

Unity girls, M-S boys race way to state titles

By ANTHONY ZILIS
azilis@news-gazette.com

PEORIA — Jordan Harmon's legs and lungs grew more tired than normal in the second half of Saturday's Class 1A State cross-country meet, a consequence of the two weeks she was forced to take off due to a foot injury. Then, she heard the voice of a runner passing her.

"Come on Jordan, you've got this," Unity eammate Caroline Bachert said through heavy breaths, an action not out of the ordinary for the freshman.

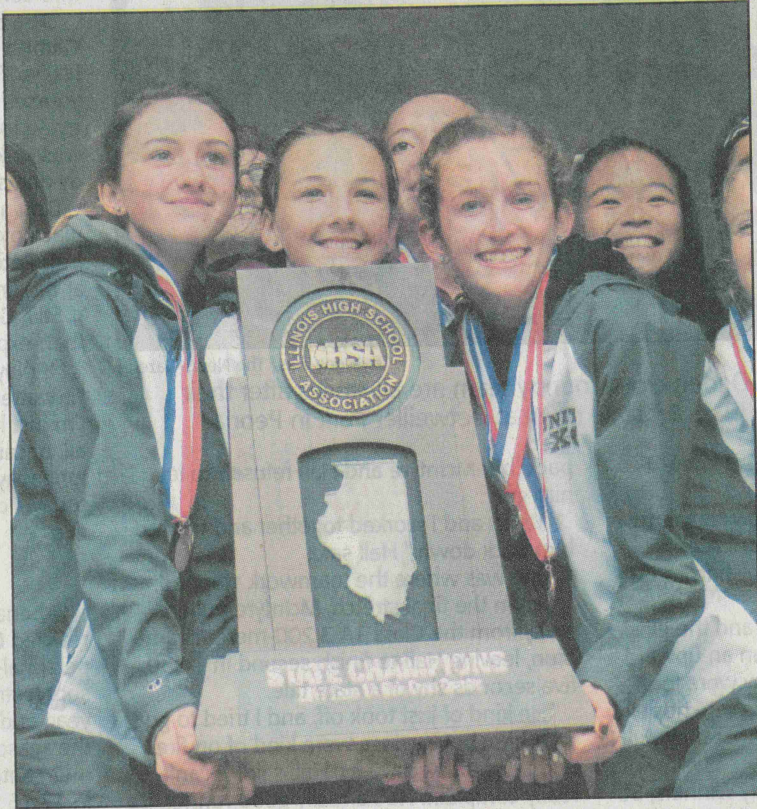
"I couldn't get the words out to say anything back," she said, "but I knew she was just going to be stronger at the finish."

In a meet where nearly every place had an effect on the result, Bachert finished 13th overall and fifth in the team race in 18 minutes, 8 seconds while Harmon took 21st overall and 12th in the team contest in 18:23 to lead Unity to its second 1A state title in three years. Freshman Evelyn Atkins landed the 25th and final All-State spot in 18:25, and Kylie Decker and Audrey Hancock rounded out the scoring with 46th- and 70th-place finishes as the Rockets scored 108 points to finish two spots clear of conference rival St. Joseph-Ogden.

"The team just picked up exactly where they needed to, every single one of them," coach Kara Leaman said. "To win by two points is just incredible."

Just two years ago, the Rockets won a state championship with a group that was mostly freshman. That time, it was Harmon, who led the way at her first state meet, and Bachert could hardly imagine that she'd join that group, let alone lead it.

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From left, Unity girls' cross-country runners Caroline Bachert, Evelyn Atkins and Jordan Harmon pose, along with the rest of their teammates, with the Class 1A state championship trophy after the Rockets won a state title on Saturday at Detweiller Park in Peoria.



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Mahomet-Seymour's Riley Fortune, left, and teammate Ryan Hodge (bib number 1275) keep pace with the rest of the Class 2A field during Saturday's state meet at Detweiller Park in Peoria. Fortune, Hodge and the rest of the Bulldogs ended up winning a 2A state championship for the second consecutive season.