

Junior Lindsay Graham had yet another record-breaking run for the Glenbard West girls cross country team Thursday, Oct. 9, this time at Katherine Legge Memorial Park in Hinsdale.

"It's just a confidence booster to keep working hard," Graham said. "Nothing motivates me to work hard more than having it pay off."

The Hilltoppers' West Suburban Conference Silver Division record for dual meets, however, was the main topic of discussion afterwards.

The defending Class 3A state champions and top-rated Hilltoppers suffered their first Silver dual loss since 2011 as No. 2 Red Devils edged them 25-30 on their KLM home course. Both teams also defeated Lyons Township with Glenbard West winning 15-50.

While Graham won the 3.0-mile race in 16:35 – a record time on the second-season course by an impressive 17 seconds – the Red Devils had the next three finishers and four of the next five to prevail.

"It's frustrating. When I finished (in 7th), I felt like I ran a smart race and I felt good, but it's just that last (few meters), right there," Glenbard West junior Grace Rogers said.

"(Glenbard West coach Paul Hass) talked to us that we're a good team and we have time. We're just going to keep working hard and use this to motivate us for the rest of the season, conference and state."

Graham won by 27 seconds over Hinsdale Central sophomore Alexa Haff (17:02), second at the 2013 3A state meet.

Freshman Lindsey Payne (17:29) was fifth. Rogers (17:50), junior Kathryn Kenwood (17:57) and sophomore Janie Nabholz (18:01) were seventh through ninth, followed by juniors Abby Shaver (11th, 18:19) and Kate Dorsey (12th, 18:29) and senior Megan Ozog (18th, 19:03).

The Hilltoppers continue to compete without injured senior and two-time all-stater Lisa Luczak. Hinsdale Central runners also finished one second ahead of both Payne and Rogers.

The teams will meet against at the West Suburban Conference Silver Division Meet at 12:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 18, at East End Park in Elmhurst. The next meeting will be the 3A state meet Nov. 8 at Peoria's Detweiller Park.

"Hinsdale ran great today and you can't take anything away from them. They're a strong team, too. I think we are, too," Hass said.

"We just ran a little bit tired, but Hinsdale just ran great. They took it to us. We'll regroup and adjust our strength a little bit and go from there. It was the perfect storm. It was on their home course and they were waiting for us and we're one person down, but all of the credit goes to Hinsdale. They beat us per person and then some."

Nobody was going to catch Graham.

Graham and Haff were stride for stride with each other most of the way until Graham finished strong in the final 800 meters. But the victory still wasn't easy.

"That's when I started to pull away, but then I was getting nervous that it was a dumb mistake so I considered slowing back down and letting (Haff) catch up a little," Graham said. "I don't know. I guess I just decided to go for it, but I can tell you I was terrified the whole last couple of minutes.

"I think today the end wasn't really leg speed. It was that I was trying to stay tough mentally and all of my endurance work I've been doing to get more fit. That's why I was able to be faster at the end."

In the Sept. 6 season opener at KLM, the Hilltoppers won the Hornet-Red Devil Invite (36 points) with the Red Devils second (68). That day, Haff won in a then-record 16:52.79 with Graham second in 17:03.48, the first of three Hilltoppers to place in the top 10.

Graham not only finished undefeated in Silver duals this season. Thursday also marked the first time Graham finished ahead of Haff in the same cross country race, although Graham competed injured during the 2013 postseason yet still was an all-state 17th.

"I felt pretty good, but I didn't feel spectacular I would say. I don't like to compare to other people because people are people, but I'm glad I improved my time," Graham said.

"This is definitely nice because my past races I haven't felt very good or gotten good times. It's definitely good to have other great runners (in our conference), but I think even if they weren't there, I can motivate myself a lot."

The Hilltoppers certainly will be motivated at the Silver Meet. They have won or shared a program-best three straight overall Silver titles, including the last two outright.

Luczak has been a part of all three of those Silver Meet lineups. Graham, Rogers, Kenwood, Nabholz and Ozog were in last year's lineup.

The overall Silver title is based on a points system with one victory for each dual victory and one point for each team beaten at the Silver Meet. With a 5-1 dual record, the Hilltoppers still can secure at least a share of the overall title by winning the Silver Meet.

"Definitely it's doable and we have more time. We have a week (to train) and just keep working hard," Rogers said.

The 2011 Hilltoppers also came from behind for conference success. They won the Silver title on a sixth-runner tiebreaker to share the overall title with York after losing their dual 26-29 Oct. 6 – their last Silver dual loss prior to Thursday.

"We haven't lost conference. If we can beat (Hinsdale Central) at the conference meet, then we're right there, just like three years ago," Hass said. "It's certainly a

possibility. That's something we can certainly focus on. We're aware of that and we'll do our best to give our best effort at conference."

Frosh-soph race

Freshman Claire Kenwood and sophomore Jana Manalo made not only their Glenbard West girls cross country racing debuts Sept. 6 at Katherine Legge Memorial Park in the Hornet-Red Devil Invitational.

It was their first times ever competing in the sport.

They incredible progress showed when they returned to KLM Thursday, Oct. 9.

