

Young Bulldog runners finish strong at IHSA State Meet



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With an all-underclassman lineup – including four sophomores – Mahomet-Seymour’s boys’ cross-country team had a 58-second split among its top five runners and placed 11th in Saturday’s Class 2A state meet at Peoria’s Detweiler Park.

The Bulldogs weren’t on the state’s radar when the season started, but ended with a flourish.

"It was a great finish to the season," Bulldog coach Neal Garrison said. "They started off unranked in the state rankings in the preseason. They remained unranked until late in the season.

"They finished higher in almost every meet than they were ranked throughout the season to conclude by proving they were one of the strongest teams in the state.

"The thing I most enjoyed about the team was how much they invested into each other. Our program has had some teams with tight bonds and that has led to these teams' success. This 2019 group ranks among the top of our program's teams with the tightest team bond."

M-S was rated 15th in the final runnerspace.com state poll.

Three of the Bulldogs' top five runners achieved lifetime bests in their final meet of the season.

Junior Nick Mies was the Bulldogs' leader, placing 47th in the 3-mile race with a time of 15 minutes, 49.69 seconds.

Teammates lowering their all-time bests were sophomore Jonah Singer (72nd in 16:06.68) and freshman Hayden Grotelueschen (159th in 16:47.52).

"Nick Mies and Kyle Nofziger (who placed 53rd in 15:54.01) ran most of the race together and finished within seconds of each other," Garrison said. "Nick cut off 15 seconds from his best.

"The addition of Nick to the team has really helped push our team to the next level."

Mies' time was the 17th fastest time of any M-S junior that has run in the state meet in the past 50 years. Among juniors at this year's meet, he was the 20th fastest from any team. Among Class 2A runners who will return

next season, Mies registered the 23rd quickest time.

Of all Bulldogs on Saturday, Singer cut the most time, reducing his previous best by 30 seconds.

"His improvement really pushed our team place up," Garrison said. "Jonah's improvement throughout the season really helped make the team great."

Singer's time was the 12th-best ever recorded by a Bulldog sophomore and was also 12th among all of the sophomores who competed in Class 2A this season.

Groteleuschen continued to benefit from his off-season training.

"Hayden ran more miles than any of our team during the summer," Garrison said. "His discipline and hard work paid off. He showed he is one of the toughest freshmen in the state."

He eclipsed the 17-minute mark for the first time and had his top time by 20 seconds, posting the seventh-best time ever by a freshman from M-S at state.

Among freshmen in Class 2A, Groteleuschen's time ranked ninth at state.

Nofziger ran his second sub-16-minute time of the postseason.

"Kyle showed great leadership the entire season in both meets and practices," Garrison said.

His state time was the 10th-best ever by any M-S sophomore at state and was sixth among all sophomores in this year's Class 2A field. Among all underclassmen in the 2A division, Nofziger recorded the 26th-best time.

Scheele overcame a late-season injury and, Garrison said, "helped make

our team strong by pushing them not only in the state meet, but in all the hard workouts during the season."

His time of 16:27.40 was the 17th-best by an M-S sophomore at state in the past half-century and was 22nd among all sophomores in this year's Class 2A competition.

The Bulldogs' other state runners were junior Joe Taylor (182nd in 17:09.43) and sophomore Josh Wilcoski (215th in 17:48.53).

"Our top seven represented their team and our program well," Garrison said. "Joe had a tremendous season and was a major part of our team getting this far."

Taylor's time ranks him 41st on the M-S chart for juniors at state.

Wilcoski compiled the 27th-best sophomore time by any M-S 10th-grader at state.

In all, nine Bulldogs ran at least one postseason race for the school.

Garrison credits his entire roster for helping the squad reach state for the 22nd time as a team.

"Runners stepped up throughout the year when we needed them, including during the state series as alternates," he said. "The runners not running gave so much so to their teammates in the state series both as training partners, alternates, and as their most active supporters during the races.

"It was so great to watch how much they cared about each other."

Former Bulldogs sent messages in the days leading up to state.

"The alumni runners really reached out to send words of encouragement,"

Garrison said. "Our current and alumni parents also went to great lengths throughout the season to help our program.

"I am so appreciative of their support."

Kaneland won the Class 2A state title with 74 points. Runner-up Dixon came in at 95 points. There were 26 teams at state in 2A.

Mahomet-Seymour Girls' cross-country

Mahomet-Seymour's top five runners ran close to one another on Saturday, helping the Bulldogs capture a top 20 finish in the IHSA Class 2A state cross-country meet at Detweiler Park, in Peoria.

M-S was 18th with 456 points. Meet champion Lisle had 110 points.

The first five M-S runners crossed the finish line within 37 seconds of one another, led by sophomore Klein Powell, whose 3-mile time was 19 minutes, 9.38 seconds.

She was just ahead of sophomore teammate Elizabeth Sims, who was clocked in 19:09.77.

Sims was ill and had to be helped by Powell to the medical tent after her race.

"She's a warrior," M-S coach Kristin Allen said. "Her teammates couldn't believe she finished."

Powell placed 92nd and Sims was 94th.

Other leaders on the all-underclassmen Bulldog team were sophomore Grace Lietz (128th in 19:35.49), sophomore Chloe Allen (140th in 19:44.83) and sophomore Ella Scott (142nd in 19:46.74).

"With two freshmen, a junior and the rest sophomores, I can't complain,"

Allen said. "It's very rewarding, but also very exhausting teaching young athletes."

Each of the top five M-S runners posted a faster time than they logged a week earlier at sectionals.

The Bulldogs' other state runners were freshman Callie Jansen (160th in 20:04.97) and junior Olivia Bunting (184th in 20:45.98).

One of the best parts of the season, Allen said, was that "there was no drama," she said. "They genuinely like each other."

In the final state rankings by runnerspace.com, M-S was listed in the No. 17 position.

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