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## Clarence: King and queen of the hills

*DelSignore of Sweet Home wins girls Class B crown.*

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Clarence set the pace at Friday's Section VI Cross Country Championship, winning the boys and girls Class A races and taking the top two places in each.

Clarence's Marissa Saenger was among the winners Friday at the Section VI Cross Country championships. Photo by James P. McCoy/ Buffalo News

Accustomed to running the hills at their home course, Akron Falls Park, the Red Devils tamed the similar challenges of Elma Meadows.

"Our home course is hilly. We had two dual meets there and the Classic. That's the acid test," said Clarence coach John Hunt. "They've run this course [Elma Meadows] quite a few times too, but they have the expectations of running a hilly course."

Senior Justin Bender won the boys Class A race while sophomore Marissa Saenger won the girls. The boys team title was the fourth for Clarence in six years. The girls won their third straight sectional title.

Saenger now has a title to go with the one she won as an eighth-grader. "I didn't want to go out too fast, I tried to keep an even pace and work my way up," she said.

Bender, fourth last year, took the lead at the halfway point to win in 16:26.8.

"Our coach always likes us to have even splits so that's normally when we make our move," he said. "I was kind of surprised [I won]. Kalen Sullivan [of WSW] is really good and some of the North guys are really talented. We're really good at hills in Clarence so this type of course is beautiful for us."

A field of 800 runners from 68 schools participated in the 65th annual event on a crisp, sunny fall day. The winner of each race, along with the top five runners not on the winning team, advance to next week's state championships.

### Boys

**Class B:** TJ Hornberger recorded the fastest time of the day in 16:03.9 bettering the largest field of the day, 146 runners. It was his second title in a row. The only race the Lake Shore sophomore hasn't won this season

was McQuaid, where he finished second. As he prepares for his second state meet, Hornberger said he plans to cut back on his mileage.

East Aurora, ranked No. 6 in the state, has won nine of the last 11 section titles. It broke the Section VI record for the fastest team time with a 83:00.7 breaking the old mark of 83:44.5 held since 1986 by Sweet Home.

**Class C:** Akron senior Jeremy Rushok had a race he'll never forget. Not only because he won, but he beat nemesis Frankie Pfeil of Roy-Hart, passing him in the last 400 meters.

"I haven't beat him since I've been running cross country. I just had to push it," said Rushok, who ran a 16:08.3.

Fredonia and Alden, ranked Nos. 8-9 in the state, saw Alden pull this one out, led by the strong run of senior Edwin Bliemeister, who was fifth.

**Class D:** After a stressful week, Corey Wefing can relax. The Maple Grove sophomore defended his title in 16:39.0.

"I was thinking all week that I've got to defend this so there was a little more pressure," he said.

Barker ran away with the team title with all seven runners in the top 10. Tyler Scheving, Jedediah Platt, Michael Lantinen and Jordan Bender finished 2-3-4-5.

## Girls

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**Class B:** This race featured last year's Class A champ, Jenny DelSignore of Sweet Home, and two-time Class B champion Marta McLaughlin of East Aurora. DelSignore won the race in 19:06.5 followed by Starpoint's Livia Chase and McLaughlin.

All seven EA runners finished in the top 10 with a gap time of 48.1 between the top five whose times are scored. The Blue Devils have won every Class B title since 2000.

**Class C:** Freshman Lauren Reyda of Fredonia made it two titles in a row. "My time was definitely a lot faster. I think last year I ran a 19:54 and this year I ran a 19:04 so that's definitely a big chunk of time cut off and that's really hard to do on this course since it's so tough," said Reyda, who had the fastest time of the day for girls.

Fredonia, without a senior in the lineup, won for the fourth year in a row. Falconer was runner-up led by Kirsten Holmberg's third-place finish.

**Class D:** Eighth-grader Hope Pietrocarlo highlighted a big race for Maple Grove as she placed first. "I passed my teammate Megan [Marsh] before the big hill and I go 'we can't die now, Megan, you have to stay with me' and we went." Maple Grove's team title was its third in three years.

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