

Gould, Bendle win state

Soph defends title as team runs to narrow victory

By Bill Khan
JOURNAL SPORTS WRITER

Belding — Bendle High's girls' cross country runners couldn't wait to get home Saturday and *really* begin celebrating their state championship.

"All week we were eating right," senior Amanda Gould said. "Our parents took away our Halloween candy last weekend. We'll eat candy when we get home."

Ah, the sacrifices that must be made.

But they were well worth it.

Sophomore Carrie Gould repeated as the individual state Class C champion, leading the Tigers to their first state title in a highly competitive meet at Candlestone Inn Golf and Resort.

Fourth-ranked Bendle had 149 points to edge seventh-ranked runner-up Addison by four points. Only 39 points separated the top five teams. Top-ranked Ida was third with 169 points.

The Tigers' point total was the highest

ever by a girls' state championship team, making a 30-minute wait for the final results that much more tense for the Bendle entourage. The previous record of 146 was set by Class A Holly in 1990.

"I didn't think we won," said Amanda Gould, who went off to watch the individual race after finishing ninth. "I really didn't."

"It was too close to call," Bendle Coach Rose Wilkins said. "I was trying to keep



Carrie Gould

Please see **BENDLE, E12**

BENDLE

Continued from E1

track of nine teams, but I lost track of a couple of red shirts."

It was the second state championship in three years for Bendle, which won the Class C girls' basketball title in 1991. Wilkins also coached that team.

"I was talking with John Angle, our superintendent, and asked, 'Where's the scoreboard?'" Wilkins said. "It's a little more instantaneous feedback. But, like basketball, it hasn't set in yet. It doesn't set in until the following year."

Carrying her teammates to a state title made this year's individual victory even sweeter for Carrie Gould.

Gould is undefeated in major meets in her two-year career and felt a burden all season to defend her championship. Her time of 19:09 gave her a 17-second cushion over Suttons Bay junior Traci Knudsen. The winning time in the individual race was a 19:55 by Christie Achenbach of Unionville-Sebewaing.

Afterward, Gould shed some tears of joy — and relief.

"I feel like a big load was lifted off me," she said. "I'm very happy."

Last year, Gould got boxed in early and had to fight back to win the race in the late stages. She got off to a slow start once again and was 16th as the pack made a sharp left turn 300 yards into the race. But it was a temporary situation, as she passed Knudsen 1 1/4 miles into the race and pulled away for the easy victory.

"I was prepared for it this year," Gould said. "We knew people would be cutting us off and we had a plan to go to the outside (on the first turn). All of us seemed to do it."

Amanda Gould's time of 20:00 was ninth in the team race and 10th when factoring in the individual event, giving her All-State honors for the third straight year.

But it took a lot of work back in the pack for Bendle to become only the third Flint-area girls' cross country champion. Junior Jennifer Pluta was 23rd in 21:07 and sophomore Jessica Knowles 32nd in 21:17.

Addison had six runners across the line before Bendle's fifth and final scorer, sophomore Crystal Johns, finished in 22:55. But Addison didn't have Bendle's strength up front, putting only sixth-place freshman Kristy Davenport in the top 18.

As it turned out, Bendle won the meet by a three-second margin. Johns' time was three seconds faster than 88th-place Amy Hasson of Michigan Lutheran Seminary. Had Johns dropped to 88th, Addison would have tied Bendle and won the tie-breaker.

The Tigers' sixth and final finisher was sophomore Amy Hendrix, who was 122nd in 24:36.

Bendle joined Northern's 1981 Class A winner and Holly's 1990 Class A winner as the area's only state girls' champions.

Carrie Gould and Clio's Kelly Shumate (1981, 1982) are the only area girls to win state titles, both doing it twice. Of the nine girls who have Class C championships, five did it more than once. Next year, Gould could join Stacey Kilburn of White Pigeon (1985, 1987, 1988) as the only three-time Class C winners.

As a team, Bendle will be favored to repeat next season.

Amanda Gould is the only runner who will graduate, but she will be replaced by sister Kelsie Gould, who will be a freshman.

Bendle has cracked the top 10 in all four of its state-meet appearances, placing sixth in 1984, fifth in 1990 and tying for 10th in 1992. The closest any other area Class C team came to winning the title was in 1987, when Atherton placed second to DeWitt.

Lake Fenton was the center of controversy, getting disqualified after meet officials ruled the girls' team wore an improper uniform. Lake Fenton wore a cotton long-sleeved shirt with "Lake Fenton cross country" on the front and "Nothing behind us matters" on the back.

Lake Fenton Coach Mitch Carroll said his team has worn those shirts to several cold-weather meets and has never been penalized. The school is appealing to the MHSAA and expects a decision within a few days.

"The appeals committee thought the uniform was OK, but the officials overruled what they said," Carroll said. "It says, 'Nothing behind us matters' on the back. It's something that is common throughout the league in our area. It seems like the officials on that side of the state have never seen that kind of shirt."

According to unofficial times, Lake Fenton would have had 382 points and placed 17th out of 21 teams. Leena Kapale would have been 27th in 21:12, Beth Barrow 58th in 22:08, Jennifer Allen 62nd in 22:12, Frankie Dzisinski 100th in 23:22, Kim Webster 135th in 25:25 and Stacey Fulk 140th in 26:16.

GEC rival Byron was 17th with 418 points. Freshman Lori Haugh was 29th in 21:15, Sandy Good 85th in 22:55, Rachel Shafter 94th in 23:07, Christina Lynn 102nd in 23:35, Nikki Judson 108th in 23:45, Daphne Chittick 127th in 24:55 and Heidi Skinner 128th in 24:56.

Goodrich, the only Flint-area team in the boys' meet, finished 15th with 322 points. Chris Kaighen was 16th in 17:23, Rick Martin 37th in 17:56, Ken Hardacre 41st in 18:00, Jeff Priemer 101st in 18:50, Chad Urbain 127th in 19:29, Mark Richardson 140th in 20:37 and Ethan Acban 141st in 20:40.

"If everybody would have raced well, we were figuring our goal was to finish in the top five," Goodrich Coach Kirk Richards said. "We had a few people who didn't have good races, but a couple people were sick."

Leslie won the boys' team championship by a 147-157 margin over Carson City Crystal. Crystal's Justin Curry was the individual winner in 16:36.

Four of the five area boys in the individual race stuck close together, with Atherton's Matt Burger finishing 47th in 18:13, Lake Fenton's Ryan Ruddy 49th in 18:15, Atherton's Chris Finton 51st in 18:16 and Byron's Dan Pace 54th in 18:20. Lake Fenton's Michael Eatmon was the other participant, placing 71st in 18:53.

Michael McFellin of Petersburg-Summerfield won the race in 16:59.

Montrose's Kate Webster was the first area girl in the individual race, placing eighth in 20:26. Teammate Windi-Sue Guntsch was 16th in 21:02, while Goodrich's Erin Adamec was 32nd in 21:52 and Atherton's Ashleigh Foutch was 43rd in 22:12.

P16
P17
P18
P18
P18
P19
P21
P19
P20
P20
P20
P21
P22
P22
P23
P23
P23
P23
P31
F

AI
40
1
1
1
1
1
1

in
g
S
L
up
co
co

F
S
v