

Prep Sports | updated: 9/12/2015 5:43 PM

Geneva plays it cool, wins Wauconda Invitational

By John Bumbales
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It was almost a perfect day for girls cross country runners, with temperatures near 60 degrees for the 3-mile Wauconda Invitational Saturday morning at Lakewood Forest Preserve.

It certainly suited the team from Geneva.

With two of the top three runners in the 3-mile race, the Vikings were able to hold off runner-up Crystal Lake Central 58-64 for the championship of the 18-team meet. Huntley (80 points) also put together an excellent performance to place third. Richmond-Burton (152 points) placed fifth.

Behind fifth-place finisher Caitlin Bruzzini, Crystal Lake South placed seventh with 198 points, followed by Cary-Grove (208 points) in eighth, and Lake Zurich (303) in 11th.

Many of the squads were affected because numerous runners were taking the ACT and were unable to participate in the meet.

Geneva's push for the championship was led by individual champion McKenzie Altmayer (17:38.7), who won by 30 seconds over second-place finisher Maggie Scholle of Lane Tech.

Competing in the Wauconda Invite for the first time ever, the Vikings were led by Altmayer, freshman Sophia McDonnell in third, freshman Emily Belanger in 15th and sophomore Taryn Christy in 16th.

"McKenzie was 11th in the state last year, so she did a very nice job today and I'm proud of her," said Geneva coach Bob Thomson, whose team has reached the state meet seven of the last eight years. "It was the first varsity race for our two freshmen, so they did very well and both of them had personal best times today."

Huntley used a great trio to reach its third-place finish as the Red Raiders got a sixth from freshman Mary Raclawski, an eighth from senior Kate Mitchell and a 12th from sophomore Lindsey Ferguson.

"It's a very interesting trio because they're still learning to run together," said Huntley coach Brad Gallagher, whose team had five runners in the top 31. "What (Raclawski) did today was outstanding, but she's still learning every race so I expect her to get better."

Bruzzini was a standout for Crystal Lake South, but the Gators were unable to put together a strong pack behind her without their regular varsity lineup intact.

Cary-Grove's troops were led by senior Sarah Riley in 14th place, as the Trojans' young team continues to grow in the early stages of the season.

"Sarah is actually having a fantastic season for us. She's been really consistent and strong for us," said Cary-Grove coach Mark Anderson, who team also got a 33rd from junior Sarah Caesar. "We've been making great strides, but it's really a young group, and over half of them are underclassmen."

Without senior Caitlin Shepard running, Lake Zurich's makeshift lineup featured a 19th-place run by senior Kristie Houghton, who placed 14th in the NSC last year. The Bears have hopes of repeating as NSC champions this fall, while aiming for another trip downstate.

"We brought some kids up to varsity today and they ran really well," said Lake Zurich coach Ian Silverman. " (Houghton) is a four-year varsity kid, so she's got a lot of experience and having her up there really helps."

Despite not having a full team running, Warren coach Brett Heimstead is still looking forward to the rest of the Blue Devils' season.

"We're a diluted squad today because of ACT's, but I think we did just fine," said Heimstead, whose team placed 13th. "We're still in a hard part of our training right now, and I'm more concerned about racing well during the championship part of our season."