

2018 Boys and Girls Cross Country State Meet Recap

Perham repeats in Class A in both boys and girls;

Edina, STMA win program's first championships;

Covert, Ping set course records in winning individual titles

Four team champions and four individual champions were crowned on Saturday, Nov. 3 during the Minnesota State High School League's boys and girls cross country state meets at St. Olaf College in Northfield.

Perham stole the team spotlight by becoming the first Class A school to win both the boys and girls championships in consecutive seasons. Minneapolis Washburn's Emily Covert and Cotter's Grace Ping set course records en route to winning their second individual championships.

And in firsts for their programs, Edina won the boys crown for the first time and the St. Michael-Albertville girls did the same.

Here is a look at the state meet.

Class A

Girls

Perham successfully defended its Class A crown with 94 points, five fewer than Howard Lake-Waverly, who was runner-up with 99. Cotter, spurred by the 1-2 finish of Grace Ping, and younger sister, Lauren, was third in the team race with 140 points. Luverne was fourth at 147 and Staples-Motley fifth with 176.

For Perham, it was the third state championship since 2015 and third overall. The only season that kept 2018 from being a four-peat was 2016 when the Yellowjackets placed second. Perham, making its 18th state meet appearance, was also runner-up in 2008 and 2009.

Powering Perham in pack-running fashion was senior Caitlin Covington, who was 10th in overall team scoring with a time of 19:24.1. She was followed by teammates Liz Birkeland, an eighth-grader, (19:26.6), senior Bailey Wegscheid (19:48.1), eighth-grader Quincy Anderson (20:04.4) and eighth-grader Lauryn Rustad (20:12.8).

Grace Ping won the Class A championship for the second time. Her other crown came in 2015 when she set a then-record of 17:52 in the first year of girls running a 5,000-meter course.

Ping set a new record in 2018 with a time of 17:19.4. That shattered the mark of 17:31.56 set last year by Tierney Wolfgram of Math & Science Academy. Wolfgram, a sophomore and the two-time defending Class A champion, didn't finish the 2018 race, dropping out near the 1,600-meter mark

Grace Ping, third in 2017, had a pace of 5:35 per mile during the 2018 race. At the 1,600-meter mark, she was clocked at 5:15, nine seconds faster than her sister, Lauren, an eighth-grader that was runner-up to Wolfgram in 2017. Grace Ping stretched the advantage to 17 seconds at the 3,200-meter mark, and, won by 22 seconds. Lauren Ping was runner-up in 17:41.5. Sophomore Morgan Gehl of Murray County Central was third in 17:53.9 and Mesabi East junior Ava Hill was fourth in 18:24.4. Cotter sophomore Morgan Arnold was fifth overall in 18:27.1.

Boys

Perham won the boys Class A championship for the second consecutive season and seventh time since 2006. The Yellowjackets finished with 64 points. West Central Area was a distant runner-up with 140 points and Mora was third at 161. Lac qui Parle Valley/Dawson-Boyd was fourth at 170 and Nova Classical Academy was third at 183.

Since 2000, Perham has qualified for the state meet every season except 2001. In that span, in addition to the seven crowns, the Yellowjackets have been runner-up six times, including two consecutive second-place finishes in 2015 and 2016.

Junior Brandon O'Hara, who placed 55th during the 2017 state meet, led the Yellowjackets with a fourth-place finish in the team scoring. He had a 5,000-meter time of 16:11.9. In the team scoring, he was followed by senior Clayton Anderson (16:12.9), junior Bailey Evenson (16:13), freshman Jakob McCleary (16:32.2) and junior Chase Belka (17:06.8).

Sophomore Geno Uhrbom of Greenway/Nashwauk-Keewatin won the individual gold medal in a time of 15:38. He averaged 5:02 per mile during the 5,000-meter race. He had a one-second lead over Staples-Motley sophomore Emmet Anderson at the 1,600-meter mark. Uhrbom passed the 3,200-meter mark in a time of 9:49, 10 seconds ahead of O'Hara. Uhrbom, third during the 2017 state meet, was 18.4 seconds faster to the finish line than runner-up, Mora junior Cooper Lennox, who was second in 15:56.4. Anderson was third in 16:07.5, and Perham's O'Hara and Anderson were fourth and fifth, respectively.

Class AA

Girls

St. Michael-Albertville climbed two spots from its finish in 2017 and into the winner's circle one year later. The Knights captured the Class AA crown for the first time in school history by preventing Wayzata from defending its title. St. Michael-Albertville finished with 70 points, five fewer than Wayzata, who was runner-up with 75. Edina was third with 87, and was followed by Farmington and Stillwater Area, who were fourth and fifth with 105 and 143 points, respectively.

Freshman Ali Weimer led the Knights in a time of 18:01.1. She was followed by teammates, freshman Katie Sigerud (18:19.8), senior Mia Silas (18:35.3), sophomore Jessica Immer (18:41.9) and junior Anna Belair (18:48.9).

Minneapolis Washburn senior Emily Covert said farewell to MSHSL racing in dazzling fashion defending her Class AA crown in a course record 17:03.4. That was 27 seconds faster than the Class AA course record she set in 2017 when she made history in becoming the first Minneapolis City Conference runner to win a girls cross country championship.

Her pace along the 5,000-meter course was 5:30. At the 1,600-meter mark, she clocked in at 5:18 and had a four second lead over Farmington senior Lauren Peterson. At the 3,200-meter mark, the lead stretched to 10 seconds when Covert had a time of 10:46. Peterson was second in 17:28.8, and her teammate, sophomore Anna Fenske, was third in 17:54.1. Wayzata junior Emma Atkinson was fourth in 17:54.3 and Lakeville South junior Brianna Brewster was fifth in 17:57.2.

Covert, who won the prestigious Griak Invitational six weeks ago, is the first Minneapolis City Conference runner to win consecutive cross country state titles since Dan Roach of Minneapolis Southwest in 1978 and 1979.

Boys

Edina climbed two places from its 2017 third-place finish to capture the team title for the first time in school history. The Hornets finished with 88 points, 11 fewer than Mounds View, who was runner-up with 99. Defending Class AA champion Wayzata, seeking its 11th state title, was fourth with 112 points, and perennial state power, Stillwater was fifth at 122.

In 11 state meet appearances in the two-class format, which began in 1975, Edina has finished runner-up three times. In addition to a third-place finish in 2017, the Hornets were also third in 2011.

Senior Maxwell Manley powered the Hornets by taking third-place overall in a time of 15:18.4. He was followed by senior William Gokemeijer (15:54.6), junior Russell Gokemeijer (16:08.4), senior Lucas Salman (16:18.8) and senior Lucas Jassen (16:22).

Roseville Area senior Acer Iverson, the runner-up to Wayzata's Khalid Hussein in 2017, won the individual gold medal in a time of 15:14.8 seconds. He averaged 4:55 over the 5,000-meter course. Iverson was part of a large pack of runners just off the lead at the 1,600-meter mark before gaining some separation. He and Stillwater Area senior Addison Stansbury passed the 3,200-meter mark in 9:48 for a two second lead over Wayzata senior Andrew Brandt and Manley. Six weeks ago, Manley won the prestigious Griak Invitational at the University of Minnesota.

Brandt finished less than a second behind Iverson in a time of 15:15.4. Manley was third followed by Stansbury (15:20.1), and Chanhassen junior Nicholas Scheller completed the top five individual finishers in a time of 15:29.7.

Iverson's winning time was four seconds off a Class AA record. In 2006, Minneapolis South's Hassan Mead set a Class AA course record with a time of 15:10.7.