

EPGJH Boys Team Places 6th at XC State

Smith, Landrus lead Titans with All-State performances

[OCTOBER 14, 2017] – The EPGJH Boys Cross Country Team faced humid breezy conditions and uncertainty as to whether the rain would hold off. But there was no doubt about the stellar competition that was lined up on the starting line at the 2017 Class 2A State Finals. The Titans had made it back to the starting line for the 3rd year in a row and were looking to repeat last season's Top 10 team finish at State if things went according to plan. But with 27 teams and 232 of Illinois' top runners ready to race, that goal would be a challenge to say the least.

As Smith (7th, 10.40) got off to a good start and was running about 12th at the half mile. He blazed through the mile in 5.06, having moved up to 6th place, maintaining that position through 1.5 miles despite the early quick pace taking its toll. Genoa Kingston's Aiden Tomlinson and Green Oaks Oak Grove's Brenden Max both moved up to challenge Smith, with Tomlinson edging Smith by one second but Max coming up 4 seconds short. Smith earned All-State honors, a lifetime PR by one second, and broke his own school record for the third time this season.

Adrian Landrus (20th, 11.01) ran #2 for the Titans for the tenth time this season, and arguably had the best race of all the EPG boys. In 36th place at the mile (5.28), Landrus continued to move up through the field. With 250 meters remaining, he was battling for 25th, the last All-State spot. He won that battle and passed 5 additional runners in the final 100 meters as his 5.33 second mile netted him a 21-second lifetime PR in his first XC State Finals. In addition to All-State honors, Landrus earned the #2 spot on the All-Time Record board.

Maison DePauw (63rd, 11.40) ran #3 for the Titans, cutting 7 seconds off his Sectional time, while #4 Noah Ludy (94th, 11.52) ran sub-12 for the fourth time this season and finished 79 places better than at 2016 State.

#5 TJ Supan (110th, 12.03) ran to his third PR in a row and helped the Boys team run to their fastest time of the season, averaging just 11.27 per runner.

Conner Betts (153rd, 12.19) closed out his season as EPG's #6, running within 2 seconds of his PR set last week at the Sectional Meet. That PR is exactly 100 seconds faster than Betts' 2016 PR. Seventh-grader Sam Bushert (179th, 12.35) ran to his second fastest time ever as EPG's #7.

Quincy St. Peter's Fiker Rosen scorched the 3200-meter course and won by 30 seconds in a time of 9 minutes 43 seconds, running splits of 4.48/4.54. Rosen was adopted from an Ethiopian orphanage 4 years ago. He won every race as a seventh grade cross-country runner last season, including the AAU National Cross Country Championships in Florida in December 2016. Chicago Latin won the team championship with 74 points.

The Titan Boys placed 6th as a team with 202 points, just 21 points out of a 4th place trophy. They competed well, beating the only team that had beaten them prior to State Finals – Sectional Champion Manhattan. The Demons edged out EPG at the Sectional Meet by 11 points, but at State, the Titans crushed 10th-place Manhattan by 112 points.

EPGJH Girls Team Places 10th at XC State

Slightom leads Titans with All-State performance

[OCTOBER 14, 2017] – The EPGJH Girls Cross Country Team had qualified for the State Championship Meet a week earlier on a warm and breezy day at the Kankakee Sectional. Similar weather greeted the Titans at Maxwell Park, with gusty southwest breezes pushing the humid air across Maxwell Park’s 3200-meter State course. Light sprinkles and windy spells seemed to be battling a warm sun for preeminence, as Mother Nature’s turmoil was apparent even before the athletes began their head-to-head competition.

With warm-ups and team meetings completed, the EPG girls lined up in Box 23. Twenty-eight teams and 241 runners were on the line for the Class 2A Finals. The gun was fired and the field surged up the hill towards the pine tree 200 meters to the south.

EPG’s Ruby Slightom (7th, 11.55) got off to a strong start, passing the half mile in 17th place. Slightom came through the mile (5.51) still holding 17th position and remaining in the mix for All-State Top 25 honors, but with the 25th place girl just 4 seconds back there was no room for error. At 1.5 miles Slightom had moved up one spot to 16th, but the race remained tight. Coming around the final turn with 300 meters to go, Slightom had surged into a battle for 12th. Nearing the finish line, she saw the clock, put the pedal down and pushed with everything she had, coming up with a 7th place finish, earning All-State honors, and clocking the second fastest time in EPGJH Girls Cross Country history.

Running #2 for the Titans was Jordyn Cannon (43rd, 12.42), cutting 6 seconds off her Sectional time and placing 11 spots higher than at State 2016. EPG’s #3 Charlene Hamilton (47th, 12.44) ran 16 seconds faster than at Sectionals and placed 69 spots higher she did at State 2016. Karli Perrine (95th, 13.11) came through as EPG’s #4, nearly matching her Sectional time and making her State Finals debut by cracking the Top 100.

The biggest PR of the day went to Emma Whitcomb (177th, 14.01) who set a lifetime best for the eighth time this season. Running splits of 6.50/7.11, she cut 26 seconds off her previous best. It was the perfect time to come up with a big race, as Whitcomb ran #5 for the Titans, and those 26 seconds helped her team by 22 points.

Hillary Gramm (191st, 14.16) cut 14 seconds off her Sectional time and picked up a 4-second PR, while Jillian Toth (194th, 14.22) turned in her second sub-14.30 performance in as many weeks.

Chicago Latin’s Ava Parekh took the Girls Individual in a time of 11 minutes 12 seconds. The team title was awarded to Tolono Unity with 98 points.

The Titan Girls placed 10th as a team with 286 points. Three weeks earlier a strong Knoxville team had beaten the Titans by 57 points. At State the Titans turned the tables on the 13th-place Blue Bullets, beating them by 59 points. Just a week earlier at the Kankakee Sectional, Manhattan scored a 9-point advantage over the Titans, but at State the EPG girls destroyed the 18th-place Demons by 175 points. The Titan XC girls ran to their fastest team time of the season with their Top 5 average of 12 minutes 55 seconds – the second fastest time ever recorded for EPGJH.

