



XC fins blazing fast times, countless PR's at Big River Invitational

Owen Williams and Ryan Kindschuh, Staff, reporter
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The St. Louis U. High Cross Country team wrapped up the JV season this past Thursday at one of the fastest meets of the year, the Big River PR Invitational.

SLUH emerged victorious in both the Varsity and JV divisions despite the fact that the top seven runners were held out for the upcoming district meet. There were a whopping 74 SLUH runners who achieved a personal best on the extremely flat course.



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Junior Joe Talleur crossing the line to claim victory
Brian Gilmore

After a long day of testing for some, and a day off school for others, the ten varsity athletes toed the line, wearing the alternate "jailbreak" uniform. The race got out hot, but quickly spread out, giving the Jr. Bills chances to make moves. By the one mile mark, senior Tristan Kujawa had set himself apart from the rest of the SLUH runners coming through at 5:05. The rest of the Jr. Bills came through in a massive pack, all stampeding by at 5:09.

"We can encourage one another based on the way we race with each other," said head coach Joe Porter. "Guys are willing to jump in and run with their teammates to get the best out of themselves."

Shortly after the one mile split, junior JP Wildermuth, wanting to make a move, called out to junior Luke Hartweger, leading them to move together to put distance between themselves and the other SLUH runners. From here, the SLUH pack continued to spread out, with Kujawa dropping back due to illness.

"I found Luke and really tried to run with him," said Wildermuth. "That was great because we were able to make a big move and catch a bunch of guys."

By the two-mile mark, Wildermuth and Hartweger were both glued to each other's shoulder, embedded in the chase pack behind the race leaders. Senior Brayden Bussmann was not too far behind the pair, in an excellent position for himself in his last race in a SLUH uniform.

"I was trying to have a little fun with it, being my last race," said Bussmann. "The no pressure of this race really helped me to stay locked in."

In the final mile, Wildermuth ended up overtaking Hartweger, closing with an impressive last mile to finish in fifth place with a 5K time of 16:21. Hartweger held on to finish a season best race for tenth place (16:37). Bussman (12th, 16:44) and sophomore Owen Williams (13th, 16:45) dashed to the finish, with Bussmann earning a nine second PR. Junior Cullen Wenger rounded out the scoring five in 14th place with a time of 16:48. The V2 squad ended up taking home 1st place with a scoring spread of just 27 seconds.

Following the varsity race, 94 SLUH runners lined up on the grass, ready to showcase the depth of the JV program to other schools, and to give each runner a reason to look back on their season with pride in their accomplishments.

Right from the gun, the front pack of six SLUH runners showed their dominance by speeding away from the field and holding their position. Led by juniors Joe Talleur and Edmund Reske, this group of runners stayed strong throughout the first mile, coming through at 5:14.

Throughout the second mile, the group broke up, leaving Talleur in front, closely followed by Reske and freshman Carter Wagner. Talleur ended up dashing away from the rest of the field and securing himself a win (16:39), which placed him as the third-fastest SLUH runner that day.

"I had a lot of fun, which was a big difference for me," said Talleur. "The mindset switch was really what I needed to get the win."

For a perfect score of 15, SLUH's JV top five also included Reske (second place, 16:50), Wagner (third place, 16:55), freshman Leo Wildermuth (fourth place, 17:10), and senior Jesse Brower-Toland (fifth place, 17:22).

Wagner and Wildermuth are now SLUH's third and sixth fastest freshmen all-time for the 5K, a hopeful sign for the future.

This weekend, the top varsity squad will race the District 1 State Qualifier meet in Cape Girardeau where they will need to place in the top four to move on to the MSHAA Class 5 State meet on Nov. 7.

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