



LOCKPORT GIRLS XC SWSC PRE-SEASON RECAP



By Randy Whalen

With the coronavirus pandemic going on there haven't been too many things that are consistent. Especially in the scheduling world of high school sports.

The cross country season was able to start this week, however. The girls SouthWest Suburban Conference Blue Division Preseason Cross Country Meet was held on Thursday, Aug. 27 right on the main campus of Lockport Township High School.

There one thing was certainly consistent. That was Lockport having the top team once again.

The Porters had all seven of their runners finish in the Top 14 as they finished with 28 points. They easily outdistanced second-place Lincoln-Way East (54), which had the individual champion in junior Kate Guderjan (18 minutes: 23.3 seconds). Sandburg (82) was third and Bolingbrook and Homewood-Flossmoor (110 points each) rounded out the 5-team Blue Division.

Since the inception of the SWSC in for the 2005-06 school year, Lockport has won the conference championship in the Blue Division 10 times. But in the past decade, since the 2010-11 school year, the Porters have captured nine league titles. Only Lincoln-Way East, in the fall of 2017, interrupted the streak.

With nine of their top 14 runners returning from last seasons 10th place in Class 3A State team, the Porters plan to extend that this fall.

"I'm so glad my team is always there for me," Lockport sophomore Kayla Shea said. "We're always pushing off each other. For the first half-mile, we were all together. Then me and Monica (Skibicki) ran almost a mile together, helping each other have a better race.

"Our whole team, we just help each other out so much and try to help each other become a better person and a runner. It also felt really good to be out here. We didn't even know if we would have a season. This could be our only race, so we just wanted to go out and give it our all."

Shea (18:40.4) was third overall in the race, placing about 10 seconds behind H-F sophomore Caroline Schoen (18:30.6). Seniors Elizabeth Bollinger (19:06.3) and Megan Mitchell (19:10.8) placed fourth and fifth for Lockport.

"Everyone ran an awesome race and I'm really happy for all the girls running," Bollinger said. "It was our first time running this course (which started behind the football stadium

and zig-zagged back-and-forth around there before finishing in the middle of the football field) so it was great just to test it out.

"It had been a really long time for us to all run (in a competition). So it was pretty special for all of us seniors to get to run senior year."

Mitchell agreed.

"I think it feels amazing," she said. "It's just really great to be back racing. We talked about pushing now and hopefully, nothing else happens COVID related and we will be good-to-go. We all wanted to race together and the pack is back."

There was certainly a pack of maroon and white as the Porters placed half of the first 14 runners. Those included senior Josphine Bober (19:21.1, 7th overall), Skibicki (a junior, 19:32.7, 9th overall), senior Grace Mildice (20:24.4, 13th overall), and junior Samantha Weisner (20:37.4, 14th overall). Sophomore Alexa Trower (22:28.7), placed 21st overall for Lockport.

"This all started in March when the team lost their track season," Lockport coach Regan Cronholm said of her team's push for success. "They all got in the mindset that they had work to do. That showed with all the work they put in all summer."

In what should be a very competitive race between the respective SWSC preseason meet winners, the Porters are next scheduled to go up against Lincoln-Way Central on Friday, Sept. 4 at the Round Barn Farm in Manhattan.

"Mike Dwyer and our administration put in all sorts of great work to get this done," Cronholm said of the Porter Athletic Director and the meet. "We are totally grateful for this opportunity. We're a pretty deep team. We didn't have a great freshmen turnout but that could be because of the COVID. But the girls have put in the work and we just have to focus on the here-and-now."

The Porters placed third in the freshmen/sophomore race with 79 points. Sandburg (31) was first. Sophomore Caroline Turner (21:38.1, 7th overall) was the top finisher for Lockport.

On the Red side of the SWSC, Lincoln-Way Central (30) was the varsity winner by 34 points over Lincoln-Way West. The victorious Knights had a row of five straight runners with the fourth through eighth finishers. Lincoln-Way West sophomore Gianna Arizzi (18:09.7) was the individual champion by nearly 1 minute: 10 seconds.