

Indiana High School Athletic Association, Inc.

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Blake Ress, Commissioner

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WESTFIELD GIRLS, CULVER ACADEMIES' BANFICH BOTH REPEAT

Westfield's girls' team and Culver Academies' Alexandra Banfich both successfully repeated as state champions in the 26th Annual IHSAA Cross Country State Finals on Saturday in Terre Haute.

Banfich, a junior, finished the 4,000 meter race in 14:20.9 to follow up on her state championship a year ago. She becomes the first girl to repeat as winner since 1992 and 1993 when Courtney Adams of Brebeuf won the first two of her three individual titles. A year ago, Banfich covered the LaVern Gibson Championship Course in 14:05.1, but strong winds offered a stern test to all the runners on this day.

Westfield junior Margaret Bingham (14:38.5) beat out Richmond sophomore Sara Terashima (14:38.7) in the final 50 yards of the race to take runner-up honors. Bingham was the first of three Westfield runners to finish in the top 12 overall and the top eight among competitors for the team title. Sophomore Kaitlyn Love (14:55.3) and senior Kristina Krasich (15:01.9) placed eighth and 12th overall, respectively, for the champion Shamrocks. Junior Breanne Ehrman (39th overall) and freshman Dana Christie (104th overall) rounded out the five scoring runners for Westfield which accumulated 114 points in the race. Westfield, which also won the team title in 1998, was coached by Scott Lidskin.

Valparaiso and Noblesville both totaled 129 points in the team competition but Valpo got the nod for second place on account of their sixth place runner finishing 50th as opposed to Noblesville's 97th place runner. It was second straight runner-up finish for the Vikings. Center Grove placed fourth with 144 and Carmel was fifth at 152.

Carroll (Fort Wayne) junior Chelsea Blanchard placed fourth overall in 14:43.7 and Valparaiso senior Amanda Hardesty took fifth in 14:44.9 among all individuals.

NOBLESVILLE'S ERICA WATSON NAMED MENTAL ATTITUDE WINNER

Following the race, Erica Watson of Noblesville High School was named winner of the 2006 Mental Attitude Award for Girls Cross Country by members of the IHSAA Executive Committee.

Watson finished 21st overall during today's state finals race in a time of 15:17.2. She's been a four-year participant in cross country having served as her team's co-captain the last two seasons and plans to participate in track for a fourth year this spring.

Academically, she ranks a top her senior class of 512 students and is a National Merit Semi-Finalist. She serves as President of the National Honor Society and is a member of the Student Athletic Board. She is undecided on her college plans but is considering business at the University of Notre Dame.

Erica is the daughter of Jeff and Laura Watson of Noblesville.

Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance, the IHSAA's corporate partner, presented a scholarship check for \$1,000.00 to Noblesville High School in the name of Watson. Since 1989, more than \$551,000 in college scholarships has been presented by Indiana Farm Bureau Insurance to deserving high school students in Indiana.

VSN MEANS ACTION PHOTOGRAPHY

Visit our friends at [Visual Sports Network](http://VisualSportsNetwork.com), the IHSAA's official photographer for all state championship events and one of the leading action photographers in the Midwest. VSN, which was on site both days, has captured thousands of images from this year's State Finals and will have them ready for viewing within a couple days of the state finals.

STATE FINALS PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

Couldn't be at state finals? You can still purchase a copy of the official souvenir program while supplies last! Programs are \$3.00 if you purchase in person at the IHSAA Office (9150 N. Meridian Street in Indianapolis) or \$5.00 by mail (postage included). To order, have your Visa or MasterCard ready and call us at 317-846-6601 during business hours (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. EDT).