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Port boys' team cruises to first at home invitational; CG-Belgium 6th among girls

Things clicked for the Port Washington boys' cross-country team in its first home meet of the season last week.

With senior Jason Marhal again leading the way, the Pirates cruised to top honors in the 33rd annual Port Washington Invitational at Tendick Park in Saukville.

Marhal placed second in the 5,000-meter race, and his team finished with 40 points, 10 fewer than runner-up West Bend West.

"I'm real happy with the way things turned out. The guys performed very well," Port boys' coach Mark Pasten said.

Marhal, who has been the Pirates' top runner throughout the season, posted a time of 16 minutes, 19.69 seconds. He trailed only West's Alec Miller (16:13.25).

"Jason ran a solid race," Pasten said. "He was right there for the lead until the last 300 meters, when Alec Miller pulled away."

Port's other scoring finishes were Nick Michalowski in fifth (16:55.03), Jack Skelton-Miller in seventh (16:56.65), Eagan Norman in 12th (17:15.53) and Alex Balister in 14th (17:17.49).

Also for the Pirates, Billy Ernest placed 15th (17:17.96), and Taylor Godersky was 31st (17:41.7).

"They all ran pretty well," said Pasten, who singled out Michalowski and Balister for turning in personal-best times.

"Nick and Alex really stepped up for us."

Among other local teams, Cedar Grove-Belgium had two runners — Peter Merritt in 58th (18:31.01) and Derek Arndt in 70th (18:56.63).

Rounding out the team standings were Cedarburg in third place with 70 points, followed by Appleton East (148), New Berlin Eisenhower (154), Menomonee Falls (199), Slinger (202), Pewaukee (224), Plymouth (229), Fond du Lac (248), Hartford (282), Whitefish Bay (286) and Eastbrook Academy (397).

In the girls' portion of the meet, West Bend West took first with 78 points, well ahead of runner-up Pewaukee (110).

Rounding out the top six squads were Plymouth (137), Slinger (143), Menomonee Falls (161) and Cedar Grove-Belgium (164).

Senior Tammi Del Ponte led Cedar Grove-Belgium by placing eighth with a 4,000-meter time of 15:43.4.

The Rockets' other finishes were Molly Ison in 16th (16:06.47), Lily Paul in 27th (16:17.14), Jericho Duenk in 54th (16:58), Chloe Paul in 60th (17:04), Maria Schueller in 85th (17:50) and Kiran Sehgal in 95th (19:28).

"It was a really good meet with great competition, and the kids ran well," Cedar Grove-Belgium coach Les Paul said.

"We had numerous personal records."

The Port girls were unable to post a team score when Alexa Brown, one of their five runners, had to drop out of the race due to a knee injury.

The Pirates' best finish was a 13th by senior Bianca Benkley (16:03.59).

Port's other runners were Abby Kotecki in 51st (16:49.46), Maggie Kotecki in 57th (16:55.12) and Brenna Russell in 87th (17:40.02).

"The girls ran about how we expected them to," Port girls' coach Joe Adamak said.

The girls' individual champion was Slinger's Taylor Clyse (14:46.72).

Rounding out the team standings were Appleton East in seventh (167), followed by Germantown (180), Cedarburg (209), Hartford (249), Fond du Lac (256), West Bend East (270), Whitefish Bay (274) and New Berlin Eisenhower (321).

This Saturday, both Port teams will return to Tendick Park for the North Shore Conference meet at 10 a.m.

Cedar Grove-Belgium will resume competition in the Central Lakeshore Conference meet Thursday, Oct. 11, at Sheboygan Lutheran.

Warriors trail in Lomira meet

Windy conditions made things extra challenging for the Ozaukee cross-country teams at the Lomira Invitational on Oct. 4.

In the girls' portion of the meet, the Warriors finished 16th out of 19 teams.

Jessika Dieringer led Ozaukee with a ninth-place time of 16:30.

The Warriors' other finishes were Brianna Leitzke in 97th (20:23), Natalie Bares in 114th (21:35), Devin Fowler in 118th (21:51) and Jordan Jacobs in 125th (22:35).

Ian Hughes led the Ozaukee boys with a 24th-place time of 18:23. Also for the Warriors, Alex Dieringer finished 38th (19:10), Tyler Bares was 94th (21:10) and Nathan LeSage was 98th (21:40).

"Despite the heavy wind, runners' times remained consistent with their goals and averages," Ozaukee coach Greg Mielke said.

The Warriors' next outing will be the Central Lakeshore Conference meet Thursday, Oct. 11, at Sheboygan Lutheran.

Image Information: AMONG THE TOP RUNNERS at the annual Port Washington Invitational last Saturday were Port's Jason Marhal (left) and Cedar Grove-Belgium's Tammi Del Ponte. Marhal placed second in the boys' race, leading his team to the championship. Del Ponte's eighth-place finish in the girls' race helped her team take sixth. Photos by Sam Arendt