

State Cross Country – Supan 6th Despite Fall Stine matches school record

[OCTOBER 15, 2011] – More than 1,000 cross country runners from Illinois competed in the four State Final races held Saturday morning at Maxwell Park in Normal. 2011 marked the 33rd year for boys cross country and the 32nd year for girls cross country. Top 25 individuals in each race earned an “All-State” medal with trophies awarded to the top four schools in each class.

Runners representing EPGJH had qualified for the State Championships for the 4th time in 5 seasons.

Shannan Supan, the second-fastest girl in school history, was competing in the Class A Finals along with school record-holder Brandon Stine.

The weather was sunny, cool, and breezy.

Supan had qualified with a personal best 12.09 second-place finish at the Germantown Hills Sectional, and was hoping to break 12 minutes at State. A time anywhere near 12 minutes would likely bring All-State honors (Top 25) to the EPGJH 8th-grader as well.

260 girls were on the line. Uniforms were checked, run-outs were completed, and starting instructions were delivered. The gun fired and runners sprinted up the first hill on their way to the fastest Class A Girls State Finals race ever. Six girls would dip under the 12-minute mark, the previous most being three in 2008.

Supan became entangled in the mad sprint up the hill, lost her balance and fell to the ground. It was a harrowing scene for her supporters. But she quickly bounced up, gathered herself, and set out on a mission to get back in the race.

She was in last place of 260 girls.

Running from behind is nothing new to Supan, as that is her racing style, and she has been enormously successful. However, being in last place at the State Meet, with all hopes and dreams of the season in the balance would be a significant challenge for any 13-year-old to overcome.

Her coach’s comment just moments before the race – *things rarely go perfectly but if you make adjustments you will succeed* – turned out to be strangely opportune.

Supan steadily moved up in the field, and amazingly by the 1000-meter mark she was in the top 20. At the mile (5.52), she had moved into 11th. She continued to move up through the field in the final mile (6.04), sprinted down the 300-meter straightaway through the tunnel of cheering spectators, and finished 6th in State with a time of 11.56. Mission accomplished.

Brandon Stine had qualified at the Germantown Hills Sectional by just 3 seconds with the race of his life, breaking his own school record with a 27-second season best 11.51. Anything close to that at State would be a success.

Stine got a good start and cruised through the mile mark at 5.43, just 2 seconds slower than his 5.41 at Germantown Hills. He delivered a 6.10 second mile for a final time of 11.51, matching his accomplishment at Sectionals.

Stine placed 81st of 261 boys participating in the Class A State Championship race. He improved his 2-mile time by almost one minute over the course of the season.

Girls champion was Anna Sophia Keller, a 7th-grader from Effingham St. Anthony. She broke her own meet record that she set last year when she won as a 6th-grader. Boys champion was Tyler Johnson of Springfield Christian. For the girls team title, Tolono Unity (124) claimed a 1-point victory over Liberty (125). The boys' team title went to Chicago Whitney Young (146).

Supan, Stine Qualify for XC State Boys team makes run at final qualifying spot

[OCTOBER 8, 2011] – IESA Cross Country Sectionals were held Saturday morning, with EPGJH competing at Germantown Hills. The two-mile course was mostly open grassy areas with a short stretch running through some open woods and passing by a lake. The weather was sunny and warm at the 10:00am gun start for the Girls race.

Shannan Supan (12.09) ran another stellar race, winding through the field and into 20th place near the half mile mark. Meanwhile, Maryjeanne Gilbert of Peoria Heights St. Thomas and Kaitlyn Benson of Metamora were burning it up out front. Supan patiently moved into 5th place at the $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile mark. Just after reaching the mile in 5.55, Supan moved into 2nd place and chased Gilbert all the way to the finish line. Gilbert won in 12.03 with Supan 6 seconds back and Benson placing a distant 3rd.

Supan continues to close in on Gilbert – the gap was 36 seconds at the Dunlap Invitational 2 weeks ago, 12 seconds last week, and 6 seconds at the Sectional Meet. Supan's Top 10 placing earns her a trip to the State Championship Meet at Maxwell Park in Normal on October 15th.

With 14 schools assigned to Saturday's Sectional Meet, the Titan Girls placed 7th with 167 points. Just 3½ weeks ago, the EPGJH girls placed 13th of 13 teams on the same course at the Warrior Invitational. Saturday they came prepared to race. All 7 Titan girls ran faster than they did at the Warrior Invite, with Supan and EPGJH #3 runner Maddie Morrison (14.41) setting personal records (PR's).

Girls competing were Supan, Alana Halvorsen (13.58), Morrison, Gracie Feeney (15.02), Hannah Kiefer (15.03), Lily Blair (15.23), and Kate Ludwig (16.19). Halvorsen placed 25th of 73 girls.

