



LOCKPORT BOYS XC SWSC PRE-SEASON RECAP



By Randy Whalen

Wil Kiley described it as "an alright race."

For the Lockport Township senior it was really much better than that.

Kiley turned in a personal best time of 15 minutes:05.05 seconds to easily capture the individual title of the SouthWest Suburban Conference Blue Division Preseason Cross Country Meet, which was held on Wednesday, Aug. 26 right on the main campus of Lockport Township High School.

It was the first cross country event of the season for each SWSC school. With the coronavirus factoring into all high school fall sports, including the recent announcement of no state tournaments, Kiley was looking to take advantage of his opportunity.

"You couldn't ask for better conditions than this," Kiley said of the race which started at 7:15 PM. allowing the warm temperatures to cool down a little. "I thought I ran an alright race. But it was a nice first race to get my legs moving.

"I'm hoping to keep racing like I am now. With all the new guidelines, we were lucky to get something in."

The PR best from Kiley was 19.2 seconds better than Sandburg senior, Griffin Lehnhardt (15:24.7). Led by Lehnhardt Sandburg easily won the team title, however. With junior Brock Rice (15:26.1) placing third and senior Ismail Tineh (15:32.1) taking fourth, the Eagles had three of the top four runners. five of the top 10, and all seven of their scoring runners in the top 16.

Sandburg scored a total of 26 points. Since the inception of the SWSC in for the 2005-06 school year, the Eagles have won the conference championship every season but two. Those were the in 2009-10 (Lockport) and 2016-17 (Lincoln-Way East).

Lincoln-Way East (57) edged Lockport (58) for second place while Bolingbrook (94) was fourth and Homewood-Flossmoor (136) rounded out the 5-team Blue Division.

"He's more than capable of it," Lockport coach Tom Razo said of Kiley. "It was a heck of a start for him and he's improved with his training. He's taking one race at a time and good things will happen for him.

"Sandburg is a good team and their one and two guys are legitimate. I was glad to see the kids run. I enjoy seeing the kids from all the schools run. We are better as a team than we showed."

The host Porters were without senior Austin Molitor, who was out with an excused absence. Sophomore Matt Johnson (16:27.6, 9th overall) turned in the second-best time for Lockport. Seniors Frank Biamonte (16:34.6, 11th overall) and Tim Nielsen (16:41.1, 12th overall), along with junior John Kajmowicz (17:54.8, 26th overall), senior Collin Lippe (18:22.5, 29th overall), and junior Noah Peake (19:53.0, 33rd overall) rounded out the Porter runners.

Kiley credits training with Molitor, Nielsen, and fellow senior Devan Callahan for helping him turn it around from last season.

"I did not have a good season last year," Kiley said. "I was slowed down by doing too many miles. But this season I've done a good training routine. That included working with my teammates and also some All-State runners from last season like Tyler Cushing (2nd in 3A last year) from Bolingbrook and Jared Kreis

from Lincoln-Way Central (5th in Class 3A last year).

The race strategy also paid off for Kiley.

"We all went out fast and were all together the first mile," he said. "Then the second mile I knew just to break out.

"I also love track (doing the distance events) so something I really enjoyed about this race was that we finished it on the track. It was really cool and felt like a combo of cross country and track."

Even with the uncertainty of the season and really any future races, Kiley believes the teamwork of this Porter group is second to none.

"This year we are just more team orientated," he said. "We are just hanging around with each other. having fun. I think the one thing is we are coming together. Even though we are 6-feet apart, there are times that we are closer than ever."

The Porters are scheduled to host Lincoln-Way East in a dual meet on Tuesday, Sept. 8. But with the pandemic in these times, the schedule is always in flux.

"What I told them is to just take one race at a time," said Razo, who credited Lockport Athletic Director Mike Dwyer with making sure the meet was well run and there was a video feed up on the scoreboard in the stadium. "You never know what the rest of the season is going to be like so you have to take this opportunity. That's what (Kiley) did. He ran a really great race."

Lockport was also third in the freshmen/sophomore race with 57 points. But that was just 11 points behind first-place Sandburg. Sophomore Rocco Biamonte (17:50.5, 7th overall) was the top placer for the Porters.

On the Red side of the SWSC, Lincoln-Way Central (27) was the varsity winner by 31 points over Lincoln-Way West. The victorious Knights had the top three finishers, including senior Jay Parker (15:49.7), who was the individual champion.