Boys Team Qualifies for State XC Finals

EPGXC Boys earn trip to State for 3rd year in a row

[OCTOBER 7, 2017] – The EPGJH Boys Cross Country Team traveled farther than any other team on the early morning bus ride to the 2017 Class 2A Sectional “E” Meet hosted by Kankakee Bishop McNamara. The 2.0-mile course at Kankakee Community College was primarily grass, looping around a soccer field, running along the tree-lined Kankakee River, making two short passes through shady trails among oaks and walnuts, and finishing on a flagged straightaway

towards a small pond. With rains coming before and after the race, athletes instead faced a warm and windy morning under mostly sunny skies.

The Boys team knew they had their work cut out for them, even with all of their success prior to this meet. Manhattan placed 3rd at State last year and had seven sub-12 guys, Paxton-Buckley-Loda had a fast front-runner and 5 strong runners to back him up, Channahon had a pack time of around 40 seconds, Bishop Mac was on their home course with their #1 consistently under 10.30 all season, and Beecher is a quality team that had traded wins with Bishop Mac at several regular-season meets. Only three teams would qualify for State.

Asa Smith (4th, 10.41) was burning it up, just a few strides off the top 3 as they charged through a fast first mile. With 600m to go, those three had dropped Smith, as Bishop Mac's Chase Provost (10.05) held off PBL's Ryder James (10.09) to claim the individual championship. Those two times were the fastest in the State on Saturday, faster than any other times in Class 1A, 2A, 3A. Smith, meanwhile, ran to a lifetime PR, breaking his own school record, and doing so while running much of the second mile alone on a warm and windy day. He placed well ahead of Manhattan's #1 runner – 5th place finisher Anthony Carli (11.09).

Adrian Landrus (8th, 11.24) came within 2 seconds of his PR set last weekend, moving up nicely through the field yet again, and placing just behind PBL's #2 and ahead of Manhattan's #2.

Noah Ludy (11th, 11.34) continued his brilliant October with an 11-second PR and another perfectly executed race. Ludy was the fastest #3 runner in the Sectional field.

Maison DePauw (18th, 11.47) strong performance was a key to the Titans team effort, as he ran 17 seconds faster than last weekend. Outside of Manhattan's #4 who edged him by 1 second, no other team's #4 came close to DePauw.

The top 4 Titan boys had come through with strength and tenacity, and they found themselves with a 7-point lead in team standings through 4 runners.

TJ Supan (39th, 12.14) delivered an 8-second PR to secure a birth to the State Finals for the Titans, although Manhattan's #7 was across the line 20 seconds before Supan as the Demons retook the lead and won by 11 points.

Conner Betts (42nd, 12.17) continued his astonishing comeback off a mid-season injury and clocked yet another lifetime PR, dropping 15 seconds off his previous best while putting himself into the Top 20 all-time XC athletes for EPGJH with his gutsy performance. Sam Bushert (57th, 12.50) ran to his second-fastest time ever and will get one more shot at a PR on October 14.

The Titan boys team punched a ticket to State Finals for the 3rd year in a row. Top 5 teams at the Kankakee Sectional were Manhattan (68), EPG (79), Paxton-Buckley-Loda (98), Channahon (116), and Bishop Mac (125).

The Class 2A Boys State Finals race will be held at Maxwell Park in Normal on Saturday, October 14, with the starting gun being fired at 11:45 a.m. sharp. The Titan Boys will be gunning for a top placing among the State-qualifying teams.

Girls Team Qualifies for State XC Finals

EPGXC Girls earn trip to State for 4th year in a row

[OCTOBER 7, 2017] – The EPGJH Girls Cross Country Team was on the bus before the sun rose on Saturday morning to make the 75-mile journey to Kankakee Community College. Bishop McNamara was hosting the 2017 Class 2A Sectional “E” on a 2.0-mile course which loops a soccer field, runs along the Kankakee River, and makes two short loops through some wooded trails before the short straightaway to the finish line in front of a small pond. A strong southerly breeze and warm sun made for less than ideal conditions, but thankfully the rain held off until the afternoon.

The Girls Varsity team was facing strong competition from heavy favorite Channahon, perennial State qualifier Manhattan, a St. Joseph team who boasted a pack time of just 29 seconds, and a quality Bishop Mac team who would be running on their home course. Twelve full teams were competing and only 3 teams would qualify for State. The Titans would have to be at the top of their game to have a shot at a ticket to State.

Ruby Slightom (2nd, 12.26) was off the line quickly and moved into second place before the half mile, a position she would hold for the remainder of the race. Slightom continued to chase after eventual winner Kathryn Cichon (12.11) of Channahon, and earned runner-up honors by holding off Grace Battiato (12.31) and Jocelyn Host (12.31) of Channahon.

Jordyn Cannon (7th, 12.48) ran a perfectly focused race, slicing 8 second off her time from last weekend and within 8 seconds of her season-best at Parkside. Charlene Hamilton (9th, 13.00) ran another big race for EPG, finishing just ahead of St. Joseph’s #1 and #2 runners. Karli Perrine (12th, 13.10) had a sensational second mile, pushing hard to move up through the field as she finished ahead of every team’s #4 runner.

The top 4 Varsity girls had done their job in a big way, and through 4 runners EPG’s 30 points matched Channahon’s 30 points, with both teams leading Manhattan by 8 points. Now it was up to EPG’s #5-6-7 runners to step up and make a difference.

Enter Jillian Toth (40th, 14.10), fresh off a 44-second PR at Delavan last weekend. Toth was out strong – perhaps a bit too strong, as she was with our 2-3-4 runners as they looped around the soccer field just before 800m. She dropped back a bit from there, but her determination remained. With 600m to go she was giving chase to Bishop Mac’s Kenna Brosseau. Coming out of the woods with 100m to go, she was still hanging on and with a cheering crowd as the colorful backdrop, Toth surged past Brosseau and finished out the scoring for EPG with a 30-second PR.

The Titans #6 and #7 runners turned in strong performances as well, with Emma Whitcomb (48th, 14.27) earning a 1-second PR, and Hillary Gramm (52nd, 14.30) just 10 seconds off her lifetime best set last weekend at Delavan.

The Titans were holding their breath at the awards ceremony as team places were announced. Kankakee Bishop Mac (129) placed 5th, and when St. Joseph (104) was announced 4th, the EPG girls let out some excited gasps and exchanged hugs, as they knew they had grabbed a qualifying team spot. Indeed, the Top 3 teams were Channahon (51), Manhattan (61), and EPG (70). The Titan XC Girls team had just earned their 4th trip to the State Finals in as many years.