Kenwood won the 3.0-mile frosh-soph race by 35 seconds and Manalo was 11th. The Hilltoppers, however, lost to Lyons Township 22-38 and host Hinsdale Central 27-30 in West Suburban Conference Silver Division dual action.

"I stayed within striking distance of the people up there. I stayed within the front pack and then I just took off," said Kenwood (19:15 for 3.0 miles).

"Knowing the course (from Sept. 6) definitely helps because you know where you want to speed up, where you want to be careful. It really helped. I told myself to run my hardest because I knew what I was going to run. I just needed to focus on my pace."

Mary Kate Shaver, another freshman, was seventh (19:59) and broke 20:00 as the team's No. 2 finisher. Manalo (20:21) was followed by freshman Claire Dibadj (19th, 20:58), sophomores Grace Zemenak (29th, 21:39) and Rebekah Crail (30th, 21:42) and freshmen Brittany Ytterdahl (33rd, 22:06) and Jillian Locke (35th, 22:22).

Kenwood and Manalo didn't just run significantly faster than at the Hornet-Red Devil Invite. Their times were personal bests so far this season, even though KLM has more hills than most courses and is considered one of the tougher ones

around.

Kenwood was a team-best 14th for the frosh-soph at the invite in 20:09.48. She was nearly a minute faster Thursday.

“Those downhills (today) I felt I did pretty well,” Kenwood said. “That’s kind of what powered me through to the first-place position.”

Manalo improved significantly more from the invite – almost a full two minutes better than her 22:17.25 for 65th in the frosh-soph race.

“I felt pretty confident about it. I actually felt like I did really good than my other races, but I felt like this one was really good for me,” Manalo said.

“I felt like at the curves, those were the points I had struggled on because they were wide turns, but I should go harder this time, which I did. That’s why I felt this one was a little bit easier than my last one.”

Kenwood, the younger sister of 2013 state runner Kathryn Kenwood, is in her first season of cross country before primarily playing soccer.

Manalo played basketball and soccer growing up, but took a break from sports last fall. By her second high school meet, the Lake Park Invite Sept. 13, Manalo moved up to ninth in the Open girls race as the team’s No. 2 finisher.

“A lot of people have been telling me that I’m good at running and I felt like, ‘Why not? Try cross country and see if it works out for me,’ ” Manalo said. “I felt confident about (the Lake Park Invite) because that time was when I got my first medal. I felt like, ‘You know what? Cross country is my sport.’ ”

The Hilltoppers will compete at the Silver Meet at 12:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 18 at East End Park in Elmhurst.

The final overall standings are a combination of dual and Silver Meet results. The Hilltoppers finished fourth in duals with a 3-3 record with their other loss to York.

LT went 6-0 in duals with Hinsdale Central at 5-1.

There also is a freshman race at 10 a.m. Saturday that will be scored separately and does not affect the final frosh-soph standings.

In the Hilltoppers' three frosh-soph races, Kenwood went undefeated against the other Silver schools.

"I'll just do my best (at the Silver Meet)," Kenwood said.

Sophomore Jenna Kelly hopes to rejoin the lineup after sitting out to recover from shin splints. Sophomore Annie Pasterz, a consistent No. 2 finisher behind Kenwood, has been lost for the season with a severely sprained ankle.

Junior varsity race

Glenbard West junior Christina Sedall finished her 2013 girls cross country season unknowingly competing with stress fractures in her hips.

It's helped her to appreciate being able to race regularly this season relatively injury free.

"I think I have a new perspective on running, just with the team and everything," Sedall said. "I'm not so worried about myself individually. I'm really happy with how the team's doing."

On Thursday, Oct. 9, Sedall was among the top finishers for the junior varsity as the Hilltoppers lost to host Hinsdale Central 23-33 and Lyons Township 25-32 at Katherine Legge Memorial Park.

Junior Caitlyn Reick was fourth (19:10 for 3.0 miles), two seconds from third place. Junior Nicole Berneche (7th, 19:31) and senior Hannah Arduino (9th, 19:40) also finished among the top 10, followed by Sedall (12th, 19:50), junior Maddy Burt (20th, 20:41) and seniors Julia Sakach (20:52), Bridget Caffrey (20:52) and

Colleen Luczak (20:53) and juniors Nicole Rogus (20:57) and Esme Bonilla (21:00) in 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th and 31st.

The losses left the Hilltoppers 4-2 in Silver duals behind Hinsdale Central and LT, which both finished 5-1. They still can at least share the overall Silver title if they win the Silver Meet Saturday, Oct. 18, at East End Park in Elmhurst. Top-16 finishers earn all-conference honors.

"I've been barely getting under 20:00 so I'd like to stay under 20:00 and get top 15," Sedall said. "Honestly, I've been trying to take it meet by meet, just trying to get through each meet. It's funny that the season is almost coming to an end. I didn't even realize it."

Even competing hurt, Sedall was 16th at the 2013 sophomore Silver Meet. While overcoming her injuries, Sedall still is working on improving the iron level in her blood.

"I don't have pain anymore, but I've been iron deficient the past season and this season," Sedall said. "It's been a little hard just energy wise but otherwise I've been feeling pretty decent. I do feel tired. (But) it's in the direction of getting better."

-- by Bill Stone