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CG-Belgium girls edge Random to win 2nd straight team berth in Division 2

The Cedar Grove-Belgium girls' cross-country team has booked another trip to the biggest meet of the season.

Led by Tammi Del Ponte, the Rockets earned a spot in the WIAA Division 3 state final for the second straight year by winning a sectional meet at Sheboygan Lutheran High School last Saturday.

Del Ponte, a senior, finished third in a field of 103 runners with a 4,000-meter time of 15 minutes, 57 seconds.

Cedar Grove-Belgium scored 67 points, eight fewer than runner-up Random Lake, the other state-qualifying team.

The previous week, the Rockets also edged Random Lake to win the Central Lakeshore Conference, 42-49.

"The girls had a goal in mind, to run a solid race, and they did a great job of taking our race plan and executing it," Cedar Grove-Belgium coach Les Paul said.

"They had a tough week of workouts, and on Saturday they were able to put that to use."

Rounding out the top five teams were St. Mary's Springs (102), Sheboygan Lutheran (104) and Manitowoc Lutheran (137). Ozaukee ran with an incomplete lineup.

Del Ponte trailed only champion Delaney Sinnen of Random Lake (15:05) and Liz Bohn of St. Mary's Springs (15:32).

"Tammi ran a very tactical race and ran down almost everybody for a great third-place finish," Paul said.

The Rockets' other scoring finishes were Lily Paul in 12th (16:35), Molly Ison in 13th (16:37), Chloe Paul in 19th (17:13) and Jericho Duenk in 20th (17:21).

It was a rewarding day in a challenging season for Cedar Grove-Belgium runners.

"They have worked so hard all season. We know that if we run good, we will have great results," coach Paul said.

"The competition was really good, and that made this a very fun meet. Everybody did their job just the way we wanted it to go."

The Ozaukee girls' top finisher was sophomore Jessika Dieringer, who placed 11th in 16:32. Her time was 11 seconds behind the last of five individual state qualifiers not on the top two teams.

"Jessika had an extremely successful season, improving considerably over an already impressive freshman outing," Ozaukee coach Greg Mielke said.

Ozaukee's other girl runner was junior Jordan Jacobs, who was 100th in 24:37.

The Cedar Grove-Belgium girls will try to improve on a fourth-place state finish last year. The Rockets have finished in the top six in three of the last four state meets.

In the boys' portion of the sectional meet, Cedar Grove-Belgium finished eighth out of 14 teams with 192 points. Ozaukee ran with an incomplete squad.

Freshman Peter Merritt led the Rockets with a 5,000-meter time of 18:17, good for 19th place.

Cedar Grove-Belgium's other scoring finishes were Derek Arndt in 31st (19:06), Jon Meerdink in 34th (19:13), Ben Schroeder in 50th (20:02) and Nick Spredeman in 58th (20:17).

Also for the Rockets, Erik Weiland was 62nd (20:20) and Zach Riesselmann was 83rd (21:25).

Sheboygan Lutheran won the boys' team title with 50 points. Rounding out the top five were Manitowoc Lutheran (71), Oostburg (91), Markesan (153) and Gibraltar/Washington Island (173).

The Ozaukee boys were led by senior Ian Hughes, who placed 23rd in 18:28.

The Warriors' other finishes were Nathan LeSage in 80th in 21:08, Alex Dieringer in 83rd

(21:11) and Tyler Bares in 84th (21:13).

The boys' race was won by Oostburg's Sam Wensink in 16:59.

The state meet will be held Saturday, Oct. 27, at Ridges Golf Course in Wisconsin Rapids. The Division 3 boys' race starts at 11 a.m., followed by the girls' run at 1 p.m.

Image Information: A THIRD-PLACE FINISH by Tammi Del Ponte (right) helped the Cedar Grove-Belgium girls' cross-country team take top honors in a WIAA Division 3 sectional meet last Saturday. Teammate Molly Ison (left) finished third, as the Rockets earned a spot in the state meet for the second straight year. Photo by Sam Arendt