

Pontiac runners nip U High for 9th straight league title

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STANFORD — Pontiac High School cross country coach Keven Forney began mentally bracing himself for the Indians' eight-year reign as Corn Belt Conference champions to end.

His team had just passed the 2-mile mark at Olympia High School yesterday well behind favored University High, which shares the state's No. 2 Class A ranking.

"At two miles, we saw the grim reaper with his sickle out," said Forney, who didn't realize Pontiac was about to run the miracle mile.

The Indians' Luke McGlasson (10th) and Orin Roth (15th) each passed a U High runner in the final yards of the 3-mile race to give Pontiac a 43-44 victory, the closest result in the 13-year history of the meet.

"This has to rank as the most gratifying victory," said Forney after picking up his ninth title. "In the past, we've always been the favorite."

U High coach Lester Hampton said his team was at full strength



Dan
Nielsen



Michelle
Myers

and had no excuses.

"They won it in the last (quarter-mile) stretch," he said.

Mahomet-Seymour's Dan Nielsen defended his individual league crown with a course record time of 15 minutes, 3.25 seconds. The senior pulled away from Pontiac junior Marc Balota (15:08.87) with a half mile remaining.

University High sophomore Barrett Moore stayed close to the leaders through 5:00 and 5:06 opening miles before fading to third in 15:17.40.

Nielsen, who normally wears glasses, races without them and it nearly cost him as he ran slightly

off course the last quarter mile.

"I couldn't see the shoot," he said. "I was pretty worried coming in. I'd seen where Marc and Barrett had been running really well."

Olympia placed third with 71 followed by Mahomet-Seymour (79) and Prairie Central (142).

Pontiac's cause was helped when Olympia's Chad Cremeens held off U High all-stater Charles Alsberry for fourth, 15:49.94 to 15:52.22.

In the 2-mile girls race, favored Pontiac scored 26 points for its second straight title. Olympia edged Mahomet-Seymour for third, 60-61. Prairie Central scored 85.

Pontiac sophomore Michelle Myers escaped Olympia junior Jennifer Lovins and Mahomet-Seymour freshman Jama Ryan in the last half mile to set a course record of 13:04.71. Lovins ran 13:15.14 and Ryan 13:17.89.

"Michelle hasn't been in too many races where she was shooting for first," said Forney after Myers' first major meet victory. "She made a strong move late in the race and maintained."

Strong finishes were Pontiac's saving grace yesterday.