

XC wins at Buder Park, looks forward to final week of 2020 season

BY NOAH APPRILL-SOKOL AND
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The SLUH cross country team showed off its depth in the last two weeks beginning with a spectacular win at Jefferson Barracks, followed by dominant performances of three races, all taking place within 24 hours: Webster Invitational, Clayton Invitational, and Big River Invitational.

At the Jefferson Barracks Quad Meet, SLUH won both the junior-senior race and the freshman-sophomore race, and an impressive 41 runners—just under half the team—achieved new personal records, a result of cool weather and a mostly downhill course.

“Our focus became on: can we run fast, can we compete; we don’t really get to compete very often, there aren’t many races this year,” said head coach Joe Porter. “In the junior-senior race, I told them our job is to race each other, if we are approaching it like practice then we are not going to

run as fast as we can.”

On the junior-senior level, SLUH dominated throughout the race, taking the first 13 places. At the front, the race quickly became a race against each other with each SLUH racer making moves and pushing the pace throughout.

“I put myself in a position to win, and Wyatt and Joe came up with me; I was really happy to see them run up with me, we pushed each other until the very end,” said senior Sandy LeGrand. “It was really exciting, and a great atmosphere with the varsity cheering everybody on, and kind of a culmination of a really great race.”

Making the final turn and sprinting 200 meters down the hill towards the finish, LeGrand, Junior Joe LaBarge, and sophomore Wyatt Seal were all in contention for the individual win. Yet, Seal was able to out-kick the rest and won the race with a time of 17:30, breaking his previous PR by 50 seconds. LaBarge and LeGrand finished right behind, securing second and third place.

“I wasn’t quite having the season I wanted, but I knew this was a chance to break out of that shell. I ran the course exactly how I wanted, and I got myself in a great position going with the flow of the race before I finally edged out the win,” said Seal. “It was a great day for everyone, and it really showed off the fitness our team has been building up this whole season.”

In the sophomore-freshman race, sophomore Brendan Jones won the race with a time of 18:48, followed by freshman Anthony Zangara. Fourteen SLUH runners finished in the top 20, giving SLUH the decisive victory.

At the Webster Invitational, SLUH raced its second set of runners in the varsity race. Despite this, SLUH took second place out of the ten teams, beating many tough varsity squads in the area including CBC, Parkway West, and Eureka. SLUH’s top runner on the day, junior Francis Alford (8th) competed strongly throughout and finished with a time of 18:40, an impeccable

time when considering the hot weather and challenging course, and sophomore Tim Greiner (10th) finished closely behind. Both received varsity medals.

“Francis had an incredible race,” said Porter. “He was right behind Nick Herrick of CBC, who was in front of our six man at Conference.”

In the Freshman race, the freshman squad took first, with medalists Anthony Zangara (3rd), Gabe Sullivan (5th), Nate Boyer (6th), and Charlie Grey (7th) leading the way.

On Friday, SLUH raced their third set of runners at the Clayton Invitational, and by moving up positions throughout the race, the squad captured a fourth-place finish in a competitive field. Six out of the seven racers took home a coveted Clayton medal and were in the top 30 finishers. Senior Aidan Byrne (12th) led the group, and on a very twisty and hilly course, ran a time of 18:43.

“This was our top 19 to 25 guys, and we were up there contending with other people’s 1 to

7, so this is one of those days where we might not have won as a whole, but it says a lot about how deep of a team we are,” said Byrne. “We are able to take, not even our top 20 guys and still be able to go out and do good.”

SLUH’s JV team at the Clayton race consisted of only seniors, placed second in the race and almost beat De Smet’s top JV squad. The JV team had all seven finishers earn a medal with Henry McIntyre (4th) and Henry Bourneuf (6th) leading the charge.

“SLUH went out together as a pack, and while we split up in the middle of the race, I think that did really well in the race,” said senior Michael Buescher.

The Big River Invitational finished the week with the varsity team placing first out of seven teams and the JV placing third out of six teams. The extremely flat course coupled with the cold weather allowed for eight new PRs in the varsity race and 26 new PRs in the JV race.

“I wanted them to run fast and take risks throughout the

race,” said Porter. “And they smashed both goals. It really was a great day for our program.”

Junior Grant Brawley (2nd) and senior Daniel Hogan (3rd) led the SLUH varsity contingent and were pursued by seniors Ryan Kramer (7th) and Hayden Zenor (11th) and junior Baker Pashea (8th), who rounded out the scoring five.

