem underwhelming, but there are still many positives to take away. Leading the race for the team, freshman Jackson Miller took home the number one spot on the day. Running a time of 9:58 for two miles, Miller averaged under five minutes per mile. This is the first time in program’s history where a freshman ran sub 10:00 for his

Alumni Race.

Following close behind him, junior Gus Talleur ran 10:03. Behind Talleur, a pack of five athletes, Murray (10:11), Evers (10:16), and Zangara (10:13), and juniors George Donahue (10:15) and Alex Bendaña (10:16) all finished within five seconds of each other. The 1-7 split of only 18 seconds is a very strong positive that the team looks to carry into the season.

Overall, the program understands that there is a lot of work to be done, but fully trusts that they will be in good shape when it matters.

In addition to a successful start, the program also welcomes two new coaches, coach Chris Staley ’19 and coach Charlie Hatch.

Hatch, from the town of Nashville, Ill., is still awestruck by the sheer numbers the program has.

“I came from a very small town where we had a really kind of skeleton crew” said Hatch. “And this is just the polar opposite here. This is just one hundred guys running in an incredible program.”

Having run Division 1 cross country at Cornell, Hatch looks to provide unique insight to the team. He looks for team success on the course this fall, but also he takes

pride in developing the program to create strong young men.

“Coach Hatch brings much needed support to the team,” said Evers. “He also brings a personal connection as he converses with many of us on the team at practice.”

Staley, working as an ASC, is glad to give back his time to the team he once ran on.

“I’m really excited to be back helping out cross country,” said Staley. “I was a runner in my time at SLUH. And it’s a really special program. And I’m just glad to give back to it.”

With Staley running in two state championships during his time at SLUH, he hopes to guide the program to the state podium this November.

“I have enjoyed getting to know Coach Staley,” said senior captain Anthony Zangara. “I am confident that he can bring energy to the coaching staff and team as a whole.”

With the first races less than a week away, the SLUH Cross Country program looks to succeed on every level. With new coaches and new teammates, the possibilities are endless for this program, but two things are for sure, brotherhood will be built and there will be No Egos.



Team after winning the Manresa Cup.



Team at mass in Manresa.

photos | Brock Kesterson