

Roth paces city boys at state

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

The state meet was a success for each of four Farmington boys in the Class A individual cross country race Saturday.

Farmington Hills Harrison junior Jared Roth did the best, finishing 11th (16:41) among 95 runners at Skatetown Golf Course near Grand Rapids.

North Farmington senior Brian Rajdl placed 15th (16:43). North sophomore Jon Herman 22nd (16:52) and Harrison senior Scott Oswald 33rd (17:12).

"We had two great success stories," Harrison coach John Reed said, adding Roth and Oswald are very coachable. "If you give them a race strategy, they listen and try to do what you tell them."

"They kept improving every week. They felt they were going to do well at the end season, and we're thrilled with the way they ran."

This was only the first year of cross country for Roth, which makes his success all the more amazing.

Though his grandfather was once a three-state champion and his father a successful runner, he hadn't given serious thought to running until this year.

"He came out and just went to the top of the state in one season," Reed said. "I've never seen anything like it. I hope he can improve on that next year, and I think he will."

"He didn't know who the other (established runners) were, and sometimes that's a big advantage;

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he wasn't intimidated by anybody."

Oswald exceeded expectations, too, but Reed said he told Oswald early in the season he could qualify for state if he worked hard and improved.

"By the end of the year, 'Hey, it looks like he should go,'" Reed said. "He not only did but ran well; so he exceeded all expectations."

"Scott wasn't worried about beating somebody but just running as well as he could. He got better and better. I knew he was a good runner, and he ended up being a great runner."

Rajdl entered the season as the defending Western Lakes champion and potentially one of the best in the state.

Despite a back injury that slowed him down the last month of the season, he still overcame the physical impediment to finish among the top runners.

"At the start of the year, I was looking for Brian to be under 16 minutes," North coach Paul Welch said. "If he had been healthy, I think that was very much within his ability."

"He got hurt and, obviously, there were different things he was shooting for. One was to compete at all. He did a fantastic job even though he was hurt."

"For the last month, his back would tighten up and he would slow down considerably. In the state meet, he was able to hold

out a little longer and had a fairly strong race. I was happy to see him have one last good race in his senior year."

Berman just managed to get to state, having been the last runner to qualify in the regional meet.

Once there, he showed he belonged by bettering his previous best time by more than 25 seconds.

"The great thing for him was to get to the state meet," Welch said. "His goal was to break 17, and he ran a great race. He took the opportunity and put everything he had into it."

"I think he's going to be a good one. He's a hard worker and takes it very seriously. He's another big-race person like Brian."

Redford Catholic Central senior Joe Leo overcame stomach cramps after eating pancakes for breakfast and won the Class A team race Saturday.

Leo finished in 16:42, which was three seconds ahead of Ann Arbor Pioneer's Keith Braxton, who led most of the way.

"I had cramps, but I fought it," said Leo, who couldn't believe his normal race-day routine caused cramps. "I usually eat pancakes; that's what I ate at Bob Evans three hours ahead of time."

The Shamrocks, running without four of their top runners because of disciplinary reasons, were 21st in the team standings with 471 points.

Leo's time was second overall to Dearborn Fordson's Abdul Al-Zindani, who won the individual race in 15:20.

also returns most of its team.

"That's good we had Stevenson (in the same area), because it made us work harder," Zynida said.

"We had a very successful year, winning some invitations and placing well in the conference. But we're not on top top; so we do have room to improve, and the girls are still hungry to go for more next year."

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since the same five runners weren't under pressure to produce in every race.

"It has been helpful to have six strong runners, because if one is down, someone else picks up the slack," Zynida said.

"Natalie was the one who rose to the occasion at the regional. At the state meet, Natalie was not as successful and Ellen rose to the occasion. They switched roles, but both are important to the

team.

"Ellen wasn't pleased with her race at regional, so she wanted to come back and prove she could run better, and did."

With six of their top seven returning — as well as junior Laura Luckaschewer, who was injured the last half of the season, and freshman Becky Lidgely — the Falcons will have another strong team next year. But Livonia Stevenson

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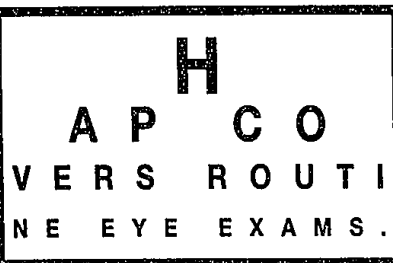
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