

Among the best

Written by Deb Egenberger

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Swede boys finish ninth in Class B.

OMAHA—The field in the Class B sprint races was as stacked as it could get during this year's Nebraska State Track and Field Championships.

Runners in the finals included a Cornhusker track recruit, a Nebraska football recruit, a walk-on for the Husker football team and a junior who is already receiving Division I football offers.

That list doesn't even include Gothenburg's Tannor Mroczek, who ran the fastest 40-yard dash at a national football combine two weeks ago.

"It was an incredible sprint field," said Swede track coach Steve Reeves. "I think it opened Tannor's eyes to the type of competition out there."

Mroczek stacked up well against that competition, earning two fifth-place medals in the 100- and 200-meter dashes.

"Fifth is an outstanding effort," Reeves said. "He ended up ninth in the 100 all-class. I'm sure glad we get to have him again next year."

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In addition to his individual sprint races, Mroczek anchored the Swede 4x100 relay that finished fifth in 43.501 seconds.

“It maybe didn’t look like our relay was that quick when you’re also watching Boys Town and Waverly,” Reeves said of the No. 1 and No. 2 relays. “But we tied the school record and that’s quite an accomplishment.”



Other members of the relay were seniors Landen Haake, Patrick Reeves and Mark Hilderbrand.

Hilderbrand also medaled in the 300-meter hurdles, finishing second in a time of 39.917 seconds.

“Mark ran a good race,” Reeves said. “The kid from Boys Town (winner Nehemiah Wilkins) is not near the technician Mark is but he is a blazer between the hurdles.”

Wilkins proved his speed in the 110-meter high hurdle race, finishing first in 14.783 seconds.

Unfortunately, Hilderbrand didn’t get the chance to compare times with Wilkins in the short hurdle race. Reeves said he flinched in the blocks, causing another competitor to start too soon and was disqualified.

“No doubt if Mark could have run a clean race he would have been in the top four,” Reeves said.

Gothenburg’s only four-event qualifier, Hilderbrand was also a member of the 4x400 relay which finished outside of a medal.

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“We didn’t get off to a good start in the mile relay,” Reeves said. “But our goal as a team every year is to get a mile relay to state and we accomplished that.”

Other members of the 4x400 relay were Eric Stevens, Andrew Collins and Patrick Reeves.

Collins came home with a pair of medals as well. He finished sixth in the 800-meter run and eighth in the 1600.

“Andrew ran in a quality 800 field,” Reeves said. “I think he would have liked to have had a quicker first lap. It’s pretty hard to make up time once you fall behind.”

The coach said the wind likely affected Collins’ time in the 1600 on Saturday. He ran the mile race in 4:37.186.

“These kids have contributed so much to the program over the years,” Reeves said. “They leave some big shoes to fill.”

One younger Swede leaving his own mark on the program is Brett Dockweiler.

The sophomore ran the 3200-meter run in 9:57.691 to move into third place on the school’s all-time list.

“He ran 9:57, hit No. 3 all-time and didn’t get a medal,” Reeves said. “That doesn’t happen very

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often.

Dockweiler, he said, has the capability to play a major role for the Swedes next year.

Gothenburg's other two individual state qualifiers had solid performances but, like Dockweiler, were not in medal contention.

Haake cleared 13-0 in the pole vault, the same height that earned Columbus Scotus and Blair competitors seventh and eighth places.

Because of earlier misses, he finished without hardware.

In the triple jump, Patrick Reeves ended up 14th with a distance of 41-1.25.

"He just didn't seem to have the same pop he had at the beginning of the year," the coach said.

The Swedes earned 24 team points to finish in a tie for ninth place with Lexington.

Boys Town won the Class B team title with 76 points followed by Blair at 67.

"Overall we had an outstanding season," Reeves said. "The kids work hard and compete hard. That's all I can ask."

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