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## All-Sages day: Monticello impresses at state cross-country

Colin Likas Nov 10, 2019



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Monticello's Mabry Bruhn (184) traverses the Detweiller Park course in Peoria on Saturday for the Class 1A girls' state meet. Bruhn led the Sages to second as a unit by placing 13th overall.

Colin Likas

PEORIA — There was no doubt, when hundreds of cross-country runners descended upon Detweiller Park for Saturday's 2019 state tournament, that Dave Rimmert could boast two talented running rosters.

Both his Monticello boys and girls won regional and sectional titles over the two prior weeks, after all.

Each gender's Class 1A state meet, however, was filled with similarly capable kids. It'd take big days across the board for the Sages to sniff a pair of top-three finishes, gaining them IHSA hardware in the process.

So, how'd that mission go?

“It’s hard to communicate it,” Remmert said. “I really didn’t expect us to come out so well.”

The Monticello boys secured their second team championship in program history, while the Sages’ girls tied the best result in their lineage by placing runner-up.

Overall, it equaled a banner day for Remmert’s athletes that ended with a community celebration at the high school.

“It’s just a dream come true,” Remmert said. “You work so hard. You put these training plans together. It takes a lot of time. Just to see them develop over the course of the season, it blows me away the kind of improvement you see.”

The kicker lies in the fact just one senior — Mackenzie Murphy — competed Saturday across both Monticello units.

Remmert isn’t ready to talk repeat — or improvement, in the case of his girls — just yet. He knows the sort of success the Sages experienced Saturday breeds an automatic target on the back.

Plus, there’s plenty to enjoy from what Monticello just accomplished.

Junior Luke Sokolowski paced the Sages’ boys by placing 11th in 15 minutes, 17.59 seconds. Not far behind was fellow junior Josh Baysore, taking 28th in 15:32.10.

Sophomore Ed Mitchell (36th, 15:42.09) and junior Morgan Dixon (47th, 15:52.88) also cracked the top 50.

“Six of our seven boys ran PRs,” said Remmert, who oversaw the Monticello boys’ 2014 state win as well. “They broke their best times by 20 seconds. They just had a very good day, and a day I did not expect.”

One reason for that was because of the presence of Olympia, an Illini Prairie Conference rival of the Sages.

The Spartans bested Monticello in the league meet earlier this season, leaving Remmert with doubts about how a rematch at state might play out.

And that was before Elgin Harvest Christian snuck between the squads, resulting in a 1-2-3 score of 115-121-127.

“I knew we had a chance, but it was one of those things where every single person had to run a best time to be able to do it,” Remmert said, “and that’s pretty much exactly what we got.”

There was more of the same on the girls’ side, although no one could stop Winnebago from taking the first-place position in Class 1A with 63 points.

The Sages’ 144 points was good for second place, with fellow IPC member Unity nipping on Monticello’s heels with 147 points.

“Our girls were 13th a year ago. Out of the top 12 teams, we knew we had to jump over a lot ... to get there,” Remmert said. “We kind of came into this year knowing it was going to be very, very hard.”

A youth movement on the roster actually seemed to aid the Sages in surpassing those who’d previously defeated them.

Racing unafraid were the likes of freshman Mabry Bruhn (13th, 17:47.98) and sophomore Rachel Koon (19th, 17:51.42). Remmert found himself especially proud of juniors Grace Talbert (33rd, 18:18.11) and Emma Brown (44th, 18:35.55) as well.

“They all ran really well,” Remmert said. “You kind of have to be able to get them all on the same page to perform well at the state level. That’s kind of the trick of it.”

### **Also in Class 1A**

Coach Kara Leaman’s Unity girls, meanwhile, bagged their fifth team state trophy in as many years, including their second consecutive third-place prize.

Senior Kylie Decker charged the Rockets with a 22nd-place effort of 17:54.61. Also aiding the outcome were junior Taylor Joop (35th, 18:19.44) and senior Evelyn Atkins (41st, 18:30.88).

