

Newcomb Delivers All-State Run at Championship Race

XC Titan Boys repeat as 8th place team at IESA State Finals

[OCTOBER 19, 2019] – The IESA State Cross Country Finals were held Saturday at Normal's Maxwell Park. Over 1400 athletes in six races were competing. As the El Paso-Gridley Titans stepped to the starting line for the 11:45am Class 2A Boys Championship race, the October sunshine was falling on a kaleidoscope of colors. The crowd fell silent as the IESA official provided final instructions, but as soon as the starter's pistol fired, the crowd erupted with enthusiasm, cheering on 237 athletes charging up the hill towards the first turn.

Reed Newcomb (21st, 11.12) was once again leading the Titan Boys team as he pushed his way up through a talented Boys field. After clocking a 5.45 opening mile, Newcomb continued to press forward, flying through the 1.5-mile mark in 40th place. He moved up a few more spots and at the penultimate left turn a spectator yelled "32!" Making the final turn he was in 30th place, but had more work ahead if he was to crack the Top 25. With 200 meters remaining and everyone sprinting to the finish line, Newcomb was in 27th with a pack of runners about 3 seconds ahead of him. He shifted gears and dropped in a fierce charge – catching and passing nearly everyone in the pack – crossing the finishing mats in 21st and earning All-State honors as a Top 25 State athlete. Places 20-27 were separated by just 2.6 seconds. Newcomb had closed out the race with a blistering 5.27 mile.

Jack Reid (73rd, 11.48) was EPG's #2 and ran splits of 5.52, 5.56 to edge Manhattan's Sean Urbanciz by half a second. Dean Witzig (94th, 11.58) and Kole Rigsby (95th, 12.00) were next across the line for the Titans, both runners finishing just ahead of Eureka's #3. With those 4 runners in, EPG had pulled to within one point of Prospect Heights MacArthur. EPG's #5 Lukas Holderby (111th, 12.07) not only finished ahead of Eureka's #4, but also edged MacArthur's #5 by 2 seconds – and 7 team places, which allowed the Titans to slip ahead of Prospect Heights Mac in the team standings by 6 points.

Pierson Romersberger (125th, 12.11) slipped ahead of Eureka's #5 runner Brady Monk for the second week in row – at Sectionals by 3 seconds and at State by three-tenths of a second. Romersberger's splits of 6.07, 6.04 also earned him a lifetime PR. EPG's #7 runner Waylon Melick (153rd, 12.24) was sandwiched between Washington Central's #5 and #6. Those three runners finished within two-tenths of a second. Melick matched his 12.24 lifetime PR from Sectionals.

The team standings showed EPG repeating their 2018 placing at 8th place in the Class 2A State Finals with a 50-point improvement in their score from last year. Of the 27 teams competing in the Championship Race, the top 10 teams were Tolono Unity (135), La Grange Gurrie (136), St. Joseph (166), Channahon (176), Monticello (201), Round Lake Park (236), Washington Central (243), El Paso-Gridley (273), Prospect Heights MacArthur (279), and Eureka (294). The Titan Boys have placed in the Top 10 at State for 4 consecutive years.

XC Sectional Champions!

EPGJH Boys Team qualifies for State Finals for 5th straight year

[OCTOBER 12, 2019] – Friday's wind and rain gave way to a brisk fall Saturday morning filled with sunshine and hope for the 15 teams and 200 runners at the Class 2A IESA Sectional Meet in Germantown Hills. The 2-mile course behind Great Oaks Community Church looped through walnut trees, past a pond, and across two small creek jumps. The temperature at race time was just above 40 degrees.

After the National Anthem, the girls continued with warm-ups and run-outs until the 10am start time. The official starter delivered instructions, the gun was fired, and 105 girls charged ahead in the first race of the day.

EPG's Lauren Shaffer (17th, 13.14) started moving up early and by a half mile was in 19th place. By the 1-mile mark she had moved into 12th and was on the verge of moving into contention for an individual State-qualifying spot. With a half mile to go she was in the middle of a pack that included Knoxville's #1 runner and Eureka's #1 and #2 runners. She continued to battle the back down the finishing straightaway, edging Washington Central's Olivia Nordhielm by less than a tenth of second. The 7-runner pack that she finished in the middle of was separated by just three-and-a-half seconds. Shaffer ran to a lifetime best time and missed the final qualifying spot for State Finals by less than 6 seconds.

Nellie Melick (22nd, 13.18) came ready to race, and delivered yet another smart and strong performance. She had the race of the day for the Titan girls, running a 10-second lifetime PR despite the hills, twists, and turns on the Great Oaks course. Lizzie Uphoff (45th, 14.04) ran to her fastest time since September 18th, while Abi Kelly (95th, 15.57) and Elise Morrison (96th, 15.57) both clocked their second-fastest times ever. Savannah Hamilton (98th, 16.05) and Callie Whitcomb (100th, 16.06) wrapped things up nicely for the Titan girls by coming through with two lifetime PRs.

The three State-qualifying teams were Washington Central (71), East Peoria Central (108), and Washington Middle (110). East Peoria's Kerrigan Vandel (12.23) ran to a 7-second victory over 6th-grader Addy Elwell of Metamora (12.30). The EPG Girls (275) placed 12th, sandwiched between season rivals Tremont (274) and Dee-Mack (300).