“It really was a great race. The one to five gap was only 25 seconds, which is a huge improvement from the beginning of the year,” said Porter. “This should really give them confidence going into districts.”

SLUH hopes to continue its success with the upcoming Finley Invitational this afternoon



photo | Brian Gilmore
Wyatt Seal (left), Joe LaBarge (middle), Sandy LeGrand (right).

Rocky stretch drops soccer team from undefeated to 5-5



Senior Jaylen Sinclair against MICDS. photo | Kathy Chott

BY LOUIS CORNETT
CORE STAFF

The past two weeks for St. Louis U. High’s soccer team haven’t been ideal. During the most recent six-game stretch, the Jr. Bill’s play was defined by a struggling offense who scored in only two games and the defense gave up nine goals. Facing the reigning state champs, De Smet, and a returning state semifinalist, Lindbergh among other tough competition, SLUH was unable to close out the close games, and saw their record drop from 4-0 to 5-5.

The team’s first matchup in this grueling stretch was against MCC rival Chaminade on Oct. 16.

Thanks to well-organized and compact back lines, the first half was scoreless. Unfortunately, SLUH’s defense couldn’t hold on in the second half as a sloppy pass caused a turnover, which led to a Chaminade goal with 10 minutes left. SLUH having dominated the majority of the game, desperate for an equalizer, pressed forward, trying to cause a Chaminade mistake. However, Chaminade was able to hang and the Jr. Bills lost 1-0.

“I thought we played well,” said coach Bob O’Connell. “Chaminade was fortunate to take advantage of a miskick, but otherwise, I thought it was a 0-0 game.”

Just a day later, SLUH had to face a tough St. Dominic team.

The Jr. Bills created more

scoring opportunities in the game by keeping their formation, which paid off as junior Evan Yalavarthi scored, SLUH’s first goal in the past 3 games. Behind 2-1, SLUH was awarded a penalty with 8 minutes left. However, SLUH was unable to convert from the penalty spot and St. Dominic added insult to injury with another goal to win 3-1.

“I thought we attacked better than Chaminade,” said O’Connell. “If we made that penalty, who knows what the result would have been.”

After two consecutive losses, the Jr. Bills, now 4-2, travelled to Eureka on Oct. 20 for their third game in five days.

Against Eureka, goals by freshman Grant Locker, junior Stephen Saladin, and senior Jacob Hammond and a defensive shutout propelled SLUH to a 3-0 victory to end the two-game skid.

“We scored early, which is something we haven’t done well, and then we scored again with 20 minutes to go to seal it,” said O’Connell. “We managed the game well, and got the clean sheet.”

Back in a winning spirit, the Jr. Bills returned home after their three-game road trip to face Lindbergh, who finished fourth in State last year.

With 19:43 remaining in the first half, the returning state semifinalists scored on a corner kick, giving them a 1-0 lead. The rest of the half was scoreless, and SLUH headed into halftime

down by one. Trying to avoid their third loss in four contests, the Jr. Bills pressed their attack, but a lack of physicality and organization left the Jr. Bills a step too slow. SLUH couldn’t capitalize to tie it, and lost 1-0 to fall to 5-3.

“Our biggest takeaway from Lindbergh was understanding what level we are going to have to play at if we want to make a postseason run,” said senior Adam Wolfe.

“We got beat. They were moving around the ball quicker, they were more physical,” said O’Connell. “They were just better than us last night.”

After a loss at home to a tough Lindbergh team, SLUH had less than 24 hours to rest up and ready up for last year’s state champions, De Smet.

“Games against MCC rivals always have a different feel,” said Wolfe. “I think the whole team was really motivated going into the game.”

Against the Spartans, SLUH was hoping to avoid another losing streak. With 28:45 remaining in the first half, SLUH was awarded a free kick 9 yards outside of the penalty box. Striding up to the ball, junior Stephen Saladin struck the ball with his right foot, a line drive right into the Spartan four-man wall that deflected away from goal.

Just a minute later, an errant pass by the Jr. Bill midfield led to a De Smet fast break. The Spartan attacker shot a low roller just past the outstretched hands of goalkeeper Johnny Barr. The ball snuck in off the inside of the left post for a 1-0 De Smet lead.

Despite the result, SLUH played the better half.

“In the first half, we were dominating possession, we just couldn’t get a goal,” said Yalavarthi. “Eventually, De Smet scored on the counterattack after we gave up the ball.”

