

State Finals: Record-setting Run for Girls Team Reid and Kelly lead girls to 9th place finish

[OCTOBER 17, 2015] – The sun was shining at Saturday’s State Finals in Normal. The best cross country runners in the state were greeted by a brisk northerly breeze, and an enthusiastic crowd lined the course at Maxwell Park.

El Paso-Gridley was one of 24 teams to qualify for the Class 2A Championship race, along with 50 individuals, for a total of 218 runners. It was the second year in a row that the Titan Girls Team had earned a trip to the IESA State Finals.

The starting pistol fired at 11:00 AM and the girls were off and running. EPG’s Julia Reid led the Titan pack through the first mile in 6.15 with Allison Kelly following one second later. Tristyn Grube crossed at 6.23 with Hannah Ludy at 6.24. Sami Allen was moving up as she clocked a 6.28, followed by Tori Witzig and Molly Holt side by side at 6.33.

The purple and black continued to move up in the field and it was Julia Reid (12.48, 70th) finishing first for EPGJH with a 21-second PR. Reid’s time makes her the #6 Titan runner of all-time. Allison Kelly (12.52, 79th) looked strong and determined from start to finish, clocking a 25-second PR and becoming the #7 Titan runner of all-time.

EPG’s 3-4-5 runners tore down the final straightaway to finish within two seconds of each other. Sami Allen (13.01, 96th) matched Reid’s second mile of 6.33 and her 16-second PR earned her the #9 spot all-time for the Titans; she is the only 7th grader listed among the Top 10. Hannah Ludy (13.02, 98th) set a 62-second PR last year at State, and this year she came through yet again with another big-time performance. Ludy ran to the biggest lifetime PR on the Girls Team, dropping 28 seconds and securing the #10 mark all-time in the record books. Tristyn Grube (13.03, 100th) set an 8-second PR and closed the books on the tightest pack ever for the EPG girls, just 15 seconds from #1 to #5.

Tori Witzig (13.16, 129th) ran to her 7th straight PR, not including the hilly Furrow course, coming in with a 15-second lifetime best. She had the second strongest splits of the day for the girls, just 9 seconds positive, and her final time matched EPG’s #1 runner from 2010. Molly Holt (13.30, 146th) set a goal of 13.30 before the race and met her goal spot on, running a phenomenal 39 seconds faster than her Sectional race and setting a 15-second lifetime PR. Holt came across the line as the sixth fastest #7 runner in the State.

As a team, the Titans all PR’d to place 9th in State, the first Top 10 team placing of any EPGXC team, high school or junior high. The Girls Top 5 runners – Reid, Kelly, Allen, Ludy, and Grube – also broke the school record of 13.04 per runner set last year at State, with all 5 runners this year coming in under that mark to average 12.57.

State Finals: Boys Team Sets School Record...Again Top 4 Titans finish at 11.51, 11.51, 11.52, 11.52

[OCTOBER 17, 2015] – The weather was cool and breezy at Saturday’s State Finals in Normal, but the EPG boys were focused on one thing – running the best race of their lives no matter what.

One week after the Titans’ dramatic State-qualifying Sectional race, they were on the starting line with the best Class 2A competition in the state – 25 teams and 218 runners. It

was the first time an EPGJH Boys team had earned a trip to State, and El Paso-Gridley's 7 runners were ready to roll.

The gun fired at 11:45 AM and the boys charged up the first hill. EPG's Garrett Forrest and Sebastian Meyer cruised through the first mile at 5.52, with Zac Nelson and Jordan Shelton right on their shoulder at 5.53. Nathan DeMarb and Aidan Killian came through together at 6.12, followed by Randall Kent at 6.15.

The Top 4 boys closed strong, all holding sub-6 pace for the second mile. Just like at Sectionals, the EPG boys blazed through the final 400 meters in a pack, all four finishing within one second. Garrett Forrest (11.51, 91st) held off a fast-closing Jordan Shelton (11.51, 92nd), while Sebastian Meyer (11.52, 97th) edged Zac Nelson (11.52, 99th) by half a second. The 2015 EPG fab four are all among the Top 8 all-time cross country athletes for the Titans.

Shelton and Nelson each PR'd by 20 seconds, while Meyer set a 15-second PR and Forrest grabbed a 13-second PR.