“The girls know (Saturday), more than ever before, they gave everything they could and just came up a little short,” Leaman said. “They felt like they were in the mix of the race, and they knew it was going to be fast. So they were prepared for that.”

St. Joseph-Ogden placed seventh as a unit, paced by senior Jillian Plotner (43rd, 18:34.59). Uni High and St. Thomas More took 10th and 11th, respectively, in the team race while led by freshman Kate Ahmari (28th, 18:13.84) and senior Fran Hendrickson (52nd, 18:47.26).

Clinton’s Payne Turney was the lone solo area runner in girls’ Class 1A, landing in 18th at 17:51.07.

Among the rest of the 1A boys, Paxton-Buckley-Loda’s Ryder James zoomed to fifth place despite having no teammates along for the ride, with the sophomore clocking in at 15:05.00.

“I really didn’t have the race I wanted, but overall it was a pretty good end,” James said. “I can’t really complain with a fifth-place finish, but there’s still a lot of work to be done.”

Uni High took sixth as a team, keyed by senior Henry Kraatz (18th, 15:23.86) and junior Aryan Lalwani (19th, 15:24.50). St. Joseph-Ogden and Unity slid into 18th and 19th, respectively, led by junior Brandon Mattsey (43rd, 15:48.78) and junior Ben Gavel (64th, 16:00.86).

Individually, Bismarck-Henning/Rossville-Alvin senior Gabe Martinez placed 12th in 15:19.13, while Blue Devils sophomore Eli Mojonier settled for 122nd in 16:41.86. Arthur-Lovington-Atwood-Hammond junior Layton Hall took 37th in 15:42.42, and Iroquois West junior Connor Price rushed to 58th in 15:56.82.

### **In Class 2A**

Urbana senior Olivia Rosenstein led the way for area big schools, jetting to fourth place in the girls’ race with a time of 17:18.86.

“It makes me pretty happy,” Rosenstein said. “I’m a little bit happy about going from sophomore year, fifth place, to fourth (this year). It’s not a lot, but it’s something. I’m satisfied with it.”

Though Rosenstein recorded a season personal best in this race, she noted she posted a faster time at Detweiller as a 10th-grader.

“I had a lot more people around me going into the finish (sophomore year),” Rosenstein said. “This year, it wasn’t like that. I was pretty much alone in the last 600 meters, or maybe even a little more.”

Rosenstein was dealing with an injury this time last year, making a recovery in time for the 2019 girls' track and field season.

To end her prep cross-country tenure on a high note, therefore, is especially meaningful.

"It's important that I'm doing this for my school and to represent the rest of my team," Rosenstein said.

One of her Tiger pals, sophomore Celia Barbieri, clocked 18:22.17 on Saturday to take 45th place.

The Mahomet-Seymour girls acquired 18th place in the team chase, led by sophomores Klein Powell (92nd, 19:09.38) and Elizabeth Sims (94th, 19:09.77).

In the boys' realm, Centennial senior Luke Manolakes achieved a top-15 finish in the 2A race. He put in a 14th-place time of 15:16.60.

"It really means the world," Manolakes said of earning all-state status. "Just to finish on a strong note is really what I wanted. I was really nervous before this race — worried that I was not going to do it."

Manolakes went through the first-mile marker at a robust 4:48, but found enough left in the tank to pass five or six opponents over the final half-mile.

"Just having it be my last race, I wanted to go all out," Manolakes said, "give it an all-out effort."

Fellow Chargers senior Ben Olaivar locked in 82nd place with a time of 16:09.08. Also representing at the meet was Champaign Central junior Alex Ahmari, who netted 35th place in 15:41.95.

Mahomet-Seymour compiled the 11th-best team score in 2A competition as well. The Bulldogs' pacesetters were junior Nick Mies (47th, 15:49.69) and sophomore Kyle Nofziger (53rd, 15:54.01).

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