

RECAPS

West Suburban Conference Silver Division Meet

Bill Stone
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VARSITY

In only her second cross country race this season, Hinsdale Central sophomore Becca Marcotte simply wanted to finish Saturday's West Suburban Conference Silver Division Meet with a positive feeling.

"I raced a couple of weeks ago (Sept. 22) and it was so painful. I did what I had to do to get ready for (Saturday) and it's OK," said Marcotte, who covered the 3.0 miles in 18:58.3.

"Going into it, I was like, 'I would be so happy if I break 19:00, but now that I did it, I could have run so much faster than that.'"

Marcotte wasn't alone. Many of the Red Devils left the course at Lyons Township's south campus knowing that they're capable of doing better in the postseason.

Hinsdale Central junior Jill Hardies (17:22.9) finished second to York junior Emma Fisher, whose victorious 17:07.0 broke the course record by four seconds. Marcotte was 24th, followed by freshman Susan Spencer (19:40.1), junior Becky Ventura (19:43.4), freshman Sarah Brennan (20:08.6) and junior Katie Gelman (20:14.0) in 33th through 36th and senior Grace Klein (40th, 21:17.8).

The Red Devils (128 points) finished fifth and ended up fifth in the final overall standings, a 50-50 combination of dual and Silver Meet standings.

"The girls learned a lot from their race and we always learn things from races," Hinsdale Central coach Mark McCabe said. "We were talking about the team finally putting our best lineup on the course, and we're getting close to doing that."

The Red Devils begin their quest to return to state as a team on the same course at the Class 3A LT Regional at 10 a.m. They only need a top-seven finish in the nine-team field to advance to the Lockport Sectional at 11 a.m. Oct. 29.

Hardies, last year's state meet runner-up, has big goals as well. She had hoped to defend her 2010 individual Silver title but Saturday also marked just her second consecutive race as she works back from shin splints.

"It was disappointing, but it's my first race back," said Hardies, who comfortably won the Red Devils' dual against Oak Park-River Forest Oct. 6. "When I finished (Saturday), I wasn't even tired. I need to learn how to race again, I guess. I just need to mentally get back into it a little bit and taper a little bit."

Hardies altered her racing strategy. Instead of going out hard, taking the lead and controlling the race, she stayed behind the taller Fisher and tried to use her as a shield from the windy conditions. Hardies was just behind Fisher after one mile, but the gap gradually grew during the next mile.

When Hardies completed her first race of the season Sept. 15 at York, Hardies also finished second to Fisher with both runners breaking the course record.

"I can't be behind someone. Mentally, I need to be right beside them or in front. I just let the gap open and open and that's how I lost," Hardies said. "Emma's a good runner but it's just disappointing because she's never really beaten me when it really matters."

Pushed with about 800 meters left, Hardies held onto second place and finished significantly ahead of two other all-state candidates, York senior Kayla Spencer (17:31.0) and Glenbard West sophomore Madeline Perez (17:34.0).

What also is encouraging is that Hardies had two great workouts this past week. That and other hard workouts to regain her fitness probably affected her performance Saturday.

"This is really her first race all year where she's racing and she's been fit, but she's not yet fast and not rested or snappy at all in her legs, and that'll come at sectionals and state. And face it. Emma Fisher ran a great race," McCabe said.

"That's good that (Hardies is) never satisfied, but you need to temper that with a little bit of patience and faith. And she does. She's got the faith but she's sometimes impatient, which often times is the mark of a competitive champion. I told her she needs to walk away not satisfied but happy with a step forward."

Marcotte has been sidelined most of the season after pulling her hamstring while running hills during the team's annual summer trip to Lake Geneva. She took a couple of Advil before Saturday's race and still was pain free a couple of hours afterward.

"This will be my worst race of the postseason. It's a start," Marcotte said. "It's been really tough. My teammates have really helped a lot. It's just tested my patience a lot. I've been doing everything that I needed to do and it was just not getting better. It's been taking so long to get to where I am now."

Ventura has been the lone constant in the varsity lineup this season. She received some pack help during Saturday's race from Spencer and Brennan, who have made occasional varsity appearances in preparation for the postseason.

McCabe said he gave the freshmen the choice to compete one last time on the sophomore level, where they would have earned individual all-conference honors for being among the top 16 finishers. They came to him separately and said they wanted to run with the varsity.