At 10:45am, the gun fired to signal the start of the final race of the day, and 102 Varsity Boys bolted into the breeze. Chillicothe's Marc Gonzalez and Washington Central's Sam Tellefson stormed to the front and would battle side-by-side until the finish line was within 200 meters.

EPG's Reed Newcomb (6th, 11.32) was in the top 25 at the half-mile, with teammate Jack Reid just a couple strides behind. Those two Titans moved up together through the mile. Soon after, Newcomb moved into the top 10, continuing to pick off athletes and surging to a 6th place finish as he passed the #1 runners from Eureka, Dee-Mack, and Eureka in the final 400 meters. Reid (13th, 11.44) was the top 7th grader in the race, finishing three-tenths of a second ahead of 7th-grader Fisher Rinkenberger of Washington Central.

Dean Witzig (15th, 11.45) had the race of the day for the Titan boys, earning a lifetime best and running with a focused intensity throughout the race. His final kick down the straightaway pushed him ahead of Washington Central's #3 runner by two-tenths of a second and earned him the designation of #16 runner of all time for Titan XC. Kole Rigsby (21st, 11.59) ran sub-12 for the second meet in a row and was the best #4 runner in the race. Lukas Holderby (22nd, 12.06) came through with another great race, just 8 seconds off his lifetime best while running well enough to be the #1 runner for 5 of the 15 teams competing Saturday.

Pierson Romersberger (31st, 12.18) was #6 for EPG, finishing ahead of every team's #5 as he destroyed his lifetime PR by an astonishing 51 seconds. #7 Titan Waylon Melick (40th, 12.24) also ran to a lifetime PR, slicing 6 seconds off his time from last week, and beating Washington Central's #5 across the finishing mats by 1 second.

The three State-qualifying teams were El Paso-Gridley (77), Washington Central (110), and Eureka (122). Chillicothe's Marc Gonzalez (10.50) out-dueled Washington Central's Sam Tellefson

(10.56) for the individual title. Those were the fastest two times in the State at this weekend's Class 2A Sectional races.

The Titan Boys Team won their 3rd Sectional Championship in the past 4 years (2016, 2018, 2019), and in doing so qualified for the Class 2A State Finals for the 5th year in a row (2015-2019). State Finals will be held at Maxwell Park in Normal on Saturday, October 19. The Class 2A Boys Race is at 11:45am.

Titans Earn 20 Lifetime PRs at Delavan Invitational

Boys team collects runner-up trophy with 6th runner breaking 114-114 tie

[OCTOBER 5, 2019] – Since EPG's previous meet just five days earlier, the race time temperature dropped from 85 to 55 like it saw an Illinois State Trooper. But the Titans showed no signs of slowing down as they sped to 20 lifetime PRs Saturday morning.

The Delavan Invitational featured a new 2.0-mile course with fewer turnarounds and the removal of a section run along a street. Those improvements to the already flat grass course along with the cool temperatures contributed to some fast times at this 27-team invite.

Lauren Shaffer (27th, 13.18) moved up through the field during the first mile, flirted with 25th place during the second mile, and finished just 2 places and 6 seconds out of the Top 25 medals. Nellie Melick (36th, 13.28) raced smart and ran fast, clocking 6.42 for her first mile and 6.46 for her second mile. Both Shaffer and Melick earned lifetime bests. Lizzie Uphoff (72nd, 14.12) was #3 for EPG.

Elise Morrison (120th, 15.34) and Abi Kelly (121st, 15.35) worked together for the entire race before Morrison outkicked Kelly by 1.19 seconds over the final 80 meters. Morrison ran a lifetime best of 16 minutes flat at this race 2 years ago, and that mark held until today, when she knocked 26 seconds off that time. Kelly continued improving by leaps and bounds by running to a 72-second PR.

Heidi Hunsinger (134th, 16.02) ran to a 86-second season best, while Savannah Hamilton (139th, 16.12) matched Morrison's PR by slicing 26 seconds off her lifetime best.

Team scores had EPG (369) in 12th place, one point ahead of 13th-place Dee-Mack (370). The Chiefs had beaten the Titans by 1 point at the first meet of the season.

The Varsity Boys race had 155 boys competing. EPG was probably in about 10th place as a team a half mile in, with Reed Newcomb (9th, 11.21) leading the Titans in 32nd place. He moved up nicely over the next 2400 meters, and his Titan teammates followed. Jack Reid (13th, 11.24) was pushing Newcomb for the entire race while consequently pushing both athletes higher on the all-time EPG records board – their official times making them the 10th and 11th fastest EPGJH runners ever.

Kole Rigsby (28th, 11.46), Dean Witzig (33rd, 11.53), and Lukas Holderby (36th, 11.58) all cracked the 12-minute barrier for the first time. The top 5 Titan runners of Newcomb, Reid, Rigsby, Witzig, and Holderby also reduced their pack time to just 37 seconds, the lowest it's been all season. Every one of the Top 7 boys ran to lifetime PRs, with the biggest time drops coming from #6 Waylon Melick (68th, 12.30) and #7 Keegan Ruppe (120th, 13.33).

