

Soccer wrestles with tough opposition from Reitz, Notre Dame at Gateway

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Senior Zach Hoffman dribbles around a Kickapoo defender at the Gateway Classic on Saturday.

BY JUSTIN SINAY AND BRENDAN BEMENT
REPORTER

This past weekend the Jr. Bills showed their ability to compete against top-ranked competition in the Gateway City Classic, and just a week and a half before MCC play begins for the Jr. Bills.

Coming off breakthrough wins over MCC rivals Chaminade—ranked second in the country—and CBC—currently ranked 20th in the country—to win the CYC Tournament a week ago, the St. Louis U. High varsity soccer team kicked off the first round of the Gateway City Classic last Friday, against Reitz Memorial from Evansville, Ind., the No. 11 ranked team in the country.

Playing on a muddy grass field at O'Fallon Park, both teams found it hard to adjust to the ball's bounces off the uneven surface and players found themselves slipping while trying to make sharp cuts up the field. About midway through the first half, however, Reitz Memorial scored the first goal of the match, on a header past junior keeper Guillaume Delabar and into the back of the net.

When the Jr. Bills stepped onto the field for the second half they came out strong. Senior captain Zach Hoffman beat the last defender on the left side and crossed the ball to junior Tommy Hill's feet for as easy tap-in as the Bills tied the game 1-1 early in the second half.

Coach Charlie Martel said, "We're finding out that we're extremely competitive with ranked teams."

With the momentum on their side, the Jr. Bills did not let up, keeping constant pressure on the Reitz Memorial defense while continuing to get shots on goal. When it looked like the Jr. Bills were on the brink of a go-ahead

goal, however, a counterattack by Reitz Memorial led to their star forward rocketing in a low line-drive shot from the top of the box, giving Reitz Memorial a 2-1 lead that they would not relinquish.

"We come forward with such intensity, we have a tendency to be vulnerable to counterattack," said Martel.

The Jr. Bills continued to generate scoring opportunities as junior Eddie Howe hit the post on a breakaway with only eight minutes left. In the end, SLUH could not pull off the upset and fell 2-1.

"One thing we need to work on is scoring," said Martel. "We're not doing that consistently. But we did have chances to score and win. We played Reitz tough. The game was about half and half possession. It was a step forward for the team."

The Jr. Bills had to quickly forget about the loss, going up against Peoria (Ill.) Notre Dame on Saturday morning. SLUH rebounded quickly from the Reitz loss, as they came out hot, firing shot after shot on the Notre Dame goalie and keeping the defense on their heels, but couldn't get the go-ahead goal.

With SLUH dominating possession the entire game, Peoria rarely had chances to score. Even after an inspiring half-time speech from assistant coach Charlie Clark, the Bills still couldn't get one through.

"We pretty much dominated Peoria," said Martel. "The team is making great strides forward. We are in the hunt. I am absolutely convinced that there is no one we can't beat on a given day."

In the first overtime, with the Jr. Bills threatening, Peoria Notre Dame struck on a counter-attack. On a cross from the right wing, Notre Dame buried a shot past junior goalie Jack Robinson.

"We've gotten so much bet-

ter since the beginning of the season," said senior Nick Kocisak. "We've been working the ball more recently, we've been able to defend as a team, we're creating scoring chances like crazy. We need to work on finishing them."

The Jr. Bills played again on Saturday night, losing to Springfield Kickapoo 4-2. Senior captain Hoffman and senior Joe Grady had the goals for the Jr. Bills.

"This weekend we played pretty well," said Hoffman. "We can't finish, that's our problem."

CBC, whom the Bills beat a week earlier to win the CYC Tournament crown, won the Showcase Bracket, topping some of the best teams in the country.

"CBC is good," said Martel. "But they're not heads and shoulders above everybody else. I think everybody is close together, and the state tournament should be interesting."

The Jr. Bills are putting in the work this week to prepare for MCC play looming next week, with their only game being versus Priory last night.

"We're concentrating on getting the ball into the corners so that we can attack the endline and have more chances in front of the goal," said Martel. "We're not a big team, so attacking defenses down the middle is not a good look for us."

