



# JM Rockets Cross Country

## Jim Flim Invitational – Sep 21st

### Rocket “C” Team Wins A Barnburner

In the closest team competition at the 2019 Jim Flim Invitational, Lewiston-Altura and John Marshall battled right down to the wire in the boys C-race. Led by Ryan Prinson, who won the 3200 meter race in 12:33.8, Lewiston-Altura had three 8<sup>th</sup> graders finish in the top 4 individually to give them what looked like an insurmountable lead with 7 points (after 3 finishers). Winona was 2<sup>nd</sup> at that point with 24 pts (5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> individually) and John Marshall was 3<sup>rd</sup> with 30 pts.

John Marshall earned those 30 points from Peter Jones' 7<sup>th</sup> place finish (13:13.2), an 11<sup>th</sup> place finish from seventh grader Louis Schoeberl (13:29.7), and 12<sup>th</sup> place by Micah Hanson (13:29.9). But the Rockets' #4 runner, sophomore William Reiter, set a new PR in finishing right behind Micah with a time of 13:33.4. Adjusted, it computes to 22:02, an improvement of 21 seconds over his previous best. William has now lowered his PR from last year by over 2½ minutes. Reiter's 13 pts gave JM 43 pts after four runners, with no additional Lewiston-Altura or Winona runners yet out of the woods.

About 15 seconds behind Reiter was JM's #5 runner, Philip Dahlen, who finished 18<sup>th</sup>. However, one of the runners just in front of him was running for Austin Pacelli, which did not field a complete team. In this situation, the runner receives no team points for his 14<sup>th</sup> place finish, and everyone behind him is moved up a place in computing team scores. So Philip earned 17 points for the team, giving JM 60 pts total. This left Lewiston-Altura needing their last two runners to score 52 points to stay in front of JM, and with only 17 scoring runners across the line at

that point, there was plenty of room for Cardinal runners to hold on to their lead.

You may recall that up to seven runners score points for the team in a given race, but only the first five are counted towards the team score. The sixth and seventh runners serve several functions. First, unlike basketball or football, there are no substitutions for an athlete who becomes injured or is just having a sub-par performance. But the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> runners essentially serve in that role, being able to step up when teammates falter. Secondly, in the case of a tie in total points between the first five runners of two (or more) teams, the faster #6 runner breaks the tie. And finally, the #6 and #7 runner can play the role of *displacers* – that is, if they finish ahead of the 5<sup>th</sup> (or 4<sup>th</sup> or even lower) runner of another team, they move back (or *displace*) the points of all team competitors who finish behind them.

But back to the C-race: JM's #6 (Max Nguyen, 19<sup>th</sup> in 14:02) and #7 (Alex Younk, 20<sup>th</sup> in 14:03) runners were the next two runners to cross the line behind Philip, displacing the #4 and #5 runners of both the Cardinals and the Winhawks by two points each. So when the Cardinal's #4 runner came in about 20 seconds behind Alex, he earned 22 points to give his team a total of 29 points after 4 runners. They needed their 5<sup>th</sup> runner to finish better than 31<sup>st</sup> in the team scoring to hold off John Marshall's depth. But he finished in exactly that spot – 38<sup>th</sup> overall, but 31<sup>st</sup> among the team scorers – to leave both team with 60 points after their top five runners. Since Max, JM's sixth runner, was already across the line at that point, JM won the team competition.

Winona finished 3<sup>rd</sup> with 74 points. A total of 81 boys and 7 complete teams competed in the C-race.

## Unsung Heroes

Most observers of a cross country meet focus on the race leaders (with the obvious exception of many parent's primary focus being on their own son). Yet when it comes to the team competition, a team's finish is actually best predicted by the performance of their 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> runners. In other words, if you want to know how well a team is doing in the competition, take note of how their #5 runner is doing compared to the #5 runner of other teams. This method is generally more accurate than any other method (except obviously calculating actual scores, which is considerably more difficult to do).

On Saturday, host Winona looked strong throughout the race, with defending Jim Flim champion Carter Briggs winning easily in 16:24. His teammate, Cody Peterson, was up with the leaders throughout the race and finished 5<sup>th</sup> in 17:03, giving Winona a solid leg up on the competition with 6 pts after two finishers. Lewiston-Altura was next at 13 pts after their first two runners, followed by Onalaska (14) and Faribault (20). Winona widened their lead when their #3 runner, Zach Reuter, crossed in 15<sup>th</sup> place. But Onalaska's and Faribault's depth brought them charging back, with Faribault's Thomas Malecha being the first #5 runner to finish the course. He was 24<sup>th</sup> place with a time of 18:17. When Onalaska's fifth runner (Damon Zielke) followed shortly thereafter in 28<sup>th</sup> place, Onalaska (74 pts) edged the Falcons (84 pts) for the team title. Winona faded to 3<sup>rd</sup> when their #5 finished in 43<sup>rd</sup> place.

For John Marshall, Garrett Eick was the #5 finisher with a time of 18:43, good for 36<sup>th</sup> place. Comparing only #5 runners from each team, Eick was 5<sup>th</sup>. John Marshall's team finish? 6<sup>th</sup> place, with Winona being the only team with a poorer finish by their #5 runner that placed above the Rockets. And Lewiston-Altura, who was 2<sup>nd</sup> after two runners? They finished 7<sup>th</sup> as a team, with their #5 runner coming across in 45<sup>th</sup> overall. He was – you guessed it – the 7<sup>th</sup> finisher among #5 runners.

Century finished 5<sup>th</sup> with 118 points, just four points in front of JM. Their #5 runner finished just a step in front of Garrett.

Overall, 14 teams and 96 runners competed in the varsity race.