Aidan Killian (12.23, 157th) had the biggest lifetime PR of all Titan runners Saturday, notching a 29-second improvement from his PR set just one week ago at the Sectional Meet. Nathan DeMarb (12.29, 166th), who was battling a cold, had to settle for his second fastest time ever, 6 seconds off his Sectional performance. Randall Kent had set a goal to break 13 minutes in his final race for EPGJH Cross Country, and he did just that, clocking a 9-second PR to cross the line in 12 minutes 54 seconds.

EPG placed 19th in the Class 2A State Championship race.

The Boys Team crushed the last 4 races of the season, setting EPG course records at Furrow Farm, Delavan, Oak Ridge Park (Sectionals), and Maxwell Park (State). At Sectionals, the Top 5 boys – Forrest, Jordan, Nelson, Meyer, and DeMarb – averaged 12.14, a new school record. Seven days later at the State Finals, the Top 5 of Forrest, Shelton, Meyer, Nelson, and Killian shattered that record by running to an 11.58 average.

XC Boys Team Sets Course Record at Furrow Farm Allison Kelly wins as Girls team runs to quadrangular victory

[SEPTEMBER 28, 2015] – EPGJH hosted a four-team meet at Furrow Farm Monday afternoon. The Titans were joined by runners from Heyworth, Pontiac, and Tremont for two races through the hills and creeks at the Titans' challenging home course. A pleasant breeze and somewhat overcast skies made the 80-degree weather feel more like fall than summer.

Forty-three athletes were competing in the Girls Race. EPG's Allison Kelly (13.59, 1st) charged to the lead shortly after the starting pistol was fired. Kelly ran with authority and came in with a 29-second victory over runner-up Tressa Scheuermann of Tremont.

Sami Allen (14.45, 4th) moved up through the field during the middle of the race, battling for 3rd place as she powered up the final hill, but Tremont's #2 runner edged Allen by a fraction of a second. Hannah Ludy (15.07, 5th) fought her own battle with a side stitch but still came #3 for the Titans. Tori Witzig (15.11, 6th), Sophie Upchurch (15.15, 7th), and Molly Holt (15.17, 8th) all ran strong to join Ludy for a #2-#6 pack time of just 10 seconds. Tia Reilly (15.43, 11th) ran 30 seconds faster than 3 weeks earlier at Furrow to cross as EPG's #7.

Sophia Lowery (16.39, 18th) and Amelia Miller (17.36, 20th) both ran Furrow season-bests by more than 80 seconds. Haley Uphoff (17.48, 22nd) was next across, followed by Mya Gramm (18.00, 24th) and Madison Rosenberger (19.42, 33rd). Gramm earned a lifetime Furrow best by 25 seconds.

The Girls team won the EPGJH Quadrangular Meet for the 6th year in a row. Team scores were EPG (23), Tremont (36), Heyworth (94), Pontiac (96).

Forty-six boys lined up for the second race of the day. In a fight for second place, The Titan's lead runner, Sebastian Meyer (12.54, 2nd), chased after Tremont's Zach Voss for 1.9 miles, reeling him in little by little and passing him with 150 meters to go. Both runners blasted up the finishing hill with Meyer edging Voss at the line to capture the runner-up position by less than a second. Meyer notched the 3rd fastest EPG time ever on the Furrow course.

Garrett Forrest (13.07, 4th) was EPG's #2, followed by Nathan DeMarb (13.32, 5th), Zac Nelson (13.34, 6th), Aidan Killian (13.37, 7th), and Jordan Shelton (13.47, 8th). Killian, Shelton, and DeMarb crushed their previous 2015 Furrow times by 87 seconds, 77 seconds, and 56 seconds, respectively.

Randall Kent (14.20, 12th) barely held off Brett Endress (14.21, 13th) as EPG's #7 runner, with Endress closing on Kent as the race progressed. It was a 107-second improvement from 3 weeks ago for Kent and an 80-second improvement for Endress.

Aidan Mann (15.48, 22nd) and Mitchell Uphoff (16.49, 27th) completed a spectacular day for the boys, with all ten running to Furrow season-best times.

