

XC takes third in State, has two All-State finishes

Rackers
finishes 4th, sets
school recordBY GREG FISTER
REPORTER

Though the preparation was enormous, the wait long, and the training intense, the 2010 State cross country meet was over almost as quickly as it started. The SLUH team placed third overall in the Class 4 boys race behind Lee's Summit North and Rock Bridge in one of the fastest State races ever.

The Jr. Bills faced challenges constantly, having to keep up with Missouri's fastest high school runners, but came away from the day with an impressive third place trophy, as well as two All-State (top 25) finishers, a fourth-place medal for senior Tim Rackers, and a new 5K school record. Although the runners had hoped to get first or second place as a team, they pushed themselves and it showed: their hard work paid off to make it one of the fastest races the SLUH cross country powerhouse has ever run. They kept up a streak of placing among the top four teams at State each of the last six years with the third-place finish.

The stage was set for a speedy race. It was a bright, chilly Saturday morning as teams from St. Louis, Kansas City, and

runners, including Rackers, disappeared in a mass of more than 150 boys racing to win.

"I think we got out fine, but it was kind of funny, about 100 meters in, Tim (Rackers) was still running with me, so I yelled to him, 'Tim, move up!'" said Rubbelke of the start.

"I knew this was it—I knew I had to give it everything I had; I had to leave it all out on the course," said Alan Ratermann. "I knew I was racing not just for myself but also for my team, so I tried to do the best I could to help the team win."

At the first mile mark, SLUH was nearly in position to win, with Rackers a very close second to Rockhurst junior Zach Herriott. The course looped around several areas of the golf course on mostly hilly terrain, and at the second mile mark Rackers held his position, while the other SLUH runners were peppered throughout the 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s. McLaughlin, who was in 33rd place at the one-mile split and moved up to 24th at the two-mile mark, seized his chance to make a difference for the team.

"Throughout the race, I heard people screaming out to me numbers between 22 and 30, so I knew I was in the All-State position, so after the second mile was over

PHOTO BY MAX WATERS



Junior Mike McLaughlin rounds a turn on the State course.

everywhere in between gathered on a golf course in Jefferson City to decide whose legs, spikes, and mindset would hurtle them to the finish with the speediest times. SLUH's State team this year consisted of seasoned and swift-footed seniors Joe Meier, Dan Ratermann and Alan Ratermann, junior rivals and companions Nathan Rubbelke and Michael McLaughlin, sophomore rising star Tom Laughlin, and SLUH's fastest man, senior Tim Rackers.

"I was excited at the start. I knew I was going to go after the win," said Rackers of his pre-race optimism. He was, and still is, one of Missouri's top-ranked runners and had a shot at winning the race, but other racers had more success on Saturday.

After the starting gun sounded, SLUH's

I had to stick with it," said McLaughlin. He added, "It was tough, but rewarding."

The finish was, like that of last year, an approximately 200 meter-long trek up a hill, where it was even more important than ever for each runner to use every last ounce of energy.

"I was kind of by myself, but I knew that this was my last cross country race for SLUH, so I'm just gonna kick that baby home, and I'm glad I did, because that kick helped me break the school record," said Rackers. He finished in fourth place overall. His finishing time was a stunningly fast 15:45, three seconds faster than Caleb Ford's school 5K record of 15:48, set last year at the First Capitol Invitational.



PHOTO BY MAX WATERS



From left: Mr. Brian Gilmore, Mr. Ryan Payton, Mr. Diego Navarro, Michael McLaughlin, Tom Laughlin, Alan Ratermann, Joe Meier, Tim Rackers, Nathan Rubbelke, Dan Ratermann, Mr. Tom Heidbrier, Mr. Tom Flanagan, Mr. Chris Scott, and Mr. Joe Porter

"It's not the best; I didn't run the absolute best race that I could have, but you have to be happy with it, and when you get the school record, you can't go wrong," said Rackers.

SLUH's point total was 131, behind Rock Bridge with 89 points and Lee's Summit North, who finished second place behind SLUH last year, with 66 points. McLaughlin barely held on to an All-State finish, finishing in 25th place with a time of 16:25. Next came Meier in 52nd, and Rubbelke in 60th place. Alan Ratermann finished in 68th place, passing Dan Ratermann during the kick, who finished in 72nd place.

"The finish is a decision: it is either go, or forever have that feeling of unfulfillment," said Alan Ratermann. "I knew I had to go, to give everything I could right then, so I put everything I had left together and charged up the hill, to try and take as many spots as I could."