## Measuring Competitive Performance

One of the primary methods our program uses to measure performance and success is comparing times – noting season best marks, identifying new personal records, and taking notice of levels of improvements in times. However, this is not the only way to measure success in cross country, and in fact, there are reasons to shy away from using times as the only measure of success. Courses are not always precisely measured, and differences in terrain and running surfaces can make a large impact on times. In a typical race, 20% to 50% of runners set new PRs; at Jim Flim, only 13% of the 136 Big 9 runners in the race set new PRs. All but a handful of these were first year runners, who often improve significantly over the course of their first season.

Cross country is a competitive sport, so the other primary method of measuring success revolves around how a runner does against the competition. But simply identifying that a runner placed 40<sup>th</sup> doesn't have very much meaning unless you know how many competitors there were – 40<sup>th</sup> place is a lot different when there are 50 competitors versus when there are 500 competitors. On the other hand, to say an athlete beat 75% of the runners at the meet is much more descriptive, even without any other context. Therefore, part of the evaluation of this meet (see page 4) is focused on the percent of total runners an athlete beats. We will make this comparison in three ways at times during the season: against all other athletes in the relevant competition(s), against all other Big 9 runners, and/or against all other John Marshall runners. In some cases, we will do these comparisons with only athletes in the same grade rather than all athletes.

## JM Varsity Performances

John Marshall's Meti Omod finished 4<sup>th</sup> overall with a time of 16:56. Dakota Dowd ran 18:10 to finish 20<sup>th</sup>, followed by Ogden Sikel (29<sup>th</sup> in 18:37). Peter Dahlen was six seconds back and just one second in front of Garrett in 33<sup>rd</sup> place.

The other two Rocket varsity performers, Stephen Akin and Jonathan Devlin, finished in the 50<sup>th</sup> and 56<sup>th</sup> positions, respectively, in the varsity field of 96 runners.

## Rocket JV Performances

Only ten of the participating schools fielded complete JV squads. Century dominated the competition, with the first twelve finishers all being Panthers, resulting in a perfect score of 15 pts. Century's Aiden Austin won the race in 18:45. Albert Lea was a distant 2<sup>nd</sup> with 75 points, and John Marshall finished 4<sup>th</sup> with 101.

The Rockets were led by Nick Wiest, who finished 20<sup>th</sup> with a time of 20:11. Matt Duncan was only 2 places behind Nick, but there was a 20 second gap between them.

Adam Peterson (30<sup>th</sup>, 20:54), Lucas Kuisle (39<sup>th</sup>, 21:17), and Ethan Shellhart (52<sup>nd</sup>, 21:55) also contributed points towards the JV team score. None of the six JM runners in the JV race set PRs.

## John Marshall PRs

Only five JM runners set new PRs on Saturday. William Reiter, mentioned in the C-race discussion earlier, is the only one who competed in cross country last year; all the others are first year runners. All the Rocket PRs were set in the 3200 meter C-race.

Of the other four, the biggest drop in time was by junior Grant Boyce, who dropped 49 seconds from his previous best when he ran 14:25 (23:28 when converted to 5000 meters). Junior Riley Gunderson's mark of 16:46 (equivalent to 27:21 for 5k) was an improvement of 38 seconds, while

freshman Matt Egle ran the equivalent of 29 seconds better than his previous best of 29:23 when he clocked 17:41 in the C-race. Finally, senior Andrew Curran's 14:30 time is equivalent to 23:37, which is a new PR for him by 9 seconds.

## Running in Bluff Country

The Jim Flim course is situated in beautiful St. Yon's valley and the surrounding hills on the campus of Saint Mary's University in Winona. It is the most challenging course the Rockets will run on this season, with two large hills to navigate – the first climbs about 100 feet vertically between about 0.20 and 0.55 miles into the race, while the second rises about 135 feet over about 0.90 miles of the course (between 1.50 and 2.40 miles). An analysis of performances on this course over several years has determined that the terrain tends to slow down runners between 2% and 3%, making PRs and season best marks fairly uncommon. (2.5% is 30 seconds for a runner who runs in the 20 minute range.)

The last page of this newsletter shows a profile of the Jim Flim course (with the vertical exaggerated about 26x).

## Who Came Up With the Name "Jim Flim", Anyways?

Jim Flim was one of the most successful cross country and track coaches in Minnesota history. He coached the Winhawks for 29 years (1972-2000) and was awarded Minnesota Coach of the



year five times. Combined girls and boys, he coached 30 teams that won Big 9 Conference titles and 24 teams that placed in the top five in state, with four of his teams (2 boys and 2 girls) winning state titles.

# Jim Flim Competitive Performances – Last Year vs. This Year

Twenty three JM runners competed in the Jim Flim Invitational in both 2018 and 2019. Eighteen of them beat a greater percentage of the field this year than they did last year. On average, the 23 runners beat 13.4% more of their competitors this year. By comparison, the 2018 JM runners at the Jim Flim Invitational improved their rank only by an average of 5.2% over 2017.

The biggest improvement was by Garrett Eick, who beat 32% of the runners this year and beat 88% this year, a phenomenal improvement of 56%. Three other runners beat at least 25% more runners this year – sophomore Kyle Pido improved from 7% last year to 49% this year, freshman Will Reiter went from 11% to 50%, and eighth grader Philip Dahlen went from beating 18% in 2018 to defeating 45% in 2019.

Other notable improvements were seen by the following athletes:

Matt Duncan	47% to 69%	+22%
Lucas Kuisle	38% to 58%	+20%
Alex Younk	24% to 42%	+18%
Elliot Anderson	8% to 26%	+18%
Nick Wiest	55% to 71%	+16%
Joel Glascock	2% to 18%	+16%