Brandon Stine (11.51) led the Titan boys, opening with a 5.41 first mile. With the Top 10 finishers guaranteed a ticket to State, Stine was battling for that position for the entire race. At the $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile mark, Stine was in 12th and in the middle of a pack of several runners. At 1.25 miles, he had moved up to 9th place, but positions continued to shift. With a quarter mile to go, Stine was holding onto 9th. Runners were charging down the final straight, and with a pack of 3 runners bearing down on him, he somehow found the strength to hold on, placing 9th and qualifying for the State Championships.

Stine sliced an impressive 27 seconds from his season-best mark set just last week. He needed every second. Twelve seconds back from Germantown Hills' Nick Bradshaw at Delavan just a week earlier, Stine rose to the occasion and posted a 3-second edge on Bradshaw to claim the final individual qualifying spot for State. Stine's 11.51 broke his own school record set last season.

Also rising to the occasion was the Boys team, who were 79 points behind Eureka last weekend at Delavan. The Titans trimmed 65 points off of Eureka's advantage, and finished just 14 points behind Eureka at the Sectional Meet, Eureka placing 3rd and claiming the final qualifying team spot.

EPGJH #3 runner Andy Layden (12.26), #5 runner Jaime Gregory (12.47), and #6 runner Quinn Killian (13.13) came up with big races for the Titans, cutting a lot of time off their previous bests. Killian ran 41 seconds faster than last weekend at Delavan and finished 1 second in front of Germantown Hills #5 runner, a team the Titans were keying off of.

Boys competing were Stine, Shelby Heffron (12.25), Layden, Ryan Filkins (12.28), Gregory, Killian, and Samuel Steiner (13.22). The top 6 boys ran lifetime PR's. 76 boys were competing.

Qualifying teams for the girls were Metamora, Washington, and Eureka. Qualifying teams for the boys were Olympia, Metamora, and Eureka.

Stine is the first Titan boy to qualify for the Cross Country State Championships. The last time two athletes represented EPGJH at State was in 2008 when Julie James and Danielle Ludwig qualified. The meet will be held at Maxwell Park in Normal on Saturday, October 15th. Supan will compete in the 10:00am Class A Girls Race. Stine will run in the 10:45am Class A Boys Race.

Shannan Supan Runner-up at Delavan Invitational Boys team places 9th of 25 teams

[OCTOBER 1, 2011] – Sunshine sifted through the soybeans Saturday morning as 700 runners streamed through grass paths at Delavan's Walt Dare Cross Country Invitational. The two-mile course required the runners to make two u-turns and crossed one section of pavement and gravel, but there were no hills.

Shannan Supan (12.19) was well back of the leaders 400 meters into the Girls Varsity race, but passed about 30 runners before reaching the mile at 6.03 in 6th place. She continued to move up through the field, and finished 2nd, twelve seconds behind Maryjeanne Gilbert of Peoria Heights St. Thomas. Supan finished 5 seconds ahead of Metamora's Kaitlyn Benson.

Alana Halvorsen (14.02) and Hannah Kiefer (14.36) were the Titan's #2 and #3 runners, with Kiefer setting yet another personal record (PR). Maddie Morrison (14.46), and Kate Ludwig (15.45) were #4 and #5 for EPGJH, Ludwig suffering a fall at the crowded first turn 200 meters into the race but recovering well.

Gracie Feeney (15.48) and Shelby Edwards (16.44) were #6 and #7 runners in the Varsity race.

The Titan girls team placed 13th of 23 teams. They turned the tables on host Delavan, finishing 209 points ahead of the Panthers who had beaten them just 18 days earlier. 160 runners crossed the finish line, with Supan's 2nd-place finish equaling Julie James runner-up honors of 2008.

Brandon Stine (12.18) led the Titan boys with a 20th place showing in the Boys Varsity race, earning a Top 25 medal. Shelby Heffron (12.34) and Ryan Filkins (12.35) took 39th and 40th, while Andy Layden (12.54) and Samuel Steiner (13.17) were the #4 and #5 runners for the boys. Stine's season-best time was just 3 seconds shy of his school record set last year.

The Varsity boys #6 and #7 runners were Sam Poppen (14.02) and Nathaniel Schug (14.09). Poppen delivered the biggest PR of the day, slicing 27 seconds off his previous best time.

The boys team placed 9th of 25 teams. The Titans will face an incredibly strong Sectional field on October 8th, which will include the top 4 teams at Delavan. The boys finished just 3 points behind 8th-place Peoria St. Philomena, the closest they have come this season to knocking off that Sectional rival.

Open runners competing at Delavan were Lily Blair (15.31), Alyssa Arbuckle (17.26), Jaime Gregory (13.11), Quinn Killian (13.54), and Keaton Stoller (14.34).