The Boys team destroyed the previous Furrow Farm course record (2014) by 11 seconds per runner. Meyer, Forrest, DeMarb, Nelson, and Killian combined for a 13.21 average and a 43-second pack time, the first time the team has been under the 1-minute barrier this season. They also won the meet handily with team scores of EPG (24), Tremont (45), Pontiac (79), Heyworth (97).

Titan Cross Country heads to the Walt Dare Classic in Delavan on Saturday. Races begin at 9:00 AM.

Titans Compete with Best in State at DMS Invitational EPGXC sets 9 PR's at 1,600-runner meet

[SEPTEMBER 25, 2015] – Fifty of the best junior high cross country teams in Illinois descended on Peoria's famed Detweiller Park, site of the IHSA Cross Country State Meet. The 1,609 runners today would be competing on a 2.1-mile grass course lined with cheering fans. Temperatures were in the low 80's with plentiful sunshine for the first race, but by the fourth race the sun was beginning to fall behind the forested bluffs to the west and cooler shadows crept across much of the park.

Julia Reid (14.05, 43rd) looked strong at the front of the EPG lead pack, followed closely by Allison Kelly (14.10, 49th) and Hannah Ludy (14.11, 52nd). Ludy had the race of the day for the Varsity girls, moving up to Kelly early in the race and pushing herself to a 36-second season best time and a lifetime best, 1 second faster than her time at the 2014 State Meet.

Tristyn Grube (14.25, 73rd) was EPG's #4, while Sami Allen (14.44, 86th) ran to a 4-second PR to close out the tightest top 5 pack time of the season for the girls at just under 40 seconds. Tori Witzig (15.01, 117th) had a big 21-second drop as she continues her season surge, getting faster at every race thus far. She is now the #25 runner all-time for EPGJH cross country. Sophia Lowery (16.38, 209th) was EPG's #7 Varsity runner.

The Varsity girls (290, 11th) matched their course record time from 2014 and placed ahead of all Class 2A schools except host Dunlap Middle School (63, 1st) and sectional team Williamsville (268, 10th).

Garrett Forrest (12.56, 59th) and Sebastian Meyer (13.00, 65th) paced the Varsity boys, running to the 5th and 6th fastest all-time EPG marks on the Detweiller course. Jordan Shelton (13.17, 91st) had the race of the day for the Varsity boys, running to a 27-second season best time and a lifetime best by 6 seconds. Zac Nelson (13.17, 93rd) was stride for stride with Shelton for the entire 2.1 miles, and like Shelton, he earned a lifetime best by dipping under his 2014 Sectional time.

Nathan DeMarb (14.01, 153rd) was #5 for the Titan boys, followed by Aidan Killian (14.08, 162nd) and Brett Endress (14.39, 199th). Endress tied his PR set at Parkside two weeks ago.

The Boys team ran to the second fastest EPG time on the Detweiller course, nearly 3 minutes faster than 2014. They placed 16th, just behind host Dunlap Middle School (14th) and perennial powerhouse Parkside (15th).

In the Girls Open race, Sophie Upchurch (14.58, 27th) had the race of the day for all Titans, moving up from 125th at the half mile to 65th at the mile and into the Top 50 by the 1.5-mile mark. Coming out of the triangle, she flew up the final stretch for a 54-second PR, just missing a Top 20 medal by 14 seconds. Tia Reilly (15.32, 58th) and Molly Holt (16.05, 87th) were next across for the Titans, followed by Haley Uphoff (17.05, 160th), who tied her PR from Parkside. Amelia Miller (17.45, 230th), Mya Gramm (17.48, 234th), and Madison Rosenberger (18.38, 287th) all ran close to PR's in the 467-runner open, followed by Maryssa Barker (20.07, 381st) who had a big 37-second PR.

In the Open Boys race, Randall Kent (14.07, 74th) had a breakthrough race, coming in with a 45-second PR and the 6th fastest time of the day of all EPG boys. Along with Upchurch, Kent is now listed among the EPGJH Top 25 XC runners of all time. Aidan Mann (15.58, 263rd) had to make a move to pass Mitchell Uphoff (16.07, 279th) in the final 800 meters of the 618-runner event. Uphoff ran to a 26-second PR.

On Monday, September 28th, the Titans will host a 4-team meet at Furrow Farm. The girls will run at 4:30 PM and the boys at 5:00 PM.

