

STATE MEET RECAP

The one goal all runners have regardless of team affiliation is to PR at the State Meet. First of all, it means your team has qualified for State, which in itself is an accomplishment. Second of all, it means you are in the top seven for your State-qualifying team, which is also quite an accomplishment. Finally, it means that training, conditioning, and all your preparation culminated in perfect harmony at the exact right time. Put all of those things together and you can begin to understand how awesome it is that we earned at least eleven PRs this morning! I say at least because there has been some question about how long Farmington exactly is. If it is 2.95 (as they advertise), then Zac Nelson and Matt Ingalsbe missed PRs by a mere 4 and 2 seconds, respectively. If Farmington is only 2.9 miles (as Garmin's suggest) the Zac and Matt earned PRs by 13 and 15 seconds, respectively. But conversion issues aside, both Zac and Matt looked strong today, and represented the mighty freshman class of EPG well against the best of the best in Class A. So let's assume that Garmin's are right and Zac and Matt earned PRs. That puts us at 13 of 14 PRs on the day, and the one athlete who missed her PR, Maddie Morrison, still ran an awesome race after not having raced in three weeks.

Let's start with the girls race.

We left El Paso before the sunrise and arrived at Detweiller as the sun was just cresting the trees and lighting up the dew on the still green grass. We parked as the first bus up the hill and made our way to our tent which we set up the night before. All the bibs were handed out (one for the front, one for the back, and one for each hip per runner) and the necessary trips to the restroom were made. The girls set off on their warmup right on time at 8am and I wandered off to burn off nervous energy and earn as much pre-race karma as I could squeeze in by wishing as many coaches "good luck" as possible. I was able to catch up with EPGXC-alum Chadwick's dad, who runs the ROTC at Manual who serves as the color guard for the meet. After chatting up a few coaches and getting the impression that everyone was pleased with the conditions, our girls finished their warmup at the top of the park and we met to go through some strideouts and review our race plan. The girls remembered the plan we went over the afternoon before and everyone looked calm and prepared to execute. I was actually more confident after talking to the girls than I was before the strideouts. They looked good and ready to rock. They headed back into Box 4 and I headed to the horseshoe as we planned. The gun went off and the race began to unfold. I was hoping the girls were enjoying the first 400 meters as their really isn't anything you can do that first 400 except enjoy the atmosphere and stay on your feet. Anna Sophia Keller made her way to the front to finish off four straight years of undefeated cross country, and our girls paired up and began to run. Julia and Cate came through first, smiling and relaxed. Sophi and Allison were next and they were not very far behind our first pair. Sarah and Tia looked great and ahead of schedule. At the mile mark, our goal times were 6:15-6:21-6:35-6:35-and three at 6:55; we came through at 6:15-6:15-6:22-6:22-and three at 6:48. Right on or slightly ahead of schedule- they were executing the plan and feeling strong. I met the girls as they turned into the triangle and they all got right back on pace after the double-sharp turn. As they came back out and headed up the incline to the 2-mile mark they were all still right near goal pace. As they came back down to the horseshoe for the third and final time, everyone's goals were within reach. Cate was absolutely flying, passing people right and left, looking to break Adam Ludy's record of passing 37 people in the final 500 meters. Julia Reid was running an incredible race, a PR pace by over thirty seconds. Sophi was leading Allison but the two were side by side at 18:20, a big kick and they could still break 20. Tia and Sarah came through at 19:00 and they looked ready to finish strong. Maddie was about 90 seconds back and fighting two girls as they headed up to the finish. Choosing to watch from where I did, I did not see the finishes, but they must have been good based on the times. Cate finished in 18:41. Four seconds ahead of her goal time, crushing a 6:04 last mile! and landing as the second-fastest girl for our team ever on this course, behind state runner-up Julie James. It was a lifetime PR by 25 seconds. Julia Reid also moved into the record books- as the 4th fastest Titan ever on the course with her 19:09. That was six seconds under her goal time and a 34 second PR, AND she PRed in each of the last three meets of the year- great finish Julia! Sophi and Allison were next in 20:10 and 20:11. That's a 33-second PR for Sophi and a 10-second PR for Allison. Tia Reilly returned as our number five, almost breaking 21 with her 21:08, a 38-second PR. Sarah Schug was right behind her, another lifetime PR, running 21:26. Maddie Morrison finished off her fourth year of cross country on the State course, running in the State meet, running a 22:43. Our girls averaged 19:51- our fastest team ever by a long shot and 46-seconds per person faster than just one week ago. Our girls placed 15th in the state, closing the gap on Olympia and Eureka and gaining valuable experience for future State Championships. Congrats to St. Joe Ogden, Unity, and Liberty for taking home the trophies.

