

State from 1B

Johnson expressed his gratitude for all who came to help, from within the community and beyond. "People from all over the place, friends from Portland came down and so many people in the community."

According to Johnson, "It's pretty much dominated every waking moment of my life for the last four weeks, and there weren't a lot of moments where I was sleeping, because my brain was constantly trying to figure out how to do this and do it the right way. And I think we pulled it off in spades."

While the event itself was spectacular, the wins for the Vikings made it even more so.

Johnson explained some of the history and significance of Blankenship's win.

"That was a big moment when Brea won, it's been a hard year for a lot of us. She was kind of banged up during cross country, and I know she didn't finish as high at the state meet as she wanted to," he said.

In addition to having missed her junior year of competing because of COVID, Blankenship was faced with the added challenge of running in two events at the meet, which is unusual for athletes at a state meet.

"It's tough to double as a distance runner," said Johnson. "I said, 'Brea, you've always doubled pretty well, and we have a shot, and I know that's risky; it might make it harder for you to win the 800,' which we thought she could, but she was all for it. I don't think the 1500

worked out as well as she wanted it to," he added, with Blankenship finishing seventh with a time of 5:09.54a. "I think that maybe just made her mad. She came back and had a look on her face for the 800 that said, 'I'm not going to lose.'"

With about 350 meters left in the race, Blankenship kicked into high gear and, as Johnson explained, "She came by me with 200 meters to go, I just said, 'They're sitting on you, they're going to try to kick you; you've got to make them work now.' So, she stretched it out and she won pretty comfortably. It was a great moment."

Blankenship, who has been running with Johnson for her entire high school career, was one Johnson scouted early on.

"I told her parents I tried to work on her and Elijah both to come out for cross country from the time they were little kids," he said, "because you could see that they both have this potential, and they worked really hard. I pretty much promised them that if she comes out for track, she's going to be a state champion. So, it was really rewarding and she was super happy."

In addition to Blankenship taking first place, the remainder of the girls' team contributed a great deal to their team taking second place overall at the meet.

"It was one of those things where we were having an okay meet, but not a spectacular meet — and then, the last few events, everything just started to come together," said Johnson. "Gracie [Freudenthal] getting second in the high hurdles was really import-

ant," he noted.

Freudenthal finished with a time of 16.18a, then placed third in the 300-meter hurdles with a time of 48.41a.

"We've come a long way with her in a short amount of time. Having a whole year off from track is one thing, and the high hurdles are so technical, so it's been a long process," said Johnson. "To miss a year and then have such a compacted season, we've really had to work hard to get her ready. The highs were really great, and [in the] intermediates she scored six points for us."

The girls' 4x400 relay team, which came in third place with a time of 4:17.63a, also made a huge contribution to the team's point total.

"Before the 4x400, we knew we had to get fourth place and La Grande had to not score, and then we were going to beat them by one point," he explained. "Then, they didn't score, but two people in the first heat ran way faster than we've run this year; the two teams ran around a 4:20, and we had only run a 4:26. Now, not only did we need to beat three people in the final, we had to beat four people — and our girls didn't just run great, they just ran out of their heads!"

The Lady Viks loaded the front with Brea and Rylee Colton.

"We wanted Corduroy [Holbrook] to get the baton and know that it was now or never, and she held off some studs," said Johnson. "Then, Gracie ran a great leg, her best leg of the year, and we got third place. That vaulted us into second place as a team, which was really special."

When asked what she was thinking during the competition, Freudenthal said, "I was thinking that it's senior year, and we just have to give our best. I think it's having the mindset knowing that you're going to be tired, and running fast anyway, running hard."

Blankenship's focus was to "Run hard and leave it all on the track. It was pretty cool — it feels good!"

Colton also placed in the 3000 meters, finishing seventh overall with a PR time of 10:56:51a.

In addition to the track events, the Vikings' Andrea Osbon racked up some serious points for the girls as well.

"She didn't have as good of two days as she wanted to have," admitted Johnson, "but she scored 16 points and led us to score in all three events. And that's what a state track meet is all about. You just have to keep whittling away and get every scrap and claw for every point you can get so that you have a chance to bring home the trophy."

Osbon finished second in the shot put (40-01.50), fourth in discus (113-05) and sixth in the javelin with a throw of 106-09.

The girls' team's performance was especially exciting because they showed much higher than the week before at district.

