

Mahomet-Seymour cross country teams headed to Sectional on Saturday

STORY page B1

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For the Mahomet Citizen



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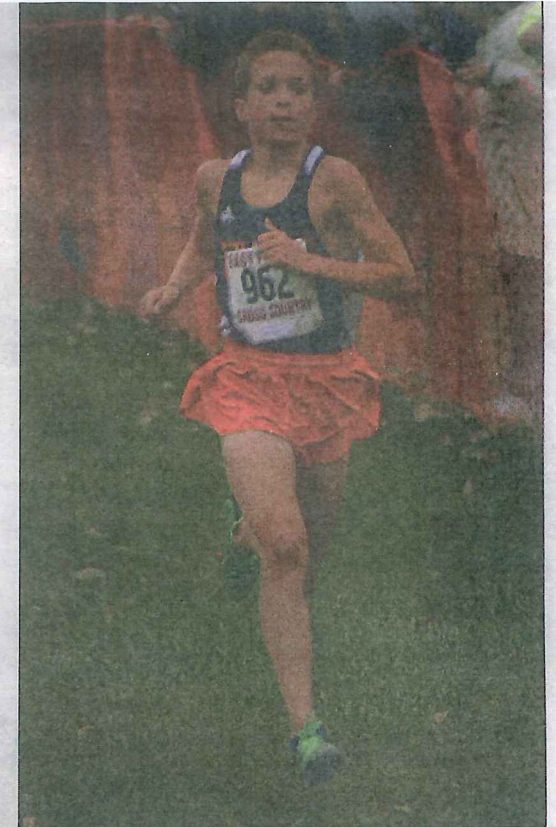
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**Left:** Lauren Whitehouse (#845) leads during Saturday's regional. Whitehouse would finish third overall in 18 minutes, 36.16 seconds. Also pictured are the eventual winner Kari Lalumandier (#860) of Metamora High School and Morton freshman Meagan Moreno (#868).

**Above:** Members of the girls' team snap a selfie under an umbrella on the rainy course in East Peoria.



Dan Chamness/For the Mahomet Citizen

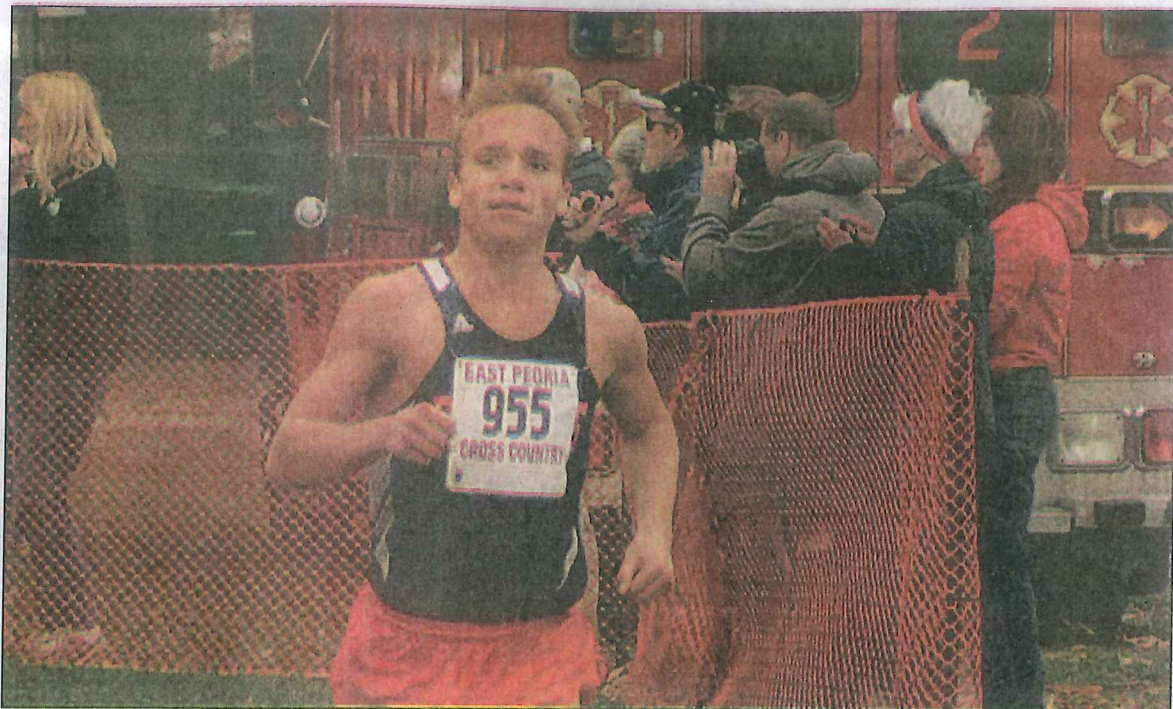


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**Top right:** Bryson Keeble, a Mahomet-Seymour freshman, runs the final portion of the IHSA 2A Regional. Keeble finished the race in 16 minutes, 24.20 seconds, and took 23rd. **Above:** Sophomore Riley Fortune cracks the top 30 at the IHSA Class 2A Regional. He finished the race in 16 minutes, 45.84 seconds.



