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Athlete of the Week: Nick Ahlheim

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SPORTS

Cross Country shows depth and dominates at MCC, Hancock Invitational

Tristan Kujawa and Hendrix Fyvie, Staff, reporter Oct 22 2025

The St. Louis U. High cross country program has been on a hot streak. Two weeks ago they dominated the MCC at Jefferson Barracks Park, capturing their 22nd consecutive varsity title with team wins in the JV and freshman divisions as well. Then, the following week as SLUH raced their V2, they returned to Jefferson Barracks to win the varsity and JV divisions easily at the Hancock Invitational.

MCC

The meet kicked off with the varsity division. The MCC Championship provided a very sharp contrast to the varsity seven's previous two races. While Nike Twilight and Palatine boasted fields with over 400 runners from multiple states, the MCC Championship only totaled 32 runners from the four conference rivals: CBC, Chaminade, De Smet, and Vianney. Despite the smaller field, the seven still had to be on their A game to win their 22nd consecutive varsity championship, and they showed out.

The seven took control of the race as soon as the gun went off. The group continued to move up and by the 800-meter mark, they held seven of the top eight places in the race.



Senior Nick Ahlheim led the group through the mile mark in 4:51—an aggressive opening split, but not unlike what he has previously opened races in. The rest of the team trailed closely behind, as they were all in a very good position to dominate the race. During the second mile, Ahlheim furthered his gap on the field and took control of the race.

“I wasn’t expecting to take the lead from the beginning,” said Ahlheim. “I’m pretty proud of myself that I was able to hold it, and run by myself the whole time as well.”

The determined group continued to control the race, and eventually found themselves holding the top four places during the race, with the remaining two runners not far behind.

After a strong last mile, Ahlheim finished his dominant performance to earn an individual MCC championship with a time of 16:01. Rounding out the podium, senior Hendrix Fyvie (16:15) and junior Ben Yoffie (16:16) finished the race right alongside each other.

The remaining three SLUH finishers were not far with sophomore Warnicke Beatty Jr. (4th, 16:19), senior Jake Fitzpatrick (6th, 16:29), and junior Micheal Luna (7th, 16:53) all putting on very impressive performances.

The group successfully earned the school’s 22nd MCC title with what was one of the strongest all-around team performances in meet history as all six SLUH finishers earned First Team All Conference—a distinction only awarded to the first seven finishers in the race. Additionally, the group scored 16 points, only one point removed from the perfect score of 15, which is only achieved when a team claims the first five places in a race.

The team’s average finishing time of 16:16 is similarly historic, as it’s both the fastest in meet history and over 25 seconds faster than last year. All around, this was one of the strongest MCC performances in recent memory, and is a very good sign for the group going into the postseason.

“It’s just nice to see them go out and execute,” said head coach Joe Porter. “Normally it’s a bit harder when the intensity of the meet isn’t there but I’m really proud of the guys for going out there and battling.”

Building off of the historic varsity performance, the JV race was just as enthralling.



Through the first mile, a sea of SLUH navy blue singlets came striding down the hills. Up front it was junior Joe Talleur and senior Tristan Kujawa leading, coming through in a swift 5:09. Trailing right behind them were senior Jaden Elgin and sophomore Owen Williams as it looked like anyone could take the victory.

Through the halfway point, Kujawa made a definitive move and never looked back, gapping the field throughout the second mile running 10:46 through two miles. Juniors JP Wildermuth and Luke Hartweger alongside Williams were in the hunt coming through at 11:00.

Despite slowing down in his last mile, Kujawa took the crown as the JV MCC champion, finishing in 17:01. With an impressive last mile, Wildermuth was close behind in second with a time of 17:02. Hartweger (17:07; third place) and Williams (17:11; fourth) were next to finish. And finishing the scoring five was junior Cullen Wenger, who continued his conservative racing style and slid up to fifth place with a time of 17:18.

The first 34 finishers in the race were Jr. Bills, highlighting the jaw-dropping depth of the program.

“Thirty-four athletes is remarkable,” said Porter. “It’s a testament to the work that the guys have been putting in.”

The final race of the day was the freshman race. Up front it was freshmen Carter Wagner and Leo Wildermuth breaking away from the pack. Ultimately Wagner pulled ahead, finishing in 17:40 to claim the MCC freshman crown.