Laughlin, in his first year running cross country, was SLUH's seventh man. He finished in 83rd place with a time of 17:09, especially impressive for a first-year runner.

Though they still have Regionals (which not all of the team is running in) and the rest of senior year, the State meet is the last really important high school cross country

race that all seniors will run in.

"Though I do plan on running cross country in college, this is my last XC season with these guys, and there's a certain team aspect of cross country that won't be there in a college team," said Rackers of the SLUH cross country brotherhood.

"It's weird, being done with cross country. ... Luckily I still get to run with these guys in the winter and during track, but I'm sure gonna miss the nice fall days with the leaves drifting downwards," said Alan Ratermann.

Meier was a little disappointed that the State meet didn't quite turn out how SLUH wanted it to, but he echoed the sentiments of his fellow seniors about the positive aspects of running for SLUH cross country that extend beyond race times, or even trophies. "It's been a blast. Even with some injury problems freshman and sophomore year, I've had a ton of fun. It's a great group of guys. It's been great so far," said Meier.

The 2010 season was full of good times, and the team's tradition of great talent and great fun still continues. Most of SLUH's varsity team will race in a regional race for the Nike Cross National race in Indiana this weekend.

PERSPECTIVE

XC Tradition in full swing

BY ERIC MUETH
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

In anticipation for this year's State cross country meet, I decided to get to the meet early, in order to be ready to cheer on the boys once their 10:15 race began.

The alarm rang. 5:19 a.m. The day I had been waiting for all of my senior cross country season had finally arrived. A few friends and I met, ate breakfast, and headed for the Oak Hills golf course in Jeff City. Two hours later, we arrived.

The air was cold and crisp, and the sun shone brightly overhead. Dew still covered the grass, which was shortly trimmed, painted, and primed. We walked the course, soaked up the atmosphere, and anticipated the race, dreaming of another State championship. The gun went off for the girls' race, signaling that we still had time. We planned out our strategy on how to see the team as many times as possible during the race. Students and faculty began to pour in and gather at the team tent. We prepared, and then it was time.

A mob of us waited, and fellow seniors led cheers and we repeated: "Feel the rhythm! (Feel the rhythm). Feel the rhyme! (Feel the rhyme). Get on up! (Get on up). It's running time (It's running time). One, two, three, LET'S GO SLUH!"

Then the gun went off and here the racers came. We cheered like crazy, but it was too

early to tell how the race was shaping up. They came around again—still too early. I bolted across the golf course and headed for the bunny ears portion of the course, which is the most secluded part of the course because it is the furthest away from the start and finish. I cheered like crazy, but I knew we needed to move up. Another time around, then it hit me.

"Oh no, LSN's fifth is even with Mike (McLaughlin), our two," I thought to myself, and told other SLUH guys sprinting to see the last third of the race.

We were going to need a miracle if we were to win. I sprinted back across the course, just hoping that something good would happen. Eight hundred meters to go now—where are we?

"Come on guys, we need to pass people," I pleaded—but I knew it was too late. They came in; the race ended. I tried to congratulate them, but I knew we lost. I had only been following LSN's finish, so I assumed we were second. But I found out later we hadn't even placed that high.

I was devastated for only a few minutes though. I walked up to our guys who had just finished, who were surrounded by coaches, and then headed to the team tent. After hearing the official third-place finish, and hearing the applause from camp, I realized that I had taken State championship-level success for

see PERSPECTIVE, 5

INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE

"Success comes only from peace of mind, and peace of mind comes only from the self-satisfaction of knowing that you have done the best you are capable of doing."

—John Wooden

SPORTS

Hockey (0-2) off to rocky start

Team battles inconsistency in two losses

BY MICHAEL TAYON
REPORTER

The Jr. Billiken hockey team started off the regular season on the wrong foot. After a respectable semifinal finish in the annual Top Hat Tournament, the season took a turn in the wrong direction with an 0-2 start.

Saturday night, SLUH squared off against Francis Howell Central, which beat SLUH two weeks ago in the preseason. The Jr. Bills started off with an early lead thanks to a breakaway goal by sophomore sensation Chase Berger, assisted by senior captain Matthew "JaBackpack" Potter. Junior forward Trent Lulow added insurance by netting two more goals in the second period.