Celebration for the girls' PR harvest would have to wait as the boys were already in the box getting ready for their 10:00am race. Six PRs would be a tough act to follow. I got a similar feeling of confidence as we talked during strideouts. And with senior leaders like Adam and Andy giving final instructions, I knew the boys would be good to go. I made the walk down to the horseshoe and kept replaying the girls awesome race in my head. Another gun, and another solid start for the Titans. Adam led Andy as they came around the first time. Matt was out fast, but Bo and Noah were right behind, our top five looked strong. Will was only separated by a few seconds and Zac was right behind DeeMack's Garrett Forrest. As they came back down to the triangle, everything looked copacetic: Andy and Adam were still side by side; Matt, Bo, and Noah were all within three seconds of each other; Will wasn't too far back, and Zac had closed the gap on Garrett. As they came back out Andy was slightly ahead of Adam, Bo had caught Matt, Noah was right with them and the whole top five was looking awesome. I'm terrible at spotting places at the State meet, but if I had to guess, I would have said we looked like a top ten team with one mile to go. A big third mile, and who knows? As they crossed the two-mile mark Andy was under goal pace by one second and Adam was right on 10:30. Noah and Bo were supposed to come through at 10:53.3 and they crossed at 10:52 and 10:54, with Matt sandwiched in between at 10:53. Our top five were running right on schedule. Will crossed at 11:22- his fastest 2-mile split of 2016, and right behind his track 3200 PR, and Zac crossed at 11:53, not far off his goal pace and right at PR pace. As they came around the last time, Andy and Adam looked strong, holding on to positions in the low 40s- a top 25 finish and All-State was not out of the question, but would require a huge kick. Both moved well and looked awesome up the final stretch, Adam finishing in 35th in 15:41 and Andy in 44th in 15:49. This makes them the second and third fastest Titans ever to traverse the Detweiller course- with Adam tying brother Jacob's PR of 15:41 from his senior year state meet. Bo looked awesome at the horseshoe and put forth a tremendous kick up to the finish- finishing in 16:14, our fastest sophomore time ever, a PR by 28 seconds. Noah stayed strong and finished in 16:36, an 8-second PR, and our 8th fastest Titan on the course ever. After his blazing 5:16 first mile, Matt managed to hang on to a 16:42- what an awesome way to close out a freshman year. Will's PR of 17:27 from Farmington was crushed, and he missed breaking 17:00 by a fraction of a second, running 17:00 on the button. Zac broke 18:00 on a legit 3.0 course, running 17:52. I could use a thesaurus to describe how awesome the boys raced, but I think the numbers speak for themselves:

-Six lifetime PRs and one season PR.

-A total of 120 seconds of improvement

-9th place in the State, beating three teams from our Sectional that beat us last week

-A 16:12 average, less than one second behind our 2015 7th place team.

-All of the Top Five now on the All-Time Top Ten List

Congrats to Harvest Christian, Freeburg, and Richmond-Burton for taking the trophies.

Huge thanks to Coach Heffron, Coach Inga, and Coach Dave for showing up to cheer with the rest of the EPGXC parents and fans. It was nice to have the support and I think the kids noticed and appreciated it.

STATE BOUND!

It was an unseasonably warm morning at Maple Lane Country Club in Elmwood, Illinois, with a steady breeze from the south and a bright sun making it feel more like late September than almost November, but we came to run and all teams had the same conditions.

We had just come off a fantastic Regional in which 12 of 14 Titans had PRs en route to a pair of third-place finishes and relatively easy advancement to the Elmwood Sectional. Advancing to State would require that no additional teams from our Regional sneaking ahead of us while simultaneously out-scoring at least 12 of the other 14 teams advancing out of Liberty and Macomb. It was going to be a challenging road to qualify.

On the girls side, talented girls teams from Liberty and Williamsville would be joining the Sectional party, in addition to the Olympia and Eureka teams that had separated themselves from us at Farmington. This would leave only one more team ticket to State with Springfield Lutheran, DeeMack, Elmwood, and ourselves all with the talent to make that happen. DeeMack looked awesome at the half mile mark, with all five of their girls near the front. This was similar to how they got out at the Elmwood invitational, but somehow we were able to catch them on October 1 in the final half mile to edge them out for second place by a mere six points. At Sectional their 4th and 5th faded more than usual they ended up in 7th as a team. Springfield Lutheran was beating us 88-100 through our first four runners, but our 5th placed 80th while theirs placed 115th (in team scoring) to secure the fifth and final team spot 180 to 203. This was the first time our girls have qualified as a team and we actually beat our team course record despite the warmer weather, running a 20:37 average through our top five.

Cate Atkins led the way in 19:21, placing 12th.

Julia Reid had a lifetime PR with her 19:43, beating many other schools' #2s.

Sophi Allen dropped thirty seconds since her previous Elmwood meet, running 20:43.

Allison Kelly also broke 21, running 20:51.

Our 5-6-7 were not where we had hoped, but they stuck together and made the moves necessary over the last mile to secure our trip to State:

Tia Reilly ran 22:29, Sarah Schug was 22:36, and Hannah Ludy ran 22:51.

This team set a new Sectional record for the team, a new Elmwood course record, and made history by being the first team to qualify for State. Now we will see how high they can place among the best of the best.

On the guys side, there were nine teams that were in the hunt for five precious spots to State. While Elmwood and Illini West had the talent to win (and ended up only four points apart for first and second) no team was counted out and many teams had legitimate talent pools to make the next step. Our outlook was bright after Regional with our top six all running sub-17 times on the 2.95 Farmington course. But the Pantagraph had listed us as a "long shots" looking for an upset with six ranked teams ahead of us in the polls and Mercer County one spot behind. At the start we appeared to be in decent shape, with the boys looking relaxed and right at target times at the mile mark. Andy and Adam were shoulder to shoulder at 5:16, as planned and Noah and Bo crossed right at 5:23. One concern was that Matt had lost contact with teammates Bo and Noah and came through the mile alone at 5:33, but Will was not far behind and

