

# SJ-O animals blitz field at cross-country regional

By **BRETT CLARK**

News-Gazette Sportswriter

**MAHOMET** — The distance-running animals lived up to their name Friday at the Class A cross-country regional in Mahomet.

The St. Joseph-Ogden runners, who wear T-shirts with "Distance Running Animals" printed on the front and "Pain Is Our Friend" on the back, won the Mahomet Regional with 27 points. They had five of the top nine finishers on the 3-mile course.

"We expected to win," St. Joseph-Ogden coach Jim Acklin said. "They had their game faces on. They have a take-no-prisoners attitude."

The Spartans' attitude was exemplified by the black flag bearing a skull and crossbones they set up at the meet.

Rick Walden led St. Joseph-Ogden, ranked No. 6 in the Class A Illinois Prep Top Times weekly poll, with a second place finish at 15 minutes, 40.2 seconds.

Melvin Goodman was fourth in 15:54.3.

The Spartans also placed sev-

enth through ninth. Brian Allen had a time of 16:22.7, Andy Ingram finished with 16:33.1 and Nick Smith covered the course in 16:35.

"We don't have to run, we get to run," Walden said. "That's kind of our motto."

Mahomet-Seymour finished second to St. Joseph-Ogden with a team score of 64 points. They were followed by Urbana University High with 94 points, Unity 103 and Monticello 110.

Along with St. Joseph-Ogden, these four teams advance to the Paxton Sectional at 4 p.m. Friday.

The top five finishers who are not members of one of the five teams that qualified also advance to the sectional.

Dan Nielsen from Mahomet-Seymour won the individual title with a time of 15:11.1.

Nielsen, a senior, said he ran well because he had a home course advantage.

"We run interval workouts on strategic parts of the course," Nielsen said. "I hoped to win it, but that is one thing I couldn't

take for granted."

Mahomet-Seymour coach John King said Nielsen has a chance to win the sectional.

"If he is on top of his game, he will be in the hunt," King said.

Acklin said he hopes the Spartans can finish near the top at the Paxton Sectional and possibly advance to state.

"We have got a shot (of winning the sectional)," Acklin said, but he added, "it is the toughest sectional in the state."

## At Chrisman

Barry Pearman from Georgetown-Ridge Farm won the Chrisman Regional with a time of 15:09 on the 3-mile course.

Chad Beals of Chrisman finished second at 15:26, followed by Phil Skinner of Westville at 15:47.

Chrisman, ranked No. 9, won the regional with 39 team points, followed by Georgetown-Ridge Farm with 45 points.

The top five individuals and the top five teams advance to the Paxton Sectional, along with the qualifiers from the Herscher, Mahomet and Normal Regionals.