All 25 Titans Run to Season PR's at Parkside Strong showing for EPG Girls and Boys at 52-team meet

[SEPTEMBER 12, 2015] – Nearly 2,000 runners from across the state of Illinois competed at the Parkside Invitational Saturday morning. It was a beautiful day for running as a brisk breeze from the north kept temperatures cool. The crowds were enthusiastic, dashing from point to point along the course, madly cheering for the colorful cross country athletes streaming along the 2.0-mile course at Normal's Maxwell Park.

Girls Varsity runners ran to the 4th fastest team average time (13.33) in the history of EPGJH cross country while placing 3rd of all Class 2A teams and 13th of 42 full teams. Race of the day for the Varsity girls went to Allison Kelly (13.19, 62nd) who set a 1.24 season-best time and an all-time PR as well, running 22 seconds faster than her 2014 State Meet time. Julia Reid (13.14, 58th) and Molly Holt (14.22, 161st) also had season-best times by more than one minute. Tristyn Grube (13.11, 52nd) became the 7th fastest EPGJH cross country of all-time, while Hannah Ludy (13.54, 110th), Sami Allen (14.06, 128th) and Tori Witzig (14.39, 189th) all ran to significant season-best times.

Boys Varsity runners ran to the 7th fastest team average time (12.35) in the history of Titan JH cross country, 13 seconds faster than the 2014 team time at Parkside. Aidan Killian (13.09, 193rd) earned race of the day honors for the Varsity boys with a 1.21 season-best time and an all-time PR that was 10 seconds faster than his 2014 Sectional time – and more importantly to Killian, 4 seconds faster than older brother Quinn’s JH cross country PR from 2011. Brett Endress (13.57, 257th) crushed his PR by 1.21, while Nathan DeMarb (12.44, 141st) and Jordan Shelton (13.06, 190th) ran to big season bests of 1.12 and 1.00 respectively, DeMarb notching an all-time PR, 6 seconds faster than his 2014 Sectional time. Garrett Forrest (12.04, 68th) and Sebastian Meyer (12.07, 71st) became the 7th and 8th fastest runners all-time for EPGJH, Forrest notching the biggest PR for returning runners, slicing 36 seconds off his 2014 Sectional time. EPG’s #4 runner Zac Nelson (12.56, 165th) had a 43-second season best.

In the Open Girls race, Madison Rosenberger (17.36, 370th) raced to the biggest PR of all 25 Titans, improving on her PR by 1 minute 32 seconds. Tia Reilly (14.29, 50th), Haley Uphoff (16.16, 225th), and Amelia Miller (16.35, 257th) all set season-best times by more than 1 minute. EPG girls Sophie Upchurch (15.09, 109th), Sophia Lowery (15.32, 154th), Mya Gramm (16.36, 261st), and Maryssa Barker (19.47, 479th) also found themselves with season-best times at the end of the day. In addition, Gramm’s effort put her 24 seconds ahead of her best time from 2014.

In the Open Boys race, Aidan Mann (14.51, 290th) had a big 1.17 PR. Randall Kent (14.12, 193rd) and Mitchell Uphoff (15.47, 407th) also came across the line with some nice PR’s, wrapping up a 100% showing for EPG’s season-best-fest with all 25 athletes earning their fastest times of the season.

On Friday, September 18th, the Titans headed to Ewing Park in Bloomington to defend their Corpus Christi Invitational Championship from 2014. Unfortunately, steady showers and strong afternoon thunderstorms resulted in the meet being cancelled. Next up for EPGJH Cross Country is Friday’s Dunlap Invitational at Detweiller Park in Peoria.

EPGJH Invitational Draws 500 Runners

Girls team scores 99 to place 2nd; Boys team places 5th

[SEPTEMBER 8, 2015] – Heavy rains drenched the course and filled the creek at Furrow Farm just hours before the 4:30pm race time at Tuesday’s 19-team junior high cross country invitational. But the storms passed and the race went forward. Temperatures remained around 70 degrees under cloudy skies, and there was plenty of water to splash through at the two creek crossings. The runners had fun, the crowds were vocal, and the competition was strong. It turned out to be a great day to be a cross country runner. In the Girls Varsity race, Tristyn Grube (10th, 14.29), Julia Reid (15th, 14.40) and Allison Kelly (16th, 14.43) all earned Top 25 medals, while running their way into the EPG course record books as Top 7 athletes of all time to conquer the Furrow Farm “W” course.

