

Summer training pays off for Shamrocks

BY STEVE KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

Cross country teams like to run in a pack, away from the competition, and Detroit Catholic Central takes that to the extreme each preseason.

For a week each August, the Shamrocks can't be found in the metro area, because they're putting in their miles in Grand Bend, Ontario. CC coach Tony Magni has been taking teams there for 34 years, the last 21 at CC.

Being far away from home lets the Shamrocks develop camaraderie and think about running without distractions.

The Shamrocks run eight miles in the morning, six in the afternoon and finish the week with a 20-mile run.

"It's not too far away but it's not too close that the parents are there every minute," Magni said. "When I first started, I couldn't get kids to go. Now I have a limit of about 30."

The training paid off once again as the Shamrocks won Catholic League and Class A regional titles again and finished third at the state meet, their best finish there since 1992.

Magni, 52, who has won 11 regionals as CC coach, has been named Observerland's Coach of the Year.

A graduate of St. Anthony High School in Detroit and the University of Detroit, Magni teaches history at CC.

His coaching career began at Grosse Pointe St. Paul, and he also had a stint at Orchard Lake St. Mary's before arriving at CC. His CC cross country teams have won three state championships, the last in 1989.

The Shamrocks don't shy away from competition, which is why they compete in the Sturgis Invitational each year. During the two-day trip, the Shamrocks go to South Bend, Ind., to tour the



Nick Allen
Plymouth Salem



John DiGiovanni
Catholic Central



Dan Jess
Catholic Central



Josh Burt
Livonia Franklin



Matt Daly
Catholic Central



Jason Richmond
Livonia Churchill



Joe Verellen
Livonia Stevenson



Brian Klotz
Livonia Franklin



Jon Little
Plymouth Salem

Notre Dame campus.

Behaving on the road is more important than where the Shamrocks finish in the meet.

"If we go to a restaurant, I enjoy it when the waitress says 'You have nice kids, well-mannered,'" Magni said. "That's more important than the trophy. You run for only so long. You are nice the rest of your life."

(16:16) and placed second at the Haslett Invitational (16:25). He was third in the Catholic League (16:43) and fourth at the Holy and Shamrock meets.

His time of 16:09 earned him fourth place at the regional, and he was 22nd (15:55) in the state team race.

"Dan is a total team runner," Magni said. "He sets the pace for everyone to follow. Dan is a real team leader and an accomplished runner. His times continued to improve with each race. His strong leadership enhanced his personal performance and motivated his teammates in every race. He was our team stabilizer and never disappointed us."

Josh Burt, senior, Livonia Franklin: Burt finished fourth in the WIAA and qualified for the Class A state meet for a third straight year with an 11th-place finish at the regional. His time of 15:57 was good for 37th at the state meet.

He holds the school record on all eight of the courses the Patriots ran at this year.

Burt was Franklin's most valuable runner the last three seasons and earned four varsity letters. He is one of the school's scholar athletes.

"Josh has been the mainstay of our team for three years," Franklin coach Bob Holmes said. "He's been our No. 1 runner in each race over those three years."

Matt Daly, sophomore, Cath. Central: Daly was the Shamrocks' most consistent runner, because he never wavered from the third spot in dual meets while showing marked improvement throughout the year.

His time improved nearly 15 minutes between the West Bloomfield Invitational, where he finished 19th (17:25), and the Class A state meet, where he finished 32nd (16:08). He also placed fourth in the Catholic League (16:45) and sixth in the regional (16:31).

"Matt astonished all of us this year," Magni said. "He just got better and better with each race. This was Matt's first experience as a varsity runner, and he proved it's where he belongs. He wasn't afraid to run with the big boys, and he gave it his all at the state meet with his best time. No doubt, Matt will be among the top runners next year."

Jason Richmond, junior, Churchill: Richmond medaled at every invitational he entered this year. He was eighth in the WIAA (17:07), 12th at the regional



All-Observer runners: Catholic Central's Dan Jess (front, left) and John DiGiovanni (right) compete against Pontiac Notre Dame Prep in a dual meet earlier this season.

(16:15.58) and 50th in the Class A state meet (16:09.7).