looking fresh. Zac crossed in 5:56 and everyone seemed to be feeling alright. Elmwood and Illini West were putting on a clinic and DeeMack looked like their talented selves, but I thought we were right behind a much improved Tremont team for that fifth spot, with Athens being a concern in the back of my mind (although I couldn't find their fifth man). As Wyatt McIntyre of Athens widened his gap over the field, it was clear that Athens was going to win the individual race, and then I saw that their #2 was ahead of our #3 and their 3-4 were right with our 3-4. Tremont still looked strong, although I kept getting them confused with the Havana runners. We needed to have good races from everyone to beat either Athens or Tremont for that fifth spot. At the two mile mark, Andy and Adam looked as strong as ever and matching their 2-mile split from the flat Farmington course, catching DeeMack's #2 and moving on the top of the field, including Eureka's #1 and Tremont's #1, I figured we needed to catch both as it was going to be a close meet so I may have started yelling a little, which I normally do not do. Noah and Bo came through next, 20-seconds slower than Farmington, but still moving up on the field and looking strong. We needed them to pick up several more spots that last mile as Matt was no longer with them, nor even in sight as they crossed the two. In fact, it would be Will who came through next for the Titans, looking strong and determined as he knew he would be critical to our success as a team. He hit the gas and began moving up. Matt and Zac, our freshmen, came through the two in 11:54 and 12:16, looking tired, but ready for the final mile. I sprinted over to the finish line to help get guys in and I saw some of the best kicks I've seen all year. Guys were picking up crucial places on that homestretch and kicking strong. I had no idea how the team scores would shake out, but I was pleased with how they attacked the finish.

At the conclusion of the boys race, I knew it was going to be a close meet; I also knew that our times were nowhere near what we had set as our goal times, and I didn't think anyone had ran a PR. Usually, when no one runs a PR, you do not advance to State (I had not seen Julia's official time- our lone PR), so I was not optimistic about our chances, despite feeling that we had ran our hearts out. We regrouped for a shake out jog, a little cooldown before the awards ceremony so I could shake off some nervousness and I could tell the kids how proud I was of their efforts, how we are not defined by one meet, and that we will continue to run and improve regardless of how the teams scores played out because that is who we are. No one questioned that our kids ran their hardest, and the guts I saw on that final homestretch were unquestionably the best kicks we've had all year- that is all you ask for as a coach, you just hope it is enough.

As we jogged back to camp to pick up and pack up, someone mentioned that teams scores were posted... both teams had qualified in fifth... It was one of the greatest feelings in coaching- when the hard work of your athletes and their all-out investment in the race is paid back in full by the sport and confirmed by the team scores. I took a few pictures of the results in case they were changed later, and confirmed with the meet referee that these were indeed official and that my teams would not be robbed of a state berth by a clerical errors later. Upon his confirmation, I pumped a fist, smiled uncontrollably, and began to review our plans for this week's training.

EPGXC advances two teams to Sectionals

If the weather feels like postseason, and the competition feels like postseason, and times drop like postseason... it must be the postseason!

Twelve of fourteen Titans earned PRs today at the 2.95-mile Farmington Regional as both girls and boys took third place to advance to the Elmwood Sectional.

The girls had the perfect race, with all seven girls running to a PR.

Cate Atkins ran yet another smart race, controlled and even paced and she moved up into 4th place overall by the end, with a 18:46 (converts to a 19:05, a PR by one second).

Julia Reid ran 19:28 (converts to 19:47) a six second PR, placing 8th overall.

Allison Kelly broke the 20-minute barrier, running 19:56, which converts to 20:16- a five second PR. She placed 14th, while EPG #4, Sophi Allen was right behind in 20th. Sophi's 20:08 converts to 20:28- a 17-second PR!

Tia Reilly, Sarah Schug, and Hannah Ludy worked together to close the gap between our 4 and 5 and Tia's PR of 21:03 (21:24 converted) was enough to place 41st overall and secure a trip to Sectionals for the whole team. Pushing Tia the whole way was junior Sarah Schug, who finally took down her 2015 lifetime PR with her 21:19. Hannah Ludy ran through some pain to finish off the Titan effort with her 21:20 (21:41 converted) a thirty second PR.

In the boys race it was a good thing they didn't take team scores at the quarter-mile mark: we would have been the last place team. Luckily, we were the smartest team on the course and we had improved by the mile mark to the top five, and by the finish we had moved up even further to place third as a team, a mere ten points behind DeeMack for second. Adam and Andy ran shoulder to shoulder, looking smooth and strong the entire race, finishing in 15:49 and 15:52, a season-PR for Andy and both had a lot more to give next week. Bo Halvorsen dropped the hammer in

the final mile, running a lifetime PR, 16:09 (16:25) for 11th overall. Matt Ingalsbe returned to St. Joe form, running what we believe to be a freshmen record 16:23 (16:39) over the 2.95 course. Noah Smith struggled with hamstring tightness, but still managed a sub-17 16:35 (16:51) for 31st. Will Bushert had a 20+ second lifetime PR 16:52 (17:09) to put six Titans under 17. Zac Nelson also had a lifetime PR, 17:30 (17:47).

EPGXC looked strong and confident as we moved up throughout the race. If we can duplicate 12/14 PRs next Saturday we'll be in good position to advance both teams to State for the first time in HS EPGXC History, including the first girls team to ever qualify.

EPGXC Succeeds All Over Central Illinois

It was a crazy weekend for EPGXC-- starting with sending off the JHXC teams to IESA State, then hopping on a bus to Eureka for a pseudo-HOI Conference Championship Meet, followed by updates from IESA State, followed by another meet at Detweiller Park in Peoria. In all that craziness, good times were had by all.

