

Prairie, Evans run to state titles

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 02 November 2013 22:28 -

FORT DODGE - The Cedar Rapids Prairie cross country team chased the Linn-Mar Lions all over Eastern Iowa this year, often settling for second place along the way.

Not this time.

The Hawks caught the Lions - and everyone else - in the biggest meet of the season Saturday and claimed their second Class 4A state title in four years at the Lakeside Golf Course in Fort Dodge.

"It feels incredible. This is great," said Prairie sophomore Jake Moore, who led the hungry Hawks by finishing fourth overall.

"It feels like all the work we put in this season and all the practices, it's all worth it," said Isaiah Vlasek, who placed seventh. "This is amazing."

Linn-Mar senior Josh Evans claimed the individual title over the 5K course in 15:19.4, but he was one of the saddest state champs you'll ever see. That's because Daniel Murphy, one of Linn-Mar's top runners, ran into severe problems on the course, fell several times, walked to the finish line and finished last out of 115 runners - nearly two minutes after everyone else was done.

If Murphy had been able to compete at full strength, the Lions probably would have given Prairie a good run for the money. Instead, they finished fourth in the standings.

"I would have been OK with second place (individually) if our team had taken it," said Evans. "The team means everything to me. This is my last year. It just hurts that we weren't able to do

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it."

Murphy fell for the final time about 50 yards from the finish line. He gamely finished in 19:43, more than four minutes behind Evans. Murphy was helped to the first-aid tent and later was resting in the Linn-Mar tent until it was time to leave the course.

"He put everything he had out there and he just broke," said Evans. "I'm assuming he just went for it a little bit too soon. He left it all out there."

For his part, Evans completed the Triple Crown of prep racing in Iowa with major titles at the Drake Relays, state track meet and state cross country meet. He beat Spencer Clark of Dowling by 11 seconds on a sunny, breezy 50-degree day in Fort Dodge.

"It feels pretty good to see the whole thing pay off," said Evans, who missed the first month of the season with a leg injury. "I worked hard in the pool, on the bike.

"It's obviously huge," to win the Triple Crown, he said.

But overall, he was disappointed with the way the day turned out. "We beat Prairie on several occasions," he noted. "Obviously they're a fantastic team. Unfortunately we weren't able to have all our pieces come together."

The top four Prairie runners placed 4th, 7th, 8th and 11th with Moore, Vlasek, Pritts and Tysen VanDraska leading the way. Zack Fiser finished 51st to complete the team scoring.

The Hawks finished with 81 points for a 35-point victory over Johnston. Dowling Catholic was third, followed by top-ranked Linn-Mar. Tanner Rathje placed fifth for the Lions.

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Prairie Coach Bill Schwarz said he was "ecstatic" with the school's second state title in four years, but quickly saluted Linn-Mar. The Lions edged the Hawks at the Mississippi Valley Conference Super Meet, but not this time.

"It's really sad when somebody goes down," he said. "I feel terrible for them. But boy, our kids ran so well. They prepared themselves. They've done everything right. They've earned it."

Schwarz had a hunch in August this could be their year.

"We knew it would take something pretty special, but we felt we had a chance and we went with that mission in mind," he said. "You've got to be healthy, and you've got to be ready to go. You have to be lucky, you have to be good."

Vlasek ran for Prairie at the state meet in 2010 as a freshman when the Hawks won the state title and finished his prep career with two state crowns. Pritts was also on the team that year as a freshman, but did not run at state.

"This is our last year for some of us," said Vlasek. "We thought, 'Why not give it all we've got and see what we can do.'"

The Linn-Mar girls finished in fifth place Saturday out of 15 teams. Amber Decker led the Lions in eighth place.

The Kennedy girls placed 11th in Class 4A. Alyssa Averhoff led the Cougars in 10th place.

The Xavier girls finished 12th in Class 3A. Jenny Dickes led the Saints in 11th place.