"It was good, too, because the boys' team was so dominant at the district meet," said Johnson. "We talked about it before, and I said the girls had no chance to win the district meet, as we only have six or seven girls on the team. But we had those same six girls go on this weekend,

and we knew that there were kids who could score points in bunches. And it takes a whole lot of depth."

Although the boys' team didn't place as high as the girls, they too had some stellar performances at the meet, scoring a total of 37.5 points.

"The pole vaulters were great," said Johnson. "Camp [Lacouture] broke a pole, and it was amazing how he just got up and said, 'Let's go!'"

However, it was the only pole in that size and right for him to vault from.

"So, all of a sudden, he's on a pole he's never jumped on before that's bigger and harder to get in," Johnson said. "But Kyle Hughes — that was the best he's ever jumped, and he made the top-10 list, which was a good start for us."

Hughes finished fifth with a PR at 13-00, and Lacouture tied for sixth with a mark of 12-06.

"Sam Ulrich had an amazing meet," noted Johnson. "We put him in two races, and we thought it was going to be really hard for him to beat Brody Bushnell."

Bushnell, from Philomath, had previously won both the 1500 and the 800 races.

"Sam's young and didn't have a freshman track season. So, we wanted to give him opportunities to have experience in the championship setting because it's totally different," explained Johnson. "The state meet is different than any other race. It's usually really physical, and a lot of times it's tactical."

While Johnson said he felt Ulrich sat back a little too long in the 1500 and didn't give himself a chance to get into the top

two, he took that experience a couple of hours later in the 800.

"He really ran a smart race. He sat back a little bit, but then when it was time to go, he knew he had to and was able to run down a lot of people for second place," Johnson said. "That is a pretty good achievement for a sophomore."

Ulrich finished fourth in the 1500 meters with a PR time of 4:09.16a, and was second in the 800 meters in 2:00.65a.

In addition to Ulrich sophomore Hunter Petterson finished sixth in the 100-meter race with a PR at 11.59a, and Chad Hughes finished seventh in the 3000 meters in a PR mark of 9:10.65a.

In the 300-meter hurdles, Lacouture finished eighth with a time of 45.71a.

Both boys' relay teams placed as well; the 4x100 team (Petterson, Lacouture, Elijah Blankenship and James Smith) finished sixth in 45.80a, and the 4x400 team (Petterson, Ulrich, Jaxson Jensen and Blankenship) finished fourth with a time of 3:33.45a.

Also on the field, Skyler Loomis finished fifth in the javelin with a throw of 150-00.

According to Johnson, "It was good; it couldn't have ended much better. We came through when we needed to, and I was really proud of the girls and the boys. The boys are young, and there are a lot of them coming back. Hopefully, we'll get a couple more kids in school to come out, and maybe the boys will be taking a trophy home next year."

Viks from 1B

athletes the opportunity to compete in matches for experience. Even though the teams didn't score as a whole, according to Wartnik, "The wins were meaningful. We had six or seven boys that were undefeated that day, and we had one girl who got to wrestle, and she was 1-1. The other boys were kind of a mixed bag; won some, lost some — but our core kids are looking strong. The kids are just an amazing group. The spirit, the mentality, the cooperation, the application; they're giving us 100 percent and constantly getting better."

The next day (May 22), the Viks headed to Marshfield for a dual meet and defeated all five schools they competed against in each dual meet.

Wartnik explained that, this year, the Vikings have an advantage as one of the larger teams in the league; if neither of the two schools competing don't have a wrestler in a weight class, there are no points earned for either team.

However, if one school has a wrestler in a weight class and the other school doesn't, the team that has a

wrestler in that weight class scores six points.

"Many of the schools don't have full lineups," said Wartnik. "We have more people in our lineup than most schools right now, so that's an advantage."

Siuslaw's first matchup was with Central Linn, a perennial 3A powerhouse.

Said Wartnik, "[We] faced a lot of close, hard-fought matches, but we really came out on top in a lot of those matches and really kind of controlled the dual meet."

Next, Siuslaw was paired up with Douglas, a typically strong 3A team that is down in numbers this year.

"Douglas had a couple of very good wrestlers," admitted Wartnik. "They won a couple of good matches against us; I think we won three of the matches and they won two. But on the dominance of our lineup, we received a lot of forfeits and, again, we won by quite a large margin."

In the third series of the meet, Siuslaw wrestled 5A Willamette.

