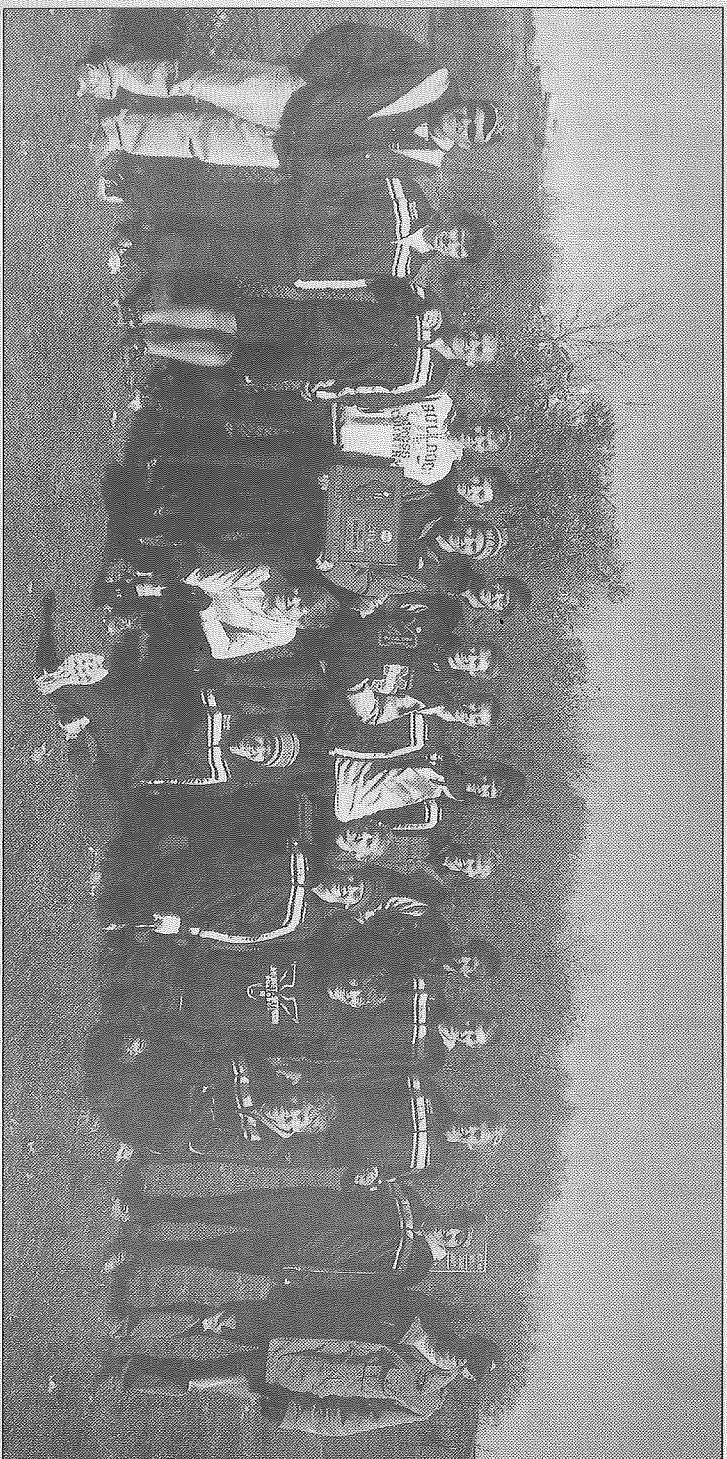


CROSS-COUNTRY



Submitted photo

Mahomet-Seymour's boys' cross-country team celebrates its sectional win on Nov. 1 in East Peoria. They'll head to the state finals this weekend.

THREE IN A ROW

Bulldog boys claim third sectional title in as many years; Lauren Whitehouse headed to finals as an individual runner

By **TERRY GREENE**
Mahomet Citizen sportswriter

For the third year in a row, the Mahomet-Seymour boys cross country team has claimed an IHSA Class 2A Sectional championship.

The running Bulldogs, led by Alex Keeble's first place finish, topped the 18-team field with 62 points on November 1 in East Peoria.

M-S, ranked #2 in the state, easily outdistanced runner-up Normal U-High (91 points) and now head to the state finals at Peoria's Detweiler Park on November 8.

Keeble turned in a time of 15:01 for his sixth win in eight meets. And he had plenty of company as the Bulldogs had five runners finish within 62 seconds of each other.

Keeble's supporting cast included William Wolf (4th, 15:12), Jake Hyde (14th, 15:42), Andrew Walmer (19th, 15:47)

and Riley Fortune (27th, 16:03), Brian Butcher (40th, 16:13) and Trevor Hanlon (72nd, 16:47) rounded out the Bulldog effort in the field of 137 runners.

Coach Neal Garrison said his athletes are as ready for the state finals as they possibly could be and have their eyes on a top three finish. Team trophies and individual medals go to the first, second, and third place teams.

"I believe our team should be in peak performance both mentally and physically at the state meet. They've invested a lot into their running to get themselves in position to do well," he said. "We try as often as we can to put our runners through similar pressure in our practices and meets throughout the season to get them ready for the state finals."

According to Garrison, just about anything can happen at a state championship meet, good and bad.

"I've seen both great and horribly bad things happen to runners from all schools at the state finals. Unfortunately it's a race that has so many things that can happen to a runner both emotionally and physically," he said. "We're preparing ourselves to be able to handle whatever comes our way on race day."

Keeble becomes the Bulldogs' second sectional title holder in school history. Dan Nielsen claimed a sectional crown in 1990.

While the Lady Bulldogs saw their 2014 come to end with a ninth-place team finish, Lauren Whitehouse advanced to the state finals as an individual runner when she placed third in the competition with a time 18:05.

Other runners who competed for the Lady Bulldogs were freshman Jenna Straub (26th, 19:21), sophomores Jocelyn Thrasher (56th, 20:07) and Mariah McAnally (57th, 20:07),

senior Twinkle Mehta (60th, 20:10), and sophomores Kaithin Lewis (73rd, 20:24) and Olivia Meyer (93rd, 21:03).

Coach Bonnie Moxley said that while it was disappointing to fall short of its goal of another state finals appearance, the future was bright for the Lady Bulldogs.

"There is no doubt that this team will invest the time and effort next summer that is required to be a state contender. More miles will be the key to our success," Moxley said. "This group, which is primarily freshmen and sophomores, has the raw talent to achieve a lot of success in the future."

Moxley predicted Whitehouse would more than hold her own at the state finals.

"Lauren is running more confident and stronger than ever before," Moxley said. "God willing, she will finish in the top 25 and push hard to make the top 15."