

Neenah's Michael Bourland is The Post-Crescent's boys' cross country athlete of the year

Year: Senior.

Family: Parents: Joe (father), Maureen (mother); Siblings: Matthew (brother), Julia (sister).

Accomplishments: Finished 33rd at the WIAA Division 1 state cross country meet with a time of 16:32. Won the sectional race with a time of 15 minutes, 56 seconds. Won the Fox Valley Association conference meet race with a time of 16:30. Finished second at the Seymour Invitational in 16:52. Finished 10th at the 37-team Midwest Invitational in Janesville in 15:56. Finished eighth at the Marquette Invitational in 16:20. Finished fourth at the Neenah Invitational in 16:12. Won the Jamie Block Memorial Invitational at West Bend in 16:12.

What's it like coming up that last hill at the state cross country meet and seeing the finish line? "That's always an enlightening experience because after all the course, hills and other stuff you had to fight through, just getting over that last hill you get a sense of fulfillment after finally crossing the finish line.

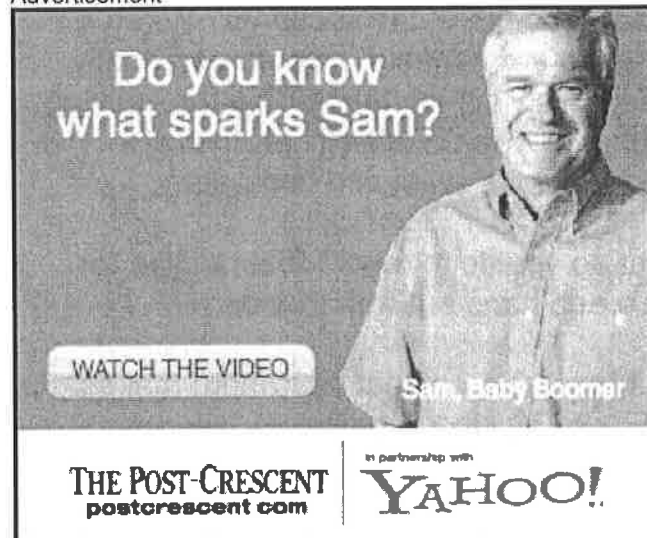
Is the last hill the toughest hill on the course? I could analyze each of the hills. There is one right before it that when I was coming up to it. It looked like a wall in front of me. It had a very steep incline. I felt that was a little bit tougher. Even though it wasn't as big a hill, it was just really steep and took a lot of effort to get up it.

What is the start line like with 190 runners waiting for the gun to fire? I see it as a challenge. We don't get that many people at any other meet. Seeing all those people at the meet, it's like, "Ok, this is it. This is the real deal."

What's going through your mind while you're running at the state meet? I look for spectators sometimes but on the state course, I'm thinking about how I should be running, how I am running and how I need to be running when I get to a certain part of the course. I'm consumed with my running.

What was your favorite course that you ran on this season? Definitely, the Janesville course. That's the course where I broke 16

Advertisement



Do you know what sparks Sam?

WATCH THE VIDEO

Sam, Baby Boomer

THE POST-CRESCENT
postcrescent.com

in partnership with
YAHOO!

minutes for the first time.

What preseason training do you do? In the summer in June, it starts out a little bit slower where I'm mainly focused on my distance runs. I usually focus on distance until mid-July at the earliest because I need time to build my base up. Once mid-July hits, then I start focusing on speed and I start doing tempo runs.

Did you go out running the day after the state cross country meet? No.

Do you ever plan really stretching things out and running a marathon or doing a triathlon? I definitely have thought about doing triathlons because I feel like right now I've got the running down and the swimming, too. I'm looking forward to the start of the swim season. I just need to pick up biking. Once I pick up biking, I can harness my skills for that. I feel that I could do pretty well in triathlons. For now, I think I'd like to stick with running. I'd really like to run in college.

Was it fun to escort the winners out to the medals podium at the sectional? When it comes to swim meets, I would personally rather be swimming than doing the walking around for awards. It's still pretty fun to watch the girls swim and compete.

What do you do to relax? Sleep. I like to sleep and hang out with friends.

