

Tigers Sweep Top Four Spots, Takes Five Of Top Six and Win Girls Invitational, Helfrich, Klockemper, Rabozzi, Place High

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville High's girls cross country team, led by race winner Emily Nuttall, swept the top four spots and took five of the top six places as the Tigers won the girls Edwardsville Invitational cross country meet Saturday morning at SIU-Edwardsville's famed Mud Mountain course.



Edwardsville won with a near-perfect 16 points, while Nerinx Hall Catholic of Webster Groves, Mo. was second with 62 points, another St. Louis school, John Burroughs of Ladue, came in third with 69 points, Centralia Christ Our Rock Lutheran was fourth with 102 points and Springfield Southeast was fifth at 140 points. Alton, Belleville East, Duchesne Catholic of St. Charles, Mo. and Bluford Webber also entered runners in the race, but didn't record a team score.

Going into the meet, the Tigers' coaching staff had some difficult decisions to make of whom to run and whom to sit out so those runners could gain some badly-needed rest.

"We made some tough decisions this week," said Edwardsville head coach George Patrylak. "We wound up resting some athletes, yet we wanted to put forth a solid effort in both the varsity and freshman-sophomore races. Due to injuries and other strategic moves, we ended up with having just over half our girls running on Saturday. With the field of Missouri schools, we did not know what to expect this weekend."



This was the first time in a number of years that Nerinx ran in the meet, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and scheduling conflicts, and Patrylak considers the Markers and the Burroughs programs among the best in the St. Louis area. And he was also impressed by the performance of his team as well.

"I was surprised by the overall team score," Patrylak said, "especially since three of our regular varsity runners didn't compete. But I was excited by the performances displayed by our athletes today. Emily Nuttall looked smooth and confident throughout the race while easily outdistancing herself from the rest of the field. We also had a solid performance from freshmen Madison Popelar and Antonella DeAvila scoring as our second and fifth runners. I was impressed with Antonella competing on a challenging course and holding on to finish sixth overall."



Nuttall was the individual winner, coming in at 19:47.4, while Popelar was second at 20:30.4, Olivia Coll was third at 20:41.1, fourth place went to Emma Patrick at 20:53.8, Lucianna Medina of Nerinx prevented a clean sweep of the top five with a time of 21:11.1, DeAvila was sixth at 21:26.6, seventh place went to Hollye Brinkley of the Markers at 21:37.7, in eighth place was the Bombers' Priyanka Antony at 21:53.1 and another pair of Tigers' runners - Belle Horsfall and Libby Straham - rounded out the top ten, with Horsfall's time being 21:59.6 and Straham coming in at 22:19.8.

Two Alton runners - Sophia Helfrich and Monica Klockemper - finished in the top 20 for the Redbirds, with Helfrich placing 16th at 23:55.4 and Klockemper right behind in 17th at 23:56.5. Alayna Rabozzi came in at 24:39.6 as the only other Alton runner.

The Tigers will run in two all-important meets during the next two weekend, running in the Palatine Invitational next Saturday and in the Peoria Invitational at Detweiler Park Oct. 1. Patrylak feels that both meets for both the boys and girls teams will be the indicators of how the teams set up for the remainder of the season.

"The next two weekend, we will be competing in our two most focused-upon meets this year," Patrylak said. "The next two weeks will be a true indication of where our teams really are at."

[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)