Pack attack lifts Chrisman harriers to 2nd in Class A Championships

By DAVID HACKETT
News-Gazette Sportswriter

PEORIA — Thirty-three runners crossed the finish line in the cold drizzle here Saturday without a Chrisman jersey among them.

Ordinarily, that would mean trouble for a team with trophy aspirations.

But this time, when the Cardinals finally crossed, they came like a flood: Kenny Bland ... Ben Jenness ... Andy Mills ... Brian Spicer ... Brent Jenness.

Those five runners finished just 28 seconds apart — a remarkable display of teamwork that led Chrisman to second place in the IHSA Class A Cross-Country Championships at Detweiller Park.

Maple Park Kaneland won the meet with 103 points. Chrisman — second in the final poll — had 136 and Yorkville was third with 164.

Chrisman's finish was the best in school history and matched the best ever by a News-Gazette area team. Urbana placed second in 1951, as did Hoopeston-East Lynn in 1979.

"We didn't have any idea we would be this good when the season started," said Cardinals coach Roger Beals. "But the kids are very team-oriented. They worked extremely hard."

Mahomet-Seymour, ranked third in the poll, settled for 10th with 288. And Oakwood, getting strong efforts from Brian Harmeson and Jeff Trask, was 12th with 307.

The individual champion was Streator Woodland senior Scott Maddux, whose time of 14:58 edged Toledo Cumberland senior Doug Light by eight seconds. Maddux is a familiar name in the winner's circle — his brother, Troy, winning in 1984 and '85.

Senior Bland led Chrisman, placing 34th overall in a time of 15:44. Ben Jenness, a senior completing his first season, was 39th in 15:50. Mills, Spicer and Brent Jenness (his hand in a cast) were close.

Despite the magnitude of the performance, the Cardinals were a pensive lot after the race.

"I thought we were going to win," said Bland. "We were probably one of the best prepared teams here and we ran well together. I thought we had a good chance to win it."

Chrisman whipped its expected rivals: No. 1-ranked Delavan, Mahomet-Seymour and fourth-rated Rock Island Alleman. What it didn't expect was seventh-ranked Kaneland to run fabulously.

Kaneland, like Chrisman, didn't have a Top 25 finisher. But all its runners scored well.

"I'd like to run against Kaneland again next Saturday," Beals said. "We were totally unaware of them. We thought it would come down to those other teams."

Mahomet-Seymour was another story. The Bulldogs hoped to claim a trophy, but senior Jamie Fancher and sophomore Brian Easter (usually the fifth man) were their only finishers in the top 75.

"It was their first time at state," said coach John King, "and obviously they didn't react well to it."

Westville's Brian Towell had the best performance by an area runner, earning All-State honors by finishing 25th in 15:31.

Sullivan senior Todd Spenser raced well to finish 31st in 15:43. Watseka junior Robert Love was 65th in 16:12 and Monticello senior David Crockett was 67th in 16:13.

Girls' race

Wheeling's Dana Miroballi claimed an unprecedented fourth championship, finishing the single-class race in a record 11:16.

It wasn't easy. Riverside-Brookfield's Katrina Price grabbed a huge lead and maintained it through the first half. Then Miroballi jetted from third and blitzed Price down the stretch.

Price's time of 11:21 also broke the record of 11:22.9 set by Elmwood's Betsy Silzer in 1981.

One of the best performances by a young runner came from Rantoul's Amy Bersig.

The Eagles' freshman ran in the shadow of St. Joseph-Ogden freshman Ashley Wright this season. But Saturday, Bersig finished 51st in 12:40. Wright was 86th in 13:02.

Karen Morris placed 42nd and twin sister Kathy 57th to spark Chrisman to 19th in the team standings. Kankakee McNamara, 16th, was the only Class A school to edge the Cardinals.

Class AA boys

Metamora senior Mark Scheirer, sixth in the meet last year, finished first in the field of 226 runners with a time of 14:22.

Schaumburg's Tim Sieb was 30th to lead his school to the team title with 120 points.