Your favorite meal that your mom makes for you? Any kind of pasta.

What kind of car do you prefer to drive – a fast sleek car, an economical car or you'd rather be a passenger? It's always been kind of a dream of mine to make a lot of money when I get older and then be able to buy a really nice sports car just to cruise around in.

Advertisement

Do you know what sparks Sam?

WATCH THE VIDEO

Sam, Baby Boomer

THE POST-CRESCENT
postcrescent.com

in partnership with
YAHOO!

Post-Crescent all-area boys' cross country team

First team

Michael Bourland, Sr., Neenah: See B-1.

Max Edwards, Jr., Appleton North: Finished 64th at the WIAA Division 1 state meet with a time of 16:56, finished fifth at the Oshkosh North sectional, finished eighth at the FVA conference meet.

Dustin O'Connell, Sr., Appleton West: Finished 79th at the WIAA Division 1 state meet with a time of 17:04, third at the Oshkosh North sectional, finished third at the FVA conference meet.

Alex Rink, Jr., Kimberly: Finished 41st at the WIAA Division 1 state meet with a time of 16:38, finished fourth at the Kimberly sectional, finished second at the FVA conference meet.

Elliott Franczek, Sr., Hilbert: Finished 15th at the WIAA Division 3 state meet with a time of 16:58, finished third at the Sheboygan Area Lutheran sectional, finished second at the Olympian Conference conference meet.

Jacob Brickner, Jr., Freedom: Finished 36th at the WIAA Division 2 state meet with a time of 17:02, finished 13th at the Freedom sectional, finished fourth at the Eastern Valley Conference conference meet.

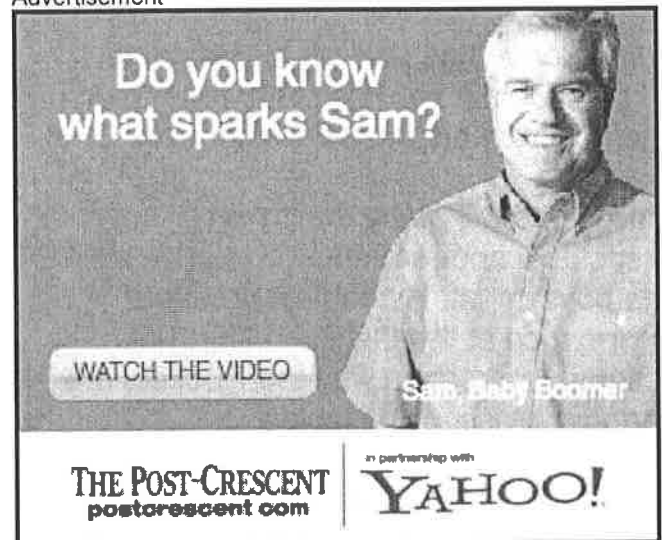
Joe Van Grinsven, So., Little Chute: Finished 42nd at the WIAA Division 2 state meet with a time of 17:06, finished second at the Two Rivers sectional, finished second at the Eastern Valley Conference conference meet.

Second team

Matt Vosters, So., Freedom; Sean Wagner, Sr., Seymour; Calvin VanRyzin, Sr., Appleton North; Eric Ruzicka, Sr., Neenah; Greg Greif, So., St. Mary Central; Tyler Sawall, Sr., Clintonville; Zach Wheeler, Sr., Waupaca.

More

Advertisement



Do you know
what sparks Sam?

WATCH THE VIDEO

Sam, Baby Boomer

THE POST-CRESCENT
postcrescent.com

in partnership with
YAHOO!

Tim Froberg column: Neenah Rockets cross country runner Tom Huxtable has come long way to help team get to state meet

He's not overly superstitious, but Tom Huxtable admits to wearing a pair of lucky socks during meets.

Considering the crummy luck Huxtable encountered earlier in his prep running career, I wouldn't blame the Neenah senior if he had a rabbit's foot sewn to his Rockets' jersey or a four-leaf clover hidden inside his running shoes.

Perseverance has paid off for Huxtable, and the Neenah cross country team has benefited from his mental toughness.