"There is a direct connection between Jason's success and the improvement in Churchill's boys cross country program," Churchill coach John McGreevey said. "He has been an impact athlete. After his freshman year, he decided he wanted to be one of the best runners in the area. Jason proceeded to intensify his off-season workouts. His teammates noticed his effort and the positive results. His work ethic has been contagious. He is very quiet, yet he leads by example."

Joe Verellen, senior, Stevenson: Verellen had Stevenson's fastest time in each race, earning a fifth place in the WIAA, sixth in the regional (16:09) and 51st in the state (16:11).

"Joe is a strong team leader, in practice and at meets," coach John Gores said. "Josh's hard work has made him one of Salem's best runners." Baker said. "He has been with me for five years and he will be hard to replace."

Jim Curtiss, senior, Catholic Central: Curtiss is a repeat selection on the first

place finish at the Class A state meet. He placed 10th at the WIAA meet and 15th at the regional. Klotz was fifth in the Lincoln Invitational and the Livonia city meet and eighth at the Redford Union Invitational.

"Burt went from being a solid runner to an outstanding runner as he made steady progress all season," Holmes said. "He saved his best races for the biggest races at the end of the year."

Jon Little, senior, Plymouth Salem: Little ends his career as a triathlete, at area selection. He was 43rd in the team race at the state meet and 68th overall (16:20). He was fourth at the regional (16:08) and third at the WIAA meet.

He helped the Rocks to three straight state meets where they finished eighth twice and 11th this year. Little is also an academic all-state selection.

"Josh's hard work has made him one of Salem's best runners," Baker said. "He has been with me for five years and he will be hard to replace."

Jim Curtiss, senior, Catholic Central: Curtiss is a repeat selection on the first

team, although his list of accomplishments isn't as long as last year's.

A knee injury from a car accident caused Curtiss to miss much of the season, but he returned to finish 10th in the league (17:10), seventh in the regional (16:32) and 44th in the state (16:22).

His best performance earlier in the year was a 15th-place finish at the Sturgis Invitational (17:16).

"Jim was one of our top runners last year, and we had great expectations of what his talent would bring to the team this year," Magni said. "Despite several setbacks during the season, Jim never lost his determination to get himself back on the varsity lineup. Although he ran competitively only at the end of the season, he had his best race when it counted most at the state final."

Jim Curtiss, senior, Catholic Central: Curtiss is a repeat selection on the first

ALL-OBSERVER

BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

FIRST TEAM

Nick Allen, senior, Plymouth Salem; John DiGiovanni, sophomore, Redford CC; Dan Jess, senior, Catholic Central; Josh Burt, senior, Livonia Franklin; Matt Daly, sophomore, Catholic Central; Jason Richmond, junior, Livonia Churchill; Joe Verellen, senior, Livonia Stevenson; Brian Klotz, sophomore, Liv. Franklin; Jon Little, senior, Plymouth Salem; Jim Curtiss, senior, Catholic Central.

SECOND TEAM

Ed Traynor, senior, Garden City; Charlie Stamboulis, junior, N. Farmington; Bobby Cushman, senior, Plymouth Salem; Eric Bohn, senior, Livonia Stevenson; Donnie Warner, sophomore, Ply. Salem; Brian Kuszyński, senior, Catholic Central; Steve McCall, junior, Lutheran Westland; Steve Stewart, sophomore, Liv. Franklin; John Keyes, senior, Westland Green; Rich DeVellis, senior, Redford Union.

COACH OF THE YEAR

Tony Magni, Redford Catholic Central

HONORABLE MENTION

Stevenson: Brad Correll, Matt Isner; Franklin: Ray Bates; Churchill: Joe Robinson, Paul Meier, John McColl, John Glenn; P.J. Woloczek, Justin Keyes; Lutheran Westland: Ken Broge, Jason McCall; Salem: Matt Anderson, Craig Little, Chris Mayer, Trevor Davis; Garden City: Bryan Kulczycki, Jon Mikosz, Marty Kano; Ply. Christian: Jordan Roode, Dave Carly; Mike Hunsicker; Farmington: Pat Lochart, Chris Nagrant; Hamilton: Tony Ward, Jason Scarborough, Steve Sargol; N. Farmington: Matt Wiegand, Ethan Goodman, Mike Marz; Redford CC: Jeff Haller, Bryan Buchanan, Mark Repasky; Garden City: Joe Fienko, Scott Massey; Redford Union: Joe Wax.

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