

Keeble, Mahomet boys win loaded regional



DOUG GILLAM, For The Pantagraph

Alex Keeble never trailed while leading No. 2-state ranked Mahomet-Seymour High School to victory in the University High Class 2A Regional at Normal's Maxwell Park on Saturday. Keeble toured the 3-mile course in 15 minutes, 5 seconds.

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NORMAL — The state cross country meet is supposed to take place once every 365 days.

For boys in the University High School Class 2A Regional, however, there will be three meets involving state-caliber competition in a 15-day span, a gauntlet that began with Saturday's race at Maxwell Park.

The first showdown in the series saw No. 2-state ranked Mahomet-Seymour best No. 3 Metamora, 39-57, while No. 22 U High advanced third (73) along with Normal West (107), Morton (137) and No. 23 East Peoria (153).

Antibiotics helped Mahomet-Seymour's Alex Keeble shrug off a bacterial throat infection and the rest of the 66-man field to win in 15 minutes, 5 seconds on the 3-mile course. Teammate William Wolf was three seconds behind in second.

"Metamora is an incredibly strong team and we were looking forward to running with them," Keeble said.

Eighth-place Bloomington (183) saw its amazing 34-year streak of qualifying come to an end, but the Purple Raiders did advance Austin Bicknell (17th, 16:14) and Jack Doud (23rd, 16:26) individually to next Saturday's 11:30 a.m. East Peoria Sectional.

Giving Mahomet-Seymour a sweep of the individual titles was Lauren Whitehouse (17:55), whose

No. 17-ranked girls team came within a point of No. 11 U High in last week's Corn Belt Conference Meet, but lost to the Pioneers on Saturday, 48-76.

Also advancing to next Saturday's 10:30 a.m. East Peoria Sectional were Washington (86), Normal West (90), Metamora (93) and Morton (150).

Seventh-place BHS (157) missed advancing by seven points, but did qualify Bre Fairley (8th, 19:05), Ellen Golowski (12th, 19:27) and Cassidy Blumenshine (43rd, 21:17).

Keeble, who has won five of his seven races this fall, had trouble breathing, but that didn't stop him from leading all the way through mile splits of 4:52, 5:07 and 5:06.

"I'm so thankful I was able to run that while I wasn't feeling well," said Keeble, who started taking antibiotics on Thursday.

Health issues kept three of the Bulldogs' top five from running, but Coach Neal Garrison hopes to have Andrew Walmer, Brian Butcher and Trevor Hanlon available next week.

Garrison's other scorers Saturday were Jack Hyde (5th, 15:21), Riley Fortune (15th, 16:09) and Ben Crow (16th, 16:11). They extended the school record for consecutive regional titles to four.

"They did what they needed to do," Garrison said.

U High coach Lester Hampton thought his team — led by Eli Hill in fourth (15:19) — looked great.

"We're just trying to get a little bit better each week," Hampton said. "I'm really excited about this tough path that we have (to state)."

U High's tough front trio included Alexander Bruno (7th, 15:27) and Jack Franklin (9th, 15:31).

Normal West was led by Alex Hillegass (12th, 15:55) and Matt DeGroot (13th, 15:57).

In the girls race, Whitehouse never trailed en route to a 42-second margin of victory over Normal West's Sara Piller, who ran a season-best 18:37.

"I kind of backed off in the first 400 and then eased back into my race pace and pushed the middle," Whitehouse said. "I want to get down to about 17:45 and medal at state."

Piller's goal was to run under control.

"I was worried about starting too fast because I get excited," she confessed. "I try to stay reserved for the first mile."

U High won despite having lost star Ashley LaFayette for the season to a foot stress fracture.

"I can't complain at all," said Coach John Neisler. "They ran a great race."

The Pioneer scorers were Shannan Supan (3rd, 18:47), Madigan Landess (4th, 18:49), Advika Kamatar (6th, 18:54), Riley Madix (14th, 19:44) and Ally Shepherd (21st, 19:58).

"We've made 'team' a really big priority with all of our setbacks and injuries this year," Supan said.

Also cracking the top five was West's Andrea Gordon (18:53).

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