

Junior Sarah Brennan epitomized the Hinsdale Central girls cross country team's mindset at Lyons Township Sept. 19.

The Red Devils wanted a solid race against their rivals in the West Suburban Conference Silver Division dual opener. So did Brennan, who was disappointed with her first two races at the Hornet-Red Devil and First to the Finish invitationals.

Brennan finished a solid fifth overall and was her team's No. 4 finisher as the Red Devils defeated LT 18-37.

"It was a really good confidence builder because my first two races hadn't gone as I had hoped so it was really nice to have a step forward from where I had been," Brennan said.

Becca Marcotte and Camila Horowicz finished 1-2 in 18:35 on the 2.97 miles with Annie Zaher third in 18:44. Brennan (18:57) also broke 19:00 with Emma Sullivan seventh in 19:06.

"A great team effort. Camila and Sarah particularly ran good races," Hinsdale Central coach Mark McCabe said.

As it turned out, their teamwork brought out the best in each other.

"The plan of that race was to go with Camila, who starts out her races out a lot more conservatively," Brennan said. "As the race goes on, we pick it up. That was the first race this season where I stuck with her and didn't fall back."

The race also turned out to be interesting for Horowicz. The first-year team member is off to a great start, but she never had come close to winning a race until this one. With the Red Devils' dual victory in hand, Marcotte coasted and Horowicz soon joined her.

"It was very awesome being like, 'There's no one in front of me. I can be at the top of this race.' It's a good feeling," Horowicz said. "For the first two (miles), Emma and Sarah and I ended up running together. I did pick up the pace a little bit but more of it was because (Marcotte) slowed down because there was no competition."

One thing didn't go well for the Red Devils. Sophie May dropped out of the race for medical reasons as she had at the Hornet-Red Devil. McCabe said May is undergoing medical clearance to return to the lineup.

"We went in with a plan and followed it, even exceeded the plan," McCabe said. "Every dual meet we'll go in with a plan, a frame of reference. (We'll ask) what do we need to do to be at our best competitive level in this race? Everyone met or exceeded those levels in the varsity race."

The varsity wasn't alone. Hinsdale Central's junior varsity beat the Lions 25-30 while LT captured the frosh-soph race 23-37.

Sara Folliard (19:35) and Susan Spencer (20:00) finished 1-2 to pace the JV victory, more than 10 seconds ahead of LT's top finisher. Val Yager (20:29), back in the lineup, was fifth and Molly Leahy (20:44), Amanda Koronkiewicz (21:11) and Tillie Kummerer (21:14) were ninth through 11th.

"Year in and year out, LT is as good of a JV team as there is in the conference every year. For our JV to run like they did against them was very encouraging," McCabe said. "Certainly Sara and Susan were great at the front end, and Val coming back in her first race from being sick."

In the freshman race, the Red Devils finished 2-3 with Anna Yang (20:05) and Mackie Stevens (20:07), but LT took the next five places. Olivia Carter was ninth (21:04), and Molly Caveney (21:28) and Maddie Sullivan (21:48) were 11th and 12th.

Two days later, the same lineup won the frosh-soph in the Red Devils' first trip to the Minooka Invitational.

"We didn't step up (against LT) quite like we needed to. If we raced like we did Saturday, it would have been a whole different story," McCabe said. "It's just a matter of getting some consistency with those younger kids."