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school's Amy Bersig strides toward the finish line. The winner was the individual winner on Saturday in the girls' Mahomet-Seymour cross-country invitational.

M-S' Nielsen sets standard in C-C meet

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MAHOMET — Earlier this year at the St. Joseph-Ogden Cross-Country Invitational, Dan Nielsen had trouble at the start and never challenged eventual winner Jeremy Skinner of Shelbyville.

And even though Shelbyville was running a team at Saturday's Mahomet-Seymour Invitational, Skinner didn't participate. He was attending a wedding.

But that didn't stop Mahomet-Seymour's Nielsen from setting a high school course record at the 3-mile Lake of the Woods layout as he won the meet's individual title.

Nielsen's time of 16 minutes, 14 seconds was good enough to beat Kankakee Bishop McNamara's Tim Kennedy, who crossed in 16:30.

Skinner had held the previous course record of 16:21, which he set last year at the M-S meet.

Urbana University High claimed the fourth and fifth spots with Joshua Folk (16:59) and Frank Winter (16:59). Chad Beals was the top finisher for Chrisman, taking seventh in 17:16.

At St. Joseph, Nielsen got tripped by a web of legs at the start and nearly fell. By the time he recovered, Skinner had a lead and Nielsen never really got into contention.

So for Nielsen, not getting a chance to run with Skinner on Saturday was a minor disappointment.

"I really wanted to improve on my time and I didn't know if I could do that without him being here," he said. "But I just tried to go out and run the race as if he was here. Usually he goes out fast so I tried to go out fast."

Nielsen went out so fast that M-S coach John King, who was reading off the mile splits as runners went by, didn't even want to tell his No. 1 runner his time.

"He came by the first mile in 4:37," King said. "I didn't even read him his time because I didn't want it to play games with his head. I just said, 'Great race! Keep on going.'"

"I thought Dan had a good chance of winning, but I didn't think it would be as easy as it was. As a team, we didn't run as well as I thought we would but we didn't run bad."

"My time today was faster than at St. Joe," Nielsen said, "but I think I worked harder today than I did at St. Joe."

Nielsen would beat not just one Kennedy, but two. Tim's brother Pat took third in 13:56, leading McNamara to a surprising upset in the boys' team competition over Chrisman, ranked No. 1 in the state.

McNamara scored 50 points to 68 for the Cardinals, the defending Class A champion. Mahomet-Seymour was third on Saturday with 142.

"They just ran a great race today," Chrisman coach Roger Beals said of McNamara.

"I wasn't happy with the way our kids ran, but it's tough to be on top of your race every day.

"We've got to go up to Amboy (35-school meet) next. I hope they were thinking about Amboy, but you never know what they're thinking about."