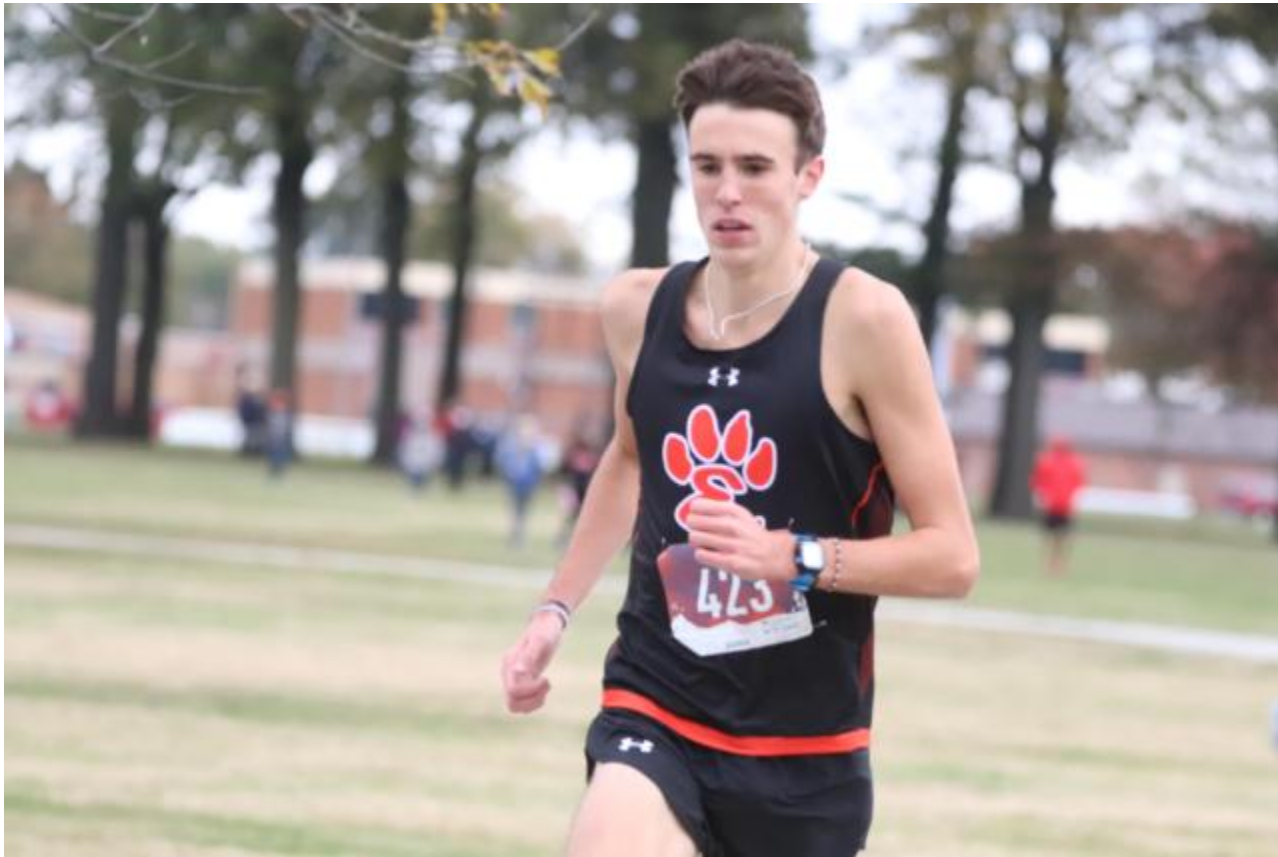


# **Ryan Watts Breaks Granite City Course Record, Tigers Place Four In Top 10, Capture Regional Cross Country Meet**

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter  
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GRANITE CITY - Edwardsville runner Ryan Watts broke the Granite City course record with a time of 14:41.14 as the Tigers placed four of their runners in the top ten in going on to win the IHSA Class 3A cross country regional meet Saturday morning at Wilson Park in Granite City.

