

Ryan Watts Captures Individual Sectional Crown, Patrylak Is Ninth, Tigers Third As Team in Normal Boys Cross Country Meet

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
November 2 2020 5:11 PM



NORMAL - Edwardsville junior Ryan Watts won the individual championship in an exciting dual to the finish with Quincy's Fiker Rosen, while junior Geo Patrylak came in ninth as the Tigers finished third as a team in the Illinois High School Association Class

3A Normal Community boys cross country sectional meet on Saturday at Maxwell Park in Normal.

Yorkville won the team championship with 61 points, Minooka was second with 73 points, and the Tigers claimed third place with 94 points. Fourth place went to Plainfield North with 125 points, coming in fifth was Frankfort Lincoln-Way East with 157 points, New Lenox Lincoln-Way Central was sixth with 176 points, Plainfield South and Lockport tied for seventh with 177 points each, O'Fallon was ninth at 234 points, and Normal Community West rounded out the top ten with 236 points.

Pekin came in 11th with 268, New Lenox Lincoln-Way was 12th with 312 points, Bradley-Bourbonnais was 13th with 334 points, Collinsville was 14th with 349 points, and Tinley Park Andrew was 15th with 350 points.

Edwardsville head coach George Patrylak was very proud of how his team performed on the day, with everyone making a contribution to the third-place finish, which under normal circumstances would have qualified the Tigers for the state meet.

"The boys were just like the girls in their race," Patrylak said. "It was a total team effort to come in a third-place finish."

The race was run in four heats, and Patrylak felt that there were two heats that stood out in his mind. The first was the dual between Watts and Rosen in the opener, that was an exciting back-and-forth dual between the two runners for what turned out to be the individual title.

"Ryan ran a great race," Patrylak said. "At the mile mark, he was in third, five to six seconds behind, and at a mile-and-three-quarters, it became a two-man race between Ryan and Fiker. For the next three-quarters of a mile, they kept switching places back-and-forth, and Watts put in a big move with a half-mile to go, and wound up winning by 15 seconds."

The big finishing kick from Watts was one of the highlights of the day, but the second heat that stood out to Patrylak was what he called the race of the day, with junior Jacob Grandone at the number five position. Grandone finished third in his heat to wind up 24th overall, winding up being the number three runner on the day for the Tigers.

"To put that in perspective, he beat every runner beside his teammates and Rosen, everyone in the (Southwestern) conference and in the regional. To say that was impressive would be an understatement."

Another Tiger runner who impressed on the day was junior Wyatt Erber, who in the final heat of the day, ran fast enough to be Edwardsville's fifth runner to score, coming in 42nd overall. It was part of the team effort that helped the Tigers throughout the day.

"I know a couple of people were disappointed with their performance, but I can't emphasize enough it was a total team effort today," Patrylak said.

Watts won the overall race with a time of 15:21.18, with Rosen coming in second at 15:36.36, and Plainfield North's Oliver Burns third at 15:37.93. A pair of Yorkville runners --- Austin Popplewell and Colin Kachlic --- were fourth and fifth respectively, with times of 15:41.81 and 15:42.87, Minooka's Vincent Van Eck was sixth at 15:49.20, seventh place went to Ivan Westcott of Yorkville, who had a time of 15:51.95, Daniel Schalk of Minooka was eighth, coming in at 15:54.08, Patrylak placed ninth with a time of 15:54.56, and completing the top ten was Yorkville's Nate Summers, who had a time of 15:56.74.

Grandone was the third runner for the Tigers, with a time of 16:23.82, Drew Stover came in at 16:28.49, and Erber was the fifth Edwardsville runner to score, his time being 16:40.96. Ryan Luitjohan had a time of 16:58.68, and Jack Draper's time was 17:18.68.

Freshman Trey Peterson was the Kahoks' leading runner on the day, having a time of 16:27.19, with Theo Paxton coming in at 16:38.08, Brock Cunningham was clocked in 17:55.25, with Axel Muniz right behind at 17:55.64, Kevin Varela had a time of 18:08.65, Andrew Gonski's time was 18:51.78, and David Garcia came in at 19:00.78.

The IHSA season is officially over, but there's the possibility of an unofficial state meet that would be organized by Shazam Racing, and is tentatively scheduled for next Saturday, Nov. 7 in Chillicothe, near Peoria. Patrylak knows that if the meet comes off, his team will be ready to go, although he can't coach the Tigers.

"I know the boys were hoping to race a little bit bigger," Patrylak said, "but this was the first time we've seen this level of competition, so I know the boys will be ready for next week."