

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

It's coming home! Cross Country wins FPXC for second straight year

Otto Reitenbach and Tristan Kujawa, Core Staff, Staff Sep 20 2024

The St. Louis U. High varsity cross country team was dominant again last Saturday, winning the Forest Park Cross Country Festival (FPXC), for the second straight year. With two teams running in the varsity race—one took first place, the other 11th—SLUH showcased both amazing depth and blazing fast top-end speed.



English



Joe Talleur powers through his race. Photo | Clark Davis

FPXC is a massive meet, with 30 teams in the top boys varsity division alone. An updated course added a large 400-meter home stretch to finish right near the starting line, putting an emphasis on the final kick. This level of competition is one of the biggest in the region, and the Jr. Bills were up to the task.

“The meet lives up to the hype,” said assistant coach Peter Dillon ’20. “You got tent city pretty close to the start right near the river basin and there is never a shortage of spectators throughout the course.”

Not only was there a large number of racers, but top competition was present, ready to prove themselves. The Rockhurst Hawklets entered the day as one of the fastest teams in Missouri, and they intended to prove it again on the Jr. Bills’ home turf.

From the opening gun, the top pack opened fast. The Jr. Bills had two runners in the fastest group after one mile: sophomore Jackson Miller and senior Alex Bendaña, both coming in around 4:52.

Unfortunately, the Hawklets had the pace to match. Rockhurst seniors Henry Acorn and Andrew Davis were neck-and-neck with the Jr. Bills. Teamwork was on the SLUH’s side, however, as their varsity depth gave the Bills a 61-91 lead a third of the way into the race.

Despite an evenly matched top group, the tight team running of the Jr. Bills gave them the edge, with senior Gus Talleur and sophomores Michael Luna and Ben Yoffie rounding out the scoring five.

This race was far from over. After two miles, the Hawklets cut the lead down to 19 off of massive gains by Rockhurst freshman No. 3 runner Jack McGovern. The Jr. Bills continued to run strong, maintaining their placement within the pack, but the Hawklets continued to compete.

Combining into the finish, Benton senior Gabriel McLain held off the second place Acorn for first place, winning in a 5K time of 15:14. Miller followed up as the first Jr. Bill finisher at 15:24 for third place. Bendaña snagged seventh (15:38) and Talleur was a third SLUH finisher under 16 minutes (15:53).

Rounding out the scoring five were Luna (16:11; 20th place) and Yoffie (16:13; 23rd). In total, the Jr. Bills had six runners before the Rockhurst No. 4 runner, solidifying a dominant 79-63 win.

SLUH B, the second Jr. Bill varsity team in the meet, placed 11th. The scoring five of juniors Jake Fitzpatrick (16:37) and Tristan Kujawa (16:52.0), sophomores Nathan Khouri (16:52.6) and Joe Talleur (17:15), and senior George Donahue (17:06) raced admirably against a tough field. This is a wildly impressive feat, beating solid teams like Jackson, John Burroughs and Vianney, a fellow MCC team. This display of depth is a testament to the work this team puts in on every level.

“They get the opportunity to race teams from Illinois, Wisconsin and Texas that we will never see again throughout the year,” said Dillon. “It gives us a great opportunity to go there and compete against some of the best in the region.”

The JV squad looked to match the success of both varsity teams with new leaders coming in the forefront due to the 18 racing in varsity.

“There was a lot of excitement building up to race day,” said junior Brayden Bussmann. “It was really fun to lead warmups and just be one of the lead guys of the pack.”

As the gun was fired, senior Gavin Smith led the Jr. Bills through the first mile at 5:25 in third with Bussmann right behind him at 5:28. Both of these athletes were able to take out the race fast, displaying not only confidence but leadership in their racing.



As the racers came down the closing stretch, Smith was the first SLUH guy to come in at 18:00, an impressive performance coming back from sickness.

“But yeah, so I had pneumonia, and it really took me out for about a week, but after that, it was pretty hard to get back into it,” said Smith. “I really felt the effects for probably two and a half or three weeks, but it was just really nice to get back out there for the first race in a while. I think my fitness kind of stayed around for the most part, but a lot of work still left to be done”

The next Jr. Bill was Bussmann in at 18:16 for 19th place bringing with him two fellow juniors, Brady Vogt (18:25.3) and Jesse Brower-Toland (18:25.5). Behind them to round out the scoring 5 was sophomore Alex Pollaci, who had a breakout race with a time of 18:51 and a huge personal best of 1:21, a feat rarely seen at FPXC. This race tested the program’s depth to new levels, as the JV squad placed 4th in a highly competitive JV field.

“The JV placing 4th is still very respectable,” said Dillon. “It shows we are incredibly deep and a lot deeper than many of the teams in the Midwest region as a whole.”

For SLUH, the freshmen race was the last race of the day, but for the meet it only marked the halfway point with six races still remaining. The freshmen were put up to the test in this race with Festus and Rockhurst also having strong squads. When the gun was shot, freshman Warnicke Beatty took an aggressive lead on the pack with two other talented competitors from Rockhurst and Festus going with him for a first mile of 5:35. The pace remained hot but Beatty and the rest of the freshman squad held their ground well, having a sizable team lead over the competition.

Beatty came in third right behind the two runners from Rockhurst and Festus with a time of 18:20. Freshmen Gibby Fyvie and Owen Williams battled it out for 4th and 5th place in the final stretch with Fyvie coming out on top at 18:54.6 with Williams less than a second behind at 18:55.4. Freshmen, Phin Gilbert (19:13) and Jonah Ebenhoh (19:21) sealed up the scoring five. The freshmen won easily with a score of 27 points as well as taking home 12 of 30 medals available to them.

“Again, it shows our incredible depth,” said Dillon. “We have a bright future looking forward. Warnicke did a great job being bold in his race plan and I think the rest followed.”



With those 6 races still to go in the meet, many of the program's athletes were put to task volunteering from jobs in the concession stand to distributing water at the finish line. This service to the team helped make the meet even more of a success for SLUH.

Now the program shifts its focus to a new race this year, the Festus-Bowles Invitational. With the top runners being held out, the V2 squad looks to set the new, unknown course on fire while the freshmen combine with the JV's to create an even deeper JV squad.

FEATURES

[Letter to the Editors: Walking to School](#)

May 16 2025

SPORTS

[Athlete of the Week: Ivan Kennedy](#)

May 16 2025

FEATURES

[Man at the Masthead: Missey's humble service at Prep News spans quarter century](#)

May 16 2025

FEATURES

[Palazzolo earns third Pulitzer Prize as Wall Street Journal reporter](#)

May 16 2025

[Load More](#)



No material may be reprinted without the permission of the editors and the moderator.



English