

# Holly boys take 5th, Flushing girls 10th

By Bill Khan  
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**Alto** — The state Class A boys' cross country championship remains elusive for Flint-area teams, but just imagine if the best runners from the area could pool their talents.

It would be illegal, of course, but such a lineup would be a coach's dream.

The Flint area produced six of the top 19 runners in the state Class A meet Saturday at Saskatoon Golf Club.

In the quest for a team championship, Holly's top-ranked boys' team finished fifth while Flushing's third-ranked girls' team was 10th.

Holly's Gerald Newcomb was the top area finisher, placing sixth in the team race and seventh overall in 16:09.

Also earning All-State honors were Flushing's Kevin Foltz (tied for 10th, 16:16), Carman-Ainsworth's Matt Vennie (tied for 12th, 16:19), Kearsley's Tony DiGenova (tied for 12th, 16:19), Swartz Creek's Paul Kekel (17th, 16:23) and Holly's Jared Maxwell (tied for 19th, 16:25). All-State recognition goes to runners in the top 25 when the team and individual races are combined.

Newcomb ran the second-best time of his four-year career, despite running on a snow-covered course in 30-degree weather.

"It was great for those kinds of conditions," Newcomb said. "I was shooting for the top 10 overall and top five in my race. I'm very satisfied."

After missing last year's state meet, Foltz was determined to make a run for the championship on Saturday. But Abdul Alzindani of Dearborn Fordson made that goal unattainable, blowing away the competition with a time of 15:20 in the individual race. Joe Leo of Detroit Catholic Central won the team race in 15.42.

Foltz was a distant second to Alzindani in the individual run after being six seconds back at the end of a blistering 4:37 opening mile by the Fordson senior.

"I didn't think he'd do that," Foltz said. "He took off fast and I can't go with that. I'm usually not that strong after I do that fast of a first mile. It took something out of me. I had to work to finish. He's tough. He is the best."

As it turned out, Foltz had to work hard just to keep ahead of Big Nine Conference rival Vennie.

"(Alzindani) just took right off and left us in the dust," Vennie said. "I wanted to try to stay with Kevin. I wanted to keep close and try to pass him, but he just out-kicked me at the end."

Vennie and Kearsley's DiGenova, both juniors, will be among the state favorites next year. They were beaten by only two underclassmen, Mike Humes of Ann Arbor Pioneer (16:04) and Jesse Elzinga of Temperance-Bedford (16:12).

In the team event, Holly had its best finish in a state meet since winning the 1978 Class B championship. The Bronchos hadn't finished better than eighth since then. It was also the best finish by a Flint-area team in the Class A meet since Swartz Creek won in 1986.

Newcomb and Maxwell led the way with their All-State performances, while Rob Keen was 29th in 16:44, Matt Hosner 53rd in 17:11 and Scott Terry 83rd in 17:31. Rich Hicks, who was Holly's No. 4 runner in the regional, became ill Friday night and dropped out of the race after two

## A CROSS COUNTRY

miles.

If Hicks was healthy, the Bronchos might have been able to grab the runner-up spot. Holly had 184 points, while second-place Milford-Lakeland had 157. Brighton won its second state championship and first since 1978 with 133 points, the second-highest winning total in the last nine years.

"It's been that way all year," Holly coach Duane Raffin said. "All of these teams have beaten each other. It's been a good season for cross country. There's been no dominating team. I'm pleased with the way we ran. The kids are disappointed they didn't win, but we'll take it considering the circumstances."

Swartz Creek and Kearsley were ranked in the top 10 all season, but the Dragons finished 11th with 353 points and Kearsley 14th with 361.

Kekel was 12th, Ryan Sanders 55th (17:13), Sean McDowell 86th (17:33), Chris Allen 96th (17:42) and Chad Parenteau 104th (17:46) for Swartz Creek.

"If you told me at the start of the year we'd be in the top 11 and win all the things we did, I'd have laughed," Creek coach Dave Carey said. "We were pathetic. I'm proud of the seniors. They got this team back together at the end."

Kearsley finished 14th for the second straight year, but with 361 points had 51 fewer than in 1994.

Four of the Hornets' top five runners will return next year. DiGenova (ninth, 16:19) is a junior, Wayne Thayer (67th, 17:20) is a senior, Matt Bartman (71st, 17:25) is a junior, Chad Zawol (87th, 17:34) is a junior and Brad Castanon (128th, 18:03) is a sophomore.

"Wayne came back all right after a bad ankle," Kearsley coach Don Marsh said. "Zawol was hurt all year and he was our fourth man. The way things worked out, we did all right."

Flushing's girls cracked the top 10 for the second time in three years by placing 10th, but the Raiders were looking for bigger things after a dominant 22-point effort in the regional one week earlier moved them to No. 3 in the state rankings.

The Raiders had 306 points, well behind repeat state champion Troy Athens' total of 102. Livonia Stevenson was second with 113 points.

"Our pack got broken up somewhat," Flushing coach Stan Holmes said. "It's hard to keep contact with each other in a meet of this size (188 runners). That's our strength."

Jenny Denkins was 17th (19:40), Alane Millar 54th (20:24), Brooke Vizena 56th (20:24), Trisha Eavy 71st (20:37) and Kathie Horne 108th (21:00) to account for Flushing's points.

Swartz Creek ended up 24th in the 27-team meet with 536 points.

Scoring for the Dragons were Allison Busch (40th, 20:11), Melissa Granger (42nd, 20:14), Kim Whiote (141st, 21:46), Ann Honnosh (14th, 21:51) and Heather Krotzer (168th, 22:32).

The state individual champion was Sharon Vantuyl of Portage Northern, who won the individual run in 18:21. Alison Klemmer of Troy Athens won the team run in 18:31 to finish second overall.

Holly's Jackie Bucholz was the fastest Flint-area runner in the girls' race, placing fifth in the individual run in 19:20.

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