

## VARSITY CROSS-COUNTRY

## RUNNERS FINISH STRONG AT STATE

Mahomet-Seymour boys bring home first-ever state XC trophy; Whitehouse takes 8th place

By TERRY GREENE

*Mahomet Citizen sportswriter*

Alex Keeble's blazing 14:49 was the spark that lit the fuse for the Mahomet-Seymour varsity boys' cross country team at the Class 2A state finals at East Peoria on November 8.

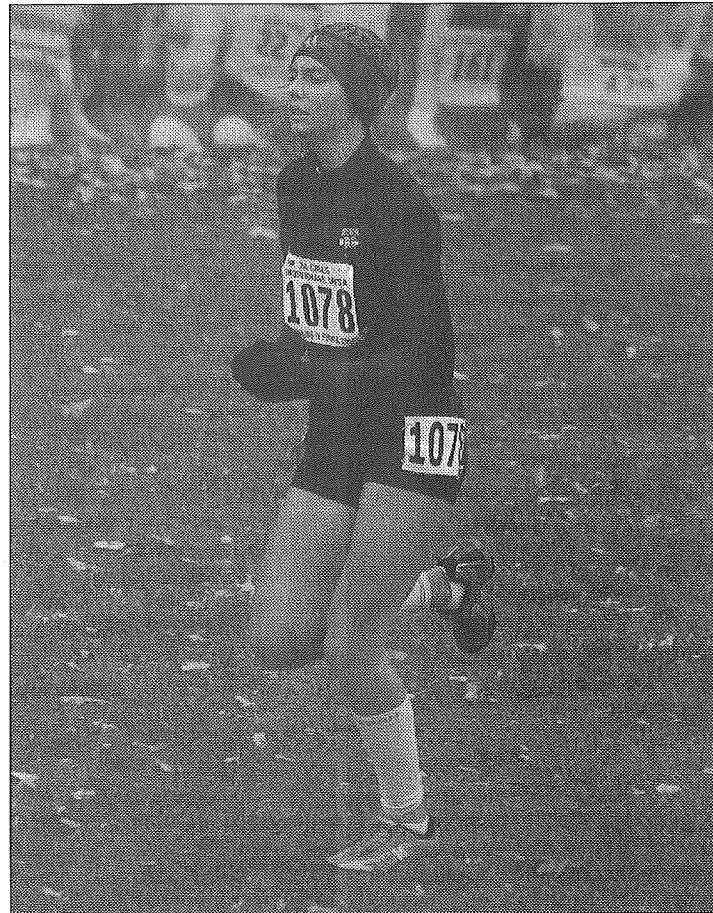
When the dust settled, the Bulldogs had a runner-up finish and the first IHSA cross-country trophy in school history. Yorkville was the state champion with 105 points.

M-S, Lansing Illiana Christian, Springfield, and Metamora rounded out the top five in the 26-team field.

Keeble's fourth-place finish, which earned the Bulldog junior IHSA All-State honors, was the best ever for an M-S individual cross country runner. William Wolf, a senior, crossed the finish line in 15:01, good enough for 18th overall and also All-State recognition.

Keeble and Wolf had plenty of help along the way. Sophomore Andrew Walmer (41st, 15:25), junior Jack Hyde (60th, 15:37) and sophomore Ben Crow (67th, 15:41) added to the M-S point total. Sophomore Brian Butcher (69th, 15:42) and freshman Riley Fortune (78th, 15:48) both recorded personal bests.

Bulldog coach Neal Garrison said his runners were prepared for the state finals and it was just a matter of getting the job done.