The Rockets will make their 14th consecutive appearance at Saturday's WIAA state boys' meet. Huxtable's breakout performance at the Oshkosh North sectional is a reason why the Rockets are headed to Wisconsin Rapids.

While meet medalist Michael Bourland had another exceptional showing for Neenah,

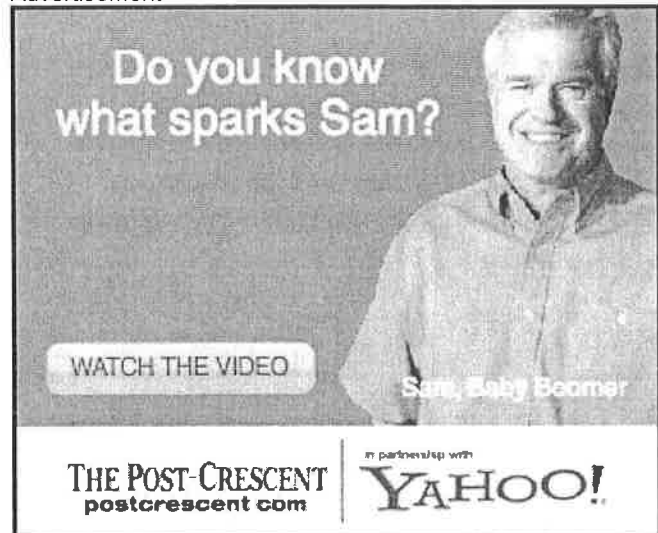
depth keeps cross country teams alive in the postseason and Huxtable provided some unexpected major points. He entered the meet as Neenah's No. 7 runner but was the Rockets' third-fastest finisher, placing 19th overall with a personal-record time of 17 minutes, seven seconds — a whopping 45 seconds faster than his previous best.

Not bad for an athlete who was competing on the JV team just a week earlier and whose cross country career has been sidetracked with medical issues.

"Tom was one of the difference-makers in our team going to state," coach John Morgen said. "We talked about how everyone needed to lay it on the line and step up. Nobody did it better on that day than Tom."

Getting the opportunity to run at the state meet for the first time was rewarding enough for Huxtable. But what made his sectional performance even more satisfying was the challenging journey he took to

Advertisement



Do you know what sparks Sam?

WATCH THE VIDEO

Sam, Baby Boomer

THE POST-CRESCENT
postcrescent.com

in partnership with
YAHOO!

Some part of a state-qualifying team.

Huxtable's entire sophomore season of cross country was wiped out when a tumor was discovered on his left leg. It proved to be non-cancerous, but it needed to be removed and he wasn't allowed to run for several months.

Huxtable made a full recovery, but his luck didn't get much better his junior year. He underwent an emergency appendectomy early in the 2010 cross country season and was sidelined the rest of the year.

Huxtable missed the competition and camaraderie of his teammates. Most of all, he missed the running and longed for the day when he could push his body through a lengthy training jaunt.

"Both those experiences made me realize how much I loved running," Huxtable said. "The doctors were 99 percent sure the tumor wasn't cancerous, so I wasn't too worried about that aspect. The hardest part was not being allowed to run. I was all ready to go my junior year and then the appendicitis happened. I guess I did feel a little cursed. It was one of those moments where you go, 'Seriously?'"

"But I tried to approach it with a sense of humor. I've used both of those experiences for motivation. Whenever I don't feel like going 100 percent in practice, I think back to how painful it was for me not to be able to run."

Huxtable earned the respect of his

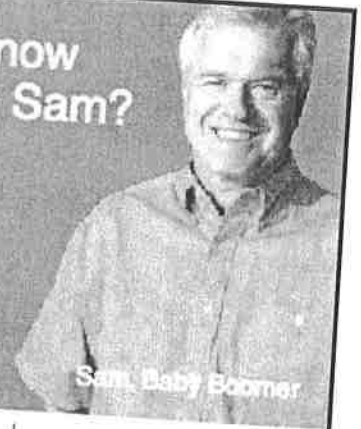
teammates with his dogged determination. That became clear when they voted him as a team captain prior to the season — even though he had missed much of the previous two years. Although he was finally healthy, Huxtable had some catching up to do and spent roughly half this season competing on the JV team. He was the JV medalist at the Fox Valley Association meet in mid-October and his brisk time earned him a spot on the varsity for Neenah's sectional.

