

St. Mary's Girls Cross Country Team Places Seventh In State Meet, Stephan, Hannigan And Hough Pace Girls

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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CENTRALIA - The eighth-grade girls' cross country team at St. Mary's Catholic in Alton finished seventh in the Southern Illinois Junior High School Class S state meet on Saturday at Foundation Park in Centralia.

Jonesboro won the team championship with 32 points, with Olney St. Joseph's Catholic second at 87 points, Pinckneyville was third with 114 points, Aviston was fourth with 155 points, coming in fifth was Selmaville with 177 points, sixth place went to Norris City-Omaha-Enfield with 185, St. Mary's was seventh with 205 points, St. Claire came in eighth with 212 points, Steeleville was ninth at 239 points and Lick Creek rounded out the top ten with 258 points.

Jadyn Gerardi of Lick Creek was the individual champion, running the course in 10:37.0 to win, with two Jonesboro runners --- Kinley Leek and Raegan Jones --- placing second and third, with Leek coming in at 11:37.3 and Jones having a time of 11:42.3. Another Jonesboro runner, Reese Jones, was fourth at 11:43.2 and in fifth place was Maddy Dil of St. Bruno, coming in at 11:45.3.

Alex Stephan was the leading runner for St. Mary's, placing 29th with a time of 12:31.2, while Lilly Hannigan was in at 12:49.8, Izzi Hough had a time of 13:00.0, Maddie Waters was right behind at 13:00.7, Sophie Waters came in at 13:17.5, Morgan Rister had a time of 13:46.7 and Katherine Fitzgerald was clocked in 14:51.9.

St. Mary's Cross Country Coach Abbie Hough said this was such a great season for her girls and boys squads. "To have eight kids participate at the state meet was amazing," she said. "The kids left it on all on the course. We had two top 50 medalists (Alex Stephan and Lilly Hannigan) and multiple personal bests. This was a fun course but it wasn't an easy one especially when you add in the rain we had leading up to the race. Some spots were muddy and slippery but they all ran a great race regardless of the obstacles.

"After the girls' team won regionals we set a goal of finishing top 10 at state so to finish in seventh was amazing. Braden Nash competed as an individual on the boys' side and should be very proud of his time and his finish. It's hard to run in a race like this without your full team but he did great."

Hough continued and said the athletes and their families made this such a great year.

"The kids have put in the work to get here and their families and friends have been supportive of us all throughout the season," she said. "Mike and Don have stepped in to assist the team this year which has been so helpful especially given the fact that we had

26 total kids. Our team is rather deceiving....we are young, we are tiny, and we wear T-shirts that say track and field. They might not always get that initial respect that they deserve but when they run they run with heart and grit and make it clear that they belong. Congrats again to Braden, Alex, Lilly, Izzi, Maddie, Sophia, Morgan, and Katherine. You've made me and your school so proud!"







