

# Plano, Sandwich and Somonauk Cross-Country Battle for Local Domination

By Mark Harrington

Three high school cross country teams, all have a different focus on the fall season.

Somonauk has revived its program, now in its third year under former Sandwich coach Bob Pax, a team of just five runners, one a shot put thrower, another a hurdler from the spring track team.

Plano has a young enthusiastic coach, Alanna Harju, who says it is a growing year for her team. "Last meet, every runner had a personal record (time). We (boys) are learning about going out too fast at the start. It is a two-mile race, not a one mile race. The girls are starting to run as pack and starting to see the benefits. I'm hoping the boys see that (and follow)."



Sandwich, whose girls team won the Interstate Eight Conference championship a year back, and the boys, which has a pair of second place conference credits over three years, is fighting a numbers game of sort. "The challenge is to fill spots from people who chose not to return for the season." Coach Chris Johnson said while pointing to the possibility of better than a second or third place pre-season conference finish prediction.

Somonauk's Matt Zaeske, with a personal best time of 17:53, finished fifth over three miles, maintaining that position after mile two. Sophomore Ryan Zaeske garnered 11th at 18:57.



For Sandwich, Jacob Dallen ran a six-minute first mile, and then took seventh at 18:28. He was followed by Evan Underhill at 19:12 and Mason Kellogg at 19:25 with Tanner Kelly and Josh Gordon rounding out the Indians top five scoring runners.

Plano held the fourth spot for most of the race, Brandon Littlefair outdistancing Sandwich's Dallen. But it is Juan Aguilar who has fans excited. He has sliced 10 minutes over his last four races.

During the race, Sandwich and Plano battle with their number two runners and number three runners in a pack. The pair will hook up again at the Lisle Invitational at the end of the month and at the Interstate Eight Conference meet near the season end.

Meanwhile in the girls' race, returning Class 2A all-stater Kayla Schiera ran all alone the entire race, winning her third straight race after finishing eighth and fifth at the Morris and Seneca Invitationals. The Sandwich junior clocked in at 18:32 for three miles after a 6:02 first mile pace. She was followed by teammates Maddy Leggett, Danniela Estrada, Maddie Dawson, and Kayla Mueller.

"Just duck and run," said Schiera about her race, who said her focus during the race centered on her form, her time to get into the low 17s (minutes) and possibly in the 16s, and to keep moving forward. She is pointing to the conference meet, her favorite course at Lisle in two weeks, and October sectionals, "a chance to see who I have to compete against at state (finals)." Schiera finished 17th at last year's state championship race.