STATE CROSS COUNTRY

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CLASS 4A BOYS

Team Standings

1. Prairie 81, 2. Johnston 116, 3. Dowling 122, 4. Linn-Mar 135, 5. Pleasant Valley 138, 6. Cedar Falls 145, 7. Waukee 178, 8. Ames 179, 9. Iowa City West 215, 10. West Des Moines Valley 229, 11. Hempstead 256, 12. Dubuque Senior 262, 13. Des Moines Roosevelt 264, 14. Iowa City High 285, 15. Bettendorf 378.

Winner - Josh Evans, Linn-Mar, 15:19.4

Prairie - 4. Jake Moore 15:34.7, 7. Isaiah Vlassek 15:41.1, 8. Mitch Pritts 15:42.6, 11. Tysen VanDraska 15:44.3, 51. Zack Fiser 16:37.2, 52. Cam Steffens 16:39.5, 77. Ross Adams 16:54.2.

Linn-Mar - 1. Josh Evans 15:19.4, 5. Tanner Rathje 15:38.2, 16. Michael Mather 15:54.4, 48. Greyson Dolezal 16:33.3, 65. Jay Halverson 16:46.4, 70. Ryan Murphy 16:48.9, 105. Daniel Murphy 19:43.0.

Washington - 58. Sam Eck 16:36.2.

CLASS 4A GIRLS

Team Standings

1. Dowling 90, 2. Ames 104, 3. Pleasant Valley 128, 4. Johnston 131, 5. Linn-Mar 141, 6. Waukee 154, 7. Iowa City West 179, 8. Urbandale 205, 9. Des Moines Roosevelt 207, 10. Ankeny Centennial 237, 11. Kennedy 247, 12. Bettendorf 277, 13. Iowa City High 279, 14. Dubuque Senior 339, 15. Muscatine 347.

Winner - McKenzie Yanek, Pleasant Valley, 14:00.2.

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Linn-Mar - 8. Amber Decker 14:44.1, 22. Morgan Garcia 15:02.7, 29. Rachel Perry 15:13.4, 37. Sydney Johnston 15:20.5, 45. Maddie Mann 15:31.3, 64. Maddie Saville 15:55.0, 84. Katie Sommer 16:19.1.

Kennedy - 10. Alyssa Averhoff 14:46.8, 28. Allison Culver 15:10.4, 55. Lauren Meyer 15:42.7, 76. Carolyn Stone 16:08.9, 78. Alissa Meyer 16:12.1, 93. Laura Feld 16:32.5, 96. Katherine Nus 16:42.0.

Washington - 23. Shannon Gorman 14:59.9.

CLASS 3A BOYS

Team Standings

1. Boone 69, 2. Charles City 82, 3. Decorah 114, 4. Pella 127, 5. Algona 148, 6. Grinnell 166, 7. Wahlert 184, 8. Mount Vernon/Lisbon 195, 9. Harlan 210, 10. Center Point-Urbana 212, 11. Williamsburg 232, 12. Clear Creek-Amana 244, 13. Creston 312, 14. MOC-Floyd Valley 322, 15. Dallas Center-Grimes 374.

Winner - Chandler Austin, Boone, 15:05.6.

Xavier - 15. Jacob Schmitt 16:39.7.

Marion - 20. Colton Forster 16:44.8.

CLASS 3A GIRLS

Team Standings

1. Decorah 108, 2. MOC-Floyd Valley 108, 3. Davenport Assumption 126, 4. Pella 140, 5. Mount Vernon/Lisbon 169, 6. Charles City 169, 7. Humboldt 211, 8. Vinton-Shellsburg 211, 9. Spencer 221, 10. Winterset 227, 11. Williamsburg 228, 12. Xavier 254, 13. Grinnell 261, 14.

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Dallas Center-Grimes 262, 15. Bishop Heelan 308.

Winner - Tess Roorda, Pella, 14:36.5.

Xavier - 11. Jenny Dickes 15:27.0, 15. Emiko Coffey 15:35.4, 48. Marinna Schroud 16:21.1, 87. Brady Hoffman 17:32.6, 93. Sydney Oakley 17:52.9, 94. Hannah Chicchelly 17:56.6, 96. Kiana Stanek 17:59.6.

Marion - 37. Madison Bach 15:52.3.