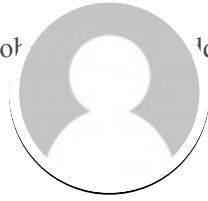


# MSHS Cross Country runners selected to compete at Nike Nationals

8 hours ago



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Written by [Dani Tietz](#)

The Mahomet-Seymour boys' cross country team has been selected to compete in the 2016 [Nike Cross Country National Competition](#) in Portland.

Nike began hosting Regional and National competitions in 2004 as a way to heighten competition between high school cross country teams nationwide.

For the last three years, Mahomet-Seymour has qualified for the regional meet, which consists of approximately 100 teams from Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Missouri, and Illinois.

Nike then gives automatic bids to the top two teams from each of the 9 regional meets, and selects four teams at-large from the nine regionals to make up the 22 teams they invite to the National Competition.

Mahomet-Seymour placed third in their Nike Regional two weeks ago, but were just notified this weekend that they were selected for the National meet, as Nike waits until all nine Regional meets are completed.

“Our boys have been training in hopes of making the national meet from the start of our IHSA season, Head Coach Neal Garrison said. “However, it is nearly impossible to make it to the national meet. Our boys had to outrun the State champion teams from other states and many nationally ranked teams that on paper were ranked ahead of them.”

Due to IHSA competition rules, the Mahomet-Seymour team cannot compete as MSHS, but have adopted the name Mahomet-Seymour Distance Project (MSDP) for the National Competition. IHSA regulations also prohibit Garrison from coaching his team, so Stephen Craw will take over as the coach while the team is in Portland.

Garrison will travel with his family as a spectator.

“These guys are very special to me,” Garrison said. “They have given so much to me and I want to be there to support them in their special moment. I will be joined by so many of their families at the race. Their families are so supportive of the runners which is one of the main reasons these boys are so successful.”

Nike pays for seven runners from the 22 teams to be flown out to Portland, and provides food and shelter for them while they are there. Mathias Powell, Riley Fortune, Ryan Hodge, Brian Butcher, Ben Crow, Gabe Pommier, and Andrew Walmer are the seven Mahomet-Seymour representatives.

While in Portland, the runners will be focused on advancing their individual sport while still competing as a team. As a Nike sponsored event, Nike provides opportunities for the athletes to meet Nike-sponsored athletes, go to lectures where they can learn from Olympic athletes and prepare for the National race.

“Oregon is known for having numerous professional running clubs where the most elite runners in the country and even outside of the country runners live and train together,” Garrison said. “Nike uses this opportunity to fly in some of the nation’s best high school runners to showcase what they have to offer.”

Mahomet-Seymour will race at 11:35 a.m. PST on December 3. The event will be streamed live at <http://nxn.runnerspace.com/>.