

RUN TO GLORY

Marietta girls run to state cross country championship

- Adam Carrington
- Nov 3, 2017

CARROLLTON — It was not long ago that the members of the Marietta girls cross country team were looking up to their male counterparts during their state championship seasons in 2014 and '15.

Now, it is the Lady Blue Devils getting the glory.

Marietta ran in a pack, with five of its seven runners finishing in the top 20, and that was good enough to secure the Class AAAAAAA state championships Friday.

The Lady Blue Devils totaled 62 points, beating South Forsyth (84), Milton was (155) and Walton (159).

It was the first team title for the Marietta girls.

“It’s very exciting,” coach Jack Coleman said. “It’s hard to express, really. They have worked so hard, and it was great to see that work pay off.”

Colquitt County’s Elizabeth Funderburk was the individual champion in 18 minutes, 29.12 seconds, nearly a minute ahead of Peachtree Ridge’s Mary Kathryn Knott (19:28.16).

Third and fourth place came down to Marietta’s Ellie Hall and Kennesaw Mountain’s Elizabeth Rice, who stayed close to one another throughout the race. Rice ultimately prevailed, finishing third in 19:37.17 after Hall beat her for the individual area title a week ago.

Hall, who ran 19:46.09, got out in front early, with she and Funderburk in front of the pack for the first mile but Hall could not keep up and ran alongside Rice and Knott once Funderburk got separation.

“My coach said to see what she was up to,” Hall said of Funderburk. “I was like, ‘OK,’ and then she kept going, and I was like, ‘Oh, shoot.’ We were focused on the team winning and getting what we can out there.”

While Hall had to settle for fourth, her teammates had her back.

Betsy Gordon was seventh in 20:13.17, beating out Hillgrove's Grace Ellsworth (20:16.52) and Walton's Abigail Robertson (20:18.74). Three other Lady Blue Devils placed in the top 20 — June Mwaniki (12th, 20:24.98), Hattie Rydinsky (19th, 20:41.59) and Ani Henderson (20th, 20:42.32).

“Our pack of girls were committed to staying together and finishing the whole race,” Coleman said. “That was the main thing we were trying to work on. Once we made the move to the finish, they had to push from there.”

Robertson was key in helping Walton finishing fourth overall. Paige Towler also chipped in, finishing 36th in 21:23.90, while Ellen Chamberlain (21:46.61) and Sarah Burwell (21:46.74) were 46th and 47th, respectively.

Hillgrove also finished in the top 10 at eighth, led by Ellsworth. Nicole Franklin was 16th in 20:33.73 and Sierra Wehrenberg was 27th in 21:00.60.

In the boys meet, Walton was the lone top-10 finisher, coming in seventh in a race dominated by Milton. The Eagles (40) rolled to the championship, with Lambert (178) a distant second.

Milton's Sam Bowers (15:58.99) and Nicholas Yanek (16:04.35) finished 1-2.

Hillgrove was 14th overall, with Kennesaw Mountain 16th.

Hillgrove's Chase Korzenok led the Cobb County contingent at 14th with a time of 17:07.77, and teammate Noah Hayes was 32nd in 17:27.19. Kennesaw Mountain's Will Bullock was 18th in 17:12.25.

Jayanth Kumar was Walton's top runner at 42nd in 17:37.57, but the Raiders had three others also finish in the top 40.

In the Class A private-school meet, the Whitefield Academy boys were third overall, with Devin Wade finishing a close second (17:04.84) behind Paideia's Griffin McCauley (17:02.42).

Zachary Justice was 14th (18:07.35) and Nicholas Harris was 21st (18:27.25).

For the Class A girls, Mount Paran Christian was 10th overall, led by Abby Gardner (18th, 22:03.44). Whitefield's Emily Little was the highest local finisher at 10th (21:06.25).

The state championships will conclude today with the remaining classifications, including the Class AAAAAA races.