

Prep Sports | updated: 10/24/2015 6:29 PM

# Pack powers St. Charles East to regional crown



**Geneva's Tyler Dau came from behind to win the race.**

Laura Stoecker | Staff Photographer

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**John Lemon**



The power of the pack once again paid off for St. Charles East.

The Saints won the Class 3A St. Charles North regional Saturday morning at Leroy Oakes by placing the fourth, fifth, seventh and eighth runners -- with just 2.3 seconds separating them.

Mike Gerkin, Jack Rzpecki, Mark Sciurba and Anthony Zilla made up those first four Saints in.

"Coach always says it is the North Central way to run," Sciurba said. "Keep the pack up there. The past two meets or so it's all we've been doing is pack together. Not to let the last man fall behind. It's working pretty well for us as the results show."

St. Charles East scored 48 points to finish 6 points ahead of Marmion and 8 in front of Geneva. East Aurora (126), St. Charles North (141) and Batavia (156) also qualified for next week's Class 3A West Aurora sectional at Stuart Sports Complex.

The Saints, who won the Upstate Eight championship last week, will go into the sectional as one of the favorites along with Neuqua Valley.

"It's definitely good momentum going onto sectionals and into state if we qualify," Sciurba said of the regional title.

"I wasn't feeling my best today. That kind of showed in my time. I stayed in my strategy. Reality check (a large hill near the end of the course), I died on that, but I kept pushing. I always think to myself I have to open up my stride and speed follows that."

Gerkin was the first Saint to finish despite falling a couple times on the extremely slippery course.

"There were multiple points with just standing water and mud," Sciurba said. "Had to go right through it, couldn't go around."

Michael Ronzone and Andrew Burroughs took second and third, respectively, for Marmion running 16:17 and 16:19.

"It was really muddy," Burroughs said. "There were a lot of puddles too. Our coach suggested to run without socks. It was cool, it was cross country at its simplest stage."

"Going down those hills we had to be a lot more conservative. You want to accelerate on the downhill but with the conditions today you really had to be a little conservative because if you went too hard you might slip."

Charlie Zimmer was sixth for the Cadets, Andrew Lifka 17th and Christian Surtz 26th.

Next comes the biggest meet of the year for Marmion who has never qualified for the state meet at the Class 3A level but certainly has the potential to do so this year.

"We just need to do what we've been doing all year," Burroughs said. "Just work hard, run our best, work together. That has always been a goal of ours. We need to take care of business next week."

Nobody made a bigger move Saturday than Geneva junior Tyler Dau.

With a mile left in the race Dau was in approximately 15th place.

Dau managed to pass each and every of those runners ahead of him in the last mile to win in 16:14. He ran with his team for the first two miles and then took off.

"I came around the corner, my dad (Keith) was there, and he was like 'That's the front, that's where you've got to go, go now,'" Dau said. "I just took that with me and just went. I didn't really expect it (to win). Never done that before. Glad it worked."

No matter how many spectators and coaches are watching him run and shouting encouragement during a race, Dau can always pick out his dad.

"I always see him," Dau said. "His voice is there and he pushes me. It helps a lot."

Boon Andrews (ninth, 16:34), Brian Caskey (11th, 16:37), Josh Rodgers (14th, 16:41) and Brian Kuehl (20th, 16:50) made up Geneva's top five.

"Our whole entire team was right there," Dau said. "I just feel we ran a great race today, everyone."

For much of the race West Aurora's Connor McCue was doing what he always does -- winning big. He had put distance between himself and the pack by the mile mark and was looking like he was on his way to another easy victory.

But McCue went down in the final mile with an injury believed to be a broken foot. He got up and valiantly finished the race, taking 46th in 17:46, after he was poised to win and on what looked like a sure path to All-State honors in a couple weeks.

"Just a shame to see," St. Charles East coach Chris Bosworth said, echoing the sentiments of several runners and coaches who have enjoyed watching McCue's impressive fall campaign.

Other top area finishes included Streamwood's Robert Douglas in 10th (16:36), Elgin's Brandon Copeland in 12th in 16:40, and Joey Rangel and Bo Ruttens in 18th and 19th for St. Charles North.