

# Outlaw cross-country girls earn trophy at State

By **Charlie Kanzig**  
Correspondent

For the second week in a row the Sisters High School girls cross-country team left Head Coach Josh Nordell nearly speechless as the squad ran to a fourth place trophy as the OSAA 4A State Championships held Saturday, November 3, at Lane Community College in Eugene.

"I knew we had an outside chance, but honestly I was thinking fifth or sixth place would be a successful day for us," he said.

This came a week after an upset win at the Oregon West



PHOTO BY CHARLIE KANZIG

Kate Bowen runs out onto the track on her way to seventh place.

District meet on October 25.

The surprising Outlaws snuck in for their third fourth-place state trophy in a row behind solid running from the top five scorers.

When the announcer called for the top four teams to come down for awards, Nordell and his assistants could barely believe it, looking at one another with a mix of shock and joy. The girls, too, stood frozen for a moment before Nordell shoed them away to head to the podium, and had a broad smile on his face as they trotted down to the infield of the track.

It was not a resounding win, however, as the Outlaws beat La Grande by a mere four points and league rival Philomath by just seven.

The top three teams battled to the closest finish among teams in recent years. Marist, despite the literal collapse of its number-one runner, edged the Vikings of Siuslaw and the Cheesemakers of Tillamook. Marist scored 70 points to squeak past Siuslaw, which scored 73, while the defending champions of Tillamook scored 77.

The next three places were equally close as Sisters scored 141 points to 145 for La Grande and 148 for Philomath.

"We tell the kids every year that every single runner you beat matters because it can come down to very narrow margins," said Nordell. "If any one of these girls had let up on the track the trophy would have gone to one of those other two teams."

Kate Bowen capped a strong junior season with a

seventh-place finish in what coaches around the state called the most competitive field of individuals in memory. Her time of 19:16 would have been good enough to win in many past seasons, according to Nordell.

Solace Bergeron of Tillamook defended her title in a time of 18:32, but she had to work at throughout the race as Annika Thompson of Junction City and Marist's McKenna Priske kept the pressure on through the first two miles. Bergeron eventually gapped Thompson, who finished in 18:40, while Priske faded to 39th place and actually collapsed temporarily with 300 meters to go.

Interestingly, 10 of the top 13 finishers came from either the Sky-Em or the Oregon West districts, underscoring the strength of those two leagues. Additionally, three of the top four teams came from those leagues as well.

"The 4A level was already loaded with fast girls even before Marist dropped down from 5A," said Nordell.



PHOTO BY CHARLIE KANZIG

The Outlaws again exceeded expectations to earn a fourth-place trophy.

"That was a really exciting race to see."

Senior Ella Cole completed her prep cross-country career finishing in 23rd place (20:35). Freshman Emma Singleton ran a strong second half of the race to finish 40th (21:37). Pearl Gregg (22:19) and Amy Hills (22:24) both beat Philomath's fifth runner, which Nordell told them

would be necessary before the meet to beat the Warriors.

Iris Diez (23:45) finished 77th and Sasha Stolasz (25:32) ended up 91st.

"The girls all did their jobs," Nordell said. "They competed and beat the girls that they needed to beat to earn that trophy. I am so proud of them for what they accomplished this season."

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