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Girls cross country: Geneva's Altmayer takes UEC title, Batavia claims team crown



Geneva's McKenzie Altmayer takes first place in the girls varsity race in the Upstate Eight cross country meet at Sunrise Park in Bartlett Saturday.

Laura Stoecker | Staff Photographer



John Lemon

You've got to admire not only the running ability of McKenzie Altmayer but also the Geneva senior's school spirit.

Altmayer spent much of her Friday night looking for updates from the Geneva-Batavia football game, and when that longtime rivalry game did not go the Vikings' way, it gave her a little more motivation for the Upstate Eight Conference girls cross country meet Saturday morning at Sunrise Park in Bartlett.

"I was looking at updates on the Cube, I was like, 'Cube send me an email, I need to know the score,'" Altmayer said of

Batavia's 24-14 win in the 97th meeting Friday night.

"We have lots of school spirit. The whole week everyone was gearing up for the football game. Everyone was wanting to beat Batavia. I ran for our team today. We really wanted the win today. The whole time we were thinking because we had the big football game last night I was thinking, 'You won the football game, we can get this one. We can work together and get this one.'"

Altmayer certainly did her part, winning the conference championship in 17:19.

Her team came up just short against a Batavia team that's one of the best in the state. The Bulldogs scored 35 points to Geneva's 40.

Altmayer, who also won the conference meet as a sophomore and took third last year, was in tears following hugs with her teammates after winning the race.

"It's my senior year and I kind of crossed the finish line, told all the other girls great job and then I started crying," Altmayer said. "It was a little rough. It's so bittersweet. I love these girls. They are my family at this point."

Emma Ehrhardt was next for Geneva in fifth in 18:09. Freshman Emily Belanger (9th, 18:24), freshman Sophia McDonnell (12th, 18:28) and sophomore Taryn Christy (13th, 18:34) nearly had enough to topple Batavia.

"A little too close for comfort," is how Batavia's Marygrace Golden put it.

Golden was the fourth Batavia runner in. Emma Stephens again led the way for Batavia, taking second overall 13 seconds behind Altmayer in 18:32.

Senior Dakota Roman was next for Batavia, fourth overall in 18:09, and Daphne Kolody finished eighth in 18:21. Anna Marie Malay placed 11th in 18:27.

"We did really good," Golden said. "It's really exciting. We will basically have the same team next year."

Golden didn't particularly like her race but said that's the kind of special team Batavia has with each runner being able to pick up the others.

"I didn't have the race I wanted," Golden said. "It was a little slow but I know my teammates did great and they supported me and even though I had kind of a rough day I can always count on them."

The two divisions of the Upstate Eight ran the race together and then scored the results separately. The Bulldogs were the overall winner; Glenbard East took the Valley crown.

The strength definitely was on the River side as the top 14 runners were all from River schools. That included St. Charles North's Audrey Ernst and Madison Kaufmann in third and seventh, respectively, and Anastasia Honea and Anna Arrick placing sixth and 14th for St. Charles East.

Glenbard East finally broke that River run with the 15th overall runner and first for the Valley, Lexi Weltin in 18:49.1. Teammate Maeve Brasile was right behind in 16th in 18:49.7.

"Our goal all year was to win the Valley side," Rams coach Joe Latala said. "They did absolutely fabulous today. It is step one toward regional, then sectional and get stronger every week. Stay confident and believe in their ability."