

Prep Sports | updated: 9/16/2017 3:56 PM

# Girls cross country: Manetsch manages another big finish for Libertyville

## Daily Herald report

Libertyville's Melissa Manetsch is making up for lost time.

Last year, she missed qualifying to the Class 3A state meet due to illness.

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But the Wildcat senior has started the season in fine form. Just last week, she ran to an impressive fourth-place finish at the First to the Finish Invite at Detweiller Park in Peoria, crossing the line in a swift 17:11.

And she continued her assault on Saturday at the Libertyville Invitational.

Manetsch jumped to an early lead on the hilly Adler Park course and did not look back, pulling away in the final 2 miles to secure the individual title in 19:06.

"I'm just super excited," said Manetsch who finished with a 24-second cushion. "Just with all the mileage I have put in during training and I'm starting to add in the speed, the times should start dropping."

A big part of her ascent is that she has been healthy since March.

"This is the Melissa we've always known," said Libertyville coach Bill Etnyre of his senior star, who took sixth place in the 3,200 at the Class 3A track and field state meet in May. "She has had uninterrupted training, and now we are hoping to see it that way going forward."

Lockport placed five runners in the top 19 to secure the team title with 43 points, followed by New Trier (51 points) and Prospect (69 points).

Host Libertyville (120 points) and Northside College Prep (164 points) rounded out the top five.

Prospect senior Mikayla Olsen (19:30) gave the Knights a big lift by taking second place; she was followed by freshman Reese Lettow (19:57) in 12th.

"She has been our leader," said Prospect coach Pete Wintermute of Olsen. "She is dedicated and brings it every day."

Junior Julia O'Grady (20:04) has been coming on strong and added 17th place finish for the Knights. Right behind was senior Kaitlyn Rouse (20:07) in 18th, and junior Marissa Valentini (20:14) closed the Knights' scoring by taking 20th place.

"We keep working on pushing our split down," said O'Grady of the improving Knights pack. "We are staying together and working together."

Wheeling senior Yailene Leon (20:34) gave the Wildcats a lift by placing 25th and leading her team to a seventh-place team finish.

"We're making a lot of progress from last year," said Leon. "My experience is definitely helping this year."

St. Viator freshman Katie Castelli (20:31) has given the Lions a nice jolt; she placed 24th on Saturday.

Castelli has teamed with junior Payton McDonnell (42nd, 20:57) in giving the Lions a nice 1-2 punch, while led to a ninth-place finish on Saturday.

"She challenges me a lot," said Castelli of McDonnell a two-time Class 2A state qualifier. "We run together and pace each other."