The Class 2A Girls State Finals race will be held at Maxwell Park in Normal on Saturday, October 14, with the starting gun being fired at 11:00 a.m. sharp. The Titan Girls will be on the starting line once again.

Titans Take Two Team Trophies from XC Dare Classic EPG Boys Team finishes regular season undefeated v. 1A/2A

[SEPTEMBER 30, 2017] – El Paso-Gridley Junior High Cross Country made a trip to the 27-team Delavan Dare Classic on a beautiful Saturday morning. Near ideal conditions of about 60 degrees under mostly sunny skies made this an enjoyable experience for athletes and spectators alike. The 2.04-mile course was challenging due to the number of turns the runners had to navigate, but the Titans nevertheless brought home 15 PR's, 9 medals, and two team trophies from this 630-runner invitational.

The Girls Varsity race began like many other races with the EPG athletes getting out strong but smart, and then moving up through the field. Ruby Slightom (2nd, 12.35) was in 6th at the half mile, but moved up nicely to earn runner-up honors, trailing only Dunlap Middle's Saniya Mathew (12.20) in the 148-runner field.

Charlene Hamilton (8th, 12.58) had the race of the day for the Girls Varsity with her classic pacing. She came through the half mile in 26th before passing runner after runner until she was in the Top 10, continuing to move through the field until the finish line mats halted her progress towards the front of the pack.

Jordyn Cannon (13th, 13.12) and Karli Perrine (26th, 13.27) worked together for the first mile until Perrine faded due to some soreness. Still, Perrine gave it her all as she flashed across the finish line in a pack of 5 runners separated by just 92 one-hundredths of a second; unfortunately for Perrine, she was the 5th of those 5 and missed grabbing the 25th place medal by the blink of an eye.

The 5-6-7 runners for EPG all earned PR's – Emma Whitcomb (81st, 14.45) by 20 seconds, Jillian Toth (91st, 14.58) by 44 seconds, and Lizzie Uphoff (15.00) by 19 seconds.

The Girls Varsity team earned the 3rd-place trophy by just 5 points over Elmwood, with Top 5 team scores showing Dunlap Middle (44), Christ the King (74), EPG (124), Elmwood (129), Dunlap Valley (162).

In the Boys Varsity race, Asa Smith (1st, 11.04) ran comfortably with the lead pack before breaking away during the second mile, eventually beating runner-up Thomas Harmon of Brimfield by 5 seconds. His adjusted 2-mile time of 10.51 was just 2 seconds off his school record set earlier this season.

Adrian Landrus (7th, 11.36) had a race much like Hamilton's, moving up throughout the entire race, running negative splits and earning a lifetime PR. Noah Ludy (22nd 11.59) also notched an all-time PR, moving into sole possession of the #10 position on the All-Time Records board.

Maison DePauw (31st, 12.18) and TJ Supan (47th, 12.37) were #4-5 for the Titans as Supan sliced 14 seconds off his previous best with an adjusted time of 12.22. Travis Gramm (75th, 13.12) and Payton Romersberger (78th, 13.15) closed things out for the Varsity boys.

The Titans claimed the 41st Annual Delavan Dare Classic Championship by defeating runner-up Dunlap Valley by 21 points. Final scores for the Top 5 teams were EPG (103), Dunlap Valley (124), Dunlap Middle (144), Franklin (176), Metamora (191). El Paso-Gridley remains undefeated vs. Class 1A/2A schools.

EPG's three athletes in the Open Girls race all ran to PR's by over 50 seconds. Hillary Gramm (10th, 14.37) had a breakthrough race, as did Kelsie Schlipf (27th, 15.24) who ran to the biggest PR of all Titan athletes, clocking a 62-second improvement from her time at Parkside. Elise Morrison (53rd, 16.00) nailed her race as well, finishing in the top third of the field.

The Open Boys race saw 5 of 6 Titan athletes running to PR's. Sam Bushert (4th, 12.39) opened with a 6.11 first mile and continued to run with purpose, his stellar performance good for a 33-second PR as well as a spot on the All-Time Records board at #21, effectually removing his brother Will who had been hanging on at #25.

Conner Betts (7th, 12.47) had one of the gutsiest races delivered this season. In just his second race back since returning from injury, Betts clocked a 6.15 for his first mile, and continued to hammer, running to an incredible 55-second PR. He managed to check in at #25 All-Time for his Records board debut. Betts' adjusted time of 12.32 pushed teammate Romersberger off the list after he had debuted at #23 just 8 days ago.

Garrison Meyer (28th, 13.26), Lane Dohman (59th, 14.16), and Gunner Cobbley (63rd, 14.20) followed suit with more PR's in the 196-runner field. Eighth-grader Cobbley ran to a phenomenal 60-second PR in his final JH cross country race, breaking 15 minutes for the first time and very nearly cracking the 14-minute barrier with a 2-mile adjusted time of 14.03. Jack Erwin (69th, 14.33) wrapped up a great day for the Titans, just missing his lifetime PR by 3 scant seconds.

Saturday the Titans head to Kankakee Community College where Bishop McNamara will be hosting a Class 2A Sectional Meet. The Girls race will start at 10 a.m., with the Boys race scheduled to begin at approximately 10:30 a.m.

Titan Girls Win Quadrangular for 8th Year in a Row

EPG boys take top 4 spots at Furrow Farm

[SEPTEMBER 25, 2017] – El Paso-Gridley Junior High Cross Country hosted a 4-team meet at Furrow Farm on yet another warm and sunny afternoon. Heyworth, Pontiac, and Tremont were attending the annual quadrangular. Creeks were at record lows, with just a few inches of water to splash through, but temperatures near 90 degrees resulted in mostly slower times than 20 days ago when Invitational runners were enjoying weather in the upper 60's.

The Girls Team had set 3 goals at the beginning of the season, and one of those goals was to win the EPG Quadrangular for the 8th year in a row. With the Titans missing their top two runners who were not feeling well, and knowing Tremont was a strong team to begin with, it looked to be an uphill battle to keep the tradition alive. When Pontiac got off to a fast start, the uncertainty grew. But the Titans were prepared for the challenge.