There were several exceptionally close finishes, including Newcomb passing Dunlap Middle's #1 runner at the finish line, but the official results showing Dunlap Middle's #1 in front of Newcomb

by 16 one-hundredths of a second. Reid tied Metamora's #1 runner, both athletes clocking exactly 11:24.57. And the team scores had EPG (114) and 3A Dunlap Middle (114) tied for 1st place. Dunlap Middle's #6 runner broke the tie, finishing 11 seconds ahead of EPG's #6 Melick. 23 complete teams were competing in the Boys Varsity race, and the next 8 team scores were Eureka (136), Delavan (158), Metamora (160), Pekin (170), Olympia (176), Mossville (195), Dee-Mack (208), Brimfield (211).

Ella Griffin (63rd, 16.04) and Aubrey Phillips (89th, 16.36) were competing in the 165-runner Girls Open. Griffin clocked the biggest Titan PR of the day, dropping 2 minutes 17 seconds from her previous best time. The Boys Open saw EPG runners setting big PRs across the board, with the exception of Dylan Moss. However, Moss ran to a 57-second season best and missed his lifetime PR by just one second. EPG boys racing in the 213-runner Open were Chris Staton (43rd, 13.28), Isaac Porzelius (49th, 13.32), Lincoln Ringger (83rd, 14.17), Nolan Kent (86th, 14.18), Dylan Moss (88th, 14.19), Harrison Sepich (122nd, 14.57), Hayden Tipler (123rd, 14.58), and Octavian Auen (189th, 17.36). Auen PR'd by over 2 minutes.

Titan XC heads to Germantown Hills' Great Oaks Community Church on Saturday, October 12 to compete at a 15-team IESA Sectional Meet. The Girls Race is at 10am and Boys Race is at 10:45am.

Titan XC Girls: Ten Years of Quadrangular Titles!

Shaffer, Melick lead Girls Team to victory at Furrow Farm

[SEPTEMBER 30, 2019] – Panther Creek was rushing through Furrow Farm on Monday afternoon, the day after a weekend that brought drenching rains to the area. The deluge gave way to clear skies and temperatures rising along with the creek, cresting at about 85F just before the Girls Varsity race kicked off at 4:30pm. 35 runners stepped up to the starting line, and the gun fired.

Jaden Lucas of Pontiac took an early lead and extended that advantage to 23 seconds by the finish line. But Lauren Shaffer (2nd, 14.34) stayed strong to claim runner-up honors with a lifetime Furrow best. Less than 30 seconds later, Nellie Melick (3rd, 15.00) pushed across the line with a time that was 44 seconds faster than her Invitational time. Lizzie Uphoff (5th, 15.18) was a solid #3 for EPG, but then the top Tremont runners rolled in at 6th, 7th, and 8th. When Tremont's #4 runner came in at 10th place, it was apparent that they were looking to end the Titan's 9-year string of victories at this race. But Abi Kelly (11th, 17.42) had something to say about that – with an exclamation point – as she charged up the finishing hill, slicing an astonishing 3 minutes 32 seconds off her previous Furrow best from 3 weeks ago. Tremont's #5 was only 24 seconds after Kelly, and with her 14th place finish the Turks had earned a strong score that might be good enough for the win. But 8 seconds later, Savannah Hamilton (15th, 18.14) appeared out of nowhere. Hamilton had run even splits of 9.07, 9.07 to earn a Furrow best by 74 seconds and put her signature on ten straight years of Titan XC titles at EPG's home quadrangular. EPG Girls teams have turned back all challengers every year since 2010.

Elise Morrison (20th, 18.35) and Callie Whitcomb (24th, 19.29) both earned Furrow season best times. They were followed by Aubrey Phillips (27th, 20.51), Heidi Hunsinger (32nd, 22.39), and Ella Griffin (33rd, 22.39).

The final scores were EPG (36), Tremont (45), Heyworth (68), Pontiac (69).

The Boys Varsity runners were on top of things as well. Heyworth's Alex Maas ran to a convincing win, and Pontiac's Aidan Lee had a strong finish to come from behind to take runner-up honors. But after that, it was all EPG, with the boys posting a 45-second pack time while claiming the next

5 spots. In fact, the Titans' 1-7 pack time was just 50 seconds. EPG's top 7 were Reed Newcomb (3rd, 12.33), Kole Rigsby (4th, 12.43), Dean Witzig (5th, 12.59), Jack Reid (6th, 13.12), Lukas Holderby (7th, 13.18), Pierson Romersberger (9th, 13.23), and Waylon Melick (11th, 13.24).

Keegan Ruppe (20th, 14.49), Chris Staton (24th, 14.57), Lincoln Ringger (31st, 15.57), and Dylan Moss (32nd, 15.57) all ran Furrow best times. Nolan Kent (33rd, 15.59), Isaac Porzelius (36th, 16.41), Hayden Tipler (43rd, 17.14), and Harrison Sepich (47th, 17.51) were next across for the Titans. Roman Zimmerman (51st, 17.57) and Octavian Auen (62nd, 20.09) wrapped things up nicely for EPG, both running Furrow best times by over 2 minutes. Zimmerman missed getting his 7th lifetime best in a row by 2 seconds.

Team scores for the boys were EPG (25), Heyworth (49), Pontiac (76), Tremont (89).

The Delavan Dare Classic is next up for Titan XC. Races are Saturday, October 5 and begin at 9am.