"Throughout it all, Tom always found ways to contribute to the team," Morgen said. "He was unable to run for awhile, so he actually biked from here to Seymour to cheer us on at one of our meets. He's been an inspiration to a lot of people in this program because of the way he's been able to deal with setbacks and adversity. A lot of kids would have just given up."

But that's not the way Huxtable rolls. He's an achiever whose 3.96 grade-point average is even more impressive than his fastest 5,000-meter time. Huxtable is

Advertisement

Do you know
what sparks Sam?



WATCH THE VIDEO

Sam Baby Boomer

THE POST-CRESCENT
postcrescent.com

in partnership with
YAHOO!

president of the national honor society at Neenah and has been accepted at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

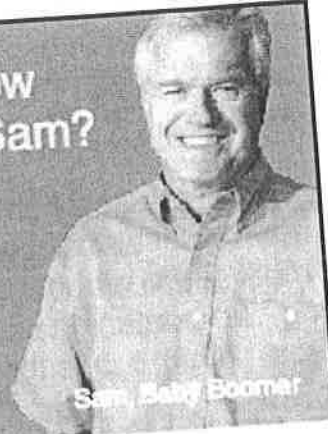
But West Point is in his future and Huxtable's current focus is being a speeding missile for the Rockets in Wisconsin Rapids. Topping his sectional time might be tough, but Huxtable just wants to represent his team well.

"It's an incredible team to be on," Huxtable said. "We have a great bunch of guys who really push and support one. Having that support system while I was trying to get back in shape was huge. Our goal was to get to state and I'm glad I was able to help out with a good race at our sectional. I kept telling myself, 'Tom, you've got to run the best race of your life. You've got to help get this team to state.'"

Mission accomplished.

Advertisement

Do you know
what sparks Sam?



WATCH THE VIDEO

Sam Baby Boomer

THE POST-CRESCENT
postcrescent.com

in partnership with
YAHOO!

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics

Neenah Rockets girls' cross country team wins team title at Fox Valley Association meet

KAUKAUNA — The members of the Neenah girls' cross country team like to think of themselves as a close, tight-knit family.

Turns out, that feeling of togetherness isn't just regulated to the practice course, offseason and hallways of Neenah High School.

It carries over to the varsity competition, where the Rockets make it a habit of finishing within seconds of each other among the top finishers.

That was the case at the Fox Valley Association girls' cross country meet at Countryside Golf Course, where the Rockets finished with five of the top seven runners en route to the FVA title.

Neenah finished with 19 points, far ahead of second-place Appleton North (87).

The Rockets' Alison Parker finished first, with a time of 15 minutes, 7.58 seconds, with Jessica Parker (second, 15:09.06), Lydia Fahrenkrug (fourth, 15:18.63), Jennifer Parker (fifth, 15:20.53) and Claire Knaus (seventh, 15:44.38) rounding out the impressive performance.

"It's really fun and exciting, because you get to run with your teammates and you get to help each other," Fahrenkrug said. "Not necessarily with words, but you think 'I can help pull my teammates across.' It's just a good team mentality."

The Rockets are well on their way to another strong showing in sectionals, as well as another state berth. Neenah finished second in Division 1 at the state meet last season.

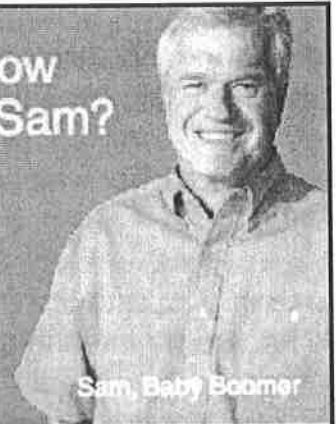
"One of our goals this season was to win conference," Neenah coach Mike Heidke said. "It was a tough day weather-wise and the girls were still pushing the pace and they worked really hard to set that pace."

"How they finished — with five in the top seven — that's what we expect. We're happy with winning conference, but we have some work to do before sectionals."

