

EAST PEORIA TIMES-COURIER

CROSS COUNTRY: Billingsley provides bright future for East Peoria

Wednesday Posted at 12:57 AM

By Cody Delmendo / Assistant Sports Editor

The East Peoria boys cross country team has had a pleasant surprise this season.

Freshman Tyler Billingsley has only been a cross country runner for a few months but has emerged as one of the Raiders best this season.

Billingsley decided to give cross country a chance after having a successful track season in eighth grade.

He posted his best time at the Peoria High Invitational on Oct. 1.

The freshman finished with a time of 15 minutes, 39 seconds, good for 28th best out of over 200 runners at Detweiller Park and his current career high.

He currently ranks No. 4 among freshman in the state in Class 2A in terms of times, according to DyeStat Illinois.

“I obviously expect him to be a guy who has a chance to go to state this year,” East Peoria head coach Brandon Shaver said. “By the time he graduates, I’d like to see him running in the 14:40 range. He’s obviously shown the capability and the willingness to go out and train.”

Shaver hasn’t been able to explain how successful Billingsley has been, but is excited to see what he can do over the next three years.

“It’s the tip of the iceberg,” Shaver said. “That’s how successful he’s been early on. I knew he was going to be talented, but he’s exceeded everyone’s expectations.”

His success wasn't without the mentorship of Michael Church and other upperclassman.

"I always had Michael Church and Mark Skaggs to look up to. They always pushed me to do my best," Billingsley said. "They always give me pointers and they tell me who they think I can stack up against and run with to get my best time."

Only time will tell for how successful Billingsley could be, but for now, he's enjoying the moment and being around his teammates.

East Peoria finished 10th out of 19 schools at the Metamora Runnin' Red Invitational Saturday.

"I think we're one of the best teams in the Mid-Illini Conference," Billingsley said. "If we can stay healthy, we can be one of the best teams."

Billingsley finished 30th at the meet.

"I really think that he surprises himself when he goes out there," Shaver said. "If he's surprising me and everyone else out there, I'm sure he's surprising himself."

Church finished eighth individually to pace the Raiders.

East Peoria's final regular season meet is Friday, at the Mid-Illini Conference meet at Detweiller Park in Peoria.