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Tri-Cities teams flourish at St. Charles East Cross Country Regional

By TROY BRUZEWSKI - editorial@kcchronicle.com
Created: Saturday, October 22, 2011 10:39 p.m. CDT

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ST. CHARLES – You'd think one of them would trip on a walnut, a shoelace would come untied or someone would get a leg cramp – something to separate a certain pair St. Charles North boys cross country runners.

It never seems to happen, though, as North teammates Duclan Duggan and Zach Heuer are practically attached at the hip.

The pair took the top two spots at Saturday's IHSA Class 3A St. Charles East Boys Cross Country Regional at LeRoy Oakes, leading the North Stars to a regional title. It's the second time in two weeks Duggan and Heuer had a near dead-heat finish, each time with Duggan getting the slight edge. This time, the margin was .2 seconds, rather than two weeks ago at LeRoy Oakes when the pair was separated by thousandths.

Duggan (15:26.1), Heuer (15:26.3) and the Stars finished with 29 points, Wheaton North finished second with 45. North coach Kevin Harrington credits the close finish and overall victory to runners executing a strategy – one that should produce close results between teammates, if a team has quality runners to rely on.

"We've been doing well with running together and it shows in the results," Harrington said.

The North coach was surprised two weeks ago when the two finished so closely. It was a first in Harrington's time around high school sports, though now it's getting repetitive.

"I don't want them to change a thing. ... Finish the same way next week, guys," Harrington said.

The strategy allows teammates to more easily keep a pace, challenge each other during the race and provide an opportunity for them to face-off against a teammate for the win. Harrington of course prefers to have teammates battling for positions 1 through 5, though the rest of the North roster also did well. He said each North runner had his season-best time.

Spencer Gray (15:42.1) finished sixth for the North Stars while Grant Markowicz (15:45.3) took seventh.

Third-place Geneva was led by Peter Archibald, who finished fifth in 15:39.5. The Vikings' Michael Bianchina (eighth, 15:47.5) also keyed the Vikings' team advancement.

St. Charles East runners Max Rowland (16:18.3), Matt Heisey (16:41.0), Lucas Werner (16:53.0) and Will Mukian (17:08.5) advance to the sectionals in individual competition. East finished eighth as a team; the first six teams advanced.

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On the girls side, East claimed first as a team. Mallory Abel (17:33.9) was first overall, almost 11 seconds ahead of Sydney Stuenkel (17:44.7) from North, who finished second. Torree Scull (18:03.3) and Sarah Hill (18:08.0) finished third and fifth overall for the Saints, who scored 23 points. Ashley England (18:07.5) was fourth overall for North, which finished with 53 points.

Geneva landed in third, as freshmen were four of the Vikings' top five finishers. Freshman Brook Nusser placed 10th in 18:54.6 while fellow freshmen Kyle Monahan, Marin Leone and Courtney Reynolds slotted behind the team's No. 2 runner, senior Kristi Shogren.

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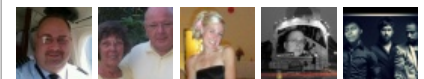
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Abel shines as St. Charles East claims regional crown

By Paul Johnson

For Sun-Times Media

Last Modified: Oct 22, 2011 06:57PM

St. Charles East senior Mallory Abel knew that Saturday's Class 3A St. Charles East Regional would be the last time she would ever compete on her home course at Leroy Oakes.

Abel made sure she went out with a bang.

She won the individual title in dominating fashion, dusting the field by 11 seconds and finishing in 17:33.9. That helped propel the Saints to a relatively easy team title, as well. East won with 23 points, outdistancing second-place St. Charles North (55).

Abel recovered after dropping the conference meet to her freshman teammate, Torree Scull, last week. Scull wound up in third place, with St. Charles North senior Sydney Stuenkel in between them.

"Last week going into the race, I think I just lost my focus a little bit," Abel said. "This week I just went out there and thought that this is my last race here ever. I just really wanted to win it."

Abel and Scull led a dominant effort for the Saints, who saw their top five runners all finish in the top eight overall. Juniors Sarah Hill and Jess Evans took fifth and sixth, respectively, and senior Kristin Sheehan was eighth.

But after the race, East coach Denise Hefferin was happy with the win, but knows that in order for the Saints to get out of the rugged sectional at St. John's Farm in Wheaton next week, her squad will have to tighten some things up. State-ranked Wheaton Warrenville South and Naperville North will be in the much-tougher field next week.

"Every team uses this meet as a preparation for whatever their end goal is," Hefferin said. "Our goal is the state meet, so we worked today on some things and we have some things walking out of here that we want to continue to work on. We're not state-meet ready yet. We will be in two weeks."

