

This season, junior Molly Caveney has been thrust into the varsity lineup for the Hinsdale Central girls cross country team.

"It's a lot different. Before you wouldn't have to go in thinking very much. Just run in the front, you'll be fine," Caveney said.

"This year, I'm not going to be in the front and you have to kind of run your own race and not get caught up in any other races. You have to plan things more or you just have to look at times, which is harder. Sometimes it's fun to be in the front of races, but it's a lot more competitive if you're not because there are so many more races within the race."

On Saturday, Oct. 3, Caveney enjoyed a personal triumph as part of the Red Devils' strong performance at the St. Charles North Invitational.

Sophomore Reilly Revord was sixth on this year's new 3.0-mile course (18:12.0), followed by sophomore Grace McCabe (9th, 18:30.8) also finished among the top 10.

They and senior Mackie Stevens (21st, 19:09.0) earned medals for being among the top 25, followed by Caveney (37th, 19:35.8) senior Emma Sullivan (56th, 20:01.8) freshman Taylor Waldron (60th, 20:10.5) in her varsity debut and sophomore Sophia Horowicz (100th, 21:14.6).

The Red Devils (129 points), ranked No. 14 this week in Class 3A by DyeStatIL, finished behind No. 3 Batavia (69) and No. 5 Lyons Township (99) with No. 13 Geneva (137) fourth.

"It was a very good team race for us. It was obviously a slow course in a meet where we've been training hard right through it. No one was feeling particularly sharp and snappy," Hinsdale Central coach Mark McCabe said. "From a team standpoint, looking at what we did and looking forward to that, plus the return of (senior Annie Zaher), we're in a very good place to where we'd like to be."

Caveney was named the varsity's Athlete of the Meet. She was most pleased that during the second mile, she persevered to keep contact with a group of girls around her so that she wouldn't finish the race running alone.

"I would say that I think that was my best race this season. I think that going into it I had a lot more positive attitude and I was a lot more excited to race," Caveney said.

"I loved the old course. I love to run on what seems more a cross country course than a track. Also I think I was more competitive than I have been, which makes it more fun."

While the first mile was in an open, flat area of the preserve, runners soon turned into the secluded east part of the course with trees and a gravel path. Unlike most courses, the runners never ran over the same part more than once.

"Most everybody ran the course before and enjoyed it. As we were warming up, we were really looking forward to running the course," Revord said. "We really liked how it was situated in the woods and not a lot of people there. Sometimes there are too many people and it's overwhelming. It was a really good course to focus on running, staying with everybody and doing well."

Not everything went Revord's way. During the first mile, she could feel her shoelace becoming untied.

"(That) was really annoying because I freak out about tying my shoes," Revord said. "It was kind of annoying to have that happen, but I dealt with it during the race. I just kept running."

"I felt the laces hitting against my shoes and the ground and everything. I tried not to think about it because it was irritating. I was trying extra hard to not twist my ankle or anything."

The opening mile also was a bit frustrating in that Revord could not close the gap on the front group. Revord was in fifth place (5:54), leading a pack of three runners, but also 10 seconds behind the lead pack and nine behind fourth-place Geneva senior McKenzie Altmayer, the eventual race champion in 17:44.8.

"I was trying to stay with them, but it was a fast start and I was not ready for that. They went out a little too fast," Revord said. "It wasn't like a big meet. It was more of a get out there and run and have another race in your books."

Caveney was 41st at the mile (6:12) but just one second from 36th. She ended up 1.7 seconds from finishing 34th overall.

"I was happy with my race because I feel as a team we really stepped up or did better than we had been doing so that was exciting," Caveney said. "At the same time I'm happy with my race, I'm not completely satisfied, which is important because I know I can do better and keep getting better going into the most important races."

As the Red Devils await recuperating senior Annie Zaher to rejoin the lineup for the first time this season, they have often been running six rather than the maximum seven on varsity.

On Wednesday, Sept. 30, Waldron said she found out that she would be joining the varsity for the first time.

Waldron was 48th at the mile Saturday (6:14), just one second behind Sullivan and two behind Caveney. The final split between Sullivan and Waldron was 8.7 seconds.

"It was a really good experience," Waldron said. "I had so much fun today because I love the course. And the varsity girls were all so nice. They were all so accepting when I started running with them. It was really fun. I loved it.

"When we started it off, it felt pretty fast but I was able to keep a pretty good pace. It just felt really good today, really strong. I came in sixth for our team and this is pretty good, just for this course because of the hills and everything."