The Tigers won the meet with 28 points, with Pekin coming in second with 88 points, O'Fallon was third with 96 points, and Normal Community West placed fourth with 98 points, all four teams advancing to the sectional meet next week hosted by Normal Community at Maxwell Park in Normal. Collinsville was fifth with 146 points, followed by Belleville West in sixth with 173 points, Quincy had 186 points to finish seventh, Normal Community had 188 points to place eighth, Belleville East was ninth with 200 points, the host Warriors were 10th with 234 points, and Alton was 11th with 287 points.

Watts broke the course record, previously held by Granite's Andrew O'Keefe, by approximately 12 seconds, and Tigers' head coach George Patrylak couldn't have been more proud of his runner and team.

"Watts ran an outstanding race," Patrylak said. "He, Geo (Patrylak) and Fiker Rosen (of Quincy) came through the mile at just under five minutes flat, and Ryan started to pull away a little bit at the two-mile mark. Ryan came through at about 9:50, and Geo was right at 10 flat."

The Tigers worked on running a smart race and staying consistent in the middle part of the race, and the practice paid off in the end.

"We've been working at staying smart and consistent in the middle of the race,' Patrylak said, "and try to work the second half."

And not only was Patrylak impressed with Watts' time, but how he cheered on his teammates at the finish line. The support the Tiger runners show for each other is a very important part of the team's success in 2020.

"What impressed me just as much as the time was how loud he was cheering for his teammates at the finish," Patrylak said of Watts. "Again, that one point was important, but not more important is the way this team supports each other."

Watts won the race in his course record time, with Patrylak coming in second at 15:08.90, with Rosen coming in third at 15:30.39. The Lancers' Byron Jones was fourth at 15:32.96, with the Tigers' Drew Stover coming in fifth at 15:33.49, and teammate Ryan Luitjohan sixth at 15:36.52. Drae Heiple of Pekin was seventh with a time of 15:42.37,

Collinsville's Theo Paxton was eighth, coming in at 15:46.10, Jackson Custer of the Dragons was ninth at 15:48.65, and rounding out the top ten was Normal Community West's Luke Reinhart, who had a time of 15:51.89.

Jacob Grandone was the fifth Edwardsville runner to score points, with a time of 15:57.35, with Wyatt Erber coming in at 16:29.34, and Jack Draper had a time of 16:35.63. Besides Paxton, the Kahoks' Trey Peterson had a time of 15:53.34, Axel Muniz came in at 16:28.34, Brock Cunningham's time was 16:58.15, Kevin Varela was in at 17:18.97, David Garcia had a time of 17:46.98, and Andrew Gonski was in at 17:49.61.

Thomas Westbrook led the Warriors with a time of 16:29.43, followed by Randy Gardner, who came in at 17:01.33, with Aaron McKeal right behind at 17:01.72, Mason Drake was clocked in 17:15.08, Alex Weaver had a time of 17:21.34, Ethan Beatty was timed in 17:27.38, and Jackson Kirk had a time of 17:50.45. Dylan Forsythe led the Redbirds with a time of 16:37.20, with Simon McClaine coming in at 17:07.20, Victor Humphrey had a time of 17:49.89, Trae Corby came in at 17:57.83, River Wrishnik came in at 18:05.25, and Parker Mayhew's time was 18:41.52.

It was a banner day for Edwardsville all around, as all seven runners set personal records, with many of the runners having breakthroughs as well.

"Geo wound up having his best high school race by far," Patrylak said, "had a 30-second personal record, and a lifetime PR by 24 seconds. Jacob Grandone had another breakthrough, running under 16 for the first time, and also having a 30-second PR."

Patrylak was very pleased with the team's performance and will be ready for the sectional, which will be run in four phases, with the first race consisting of the individual qualifiers from the regionals that feed into the Normal Community sectional, plus each team's number one runner, with the second race being the each team's number two and three runners, the third race consisting of the number four and five runners, and the number six and seven runners competing in the final race. It'll make for some interesting strategy decisions for the Tigers' coaching staff this week.

"Obviously, we'll have our workouts this week," Patrylak said, "but we'll need to decide who'll benefit from racing with Geo in the second race, and who will benefit from being our top runner in the third race, and out top runner in the fourth. Stover and Luitjohan have been so solid for us, and either way, we'll be fine."

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