

O'Keefe, Determan Are Winners in Mud Mountain 5K Run Benefit for Edwardsville Cross-Country, Track Teams

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Andrew O’Keefe of Granite City and Julianna Determan of Edwardsville were the individual winners at the 24th annual Mud Mountain 5K run Saturday morning at the famed cross-country course at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

A total of over 250 runners participated in the fund-raiser for the Edwardsville High School cross-country and track teams, which has gained widespread community support since its inception in 1995 and has become one of the most anticipated, and fun, events of the summer running season.

Conditions for this year’s event were ideal, with a sunny sky, temperatures in the low to mid-70s at race time, with low humidity, and even a slight breeze blowing. And the conditions made for a very good race, along with the connected one-mile fun run.

“First off, we were very lucky, fortunate to have such nice weather today,” said Tigers cross-country coach and race chairman George Patrylak. “See a lot of smiles, so I think people were happy with their races, which is always good. Another solid turnout, great community support. It seems like it’s going to be another successful Mud Mountain.”

The fact that the race is held on the SIUE cross-country course helps bring out many of the Cougar alumni, and this year was no exception.

“This year, we actually had a few alumni from when I ran at SIUE, and earlier,” Patrylak said, “so we did have our first-ever SIUE female alumni team. So that was kind of neat to see. But, no, it’s one of the things I love about this event, and most running events in Edwardsville, is we help out at several. It’s amazing how you see similar faces, and how committed the running community is in this area.”

And the overall community support of the event is very important as well and was evidenced by a record number of sponsors.

“Local businesses have been unreal,” Patrylak said, “just the generosity they continue to show. This year, we set record highs for sponsorship donations. I think we had 43 combined gold and silver sponsors, which is by far the most we’ve ever had, so we’ve been really blessed that the Edwardsville-Glen Carbon community supports their athletics, supports the schools, supports the various clubs and activities that go on throughout the community.”

And as far as the competitive race went, Patrylak was very pleased with how everything turned out.

“Yeah, it kind of felt like I had déjà vu,” Patrylak said with a smile. “Some of those guys up front, Andrew O’Keefe, Roland (Prenzler), Jack (Pifer), it almost feels like it was last year again, but no, there were some blazing, blazing times for this early. I believe Julianna Determan, one of our alumni who’s running at Missouri Southern, was our winner this year, so it’s great to see so many familiar faces, even if they’re not Tiger current and past Tigers, we have such a good rapport with teams from Granite City, Alton, O’Fallon. It’s always great to see those guys and ladies. They’re friends, and they compete, and they enjoy the camaraderie of running together, so stuff like that, and seeing our alumni come back, that’s what makes today special for us.”

it’s that friendship between the competing schools such as Granite, Edwardsville, Alton, O’Fallon and the rest of the southern Illinois schools that help make cross-country and track very unique.

“It does, and we’ll go to some of these meets, and guys will do warm-ups and cool-downs together,” Patrylak said. “Obviously, that switch is flipped when they’re on there, but there’s been plenty of races where coaches and athletes have worked strategy. For example, when we did Roland and Andrew O’Keefe last year in the two-mile, we’ll try to pace people, match people with the goal of doing what’s best for the runners, and again, that’s part of the area that we are, the southern Illinois coaches here are great to work with, and as far as our athletes and coaching staff, I’m pretty spoiled, because I think it’s second to none,” Patrylak said with a laugh.

O’Keefe won the men’s race with a time of 16:00.36, finishing ahead of Harrison Thomas of Carbondale, who had a time of 16:08.94. Prenzler, who will run on the course as a member of the Cougars starting this fall, came in third with a time of 16:15.57, with Tiger teammate Pifer fourth at 16:32.61. Daniel Mazar of Glen Carbon was fifth with a time of 16:46.22, followed by Dane Shaw of Austin, Tex., with a time of 16:47.18. Coming in seventh was Edwardsville’s Zach Walter, with a time of 16:49.86. with Patrick Hetlage of Des Peres, Mo., finishing eighth at 16:56.84. Ninth place went to Will O’Keefe of Granite City, with a time of 16:58.19. and Cassius Havis of Alton was 10th with a time of 17:05.61.

Determan was the women’s winner, coming in at 18:15.34, with Edwardsville’s Abby Korac second at 18:42.11. Maddie Keller of Troy was third with a time of 18:44.23, Riley Knoyle of Glen Carbon came in fourth at 20:17.44, Edwardsville’s Savannah Brannan was fifth at 20:20.48, and Melissa Spencer was sixth at 20:41.26. Coming in seventh was Riley Vickrey of Florissant, Mo., at 20:55.45, with Chessy Nikonowicz of Granite City coming in eighth with a time of 21:02.70. Peyton Ali of Noblesville, Ind., was ninth, with a time of 21:29.59, and Roxanne Patrylak of Collinsville was 10th at 22:05.97.

In the team competitions, the first-ever corporate sponsorship winner was Integrity Spine and Joint of Troy, who's team of Ben Walter, Jarod Willis, Drake Bleier, Caleb Bagwell, and Ethan Dudley combined for 118 points, finishing ahead of second-place Stassi Chiropractic and Wellness Center and Al's Transmission, who tied for second with 137 points. In the men's team race, the Edwardsville Elite Eight, with Prenzler, Mazar, Shaw, Todd Baxter, Sam McCormick, Dustin Davis and Derek Burge-Beckley scoring 42 points, with the WAAA team coming in second with 62 points, and Race Invaders 2: Electric Boogaloo third with 79 points. The women's team event was won by the Elite Eight Women, with Determan, Brannan, Spencer, Rachel Schoenecker and Lizzy Lynn combining for 250 points. Abby's Peasants came in second with 266 points, and the SIUE Women's Alumni Team 1 was third with 505 points.

The Mud Mountain race celebrates its 25th running next year, and Patrylak is optimistic about increased numbers for next year, as well as possibly having a few surprises for the milestone race while giving credit to the race's founder.

"Well, we're hoping we could do a little bit to get numbers up," Patrylak said. "I know we have a couple of thoughts about maybe some surprises we can throw in there, because that's a significant number. Twenty-five for any road race is quite the accomplishment, and hopefully, we can get a little bit of recognition (for) Coach Jim Price, who started the race, 24 years ago now. I was lucky I inherited something great, and I've had some super support from race directors and Mud Mountain six. So I'd like to say a lot of it's by hard work, but the bottom line is Jim Price created something special, and I continue to get more and more support. Just the number of parents here that are athletes are a couple of years removed, some of our workers like Larry Thompson, his son Tony is seven years removed, and we still get some of these families coming back and helping us. So, that's always great for me and the amount of support we get.

"Just appreciate everyone coming out today," Patrylak continued, "and I know a little bit of a learned lesson with buses. So we might have to continue doing this for the foreseeable future. So overall, I think things went pretty well."







[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)