

## CROSS COUNTRY

# XC's Garrison picks up another honor

## Bulldog cross country coach gets two 'Coach of the Year' awards from Dyestat

By **JASON BROWN**  
*Citizen sportswriter*

The 2016 boys' cross-country season ended months ago, but the awards and accolades for Bulldogs' coach Neal Garrison keep coming.

On Thursday, Garrison was named Class 2A Coach of the Year and Illinois 2016 Coach of the Year by Dyestat, the premier digital hub for high school cross-country information.

"I am most excited about getting the award as I know it really shows how many people have deeply invested into the program," said Garrison. "I am extremely grateful for all those who

helped our program get to this point."

The 2016 Bulldogs won their fourth straight conference title, sixth straight regional title, fifth straight sectional title and qualified for state for its sixth straight year.

After holding the No. 1 ranking all season, the Bulldogs won the Class 2A state championship at Detweiller Park in Peoria Nov. 5.

The team ran the best Class 2A performance ever at state, placing all seven runners in the top seven, including six all-state runners.

After winning the state

title, the top seven Bulldog runners formed the Mahomet-Seymour Distance Project (MSDP) and placed 17th in the Nike Cross Nationals, establishing the team as a perennial powerhouse in the area and in the state.

MSDP had the smallest enrollment (by more than 900 students) than the rest of the teams in the field.

"It is really impressive what this group of runners was able to accomplish this year," said Garrison.

"I am so proud of the boys—all 18 of them. They invested so much into each other and their running. I really think they were so

successful because they were so selfless and cared so much for their teammates."

The three state trophies will be displayed in the newly finished trophy case by the entrance to the gym.

"While I am the current figurehead who gets the honor," Garrison said, "the award really belongs to the many runners, parents, administration, and coaches who helped to build the cross country program at our school over the years.

"It is rewarding to know that the investments that so many runners and families put into our program paid off in such a big way."



File photo

Coach Neal Garrison poses with the state championship trophy alongside son Grant and wife Amber. Garrison picked up two more coaching honors last week.