Said Fahrenkrug: "We know what our goal is. We've discussed it and trained for it over the summer — it's to win state. That's

Advertisement

Do you know
what sparks Sam?



WATCH THE VIDEO

Sam, Baby Boomer

THE POST-CRESCENT
postcrescent.com

in partnership with
YAHOO!

what we want to do and we're going to try our hardest."

Meanwhile, Neenah's Michael Bourland led the boys' race.

The last quarter of the course was a sequence that played over and over in Bourland's mind prior to Thursday's race.

"I always remember the finish," he said. "Running by the pond, across the bridge, do a loop, go back, across the bridge and do the finish.

"When I eventually got to it, I decided to just go."

That's exactly what Bourland did, as he easily distanced himself from the rest of the field to capture first place with a time of 16:29.11.

Kimberly's Alex Rink finished second (16:37.93) and Appleton West's Dustin O'Connell (16:43.48) was third.

Fond du Lac won the team title with 71 points, but only 11 points separated the top four team finishers: Neenah (73), Appleton North (75) and Kimberly (82).

The poor weather was no problem for Bourland.

"We train a lot with the elements," he said. "We had some intense practices with bad weather, so it was really nothing new to us. It was just another bump in the road."

BOYS (5,000 meters)

FOND DU LAC 71, NEENAH 73, APPLETON NORTH 75, KIMBERLY 82, APPLETON EAST 108, OSHKOSH WEST 127, APPLETON WEST 144, OSHKOSH NORTH 257, KAUKAUNA 270, MENASHA 320

Top five: 1, Michael Bourland N 16:29; 2, Alex Rink KIM 16:37; 3, Dustin O'Connell A W 16:43; 4, Nathan Gunderson FDL 17:05; 5, Chris Leisses FDL 17:06

Appleton East: 6, Logan Andrew 17:08; 13, Alec Palmer 17:39; 27, Alex Gugala 18:07; 29, Tyler Hafeman 18:09; 33, Colin Loomans 18:15.

Appleton North: 8, Max Edwards 17:11; 9, Calvin Vanryzin 17:18; 16, Tanner Daines 17:43; 20, Matt Hendrickson 17:49; 22, Jordan Knapp 17:58.

Appleton West: 14, Austin Hetrick 17:41; 40, Will Shecterle 18:44; 43, David Nugent 18:58; 44, Andrew Thiel 19:00.

Advertisement

Do you know what sparks Sam?

WATCH THE VIDEO

Sam, Baby Boomer

THE POST-CRESCENT
postcrescent.com

in partnership with
YAHOO!

Kaukauna: 47, Brett Hanson 19:11; 52, Jacob Johnson 19:35; 53, Brett Luedke 19:50; 57, Quentin Zwiers 19:55; 61, Matt Voet 20:40.

Kimberly: 10, Michael Quesnell 17:24; 12, Kevin Kilgas 17:36; 26, Alec Schultz 18:06; 36, Spencer Lamers 18:29.

Menasha: 54, Kalle Kutschera 19:51; 65, Isaac Vosters 21:49; 66, Zach Vosters 22:24; 67, Mike Pawlak 24:12; 68, Jim Sell 24:14.

Neenah: 15, Nicholas Kehler 17:41; 17, Eric Ruzicka 17:47; 19, Sam Rall 17:48; 21, Richard Rohe 17:53.

GIRLS (4,000 meters)

NEENAH 19, APPLETON NORTH 87, KIMBERLY 98, APPLETON WEST 99, APPLETON EAST 142, OSHKOSH NORTH 155, FOND DU LAC 163, OSHKOSH WEST 198, KAUKAUNA 212, MENASHA 297

Top five: 1, Allison Parker N 15:08; 2, Jessica Parker N 15:10; 3, Mira Ensley-Field AE 15:10; 4, Lydia Fahrenkrug N 15:19; 5, Jennifer Parker N 15:21.

Appleton East: 13, Erin Fischer 16:05; 28, Megan Larsen 16:40; 40, Michelle Miller 17:10; 58, Jing Shen 17:58.