We got one of our first program-wide pictures taken as the JH and HS teams joined together for an impressive pic of our 50+ athletes prior to sending them off to State. You can see various interpretations of the pic on Facebook.

Then we went to Eureka, where Julia Reid, Sophi Allen, Hannah Ludy, Sarah Schug, Molly Holt, Carmen SantAmour, Olivia Tipler, Mya Gramm, and Lauren Buggar represented the Titans in the first-ever HOI Conference meet (named the Eureka Invitational because the Conference doesn't recognize it as an actual championship). Those nine raced to a third place finish, just behind state-ranked Eureka and DeeMack, but ahead of a very good Heyworth program. Julia and Sophi earned pseudo All-Conference honors with their top 20 finishes (Julia 5th and Sophi 11th). Hannah ran to a lifetime PR, 21:42; Carmen, Mya, and Olivia worked together at breaking their goal of 24:00 and succeeded as they ran lifetime PRs of 23:33, 23:36, and 23:36, respectively. Lauren made good on her pledge not to be over 30 after Elmwood, running 28:39.

In the boys race, only Randy Kent, Aidan Mann, and Mitchell Uphoff chose the Eureka course (the rest chose Detweiller). Randy ran to a lifetime PR, 19:13; Aidan ran to a lifetime PR 21:41, and Mitchell just missed his lifetime PR, running 22:59.

Afterwards, Coach SantAmour stayed and picked up our medals as we hit the road for Peoria. We received text updates that the JH girls had a perfect day (7/7 on PRs) and that Asa was 7th overall, but no team scores were available.

Once in Peoria, our remaining girls (Allison, Tia, and Maddie) warmed up and got ready to race. The temperature had increased since Eureka, but the course was in much better shape than expected. The girls started off fast, Allison crossing in 6:16, her previous fastest first mile being 6:33. Tia and Maddie was right behind in 6:43, both fastest first miles of the season. The second mile (and the heat) slowed them down a bit, but all three were still on pace for PRs. As they fought the field that last mile and raced up to the finish, all three ended with PRs. Allison in 20:21 (a 20-second improvement); Tia in 21:39 (a 27-second improvement); and Maddie in 22:04 (season PR by 35 seconds!).

In the guys race, Adam Ludy led the first mile in 5:16. But Noah and Bo were right on his heels in 5:17 and 5:18. In fact, Noah was temporarily ahead of Adam during mile two, before Adam retook him in the final mile. Adam finished in 16:33. Noah in a lifetime PR of 16:44. Bo stayed in contact the entire race, also running a lifetime PR of 16:48. Will Bushert stepped up as our #4, running 17:39. Matt Ingalsbe ran 18:13 to be our #5 in the varsity race. Aidan Killian set a lifetime PR by 53-seconds with his 19:14, and Jeb Uphoff ran a 20:16 after roofing all morning, quite an impressive feat. Our boys placed 9th of 45 teams with their performance.

In the open, the freshmen trio of Zac Nelson, Brett Endress, and Jordan Shelton all sought to earn a top-20 medal. All three were in the top 25 at the mile mark, as they crossed just under six minutes. Zac kept the hammer down and ran another low-six mile, moving up into 6th place and crossing the two-mile mark at 12:04. Brett was hanging tough at 12:30, but recent illness and a wicked side stitch were making for a painful 12:49 for Jordan. As they made their last lap around the park, Zac finished strong, 18:05, our 5th fastest time of the day, and in the top 10 in the Open. Brett also hung on for a 12-second PR, 19:06.

When the dust settled on the long day, multiple successes were had:

- Seven lifetime PRs for the boys
- Five lifetime PRs and one season PR for the girls
- 3rd in conference for the girls
- 9th of 45 at Patriot for the boys
- JH Girls placed 8th- highest ever finish for a JH team
- JH Boys placed 5th- beating the record the girls set 45 minutes earlier.

"Boah" Wraps Up Competition at Amboy

The 1-2 tandem of Bo Halvorsen and Noah Smith (collectively known as Boah) repeated their 1-2 performance against fresh soph competition at Amboy; leading their squad to an undefeated FS season with their 31-64 victory over freindly rival Fieldcrest. Their times of 13:05 and 13:08 rank just behind senior duo Andy and Adam's time from 2014

(12:56 and 12:57) and just ahead of alums Ryan Filkins (13:47) and Hunter Cobbley (13:55). Chasing Cobbley's time was freshman Matt Ingalsbe (10th, 13:58) and sophomore Will Bushert (11th, 13:59), putting our top four in the top eleven overall. Rounding out our top five was Jordan Shelton (23rd, 14:37). Zac Nelson (15:00) and Brett Endress (15:48) also ran on the FS Championship squad.

In the girls varsity race, Julia Reid led the way for the Titans, earning third place on the Top Ten Titans list for the course, finishing 8 seconds ahead of Cate Atkins' freshman year time. Julia also earned a medal for her performance. Running #2 and earning a lifetime PR was sophomore Sophi Allen, running a 20:13 on the 2.9-mile course (#6 girl all time). Allison Kelly also made the top-ten all time runners, tying Karly Miller's 2011 time with her 20:20. Running #4 was Tia Reilly, with a 21:44, her first time under 22 this season. Sarah Schug continues to be a consistent performer, running 22:05 to put our top-five average at 20:47. Molly Holt was right behind Sarah, running 22:09. Our girls placed 7th in the team race out of 27 teams.

