

Letter to the Editors: Walking to School

May 16 2025

Athlete of the Week: Ivan Kennedy

May 16 2025

Man at the Masthead: Missey's humble service at Prep News spans quarter century

May 16 2025

Keyword Search



Search

SPORTS

Cross Country opens season with high hopes powered by elite depth

Otto Reitenbach and Tristan Kujawa, Core Staff, Staff Aug 23 2024

The St. Louis U. High cross country program is back again, looking to follow up their third place finish at the 2023 state meet with eyes on a top podium finish. Hopes are high, as the Jr. Bills return four of the seven state runners from last season, including the fastest freshman in Missouri cross country history, sophomore Jackson Miller.

A staple of SLUH's successful program has been strong offseason training. Throughout the whole offseason the Jr. Bills have individually run hundreds of miles, all in preparation for the season to come. This is the mark of an amazing cross country team.

In the 1990s, just as the program began its reputation as a regional power, a group of top Jr. Bills began to train through the winter, and eventually the summer. This set a precedent for future generations of runners. Nowadays, while other programs may have had a small handful of year-round runners, the SLUH cross country program has dozens of these dedicated runners, and the depth of that training will prove itself throughout the season.



English

Along with Miller, the Jr. Bills return a talented young core. Senior captains Gus Talleur (personal record of 16:09), Alex Bendaña (PR of 15:57), and George Donahue (PR of 15:45) will look to lead the charge throughout the season. Consistently scoring on last year's varsity squad, this group from the class of 2025 poses a strong threat to any roster from across the state.

They're backed up by an impressive field of juniors, with Jaden Elgin (PR of 16:36), Hendrix Fyvie (PR of 16:57), Jake Fitzpatrick (PR of 16:54), Tristan Kujawa (PR of 17:08), and Nick Ahlheim (PR of 17:09), all looking to join the top seven and make an impact for this program. While this contingent represents the leadership of SLUH cross country, the Jr. Bills have a pack of young runners eager who are also eager to compete.

The generational Class of 2027 adds to the depth of the squad by having five members who all had PR's under 17:45 in their freshman year. Sophomores Luke Hartweger (17:33 PR), Michael Luna (16:59 PR), Edmund Reske (17:41 PR), Joe Talleur (17:20 PR), and Ben Yoffie (17:20 PR) managed this feat along with stellar performances in the previous track season to add to their resume.

"It feels so deep it's like looking out on a Great Lake, like Lake Michigan," said assistant coach Charlie Hatch. "You know last year we were like Lake Erie but this year feels like a Lake Michigan year."

The new members of the freshmen class are shining early, as the group has 37 young men who are already dedicating themselves to program.

The depths have also increased on the coaching side, with new assistant coach Peter Dillon '20 who ran in the 2019 State Championship where the Jr. Bills placed second.

"I just want to give back to the team that made me who I am today," said Dillon. "This team really took me from a young boy to a young man and a lot of the values like hard work and being honest are instilled within me today and I just want to give that back now"

The freshman and sophomore squads take on their first race Sept. 4 at the O'Fallon Futures Invitational while varsity will begin its season Sept. 7 at the notoriously fast Granite City Invitational.

