

Nationally-ranked SLUH soccer kicks off to an explosive start

photo | Ben Banet

BY JAMES BOECKMANN
REPORTER

The post-game handshakes can get a little awkward when the game is ended via mercy rule with over ten minutes left to play. Thankfully the Jr. Bills were the culprits in the mercy ruling against victim Gibault Monday night.

Last week, coach Charlie Martel said the team would play fast and attack quickly. The Jr. Bills couldn't have attacked a whole lot faster to start the season, scoring their first goal just 52 seconds into the game. Senior Ryan Merrifield sent senior Mason Suess through the teeth of Gibault's defense, and Suess served a great ball into the box. Captain Paul Buehler clinically headed it off the side post for an exciting first goal of the season.

Within the next two minutes, senior Tommy Behr officially opened the floodgates with a header goal of his own off a Merrifield cross, and the game was es-

entially a cruise from there.

After the game, fan favorite senior Joey "Ferber-Baby" Ferber had this to say about his pregame expectations: "I knew we had a really good opportunity to pick up a 'W,' but I can't say I expected us to Mr. Kickham in the butt the way we did."

SLUH would score thrice more in the first half. Senior Joe Jedlicka benefited from some shaky goaltending after getting up into the play well from the back. Then Suess put heavy pressure on the Gibault defense, earning him a breakaway chance he easily converted. Ferber scored the last goal of the half after sticking with a loose ball in the box, tapping it in to make the score 5-0.

Goalkeeper Guillaume Delabar finally touched the ball late in the first half, off a pass back by Ferber. The defense was never really tested, since SLUH dominated possession and their midfield, anchored by Logan Welge, held the

ball in Gibault's end much of the game.

The second half brought more of the same. After Buehler buried a shot from just inside the box into the side netting, it was the bench's turn to produce. Senior substitute Joey Gasperoni scored twice in a row, senior Jacob Kloeppinger scored after being set up by a fancy pass from Ferber, and junior Zach Hoffman ended the game on a nice shot into the bottom corner.

Merrifield said, "It felt amazing, now we're just looking for more competition to see where we really stand against some other top teams."

Martel was also excited by



Mason Suess eludes Gibault's keeper in the 10-0 blowout of Gibault.

the way the Jr. Bills played.

Martel said, "Our speed of play was great, and we played what we were facing, which was really important."

Clearly it worked, but there will always be things to improve on, and Martel said, "We would like to find our targets better up

top, especially the ones on the wings."

The Jr. Bills are looking forward to the CBC tournament next weekend, where they will play tough MCC teams, including CBC. Check out the nightbeat to see the final of the SLUH-Fort Sumwalt South game last night.

Captain Close-Ups: A Look at the Cross Country Captains

BY GREG FISTER
STAFF ARTIST

They say it takes a village to raise a child: so what does it take to raise most of the 110 St. Louis U. High Cross Country runners up to the team's tradition of excellence? Though it is a joint effort between the coaches, captains and individual runners, the four senior captains hold much of the weight as being the role models that embody for the underclassmen the team's motto: "Tradition, Class, Pride."

Each cross country captain must be a devoted runner of both cross country and track and field, and must gain the votes of his teammates. They fill the leadership void left by their predecessors by leading warm-ups, stretches and drills, and hoping to inspire in each runner the same passion that propelled them to captainhood. This year, with the team bigger than it has ever been, the captains have a huge obligation to let each runner know he is a part of the team, and each person's success depends on his teammate's.

The four captains are seniors Nathan Rubbelke, Joe Esswein, Joshua Zink-Duda and Michael Pollihan. The four of them are united by a common trait: they love the sport and want to share that zeal with their teammates.

Zink-Duda joined cross country his sophomore year after encouragement from his track teammates. Though he hasn't been on the team as long as the other captains, he feels that his current role on the team reflects his hard work and passion for the sport.

"I love running, and I want other people to enjoy it as much as I do," said Zink-Duda.

Zink-Duda's goal for the team this year is a common one: "to win State."

"Personally," Zink-Duda said, "I would like to try to focus on the middle-of-the-pack runners, to encourage them and to work with them, so we can have a

strong middle group that will help push the varsity guys to do better."

Michael Pollihan is in his fourth year of cross country with SLUH. He showed some promise freshman year, but an illness sophomore year somewhat dampened his dreams.

"But then I came back junior year and made the Palatine trip and the State trip and had a lot of fun. I ran track, had a great season. Being a captain this year has made it really fun. It's just been a great ride," said Pollihan.

Pollihan thinks that everyone on the team should know that "hard work always pays off, especially in cross country. It's possibly the sport (in which) hard work pays off the most. Just keep running, and you'll get better"

Joe Esswein, a devoted and talented runner of track and cross country, explained what he feels it means to be a captain.

