

Prep Sports | updated: 10/17/2015 6:56 PM

Prospect's expectation realized in MSL victory



From left, Emily Stegmeier of Elk Grove, Brooke Wilson of Prospect, Kelly O'Brien of Palatine and Jocelyn Long of Barrington run side-by-side during the Mid-Suburban League girls cross country meet at Heritage Park in Wheeling on Saturday. Wilson won the race, while O'Brien finished second.

Joe Lewnard | Staff Photographer

By Michael Eaken Daily Herald Correspondent

For Prospect's girls cross country team, an encounter with the unexpected did not stop the Knights from achieving exactly what they expected.

Missing their No. 2 runner on Saturday at the Mid-Suburban League conference meet, the Knights didn't miss a beat.

Prospect placed five runners in the top 24 in edging Barrington 66-68 for its third overall MSL title on a crisp fall morning at Heritage Park in Wheeling.

Junior Brooke Wilson set the tone, using a final surge in the last 15 meters to pass Palatine junior and defending MSL champion Kelly O'Brien to secure the individual title in 17:24.12.

Wilson battled O'Brien, Barrington sophomore Joceyln Long and Elk Grove junior Emily Stegmeier for the first 2 miles. Wilson and O'Brien made separation in the final mile before the Knights junior made her winning move at the finish.

"We weren't expecting that at all -- it's amazing," said Wilson. "I was battling the entire race, and I didn't want to let O'Brien loose. I went for it and it worked out."

Defending champion Palatine (85 points) took third, followed by Schaumburg (118 points) and Hoffman Estates (138 points).

O'Brien (17:25.56) took second individually with Long (17:40.87), Stegmeier (17:56.36), and Schaumburg sophomore Maddie Marasco (18:07.57) rounding out the top five.

Wilson became the third Knights runner to win an MSL title, joining Brooke Wolfe (2010, 2011) and Annette White (2007) as MSL champions.

"It was about taking chances," said Prospect coach Pete Wintermute of Wilson's effort. "She put herself in the hunt and squeezed out seconds here and there and got it done in the last straightaway."

Prospect freshman Marissa Valentini, the Knights' usual No. 2 runner, missed the meet due to a sore foot. But junior Aileen White (18:22.7) came up big by taking eighth place for the Knights.

A pair of freshman then made their mark for Prospect with Julia O'Grady (18:42.40) taking 15th place, followed by Jenna Baltes (18:49.29) in 18th.

Sophomore Mikayla Olsen (19:01.45) completed the scoring with a 24th-place finish.

"It's just so exciting," said White. "We weren't expecting to win, but we came in confident. The last couple weeks we've been coming together, and we

have each other's back."

"It's all about the process and focusing on each race," said Wintermute. "My hardest job is getting them to the starting line and making sure they are ready to go."

Barrington definitely gave Prospect a battle. Long set the tone for the Fillies and got great support from junior Samantha Samaryczew (18:34.88, 12th) and senior Lauren Conroy (18:40.59, 14th).

"We were ready to go," said Long, who battled the leaders for the first 2 miles. "I felt pretty comfortable and I knew what to expect."

Freshman Sophie Hoeltgen (18:42.60) aided the Fillies with a 16th-place finish. She was followed by freshman Eve Hoeltgen (18:59.86, 23rd).

"The girls ran a really good race and you can't ask for anything more," said Barrington coach Deb Revolta of her team's near miss. "Hats off to Prospect, they ran a good race. It was a great battle."

O'Brien pushed Palatine, which was missing its No. 2 runner, Sam Lechowicz. The Pirates senior took a brief lead with 100 meters remaining before Wilson made her final move.

"We were neck and neck and I almost had her," said O'Brien, "I knew I could set an example for going for it and taking some chances."

Junior Anna Buckstaff (18:24.25) and senior Sabina Yosif (18:48.24) also came up big for the Pirates, taking ninth and 17th place, with senior Rebecca Duran (19:18.35) adding a 26th-place finish.

"That was Kelly's best race of the season," said Palatine coach Joe Parks. "It was two really good girls duking it out. We ran really well today."

Stegmeier didn't back down on Saturday, as she clung to the lead pack for over 2 miles. The Elk Grove junior showed a bit of grit on Saturday with an impressive fourth-place finish.

"I stayed with the leaders longer than I was expecting to," said Stegmeier. "I am very happy with the race. I feel like I exceeded my expectations."

Marasco has also been coming on strong for Schaumburg this season, and she gave the Saxons a huge lift with her fifth-place finish.

Junior Ellie O'Connell (18:49.45), sophomore Lauren Kubinski (18:56.04), sophomore Valerie Schacketon (18:59.39) also aided the Saxons' charge by finishing 18-19-22.

"We're getting closer as a team and we're looking to keep improving," Marasco said.

Conant junior Sydney Davis (18:09.79) impressed with a sixth-place finish.

"It was tough at times, but you just have to keep going," said Davis. "I'm definitely feeling more confident this year and I'm ready to move."

Meagan Biddle (18:20.23) led Hoffman Estates' attack with a seventh-place as Hoffman Estates took fifth.

"I knew it was going to go out fast, so I wanted to get out strong," said Biddle. "I'm feeling pretty confident and I want to keep improving the next couple of weeks."

Junior Hailey Bowes (18:25.17) took 10th place and junior Sarah Harden (18:56.77) was 21st as Hersey finished sixth.

Buffalo Grove senior Kaitlyn Ko (18:32.88) took 11th place, and her teammate, senior CJ Kaplan (19:10.90), placed 25th.

Senior Gaby Sanchez (18:36.59) placed 13th for Rolling Meadows.

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