Karli Perrine (2nd, 14.48) and Charlene Hamilton (3rd, 14.50) ran well together and finished less than 10 seconds back of winner Sophia Sumer of Tremont. Lizzie Uphoff (5th, 15.32) stepped into the #3 spot for EPG with a strong run, while Emma Whitcomb (7th, 15.59) came through with a performance that was 2 seconds faster than her Invitational race despite the heat. Jillian Toth (13th, 16.21) sealed the victory for the Titans by cutting 33 seconds off her Invite time.

Hillary Gramm (15th, 16.40) and Chloe Atkins (17th, 17.16) were #6-7 for the Girls Team, followed by Kelsie Schlipf (19th, 17.31), Elise Morrison (23rd, 20.33) and Joci Nelson (24th, 20.36). Schlipf dropped 25 seconds off her Invite time.

Final team scores in the 31-runner race were EPG (30), Tremont (41), Pontiac (52), Heyworth (110).

The Boys Team were missing their #3 runner but still scored a 46-point victory over runner-up Tremont. Asa Smith (1st, 11.51) broke away from the field early and won his sixth race of the

season. Adrian Landrus (2nd, 12.53), Noah Ludy (3rd, 13.01), TJ Supan (4th, 13.20), and Travis Gramm (6th, 13.35) all looked strong and confident as they climbed the final hill to the finish line in front of the barn. Alex Maas of Heyworth prevented a Titan sweep by finishing 8 seconds in front of Gramm, who ran 29 seconds faster in the Quadrangular heat than he had at the Invite.

Payton Romersberger (8th, 13.42) and Garrison Meyer (10th, 14.22) had stellar races to give EPG 7 of the top 10 spots. Romersberger clocked a time that was 52 seconds faster than his previous Furrow best.

Conner Betts (15th, 14.52) had an impressive outing, running in his first race since an injury took him out of competition on August 31. Jack Erwin (24th, 15.59), Gunner Cobbley (29th, 16.19), and Lane Dohman (34th, 17.03) wrapped things up for the Titans. Cobbley clocked his lifetime best Furrow time.

There were 51 runners in the boys field, and final team scores were EPG (16), Tremont (62), Heyworth (76), and Pontiac (85).

Saturday the Titans head to the 41st Annual Walt Dare Classic in Delavan to wrap up their regular season schedule. There will be 27 teams competing and races begin at 9:00 a.m.

Competition Heats Up at 1,500-Runner DMS Invite Medal winners Slightom, Smith, Landrus, Romersberger run well

[SEPTEMBER 22, 2017] – Forty-five schools were in attendance at the Dunlap Middle School Invitational and the story of the day was the heat. Skies were mostly sunny, the mercury was pushing beyond the 90-degree mark, and the 2.1-mile course at Peoria's Detweiller Park was dry and dusty. But that did not stop 1,503 finishers from pushing themselves to overcome the challenging conditions.

In the Girls Varsity race, Ruby Slightom (22nd, 13.29) was in about 60th place at the half mile, 39th at the mile (6.21), and 28th at 1.5 miles. She clocked a 6.30 second mile while continuing to surge past runners and held on for a Top 25 finish.

The #2 Titan was Charlene Hamilton (48th, 14.13), running strong splits of 6.40/6.54 and moving up 23 spots from the mile to the finish. Hamilton ran 15 seconds faster than she did on the same course last year, despite this year's unfavorable conditions.

Jordyn Cannon (59th, 14.27) and Karli Perrine (61st, 14.27) were together much of the race, while Lizzie Uphoff (183rd, 16.14) moved back into the number five spot for EPG. Varsity runners Emma Whitcomb (198th, 16.29) and Chloe Atkins (206th, 16.32) rounded out the Titan Girls Team in the 265-runner field.

The Girls placed 15th with a score of 369, between Lincoln (355) and Williamsville (410). Class 3A powerhouse Glenwood won with 100 points.

In the Boys Varsity race, eventual winner Wyatt Erber of Edwardsville Liberty was out front early, with EPG's Asa Smith (5th, 11.46) among those in a chase pack. Smith clocked a 5.22 first mile en route to his second-fastest performance of the season – running a two-mile equivalent of 11.12.

Adrian Landrus (17th, 12.17) came through mile one at 5.48 and then proceeded to move up 25 spots with a 5.55 second mile. He pushed all the way to the finish line, just nipping Liberty's Cannon Wolf by two-tenths of a second at the finish line.

The 3-4 runners for EPG were Maison DePauw (40th, 12.44) and Noah Ludy (55th, 12.55). Ludy ran strong splits of 6.03/6.17, which helped him to a race performance that was 46 seconds faster than one year ago at Detweiller.

Number five Titan TJ Supan (120th, 13.38) had a stellar outing, matching Landrus for best splits of the day with his 6.25/6.32 and passing more than 50 runners in the final 1.1 miles of the race. And 6-7 runners Travis Gramm (138th, 13.51) and Sam Bushert (173rd, 14.12) competed well in the 280-runner field.

The Boys placed 7th as a team with 230 points, between Edwardsville Liberty (226) and host Dunlap Middle (265). Geneseo won with 99 points.

In the Girls Open race, Hillary Gramm (66th, 16.16) had a very strong effort, as her 2-mile adjusted time was just 15 seconds off her lifetime PR. Kelsie Schlipf (168th, 17.40), Elise Morrison (289th, 19.35), and Joci Nelson (290th, 19.36) battled the heat and the 434-runner field.

In the Boys Open race, seventh-grader Payton Romersberger (9th, 13.13) had a breakthrough race. He clocked a 66-second PR, earning himself a spot on the EPG All-Time Record board at #23 with his 12.35 two-mile equivalent.

Garrison Meyer (88th, 14.29) was just 20 seconds off his PR, while Gunner Cobbley (256th, 16.15) ran 74 seconds faster than he ran on this course last fall. Jack Erwin (268th, 16.24) and Josiah Meade (441st, 19.17) were the final two Titans to cross the finish line on this first day of fall that felt like mid-summer.

Monday will find our EPGJH athletes at Furrow Farm for our quadrangular meet vs. Heyworth, Pontiac, and Tremont. The Girls Team will be gunning for an unprecedented 8th quadrangular victory in a row, having won this meet every year since 2010. Meanwhile the Boys Team will be aiming to extend their undefeated season v. Class 1A/2A schools with a win at Furrow. There are two races – Girls at 4:30, Boys at 5:00.

