

# No. 6 runner lifts SJ-O out of

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PAXTON — The St. Joseph-Ogden High School boys' cross-country team knows how hard it is to win a sectional title.

"You don't get many chances to win a sectional," said SJ-O coach Jim Acklin after Friday's Class A meet at Paxton-Buckley-Loda High School.

Acklin, checking his raw scores, had his team losing the title, 104-105, to Normal University High.

But then came the official results, read

by PBL coach Fred Guyot. Last year, Guyot had bad news for the Spartans. They narrowly finished sixth and therefore missed qualifying for the state meet.

The news was quite the opposite on Friday. SJ-O tied U-High 90-90, turning the Spartans' No. 6 runner, Nick Smith, into a hero.

Smith, in 36th, had beaten U-High's No. 6 runner, Marshall Watson, who was 40th, and SJ-O had won the tiebreaker and the title.

"We've been keying for this meet," Smith said after the race. "There was a

Normal U-High runner right in front of me, but I didn't know if he was (their) fifth or sixth (runner). He kicked me down."

Not only did SJ-O win, it will be going to state, joined by U-High, Herscher (128), Chrisman (139) and Kankakee Bishop McNamara (145).

Joining those teams in Peoria next Saturday will be the top seven runners not on those teams.

Leading the way was Mahomet-Seymour's Dan Nielsen, who made sure his last sectional meet would result in

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## tie to sectional win

an individual title. Nielsen finished the 3-mile race in 15 minutes, 43 seconds, picking up the pace on the final mile.

He left behind U-High's Barrett Moore (15:47) and Georgetown-Ridge Farm sophomore Barry Pearman (15:56).

The other five individuals qualifying were Urbana University's Joshua Folk (16:02), Arthur's John Jess (16:02), Ryan Meece of Gardner-South Wilmington (16:18), Coal City's Joe Christensen (16:20) and Olympia's Chad Creemens (16:22).

"It went out fast, but not quite as fast as I expected," Nielsen said of the early pace. "I knew I couldn't come in here thinking I was going to win it hands-down."

As for next weekend, Nielsen said it's going to take a time much faster than a 15:43 if he's going to challenge for the state title on the fast Detweiller Park course.

"It's a matter of being as determined as possible," Nielsen said. "It's definitely going to be a faster time. I hope I can do it."