

# Bulldogs regroup, win cross-country regional

By FRED KRONER  
News-Gazette Staff Writer

The signs were ominous Saturday for Mahomet-Seymour's boys' cross-country team.

The Bulldogs were joined in the Hoopston Area Class A regional by two other state-ranked teams and had to compete without its established No. 1 runner.

An illness has sidelined Grant Iles for the season.

As the 3-mile race progressed, M-S' normal second or third runner, Chad Avery, fell off the pace. He wound up as the team's seventh finisher.

With such obstacles to contend with, most schools would be happy to simply qualify for the next round and use the upcoming week to regroup.

Mahomet-Seymour not only qualified for its own sectional next Saturday, but will enter as the regional champions.

M-S placed five runners in the top 15 and beat third-ranked Urbana University High and No. 14 St. Joseph-Ogden, which tied for second.

Fifth-ranked M-S had 46 points, claiming its third regional in the past nine years. Uni and SJ-O totaled 54.

"We've run without him (Iles) before and the kids had done well," said M-S coach John King. "I felt the others could pick up the slack. We're strong through nine (runners)."

"The rest of them stepped up. This is what I'd hoped they'd do, but the other teams are good. Today, my kids put it together."

Philip Alexander was M-S' leader, placing fourth. The team's other scoring runners were Scott DeWitt (seventh), Neil Banwart (ninth), Josh Smith (11th) and Jesse Schweig (15th).

SJ-O senior Jon Jamison remained unbeaten, winning his 11th consecutive race and coming within eight seconds of the course record. His time was 5 minutes, 19.2 seconds.

Runner-up Ryan Wells, from

## CLASS A CROSS-COUNTRY

Oakwood, was 22 seconds behind. Jamison's teammate, Adam Marriott, was third.

"The course is rugged and the wind is so tough, it's hard to get under 15 (minutes)," Jamison said. "I'm not really too happy, but the main thing was to get business done and worry about the big dogs next week."

Oakwood and Paxton-Buckley-Loda also advanced full teams to the M-S Sectional.

In the girls' division, St. Joseph-Ogden won its third straight regional and Georgetown-Ridge Farm's undefeated freshman, Nichole Brucker, won her 13th race in a row.

Brucker's 12:23.4 time lowered the previous course record by 26 seconds. She finished 38 seconds in front of her teammate, Lindsay Newlin, who was second.

M-S' Jessica Rayburn ran third in 13:05.

SJ-O had four runners in the top eight and six among the top 13 in the 50-runner field.

Spartan leaders were Nicole Goodman (fourth), Michelle Nix (fifth), Jessica Nichols (seventh) and Marcy Miller (eighth).

"I knew we were the team to beat, but you never know what will happen," said SJ-O girls' coach Andy Larson. "I couldn't be more proud of a group of athletes."

Brucker didn't let the cold, blustery conditions provide a mental barrier.

"I think of it (varied weather) as all the same," she said. "If you think of it like any other race, you'll do OK."

"In the regional, I knew it was time to get up to another level."

Brucker is awaiting the expected sectional challenge she'll receive from 1994 Class A state runner-up, sophomore Stacy Sullivan from Petersburg Porta.

"I'll probably be nervous, but I

have to think positive," she said. "I'm looking forward to having a girl stay up there with me."

■ **At Tuscola.** Tuscola's girls made an emphatic statement, taking the top five places in the nine-school field. Tuscola is ranked seventh in Class A.

Patty McDaniel was the winner in 12:39 and was followed by Becky Wetzel, Stephanie Reinhart, Candy Ard and Sara Vest.

The first non-Tuscola finisher was Salt Fork's Kimmy Myers, sixth in 13:18.

Monticello was second, Chrisman third, Salt Fork fourth and Sullivan fifth in the team chase.

In the boys' division, Tuscola's Robert Hanners was the champion. His time (15:55) gave him a 15-second winning margin.

Central A&M won team honors, followed by Chrisman, Unity, Sullivan and Shelbyville.