Titan XC Takes Two Trophies at CCI

Girls 3rd, Boys 1st at Corpus Christi Invite

[SEPTEMBER 18, 2019] – Despite missing 3 Varsity runners at Wednesday's 12-team Invitational hosted by Corpus Christi, the EPG Titans came home with 8 individual awards and two team trophies. It was a pleasant sunny afternoon at Bloomington's Ewing Park, where 238 runners were competing. Spectators lined the course in several locations – at the starting area, as runners entered the woods, near the bridge across a creek, and at the finish line where final duels were being fought one after another as athletes raced towards the clock.

In the Girls Varsity race, Lauren Shaffer (3rd, 13.51) was focused from the beginning, clocking a 6.45 first mile – which included the "big hill." She finished strong, holding off Noelle Hunt of St. Matthew by 1 second to claim the saucer-sized 3rd place medal. Lizzie Uphoff (5th, 13.54) ran splits of 6.53, 7.01 which added up to her second race in a row at sub-14. Nellie Melick (6th, 14.01) raced to a 15-second season best and was the highest placing #3 runner in any of the day's races.

Callie Whitcomb (41st, 16.45) ran evenly with mile splits of 8.20, 8.25 as EPG's #4 runner. Abi Kelly (44th, 17.24) Savannah Hamilton (45th, 17.25), and Aubrey Phillips (53rd, 19.12) rounded out the Varsity 7.

The Top 5 team scores were St. Matthew (43), Corpus Christi (71), EPG (92), Trinity Lutheran (113), Dee-Mack (113). The Girls team, despite missing their #4 runner, showed how much they have improved thus far, as they beat a strong Dee-Mack team for the first time this season to earn the third place trophy.

Reed Newcomb (1st, 12.03) ran to a dramatic come-from-behind victory. At 400m he was buried in the field at about 30th place. By 1000m as the hill climb began, he had moved into 8th. At the mile he was looking strong in 4th. And as he came into view through the trees of a wooded trail, he was at the front of the lead pack. Newcomb and St. Thomas Philo's Jay Saunders came out of the woods together, and it was anybody's race as they both sprinted the final 150 meters towards the finish line, Newcomb holding off Saunders by just under 2 seconds.

Kole Rigsby (4th, 12.11) followed in Newcomb's footsteps, running perfect splits of 6.06, 6.05 and moving steadily up through the field. His time was within 6 seconds of his PR set four days earlier at Parkside, and 5 seconds ahead of Dee-Mack's #1 runner. Lukas Holderby (11th, 12.35)

had yet another strong race and was 14 seconds ahead of Dee-Mack's #3. Waylon Melick (19th, 13.05) ran to a lifetime PR by 1 second, which happened to put him 1 second ahead of Heyworth's #2. EPG's #5 Pierson Romersberger (24th, 13.16) sealed the deal for the Titans by beating Dee-Mack's #5 by less than one second. Chris Staton (50th, 14.37) was EPG's #6 in the 71-runner Boys Varsity race.

The Top 5 team scores were EPG (59), Dee Mack (69), St. Matthew (89), Heyworth (99), Corpus Christi (117). The Titan Boys pulled off a 10-point victory despite missing two of their top five runners, claiming their 4th championship in a row at this race.

Keegan Ruppe (3rd, 14.17) and Isaac Porzelius (13th, 14.45) both ran lifetime PRs and brought home awards in the Boys Open division. Ruppe's splits were 7.21, 6.56, while Porzelius ran 7.24, 7.21. Nolan Kent (15.06), Lincoln Ringger (15.49), Dylan Moss (16.58), Hayden Tipler (17.14), Harrison Sepich (17.44), Roman Zimmerman (17.55), Heidi Hunsinger (18.29), and Ella Griffin (20.05) were also competing in the 111-runner Combined Open race. Zimmerman set a lifetime best by 2 minutes 54 seconds, his sixth PR in a row.

Titan XC will travel to Peoria's Detweiller Park on Friday, September 27 for a 2.1-mile race on the IHSA State Finals course. The first race is scheduled for 4pm.

PR Parade at Parkside XC Invite

EPG runs to 23 season bests

[SEPTEMBER 14, 2019] – El Paso-Gridley travelled to a 51-team meet hosted by Parkside Junior High on Saturday. The 2.0-mile course was run on the IESA State Finals course at Normal's Maxwell Park. The September morning was filled with sunshine, enthusiastic spectators from across the state, and nearly 2,000 cross country athletes.

In the Girls Varsity race, Lauren Shaffer (81st, 13.32) opened with a 6.50 mile and came back in 6.42 as she ran to a 42-second season best. Her 13.32 was also a 26-second lifetime PR and earned her a spot on EPG's all-time Top 25 records board at #23.

Lizzie Uphoff (98th, 13.49) cracked the 14-minute barrier for the first time this season and only the third time in her life. Nellie Melick (159th, 14.22) ran 30 seconds faster than last year at this meet. EPG's #4 and #5 runners Callie Whitcomb (262nd, 16:09.2) and Elise Morrison (263rd, 16:09.6) ran through the mile together in 8.14 and finished side by side with a strong second mile of 7.55. Both clocked season best times. Whitcomb not only posted a 102-second season best, but also sped to a lifetime PR.