Blair placed 31st of 182 girls, while Arbuckle went out strong and held on to tie her PR. Gregory had a fantastic race, finding his way through a crowded start and surging into the top 12 runners by the mile

mark. He soon moved into 9th and held position, earning a Top 15 medal in the 174-runner Boys Open. Killian placed 28th, while Stoller blazed to his best race of the season, running a 6-second PR.

EPGJH Cross Country will be competing at Sectionals on Saturday, October 8th in Germantown Hills. The Girls Race is at 10:00am, followed by the Boys Race at 10:40am. 14 teams will be competing, with the top 3 teams advancing to the State Championship Meet on October 15th.

Double Win in the Rain for EPGJH Cross Country Girls and boys put 5 in top 10 to take both team titles

[SEPTEMBER 26, 2011] – With strong winds and a cold rain as the backdrop, two Titan teams emerged victorious in a 4-team meet at Furrow Farm Tuesday. The air temperature was 55 degrees, and the water in the two creek crossings was even colder. But Titan Junior High Cross Country runners were on fire as they left no doubt about who would take the team titles at the second home meet hosted by EPGJH.

Shannan Supan (13.50) sped to victory in the Girls Race, clocking the fastest time of all girls and running faster than 27 of the 29 boys who would later compete in the Boys Race. Alana Halvorsen (15.11) placed 2nd with a strong effort, finishing over 30 seconds ahead of a Heyworth runner, the only girl to break up the Titan's top 5. Gracie Feeney (16.04) and Maddie Morrison (16.08) scorched the course for 4th and 5th overall, Morrison holding off 6th-place finisher Alli Hodgson of Pontiac by 8 seconds. The top 4 Titan girls matched their 1-2-4-5 placing from last year.

EPGJH runner Hannah Kiefer (17.30) placed 10th, her time 88 seconds faster than just 3 weeks ago on the same course. Weather conditions on that day were ideal, and although the wind and rain were definite factors Monday, neither Kiefer nor Kate Ludwig (17.36) was deterred, Ludwig besting her previous course best by 51 seconds and placing 11th.

Shelby Edwards (18.26) was EPG's #7 runner and also recorded her fastest time at the farm, placing 13th for the Titan girls. Lily Blair (18.39) and Alyssa Arbuckle (19.36) placed 15th and 22nd in the 29-runner field, Arbuckle running a personal course best time.

The Titan girls scored a decisive victory – EPG (21), Heyworth (48), Tremont (62). Pontiac had four runners and did not record a team score.

In the Boys Race, Pontiac's Nate Durham won by 5 seconds over a Heyworth runner. But then EPG's pack appeared, charging up the hill to the barn and placing 3rd, 4th, and 5th. Shelby Heffron (13.53) led the Titan boys, followed closely by Ryan Filkins (14.03) and Brandon Stine (14.08). Pontiac's #2 and #3 runners were next across the line, but EPG's Samuel Steiner (14.27) and Andy Layden (14.28) placed 8th and 9th, shutting the door on Pontiac.

Nathaniel Schug (15.39), Sam Poppen (15.40), and Quinn Killian (15.43) were EPG's #6, #7, and #8 runners, giving the Titan boys 8 of the top 14 spots. Keaton Stoller (16.46) placed 20th of 29 runners.

Layden and Killian ran personal course best times.

The boys came away with a big victory, although the margin was not quite as overwhelming as in the girls race. EPG (29) was followed by Pontiac (47), Tremont (74), and Heyworth (78).

This was the first time both the boys and girls have claimed victory at the same meet. All runners are showing steady improvement this season as the IESA State series draws near.

EPGJH Cross Country will be competing at the Delavan Invitational this weekend. The junior high races follow the high school races, and will begin at approximately 11:00am Saturday.

Six Medals and 14 PR's for EPGJH Cross Country Supan places 3rd in 200-runner Varsity Race at Dunlap Invitational

[SEPTEMBER 23, 2011] – About 1,000 runners competed in 3 races at Peoria's Detweiller Park on Friday afternoon. The Dunlap Invitational hosts 35 teams, offering runners the opportunity to compete on a course of historical significance. Athletes follow the first 2.1 miles of the route that has served as the IHSA State Cross Country Championship course for the past 40 years.

Shannan Supan (12.49) opened her race with a 6.00 mile. Two girls had already established a big gap on the field, and Supan was in the middle of a 12-runner chase pack. By the 2-mile mark (12.15), she had moved a couple seconds in front of the pack, but had to fight off a challenge from Armonty Flynn of Chatham Glenwood as the two runners bore down on the finish line. Supan held Flynn off by a fraction of a second to claim 3rd place in the 200-runner Varsity Girls competition.

