

Flowers rolls ahead for another victory, other area athletes compete in East Alton-Wood River Meet

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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WOOD RIVER – Clear skies and near-perfect seasonable temperatures greeting runners from 19 schools to Belk Park's south end for the 21st **East Alton-Wood River Invitational** cross-country meet Saturday morning.

The meet featured no team scoring, but did have races for both boys and girls in each of four classes, with starters being sent off a minute apart for each class over a three-mile course near the Belk Park golf course. A 1.5-mile junior-high race, in which no standings were kept, also took place at the same time the freshman races were held.

Jersey's Ben Flowers turned in the fastest time of the day, covering the course in 15:34 in the junior race. The course was, in his view, a difficult one. “It was pretty tough,” Flowers said. “This course is pretty rough; there was a lot of hills and bumps and stuff like that. My main focus was trying not to get hurt and make sure I didn't step into any holes.”

“Ben ran a great race on Saturday,” said Flowers' coach, **Harold Landon**. “We're getting primed for our conference meet on Thursday (the **Mississippi Valley Conference Championship at Principia College in Elsah**) and then for the (IHSA) regionals and sectionals after that.

“I love this meet, especially for our younger kids, the kids that don't get a chance to run up in the front of the pack. It gives them a chance to run with their peers. Everyone knows they have a chance to run in the front of the pack and perhaps even win the race.”

The weather helped attract a record number of participants and spectators for the event, which made race organizer and **EA-WR coach Russ Colona** very happy. “The weather was excellent today,” Colona said. “We had the biggest crowd we ever had – 19 schools and almost 300 runners – so it was a real nice day.

“We had some of the best runners in the state here too; Red Bud had some of the best girls in the state and Flowers.”

The format was devised by Colona when he began the race in 1995. “I came up with the format to give kids a chance to win plaques that normally wouldn't,” Colona said. “There are kids who get a chance to win stuff that wouldn't normally win, and that makes for a fun day.”

The top 10 freshman girls were Jenna Schwartz of Waterloo (19:07), Madi Throne of Litchfield, Ella King of Waterloo, Molly Lewis of Carlinville, Mackenzie Nigh of Lebanon, Ashley Hartman of Waterloo, Nicole Chastain of Red Bud, Kyanne Williams of Collinsville, Mira McAtee of McGivney Catholic and Ramires Merdedes of Dupo.

Top 10 freshman boy runners included Jacob Landon of Carlinville (17:14), Drew Bertman of Jersey, Bailey Lippad of Carlinville, Christian Lazier of Jersey, David Lewis of Waterloo, Will Brandt of First Baptist Academy of O'Fallon, Sam Krienborg of Waterloo, Caden Bohn of Piasa Southwestern, Asher Stidd of Jersey and Alex Sievers of Red Bud.

The top 10 sophomore girls were Mandy Kraus of Waterloo (20:21), Madelyn Williams of Carlinville, Stasia Nejmanowski of Carlinville, Emma Leonhard of Greenville, Emma Steining of Waterloo, Brittany Nigh of Lebanon, Riley Gribble of Civic Memorial, Kayla Tiery of Collinsville and Anja Krugm of Collinsville.

Top 10 sophomore boys were Jason Landen of Carlinville (16:41), Charles Helb IV of Carlinville, Ryan Poggenphul of Carlinville, Jacob Sewell of Collinsville, David Lunk of Waterloo, Adam Dobson of Waterloo, Garrett Healen of Red Bud, Grayson Armour of Carlinville and Josh Foster of Columbia.

The top 10 junior girls included Briana Travis of Litchfield (19:33), Lexi Throne of Litchfield, Libby Price of Waterloo, Elli Holan of Waterloo, Daniele London of Red Bud, Kiara Chapman of Jersey, Heather Elliott of Waterloo, Jordan Brandt of Litchfield, Kamryn Brewer of Carlinville and Taylor Vaughn of Dupo.

Top 10 junior boys included Flowers, Jake Schwartz of Waterloo, Brendan Peterson of Collinsville, Jaxen McNeese of Lebanon, Colin Kessinger of Greenville, Brendan Springman of East Alton-Wood River, Wil Autermann of Collinsville, Noah Hays of Waterloo, Chase Herren of Red Bud and Andrew Byden of Jersey.



Top 10 senior girls were Keri Bladestar of Red Bud (18:11), Colleen Madden of Carlinville, Jacey Mohr of Carlinville, Whitney Liefors of Waterloo, Alex Singleton of Civic Memorial, Alex Anrida Quarten of Litchfield, Natalie Halladay of Marquette, Cindy Morales of Collinsville, Emma Marcial of Collinsville and Shana Foster of Dupo.

Top 10 senior boys included Cory Landon of Carlinville (16:08.3), Nolan Kriece of Carlinville, Alex Becker of Red Bud, Kristian Aliserouse of Columbia, Mike Roach of Jersey, Frank Trost of Civic Memorial, Drake Claxton of Collinsville, Blake Rusteberg of Waterloo and Dakota Gill of Dupo.

Competing schools on the day were East Alton-Wood River, Litchfield, Gillespie, Staunton, Carlinville, Carrollton, Collinsville, Jersey, Greenville, Vandalia, Columbia, Red Bud, Dupu, Trenton Wesclin, Waterloo, Civic Memorial, McGivney Catholic, Marquette, Lebanon, Hillsboro and First Baptist Academy of O'Fallon.