Abi Kelly (283rd, 16.47) had the race of the day for the Titan girls, running to a spectacular 2 minute 30 second PR, breaking 19, 18, and 17 minutes for the first time – all in one race. Her splits were 8.26, 8.21. Aubrey Phillips (305th, 18.42) wrapped things up for the EPG Varsity Girls as she edged Springfield Franklin's Audrey Delcomyn by two-tenths of a second.

The Girls team placed 31st with 844 points. Scores of local teams who placed near the Titans were Normal Chiddix (29th, 734), Tremont (33rd, 930), and Heyworth (35th, 1029).

The Boys Varsity race saw a Titan team pushing into new territory, with all 7 Varsity runners claiming lifetime PRs. Reed Newcomb (32nd, 11.39) and Jack Reid (39th, 11.43) cruised through the mile in 6.04 and 6.05, with Kole Rigsby (79th, 12.05) and Dean Witzig (82nd, 12.07) right behind at 6.08. Newcomb came back in 5.35 to set a 21-second lifetime best, which also moved him up to the #13 all-time runner for EPG, one second ahead of TJ Supan. Reid clocked a second

mile of 5.38 to earn him a #15 debut on the Titan Top 25 all-time records board. Rigsby and Witzig both ran sub-6 for their second mile as they pushed each other to lifetime PRs. Witzig climbed one place on the all-time list to #23, and one second closer to #22 Rigsby.

The EPG Boys team (340) placed 11th of 50 full teams, ahead of all their Class 2A Sectional rivals including 12th place Metamora (362). The Redbirds' times of 11.47, 11.47, 12.04, 12.11, 12.17 compared with the Titans times of 11.39, 11.43, 12.05, 12.07, 12.22 suggest it will be a battle between these two teams for the remainder of the season.

Savannah Hamilton (215th, 16.38) and Heidi Hunsinger (298th, 17.28) were the lone Titan runners in the Girls Open race. Hamilton posted a 70-second PR, while Hunsinger earned a 153-second season best despite stopping to help a Bloomington runner who had fallen.

In the Boys Open race, every EPG athlete ran to a season best, most posting huge lifetime PRs. Chris Staton (120th, 14.03) crushed his season best while lowering his lifetime best by 15 seconds. Keegan Ruppe (152nd, 14.21) posted a lifetime best by running over a minute faster than last year at Maxwell Park. Nolan Kent (217th, 14.48) ran to a 62-second PR, while Isaac Porzelius (229th, 14.53) was just 5 seconds back for a 97-second PR. Dylan Moss (286th, 15.16) ran to an 82-second season best. Lincoln Ringger (319th, 15.34), fresh off an 84-second PR at Furrow four days ago, kicked it up another notch for a 57-second PR. Hayden Tipler (407th, 16.13) and Harrison Sepich (409th, 16.15) wrapped up the Titan PR parade by both posting PRs of more than 100 seconds.

Titan XC will be back in Bloomington-Normal on Wednesday afternoon for a small invitational hosted by Corpus Christi. Races will take place at Ewing Park and are scheduled for 4:00pm, 4:30pm, and 4:55pm.

3rd Place Trophy Awarded to Titan Boys at Home Invite

Titans earn 5 Furrow PRs and 5 Lifetime PRs at 600-runner meet

[SEPTEMBER 10, 2019] – El Paso-Gridley hosted the 13th Annual Cross Country Invitational at Furrow Farm on a warm Tuesday afternoon. A total of 23 teams and 624 runners ran up and down the hills, splashed through the creek crossings, snaked through the W, zoomed under the bridge, darted through the cattle chute, curved into the tunnel of apple trees, and attacked the final hill towards the red barn. 100 individual medals and 8 team trophies were awarded to the athletes.

Lauren Shaffer (17th, 14.44) went out strong in the Girls Varsity race and held on for a Top 25 medal as she ran her fastest time ever on the 2.0-mile Furrow course by 38 seconds. Lizzie Uphoff (25th, 15.07) had to charge past Chillicothe's Jocelyn Forsythe up the finishing hill to claim the final Varsity medal, with 26th and 27th place finishers just one step behind Uphoff – all 3 clocking 15 minutes 7 seconds. Uphoff ran to a Furrow Best as well.

Nellie Melick (47th, 15.44) was #3 for the Titans, running 5 seconds faster than 8th place Corpus Christi's #2 runner with splits of 7.44, 8.00. Elise Morrison (105th, 19.29) was the final athlete to cross the finish line for EPG in the 124-runner Girls Varsity race.

Dunlap Middle dominated the team scoring with 33 points, well ahead of runner-up Delavan's 99. The Titans did not have a full team participating, so did not have a team score.

In the Boys Varsity race, all 7 of the Titan boys had exceptionally strong races. Reed Newcomb (8th, 12.33) found his way into the Top 10 early, and stayed there. Kole Rigsby (11th, 12.41) clocked splits of 6.14, 6.27 to earn a 32-second Furrow Best time. Dean Witzig (23rd, 13.20) ran

splits of 6.35, 6.45 and finished just 15 seconds off his time at Metamora on the hilly Furrow course. Jack Reid (26th, 13.29) ran #4 for the Titans, with Waylon Melick (33rd, 13.39) having an exceptionally strong race with splits of 6.48, 6.51. Lukas Holderby (34th, 13.41) ran with Melick the entire race, while Pierson Romersberger (38th, 13.49) clock splits of 6.52, 6.57 en route to a 16-second lifetime best.

