

Urbana Uni High's Ella Schoenberg is shown entering the finish chute as she successfully defends her individual championship at the 9th Annual Mahomet-Seymour Invitational cross-country meet Saturday.

Uni's Schoenberg, M-S's Mathis first

By JOE MILLAS

News-Gazette Sportswriter

MAHOMET — Uni High's Ella Schoenberg successfully defended her individual crown by winning the girls' race. Mahomet-Seymour won the girls' team title and Chrisman won the boys' team championship. But it was Neil Mathis' day at the 9th annual Mahomet-Seymour Invitational cross-country meet Saturday.

Mahomet-Seymour's Mathis, breaking away from the field at the one-mile mark, won the boys' individual title with a record-setting time of 15 minutes, 35 seconds on the 3-mile course in Mahomet.

His effort chopped 18 seconds off the previous mark of 15:54 set by Cumberland's Brian Oakley last year. Oakley was ill and could not defend his title and Cumberland chose not to attend the meet without him.

Schoenberg won the girls' individual title for the second straight year, running the 2-mile distance in 11:59, more than 17 seconds faster than her winning time last fall.

Mahomet-Seymour's girls placed four runners among the top 11 and won the team title with a total of 31 points. Uni High was second with 53.

CHRISMAN, PACED BY Robb Morris' ninth place finish, won the boys' championship with 76 points. Defending champion Uni High, running without No. 1 man Richard Williams who was taking SATs, wound up second with 118 points.

Mathis eased away from early leader Tim Hamann of Manteno after the first half mile. Then, during the loop run near the junior high school, Mathis took complete command of the race, opening his lead to nearly 80 yards by the time he led the field back onto the original running area. He simply increased the pace after that to produce his record-setting finish.

Mathis' teammate, Karl Welke, who was coming off a slight knee problem earlier in the week, ran a solid race and finished sixth in 16:12. Other top finishers were Hoopston-East Lynn's Mark Haggerty, third in 15:59, Kankakee

Bishop McNamara's Matt Close, fourth in 16:05 and Warrenburg-Latham's Jerry Giberson, fifth in 16:08.

Mathis pointed to the tight corners on the course as the key to getting the record.

"To get a good time on this course you have to run the corners," he said. "I just planted my foot and went hard around them."

"The back loop is all just technique surges and hills. Coach King works on that all the time. I wanted to be ahead after the first couple of turns. Then I was confident I could pull away and try for the record."

THE TIGHT TURNS and wet grass, from Friday night's rain, proved tricky for the runners in both races. Schoenberg said they affected her performance, even though she won by a clear margin over Kankakee Bishop McNamara freshman Terri Fuelling.

"I went around them really wide," Schoenberg said. "It was an average run for me. My time was under 12 minutes, which was good. My goal this season has been to run under 12 minutes as much as I can."

Chrisman coach Roger Beals said he was happy with his team's performance, but felt the race might have been different had Uni's Williams been in uniform.

"It makes a lot of difference mentally, for the other guys," Beals said.

Uni High coach Mike McCollom agreed. "Richard is a marker for the other kids," he said. "The other kids trust him when he's out front. I think Herbert (Schonken) relies on him more than anybody. We were hoping to be under 100 points, but we missed it by a little. But I'm not upset about it. Two seconds is pretty good in this meet."

The Mahomet-Seymour girls, led by a 34.5 finish by Karen Welke, Mary Seal and Marcy Novak, simply out-packed Uni to win the team trophy. The Bulldogs placed Melissa Cox in 11th place and Kim Wilhite in 18th while Uni was sending Kim Clausen in the finish chute in seventh, Kathleen Liu and Marion Knight in 16th and 17th and Amanda Young in 26th to close out its scoring.