Titan Girls, Boys Combine for 99-point Victory at CCXC Invite Boys Team Repeats as Champions, Girls Team Captures 3rd Place Trophy

[SEPTEMBER 15, 2017] – A record fifteen teams attended the Corpus Christi Invitational Friday afternoon. 318 runners covered the 2.0-mile course on a warm day under sunny skies. The course, updated in 2014, features trails, open grassy areas, a path along a creek, and several footbridges. The first of four races started at 4 p.m., and the concluding awards ceremony wrapped things up as the sun's intensity gave way to a pleasant evening.

In the Girls Varsity race, St. Matthew's Isabella Ramshaw (12.23) held off runner-up Gabriella Moreman of Danville Schlarman (12.32) for the overall win. Soon to follow were four Titans, evenly spaced amongst the Top finishers – Ruby Slightom (4th, 12.56); Jordyn Cannon (6th, 13.16); Charlene Hamilton (10th, 13.36); and Karli Perrine (13th, 13.58). Slightom and Cannon clocked the fastest-ever EPG times on this course.

Emma Whitcomb (35th, 15.17) had a strong performance as the Titan #5 runner, followed by Lizzie Uphoff (45th, 15.52) and Jillian Toth (54th, 16.32) to round out the EPG athletes competing in the 75-runner Varsity field.

The Titan girls moved up through the field as the race progressed, chased down some competitors down the homestretch, and finished with an all-time EPG Course Record for all Ewing Park courses. Their performance as a team was good for the 3rd place trophy, with the Top 5 team scores showing host Corpus Christi (51), St. Matthew (59), EPG (60), Christ the King (84), Dee-Mack (129).

In the Boys Varsity race, Asa Smith came from behind to take the lead with a half mile to go. But Christ the King's Max Kersting stayed close, and with 200 meters to go began to close on Smith. Just before reaching the 50-yard line on the football field finish, Kersting caught and passed Smith. Smith was then the one holding on before making a final surge and passing Kersting just before the end zone finish line. EPG's Smith had won by less than half a second.

There were similar dramatic finishes throughout the Boys race, as the Titan athletes charged to the finish line. The Titans put 5 in the Top 25 with Adrian Landrus (3rd, 11.51), Maison DePauw (5th, 11.52), Noah Ludy (12th, 12.34), and TJ Supan (24th, 13.12). Smith, Landrus, and DePauw clocked the fastest Titan times ever on this course. Travis Gramm (29th, 13.25) and Sam Bushert (37th, 13.43) both finished in the top half of the 88-runner field.

The Titan Top 5 were at 67 points one-third of the way through the race, but running smart, confident, and strong, they lowered their score to 38 by the finish. The EPG Boys Team earned a 33-point victory in 2016, and they defended their title with a 51-point win in 2017. Top 5 team scores were EPG (38), Heyworth (89), South Pekin (106), Christ the King (113), Corpus Christi (168).

The Girls Open race consisted of 67 athletes, and the Titans all finished in the top half of the field – Chloe Atkins (8th, 16.07); Hillary Gramm (14th, 16:32); Kelsie Schlipf (17th, 16.52); Elise Morrison (28th, 18.43); and Joci Nelson (29th, 18.44). Atkins took home a Top 10 award, while Schlipf was closest to her PR.

The Boys Open race had 87 runners competing, and Titan teammates Payton Romersberger (1st, 13.51) and Garrison Meyer (2nd, 14.01) moved to the front at the mile mark. Both finished strong, with Romersberger running his second mile faster than his first as the duo claimed 1st and 2nd overall.

Lane Dohman (8th, 14.39) tied his PR, while Gunner Cobbley (11th, 15.03) took home a 25-second PR. Jack Erwin (15th, 15.24) was next across for the Titans, followed by Caleb Smith (26th, 16.06) and Josiah Meade (50th, 17.16). Meade set a PR by 83 seconds.

The Girls Varsity and Boys Varsity teams combined to earn El Paso-Gridley a 99-point victory in the Combined Team category. They took home the Combined 1st Place trophy with Top 5 Combined team scores showing EPG (98), Christ the King (197), Corpus Christi (219), St. Matthew (260), Dee-Mack (301).

EPG Cross Country is set to cross the Illinois River next Friday to run at Peoria's Detweiller Park. Dunlap Middle School is hosting an invitational on the first 2.1 miles of the IHSA State Meet course with races beginning at 4 p.m.

Record Day for EPGXC at 50-Team Parkside Invite

All 24 Titans run to PR's – Girls set team record, Smith breaks school record

[SEPTEMBER 9, 2017] – The Parkside Invitational bills itself as the premiere Junior High Cross Country Invitational in the state of Illinois, and given the number and quality of athletes that compete here year after year, they may have a claim to that designation. 50 teams and just under 2,000 runners were running some fast times in near-perfect race conditions. Class 1A, 2A, and 3A schools from across the state sent their teams to do battle on the 3200-meter course at Normal's Maxwell Park, home of the IESA State Finals.

The EPG Girls Team got things rolling with 7 PR's in the Girls Varsity race. Ruby Slightom (18th, 12.05) came through the mile in 6.00 and backed that up with a 6.05 to jump to #3 on the All-Time EPG record board. Slightom ran a 65-second season best and 41 seconds faster than her 2016 State time.

Jordyn Cannon (44th, 12.40) clocked a time that was 38 seconds faster than her 2016 Parkside Invitational time, while Charlene Hamilton (51st, 12.42) who always seems to come through with big races at big meets turned in a 66-second season best and a time that was 24 seconds faster than her 2016 State time. Karlie Perrine (62nd, 12.52) pushed herself to a 48-second PR while running faster than EPG's #1 runner at this meet last year.

Emma Whitcomb (236th, 14.48) came through with a 73-second PR to find herself as EPG's #5 runner, while #6 Lizzie Uphoff (253rd, 15.01) sliced a few seconds off her PR and #7 Hillary Gramm (267th, 15.15) ran to a 63-second PR.

The Girls Team placed 15th overall and scores showed the Titans as one of the top Class 2A schools competing. Slightom, Cannon, Hamilton, Perrine, and Whitcomb ran to the fastest EPG team time ever at the Parkside Invitational, and the 3rd fastest team time in EPGJH XC history, with only the 2015 and 2016 teams running faster at State Finals.