The Bills, however, collapsed late in the third. They gave up two goals on back-to-back slap shots. In the third, Missouri's best third-line grinder, Kyle Novak of FHC, proved to be too much for goalie Justin Ragland, twining his second goal on the short side to put Howell Central up. The Jr. Bills dropped their second loss to Francis Howell Central, 4-3, despite out-shooting

the Spartans 39-12.

"We really need to close out more games, get our offense rolling, play with intensity, because clearly this season will not be a cake walk, and pick it up in practice because it all starts there," said senior captain and defenseman Jackson Hoffmann.

Monday night against the Fort Zumwalt West Jaguars, the Jr. Bills started out strong once again. Lulow scored halfway through the second period, with junior forward Dan Warnecke getting the assist.

But, in the last five minutes of the third period, after maintaining a 1-0 lead the whole game, SLUH gave up a Jaguar goal on a 5-on-3 advantage. A mere two minutes later, a Jaguar forward blasted a shot from the slot that junior netminder Thomas Place could not stop due to heavy traffic in the defensive zone.

The Jr. Bills shot themselves in the foot in the game by not staying out of the sin



Junior Trent Lulow skates up the ice with the puck against Francis Howell Central last Saturday night.

bin, and look for redemption and a true test this Saturday against their MCC rival, the Vianney Golden Griffins.

"We just got to put together a complete game. We can't take time off and (have to) start finishing our opportunities and work harder in practice to prepare for Vianney," said sophomore forward Stephen Lordo.

(from 4)

granted. I had forgotten how difficult it was to win State, and this made me remember how talented our team is; getting third place when we did not have our best race is incredible. The effort was definitely there. The outcome and performance? Not today, but there's no shame in that. Too much pressure? Perhaps, but I don't really think so. Other teams had great races, and deserved their finishes. It definitely could have been worse, and there were a lot of positives from the day.

A school record, two All-State runners, a State trophy, the fastest average time in SLUH XC state history, beating the pre-race favorites (West Plains)—what could any fan complain about? I witnessed a great day for not only Jr. Bill cross country, but also a tremendous showing of school spirit and support for the whole body of work these runners put in to get to the State meet. So should we be even remotely upset? I believe the answer is no. I'll stick to this answer because of the four state trophies we won over my four years as a part of SLUH XC and the great memories that come with them.

I soaked this great day in. And in the end, I am very happy and proud of the effort of those seven guys and of the other 90 or so who run for St. Louis U. High, simply for the sake of the great tradition that U. High cross country bestows.

CONVERSATION OF THE WEEK

Tim Rackers talks about cross country State meet

BY ERIC MUETH
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

I sat down with SLUH's top XC runner, senior Tim Rackers, on Tuesday during lunch and talked about State, the team, and the school 5K record he now holds after his 15:45 at State.

Eric Mueth: Congratulations on your race and the team as a whole. First I want to talk about the team. How did the team feel before the race—I know some of them were banged up?

Tim Rackers: Yeah, we had a few people feeling a little down, who felt they were a little beaten up. I think we all were feeling okay, but we weren't in our tip-top shape, so we ran a race that reflected how we were feeling. So it was good, but it was not the superb race that we wanted.

EM: Did the large SLUH crowd help for any motivation?

TR: Yeah, it did. To have all the fans out there and cheering really gets you excited for the race. And just having them running along the course, we gave (the fans) a workout.

And you got cheers there as well.

EM: So going into the race, what were your expectations? Did the school record ever cross your mind?

TR: It wasn't really time that I thought of because last year's times were so slow, but I was thinking place though. I wanted to get first—that's the dream—but coming into there it was all going after the win. And I kind of ran a race that I thought would get that, but the record hadn't really come to my mind until I saw the clock at the end, and the finish line.

EM: (Rockhurst junior Zach) Herriott kind of gapped you in the middle of the second mile. Did the thought of first ever vanish, or what did you try to do after?

TR: I was still thinking of first at the one mile with Herriott, but after that he kind of pulled away and it was like, well, I'm going to hold onto whatever place I can get. I dropped two more places during the last two miles, but it was all just trying to keep the gap between Herriott not increasing too much and running with the guys that were next to me.

EM: So, fourth place, are you happy with that?

TR: Yeah, you have to be. It's State. I didn't have the perfect day, but I had a good day, and you can't be disappointed with that. And I got the school record so that's always something to be happy about.

EM: And what does the school record mean to you now that you officially hold it?