In the boys varsity, Adam and Andy ran together for the first time since Bureau Valley and both earned medals for their top 25 finishes. Andy was 11th in 15:45 and Adam was 21st with a 16:04. Jeb ran his second race in a row sub-20, finishing in 19:46.

In the open, Maddie Morrison got out fast early, and was in the lead at the mile mark. She held on valiantly in the second mile and ended up in 7th, earning her a top ten medallion. Carmen and Mya both ran close to their 16:00 goal times, finishing in 16:23 and 16:22, respectively. Olivia battled the heat and still ran a 17:45. Lauren maintained sub-30 pace that she started at Elmwood, finishing in 19:55 over the two-mile open course. Freshmen Randy Kent got out in 6:40, and held on for a 13:41. Aidan Killian dropped thirteen seconds from mile one to mile two, running 13:29. Aidan Mann ran a 14:14 and Mitchell Uphoff ran 15:40

Warning! Falling Times Ahead!

There should have been a caution sign outside of Maple Lane Country Club as the EPGXC Titans were about to unleash some dangerously fast times on the cool and overcast golf course just outside of Elmwood. We had a good goal-setting session in the weight room on Wednesday, and then tailored Thursday's workout to dial in that goal pace. The kids crushed the workout, usually a very good sign that their season bests should be placed on the endangered species list. Friday, we recovered with an easy run and some barefoot work on the turf, Saturday we were ready.

The Fresh Soph boys came in as the team favorites, having won their previous FS

race at Bureau Valley with almost all of the same teams in attendance at Elmwood. The Fieldcrest coach approached me before the race saying "I hope you ran your studs in the Fresh Soph race cause we are trying to stay with some of your guys". It seemed like everyone knew we have a loaded group of underclassmen (nevermind the freakshow of talented athletes dominating the junior high scene). Right from the gun, our boys took to the front and never looked back. Leading the charge was the sophomore duo of Noah Smith and Bo Halvorsen, crossing the mile mark in 5:23, shoulder-to-shoulder in first and second place. Close behind was Matt Ingalsbe, who continues to have a stellar freshman season, crossing in 5:35, with Will Bushert charging an aggressive first mile a mere two seconds behind Matt. Jordan Shelton and Zac Nelson were passing people right and left as they crossed the one in 6:01. A small gap later Aidan Killian and Brett Endress came through in 6:22, followed by Aidan Mann and Mitchell Uphoff just under seven. It was the first time all of our guys had crossed the mile mark under seven-foreshadowing the stellar finish we would have.

At the two, Bo and Noah had increased their lead on the field and were in control heading into the final mile. With PRs of 16:50 and 16:55, their 11:23 two-mile split put their PRs well within range. Moving up during the second mile was Will Bushert, who was now even with Ingalsbe as they crossed in 11:53 and headed into the final mile. Zac and Jordan had held strong, crossing in 12:40 and moving into the top 20 in the race. Brett Endress had moved up the most in the second, crossing in 12:56 and closing the gap on our 5-6. Aidan Killian crossed in 13:22, and Aidan Mann had crept up closer to Mitchell, crossing at 14:41 behind Mitchell's 14:34. As I sprinted to the finish line, I almost missed Bo and Noah as they took first and second overall in the race: 17:05 and 17:09. Logan Schmillen of Fieldcrest took third place and upset our sweep of the top four spots as Will Bushert and Matt Ingalsbe settled for 4th and 5th overall- 17:36 and 17:48. A lifetime PR for Will, beating his Peoria Heights time of 17:48 from 2015. Jordan and Zac raced each other to the chute, crossing in 19:04 and 19:05, and Brett Endress almost caught them as he sped a 6:26 last mile for a 19:18, a lifetime PR by 45 seconds. Aidan Killian practically tied his lifetime PR in 20:07, and Aidan Mann got his lifetime PR by 31 seconds with his 21:50. But the race of the FS race had to belong to Mitchell Uphoff. Mitchell set a new personal best in a three-mile race by 1:51, dropping from 23:45 to 21:54 on a hilly and slippery course! When the team scores settled, our FS Boys came away with a victory over second-place Fieldcrest 27 to 49, beating them by an average of 60-seconds per

runner. Watching and cheering the fresh-soph team, the girls varsity was getting pretty excited about their possibilities in the next race.

