

Reedsburg run gives Port girls taste of a title

Written by Steve Ostermann
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Staying with the front-runners has become a way of life for the Port Washington girls' cross-country team this season.

However, the Pirates hadn't raced to top honors until last Saturday, when they grabbed a championship in the large-schools division at the Reedsburg Invitational.

Led by sophomore Bianca Benkley, Port scored 29 points, well ahead of runner-up Baraboo, which had 52 in a 12-team field.

Benkley took third with a 4,000-meter time of 16 minutes, 8 seconds, to pace a pack of six Pirates who finished in the top 11.

Port's other scoring efforts came from Ashley Hilton in fourth (16:10), Diana Seer in fifth (a season-best 16:20), Payton Greisch in eighth (16:43) and Bonnie Allen in ninth (16:44). Allison Hilton was 11th (16:47).

"It was a good, challenging course," Port girls' coach Joe Adamak said. "The girls all ran hard and did well."

The team title was the first in five meets for the Pirates, who had a second, two thirds and a fourth in their previous outings.

Another highlight for Port came from its junior-varsity girls' team, which placed first with a perfect score of 15 points.

Freshman Abby Kotecki won the race in 18:19, as the Pirates swept the top five places.

In the boys' portion of the varsity meet, the Pirates placed fourth out of seven teams in the large-schools field with 102 points.

Baraboo won the title with 23 points, and Portage (58) and Wisconsin Dells (101) were second and third, respectively.

Port coach Mark Pasten gave his top runners a break from the meet, instead using a lineup of runners taking their first crack at varsity competition.

Sophomore Jack Skelton-Miller led the Pirates with 13th-place time of 18:54 in a 5,000-meter race that included 47 runners.

Among his teammates, Adam Laessig took 16th (19:00), Joe Bartolotti was 19th (19:25), Matt Froelich was 22nd (19:39) and Eric Ross was 32nd (20:27).

"All things considered, I was happy with our finish," Pasten said. "It was a good experience for these runners. They did well."

This week, the Port boys will return to their regular lineup for the Badger Invitational in Madison

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on Saturday. The Port girls do not have a meet.

Both teams will then run at the annual Port Invitational on Oct. 7 at Tendick Park in Saukville.

Lundgren, Ducheny lead Hawks

The Grafton cross-country teams had mixed results at the Len Nikolai Invitational in Manitowoc last Saturday.

Senior Stefan Lundgren led the boys' squad with a 64th-place time of 18:15, as the Black Hawks finished 17th out of 18 teams.

Grafton had 423 points in a meet won by Stevens Point with 49.

The Hawks' other finishes were Patrick Tobianski in 73rd (18:25), Adam Kahmann in 92nd (18:59), Josh Wimmer in 94th (19:04), Michael Knapik in 100th (19:28) and Justin Tomashek in 111th (20:06).

"The guys ran OK," Grafton coach Kevin Kriegel said. "They've been maintaining their times, but what we're looking for now are time drops."

Tobianski, a freshman, showed the most improvement by trimming 40 seconds off his previous-best time.

Michael Larson of Stevens Point won the race in 16:12.

The Grafton girls, who had an incomplete lineup, were paced by sophomore Amber Ducheny, who finished eighth with a personal-best time of 15:37, the fourth-fastest in team history.

"It was really nice to see her run that well in a big meet," said Kriegel, who noted Ducheny's previous-best time was 16:02.

The Hawks' other finishes were Kylie Longoria in 66th (a personal-best 17:00), Jamie Karrels in 85th (17:17) and Emily Volkmann in 87th (17:18).

Haley Johnson of Plymouth won the girls' race in 14:49.

This week, both Grafton teams will run at the Owl Invitational in Slinger at 4 p.m. Thursday.