"They had a pretty solid lineup," said Wartnik, "but we out-wrestled them. And then, with all the forfeits again, we had a pretty decisive win."

The Vikings' fourth

match was against Coquille, which had a couple of wins but was dominated by the Viks overall.

Finally, Siuslaw faced host Marshfield.

"We finished out with Marshfield," said Wartnik. "They won three of the five matches wrestled. But again, we were collecting all of the forfeits and they didn't have people — so, we won decisively."

With regards to the team, "We have some wrestlers who are doing tremendous work. Some of the youngsters who are doing great. A couple of my juniors — John Corser and JC Gentry — are really improved from a year ago. I think that was a real high mark for us, the performance of Corser and Gentry."

In addition, the seniors on Wartnik's team performed quite well over the weekend.

"Elijah LaCrosse and Ryan Jennings are just dynamite," said Wartnik. "Elijah lost a pair of very, very close matches on Saturday. But then, Elijah was giving away 8-10 pounds; he weighed in at 152, and

we had him wrestle 160 pounds all day."

Wartnik said he could tell by the end of the day that LaCrosse was tired. "And I'm not making any excuses, he wrestled some great people. Lost tough matches, but again, because he was so close, the other teams didn't get very many points. They got three points, whereas our other guys were winning by pin. Elijah just looks great."

LaCrosse, who took third at state last year, has his eyes on the prize this year.

"The state championship is always the goal, and I have a good shot at it [this year]," said LaCrosse. His other focus is "to enjoy my last season and go for it all."

Jennings had a great weekend as well, going undefeated at the Marshfield meet.

Wartnik also mentioned three of his sophomores who are performing well.

"Mason Buss is undefeated at this point," said Wartnik, "and he won a pair of good matches on Saturday. We have Yoskar DeLaMora, who wrestled very well. He won a couple of matches,

and lost one — but even in losing, he looked pretty good. And then Cayden Gray is one of the real surprises this year. He's wrestling so well and doesn't have a whole lot of experience. But he's wrestling like crazy with a ton of heart."

Gray, who had a particularly intense match Friday night, managed to come away unscathed, but his opponent ended up with minor injuries as a result of the match.

According to Wartnik, "There are moments where things get scary, and I just pray. It's part of the game, and we try to teach a lot of tumbling and acrobatics so that people learn how to react in those strange moments — but it doesn't insulate you from everything.

So fortunately, neither wrestler was ruined, but they came away stretched out a little bit."

In all, the team is off to an excellent start and a promising season ahead.

"This is a team where it's just a very inviting group," said Wartnik. "The young people are the most positive, respectful people I've ever coached. It's just amazing. For a number of reasons, this is a team that has a lot of us excited."

The Viks held their first home dual meet this past Tuesday (after press deadlines), with their next meet tonight (May 26) at Sweet Home starting at 5 p.m.

Their next home meet is June 8, also starting at 5 p.m.

Honors from 1B

Gracie Freudenthal, Jane Lacouture, Rylee Colton.

Football: Avery Hart, Beau Erickson, Billy Massey, Braydon Thornton, Camp Lacouture, Christian Newlan, Cort Waggoner, Daniel Shick, DAyne Muller, Elijah Blankenship, Ethan Aaron, Henry Rankin, Hunter Petterson, Ian Sissel, Isaac Garza, James Smith, Joe Slaughter, John Rose, Julian Loftis, Landon Severy,

Noah Dotson, Odin Smith, Owen Garneau, Rhys Fleming, Skyler Loomis, Talin Loomis, Tate Botstensek, Victor Ayala.

Boys Soccer: Alex Goss, Brayden Linton, Daniel Paasch, Derrick Vanduch, Dez Anderson, Dylan Jensen, Imanol Pelayo, Jake Roberts, Jaxson Jensen, Jerrel Brumley, Jesus Jason Garcia, Kayden Lane, Lucian Murphy, Morgan Delle, Noel Hernandez, Yoskar De La Mora.

SERVPRO
Fire & Water - Cleanup & Restoration™
of Lane County (541) 345-0115
24 HOUR EMERGENCY SERVICES

COPELAND LUMBER YARDS INC.
On Siuslaw! Go Viks!
541-997-8474
3231 Hwy. 101 N, Florence
copeland.doitbest.com

WATERFRONT DEPOT RESTAURANT
We Love Our Viks & Sailors!
"Open Daily"
541-902-9100
1252 Bay Street
Florence, Or 97439
thewaterfrontdepot.com