Hannah Kiefer (15.40) chalked up her 8th personal record (PR) in a row with a 42-second improvement from her time last weekend. Maddie Morrison (15.47) was the #3 runner for the Varsity Titan girls, while Lily Blair (16.00) and Kate Ludwig (16.06) were close behind. Blair and Ludwig set 2-mile personal best times by 46 and 66 seconds, respectively. Shelby Edwards (16.57) ran to the biggest PR of all Titans by cutting 1 minute 7 seconds off her previous best time.

Alana Halvorsen (14.15) ran strong splits of 6.42, 6.48 to place 10th in the Girls Open field. She cruised through the 2-mile at 13.30, a 24-second drop from her previous best and exactly what her goal time was for this race. Halvorsen took home a medal for her efforts.

Gracie Feeney (15.27) came through with a big 54-second PR and placed 51st of 288 open class girls. Alyssa Arbuckle (18.11) also ran in the combined open race and came up just 1 second shy of a PR.

The EPGJH boys looked strong in the 292-runner Boys Open field, with the first four boys across the line running negative splits (the second mile faster than the first mile).

Shelby Heffron (13.07) and Ryan Filkins (13.09) paired up for negative splits of 6.17, 6.16, both collecting a PR at the 2-mile mark with a 12.33 clocking. Heffron and Filkins became the fastest Titan boys to run the 2.1-mile course at Detweiller, eclipsing Gabe McKinley's record time of 13.12 set last year.

Andy Layden (13.26) had a breakthrough race and the biggest improvement for the boys – a whopping 53-second drop in time from his previous best. He dashed past the 2-mile mark in 12.52. Layden clocked his best 1-mile time (6.28) with his opening mile, and then proceeded to run even faster for his second mile (6.24), thus running to 3 PR's within one race.

Samuel Steiner (13.30) dropped below the 13-minute mark for the first time ever with his 12.55 at 2 miles. He ran splits of 6.30, 6.25.

Nathaniel Schug (14.16) and Quinn Killian (14.26) broke the 14-minute barrier for the first time with 2-mile times of 13.39 and 13.46, respectively.

Keaton Stoller (15.26) also broke a barrier, cracking 15 minutes for the first time with his 14.40 clocking at 2 miles. Sam Poppen (15.46) was well off a PR, but still finished in the top half of the field.

Heffron (5th), Filkins (6th), Layden (13th), and Steiner (15th) each received a medal. Their pack time for runners 1 through 5 was a scant 49 seconds.

EPGJH Cross Country will be hosting a 4-team meet at Furrow Farm on Monday. Meet time is 4:30pm with the Girls Race followed by the Boys Race.

Kiefer, Arbuckle, Supan, Killian Set XC Personal Bests at 50-team Meet Kiefer drops 51 seconds; Supan moves up to #3 on all-time list

[SEPTEMBER 17, 2011] – A sunny Saturday greeted EPGJH Cross Country runners as they traveled to Shorewood for a 50-team meet. Five downstate teams joined 45 suburban Chicago-area schools at the Troy Invitational. The 5th/6th grade runners competed in 1-mile races, while 7th and 8th grade races featured a 2-mile route. The course varied from grassy flat sections to hilly wooded trails.

The 7th grade Titan girls began the third race of the day with a bang. Maddie Morrison (14.54) led the EPGJH runners and was just 10 seconds shy of her personal best. She placed 84th of 269 runners.

Number 2 runner for the 7th grade team was Hannah Kiefer (15.36), who pushed herself to a 51-second personal record (PR). It was the second week in a row that Kiefer has had the biggest PR on the team, and she is the only Titan runner who has consecutively improved in each of her 7 races this season.

Also competing in the 7th grade girls race were Gracie Feeney (15.41), just 4 seconds shy of a PR; Lily Blair (16.29); Kate Ludwig (16.53); and Alyssa Arbuckle (17.26). Arbuckle has shown steady improvement over the past few weeks, and ran to her 3rd PR in a row Saturday morning.

The 7th grade girls placed 24th as a team with 586 points, 11 points ahead of 25th-place Homer, and 5 points behind 22nd-place Pontiac.

In the boys 7th grade race, Andy Layden (13.57) was just 13 seconds off his best time set earlier this week, while Keaton Stoller (15.22) was 19 seconds off his best mark.

Shannan Supan (12.33) and Alana Halvorsen (13.56) ran together for the first half mile of the 8th grade girls race, and entered the narrow trails between 90th and 100th place. When Supan shot out of the trails just before the mile, she had moved up to 40th. Just before entering Hammel Woods on the final loop, she was in 26th and still moving up. Coming out of the trails and with a final 400-meter charge to the finish, Supan took 12th place, her 12.33 PR making her the third fastest EPGJH girl on record.

