

THE METROWEST DAILY NEWS

By Mike Kelley/ Daily News Correspondent

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After winning the EMass Div. 1 title last Saturday with a subpar performance, Lincoln-Sudbury's girls ran much better this week. Unfortunately, they couldn't overcome the absence of their second and fifth runners, or the depth of Dennis-Yarmouth, who took the team crown with 56 points

"I hate using injuries as an excuse, but it is a reality," said L-S coach Chris Tarello, whose team finished second with 79 points. "Hannah Zabrowski, who's been our No. 2 all year, was out with a stress fracture. And Holly Clark, our fifth, has had the flu all week, so obviously I couldn't run her. The girls raced very well today, I thought they competed better than last week. Dennis-Yarmouth was just better than us."

L-S was led by junior Dana Jamieson, who completed her first season of cross-country with a third place finish of 19:32. Junior Emily Mephram was 15th with a time of 20:16, followed by sophomore Jess Griffin (36th, 20:49), junior Liz Albanese (38th, 20:51), and sophomore Barbara MacNeill (42nd, 20:53).

Dana Jamieson led the girls cross country team team to a second-place finish Saturday in the state cross country championships.

The Lincoln-Sudbury girls cross country team is widely known as one of the deepest team in the state. Coach Chris Tarello has put together a team capable of putting 14 girls under 21 minutes on an average 5K course.

Luckily for the other teams in the state the Warriors can only run seven at a time, and the mantra for the other teams has been "We only have to beat their top five."

However, the girls on the L-S team have also improved over the course of the season to the point where there is only one other team that even has the potential of putting out a better top five, and that team is Dennis-Yarmouth.

Going into the Massachusetts State Cross Country championship meet Saturday without one of its top runners, junior captain Hannah Ziobrowski, who was out with an injury, and freshman Holly Clark, who was felled by illness, the Warriors had yet another chance to show off their depth. For other teams, losing one of its top five would signal a sure defeat, but for L-S it is just business as usual and the Warriors had another great day at the state championship meet.

The L-S team left no room for error on the part of Dennis-Yarmouth. Unfortunately for the Warriors, the Dolphins of D-Y were nearly perfect as all of their top five came through with near season-best performances. It is not common for all runners to have top performances in the same race, but with the title on the line the Dolphins came through to beat L-S in a close race. Franklin finished a distant third, and five-time defending champ Amherst was fourth.

The race was held at Northfield Mountain, one of the most difficult courses in the state, known for the steep half-mile climb early in the race. The course was muddy and wet in places after a week of rain, but the skies cleared on Saturday leaving a near perfect day for a November race.

Dana Jamieson and Emily Mepham submitted their best races of the season in the biggest race of the year, and with the L-S third through sixth runners coming in a fast tight pack soon after, the Warriors put together a performance that would have resulted in a championship in most years.

Jamieson, the first-year transplant from the L-S track team, solidified her standing as one of the top harriers in the state with a third-place finish overall, and the first team runner to finish (some girls' teams did not qualify and they had to compete as individuals, which meant they were not involved in the team scoring). Jamieson finished in 19:32, which given the difficulty of the course and the conditions, was probably the equivalent of an 18:47 at an average 5K cross country course.

Mepham, another transplanted track runner from the state champion spring track team, came in second for the Warriors in 20:16, a full minute faster than what she had run a month ago on the same course. The time was good enough for eighth place in the team standings, 15th overall, and a place on the medal stand. Mepham used a strong finishing kick to pick off a D-Y runner in the last straightaway.

Equally as impressive was the Warrior pack that soon followed. Jess Griffin, Liz Albanese, Barbara MacNeill, and Rachel Potter all finished within seven seconds of each other and all in under 21 minutes, the equivalent of times in the low 20's on a normal course.

For Griffin, the hero of the Eastern Mass championship meet, the race was especially gratifying. She had an difficult time on this course at the Bay State Invitational meet a month earlier. This time around she came back to conquer the unforgiving course.

The meet also featured the return of Albanese. Albanese was expected to be one of the top returning runners from last year, however she was felled over the summer by a stress fracture. She had to endure watching her teammates from the sideline most of the season but worked hard nonetheless to come back, culminating in her participation in the state championship meet, her first varsity race of the season.

MacNeill also capped off a noteworthy season with her performance. MacNeill was the iron woman of the team, as she was the only runner to compete in every varsity race this year. Potter also finished well for the team. She and fellow sophomore MacNeill have now competed in two state championship meets in their young careers.

Two years ago the team did not qualify for the state meet. Last year the team graduated three of its top seven including its top runner from a team that finished 13th at the state meet. From that remote starting point coach Tarello and senior captains Christine Duggan, Krysten Muldoon, Lauren Hardardt, and junior captains Ziobrowski and Molly Binder almost led the young and inexperienced Warriors to a state title, being thwarted by a near perfect performance by the one team with the talent to beat them. With all 14 of their top runners returning, even that may not be enough to stop the Warriors next season.