Dan Chamness/For the Mahomet Citizen

Mahomet Seymour senior Alex Keeble runs to a second-place finish at the Illinois High School Association Class 2A Regional, which was held at Illinois Central College and hosted by East Peoria. Keeble finished in 15 minutes, 2.87 seconds, and led the Bulldogs to the regional title.

# CHASING THEIR DREAMS

## *Team already looking ahead to state finals*

By **JASON BROWN**  
*Citizen sportswriter*

Mahomet-Seymour cross country runner Alex Keeble has collected numerous accolades during his high school career.

But for him, he's missing the most important one: a state championship.

Keeble ran the fastest senior time ever by a Mahomet runner at any meet in 46 years and is currently ranked in the top 50 individuals in the nation.

As the conference meet varsity champion a few weeks ago, Keeble shattered the Corn Belt record and broke the course record with a time of 14:36. Dan Nielsen set the previous meet record in 1990 with a time of 15:03.

To capture the state title, though, Keeble will have to outrun Normal University's Jack Franklin and Metamora's Jake Gillum.

Last Saturday, Franklin won the IHSA 2A East Peoria Regional with a time of 14:57.70, and Keeble followed with a second-place finish at 15:02.87.

Gillum placed third with a time of 15:09.19.

But these runners are not just competing for themselves. They're also competing for a team championship.

From the beginning of the season, Keeble has helped Mahomet-Seymour keep its No. 1 Class 2A ranking, and Saturday the team continued that streak by winning the East Peoria Regional.

Franklin led Normal University's squad, which is ranked fifth in state, to a second place finish, and Gillum helped Metamora earn third place.

Both those schools advanced to the sectional scheduled to be held Saturday in Normal alongside Mahomet-Seymour.

## BOYS XC from B1

"They [Normal] are extremely well coached and have great guys on their team," said Garrison. "I very much admire their program and their runners. Metamora has a great coach as well. He is in the hall of fame."

The Bulldogs' depth has allowed the team to place several runners in the top

ten of each meet, including the seven runners who will be heading to sectionals: Keeble, junior Andrew Walmer, senior Jack Hyde, junior Ben Craw, freshman Mathias Powell, freshman Bryson Keeble and sophomore Riley Fortune.

This the 17-minute mark than ever before.

"In my early years of

coaching, we might have one or two runners break 17," said Garrison. "This year 17 of our runners did that, which is about two-thirds of our team. They all work hard, and it drives the entire team too much more success."

Alex Keeble said he and teammates feed off each other and push each other for better times. He admits the toughest component about cross-country is "definitely the mental aspect of it where self-doubt comes into play. It's a lot more mental than physical in a lot of ways."

But for Keeble, who plans on running at the college level and studying political

science, he thrives on the competition because, simply, "I love the sport," he said.

"I have to credit our entire team for working so hard," said Garrison. "Many teams give up to some degree if they aren't in the top five runners. It is comparable to not making the starters of a basketball team. But the true strength of the team isn't just the 'starters,' but the strength of the entire team."

Garrison believes competitiveness is something runners are born with and considers himself fortunate his runners are very competitive and are willing to train hard to improve.

Keeble and the upper-classmen learned how to train and race from alumni runners and now are training the younger runners to surpass them when they graduate, the coach said.

"These guys are very self-motivated and internally driven," said Garrison. "They have to be self-disciplined to run in the below zero wind chill in the winter with no coach requiring them to run. They have to be self-disciplined enough to run in the 100 plus degree heat index in July when no coach is making them.

"It has been very much my pleasure to get to coach a group of such tough, de-

termined, and self-disciplined young men."

For the next couple weeks, Keeble and the Bulldogs will try to top last year's state performance.

Keeble will try to upgrade from his fourth place finish at the state championship, and the Bulldogs, whose team record is 159-3, want to improve on last year's school-best second-place state finish by bringing the team championship trophy back to Mahomet.

But first, Keeble and the Bulldogs have to advance through the IHSA Class 2A Sectionals at Normal this Saturday.