

Two track athletes crowned as state champions

By **Charlie Kanzig**
Correspondent

For Skyler Larson, a year of preparation paid off as he cleared 6 feet 2 inches in the high jump to win the state title at the OSAA 4A State Championships held at Mt. Hood Community College on May 17 and 18. Sophomore Brody Anderson reached the top of the podium as well with a stellar race in the 400 meters.

Larson's win in the high jump Saturday included a bit of drama. The State leader coming into the meet, Larson and Garrett Hagarty of Hidden Valley, who had cleared 6 feet 5 inches back in April, ended up as the last two remaining in the competition after clearing 6 feet 1 inch. As the clock inched toward the 3:30 start time of Larson's other event of the day, the 110 high hurdles, Larson had time for a couple of more jumps and cleared 6 feet 2 inches on his second attempt. Hagarty was unable to continue due to an injury of some sort, leaving Larson as the winner.

However, having run off to do the hurdles, in which he placed seventh in 16.63,

he did not get the good news about the high jump until he returned to the pit where his buddy Garrett Kersavage greeted him with a hug.

Head Coach Jeff Larson, Skyler's father, fought back tears after his son's win. "This meet was the culmination of years of hard work," he said. "Skyler was the smallest guy at every meet his first three years of high school. I constantly had to remind him to be patient and work on perfecting his technique. I'm so truly pleased for him. I think he had at least an inch or two more in him, but that hurdles race took away his legs."

Anderson's win, while not unexpected, pitted him against Casey Tow of Sweet Home, whom he nipped at the district meet a week earlier, and his own teammate and fellow sophomore Hayden Sharp. After being the seventh-fastest qualifier on Thursday, relegating himself to an outside lane, Anderson was visible to all of his challengers, but came through with the win, just a hair in front of Tow with a time of 50.45. Sharp finished fourth in 51.53.

Coach Larson lavished praise on Anderson. "Brody

ran like a senior instead of a sophomore," he said. "He wisely paced himself through the prelims in an effort to save energy for the finals. His race plan was executed perfectly as he came off the corner in control and powered down the homestretch for the win. I'm so very happy for him. He's still hungry for more, too. He plans to race in several Junior Olympic meets this summer in an effort to break the 50-second barrier. I think he'll succeed."

Along with the two winners, the Outlaws claimed a passel of other medals during the two-day competition.

Junior Kate Bowen got things started for the Outlaws on Friday with her best effort of the season in the 3,000 meters, finishing sixth in 10:46.33. Defending champion Hannah Rannow of Siuslaw stormed to another win in 10:14.3.

Sophomores John Peckham and Will Thorsett found themselves in a barn-burner of a race in the boys 3,000. The fast pace and deep field of runners pulled them both to personal bests. Peckham placed fifth in 9:03.67 and Thorsett lopped 18 seconds off of his previous



PHOTO BY CHARLIE KANZIG

Skyler Larson won a state title in high jump.

best on his way to ninth place in 9:09.11, just half a second from making the podium.

"Unbelievable," said Josh Nordell. "Those guys are so disciplined and so composed. I couldn't be more proud of them."

For comparison, last year only five boys ran under 9:10 at State, and the year before that it was only four, according to Nordell. Kale Cassidy

of Baker stole the race with a time of 8:51.32 in his best time of the season by 30 full seconds.

After bowing out of the pole vault much earlier than he hoped at 12 feet, Garrett Kersavage came back with a seventh-place medal in the triple jump, with a mark of 39 feet 11 inches.

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