

# SJ-O, Uni High runners attack Classic

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ST. JOSEPH — Saturday might be remembered as Breakthrough Day for runners from St. Joseph-Ogden's and Urbana University High's girls' cross-country teams.

In the annual Spartan Classic, which included 115 entries for the girls' race, S-J-O had four of its runners finish in the top nine.

The breakthrough, however, was the effort of the Spartans' next finisher.

"This is the first meet where we've had a fifth runner step up," girls' coach Steve Shaffer said, praising the efforts of senior Danielle Strack. "Usually we have a gap of about a minute and 45 seconds, and both Unity and Uni High usually have their seventh runner in before our fifth, but Danielle ended up a minute and 10 off the pace."

Strack's performance, good enough for 29th overall, helped S-J-O, ranked fourth in the state among Class A schools, win team laurels. She also came in ahead of Unity's fourth runner and in front of Uni High's sixth placer.

Uni High, meanwhile, took a significant step forward in the estimation of coach Bonnie Byers. Her squad finished second, outrunning Unity.

S-J-O's point total was 49, followed by Uni with 86.

Unity with 92 and Argenta-Oreana with 134. Unity is ranked fifth and Uni High eighth this week.

A-O had the individual winner for the second straight year in sophomore Karen Bloch.

Bloch's 11-minute, 21-second time was just one second off her personal record and was 11.56 seconds ahead of runner-up Karen Wamsley, a senior at Unity.

Bloch was 7:12.91 ahead of the final girls' finisher. The significance of Uni High's finish was one reason Byers was all smiles.

"They can only hear the coach say, 'You can do it,' so many times," she said. "Today they did it. This is a major breakthrough."

"They ran with confidence and packed as well as they could. A major factor was having Amy (Park-er) back (from an injury)."

The Illineks' individual leader was senior Tysan Huang, in fifth. Uni High's next four runners placed

between 18th and 26th, and the split between Huang and the No. 5 finisher, junior Eman Jassim, was just 51.65 seconds.

S-J-O's finishers in the top 10 were junior Maria McKinney, third; senior Ashley Wright, fourth; junior Erin Fuller, sixth, and sophomore Beth Rudnickie, ninth.

■ In the boys' meet, S-J-O pushed Normal University High, rated No. 1 in the state, but placed a close second to the Pioneers.

U-High had 82 points, and S-J-O, ranked 15th, had 86 followed by 10th-ranked Georgetown-Ridge Farm, 132, and seventh-ranked Chrisman, 164, in the 28-team field.

G-RF sophomore Barry Pearman was first among the 191 boys. His time of 14:54.91 was nearly 10 seconds ahead of the runner-up, Mahomet-Seymour senior Dan Nielsen was third and was the only non-sophomore in the top four.

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