

Jersey's Flowers dominates again, while CM's Singleton wins girls division in invitational meet

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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ALTON – Jersey's Ben Flowers added another reason why he's arguably the best cross-country runner in the Metro East area this season.

Father McGivney Catholic's Mira McAtee made history for her school as well.

And Collinsville and the Panthers won the team titles at the Alton Invitational cross-country meet Wednesday afternoon at Gordon Moore Park.

Flowers won his fourth race in his last five starts in the varsity boys competition, covering the three-mile course that wound around the park in 16:32.12, with second-place finisher Andrew O'Keefe of Granite City finishing second in 16:51.64. Centralia's Garrett Blanchrd took third in 16:53.58, followed by Alton's Arie Macias (17:05.15), McCluer North's Clinton Heffner (17:22.55), the Panthers' Nick Reynolds (17:31.85) and Mike Roach (17:55.60), Civic Memorial's Frank Trost (18:04.76) and Cobi Callies (18:05.13) and Collinsville's Drake Claxon (18:08.49) to round out the top 10.

The Panthers won the team competition with 43 points, with Alton taking second at 76 points, Granite City third with 85, CM fourth at 107, Centralia fifth at 114, the Kahoks sixth at 115, McCluer North seventh at 156, Cahokia eighth at 199 and Staunton ninth at 246. Marquette and McGivney did not have enough runners to be scored.



The girls race went to CM's Alex Singleton, who covered the course in 20:49.51, followed by Centralia's Cheyenne Finley (21:30.72), Marquette's Natalie Halliday (21:42.54), Collinsville's Andrea Frerker (22:05.71), Emma Marciak (22:47.62) and Cindy Morales (22:56.73), Granite City's Kori Nesbit (23:02.33), Jersey's Kiara Chapman (23:06.71), Staunton's LeaAnn Johnson (23:39.41) and Collinsville's Anja Krueger (24:12.95).

The Kahoks 46 points for the team title, with McCluer North second at 75, Granite City third at 81, Jersey fourth at 87, Centralia fifth at 99 and Marquette sixth at 102. McGivney and Cahokia did not have enough runners for a team score.

“Ben had a really good day,” said Panther coach Harold Landon. “He's won all but one of the races he's been in this year, and the one race he lost, he ran a personal best. He's just a junior but he's really put the time in to be successful, and all the work he's been doing has really been paying off for him.”



For the Panthers, the mid-season meets are what Landon considers the “fun” part of the season. “The kids are in meets this part of the year where they can bring home some hardware and see how the work they've done is paying off,” Landon said.

Redbird coach Vernon Curvey was pleased with the results for his team. “We've got just one senior on the team (Jett Durr),” Curvey said, “and having Arie finish fourth and (Evan Rathgeb) finished 13th was good to see. Our JV team won their race as well, and that was freshmen and sophomores in that one. I think we've got a really good future ahead of us.

“We're seeing some success and I think the kids know what it takes to be successful. We're on track to where I want us to be; we're a month away from the regional and we want to qualify for the sectional this year as a team, then get some runners up to (the state meet in Peoria in November).”

“Finishing third like we did (in both varsity races) is a big accomplishment,” said Warrior coach Rich Skirball. “We've had some kids hurt and we're trying to get healthy; the kids we had today really competed well. We had them do a hard training session on Monday and they had to reach deep within themselves.

“Coming to a tough course like this one without fresh legs, that was difficult, but we did well.”

For McGivney's Griffins, the second-year program won its first-ever medal in a competition, with freshman McAtee finishing 15th in a time of 25:10.53 (the top 15 runners in the varsity races were awarded medals).

“It's awesome,” McAtee said. “The course was really hard and it was pretty warm out there today, but it's still a great feeling.

“There was a lot of hills on the course today; it was a tough course.”

In the JV race, the Redbirds scored 16 points to take the team title over Collinsville, who had 54 points; Granite City was third with 56 points. Jersey's Christian Cazier, running as an individual, won the race in 19:10.76, with Redbird Nick Northway the fastest scoring runner in 19:13.30. Collinsville's Blerta Beluli won the girls JV race in 26:01.39; no team scores were kept in that competition.