Halvorsen (13.54) also moved up through the field and placed 73rd. Her time was just 2 seconds off her personal best set at last weekend's Parkside Invitational, and she ran 100 seconds faster than last year at the Troy Invitational.

Brandon Stine (12.41) led the 8th grade boys, followed by Shelby Heffron (12.53), Ryan Filkins (13.00), Nathaniel Schug (14.01), Samuel Steiner (14.05), Quinn Killian (14.08), and Sam Poppen (15.19).

Killian ran a spectacular race for the boys, getting stronger and stronger as the race went on. He finished with a 9-second PR. It was the 3rd race in a row that Killian and Schug have run in the 14's.

The 8th grade boys placed 22nd as a team with 611 points, 4 points ahead of 23rd-place Minooka and 5 points ahead of 24th-place host Troy.

EPGJH Cross Country will be running 2.1 miles of the IHSA State Championship course at Detweiller Park on Friday. 35 teams are expected for the Dunlap Invitational. Meet time is 4:30pm.

More PR's for Titan XC at 400-runner Warrior Invite Kiefer drops 46 seconds; Supan #4 all-time EPGJH runner

[SEPTEMBER 13, 2011] – EPGJH Cross Country visited Germantown Hills for a 17-team invitational meet on Tuesday. It was sunny and about 80 degrees, but the Titans nevertheless followed up their 16-PR day at Parkside Saturday with 5 more season best times Tuesday.

The race of the day came from Hannah Kiefer (16.27), improving her personal best by 46 seconds. She was the Titan's #2 girl in the Girls Varsity race. Shelby Edwards (17.16) bested her Clinton Invite time by 4 seconds after just missing a PR over the weekend, while Kate Ludwig (16.29) dropped her PR by 1 second. In the Girls Open race, Alyssa Arbuckle (18.08) ran her best race ever.

Alana Halvorsen (14.03) also had a strong race – her 2nd fastest ever – and placed 25th in the Girls Varsity race to lead the Titan girls. Shannan Supan (12.59) became the 4th fastest runner in EPGJH Cross Country history with a dazzling performance in the Girls Open race. Her splits of 6.31, 6.28 earned her runner-up honors in the field of 135.

Andy Layden (13.45) sliced 15 seconds off his previous PR of 14-flat set at Parkside on Saturday. Brandon Stine (12.22) also ran strong for the Titan boys, running through mile 1 at 5.48 and finishing just 2 seconds shy of his season best. Stine placed 15th in the Boys Varsity race. Ryan Filkins (12.54) found his way under the 13-minute barrier for the second time in 4 days and was the #2 runner for the EPGJH boys.

Despite missing their #3 runner who is recovering from a bicycle accident, the Titan boys pulled out a 7th place team finish at the Warrior Invitational with team places of 15, 32, 42, 45, and 50.

Other Titan finishers Tuesday were Shelby Heffron (13.23), Samuel Steiner (13.40), Nathaniel Schug (14.36), Quinn Killian (14.41), Sam Poppen (15.00), Keaton Stoller (15.47), Gracie Feeney (16.34), Maddie Morrison (17.17), Lily Blair (17.46), and Courtney Stretch (19.06). 431 runners competed at the meet.

Next up for EPGJH Cross Country is the Shorewood Troy Invitational Saturday at 9:00am.

Boys 9 for 9 on Season Bests at Parkside Alana Halvorsen runs into the record books

818 boys and 780 girls completed the Parkside Invitational course, which also serves as the IESA State Championship race site. The rains had ended Friday evening, and there were just some lingering clouds and humidity in the air. It was a good morning to race.

16 of 18 EPGJH runners set season bests. All the boys PR'd. Brandon Stine was just 5 seconds off his school record set last season. The top 4 boys (Stine, Shelby Heffron, Ryan Filkins, and Samuel Steiner) ran the top 4 times by any EPGJH boy on the Parkside course. Ryan Skare (2010), Marc Hartness (2009), and Josh Larson (2009) got knocked down to the #5, #6, and #7 spots. Steiner backed up his PR at the EPGJH Invitational with a remarkable 92-second drop.

For the girls, Alana Halvorsen medaled in the Girls Open race. She ran to a 13.54 PR, vaulting her ahead of Alexis Yoder's 2008 time of 14.05 and establishing Halvorsen as the 7th fastest EPGJH girl all-time. Seven girls PR'd, and five of those girls ran to their best times by over a minute (Hannah Kiefer, Kate Ludwig, Courtney Stretch, Alyssa Arbuckle, and Lily Blair).

Times for the girls were Halvorsen (13.54) for 15th place in the Girls Open, Maddie Morrison (14.44), Gracie Feeney (15.48), Blair (16.00), Ludwig (16.30), Kiefer (17.13), Shelby Edwards (17.30), Stretch (18.08), and Arbuckle (18.18).