Tuesday marked the first time all season that the EPG Boys team put their Top 7 all under 14 minutes, and marked their best pack time of the year as well, with just 66 seconds separating runners 1-5. The team effort was good enough to place 3rd of 18 full teams. Dunlap Middle (70) won, followed by Pekin (86), and EPG (87). Olympia (144) placed 4th. The Titans were well ahead of the other schools that they will face in their IESA Class 2A Sectional, notably Olympia and Eureka, who had placed well ahead of the Titans in earlier contests.

Five Titan runners were competing in the 158-runner Girls Open race. Savannah Hamilton (73rd, 19.28) ran splits of 10.01, 9.27. She was followed by Callie Whitcomb (80th, 19.42), Aubrey Phillips (90th, 20.08), Heidi Hunsinger (109th, 21.19), and Abi Kelly (112th, 21.21).

Keegan Ruppe (43rd, 15.21) led the Titans in the Boys Open race, with Chris Staton (55th, 15.49) next across the finish line as he ran to a 31-second Furrow Best on the Furrow Beast. Nolan Kent (57th, 15.52) clocked even splits of 7.53, 7.59. Lincoln Ringger (73rd, 16.31) found the hills and creeks to his liking as he ran to an astounding 84-second lifetime best. Isaac Porzelius (93rd, 17.21) and Dylan Moss (106th, 17.53) finished right in the middle of the 211-runner field, while Harrison Sepich (111th, 17.58) and Hayden Tipler (112th, 17.58) finished side by side as they charged up the hill of death, both running negative splits on their way to PRs. Tipler clocked 9.00, 8.58 and Sepich clocked 9.19, 8.39. Roman Zimmerman (167th, 20.49) ran to his 5th PR in a row, while Octavian Auen (186th, 22.28) finished off a great day for the Titan runners.

Titan XC heads to Normal's Maxwell Park on Saturday morning for a 50-team meet hosted by Parkside Junior High. Races begin at 9:30am.

EPGXC Boys Win at Metamora

Titans run 7 season bests at Black Partridge Park

[SEPTEMBER 5, 2019] – Metamora hosted a 5-team meet at Black Partridge Park on a pleasant sunny afternoon. The course distance has fluctuated over the past decade – previously 2.18 miles and 2.10 miles – and Thursday's event was an even 2.00 miles. A total of 136 runners would run through grass trails, around the perimeter of Black Partridge Park, past the 1836 Lee Cabin, and into some hilly wooded areas. There were 63 athletes competing in the Girls Race and 73 in the Boys Race.

In 5th grade, Addy Elwell earned All-State honors, and she is back at it this season as a 6th grader, winning on her home course by 40 seconds. The battle was for second, and Galesburg's Lily Furrow slipped past EPG's Lauren Shaffer (3rd, 14.19) at the finish line to claim runner-up honors by two-tenths of a second. Lizzie Uphoff (4th, 14.25) valiantly fought off Metamora's #2 runner, Lauren Poole, overcoming some mid-race cramps to post a 23-second season best time.

Nellie Melick (13th, 15.50) was back racing after being off for a few days with a tendon issue. Elise Morrison (31st, 18.08) and Callie Whitcomb (32nd, 18.23) were EPG's #4 and #5 runners. Aubrey Phillips (39th, 19.19) started strong but faded the last half of the race, while Abi Kelly (40th, 19.22) ran well and just missed a lifetime best by 5 seconds. Savannah Hamilton (43rd, 19.59), and Heidi Hunsinger (50th, 21.19) were the final Titan girls to cross the finish line.

With Metamora (29) putting 6 girls in the top 10, the Redbirds ran away with the team victory. The next 3 team places were up for grabs, and it was EPG (64) placing 2nd over Galesburg (68) and Morton Blessed Sacrament (74). St. Philomena's #1 runner was 2 seconds in front of Melick, but they did not have enough runners to field a full team.

EPG athletes were content to let several Metamora runners sprint to the front, and then slowly pick them off one at a time. While Galesburg's Plamedi Nseka cruised to a 43-second victory in 11 minutes 50 seconds, it was EPG's Reed Newcomb (2nd, 12.33) who ran a strong and strategic race to claim the runner-up position. Kole Rigsby (4th, 12.41) crossed the line just 8 seconds later.

Dean Witzig (7th, 13.05) made his 2019 season debut in spectacular fashion, running strong and smart as EPG's #3 runner. Jack Reid (10th, 13.17) and Lukas Holderby (13th, 13.44) were #4 and #5 for the Titans. Waylon Melick (17th, 14.05) and Pierson Romersberger (18th, 14.05) were together almost the entire race and were separated by just two-tenths of a second at the finish line. Romersberger clocked a 26-second PR.

EPG followed with nine more runners – Keegan Ruppe (26th, 14.52), Chris Staton (40th, 15.44), Nolan Kent (41st, 16.01), Isaac Porzelius (47th, 16.30), Dylan Moss (55th, 18.03), Lincoln Ringger (56th, 18.07), Hayden Tipler (57th, 18.07), Harrison Sepich (67th, 21.03), and Roman Zimmerman (68th, 21.11). Staton earned a season best, while Porzelius ran to a 105-second PR. Tipler and Zimmerman also set lifetime bests, with Zimmerman running to his 4th PR in a row.

