

## RECAPS

### Hornet-Red Devil Invite

Bill Stone  
Sept. 7, 2011

Hinsdale Central junior Jill Hardies finally made it to the starting line at the Hornet-Red Devil Invitational Saturday.

She didn't finish, but that's because the two-time all-stater is more focused on the finish to her season.

Hardies was in first place alongside Naperville Central senior Amanda Fox for the first mile, but Hardies decided to drop out because of shin splints that had been bothering her the past two weeks.

"I went in with the attitude of, 'Try to race. They're not too bad,' but I knew on my warmup that they weren't feeling great and they were bothering me. At the mile mark I was like, 'I shouldn't be doing this,' so I stopped," Hardies said.

"(Shin splints) can easily turn into stress fractures if you race on them and push them too much. I have a long season ahead of me hopefully it'll go until the end of December for some postseason (national) meets. I want to be healthy for when it matters. (The Hornet-Red Devil is) a big meet, but it's not necessarily a very important meet right now."

Hardies and junior Becky Ventura were the only Red Devils to compete in the varsity girls race. Ventura gave quite an inspired effort herself and finished 36th (20:19.05) to earn an individual medal for a top-40 finish after taking 36th in the invite's frosh-soph race in 2010.

"Becky had probably the best cross country race of her life. She's worked really hard over the summer and done very well and is going to be an important part of our varsity team," Hinsdale Central coach Mark McCabe said.

"In retrospect, (Hardies) probably shouldn't have started the race. Initially, the plan for her was to open up at (the Peoria Woodruff Invite Sept. 10). It's a matter of cross training a couple of days and she'll be fine. It was kind of an iffy proposition if she was going to start (Saturday). We were like, 'Let's see how it goes, but if it's not good, we're not going to pursue (continuing). We don't want a minor thing to turn into something more problematic.'"

One reason Hardies wasn't to compete was because she sat out the invite the previous two seasons. Last season, Hardies actually didn't compete until 10 days before the conference meet to recover from an offseason stress fracture in her foot. She went on to finish second at the Class 3A state meet at Peoria's Detweiller Park— the highest individual finish in program history.

Fox, seventh at state in 2009 and 34th last year, won Saturday's race (17:05.88) by 21.72 seconds over Glenbard East senior Lindsey Rakosnik, the defending Class 3A 800-meter champion in track.

Hardies still hopes to compete against more strong competition at Detweiller Saturday.

"I love that course and it's a big meet and it would be exciting to see how fast I could run, but if my shins are bothering me, I'm not going to try and push it," Hardies said.

"I could have finished this race, but with how bad I was feeling it would do my shins more harm than good and for what benefit I guess would be the question. It would be really exciting to have won this meet. Amanda ran such a fast time that if I was up with her, I probably would have run fast as well. But I went in knowing if I wasn't feeling good at all, it was probably the best choice (to drop out)."

## OPEN GIRLS

Hinsdale Central freshman Susan Spencer missed her eighth-grade cross country season at Clarendon Hills Middle School because of back surgery.

Spencer had quite a return in her high-school debut at the Hornet-Red Devil Invitational Saturday. She won the 2.0-mile Girls Open race in 12:50.16 to win the race by 6.33 seconds.

It was just part of a strong performance by the Red Devils, who also had freshmen Sarah Brennan (13:23.48) and Sophie May (13:28.69) take third and fourth behind Palatine's Kara Burton (12:56.49).

"I'm just glad I didn't ever give up at one point because (Burton) was going so fast. My whole goal was just to keep up with her the whole race and hopefully at one point pass her and then keep it that way," Spencer said.

"It felt really good (to win). I was really scared (Burton) was going to come up behind me because I'm not much of an ending sprinter. I was trying to make it as far of a lead as I could up the hills so that near the end she wouldn't outsprint me. A hot day but a good run."

The Red Devils had seven of the top 20 finishers and took 13 of the 40 individual medals, but they were edged by Palatine for the team title on a sixth-runner tiebreaker after both teams scored 32 points. Palatine's No. 6 finisher was 10th overall.

"I was proud of all of our team. I felt like we just dominated," Spencer said.

Hinsdale Central and Palatine were dominant, taking 16 of the top 17 places with 10 by the Pirates.

Other medalwinners for the Red Devils were sophomore Annie Wysopal (11th, 13:49.02), junior Zoe Larson (15th, 13:57.97), sophomore Rose Huang (17th, 13:58.91), junior Meg Knister (19th, 14:01.50), senior Lauren Paul (21st, 14:11.55), freshmen Sarah Folliard (23rd, 14:17.65) and Tillie Kummerer (24th, 14:20.17), juniors Grace Cook (27th, 14:25.55) and Julia Tabacyzk (34th, 14:36.86) and sophomore Cristina Tye (40th, 14:45.74).

"They ran a great race. A lot of those girls were freshmen, their first race, and we had a lot of good performances not just from the freshmen but the sophomores and upperclassmen as well," McCabe said.

“We’ve got a talented and really enthusiastic and motivated group of freshmen. They’re really fun to work with and I think they’re going to be a big part of our program as we move along.

“In the first race, we kind of low-key the advice and talk about general race strategy of the course. All of the summer (training) is leading up to this. Once they get a taste of their first race, we talk more about specific race strategies.”

Brennan (Westview Hills Middle School) and May (Hinsdale Middle School) enter the season with plenty of competitive experience, but being in a race with more than 300 finishers was nothing like middle school.

While Spencer had to remain tough to win, Brennan, who finished 27 seconds behind Burton, had to maintain her focus in no-man’s land.

“I was in the middle of a big gap so it was kind of hard. I was satisfied and I was happy and our team did really well, too,” Brennan said. “It was good that I saw Susan ahead of me. It was like, ‘Oh, she’s doing really well.’ ” Running (the open race), I didn’t really know what we were getting into. I wanted to get top 20 as well so getting third was awesome.”

Also hoping for a top-20 finish going into the race, May said she received a lift from having teammates in her sights. May’s training has been somewhat hindered by illness and a minor leg injury but she kept pushing to hold off Wheaton Warrenville South’s Paige Bocianski (13:31.08) and a pack of five Palatine runners.

“I felt like I could have done better at the end. I just sprinted it out and I’m happy that (Bocianski) didn’t pass me,” May said.

“We all push each other being up there, it’s great. We kind of feed off of each other and it’s positive energy to have everybody up there. The team is like a family. We spend a lot of time with each other. Over the summer we spend a lot of hours with each other so we have to kind of get along.”

The invite allows unlimited entries at all levels. McCabe continued his recent pattern of running his non-varsity entries in the shorter Open Girls race rather than the Fresh/Soph Girls race. The rest of the varsity lineup sat out Saturday to protect minor injuries.

“We have high hopes for the season. Also we’re not a super deep team,” McCabe said. “We need to be especially careful. Everything’s minor little aches and pains (for now), but we’re really going to low-key the first part of the season to be where want to be when means the most.”

Copyright 2011 Hinsdale Central Cross Country