Times for the boys were Stine (12.20), Heffron (12.39), Filkins (12.40), Steiner (13.08), Nathaniel Schug (14.00), Andy Layden (14.00), Quinn Killian (14.17), Sam Poppen (14.29), and Keaton Stoller (15.03). All of the boys ran a disciplined even-paced race, which helped them to PR's across the board. Heffron, Filkins, Layden, and Poppen ran negative splits, burning up the second mile at a quicker pace than the first mile. Heffron and Filkins bested Ryan Skare's best 2010 time of 12.56 and moved up to the #5 and #6 fastest EPGJH boy all-time.

The EPGJH runners will face many of their Sectional foes at the Warrior Invitational on Tuesday, September 13th at 4:15pm. Germantown Hills is hosting the meet at Great Oaks Community Church. On Saturday, the Titans travel to Shorewood Troy to take on a challenging course which features the only creek crossing other than our home course at Furrow Farm.

Boys Place 3rd at 21-team EPGJH Cross Country Invitational Just 12 points shy of defending state champions

[SEPTEMBER 6, 2011] – More than 500 runners jumped hay bales and barriers, climbed hills and splashed through muddy creeks at the 5th Annual EPGJH Cross Country Invitational at Furrow Farm Tuesday afternoon. Sunny skies with temperatures in the upper 60's made for great running weather, and the enthusiastic crowd loved every minute of the three races.

The EPG boys did more than jump hay bales as they made a huge leap of improvement from just two weeks ago. They avenged earlier season defeats by a wide margin, finishing 103 points ahead of Metamora, 131 points ahead of Washington, and 189 points ahead of Morton. All three teams had beaten the Titans on August 20th at the Redbird Classic in Metamora.

The Titan boys were the only team to place 4 runners in the Top 25, and finished just 13 points behind Team Champion Olympia Middle School and 12 points behind Eureka, the defending Class A State Champions. The Titans also earned the first-ever trophy for EPGJH Cross Country with their 3rd-place showing.

Leading the way for the boys were 11th-place Shelby Heffron (13.20) and 12th-place Brandon Stine (13.22). Jaime Gregory (13.26) placed 18th and Ryan Filkins (13.35) placed 23rd. EPG's "four-pack" was at its best with just 15 seconds separating the four runners.

Samuel Steiner (14.18) jumped to a season-best time, placing 43rd for the Titans and providing good support as the Titan's #5 runner. Steiner finished less than a minute back from EPG's #1 runner, which was key to their strong placing. Andy Layden (14.57), 60th, and Sam Poppen (15.02), 63rd, each ran well as EPG's #6 and #7 varsity boys. 115 runners crossed the finish line in the boys varsity race.

Team scores for the boys were Olympia (89), Eureka (90), EPG (102), Tri-Valley (116), Dunlap Valley (120), Dunlap Middle School (202), CEC Chillicothe (203), Metamora (205), Washington (233), Mossville (256), Heyworth (267), Morton (291), Holy Trinity (355), Peoria Academy (358), Athens (421).

Alana Halvorsen (15.02) looked strong as she crossed the second creek with 7th-grader Maddie Morrison (16.00) hot on her heels. Halvorsen moved up several places in mile 2 and charged up the final hill towards the red barn, but finished in a tantalizing 26th place, just one spot out of the medals. Morrison placed 47th.

The EPG #3 runner was Gracie Feeney (17.11), placing 78th. Mercedes Gregory (17.41) and Lily Blair (17.50) placed 88th and 90th. Kate Ludwig (18.27) and Shelby Edwards (18.35) placed 98th and 100th as the #6 and #7 varsity runners. 111 girls finished the race.

The girls team showed a marked improvement as well, placing 13th and finishing ahead of Delavan, Heyworth, and Mossville. Delavan had finished 30 points ahead of the Titan girls at Metamora a couple weeks ago, but the Titan girls reversed that with a 12-point edge over the Panthers.

Team scores for the girls were Dunlap Valley (47), Eureka (78), Dunlap Middle School (92), Metamora (97), Washington (129), Holy Trinity (187), Olympia (217), Athens (241), Tri-Valley (258), Morton (277), CEC Chillicothe (302), Bethel Lutheran (312), EPG (319), Delavan (331), Heyworth (352), Mossville (512).

Open race finishers were Hannah Kiefer (61st, 18.58), Alyssa Arbuckle (83rd, 19.57), Courtney Stretch (114th, 21.40), Nathaniel Schug (16th, 15.07), Quinn Killian (34th, 16.06), and Keaton Stoller (40th, 16.22). 152 girls and 131 boys competed in the combined open race, and the creek crossings were an adventure!

