

Class A boys' cross-country

Trio of area teams advance to state

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MAHOMET — Three area teams and two individuals are on their way to Peoria after qualifying for the state meet in the Class A boys' cross-country sectional championships at Lake of the Woods Saturday afternoon.

Chrisman, St. Joseph-Ogden and Uni High will vie for team honors while the Mahomet-Seymour duo of Neil Mathis and Chris Perry will seek individual glory in the Illinois High School Association state finals at Peoria's Detweiler Park next Saturday.

The sectional team championship went to St. Anne, which edged Chrisman 88-91. Herscher was third with 122 followed by St. Joseph-Ogden at 137 and Uni High with 139. The top five teams advanced to the state level.

In addition, seven individuals not on the top five teams also qualified for the state meet.

They included two members of the host Mahomet-Seymour team, junior Neil Mathis and senior Chris Perry, as well as a duo from Beecher — Ron Speletich and Tony Fernatt. Other qualifiers included Warrensburg-Latham's Jerry Giberson, Bloomington Central Catholic's Steve Boozell and Kanakae Bishop McNamara's Matt Close.

SPELETICH AND FERNATT finished 1-2 among all individuals. Speletich, a junior won the meet, covering the 3 miles on the Lake of the Woods Golf Course in 15 minutes, 45 seconds. Fernatt, a freshman, was timed in 15:48.

Chrisman missed in its bid for the sectional title when fifth man John Johnson, who was ill with allergies and poison ivy all week, ran only 44th. He should be recovered by next Saturday and the Cardinals could be tough in the state meet.

The Cardinals were led by Rich Bland, who took third, and Robb Morris, who was sixth.

St. Joseph-Ogden, given only an outside shot to qualify, got a big boost when junior Brad Chism, who had been considered questionable with a knee injury, was able to compete and finished 16th overall.

The Spartans were led by senior Bill Simpson, who ended up in fifth place.

Uni High, feeling the pressure of being a favorite in the sectional meet, stumbled a bit and had some hard luck but still managed to earn its first state berth under coach Mike McCollom.

MCCOLLUM, WHO AT one point was feeling less than chipper when he thought his Illineks had just missed qualifying, breathed a sigh of relief when it became apparent that they had made it.

"We got our one break for the season today," he said. "We were not very competitive in the fifth, sixth and seventh spots.

"These are mental races. People like Chrisman, St. Joseph-Ogden and St. Anne have been here before. They have the edge. We've never been at the state level. Now we are.

"We got eighth last year with 232 points so we

improved almost 100 points and three places this time."

The Illineks were also hampered when Pieter van Es had both shoes come off and was forced to stop to tie them. Van Es finished in 36th place.

Spartan coach Rick Mohr pointed out that this is an odd-numbered year, traditionally a good omen for his teams, which have advanced to state meets in the past three odd-numbered years and will be making their fifth trip to state in the past seven seasons.

Still, he admitted that he wasn't so sure about this one. "This is not really an expected thing," he said. "I figured we'd end up with 141 points and they improved on that.

"WHAT THEY DID was outstanding. I really happy for Bill being up that close to the top after all the work he's done. Having Chism helped a lot. It really helped the other kids mentally."

Chrisman coach Roger Beals said that he was impressed with the fact that Johnson ran at all. "He was really hurting," Beals said. "He had a lot of guts just to run. He'll be better by next week and then, maybe, we'll get them (St. Anne)."

Beal's leader, Bland, said he made a tactical error that cost him a better shot at the individual title.

"I made my move too soon," he said. "I should have just stayed with them (Speletich and Fernatt) longer before I tried it. When I moved and it didn't work, I didn't have much left."