



## Mahomet-Seymour notes

By Fred Kroner

# Keeping pace with Bulldog cross-country

For a group of runners who move quickly, the pace of Mahomet-Seymour's boys' cross-country program is relatively slow.

Coach Neal Garrison keeps it that way. He doesn't clutter the schedule with multiple meets.

The Bulldogs ran the IHSA minimum six prior to Saturday's regional, which ended with M-S capturing its fifth consecutive regional title in the sport.

It was hardly a surprise outcome for a program which has been ranked No. 1 in Class 2A all season.

Senior Jack Hyde appreciates Garrison's approach.

"The limited schedule is one of my favorite things about the way Coach runs our team," Hyde said. "It is almost impossible for a 15-year-old kid to mentally push himself to the breaking point more than once a week for any duration of time.

"What I see out of teams that run more meets is honestly just crappy performances at their week-night meets, or a quick burn out before the end of the season. I like the way we do things because it has given me the rest when I need it

*"The target on our back has been super-motivating for us."*

**JACK HYDE**

eight years ago.

"I started running because of two influential people in my life: my father and Forrest Smoes," he said. "My dad (Rich) would regularly run 4-7 miles a day when I was growing up, so starting at around age 9, I would go out to the trails with him and try to keep up for about a mile.

"Being a professional athlete, he always dusted me, but those were fun times that taught me to love being outside and getting fresh air. Forrest, who was the No. 1 runner on the junior high team back then, was in seventh grade when I was in fifth and so I just did it because I looked up to him and thought it seemed cool to run with the big kids."

It hasn't always been easy.

— which is often — giving me the ability to hang on until the state meet.”

There’s more than just not wearing down physically. The runners are also staying fresh mentally.

“One big advantage to having less meets is you can have more time home with family and friends,” Garrison said.

Hyde is one of four seniors — along with Alex Keeble, Joey Magyar and Mason McAnally — who have been part of the cross-country program the past four years. They entered high school with high expectations after placing fourth at state in junior high as eighth-graders.

“Starting in eighth grade, several of my teammates and I began to plan out the next four years of our running careers,” Hyde said. “Coming off a state trophy in eighth grade, those plans were very short-sighted and full of pride, but some things we envisioned have actually come to pass.”

Keeble and Hyde were part of an IHSA state runner-up team last November.

Garrison said it’s difficult to gauge the potential in young runners. “We definitely attempt to mentally and physically train our runners to be able to race with the best in our class,” Garrison said. “However, we have no control over how fast the other teams are in the state, so I think it is very hard to accurately predict too far in advance how competitive our teams will be compared to other teams in the state.”

Even so, the coach added, “I did see the potential in the current older group a couple years ago. I also see the potential of our younger runners on the team now and they should do well when they have a couple years of experience. It takes a couple of years to get a runner ready to compete at a higher level.”

Hyde took up running

“The key for myself has been without a doubt my faith,” Jack Hyde said. “There have been countless times where my body has given up and the only thing I had to push me through the pain was the belief that I have been given a gift by God to run and to help others improve. That belief pushed me not to give up, which in my opinion is the most selfish thing anybody can do with a great talent they’ve been given.

“I know faith pushes many of my teammates as well. As a group, I think the thing that pushes us the most is the team dynamic that develops in the middle of workouts. When guys use their breath to cheer on teammates during a hard workout, it builds the bonds between us and makes the younger guys feel included and loved by the older guys.”

Last year’s success has provided both a target and motivation for the Bulldogs. Six of the seven athletes who ran at state a year ago were underclassmen. Just two in the regional lineup (Hyde and Keeble) are seniors this year.

“The target on our back has been super motivating to us,” Hyde said. “We know all the stories about pride before the fall, and I’m personally motivated to stay humble because my faith compels me to see the potential in all these great guys from Grayslake, Yorkville and U-High.

“We recognize our gift, but know that it can all be taken away by sickness and injury, so we try to stay on top of things like sleep and nutrition to keep that extra edge over the numerous strong competitors. We knew going into it that we would be seen as a competitor, and so for the most part we just focus on doing what we’ve always done and not letting it get in our heads.”