

Dynamic Duo: Griffins Rybak, Hatley Poised For State Girls Cross Country Championships

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GLEN CARBON - Father McGivney Catholic's dynamic duo Elena Rybak and Kaitlyn Hatley have dominated races throughout the season in this region, regardless of the size of the schools.

Hatley was fifth in the Benton Sectional with a blazing time of 17:45.1 and she was second in the Trenton Sectional with a time of 18:16.3. She also was second in the conference and county meets.

Rybak, also a superstar runner/athlete, has won every race she has entered in the season. She scorched the Benton course with a first-place time of 16:47.5 and she won the Trenton Regional with a time of 17:44.2 Her best three-mile time was 17:11.5 at the Patriot Invite.

For two straight years, she has been the 1,600 state champion in small schools in Illinois. On Saturday, she is shooting to capture the state championship for small schools in cross country and is favored to be right at the top. Rybak is poised right now to vie for a third consecutive Illinois track and field state championship in the 1,600.

Rybak said she did not have fond memories of the Trenton-Wesclin course after some medical issues with an earlier post-season race in her career, but she blocked it out this time and got redemption.

"I can't focus on how I did before, but just take things race by race," she said. "I felt nice and strong this time on the course and worked on my stride and form."

Hatley said the goal for the pair is to finish one-two every meet and also encourage the team. She said Elena's issue the one time on the Trenton course has served as motivation to overcome and she is so proud of her for what she has done.

Hatley said she also sees a lot of potential in the team and is excited about the state meet.

Rybak is also a team player and both girls constantly try to motivate the team to improve.

"It is so much fun having the team in the postseason," both said.

Stay tuned to see how Hatley/Rybak perform at state on Saturday, Nov. 4, 2023. The girls and their coach have high hopes and expectations and seem in the best possible form to bring home top honors for the Father McGivney Griffins.