

Powder Valley boys earn state crown

Elgin girls take third in 1A championships

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — It came down to the last events, but the Powder Valley Badgers boys on Saturday, May 22, took home a track and field state championship at this weekend's meet.

Powder Valley came from behind to score 64.50 points to claim the Oregon 1A State Championship (although the Oregon School Activities Association is not sanctioning any state championship events this spring). Even more impressive, the Badgers won their title with only six athletes competing on the boys side.

The state event took place at Banner Bank Track at Eastern Oregon University, La Grande, and included athletes from 34 schools on the boys side and 30 for the girls.

The Badgers accumulated points early in the day through field events, with Case Olson pacing third in the javelin throw and Kaiden Krieger taking third in the high jump. Reece Dixon added 4.5 points in the triple jump with a tie for fourth place.

Distance runner Justin Ash was all over the track



Elgin's Aaliyah Burton and Powder Valley's Belle Blair compete head-to-head in the 300-meter hurdles Saturday, May 22, 2021, at the Oregon 1A track and field championship at Eastern Oregon University, La Grande. Blair secured a narrow victory over Burton in the event by two tenths of a second.

for the Badgers, starting the day with a third-place finish in the boys 1,500 meter run with a time of 4 minutes, 15.66 seconds. Ash later took second place in the boys 3,000 meter run with a time of 9:09.00 and helped Powder Valley's 4x400 meter relay team finish in second place.

"He was a key piece," said Powder Valley head coach Nick Maszk said of Ash.

After a podium finish in javelin, Olson headed to the track and ran a 54.02 in the boys 400-meter dash to finish fourth.

Krieger also had a busy day, starting off his track events with a second-place finish in the boys 200-meter dash. He ran a 23.69 in the 200 and then scored a 42.01 second-place finish in the boys 300 meter hurdles in back-to-back events. Harper's Corbin Palmer edged out Krieger by a mere four thousandths of a second.

"He's just a hard worker," Maszk said of Krieger. "He was probably a second off of winning all three of his events."

Krieger was able to rest during the 3,000 meter

event before taking the track once more in the 4x400. After Ash scored a crucial eight points in the 3,000, the pressure was on the relay team to hold on to the Badgers' lead.

Powder Valley's 4x400 meter team of Dixon, Ash, Olson and Krieger finished with a time of 3:41.01 and took home second place in the event. The eight points they earned in the event solidified the Badgers' first-place finish over Damascus Christian in second.

"We were ecstatic about it," Maszk said. "It was just a really low athlete count to



Powder Valley's Justin Ash takes the baton for the second leg of the 4x400 meter relay, the final event Saturday, May 22, 2021, at the Oregon 1A track and field championship at Eastern Oregon University, La Grande. The Badgers finished second in the event en route to securing a first-place overall team finish.

get the points that they did, that was one of the biggest things to me."

On the girls side, Aaliyah Burton of Elgin finished her day as a state champion in the girls 100-meter dash (12.89) and the girls 100-meter hurdles (15.51). Burton finished as runner-up in the girls 300-meter hurdles to Powder Valley's Belle Blair.

Blair also won individual state championship honors in the long jump (15-10.00) and the 400-meter dash (1:01.13).

The Elgin girls scored 47 points to finish on the podium in third place. The Powder Valley girls took sixth overall with 41 points.

Imbler's Erin Coston won a state championship in the girls pole vault, clearing a height of 8-06.00. The Panthers scored 28 points and finished eighth in the team standings.

For Powder Valley, the boys' team won state without any individual event winners and relied on a solid group effort to take first overall.

Full results from the Oregon 1A State Championship are online at www.swtiming.com/results/lastate/index.htm.

"I just told them that your job today is to get every single guy in front of you that you can," Maszk said. "Every point matters."

Union High athletes compete at state



Above, Union's Carter Blackburn took sixth in the boys pole vault Saturday, May 22, 2021, at the 2A state track meet in Union. Blackburn cleared a mark of 10 feet, 6 inches.

At left, Union's Audrey Wells, right, passes the baton to Ashlee Burtch during the girls 4x400-meter relay Saturday, May 22, 2021, at the 2A state track meet in Union. The Union girls relay team took fourth in the event.

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