

The fall sports season of 1983 was a pretty memorable one in the history of Glenbard West athletics.

The football won its first state championship and its only one until last November. The girls volleyball team also captured the program's only state title that year.

That also was the last time that the again perennial power Glenbard West girls cross country team won a regional championship. That is, until Saturday, Oct. 26.

The Hilltoppers dominated the Class 3A Fenwick Regional at Schiller Woods with only 22 points by putting five in the top nine, six in the top 11 and all seven among the top 15.

"It's pretty crazy," Glenbard West freshman Janie Nabholz said. "We weren't even alive when it happened last so it's pretty great that we did it."

Senior defending 3A state champion Madeline Perez (16:54.71 for 3.0 miles) and junior Lisa Luczak (17:16.86) finished first and second, sophomore Grace Rogers (4th, 17:41.49), Nabholz (6th, 17:46.98) and sophomore Kathryn Kenwood (9th, 18:13.52) also were in the top 10, and junior Megan Ozog (18:25.98) and sophomore Kate Dorsey (18:51.78) were 11th and 15th.

Glenbard West finished well ahead of Oak Park-River Forest (70 points) and Fenwick (100), which each had two top-10 finishers, even though sophomore and 2012 all-stater Lindsay Graham was held out to rest sore knees.

The Hilltoppers now compete at the Lake Park Sectional at 1 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 2, where they need just a top-five finish to return to the state meet for what would be a program-best fourth consecutive year. Glenbard West competed there Sept. 14 in winning the Lake Park Invite.

Overall, Glenbard West now owns three regional/district titles. By the way, last year the Hilltoppers captured their first sectional title ever en route to the third-place trophy at state.

"This time, I kind of assumed we got first after I found out how everyone did because we all did so well, but it's always nice to actually see the plaque and be like, "Wow, we actually got first," "Luczak said.

"The girls ran awesome today," Perez added. "The girls really stepped up and, considering the conditions and everything, I think we were just all really excited and positive going into this race and it definitely showed."

While the Hilltoppers have risen to the occasion during their current streak of success, the IHSA assignments haven't always been in their favor. At the previous three regionals, they had finished second each time by a combined 21 points.

Last year, Glenbard West was second 43-47 to Lake Park, which eventually finished second at state. In 2011, the Hilltoppers were second 40-49 to York, the team with which they had shared the overall West Suburban Conference Silver title. In 2010, Wheaton Warrenville South began its march to third at state by beating the second-place Hilltoppers 27-35.

Lake Park also was at the Fenwick Regional Saturday and advanced by taking fifth (120) behind York (106). Glenbard East (129) was the sixth and last team to advance.

In 1983, the Hilltoppers ended up eighth at state. In 1979, the first year of an IHSA girls cross country state meet, the Hilltoppers won the district title, the equivalent of regionals, and finished third at state.

"You know, it's luck of the draw and you have to be good enough to eventually do it and this year we were," Glenbard West coach Paul Hass said. "1983 was a great year for Glenbard West. We'll try to make something happen this year.

"We didn't get it done the last couple of years, but not because we didn't have good teams but there were just good teams that just ran really well. Today was our day. The bottom line is you qualify for the next round and we did that. The bottom line for my accord is did we run well today and did we improve? We're working on some things and we did improve so hopefully we can keep on improving from week to week. That's all we'll focus on."

One thing didn't change at regionals this year. Perez won the race and looked great accomplishing it. Luczak was third at regionals last year behind York graduate Emma Fisher, who was second to Perez at state.

Perez dominated from the start, running the first mile in 5:21, 18 seconds ahead of Luczak, and 11:07 at the two-mile mark.

In her first race of the season at the West Suburban Conference Silver Division Meet Oct. 19, Perez ran 17:43.0 for 3.04 miles to finish second to Hinsdale Central freshman Alexa Haff, who has lost only once this year.

