

RECAPS

Hinsdale Central at Proviso West/Whitney Young

Sep 22, 2011
Bill Stone

Hinsdale Central girls cross country runner Susan Spencer recently has battled knee and shin pain, but there was another emotion she had to confront Thursday (Sept. 22).

She and fellow freshman Sarah Brennan were making their varsity debuts in the Red Devils' West Suburban Conference Silver Division triangular against host Proviso West and Downers Grove North.

"Very nervous being our first varsity race for Sarah and me, very scary," Spencer said. "(People told me), 'Just finish hard, finish the race and do your best.' "

Spencer ended up being the Red Devils' top finisher as they beat Proviso West 15-49 and lost to Downers North 15-45 in Hillside.

Spencer (20:23) and junior Becky Ventura (20:35) were seventh and eighth among varsity finishers in the 3.09-mile race. Sophomore Becca Marcotte (21:13), Brennan (21:14) and junior Allison Shaner (23:08) finished 10th through 12th.

"I thought Susan ran particularly well at the varsity level," Hinsdale Central coach Mark McCabe said. "We got out a little slowly (as a team). In fact, we got out a lot more slowly than we needed to and were playing catchup the rest of the way.

"Downers North is one of the teams that we'll see at sectionals. It's one of the teams we're going to have to beat in order to be in the hunt to qualify for state. We wanted to see what Susan and Sarah will do running at the varsity level (going into the postseason). We'll continue to do that to gain that varsity experience."

The dual marked the season debut for Marcotte (87th at state in 2010). On Saturday (Sept. 24), senior Taylor Troy (179th at state) made her season debut at Whitney Young's fifth annual Dennis Ziomek Invitational at Washington Park as she returns from an iliotibial band injury. Defending state runner-up Jill Hardies did not compete in either race but continues to train as her shin splints heal.

"Throughout the season we're going to be in a putting things back together kind of mode," McCabe said. "(Marcotte) hasn't done much in terms of quality training so this was just kind of a starting point just to see how it would feel."

Proviso West was quite a debut for Spencer and Brennan, especially considering that the course's plus 3.0-mile distance made it roughly one quarter of a mile longer than the last Silver triangular at York's 2.85-mile East End Park Sept. 15.

Downers North, 10th at state last year, set the tone for the race at the outset. The Trojans had the first six

finishers, led by junior Gabrielle Hesslau (19:18), who was a team-best 32nd at state. The Trojans' No. 3, 5, 6 and 7 state finishers also return.

The Red Devils' top-four finishers covered the first mile in 6:32. By the end, Spencer missed catching Downers North's No. 6 finisher, sophomore Meghan Bonfield (160th at state), by three seconds and No. 5 finisher, senior Allison Proffitt (62nd at state), by five.

"I felt like our first mile was a little slow but once we found out our time, we kind of kicked up our pace and it felt like that really helped," Spencer said.

"It was good to have people push you. It was kind of nice feeding off that energy because I've never done a varsity race before so I didn't know what pace to go at in the beginning. Near the end of the race, my goal was to try and get as close as I could to those (Downers North) girls. I think that helped to motivate me."

The varsity had plenty of fun at the Ziomek Invite. They finished third (64 points) with five finishers behind Vernon Hills (37) and Whitney Young (55) with Latin (144) fourth.

Runner of the Meet Spencer (19:22.64) and Ventura (19:25.52) were fifth and sixth in the 3.0-mile race behind three seniors and one junior, and Brennan (11th, 19:43.43) and juniors Kate Gelman (20th, 20:18.52) and Zoe Larson (30th, 20:51.18) also finished among the top 30. Kenwood senior Dhiaa Dean won in 18:52.33.

This was the Red Devils' second straight trip to the invite. Especially with intermittent rain throughout the morning, the course was a somewhat rugged one, albeit mostly flat, that winds throughout the spacious park.

"I like the terrain (of this course), all of the trees and the lake and it kind of makes it more enjoyable instead of some of like five laps as some of our other races," Ventura said. "And the atmosphere is less of a stressful, competitive atmosphere than it is more everyone's doing this because they enjoy running. It's more of a fun meet because we're all in the front and together during the race."

Gelman made a strong varsity invite season debut but McCabe said electrolyte issues hindered her finish after a solid "90 percent" of her race.

Ventura, meanwhile, continued her consistently strong season despite a busy day capping off a week of Homecoming activities. She quickly cooled down and then left earlier so she could fulfill her responsibilities as a percussionist for the school band at the football game.

As a group, the Red Devils also bypassed the awards ceremonies so they could return more quickly to Hinsdale for Homecoming activities.

"Most of the other kids (also in band) just didn't race today, but I wanted to race. My day's full, but you get things done. It works out. We make it work," Ventura said.

JUNIOR VARSITY

Hinsdale Central sophomore Cristina Tye has made vast improvements this season thanks in part to working hard on her own over the summer.

She thinks the main reason is her teammates.

“Our running group randomly books it all of the time. In our running group, we just train and talk and it makes us run fast,” Tye said.

On Saturday, the result was a sea of Red Devils near the front of the junior varsity open race at the Whitney Young Invitational. No team scores were kept, but the Red Devils dominated with nine of the first 13 finishers.

Tye was fourth (14:02.24) and junior Meg Knister (14:11.29), seniors Lauren Paul (14:13.03) and Brittney O’Grady (14:14.03), freshman Rachael McCann (14:16.42), junior Julia Tabaczyk (14:18.39), senior Runner of the Meet Lisa Valcarengi (14:19.52) and juniors Grace Cook (14:25.88) and Mia Larson (14:26.68) were sixth through 13th.

