

CHAMPS: Finish was Outlaws' best ever in cross country

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dominant win came as more of a surprise. Junction City's Anika Thompson came into the meet ranked first and is known to have a tendency to push the pace and run from the front in the hopes of breaking the rest of the field. Thorsett owned the second best time among 4A runners and figured to be among the lead pack, but the pack never materialized. Instead it was Thorsett and Thompson running together virtually from the gun with no other challengers.

Thorsett said, "Going into the race, I had a pretty good idea of what was going to happen. I expected there to be a lead pack of about four to five people. My plan was to stay with the front pack and then around the two-mile mark make a big move, hopefully big enough to pull away," she explained. "I was definitely surprised when it became a two-man race so close to the start, but I tried not to panic. I knew that Anika went out fast, and the only way I would be able to be there at the finish was to be there at the start."

Her plan worked, and by the two-mile mark Thorsett began to pull away from Thompson and it wasn't long before she began to realize she might win.

"Going around the ponds in the last mile, part of me was pretty sure that I was

going to win. I was really trying to not get over-confident since we still had a while to go, and I knew if I let myself think I had already won, I might forget that I still had to push the pace. I really wasn't sure about the finish until I got to the track."

She definitely did not let up and ultimately crossed the line a full twenty-two seconds ahead of Thompson, who finished in 18:05.

Thorsett's time established a new state meet record for 4A runners, which was formerly held by Taylor Wallace of Henley in 18:13. The state meet course was altered this year and produced a number of record-breaking times for many of the classifications.

A day after her win Thorsett said she sees her season as a steppingstone for her future.

"I am overjoyed with how the results turned out, but I know this is just the beginning."

She also had kind words for her teammates and coaches. Thorsett said, "Every person on our team has contributed to this season. My coaches are great, and there is no way I would be where I am without them. It's been an awesome experience, one I will never forget."

Kate Bowen, a senior, who finished seventh in last year's state meet, completed her cross-country career for the Outlaws in fifteenth place in 19:39.

For Peckham, the goal of winning had been months in the making. Through summer miles and core strength

work, Peckham built on an already strong foundation. He finished fifteenth at state last year as a sophomore, which was not as high as he expected, but roared back during track season to take fifth at state in the 3,000 meters behind three seniors and one junior, making his expectations for the cross-country season reasonable.

"I have been training very hard since the start of summer with the state meet in my mind," he said. "Since June, my goal has been to win the state meet and do everything I could to benefit my team. I dedicated a lot of time to running, and I am super happy that I did."

Like Thorsett, Peckham took charge of the race in the final mile and pulled away from Baker's Kale Cassidy and Will Thorsett to win in a personal best time of 15:48. Cassidy crossed the line in 15:57 and Thorsett came through in 16:00, also a personal best.

Peckham said, "The race went exactly how I pictured it would. Everyone who had a chance was up front, which was a lot of guys this year. From where I took the lead at the two-mile mark to the finish I kept telling myself that the race was not over yet and that I had to keep going as hard as possible. Winning was a dream come true, especially with my whole team there and us getting the second-place trophy."

Peckham's success was most certainly helped by having a training partner like fellow junior Will Thorsett, as well as his other teammates.



PHOTO BY CHARLIE KANZIG

John Peckham also earned a state championship trophy for the Outlaws in the boys race.

"For those top two to finish 1-3 is a testament to their friendship, work ethic, and desire," said Nordell. "The whole boys varsity team, in fact, was all-in this season and the results show that."

After beating Philomath by four points at District a week earlier, the Warriors turned the tables and nipped Sisters by just 5 points to

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