

SJ-O races to girls' Class A cross-c

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PEORIA — Last spring, St. Joseph-Ogden proved it had girls who could run a two-mile relay faster than anyone else in Class A.

On Saturday, the Spartans proved they have individuals who don't need help covering a long-distance.

With three runners placing among the top 30 and a fourth finishing ahead of the No. 4 runner from all other schools, SJ-O won the Class A girls' cross-country state championship.

Junior Marla McKinney and senior Ashley Wright earned all-state honors for SJ-O by virtue of their top 25 finishes in the 160-runner field.

Individually, two other area girls received all-state laurels.

Argenta-Oreana sophomore Karen Bloch was sixth. She covered the 2.1-mile course in 12 minutes, 8 seconds, 25 sec-

■ SJ-O boys place fourth at state, D-5.

onds behind the winner, Sparta's Becky Garrett.

Bloch's time was an improvement of 35 seconds from the 1989 state meet, when she was 10th. Bloch's time was also the sixth best ever run on the Detweiller Park course by a Class A girl.

The other area all-stater was Unity senior Karen Wamsley. She was 14th in 12:27 and became her school's first three-time all-state harrier.

Urbana University High finished one position away from a team trophy. The Illineks were fourth with 197 points.

SJ-O's score was 167 followed by Hillsboro, 186, and Rock Island Alleman, 188.

Unity's team placed 11th and Sullivan's 19th in the 20-school field.

"I knew no one had a top four faster than ours," SJ-O girls' coach Steve Shaffer

said. "It was a matter of whether our fifth could run well.

"Danielle Strack ran a gutsy race and that did it."

SJ-O's No. 3 runner, junior Erin Fuller, and No. 4 runner, sophomore Beth Rudnicke, competed up to Shaffer's expectations.

Although third on her team, Fuller finished ahead of all runners from the teams that placed second and fourth. She was 29th overall.

Rudnicke came in at the No. 44 spot with what Shaffer termed, "the race of her life."

He added: "Usually she tries to hold on at the end. Today she was passing people."

Rudnicke's time of 13:18 was 40 seconds faster than she ran on the course earlier in the season.

Three of SJ-O's top four placers — McKinney, Wright and Rudnicke — were

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country championship

members of the school's 3,200-meter relay which won a state title last May.

Shaffer believed the carry-over value had some merit.

"Those three were proven winners," he said. "They'd already shown they could compete at state. "They didn't come in here overwhelmed."

University High coach Bonnie Byers wasn't surprised by the team outcome.

"My girls asked me very early in the season if we could beat St. Joe and I told them, honestly, no," Byers said. "I thought they had the best team in the state."

Uni High's fourth-place effort was one back of its best at state in cross-country.

"Fourth is a very honorable position to be in," Byers said. "The only reason we're disappointed is that they only recognize the top three teams."

Just one of Uni's seven state-meet competitors is a senior and Laurel Heren-

deen placed among the top 15 freshmen on Saturday.

She was 64th in 13:35.

Class AA

Centennial sophomore Stephanie Dueringer was Champaign County's top placer. She was 39th in 12:29.

Dueringer's 2-mile split (11:58) was a personal best.

The winner for the 2.1-mile girls' race was McHenry's Erin Boland, in 11:30. There were 235 finishers.

Palatine won team honors with 65 points. Centennial's team was 23rd out of 29 qualifiers.

Other local runners in the top half were Rantoul senior Amy Bersig, 53rd at 12:39; Urbana freshman Sarah Stephens, 61st at 12:45 and Centennial junior Sara Campion, 110th at 13:08.

Bersig, an all-state runner last year, was hampered by a head cold.