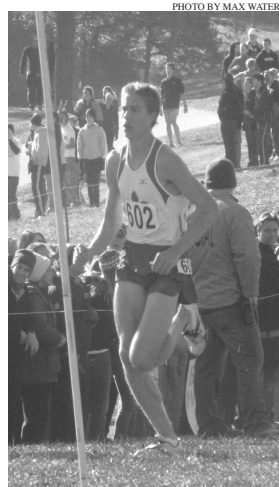
TR: It gives me a lot more sense that, yes, in some way I have finally beaten Caleb Ford.

EM: And for the whole meet, are you upset with a third place team finish, or are you proud of this season?

TR: I think that we all would be more happy if we had gotten second or first, but the day we had, it was an okay day, and you have to be happy with third. And the season wasn't as much as we wanted it—for the race and for the win. The season for me revolves more around the experiences I had with the team and the memories I formed. So in that way, it's been an absolutely great season.

EM: All right, thanks!

TR: You're welcome.



Senior Tim Rackers kicks in to the finish in the State Championship.

Swimmers within half a point at MCCs, State tonight

BY CULLIN TRIPP
REPORTER

The Jr. Bill swimming team entered a high-energy pool deck last Friday for the Metro Catholic Conference (MCC) Championship.

On Wednesday, junior Mike Barry won the diving for SLUH with a score of 244.7. The team hoped to replicate that victory on Friday night. With a whole season of preparation under head coach Rachel Graczak behind them, they were focused and ready to swim. The pool deck was crowded with swimmers and fans in anticipation of one of the most exciting events of the year in high school swimming. The SLUH swimmers pulled out all the stops for the meet, with every swimmer shaving down his time, and some swimmers bringing out their best suits to drop even more time.

From the moment the meet started, Chaminade and SLUH went back and forth, each team trying to out-swim the other. Freshman Luke Sloan was the first to win an event for SLUH, placing first in

the 200 IM with a winning time of 2:06.25 and dropping almost a full second off his previous best time. Sloan was behind after the fly and back portions of the race, but he surged forward in the breast to gain a small lead, finally splashing to a victory with the freestyle.

"I was very happy with my performance, and really locked in on that last 50 free to take first," Sloan said after the race.

Next, junior Sam Erlinger stepped up in the 200 free, taking first with a time of 1:51.62. Erlinger improved his time, and led the race the whole way, locking up SLUH's second first place.

Erlinger continued to make a huge impact on the meet, placing second in the 100 free with a 51.07. But senior captain Michael Hagerty outdid him in the event, winning in 49.82.

"I thought I did pretty well, better than I expected, and it was great to finally break 50.00," said Hagerty.

In the 100 fly, Mitch Kramer placed third overall, dropping enough time to qualify for

State with a 56.67.

"The first thing going through my head when I finished that race was: 'I'm tired. Really, really tired. I can't feel my legs, but I did it. I finally made State,'" Kramer laughed.

In the 100 back, senior captain John Lewis upset the top three places, dropping almost two seconds and finishing second overall. Lewis came through in the 200 IM as well, dropping another three seconds off his already lowered time from prelims.

"John was incredible; he dropped a ton of time and really gave us the push we needed to really make a run at the title," said Graczak.

To finish off, senior Steve Hoerr placed fourth in breaststroke, and the 400 free relay, made up of Sloan, junior Amir Paschal, Hagerty, and Erlinger, dominated the race, winning by 10 seconds with a time of 3:26.83.

Before the 400 free relay, Chaminade led the meet, and with SLUH winning huge in the relay, they needed Chaminade to place no better than fourth to win. SLUH took first,

CBC second, Chaminade third, and Vianney fourth in the 400 relay. The third place finish for Chaminade was just enough for them to hang onto their lead with a final score of 427 to 426.5.

"It was disappointing, and when you lose by that close of a margin, people start saying would have, could have, should have, and it just happened that they outperformed us by half a point. Nothing else to say," Graczak said.

Although the Jr. Bills couldn't pull through in the end, they held their ground, and the margin between the final scores was much closer than anyone expected.

"The team performed really well; we had a lot of guys step up in a big way: John Lewis, Nick Koors, and Mitch Kramer. Losing by a half a point after the fight we put up is nothing to be ashamed of," Hoerr said after the meet.

Despite the slightly disappointing outcome, SLUH is ready to bounce back in State, held at the RecPlex in St. Peters today and tomorrow.