

# Edwardsville Puts Four Runners in Top Ten, Wins Southwestern Conference Boys Cross Country Meet

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter  
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ALTON - The Edwardsville boys cross country team placed four of its seven runners in the top ten, and five in the first 11, in going on to win the Southwestern Conference meet Thursday afternoon at Gordon Moore Park in Alton.

The Tigers won the meet with 37 points, with O'Fallon coming in second with 46 points, and Belleville East coming in third with 73. Belleville West finished fourth with 119 points, Collinsville was fifth with 123 points, Alton came in sixth with 139, and East St. Louis was seventh with 210 points.

The Tigers ran without top runner Jack Pifer, who was held out after suffering an ankle injury that is day-to-day but still ran well with a lineup of three sophomores and three seniors.

"We were able to win back the conference title, and we did it shorthanded," said Edwardsville cross country coach George Patrylak. "We had to sit out Jack Pifer, and he's day-to-day, and we're hoping to get him back sooner than later."

Despite missing Pifer, the Tigers did a good job of following the race strategy of staying close together in the first part of the race, then as things opened up, they still were able to be close together.

"Our team did a good job of packing it together for the first half of the race," Patrylak said, "and when things started to open up at the halfway point, we were competitive. We may have lost a few spots, but overall, we were very competitive."

And there were many positives that came out of the race today for the Tigers as well.

"One of the positives today was we were able to win the meet with three sophomores and three seniors in the lineup," Patrylak said. "We're happy that most of our guys are trending in the right direction, and they've been progressing in the right direction."

O'Fallon took the first two spots in the individual standings, as Nick Edwards won the race with a time of 15:41.76, followed by Chris Wichler, who came in at 15:52.85. One of the three Edwardsville sophomores, Geo Patrylak, was third with a time of 15:55.69, while Collinsville's Theo Paxton was fourth at 15:59.75. Alton's best runner, Cassius Havis, came in fifth with a time of 16:00.10, followed by one of the Tiger seniors, Zach Walters, sixth at 16:03.17. The second sophomore in the top ten for Edwardsville was Ryan Watts, who came in seventh at 16:04.15, with a pair of Lancer runners - Byron Jones and Zack Panek - coming in eighth and ninth with respective times of 16:23.69 and 16:23.75. Rounding out the top ten was Edwardsville sophomore Drew Stover, with a time of 16:28.68.

The other two Tiger seniors, Xander Valdez and Kurt Brase, finished 11th and 19th, with Valdez's time being 16:29.79, and Brase coming in at 16:48.68. The third sophomore, Ryan Luitjohan, was 14th with a time of 16:33.77.

Outside of Havis, other Alton runners were Dylan Forsythe, who had a time of 17:27.67, Simon McClaine, with a time of 18:15.29, River Wrischnik, who came in at 18:33.16, Victor Humphrey at 18:37.10, Christian Kotzamanis, with a time of 18:42.84, and Conner Fassler, who had a time of 18:46.29.

The other Kahok runners in the race were Axel Muniz, who had a time of 17:07.42, Matthew Wilde, who came in at 17:50.06, Garrett Lee at 18:05.79, Kevin Varela, with a time of 18:19.70, Brock Cunningham at 18:23.11, and Paul Falbe, who had a time of 18:55.35.

The Tigers are looking ahead to the post season and the IHSA Class 3A regional meet coming soon, and Patrylak feels very optimistic about his team's chances for success.

"If we can get healthy, and keep a positive mindset, I think we can have one of our better finishes in the last several years," Patrylak said.



[Colin Feeney also contributed to this story.](#)