

# A Comeback WIN

Team wins state after losing by one point last year

One point was what state came down to last season... S. E. Polk scored 79 and Johnston 80 points. The girls' cross country team placed second, after going a whole season ranked number one in the state. The team was disappointed but the unfortunate ending was what helped lead them to a state championship title this season. "I think it really helped motivate us to actually get after it this summer because we knew what it felt like to almost win but not quite get there so this year we were very determined to win," senior Brooke Mckee said.

The veteran team started their training in early July and by the end of the season, they were running around 50 miles a week, which was the most the team had ever done. Along with increasing their mileage, the team started having multiple morning practices during the week which was a big change. The team also did a lot of strength work and they focused on all the different parts of their races. "Hennes' goal this year was to do what we did my freshman year (2016) because that's when we had one of our best years," McKee said. "So he used the training plans from that year and adapted it to the new team."

Although the team made some changes to their training, their goals and mission statement stayed the same. "We've got five principals," coach Patrick Hennes said. "Number one is to be healthy because nothing else matters if you are not healthy. Work hard. We got to have fun, so that's the third. The fourth one is to kick butt. The fifth part of our mission is to embrace your sisters. So we think if we do all five of those principals and do them as best we can, it doesn't matter if we win a state title or not... we're going to be successful."

Leading up to state, tweaks to their training and the positive mentality had already paid off as they got second among 30 other teams at the Rim Rock Invitational hosted by Kansas University. The team that placed in front of them ended up being the Kansas large class state champions. Two weeks after state, the team avenged the loss to the Kansas State champions by beating them at the Nike Regional Meet in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The team also went to Pleasant Valley and placed third behind the 12th and 13th ranked teams in the country. "It's fun to have those challenges and get out and see some teams that we wouldn't normally see," Hennes said.

The team dominated state and had a total of 54 points with three girls who finished in the top 10. The second-placed team, Dubuque Senior, finished with 88 points. "Brooke and I have both been on teams that have won state before last year so just remembering that feeling as well as the feeling of losing by one point," junior Bella Heikes said. "I think that helped us win state."

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Sophomore Phoebe Smith keeps a steady pace at the end of the second lap at the meet in Indianola. "Cross country is one of the best activities anyone can participate in," Smith said. "It's a sport any can do if they are committed and motivated to run, it's the best!" Photo by: Jordyn Cimmiyotti

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