EPG's #4 runner Hannah Ludy (27th, 15.12) and #5 runner Sami Allen (31st, 15.39) capped a tight 1 minute 10 second pack time, while Tia Reilly (48th, 16.13) and Sophia Lowery (76th, 18.08) rounded out the Varsity squad.

The Titans earned their first team plaque of the season, placing 2nd of 15 teams and improving on last year's 3rd place showing. Top 5 teams were Dunlap Middle School (29), El Paso-Gridley (99), Dunlap Valley (147), Washington Central (149), and Eureka (152).

In the Boys Varsity race, Garrett Forrest (12th, 13.21), Sebastian Meyer (14th, 13.29), and Zac Nelson (19th, 13.39) all earned Top 25 medals. Forrest notched the 5th fastest EPG time ever on the Furrow course, while Nelson had the race of the day for the Titans, running to an astounding 61-second season best time on the toughest XC course in central Illinois.

Nathan DeMarb (43rd, 14.28), Jordan Shelton (57th, 14.54), Aidan Killian (61st, 15.04), and Randall Kent (94th, 16.07) also contributed to a Boys Varsity team placing of 5th out of 17 teams, jumping up 4 spots from last year's placing.

The combined open saw two Top 10 Titan finishes as Sophie Upchurch (7th, 15.43) and Molly Holt (8th, 15.43) charged up the finishing hill to the red barn and crossed the line together. Upchurch, Holt, and Haley Uphoff (24th, 17.20) all ran to season-best times.

Other Titan finishers for the Open Girls were Amelia Miller (42nd, 19.03), Mya Gramm (46th, 19.12), Madison Rosenberger (55th, 19.45), and Maryssa Barker (94th, 22.54).

Brett Endress (42nd, 15.41) led EPG finishers for the Open Boys, followed by Aidan Mann (64th, 16.40) and Mitchell Uphoff (79th, 17.31).

Next up for Titan Cross Country is the Parkside Invitational this Saturday. Races begin at 9:30am at Maxwell Park's flat and fast 3200-meter course.

Titans Run to 22 Season Bests at Clinton Big PR's for Barker, Witzig, Kent

[AUGUST 22, 2015] – The weather for Saturday morning's Maroon Invitational at Little Galilee Campground was ideal for running, and the Titans capitalized on the favorable conditions by coming through with 22 season best performances. Despite the hilly second mile of the 2.0-mile course, EPGJH runners clocked some impressive times.

First across the line for EPG in the Girls Varsity race was 5th place finisher Tristyn Grube (13.56). She became the fastest Titan girl ever on the Clinton course, eclipsing Maddie Morrison's 2012 record by 12 seconds.

Julia Reid (15th, 14.32), Allison Kelly (19th, 14.46), and Sami Allen (20th, 14.48) all ran to season best times. Hannah Ludy (23rd, 14.54) rolled an ankle early in the race, yet still ran to within 6 seconds of a season best.

Grube, Reid, Kelly, Allen, and Ludy combined for a Titan team course record for the second time in as many meets, and notched the fastest August team time ever recorded (72.56) in the nine-year history of EPGJH Cross Country. Their pack time was 58 seconds.

Tia Reilly (28th, 15.49) and Molly Holt (34th, 16.27) also set season best times in the Girls Varsity race.

In the Girls Open race, Tori Witzig (15.31) ran to a 6th place finish and sliced an impressive 2 minutes 10 seconds from her Heyworth time. Sophie Upchurch (9th, 15.57) looked very strong in her cross country debut, while Sophia Lowery (11th, 16.04) was 101 seconds faster than her Heyworth race. All three earned Top 15 ribbons.

Mya Gramm (23rd, 17.19) closed to within 19 seconds of her 2014 PR, while Amelia Miller (28th, 17.57) and Madison Rosenbeger (46th, 19.08) dropped a minute from their times at Tuesday's meet. Haley Uphoff (48th, 19.28) was next, followed by Maryssa Barker (53rd, 20.35) who had the biggest Titan PR of the day, cutting nearly 4 minutes off her Heyworth time.

Top runners for the Varsity Boys were Garrett Forrest (11th, 12.52) and Sebastian Meyer (12th, 12.53).

