

Sophomore Grace McCabe and her Hinsdale Central girls cross country teammates were determined to make the most of a gloomy situation. McCabe was disappointed about her previous race but wanted to bounce back in the varsity's second annual trip to the Flashrock Invitational at Northview Church in Carmel, Ind.

A thunderstorm, however, delayed the start of the race about an hour. The varsity girls championship race had been the second of eight scheduled races originally at 9:25 a.m.

"There were puddles everywhere. Our starting box was in a puddle," McCabe said.

"(Hinsdale Central coach Mark McCabe) was talking to us about trying not to let it psych you out because it'll psych other people out so you have to make sure that you use it to your advantage."

As the lone Illinois team in the field, the Red Devils came away with a positive feeling after finishing ninth (220 points) in a field that Mark McCabe said beforehand had nearly all of the top-rated teams in Indiana.

Sophomore Reilly Revord was fifth on the 3.1-mile/5-kilometer course (18:36.8). Grace McCabe (12th, 19:08.8), 3.6 seconds from a top-10 finish and senior Mackie Stevens (29th, 19:41.9), also received top-50 individual medals, followed by junior Molly Caveney (75th, 20:47.6), sophomore Sophia Horowicz (116th, 21:26.1) and senior Emma Sullivan (138th, 21:59.8).

"They run a phenomenal meet there," Revord said. "It's just a great feeling to be able to go back and run on the same course again because it's one of the really nicest courses that we get to run. It's just an overall good feeling."

The meet once again showcased practically all of the top teams in Indiana. Carroll of Fort Wayne, Ind. (124) pulled out the title over Columbus (Ind.) North (138) and Zionsville (140).

At last year's Indiana state meet, Carroll (7th), Columbus North (5th) and Zionsville (6th) all finished among the top seven. Defending state champion Carmel did not compete Saturday.

Because of the lightning delay, the final open races were canceled.

"I think the times were a little slower only because of the weather," Revord said.

"It was still a great race to go to, pretty competitive. Nothing compared to Illinois, but one of the more competitive races in Indiana. It's just good to get out and get away from the teams that you're normally facing every week."



Revord continued the momentum from her best race ever in taking sixth (17:03.9 for 3.0 miles) Sept. 12 at the First to the Finish Invite at Peoria's Detweiller Park, annual site of the state meet.

McCabe, an all-state 20th in 2014, had finished 42nd in that race (18:13.8) but also had been through a stressful week and was battling illness. She put herself in position to be among the frontrunners as usual Saturday.

"Definitely during the week I focused on hydration and just how I was feeling and if I needed to back off (training) I would do that," McCabe said.

"My goal was top 10. And I got 12th. Two girls passed me on the last straightaway. That bummed me out. But it was around that (goal) area and hopefully I'll do better in the future also and in better conditions, too. But still the conditions shouldn't matter."

Three seniors took the top three places Saturday. Pendleton Heights senior Alex Buck (18:09.7), who won by 14.2 seconds, was eighth at the 2014 Indiana state meet and 19th as a sophomore. Revord was 5.9 seconds behind fourth-place Avon junior Taylor Nicholson (18:30.9), second at Indiana state in 2014.

Current junior Alexa Haff, injured this cross country season, won last year's invite in 17:49.8. Revord was seventh in 18:38.0, about a second slower than Saturday.

"Definitely an improvement from last year (despite the weather)," Revord said.

"(First to the Finish was) definitely a big boost of confidence. I think as the year goes on, you get a little more confident about each race you do. Especially, this is my second year as a high school athlete for cross country and it just definitely more and more builds up your confidence – the more workouts you do, the more races you get under your belt."

The Indiana trip is used to replicate the two-day overnight schedule of the state meet weekend Nov. 6-7 in Peoria. The varsity left Friday morning around 10 a.m. to have a practice run that afternoon on the course.

"It's just a good team bonding experience that we all enjoy," Revord said. "We got our practice stay overnight before state, which is a good time, hanging out on the bus, going to dinner the night before, going shopping for breakfast."

The Red Devils are optimistic that by the time of state, senior Annie Zaher will have rejoined the lineup. The 2013 Class 3A 1,600-meter girls track state champion has yet to compete this season but continues to cross train uninterrupted.

If Zaher competed Saturday and finished ahead or near Revord, the Red Devils

would have at least placed second. She was fourth at the invite last year.

"It was a little intimidating, knowing that it was thunder storming outside, but in the end everybody handled it very well. I had a little hangout time before the race started," Revord said. "We were going to set up our tarp but (the delay) just moved our warmup time back, gave us some time to hang out and chill before the race."

There were many tense moments during the race, simply because of the course conditions.

Revord said the pouring rain made much of the course "a huge mud pile."

"It was wet, giant puddles everywhere and then when you go back in the forest, it was a downhill mud slide," Revord said. "It was a corner, so I swung it wide and it was just all mud, all downhill for a little bit. I was like flying everywhere. It was just really hard to get a good grip. It was a little scary at the moment.

"It was bad, but other than that part, it also made it a little more entertaining that it was wet going through the puddles. It was not a pretty course to run that day."