Medalists for EPG were Heffron, Stine, Gregory, and Filkins in the Boys Varsity Race, and Schug in the Boys Open category.

Complete results can be found at <http://www.frontiernet.net/~djokisch/epgjhResults.htm>

EPGJH Cross Country is fired up for the 1500-runner Parkside Invitational this Saturday at 9:30am. Top-notch competition and a fast course should provide a great venue for the Titans to follow their test of mettle on the hills of Furrow Farm with an opportunity for some fast times.

EPG Runners Improve Despite "Big Hill" Morrison and J. Gregory break barriers

[AUGUST 27, 2011] – EPG Junior High runners posted 14 season-best times at the Clinton Invitational Saturday morning. Nine teams were competing at the meet, held at scenic Little Galilee Church camp southwest of Clinton. A cool sunny morning gave way to warmer temperatures for the later races, but the Titans performed well in each event.

The course was primarily open grassy trails with occasional paved and wooded sections. Just after the mile the trail took a precipitous drop followed by a sharp incline – the "big hill" – which challenged runners in the middle of the race.

Alana Halvorsen (14.26) blazed the first mile in 6.56 and met the challenge of the second mile, placing 8th in the Girls Varsity race. Her 1-minute season-best time earned her a Top 15 award.

Maddie Morrison (15.04), the Titan's #2 girl, ran to a dramatic 4-minute improvement and placed 18th. The seventh-grader's strong effort gave her the biggest time drop of all Titan runners Saturday.

Gracie Feeney (15.37), placed 31st with a 49-second improvement, while Mercedes Gregory (16.20) posted a 22-second season-best, placing 43rd. The Titan's #5 runner Lily Blair (17.08) ran to a big 81-second improvement, placing 52nd.

Hannah Kiefer (19.36) and Alyssa Arbuckle (19.40) placed 56th and 57th in the Girls Varsity Race, both clocking times within 30 seconds of their best marks of the season.

Shelby Heffron (12.56), Ryan Filkins (13.00), and Jaime Gregory (13.03) ran as a tight pack and crossed the line in 14th, 16th, and 17th. Heffron's PR run of 12.56 tied Ryan Skare for the 5th best all-time run in the history of EPGJH cross country. Filkins ran to a 27-second PR, placing 16th for the second meet in a row, just one place out of the awards at both meets. Gregory ran to a significant 47-second PR, a big move for the seventh-grader in just his third race.

Samuel Steiner (14.55) ran to a season-best, while Andy Layden (14.58) just missed a season best by 1 second. They placed 41st and 43rd. Quinn Killian (15.09), 44th, posted a PR, while Nathaniel Schug (15.11), 45th, was 2 seconds shy of his best time.

The Titan girls placed 8th in team scoring with 152 points, while the boys placed 5th with 128 points. Girls team winner was Blessed Sacrament Academy with 56 points, while the Olympia boys topped runner-up Blessed Sacrament by 1 point.

Shelby Edwards (17.20), Kate Ludwig (18.04), and Courtney Stretch (19.26) all ran personal best times. Edwards ran a smart race with a strong 2nd mile, steadily moving up to 12th place and claiming a Top 15 award. She improved 2 minutes 34 seconds. Ludwig slashed nearly 4 minutes from her previous best, showing the second biggest improvement of all 19 Titans competing Saturday. Stretch placed 44th and improved her time by over a minute.

Sam Poppen (14.59), 22nd in the Boys Open race, cracked the 15-minute barrier for the first time since the 2010 Sectional Meet, while Keaton Stoller (15.54) placed 31st.

EPGJH Cross Country runners return to Metamora's Black Partridge Park this Thursday, September 1st for a 4:00pm meet.

Four Titans Earn XC Medals at Redbird Classic Stine, Heffron, Schug, Killian place in boys races

[AUGUST 20, 2011] – EPGJH Cross Country competed in an 11-team invitational meet at Black Partridge Park in Metamora on Saturday. The 2.18-mile course was mostly grass, with a couple hilly trail sections in the woods. The temperature was in the 70's with overcast skies.

Alana Halvorsen (17.42) led the Varsity Girls with a 33rd place finish. Gracie Feeney (17.55) placed 35th, running through the 2-mile mark over 2 minutes faster than at Brimfield earlier in the week. The #3 runner for the Titans was Mercedes Gregory (19.00), placing 46th.

Maddie Morrison (20.53) placed 54th and bested her 2-mile time by nearly 3 minutes. Alyssa Arbuckle (21.18) improved her time by about a minute per mile and placed 56th, while Courtney Stretch (22.39) completed the Girls Varsity effort with a 58th place finish and a much-improved time.

