

Wins keep rolling for SLUH soccer, focus turns to CBC Tournament

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In their past six games, SLUH soccer has scored 25 goals. Their opponents have scored just three. In summary: this year's Varsity team is good, and they're off to a dangerously hot start. Four additional wins over the past week have the team at 6-0-1 on the season and poised to turn heads at the CBC tournament.

The scoring spree started last Thursday, when the Jr. Bills suited up against Webster Groves. The biggest challenge of the night proved not to be the opponent, though, but the opponent's turf. Webster's field was grass and had a slight hill, which made it uncharted territory for the Jr. Bills, who were much more familiar with the turf fields at SLUH.

After 90 minutes of play, though, SLUH's high-powered offense prevailed. Senior forward Stephen Saladin led the team with two goals, and both showcased a unique aspect of his game. Saladin's first goal, which opened the scoring, came on a blistering breakaway that left the Webster defenders in the dust. His second was a clean penalty kick that shot past the goalie's right side, emphasizing his shooting ability.

The other goal of the game, which put SLUH up 2-0, came from sophomore midfielder Grant Locker, who has been quietly having a stellar start to the season. Locker has posted 6 goals and 3 assists on the season, making him one of the team's leading scorers, behind only Saladin.

"We've gotten off to a great start, I think. Our front four has been really led by the seniors and followed up by some underclassmen and I think we're great at using our speed to go forward," said Locker.

It was Locker who shined

during last Saturday's match against Father McGivney. With 2 goals and an assist, he helped bring the team to a dominant 7-0 win.

Once again, the field dictated strategy for the Jr. Bills, though. Thick grass forced SLUH to play balls in the air as much as possible. The strategy worked well for senior defender Ben Ridgway, who opened the scoring with a shot off his knee. The goal was Ridgway's first of the season.

"We had to play a little harder to find those through balls, but the chances kept coming from them. It was great scoring, though. It was really exciting because I've had many chances but it was nice to finally capitalize on one. I want more," said Ridgway.

In addition to Ridgway, several other varsity players found the back of the net for the first time against Fr. McGivney. Juniors Joe Olascoaga and Kevin Cooney both notched their first goals in the game, while junior Sam Tieber scored his second off of Locker's assist.

Even though goals can be hard to come by in high school soccer, the Jr. Bills certainly haven't run into that problem yet this season. Senior Evan Yalavarthi credits the team's grit for their scoring proficiency.

"It's probably our players this year," he said. "In the past we haven't had that attacking mentality. Even before the season started, though, coach took us on a retreat about toughness. Over the course of the season so far we've developed that mentality that we need to score. Now, we have a tough team and that creates a desire to score and the ability to follow through."

After two statement wins, the Jr. Bills' biggest game of the past week came Wednesday night against Vianney, which was their first game of MCC conference play. SLUH was supposed to play on Tuesday, but lightning stopped the game a few minutes into the first half. Play

picked up the next night, and the Jr. Bills brought momentum. The game was only the first of the CBC Tournament, but Yalavarthi had high expectations for the match.

"We are actually very confident going into the tournament," he said. "Our goal was to win this tournament and we think that's definitely within reach. After playing against Vianney, they didn't have any chances to score but we were just pounding them and we had so many shots, so we're hoping to put up a lot of goals and win the other two games as well."

Unsurprisingly, it was Locker who opened the scoring against Vianney. A fast shot off an assist from Tyler Van Bree put the Jr. Bills on top early. The only other goal of the night was scored by Yalavarthi from outside the box, but it wasn't SLUH's only chance. Several shots bounced off the goal post and could have added to the final score had it not been for a few inches.

Overall, O'Connell was very happy with the play against Vianney.

"We passed the ball well, we passed it quick, we had a good first touch. I think a lot of it has

to do with the skill and quality of our guys," O'Connell said.

SLUH followed up the win against Vianney with a last second shocker last night against CBC. Two goals from Saladin put the Jr. Bills up early against one of the highest ranked teams in the state. O'Connell had stressed before the game, though, that the ranking did not scare him or his team. As time expired, it showed. With just under 2 seconds left in the game, Johnnie Ferrarra weaved through the box and delivered a shot that squeezed past CBC's keeper. SLUH went on to win the game 3-2 in their closest match of the season. SLUH fans went crazy as the team rushed the field to celebrate the goal.

SLUH looks to continue scoring tomorrow night against De Smet in their final match of the tournament. A win will mean first place for SLUH.