SLUH kicks off MCC play against Vianney at SLUH on Tuesday night at 6. In the CBC Tournament earlier in the season, Vianney and SLUH played to a 2-2 tie.

Kocisak said of MCC play, "We're interested to see how far we've come since the CBC Tournament."

Martel said, "It's important for us to start well. We've only won the conference twice in the past 20 years."

Cross country sweeps Parkway West invitational as postseason looms

BY BRIAN SUHRE
REPORTER

The St. Louis U. High cross country team swept the competition away at the Parkway West Invitational this past weekend, winning on all levels against a very competitive field. Runners are looking to hit their stride at the perfect time as the postseason looms.

After enduring some difficult team results the previous week at Palatine and Hancock, the impressive meet sweep at Parkway was especially gratifying. The entire team had not raced together at the same meet since the Forest Park XC Festival last month, but finally got to show off the fruits of their collective work this weekend.

The varsity race featured in-state rivals Rock Bridge, Lafayette, and Marquette. Senior captain Matt Nicholson led the way for the squad once again, finishing sixth overall with a time of 16:29.

Nicholson finished behind the two very strong front runners—one being State two-mile champion Noah Kauppila.

"It was a nice confidence-booster to run at the front with some of the top guys in the state," Nicholson said. "It was fun to run with Noah for the first two miles at least."

Sophomore Matthew Hennessy strengthened his claim to the No. 2 spot on the team with an impressive 10th place finish and a time of 16:52. Junior Tom Rubio moved up the depth chart on the day, coming in third on the team with a time of 17:08. Sophomore Jack Sullivan and senior Joe Archer completed the scoring for the team and rounded out the top five with times of 17:26 and 17:27, respectively.

In the junior varsity race, senior David Arredondo and ju-

nior Peter Rackers finished strong enough to be the team's sixth and seventh fastest runners on the day, with times of 17:42 and 17:54, respectively. Sophomore Garrett Fox was the only individual champion for the team that day, winning the sophomore race emphatically with a time of 18:02, 13 seconds ahead of the next finisher.

The course at Living Word United Methodist Church for the most part did not yield very fast paces. The ground was extremely muddy and soft, and the turn-heavy nature of the course was not very friendly to the runners' momentum.

"There were so many turns that you couldn't afford to get caught on the inside or you'd lose a lot of momentum," Nicholson said.

Head coach Joe Porter was very impressed with the team.

"I think that's a day that shows off the depth of our program," Porter said. "A lot of guys have been working really hard, so for us to go and win five out of five races is really big."

After the disappointing finish at Palatine, Porter was excited by the turnaround.

"A lot of guys exceeded expectations and left feeling a little better about how they've been racing," he said.

Nicholson echoed Porter's sentiments. "Many young runners ... excelled on the day," he said. "To be able to win on all levels is not something every team can say they can do."

The team races again this weekend at the MCC Championships, where they look to defend their crown on all three levels. The meet will take place Saturday morning at 9 a.m. at Central Fields in Forest Park.

B-Soccer looks forward to strong second half

BY MARTY JOHNSON
REPORTER

Although the B-team is off to a decent 4-2-2 record, they have had problems scoring goals this season.

Sophomore Eric Helfrich leads the team with five goals, and the Soccerbills have scored 16 goals overall in nine games. However in five of these games, the team has scored one goal or less. In these games, the Soccerbills are 1-2-2.

"It's something we struggle with," says midfielder Cort Held. "But we are continuing to get better every day."

But the B-soccerbills have won their past two games, outscoring their opponents 8-0 in

the process.

"We've won our last two games because we were able to possess the ball and create chances," defender Joe Jasso says.

The team will have to keep up the good play because they still have conference rivals Vianney, who defeated SLUH earlier in the season, and CBC to play.

"I look forward to playing the MCC teams, especially the V-High squad, and winning," Jasso said. "I think it will be a good competitive second half of the season full of wins, and I look forward to it."

The B-team continues its season against Priory at Priory on Oct. 4.