The varsity girls were excited, coming off their trophy-finish at Furrow on Tuesday, as well as some goal-crushing 800s on Thursday. Confidence was high already, when the Fieldcrest coach came over and wished our girls the best. Another testament to why I love this sport- every coach, every parent, every athlete sincerely wishes the best for all participants- that positive energy meant a lot to our girls and they finished their final strideout and got in the box with good vibes. In classic EPGXC fashion, we got out smart; spotting the other teams several seconds as they blistered the first mile and we bided our time to drop the hammer in the second and third miles. Cate Atkins came through the mile mark at 6:25, about thirty seconds behind the leaders, but with a smile on her face and a full tank of gas- classic Cate fashion. Julia Reid had been through the mile mark a few seconds earlier at 6:19, and Allison Kelly and Sophi Allen were right behind in 6:33 and 6:36. Hannah Ludy was back in action after working out some hip issues and she tied herself to senior leader Maddie Morrison for a 6:52 first mile. Sarah Schug was right behind at 6:58, with Tia and Molly following her lead at 7:00. The Fab Four (Carmen, Mya, Olivia, and Gabby) looked as in control as their Thursday workout, crossing in 7:46, well ahead of schedule, but looking great. Lauren Buggar has her fastest first of the season by thirty seconds, crossing in 8:37. As I jogged over to the two mile mark I remarked how poised and in control our girls looked and how I expected they would move up in a field who had gotten out too fast. Little did I know how much they would move. Cate had gained 22-seconds on the leaders, moving from 28th at the mile mark to 7th or 8th by the two! Her near-even splits of 6:25-6:28 on a course that has a downhill first and uphill second were impressive for even a flat course. Not only that, she was still smiling, holding a high stride rate, and effortlessly moving up on the leaders. Julia had developed a pesky side stitch, but still managed a thumbs up at the two, crossing in 13:08. Allison crossed in 13:56, and Sophi in 14:07. Sarah Schug had moved into our #5 spot in 14:39, with Tia and Molly following along in 14:46 and 14:50. Hannah and Maddie were hanging on to our #8 and #9 right with the crew at 14:52 and 14:54. While our Fab Four broke up during mile two, Carmen SantAmour and Mya Gramm maintained an awesome pace, crossing the two at 16:06, on pace to threaten the 24-minute mark, when neither had a PR under 25! Olivia Tipler was hanging on, still within striking distance at 16:15, and Gabby Hamilton was having the race of her life, despite losing her pack

she crossed the two at 17:05. Lauren Buggar had settled in with a 10:24 second mile, but at 19:01, still was in position to get out of the "dirty thirties" once and for all. As I was writing Lauren's two-mile split on the split sheet, Cate Atkins was crossing the finish line in 6th place in 19:06! A lifetime PR by 11 seconds! Julia Reid tied her lifetime PR from SJO at 19:53- placing 12th. Allison Kelly missed a PR by a mere nine seconds, running 20:57, and Sophi Allen had a lifetime PR of 21:15. Sarah Schug was two-seconds behind her season PR, but 37-seconds ahead of her time here last year, running 22:04. Tia Reilly continued her hot streak, setting another lifetime PR, this time by 53 seconds with her 22:06. Molly Holt also had a fabulous race, a lifetime PR of 72-seconds in 22:32. Hannah Ludy was right behind Molly in 22:36, also a lifetime PR. Maddie Morrison missed a season PR by eight seconds with her 22:47. Carmen and Mya had amazing races- Carmen running 24:05- a lifetime PR by 67 seconds; Mya ran 24:15, lifetime best by 66 seconds; and Olivia ran 24:28- lifetime PR by over a minute. Those three carried Gabby to a lifetime PR as well, she dropped a 25:44, a PR by 2:19! Lauren managed to break 30 for the first time this year, and broke 29 as well, running 28:31. The group effort by the girls led to a second-place team finish, second only to #6-ranked Eureka.

We had two varsity boys: Andy Layden and Jeb Uphoff. Andy's goal was to run a 16:30. He got out in 5:22, fast and relaxed. He came through the two at 10:59, right on pace. He closed in 5:28 to finish in 16:27, 10th overall a season PR and right under his goal time. Jeb got out fast in 6:19, his fastest first mile ever. He fell back to a 6:53 in mile two and was hurting pretty bad, but his 13:12 was still in great shape to make his sub-20 goal. He brought it home in 7:13, totaling 20:25 and missing his sub-20 goal. but still setting a lifetime PR by eight seconds.

The biggest mishap of the day occurred when I sent the kids on a long cooldown thinking we had a while before results. We did not have a lot of time and all the FS boys and girls missed receiving their six individual medals and two team plaques. Andy made it back just in time to pick up his medal. It was a good day.

We ran awesome at St. Joe.

Every single runner had a PR. 14 for 14; ten of those were lifetime PRs, also. Some details:

The guys ran first, so I'll recap their race first. Adam Ludy was coming off a strong

finish at Bureau Valley and some even stronger workouts leading up. He felt good and got out quick as he crossed the one in 5:06, he was hanging out with Carlinville's #1 and looking relaxed. Bo and Noah were on his heels, crossing at 5:21 and 5:22. Matt Ingalsbe was closing the gap between our #3 and #4, crossing in 5:36. Jordan, Will, and Zac came through as a trio right at 6:00. It was aggressive, but they were ready. At the two, we had moved up nicely, Ludy was holding a top ten spot; Bo and Noah held steady, crossing just over the 11:00 mark; the biggest surprise was Matt, who had closed the gap even further, crossing just five seconds behind Bo and Noah. Our 5-6-7 trio was loosely held together, led by Zac at 12:06, followed by Will and Jordan 12:07 and 12:09. At the finish, we held on extremely well, Adam finishing in a lifetime PR 15:48, for 10th place, the 4th fastest time in EPGXC history. Bo Halvorsen and Noah Smith made the top-ten Titan list with their 16:50 and 16:55, first time either had been under 17. Just missing 17:00 was Matt Ingalsbe, who ran 17:03- a lifetime PR by 75 seconds off his 2.5 converted time and 112 seconds faster than his previous 3-mile PR! Matt earned snazziest runner of the day with that performance. Our 5-6-7 trio also had PR days: Zac Nelson dropping 1:41 off his 3-mile PR- down to 18:13, Jordan Shelton dropped 22 seconds off his Tuesday time, running 18:18; and Will Bushert had a 34-second season PR at 18:20, also 34 seconds faster than his 2015 effort at this meet.