Nathan DeMarb (26th, 13.56) dropped 20 seconds from his Heyworth time, while Jordan Shelton (29th, 14.08) missed a season best by 2 seconds. Varsity runners Aidan Killian (33rd, 14.30), Zac Nelson (34th, 14.40), and Brett Endress (36th, 15.18) all had season best times.

Open runners Randall Kent (8th, 14.39), Aidan Mann (17th, 16.08), and Mitchell Uphoff (23rd, 16.39) also came away with season best performances. Kent had the biggest PR of all Titan boys, improving his time by 1 minute 44 seconds.

The Titans travel to Metamora's Black Partridge Park for their next meet on September 3rd at 4:00 PM.

EPGJH Cross Country Opens with Two Wins Boys win by 8, Girls by 1 at Heyworth Quadrangular

[AUGUST 18, 2015] – Tuesday afternoon found 25 Titan runners attacking the trails at Centennial Park near Heyworth. The 1.95-mile course was two loops through a park and around a pond.

It was the first meet of the season for the Titans, but the competition would be strong, with all four teams having sent teams to State last year – the El Paso-Gridley girls (15th, Class 2A), Normal Epiphany girls (11th, Class 1A), Bloomington Corpus Christi girls (22nd, Class 1A), Bloomington Corpus Christi boys (14th, Class 1A), and Heyworth boys (18th, Class 1A).

Titan Tristyn Grube started things off on the right foot by breaking the EPG course record at Heyworth in her cross country debut with a time of 13.56. She led through the middle part of the race but could not hold off a late charge by Corpus Christi's Kaylie Eckhoff, placing 2nd overall by 4 seconds.

Hannah Ludy (4th, 14.26) and Allison Kelly (7th, 14.34) ran smart and had strong finishes. Ludy was three seconds ahead of the 5th place runner, while Kelly edged two runners by just one second.

Sami Allen (11th, 14.43) showed tremendous poise and strength in her first cross country race as she started in the latter half of the field but continued to move up all the way to the finish line. Julia Reid (12th, 14.44) followed just one second later as the Titans' #5 runner.

Grube, Ludy, Kelly, Allen, and Reid combined to shatter the EPG team record on the Heyworth course by over 4 minutes.

Tia Reilly (16th, 15.33) and Molly Holt (22nd, 16.49) rounded out the Varsity scorers.

Tori Witzig (25th, 17.14), Sophia Lowery (26th, 17.18), Mya Gramm (27th, 17.23), Haley Uphoff (30th, 17.27), Amelia Miller (33rd, 18.39), Madison Rosenberger (35th, 19.36), Lauren Sepich (39th, 23.32), and Maryssa Barker (40th, 23.56) also competed well on Tuesday.

Team scores could not have been much closer, with the EPG Girls earning a narrow one-point victory. The final tally was EPG (36), Corpus Christi (37), Epiphany (47), Heyworth (115).

EPG's Garrett Forrest (12.56) led the Boys Team with his 3rd place finish, just 14 seconds behind winner Logan Moore of Heyworth. Only All-State runners Sean Supan and Andy Layden have run faster times for EPG on the Heyworth course.

Seventh-grader Sebastian Meyer (5th, 13.04) ran side-by-side with Forrest for much of the race, making for a strong 1-2 punch up front for the Titans.

Jordan Shelton (9th, 13.45) and Nathan DeMarb (10th, 13.55) ran strong races, while Aidan Killian (14.21) came from way back in the pack to make a big contribution to the Titan team with his 15th place finish.

Despite Normal Epiphany putting their #1 in front of EPG's #1, their #2 in front of EPG's #2, and their #3 in front of EPG's #3, the Titans pulled out an 8-point victory due in large part to their #4 and #5 both finishing in front of Epiphany's #4.

In addition, EPG's #6 runner Zac Nelson (17th, 14.50) and #7 runner Brett Endress (23rd, 15.35) both finished ahead of Epiphany's #5.

Final team scoring for the boys showed EPG (42) on top, followed by Epiphany (50), Corpus Christi (53), and Heyworth (83).

First-time Titan runners Randall Kent (25th, 15.58), Mitchell Uphoff (29th, 16.44), and Aidan Mann (31st, 17.19) also had strong races Tuesday.