The Titan Boys put their #2 in front of Metamora's #1, and their #3 in front of Metamora's #3 by 3.9 seconds. Metamora's #4 finished one place in front of EPG's #4 and the Redbirds' #5 also finished one place in front of EPG's #5. Metamora's 6-7 were in front of EPG's 6-7 with just one runner between each pair. The race was very tight, but the Titans came home with the win, with team scores of EPG (36), Metamora (40), Morton Blessed Sacrament (72), Galesburg (92), St. Philomena (146).

The Titans host the 13th Annual EPGJH Invitational at Furrow Farm with races starting at 4pm on Tuesday, September 10. Twenty-four teams and over 700 runners are registered.

Uphoff and Newcomb Lead Titans

Roman Zimmerman runs to 3rd straight PR

[AUGUST 27, 2019] – Five teams faced off at Lake Eureka Tuesday afternoon. The 1.93-mile course ran along the edge of the water, turned into another park, looped through wooded trails, and circled a small field of wildflowers in the Hornets Nest before returning to the start/finish area. A total of 157 runners completed the two races.

Lizzie Uphoff (5th, 14.25) and Lauren Shaffer (6th, 14.26) found each other early and ran most of the race side-by-side. They clocked the 7th and 8th fastest EPG times ever on this course, bumping Tori Witzig down to #9 all-time. Elise Morrison (33rd, 17.53), Callie Whitcomb (41st, 18.35), and Aubrey Phillips (45th, 18.59) completed the scoring for the EPG girls. Savannah Hamilton (46th, 19.07) and Ella Griffin (52nd, 20.36) ran #6 and #7 for the Titans. Heidi Hunsinger (55th, 21.42) and Abi Kelly (56th, 21.44) were the final Titan runners in the 72-runner girls field.

Reed Newcomb (6th, 12.34) and Kole Rigsby (8th, 12.42) worked together for much of the 85-runner race. Newcomb ran to the all-time 7th fastest EPG clocking at Eureka, while Rigsby tied Sam Bushert's 2018 time. Jack Reid (13th, 13.16), Lukas Holderby (18th, 13.30), and Waylon

Melick (25th, 14.05) ran #3-#4-#5 for the Titans for the third meet in a row. Pierson Romersberger (34th, 14.44) followed 39 seconds later, with Keegan Ruppe (38th, 14.53) running #7 for the Titans.

Next across the line for EPG were Chris Staton (51st, 16.22), Nolan Kent (52nd, 16.26), Isaac Porzelius (58th, 17.37), Hayden Tipler (62nd, 18.04), Lincoln Ringger (65th, 18.28), Harrison Sepich (66th, 18.54), Octavian Auen (74th, 19.55), and Roman Zimmerman (78th, 20.33). Porzelius set a big PR running in his second race, while Zimmerman ran to his third straight PR by slicing 17 seconds off his lifetime best.

The EPG girls (104) and boys (70) teams both placed 4th. Delavan (33) won for the girls, and Mossville (43) won for the boys.

The next competition for our Titan runners is at Black Partridge Park in Metamora on September 5. Races begin at 4:15pm

EPGXC Runs to 24 Season PRs

Titans collect 8 medals at Maroon Invite

[AUGUST 24, 2019] – On a crisp August morning, the El Paso-Gridley Titans arrived at Little Galilee Camp along with nine other teams. A total of 210 runners would soon be winding through meadows and woods under sunny skies at the Clinton Maroon Invite. The gun fired for the first of four races shortly after the scheduled 9am start time.

It was Lauren Shaffer (8th, 14.14) and Nellie Melick (9th, 14.16) leading the charge for the Titans. Shaffer was only 18 seconds off Tristyn Grube's all-time EPG course record at Little Galilee. Melick clocked a time that was over 4 minutes faster than she ran here last year. Lizzie Uphoff (14th, 14.48) grabbed a top 15 medal, while Elise Morrison (43rd, 17.13) cut nearly 2 minutes off her season best. Callie Whitcomb (49th, 17.51) was EPG's #5 in the 54-runner field.

Nine full teams were competing, with the top 5 teams St. Agnes (40), Olympia (60), Monticello (70), Taylorville (106), and EPG (123). Other schools participating were Christ the King, Clinton, Heyworth, and Sullivan.

In the Boys Varsity race, Reed Newcomb (8th, 12.19) and Kole Rigsby (11th, 12.22) found their way into the Top 7 Titans all-time on this course, while Jack Reid (15th, 12.31) cut 101 seconds off his PR. Lukas Holderby (23rd, 13.11) and Waylon Melick (30th, 13.26) both set lifetime bests. EPG's #6 Pierson Romersberger (44th, 14.31) and #7 Keegan Ruppe (45th, 14.33) were next across the Titans in the 62-runner field. Ruppe tied his lifetime best, set September 29, 2018 at Delavan.

EPG placed 4th of 10 teams, with the Top 5 scores showing Taylorville (36), Olympia (72), Monticello (80), EPG (87), and Heyworth (110). Central A&M, Christ the King, Clinton, St. Agnes, and Sullivan were also competing.

