

Exchange students run mile in our shoes

By Dan Kohn
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APPLETON—The Fox Valley Lutheran cross country team has taken diversity to a new level. The Foxes have five athletes representing four countries on their squad.

The foreign exchange students decided that going out for a sport would enable them to bond with their fellow students. And the idea has worked to perfection.

The students who have made the commitment to run include Hoyeon (Jose) Jung from South Korea, Nis Bennet Fahl of Germany, Dario Niederprum of Germany, Riccardo Destefanis of Italy and Musab Shakeel of Pakistan.

Foxes coach Peter Sehloff said the students are a welcome addition to his

team, which has greeted them with open arms.

"They do bring a different dynamic to the team and we weren't expecting them," Sehloff said. "One came out and then another one came out. They talk to each other and that kind of got the ball rolling. We ended up with five or six of them and they keep coming."

Early on, however, their enthusiasm got the best of them.

"They got hurt, really," Sehloff said. "They tried to do too much, too soon, which is a classic cross country injury. They thought they could do it. They thought they could. So they are coming back now and they are doing very well. They work very hard. They do bring a new freshness to the team."

Only one, Destefanis, has run cross country before.

"I like cross country," Destefanis



Hoyeon
Jung

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Foreign exchange student Riccardo Destefanis practices with his Fox Valley Lutheran cross country teammates. WM.GLASHEEN/POST-CRESCENT MEDIA

Students

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said. "We are more organized than in Italy. I like the coaches. They are very good. I like this school. It is very big. In Italy, we have a smaller school."

But he is fitting in nicely at FVL.

"All are very kind with us and I like it," Destefanis said. "I think it is an important experience for us."

Niederprum is new to the sport but has been able to run one varsity meet.

"I have improved a lot in cross country," Niederprum said. "One meet I also ran varsity and was honored to do that. Usually I swim. I didn't do cross country at home (because) they aren't school meets like here."

He also likes the fact he is able to learn about his host country.

"I think such an experience is good to improve my English skills and learn about the American culture and I have enjoyed it a lot," Niederprum said.

Shakeel said he joined the team because he also wanted to learn more

about American culture.

"I thought after-school sports would be a great idea to meet new friends and to fit into the culture and the school," Shakeel said. "I am relatively new in cross country. It's going good but, on the other hand, it's a bit tiring, too. I'm glad I joined cross country because now I am physically improving as well. We run a lot every day and I'm making new friends and getting socially connected."

Jung is familiar with America, but is new to cross country.

"I've never been to a cross country (meet) before but I have been to an American school last year in California," Jung said. "This is a pretty different school, just like style and the teachers, but I like this school, too. It's going pretty good. Sometimes I don't want to go to practice but the coach is good and I like that."

For Bennet Fahl, after-school activities are a new experience.

"It's awesome because we don't have these group (activities) in Germany and we go home after school," he said. "But here we have a really great group. The best thing is at

the meets everyone cheers and it's really awesome. I love it here because everybody is so friendly. When you are sitting in the hallway, strange people come to you and say hi. The people would never do that in Germany."

As for the rest of the FVL runners, having the exchange students on their team has been a positive experience.

"It's really fun," junior Lara Bayer said. "Team dinners and stuff, sometimes we don't know everyone because they are new and we're new too, so we talk to them a lot. They are really funny and we ask them about their culture and stuff."

Junior Miranda Skarban agreed.

"It's definitely interesting learning about different cultures and how different it is from ours and yet we can still get along and do something we both enjoy, like running together," Skarban said. "That is definitely impressive. They are doing better than us."

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