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INSIDE PREPS

St. Joseph 7th, Lakeshore star 8th

By LYLE SUMERIX

GRAND RAPIDS — Three were last in the Michigan Class B state cross country meet here Saturday, not not quite fast enough for the St. Joseph boys team or Melissa Laughlunn of Lakeshore.

The St. Joe boys finished seventh, while Laughlunn placed eighth. She ran the football run over though posting her career best time of 18:04.

However, Laughlunn and Jim Ornelo, who ran first on the St. Joe men each earned medals and a place on the all-state team. Ornelo finished 11th in the boys team race at 16:46.

Even though she didn't achieve her goal of a state championship, Laughlunn was upbeat about posting her career best time.

"I'm disappointed I didn't place higher, but I'm happy I improved by [illegible] meter snow-covered, wind swept course at the Grand Rapids Golf Club. "I really thought I would se in the top five, but I did the best I could and ran my best time."

The near freezing temperature did not bother Laughlunn and St. Joey Ryan Trykowski.

"I hurt so bad," said Laughlunn. "I can't breathe well in cold weather.

"But, now that it's over, I know I'm going to miss it."

The Lakeshore senior finished one place ahead of her ninth place team. Lakeshore finished 1st overall regional title.

"She ran her heart out," added Lakeshore coach Inge Taylor. "It was a fast race and she ran her best time ever. I'm proud of her."

Trykie, also a senior, was running with a bad cold. He coughed and hopped back after the first mile. "The cold weather caused his lungs to close up," explained coach Bart Waldvogel. "Last week he ran twerts on the team, but today he finished seventh."

The battle between the front four of the runners and the last three made the differences whether St. Joe finished third or seventh.

Droste led the team at 11th place in 16:46, with Colin Bunyon 45th at 16:47, Kevin Bunyon 55th at 16:51 and Jeff Bunyon 58th at 16:52. Ryan and Mark Bowers finished 102nd at 17:26, Ben Watson 139th at 17:49 and Yocke 180th at 18:14. All are

CROSS COUNTRY
CLASS B STATE FINALS

seniors except Gast and Watson, both sophomores.

"They did the best they could today," said Waldvogel. "They ran a good race, but not a great race. There was some great competition."

It was the fourth finish in the top 10 in the past five years for St. Joe. In his 24 years as coach, Waldvogel's team have gone to state 11 times, with four runnerup finishes and finished runner-up four years.

"The big thing is getting to state," said Waldvogel. "With a good group of sophomores and freshmen, we'll see if we can make it back next year."

Stockbridge won the boys team event with 111 points, followed by Gaylord second with 211. St. Joe scored 270 points.

The winning time in the team event was 15:39, posted by Mathew Hunting of Gaylord.

Other individual boys from southwestern Michigan competing included Joe Lemon of Lakeshore, 66th at 16:47; Jason Stockbridge and Edwardsburg's Adam Edwardsburg, 72th at 17:06; Adam Nelson of Edwardsburg, 98th at 17:56.

For the girls, Caledonia blew out everyone for the third straight year, winning with only 38 points compared to second place Gaylord with 97.

Caledonia placed five runners among the top nine, with its sixth runner finishing in 13th place in 19:12. Times for the top five ranged from 18:08 to 18:51.

The winning time in the team event was 15:39, posted by Carrie Gould of Flint Powers.

Winning the girls individual event was Kate Fall of Vassar in 18:36.

Other individual girls competing from southwestern Michigan included Jessica Esther Frances of Three Rivers, 27th at 20:11; Kris Grunder of St. Joseph, 42nd at 20:36, and Aimee Hockleman of Three Rivers at 20:59.

SUMMARIES

Three Rivers' Keith Brown stiff-armed Grand Rapids Catholic Central's Marty Harig for some extra yardage

Wildcat punt return key

By KEN FOX

THREE RIVERS — In a game filled with heroes, Joel Messenger stood above the crowd — even though the scorer stands just 5-feet-6.

Messenger's 65-yard punt return in the third quarter sparked the Three Rivers High football team to a 20-12 victory over Grand Rapids Catholic Central in a Class B football playoff.

Bill pre-regional playoff game. Next week Shaw's Wildcats, now 10-0, travel to No. 1 East Grand Rapids next weekend for the regional championship game.

"This feels awfully good," Shaw said of the win. "I was very proud of the way our kids played against a very good team. Our defense really stepped up."

Messenger, who also recovered a fumble from his cornerback spot, must share the spotlight with halfback Keith Brown (114 yards rushing) and quarterback Rob Reiser (7-of-11, 108 yards and a touchdown).

Despite dominating the first half, the Wildcat lead was just 7-6 as Catholic Central prepared to punt with just over seven minutes to play in the third quarter.

Messenger fielded Adam Perrin's punt at the Wildcat 35 and immediately sidestepped a Cougar tackler almost immediately.

Messenger then broke to the outside, got several good blocks in front of the Wildcat bench and then turned on the afterburners to the end zone. He then outraced the Grand Catholic Central defenders into the end zone to complete the electrifying 65-yard return.

"Punt returns have been a big part of our success this season," Shaw said. "Even the one we didn't score on a last yet, we were still hanging in or 35 yards per return.

"The kid simply made a great run," Cougar coach Tom Pisaniuuuh said. "Our coverage team was there, but he made some great moves and got free."

Despite a great defensive effort, Three Rivers' 12-0 lead looked safe.

As the fourth quarter started, Catholic Central had just 49 total yards. But suddenly, behind the passing of quarterback Jeff Schneider, the Cougars began an inspired comeback.

Following a Three Rivers punt, the Cougars drove 61 yards in seven plays to cut into the lead.

Schneider, who completed nine of five passes in the drive, found wide receiver Jason Jandernoa for a nine-yard scoring play. Portis slipped on the extra point attempt, so the Wildcat lead remained seven.

But the Three Rivers offense, which had struggled since the first drive of the game, shook off some rust and went right back to work.

Three Rivers' Joel Messenger returned a punt for a touchdown against Grand Rapids Catholic Central.

32 yards against a Wildcat defense led by Jason Ave, Troy Pugliese and John Perrel.

"Our offensive line was every bit as good as it was on film," Pisaniuuuh said. "They all run to the ball well and really hit when they get there ... I was very impressed.

Three Rivers made a statement early, driving 58 yards in 11 plays following the opening kickoff.

The drive, which took 7:36 off the clock, culminated with a three-yard touchdown run by Brown.

"One of our goals was to get in front of them early," Shaw said. "The way we controlled the ball and got it in the end zone was a big part of that."

After a rough start, Schneider ended up completing nine of his 17 passes for 121 yards and two scores for Catholic Central.

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bet, either.

"We run something called killers in practice," Carfiesa said. "They're 100-yard sprints at a crack and we run four or five of them in the preseason. We also run them when we have a three-day break. Last night at practice our legs weren't tired so I knew we were where we had to be in our conditioning."

Lakeshore did appear more confident and relaxed after the win over Gull Lake, however.

"All of my teams have had specific goals," he said. "But this one is so focused. Even after tonight's win, these kids were as

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cited, but they weren't out of control. These kids have been there before and they've been able to dig down deep enough to win no matter what the situation is."

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