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Girls Cross Country Clench State Title for Second Year in a Row
by Ashley Skinner

Last year, the girls cross country team held true to head coach Steve Golemon's promise of finishing on the medal stand. This year, they've done it again. For the second time in the school's history, the Lady Bulldogs finish first at state.

"For the girls, the task of earning a repeat state championship was made extremely difficult," Golemon said. "The difficulty increased throughout the season, when illness and injuries occurred to key runners; however they never lost the commitment, determination, intensity, self-discipline and focus that we needed to have a chance at a repeat."

Despite finishing second at the regional meet behind Liberty Hill, the Lady Dogs continued to practice hard and were able to overcome all odds of finishing behind them at state. They were determined to defend their title as returning state champions.

"We knew we were the underdogs coming into the meet, which made us push even harder to defend our title," senior Mercy Yermo said.

This cross country season has been accompanied by rainy weather and cooler temperatures which played a big factor at the state meet. The entire course was mainly slick mud, along with up to two feet of water in some places.

"While I was running, I could hardly feel my body because of the cold rain," junior Kaitlyn Rodriguez said. "Running through the small 'rivers' affected all of our times by at least 30 seconds. It was insane."

Despite the bad weather conditions, the Lady Dogs had two individual state medalists. Sophomore Sandy Clarkin (12:22.52) finished fifth, and Yermo (12:29.00) finished ninth. Clarkin was a returning individual medalist as she placed seventh in last year's state meet.

"It felt amazing to medal at state again, but it felt even better to know that I improved from last year," Clarkin said. "We worked so hard this year to get back to state."

Additionally, freshmen Ashlyn Persyn (12:56.16) finished 27th and Sullivan Wilke (13:03.15) took 37th, and Rodriguez (13:23.60) finished 69th to place in the top half of the field of 151 runners. The number six and seven runners for the Lady Dogs were seniors Brenda Gutierrez (13:44.38), who came in 93rd and Allie Denham (13:49.71), who came in 101st.

"Team, as well as individual, character and pride were definitely demonstrated by the team," Golemon said. "Team excellence became a major factor as the number three through the number seven runners fulfilled their obligations."

The Lady Dogs finished their season with their eighth straight district championship, and a repeat state title. The team will be losing three seniors as Denham, Yermo, and Gutierrez graduate, but the expectations for the girls cross country team will remain high.

"Obviously, there were many who felt that the 2014 state title was a one year wonder, and how wrong that was," Golemon said. "Simply put, the right people doing the right thing at the right time for the right reason will always produce the right result. In other words, will it to happen, and it will happen. And it did happen again in 2015."