

Tiger Finale gives runners chance to close out on high note

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – With the IHSA cross-country postseason about to get under way, Monday afternoon was a good time to give runners a chance to win a place on the postseason lineup for this weekend's IHSA regional meets and also give those who won't be on the postseason rosters one last chance to run in a race.

The Tiger Finale meet Monday at SIU-Edwardsville's Mud Mountain cross-country course served just such a dual purpose; no official times were kept and teams were not scored for the day's two races, one for juniors and seniors which led off the day and a second race for freshmen and sophomores, with boys and girls running each race at the same time.

In addition to the Tigers, Alton, Granite City, Triad, Belleville East, Belleville West, O'Fallon and Cahokia took part in Monday's meet.

"Our postseason rosters were due today, so the top 12 runners were solidified going into this race," said Tiger coach George Patrylak. "Some of the coaches use this – for example, on the boys side – as a runoff on who's going to be our seventh runner for regionals. But for the most part, this is one of those opportunities for those athletes who will not be competing in a regional or sectional meet to get one last race in.

"For our athletes, it's their third opportunity to run on the course, and we really preach that individual success is the amount of improvement each runner shows throughout the year, so for our athletes, this was our third – possibly fourth time if they ran Mud

Mountain – but it was our last opportunity how much they've improved since the early summer months and hopefully have some closure on the season and they get to end with a (personal record) on their course.”

Many of the Tiger runners turned in outstanding performances on the day, Patrylak said. “Some of our runners today actually ran times that were fast enough that they would have earned medals at the Fall Classic and at the Edwardsville (Invitational), so it's good where some of those runners – our fringe varsity runners in terms of being in our top seven – get those opportunities to run.

“I was very happy with the efforts of our guys and our girls, (freshman-sophomore) and juniors and seniors – I feel like we had a lot of course PRs today; it's just great that they get one last opportunity – and for our seniors, there's a not much better way than to end your running career on your home course; for those seniors, this was their last race. I know that it was important for them, and obviously, to spend four years going after this beast of a course and to be able to end on it is always a positive.”

The Tigers' top runners in the junior-senior race were Todd Baxter and Hannah Stuart, while the top frosh-soph runners were Colten O'Brien and Kaitlyn Loyet.

The postseason begins at 10 a.m. Saturday for the girls and 11 a.m. Saturday for the boys when the Tigers join Alton and Granite City in the Belleville West Regional; the top six teams and top five runners from non-qualifying teams advance to the Oct. 28 Granite City Sectional at Wilson Park in Granite City; start times are 10:30 a.m. for the girls and 11:30 a.m. for the boys; the state cross country meet in all three classes will take place Nov. 4 at Peoria's Detweiler Park.