Appleton North: 9, Jenny Jones 15:45; 10, Kendra Jensen 15:57; 19, Kaitlin Squier 16:22; 24, Maggie Burneske 16:32; 26, Katie Flood 16:34.

Appleton West: 9, Chloe Siamoff 15:52; 16, Michal Michiels 16:16; 18, Mariah Frank 16:20; 23, Morgan Manual 16:29; 33, Anna Kremer 16:56.

Kaukauna: 34, Klair Diedrick 16:58; 37, Kaitlyn McDaniel 17:05; 43, Hannah Mauel 17:13; 45, Jeanette Kussow 17:16; 53, Hannah Podvin 17:34.

Kimberly: 6, Mckenzie Carper 15:28; 14, Miranda Micke 16:06; 21, Sarah Richardson 16:24; 25, Stephanie Rink 16:32; 32, Lexi Buechler 16:54.

Menasha: 41, Kyla Munoz 17:10; 61, Dakota VandeBerg 18:19; 64, Jessica Morgan 19:04; 65, Jennifer Schmidt 19:08; 66, Paige Biese 20:14.

Neenah: 7, Claire Knaus 15:45.

Related Links

Terror Cross Country Invitational

Advertisement

Do you know what sparks Sam?

WATCH THE VIDEO

Sam, Baby Boomer

THE POST-CRESCENT
postcrescent.com

in partnership with
YAHOO!



October 22, 2011

Neenah Rockets girls roll to sectional title for trip to WIAA state cross country meet; Neenah, Appleton North tie in boys' race

*By Mike Woods
Post-Crescent staff writer*

WINNECONNE — The table is set, and the Neenah girls' cross country team is ready to feast.

The top-ranked Rockets lived up to their reputation and then some Friday as they took four of the top five places and ran away with the WIAA Division 1 Oshkosh North sectional championship at Lake Breeze Golf Course.

The Rockets totaled 23 points, while runner-up Slinger finished with 86.

"It's what we hoped for," Neenah coach Mike Heidke said. "You never know if everyone is going to have a good race, but they all ran very well today."

Neenah was led by junior Alison Parker, who won the individual title in 14 minutes, 10 seconds. She was followed by her twin sisters, with Jennifer Parker finishing third and Jessica Parker fourth. Claire Knaus followed in fifth place.

Four other area runners qualified as individuals. Appleton East's Mira Ensley-Field was sixth, Appleton North's Kendra Jensen seventh, Hortonville's Sarah Glidden eighth and Appleton West's Chloe Siamof ninth.

Neenah and Appleton North tied for first in the boys' race, as each finished with 77 points to gain state berths. The Rockets' Michael Bourland was the individual winner in 15:56. Appleton West's Dustin O'Connell finished third and was the lone area individual qualifier.

The individual title was extra sweet for Allison Parker, who finished second at the sectional last year.

"I knew (Slinger's Taylor Clyse) was going to be with me and I could feel her with me the whole way," she said. "I just had to keep pushing, knowing that she would try to hold on; then, eventually, I just went for it.

"I had never won sectionals before so it was always a goal of mine. I'm really proud of myself and my team today."

The Rockets have figured out how to deal with the added pressure of being the No. 1-ranked team in the state, but now it gets ramped up a little more as they look to finish things off.

"It's difficult, knowing we have a target on our back every meet, but are all the girls on our team are so positive," Alison Parker said, "so it's really not that big of an issue.

"I'm really nervous but our team is all excited, too. We're going to have dreams about it, wake up in the middle of the night, but just know you're confident going into the state meet."

Heidke is confident but is taking nothing for granted.

"It would be really nice. That's been our goal and that's what they've been working hard at for years now," he said. "They've been trying to get themselves to the highest plateau at state. But every meet is different and we'll take a little bit of luck and, hopefully, it goes well. We'll see what happens."

In the boys' race, Bourland topped his best time of the season by a second.

"I know I can go faster," he said. "My goal for this season was 15:30. I might not have gotten as close as I wanted with that, but I don't feel like I'm peaking yet."

As his thoughts turned to next week's state meet, he said a key is to remember a valuable lesson he learned last year.

