

# Spartan crowd's proud

## ■ SJ-O's Jamison, Uni, Mahomet-Seymour finish with flurry at state meet

By JEFF D'ALESSIO  
News-Gazette Staff Writer

PEORIA — For 364 days and 364 nights, those St. Joseph-Ogden people, so crazy about their cross-country, wait for this day, their day, state meet day.

Seems as though there's always something for the tradition-rich, two-time state champion Spartans to celebrate the first weekend in November.

Saturday, it was Jon Jamison.

About 100 SJ-O backers, including a large contingent of alumni runners, dropped by Peoria's Detweiler Park to watch Jamison turn in the fourth-fastest time among Class A boys at the state meet.

Jamison's 15-minute, 16-second run was the best ever turned in by a Spartan. Only Brian Allen, in 1991, placed as high, also finishing fourth.

"I thought Jon ran an extremely intelligent race," Spartans coach Jim Acklin said. "He just kept working his way up to the front of the pack."

Jamison, a senior, overcame a rough start

and ankle problems to share the area spotlight with the Urbana University High boys, who took third as a team.

"I knew I could get anywhere between first and 20th if I ran well," Jamison said. "Once I got going and I heard the crowd, I got into my rhythm and ran like I could. I got great crowd support from everybody."

Jamison was among seven area boys to earn all-state honors for finishing in the top 25.

Uni High senior Damian Marshall placed 11th in 15:41, Tuscola freshman Robert Hanners 15th (15:45), SJ-O junior Adam Marriott 16th (15:45), Chrisman sophomore Ben Rogers 17th (15:46), Prairie Central freshman Ryan Young 18th (15:48) and Mahomet-Seymour junior Phillip Alexander 22nd (15:55).

Marshall entered his final high school race with a three-prong plan: beat Petersburg Porta's No. 2 runner, beat Normal University High's No. 2 runner and finish among the top 15.

"All three of my goals were fulfilled and I'm more than happy with my performance," Marshall said.

Marshall overcame a serious case of the heebie-jeebies to help Uni High rack up 135 points, third to Porta (86) and Normal University High (108).

"To say I was all sunshine and flowers at

the starting line would be an out-and-out lie," said Marshall, who overtook Porta's T.J. Zimmerman with a strong kick in the end.

The Illineks placed 4 of 6 runners in the top 65, with Andrew Medendorp finishing 30th, Matt McClintock 48th and Chris Gorski 65th.

Mahomet-Seymour wasn't far behind Uni High, its 173 points good for fourth place. The Bulldogs had three runners among the first 50 — Alexander, No. 45 Neil Banwart and No. 47 Josh Smith — and another, Chad Avery, place 61st.

Banwart has been a member of the Bulldogs' varsity for all of two weeks.

"Not bad for a little freshman," M-S coach John King said.

Same goes for Tuscola's Hanners. The freshman, who had beaten Jamison the week earlier at sectional, continued his ascent with an all-state showing.

"We were hoping for him to finish right in the middle of the all-state group," Warriors coach Les Sluder said. "The pressure didn't get to him."

In the Class AA boys' race, Champaign Central senior Brandon Scott ran the best race of his life — a 15:54 that put him 101st overall.

Rantoul senior Jesse Williams turned in a 16:26 effort to place 171st.