The EPG Boys Team had an exciting day as well, with Asa Smith (6th, 10.49) running to a 27-second season best while breaking his school record set at the 2016 State Finals by 2 seconds. His splits were 5.16, 5.33.

Maison DePauw (20th, 11.06) turned in another stellar performance, clocking splits of 5.36, 5.30. Smith is the only EPG athlete to clock a faster time than DePauw – ever – as DePauw jumped up to #2 all-time for the Titans.

Adrian Landrus (29th, 11.24) ran to a 25-second PR, while Noah Ludy (83rd, 11.51) broke the 12-minute barrier with a 28-second PR. Travis Gramm (123rd, 12.09) was EPG's #5 with his 23-second PR. TJ Supan (194th, 12.36) cut things close with a 1-second PR, while #7 runner Sam Bushert (225th, 12.57) broke into the 12's with his 25-second PR.

The Boys were the top-placing Class 2A school and placed 4th overall. Top 5 teams were Yorkville (145), Troy (192), Parkside (210), El Paso-Gridley (260), New Lenox Martino (274). The team time for the Boys was a 40-second season best and the 4th best EPG team time ever.

EPG athletes in the Open races performed no less spectacularly. 548 girls and 688 boys were competing, and the Titans ran strong.

Chloe Atkins (127th, 15.04) clocked a 75-second PR, Jillian Toth (153rd, 15.24) ran to a 90-second PR, Kelsie Schlipf (225th, 16.08) ran to a 46-second lifetime best, Joci Nelson (279th, 16.33) ran 54 seconds faster than her best ever, and Elise Morrison (313th, 16.53) finished strong for a 37-second PR.

Garrison Meyer (112th, 13.28) dropped 32 seconds off his previous best, Payton Romersberger (135th, 13.41) ran a 5-second PR, Jack Erwin (213th, 14.13) ran to a big 68-second PR, Lane Dohman (274th, 14.39) clocked a 6-second PR, and Gunner Cobbley (384th, 15.28) ran to an 11-second lifetime best.

Next up for Titan XC is the Corpus Christi Invitational this Friday. EPG will be attempting to extend their run of earning the Girls/Boys Combined Team Championship Trophy, which they first brought home back in 2014.

Furrow Farm Hosts 24 Teams at EPGJH Invite Girls Team Places 3rd, Boys Team Wins

[SEPTEMBER 5, 2017] – The 11th Annual EPGJH Invitational drew 570 runners and a record 24 teams to Furrow Farm. Sunshine and a cool breeze greeted the athletes and crowds, while both creek crossings were just ankle-deep.

The gun went off for the 4:00 Girls Varsity race, and the EPG girls looked fantastic on their home course. Ruby Slightom (6th, 13.28) led the Titan charge by running to an EPG course record, eclipsing Sophi Allen's 2014 mark by 7 seconds. Jordyn Cannon (12th, 13.46) and Karli Perrine (13th, 13.47) teamed up for a strong 2-3 punch, with Charlene Hamilton (20th) earning the 4th Top 25 Varsity medal for the girls. Lizzie Uphoff (46th, 15.26) was EPG's #5 runner, followed by Emma Whitcomb (69th, 16.01) and Hillary Gramm (77th, 16.18). Whitcomb and Gramm achieved what very few runners do – a PR on the tough Furrow course.

The Girls Team took home the 3rd place trophy – it was the EPG Girls' fourth year in a row to place among the Top 3 teams. Top 5 teams for the 2017 Varsity Girls race were Peoria St. Jude (63), Dunlap Middle (82), El Paso-Gridley (93), Pekin (113), Corpus Christi (126). Peoria St. Jude's Maria Stedwill claimed the individual title with a time of 11 minutes 58 seconds.

In the Boys Varsity race, it was Asa Smith (1st, 11.36) making his way to the front, and staying there. Smith ran with confidence to his second EPGJH Invitational title, bettering his 2016 EPG course record by 15 seconds. Runner-up was Josh Noll of Dunlap Valley with a time of 11.47.

EPG's Maison DePauw (3rd, 11.51) had the race of the day for the boys, running to a 34-second season best through the creeks and hills, and equaling Asa Smith's 2016 winning time. His splits were 5.55, 5.56 as he crushed mile 2 and powered up the final hill. Adrian Landrus (5th, 12.04) turned in an awesome debut at Furrow, running to the 3rd best EPG time ever on this course. Noah Ludy (18th, 12.40) sliced 2 minutes 36 seconds off his 2016 Invitational time, while TJ Supan (36th, 13.18) was EPG's #5 runner. Travis Gramm (65th, 14.04) was the final Titan Varsity runner to complete the 3200-meter course.

The 2017 Boys Team remained undefeated as they claimed the EPG Invite Team Title for the second straight year. Top 5 teams for the 2017 Varsity Boys race were El Paso-Gridley (63), Dunlap Valley (94), Dunlap Middle (140), Olympia (154), Eureka (173).

In the Girls Open race, Chloe Atkins (21st, 16.19) and Jillian Toth (27th, 16.54) both ran to big PR's, Atkins by 44 seconds. Kelsie Schlipf (43rd, 17.56) held off teammates Elise Morrison (44th, 18.05), and Joci Nelson (47th, 18.11) as all 5 EPG girls in the Open Race finished in the top half of the 102-runner field.

In the Boys Open race, Garrison Meyer (17th, 14.14) and Payton Romersberger (23rd, 14.34) both earned Top 25 medals. Caleb Smith (41st, 15.36) and Jack Erwin (44th, 15.41) finished 5 seconds apart, while Gunner Cobbley (68th, 16.28) ran over four-and-a-half minutes faster than one year ago at this race. Lane Dohman (75th, 16.42) wrapped things up for the Titans and like all the EPG Open runners, placed in the top half of the field, finishing ahead of 110 runners.

Not only did the Titans capture two trophies, but 2016 recipient Pekin awarded the traveling Sportsmanship/Team Spirit Plaque to the EPGJH Cross Country athletes for welcoming runners from other teams, wishing other runners good luck, and congratulating the finishers.

