



## Whitley's a winner but York takes top honors

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Kelly Whitley was in a familiar spot Saturday afternoon as the girls' division of the Leavey Invitational concluded.

The Geneva junior defended her individual title at the prestigious St. Charles East 17-team invitational at Leroy Oakes Forest Preserve with a winning time of 17 minutes, 48.6 seconds over the 3-mile course.

But York denied Geneva, the two-time defending Class 3A state champions, the team title 72-74 in St. Charles.

"I think we all ran the best race we could run," the Vikings' team leader said. "The outcome just didn't go our way this time. We're going to come back hungering for a victory."

Whitley turned back Barrington freshman Becca Batliner by a second and a half for individual top honors. Bartlett junior standout Alyssa Schneider was third, with St. Charles East sophomore Mallory Abel becoming the fourth person to break the 18-minute barrier.

Geneva veterans Kelly Shogren and Tess Ehrhardt snared top-10 results, but York nipped the Vikings behind the Frigo sisters, senior Meghan and sophomore Michelle, and junior Stephanie Huster, who were between fifth and 13th place.

"It's a huge momentum boost for us," said York coach Annette Schulte.

Barrington (115), St. Charles North (126) and Benet Academy (141) were third through fifth; host St. Charles East was sixth. Geneva was without the services of Liza Tauscher, who is recovering from shin splints.

"Liza is a huge part of our team," Whitley said. "She is going to make a huge impact on our team (when she returns)."

St. Charles North had three runners - Erica Bauerbach, Meghan Heuer and Jessica Scheets - in the top 17 to flavor its fourth-place showing. Bauerbach lowered her career-low performance at the 3-mile layout by almost two minutes to finish seventh overall. Heuer, meanwhile, a member of the Vikings' state championship contingent after moving from Minnesota two summers ago, was eighth in her first invitational appearance for the North Stars.

"I saw the top people up there and I had to stay with them," said Bauerbach. "I've never run that fast before."

Abel, the St. Charles East sophomore, has the considerable task of replacing Lizzy Hynes' foundational presence for the Saints. Abel was two-plus seconds behind Schneider, the Bartlett standout who finished fifth at state last fall.

"I felt pretty good," Abel said. "I wish I would have sprinted more at the end. We're all pretty excited (with our team results)."

Seniors Holly Robertson and Grace Gordon had top-30 showings to further the Saints' cause. Batavia senior Alexis Sampson, the Bulldogs' electric all-state half-miler in track and field, had the best showing among her team by nearly two minutes in placing 16th. Batavia finished 14th overall in the team standings.

Bartlett was eighth on the day as Schneider eyes another treasure-laden season after state-worthy performances in both cross country and track and field last year.

"I would say it was a very hard race," said Schneider, who was clocked in 17:55.7. "I had to give it my all just to stay up with the (lead) pack. I am very happy."

Taylor Crawford, Janessa Baker, Lauren Prescott and Samantha Maiorana were the Hawks' other counting runners.

Scott Brooks' Benet team did not have its superstar - senior McKinzie Schulz, the reigning 800-meter state champion and 1,600 runner-up - but the veteran coach refused any alibis with the Redwings' fifth-place showing.

"That shouldn't matter," Brooks said. "I only had one runner (Katie Porada) take any risks out there."

Porada negotiated the course in 18:10.2 to place sixth overall.

"The third mile was really hard," said Porada. "At that point I was too far behind (to challenge the lead). It was the best time I've ever run."

Montini was ninth behind freshman Theresa Connelly and sophomore Ericka LaViste, who were 11th and 19th. Waubonsie Valley, Wheaton Academy and Glenbard North all struggled on the afternoon.

Barrington has higher expectations this season, despite losing track state champion Rebecca Tracy to graduation. Batliner was a revelation for the Fillies, making her high school tournament debut with a 17:50.2 showing.

"It surprised me a lot," Batliner said. "My team was very supportive. I stuck with the pack in front of me, and they were like a vacuum pushing me forward."

Ella Tracy, Colleen Shanvley, Kaila Privatsky and Katherine Wilson rounded out the Fillies' counting scores.

"We have a really young team," said Tracy, a sophomore, who finished 21st. "We didn't make to state last year as a team, but that is our goal this year."