"Being a captain doesn't simply revolve around how you are with the best runners on the team: it's more about how you relate the younger kids who are largely in the dark about a lot of the intricacies of the sport. It's about making sure they have fun but also pushing them to be the best they can be," he said.

Esswein, who is also a senior advisor, said that being in that position helps him work with the freshmen on the team.

"It helps to remind me what a freshman's mind is like. When I'm around them, hearing what they say, I can help them with the transition to SLUH," Esswein said.

As Esswein gears up for the season, he's focusing on his main goal: to help SLUH win a State championship. Esswein stated that the biggest motivator for him is frustration over the team's third place finish last year.

"This year I'm looking at it less like, 'How can I improve my finishing times' and more about 'How can I improve myself,' as I have to set an example for the freshmen," said Esswein.

"When you ask anyone on

the team which they like better, track or cross country, and everyone says cross country because of the team, of course. We become so close throughout the course of the year: having fun, relating and learning from each other, that is cross country," said Esswein.

Rubbelke is excited and honored to be a captain, but he feels the pressure. "This program has a lot of expectations; considering those, it's a bit nerve-racking, but it's still an honor," said Rubbelke.

Head coach Joe Porter emphasized that being a captain means "making the guy in the middle feel wanted." Rubbelke described the team atmosphere as that of a good-natured and hard-working family.

When asked about what drives him to be one of the fastest runners on the team and a leader among teammates, Rubbelke emphasized his love of working hard, and keeping up the tradition of SLUH cross country.

As a captain, something that drives me is looking at the former captains, (such as) Caleb Ford ('10) and Joe Meier ('11). To be in the same shoes that they used to fill is really an honor for me," said Rubbelke.

Rubbelke has started a new tradition of a weekly song that the team sings together. "Last week we sang 'Build Me Up Buttercup.' It was really good, but some of the freshmen were a little timid. We hope to break them in; to let them know that it's normal to be weird in cross country."

Next Saturday, the entire team will be put to the test at the monumental Forest Park Cross Country Festival. Every healthy SLUH runner will race, and the convenient location of the meet in Forest Park gives family, friends and fans a great chance to cheer on the team.

Today's First Capitol Invitational Run scheduled at 4 p.m. was cancelled due to heat.

Graczak's goal for season: 'Beat the Red Devils'

BY DAVID GREAVES
REPORTER

The swim team has kicked off its second season under coach Rachel Graczak, and already she is indicating that she has big plans for this year.

"Although we have lost some valuable swimmers, we have also gained and improved enough to more than fill the gap," Graczak said.

One difference in routine the swimmers have already noticed is the longer practices, as well as the distances per practice.

When asked about changes this year, Graczak replied that they will be swimming "more yards and more technique work," a change built on her previous year's emphasis on technique and variety rather than the endurance workouts that were common before her arrival to the team.

Graczak also plans to work on some more specialized groups in order to create a team where swimmers focus and improve on their specialty event, but also work on getting better in their weakest event.

The Jr. Bills lost several valuable seniors to graduation, and will also miss sophomore Luke Sloan, who as a freshman performed stunningly and made a large contribution to the team. However, Graczak and the team are determined not to let the loss affect the team's overall performance.

Graczak said, "Everyone is vital... A team cannot rely on only one person to carry the team. There are many other strong swimmers capable of filling the gap."

New additions to varsity include freshmen Andrew Irvine

and Andrew Postol, sophomore Jack Brauer, and others who moved up from junior varsity. These new members have showed in time trials that they will be valuable in keeping the team's performance high this season.

Returning members who will likely be the driving engine of the swim team include seniors Pieter Derdeyn, Amir Pashal, and Sam Erlinger, and juniors Chris Favier and Larry Hoerr, according to Graczak.

"I'm really excited. (We have) so much potential on our team," said Graczak.

According to team captains Derdeyn and Paschal, the team also has some points to work on for the season.

"I think one thing we could improve on is our general endurance. We need more versatility for the long distance events," said Derdeyn.

When asked about improvements, Paschal replied, "I guess practice and staying serious. Staying motivated even if you don't have the same goals as somebody else." As a final note, Paschal added, "I'm making state!"

When asked about about his goals for the season, Paschal replied, "Develop a better work ethic. And definitely win MCC's, especially after losing last year..."

"...By only half a point," added Derdeyn.

The number one goal for Graczak is, "beat Chaminade. I want to beat them in the duel meet and in MCC's."

Last year, SLUH lost to the Red Devils in both competitions, making the team even more determined to show them that they are a team to watch out for this year.

SLUH SWIMMING

