

Inspired runner wins boys' title at St. Joseph

By LOU ENGEL

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ST. JOSEPH — Jess Lehman had an instant cure for his early morning doldrums this past summer.

"Every time I felt like staying in bed," the Mo-weaqua Central A&M senior said, "I thought of Robert Hanners."

Lehman was the one who left Hanners thinking Saturday as he took the lead from the outset and never looked back in a wire-to-wire victory over the Tuscola sophomore in the 25th running of the boys' division of the Spartan Classic.

St. Joseph-Ogden's Adam Marriott was third, Sullivan's Luke Standerfer fourth and Urbana University High's Andrew Medendorf fifth.

Mahomet-Seymour's Phil Alexander was sixth and teammate Scott Dewitt seventh as the Bulldogs placed four runners in the top 18 to win the team championship with 62 points.

SJ-O had 102 points to edge champion Uni by three points for second place. Oakwood was fourth with 165.

Delavan/Tremont's No.-1 ranked Class 1A team dominated the girls' race. Senior Bethany Klokkenga was the individual winner as the Panthers scored 40 points to beat runner-up SJ-O by 30 points for the team title. Tuscola was third with 101 points and Mahomet-Seymour fourth at 106.

"I knew I had to have a good first mile," Lehman said after covering the 3-mile course through the streets of St. Joseph in 14 minutes, 57.73 seconds to beat Hanners by 14 seconds.

"You can't mess around in these big meets. I know most of the other guys are faster than me at the end so I like to get a good lead and try to keep it. I'm no 400 runner. I have to be strong and mentally tough to succeed.

"I finished third here last year behind (graduated St. Joseph-Ogden senior Jon) Jamison and Hanners. That was the first of many times Hanners beat me in cross-country and track last season. I never beat him once."

Hanners may be the one doing the early rising after suffering his first loss of the season.

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News-Gazette photo by Robin Scholz

Tuscola's Robert Hanners, left, and St. Joseph-Ogden's Adam Marriott finish their race. Hanners was second Saturday at the Spartan Classic.

"I'm going to have to start running a few extra miles in the morning," Hanners said, "to be ready for him the next time."

Klokkenga broke away at the finish for a narrow victory over Georgetown-Ridge Farm's Lindsay Newlin in the girls' race. SJ-O freshman Amy Roberts was third in 11:51.33.

"I was hoping we would show up as a team and show some consistency the way we did," M-S coach John King said. "I just hope we can build on this. We are right where we want to be at this time."

SJ-O coaches Andy Larson and Jim Acklin were equally pleased with the efforts of their Spartan teams.

"We made a statement today with five runners in the top 25," Larson said of his girls' team. "Freshmen Amy Roberts and Kara Franzen were our first and second runners through the chute (finishing third and 11th in the individual standings).

"Amy Roberts has run like a senior all season. She has no fear of anyone. Kelly Klein also has been consistent all season as our No. 3 runner."