"(They said), 'We want to do what's best for the team.' That's the kind of attitude that championship teams are built around," McCabe said. "I respect and admire that, but it's going to be better for them and the team down the road."

Gelman, just back from injury, was having her best race of the season – until the final 25 meters.

Gelman has battled electrolyte issues that have caused her to struggle finishing races, but she had no problems during her last race Oct. 6. On Saturday, however, Gelman collapsed in sight of the finish, stumbled getting back to her feet and then could only walk across the finish line.

“I just couldn’t run. It was just so hard. I just tried. At least I finished,” Gelman said.

“It was definitely my best race of the season by far. I was ahead of teammates I had never been ahead of before, and I was with people from other teams that I had always seen as being really good. I definitely gave it my all the whole time so then that’ll be good for (regionals) because I know that I can do that.”

Klein, another returnee from last year’s state lineup, also rejoined the lineup Saturday but was plagued throughout the race by her hip injury that also significantly limited her training. The race ended up being even harder than she anticipated.

“I just wanted to do one last (race), I guess, finish it off. I thought (my hip) was going to get better, but I wanted to be there with my team so I just stuck it out as much as I could,” Klein said.

If Klein doesn’t compete in the postseason, she still will be a key team member because of her experience and as one of the Red Devils’ captains.

“(I want to) just definitely be there and support them, motivate them and give them any advice because there’s a lot of freshmen, new girls, going these next couple of meets,” Klein said. “It’s kind of frustrating, but I’m lucky that I had three other good years. It’s special, even though I haven’t had the best year.”

JUNIOR VARSITY

Hinsdale Central junior Zoe Larson already had progressed so much this season.

The final moments of Saturday’s West Suburban Conference Silver Division Meet showed she was capable of even more.

Larson used a strong finish to take 13th place (20:03.6 for 3.0 miles) at Lyons Township’s south campus to earn all-conference honors in the race for a top-16 finish.

“I wasn’t expecting this so I was very excited,” Larson said. “When I was on the last lap, (Hinsdale Central coach Mark McCabe) was telling me, ‘One more (place),’ and I’d be all-conference and I just kicked up my pace, knowing it was the last lap of my last race this year and I just kept passing people so it was fun.”

“I said to Zoe after the race she has got the heart of a lion,” McCabe said. “She was pretty much sitting in 17th place the whole second half of the race. I yelled at her every time I would see her, cheering for her, that she needed to get at least one (runner) to get all-conference. That last 600 meters she passed four girls and made up a good little bit of ground. She had an awesome race.”

Hinsdale Central was fourth (134 points) and fourth in the final overall standings. The Red Devils had tied

for fourth in the dual standings at 2-4 with Glenbard West (142) and Oak Park-River Forest (168).

Senior Lauren Paul (43rd, 21:26.0) was the Red Devils' No. 2 finisher, followed by juniors Meg Knister (52nd, 21:35.3), Mia Larson (53rd, 21:36.1), Grace Cook (57th, 21:38.8) and Julia Tabaczyk (63rd, 21:44.0) and seniors Liz Marcotte (64th, 21:46.0), Grace Berg (65th, 21:46.6) and Brittney O'Grady (67th, 21:48.6).

McCabe said Paul, Berg, Cook, O'Grady and Mia Larson ended the season strong and with a string of good races. At the 2010 JV Silver Meet, Paul, Berg and O'Grady were 70th, 114th and 95th, respectively.

For Zoe Larson, it was a huge step up from taking 24th at the 2010 sophomore Silver race and 71st in that race as a freshman.

"I wouldn't expect to be this far, considering how I was freshman year and just doing better, it's fun," Zoe Larson said. "It means a lot because I've been trying really hard this season and just improving."

As freshmen, Zoe and Mia, her twin sister, often would pace off each other.

"But Zoe just got faster," Mia said.

The sisters remain teammates and supportive of each other. That's why it's probably no surprise that Mia also came on strong at the end of this season – and on Saturday.

"(The goal) was to push myself harder at the end because it was the last one and to get all of my energy out there," said Mia Larson, 57th in last year's sophomore race.

"I think I've been hydrating better and I like colder weather better. During the race, I was trying to pick up my pace near the end because I felt really fast so I wanted to pass some people."

