

VanDraska grabs 2nd at state meet

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FORT DODGE - Tysen VanDraska planned to use his punishing kick to lick the field at the Class 4A state cross country meet Saturday in Fort Dodge and bring home the title.

Denied the championship, VanDraska employed his infamous kick to claim second place with a gutsy finish on the soft, squishy turf at Lakeside Golf Course.

VanDraska was hoping to whip Ryan Schweizer of Dowling for the individual title in the latest renewal of their personal showdowns, but Schweizer was a little too fast for Van Draska on a gray 50-degree day in Fort Dodge.

VanDraska appeared to slow down near the finish when he realized he wasn't going to win the race. He was running in third place with about 50 yards left when a runner suddenly appeared on his right shoulder.

Unwilling to finish fourth, VanDraska kicked into high gear and nipped Sam Schillinger of Cedar Falls and Trevor Kirk of West Des Moines Valley for the silver medal.

Schweizer won the title in 15 minutes, 45.3 seconds for the 5K course. VanDraska claimed second place in 15:49.9, a few tenths of a second ahead of Schillinger (15:50.2) and Kirk (15:50.7).

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VanDraska, a fierce competitor, is tired of finishing second behind Schweizer, but saluted the winner for running a good race.

"I've taken second to him many times," he said. "I was closer this year than ever. I'll get better and I'll see him in track.

"He did get the best of me, but there's always room to improve."

The Prairie Hawks fell short in their bid to win the team championship. Dowling edged Cedar Falls for the title, 69-79. Prairie finished third with 100 points.

Prairie won the Class 4A title in 2013, placed second in 2014 and finished third in 2015. "I guess I don't like the trend there," Prairie Coach Bill Schwarz said with a touch of humor.

"We've got a fantastic team," said Schwarz. "There were really four deserving teams here and we're just fortunate to be one of the top three."

Pleasant Valley, another strong club, placed fourth.

VanDraska said he got jostled a little at the start of the crowded race. He briefly took the lead after approximately two miles, which is about the time Patrick Bose of Johnston slipped and fell on the muddy course as a member of the lead pack. That created a sudden hazard for other runners, including VanDraska.

"I had to break stride," said VanDraska. "Schweizer hurdled him and I kind of slowed down and went around him."

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Schwarz knows how badly VanDraska wanted to finish his prep cross country career with the state title.

"Tysen trained like a madman to win this thing," the coach said. "He's a little disappointed and we're all a little bit heartbroken for him.

"But losing to the kid he lost to (Schweizer) - he's an outstanding talent. Tysen's had a fantastic year."

Jake Moore finished 10th for Prairie in 16:02.0 to get a medal.

The Linn-Mar Lions finished seventh in the team race with 195 points, losing a tiebreaker with Indianola for sixth and seventh. Ryan Murphy placed sixth for the Lions and Michael Mather was 11th.

TEAM STANDINGS

1. Dowling 69, 2. Cedar Falls 79, 3. Prairie 100, 4. Pleasant Valley 112, 5. West Des Moines Valley 184, 6. Indianola 195, 7. Linn-Mar 195, 8. Iowa City West 202, 9. Dubuque Senior 238, 10. Waukee 256, 11. Johnston 281, 12. Iowa City High 284, 13. Ankeny Centennial 303, 14. Urbandale 305, 15. Hempstead 307.

CHAMPION - Ryan Schweizer, Dowling, 15:45.3

PRAIRIE - 2. Tysen VanDraska 15:49.9, 10. Jake Moore 16:02.0, 25. Cam Steffens 16:26.7, 31. Chris Oehlert 16:28.8, 32. Colton LaGrange 16:29.8, 45. Matt Lorenz 16:48.9, 82. Elijah Vlasek 17:17.8.

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LINN-MAR - 6. Ryan Murphy 15:58.2, 11. Michael Mather 16:04.4, 53. Johnny Clymer 16:54.9, 59. Colin Johnston 16:57.8, 66. Dalton Gosch 17:05.6, 93. Carter Lorenz 17:35.4, 96. Brycen Snell 17:39.3.

WASHINGTON - 61. Samuel Eck 16:52.8.