

SPORTS

Sunday, October 11,
2009

OVAC Cal Pokas Cross Country Championships



T-L Photo/SETH STASKEY

ST. CLAIRSVILLE'S Alex Thornburg runs toward the finish line for the championship during Saturday's OVAC Cal Pokas Cross Country Championship.

Red Devils sweep again in Class 3-A

• Perzanowski, Thornburg lead way with individual titles

By **SETH STASKEY**
Times Leader Sports Editor

BYESVILLE — Not too long ago, the St. Clairsville Red Devils cross country teams came here hoping to fare well and possibly hoist the coveted OVAC Championship trophy in cross country.

Oh, how the times have changed.

Both the Red Devils boys and girls came to Meadowbrook High School Saturday morning as convincing favorites and two-time defending champions in the annual OVAC Cal Pokas Cross Country Championship.

And more room will need to be made in the ever-growing Red Devil trophy cases.

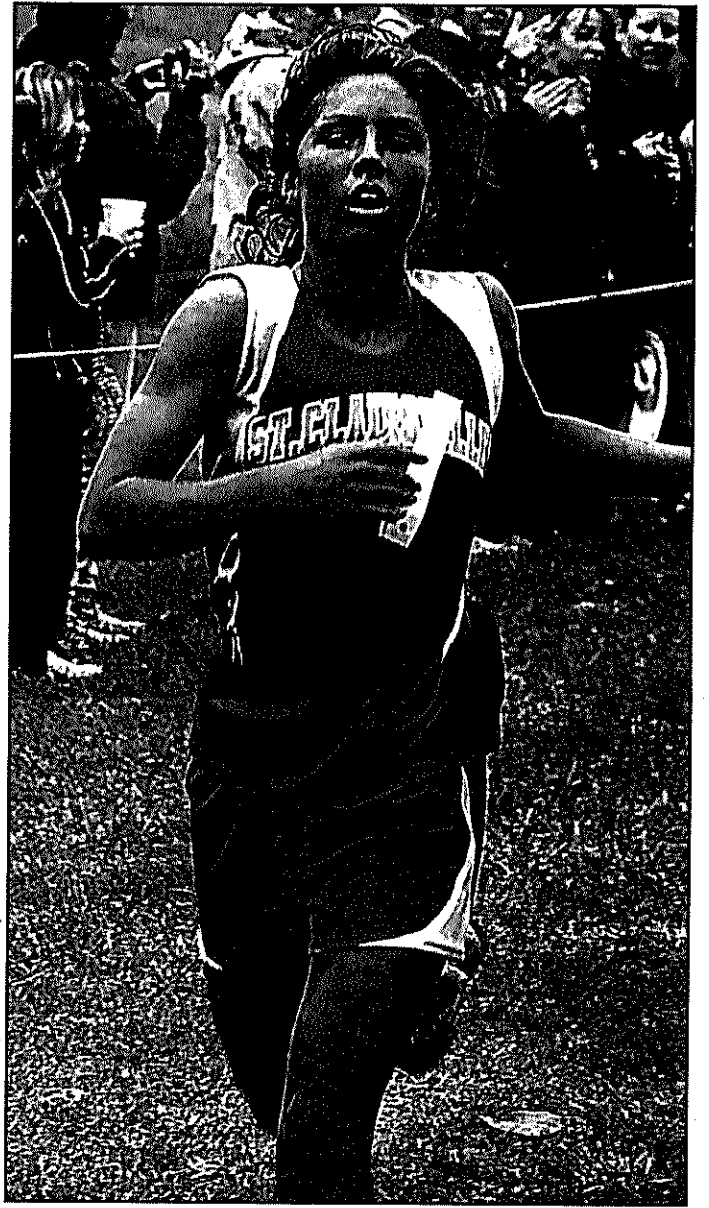
Coach Tony Ciroli's boys and Heidi Mooney's juggernaut girls squad ran away with their division titles, scoring 42 and 29 points, respectively.

The Red Devil boys — who are ranked sixth in the Ohio Division II state poll — won their seventh OVAC title and fourth consecutive by placing all five of their scorers inside the 30 of a meet, which featured 210 finishers.

"I think we ran well," Ciroli said. "We've been plagued the last couple of weeks with minor injuries and have been nurturing some kids, but today is one of the meets we aim for and we're getting ready to start our march westward (for the postseason)."

Leading the way for the Red Devils was senior standout Alex Thornburg who made

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T-L Photo/SETH STASKEY

ST. CLAIRSVILLE'S Kelly Perzanowski crosses the finish line with the championship during Saturday's OVAC Cal Pokas Cross Country Championship.

SJC boys run streak to seven

• Irish place five in top 15; Wheeling CC girls repeat

By **SETH STASKEY**
Times Leader Sports Editor

BYESVILLE — The St. John Central Fighting Irish firmly buy into the cliché that winning never gets old.

For the ninth time in school history and the seventh straight time, the Irish boys found themselves on top of the heap at the Cal Pokas OVAC Cross Country Championship held here Saturday morning at Meadowbrook High School.

And as in years' past, Coach Jeremy Midei's Irish not only prevailed, but they dominated.

St. John Central finished with a meet-low 42 points, which was 51 better than small-school division runner-up Barnesville.

Wheeling Central's girls were among a handful of favorites in the small-school race and Coach Heather Wayt's youthful Lady Knights escaped with their second straight championship and third in school history, posting 160 points. Barnesville again finished second with 211 tallies.

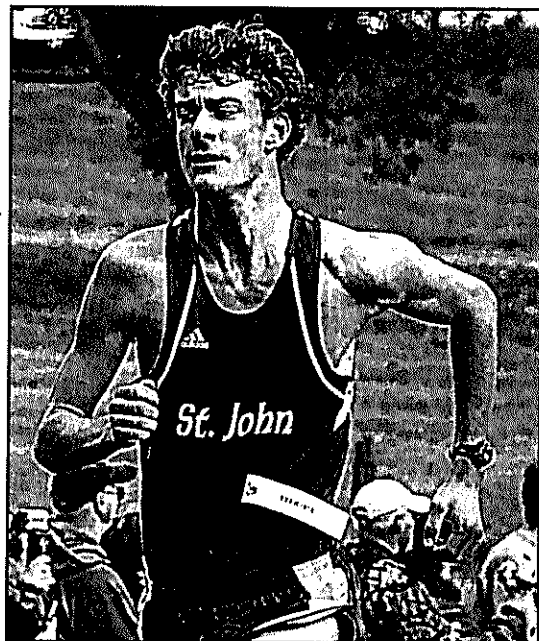
THE IRISH — who haven't raced much in the Ohio Valley — placed all five of their runners inside the meet's top 20, but Midei knows there's still

plenty of work to do if they hope to make another big splash in four weeks at the Division III state meet.

However, before total focus could shift to the state tournament, the Green came to Byesville and captured yet another overall title.

"It's always exciting to win another OVAC title," Midei said. "This is a meet we look forward to every year, and we're pretty excited with how we ran, but we were a little amped up for this race and that's my fault and

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ST. JOHN'S Matthew Moscato heads toward the finish line in the boys race at Saturday's OVAC Cal Pokas Cross Country Championship. Additional images may be found at cu.timesleaderonline.com

T-L Photo/SETH STASKEY

the most of his final OVAC Championship meet, lifting a proverbial monkey off his back and getting into the winner's circle for the first time in his career.

"I am speechless," an elated Thornburg said moments after the race. "I just had to gut it out and make a move late in the race, but this (championship) is something I've wanted since I've been running."

Thornburg - who ran a time of 16:11 - found himself in a pack of three or four runners for the better part of 2.5 miles of the race, but over the course of the final half mile or so, the Red Devils senior "found another gear" and took off, separating from the pack.

"The pace really picked up after the two-mile mark," Thornburg continued. "The whole last mile was fast and it was a battle. We changed leads several times and it was just a great race."

The individual champion was the first under Cirol's guidance.

"I got goose bumps thinking about it," Cirol said. "We've kind of called it a curse, because it's haunted us everywhere we went no matter if it was track or cross country. We just couldn't seem to attain the champion status, but watching (Alex) run today and be up in the mix was a real pleasure. When he crossed the line, I don't know who was more happy me, him or his parents, but he told me in the chute, he got the curse removed."

The second Red Devils' runner to cross the line was sophomore Andy Thornburg who posted a time of 16:45 for the seventh place overall and second in 3-A.

Senior Shane Scheuer posted a 16:51 to finish 10th overall and third for the Red Devils. Junior ace Nick Pokas - who's grandfather is Cal, for whom the race is named, put forth one of his best efforts of the campaign, finishing 12th overall in 17:06.

The final scoring member of the Red Devils was Cole Antolak who finished 26th overall in a time of 17:48.

While the Red Devils are excited with their finish and yet another ticket to the OVAC Banquet of Champions in May, Cirol knows there's still plenty of work to do before the district, which is just a little under two weeks away.

"When you win your division in the OVAC, when you've got a good score like we did today and you've been going and competing well against other teams, you can't complain too much," Cirol said. "We're doing well, but we know the battles ahead and we're going to need our fourth, fifth and sixth runners to move up some. If we can get that done, I think we're going to have a really good shot of having a good showing in the weeks to come."

THE LADY Red Devils have been running roughshod through nearly all of their competition all season regardless of the

meet and location.

Coach Heidi Mooney's juggernaut was up to its same old tricks Saturday, placing four runners in the top five and its fifth in the top 20 for an astounding team total of 29 points.

"The girls ran awesome and the feeling of winning this meet never gets old," Mooney smiled. "We're pretty fortunate with the team we have that's for sure, but we've got to stay focused and I'm on pins and needles each week about injuries and things, so it's kind of bittersweet, but we really have been running well."

The Lady Red Devils - ranked third in the latest Ohio coaches poll and garnering two first-place votes in the process - were once again led by senior standout Kelly Perzanowski, who's making the most of her final prep cross-country season.

After not competing in the OVAC meet a year ago and chasing the likes of her older sister Natalie and Barnesville's Stephanie Morgan the previous two seasons, Perzanowski etched her name into the OVAC lore.

"This really feels good to win, but I am so excited about what our team accomplished because we all ran really well," the modest Perzanowski said. "We're looking forward to the state tournament the next couple of weeks and putting four runners in the top five is a great accomplishment and something we're really proud of."

Perzanowski - who's been beaten by just three individuals all season - spent a little more than the first mile chasing Harrison Central's Ericka Skinner, but raced past her and eventually posted a 18:39 for the title.

"The mile time was slow," Perzanowski said. "I wasn't too worried about it because I knew I just had to run my race. Ericka and I really worked together out there a little bit and picked it up, but I am happy with my times."

Like Cirol with Thornburg, Perzanowski is the first individual victor in the Mooney era at St. C.

"For lack of a better term, Kelly is an animal," Mooney said. "She works very, very hard and she's got that fighter spirit in her. She's very focused and determined and has earned everything she gets."

Senior Kate Hodgson continued her brilliant campaign with a bronze medal performance. She posted a solid time of 19:14 to finish third overall and in her class.

Junior Jamie Perzanowski - younger sister of Kelly - was right on Hodgson's heels, finishing fourth in 19:21. Freshman phenom Amy Castle - younger sister of legendary Barnesville runner Jennie Castle - was once again brilliant, posting a time of 19:50, which was good enough for fifth place.

Frosh Juliana Madzia continues her solid first campaign in varsity running, finishing 17th overall in 20:47.

● SJC

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I don't think our plan did anyone too many favors."

The Irish's plan was more focused toward the overall title and keeping its streak alive in that department.

"We knew St. Clairsville was a very good team and knew they had four guys who were going to be up in there," Midei said. "We had to combat that as best we could, so I think we were a little too amped up and it hurt us somewhat, but we've got a lot of work to do before we get to the state meet."

The Irish were led by their senior duo of Luke Holubeck and Matthew Moscato. Both were major contributors on the Irish's state championship team from a year ago.

Holubeck found himself in a logjam for 2.5 miles of the race for the individual

title, but he settled for a third-place finish in a time of 16:24. Moscato was just a place behind, posting a solid time of 16:33.

Senior Ian Gulley continues his mid-season surge, posting a 16:49 to finish third on his team and eighth overall.

Junior Matt Riffle and sophomore Ramon Nieves finished 13th and 14th overall in times of 17:07 and 17:20, respectively.

"This maybe the first time all year where we had all five guys run well,"

Midei said of his team, which is ranked sixth in the Division III state poll. "I thought we might have went out a little fast, but I thought the guys did a nice job of checking down, realizing it and making enough adjustments for us to do what we had to do to win."

Wheeling Park sweeps 4-A cross country

By SETH STASKEY
Times Leader Sports Editor

BYESVILLE - Coming here Saturday morning, Michael Jebbia thought his Wheeling Park Patriots may have enough to get it done once again.

While lacking a lot of experience, his Patriot boys and girls always seem to rise to the occasion during the annual OVAC Cal Pokas Cross Country Championship at Meadowbrook High School.

This year was no different for the recently announced West Virginia state cross country coach of the year.

The Lady Patriots finished third overall and 110 points ahead of Buckeye Local for the championship.

The boys, meanwhile, finished with 166 points, but it was low enough to take 4-A, finishing 59 points ahead of East Liverpool.

"Our kids always seem to run well here," Jebbia said. "This is a meet we take very seriously and it's one that's very important for the kids, and again this year they stepped up."

THE LADY PATRIOTS' title is their seventh straight and 10th overall, which moves them into a tie with John Marshall for the most CC titles in conference history.

"Our top seven all ran their best times of the season," Jebbia said. "Our front three were super today and that's the kind of effort we needed."

While the Lady Patriots have definitely missed the graduate Courtney Yaeger who's now competing at the University of Illinois, Park's girls have improved as a whole.

"Our girls have all improved so much from last year," Jebbia continued. "We've got four freshman on the team, who've been working very hard. They were all packed up in there."

The Lady Patriots had their top seven runners within 22 spots of each other.

Sophomore Lauren

Tarovsky led the way for the Patriots with a 21st place finish in a time of 21:03. Frosh Elena Romanek was 23rd overall and second for the Park in a time of 21:14.

Sophomore Madison Morris finished 30th in a time of 21:22. Audrey Biega was 35th overall and fourth for the winners in a time of 21:48. Samantha Dodd rounded out the scoring. The freshman was 38th in a time of 21:53.

"That form of running can work in a lot of cross country races," Jebbia said. "This is a really nice confidence builder and boost going into our regional."

THE PATRIOT boys were led by two-time all-stater and two-time all-OVAC performer Logan Wojcik as normal, but it was the rest of the squad that was needed to hold off the aforementioned Potters.

"We know what we're going to get from Logan, but basically all of the other guys are new for the most part," Jebbia said. "With having such an inexperienced team, we thought it would be a little tougher."

However, the scoring five were all members of the team, but just couldn't crack the varsity lineup, so they got a taste of the success, which included a second straight West Virginia AAA title.

"Logan and Greg (Mulley) were around and the success we had has helped them and these other guys have tasted it too," Jebbia said.

"I think those factors helped us as well and like the girls this really gives us a nice boost heading into the regional."

Wojcik finished sixth overall in a time of 16:44 to lead the way. Sophomore Brandon Robinson was the second Pat and 33rd overall finisher to cross the line, posting a time of 17:58.

Junior Lucas Runyan was 38th overall in a time of 18:08 and classmate Cody Patterson was 47th in 18:35. The aforementioned Mulley was the fifth runner, finishing 53rd in 18:41.

OVAC CC

GIRLS

Overall
TEAM SCORES: St. Clairsville, 29; Harrison Central, 134; Wheeling Park, 139; Wheeling Central, 160; Barnesville, 211; Shadyside, 214; Martins Ferry, 223; Caldwell, 229; Fort Frye, 241; Buckeye Local, 249; East Liverpool, 287; Cambridge, 310; St. John, 313; Indian Creek, 316; John Marshall, 336; Meadowbrook, 371; Bellaire, 391; Union Local, 393; Brooke, 421; Bishop Donahue, 545; Linsly, 557; Tyler Consolidated, 612.

Top 20 (All-OVAC)
1. Kelly Perzanowski (St. C.), 18:39; 2. Ericka Skinner (HC), 18:49; 3. Kate Hodgson (St. C.), 19:14; 4. Jamie Perzanowski (St. C.), 19:21; 5. Amy Castle (St. C.), 19:50; 6. Sarah Biehl (FF), 19:56; 7. Maggie McIlvain (EL), 20:00; 8. Sarah Kosky (SJC), 20:09; 9. Sarah Kaufman (Zanes), 20:18; 10. Lauren Yoho (HC), 20:21; 11. Chelsea Furda (KC), 20:23; 12. Kylie Stewart (MF), 20:31; 13. Karyl Jones (Barnes), 20:34; 14. Brianna Robbins (WC), 20:46; 15. Mindy Snyder (HC), 20:47; 16. Emily Bucon (WC), 20:47; 17. Juliana Madzla (St. C.), 20:47; 18. Tara Toltett (Shady), 20:59; 19. Jesse John (WC), 21:01; 20. Lea Figurski (BL), 21:02.

Class 4-A
TEAM SCORES: Wheeling Park, 139; Buckeye Local, 249; East Liverpool, 287; Cambridge, 310; Indian Creek, 316; Brooke, 421.

Top 10
1. Maggie McIlvain (EL), 20:00; 2. Sarah Kaufman (Zanes), 20:18; 3. Chelsea Furda (KC), 20:23; 4. Leah Figurski (BL), 21:02; 5. Lauren Tarovsky (WP), 21:03; 6. Elena Romanek (WP), 21:14; 7. Carrie West (JM), 21:22; 8. Madison Morris (WP), 21:22; 9. Alyssa Glesey (Camb), 21:27; 10. Audrey Biega (WP), 21:48.

Class 3-A
TEAM SCORES: St. Clairsville, 29; Harrison Central, 134; Martins Ferry, 223; Meadowbrook, 371; Bellaire, 391; Union Local, 393; Tyler Consolidated, 612.

Top 10
1. Kelly Perzanowski (St. C.), 18:39; 2. Ericka Skinner (HC), 18:49; 3. Kate Hodgson (St. C.), 19:14; 4. Jamie Perzanowski (St. C.), 19:21; 5. Amy Castle (St. C.), 19:50; 6. Lauren Yoho (HC), 20:21; 7. Kylie Stewart (MF), 20:31; 8. Mindy Snyder (HC), 20:47; 9. Juliana Madzla (St. C.), 20:47; 10. Melanie Hannan (St. C.), 21:16.

Class 1-A/2-A
TEAM SCORES: Wheeling Central, 160; Barnesville, 211; Shadyside, 214; Caldwell, 229; Fort Frye, 241; St. John, 313; Bishop Donahue, 545; Linsly, 557.

Top 10
1. Sarah Biehl (FF), 19:56; 2. Sarah Kosky (SJC), 20:09; 3. Karyl Jones (Barnes), 20:34; 4. Brianna Robbins (WC), 20:46; 5. Emily Bucon (WC), 20:47; 6. Tara Toltett (Shady), 20:59; 7. Jesse John (WC), 21:01; 8. Brooke McIntel (Shady), 21:11; 9. Laken Ramsey (Riv), 21:19; 10. Lindy Stauffer (SJC), 21:20.

BOYS

Overall
TEAM SCORES: St. John, 42; St. Clairsville, 65; Barnesville, 103; Caldwell, 148; Magnolia, 161; Wheeling Park, 166; Fort Frye, 214; East Liverpool, 225; Wheeling Central, 272; John Marshall, 315; Bellaire, 334; Union Local, 356; Buckeye Local, 360; Harrison Central, 387; Cameron, 419; Linsly, 432; Brooke, 432; Cambridge, 442; Meadowbrook, 458; Indian Creek, 507; Zanesville, 544; Bishop Donahue, 643.

Top 20 (All OVAC)
1. Alex Thornburg (St. C.), 16:11; 2. Jeremy Anderson (FF), 16:19; 3. Luke Holubeck (SJC), 16:24; 4. Matthew Moscato (SJC), 16:33; 5. Brennan Delaney (Barnes), 16:40; 6. Logan Wojcik (WP), 16:44; 7. Andy Thornburg (St. C.), 16:45; 8. Ian Guley (SJC), 16:49; 9. Brandon Saling (Cald), 16:50; 10. Shane Scheuer (St. C.), 16:51; 11. Wesley Lewis (Barnes), 17:02; 12. Nick Pokas (St. C.), 17:06; 13. Matt Riffe (SJC), 17:07; 14. Ramon Nieves (SJC), 17:20; 15. Hunter Ankrum (JM), 17:21; 16. Josh Fitch (UL), 17:24; 17. Brandon Stephens (Barnes), 17:25; 18. Nathan Harshberger (Mag), 17:36; 19. Jacob Boyer (EL), 17:37; 20. Joe Feeney (Mag), 17:38.

Class 4-A
TEAM SCORES: Wheeling Park, 166; East Liverpool, 225; John Marshall, 315; Buckeye Local, 360; Brooke, 432; Cambridge, 442; Indian Creek, 507; Zanesville, 544.

Top 10
1. Logan Wojcik (WP), 16:44; 2. Hunter Ankrum (JM), 17:21; 3. Jacob Boyer (EL), 17:37; 4. Cody Wiswa (BL), 17:56; 5. Brandon Robinson (WP), 17:58; 6. Lucas Runyan (WP), 18:06; 7. Cory Lelsure (BL), 18:13; 8. Tim Densmore (EL), 18:30; 9. Ryan Hall (Zanes), 18:34; 10. Cody Patterson (WP), 18:35.

Class 3-A
TEAM SCORES: St. Clairsville, 55; Magnolia, 161; Bellaire, 334; Union Local, 356; Harrison Central, 387; Meadowbrook, 459.

Top 10
1. Alex Thornburg (St. C.), 16:11; 2. Andy Thornburg (St. C.), 16:45; 3. Shane Scheuer (St. C.), 16:51; 4. Nick Pokas (St. C.), 17:06; 5. Josh Fitch (UL), 17:24; 6. Nathan Harshberger (Mag), 17:36; 7. Joe Feeney (Mag), 17:38; 8. Sebastian Cruz (HC), 17:42; 9. Alec Hineman (Mag), 17:45; 10. Aaron Estep (Tyler), 17:48.

Class 1-A/2-A
TEAM SCORES: St. John, 42; Barnesville, 103; Caldwell, 148; Fort Frye, 214; Wheeling Central, 272; Cameron, 419; Linsly, 432; Bishop Donahue, 643.

Top 10
1. Jeremy Anderson (FF), 16:19; 2. Luke Holubeck (SJC), 16:24; 3. Matthew Moscato (SJC), 16:33; 4. Brennan Delaney (Barnes), 16:40; 5. Ian Guley (SJC), 16:49; 6. Brandon Saling (Cald), 16:50; 7. Wesley Lewis (Barnes), 17:02; 8. Matt Riffe (SJC), 17:07; 9. Ramon Nieves (SJC), 17:20; 10. Brandon Stephens (Barnes), 17:25.

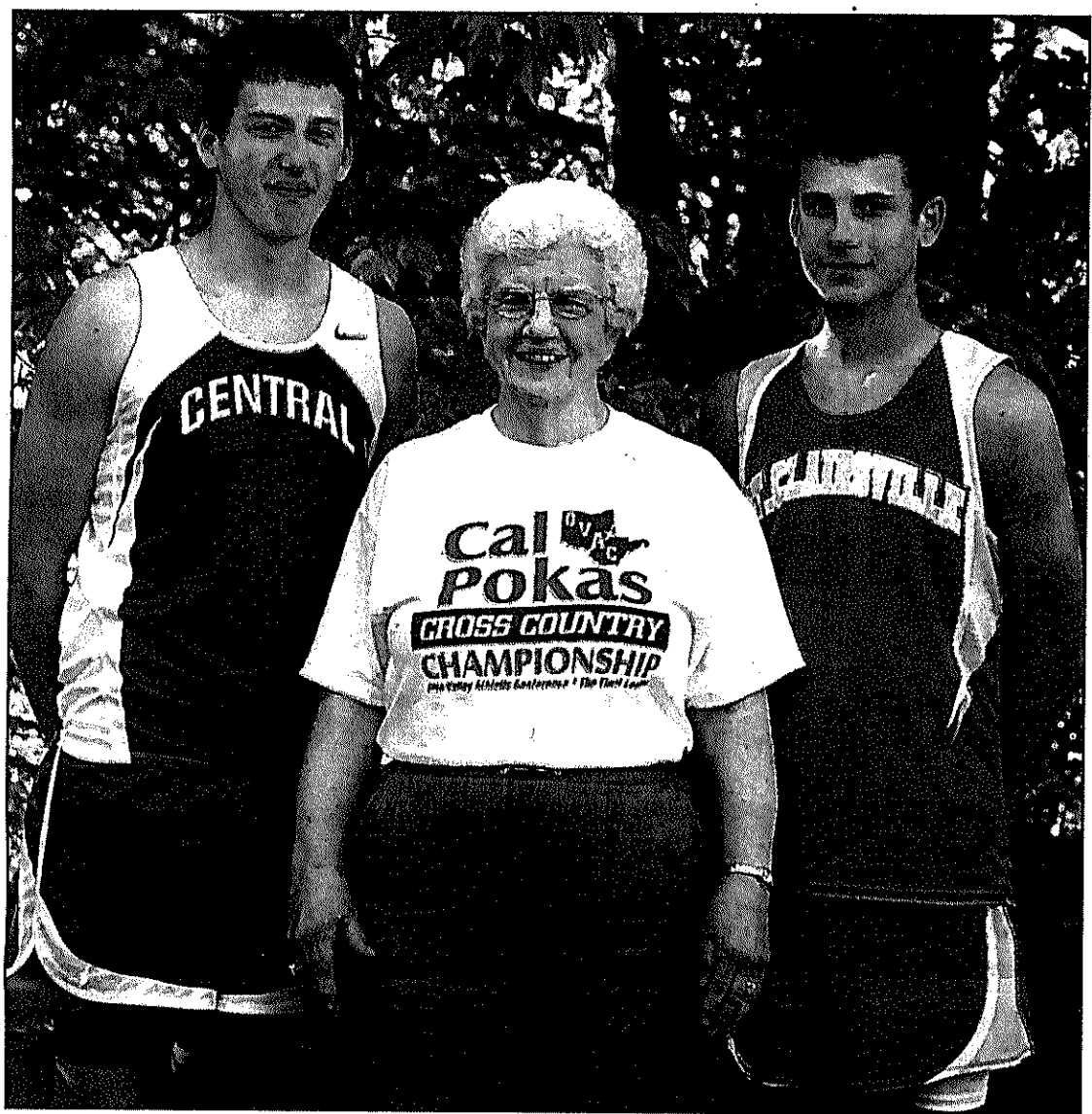
JUNIOR HIGH

Girls
TEAM SCORES: Bellaire, 52; Union Local, 75; St. Clairsville, 76; Martins Ferry, 84; Sherrard, 106; Harrison Central, 169; Moundsville, 172; Cameron, 183; Shadyside, 212.
Top 10
1. Danielle Stoner (Bell), 13:00; 2. Jenna Furr (Cald), 13:08; 3. Manda Robey (MF), 13:17; 4. Michaela Miller (St. C.), 13:20; 5. Jamie Truchan (MF), 13:26; 6. Hannah Pagano (UL), 13:27; 7. Morgan Vucelik (Shar), 13:29; 8. Fallon Doyle (SJC), 13:36; 9. Hayley Miller (Bell), 13:41; 10. Cori Medley (UL), 13:45.

Boys

TEAM SCORES: Not Supplied
Top 10
1. Reynolds, Dylan, Tyler Consol, 11:29.67; 2. Elbert, Aaron, St. Clairsvi, 11:37.55; 3. Hayes, Calab, Union Local, 11:54.47; 4. Conner, Michael, Sherrard, 11:59.31; 5. Holubeck, Garrett, St. Clairsvi, 12:00.05; 6. Causby, Jamel, Union Local, 12:11.42; 7. Cheeseman, Matthew, Fort Frye, 12:14.69; 8. Harding, Tanner, Caldwell, 12:16.06; 9. Baker, Chris, St. Clairsvi, 12:29.63; 10. Keller, Greg, Moundsville, 12:40.65.





T-L Photo/SETH STASKEY

BETTY POKAS is flanked by her two grandsons, Jacob Mayles (left) and Nick Pokas (right) who are going to be competing in Saturday's Cal Pokas OVAC Cross Country Championship. Mayles is a sophomore at Wheeling Central and Pokas is a junior at St. Clairsville

OVAC CC Championship runs deep in Pokas family

• Two participants set to run in race named for their grandfather

By SETH STASKEY
Times Leader Sports Editor

The Ohio Valley Athletic Conference championship means a lot to a lot of people.

This Saturday's Cal Pokas OVAC Cross Country Championship takes on additional meaning for St. Clairsville junior Nick Pokas and Wheeling Central sophomore Jacob Mayles.

The annual meet — which

will be held at Meadowbrook High School Saturday morning — was named in their late grandfather's honor in 2005.

The Red Devils are one of the pre-meet favorites in Class 3-A, so that along with the aforementioned obvious motivation makes this week even more important for Pokas.

"The OVAC is a great race anyway, but it being named after my grandfather just adds to it and makes you want to go out there

even harder," Pokas said. "Plus our team is doing really well this year so if we were able to win the title, it would be an even greater thing just for my grandpa."

Pokas was a member of the Red Devils' winning team a year ago as the fifth runner and this year he's running as the Red Devils' fourth man during most meets.

Despite how much he tries to put it out of his mind and focus on the OVAC as just another meet, the thoughts of his grand-

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● Pokas

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father and the legacy he left behind in the world of cross country still trickle in.

"It goes through my mind before the race, but when I am on the course and racing, I just try to treat it like any other race," Pokas explained. "I try not to get too hyped up before a race. I just want to go out there and run the race and not think about anything except running."

Seeing that the Red Devils have won the last three Class 3-A team crowns, additional motivation isn't really necessary, but Pokas — who is the son of Dr. John and Jane Pokas — knows his teammates dig a little deeper this week.

"My teammates go all-out anyway since it's the OVAC," Pokas noted. "If our team's all there and we run well, we should be fine, but we won't be too confident."

While Pokas is a veteran of the OVAC meet, this will mark Mayles' first time in the field. Earlier in the week, he received the news that he'd be running on the varsity squad.

"I am really excited about the chance to run in the meet," Mayles said. "When I step up to the line, I probably won't be thinking about (the race) being named for my grandpa, but just running well."

Not that Mayles needed any additional motivation, it appears this will be his final race of the season as West Virginia schools begin regional competition and he's not expecting to run.

"I just want to push myself and leave it all out there plus I want to do well for my grandma," Mayles said. "The season's been going pretty well. I usually run jayvee and I've been hurt some this year, so I would like to run around 21 minutes."

This is Mayles' first season in cross country. He came out to help himself get into better shape for basketball and also tennis in which he excelled last spring.

While Pokas' teammates obviously realize the connection by his last name, the same isn't exactly true for Mayles' teammates. Mayle's mother is the former Judy Pokas, who is married Duane "Doe" Mayles of Wheeling.

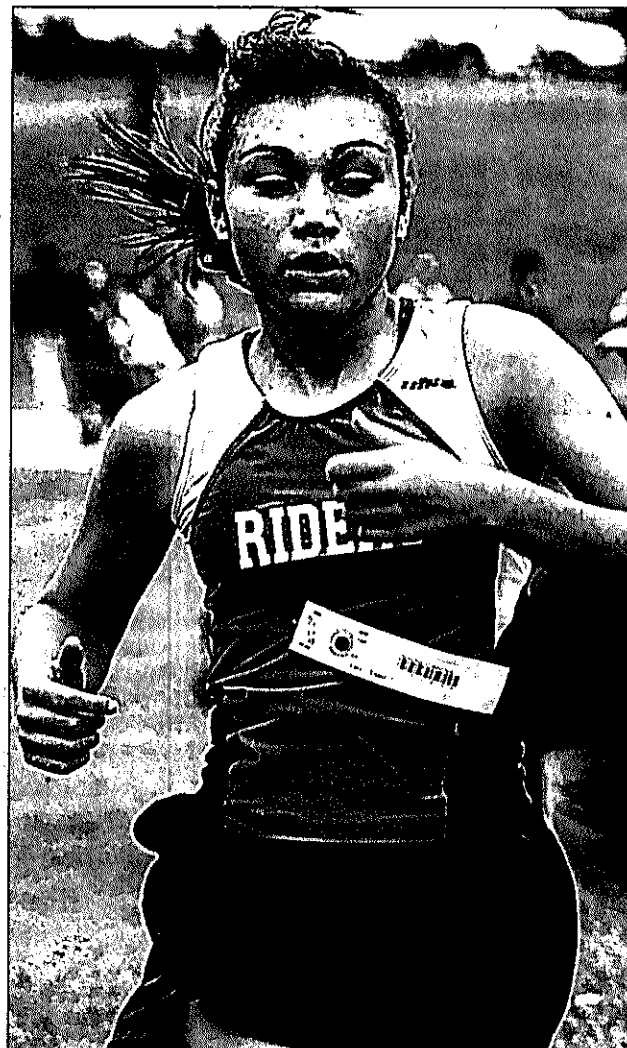
"I think I might have told one or two of my teammates before that the meet was named for my grandpa, but for the most part I don't think many of them realize it," Mayles said.

While both Pokas and Mayles are preparing for the race like it's any normal event, their grandmother, Betty, knows that their grandfather will be looking down and smiling come Saturday morning.

"Cal always enjoyed going to cross country meets, and this one would have been extra special to him," Betty said. "Although he covered hundreds and hundreds of teenagers' achievements in some 40 years of writing sports, he never lived to see his four grandchildren, also including Olivia and Alex Pokas, participate in high school sports."

Pokas' contributions to cross country were first recognized with the Cal Pokas Memorial Cross Country Classic, which was sponsored by The Times Leader. However, in September of 2005, that meet ended and the OVAC added Pokas' name to its championship.

The Times Leader's coverage of the Cal Pokas OVAC Cross Country Championship will continue in Friday's edition with the complete race preview and then on Sunday with complete coverage and reaction from the event.



TOP LEFT: John Pokas and Judy (Pokas) Mayles watch their children compete for St. Clairsville and Wheeling Central, respectively. The OVAC Cross Country Championship is named for their late father, Cal.

TOP RIGHT: Martins Ferry's top runner during Saturday's OVAC Cross Country meet was Kylie Stewart.

AT LEFT: St. Clairsville senior Kate Hodgson runs during the OVAC meet. She finished third overall.

RIGHT: OVAC Executive Secretary Tom Ratalczak watches the action during Saturday morning's race.

MIDDLE LEFT: The lead pack of boys runs during the Cal Pokas OVAC Cross Country Championship. From left are Luke Holubeck (St. John), Jeremy Anderson (Fort Frye) and Brennan Delaney (Barnesville).

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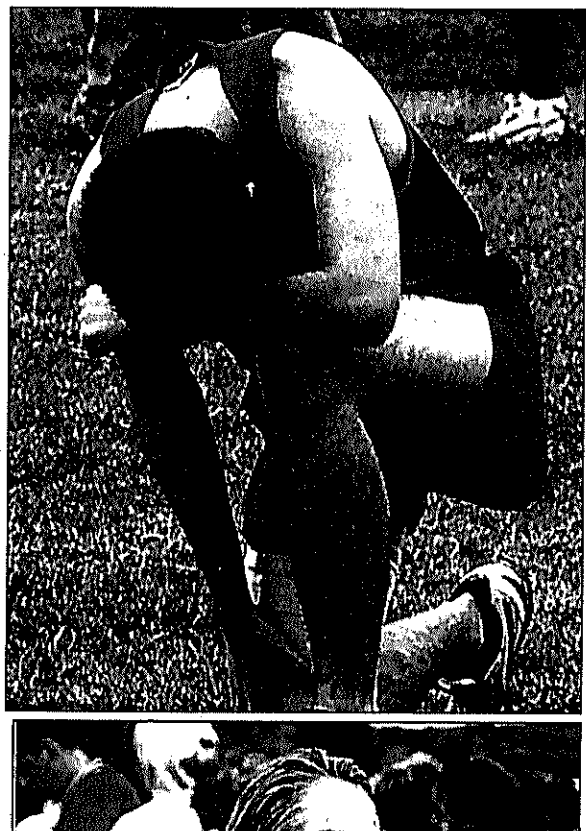
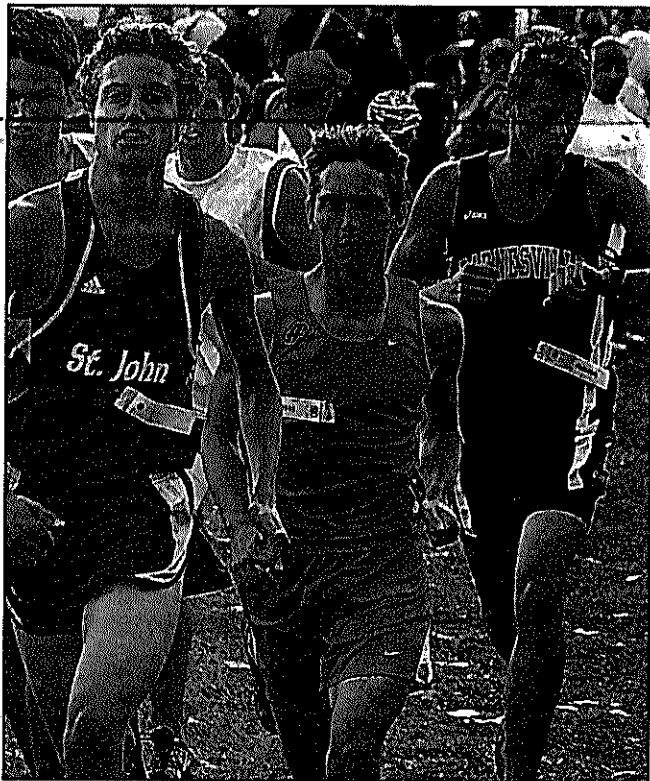
BOTTOM LEFT: St. John Central's Sarah Kosky heads toward the finish line with a second-place finish in the Class A/AA race.

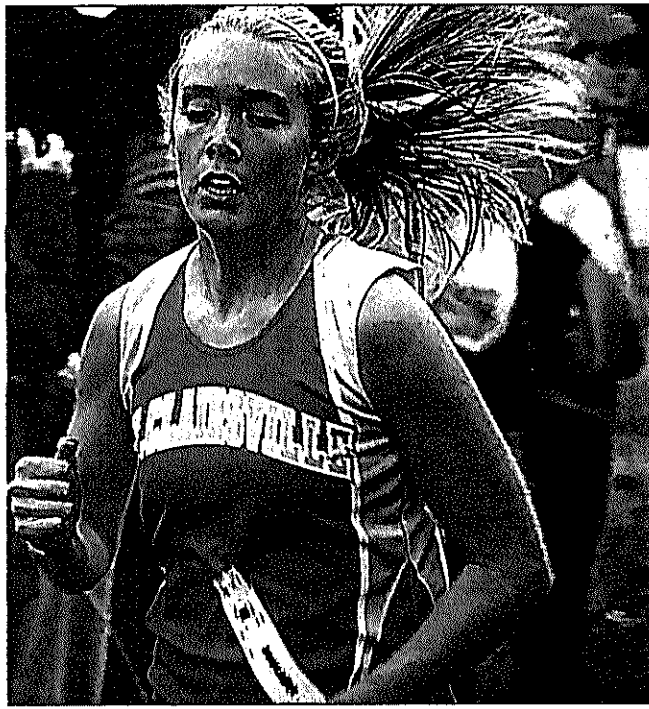
BELOW: Harrison Central's Ericka Skinner runs during the first mile of Saturday's OVAC Cal Pokas Cross Country meet.

LOWER RIGHT: Bellaire junior Ian McConville says a prayer before he embarked on the OVAC Cal Pokas Cross Country Championship.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Shadyside's Brooke Meintel crosses the finish line in 22nd place at the Cal Pokas OVAC Cross Country Championship held Saturday morning at Meadowbrook High School in Byesville.

T-L Photos / SETH STASKEY





TOP LEFT: John Pokas and Judy (Pokas) Mayles watch their children compete for St. Clairsville and Wheeling Central, respectively. The OVAC Cross Country Championship is named for their late father, Cal.

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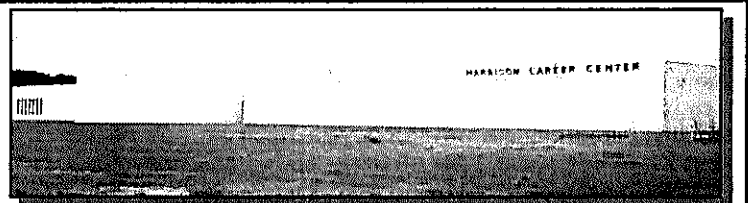
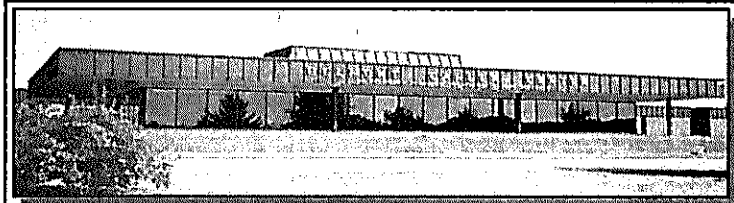
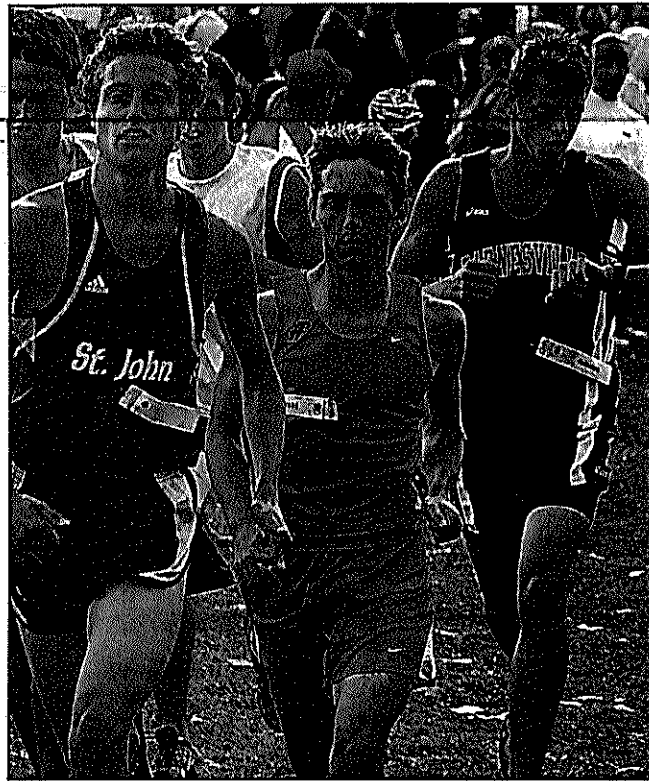
BOTTOM LEFT: St. John Central's Sarah Kosky heads toward the finish line with a second-place finish in the Class A/AA race.

BELOW: Harrison Central's Ericka Skinner runs during the first mile of Saturday's OVAC Cal Pokas Cross Country meet.

LOWER RIGHT: Bellaire junior Ian McConville says a prayer before he embarked on the OVAC Cal Pokas Cross Country Championship.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Shadyside's Brooke Meintel crosses the finish line in 22nd place at the Cal Pokas OVAC Cross Country Championship held Saturday morning at Meadowbrook High School in Byesville.

T-L Photos / SETH STASKEY



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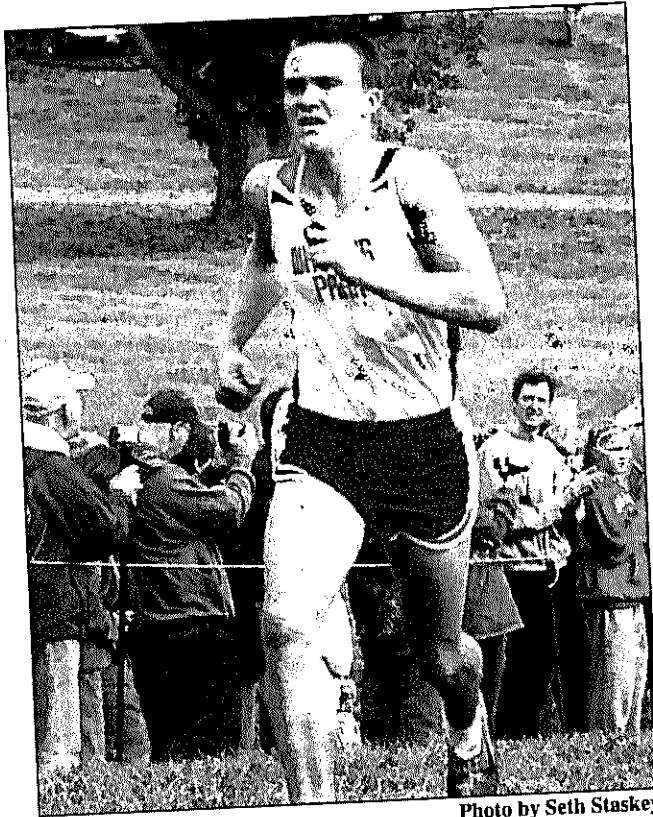


Photo by Seth Staskey

Wheeling Park's Logan Wojcik finishes in 16:44 to win the OVAC Class AAAA Cross Country championship in Byesville.

Park Boys, Girls Sweep Class 4-A

St. John boys,
St. C. girls win
overall titles

By **SETH STASKEY**
For the News-Register
BYESVILLE

Michael Jebbia thought his Wheeling Park Patriots may have enough to get it done again.

While lacking a lot of experience, his Patriots boys and girls always seem to rise to the occasion during the annual OVAC Cal Pokas Cross Country Championship at Meadowbrook High School.

This year was no different for the recently announced West Virginia State Cross Country Coach of the Year.

The Lady Patriots finished third overall and 110 points ahead of Buckeye Local for the championship. The boys, meanwhile, finished with 166 points, but it was low enough to take AAAA, finishing 59 points ahead of East Liverpool.

"Our kids always seem to run well here," Jebbia said. "This is a meet we take very seriously and it's one that's very important

for the kids, and again this year they stepped up."

For the Lady Patriots, this title is their seventh straight and 10th overall, which moves them into a tie with John Marshall for the most cross country titles in conference history.

"Our top seven all ran their best times of the season," Jebbia said. "Our front three were super and that's the kind of effort we needed."

While the Lady Patriots have definitely missed the graduated Courtney Yaeger, who's now competing at the University of Illinois, Park's girls have improved as a whole.

"Our girls have all improved so much from last year," Jebbia continued. "We've got four freshman on the team, who've been working very hard. They were all packed up in there."

The Lady Patriots had their top seven runners within 22 spots of each other.

Sophomore Lauren Tarovisky led the way with a 21st-place finish in a time of 21:03. Freshman Elena Romanek was 23rd overall and second for Wheeling Park in a time of 21:14.

See, Park, Page B2

PARK

Continued from page B1

Sophomore Madison Morris finished 30th in a time of 21:22. Audrey Biega was 35th overall and fourth for the winners in a time of 21:48. Samantha Dodd rounded out the scoring. The freshman was 38th in a time of 21:53.

"That form of running can work in a lot of cross country races," Jebbia said. "This is a really nice confidence builder and boost going into our regional."

The Patriots boys were led by two-time all-stater and two-time all-OVAC performer Logan Wojcik as normal, but it was the rest of the squad that was needed to hold off the aforementioned Potters.

"We know what we're going to get from Logan, but basically all of the other guys are new for the most part," Jebbia said. "With having such an inexperienced team, we thought it would be a little tougher."

However, the scoring five were all members of the team, but just couldn't crack the varsity lineup, so they got a taste of the success, which included a second straight West Virginia AAA title.

"Logan and Greg (Mulley) were around and the success we had has helped them and these other guys have tasted it too," Jebbia said. "I think those factors helped us as well and like the girls this really gives us a nice boost heading into the regional."

Wojcik finished sixth overall in a time of 16:44 to lead the way. Sophomore Brandon Robinson was the second Patriot and 33rd overall finisher to cross the line, posting a time of 17:58.

Junior Lucas Runyan was 38th overall in a time of 18:08 and classmate Cody Patterson was 47th in 18:35. The aforementioned Mulley was the fifth runner, finishing 53rd in 18:41.

Class AAA

Not too long ago, the St. Clairsville Red Devils cross country teams came to Byesville hoping to fare well and possibly hoist the coveted OVAC Championship trophy in cross country.

Oh, how the times have changed.

Both the Red Devils boys and girls came in as convincing favorites and two-time defending champions.

And more room will need to be made in the ever-growing Red Devil trophy cases.

Coach Tony Ciroli's boys and Heidi Mooney's juggernaut girls squad ran away with their division titles, scoring 42 and 29 points, respectively.

The Red Devil boys — who are ranked sixth in the Ohio Division II state poll — won their seventh OVAC title and fourth consecutive by placing all five of their scorers inside the 30 of a meet, which featured 210 finishers.

"I think we ran well," Ciroli said. "We've been

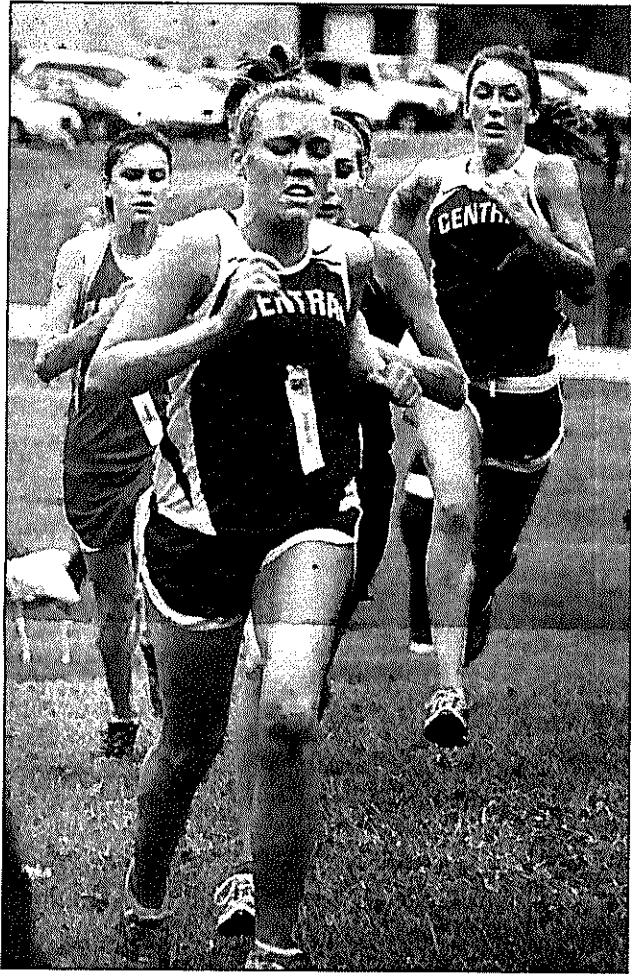


Photo by Seth Staskey

Wheeling Central's Brianna Robbins, front, leads the pack as the Maroon Knights girls went on to claim their second straight OVAC girls' cross country championship Saturday in Byesville.

plagued the last couple of weeks with minor injuries and have been nurturing some kids, but (Saturday) is one of the meets we aim for and we're getting ready to start our march westward (for the post-season)."

Leading the way for the Red Devils was senior standout Alex Thornburg who made the most of his final OVAC Championship meet, lifting a proverbial monkey off his back and getting into the winner's circles for the first time in his career.

"I am speechless," an elated Thornburg said. "I just had to gut it out and make a move late in the race, but this (championship) is something I've wanted since I've been running."

Thornburg — who ran a time of 16:11 — found himself in a pack of three or four runners for the better part of 2.5 miles of the race, but during the course of the final half mile or so, the Red Devils senior found another gear and took off, separating from the pack.

"The pace really picked up after the 2-mile mark," Thornburg continued. "The whole last mile was fast and it was a battle. We changed leads several times and it was just a great race."

The individual champion was the first under Ciroli's guidance.

"I got goose bumps thinking about it," Ciroli said. "We've kind of called it a curse because it's haunted us everywhere we went no matter if it was track or cross country. We just couldn't seem to attain the champion status, but watching (Alex) run (Saturday) and be up in the mix was a real pleas-

ure. When he crossed the line, I don't know who was more happy me, him or his parents, but he told me in the chute, he got the curse removed."

The second Red Devils' runner to cross the line was sophomore Andy Thornburg, who posted a time of 16:45 for the seventh place overall and second in 3-A.

Senior Shane Scheuer posted a 16:51 to finish 10th overall and third for the Red Devils. Junior ace Nick Pokas — who's grandfather is Cal, for whom the race is named, put forth one of his best efforts of the campaign, finishing 12th overall in 17:06.

The final scoring member of the Red Devils was Cole Antolak who finished 26th overall in a time of 17:48.

The Lady Red Devils have been running roughshod through nearly all of their competition all season regardless of the meet and location.

Coach Heidi Mooney's squad four runners in the top five and its fifth in the top 20 for an astounding team total of points.

"The girls ran awesome and the feeling of winning this meet never gets old," Mooney smiled. "We're pretty fortunate with the team we have that's for sure, but we've got to stay focused and I'm on pins and needles each week about injuries and things, so it's kind of bittersweet, but we really have been running well."

The Lady Red Devils — ranked third in the latest Ohio coaches poll and garnering two first-place votes in the process — were once again led by senior standout Kelly Perzanowski, who's making the most of her final prep cross country season.

After not competing in the OVAC meet a year ago and chasing the likes of her older sister Natalie and Barnesville's Stephanie Morgan the previous two seasons, Perzanowski etched her name into the OVAC lore

"This was a little bit of a challenge this year because of some of the runners we lost, and I didn't really know what to expect."

Heather Wayt

Wheeling Central coach

but raced past her and eventually posted a 18:39 for the title.

Like Ciroli with Thornburg, Perzanowski is the first individual victor in the Mooney era at St. C.

Senior Kate Hodgson continued her brilliant campaign with a bronze medal performance. She posted a solid third overall and in her class.

Class AA/A

The St. John Central Fighting Irish firmly buy into the cliché that winning never gets old.

For the ninth time in school history and the seventh straight time, the Irish boys found themselves on top of the heap, and as in years past, Coach Jeremy Midei's Irish not only prevailed, but dominated.

St. John Central finished with a meet-low 42 points, which was 51 better than small-school division runner-up Barnesville.

Wheeling Central's girls were among a handful of favorites in the small-school race and Coach Heather Wayt's youthful Maroon Knights escaped with their second straight championship and third in school history, posting 160 points. Barnesville again finished second with 211 tallies.

The Fighting Irish placed all five of their runners inside the meet's top 20.

The Irish were led by their senior duo of Luke Holubeck and Matthew Moscato. Both were major contributors on the Irish's state championship team from a year ago.

Holubeck found himself in a logjam for 2.5 miles of the race for the individual title, but he settled for a third-place finish in a time of 16:24. Moscato was just a place behind, posting a solid time of 16:33.

Senior Ian Gulley continues his mid-season surge, posting a 16:49 to finish third on his team and eighth overall.

Junior Matt Riffle and sophomore Ramon Nieves finished 13th and 14th overall in times of 17:07 and 17:20, respectively.

The Wheeling Central girls had three runners inside the top 20 after displacing, but Wayt was anxiously waiting outside the results trailer for the final word.

"We've been struggling at times this season, but our girls really stepped up," Wayt said.

Sophomore Brianna Robbins led the way for the Maroon Knights, finishing 14th overall in a time of 20:46. Freshman Emily Bucon posted a 16th place finish overall in a time of 20:47.

Junior Jesse John was

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Cody Patterson was 47th in 18:35. The aforementioned Mulley was the fifth runner, finishing 53rd in 18:41.

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in a speechless," an elated Thornburg said. "I just had to gut it out and make a move late in the race, but this (championship) is something I've wanted since I've been running."

Thornburg — who ran a time of 16:11 — found himself in a pack of three or four runners for the better part of 2.5 miles of the race, but during the course of the final half mile or so, the Red Devils senior found another gear and took off, separating from the pack.

"The pace really picked up after the 2-mile mark," Thornburg continued. "The whole last mile was fast and it was a battle. We changed leads several times and it was just a great race."

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"The girls ran awesome and the feeling of winning this meet never gets old," Mooney smiled. "We're pretty fortunate with the team we have that's for sure, but we've got to stay focused and I'm on pins and needles each week about injuries and things, so it's kind of bittersweet, but we really have been running well."

The Lady Red Devils — ranked third in the latest Ohio coaches poll and garnering two first-place votes in the process — were once again led by senior standout Kelly Perzanowski, who's making the most of her final prep cross country season.

After not competing in the OVAC meet a year ago and chasing the likes of her older sister Natalie

and Barnesville's Stephanie Morgan the previous two seasons, Perzanowski etched her name into the OVAC lore.

"This really feels good to win, but I am so excited about what our team accomplished because we all ran really well," Perzanowski said. "We're looking forward to the state tournament the next couple of weeks and putting four runners in the top five is a great accomplishment and something we're really proud of."

Perzanowski — who's been beaten by just three individuals all season — spent a little more than the first mile chasing Harrison Central's Ericka Skinner,

160 points. Barnesville again finished second with 211 tallies.

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"We've been struggling at times this season, but our girls really stepped up," Wayt said.

Sophomore Brianna Robbins led the way for the Maroon Knights, finishing 14th overall in a time of 20:46. Freshman Emily Bucon posted a 16th place finish overall in a time of 20:47.

Junior Jesse John was the third Wheeling Central runner to cross and 19th overall finisher in a time of 21:01.

"Those three train together and have really been pushing each other," Wayt said. "This was a little bit of a challenge this year because of some of the runners we lost, and I didn't really know what to expect."

Maddie Dean and Katie Hurley rounded out the scorers for the Maroon Knights, finishing 54th and 70th overall, respectively.


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<p>(at Byesville)</p> <p>BOYS</p> <p>Overall</p> <p>Team Scores</p> <p>St. John, 42; St. Clairsville, 55; Barnesville, 103; Caldwell, 148; Magnolia, 161; Wheeling Park, 166; Fort Frye, 214; East Liverpool, 225; Wheeling Central, 272; John Marshall, 315; Bellaire, 334; Union Local, 356; Buckeye Local, 360; Harrison Central, 387; Cameron, 419; Linsly, 432; Brooke, 432; Cambridge, 442; Meadowbrook, 459; Indian Creek, 507; Zanesville, 544; Bishop Donahue, 643.</p> <p>Top 20 (All OVAC)</p> <p>1. Alex Thornburg (St. C.), 16:11; 2. Jeremy Anderson (FF), 16:19; 3. Luke Holubeck (SJC), 16:24; 4. Matthew Moscato (SJC), 16:33; 5. Brennan Delaney (Barnes), 16:40; 6. Logan Wojcik (WPI), 16:44; 7. Andy Thornburg (St. C.), 16:45; 8. Ian Gulley (SJC), 16:49; 9. Brandon Salling (Cald), 16:50; 10. Shane Scheuer (St. C.), 16:51; 11. Wesley Lewis (Barnes), 17:02; 12. Nick Pokas (St. C.), 17:06; 13. Matt Riffle (SJC), 17:07; 14. Ramon Nieves (SJC), 17:20; 15. Hunter Ankrum (JM), 17:21; 16. Josh Fitch (UL), 17:24; 17. Brandon Stephens (Barnes), 17:25; 18. Nathan Harshberger (Mag), 17:38; 19. Jacob Boyer (EL), 17:37; 20. Joe Feeney (Mag), 17:38.</p> <p>Class AAAA</p> <p>Team Scores</p> <p>Wheeling Park, 166; East Liverpool, 225; John Marshall, 315; Buckeye Local, 360; Brooke, 432; Cambridge, 442; Indian Creek, 507; Zanesville, 544.</p> <p>Individual Top 10</p> <p>1. Logan Wojcik (WPI), 16:44; 2. Hunter Ankrum (JM), 17:21; 3. Jacob Boyer (EL), 17:37; 4. Cody Wilshire (BL), 17:58; 5. Lucas Runyan (WPI), 18:08; 7. Cory Leisure (BL), 18:13; 8. Tim Densmore (EL), 18:30; 9. Ryan Hall (Zanes), 18:34; 10. Cody Patterson (WPI), 18:35.</p> <p>Class AAA</p> <p>Team Scores</p> <p>St. Clairsville, 55; Magnolia, 161; Bellaire, 334; Union Local, 356; Harri-</p>	<p>son Central, 387; Meadowbrook, 459.</p> <p>Individual Top 10</p> <p>1. Alex Thornburg (St. C.), 16:11; 2. Andy Thornburg (St. C.), 16:45; 3. Shane Scheuer (St. C.), 16:51; 4. Nick Pokas (St. C.), 17:06; 5. Josh Fitch (UL), 17:24; 6. Nathan Harshberger (Mag), 17:38; 7. Joe Feeney (Mag), 17:38; 8. Sebastian Cruz (HC), 17:42; 9. Alec Hinnerman (Mag), 17:45; 10. Aaron Estep (Tyler), 17:48.</p> <p>Class AA/A</p> <p>Team Scores</p> <p>St. John, 42; Barnesville, 103; Caldwell, 148; Fort Frye, 214; Wheeling Central, 272; Cameron, 419; Linsly, 432; Bishop Donahue, 643.</p> <p>Class AA/A</p> <p>Individual Top 10</p> <p>1. Jeremy Anderson (FF), 16:19; 2. Luke Holubeck (SJC), 16:24; 3. Matthew Moscato (SJC), 16:33; 4. Brennan Delaney (Barnes), 16:40; 5. Ian Gulley (SJC), 16:49; 6. Brandon Salling (Cald), 16:50; 7. Wesley Lewis (Barnes), 17:02; 8. Matt Riffle (SJC), 17:07; 9. Ramon Nieves (SJC), 17:20; 10. Brandon Stephens (Barnes), 17:25.</p> <p>GIRLS</p> <p>Overall</p> <p>Team Scores</p> <p>St. Clairsville, 29; Harrison Central, 134; Wheeling Park, 139; Wheeling Central, 160; Barnesville, 211; Shadyside, 214; Martins Ferry, 223; Caldwell, 229; Fort Frye, 241; Buckeye Local, 249; East Liverpool, 287; Cambridge, 316; John Marshall, 393; Union Local, 393; Brooke, 421; Bishop Donahue, 545; Linsly, 557; Tyler Consolidated, 612.</p> <p>Top 20 (All-OVAC)</p> <p>1. Kelly Perzanowski (St. C.), 18:39; 2. Ericka Skinner (HC), 18:49; 3. Kate Hodgson (St. C.), 19:14; 4. Jamie Perzanowski (St. C.), 19:21; 5. Amy Castle (St. C.), 19:50; 6. Sarah Blehl (FF), 19:56; 7. Maggie McIlvain (EL), 20:00; 8. Sarah Kosky (SJC), 20:09; 9. Sarah Kaufman (Zanes), 20:18; 10. Lauren Yoho (HC), 20:21; 11. Chelsea Furda (IC), 20:23; 12. Kylie Stewart (MF), 20:31; 13. Karly Jones (Barnes), 20:34;</p> <p>14. Brianna Robbins (WC), 20:46; 15. Mindy Snyder (HC), 20:47; 16. Emily Bucon (WC), 20:47; 17. Juliana Maddie (St. C.), 20:47; 18. Tara Tollett (Shady), 20:59; 19. Jesse John (WC), 21:01; 20. Lea Figurski (BL), 21:02.</p> <p>Class AAAA</p> <p>Team Scores</p> <p>Wheeling Park, 139; Buckeye Local, 249; East Liverpool, 287; Cambridge, 316; Indian Creek, 316; Brooke, 421.</p> <p>Individual Top 10</p> <p>1. Maggie McIlvain (EL), 20:00; 2. Sarah Kaufman (Zanes), 20:18; 3. Chelsea Furda (IC), 20:23; 4. Leah Figurski (BL), 21:02; 5. Lauren Tarovitsky (WPI), 21:03; 6. Elena Romanek (WPI), 21:14; 7. Carrie West (JM), 21:22; 8. Madison Morris (WPI), 21:22; 9. Alyssa Glesye (Camb), 21:27; 10. Audrey Biega (WPI), 21:48.</p> <p>Class AAA</p> <p>Team Scores</p> <p>St. Clairsville, 29; Harrison Central, 134; Martins Ferry, 223; Meadowbrook, 371; Bellaire, 391; Union Local, 393; Tyler Consolidated, 612.</p> <p>Individual Top 10</p> <p>1. Kelly Perzanowski (St. C.), 18:39; 2. Ericka Skinner (HC), 18:49; 3. Kate Hodgson (St. C.), 19:14; 4. Jamie Perzanowski (St. C.), 19:21; 5. 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