

PrepReport

Ehnle, Tremont both 6th

By Randy Sharer

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PEORIA — Not the physical fallout from an October injury nor the mental baggage of a disastrous 2012 state cross country outing could derail Connor Ehnle on Saturday.

The Tremont High School senior produced the Pantagraph area's top result in the 68th state meet, placing sixth in Class 1A in 15 minutes, 18 seconds on De-

tweiller Park's 3-mile course.

"I was worried if I was even going to be back and what kind of shape I would be

in," said Ehnle, who hoped to crack the top 15 last year, but mysteriously struggled home 121st.

"Coach kept telling me, 'trust your training.' I trusted him. It paid off at sectionals (with a win) and thankfully I ran good at state."

Pontiac's Zac Justus was pretty good, too, clocking 15:19 for 18th in 2A where Bloomington's Sam Doud also earned all-state (top 25) honors by taking 23rd in 15:23.

The areas' five 1A all-staters included Tremont's Caleb Imig (11th, 15:24), Olympia's Ryan Van Dyke (14th, 15:33), Heyworth's Cade Martens (21st, 15:39) and El Paso-Gridley's Jacob Ludy (25th, 15:42).

Imig improved 30 places and 19 seconds over last year.

"The thing I'm most happy with this year is just how much I've learned how



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Tremont's Connor Ehnle, left, battles Tuscola's Eric Ponder in the Class 1A state cross country meet at Peoria on Saturday. Ponder wound up fifth and Ehnle sixth.

to race," he said after helping Tremont ignore its No. 18 ranking to place a surprise sixth (193).

Elmwood won its seventh title with 161 points while sophomore Jon Davis of Fithian Oakwood took the individual crown in 14:47.

The Turks nearly had a third all-stater as Wilson Pfloderer ran 30th in 15:50.

"This would be the best top three that we've ever had," said Tremont coach Mike Lynn.

Van Dyke became the top finisher in Olympia history.

"I was a little disappointed with my time, but I'm really jacked about my place," said Van Dyke, who helped the No. 17-ranked Spartans place 15th with 328 points.

Martens missed the best finish in Heyworth history by one place.

"I'm disappointed," he said. "I went out a little fast (in 4:45 the first mile) and it affected me."

Ludy helped first-time

state entrant El Paso-Gridley, which came in ranked 25th, placed a shocking 12th (301).

"I felt great," Ludy said. "I was just running for joy today."

EPG coach Michael Melick felt joy, too.

"We set some pretty high goals for ourselves this week and we didn't hit those necessarily," he said, "but they should be real proud of what they did."

Pontiac's Justus reached his goal while improving nine places over last year despite running 13 seconds slower.

"The wind kind of affected me, but not much," Justus said. "I really wanted to go out where Sam Doud was. I caught him at the end again."

Doud became the eighth all-stater in BHS history, but he wanted more.

"Opening up in 4:45 (the first mile) and ending at 15:23 is not a well run race at all," he said.

Mahomet-Seymour had

been ranked high all season, climbing to No. 2, but slumped to 15th (406). Yorkville won (119) while Glenbard West's John Wold repeated in 14:38.

"Our No. 1 guy (Alex Keeble) has been sick," said Coach Neal Garrison, who felt the rest of the Bulldogs lost their fire when Keeble had to drop out.

No. 5-ranked University High finished 14th (390) with Alexander Bruno leading the way in 44th (15:43).

"It wasn't one of our better days," said Pioneer coach Lester Hampton.

It was a long day for Normal Community, which placed 26th (651) in its 3A state debut. The winners were Hinsdale Central (99) and O'Fallon's Patrick Perrier (14:21).

"We had two PRs (personal records)," said NCHS coach Tom Patten. "We were hoping for a few more than that."

Tanner Kuenneth led NCHS in 119th (15:43).