"I think (winning the tournament) would be a great first step for what we're trying to accomplish," said O'Connell. "It would be nice to win a championship and have that taste and feeling that can only make us better."



art | Nathan Rich

ESPORTS!

Jr. Bills dominate CBC and Francis Howell Central in first competition. Read about it next week!



photo | David Callon

Sophomore team member playing Rocket League.



photo | David Callon

ESports fans after the win.

Varsity XC builds off solid performance at FPXC, V2 set for Sioux Passage

BY JACKSON COOPER,
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Anticipation soared as the SLUH cross country team prepared to face off against fierce competition from across four states including the best teams in Missouri at the Forest Park Cross Country Festival (FPXC) last Saturday. The team put up impressive performances across the board, including the first Forest Park JV victory and first individual winner in several years.

This year, the festival was held in a new location centered around Forest Park's Langenberg, Cricket, and Lindell fields. As the host of the meet, SLUH coaches devoted much of their time and energy to ensure that the first FPXC in two years would run smoothly. In just a week, the coaches were able to turn the knee-high grassy fields into a mowed, marked, and mapped 5K and 3K course to be run on by thousands of athletes.

"You know, we talked about hosting a meet and the logistics of that and having 3000 athletes from around the Midwest, having a good experience in a new location in the park for us," said head coach Joe Porter. "I thought that it went extremely well. I think it was well received."

In a very competitive race, the varsity finished in fourth place with 119 points behind some of the top competition in the state, including Class 5 defending champions Rock Bridge (Columbia) (79), the Class 4 seven-time defending champions Festus (90), and a very strong Kickapoo (Springfield, Mo.) team (106) that is currently ranked second in Class 5.

Senior Baker Pashea led the scoring with an impressive 10th place finish and a time of 16:18, with senior Justin Glass taking the role of the second finishing Jr. Bill with a 23rd place finish and a time of 16:47. Seniors Sean Kellogg and Joe LaBarge finished close behind at 29th and 30th respectively. Both ran times of 16:54. Senior Grant Brawley rounded out the scoring five with a 44th place finish and a time of 17:23. Juniors Wyatt Seal (17:30, 50th), Tim Greiner (17:33, 55th), Will Riggan (17:46, 60th), and Nolan Meara (17:59, 71st) rounded out the varsity racers.

The Jr. Bills were able to put nine varsity runners in the top half of the incredibly competitive race and medal their top four racers, which is certainly not an easy task given the presence of other state title contenders. Still,

the runners had held for a higher finish.

"It might not have been the exact outcome we were hoping for, but a lot of that was out of our control on Saturday," noted Pashea. "I still couldn't be more confident in this group of guys going forward."

In the JV division, the SLUH runners were able to continue their superb form from the previous week's Granite City Invitational, claiming the race victory with a low score of 34. The race featured one of the standout individual performances of the day, with sophomore Charlie Murray (17:38) taking home the individual victory, SLUH's first individual race champion in any division at Forest Park since 2013.

Murray was followed by sophomore Mason Scargall (17:59) in third, with senior Francis Alford (18:13) closely behind in fourth. Sophomore Anthony Zangara (18:19) ran a great race to finish in eighth, and junior Cody Cox (18:46) took the final scoring spot in 18th place.

This excellent performance from the JV squad was made even more impressive as Seal and Riggan, their two top finishers from the team that captured a perfect score at Granite City, were moved up to the varsity division, further highlighting the program's unparalleled depth.

In the freshman 3K race, the Jr. Bills finished in fourth place with a score of 94, falling behind Rockhurst (50, team champions due to tie-breaker), Festus (50), and Eureka (59). Despite the hot and humid racing conditions, Gus Talleur (10:43) led the way for SLUH throughout the race, contending for a race win and eventually crossing the line in third, just six seconds behind the race champion. Otto Reitenbach (11:39) finished in 19th as SLUH's second finisher, and a trio of freshmen—George Donahue (11:57, 25th), Gavin Smith (11:59, 26th), and Ethan Bogner (12:00, 27th)—crossed the line in quick succession to make up the remainder of the scoring five.

After FPXC, the members of the cross country team immediately began setting their sights on this Saturday's Paul Enke Invitational at Sioux Passage Park, which features an extremely hilly course that is considered one of the toughest in Missouri. The varsity top seven will be rested, giving a V2 squad of JV runners the opportunity to compete in the varsity race against some of the top competition in St. Louis.