Brandon Stine (14.29) was the Titan's #1 runner in the Boys Varsity race and earned a medal with his 13th place finish. Shelby Heffron was just one second back, placing 14th with even mile splits of 6.39 and 6.39. Ryan Filkins (14.40) just missed a medal with his 16th place finish, and Jaime Gregory (15.09) again proved to be a strong #4 runner for the Titans, placing 26th.

Also running in the Boys Varsity race was Andy Layden (16.18, 44th), Samuel Steiner (16.22, 46th), and Sam Poppen (17.38, 57th). Layden and Steiner worked together much of the race and both turned in nearly even splits.

The previous EPG record for the 2.18-mile course set by Marc Hartness in 2009 was broken by both Stine and Heffron, and tied by Filkins.

Lily Blair (20.10) had a fantastic effort in the Girls Open race, marking 2 miles at 4 minutes faster than her first race at Brimfield just four days earlier. She moved up from the #10 spot to the #4 spot for EPG. Hannah Kiefer (21.18) and Shelby Edwards (21.41) both sliced over 2 minutes off their 2 mile times, and Kate Ludwig recorded consistent mile times to finish soon after Edwards.

Nathaniel Schug had a stellar performance in the Boys Open race, running negative splits of 7.39 and 7.30. He moved up the entire race, looking stronger at every glance, passing runners left and right, and charging through the finish to earn an 11th place medal. Quinn Killian was just 9 seconds back in 12th place, also good for a medal. Keaton Stoller wrapped up the day for the Titans with a 16.12 effort for 2.18 miles.

In team scoring for the girls, EPG placed 8th with 217 points. The boys placed 5th with 102 points, just 1 point behind 4th-place Morton. Germantown Hills won for the girls, while Metamora took the boys title.

EPGJH Cross Country will make its first appearance at the Clinton Invitational Saturday, August 27th at 9:00am. The meet will be held at Little Galilee Church Camp, just southwest of Clinton.

JH Cross Country Boys Win Opener Boys win by 1 point...again

[AUGUST 16, 2011] – EPGJH Cross Country opened its season at Brimfield in a 4-team race with Brimfield, Chillicothe, and Riverview. The grass course was flat but had some rough sections, measuring just under 2 miles. Corn and sunshine were plentiful.

The course was different – last year the race was held at Wildlife Prairie State Park – but the result was the same – a narrow 1-point victory for the Titans.

The Titans ran strong and steady. Third-place finisher Brandon Stine (12.45) set the pace for EPG, just edging Brimfield's #1 runner. Shelby Heffron (13.26) and Ryan Filkins (13.28) worked together for the entire race and placed 7th and 8th. Seventh-grader Jaime Gregory (13.50) was a strong #4 runner for EPG, placing 9th, while classmate Andy Layden (14.58) was the final scorer for the Titans, coming across the line in 16th place.

A wave of purple runners followed on Layden's heels – Sam Poppen (15.10), Samuel Steiner (15.14), Quinn Killian (15.14), and Keaton Stoller (15.24) – placing 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st. Nathaniel Schug (15.42) followed closely in 24th. There were 33 boys competing.

Filkins and Killian achieved all-time personal records (PR's).

EPG came through with a narrow team victory over Chillicothe, whose runners matched up nearly identically with the Titans. Brimfield placed 3rd, while Riverview fielded just 4 runners and did not figure into the team scoring. One big key to the EPG victory was putting their 4th runner in front of Chillicothe's 3rd runner. Team scores were EPG 38 (3-6-7-8-14), Chillicothe 39 (2-5-9-11-12), Brimfield 62 (4-10-13-15-20).

The EPGJH girls were led by eighth-grader Alana Halvorsen (15.26) who placed 5th in a tight race to the finish with Chillicothe's Abby Camp (15.24) and Riverview's Bethany Spradlin (15.25). Mercedes Gregory (16.42) ran an outstanding race to place 11th for the Titan girls. Seventh-grader Gracie Feeney (18.37) was #3 for EPG and placed 15th.

Kortney Bagby (20.22) placed 20th, while Alyssa Arbuckle (21.27) was fifth across the line for the EPG girls with her 24th place finish. The Titans took the next six spots – 25th through 30th – with Courtney Stretch (21.55) followed by seventh-graders Maddie Morrison (21.58), Hannah Kiefer (22.06), Kate Ludwig (22.29), Lily Blair (22.33), and Shelby Edwards (22.38).

The Chillicothe girls team won, followed by Brimfield in 2nd and EPG in 3rd. Riverview fielded 4 individual runners.

EPGJH will face some tough competition at Metamora's Redbird Classic this weekend. Races will be held at Black Partridge Park with the Varsity Girls Race at 9:00am, followed by the Varsity Boys Race at 9:45am and the Open Class Race at 10:30am.