

Boys' Sectional Races Saturday

By JOE MILLAS
News-Gazette Sportswriter

It's semifinal time. Just one more standout performance Saturday and local and area boys' cross-country teams can earn their ticket to the state finals Nov. 13 in Peoria.

But it won't be easy for the Class AA boys at the Springfield Sectional or the Class A boys at the Normal Sectional Saturday morning. The Class AA meet is set for noon in Lincoln Park. The Class A competition gets under way at 10 a.m. at the Illinois State University Golf Course.

Representatives in the Class AA meet include

Rantoul, runner-up to Bloomington in the regional meet hosted by the Eagles last week, and two individuals — Champaign Central's Andy Egberman and Centennial's Bryan Cox.

The area is well-represented with Class A teams and individuals. St. Joseph-Ogden and Chrisman, winners of regionals at Mahomet and Hoopeston-East Lynn, lead the way.

Other teams include Mahomet-Seymour, Uni High, Tuscola, Oakwood, Hoopeston-East Lynn and Paxton.

Five teams as well as

seven individuals not on qualifying teams will advance from each meet to the finals at Detweiller Park.

The Class AA team battle figures to be the field against Capitol Conference champion Springfield Lanphier, which will be running on its home course.

Bloomington, the Big 12 Conference winner, should be near the top, as should the Eagles, who finished just eight points behind the Purple Raiders in the regional meet.

Other top teams figure to be from the deep south, possibly East St. Louis Lin-

coln and one or both of the Granite City schools (North and South).

Rantoul coach Al Taylor thinks his team has an excellent chance to advance one step beyond its 1981 finish. The Eagles were a surprise team qualifier out of the district (1981 terminology) meet last fall, but didn't make it past the sectional.

"I think we have a real good shot at it this year," Taylor said. "I would be really disappointed if we didn't make it. We're going to run as well or better than we did last Saturday.

"Making it to sectional was the icing on the cake last year. This year we expected it. Now we want to take it one more step. Saturday has got to be our best race of the season so far. I think we can get third, and Bloomington's not out of reach. Our kids believe that now."

The Class A team battle will feature the No. 1 ranked team in the state, Streator, heading a group of six teams that figure to battle it out for the five state berths available.

The group includes Pontiac, St. Joseph-Ogden, Chrisman, Oakwood and Mahomet-Seymour.

The Spartans have been coming on strong lately, winning the Okaw Valley title and the regional crown with senior star Tom Fortune leading the way in both victories.

Fortune has been doing it despite some physical problems. "He's still having some trouble with his hip," said SJ-O coach Rick Mohr. "It doesn't seem to bother him during races when he warms up enough. It's afterward that he's in pain."

Fortune will be in elite company when it comes to the individual title chase. The favorite figures to be John Jacobson of Cornell. He will be challenged by Hoopeston-East Lynn's Kirt Davis and Chrisman's Lane Holbert as well as Fortune.