“I was really exhausted after the long race,” said Wagner. “But it brought me joy to share this conference win with so many generations who came before me.”

Following Wagner was Wildermuth with a very impressive time of 17:50 for second. Next for the Jr. Bills were a tight pack including freshmen Anderson St. Clair (5th, 19:07), Eddie Rose (6th, 19:11), Andrew Yoffie (8th, 19:13) and Tyler Matthews (9th, 19:16).

The MCC freshman race is usually a telltale sign for the future of the program, and the future looks bright with SLUH once again defending both its individual and team titles in the freshman race. The group truly ended the meet on a high note, putting on one final masterful performance for the evening.



Hancock

The program continued the dominance last Saturday, going back to Jefferson Barracks for the 63rd annual Hancock Invitational. The Jr. Bills dominated the meet taking home team titles in the varsity and JV alongside individual titles in both races.

On a humid morning with light mist, the V2 squad toed the line ready to make it five years in a row of team victories at the meet.

Through the first mile, senior Tristan Kujawa led the Jr. Bills pack coming through in second place at 5:13, with the lead runner having a sizable 11-second lead on him. Behind Kujawa was the rest of the squad with sophomores Owen Williams and Phin Gilbert pushing the pace.

“He was a very good runner,” said Porter. “But I was really excited by the veteran savviness of Tristan Kujawa. I liked that we were able to stay confident and feel it back in, and race very tactically and very strong.”

As the race got difficult with a series of punchy hills and a light drizzle, Kujawa made his move into first and came through two miles in 10:45. The rest of the Jr. Bills displayed incredible pack racing with juniors Wenger and JP Wildermuth now leading the chase pack through two miles in 10:49.

Ultimately Kujawa wouldn't be denied the victory, winning the race in 16:49, snagging a personal best and his second straight win. With an impressive last mile, junior Luke Hartweger moved up throughout the race to finish in 16:55 for third. Rounding out the scoring five was Wenger (16:57, 4th), Wildermuth (17:04, 5th), and Williams (17:33, 7th). These high placing varsity finishes led the Jr. Bills to the win with 16 points for the second straight week, dominating the field.

“Those were the guys racing JV at MCC,” said Porter, “and to be able to still have that success with this group on the varsity level. It kind of shows again the depth of the program and it's a testament.”

Later that morning, the massive JV squad lined up hoping to finish their races before the storm. While SLUH always has a plethora of runners in JV races, this group was particularly deep, as the freshmen also competed in division, hoping to face better, older competitors. The swarm of SLUH jerseys crowded the line, intimidating the other teams with their sheer numbers.



Right from the gun, SLUH athletes took control of the race, with juniors Edmund Reske and Joe Talleur leading the large SLUH contingent. Both clearly had their eyes set on the win and quickly distanced themselves from the rest of the field. After a tight race between the two, Reske pulled away and seemed to be in a great position to win.

However, freshman Leo Wildermuth wasn't going to go down without challenging the experienced Reske for the win. The pair found themselves close down the finishing horseshoe turn, but Reske pulled away with an impressive finishing kick to win the race in 17:24.

"It's nice to know hard work pays off later in the season," said Reske. "I was really happy to have Leo and Joe pushing me hard during the race and actually I was kind of surprised I won."

Wildermuth, en route to his second runner-up finish in a week, ran a time of 17:31—a remarkable time for any freshman. A trio of upperclassmen consisting of senior Brayden Bussman (17:40, third), senior Preston Eash (17:43, fourth), and junior Joe Talleur (17:54, fifth) rounded out the perfect scoring five.

The group's dominance extended far beyond the scoring five, as SLUH athletes claimed all but two of the top 20 places in the race.

At about the same time Reske crossed the finish line, there was a loud lightning strike nearby, sending the meet into a frenzy. Some runners even continued to run well past the finish line into the dry team tent, and ultimately the group was allowed to leave without a formal closure to the meet. While the meet ended in chaos, it was nonetheless a day to be proud of.

"We always want to look at a season as a process of continuing to improve," said Porter. "Even though the season is coming to an end, I think that this group in particular has had a lot of success by fast times and I'm proud of that."

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English