Two More Wins for Titan XC at Metamora Slightom leads girls; Smith wins 80-runner race

[AUGUST 31, 2017] – Metamora hosted a 5-team meet at Black Partridge Park on a sunny Thursday afternoon. Teams competing were El Paso-Gridley, Galesburg, Metamora, Spring Bay Riverview, and Washington St. Pat's. The 2.1-mile course consisted of grass loops and wooded trails.

Fifty-five girls were in the first race of the day, and EPG's Ruby Slightom (2nd, 13.50) led the Titans, followed closely by Jordyn Cannon (3rd, 13.54). The other Titan Top 5 were Karli Perrine (5th, 14.21), Charlene Hamilton (6th, 14.29), and Lizzie Uphoff (12th, 15.50), helping the Girls earn a decisive team victory with 23 points. Cannon and Uphoff ran to the biggest SB's of all 11 EPG girls competing, dropping over a minute off their previous season best times.

In the 80-runner boys field, EPG's Asa Smith won by 40 seconds. The Metamora boys were running 2-3-4-5 early on, but the Titans remained patient but focused before driving home a strong second mile. The EPGJH team ended up finishing 1-2-3-5-7 for a big victory with just 18 points. After Smith came EPG runners Adrian Landrus (2nd, 12.30), Noah Ludy (3rd, 12.56), Travis Gramm (5th, 13.10), and TJ Supan (7th, 13.15). Gunner Cobbley and Jack Erwin took home the biggest PR's of the day for the boys.

EPG Runs to Victory at Eureka Lake Girls Team Wins by 27, Boys Team Wins by 51

[AUGUST 22, 2017] – Four teams faced off at Eureka Lake in a cross-country meet hosted by Eureka Middle School. The 1.93-mile course followed the shoreline, then ran along a gravel road and into some wooded trails before looping back along the lake.

The Titan girls patiently moved up through the field and finished strong to place 4 in the top 5. Jordyn Cannon (1st, 13.45) notched her second individual victory of the season, with Ruby Slightom (2nd, 13.51) just six seconds back. Charlene Hamilton (3rd, 14.02) came through with another strong effort, 16 seconds ahead of Tremont's Sophia Sumer. Karli Perrine (5th, 14.21) finished 5 seconds ahead of Tremont's #2 runner. Lizzie Uphoff (12th, 15.47) had the race of the day for the girls, notching a 43-second PR.

EPG's #6 runner was Emma Whitcomb (17th, 16.53), running strong and helping with the scoring by finishing ahead of the #5 runner from each of the other teams and ahead of Delavan's #4. EPG's #7 runner Chloe Atkins (20th, 16.59) placed ahead of #5 runners from Eureka and Delavan.

Next across the finish line for the Titans were Kelsie Schlipf (25th, 17.46), Hillary Gramm (29th, 18.44), Joci Nelson (34th, 19.44), and Elise Morrison (35th, 20.10).

The EPG Girls Team won with the score EPG (23), Tremont (50), Eureka (67), Delavan (79).

In the Boys Race, six of the first seven finishers were Titans. Asa Smith (1st, 11.38) grabbed the win by 23 seconds and the EPG course record by one second, bumping Nate DeMarb (2016, 11.39) down to second-fastest EPG runner at Eureka. Adrian Landrus (2nd, 12.01) and Maison DePauw (3rd, 12.21) looked strong and smooth, as did Noah Ludy (4th, 12.44) who surged past Eureka's top runner in the final 300 meters. TJ Supan (6th, 12.57) and Travis Gramm (7th, 13.02) were close behind.

Conner Betts (11th, 13.39) broke into the EGP Top 7 by running 71 seconds faster than last year on this course. Sam Bushert (13th, 13.42) set a lifetime PR by 13 seconds with his 2-mile adjusted time of 14.12. Payton Romersberger (20th, 14.09) also notched a big PR. Garrison Meyer (23rd, 14.19) placed in the top half of the 55-runner field.

Lane Dohman (32nd, 14.54) ran to his 3rd PR in a row, followed by Caleb Smith (39th, 15.34). Gunner Cobbley (44th, 16.20) had a nice 2017 race debut, running significantly faster than he did here in 2016. Jack Erwin (48th, 17.06) was next across the finish line for the Titans.

Josiah Meade (51st, 18.00) had the biggest PR of the day for the boys, cutting 73 seconds off his previous best with his 2-mile adjusted time of 18.39. Declan Duley (55th, 22.53) had another strong finish and was within 19 seconds of his all-time best.

The Boys Team won with the score EPG (16), Eureka (67), Tremont (83), Delavan (91).

Next up for Titan XC is a 4:15 p.m. meet Monday, August 28 at Pontiac Junior High School.

Titans Conquer XC Maroon Invite with 23 Season Bests EPG Boys Bring Home First Place Trophy

[AUGUST 19, 2017] – EPGJH Cross Country traveled to Little Galilee Church Camp on Saturday for an 8-team invitational meet. Thunderstorms rolled through the El Paso-Gridley area as the bus departed, bringing back memories of last year's cancelation due to rain, but it was all sunshine upon arriving at the meet. The sunny weather was a change from last year, but the 2-mile course was the same as always – featuring rugged trails and a monster hill about 1.5 miles in.

Ruby Slightom (4th, 14.00) led the Titan Varsity Girls in the first race of the day, with Charlene Hamilton (5th, 14.04) right on her heels. Slightom missed Tristyn Grube's all-time EPG course best by just 4 seconds. Along with Slightom and Hamilton, Karli Perrine (7th, 14.22) also earned a Top 15 Medal as she ran to the sixth fastest Titan time on this challenging course.

Chloe Atkins (35th, 17.03) stepped up as EPG's #4 Varsity runner while dropping 61 seconds off her time from four days earlier. Lizzie Uphoff (40th, 18.14) rounded out the Titan scoring.

Despite missing top runner Jordyn Cannon, the Girls Team pulled out 4th place with a team score of 91.

The Boys Team conquered the infamous hill and the competition, putting runners #1-#6 in the Top 18 overall. Asa Smith (2nd, 11.41) led the charge, followed closely by Adrian Landrus (4th,

11.49). Both athletes broke the EPG course best set by Andy Layden (11.54) when he won the individual title here back in 2012.

Maison DePauw (8th, 12.25) found his way into the Top 10, while Noah Ludy (15th, 12.41) set a 58-second season best to snag the last medal in the Varsity race. #5 runner Travis Gramm (16th, 12.50) had the biggest PR of all Titan Varsity runners on the day, cutting 83 seconds off his 2-mile time at Durham Park.