Aubrey Phillips (6th, 16.24) had the race of the day for the Titans by slicing 5 minutes 37 seconds off her time from 4 days earlier, earning a Top 15 award in the Girls Open race. Savannah Hamilton (15th, 17.48), running in her first race of the season, snagged the last ribbon by just 4 seconds. Ella Griffin (22nd, 18.21) and Abi Kelly (26th, 19.17) both ran to 4-minute season best times, while Heidi Hunsinger (32nd, 20.01) also ran to a significant season best. 43 runners completed the Girls Open race.

In the Boys Open race, Chris Staton (21st, 15.48) and Nolan Kent (22nd, 15.50) worked together, Chris running to a 2 minute 43 second season best. Lincoln Ringger (30th, 17.55) broke 20 minutes for the first time ever, and cracked the 19-minute barrier and 18-minute barrier as well. Hayden Tipler (32nd, 18.09) was next across for Titans, cruising to a 3 minute 52 second season best. Harrison Sepich (35th, 19.16) and Octavian Auen (40th, 19.46) both came in under 20 minutes with big PRs. Fours were wild for Roman Zimmerman (44th, 21.34), placing 44th in a time exactly 4 minutes faster than he ran 4 days earlier. A total of 51 boys completed the Boys Open.

Titan Cross Country's 24 runners conquered Little Galilee's infamous hill on August 24 and came home with 24 season PRs.

Titans Duel Dee-Mack in XC Opener

Lauren Shaffer, Reed Newcomb capture individual wins

[AUGUST 20, 2019] – A morning of severe weather gave way to sunshine by afternoon as the Titans arrived at Westwood Park in Mackinaw. The dual meet with Dee-Mack would take place on a four-loop course consisting primarily of grass, some shade, and plenty of hills. A nice crowd was on hand to cheer on the 71 runners.

Lauren Shaffer (1st, 15.12) caught the early leader during the second half mile, and held strong to win the race in 15 minutes 12 seconds. Lizzie Uphoff (2nd, 15.38) moved up nicely, attacked the hills, and found herself in an all-out battle with Dee-Mack's top runner, winning the duel with an extended sprint to the finish line. Nellie Melick (4th, 16.14) followed 36 seconds later.

Elise Morrison (19.08) ran #4 for the Titans, and Callie Whitcomb (19.23) was right behind her. Seventh-grader Aubrey Phillips (22.07) was the next EPG finisher. Ella Griffin (22.23) completed her first XC race, as did Abi Kelly (23.42) who crossed the line with Heidi Hunsinger (23.42).

Team scoring for the girls was as close as it could be, with Dee-Mack edging EPG by a score of 29-30.

Dee-Mack's top runner charged out to a huge lead, and a sea of red followed. But Reed Newcomb (1st, 13.27) found another gear in the second half mile and overtook the early leader just before clocking 6.29 for the first mile. Newcomb withstood a late surge from Dee-Mack's #1 to earn a 1-second victory in the 36-runner field. Kole Rigsby (3rd, 13.32) moved up the entire race and was just 5 seconds back by the finish. Jack Reid (4th, 14.12) made an impressive cross country debut, as did Lukas Holderby (8th, 14.30). Waylon Melick (5th, 14.49) rounded out the scoring for the Titan boys.

Pierson Romersberger (15.26) had the best splits of the day, just 14 seconds positive as he clocked 7.36, 7.50 to run #6 for the Titans. Keegan Ruppe (15.43) opened his 2019 season nearly 2 minutes ahead of where he started 2018. Dylan Moss (16.38) ran 107 seconds faster than his first meet last year, with Nolan Kent (16.47) running strong in his first cross country meet. Next across for EPG – Chris Staton (18.30), Lincoln Ringger (20.15), Hayden Tipler (22.01), Octavian Auen (22.38), Isaac Porzelius (23.21), Harrison Sepich (23.29), and Roman Zimmerman (25.33).

At the end of the first mile, the Titan boys were well behind the Chiefs in team scoring, but by the end of the race, EPG had fought their way towards the front to come away with a one-point victory, 28-29.

EPGXC travels to Little Galilee Church Camp for a Saturday morning invitational hosted by Clinton on August 24. Races begin at 9 AM.

XC Season Begins August 5, 2019

First Practice 6 p.m. at South Pointe Park

[AUGUST 2, 2019] – EPGJH Cross Country opens its season Monday, August 5 at South Pointe Park in El Paso. Athletes should meet at the 2.5-mile post near the pond at 6 p.m.

A current sports physical must be on file before practicing. Completed physicals can be turned in to Coach Heffron prior to practice if not already on file at the Junior High office.

A Gridley-to-El Paso shuttle will be available to take XC athletes from the EPGJH Activity Entrance in Gridley directly to South Pointe Park in El Paso during the first two weeks of practice. The shuttle will depart from Gridley at 5:45 p.m. and arrive at South Pointe Park by 6 p.m. There is no return shuttle, so 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 5:45pm Gridley-to-El Paso shuttle picking up at the EPGJH Activity Entrance and providing service to the EPGHS Link.

Athletes should bring the following items to practice on Monday:

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

Both the Girls XC Team and the Boys XC Team have qualified for the Class 2A State Finals 4 out of the past 5 years. 2019 should be another exciting season for Titan XC. Your coaches are looking forward to helping every athlete achieve their goals.

Best wishes to all 2019 Titan runners! Let's make it a fun season!