As the second half began, SLUH desperately tried to tie up the game against their Jesuit ri-

vals. Physicality and team pressing allowed SLUH to continue to dominate possession. However with 33:05 remaining in the game, the Jr. Bills were forced to defend a De Smet set piece from 20 yards outside their box. A high arcing ball by a De Smet defender found a fellow attacker who headed the ball into the top corner served as the last goal of the game, with SLUH losing 2-0 to De Smet.

“We played really well, and there were more positives than negatives,” said senior forward, Jack Rudder. “We possessed the ball really well, but we just couldn’t find the goal.”

Having lost their fourth game of the five-game stretch, the Jr. Bills returned home later in the week for Senior Night against MICDS.

Fifteen of the 25 players played their last game at SLUH this past Saturday, and were honored before the game.

“It was pretty nostalgic to reflect and think back on all our favorite memories that were listed in the ceremony,” said Rudder. “I was sad that I was injured for that game, knowing my last game played at SLUH had already happened.”

With just over 29 minutes in the first half, SLUH had a great scoring chance to pull ahead. Yalavarthi crossed a gorgeous ball from MICDS’s endline that barely missed the head of Hammond, who was awaiting the cross at the back post. Just a little too high for Hammond, the ball was cleared by MICDS and the score remained 0-0.

Just over a minute later, MICDS struck first. A shot from a MICDS attacker outside the box led to a spectacular save by Barr in goal. However, the rebound fell to another MICDS player who sneaked the ball in through a tiny window made by the near post and the diving Barr. MICDS took the 1-0 lead into halftime.

“In the first half, it looked like we were going to be the team that went up first,” said Yalavarthi. “We were getting lots of crosses into their box, but we just couldn’t capitalize.”

Coming out quick after halftime, SLUH immediately put pressure on the MICDS defense. With 36:22 left, the Jr. Bills were awarded a corner kick. After the cross rattled around in the box and out, the ball found its way to Yalavarthi, who hit a right-footed shot from 18 yards out which was blocked by the keeper. But the rebound went right to Locker, who sent the ball into the back of the net to tie the game at one.

With 12:05 remaining in the game, MICDS found the net again as an attacker dribbled two-thirds of the field, juking SLUH defenders all the way to the penalty box. The run ended with a brilliant shot, top right corner, and MICDS regained the lead of 2-1, which would be the final score of the game.

“The last ten minutes, we were making runs forward and kept the ball in MICDS’s half,” said Yalavarthi. “But we just couldn’t get the goal.”

After their fifth loss in six games, the Jr. Bills’ record dropped to 5-5. However, with districts starting on Oct. 31, SLUH and the seniors remain positive about a long postseason run.

“Although we lost five of six, the team played well during this stretch of games,” said Wolfe. “We got a sense of what we need to work on in order to succeed in November, in the State Tournament.”

As they prepare for districts, SLUH postponed two games scheduled for Oct. 26 and 27 due to mandatory COVID testing. Awaiting tests, the Jr. Bills will have socially-distanced practices, hoping their precautions this season such as masks, and sitting far apart on benches, leads to zero positive tests.

Rifle readies for 2020 season

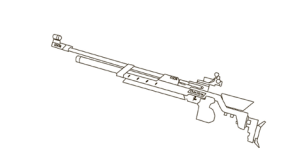
BY JACK RYBAK
CORE STAFF

Rifle is back. The Jr. Bills rifle team has started practicing in preparation for a season that is still unclear. Of course, with the impact of COVID-19, there are some changes being made.

The first change is that all shooters are required to wear a mask both on and off the line. Additionally, shooters have to sign up for a relay prior to shooting in an effort to control the quantity of shooters in the range. All the equipment is sanitized, travel will decrease, and postal matches will increase. Another change is that shooters on the line must be separated by at least one lane, which will limit the number of shooters at one time. Finally, the range will only be used for shooting; anyone who is not shooting cannot be in the range.

To manage the flow of new shooters, newer members of the team who aren’t highly ranked will have to share rifles with each other. Currently, the team will remain walk-on, but there is a possibility of tryouts for first picks on rifles. There will also be an additional team captain and a class captain for the sophomores and juniors.

“Last year was our learning curve,” said associate head coach Thomas Lally, ’16, referring to the record-setting number of shooters in the program. “We are fully ready for the number of



art | Jack Rybak