**1st Ever XC Relays concludes with fast times, 8 Punxsy boys medalists and a runner-up team placing!**

A total of four teams participated in a unique cross country invitational on Friday evening at Jack LaMarca stadium, with the locals coming away with a slew of fast times and a significant haul of medals for their efforts.

Punxsy hosted Elk County Catholic, Saint Marys and Hollidaysburg on a perfect evening for running, with Elk County capturing first place in a competitive varsity boys relay event while the Saint Marys girls dominated, winning by almost three minutes in the 4x2 mile varsity category. Sophomore Liam Storms started the evening by making the locals proud in winning the open division race.

“I think the athletes competing enjoyed the event quite a bit,” said Punxsy boys head coach George Wehrle. “There were some really impressive times from the competitors, and the relay format provided a bit of variety to what will be a long season of running strictly 5k’s.”

The open division race was the first event to get underway, and sophomore Liam Storms wasted no time in heading to the front and held off all comers to take the top prize with a solid time of 12:18.6 for the 2 mile distance. “Liam wasn’t afraid to jump out to an early lead and he pretty much cruised an impressive win,” said Wehrle. “He won by about 20 seconds and ran the equivalent of a sub-20 minute 5k, something he never did last season.”

Fellow sophomore Jacob Good placed fourth in the open division with a fine time of 13:28, with teammate Sam Rodgers just two places behind with a time of 14:24. “Jacob really ran well, easily one of his best races ever, and Sam had a nice dual at the end with a Hollidaysburg runner who just nipped our guy at the line,” said Wehrle.

Luke Poole comported himself well in his first ever cross country race as he placed ninth in 15:48, while Copeland Whitfield placed 12th at 21:39 in his first varsity competition. “Luke is coming along nicely and will keep getting better with each race, and that pretty much goes the same for Copeland,” said Wehrle. “Both guys are relatively new to running and just need some time to develop.”

For the varsity boys relay format, a total of seven teams took to the starting line, with each team comprised of four runners. Punxs’ys “A” team of Ethan Brentham, Jake Dinger, Alex Eberhart and Owen Bartlebaugh put up a valiant fight before coming up just 36 seconds short against a strong Elk County Catholic squad. “36 seconds in an eight mile race isn’t all that much of a gap, so our guys definitely hung in there and competed well,” said Wehrle. “Elk County’s “B” team was only about 100 yards behind our “A” team, so they are a powerful group of runners for sure.”

Brentham, Bartlebaugh, and Dinger had the 5th, 6th and 7th fastest splits of the day, respectively, and Eberhart ran a strong third leg to move Punxsy into the runner-up spot after having been trailing both ECC squads for much of the race. “Alex is a wily veteran and showed some nice competitive instincts out there tonight,” said Wehrle. “He put us into second place by making up about 30 seconds on ECC’s “B” third leg.”

Punxs’ys “B” squad of Ethan May, Corbin Heitzenrater, Evan States and Kevin Ingros placed fourth overall, with May running a split of 11:47 that was good for 10th overall. “Ethan did a terrific job in his first high school cross country race and was rewarded with a top 10 medal,” said Wehrle. “Corbin was impressive as well, with a 12:12 leg that was the 12th fastest of the day. Evan and Kevin ran good times but were in the difficult position of being in “no man’s land”, with third place almost three minutes ahead and fifth place over a minute behind. It’s tough to run your best with no competition to push you.”

With eight Punxsy runners earning medals for placing in the top 10 in either the open or relay division, it was a good afternoon of racing to begin the season for the Punxsy athletes. “I was very surprised to see how fast the guys ran, and if these two mile times reflect their 5k potential we should be competitive with pretty much anyone in our district,” said Wehrle. “As good as we ran, however, Elk County still swept the top four places and we’ll get to see them again on Tuesday over the full 5k distance on a tough DuBois course.”

Hosting an invitational requires a community effort, and many people were involved in helping to make this inaugural event a success. “Girls coach John Snyder was the driving force behind this relay meet, but we had a lot of help from the athletic office, maintenance staff, and of course parents and family who worked or donated food items for the concession stand,” concluded Wehrle. “I think we can do this again next year and give the athletes an even better experience, but this year was definitely a fun event that showcased some excellent runners.”

**Results:**

**Team Relay Standings:**

1. Elk County Catholic A-45:22.4
2. Punxsutawney A-45:58.9
3. Elk County Catholic B-46:16.2
4. Punxsutawney B-49:27.2
5. Hollidaysburg A-50:35.7
6. Hollidaysburg B-53:35.1
7. Saint Marys A-54:13.6

**Punxsy individual splits-Relay Division**

Ethan Brentham-11:05.0 (5th)

Owen Bartlebaugh-11:10.3 (6th)

Jake Dinger-11:17.2 (7th)

Ethan May-11:47.9 (10th)

Corbin Heitzenrater-12:12.2 (12th)

Liam Storms-12:18.6-1st Open Division; 13th Overall

Alex Eberhart-12:26.3 (15th)

Evan States-12:30.3 (16th)

Kevin Ingros-12:56.7 (24th

Jacob Good-13:28.4-4th Open Division; 28th Overall

Sam Rodgers-14:24.8-6th Open Division, 34th Overall

Luke Poole-15:48.0-9th Open Division; 37th Overall

Copeland Whitfield-21:39.0-12th Open Division; 40th Overall