

Bulldogs capture Class 2A IHSA Regional Title

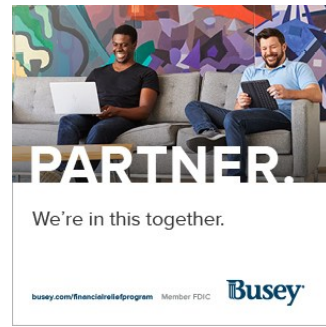


Fred Kroner • 4 hours ago

0 78 3 minutes read



photo by Kristi Lietz



By FRED KRONER

fred@mahometnews.com

The state-ranked Bulldogs' boys' cross-country team lived up to expectations on Saturday (Oct. 24), dominating the 11-school Class 2A IHSA regional field at Taylorville.

Mahomet-Seymour's team title was its first in the sport since 2016.

All five of M-S' scoring runners finished among the top 15 individuals in the 76-runner regional field.

Junior Kyle Nofziger challenged for individual honors, but ended in second by 2.6 seconds. Nofziger's 3-mile time was 15 minutes, 38.1 seconds.

Junior teammate Joseph Scheele placed fourth overall, covering the distance in 16:08.3.

Nofziger and Scheele earned medals and all-Region status for their top-five performances.

M-S' second through fifth runners were packed within 49 seconds of one another.

Other team leaders were junior Jonah Singer (13th in 16:52.5) junior Taylor Fan (14th in 16:56.0) and senior Joe Taylor (15th in 16:57.0).

Among seniors at Taylorville, Taylor was the fourth finisher.

Other M-S participants were sophomore Hayden Grotelueschen (21st in 17:06.6) and junior Karsten Waisath (47th in 17:50.4).

In order to adequately social distance, the regional was contested in three flights. The first flight was for the top three runners from each school.

The second flight consisted of each school's fourth and fifth runners. The final flight was reserved for the sixth and seventh runners from each school.

Singer and Grotelueschen were assigned to the second flight.





"Jonah won the flight with a time so fast that he finished higher than most runners in the first flight," M-S head coach Neal Garrison said. "Jonah showed his competitive spirit as he led from start to finish."

The third flight, featuring Taylor and Waisath, was a virtual repeat of the second one.

"Joe really took control of the race," Garrison said. "He pushed the pace the

entire run and won the flight with a time so fast that it beat most of the runners from Flight 1 or 2.

"This was quite a feat from the third flight. Joe's previous experience in multiple state series races really helped him and our team."

The top five teams at the sectional qualified for the Saturday (Oct. 31) sectional at Olney East Richland.

Also on M-S' sectional roster is sophomore Ben Wallace.

"I was so proud of our boys for winning the regional meet," Garrison said. "It has been a year full of uncertainty and instability due to Covid.

"Our runners came together as a group and really bonded more than I have seen for years. They were able to really work through the adversity of life and do some great things as a team this season. I couldn't be prouder of them as people and as runners."

Garrison was also thankful for the extra help he had throughout the fall.

"I am grateful for our two assistant coaches, Brian Butcher and Andrew Walmer," Garrison said. "They have really helped our team develop this year.

"Their running experiences have benefited our runners in big ways. It is no surprise that the last time our team won a regional meet was when they were runners for our program."

This was the 13th regional title in program history for the Bulldogs. The first, in 1987, came under legendary coach John King, who Garrison said "really established a great cross-country program. Our alumni and current runners have worked hard to keep at the level that King established with his runners.

"I think our current runners always know that they represent all the alumni that ran before them who gave their all to set our current runners up for success now."

The Bulldogs, ranked 11th in Class 2A by milesplit.com, had a composite score of 48 points at the regional.

The other advancing teams from the Taylorville site were runner-up Olney (75 points), third-place Champaign Central (87 points), fourth-place Mattoon (113 points) and fifth-place Urbana (131 points).

Garrison said the support the team received was above and beyond what would have been expected.

"We had so much support from our runners who weren't in the top seven," Garrison said. "They gave up their entire day, running from point to point in the race encouraging teammates.

"I really think their team spirit and support made all the difference to our team winning the meet.

"All season long the depth of our team was able to represent our program well by winning so many open races.

"At the regional, these same runners continued to give their hearts to the team and did what they could to push our team to the win."

Six M-S athletes registered times that placed them among the school's top 50 all-time for their class in regional competition.

Among seniors, Taylor's time ranks 41st.

Among juniors, Nofziger's time ranks 10th, Scheele's was 22nd, Singer's was 44th and Fan's was 48th.

Among sophomores, Grotelueschen's time was 27th.