"I ran state last year and I died really hard just because I went out too fast at the beginning," he said. "But I think my plan for state is to just run smart above all else, because of the hills and what not. I just have to remember to save my energy for that."

"Just knowing your limits. Being able to know that you have enough for the end of the race and be able to put in a decent kick."

The Terrors' O'Connell, a senior, had been to the state meet but only as a spectator.

"The goal is to go to state every year and I finally got there," he said. "It means that my hard work has paid off. I've invested a lot into the sport. To get to state, it's going to be nice to experience. I've gone there and watched and it's an amazing atmosphere."

BOYS (5,000 meters)

NEENAH 77, APPLETON NORTH 77, FOND DU LAC 89, SHEBOYGAN NORTH 100, APPLETON EAST 128, OSHKOSH WEST 149, SHEBOYGAN SOUTH 153, SLINGER 183, APPLETON WEST 215, HORTONVILLE 261, OSHKOSH NORTH 322, MENASHA 378

First place and individual qualifiers: 1, Michael Bourland N 15:56; 2, McKena Ramos SS 15:58; 3, Dustin O'Connell AW 16:19; 4, Chris Leisses FDL 16:25; 6, Adian Welsch SN 16:32; 8, Zach Klokow SS 16:34

Appleton East: 9, Logan Andrew 16:41; 18, David Fischer 17:07; 25, Alec Palmer 17:15; 37, Alex Gugala 17:36; 39, Colin Loomans 17:37.

Appleton North: 5, Max Edwards 16:28; 7, Calvin VanRyzin 16:33; 14, Tanner Daines 16:55; 22, Jordan Knapp 17:11; 29, Matt Hendrickson 17:18.

Appleton West: 30, Austin Hetrick 17:19; 58, Will Shecterle 18:23; 60, Michael Donovan 18:27; 64, David Nugent 18:34.

Hortonville: 17, Zack Wickham 17:02; 48, Andrew Werner 17:57; 62, Eric Moore 18:33; 65, Dylan Heimmermann 18:35; 69, Nathan Lenz 19:03.

Menasha: 71, Zach Hayes 19:15; 73, Kalle Kutschera 19:22; 77, Mike Pawlak 20:30; 78, Isaac Vosters 20:38; 79, Zach Vosters 21:39.

Neenah: 10, Eric Ruzicka 16:42; 19, Thomas Huxtable 17:07; 23, Sam Rall 17:13; 24, Richard Rohe 17:14.

GIRLS (4,000 meters)

NEENAH 23, SLINGER 86, APPLETON NORTH 102, HORTONVILLE 122, APPLETON WEST 133, APPLETON EAST 137, OSHKOSH NORTH 208, SHEBOYGAN NORTH 212, FOND DU LAC 222, OSHKOSH WEST 225, SHEBOYGAN SOUTH 285, MENASHA 376

First place and individual qualifiers: 1, Alison Parker N 14:09; 6, Mira Ensley-Field AE 15:03; 7, Kendra Jensen AN 15:09; 8, Sarah Glidden H 15:12; 9, Chloe Siamoff AW 15:14; 12, Sara Leibham SN 15:24.

Appleton East: 14, Erin Fischer 15:30; 23, Kaylyn Haefner 15:43; 30, Megan Larsen 15:57; 64, Michelle Miller 16:53.

Appleton North: 18, Jenny Jones 15:36; 19, Maggie Burneske 15:38; 25, Mary Kate Ontaneda 15:51;

33, Gabrielle Kiefer 15:59.

Appleton West: 16, Mariah Frank 15:35; 29, Anna Kremer 15:57; 36, Michal Michiels 16:02; 43, Morgan Manual 16:10.

Hortonville: 13, Emma Rafuse 15:26; 32, Kathy Derks 15:59; 34, Isabella Schleinser 16:00; 35, Jenna Green 16:02.

Menasha: 58, Kyla Munoz 16:39; 78, Jessica Morgan 18:09; 79, Dakota VandeBerg 18:10; 80, Jennifer Schmidt 18:16; 81, Paige Biese 18:58.

Neenah: 3, Jennifer Parker 14:40; 4, Jessica Parker 14:41; 5, Claire Knaus 14:57; 10, Jessie Laabs 15:17.