"She's been doing better and she's (moved up) in the second group," Zoe Larson said. "She's been pushing herself really hard during practice and showed a lot of improvement."

Saturday's colder weather also probably helped Knister finish on a stronger note. She's been battling allergies the past few meets, yet she still remained among the top JV finishers.

"I've slowed down a bit because I couldn't breathe very well so they've gone away now," Knister said. "It was better than my past three meets. It was the last race so I just tried as hard as I could."

If the Red Devils weren't motivated enough for their final race of the season, Zoe Larson said assistant coach Amy Carroll gave them more focus going into the race.

"(Carroll) said not to regret anything to make sure that you do as best as you can so you don't feel bad about it later, just knowing that you could have done something better just trying your hardest, going all out," Zoe Larson said.

SOPHOMORES

Sophomore Rose Huang decided not to be satisfied with being a solid contributor to the Hinsdale Central sophomore team's lineup.

She was capable of even more, and she showed that in Saturday's final race of the season at the West Suburban Conference Silver Division Meet at Lyons Township's south campus.

While freshman Tillie Kummerer was a team-best 21st (20:40.1), Huang was the Red Devils' No. 2 finisher in 29th with a personal-best 21:03.1 for 3.0 miles. Huang, who was among the team's Runners of the Meet, came on strong enough that she just beat a York runner at the finish chute.

"(Coach Mark McCabe) is always saying that we should not have a pecking order (of finishing among the team) and I think I did better with that today," Huang said. "I tried to stay with my teammates in the front and I just kept trying to get the girls from the other teams in front of me afterwards."

The Red Devils had several small packs of finishers en route to finishing sixth (144 points) and tying for fifth place in the final overall standings with Oak Park-River Forest, which was fifth Saturday (128 points).

Freshmen Anya Patel (21:06.4) and Sara Folliard (21:06.4), the Red Devils' No. 3-4 finishers, were 32nd and 33rd, and sophomores Annie Wysopal (21:36.1) and Cristina Tye (21:40.8) were 39th and 40th. Other top finishers were sophomores Amanda Koronkiewicz (45th, 21:55.2) and Sara Ramasastry (55th, 22:19.7), freshmen Rachael McCann (57th, 22:25.6) and Allie Hetke (59th, 22:29.3) and sophomores Maley Messina (64th, 22:59.6) and Allison Gelman (65th, 22:59.8), who just beat the 23-minute mark.

Patel and Messina were among the team's Runners of the Meet. With unlimited entries, the Red Devils had nobody compete in the shorter freshman race, which was 2.0 miles.

"For (Huang) and Anya to be our No. 2 and 3 runners today and running good races was great," McCabe said. "(Huang is) not quite strong enough to carry it all the way through for 3.0 miles, but I told her between now and track and cross country next year, if she continues to build that foundation, she's going to be a top runner for us."

Kummerer had an impressive first high-school season, especially considering that she was thrust into the No. 1 finisher's role once freshmen Susan Spencer and Sarah Brennan were promoted to the varsity. There had been talk about Spencer and Brennan returning to the sophomore level one last time Saturday, but they opted for the varsity race after McCabe gave them the choice.

"I know I'll definitely be back next year because I just love being part of a team, all of the girls I get along with," said Kummerer, who plans to compete in track. "I feel like it's going good, all of the new training I'm getting. I hope I can definitely speed up and progress throughout the years. It's a lot different than junior high (competition). It's a lot more sophisticated."

Kummerer went after all-conference honors for a top-16 finish. She was among the top 15 after one mile and still in the top 20 at two miles.

“I was trying pretty hard. I was looking ahead, (thinking), ‘I can do this,’ “ Kummerer said. “When I first went out, everyone went out fast. I felt good in the first mile, but a lot of people came back from the beginning and started picking up the pace.”

Patel also ended her freshman season with a solid race. She received a lift from overcoming recent breathing problems and a disc jockey who played dance music near the starting line throughout the races.

“It gave a different vibe to the meet and I really enjoyed it. It was different and I thought it was really cool,” Patel said.

“I felt really confident and I felt really good when I was running and was really excited. I think I stayed strong throughout and realized that even if I started behind that I could work my way back up.”

“She just had the race of her young running life today,” McCabe said. “She’s been dealing with breathing issues and a new inhaler. She’s really done a good job of making that all work.”

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