

Led By Knoyle And Lueking, Tigers Place Five Runners In Top 10, Capture SWC Girls Meet Over O'Fallon

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
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SWANSEA - The Edwardsville girls cross country team, led by a third-place finish from Riley Knoyle and a fourth from Maya Lueking, placed five runners in the top ten to take the Southwestern Conference championship meet on Saturday morning at Clinton Hills Conservation Park in Swansea.

The Tigers won the title with 28 points, with O'Fallon coming in second with 38 points, Belleville West coming in third with 92 points, host Belleville East was fourth with 96 points, and East St. Louis was fifth with 133 points. Both Alton and Collinsville entered runners in the race, but did not have enough to form a complete team, thus no score was kept for the Redbirds and Kahoks.

The Tigers' strategy of staying together in the pack worked well for the team, and was a key to their team victory on the day.

"Our pack was able to get it done for us today," said Edwardsville head coach George Patrylak. "Like the boys, we were able to have four first-team all-conference runners."

Knoyle ran very well in the race, although she felt disappointed in her result. But Patrylak knows that Knoyle will bounce back in the postseason races coming ahead.

"Riley led the way for us," Patrylak said. "I know she's a little bit disappointed in her performance, but the next two invites are the regional and the sectional, and that's when we'll need her at her best."

In addition, a pair of freshmen, Lueking and Dylan Peel, ran all-time personal bests in the race, and helped the team tremendously.

"We had two freshmen finish in the top five," Patrylak said. "Maya ran a lifetime (personal record), finished fourth, and Dylan Peel also ran a lifetime PR and finished fifth. And we got a strong performance from Kaitlyn Loyet, continuing her strong senior season, and our sixth and seventh runners were also freshmen. To do as they did today, with only one junior and one senior in the lineup was extremely impressive, and with the depth of the team, they were able to win the JV division with only 17 points."

O'Fallon's Peyton Schieppe was the individual winner with a time of 17:53.46, with Belleville West's Alyssa Elliott second at 17:58.60. Knoyle came in third at 18:21.91, while Lueking was fourth at 18:55.85, the Panthers' Julia Monson was fifth with a time of 19:26.13, Peel came in sixth at 19:32.73, seventh place went to O'Fallon's Ella Peterson at 19:39.00, Loyet was eighth with a time of 19:45.62, with teammate Whitney Dyckmann ninth at 19:47.96, and the Panthers' Hannah Zura was 10th with a time of 20:01.08.

Besides the top five for Edwardsville, Olivia Coll came in 12th with a time of 20:36.57. East Side was led by Lienikei Burns, who came in at 22:39.97, with Ishaya Fowler having a time of 24:01.72, Sasia King was clocked in 25:49.39, Markia Lampley came in at 27:39.93, and Ambrasha Lampley had a time of 32:23.84.

The Redbirds were led by Alayna Rabozzi, who had a time of 21:27.95, with Sophia Paschal coming in at 22:52.93, Eva Schwaab was clocked in 23:03.99, and Maggie Ni was in at 29:45.15. For the Kahoks, Maggie Fitzgerald had a time of 22:21.51, Hannah Petit came in at 23:37.63, and Cassidy Rea had a time of 24:04.28.

Patrylak gave much credit to O'Fallon for having a great program that's always ready to run and compete, and knows that both teams will be ready for the IHSA Class 3A regional meet at Granite City's Wilson Park on Saturday, Oct. 24, along with the Normal Community sectional on Saturday, Oct. 31.

"Obviously, O'Fallon is a great program, just like the boys," Patrylak said. "Coach (Neil) James always has his team ready, and in the regional, we're going to add Normal Community, which is a top 25 ranked team in the state. It should be the best competition we face this year, and at the sectional, there's also six other ranked teams in it."

The Tigers will use the time off before the regional to refocus and get ready for what lies ahead.

"Counting this week, our teams will refocus and get ready for the regionals," Patrylak said. "I think we're ready to perform well at our last two meets of the year."