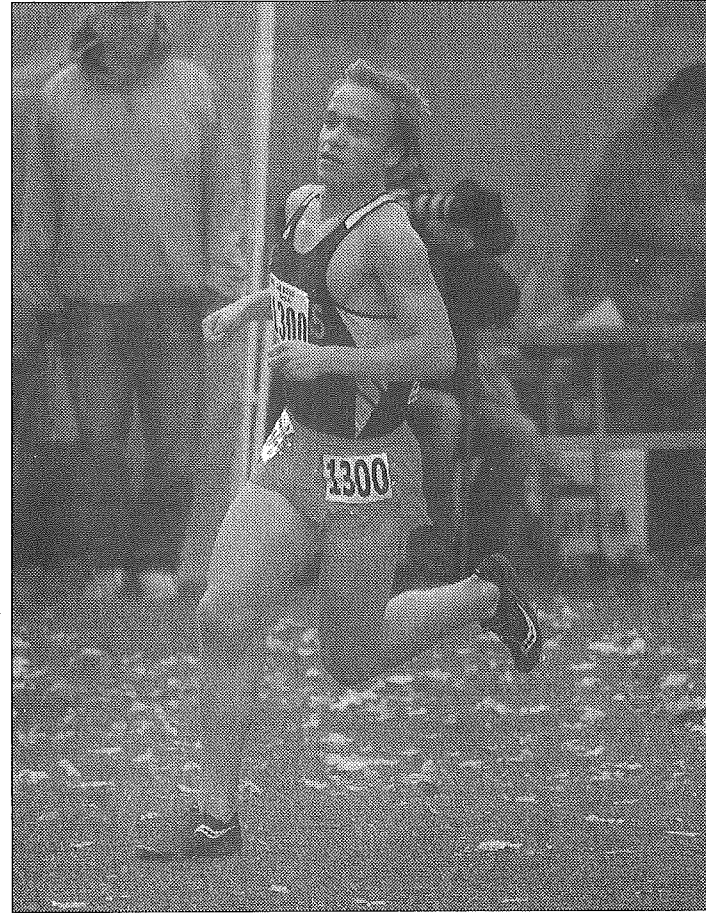
Daniel Chamness/For the Mahomet Citizen

Junior Lauren Whitehouse runs the second mile of the three-mile state championship race in Peoria. Whitehouse finished eighth in the IHSA Class 2A State Finals, in a time of 17 minutes, 42 seconds.

"Before the race, Coach Todd Lafond told our runners to relax and compete," Garrison said. "As the race unfolded I thought our runners were too far back

to be able to place in the top three as a team. Thankfully I was wrong."

Can a team that is loaded with underclassmen repeat and pos-



Daniel Chamness/For the Mahomet Citizen

Alex Keeble runs in the IHSA Class 2A State Finals, which were held at Detwiller Park in Peoria. The Bulldog harrier finished fourth in the three-mile race, finishing in 14 minutes, 49 seconds.

sibly do even better in 2015? Garrison thinks so but added that M-S won't be alone in its pursuit of a state championship.

"Our team has the talent to

be stronger in 2015. However, we don't want to underestimate how much our competition could also improve in a year's time," he said. "We're hopeful

that this group and our alumni have set it up for next year's group to be able to do as well."

On the girls' side, junior Lauren Whitehouse also claimed All-State honors when she blitzed the course in a time of 17:42 and an 8th place Class 2A finish. For Whitehouse, it was the culmination of a stellar season that saw a string of successes.

Going into the state finals, according to Whitehouse, she had some specific goals in mind.

"My goal was to run a 17:45 and finish in the top fifteen. I was feeling pretty good going into the second mile, which is usually where I struggle," she said. "I started to get a little excited when I crossed the two-mile mark at 11:43. At the end, all I could focus on was crossing that line as fast as possible."

M-S Coach Bonnie Moxley said the state finals should bring out the best in an athlete and that's exactly what happened for Whitehouse.

"Lauren ran her lifetime best at the state meet and that's what a champion is supposed to do. Lauren has worked hard and put in a lot of miles," Moxley said. "But success came to Lauren this season because she was able to perfect her race strategy. It takes a lot of confidence to be willing to slow down your first mile and that is what she had to do."