Also finishing among the top 30 were sophomore Runner of Meet Allison Gelman (14:57.99), freshmen Melissa Oskouie (14:58.80) and Allie Hetke (15:00.23) and junior Greta Hucek (15:01.74) in 23rd through 26th and senior Sam Gianakas (29th, 15:05.73).

“For the JV, it’s one of the most fun races of the year,” McCabe said. “It’s a 2-mile race and it’s a race where a lot of them get a chance to be up front, which is real nice. We saw some real breakthrough races, which we did last year as well. Cristina ran just an awesome race and Rachael was up there, too.”

Tye said the invite was of her favorite races last year as well, but on Saturday she was more than a minute faster. In 2010, Tye finished in 15:14.85 to be the Red Devils’ 21st finisher in the race and 41st overall.

“I love 2.0 miles race-wise. It’s way faster and easier. I feel better after it, not as dead,” Tye said. “I would say getting in the front, stretching ahead, that was the biggest thing for me (this race) because once you’re ahead, you just keep going. Pacing yourself is a big thing.”

McCann was excited that her time was faster than her 2.0-mile time trial at the beginning of the season.

“I guess I can keep pushing myself and that could help (improve my 3.0-mile time),” McCann said.

“Just because we all run really fast and we all push each other, I think that made me run faster. At the beginning, we were supposed to go in the front, so I made sure I got in the front. There were like three Red Devils in front of me so I was trying to keep up with them so I think that helped me push myself. Then you feel good about yourself so you just keep running.”

On Sept. 22, the Red Devils' junior varsity lost to Downers North 17-41 and beat Proviso West 15-50.

Zoe Larson (22:05 for 3.09 miles) and Knister (22:30) were fourth and seventh in the JV race. Tabaczyk

(9th, 23:00), Paul (10th, 23:11), senior Athlete of the Meet Grace Berg (11th, 23:14), Valcarengi (23:21) and Cook (23:29) rounded out the top seven, and O'Grady (23:38) and Mia Larson (23:44) also broke 14:00.

SOPHOMORES

Hinsdale Central freshman Anya Patel has decided for her first high school cross country season that she will keep a personal log of her races.

"I make a list of what my race was like mile for mile, 800 for 800, how I felt for it. I do it right as soon as I come home so I won't forget anything, before I start my homework," Patel said.

"I'm keeping track of how I ran the race so I can improve every time I run. It's like a different run to me and I really enjoy it. I hope to take back the different memories of the different courses."

There sure was quite a story to tell regarding Saturday's sophomore race at the Whitney Young Invitational. The race was supposed to be 3.0 miles but McCabe said the leaders were mistakenly turned to the finish early and it became a 2.0-mile race as it was last year.

"We realized when (other people) were saying, 'Oh my goodness, time to finish, time to finish.' And people started sprinting," Patel said. "I can say that's probably my fastest times I've ever gotten and it was quite a shock.

"I think it's part of cross country, where you have to adapt. It was really hard at the beginning, but we learned that you have to change and sometimes with the different courses, it's just part of it. You have to change your mental state, too, to fit to what you're running."

Despite the abrupt change, Hinsdale Central freshman Tillie Kummerer (13:35.84) and sophomore Annie Wysopal (13:39.67) were sixth and seventh and sophomore Rose Huang (11th, 13:55.76), Patel (19th, 14:09.24), sophomore Amanda Koronkiewicz (20th, 14:10.73) and freshman Sara Folliard (21st, 14:12.50) also finished among the top 25. The Red Devils (63 points) finished second to Whitney Young (43).

"The kids didn't know what the heck was going on," McCabe said. "That was unfortunate there. It was not a good gauge of what we could have done, but Annie Wysopal particularly had a good race."

Patel was just happy to be competing. On Sept. 22, she made her high-school debut as the Hinsdale Central sophomores beat Proviso West 15-50 and lost to Downers North 23-32.

Patel was named a Runner of the Meet after her 22:07 on the 3.09-mile course earned seventh overall behind the Red Devils' Kummerer (21:34), Wysopal (21:51) and Huang (22:05) taking fourth, fifth and sixth. Folliard (22:18) and Koronkiewicz (22:41) were 10th and 13th with Tye (22:57), Runner of the Meet McCann (24:10) and sophomore Sara Ramasastry (24:36) 18th through 20th.

"Anya and Rose ran particularly good races," McCabe said. "This is just a starting point for (Patel) and she ran extremely well so that was very encouraging. When we get that frosh-soph group back together, like at the conference meet, it'll be a real competitive group."

Patel was a cross country and track competitor at Butler Junior High, running the 1,600, 800 and 400 relay for the Vikings in track and 2.0-mile cross country races. She was particularly enthused to compete in the season-opening Hornet-Red Devil Invitational Sept. 3 at Katherine Legge Memorial Park, but she sat out to rest a hip injury caused by the pressure of her growth plates.

“I felt kind of down when I saw the other girls and they were able to run and I was not. I was really looking forward to those (first races), but I think in the end it was worth the wait,” Patel said.

“(At Proviso West), I didn’t feel the nerves of, ‘It’s going to be three miles.’ I’m not generally a very negative person so I was very more optimistic. It’s all about the process so the training led me up to do it. Mr. McCabe is a great coach so he was there for me.”

Copyright 2011 hccrosscountry.com