

SPORTS / PREPS

SPARTAN CLASSIC CROSS-COUNTRY



Holly Hart/The News-Gazette

Monticello's Scott Phelps, right, moves past Eureka's Kevin Martin for ninth place Saturday.

Right on track

Hilltoppers perform well against state powers

By FRED KRONER
News-Gazette Staff Writer

ST. JOSEPH — It was difficult for Schlarman's Brian Rohrbach to be disappointed with Saturday's third-place team finish in the Spartan Classic, a meet that featured three of the state's top-ranked Class A boys' teams.

Top-ranked Eureka was the meet winner, and fourth-ranked Cumberland edged No. 5 Schlarman for the runner-up position.

The Hilltoppers have become used to competing short-handed. No. 2 runner Aaron Golden (football) and No. 4 runner Brendan Smith (ACT) were not in Saturday's lineup, but Schlarman still had four placers among the top 23 in a field of 186 finishers.

"In a field like this, that's pretty impressive," Rohrbach said. "Now is the time we need to string together some successive back-to-back good races."

His team won a 10-school invitational Tuesday at North Vermillion (Ind.), and Rohrbach saw "good progression" at SJ-O.

Junior Scott Krapf placed fourth overall in the 2.95-mile street race, beating Eureka's No. 2 runner for the first time. Senior Jeff Miller was 18th, and teammates Josh Fulton and Jacob Trimble were 22nd and 23rd, ending within a second of each other and trailing Miller by

"Miller was an all-stater last year, and (Fulton and Trimble) are just five (places) behind him," Rohrbach said. "I'm very happy overall with how we performed."

Krapf's time (14 minutes, 45 seconds) was six seconds quicker than he ran in the 2003 Classic, when he was also fourth.

The boys' individual winner was Eureka senior Sean Houseworth, whose mother (Patty Plymire Houseworth) is a former SJ-O runner. Houseworth's time of 14:28 gave him a 13-second margin of victory.

Other area schools in the top 10: Mahomet-Seymour (sixth), Monticello (ninth) and Urbana University High (10th), which made the Illinoisrunner.com Class A state rankings this week at No. 15.

Other area runners in the top 25: Monticello's Scott Phelps (ninth), M-S' Justin Sebens (13th), Monticello's Keith Butler (14th) and Uni's Andrew Zukoski (21st), who ran 16:13 and cut his time by 16 seconds from last year's meet.

Sebens and Trimble were the lone sophomores among the top 25.

Phelps' time (15:23) was an improvement of 35 seconds over what he ran last year at SJ-O.

"I've broken through to another

even more," Phelps said.

Monticello coach Jeff Butler said Phelps is showing the one trait that can help ensure faster times.

"Running is so much mental," he said. "You have to believe in yourself and in your fitness level. Scott is pretty serious about wanting to do well, and he watches the little details."

Butler said his son, Keith, is "quietly becoming one of the better runners in the area," and added that Brent Rhodes was one of the Sages' most pleasant surprises Saturday.

Rhodes was 44th overall but fourth among freshmen.

"He's getting used to our training," Jeff Butler said, "and really ran well."

State-ranked Georgetown-Ridge Farm/Chrisman (14th) was without its top two runners. Nathan Warstler aggravated an ankle injury during warmups, and Wes Hornback is out with a hamstring strain.

"It's better to get them healed now and have them healthy later," said G-RF/C coach Tom Kurbartz, whose leader was Reed Morris (56th).

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Spartans set up for a fine future

By FRED KRONER
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ST. JOSEPH — A year ago, the tradition-laden St. Joseph-Ogden girls' cross-country program needed help.

The Spartans, who had four consecutive top-10 finishes at state from 1998 to 2001, were unable to field a team. SJ-O had four healthy runners, one fewer than the requirement for a team score.

Two freshmen have stepped in this year to put coach Jon Jamison's team back in the thick of the competition. And with a thriving junior high program, Jamison said, "we're looking at a bright future."

The present is not so bad, either, for a team that has seven girls. In Saturday's 33rd running of the Spartan Classic, SJ-O had the top freshman and the top sophomore in the girls' 1.97-mile race and placed third in the 30-school event.

Freshman Hannah Hogan was the individual runner-up, six seconds behind Eureka's defending champion Hannah Ehrenhart. SJ-O teammate Jill Purcell, with a strong second-mile surge, finished fourth in 11 minutes, 49 seconds. She was within 10 seconds of Hogan.

"We beat some quality teams," Jamison said, "but the way we've been looking at practice, I thought we had a shot at the top three."

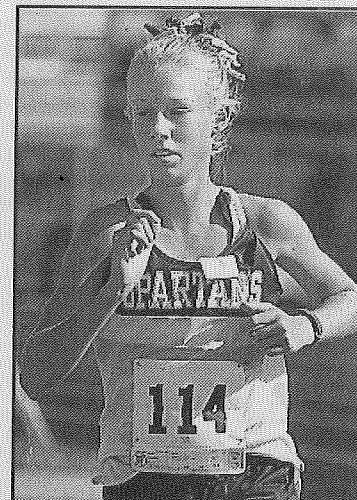
Eureka and Bureau Valley were the top two schools. Other area schools in the top 10 besides SJ-O were St. Thomas More (fifth), Salt Fork (ninth) and Monticello (10th). Urbana University High, which was without four of its top seven runners, ended 12th.

Individually, Monticello's Kerby Waddell was ninth and St. Thomas More's Sarah Roberts 10th in a field of 162 finishers.

Roberts was one of two seniors in the top 20.

Purcell said she woke up "excited" Saturday that the Spartans' lone home meet fell on homecoming weekend.

She was about 15th at the mile mark, but she was



Holly Hart/The News-Gazette

St. Joseph-Ogden freshman Hannah Hogan races to second place in the girls' race.

not discouraged.

"The tradition St. Joe has had gets you pumped up, and I tried to make some moves," said Purcell, who completed the course 30 seconds faster than the eventual 15th placer.

Hogan, who covered the first mile in 5:42, followed a different strategy than at normal meets, which are 3 miles.

"You can't pace yourself as much," she said. "It's more go out and hold on."

Freshman Amber Stierwalt was 33rd, and sophomore Dayna Long — who Jamison said "had an exceptional race" — was 36th. Junior Alexae Stone was 47th.

"Our team was awesome," Hogan said. "The girls really stepped it up."

Uni had runners missing for a variety of reasons: Yom Kipur, the ACT and injury. Freshman Shivani Khanna twisted an ankle at a Tuesday meet and was withheld as a precaution.

"For the crew we had, we didn't do bad," said Illineks coach Doug Mynatt, whose top finisher was senior Alex Ivanova (44th).

St. Thomas More's Cara Feeny was 11th, and teammate Carolyn Rauber was 22nd. Oakwood sophomore Ashley Sermak was 24th, two spots ahead of Schlarman's Whitney Fox.