

Prep Sports | **updated: 10/31/2015 5:23 PM**

Girls cross country: Grant, NSC teams excel in Schaumburg sectional

By John Bumbales
Daily Herald Correspondent

There were plenty of impressive performances to go around at the individual and the team competition Saturday morning at the Class 3A Schaumburg girls cross country sectional.

The 3-mile race at Busse Woods was run under dreary conditions on this Halloween Day as 18 teams took to the course under very raining weather conditions at 45 degrees.

When all was said and done on the muddy and slippery track, it was a banner day for Lake County and North Suburban Conference teams.

Lake Forest wound up capturing the championship with 79 points while runner-up Grant was the big shocker of the day as the Bulldogs advanced to the state meet for the first time in school history.

Grant barely nipped Barrington 100-101 for second place, leaving just two team berths available to the state meet in Peoria next weekend.

And it was Stevenson that stepped to the forefront as the Patriots (113 points) returned to the state meet as a team for the first time in many years. Palatine (115 points) was right behind the Pats to earn the fifth and final spot to state while Lake Zurich (183) placed eighth behind runner-up Caitlin Shepard.

Shepard led for the first 2 miles before Prospect junior Brooke Wilson (17:49) pulled away in the end to win by seven seconds.

"It was a little tough because the ground was really saturated with water so it was really hard to run on," said Shepard, who won the second of seven individual at-large berths to state. "I'm hoping to go top five (at state), and most of the girls who are in contention for top five are in this sectional so I think I can go top five."

Lake Zurich coach Ian Silverman knows that Shepard has really grown into an elite runner as she embarks on her final state meet at Detweiller Park.

"She (Shepard) ran awesome, she gutted it out, and it was a fantastic race," Silverman said. "If she keeps running like this she can finish top five or top 10. We ran really well, and I'm really proud of them."

Grant's historic performance in this always-powerful sectional meet was led by the duo of senior Madison Romig in seventh, and freshman teammate Danielle Osmon shocking the elite field in eighth.

The Bulldogs trip to state was also keyed by Eva Cardy in 22nd, Rachael Temple in 24th, and Samantha Kaye in 44th. Grant's Brooke Drabek placed 46th.

"I'm not shocked we made it, but I'm a little shocked we took second place," said Grant coach Jeff Durlak, who is in his ninth season. "Our girls ran their best race of the season, and we're starting to see the last few weeks what they were capable of doing all year."

Stevenson's long-awaited return to Peoria was once again led by sophomore standout Isabelle Sparreo in ninth with strong support from senior teammate Jessica Philipp in 13th.

Sophomore Natalie Sparreo was another huge factor for the Patriots in 26th place with teammates Gabriela Jagielo (31st), and Shea Kirby (37th) helping to pave the way downstate.

"I don't think it was her (Isabelle's) best race, but we want that to be next weekend," said Stevenson coach Maureen LeVanti. "Jessica has been having a good end to her season, and she's one of the nicest kids I know."

The dream for a place in the state meet became a reality for Crystal Lake South junior Caitlin Bruzzini as the third at-large qualifier in 12th, and Libertyville sophomore Melissa Manetsch as the fifth at-large qualifier in 15th.

"She (Manetsch) had some rough patches through the race, but hopefully she will be able to put together three miles next weekend," said Libertyville coach Bill Etnyre. "It was a tough day to run and we were missing one of our top runners (Jenna Ocheltree) so we knew we didn't have much chance to make it and we wanted to support Melissa."

Lake Zurich's Kristie Houghton placed 34th followed closely by teammate Kelly Ledinsky in 36th.

Class 2A

At the Class 2A Woodstock North sectional, Vernon Hills continued to roll as the Cougars ran to the team title 79-85 over perennial power Belvidere North.

Vernon Hills' outstanding duo of senior Vivian Overbeck (17:50), and sophomore Lauren Katz (18:15) led the way to the crown.


The Cougars will be joined downstate by familiar foe Grayslake Central as the Rams ran to fourth place with 170 points.

Lakes senior Kortney Schardt placed fifth to earn an at-large berth to state. But the Eagles missed out of the fifth and final berth as a team by a slim 189-199 score to Kaneland.

Grayslake Central was led by the trio of Megan Girmscheid, Lura Quandt, and Elizabeth Aho.

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