

U High boys, girls sweep in Corn Belt

Mahomet's Smoes, Pioneers' Billingsley individual champs

By Randy Sharer

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STANFORD — The showdown between the No. 6-state ranked University High School boys cross country team and No. 5 Mahomet-Seymour lived up to its hype in the Corn Belt Conference Meet on Monday.

The Bulldogs, who had not won since joining the league in 1986, had topped U High twice earlier, most recently by a point at Metamora on Oct. 6.

This time U High came out on top, 37-39, to win its sixth consecutive conference crown. It was the closest race for first since 2006 when Central Catholic edged U High, 44-45.

Mahomet-Seymour lost despite a 1-2 finish from junior Forrest Smoes and senior Jonathan Schaap, who toured the 3-mile course in 15 minutes, 7 seconds and 15:13, respectively.

"We knew it was going to be really close with Mahomet," said Pioneer coach Lester Hampton. "They are such a really good team."

In the girls division, No. 2-ranked U High won its third consecutive title with 20 points, 59 ahead of No. 23-ranked Mahomet-Seymour.

The Pioneers were sparked by a 1-2 finish from junior Sydney Billingsley (18:07) and freshman Shannon Supan (18:23).

"We knew if we just ran our race, we would be fine," Hampton said.

As expected in the boys race, Pontiac's terrific trio of Zac Justus (5th, 15:30), Josh McCoy (6th, 15:33) and Shawn Milhauser (7th, 15:35) had a say in the team outcome.

"One of the keys was definitely Adam Bruno passing the Pontiac kids because I knew they could throw a wrinkle into things," said Hampton, who saw Bruno run fourth in 15:25. "If they beat our guys, but didn't beat the guys up front from Mahomet, that would cause problems for us."

Also scoring for the Pioneers were Brendan Hoskins in third (15:21), J.D. Lafayette in eighth (15:36), defending champion Wesley Ward in 10th (16:53) and Eli Hill in 12th (15:58).

U High got a lift from No. 6 man Joe Clay, who was 14th (16:10), two spots ahead of the Bulldogs' fifth man.

"They just ran a phenomenal race," said Bulldog coach Neal Garrison of the Pioneers. "They are a good team, but they are re-

ally great when they need to be great."

The victory was the first of Smoes' career and his time was a career best. Only once before had he beaten Schaap, who celebrated his 18th birthday.

The duo sped the opening miles in 4:59 and 5:07. Smoes pulled away early during a 5:01 final mile to become the first Bulldog champion since Kyle Emkes in 2000.

"My plan was to go with my teammate and just kind of run together like we do in practices," Smoes said.

In the girls race, Billingsley wanted to redeem herself after finishing third in 2011. She was with last year's runner-up, Faith Weiland of Central Catholic, while reaching the two-mile mark in 12:03. A quarter mile later, Billingsley took off and Weiland faded to third in 18:32.

"I felt good today so I just wanted to make the best of the (ideal) weather," Billingsley said. "In the postseason, I'm not too concerned about time. It's all about place. I kind of threw time out the window today and just ran."

Other Pioneer scorers were Alex Walsh (5th, 18:48), Ashley Lafayette (7th, 19:04) and Morgan