St. Charles North will be looking to compete for one of the five state qualifying slots at sectionals next week, as well. After Stuenkel's second-place finish, sophomore Ashley England posted a fourth-place finish (18:07.5). Junior Kelly Manski came in 11th.

Seven of the eight teams at the meet qualified for sectionals. That included Bartlett in fifth and Streamwood in sixth.

Bartlett was strong at the top, with junior Nicole Watkins finishing seventh in 18:30.1. Senior Taylor Crawford posted a 13th-place finish.

“We were really happy with the way Nicole ran today,” Bartlett coach Beth Emody said. “She ran really strong. She said that she went in with a new strategy and made sure that she stayed competitive throughout the race, so that was good. There’s always a chance (that Watkins could advance to state as an individual if the team fails to advance next week). It really depends on who advances (at regionals) and how she races next week. She’s been working hard since June.”

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Girls take off at the start in the regional at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve in St. Charles on Saturday, October 22.

LAURA STOECKER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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By [John Lemon](#)

A new race, a new individual winner for the St. Charles East girls cross country team. Everything else was same old dominating Saints.

A week after freshman Torree Scull won the Upstate Eight Conference River title, senior Mallory Abel came out victorious on the same LeRoy Oakes course Saturday at the Class 3A St. Charles East regional.

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Abel won in 17 minutes, 33.9 seconds, almost 11 seconds ahead of the runner-up from St. Charles North, Sydney Stuenkel. Scull was third in 18:02.

Nobody could challenge the Saints, who won the regional with 23 points, well ahead of St. Charles North's 55 and Geneva in third at 103.


"Just another trial run for next week and ultimately downstate," Saints coach Denise Hefferin said. "Keep improving every week. Today's meet was another week of preparation for the state

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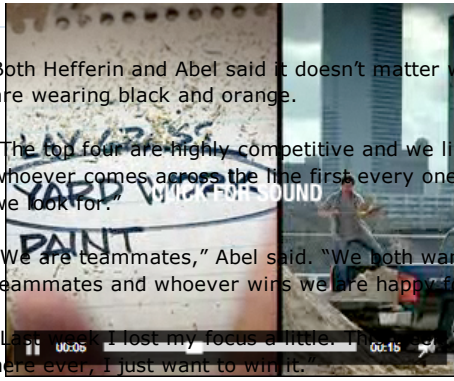
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meet.”

Both Hefferin and Abel said it doesn't matter who crosses the line first as long as they are wearing black and orange.

“The top four are highly competitive and we like it,” Hefferin said. “We talk about whoever comes across the line first every one is a team champion today and that’s what we look for.”

“We are teammates,” Abel said. “We both want to win but the end of the day we are teammates and whoever wins we are happy for each other.

“I lost my focus a little. I went out and thought it was my last race here ever, I just want to win it.”

The Saints’ 3-4-5 runners all placed in the Top 10: Sarah Hill in fifth, Jessica Evans sixth and Kristin Sheehan eighth.

“We worked on some things today and we have some things walking out of here we want to continue to work on,” Hefferin said. “We’re not state ready yet. We will be in two weeks.”

The Saints will see Wheaton Warrenville South, the state’s No. 2 team, and No. 4 Naperville North, among others, next week at the Wheaton North sectional on the same course the Saints competed earlier this fall at a flight meet.

“We are pretty confident,” Abel said. “We have a really good team this year. You can never say 100 percent sure but we are feeling pretty confident. Next week on a personal standpoint I’m feeling pretty good. This race definitely helped.”

Stuenkel led a solid second-place finish for the North Stars. Sophomore Ashley England made one of the best dashes to the finish, nipping the Saints’ Hill for fourth place in 18:07.5 to Hill’s 18:08.0.

All seven of the North Stars finished in the top 23: Kelly Manski 11th, Natalia Gawlik 18th, Megan Young 20th, Ania Gawlik 21st and Kaylee Wessel 23rd.

Geneva coach Bob Thomson said senior Kristi Shogren had her best race of the year to take 14th in 19:05.8. Only freshman teammate Brook Nusser in 10th finished ahead of her for the Vikings.

“Kristi has been up and down,” Thomson said. “She got her PR today, our only senior in the top seven. She stepped up.”

So did Bartlett junior Nicole Watkins who took seventh in 18:30.1 for the Hawks, who were fifth as a team.

“We were really happy with the way Nichole ran today,” Bartlett coach Beth Emody said. “She ran really strong. She went in with a new strategy and made sure she stayed competitive throughout the race. It was an overall make sure she is continuing to push the pace and make sure you don’t get into your comfort zone.”

Taylor Crawford wasn’t too far behind Watkins taking 13th.

“The biggest thing was getting to next week,” Emody said. “This time of year you want to get as much racing as possible. The other thing was try to race this week like it is next week. How hard are you going to run next week to get as close as qualifying for state as possible? That is something we talk about all season.”

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