When the dust had settled and the scores were finally tabulated, the Titans found themselves in 7th place of 26 teams, with six of our seven runners earning trophies.

Chasing the guys into the chute were the ladies, who also were having a banner day. Cate and Julia came through the one in decent position, 6:39 and 6:42, respectively. Allison Kelly had her fastest start of the year, crossing the one-mile mark in 6:47, chased by Sophi at 6:55. Sarah and Maddie came through together at 7:10 and Tia Reilly crossed in 7:45. Cate continued pushing through mile two, picking up the pace and passing over fifteen girls. Julia also descended from one to two, crossing the two-mile mark in 13:19. Allison continued to have a PR day, her second mile staying under the 7-minute mark for the first time this year. Sophi had faded, but only slightly and fought hard to bring it back in mile three. Sarah Schug was looking strong and moving up rapidly; and Maddie Morrison, who hadn't had a second or third mile under 8:00 all season, ran her second in 7:49 and her third in 7:39! Tia Reilly ran a 7:57 second to cross the two-mile mark at 15:42 and would need a 7:17 to sneak under her goal time of 23:00 Not one to disappoint, Tia turned

on the jets, especially in that last 100 meters on the track and finished in 22:59.8! Maddie's great last two miles earned her a 22:39, tying her time from 2015 and a 2016 PR by a whole minute. Sarah Schug earned a season PR by 58 seconds, Sophi earned a lifetime PR by 4 seconds. Allison Kelly had the girls race of the day, running 20:48, a lifetime PR by 90 seconds! Julia Reid broke the 20-minute barrier, running 19:53, a lifetime PR by 72 seconds. Cate Atkins missed her lifetime PR by two seconds, running 19:19, her fastest of 2016 by 84 seconds.

The girls team placed tenth of twenty-one schools, earning the Comeback Award for being the most-improved team from 2015 results (when we were 16th of 19). Most excitingly, the girls team time was 20:44, only ONE second off the all-time team record (set at a short? Eureka Regional course in 2010). In addition, ALL seven girls earned a place on the Top Ten Titans of all time on the SJO three-mile course.

Huge Hardware Haul at Bureau Valley

It was a long week for EPGXC, our longest mileage week of training and three meets challenged the stamina of our athletes, but we should emerge all the stronger for our efforts. The first effort was our Monday long run- most athletes logged their longest run of their life. Some broke into double-digit single runs for the first time, and Noah Smith logged his first half marathon- running 13.1 miles- congrats on that milestone, Noah.

On Tuesday, we traveled to Fairbury for a triangular against Prairie Central and Heyworth. The temps were up and the air was thick with humidity and mosquitoes, but the Titans executed a smart race plan, moving up as the race went on and ended up with team victories for both the boys and girls. Randy Kent earned snazziest courier du bois by closing the gap between himself and the EPG pack ahead of him. Unfortunately, Prairie Central altered the course which we ran the previous five years, so comparisons to previous years were inaccurate. The new Top Times page now has four columns to reflect the course change. That being said, a few athletes actually beat their 2015 times, despite having to run almost a quarter-mile farther.

2015 Cate- 21:13

2016 Cate- 21:08

2015 Carmen- 28:02

2016 Carmen- 27:53

2015 Noah- 19:56

2016 Noah- 18:53

2015 Will- 20:31

2016 Will- 20:27

On Thursday, we made our annual pilgrimage to Princeville to race against the Stark County Rebels and the host Princeville Princes and Lady Princes. Again, both our girls and boys team emerged victorious, our boys with a perfect score of 15, and our girls edging a very good Stark County team by two. Randy Kent handed off the snazzy suit to Lauren Buggar for her season PR on a twisty turny course. There were delicious cupcakes at the post-race potluck, and I think a few of our runners made some new friends.

On Friday, we needed some shaking out as the long run and races were weighing heavily on our legs. After some form work and some easy runs, we hit the weight room.

Saturday morning we woke early to head to the mighty metropolis of Walnut, IL (via Ohio) to participate in the Bureau Valley Invitational. One of the highlights of Bureau Valley is the fresh soph race, as it gives our underclassmen a chance to race against boys their own age. Our Fresh/Soph squad came out guns blazing as Noah Smith led the way, literally. Smith was in second place and looking relaxed at the mile mark before deciding to push the pace and take the lead during mile two. The AW kid passed him back in the last half and they raced to the finish with Smith taking the silver. Matt Ingalsbe had a fabulous race, our fastest last-half mile of the day, closing in 2:59 to finish in the top ten. Will Bushert also earned a trophy in the race, bringing our total to three. With Jordan Shelton and Zac Nelson working together to close in on trophies of their own, the Titans FS Squad was able to win the team race and regained the Fresh-Soph championship which we hadn't earned in a couple years. For those counting at home, the team trophy marked our fourth trophy in the FS Race.

In the girls varsity, Our top three all finished in the trophies, with Cate Atkins finishing in the top ten, and Julia Reid and Sophi Allen placing 22nd and 23rd, respectively. Sophi earned "snazziest" with her lifetime PR and by closing the gap on our #2. Allison Kelly and Sarah Schug were our four and five and their places were good enough to bring home the 4th place trophy- bringing our total up to eight trophies, with one race to go. Tia Reilly had a phenomenal race, earning a lifetime

PR by thirty seconds with her 23:55.

