

# SJ-O's top runner takes one for team

■ Battling illness, Jamison runs SJ-O into state berth

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MAHOMET — Jon Jamison's cross-country season took a turn Saturday.

The St. Joseph-Ogden senior turned it into a mere detour, however, and not a dead end.

Jamison, who had won every race he had entered this season, was physically unable to stay with the leaders in the 157-runner Mahomet-Seymour Class A boys' sectional.

Symptoms he first noticed Friday — a headache and congestion — took their toll.

Less than a half-mile into the 3-mile race, Jamison felt cramping in his chest.

"Then I lost my form and couldn't get my breathing down," he said. "I was feeling weak."

The desire to compete in the state meet as an individual was not what kept him going.

"Twice, I came close to dropping out," he said, "but I thought

about the team. I knew they needed me."

If he didn't know, SJ-O coach Jim Acklin offered encouraging reminders at various junctures in the race.

"I hollered at him to salvage something," Acklin said. "If he dropped out, there was no way we were going anywhere as a team."

Jamison stuck it out and still finished as the team leader. He ran 10th in 16 minutes, 31 seconds. He was 48 seconds behind the winner, Rushville senior Matt McClelland.

SJ-O finished fourth in the 20-school field and secured one of the five team berths for next weekend's state meet.

Top-ranked Petersburg Porta was first (71 points) followed by Urbana University High (96), Mahomet-Seymour (119) and SJ-O (164).

Two area runners, Tuscola freshman Robert Hanners and Chrisman sophomore Ben Rogers placed seventh and ninth, respectively, and qualified for state.

The first area placer was Uni High senior Damian Marshall,

fifth in 16:11.

"He ran well, but four of our top five really stepped up," said Uni High coach Bonnie Moxley. "Andrew Medendorp (14th) had an outstanding race and Matt McClintock (19th) and Chris Gorski (27th) ran their best races of the season."

"We're where we need to be going into state. I hope we can come home with a trophy."

Acklin said the Spartans can also fare well next week.

"We could be a dark horse," he said. "We have the potential to be a top 10 team, but we can't have that much distance (55 runners) between our third and fourth runners."

Following Jamison were Josh Hale (12th) and Adam Marriott (15th). The Spartans' next placer was 1:15 behind Marriott.

Marshall said he derived no extra satisfaction from beating Jamison.

"That was not one of my goals," he said. "The opportunity presented itself to pass and I had to take it. I'm sure he'll bounce back at state."

So will Marshall.

"I need to step it up one tiny level," he said, "and that can be equated with desire. I'm a senior and it will be my last cross-country race. If that can't motivate me, nothing can."

Acklin is confident Jamison will be ready for state.

"It will affect him only to the extent he lets it affect him," Acklin said, "and mentally, he's strong. I don't want to overanalyze the situation."



News-Gazette photo by Darrell Hoemann

Rushville's Matt McClelland pulls away as St. Joseph-Ogden's Jon Jamison tries to stay in contention. McClelland won Saturday's boys' sectional cross-country race at Mahomet. Jamison was 10th.

The top six M-S runners placed between 17th and 38th with just a 37-second split.

Philip Alexander was the leader in 17:44.

He was followed by Neil Banwart (22nd), Chad Avery (25th), Scott DeWitt (29th), Josh Smith (36th) and Josh Mock (38th).