



THE ART OF PACK RUNNING BOOSTS NEUQUA VALLEY TO BOYS TEAM TITLE AT RICHARD SPRING INVITATIONAL



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Glenbard West wins Girls title behind 1-2 finish by Hart and Payne

Above: Josh Molloway leads his Neuqua Valley teammates to the finish placing sixth overall (Mike Newman Photo)

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Peoria --- Everyone knows that the key to winning a team race at a cross country invitational is keeping you and your teammates close together at the finish. Top ranked Neuqua Valley has made it into an art form showing that in the Boys Varsity race Saturday at the Richard Spring Invitational. The Wildcats placed five runners in the first twenty-five in this over 500 runner field.

There were portions of the course that still had not recovered from last week's invitational meet. It did not help that the Peoria area received close to an inch of rain Friday night. It made Neuqua Valley's game plan logical but just that simple. Go out conservatively the first two miles and then pick off runners in the final mile of the race. You could not see the gold of Neuqua the first mile of the race. **Brian Griffith** (Lake Zurich HS) and **Dylan Jacobs** (Sandburg HS, Orland Park) led at the mile with **Brian Leonard** (Palatine HS) in 4:45. A pack of runners was two seconds back. **Jake McEneaney** led the Neuqua Valley pack ten seconds behind the leaders fully under their pace control.

Griffith and Jacobs started making moves in the triangle coming out with a fifteen second advantage ahead of a pack with Leonard, **Irwin Loud** (Oak Park-River Forest HS), and **Charlie Kern** (York HS, Elmhurst) looking the two front runners. **McEneaney, Jackson Jett, and Josh Mollway** were now only five seconds behind the pack in eighteenth place ready to make their charge.

Jacobs made a move by the finish line trying to shake the Griffith. It did not work. Turning onto the Route 29 portion of the course, Griffith tried gapping Jacobs but the Sandburg runner refused to let up. They were side by side coming up the incline towards the finish. Griffith made one more move at 100 meters to go which proved to be enough. He crossed the finish arms raised in 14:34. Jacobs crossed two seconds later. Griffith's final 800 of the race was a blazing 2:12.

It was a mad rush to the finish line after that. Leonard finished third (14:55) just one second ahead of **Jack Franklin** (Normal University HS). Loud crossed in fifth two seconds later. Then the Neuqua pack started to roll in. Josh Mollway finished 6th in the same time as Loud. **Jackson Jett** (7th), **Jake McEneaney** (9th), **Zach Kinne** (19th), and **Matt Milostan** (27th) complete the pack for Neuqua Valley all within 21 seconds of each other. It resulted in 65 points and the team win.

"It is the greatest feeling in the world having teammates around you," Mollway said. "I always believe in a kick. Even if I don't think I have one, I can dig deep and find one. It is great teammates around me to do that. We feed off of each other down that final stretch which lets us do really well as a team."

2A top ranked Mahomet-Seymour showed again that they are one of the top ranked teams in Illinois regardless of classification. The Bulldogs ran only a twenty second split on their top five to score 118 points to finish second. **Andrew Walmer** led his team with a twelfth place finish. Twelve seconds later came his teammates as **Riley Fortune** (24th), **Ryan Hodge** (28th), **Mathias Powell** (31st), and **Brian Butcher** (35th) all finished within eight seconds of each other. 3A #2 Lake Zurich finished third with 206 points followed by #12 Hersey (233 points) and #9 Wheaton-Warrenville South (255 points) rounding out the top five.

Lindsey Payne (Glenbard West HS, Glen Ellyn) demonstrated last year that she did not need to be at the front of the pack early in the race. Just get her to the first mile mark and she turns it into a 2 mile race. She does have a little help with freshman **Katelynne Hart** right by her side. The two runners were near 50th place as they passed the 800. By the time they got to the mile in 5:40, they had the lead.

"Last year on long runs, I was so lonely," Payne said after the race. "Now I have Katelynne and Katie (Hohe) to push me. All of the training runs I have them with me. We all are improving because of that."

The two took off as they entered into the triangle. The question was as the two came out with their lead even larger was which Glenbard West runner would win and who would finish third individually?

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That lead would grow. Hart showed her 2:13 800 speed that she possesses up the final incline moving away from Payne towards the finish line. Hart finished in 17:06 with Payne only two seconds behind. There was a gap of more than 30 seconds before Nizolek crossed the line in 17:43 just ahead of Grant's **Danielle Osmon** and Maine South teammate **Maddie Dingle**.

"My kick is getting better because of her," said Payne as she pointed to her teammate. "This girl has some amazing speed at the end."

"It's because of her pushing me at the end," Hart said about her teammate. "We just work so hard together."

The team race was all Glenbard West especially when you have the top two runners in the race. The Hilltoppers scored 73 points with all of their scoring five within 93 seconds of each other. **Katie Hohe** joined Hart and Payne in the top ten as she finished seventh. **Janie Nabholz** (27th) and **Chloe Connelly** (38th) rounded out the top five for Glenbard West.

There were surprises behind Glenbard West in the team race. 3A #11 Wheaton-Warrenville South relied on three runners in the first seventeen to place second with 160 points. **Allison McGrath** (10th) and **Sara Atkins** (12th) once again led the Lady Tigers. Sophomore **Laurel Moneysmith** ran a great race running 18:18 to finish 17th overall. Palatine, who was not even in the top 25 in 3A at the beginning of the season, ran their best race of the season so far by finishing third (215 points) led by the fifteenth place finish by **Danya Lloyd**. 3A #5 Geneva was three points behind (218 points) to finish fourth. 3A #8 Neuqua Valley was another five points behind (223 points) to finish fifth.

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