"(At regionals) the first 200 I wanted to establish my position and then from there just keep moving. My ultimate goal is I did everything I could for the team today," Perez said.

"I think I had a little bit more of a steady race, which was my goal last week and going into this week, and I think I executed it a little bit better. There's still always room for improvement and there's definitely things that I'm taking away and I know I need to continue to work on through these next couple of weeks before state."

Haff won the seventh of her eight races Saturday. Haff captured the Lyons Township Regional in 16:56.08 for 2.97 miles, the second fastest girls time ever run on that course, by 19.33 seconds over LT senior Lexy Rudofski (17:15.41), who ran an all-time LT best.

The Fenwick course at Schiller Woods was different than the one the Hilltoppers ran when they competed against OPRF and Hinsdale Central Sept. 26, bypassing a large hill three times in favor of a more scenic

journey around the perimeter of the park. Graham ran a team-best 17:45 in the dual meet, five seconds behind the victorious Haff.

While certainly more flat, Fenwick's also more open course proved to be a tradeoff. That and Perez's dominance from the start left her prey to the stiff, cold wind bursts under cloudy skies.

"Madeline ran incredible. That's amazing (to break 17:00). She broke Haff's time at LT's course today, which is way faster than this course," Hass said. "She looks tough. She looks like she was very focused."

Luczak used some determination of her own for what she considers her best race so far this season. Behind a stronger start and a team-best 5:41 third mile, Luczak, sixth at state last year, was second and 5.39 seconds ahead of third-place Fenwick junior Olivia Ryan (17:22.25).

Ryan was fifth at the 2012 state meet, two seconds ahead of Luczak, as the highest finishing non-senior behind Perez. This was the first time they raced against each other since then.

"That was a great motivator because I knew last year at state that we were really close so I knew that this race would kind of see how much we both improved and it will be a good view for how still will be again," Luczak said.

"I got out a lot smarter so that really helped and I just kind of gradually moved on and didn't go out too fast. It was just a good race for me, and it felt good, too. It was like the first one that I'm actually happy with this season so it's nice."

Even with the longer course at Proviso West, Luczak ran out of room at the Silver Meet and ended up fifth. On Saturday, her first mile (5:39) was nine seconds faster and her second mile (5:56) an 11-second improvement.

"Lisa ran amazing. She finally got out and she finished second. She really ran smart," Hass said.

Luczak and Kenwood actually missed the awards ceremony because they were engaged in the team's annual time trial on the competition course after the proceeding boys regional race.

The Hilltoppers' remaining members of the 12-person state lineup (senior Annika Manning and sophomores Nicole Berneche, Caitlyn Reick and Abby Shaver) raced along with girls and boys from other teams. Shaver had the Hilltoppers' fastest time of 18:41.

Last year, Rogers ran so well in the time trial that she was inserted into the sectional lineup and stayed on to compete at state. This time, actually running at regionals, Rogers finished right behind Luczak as she did at the Silver Meet and 2.91 seconds ahead of sixth-place Fenwick senior Briana Daley (17:44.40). Daley was 49th at state last year, 10 places and eight seconds ahead of Rogers.

"It was the first time (for regionals) and I liked it. I liked the course," Rogers said. "I loved it. Everyone did really well and I'm really happy with how I did."

Rogers, the other Glenbard West regional runners and team members who drove to watch the regional race remained for the time trial and scurried throughout the course to provide support.

At last year's Lake Park Regional, Rogers recalled running in that time trial and the added benefit of that course. The finish is actually in the football stadium by running about 300 meters on the track.

"I had Caitlyn (Reick) to run most of it with, our teammates were really supportive and cheering for us and parents were cheering for me," Rogers said. "Everyone was all ready for the awards ceremony so everyone was sitting in the bleachers when I finished on the track so I had lots of fans. It made it easy with everyone's support."

Nabholz was just 2.58 seconds behind Daley for the last individual medal but accepted Luczak's medal in her temporary absence.