TJ Supan (18th, 12.56) broke the 13-minute barrier for the first time, while Sam Bushert (14.32) was EPG's #7 runner.

Team awards went just one-deep, and the Titans bested runner-up Olympia by 21 points to take home the trophy.

The EPG girls running the Open Race took 4 of the 15 ribbons awarded, while going 6 for 6 on personal records. Emma Whitcomb (5th, 16.53) blazed the trail of PR's by crushing her previous best by 96 seconds. Hillary Gramm (8th, 17.18) set a new PR by an amazing 2 minutes 40 seconds, while Jillian Toth (11th, 17.31) cut nearly a minute off her best time.

Kelsie Schlipf (13th, 17.42) and Joci Nelson (18th, 18.08) both destroyed their PR's by over 2 minutes. But it was Elise Morrison (19th, 18.13) who brought home the biggest PR on the day for the girls – running a full 6 minutes 18 seconds faster than four days earlier.

In the Boys Open, Conner Betts (2nd, 13.53) ran a fantastic race to earn a season best by over a minute and a lifetime best by 4 seconds. Garrison Meyer's (3rd, 14.00) race was no less impressive, as he beat his best time by 3 minutes 31 seconds.

Caleb Smith (12th, 15.05) laced up some running shoes for the first time and dropped an incredible 5 minutes 22 seconds.

Lane Dohman (26th, 15.53) cut 53 seconds off his best time, with Payton Romersberger (28th, 16.02) crossing the finish line 9 seconds later. Jack Erwin (35th, 16.34) notched a PR, as did Josiah Meade (58th, 19.52) and Declan Duley (66th, 23.22), Duley by virtue of it being his first cross-country race. Meade ran to the biggest PR of the day, and most likely the biggest PR in the history of EPGJH Cross Country, cutting 7 minutes 2 seconds off his previous best.

When all was said and done, this group of Titan runners had eclipsed the previous team record for SB's set at this meet (22) by running to 23 season-best times.

Next up for Titan XC is a 4:15 p.m. meet at Eureka Lake on Tuesday, August 22nd.

Titan XC Opens with Two Big Wins

EPG sweeps individual and team titles

[AUGUST 15, 2017] – Crescent City hosted a 6-team meet at Durham Park in Onarga on a warm and sunny Tuesday afternoon. The 2-mile 2-loop course ran through a park and along a cornfield.

The Girls Race got underway at 4:00 p.m. and by 4:15 p.m. EPG had taken the first 4 places. Jordyn Cannon (1st, 14.15) ran to victory with perfect splits of 7.07 and 7.08. Next it was Karli Perrine (2nd, 14.45) leading the chase pack of Titan runners, which included Ruby Slightom (3rd, 14.48) and Charlene Hamilton (4th, 14.51). Sixth-grader Lizzie Uphoff (8th, 17.03) rounded out the Titan scorers.

Chloe Atkins (12th, 18.04) finished in the top third of the field. Emma Whitcomb (14th, 18.29) and Jillian Toth (15th, 18.29) had strong cross country debuts as well as a stride-for-stride duel to the finish line with Whitcomb edging Toth by a quarter of a second.

First-time XC athletes Kelsie Schlipf (21st, 19.43), Hillary Gramm (22nd, 19.58), Joci Nelson (26th, 20.39), and Elise Morrison (24.31, 30th) wrapped up a great first meet for the Titan Girls.

The EPG Girls earned a perfect score of 15 as the 5-6-7 finishers were running for schools that did not have enough runners to field a team. Final team scores were EPG (15), Crescent City (56), Odell (62).

Asa Smith (1st, 12.09) took the lead from Champaign Next Generation's top runner just before the half mile in the Boys Race. He won by 15 seconds, with teammate Adrian Landrus (2nd, 12.24) running to the 18th best time in EPG Boys Cross Country history – in his first-ever cross country race.

Maison DePauw (4th, 13.03), TJ Supan (5th, 13.26), Noah Ludy (7th, 13.39), Travis Gramm (9th, 14.13), and Sam Bushert (10th, 14.25) were next across the line as the EPG Boys Team dominated the field by placing their Top 7 runners in the Top 10 overall.

Conner Betts (12th, 14.58) ran 2 minutes 24 seconds faster than he did at last year's opening meet. Payton Romersberger (14th, 15.20), Lane Dohman (21st, 16.46), Jack Erwin (22nd, 16.49), Garrison Meyer (28th, 17.31), Caleb Smith (33rd, 20.27), and Josiah Meade (39th, 26.54) all ran well in their first cross country race.

The EPG Boys did not earn a perfect score like the Girls, but their performance was just as impressive. The Titans handily won with team scores showing EPG (19), J.L. Nash (62), Champaign Next Generation (72), Iroquois West (86).

Titan XC travels to the Clinton Invitational on Saturday, August 19th. Varsity races begin at 9:00 a.m. and Open races begin at 10:00 a.m.

New Season Begins July 31, 2017

Meet at South Pointe Park at 6 p.m.

[JULY 28, 2017] – EPGJH Cross Country opens its eleventh season with our first scheduled practice set for Monday, July 31 at South Pointe Park in El Paso. Athletes should meet near the pond at 6 p.m.

A current sports physical must be on file before practicing. Completed physicals can be turned in at the Junior High office in Gridley or to Coach Heffron prior to participating.

A Gridley-to-El Paso shuttle will be available to take XC athletes from the EPGJH Activity entrance in Gridley to South Pointe Park in El Paso during the first three weeks of practice. The shuttle will depart from Gridley at approximately 5:30 p.m. and arrive at South Pointe Park around 5:45 p.m. Parents should pick up athletes after practice at 8 p.m.

Once school begins, practices will be after school at Westview Park in Gridley, with a Gridley-to-El Paso shuttle providing service to the EPGHS Link.

Athletes should bring the following items to practice on Monday:

- (1) Current sports physical (if not already on file at the EPGJH office)
- (2) Comfortable running shoes
- (3) Water

Both the Girls XC Team and the Boys XC Team are coming off back-to-back appearances at the Class 2A State Finals. The Girls Team qualified in 2014, 2015, and 2016; the Boys Team qualified in 2015 and 2016.

Best wishes to all 2017 Titan runners this season!