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## No. 1 Mahomet boys win cross country sectional

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9 hours ago • [Randy Sharer rsharer@pantagraph.com](#)

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NORMAL — All the No. 1-state ranked Mahomet-Seymour High School boys cross country team needed to do in Saturday's University High Class 2A Sectional was advance.

The Bulldogs have such depth, they rested three of their top seven and still won their fourth consecutive sectional to qualify for the fifth straight year to next Saturday's state meet in Peoria.

"We didn't necessarily want them to go to the well," said Coach Neal Garrison, whose participants tried to save enough energy to make a splash next week.

Rain made the course resemble the bottom of a well in spots, but the mud-spattered Bulldogs put five men in the top 33 to score 65 points, besting runner-up U High by 43.

The No. 5-ranked Pioneers, led by individual champion Jack Franklin, advanced for the ninth straight year.

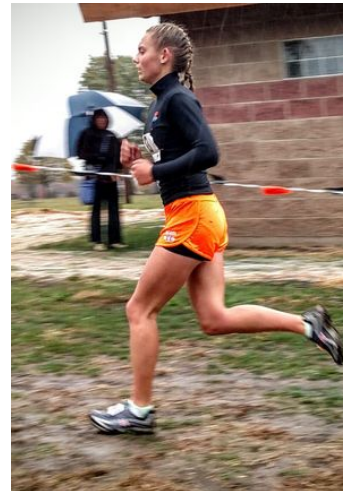
For the girls, the area qualifiers were fifth-place Mahomet-Seymour (174) and U High senior Shannan Supan, whose team ran eighth (206).

Garrison isn't counting any state titles before they're won.

"We know a lot could change in the next week," he said. "A guy could come up lame."

Alex Keeble led the Bulldogs to a healthy 59-second five-man split, clocking 15 minutes, 24 seconds for second on Maxwell Park's 3-mile course.

His fellow scorers were Gabe Pommier (8th, 15:39), Brian Butcher (10th, 15:40), Ryan Hodge (18th, 16:02) and Riley Fortune (33rd, 16:23).



Third-placer Lauren Whitehouse helped Mahomet-Seymour's cross country team advance fifth from the University High Class 2A Sectional at Normal's Maxwell Park on Saturday.

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"The wind was awful and then the rain was awful, too," Keeble said. "We were taking it a little easy today, saving it for next week. Jack Franklin had an incredible race."

A state title contender, Keeble also lost in the regional to Franklin, who motored 15:16, a nifty improvement over his 15:36 Intercity win on this course.

"I didn't feel tired the first two miles so I was able to finish pretty hard on the last one and pull away a little bit," he said. "It was pretty tactical so I wasn't really thinking about times."

After Zach Wolford (7th, 15:39) and Jared Schucckman (13th, 15:56), the Pioneers had a 45-second gap to their fourth man.

"I thought our 1-2-3 looked awesome," said U High coach Lester Hampton. "We've got to bridge that gap (from 3 to 4) somehow. I think every team is trying to do that."

Matt DeGroot (17th, 16:01) of eighth-place Normal West (217) tried to be one of the seven individual qualifiers, but missed by one place and 3.9 seconds. Other advancing teams were No. 10 Peoria Notre Dame (128), No. 8 Metamora (132) and No. 17 Danville (185).

Mahomet-Seymour's No. 14-state ranked girls advanced for the fifth time since 2010 and the 13th time in school history. Lauren Whitehouse, eighth in last year's state meet, led the way in third (18:19) while earning her fourth state trip.

"My first two miles were faster than they have been all season and the third mile was a little tougher," said Whitehouse, who ran alone in second most of the way.

Reigning state champion Maryjeanne Gilbert of Peoria Notre Dame won in 16:52, a whopping 1:19 ahead of Dunlap runner-up Franny Verville (18:11), who passed Whitehouse in the final mile.

No. 2-state ranked Dunlap won (45) followed by No. 11 Notre Dame (81), No. 9 Washington (99) and No. 16 Morton (156).

"We knew it was very iffy," said Mahomet-Seymour coach Bonnie Moxley. "We've had three front runners all season long and it's all been about trying to bring a fourth and a fifth runner along with us, move them closer."

The Bulldogs' front three included Brisa McGrath (22nd, 19:10) and Jenna Straub (30th, 19:26). Their gap-closing teammates were Madison Buzicky (62nd, 20:15) and Samira Kassem (65th, 20:16).

No. 15-ranked U High never got going.

"We just got ourselves positioned too far back early and then gaps generated with the weather and we just couldn't close them up," said U High coach John Neisler, who was happy Supan advanced 23rd (19:13).

"I'm glad that she got that seventh spot. It's not every day you get to say you're a four-year state qualifier."

**NCHS shut out:** In the Normal Community Class 3A Sectional also contested at Maxwell Park, the Ironmen had no qualifiers for the first time since 2007.

The NCHS girls were seventh (202), missing the final berth by 77 points. Muriel Bean (27th, 19:25) and Lauren Feldner (29th, 19:25) led the Ironmen, but needed to be 10 seconds faster to qualify individually.

"The bottom line is all seven girls who raced today are coming back and they got some good experience out of this," said NCHS coach Tom Patten.

For the boys, NCHS was represented by Dillon Butler (56th, 16:55), Carson McCormick (117th, 17:55) and Jacob Myers (127th, 18:21). It took 16:07 to advance.