Nabholz was the final runner to break 18:00 and also was the top freshman finisher, 13.15 seconds ahead of seventh-place Mary Blankemeier (18:00.13), OPRF's No. 1 finisher.

"(My goal) was definitely to stay with Grace and try to keep the pack and I think for the most part we did do that," Nabholz said. "I've done a lot of races so I think I'm pretty good (dealing with regionals), but I always get a little nervous right before the gun goes off."

Rogers and Nabholz were within a second of each other at the mile (5:49/5:50) and two miles (11:56/11:57). Kenwood, also trying to pack it up, was with Nabholz at one mile but had fallen back slightly by the second mile (12:03) and couldn't make up the ground.

Kenwood still finished ahead of every other team's No. 3 finisher by at least 39 seconds.

"I kind of fell behind and no one was right next to me so I was kind of in the middle but it was a good race," said Kenwood, a first-year runner. "I think I've had enough races (by now). I'm always nervous, though. That's not going to stop. A lot of the girls came from cross country, like (sophomore friend Christina Sedall), which helped, and then my family was there so it was good. I wasn't as nervous as my first race."

Ozog joined Perez and Luczak as the only returnees from last year's regional lineup who competed Saturday.

Ozog also was the team's No. 6 finisher at the 2012 regional, when she was 20th at Lake Park in 18:52.7. At the Lake Park Invite, Ozog ran 18:10.3 for 13th, her best race this season until Saturday.

"I finally got back to a good time," Ozog said. "I feel like last year if I was running 18:26, I would have been the fourth runner or something like that but this year everyone is just so good, which is really great. I feel like the race is a lot faster than I remember, but I liked it."

Ozog liked something else, too. After being hampered by foot pain throughout the season, it is finally subsiding. Ozog said this past week was the first time in which she ran almost every day.

"That's been a pretty big step for me," Ozog said. "It's hurt throughout the week and stuff, but not enough to not run so I'm really happy about that and today it doesn't hurt at all."

Graham finished third at the Silver Meet in her first race in two weeks to help her knee pain subside. Hass made a last-minute decision to replace Graham with Dorsey as a precautionary measure.

"We just wanted to take it easy on her today," Hass said.

This would have been the first time that Graham would have competed against her former Glenbard East teammates, but she could have that chance at sectionals. Graham's family bought a home in Glenbard West's district in the spring but she did not transfer schools until completing her freshman year.

"I still want to try and help out our team. I'm hoping I'll be able to," Graham said. "I felt all right and then on Tuesday (a hard training day), my knee started really hurting. I still have two weeks (until state) so we'll see."

Dorsey was a state alternate last year but hadn't competed varsity until Oct. 10 against LT, when Graham, Perez and Ozog all did not compete. Dorsey won the frosh-soph race at the Silver Meet, her first race victory, with Shaver second and Berneche fourth.

Dorsey was prepared all week to compete as the first alternate but didn't get the official word until Saturday morning.

"(Friday) they told me kind of that there was a good chance I'd be running. I was actually preparing all week in case something happened," Dorsey said.

"Ever since last year, I wanted to run at least one of the races at the state series so I kind of got my goal of that completed. It just felt like it was a whole different race but it was fun and exciting."

At sectionals, the Hilltoppers will get a glimpse of their state trophy competition as they'll see New Trier for the first time since Sept. 21 at the Richard Spring Invite at Peoria's Detweiller Park, site of the state meet Nov. 9.

The Hilltoppers actually finished third behind the Trevians and champion Palatine, another projected trophy contender along with top-rated and defending state champion Naperville North.

New Trier junior Mimi Smith, 12th at state last year, also has been running like a top-five state contender this season.

"I felt like everyone gave it their best (at regionals). Everyone just did amazing," Luczak said. "I felt like everyone stepped up a ton and especially everyone's times were so good with the hard wind and it just gives us a lot of confidence for how we'll be at sectionals."

-- by Bill Stone