

First to the Finish Invitational

Coach Mark McCabe

The varsity finished sixth with several girls commenting that they could have finished stronger. How would you evaluate the race?

"It was a mixed bag. On the girls side, this is a very tough meet. You had eight of the top 14 ranked teams in the state here. We knew coming in the best we were probably going to do today was fourth. And there are some things that were a mixed bag, that were under our control and others that weren't. Grace McCabe obviously is coming back, her first race (this season), taking baby steps. It was just a matter of getting a race under her belt. Reilly has been sick all week. It wasn't meant to be for her today. McKenna ran well today but still again, jitters for the first time freshmen down on this course in a big meet and she performed well. I think there's a lot more there. I thought the biggest bright spots today were Kayla and Taylor. They're really stepping up as top-five contributors for us, which is what we're really looking for, and they've been consistent with two really strong races in a row. Again, there's a lot with Reilly and Grace there's obviously a lot more there but that's because of extenuating circumstances right now. Those other three, there's a lot more there just because they're just brand new to this and they're finding out what they can do and testing their limits. If they keep coming like that and Grace and Reilly will be, of course, where they need to be when it matters, we're going to have a real good team. We set high goals for ourselves this year on our summer trip and afterwards we said we're totally convinced that we're ready to make those happen. It's just going to take it week by week by week, a step forward every week."

What do you take from this meet?

"A lot of good came out of it, but this meet some years we've come here and we're firing on all cylinders. Everybody's healthy and other years it doesn't happen. Last year we were 11th here and were fifth at state. It's going to be like that this year. Quite frankly, you've got Glenbard West, which wasn't here today, and then potentially Geneva and Neuqua Valley. Those were the only top 10 teams in the state that weren't here today. And Glenbard West is the only top team. That makes us walking out of here today, knowing that we didn't come close to putting it all together, feel pretty good about what lies ahead."

How would you evaluate the open race?

"I thought in the open race Taylor Wagner had a good race. Taylor's had good races to kick off her high school career as well. She's a savvy racer. She's just got good innate racing sense"

and she also loves it and she works hard and she's going to be valuable member of our team. It was good experience for all of our open girls to get on the state meet course and experience that for the first time. I thought Melanie Chafin had a real good solid race, her best race of the year."

Considering the muddy course conditions, what adjustments in strategy or mindset did you convey to your runners?

"Going in we talked about the fact that it's going to be frustrating on a lot of parts of the course today. You can't let it frustrate you. Everybody else is working through those same conditions and in the warmup before we were talking about in those sloppy parts of the course, what's our best route? Is it to move outside to the right, move outside to the left, is it to go right through it? Another thing that kind of exacerbated things today – and this lies on me – was you can't back off every week for invitationals early in the season or you won't be where you want to be at the end of the year. We were real heavy this week. We went long on Monday, we went hard on Tuesday and Thursday. They were running on real tired legs and add that to the course conditions, which makes it harder to work through that anyway. We were far, far, far from our best today. That's OK. Next week, we'll cut back to two quality days on Monday and Wednesday and be a little fresher for Flashrock."