In the boys Varsity, Adam Ludy and Andy Layden had a conservative first mile as Brayden Hamblen and Chris Ahlers smoked a sub-5 first mile on the slow course. Ludy moved up considerably over the final two miles to end in 8th, er 7th overall in 17:01. Andy Layden finished 21st in 17:47; and Jeb Uphoff snuck under 22:00 in 21:56 to finish the Titan effort on the day.

Girls Continue to Roll at FTF

The Titan Women again set a team record for average time at the First to the Finish Invitational, averaging 21:54 to beat the previous meet record of 22:11 set by the 2012 squad. Our top four remained unchanged as Cate Atkins (20:53), Julia Reid (21:08), Sophi Allen (22:08), and Allison Kelly (22:21) led the way. Sarah Schug moved into the #5 role this week with her season PR of 23:00. Hannah Ludy chased Sarah in at 23:08 and Maddie Morrison rounded out our top seven with her 24:07. Tia Reilly had a fantastic meet, dropping thirty seconds from last week and setting a lifetime PR, 24:32, on the soft course. Molly Holt crossed the chute seven seconds later in 24:39. Carmen SantAmour (25:51) and Mya Gramm (25:55) pushed each other and worked together for the three-mile race and Megan Endress set a season PR with her 26:21. Olivia Tipler ran a 26:41, and Gabby Hamilton set a lifetime PR of 28:03. Lauren Buggar made her last mile her fastest one as she finished the race in 31:30. The girls placed 9th of 38 teams.

The guys placed 11th as a team as only three athletes set PRs on the slippery slop. Jeb Uphoff ran sixteen seconds faster than last week and earned snazziest accolades with his 20:59. Jordan Shelton dropped seven seconds down to 20:32, and Aidan Killian also dropped seven seconds to 20:33. Andy Layden was somehow disqualified, although the online results had him at 17:18 prior to being removed. Bo Halvorsen repeated as our #2, running 18:08. Noah Smith repeated as our #3, running 18:28. Matt Ingalsbe looked strong at the two-mile mark and finished as our #4 in 19:05. Will Bushert rounded out the scoring effort with his 19:20. The freshmen pack of Jordan, Brett, Aidan, and Zac worked together to finish between 20:32 and 20:45, while fellow freshman Aidan Mann (22:24) and Randy Kent (22:58) worked to close the gap between the groups. Mitchell Uphoff finished in 25:01 to finish off the day.

Many athletes were disappointed with their times, and we did not have the large harvest of PRs we have come to expect from this meet, but our training remains strong and we will trust the process and make our patient gains as the season progresses.

EPGXC Opens in Record-Breaking Fashion at Maxwell Park

After almost twenty practices the Titans were finally able to put their training to the test at the season-opening NCHS Open at Maxwell Park on Saturday, September 3. The guys had a lot of fresh faces on the line as nine of the thirteen Titans in the race were competing in their first ever high school cross country race. Leading the way for the

Titans was seasoned veteran Andy Layden, as he comfortably led the way in 16:35, besting Hunter Cobbley's time on this course from last year and improving his own course PR as well. Running second was sophomore newcomer Bo Halvorsen, who ran a 17:36 to debut in snazzy fashion- Bo also was voted runner of the meet for said performance, so look for him in the shiny purple suit at FTTF. Right with Bo was sophomore Noah Smith, crossing as our #3 in 17:40. Another sophomore, Will Bushert was our #4, finishing in 18:54. Matt Ingalsbe rounded out the Titan top five, running 18:55. Those five earned EPG a 17:56 average, 108 points, and fifth place out of eight schools. Our 6th through 10th runners were all freshmen- Zac Nelson (19:54), Brett Endress (20:25), Jordan Shelton (20:39), Aidan Killian (20:41), and Randy Kent (21:12), all established new 3-mile baseline times. Jeb Uphoff, our lone junior, started the year off with a 21:14. Aidan Mann ran a 22:21 and Mitchell Uphoff crossed in 24:32 to finish off the boys varsity race. Those who ran here last year saw marked improvement over those times (Andy from 16:40 to 16:35; Noah from 19:39 to 17:40; Will from 20:49 to 18:54; and Jeb from 21:30 to 21:15)- which shows that those summer miles are paying off.

On the girls side, we put fifteen girls on the line at this race, the most in program history. Not only the most, but also the fastest as the 2016 girls set a new team record for the meet by 30-seconds per runner! Leading the way was Cate Atkins, 6th overall in 20:43. Freshman Julia Reid was our #2, running 21:05. Sophi Allen snuck under 22:00 in 21:59. All three times cracked the top ten times ever for EPGXC on this course. A pair of freshmen finished out the varsity scorers as Allison Kelly was our #4 in 22:18 and Hannah Ludy was our #5 in 22:44. These five averaged 21:45 for the meet, breaking 22:15 time set by the 2010 squad. Senior leader Maddie Morrison came in next for the Titans in 23:39, chased in by Sarah Schug in 23:46. Molly Holt (24:38), Tia Reilly (25:01) came in as our #8 and #9 before Carmen SantAmour crossed in 25:20 (over two minutes faster than last year and just missing her lifetime PR of 25:12). Mya Gramm worked with Carmen on the course, finishing on her heels in 25:21. Olivia Tipler made huge gains from her time trial performance, dropping a 25:54 for three miles. Megan Endress ran a 26:53 and Gabby Hamilton debuted for the Titans as she ran a 28:04. Lauren Buggar took almost two minutes off her 2015 performance at this meet, running 31:24 to start off 2016. The girls placed 4th as a team.