

Senior Megan Ozog has been a key member of the Glenbard West girls cross country's varsity lineup ever since she was a freshman.

Her varsity contributions began in the second official weekend of the 2011 season at the Lake Park Invitational.

"It seems like whenever you need someone to step up, Megan is always there for you," Glenbard West coach Paul Hass said. "She's been doing it since she was a freshman. Lake Park was Megan's first varsity meet and we needed someone. Our upperclassmen didn't run very well and Megan Ozog was right there."

At her final Lake Park Invite Saturday, Sept. 13, Ozog was happy to contribute again. She was even happier that she and the varsity were only part of a great day for the entire program.

While the varsity rolled to the team title as junior Lindsay Graham defending her individual championship, the Junior varsity and open teams also won their races.

"It was really awesome to see every single level win. I don't know if that's ever really happened before so that was really exciting." Ozog said.

"It's fun to see everyone else do well. The varsity is always kind of doing pretty well so it's nice to see everyone else get to experience it, too. Everyone just puts in so much hard work because all of the workouts are the same. Varsity doesn't do separate workouts for frosh-soph or JV so everyone puts in the same amount of work and it's nice to see everyone get the same results this time. A lot of teams will be just good (on varsity). Their top seven is all they've got, but all of us, every level, we're so good because we work so hard and have such good training. It's nice to see it pay off for everyone."

Graham (16:49.5 for 3.0 miles) won the race by 17.5 seconds after capturing the 2013 crown in 17:08.4.

Senior Lisa Luczak (4th, 17:16.3), sophomore Janie Nabholz (17:46.6) and junior Kathryn Kenwood (17:49.4) followed in fourth through sixth. Junior Grace Rogers

(11th, 18:01.2) also earned a large medal for a top-15 finish. Ozog (18th, 18:23.5) and juniors Kate Dorsey (20th, 18:29.3) and Abby Shaver (27th, 18:38.4) received smaller medals for top-30 finishes.

The Hilltoppers (27 points), ranked No. 1 in Class 3A, won comfortably over Schaumburg (89), Hoffman Estates (94), St. Charles East (120) and Downers Grove North (132).

Glenbard West will return to the Lake Park course to begin its quest for another state championship at regionals Oct. 25 followed by the Niles West Sectional Nov. 1. Lake Park played host to the sectional in 2013.

"That was, by far, the best team race we've ever had because we won varsity, JV and then we won open," said Luczak, another fourth-year varsity standout and two-time all-stater.

"To just win all three and just completely sweep everything was, by far, the best we've ever done. It was, actually honestly, as exciting as winning state for me because it was everyone there. It was the younger girls. It was the older girls. Everyone tried so hard. Everyone did their best. There are so many (personal records) across the board. It was a great course, we really had some great competition and it was just a lot of fun."

Graham had a lot of fun defending her title. She went out perhaps harder than she wanted but needed to keep pace with an eager field.

Graham put herself among the leaders and then took command during the second mile.

"I went out pretty hard the first mile, but I didn't want to take the lead. Luckily the girls in the race went out super hard so I was able to stay behind them and get some wind blocked," Graham said.

"Then by the second mile, I started to move and then by the third mile I was really tired so I just tried my best. I knew my last mile I was actually really slowing down

so I just tried to push myself.”

There was a battle for second between Streamwood senior Gabby Juarez (17:07.0) and St. Charles North freshman Audrey Ernst (17:07.1).

Those times would have edged Graham’s winning time from 2013. That was a strong performance for Graham at that time, but she probably also would have run faster with the competition, considering she won that title by 19.4 seconds.

“(My 2013 race) was like a really big surprise,” Graham said. “I cut off a lot of time so I knew I needed to be under 17:00 at this meet so I was glad that I finally was. I guess it was equally sweet (to win again Saturday).”

Luczak was third in the 2013 race (17:33.5) but actually ran 17.2 seconds faster on Saturday. Freshman Lindsey Payne did not compete after finishing third overall at the season-opening Hornet-Red Devil Invitational Sept. 6.

-- by Bill Stone