

Alicia Wins Silver in National Meet

On December 14, 1996, Alicia Weber, a junior honor roll student at South Park High School, competed in the largest cross country event in the United States at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, KY. The rolling grasslands of Kentucky horse country were crowded with 2343 runners from ages 6 to 18.

Alicia was literally at the back of the pack and had to pass 190 other girls (intermediate division) in the grueling 5000 meter race. She missed first place by only 0.3 second. Her official time for the 5000 meter was 19:07.3.

To get into this race, Alicia had to qualify in two races: one at Slippery Rock University and the other at the Finger Lakes Community College in New York.

South Park runner won't let tough loss slow her down

By Rich Emert
SPORTS WRITER

After running 3.1 miles, an inch would not seem to be that far. But an inch was like a mile for Alicia Weber of South Park at the National Junior Olympics Cross Country Championships.

Weber, 16 and a junior at South Park High School, was leading the Intermediate Girls' Division (ages 15-16) Dec. 14 at Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Ky. As she headed for the finish line, she

thought she had the race won. Then she saw the foot of Bethany Harry shoot in front of her at the last second. "She beat me by six centimeters," Weber said. "After running a distance would matter much, but it did. I just saw her foot come past me at the end. She beat me by three-tenths of a second."

Weber finished in 19 minutes, 7.3 seconds. She will receive a silver medal for her efforts. "I sort of expected to do well," Weber said. "I had a pretty good plan and stuck to

it. Except for one step, I'm happy." Placing second at the national competition made up for a disappointing high school cross country season. She made it to the WPIAL championships, but became ill and didn't compete. The Junior Olympics were a second chance. "I provided some redemption. I think I proved something to myself," she said.

Weber had to advance through two qualifying meets to reach the national championships. She was first in her division in 22:07 at the local qualifier at Slippery Rock next fall.

University. From there, she went to Finger Lakes N.Y., where she was third in 20:10. Weber was 12 when she won her first race, a 5K that started at the children's playground in South Park. She lives about a mile from the park.

Weber has a personal best of 37:34 for the 10K Great Race. She has also competed in the Junior Olympic Track Championships in the summer. She has competed in triathlons and is considering running high school track in the spring and cross country again

In the fast lane

Alicia Weber, a junior at South Park High, finished second in the National Junior Olympic Girls' Intermediate (ages 15-16) Cross-Country Championships, Dec. 14 at Kentucky Horse Park, outside Lexington. There were 191 runners. Weber covered the 5,000-meter course in 19 minutes, eight seconds. Bethany Harry of Forty Fort, Pa. finished first in 19:07.

TRIBUNE-REVIEW

SUNDAY, JAN. 12, 1997

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE